# Human factors affecting the triaging of crime scene items

Enhancing the quality of forensic science decisions by exploring factors that may affect the triaging of crime scene items.

## Key details

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| **Lead institution** | University College London |
| **Principal researcher(s)** | Principal investigator – Dr Ifat Levy; Lead researcher – Mohammed Almazrouei<br>mohammed.almazrouei@ucl.ac.uk |
| **Police region** | London |
| **Collaboration and partnership** | Collaboration between University College London and Yale University. |
| **Level of research** | PhD |
| **Project start date** | April 2022 |
| **Date due for completion** | December 2024 |

## Research context

Decisions made early at the crime scene could potentially impact the direction of police investigations and/or the case legal outcomes. One such decision is the triaging (or prioritisation) of crime scene items.

Triaging could be needed to optimise the quality of forensic evidence (for example, speed and type of forensic tests to identify suspects). However, some factors could potentially affect the quality of

the triaging process, such as the assessment of multiple types of forensic analysis for the crime scene items. These may include human, resource factors and other factors (US Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2019).

This study aims to explore human factors that may play a role in the triaging of crime scene items. The findings may have implications for improving forensic practitioners' practice and training to enhance the triaging quality.

## References

US Bureau of Justice Assistance. (2019). Triage of forensic evidence testing: A guide for prosecutors (No. 254513).

# Research methodology

In this online study, participants will be asked to evaluate a forensic casework brief and photographs of items collected from a crime scene. Under a hypothetical scenario, the participants are assigned to this case and will be asked to make a series of decisions about it. For this study, the participant will be asked whether they would choose to test (or not) crime scene items for two broad types of forensic analyses – biological traces (like blood) and fingerprints.

Participants are also asked to complete a task in which they will make a series of choices between pairs of visual options. They will be asked to choose which of the two options they prefer. For example, they might be asked to choose whether they would prefer an option with a 100% chance of a certain outcome, or an option with another probability of a different outcome.

The targeted participants are any crime scene/forensic examiner or supervisor/manager who could be involved in the triaging process. The participant can be working in any relevant departments such as crime scene, evidence recovery, or biology as long as they can be involved in the item prioritisation process at any stage (for example, in the crime scene, in the laboratory, in a managerial meeting).

# Research participation

We are seeking volunteers to participate in this online study about factors affecting forensic decision making. The inclusion criteria are an adult crime scene/forensic examiner or

supervisor/manager who can be involved in both:

1. the process of prioritizing or triaging items collected from crime scenes
2. the selection of testing type for triaged items, including testing for biological traces (like blood) and fingerprints

The participant can be working in any relevant departments (such as crime scene, evidence recovery, or biology) as long as they can be involved in both of the above forensic tasks.

Fluency in English is necessary for the completion of the study tasks.

The study will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete. There is time for a short break in the middle if required.

Participation is voluntary. Although participants will be asked some basic demographic questions (for example, age), no individual identifying information is collected. Therefore, all data collected for this study are anonymous.

If you are interested in participating in this study:

- make sure that your audio is turned on – some tasks will require you to listen to recordings
- use a desktop or laptop computer – do not use a mobile or tablet

Access the study

This study was approved by Yale HIC (#0910005795). If you have any questions about this study, please contact the principal investigator Dr. Ifat Levy at ifat.levy@yale.edu (Yale Decision Neuroscience Lab).