

The DNA Olympics- Jamaicans win sprinting 'genetic lottery'- and why we should all care



Segregation was on display in London over the past two weeks—which, surprisingly, should spark no concerns and may even help educate us all about the wonders of human biodiversity. Let me explain.

Led by 100-meter world record holder Usain Bolt, Jamaican men swept the sprinting events at the London Olympics. It was a stunning feat for the small Caribbean nation. But as part of a broader trend, it's hardly surprising. Runners of West African descent are the fastest humans on earth.

The trends are eye opening: Athletes of African ancestry hold every major male running record, from the 100 meters to the marathon. (Although these same trends hold for female runners, the pattern is more dominant among male runners. This analysis focuses on men because the playing field for them is far more level, as social taboos remain that restrict female access to sports in many parts of the world.) Over the last seven Olympic men's 100-meter races, all 56 finalists have been of West African descent. Only two non-African runners, France's Christophe Lemaire, who is white, and Australia's Irish-aboriginal Patrick Johnson, have cracked the [top 500 100-meter times](#). There are no elite Asian sprinters—or, intriguingly, any from East or North Africa.

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