



Forensic Footwear Examiner Decision Analysis Black Box Study *Requesting Participation*



Purpose

The purpose of this study is to measure the accuracy and reliability of decisions made by forensic footwear examiners. This study is a collaborative effort by the FBI Laboratory, Ideal Innovations, and Noblis.

Test design summary

Participants will be asked to make conclusions based on comparisons of footwear evidence similar to actual casework. The footwear evidence samples will be provided as both physical photographs and digital images, the latter provided via a custom software application. The custom software will also be used to record comparison determinations (i.e., conclusions) and will provide tools for marking wear, randomly acquired characteristics, and or other design elements or anomalies that were used to make those determinations.

Participation

Participation in this study is open to all practicing, qualified United States examiners who have performed forensic footwear evidence comparisons in operational casework within the last five years. Non-U.S. examiners may participate if they use the SWGTREAD conclusion scale (either 2006 or 2013 scale). Participation is contingent upon receipt of a signed consent form (provided through the email address below, during live recruitment events (e.g., scientific conferences), and via online download).

Extent of support requested

Participants will be asked to perform a total of 100 footwear evidence comparisons over a period of approximately one year. We estimate that the study will take about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour to 1 hour per week over the course of the year.

Each comparison involves one questioned impression, and one item of footwear (test impressions and outsole images). The 100 comparisons will be distributed in five packets of 20 comparisons each over the one-year period. Participants are required to complete an on-line background questionnaire.

Schedule

The first test packets are expected to be sent to participants in late 2018.

Anonymity

All questionnaire information and test results will be kept separate from personally identifiable information so that results cannot be associated with specific individuals, even for the members of the test administration and data analysis teams. Anonymity will be assured through the use of participant ID numbers and controlling the flow of information.

Reporting

The results will be presented at forensic conferences and submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Results will be aggregated across multiple examiners. Results will be further analyzed and classified by the education, training, and experience categories established in the background questionnaire. All results will be anonymous and care will be taken so that results are not aggregated in a way that compromises anonymity.

Interested in participating? Email footwear@noblis.org