

Did migration to America take long enough for humans to evolve?

The Bering land bridge plays a central role in our picture of how humans reached the Americas...[Current estimates](#) suggest that people lived [on this bridge called Beringia] for between 5,000 and 8,000 years, starting about 23,000 years ago.

That is a long enough time for natural selection to have had an effect on the genome of people who lived there, according to a [recent study].

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[A [genetic survey](#) of 191 Greenlandic Inuit people found some genetic patterns that are so common that the best explanation for them is natural selection. Specifically, there's evidence to suggest that three genes involved in metabolizing fatty acids (*FADS* genes) show changes that might be the result of adaptation to a diet high in protein and fats.

It's possible that the adaptations took place on Beringia itself—in which case they would predate the peopling of all the Americas.

[The researchers confirmed this hypothesis when they] found variants in the *FADS* genes that were much more common in the Native American genomes.



The Bering land bridge. Credit: National Park Service.

If the evidence keeps piling up that the *FADS* genes affect how we process our food, they could ultimately be important in medical research...[It may show that] the best diet might be different for different people, depending on their genetics.

[The study can be found [here](#).]

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post:

Migration to America took long enough for evolution to happen on the way