

# Questioning a Courtroom Proof of the Uniqueness of Fingerprints

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## Summary

Forensic scientists or analysts concerned with “individualization” often presume that features such as fingerprint minutia are unique to each individual. In the United States, defendants in criminal cases have been demanding proof of such assumptions. In at least two cases, the government of the United States has successfully relied on an unpublished statistical study prepared specifically for litigation to demonstrate the uniqueness of fingerprints. This article suggests that the study is neither designed nor executed in a way that can show whether an individual’s fingerprint impressions are unique.

*Key words:* Forensic statistics; Individualization; Probability evidence; Fingerprints.