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## Who gets murdered in London?



### Key messages

- Few crimes have gripped the public imagination as fiercely as the spate of killings with sharp instruments - so-called “knife crime” - widely reported during 2018 and the first part of 2019. The extent of concern can be gauged by the fact that the only topic that would regularly knock Brexit out of the headlines would be yet another murder. The authorities quickly settled on the idea of a “public health” approach to the problem; but since one of the first steps in determining a remedy would be to identify the at-risk population and its characteristics. There is little doubt that minority victims are unusually prevalent; but which minorities, and how prevalent? Analysis by Origins proved to be a timely and accurate way of answering these vital questions.

### Context

Many organisations hold small files containing the names of people who have experienced serious misfortune. Such people may have suffered from crime, from fire or other sources of physical injuries, from poor health or lack of adequate housing. Understanding which target groups are at highest risk of these misfortunes is often the first step towards developing successful strategies to combat these sources of disadvantage.

A good example of such a file is the list of the names of the 109 people who were victims of murder in London during 2018.

Passing the names through the Origins software we were able to code all 109 of them with the ethno-cultural category that best described their name and compare this distribution with that of adult Londoners as a whole.

Perhaps the most striking result of the analysis was the large proportion of Black African names, 17% of the file compared with a London average of 4.9 %. Half of these were of Nigerian origin. It was also apparent that Londoners from the Muslim world were at a high risk of murder, particularly those with Turkish names. Muslim names were four times more common among the dead than names from Hindu or East Asian backgrounds.

Though numbers were small it was evident that people with Romanian or Turkish names were also disproportionately likely to be murdered compared with members of other London communities. Murder is by no means a problem confined to London's black communities. 28% of the murder victims had Black African, Turkish or Romanian names compared with 7% of adult Londoners.

When Origins was used to infer the gender of the victims it became evident that it was Black African males in particular who were at highest risk of murder. The women at greatest risk of murder had names originating from Eastern Europe.

The availability of victims' age on the file which we accessed revealed that among men aged under 28 it was Black Africans who were particularly at risk of murder. Young men from the Muslim world were another group disproportionately at risk.

Clearly colour is an issue but not the only reason for differences in murder rates. For example people from Hindu and East Asian backgrounds are relatively safer notwithstanding their physical appearance. Culture does seem to make a difference and it is reasonable to suppose that membership of criminal gangs involved in particular forms of crime explains the existence of white minorities among the groups at highest risk of being murdered.

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