

Y-DNA: No Matches with Your Surname?

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If you don't have a Y-DNA match yet with someone with your surname or variant, and others with your surname have tested, this may indicate that your surname has multiple points of origin.

If a surname has a single point of origin, one man or family adopted the surname, and it was passed down the generations over time. All the direct male line descendants would have the same or a close Y-DNA result.

Where a surname has multiple points of origin, more than one man or family adopted a surname. These men could even be in different countries. Each man, at the time of adoption of surnames, probably had a different Y-DNA result.

Over time, surnames evolved, often to multiple forms, and through migration the surname spread out geographically.

Another reason for not having any Y DNA matches could be that your surname evolved from a different root surname than those who have tested. As surnames evolved over time, two different root surnames each could have a branch which evolved to the same form. For example, the surname Matts could evolve to Mates, and the surname Mate could evolve to Mates. If all the family trees tested in the project so far evolved from Matts, except your tree, which evolved from Mate, you wouldn't have any matches yet.

The dataset of test results may still be small, as compared to the population of your surname. As the number of participants increases for your surname, you should find a match.

It is possible that an event occurred in the past that affected the link between your surname and your DNA. These events include: a voluntary name change, informal adoption, extra marital event, or an illegitimate son taking on the mother's surname, and therefore breaking the link between the surname and Y-DNA.

The most likely reason that you do not have a match is that your surname has multiple points of origin and no one else has tested from your origin. The second most likely reason is that your surname evolved from a different root surname, and no one else has tested yet from this root origin.

Unless your research or family legends indicate that an event occurred to break the link between Y-DNA and the surname in your family tree, you should first consider multiple origins for the surname or the surname evolving from two different root surnames.

Let's look at the situation where your surname has multiple points of origin. For our example, the surname originated in 3 different locations in England. Each origin represents a different DNA result. For our example, we will call these families D, E, and F.

The surname originated in Essex, Staffordshire and Warwickshire. Over the centuries, migrations occurred in each family, so the surname has spread over a much larger geographic area. Some migrations resulted in all three families having members residing in the same geographic area, such as London. Even though they have the same surname, and are in the same location due to migration, they belong to different DNA Lines.

Family D originated in Warwickshire, and for the first several generations after the adoption of hereditary surnames, there were many sons, who also had many sons. Therefore, this DNA line proliferated rapidly.

Family E originated in Staffordshire. For the first 100 years, there were very few sons, so the

population of this surname grew very slowly.

Family F originated in Essex, and had very few sons. The plague resulted in the major branch of this family wiped out. Only a few males were left to carry on this DNA line, so there are very few males today.

Multiple migrations from different branches of Family D to the USA occurred, starting in the 1700's. Other branches migrated to Australia, and in the 1800's to the Republic of South Africa. In the USA, the proliferation of the surname continued, with multiple generations with a large number of sons.

A branch of family E migrated to Canada in the 1700's, and then a descendent later migrated to the USA in the 1900's. In Canada, this surname proliferated, especially in Ontario. In Quebec, an unexpected and unknown variant has developed due to the pronunciation differences.

The population size of Family F is still low today, and has never recovered from the plague. One male migrated in the 1800s to the USA, and another to Australia in the early 1900's.

Today, in the USA and England, the majority of the population with the surname belongs to Family D. The second major component of the surname population is Family E. Family F represents a very small fraction of the population of the surname. Less than 5% of the US population, and 15% of the England population belong to Family F.

A person in Family F who tested would most likely not have any matches early in the Surname Project. Their surname has multiple points of origin, plus their DNA line is found in a low percentage of the population of the surname.

Family D has the most matches. This family is also the majority of the surname population, and migrations have spread descendants to multiple countries.

Family E has very few matches, and will have more matches when research or testing uncovers the unknown variant in Quebec.

Thousands of different situations have occurred over the centuries. Each surname has encountered situations that would affect the population of the surname and the location of the population today. The above hypothetical situation is just one example of a situation that could occur, and which could result in a person testing from Family F and not yet having any matches.

It is disappointing to not have any matches. You will have matches in the future. Perhaps a study of your family tree or surname will provide some clues as to where your DNA line is located today. In this case, perhaps you can recruit some participants from that geographic area. This action may result in you finding a match sooner.

When you don't have a match, most likely your surname has multiple points of origin, or evolved from a different root surname.