

Rapid facial recognition trial begins



Leicestershire Police is the first force in the UK to test new facial recognition software that could transform the way criminals are tracked down.

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NeoFace, developed by NEC, can compare any digital image – such as CCTV or police body-worn camera footage – with any other photo held on the Leicestershire Police database.

The computer programme has been under evaluation for a couple of months and around 200 suspects have already been put through the system, with a high success rate of identification.

It works by comparing dozens of measurements between key facial features. It's impressive, because it provides initial results in a few seconds.

The current system, although computerised, involves manually searching for possible matches, which can take several hours.

The full-face images are drawn from body worn video or CCTV and can be compared with thousands of photographs of suspects following arrest. Unlike DNA and biometric information, which must be discarded after six months if suspects are not convicted, police can retain photographs indefinitely.