

REPORTS

Adaptive Mutations in Bacteria: High Rate and Small Effects

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Evolution by natural selection is driven by the continuous generation of adaptive mutations. We measured the genomic mutation rate that generates beneficial mutations and their effects on fitness in *Escherichia coli* under conditions in which the effect of competition between lineages carrying different beneficial mutations is minimized. We found a rate on the order of 10^{-5} per genome per generation, which is 1000 times as high as previous estimates, and a mean selective advantage of 1%. Such a high rate of adaptive evolution has implications for the evolution of antibiotic resistance and pathogenicity.

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