***eLife’s* transparent reporting form**

We encourage authors to provide detailed information *within their submission* to facilitate the interpretation and replication of experiments. Authors can upload supporting documentation to indicate the use of appropriate reporting guidelines for health-related research (see [EQUATOR Network](http://www.equator-network.org/%20)), life science research (see the [BioSharing Information Resource](https://biosharing.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)), or the [ARRIVE guidelines](http://www.plosbiology.org/article/info%3Adoi/10.1371/journal.pbio.1000412) for reporting work involving animal research. Where applicable, authors should refer to any relevant reporting standards documents in this form.

If you have any questions, please consult our Journal Policies and/or contact us: editorial@elifesciences.org.

**Sample-size estimation**

* You should state whether an appropriate sample size was computed when the study was being designed
* You should state the statistical method of sample size computation and any required assumptions
* If no explicit power analysis was used, you should describe how you decided what sample (replicate) size (number) to use

Please outline where this information can be found within the submission (e.g., sections or figure legends), or explain why this information doesn’t apply to your submission:

Statistical methods were not used to determine sample sizes as the significance of rate difference was determined with absolute rates and with overlapping 95% confidence intervals rather than p-values, as we have found that the Mann-Whitney U test is too sensitive to the small biological variations that are observed when remeasuring the same strain. A minimum of 14 replicates was performed, as this allows at least one outlier in the rate measurements (e.g. the occasional “jackpot” in which a random GCR event occurs early in growth) to not bias the 95% confidence interval; importantly, these “jackpots” are included in both the calculation of the median rates and the 95% confidence intervals.

**Replicates**

* You should report how often each experiment was performed
* You should include a definition of biological versus technical replication
* The data obtained should be provided and sufficient information should be provided to indicate the number of independent biological and/or technical replicates
* If you encountered any outliers, you should describe how these were handled
* Criteria for exclusion/inclusion of data should be clearly stated
* High-throughput sequence data should be uploaded before submission, with a private link for reviewers provided (these are available from both GEO and ArrayExpress)

Please outline where this information can be found within the submission (e.g., sections or figure legends), or explain why this information doesn’t apply to your submission:

For spontaneously selected GCRs, GCR rates were calculated from a minimum of two independent isolates with a minimum of seven technical replicates per isolate using the fluctuation analysis. Rate determination used the method of the median. Individual isolates were selected from independent cultures to prevent sequencing “siblings” arising from the same GCR-forming event. For induced GCRs, individual isolates were selected from independently induced cultures to prevent sequencing of “siblings”.

**Statistical reporting**

* Statistical analysis methods should be described and justified
* Raw data should be presented in figures whenever informative to do so (typically when N per group is less than 10)
* For each experiment, you should identify the statistical tests used, exact values of N, definitions of center, methods of multiple test correction, and dispersion and precision measures (e.g., mean, median, SD, SEM, confidence intervals; and, for the major substantive results, a measure of effect size (e.g., Pearson's r, Cohen's d)
* Report exact p-values wherever possible alongside the summary statistics and 95% confidence intervals. These should be reported for all key questions and not only when the p-value is less than 0.05.

Please outline where this information can be found within the submission (e.g., sections or figure legends), or explain why this information doesn’t apply to your submission:

95% confidence intervals of the median of the GCR rates (Figures 1 and 6) are reported in Supplemental File 1.

(For large datasets, or papers with a very large number of statistical tests, you may upload a single table file with tests, Ns, etc., with reference to sections in the manuscript.)

**Group allocation**

* Indicate how samples were allocated into experimental groups (in the case of clinical studies, please specify allocation to treatment method); if randomization was used, please also state if restricted randomization was applied
* Indicate if masking was used during group allocation, data collection and/or data analysis

Please outline where this information can be found within the submission (e.g., sections or figure legends), or explain why this information doesn’t apply to your submission:

No randomization into groups was performed as experiments were performed on isogenic Saccharomyces cerevisiae strains with defined genotypes.

**Additional data files (“source data”)**

* We encourage you to upload relevant additional data files, such as numerical data that are represented as a graph in a figure, or as a summary table
* Where provided, these should be in the most useful format, and they can be uploaded as “Source data” files linked to a main figure or table
* Include model definition files including the full list of parameters used
* Include code used for data analysis (e.g., R, MatLab)
* Avoid stating that data files are “available upon request”

Please indicate the figures or tables for which source data files have been provided:

Source data for the rates in Figures 1B, 1C, 7A, 8A, and 9A are in Supplemental File 1. Source data for the GCR product distribution in Figures 6A, 7B, 8B, and 9B are summarized in Supplemental File 1 and reported in Supplemental File 3. Source data for the inversion junction distribution in Figure 3A and Figure 4 are reported in Supplemental File 3.