

DNA database rises by 600,000 in just one year

Jason Lewis – Daily Mail March 17, 2007

Almost 600,000 people have been added to Tony Blair's national DNA database in the past 12 months, according to new figures obtained by The Mail on Sunday.

They show that the Government now holds samples of almost four million individuals - and one in four has no criminal record or even a police caution.

The database is expanding rapidly as all suspects arrested in connection with any imprisonable offence now routinely have DNA swabs taken.

New plans will extend these powers to allow police to take genetic samples from anyone arrested or suspected of any crime - however minor.

The samples remain on official records even if the alleged offender is never charged or is later cleared by a court.

The Government and the police insist the register is crucial for solving serious crimes, including rapes and murders. But Opposition MPs and civil rights groups said the figures were evidence of a 'sinister' attempt to turn every British citizen into a suspect.

The new figures, released under the Freedom of Information Act, show the database now holds 3.98million DNA samples from people in England and Wales - up from 3.4million the previous year.

News of the register's growth comes amid fears that the Government intends to link it with identity card records, allowing unprecedented monitoring of individuals.

Ministers deny any such plans but Mr Blair has insisted there should be 'no limit' to DNA records - suggesting even those who are not accused should offer up their data.

The Government already holds samples of around 140,000 people who have never been arrested, some of them victims of crime.

A recent Home Office report showed that 5.24 per cent of the UK population now has a DNA profile on the database. This compares with an EU average of 1.13 per cent and 0.5 per cent in the US.

Liberal Democrat MP Lynne Featherstone said:

"The Government is building a national DNA register by stealth. If it wants a database for everyone, it should go to Parliament and fight for it."

However, the Home Office insists the database is a key police intelligence tool and that there are no plans to make it compulsory.

It adds that maintaining and developing the register is a top priority, with Government and police investment of more than £300million over the past five years.

Meanwhile, the number of crimes solved through DNA technology has quadrupled. These include the case of 65-year-old Brian Field, arrested for drink driving in 1999.

A DNA sample from Field matched one from the clothes of Surrey schoolboy Roy Tutill, 14, who was raped and strangled on his way home from school on April 23, 1968.

Field pleaded guilty to the murder and was jailed for life in November 2001.

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