

1 Choice of assembly software has a critical impact on virome characterisation.

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12

13 **Abstract**

14 *Background*

15 The viral component of microbial communities play a vital role in driving bacterial diversity,
16 facilitating nutrient turnover and shaping community composition. Despite their importance, the vast
17 majority of viral sequences are poorly annotated and share little or no homology to reference
18 databases. As a result, investigation of the viral metagenome (virome) relies heavily on *de novo*
19 assembly of short sequencing reads to recover compositional and functional information.

20 Metagenomic assembly is particularly challenging for virome data, often resulting in fragmented
21 assemblies and poor recovery of viral community members. Despite the essential role of assembly in
22 virome analysis and difficulties posed by these data, current assembly comparisons have been limited
23 to subsections of virome studies or bacterial datasets.

24 *Design*

25 This study presents the most comprehensive virome assembly comparison to date, featuring 16
26 metagenomic assembly approaches which have featured in human virome studies. Assemblers were
27 assessed using four independent virome datasets, namely; simulated reads, two mock communities,
28 viromes spiked with a known phage and human gut viromes.

29 *Results*

30 Assembly performance varied significantly across all test datasets, with SPAdes (meta) performing
31 consistently well. Performance of MIRA and VICUNA varied, highlighting the importance of using a
32 range of datasets when comparing assembly programs. It was also found that while some assemblers
33 addressed the challenges of virome data better than others, all assemblers had limitations. Low read
34 coverage and genomic repeats resulted in assemblies with poor genome recovery, high degrees of
35 fragmentation and low accuracy contigs across all assemblers. These limitations must be considered
36 when setting thresholds for downstream analysis and when drawing conclusions from virome data.

37 **Keywords**

38 Virome, viral, assembly, metagenome, benchmark, comparison, bacteriophage, phage

39

40 **Background**

41 The rapid evolution of metagenomics and high throughput sequencing technologies has revolutionised
42 the study of microbial communities, giving new insights into the role and identity of the uncultivated
43 microbes which account for the majority of metagenomic sequences (Solden, Lloyd et al. 2016).
44 However, the majority of microbial sequencing efforts have focused on the characterisation of
45 prokaryotic microbes. Viral metagenomes (viromes) are dominated by novel sequences, often with up
46 to 90% of sequences sharing little to no homology to reference databases (Aggarwala, Liang et al.
47 2017). Bacteriophage, the most abundant members of viral communities, play a key role in the
48 shaping the composition of microbial communities and facilitate horizontal gene transfer (Paul 2008).
49 Viromes have been shown to play a role in global geochemical cycles (Breitbart 2011) and have been
50 studied in varied ecosystems including the ocean (Hurwitz and Sullivan 2013). Viromes of the human
51 body are of particular interest, where they have been linked to disease status (Norman, Handley et al.
52 2015), maintaining human health (Manrique, Bolduc et al. 2016) and shaping the gut microbiome in
53 early life (Lim, Zhou et al. 2015, McCann, Ryan et al. 2018). Due to the predominance of
54 uncharacterised viral sequences “viral dark matter”; (Roux, Hallam et al. 2015), and the lack of a
55 universal marker gene, virome studies rely on database independent analysis methods and depend
56 heavily on *de novo* assembly to resolve viral genomes from metagenomic sequencing reads.

57 Metagenomic assemblers typically use de Bruijn graph (DBG) approaches to address the
58 complexity and size of metagenomic datasets in an accurate and efficient manner. Microbial
59 metagenomes pose significant challenges to DBG assembly when compared to single genome
60 assemblies often complicating the DBG and leading to fragmentation and/or misassembly (Olson,
61 Treangen et al. 2017). These challenges include uneven sequencing coverage of organisms within the
62 metagenome, the presence of conserved regions across different species, repeat regions within
63 genomes and the introduction of false *k*-mers by both closely related genomes at differing abundances
64 and sequencing errors at high read coverage. This hampers the use of coverage statistics to resolve
65 repeat regions between and within genomes (Olson, Treangen et al. 2017).

66 A wide array of metagenomic assembly programs have been employed, each addressing
67 aspects of metagenomic challenges to varying degrees. However, many of these programs have been
68 designed and optimised for bacterial metagenomes, which share many assembly challenges of
69 viromes but to a lesser degree. Virome data is characterised by high proportions of repeat regions
70 within viral genomes (Minot, Grunberg et al. 2012), hypervariable genomic regions associated with
71 host interaction (Warwick-Dugdale, Solonenko et al. 2018) and high mutation rates which lead to
72 increased metagenomic complexity and strain variation (Roux, Emerson et al. 2017). Low DNA
73 yields also limit read coverage and often require a multiple displacement amplification (MDA) step
74 which has been shown to preferentially amplify small single stranded DNA viruses (Kim and Bae
75 2011). Extremes in read coverage caused by MDA bias and dominant viral taxa such as crAssphage,
76 which can make up large proportions of human gut viromes (Dutilh, Cassman et al. 2014), sequester
77 sequencing resources and result in insufficient coverage of low abundance viruses. These challenges
78 result in fragmented virome assemblies (García-López, Vázquez-Castellanos et al. 2015), limiting
79 their use in downstream analysis. Despite benchmarks of bacterial metagenomes having highlighted
80 failings and benefits of particular assembly programs, many poorly performing assemblers have
81 featured in virome studies (Foulongne, Sauvage et al. 2012, Hannigan, Meisel et al. 2015, Guo, Hua et
82 al. 2017).

83 Accurate comparison of metagenomic assemblers is complicated by the unknown
84 composition of metagenomic datasets and the limited applicability of general assembly statistics such
85 as N50 (Deng, Naccache et al. 2015, Vollmers, Wiegand et al. 2017). To address this, the accuracy
86 and efficacy of metagenomic assembly programs is often evaluated using simulated datasets and
87 mock communities of known composition. Although these simulated datasets are undergoing constant
88 improvements (Sczyrba, Hofmann et al. 2017, Fritz, Hofmann et al. 2018), they have focused
89 primarily on bacterial metagenomes and remain limited in their ability to accurately replicate the
90 challenges of true metagenomes. While some virome-specific assembly benchmarks have been
91 performed, many have been limited to a small number of assemblers, 454 data or subsections of
92 virome studies and have exclusively used simulated data (Aguirre de Cárcer, Angly et al. 2014, Smits,

93 Bodewes et al. 2014, Vázquez-Castellanos, García-López et al. 2014, García-López, Vázquez-
 94 Castellanos et al. 2015, Hesse, van Heusden et al. 2017, Roux, Emerson et al. 2017).

95 Here we expand upon previous studies and present a detailed investigation of assembly
 96 software for virome analysis which compares all those previously used in human virome studies to
 97 date, as well as other popular or more recently published assemblers (Table 1). We compare assembly
 98 efficacy and accuracy using simulated viromes, mock viral communities and human gut viromes
 99 spiked with a known exogenous bacteriophage. Furthermore we confirm these findings using human
 100 virome data from published datasets and assess computational parameters such as runtime and RAM
 101 usage. We also investigate in detail the impact of sequencing coverage and genomic repeats on
 102 assembly performance and highlight important considerations for future virome studies. Together
 103 these data comprise most comprehensive virome assembly benchmark to date.

	Link	Version used	Reference
ABySS (<i>k</i>-mer 63)	http://www.bcgsc.ca/downloads/abyss/	v2.0.2	(Simpson, Wong et al. 2009)
ABySS (<i>k</i>-mer 127)	http://www.bcgsc.ca/downloads/abyss/	v2.0.2	(Simpson, Wong et al. 2009)
CLC	https://www.qiagenbioinformatics.com/products/clc-assembly-cell/	v5.0.5	https://www.qiagenbioinformatics.com/
Geneious	https://www.geneious.com/features/assembly-mapping/		(Kearse, Moir et al. 2012)
IDBA UD	https://i.cs.hku.hk/~alse/hkubrg/projects/idba_ud	v1.1.1	(Peng, Leung et al. 2012)
MEGAHIT	https://github.com/voutcn/megahit	V1.1.1-2	(Li, Luo et al. 2016)
MetaVelvet	https://metavelvet.dna.bio.keio.ac.jp/	V1.2.0 2	(Namiki, Hachiya et al. 2012)
MIRA	http://www.chevreux.org/mira_downloads.html	V4.0.2	(García-López, Vázquez-Castellanos et al. 2015)
Ray Meta	http://denovoassembler.sourceforge.net/	V2.3.0	(Boisvert, Raymond et al. 2012)
SOAPdenovo 2	http://soap.genomics.org.cn/soapdenovo.html	v2.04	(Luo, Liu et al. 2012)
SPAdes	http://cab.spbu.ru/software/spades/	V3.10. 0	(Bankevich, Nurk et al. 2012)
SPAdes meta	http://cab.spbu.ru/software/spades/ (variation of SPAdes applied with flag)	V3.10. 0	(Nurk, Meleshko et al. 2017)
SPAdes sc	http://cab.spbu.ru/software/spades/ (variation of SPAdes applied with flag)	V3.10. 0	(Bankevich, Nurk et al. 2012)
SPAdes sc careful	http://cab.spbu.ru/software/spades/ (variation of SPAdes applied with flag)	V3.10. 0	(Bankevich, Nurk et al. 2012)
Velvet	https://www.ebi.ac.uk/~zerbino/velvet/	V1.2.1 0	(Zerbino and Birney 2008)
VICUNA	https://github.com/broadinstitute/mvicuna	V1.3	(Vázquez-Castellanos, García-López et al. 2014)

104 *Table 1: A list of assemblers used in this study*

105 **Results**

106 *Simulated virome dataset*

107 The ability to accurately recover each of the 572 members of a published simulated community
108 (Hesse, van Heusden et al. 2017) and the degree of fragmentation, was assessed by aligning the
109 resulting contigs from each assembler to the reference genomes (Fig. 1). MetaVelvet was not included
110 in this analysis as it failed to reach completion after seven days. Approximately half of the genomes in
111 the community featured an average recovered genome fraction less than 75% and exhibited higher
112 degrees of fragmentation (>10 contigs per genome on average) across all assemblers. For 87 of the
113 572 genomes there was an average recovered genome fraction of less than 20% across all assemblers
114 (the low recovered genome fraction of VICUNA was excluded as an outlier). Of these genomes, 84
115 were present at low abundance (lowest 40% of all abundances normalised to genome length). The
116 remaining three genomes were present at higher normalised abundances (50 – 80th percentile) but
117 featured the some of the highest proportions of genomic repeats (70th-90th percentile).

118 Normalised genome abundance within the community had a strong positive correlation with
119 recovered genome fraction across all assemblers (Supplementary Table 1, Additional file 5) and was
120 verified using a linear model (Supplementary Table 2, Additional file 5), with the exception of
121 SOAPdenovo2, which was negative. Normalised abundance also correlated negatively with the
122 degree of fragmentation (number of contigs) across all assemblers except Velvet which was positively
123 correlated and Geneious which was not significant (Supplementary Table1, Additional file 5). None
124 of the genomes in the lower 30th percentile of normalised abundance featured an average recovered
125 genome fraction greater than 75%, further exemplifying the impact of low sequencing coverage.
126 However high abundance did not consistently improve genome recovery and of the 172 genomes in
127 the top 30% of normalised abundance, 20 featured an average genome fraction below 50%. The
128 distance of the log transformed (due to extremes in values) normalised abundances from the mean was
129 negatively correlated with recovered genome fraction across all assemblers (correlation coefficient: -
130 0.42, p-value < 2.2e⁻¹⁶). Of 171 genomes in the 40th – 60th percentile of normalised abundance 29
131 featured an average genome fraction below 50%. This indicates factors other than abundance may

132 hamper genome recovery. MIRA and Geneious both recovered a greater fraction of low abundance
133 genomes with fewer contigs than other assemblers. However, MIRA assemblies of 13 of the most
134 abundant genomes in the community (highest 10%) exhibited the highest degree of fragmentation in
135 the study, generating between 401 and 2983 contigs per genome.

136 The proportion of inverted repeats, palindromic repeats, tandem repeats and a total proportion
137 of genomic repeats was calculated for each genome. The total percentage of repeat regions predicted
138 in each genome was positively correlated with the degree of fragmentation observed in each assembly
139 across all assemblers with the exception of Ray Meta (Supplementary Table 3, Additional file 5), and
140 negatively correlated with recovered genome fraction across all assemblers except ABySS (k -mer
141 63/127), Geneious, and SOAPdenovo2. When this relationship between repeat regions and the
142 recovered genome fraction was assessed using a linear model, correlations were significant for CLC,
143 MIRA, Ray Meta, Velvet, and all parameters of SPAdes (Supplementary Table 2, Additional file 5).
144 Both the proportion of repeat regions in a genome and the relative abundance of that genome
145 contribute to the variation in recovered genome fraction, though each explain a separate aspect of this
146 variation. No interaction was found between these two metrics.

147 VICUNA, Ray Meta, SOAPdenovo2, Geneious, ABySS (both k -mer sizes) and Velvet
148 recovered under 50% of the total genome fraction (all genomes in the community). VICUNA
149 produced just four contigs in total with high levels of mismatches (174 per 100kb on average) which
150 could possibly linked to the format of the artificial reads as this was not observed in real sequencing
151 data. The five assemblers which recovered the highest genome fraction overall were SPAdes
152 (default), MEGAHIT, SPAdes (single cell), SPAdes (single cell + careful) and CLC. All assemblers
153 achieving a minimum average genome fraction of 50% were subjected to a ranking system
154 (Supplementary Table 4, Additional file 5). To compare both recovery and fragmentation assemblers
155 were ordered from best to worst based on genome recovery and number of aligned contigs. The
156 average rank resulted in Spades (default) performing best, recovering 72.2% overall genome
157 sequences with 8230 contigs. The remaining top five assemblers of this combined rank were SPAdes
158 (meta) 68.2% with 7419 contigs, SPAdes (single cell) 68.9% with 9506 contigs, CLC 68.6% with

159 9152 contigs and MEGAHIT 69.6% with 10083 contigs. The number of assemblies which recovered
 160 greater than 90% of the target genome in one single contig was compared (Fig 2). SPAdes (default)
 161 performed best, recovering 210, SPAdes (meta), SPAdes (single cell + careful), CLC, and SPAdes
 162 (single cell) each recovered 179, 168, 162 and 160 genomes respectively.

163 The accuracy of assemblies was assessed by calculating the average count of indels,
 164 mismatches, and misassemblies per 100kb across all genomes. These counts were normalised to the
 165 number of genomes each assembler recovered with a minimum genome fraction of 50%. These were
 166 ranked according to their performance in all three metrics (Supplementary Table 4, Additional file 5),
 167 with assemblies from Velvet having the lowest overall counts followed by ABySS, IDBA UD,
 168 MEGAHIT and Ray Meta. With the exception of Ray Meta and SOAPdenovo2, the number of
 169 mismatches per 100kb was negatively correlated with both genome abundance and recovered genome
 170 fraction across all assemblers (Supplementary Table 1, Additional file 5).

171 The rate of false positive (no alignment to reference genomes) and false negative (recovered
 172 genome fraction of 0%) contigs assembled allowed for the determination of sensitivity. A number of
 173 assemblers had a sensitivity greater than 97%, however each returned greater than 7,000 contigs,
 174 inferring a high degree of fragmentation (Table 2). MIRA assembled (partial or complete) 559 of the
 175 genomes with a false positive count of just four. However, this was achieved from more than 27,000
 176 contigs. ABySS (both *k*-mer sizes), Geneious, Ray Meta and Velvet returned very few false positives
 177 but failed to detect many of the genomes present. SPAdes (meta) performed best with 558 of the 572
 178 genomes detected and only five false positives resulting from 7419 contigs.

	False Positives	False Negative	True Positives	No. of contigs returned*	Sensitivity
ABSS (<i>k</i>-mer 63)	0	111	461	7957	80.59
ABySS (<i>k</i>-mer 127)	1	123	449	7732	78.50
CLC	34	5	567	9152	99.13
Geneious	9	190	382	958	66.78
IDBA UD	25	9	563	8999	98.43
MEGAHIT	21	8	564	10083	98.60
MetaVelvet	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MIRA	4	13	559	27600	97.73

Ray Meta	0	213	359	4224	62.76
SOAPdenovo2	536	116	456	11548	79.72
SPAdes	29	3	569	8230	99.48
SPAdes meta	5	14	558	7419	97.55
SPAdes sc	38	7	565	9506	98.78
SPAdes sc careful	40	6	566	9724	98.95
Velvet	1	65	507	6343	88.64
VICUNA	0	558	14	4	2.45
				*572 in community	

179 *Table 2: The number of false positive, false negative contigs generated by each assembler for the*

180 *Simulated community, together with the sensitivity rates*

181

182 *Mock community dataset*

183 Two mock viral communities were used to investigate the impact of high and low abundance ssDNA

184 viruses on assembly performance. Mock A (Table 3a) contained 12 viral genomes, 10 of which were

185 at equal abundance (9.82% of the total community) and two ssDNA genomes (NC_001330 and

186 NC_001422) at low abundance (0.92%). Analysis of this community showed that although some

187 assemblers, namely CLC, Geneious, SPAdes (single cell) and VICUNA, detected all 12 genomes, this

188 was at the expense of a large number of false positives (1143, 53, 1513 and 4969 respectively). Velvet

189 and MetaVelvet generated no false positives, but failed to assemble three genomes, while ABySS (for

190 both *k*-mers) generated a large number of false positives and failed to assemble four and six genomes,

191 respectively. IDBA UD and Ray Meta outperformed the other assemblers with an equal number of

192 contigs to genomes (12), followed by MEGAHT, SPAdes (default) and SPAdes (meta) with 13, 14

193 and 14. Mock B (Table 3b) also contained 12 genomes but with a higher abundance of ssDNA

194 genomes NC_001330 and NC_001422 (32.47%). VICUNA assemblies of Mock B improved upon

195 those from Mock A as no false positives were generated, while the false positive rate in the MIRA

196 assembler increased to 94 from none in Mock A. IDBA UD performed best followed by SPAdes

197 (default), Ray Meta, MEGAHT and SPAdes (meta) based on sensitivity and number of contigs, while

198 ABySS (both *k*-mer sizes) and SOAPdenovo2 had the lowest sensitivity. Despite being a relatively

199 simple community consisting of 12 members, not all assemblers were able to recover all members

200 (Supplementary Table 5-6, Additional file 5). A greater number of assemblers (six) failed to assemble
 201 all members of Mock B than Mock A (four). ABySS(*k*-mer 63), ABySS(*k*-mer 127), Velvet and
 202 MetaVelvet failed to assemble 6, 4, 3 and 3 genomes respectively, in Mock A and 6, 4, 1 and 1
 203 genomes, respectively in Mock B. In addition, MIRA and SOAPdenovo2 failed to assemble 1 and 2
 204 genomes respectively in Mock B.

A)

	False Positives	False Negative	True Positive	No. of contigs returned*	Sensitivity
ABySS (<i>k</i>-mer 63)	52	4	8	61	66.67
ABySS (<i>k</i>-mer 127)	50	6	6	56	50.00
CLC	1143	0	12	1299	100.00
Geneious	53	0	12	65	100.00
IDBA UD	0	0	12	12	100.00
MEGAHIT	0	0	12	13	100.00
MetaVelvet	0	3	9	26	75.00
MIRA	0	0	12	89	100.00
Ray Meta	0	0	12	12	100.00
SOAPdenovo2	2	0	12	23	100.00
SPAdes	0	0	12	14	100.00
SPAdes meta	0	0	12	14	100.00
SPAdes sc	1513	0	12	1527	100.00
SPAdes sc careful	0	0	12	15	100.00
Velvet	0	3	9	26	75.00
VICUNA	4969	0	12	5385	100.00
				*12 in community	

205

B)

	False Positives	False Negative	True Positives	No. of contigs returned*	Sensitivity
ABySS (<i>k</i>-mer 63)	60	4	8	69	66.67
ABySS (<i>k</i>-mer 127)	132	6	6	139	50.00
CLC	450	0	12	505	100.00
Geneious	14	0	12	30	100.00
IDBA UD	0	0	12	12	100.00
MEGAHIT	0	0	12	14	100.00
MetaVelvet	0	1	11	24	91.67
MIRA	94	1	11	157	91.67
Ray Meta	0	0	12	13	100.00
SOAPdenovo2	2	2	10	27	83.33

SPAdes	0	0	12	13	100.00
SPAdes meta	0	0	12	14	100.00
SPAdes sc	593	0	12	607	100.00
SPAdes sc careful	0	0	12	14	100.00
Velvet	0	1	11	24	91.67
VICUNA	0	0	12	15	100.00
				*12 in community	

206 *Table 3: The number of false positive, false negative contigs generated by each assembler for a) Mock*
207 *community A and b) Mock community B) along with the sensitivity rates for each*

208 All but three VICUNA assemblies in Mock A exhibited a high level of fragmentation,
209 generating 34.7 ± 35 (mean \pm standard deviation) contigs per genome. Fragmentation was also seen in
210 MIRA assemblies to a lesser degree with 7.4 ± 10 (mean \pm standard deviation) contigs per genome on
211 average. There was a high rate of fragmentation in CLC with one community member generating 144
212 contigs for genome KF302035. Average recovered genome fraction of $85.4 \pm 6.4\%$ was skewed by
213 ABySS (k -mer 63), ABySS (k -mer 127), Velvet, MetaVelvet, SOAPdenovo2, and VICUNA which
214 recovered on average 49.5%, 66.6%, 73.8%, 73.8%, 29.7% and 76.6%, respectively. All other
215 assemblers recovered over 99% of each genome in the community (Supplementary Figure 1,
216 Additional file 6).

217 Closer inspection of the two ssDNA genomes present at lower relative abundance highlighted
218 significant differences in the average number of indels across all assemblies of the NC_001330 and
219 NC_001422 genomes versus other members of the community (p -value = 0.037). These genomes
220 exhibited an average of 41.7 ± 18.5 and 9.4 ± 20.4 indels per 100kb, while all other genomes featured
221 an average of 7.8 ± 18.9 indels per 100kb. The low abundant ssDNA genomes NC_001330 and
222 NC_001422 also featured the highest average mismatches per 100kb at 148.7 ± 3 and 302.5 ± 10.7 ,
223 respectively (Supplementary Figure 1, Additional file 6).

224 The degree of fragmentation observed by VICUNA and MIRA in Mock B was lower than in Mock A
225 with a mean of 1.3 ± 0.89 and 5.3 ± 7.7 contigs per genome, respectively. CLC fragmented genome
226 KF302035 in Mock B (44 contigs), but to a lesser degree than Mock A (144 contigs). MEGAHIT,
227 which recovered at least 98% of all genomes in Mock A, also recovered over 98% of all genomes in

228 Mock B except for the ssDNA genome NC_001422, of which 56.5% was recovered in two contigs.
229 The majority of assemblies exhibited 147.9 ± 0 and 297 ± 1 mismatches per 100kb for NC_001330
230 and NC_001422 (high abundance ssDNA), respectively, identical values to those measured in Mock
231 A. Velvet and MetaVelvet were exceptions with 184.2 and 860.2 for genome NC_001422 and
232 NC_001330. A similar pattern of high values across a narrow range was also observed with the
233 number of indels, with 49.3 to 32.9 present in all assemblies NC_001330. Genome NC_001422
234 featured 18.57 indels across all SPAdes assemblies (all parameters) and 860.2 across both Velvet and
235 Metavelvet assemblies. All other assemblers which successfully recovered this genome did not feature
236 any indels (Supplementary Figure 1, Additional file 6).

237 *Q33*

238 Five assemblers failed to generate contigs which met alignment thresholds and were subsequently
239 excluded from further analysis - namely ABySS (*k*-mer 63), ABySS (*k*-mer 127), SOAPdenovo2,
240 Velvet and MetaVelvet. All remaining assemblers recovered over 90% of the spiked Q33 genome
241 with the exception of MIRA (8.5%). Six assemblers recovered over 99% of the Q33 genome in a
242 single contig - SPAdes (meta) 99.74%, MEGAHIT (99.6%), VICUNA (99.6%), Ray meta (99.6%),
243 CLC (99.5%) and Geneious (99.1) (Fig. 3). However, only MEGAHIT assembled the Q33 genome
244 with a contig equal in length to the genome itself. SPAdes (meta) and CLC generated assemblies
245 shorter than the reference genome by 86 and 141 bases. VICUNA (723), Geneious (1765), and Ray
246 Meta (9884) each generated assemblies longer than the reference genome. SPAdes (default) SPAdes
247 (single cell), IDBA UD and SPAdes (single cell + careful) each assembled Q33 in 2, 3, 4, 5 and 5
248 contigs, respectively. Ray Meta and VICUNA assemblies had the lowest number of mismatches and
249 indels per 100kb, however Ray Meta exhibited the highest rate of misassemblies (2 relocations, 1
250 inversion). All assemblers featured a minimum of one local misassembly with the exception of
251 SPAdes (meta) did not feature any. The six best assemblies of the Q33 genome and the genome itself
252 are syntenic (although occasionally on the reverse strand) and the start and end point were not
253 conserved (Fig .3).

254 *Read depth analysis (Time and RAM)*

255 Assemblers were compared for practicality by measuring the time to reach completion and maximum
256 RAM usage via four published healthy human gut viromes (Manrique, Bolduc et al. 2016) and various
257 sequencing depths . It must be noted that all assembly tasks were allocated five threads, however
258 specifying the number of threads did not change the number of threads used by certain programs.
259 MetaVelvet was not included in this analysis as it failed to reach completion after running for seven
260 days. CLC and Geneious were performed on a desktop computer and therefore excluded from time
261 and RAM analysis. Run time is dependent upon the number of reads and this is largely linear in scale
262 with more reads leading to an increased assembly time (Fig. 4a). MIRA and Vicuna (Fig. 4a insert)
263 were the slowest with MIRA taking over 15 times longer than the other software to assemble 3.5
264 million reads. SOAPdenovo2 had the shortest completion time followed by IBDA UD and Velvet.
265 Most assemblers were consistent across samples (observed via error bars) with the exception of
266 MIRA and Ray Meta. MIRA, Vicuna and Velvet (Fig. 4b insert) had the highest max RAM usage
267 while the lowest was Ray Meta, IDBA UD and SPAdes (meta) (Fig. 4b). The majority of assemblers
268 observed a linear scale pattern similar to that of run time.

269 *Read depth analysis N50 and Longest contig length*

270 For both the N50 (Fig. 4c) and the longest contig length (Fig. 4d), there was a large amount of
271 variation between samples for the majority of assemblers. The longest contig length showed a large
272 increase at the final sequencing depth. Particular assemblers, namely SPAdes (default), SPAdes
273 (meta), MEGAHIT and ABySS (k -mer 127), produced longer contigs as the sequence depth was
274 increased.

275 **Discussion**

276 Many bacterial metagenomic assembly comparisons have highlighted that the choice of assembler has
277 a significant impact on downstream analysis and the accuracy of the reconstructed metagenome
278 (Mavromatis, Ivanova et al. 2007, Lindgreen, Adair et al. 2016, Greenwald, Klitgord et al. 2017,
279 Vollmers, Wiegand et al. 2017). We have found this also to be true for viral metagenomes, where
280 accurate and complete assembly are of particular importance given the lack of viral representation in

281 reference databases. Virome studies depend heavily on the assembly step and possess many features
282 which are challenging to successful assembly. In this study we compared the performance of those
283 assemblers used to date in human viral metagenomics studies using datasets of known and unknown
284 composition and varying complexity. These included a Q33 spiked virome, mock virome
285 communities, a simulated virome and the “Healthy human gut phageome” (Manrique, Bolduc et al.
286 2016). Each dataset provided unique attributes allowing for comparison of assembly performance on a
287 number of levels. The combination of artificial and real viromes used in this study allows for the
288 comparison of various aspects of assembly performance across a range of datasets rather than
289 depending on simulated viromes alone, as is commonly carried out in assembly comparisons
290 (Mavromatis, Ivanova et al. 2007, Fritz, Hofmann et al. 2018) .

291 The Simulated dataset featured 572 viral genomes at various relative abundances as published
292 by Vázquez-Castellanos and colleagues (Vázquez-Castellanos, García-López et al. 2014). Fragmented
293 assemblies of individual genomes within microbial communities hamper downstream analysis and
294 limit the conclusions which can be drawn from metagenomic data such as taxonomic and functional
295 profiles (Florea, Souvorov et al. 2011). Consequently, the percentage genome recovery and degree of
296 fragmentation was assessed across each assembler, with SPAdes (default, meta and single cell) each
297 performing well. VICUNA performed very poorly, recovering only four contigs with high numbers of
298 mismatches and misassemblies, despite having performed well with other datasets and being designed
299 to address challenges of heterogeneous viral populations (Yang, Charlebois et al. 2012). This failure
300 may reflect the computational challenges relating to the format of the simulated reads, as benchmarks
301 carried out within the VICUNA study itself only include actual sequencing reads (Yang, Charlebois et
302 al. 2012). However, similar poor performance has been previously observed in virome assembly
303 comparison using VICUNA and 454 reads (Vázquez-Castellanos, García-López et al. 2014). For
304 those assemblers which could recover greater than 90% of the reference genome in a single contig,
305 SPAdes (default) outperformed SPAdes (meta). This may be explained by a lack of strain variants in
306 the dataset and the fact that SPAdes (meta) was optimised to combine strain variants of each species
307 to form consensus sequences.

308 A subset of genomes were poorly recovered (<20% genome fraction) by nearly all
309 assemblers. This observation indicates that there are challenging aspects of viral genomes and
310 metagenomes which cannot be overcome with current assembly strategies. The strong positive
311 correlations between the relative abundance and genome fraction suggest that a low abundance
312 threshold applies to virome assembly, below which assemblies will consist of small fractions of the
313 viral genome, and in most cases be highly fragmented. This detrimental impact of low coverage has
314 been well established in previous assembly comparison studies (García-López, Vázquez-Castellanos
315 et al. 2015, Roux, Emerson et al. 2017, Fritz, Hofmann et al. 2018). Highly abundant genomes also
316 caused similar recovery and fragmentation issues across all assemblers, which is of particular
317 importance due to the prevalence of extremely high abundance genomes in viral data (crAssphage,
318 certain ssDNA viruses). As both abundance extremes are common in virome data, their impact must
319 be considered when designing virome studies (i.e. sequencing depth). As relative abundance alone did
320 not fully explain the variation in genome fraction recovered, the role of genomic repeats (a well-
321 established assembly challenge (Acuña-Amador, Primot et al. 2018) was also investigated. However,
322 genomic repeats could explain the variation in genome fraction recovered to a lesser degree than
323 relative abundance, suggesting other factors contribute to poor genome recovery.

324 Compositional differences between final assemblies and viromes themselves must be taken
325 into account when drawing conclusions about virome composition and setting parameters for
326 downstream analysis. Challenges such as genomic content and strain variation are not currently
327 addressed in human virome assembly strategies and impact the reconstruction of certain members of a
328 virome. Hybrid sequencing, which uses both long and short reads to resolve genomic regions
329 associated with poor assembly (Warwick-Dugdale, Solonenko et al. 2018) is a promising new
330 technology which could address current virome assembly challenges. Extraction methods which may
331 reduce the bias introduced by MDA steps include using Swift Biosciences 1S Plus kit (Roux,
332 Solonenko et al. 2016) and/or increasing overall sequencing depth to improve coverage of lowly
333 abundant viral genomes (in conjunction with an assembler which is less sensitive to high coverage
334 sequences).

335 Performance of some assemblers in this study was hampered by high coverage datasets
336 (namely overlap consensus assemblers). VICUNA assemblies exhibited the highest degree of
337 fragmentation of all assemblers with Mock A, despite having resolved both high abundance ssDNA
338 genomes of Mock B to a single contig. MIRA also exhibited a high degree of fragmentation with high
339 abundance genomes in both simulated and mock datasets. However, MIRA was least affected by low
340 abundance reads, recovering a greater genome fraction of low abundance genomes than other
341 assemblers with fewer contigs. Assembly challenges of high coverage sequences in viromes may
342 potentially be addressed by sub-setting reads similar to the assembly approach used by
343 SLICEMBLER (Mirebrahim, Close et al. 2015).

344 Multi-assembler approaches such as the use of Geneious to generate consensus sequences from
345 separate assemblers have been developed (Koren, Treangen et al. 2014, Schürch, Schipper et al. 2014,
346 Deng, Naccache et al. 2015) but have not been included in human virome studies using short reads.
347 MIRA assemblies of the Q33 genome and some low abundance genomes in the Simulated dataset
348 were improved using Geneious, resolving greater genome fractions with fewer contigs (despite
349 Geneious recovering a lower genome fraction of the Simulated dataset overall). It is possible that
350 using these approaches could address issues facing each assembler, i.e. combine the assemblies of
351 SPAdes (meta) which performs well across all 4 datasets but struggles to recover low abundant
352 genomes, with MIRA assemblies which are less affected by low abundance but has difficulty
353 resolving genomes of higher abundance. Comparison of multi-assembler approaches and
354 combinations of various assemblers was not within the scope of this study, but should not be ruled out
355 as a potential method of improving virome assembly in cases where composition could be assessed
356 and obvious assembly challenges were known to be present.

357 Across all analysis methods in this study, SPAdes (meta) performed consistently well and
358 would be our recommendation. It performed best in the Simulated data based on false positives, true
359 positives and false negatives, best assembled the Q33 genome (recovery, fragmentation,
360 misassemblies and genome size) and performed well with both mock communities in recovering all
361 members accurately in one or two contigs. SPAdes (meta) RAM usage was low and did not increase

362 to the same degree as other assemblers with increasing sequencing depth. This recommendation is in
363 agreement with previous comparisons (Vollmers, Wiegand et al. 2017) which also suggested using
364 SPAdes (meta) due to its ability to accurately assemble members of bacterial metagenomes. SPAdes
365 (meta) is less able to accurately reconstruct micro-diversity as it generates a consensus assembly of
366 “strain–contigs” in a metagenome, which means it is better equipped to address the high mutation
367 rates observed in virome data (Nurk, Meleshko et al. 2017). This recommendation is also concurrent
368 with a previous study (Roux, Emerson et al. 2017) which found IDBA UD, MEGAHIT and SPAdes
369 (meta) to perform equally well when assessed using 14 simulated viromes. However, we found that
370 SPAdes (meta) outperformed IDBA UD and MEGAHIT in the Q33 spiked dataset, RAM usage in
371 relation to increasing sequencing depth, and in its ability to recover members of the Simulated virome
372 in a single contig. This recommendation contradicts two previous assembly comparisons which found
373 CLC (Hesse, van Heusden et al. 2017) and Velvet (White, Wang et al. 2017) to be best suited to
374 virome data. However, SPAdes (meta) was not included in either study. Though SPAdes (meta) was
375 out performed by MIRA in the assembly of low abundance genomes in the Simulated dataset, MIRA
376 has limited application to large datasets. MEGAHIT also performed well across all datasets
377 performing well in relation to recovery, fragmentation and accuracy, but encountered some recovery
378 issues in mock datasets and minor accuracy issues with the Q33 genome.

379 The higher levels of accuracy (low mismatch indel and misassembly counts) of assemblers
380 which performed poorly in other metrics namely (velvet and ABySS (k -mer 63), highlights the trade-
381 off between accuracy and contiguity observed in previous assembly studies (Gritsenko, Nijkamp et al.
382 2012, Lin and Liao 2013). However, both IDBA-UD and MEGAHIT performed well for accuracy,
383 genome recovery and fragmentation. These assemblers may be worth considering if strain level detail
384 is of particular importance. The mock A and B datasets were used to assess the impact of
385 amplification bias on assembly performance. All ssDNA assemblies featured an equal minimum
386 number of mismatches across both Mock A and B. This may be caused by challenges in the genomes
387 themselves hampering accurate assembly, but is more likely to reflect strain variation between

388 genome sequence featured in the original publication and the genome of the phage used in the
389 community itself.

390 The Q33 spiked virome consisted of pooled reads from three healthy human faecal samples,
391 each of which having been spiked with 10^7 PFU ml⁻¹ of lactococcal phage Q33 prior to virome
392 extraction. This allowed for assembly comparison of one abundant member of a challenging viral
393 community. Despite the high relative abundance of the Q33 genome, only 6 assemblers could recover
394 over 90% of the genome in a single contig, of these SPAdes (meta) and MEGAHIT reconstructed the
395 Q33 genome accurately without the introduction foreign or chimeric DNA. It was also noted that the
396 genome synteny was conserved across these six assemblies. This may reflect circularization of the
397 linear Q33 genome during DNA extraction as the presence of cos sites has been previously predicted
398 (Mahony, Martel et al. 2013).

399 The longest contigs of each assembler were only detected at the highest sequencing depths
400 and varied across assemblers, which may indicate that high coverage is necessary to recover the
401 largest viral genomes in a community. However, it is also possible that these long contigs may reflect
402 misassemblies and duplication events caused by read errors at high sequencing depths which must be
403 considered when analysing high coverage data. At almost all sequencing depths Geneious, Vicuna,
404 Ray Meta and ABySS (k-mer 127) exhibited the highest N50 values, despite performing poorly in
405 other metrics. This further highlights the limitation of using N50 alone as a metric of metagenomic
406 assembly (Vollmers, Wiegand et al. 2017).

407 A further important consideration when performing any metagenomic assembly is
408 practicality; size of dataset, computational resources, bioinformatic resources, and how much hands-
409 on time is required from the end user. Both CLC and Geneious are available as a GUI (albeit requiring
410 a licence fee) which widens their audience to researchers with limited command-line experience (CLC
411 can also be run using the windows command line). However, this limits their practicality for large
412 scale virome studies as they are limited to the computational power of desktop computers and are not
413 suited to the assembly of large numbers of samples. Despite the limitations of computational power,
414 CLC performed well in all datasets in terms of genome recovery and fragmentation. Of the freely

415 available open source assemblers, MIRA and VICUNA are the least efficient in terms of RAM usage
416 and assembly time, reflecting limitations of the overlap consensus approach to assembly. This limits
417 their applicability to large virome datasets, and further increases the time required to carry out the
418 Geneious assembly approach which requires the output of both assemblers. Despite the long runtime,
419 VICUNA did not adhere to the number of cores specified, instead using all available cores. All other
420 assemblers had a similar time requirements (with the exception of SOAPdenovo2 which performed
421 poorly across all datasets). Of the assemblers which consistently performed well in terms of accuracy,
422 genome fraction recovered and fragmentation, SPAdes (meta) was most efficient in terms of RAM
423 usage, which did not increase to the same degree as other assemblers with increasing sequencing
424 depth. MIRA stood out in terms of impracticality by generating by far the largest intermediate files of
425 any assembler, requiring several gigabytes of storage space for intermediate files.

426 The combination of results from four datasets facilitates accurate comparison of assemblers as
427 the limitations of each individual dataset vary. Application of Phi29 MDA to amplify virome DNA to
428 sufficient quantities for sequencing can introduce significant bias and skew the original composition
429 of the virome, making quantitative viromics difficult (Kim and Bae 2011, Roux, Solonenko et al.
430 2016). As a result, it is likely that true diversity of viral metagenomes is not being accurately captured
431 using current virome extraction methods. However, as these procedures move away from steps known
432 to introduce bias, greater diversity will be observed. In this sense, the level of complexity of the Q33
433 dataset, which pooled three independent human viromes, provides a useful testbed for metagenomic
434 assemblers in future virome studies as extraction methods improve. Additionally, Q33 was not present
435 in the viromes prior to spiking, assemblers were not challenged by the presence of native strain
436 variations of Q33 genome. In this study, assemblers were compared without individual optimisation
437 to the specific dataset. Feasibility dictates that, this “straight out of the box” approach to assembly is
438 used by almost all metagenomic assembly comparisons. Additionally, as the true composition of
439 metagenomes is unknown, any impact of parameter optimisation must be estimated from general
440 assembly statistics such as N50 and longest contig which have been highlighted to be of limited
441 usefulness (Aguirre de Cárcer, Angly et al. 2014, Vollmers, Wiegand et al. 2017).

442 **Conclusions**

443 Of all assembly programs used in human virome studies, SPAdes (meta) addressed the challenges of
444 virome data most effectively. However, all assemblers have limitations and are hampered by aspects
445 of virome data. Low read coverage and high genomic repeats lead to assemblies with low recovered
446 genome fraction and a higher degree of fragmentation, with the assemblies themselves being less
447 accurate. This pattern was seen across all assemblers used in this study.

448 As assembler choice has significant implications for virome composition and the conclusions
449 which can be drawn from a dataset, assemblers which performed poorly in this study (i.e. low genome
450 recovery or accuracy and high degree of fragmentation) highlight a potential untapped resource in the
451 sequence data of previously conducted virome studies. It is highly likely that many viral sequences
452 were poorly assembled and reanalysis using a more effective assembler may yield new insights.
453 Design of future virome studies should carefully consider the impact of sequencing depth, as extremes
454 in read coverage will prevent the assembly and detection of viral genomes at both high and low
455 abundance.

456

457 **Methods**

458 Each assembler with the exception of Geneious and CLC was run as per manual with default
459 parameters (unless stated) using a Lenovo x3650 M5 server with an intel Xeon processor E5-2690 v3
460 and 512Gb RAM . Geneious assembly approach mirrored that used in (Manrique, Bolduc et al. 2016)
461 by generating consensus sequences from the assemblies of both MIRA and Vicuna. CLC and
462 Geneious were run on a 64-bit windows 10 computer with an i5-4690 CPU and 16 GB of RAM.

463 *Data sources*

464 Sequencing reads from mock communities A and B featured in (Roux, Solonenko et al. 2016),
465 Simulated Virome dataset featured in (Hesse, van Heusden et al. 2017), reads used to compare the
466 impact of sequencing depth on time and RAM usage featured in (Manrique, Bolduc et al. 2016) and

467 human viromes spiked with 10^7 PFU of Lactococcal phage Q33 (Mahony, Martel et al. 2013) and
468 originated from (Shkoporov, Ryan et al. 2018) .

469 *Read Pre-processing*

470 Raw read quality was assessed with FastQC v0.11.5 and sequencing adapters were removed with
471 cutadapt v1.9.1 (Martin 2011) for the mock, Spiked and healthy gut virome data sets. Trimming and
472 filtering was carried out with Trimmomatic v0.36 (Bolger, Lohse et al. 2014) using parameters
473 specific to each dataset. A sliding window size of 4 with a minimum Phred score of 30 and a
474 minimum length of 60bp was used with reads from both mock communities. The leading 15bp and
475 trailing 60bp were removed from “Healthy human gut phageome” reads and a sliding window of 4bp
476 with a minimum phred score of 20 was applied. The leading 10bp and trailing 100bp were removed
477 from the Q33 spiked virome reads and a sliding window size of 4bp with a minimum Phred score of
478 30. Filtered reads were through a minimum length filter of 60bp.

479 *Analysis methods*

480 Quality filtered reads from the Q33 spiked dataset consisted of 3 individual viromes which were
481 pooled and subsequently assembled. Contigs were aligned to the published Q33 using Blastn with an
482 e-value cut-off of $1e^{-20}$. Top hit alignments to the Q33 genome with a minimum alignment length of
483 800 bases and which shared 95% identity were included in further analysis using QUAST (v. 4.4)
484 (Gurevich, Saveliev et al. 2013) with “--unique mapping” flag. Further comparison and visualisation
485 of Q33 assemblies was carried out using Mauve (v. 20150226, build 10) (Darling, Mau et al. 2010).

486 Alignment and comparison of assemblies from mock and simulated data sets to reference
487 genomes was carried using MetaQUAST (v. 4.4) (Mikheenko, Saveliev et al. 2015) with “--unique
488 mapping” flag. Correlations were carried out using Spearman method and plots were generated using
489 the package ggplot2 (v 3.0.0) package in R (v.3.4.3). These correlations were validated using a linear
490 model in R base library. For data which was not normally distributed, log transformation was carried
491 out.

492 Reads from the “healthy human gut phageome” were analysed to compare the overall
493 assembler efficiency and the impact of sequencing depth. Reads were randomly subset in pairs (both
494 the forward and reverse read of a pair were retained) to different depths using an in-house python
495 script. Samples were subset in increments of 300,000 reads to their respective maximum depth (2.7,
496 3.5, 3 and 3.3 million reads). The shell script *time* script, location `/usr/bin/time`, was utilised to
497 measure the maximum RAM and length of time for each assembly to reach completion. All
498 assemblers were run using 5 threads where possible with the exception of CLC, Geneious, Ray Meta,
499 Velvet and Vicuna. Ray Meta and Velvet were run with 10, 1 thread(s) respectively. Ray Meta failed
500 to run with 5 while Velvet ran with 1 core despite 5 being allocated. Vicuna was also allocated 5
501 threads however used upwards of 20. MetaVelvet was run, but after 7 days had failed to reach
502 completion and was therefore removed from the subsequent analysis of these metrics. Contig statistics
503 and filtering (contigs greater than 1kb retained) were performed using the assembly-stats script from
504 the Pathogen Informatics group at the Wellcome Sanger Institute ([https://github.com/sanger-](https://github.com/sanger-pathogens/assembly-stats)
505 [pathogens/assembly-stats](https://github.com/sanger-pathogens/assembly-stats)).

506 **Figure Legends**

507 Figure 1: Relationship between percentage of each genome recovered (genome fraction), the number
508 of contigs required for each combination of genome and assembler and the abundance and proportion
509 of repeats for each genome. (A and B) Genomes are ordered by their average genome fraction across
510 all assemblers from high to low along the x-axis. (A main) Relative abundance, normalized by
511 genome length is plotted along y-axis with upper limit of 0.75% and colour of bars determined by
512 proportion of repeat regions in each genome. Blue bars represent genomes with a high proportion of
513 genomic repeats (4th quartile of all genomes), red represents all other genomes below this quartile. (A
514 insert) Expanded view of (A) without an upper limit of y value. (B) Percentage genome recovered is
515 plotted along the y axis. Points are coloured by assembler with shape of the point is denoting number
516 of contigs generated by each assembler for each genome.

517 Figure 2: Number of contigs each assembler recovered to a minimum genome fraction of 90% in a
518 single contig.

519 Figure 3: Mauve output of the Q33 reference genome (top) along with of the six assemblers which
520 recovered >99% of the genome with a single contig. Assembly regions outside of locally collinear
521 blocks which do not share homology to the reference genome are highlighted by a black outline.
522 Reverse complement of assemblies in the opposite orientation to the reference were plotted for
523 visualisation purposes (VICUNA, CLC, Geneious)

524 Figure 4: (A) Time, measured in seconds, for each assembly to reach completion successfully for each
525 read subset, (B) the maximum RAM, measured in MB, used for each assembly for each read subset,
526 (C) mean N50 length and (D) mean contig length for 4 samples for each assembly across the read
527 subsets after filtering contigs less than 1000 bases. Points represent the mean time for the 4 samples
528 while error bars are the standard error.

529 **Abbreviations/Glossary**

530 The following terms; Genome fraction, N50, number of contigs, misassemblies, local misassemblies,
531 are defined by QUILT (Mikheenko, Saveliev et al. 2015)

532 Genome fraction “is the total number of aligned bases in the reference, divided by the genome size. A
533 base in the reference genome is counted as aligned if there is at least one contig with at least one
534 alignment to this base. Contigs from repeat regions may map to multiple places, and thus may be
535 counted multiple times in this quantity.”

536 N50 “is the contig length such that using longer or equal length contigs produces half (50%) of the
537 bases of the assembly. Usually there is no value that produces exactly 50%, so the technical definition
538 is the maximum length x such that using contigs of length at least x accounts for at least 50% of the
539 total assembly length.”

540 Number of contigs “is the total number of contigs in the assembly that have size greater than or equal
541 to 0 bp.”

542 Misassemblies “is the number of positions in the assembled contigs where the left flanking sequence
543 aligns over 1 kbp away from the right flanking sequence on the reference (relocation) or they overlap

544 on more than 1 kbp (relocation) or flanking sequences align on different strands (inversion) or
545 different chromosomes (translocation).”

546 Local misassemblies “A local misassembly has two or more distinct alignments covering the
547 breakpoint, the gap between left and right flanking sequences is less than 1 kbp and the left and right
548 flanking sequences both are on the same strand of the same chromosome of the reference genome.”

549 **Data sources**

550 Sequencing reads from mock communities A and B:

551 http://datacommons.cyverse.org/browse/iplant/home/shared/iVirus/DNA_Viromes_library_comparison
552 [n](#) .

553 Simulated virome reads:

554 https://figshare.com/articles/Simulated_virome_dataset_for_assembly_and_annotation_tests/515116
555 [3](#) .

556 Reads used to compare the impact of sequencing depth on time and RAM usage from the NCBI SRA;

557 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sra> under the accession numbers SAMN04415496 to SAMN04415499

558 Human viromes spiked with 10^7 PFU of Lactococcal phage Q33 phage

559 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sra> under the accession numbers SRX3240741, SRX3240716,

560 SRX3240715

561

562 **Declarations**

563 **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

564 Not applicable

565 **Consent for publication**

566 Not applicable

567 **Competing interests**

568 The authors declared that they have no competing interests.

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574 **Authors' contributions**

575 TDSS, AGC, FJR, PR, and CH conceived and designed experiments. TDSS, AGC, FJR
576 carried out bioinformatics analysis and drafted the manuscript. All authors approve and contributed to
577 the final manuscript.

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735 **Additional files**

736 Additional file 1. (html) Simulated Virome MetaQUAST output.

737 Additional file 2. (html) Mock virome A MetaQUAST output.

738 Additional file 3. (html) Mock virome B MetaQUAST output.

739 Additional file 4. (html) Q33 spiked virome QUAST output.

740 Additional file 5. (xls)

741 S. Table 1: Spearman correlation values from the relationships of indel, mismatch and misassembly
742 counts, recovered genome fraction, abundance and total proportion of genomic repeats within the
743 Simulated virome. *GF – Recovered genome fraction

744 Additional file 5. (xls)

745 Supplementary Table 2: Linear modelling correlation values comparing recovered genome fraction,
746 total proportion of genomic repeats and abundance for the Simulated virome.

747 Additional file 5. (xls)

748 Supplementary Table 3: Spearman correlation values from the relationships of inverted, tandem,
749 palindromic and total repeats, abundance and the number of contigs generated by each assembler for
750 the Simulated virome.

751 Additional file 5. (xls)

752 Supplementary Table 4: (A) Ranking table comparing recovered genome fraction and contig numbers
753 for assemblers which recovered at least 50% of the total genome fraction. (B) Ranking table of indel,
754 mismatch and misassembly counts per 100kb, normalised to the number of genomes recovered to at
755 least 50%.

756 Additional file 5. (xls)

757 Supplementary Table 5: Number of aligned and unaligned contigs generated by each assembler for
758 Mock Community A.

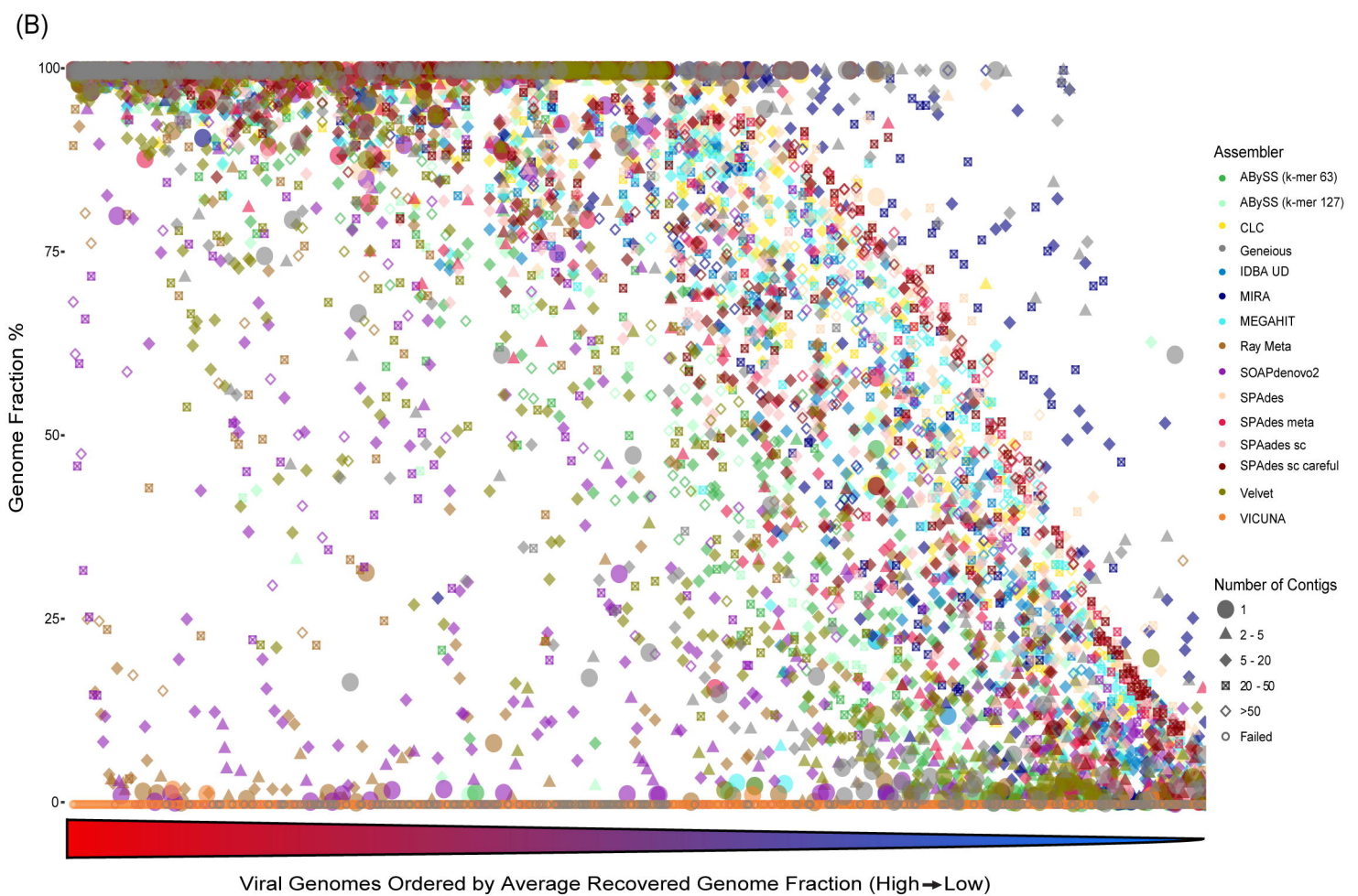
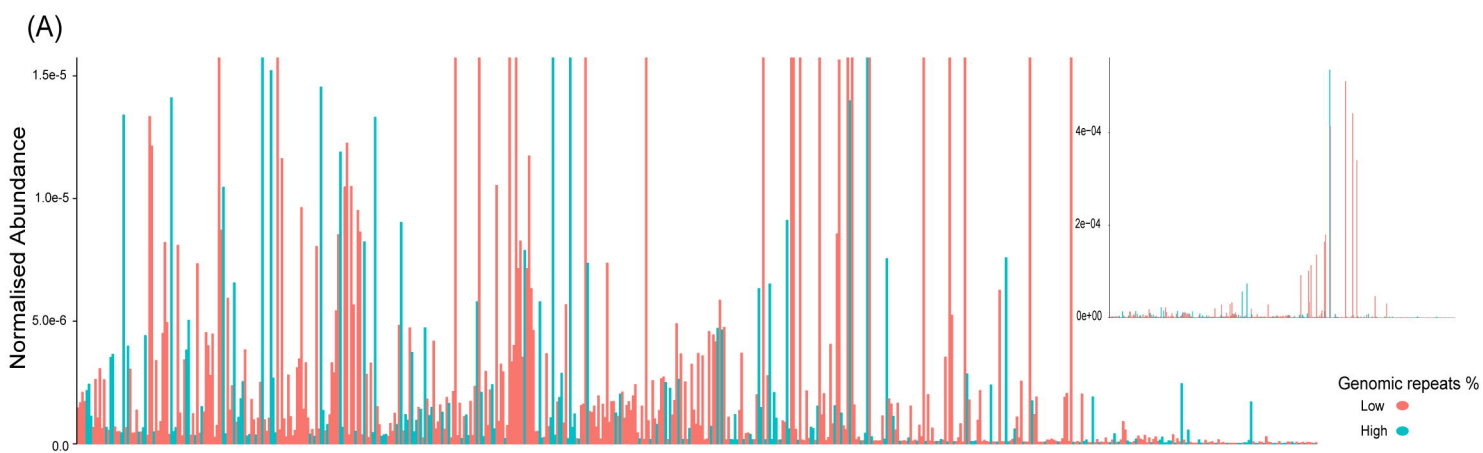
759 Additional file 5. (xls)

760 Supplementary Table 6: Number of aligned and unaligned contigs generated by each assembler for
761 Mock Community B.

762 Additional file 6. Supplementary Figure 1. Analysis of recovered genome fraction and indel/mismatch
763 counts for Mock communities A and B. Triangles represent N/A values for mismatches and indels
764 caused by assembly failures.

765

766



90% Genome coverage with a single contig

