



Comparing Two RDS Approaches to Extend the Reach of a Probability-Based Panel

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Surveying rare or “hidden” populations is often important for policy making, but...

This is often difficult or impossible using probability methods, because screening for these groups can be prohibitively expensive.

Alternatives include:

- Less rigorous methods such as:
 - Snowball samples
 - Opt-in web panels
- Respondent driven sampling (RDS) methods

The goals of this work:

- **Assess the feasibility of using a probability-based panel sample with nomination of non-panelists to survey a larger sample of people who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender in the US.**
- **Compare estimates from the survey using panelists vs. non-panelists.**

NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel® is a household, multi-client panel that uses the probability-based NORC National Frame to construct an address-based nationally representative sample panel with sample coverage of approximately 97% of US households

AmeriSpeak has the highest cumulative AAPOR Response Rate among commercially accessible US household panels



Pilot 1 (early 2017):

- Focused on health status outcomes, social media use
- Adapted traditional RDS methods to web-based panel

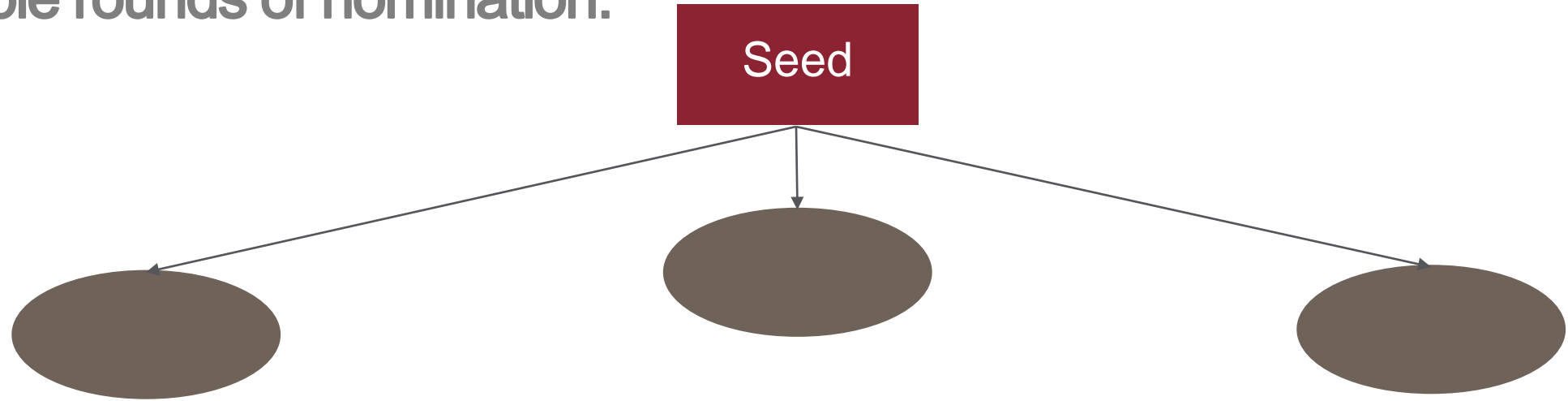
Protocol:

- Invite LGBT and non-LGBT panelists to a web survey
- Ask each panelist how many LGBT adults they know
- Request email addresses for up to 3 LGBT nominees for each panelist
- Send email invitations to nominees

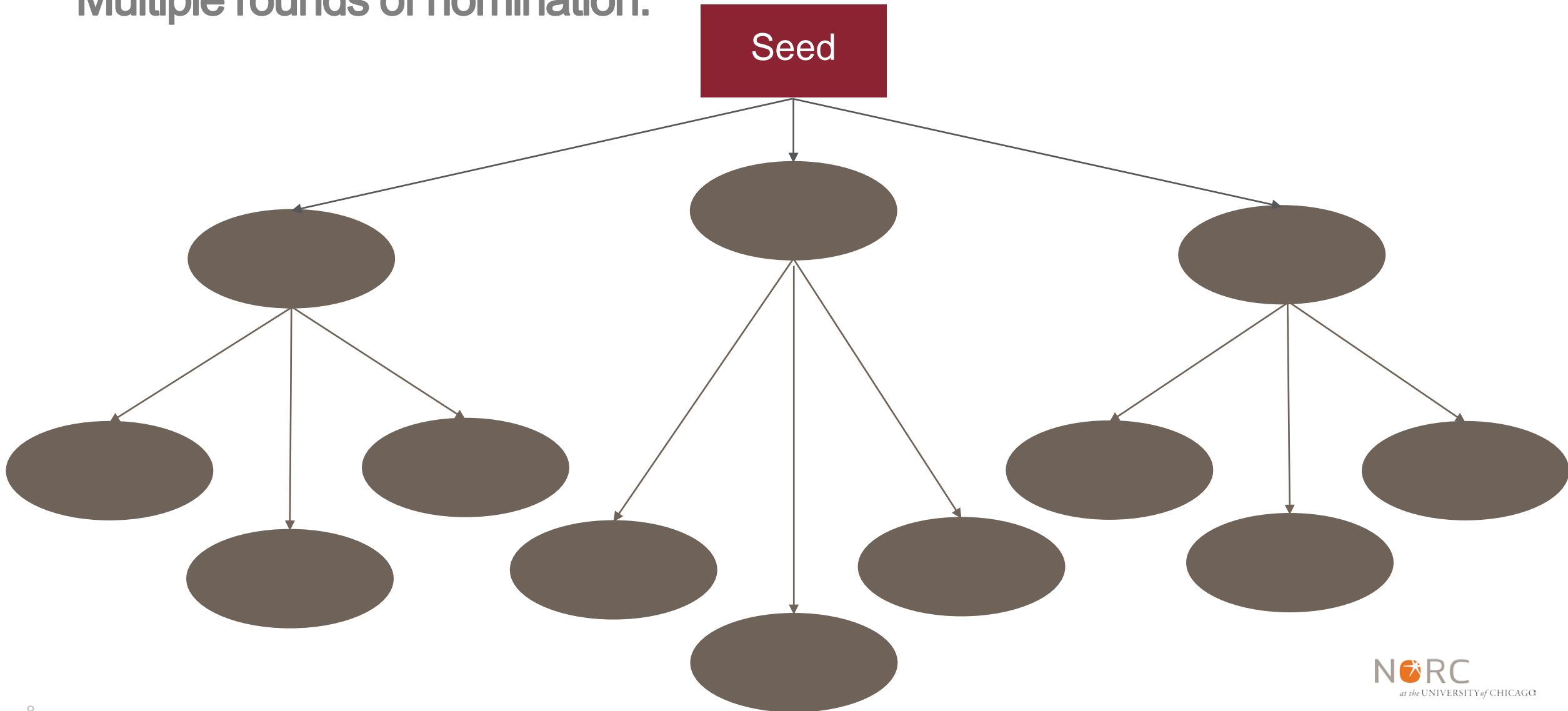
Multiple rounds of nomination:

Seed

Multiple rounds of nomination:



Multiple rounds of nomination:



Pilot 1 Challenges:

- Technical issues with survey system – difficult to send reminders to new “spawned” cases for nominees
- Reluctance to provide contact information for LGBT friends and family members without their knowledge/permission
- Confidentiality concerns

Pilot 2 (Fall 2017), including experiment:

- Improved version of indirect nominations vs.
- New direct referral approach:

Nomination Condition	Referral Condition
Request email addresses for up to 4 LGBT nominees	Request that panelists contact up to 4 LGBT adults and invite them to take the survey
Send email invitations to nominees	Wait for referrals to take survey

- Both conditions included LGBT and non-LGBT panelists (N=1,131)

Incentives

- 5,000 points (\$5.00 equivalent) for panelists
- \$5.00 Amazon gift card for referrals
- Additional 5,000 points / \$5.00 gift card for every referral completion

Reminders

- Sent via email to panelist seed cases and some referral cases:

Nomination Condition	Referral Condition
Requested email addresses for nominees	Did not request email addresses for referrals
Send email reminders to nominees	Reminded panelist seeds to encourage their referrals to complete the survey

	Nomination Condition		Referral Condition	
	Non-LGBT seeds	LGBT seeds	Non-LGBT seeds	LGBT seeds
Panelist interviews	110	98	100	102
Total Referral interviews (Percentage of additional completes)	8 (7%)	29 (30%)	12 (12%)	58 (57%)

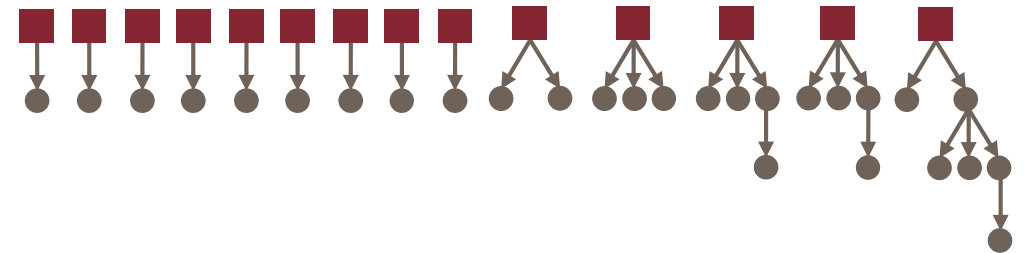
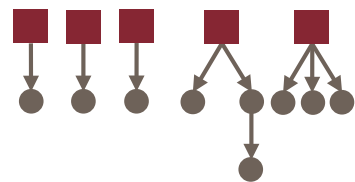
Results – Additional Completed Interviews

Seed cases ■
Referral →●

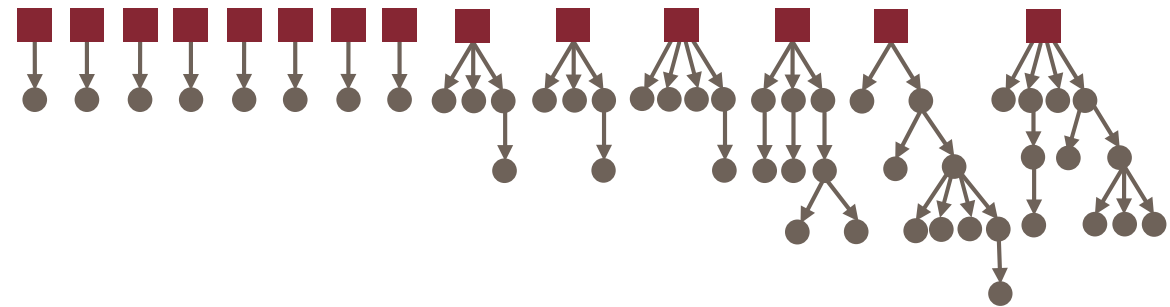
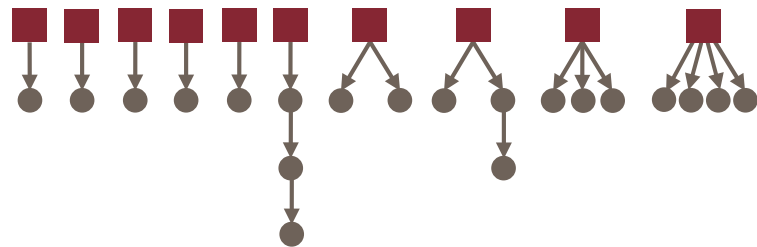
Non-LGBT seeds

LGBT seeds

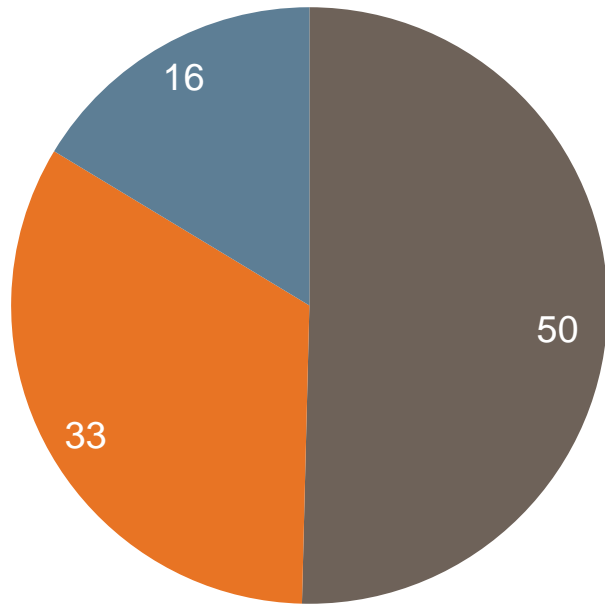
Nomination
Condition



Referral
Condition

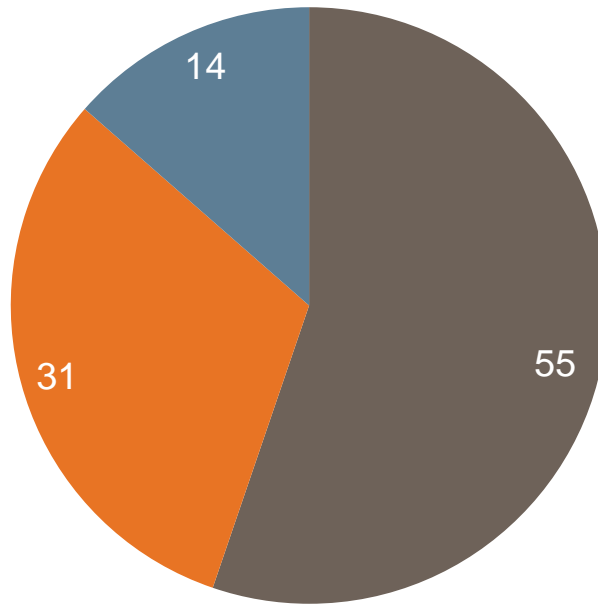


Non-LGBT seeds



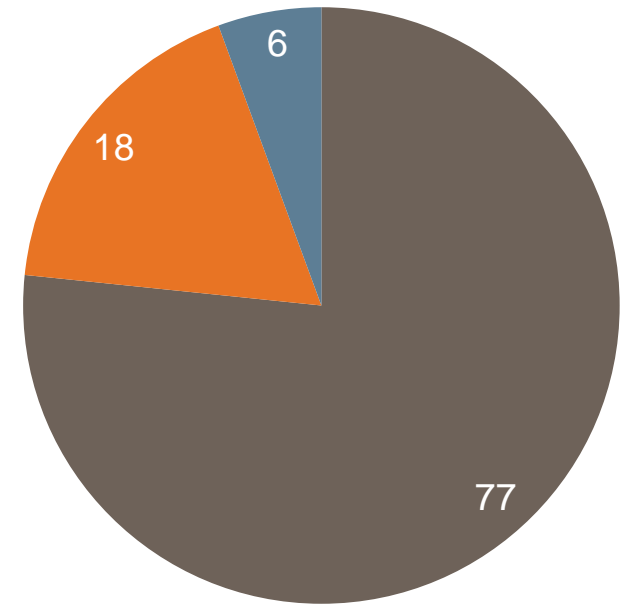
■ 18-34 ■ 35-49 ■ 50+

LGBT seeds



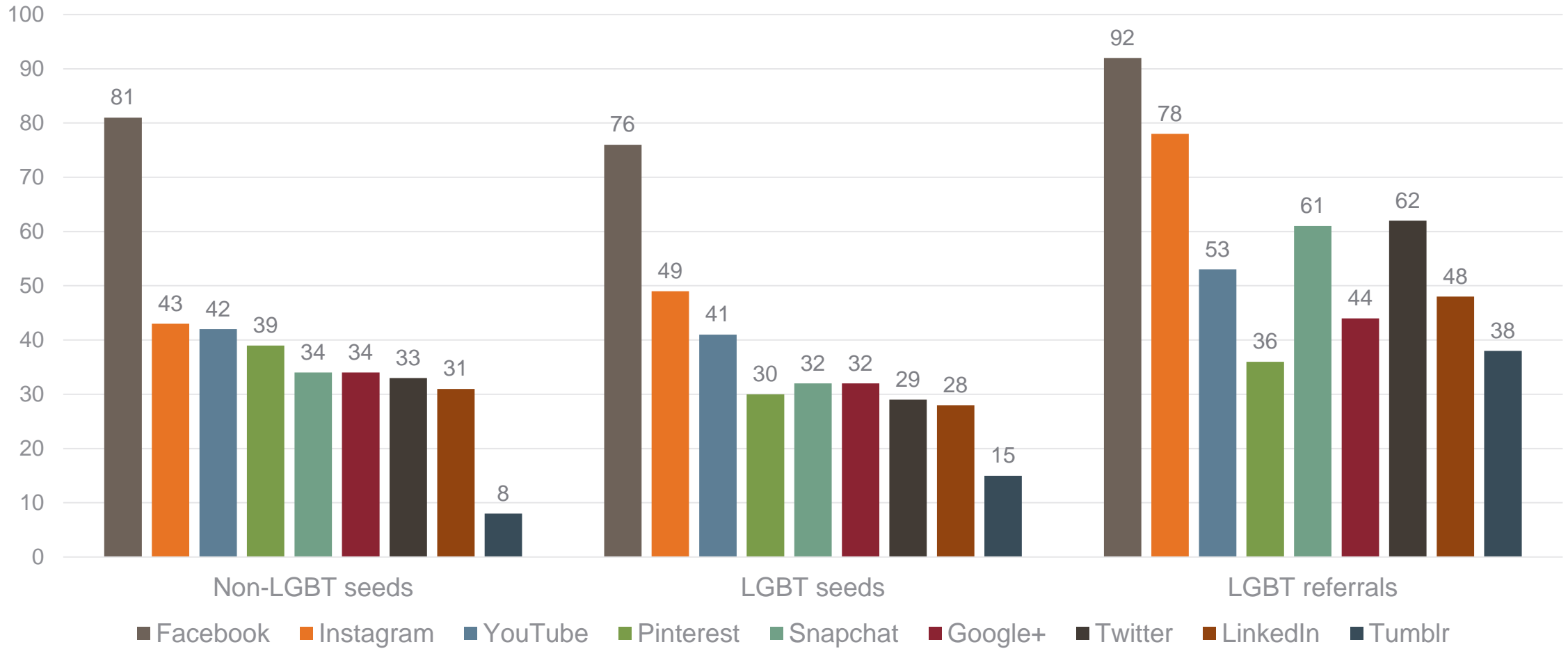
■ 18-34 ■ 35-49 ■ 50+

LGBT referrals



■ 18-34 ■ 35-49 ■ 50+

Generations of Referrals for Each Condition



Screening criteria:

- This survey used a fairly narrow definition of LGBT, based on questions from the NHIS and CHIS.
- Some referral cases who identified as other gender and sexual minorities were screened out.
- Careful consideration of screening criteria is needed on a project-by-project basis.

Some panelists and referrals tried to “game the system”:

- They referred themselves and completed the survey multiple times, or encouraged others to pretend to be eligible.
- These cases were identified through manual review and removed from the data.

The Referral Condition outperformed the Nomination Condition:

- Possibly because it allowed respondents more control and eases concerns about confidentiality
- Despite the fact that direct reminders to referrals weren't possible
 - New reminder strategies?
- But it was also more vulnerable to gaming the system
 - Use digital fingerprinting for survey de-duplication

Conclusion: The Referral Condition seems like a promising methodology for achieving larger samples of hard to reach populations.

- There is still work to be done to compare against probability-based samples, or less rigorous methods, consider other modes, etc.

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Thank You!



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