Linked mutations at adjacent nucleotides have shaped human population differentiation and protein evolution

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Abstract

Despite the fundamental importance of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) to human evolution there are still large gaps in our understanding of the forces that shape their distribution across the genome. SNPs have been shown to not be distributed evenly, with directly adjacent SNPs found unusually frequently. Why this is the case is unclear. We illustrate how neighbouring SNPs that can't be explained by a single mutation event (that we term here sequential dinucleotide mutations, SDMs) are driven by distinct mutational processes and selective pressures to SNPs and multinucleotide polymorphisms (MNPs). By studying variation across multiple populations, including a novel cohort of 1,358 Scottish genomes, we show that, SDMs are over twice as common as MNPs and like SNPs, display distinct mutational spectra across populations. These biases are though not only different to those observed among SNPs and MNPs, but also more divergent between human population groups. We show that the changes that make up SDMs are not independent, and identify a distinct mutational profile, $CA \rightarrow CG \rightarrow TG$, that is observed an order of magnitude more often than other SDMs, including others that involve the gain and subsequent deamination of CpG sites. This suggests these specific changes are driven by a distinct process. In coding regions particular SDMs are favoured, and especially those that lead to the creation of single codon amino acids. Intriguingly selection has favoured particular pathways through the amino acid code, with epistatic selection appearing to have disfavoured sequential non-synonymous changes.

Key words: sequential dinucleotide mutations, multi-nucleotide polymorphisms, multi-nucleotide mutations, human mutation, DNA repair, epistatic selection, SDM, MNP

Introduction

Single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) are the pillars of modern genetics studies (Gray et al., 2000; Brookes, 1999). From their use in genome-wide association studies to map the genetics of diseases (Bush and Moore, 2012), to studying patterns of evolution (Morin et al., 2004), SNPs are widely used and studied across fields. A common implicit assumption across these studies is that SNPs are independent (Schrider et al., 2011), with each substitution assumed to have resulted from a distinct mutational event. However, the distribution of SNPs across the genome has been known for some time to not be even, with not only polymorphisms (Amos, 2010; Hodgkinson and Eyre-Walker, 2010) but also fixed differences between species clustering in the genome (Bazykin et al., 2004). Where multiple base substitutions are found in the same genomic region, the derived alleles are more often found on the same haplotype (Schrider et al., 2011), suggesting that the two changes have not occurred independently.

Directly neighbouring polymorphisms are particularly enriched in the human genome (Hodgkinson and EyreWalker, 2010), though why this is the case is not fully understood. Previous studies of trios have shown that many of these changes have arisen in a single generation as multinucleotide polymorphisms (MNPs) (Besenbacher et al., 2016; Schrider et al., 2011), which are particularly enriched with GA → TT and GC → AA changes, suggesting that they are linked to error prone replication by polymerase zeta (Harris and Nielsen, 2014). However, not all sites of neighbouring changes can be explained by a single mutational event. Many neighbouring polymorphisms occur at different allele frequencies in the population suggesting they have arisen from two distinct mutations (Hodgkinson and Eyre-Walker, 2010), which we term here sequential dinucleotide mutations (SDMs). These clustered changes have been comparatively understudied and may simply reflect mutational hotspots but may also be the result of selection, with the impact of an initial deleterious SNP being at least partly corrected by a second neighbouring change (Davis et al., 2009). One obvious circumstance is where the impact of a deleterious nonsynonymous change is offset by a second polymorphism nearby. For example, nonsynonymous changes are less often found on highly expressed haplotypes, suggesting selection has favoured particular combinations of coding and regulatory alleles (Lappalainen et al., 2011). Likewise there is evidence that selection has favoured particular combinations of nonsynonymous changes spanning different amino acids in the same protein (Breen et al., 2012).

In this study we therefore focused on SDMs comprising two neighbouring changes that cannot be readily explained by a single mutational event, and investigate whether they simply reflect two independent but neighbouring polymorphisms or whether the second change depends on the first. The human mutation spectrum has diverged between human populations, with particular SNPs in particular sequence contexts more common in different continental groups (Harris and Pritchard, 2017). Accordingly, we also explore whether SDM fractions have diverged between population groups and whether any divergence simply mirrors differences in SNP or MNP mutational profiles. We also characterise the functional importance

63   of these SDMs by studying the selective pressures acting upon them and whether they have favoured particular pathways

64   through the amino acid code.

Results

To investigate the frequency of occurrence of neighbouring mutations in different populations we defined SDMs in the 1000

genomes phase 3 dataset (The 1000 Genomes Project Consortium, 2015) using the approach illustrated in Fig 1. In this

study we focused specifically on changes across neighbouring nucleotides that, due to being found at different allele

frequencies, cannot be readily explained by a single mutational event. All of these SDMs were annotated with respect to

their ancestral alleles, triplet nucleotide context and occurrence in each individual (see methods), allowing us to infer the

order of nucleotide changes. SNPs were defined in the same way to enable direct comparisons of their mutational profiles

to SDMs.

We observed that a typical individual carries over 14,000 of these compound SDMs (Supplementary Figure S1) of which on

average 27 fall within a protein coding region. The distribution of SDMs across the genome broadly follows that of SNPs

(Supplementary Figure S2 to Supplementary Figure S6), with the exception of the major histocompatibility complex on

chromosomes 6, that carries an unusually high proportion of SDMs despite its high SNP density (Supplementary Figure S7).

Examination across populations highlights that the intermediate haplotype is generally common (Supplementary Figure

S8) and for 88% of SDMs it is observed across all continental groups, suggesting that the first change for many SDMs

occurred prior to the human migration out of Africa (Fig. 2A).

SDMs show biases between human populations distinct to those among SNPs

Despite being a reduced summary statistic compared to individual genotypes, comparisons of the numbers of SNPs found

in different triplet contexts between individuals has been shown to separate out the major human population groups

(Harris and Pritchard, 2017). This has been attributed to differences in the large number of genes that control DNA

mutation and repair between populations. Characterisation of the individual SNPs that make up SDMs recapitulates the

patterns observed in this previous study. Principal component analysis of the frequency of occurrence of the first and

second changes in compound SDMs, defined by their sequence context, show highly similar patterns to that observed in

Harris and Pritchard (2017) (Fig 2B and C). Despite their more limited numbers, the mutational profile of SDMs can though

even more effectively separate out the major human sub-populations (Fig 2D); with certain types of SDMs in specific

nucleotide contexts enriched in different populations. Surprisingly, unlike the PCAs of individual SNPs, the American

continental group separates in this analysis, in part driven by a depletion for $CG \rightarrow TG \rightarrow TA$ SDMs among these individuals

(Fig 3A). In contrast SDMs are relatively depleted at AT rich triplets in African populations, and in particular SDMs where

the mutations have the effect of switching AT base composition between strands (i.e. that involve multiple neighbouring

A:T → T:A or T:A → A:T mutations; Fig 3B). To ensure these results were not due to ancestral allele misidentification we

repeated the analysis but this time without restricting to sites where the ancestral allele could be determined. After

grouping sites sharing the same combinations of haplotypes, the major populations were still observed to separate in this

analysis (Supplementary Figure S9). A PCA based on MNP mutational fractions, i.e. those changes for which an intermediate

haplotype is not observed, also does not show the definition between continental groups observed for SDMs

(Supplementary Figure S10).

This improved separation observed in the SDMs analysis is driven by the fact that the first and second changes in SDMs

show distinct biases between populations, providing a greater resolution of population differences. This is illustrated by

the fact a PCA of the differences in mutational fractions between the first and second change in SDMs also effectively

separates the major population groups (Supplementary Figure S11). If the first and second change in SDMs showed the

same biases between populations, then continental groups should not still separate in this analysis.

Consequently, SDMs show different mutational spectra across populations that are distinct and more pronounced than

those among SNPs and MNPs, and which can effectively separate major population groups.

CpG deamination is not sufficient to explain SDM variation

Intriguingly, the results in Supplementary Figure S11 imply that the first and second mutations in SDMs are not driven by

the same processes. To investigate this further we characterised the types of mutations observed as the first and second

change in SDMs classified again by base change and triplet context. To ensure that batch effects and sequencing artefacts

did not confound this analysis we replicated it across two independent datasets. The global set of 2504 genomes sequenced

by the 1000 genomes consortium used above, as well as a novel dataset of 1358 Scottish genomes from the Lothian Birth

Cohorts 1921 and 1936 (Deary et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2018), whole genome sequenced at a mean depth of 36X.

Comparison of the frequency with which particular changes occur as the first and second mutation in an SDM indicates that

each shows biases for different types of change. As shown in Fig 4 a clear role of CpG dynamics in shaping SDMs is observed.

Methylated cytosines immediately followed by a guanine (i.e. CpG sites) are known to be particularly prone to deaminate

to a thymine, with mutation rates at these sites up to 18 times higher than at other dinucleotides (Kong et al., 2012). As

shown in Fig 4, the first mutation in SDMs is more likely to create a new CpG site, with the second change more likely to

lead to the loss of one. This suggests that a dominant factor underlying SDMs is an initial mutation that creates a new CpG

site, which subsequently mutates. This signature is observed across both the 1000 genomes and Lothian Birth Cohorts

(Supplementary Figure S12).

This raises the question, to what extent do SDMs simply reflect the known mutational biases of SNPs? (Supplementary

Figure S13). To explore this we determined the expected number of each SDM in the genome given the observed frequencies

of occurrence of its constituent changes among SNPs (see methods for more details). Moderate correlations were observed

between these values (Fig 5A, negative bionomial regression McFadden's psuedo-R^2: 0.57 (Lothian Birth Cohort), 0.61

(1000 Genomes Cohort)), but substantial outliers were observed, where the frequencies of occurrence of SDMs in the

genome differ markedly from what would be expected given the rates of changes among SNPs. In particular the SDMs

involving CA → CG → TG changes (and their complement TG → CG → CA) occur over an order of magnitude more frequently

than expected given the frequency of occurrence of the constituent changes among SNPs (Fig 5A). Notably, they also occur

over an order of magnitude more often than other changes that involve the creation and subsequent deamination of CpG

sites. Whereas 10,633 intergenic CAG → CGG → TGG changes were observed in the 1000 genomes population there are only

1,038 intergenic CTG → CGG → TGG changes, despite both changes leading to a similar creation and loss of CpG sites, and

both ancestral triplets occurring at the same frequency in the genome (due to being the reverse complement of one

another). This enrichment of these changes is maintained at extended sequence contexts (Supplementary Figure S14). This

implies that a distinct process where an initial A:T → G:C change is favoured has led to the comparatively high number of

these changes, and CpG dynamics alone cannot explain the elevated occurrence of these specific SDMs relative to other

SDMs involving a final CpG to TpG change. This is further illustrated in Supplementary Figure S15. Modelling the interaction

between these two factors (original base change and the impact of changes on CpG sites) using regression analysis confirms

that only where a CpG is created by an initial A → G, and not for example by a T → G change, is the rate of SDMs so high

(Supplementary Figure S15).

Comparison of the number of SDMs to the number of MNPs sharing the same ancestral and derived triplets in the 1000

genomes cohort further highlights the distinct mutational biases of SDMs and in particular the bias towards the specific

enrichment for CA → CG → TG changes (Figure 5B). Whereas, as previously observed, MNPs are enriched with GA→TT and

GC→AA changes, thought to be a result of error prone replication by polymerase zeta (Harris and Nielsen, 2014), SDMs are

distinct due to this bias towards CA → CG → TG mutations.

Further mutational biases specific to SDMs are also observed. For example TTA to TTT polymorphisms are more common

as the second change in an SDM than the first, and SDMs containing two consecutive A:T→ T:A changes are more common

than expected given the frequency of occurrence of the same changes among SNPs (Fig 4 and Fig 5A). Consequently

although the turnover of CpG sites drives the creation of a large proportion of SDMs, further processes appear to be

contributing to different biases not only between SDMs and SNPs/MNPs, but also between the first and second changes of

neighbouring polymorphisms.

The sequence of changes observed depends on their ancestral state

This relationship between the first mutation in SDMs and their frequency of occurrence in the genome raises the question

as to whether the second mutation depends to some extent on the first. To explore this, we examined SDMs where initial

mutations have created the same intermediate nucleotide triplet. If the two changes that comprise an SDM are independent,

then the subsequent mutations at these intermediate triplets should occur in similar numbers irrespective of the ancestral

triplet from which they derived.

The dominant feature underlying downstream changes at many of these intermediate triplets was the biased deamination

of CpG sites. SDMs passing through an intermediate triplet containing a CpG site are dominated by subsequent CpG to TpG

changes irrespective of the original ancestral nucleotides. We therefore focused on intermediate triplets that contain no

CpG sites. As shown in Fig 6A, mutations at these intermediate triplets are not independent of the initial change. For

example, 94% of SDMs passing through an intermediate TTA triplet go on to become TAA if the original ancestral codon

was TTT. This number is though only 17% if the original ancestral codon was TTG (Fig 6A and Table 1). This link between

the form of the first change on the observed fraction of downstream changes was shown to be maintained in expanded

sequence contexts (one and two bases either side of each SDM, see Supplementary Table 1). To minimise the potential

impact of batch effects and sequencing artefacts we again sought replication for this observation in the independent Lothian

Birth Cohort collection of Scottish genomes and this difference was found to be highly significant in both datasets (Fig 6B).

This phenomenon is not exclusively restricted to intermediate triplets containing just adenines and thymines. For example,

ACA intermediate triplets are more likely to be linked to an ATA final triplet if the ancestral triplet was CCA than if it was

ACG (Fig 6A+B). There appear therefore to be constraints on the second change in SDMs dependent on their original

ancestral state.

Coding SDMs have favoured the creation of single codon amino acids

We next investigated the impact of these mutational biases on coding regions. As shown in Fig 7, SDMs have had a distinct

impact on the evolution of genes. The particular biases of SDMs means that nine out of ten of the most common coding

SDMs involve the previously described CA → CG → TG change. As a result of the layout of the amino acid code this bias has

led to the preferential creation of the single codons that code for methioinine and tryptophan (logistic regression of

frequencies of changes that create these single codon amino acids to the frequencies of all other changes: P = 6.4×10^{-04}).

$Thr_{ACA} \rightarrow Thr_{ACG} \rightarrow Met_{ATG}$ is the most common coding SDM, with $Gln_{CAG} \rightarrow Arg_{CGG} \rightarrow Trp_{TGG}$ the fourth most common change

(Fig 7, Supplementary Figure S16). The mutational biases of SDMs and organisation of the amino acid code have therefore

combined to favour the creation of single codon amino acids. The comparatively low number of these amino acids created

by SNPs is therefore partially compensated for by the particular mutational biases of SDMs.

To investigate the potential impact of selection in coding regions we compared the observed number of coding SDMs to that

expected given the numbers of the same SDM in intergenic regions, after accounting for differences in the occurrence of the

ancestral triplets between regions (see methods). Under the assumption that intergenic SDMs are under comparatively

little selection, discrepancies between these numbers should indicate which coding SDMs have been favoured or

disfavoured by selection. A noticeable difference to the previous comparison with coding SNPs is that the first change of

coding SDMs is depleted with a number of the changes that create a CpG site (Fig 7, Supplementary Figure S17). SDMs

where the first mutation is non-synonymous (missense, stop gained or lost) are depleted among coding regions, consistent

with their removal by selection, with the notable exception of the $Thr_{ACA} \to Thr_{ACG} \to Met_{ATG}$ pathway through the amino

acid code that remains unusually enriched among coding SDMs (observed proportion of coding SDMs matching this change

versus expected proportion given number in intergenic regions and differences in rates of ancestral codon between regions:

Chi-squared $P=2.9 \times 10^{-10}$, Bonferroni corrected $P = 6.58 \times 10^{-7}$). This suggests this change is not only favoured by the

mutational biases of SDMs but also by selection in coding regions.

To explore the mutational profiles of coding SDMs further, we compared the normalised occurrence with which SDMs occur

on the coding and non-coding strands of genes. Taking the SDM shown in Fig 8A as an example, as a change on one strand

must also effect the other strand then the null hypothesis is that the numbers of these two complementary changes

(CGA>GCG>GTG and TGC>CGC>CAC) should be similar. In this analysis we compared if though there was an impact of

whether a gene was present on the blue or red strand. If the frequencies of these changes are independent of whether or

not they occur on the coding strand then the two changes should still occur at the same rates when accounting for the

background occurrence of the respective ancestral codon on the coding strand of genes. This is what we see for most

changes, i.e. an SDM and its reverse complement are found at approximately equal normalised occurrences on the coding

strand of genes (Fig 8B). However, a subset of SDMs show imbalances in the normalised occurrence with which they and

their reverse complement occur on the coding strand, including both the $Thr_{ACA} \to Thr_{ACG} \to Met_{ATG}$ and $Gln_{CAG} \to Arg_{CGG} \to$

Trp_{TGG} changes. Of the five most significant SDMs in this analysis, only one; $Pro_{CCG} \to Pro_{CCA} \to Leu_{CTA}$ does not involve a CA

$\to$ CG $\to$ TG change. The reverse complement of this change is $Arg_{CGG} \to Trp_{TGG} \to Stop_{TAG}$ suggesting that this change is

comparatively infrequent on the coding strand due to it leading to the introduction of a deleterious stop codon.

Consequently selection acting on a subset of SDMs appears to have led to imbalances with which they and their reverse

complement appear on the coding strand of genes.

We conclude that although particular changes are favoured by SDM mutational biases, selection has preferentially removed

changes passing through certain codons, leaving changes that create single codon amino acids comparatively unaffected.

Together, this has led to different impacts on coding regions of SDMs and SNPs.

Evidence for epistatic selection at neighbouring coding polymorphisms

We finally investigated whether there is evidence of epistatic selection acting across the polymorphisms that make up

coding SDMs i.e. whether the selective pressure acting on a nucleotide change depends on neighbouring changes. The amino

acid code is thought to have been optimised so that physically similar amino acids have been brought together at

neighbouring positions (Koonin and Novozhilov, 2009). This ensures that the negative effect of a single mutation is

minimised. By extension though, this suggests that two successive missense mutations in a codon are potentially more

deleterious than one, despite the net change being one amino acid change in both cases, with the strength of selection acting

on the first mutation modulated by the allele present at the neighbouring base.

To explore this hypothesis we focused on SDMs where the initial mutation led to a missense change, and characterised

whether the strength of selection acting upon this initial change depends upon subsequent neighbouring mutations in the

same codon. If a subsequent change in the same codon is synonymous then the original amino acid change is unaffected

and the null hypothesis is that the strength of selection on the codon should be in line with that among coding SNPs with

the same change as the original missense mutation. However, if the second change is a further non-synonymous change

and the amino acid code is optimised so that two subsequent missense changes in the same codon are more deleterious

than just one, such changes should be relatively depleted in the genome despite the fact there is still only one amino acid

change. We used multiple linear regression to control for potential confounders (the occurrence of the first change among

coding SNPs indicating the expected occurrence of these changes, the number of different codons that encode the final

amino acid and the impact on any CpG site of the second change). Supplementary Figure S18 shows that SDMs made up of

two successive missense changes are less frequently observed in the genome when compared to missense changes followed

by a subsequent synonymous change (P=0.0013, false discovery rate=0.0088). The number of missense-synonymous SDMs

in the genome is on average 37% higher than missense-missense SDMs after accounting for the number of coding SNPs

showing the same change as the original missense mutation, CpG mutability and codon frequency. When also accounting

for the state of the intermediate triplet, this difference remains significant (P=0.00015, false discovery rate=0.010).

Although single codon amino acids appear to have been generally favoured by SDMs, having accounted for this effect, the

creation of a methionine codon following an original missense change in fact occurs particularly infrequently relative to

synonymous changes (P=1.4×10^{-6}, false discovery rate=1.3×10^{-5}). Consequently the impact of missense changes on fitness

appears to depend on the form of subsequent neighbouring mutations, and epistatic selection between neighbouring coding

polymorphisms has helped shape the number of SDMs in the human genome.

Discussion

Although the changes that make up SDMs have been most often categorised as individual SNPs, we have shown they appear

to be driven by distinct mutational processes. Although the creation and subsequent deamination of CpG sites underlies a

large proportion of SDMs, we show, we believe for the first time, that CA → CG → TG changes are substantially

overrepresented relative to other changes that involve the gain and deamination of a CpG site. This suggests a distinct

process is driving this bias for these specific changes. The creation of new G:C base pairs is often attributed to biased gene

conversion (BGC) that favours weak (A:T) to strong (G:C) basepair changes. However, previous studies have found little

evidence of a strong effect of BGC on genome-wide mutational profiles (Harris and Pritchard, 2017; Do et al., 2015), and,

for example, T:A → G:C changes are not similarly enriched among the first change of SDMs, suggesting a distinct process is

potentially contributing to the elevated rate of these polymorphisms.

As with SNPs, SDM mutational profiles appear to differ between human groups, but, unlike SNPs and MNPs, SDM rates can

more clearly define populations. In contrast to SNP mutational profiles, the SDM profiles of the Americas populations

distinguishes them from other continental groups, in part driven by a depletion of CG → TG → TA changes among these

individuals. The larger spectrum of changes among SDMs, and the fact that the changes in SDM are not independent, and

do not simply reflect underlying SNP rates, likely provides the greater resolution in defining populations. Although

genotyping and switch errors would impact the ability to call SDMs accurately, previous analyses have suggested that the

accuracy of the 1000 genomes cohort is high and the use of the independent and high coverage (>30X) Lothian Birth Cohort

to validate key findings suggests that errors due to low sequencing coverage in 1000 genomes samples aren't driving the

observations in this study. Our examination of switch errors in 26 randomly selected individuals through read based

phasing suggests switch errors are relatively infrequent at these neighbouring bases. Likewise SDMs exhibit distinct

mutational biases to MNPs suggesting they are not simply inappropriately annotated MNPs.

Not all common SDMs are associated with CpG sites. In particular, changes at AT rich triplets show population differences

and enrichment among African populations. The second change in AT-rich SDMs also often appears dependent on the

original ancestral sequence. One potential explanation for this is a role for homologous recombinational repair among these

SDMs. Recombination based repair mechanisms transfer nucleotide sequence information between chromosome copies,

and as a result between ancestral and derived haplotypes. The second changes in these SDMs may therefore reflect errors

in this repair process, potentially arising due to the pre-existing mismatch between chromosomal copies. Alternatively

constraints on the sequence composition of regions may lead to biases towards those maintaining local nucleotide

composition. Recent work has highlighted that as many tests of adaptive evolution, such as the branch-site test, assume

base substitutions occur independently, then violations of this assumption can lead to erroneous signals of positive

selection (Venkat et al. 2018). MNMs have been show to drive a lot of false positive signals but this potentially also extends

to SDMs.

An intriguing consequence of the bias for the creation and subsequent loss of CpG sites among SDMs is the fact that this

favours the creation of methionine and tryptophan codons due to the specific arrangement of the amino acid code. As both

codons contain a TG dinucleotide they are readily created by the preference for CA → CG → TG changes. This therefore

partly offsets the fact that these amino acids are more rarely created by single mutations due to being only encoded by a

single codon. Among coding SDMs the creation of new methionine codons is the most common of all double mutations, even

when accounting for background mutation rates. However, it should be noted that as SDMs are relatively rare, the

overwhelming majority of new methionine codons are still created by SNPs.

Nonadditive, i.e. epistatic, genetic interactions have been proposed to underlie a range of phenomenon such as the missing

heritability of phenotypes, but detecting such interactions in humans has proven difficult (Wei et al., 2014). Previous studies

have suggested that the strength of selection acting upon a coding variant may depend on the alleles carried at other

variants nearby. For example Lappalainen et al. (2011) showed that putatively functional coding variants are less often

observed on more highly expressed regulatory haplotypes. Given the previous observations that the amino acid code

appears optimised so that the more deleterious amino acid changes cannot result from single base changes, we investigated

whether SDMs may be a further example of epistatic selection in the human genome. When accounting for various factors,

an original non-synonymous change is less often than expected followed by a non-synonymous change in the same codon.

This suggests that the strength of selection acting upon the original missense mutation is modulated by changes next to it,

despite the net effect still being a single amino acid change. However, an assumption made to varying degrees by these

studies is that missense changes can be grouped, and that their impact on fitness is broadly similar. Even larger sequencing

cohorts, such as those being generated as part of the UK Biobank (Sudlow et al., 2015), would help refine this analysis and

the epistatic selection acting upon individual types of intermediate missense changes.

Consequently human mutation profiles appear more complex than previously thought, with neighbouring polymorphisms

driven by distinct mutational processes. These SDMs are under unusually strong selective pressure and have played an

important and distinct role in shaping human protein evolution.

Materials and methods

Variant calling

1000 genomes consortium version 3 phased haplotypes along with information on their ancestral alleles were obtained

from http://ftp.1000genomes.ebi.ac. uk/vol1/ftp/release/20130502/. After excluding variants with missing or low confidence

ancestral allele annotations, neighbouring variants where both derived alleles were observed together on the same

haplotype were flagged as potential SDMs. As the focus of this analysis was on SDMs originating from two neighbouring

mutation events, only SDMs where haplotypes also existed which carried the derived allele at one but not the other variant

were kept, i.e. the two changes were observed at different allele frequencies. See Fig 1 for more details on how SDMs were

defined in this study. This led to 169,702 putative MNPs being excluded where only two haplotypes were observed. Due to

the very low probability of recombination events occurring between neighbouring bases in the human genome, we also

excluded SDMs where both combinations of one derived and one ancestral allele were observed. Following this filtering

377,766 neighbouring pairs of polymorphisms remained.

As switch errors would impact the ability to correctly call SDMs we assessed the proportion of incorrectly phased alleles in

26 randomly chosen individuals (one from each sub-populations) using GATK's ReadBackedPhasing tool, which uses the

co-occurrence of alleles in the same read to infer phase at nearby variants. On average only 0.34% of SDMs were phased

discordantly to the original data using this approach (a further 1.7% could not be phased using the read backed phasing

approach alone). This number was found to be relatively consistent across population groups (0.28% in Europeans to 0.4%

in Africans).

Illumina HiSeq X paired-end sequencing data for 1370 Lothian Birth Cohort (Deary et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2018)

individuals (mean sequencing depth of 36X) were aligned to the build 38 version of the human reference genome using

BWA (Li and Durbin, 2009). Variants were called using GATK (DePristo et al., 2011) according to its recommended best

practices. This included the use of GATKs HaplotypeCaller software that implements read based phasing of nearby alleles.

After checking identities with previous array data, excluding duplicate individuals and those displaying excessive levels of

heterozygosity 1358 individuals remained. All SNP coordinates were then lifted over to build 37 so as to match the 1000

genomes   dataset   using   Crossmap   (Zhao   et   al.,   2014).   Ancestral   sequences   available   at

ftp://ftp.1000genomes.ebi.ac.uk/vol1/ftp/phase1/ analysis_results/supporting/ancestral_alignments/ were used to determine

the ancestral alleles of each SNP, and as with the 1000 genomes data only those variants with high-confidence calls were

kept (see Paten et al. (2008) for more details). SDMs were subsequently called using the same approach as the 1000

genomes data.

All SNPs were annotated using variant effect predictor (VEP, McLaren et al. (2016)) with gene models from the version 85

release of Ensembl. SDMs were subsequently reannotated using custom python scripts to correctly annotate the

consequence of the double base change in coding regions.

All non-coding SNPs, MNPs and SDMs were defined with respect to their triplet context on the reference strand. This meant

that all non-coding SDMs were recorded twice, once with respect to their immediate 5' neighbour and once with respect to

their 3' neighbour (Fig 1). Non-coding SNPs were recorded with respect to all three frames within which they fell. On the

other hand coding polymorphisms were recorded with respect to just the actual codon within which they occurred. This

enabled the direct comparison of the occurrence of SNPs and SDMs inside annotated codons to matching triplet bases

outside of coding regions.

Calculating observed and expected numbers of SDMs

The relative occurrence of particular mutation types were calculated as in previous studies of SNPs (Harris and Pritchard,

2017). First, the number of distinct changes in a particular triplet context (m) was counted in each population (P). Then

this count, $C_P(m)$ was converted to a mutational fraction by dividing it by the count of all observed changes. For SDMs, an

individual was a carrier if at least one of their haplotypes carried both derived alleles at the corresponding pair of

nucleotides.

In various analyses the two changes that comprise an SDM were separated into those that came first (i.e. the derived allele

at just one of the two nucleotides is observed by itself in the population, see Fig 1) and those that came second. Their relative

occurrence were also calculated as above.

The expected SDM frequencies of occurrence were derived from background SNP numbers by calculating the conditional

probability of observing an SDM comprising the corresponding two changes (Eq 1).

352   P(Change1 then Change2) = P(Change1)·P(Change2|Change1)   (1)
353
Where P(Change1) is the proportion of SNPs displaying the corresponding change when defined by their triplet context.

P(Change2|Change1) is the proportion of SNPs displaying the same change as change 2 among all SNPs with the same

ancestral triplet and where the change is at a position in the triplet neighbouring the location of the first change. For

example, if the first change was AAA>ATA and the second change ATA>ATC, P(Change2|Change1) would correspond to the

number of ATA>ATC intergenic SNPs divided by the sum of all ATA>ATB and ATA>BTA changes (where B can be any

nucleotide except A). This therefore accounts for the fact that the second change in an SDM had to occur at a base

neighbouring, but not at, the location of the first, and involve the triplet the first change had created.

To calculate the expected number of coding SDMs given their frequency of occurrence in intergenic regions we first

corrected the counts of each intergenic SDM for the difference in triplet occurrence between coding and intergenic regions.

This was done for each SDM by dividing their observed number in intergenic regions by the ratio of intergenic to coding

triplet counts for the corresponding ancestral triplet. To account for the general underrepresentation of SDMs in coding

regions we then divided this value for each SDM by the sum across all SDMs to get the relative, normalised mutational

fractions of each change. This was finally multiplied by the total number of all coding SDMs so that the observed and

expected counts were on the same scale.

Statistical analyses

To test whether the impact of CpG dynamics on SDM numbers depended on the form of the original base change, we fit the

negative binomial generalized linear model specified in Eq (2).

$obsSDMCount_i = \mu + expSDMCount_i\beta_l + firstBaseChange_i\beta_m + cpgChange_i\beta_n + firstBaseChange_i cpgChange_i\beta_{mn} + \varepsilon_i$ (2)

Where $obsSDMCount_i$ corresponds to the observed number of SDMs of type i (e.g. AAA>ATA>ATT), $expSDMCount_i$ is the

expected number given background SNP mutational fractions (see Eq 1) and $firstBaseChange_i$ and $cpgChange_i$ are the first

base change and impact of both changes on any CpG sites respectively. The significance of the interaction term was assessed

using ANOVA.

Significance testing in Fig 4 and Supplementary Figure S12 was carried out as in Harris and Pritchard (2017) i.e. we used

their iterative approach of undertaking conditionally independent chi-square tests to try and minimise false positive

significant results. To test for the enrichment of specific codon changes among coding SDMs, having accounted for

background rates of coding SNP and intergenic SDM changes, we used multiple linear regression as specified in Eq 3 to Eq

6.

$firstCodingSDMCount_i = \mu + firstIntergSDMCount_i\beta_l + ratio_i\beta_o + funcClass_i\beta_m + cpgChange_i\beta_n +$

$funcClass_i cpgChange_i\beta_{mn} + \varepsilon_i$ (3)

$firstCodingSDMCount_i = \mu + codingSNPCount_i\beta_l + funcClass_i\beta_m + cpgChange_i\beta_n +$

$funcClass_i cpgChange_i\beta_{mn} + \varepsilon_i$ (4)

$secondCodingSDMCount_i = \mu + secondIntergSDMCount_i\beta_l + ratio_i\beta_o + funcClass_i\beta_m + cpgChange_i\beta_n +$

$funcClass_i cpgChange_i\beta_{mn} + \varepsilon_i$ (5)

$secondCodingSDMCount_i = \mu + codingSNPCount_i\beta_l + funcClass_i\beta_m + cpgChange_i\beta_n +$

$funcClass_i cpgChange_i\beta_{mn} + \varepsilon_i$ (6)

Where $firstCodingSDMCount_i$ corresponds to the number of distinct first changes among coding SDMs that match change i,

where each i is one of the 576 possible single base difference between two codons. $secondCodingSDMCount_i$ is the

corresponding count among the second changes of coding SDMs and firstIntergSDMCount$_i$ and secondIntergSDMCount$_i$ are

the corresponding counts among the same nucleotide triplets at intergenic SDMs. codingSNPCount$_i$ is the count of the same

change observed among coding SNPs, funcClass$_i$ is the functional impact of the corresponding change (missense, stop

gained etc) and cpgChange$_i$ is the impact on any CpG sites (lost or created). Ratio$_i$ is the ratio of the counts of the

corresponding ancestral triplet in intergenic and coding regions. Any interaction effect between the functional impact of

the given codon change and its impact on CpG sites is represented by β_{mn}. The results of these four models are shown in

Supplementary Figure S16 and Supplementary Figure S17. Multiple linear regression was also used in the test for epistatic

selection among coding SDMs as specified in Eq 7.

$$\text{codingSDMCount}_i = \mu + \text{intergSDMCount}_i\beta_l + \text{funcClass2}_i\beta_m + \text{codonCount}_i\beta_n + \text{cpgChange1}_i\beta_o + \text{cpgChange}_i\beta_p + \varepsilon_i \quad (7)$$

Where codingSDMCount$_i$ is the number of each SDM, i, in the genome where i is restricted to the 663 SDM where the first

change is missense. intergSDMCount$_i$ is the count of the same SDM, i, in intergenic regions. funcClass2$_i$ is the functional

impact of the second change in SDM i, and cpgChange1$_i$ and cpgChange2$_i$ are the impact on CpG sites of the first and second

changes in the SDM respectively. codonCount$_i$ is the number of codons that encode the final amino acid created by the SDM,

to account for the fact that amino acids with only one codon are generally favoured by SDMs. A goodness-of-fit test

confirmed that the Poisson model suitably fit the data (Chi-squared p=0.997).

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Figure Legends
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Figure 1 - Defining the SDMs studied in this analysis.

In this study we focused on SDMs involving neighbouring nucleotides that could not be readily explained by a single

mutational event. Haplotypes containing just one of the two changes that make up the SDM had to be observed among the

individuals (we assumed that reverting mutations and recombination events between neighbouring bases were rare).

Using information on which alleles were ancestral we then inferred the order of changes, with each SDM recorded twice,

according to their immediate 5' and 3' nucleotides. This allowed downstream analysis of their impact on codons and

comparisons to SNPs in the same triplet contexts.

Figure 2 - Divergence in SDM mutational fractions between human populations.

A) Venn diagram of the number of intermediate haplotypes observed across different populations. B) Principal component

analysis of individuals according to the mutational fraction of each first change in the SDMs they carry, defined by their

triplet context. Points are coloured according to the continental group to which they belong and the corresponding 1000

genomes consortium three letter population codes are shown below. Although restricted to SNPs forming part of SDMs

only, this plot largely mirrors that derived using all SNPs in the same populations presented in Harris and Pritchard (2017)

at https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.24284.006. C) The same as A but for the second change in SDMs. D) Principal component

analysis of individuals according to the mutational fraction of the SDM changes they carry defined by triplet context.

Figure 3 - SDMs that differ between population groups.

A) Log$_2$ ratios of the frequencies with which selected SDMs occur in different continental groups. Only SDMs found at at least 150 sites in each population and with a Log$_2$ratio >= 0.3 and a P < 0.05 in at least one population comparison are shown in this plot. One dot indicates the corresponding comparison was associated with an uncorrected Fisher's exact P < 0.05, two dots that the false discovery rate (q value) was < 0.05. Red cells indicate the corresponding SDM is relatively enriched in the first named continental group, blue that the change is enriched in the second population. B) The relative enrichment of selected SDMs in African versus European populations. (Left) SDMs that exclusively involve weak base pairs (adenine and thymine) broken down by their net impact on the base composition of each strand. (Right) SDMs that exclusively involve strong base pairs (guanine and cytosine).

Figure 4 – The relative mutational fractions of different forms of first and second changes among SDMs.

(Left) The ratios of the mutation fractions of the first and second changes by triplet context in the 1000 genomes cohort.

Each cell corresponds to a particular change defined by the original triplet (labelled on the right of the plot) and the

observed change (labelled at the bottom). The numbers in the bottom row indicate which base in the triplet is polymorphic

followed by the mutation that occurred i.e. 1-> A in the bottom GGG row indicates the respective cell corresponds to GGG-

> AGG changes. A dot in the cell indicates that the frequency of the corresponding change is significantly different between

the first and second changes of SDMs (Bonferroni corrected chi-squared P < 0.05, see methods for more details). (Middle

and right) The ratio of the frequencies of the first (middle) and second changes (right) in SDMs versus the observed

frequencies of the same change at SNPs. In all three heatmaps red cells indicate the change is enriched among the first

named change, and blue that it is enriched among the second named change.

Figure 5 - The observed number of intergenic SDMs against the number expected given the frequencies with which the constituent changes occur among SNPs and MNPs.

A) SDMs versus SNPs. SDMs are broken down by the original base change and the impact on any CpG sites of each constituent change (impact of first change -> impact of second change). The line of parity is shown in black. Together these three factors (the expected number of SDMs from background SNP rates, the first base change and impact of the changes on CpG sites) explain the majority of the variation in SDM frequencies (McFadden's pseudo-R^2: 0.84 (Lothian Birth Cohort), 0.85 (1000 Genomes Cohort)). B) The number of SDMs versus number of MNPs showing the same ancestral and derived triplets in the 1000 genomes cohort. Points are coloured by the dinucleotide change between the ancestral and derived haplotypes and outlier points labelled.

Figure 6 - The form of the second change is related to the ancestral state of SDMs.

A) Sankey plots representing the changes observed among intergenic SDMs sharing the same intermediate state. The width

of each bar represents the proportion of SDMs sharing the corresponding ancestral state that ended at the indicated final

triplet. B) P values indicating pairs of ancestral states where intergenic SDMs show different biases for final triplets despite

passing through the same intermediate state (indicated in brackets). Chi-squared test p values for both the 1000 genomes

and Lothian Birth Cohorts are shown.

Figure 7 - The observed and expected number of coding SDMs in the 1000 genomes cohort.

The x axes in the left and right columns correspond to the observed number of first and second changes in coding SDMs respectively. Each point represents a distinct single base change between two codons and points are coloured by the impact of the change on the corresponding protein. The impact of the change on any CpG sites is also indicated by the shape of the point. The y axis in the top row corresponds to the number of the changes expected given their frequency among coding SNPs. The y axis in the bottom row gives the expected numbers given the frequencies of the changes amongst the first and second changes of intergenic SDMs after accounting for differences in the frequencies of occurrence of ancestral triplet between regions. Labelled points show a significant difference between the observed and expected numbers after correcting for multiple testing (Chi-squared P< 2.4e^{-5}). The line of equality is also indicated.

A

5'-GCA-3' > 5'-GCG-3' > 5'-GTG-3'
   ||| ||| |||
3'-CGT-5' > 3'-CGC-5' > 3'-CAC-5'

Figure 8 - Asymmetry in the occurrence of changes on the coding and non-coding strand of genes.

A) Reverse complement changes are expected to occur at the same rates across the genome. B) The observed count of each SDM change on the coding strand of genes, normalised by the total frequency with which the ancestral codon occurs in coding regions, is shown. Each change is paired with its reverse complement change, with the count of the change displaying a comparative enrichment on the coding strand shown in red. Where both changes are equally common on coding strands, one was randomly chosen to be shown in red. To test for asymmetry in the frequencies of SDM pairs, a 2x2 contingency table of (a) the count of each SDM in coding regions and (b) the count of the matching ancestral codons across all genes was constructed, and differences in the proportion of ancestral codons carrying the respective SDM was tested using the Fishers exact test. SDM pairs are ranked by p value (smallest at the top). The five most significant pairs (P <5x10[-5]) are shown in the bottom-left inset and the six SDM involving a final Ala_{GCG} -> Val_{GTG} change are shown in the bottom right.

Supporting information

Supplementary Figure S1 Number of SNPs and SDMs each individual carries

Supplementary Figure S2 African population SDM (red) and SNP (blue) densities in 1Mb windows across the genome

Supplementary Figure S3 American population SDM (red) and SNP (blue) densities in 1Mb windows across the genome

Supplementary Figure S4 East Asian population SDM (red) and SNP (blue) densities in 1Mb windows across the genome

Supplementary Figure S5 European population SDM (red) and SNP (blue) densities in 1Mb windows across the genome

Supplementary Figure S6 South Asian population SDM (red) and SNP (blue) densities in 1Mb windows across the genome

Supplementary Figure S7 SDM versus SNP densities in 1Mb windows along the genome. Densities in different population

groups are shown and the outlier windows corresponding to the MHC region on chromosome 6 are indicated.

Supplementary Figure S8 Counts of SDMs by change (rows) and haplotype frequencies (columns). Haplotype frequencies

are broken down into three heatmaps by number of ancestral alleles, and the bar chart along the top of each heatmap

indicates the total number of SDMs with the corresponding haplotype frequency.

Supplementary Figure S9 The same as Figure 2D but without restricting to sites where the ancestral haplotype could be

determined and folding together changes involving the same three haplotypes.

Supplementary Figure S10 The same as Figure 2D but for MNPs rather than SDMs.

Supplementary Figure S11 Principal component analysis of individuals according to the difference in the mutational

fraction of first and second changes among SDMs. The mutational fraction of each second change in an SDM defined by their

base change and triplet nucleotide context was subtracted from the corresponding mutational fraction of first changes. The

resulting differences were then used as input to the PCA. The continental groups still separate in this analysis suggesting

the first and second changes display different biases between populations.

Supplementary Figure S12 Same as Fig 4 but for the Lothian Birth Cohort genomes.

Supplementary Figure S13 Frequencies and counts of a subset of intergenic SDMs and SNPs across the 1000 genomes

cohort. The three leftmost heatmaps indicate allele frequencies of the intergenic SDMs where the second change is CpG →

TpG, i.e. the potential deamination of a CpG site. The numbers of intergenic SDMs of the corresponding allele frequency are

indicated by the intensity of colour. The derived allele frequencies and numbers of intergenic SNPs matching each

constitutive change are indicated in the final two heatmaps. The original base change in the SDM and its impact on any CpG

sites is also indicated (the base change being orientated with respect to the CpG → TpG change). The yellow histograms

represent the total counts of each corresponding intergenic SDM or SNP.

Supplementary Figure S14 The occurrence of all SDMs in a 6mer context involving the gain and loss of CpG sites in the

1000 genomes cohort normalised by the frequency of the ancestral 6mer in the genome. SDMs involving the same

nucleotide changes are grouped by colour. SDMs involving a CA>CG>TG change or its reverse complement are common in

largely all 6mer contexts.

Supplementary Figure S15 The importance of CpG dynamics in shaping SDM numbers depends on the form of the original

base change. Each dot represents the observed count of a particular form of SDM. Filled circles and error bars represent

the expected number of SDM of the given category having controlled for background rates of change at SDM. These expected

numbers were generated from prediction outputs of Eq 2 when the expected number of SDM variable was fixed at its

median observed value. The interaction term in Eq 2, assessed using ANOVA, was significant ($p < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$) in both cohorts.

Supplementary Figure S16 The enrichment and depletion of changes in coding SDMs having accounted for the

corresponding occurrence of changes observed among SNPs. The observed number of each codon change among the first

and second change of coding SDMs was fitted against its consequence, effect on CpG sites and observed occurrence among

SNPs. See Eq 4 and Eq 6 in the methods section for more details.

Supplementary Figure S17 The enrichment and depletion of changes in coding SDMs having accounted for the

corresponding frequency of occurrence of changes observed among intergenic SDMs. The observed number of each codon

change among the first and second change of coding SDMs was fitted against its consequence, effect on CpG sites and

observed frequency of occurrence among intergenic SDMs. See Eq 3 and Eq 5 in the methods section for more details.

Supplementary Figure S18 Testing for epistatic selection across neighbouring, coding nucleotide changes. Restricting the

analysis to SDMs where the first change leads to a missense change in coding regions we tested whether the frequency of

occurrence of these SDMs was related to the consequence of the second change. We controlled for the number of codons

that encode the final amino acid, the impact of the second change in the SDM on CpG sites and the corresponding frequency

of occurrence of the first change at coding SNPs in this analysis. See Eq 7 in the methods section for more details.

Table 1—Counts and proportions (by ancestral triplet) of SDMs passing through the intermediate triplet TTA.

Ancestral triplet	Intermediate triplet	Derived triplet	Intergenic SDMs	Intergenic proportion by start triplet	Intronic SDMs	Intronic proportion by start triplet	Coding SNP count (first change)	Coding SNP count (second change)
ATA	TTA	TAA	38	0.34	32	0.42	314	68
ATA	TTA	TCA	56	0.50	36	0.47	314	558
ATA	TTA	TGA	17	0.15	9	0.12	314	91
CTA	TTA	TAA	36	0.21	20	0.19	1207	68
CTA	TTA	TCA	104	0.61	69	0.64	1207	558
CTA	TTA	TGA	30	0.18	18	0.17	1207	91
GTA	TTA	TAA	21	0.25	19	0.30	403	68
GTA	TTA	TCA	54	0.64	34	0.53	403	558
GTA	TTA	TGA	9	0.11	11	0.17	403	91
TTC	TTA	TAA	62	0.44	55	0.49	656	68
TTC	TTA	TCA	54	0.38	43	0.38	656	558
TTC	TTA	TGA	25	0.18	15	0.13	656	91
TTG	TTA	TAA	44	0.17	38	0.20	1865	68
TTG	TTA	TCA	162	0.64	121	0.64	1865	558
TTG	TTA	TGA	49	0.19	31	0.16	1865	91
TTT	TTA	TAA	1817	0.94	1696	0.95	257	68
TTT	TTA	TCA	81	0.04	55	0.03	257	558
TTT	TTA	TGA	28	0.01	27	0.02	257	91
TAA	TTA	ATA	61	0.03	52	0.03	15	168
TAA	TTA	CTA	46	0.02	44	0.03	15	606
TAA	TTA	GTA	27	0.01	19	0.01	15	244
TAA	TTA	TTC	23	0.01	18	0.01	15	182
TAA	TTA	TTG	76	0.04	47	0.03	15	1046
TAA	TTA	TTT	1611	0.87	1489	0.89	15	209
TCA	TTA	ATA	80	0.15	55	0.14	1503	168
TCA	TTA	CTA	130	0.25	90	0.23	1503	606
TCA	TTA	GTA	58	0.11	43	0.11	1503	244
TCA	TTA	TTC	35	0.07	34	0.09	1503	182
TCA	TTA	TTG	160	0.31	127	0.33	1503	1046
TCA	TTA	TTT	60	0.11	39	0.10	1503	209
TGA	TTA	ATA	32	0.14	11	0.06	24	168
TGA	TTA	CTA	47	0.21	29	0.17	24	606
TGA	TTA	GTA	19	0.09	16	0.09	24	244
TGA	TTA	TTC	25	0.11	18	0.10	24	182
TGA	TTA	TTG	54	0.24	43	0.25	24	1046
TGA	TTA	TTT	45	0.20	55	0.32	24	209

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