

Are humans truly evolving or are we just genetically 'drifting'?

Evolution may be responsible for a range of complex traits, including height and waist-to-hip ratio, and diseases such as schizophrenia, research from The University of Queensland shows.

The findings improve understanding of how [natural selection](#) shapes human populations, and could lead to better prevention, diagnosis and treatment of complex diseases through an enhanced knowledge of their underlying genetics.

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"Many human complex traits are concentrated in different populations around the world," Professor [Jian] Yang said. "For example, populations in the Northern Hemisphere tend to get taller the further north you go, and European Americans have a lower [body mass index](#) (BMI) than African Americans, but higher than Chinese, Indonesians or Thais."

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"The question is whether or not these differences are the consequence of natural selection or simply the result of what we call 'genetic drift' – where gene mutations (also called genetic variants) become more or less frequent in a population by chance."

Professor Yang and his colleagues set out to answer the question.

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If genetic variants associated with a complex trait resulted from natural selection they should appear more frequently than expected under [genetic drift](#). The analysis supported this, showing that the genetic variants associated with height, weight-to-hip ratio and schizophrenia were more differentiated than expected by random drift.

Editor's note: Read [full study](#)

Read full, original post: [Does evolution make us or are we just drifting that way?](#)