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

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**Sample-size estimation**

* You should state whether an appropriate sample size was computed when the study was being designed
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* 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:

The data analyzed in this work consist solely of bacterial genome sequences. The entire paper concerns development of methodology for analysis of such data, and as such the justification of the methods we present is actually the topic of the paper.

**Replicates**

* You should report how often each experiment was performed
* You should include a definition of biological versus technical replication
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* High-throughput sequence data should be uploaded before submission, with a private link for reviewers provided (these are available from both GEO and ArrayExpress)

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All datasets used are publicly available and we provide explicit links to all of them (i.e. database URLs and accession IDs).

**Statistical reporting**

* Statistical analysis methods should be described and justified
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* 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.

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Since the analysis methods are the topic of the paper, the statistical analyses are all rigorously defined and explained in great detail.

(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.)

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* 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
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This doesn’t apply to our submission. There was no grouping or masking of data.

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

The source data (i.e. genome sequences) from which all results derive are publicly available as mentioned above. In addition, we have prepared a comprehensive collection of processed data files to help reproduce the results shown in the paper, which are available from <https://zenodo.org/record/4420880> (as also stated in the paper).