

With rise of agriculture came big changes in European genome

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The agricultural revolution was one of the most profound events in human history, leading to the rise of modern civilization. Now, in the first study of its kind, an international team of scientists has found that after agriculture arrived in Europe 8,500 years ago, people's DNA underwent widespread changes, altering their height, digestion, immune system and skin color.

Researchers had found indirect clues of some of these alterations by studying the genomes of living Europeans. But the new study, they said, makes it possible to see the changes as they occurred over thousands of years.

"For decades we've been trying to figure out what happened in the past," said Rasmus Nielsen, a geneticist at the University of California, Berkeley, who was not involved in the new study. "And now we have a time machine."

Before the rise of agriculture, Europe was home to a population of hunter-gatherers. Then a wave of people arrived whose DNA resembles that of people in the Near East. It's likely that they brought agriculture with them.

Finally, about 4,500 years ago, a nomadic population from the steppes of Russia, known as the Yamnaya, swept into Europe.

The analyses that revealed these migrations were based on dozens of ancient European genomes. But in [a study published in Nature](#), [David Reich](#), a geneticist at Harvard Medical School, and his colleagues analyzed the genomes of 230 people who lived between 8,500 and 2,300 years ago.

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