



23andMe Introduces New Feature Helping African Americans Trace Their Roots to Post Slavery Communities in the South

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The new African American Genetic Groups feature traces customers' ancestral connections from before the early-to-mid-20th century migrations to more than 200 communities in Southern states

SUNNYVALE, Calif., Oct. 17, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- 23andMe Holding Co. (Nasdaq: ME), a leading human genetics company, released a powerful new feature that enables African American customers to trace their roots to over 200 communities of people of African descent in the Southern United States. These communities include those with connections to the Piney Woods region in the dense forests and rolling hills in rural Mississippi; the creoles of the River Parishes and Greater New Orleans who draw on a unique mix of French, Spanish, Native American and African cultures; and the Gullah Geechee of South Carolina and Georgia, among many others.

Many Americans do not realize that before the Great Migration, more than 90 percent of the Black community lived in the South. Then, during the two waves of the Great Migration between 1910 and 1970, roughly six million Black Americans left their homes in primarily rural southern communities, moving north and west in search of economic opportunities, and to escape poverty, repression, and racial violence.

"History is written in our DNA, and it's important for African Americans to see how their family histories are woven so deeply into the history of the United States," said Steven Micheletti, Ph.D., 23andMe Senior Scientist, Population Genetics, and lead on the 23andMe African American Genetics Group feature.

"Many African American families whose ancestors fled the South during the Great Migration kept some connection to those communities that they left behind, but over the decades, some families lost those connections. Learning this information could help reconnect families to these communities."

The new African American Genetic Groups feature offers families and individuals direct links to the places where their ancestors once lived, providing meaningful insights into African American history and heritage within the United States. These communities offer a window into the unique histories, cultures, and traditions passed down over time. The new feature will include shared ancestral locations, a list of common maternal and paternal haplogroups, and additional information to help those tracing their connections to these communities.

23andMe customers will be able to trace connections to the following African American Genetic Groups, among many others:

- Southern Mississippi Pines African Americans
- Yazoo River Basin Mississippi African Americans
- Georgia Coastal Plain African Americans
- Central Carolinas Piedmont African Americans
- Central Georgia Piedmont African Americans
- Central Kentucky African Americans
- Chesapeake Bay African Americans
- Savannah River Basin African Americans
- Lower Alabama African Americans
- Maryland Western Shore African Americans

(For a full list, please see our [blog post](#)).

For many African American families, tracing their roots can be challenging due to the disruptions caused by the transatlantic slave trade, systemic racism, and displacement during the Great Migration. That massive movement of people transformed the political, cultural, and social landscape in the United States. Families moved along well-worn paths to cities like Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and Detroit, forever changing the fabric of these urban centers.

Approximately 88 percent of 23andMe customers who self-identify as African American will see connections to at least one of the newly identified African American Genetic Groups. For 23andMe+ Premium™ customers, who have access to more distant connections, this number rises to 95 percent.

About 5 percent of 23andMe customers who identify as white or caucasian and have some African ancestry will also receive matches. Whereas many African Americans are well aware of their mixed ancestry that often includes European ancestry, many people who self-identify as white but have some ["hidden" African ancestry](#) may not know that same history.

This important new feature is part of a broader effort to improve representation in 23andMe's product and within its research. For over a decade, 23andMe has taken steps to enhance the diversity of its research dating back to its [Roots into the Future Project](#), and its African [Genetics Project](#).

Most recently, 23andMe collaborated with researchers at the National Institutes of Health and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine to publish the [largest and most diverse genetic study of the sickle cell trait](#), linking the trait to increased risk for certain blood clots. In 2023, scientists from 23andMe, Harvard, and the Smithsonian [conducted a historical DNA analysis of 27 enslaved and freed African Americans](#) who labored at a Maryland iron furnace and established genetic connections between them and 40,000 of their living relatives. 23andMe's new [Historical Matches](#) feature now

allows customers to see if they share a connection to these historical individuals.

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About 23andMe

23andMe is a genetics-led consumer healthcare and therapeutics company empowering a healthier future. For more information, please visit investors.23andme.com.

Forward-Looking Statements

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