

What contributions did ancient Denisovans make to modern human gene pool?

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A mysterious extinct branch of the human [family](#) tree that once interbred with modern humans was more genetically diverse than Neanderthals, a finding that also suggests many of these early humans called Denisovans existed in what is now southern Siberia, researchers say.

In 2008, scientists unearthed a finger bone and teeth in Denisova cave in Siberia's Altai Mountains that belonged to lost relatives now known as the [Denisovans](#) (dee-NEE-soh-vens). Analysis of DNA extracted from a finger bone from [a young Denisovan girl](#) suggested they shared a common origin with [Neanderthals](#), but were nearly as genetically distinct from Neanderthals as Neanderthals were from living people.

A deeper understanding of extinct human lineages could shed light on [modern](#) human evolution. For instance, analysis of the Denisovan genome showed that Denisovans have contributed on the order of 5 percent of their DNA to the genomes of present-day people in Oceania, and about 0.2 percent to the genomes of Native Americans and mainland Asians. These DNA contributions not only signify interbreeding between the two groups (scientists have yet to definitively call Denisovans a separate species), but also may explain the origin of some traits of living humans.

Read full, original post: [Mysterious Group of Extinct Humans Was More Diverse Than Neandertals](#)