

Prehistoric footprints offer snapshot of how our ancestors divided labor between men and women

Prehistoric footprints are a remarkable and precious source of evidence for the behavior and biology of ancient organisms, capturing a snapshot of their lives in deep time. In a new paper [in Nature Scientific Reports](#), our research team documented and interpreted an extraordinary site in northern Tanzania called Engare Sero, where hundreds of human footprints were preserved in volcanic ash many thousands of years ago.

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Based on a sophisticated statistical analysis using a vast comparative data set of modern foot dimensions, this group likely consisted of mainly 14 adult females, with two adult males and one younger male.

Modern foragers such as the [Hadza in Tanzania](#) and the [Ache in Paraguay](#) often include groups of adult females cooperatively gathering food together, with occasional visits from or accompaniment by adult males. This scenario seems a plausible fit for the group structure and patterns of movements we inferred at Engare Sero. The footprints may indicate cooperative and sexually divided foraging in this ancient human community.

While we don't know what the community of people who made these prints was specifically like, we know that hominins in Africa at this time were engaging in complex behaviors, and that they were members of our own species, *Homo sapiens*.

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