

ISOGG Notes - - GSSCC DNA SIG
compiled by Gail Burk - August 5, 2025

I recently read through a blog post by Jim Robeson, webmaster for the Monterey County Genealogy Society, extolling the virtues of the ISOGG website (International Society of Genetic Genealogy, founded in 2005, by Katherine Borges). ISOGG's reputation in the genetic genealogy world is excellent. We genealogists know that ISOGG has an online presence, but how often do we actually visit ISOGG and look at pages on the site?

Jim's blog encourages us to really take some time to explore the ISOGG website, and I recently did just that. ISOGG has hundreds of pages, but they are not always easy to find. Rather than trying to navigate from the home page, you might begin instead by first visiting their page entitled "**Popular Pages.**" That section of the ISOGG site lists, in descending order, the most-visited sections of ISOGG. Of course, the home page is in first place because that's where most people begin. Here's the URL for Popular Pages:

<https://isogg.org/wiki/Special:PopularPages>

I will sample here just a few of the links to be found among the top fifty of the popular pages. Coming in at number 3 is the category called "**Autosomal DNA testing comparison chart**" (1,981,765 views). This is a very useful diagram; it provides excellent and detailed comparisons and contrasts among testing companies, including data for every conceivable category of information about each respective company. For example, in comparing "average responsiveness of matches" to messaging, all testing companies rated a "medium" grade except for 23andMe, for which the responsiveness grade was "low." You can compare price, number of reference populations, available analytical tools, overall accuracy of ethnicity estimates, and much more.

https://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_testing_comparison_chart

The 4th most popular section at ISOGG is a discussion of "**How long is a generation? Science provides an answer**" (1,016,460 views) featuring an article by Donn Devine, CG, FNGS, who argues that the long-used assumption of 25 years per generation, or four generations in a century, is proven inaccurate by a detailed analysis of statistics. His analysis shows that a generation is more likely

to be about 35 years in the male line (father's age at birth of child), and 30 years in the female line (mother's age at birth of child), even for earlier generations, when averaged together. This reassessment of generational length has a direct effect on which era we might target in our search for documents and records pertaining to earlier generations of ancestors whose birth dates are not yet known. As the author states, "At the usually accepted value of four generations per century, ten generations would place the common ancestor only 250 years in the past, in the mid-18th century, suggesting a further search in records of that period for evidence pointing toward the relationship. However, the longer three-generation per century interval indicated by the recent research would place the common ancestor in the late 1600s, with a much reduced chance of finding further documentary evidence bearing on the relationship."

[https://isogg.org/wiki/How long is a generation%3F Science provides a n answer](https://isogg.org/wiki/How_long_is_a_generation%3F_Science_provides_a_n_answer)

Coming in at number 10 in popularity is the section entitled, "**Autosomal DNA tools**" (526,975 views), which covers the array of third-party websites that offer various tools for DNA analysis. This section covers all the usual suspects in this category, including Banyan, DNA Painter, Shared cM Tool, GEDmatch, and What Are the Odds with a brief overview of each. Tools that utilize GEDcom files are also listed, along with mobile apps, and tools that are no longer available. Each analytical tool in this section has a live link you can click on to learn more about that specific tool.

[https://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal DNA tools](https://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_tools)

Maybe you are interested in surname mapping, a useful technique for a surname DNA project, such as some of the DNA projects found at Family Tree DNA. Many surnames have regional distribution patterns. Mapping the distribution of a surname at different points in time will often reveal the origin of the family name and will thus provide a narrower focus for further research and for recruitment efforts. If this is an interest, you will want to explore the 23rd most popular category, "**Surname mapping**" (282,491 views). Here, you will also find a list of surname mapping websites for many countries (mostly European), with live links to these sites.

[https://isogg.org/wiki/Surname mapping](https://isogg.org/wiki/Surname_mapping)

Another very useful section is the “**Genetics Glossary**” (201,601 views), at number 32 in popularity. Here you will find a huge list of genetic genealogy words and terms, with definitions, and many with links to click on where you can learn more. I guarantee you will find terms you have never encountered before. The only letters of the alphabet not represented on this list are Q and Z.

https://isogg.org/wiki/Genetics_Glossary

Rounding out the top fifty most popular sections of the ISOGG website, coming in at number 50, is the category entitled, “**MtDNA haplogroup projects**” (121,771 views). This section explains what is involved in joining a mitochondrial DNA project, and provides a list of mtDNA haplogroup projects with live links where you can read more about each project. In the “See also” portion of this section, you will find an interesting list of other projects, such as Native American and Jewish DNA projects.

https://isogg.org/wiki/MtDNA_haplogroup_projects

Each page on the list of Popular Pages includes a list of sources of information for that page, and suggestions for additional research as well as lists for researching ancillary subject matters. There are pages geared to every level of DNA experience, from beginner to advanced. The only limitation is how much time you have to go exploring!

Sources Monterey County Genealogy Society
<https://mocogenso.wordpress.com/page/2/>
accessed July 27, 2025

International Society of Genetic Genealogy (ISOGG)
Popular Pages
<https://isogg.org/wiki/Special:PopularPages>
accessed July 27, 2025