



A163 Follow-Up Survey of Forensic Professionals on Key Issues Facing Friction Ridge Analysis

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an increased understanding of the views, perspectives, and opinions of forensic practitioners on key issues facing friction ridge analysis.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by highlighting current opinions and reactions of forensic science professionals in light of recent government publications. This data will create a deeper appreciation for the gap between perception and the reality of friction ridge analysis in forensic laboratories.

Since the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Report, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, was released in February 2009, many forensic disciplines have been under increased scrutiny, including friction ridge analysis. As a follow-up to a "Science of Fingerprints" survey where 150 forensic practitioners were surveyed between 2007 and 2009, the same participants were asked the same eight questions with an additional four questions:

1. Do you conduct friction ridge analysis as part of your current position?
2. Do you believe that fingerprint identification is a science?
3. Do you feel that fingerprint identification should be admitted into courtrooms as expert testimony?
4. What type of research, if any, should be done to correct the misidentifications that occur?
5. Should there be a minimum number of points for identification? Why?
6. Do you feel that other misidentifications have occurred that have never been caught?
7. Do you believe that innocent people are in jail or on death row because of fingerprint errors?
8. What additional quality assurance steps should be taken for fingerprint examiners?
9. Do you or your laboratory perform blind verifications?
10. Do the *Daubert* factors apply to fingerprint identifications?
11. After reading the *NH v. Langill Opinion*, do you agree that the testimony should be inadmissible?
12. Has the NAS Report, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, affected how you perform your job (whether it be daily routines, SOP, testifying, etc.)?

The majority of practitioners surveyed had five years or less experience in forensic science and represented local, state, and federal agencies across the United States. Consensus in the field of forensic science can be difficult given the variance in jurisdictional requirements; however, trends on this topic were significant. While the majority of practitioners surveyed believed that fingerprint identification is a science, this follow-up survey demonstrates that a clear, coherent message as to what constitutes that science is yet to be achieved.

Friction Ridge, Fingerprint Identification, NAS Report