

Long-standing belief that meat-eating helped drive human evolution called into question

There's a widespread belief that eating meat became much more common with the advent of big-brained *Homo erectus*, two million years ago, based on increased archaeological evidence of meat-eating from that point.

But [new research](#) in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* has called that belief into question, suggesting that the numbers don't quite add up.

"Generations of paleoanthropologists have gone to famously well-preserved sites in places like [Olduvai Gorge](#) looking for — and finding — breathtaking direct evidence of early humans eating meat, furthering this viewpoint that there was an explosion of meat-eating after two million years ago," says Dr. Andrew Barr, assistant professor of anthropology at George Washington University, US, and lead author on the paper.

"However, when you quantitatively synthesize the data from numerous sites across eastern Africa to test this hypothesis, as we did here, that 'meat made us human' evolutionary narrative starts to unravel."

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They found that, once they'd accounted for variation in sampling over time, there was no evidence that meat-eating increased once *Homo erectus* appeared. While there was an increase in marked animal bones after the advent of *Homo erectus*, this was likely because sites from this time period had been more extensively studied and sampled.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)