

Coffee or tea? The answer might be in your genes

Notes & Cues:**Article:**

Do you prefer coffee or tea? The answer to that question might in part be down to your genes, research suggests.

Scientists say a genetic predisposition to perceiving the bitterness of particular substances appears to nudge us towards one beverage or the other.

The study, published in the *Scientific Reports* journal, involved two sets of data. The first was a large twin study which showed that, at least in those of European ancestry, particular genetic variants are linked to the strength of perception of different tastes: one specific variant was associated with slightly higher ratings of bitterness for caffeine, another to greater bitterness for quinine and a third to greater bitterness for a drug known as propylthiouracil, or prop.

The team found people with a greater genetic predisposition to perceiving the bitterness of caffeine drank a little more coffee, but an increased perception of the bitterness of quinine and prop were linked to a small reduction in coffee drinking.

“While the effect of perception on your daily coffee intake might be relatively small – only a 0.15 cup per day increase – from a normal caffeine taster to a strong caffeine taster, it actually makes you 20% more likely to become a heavy drinker – drinking more than four cups per day, ” said Jue Sheng Ong, first author of the research from QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Australia.

“Our taste genes partially play a role in how much coffee, tea or alcohol we drink, ” he said. “The preference towards tea can be seen as a consequence of abstaining from coffee, because our genes might have made coffee a little too bitter for our palates to handle.”

Summary: