

# When Size Matters:

## How Social Media Can Help Determine Key Population Size

amfAR funded a study with Johns Hopkins University, gay social network Hornet, MSM-GF, and Emory University to see how the number of gay and bisexual men using Hornet or Facebook in various countries compared to UNAIDS population size estimates for gay and bisexual men.

### Why is this important?

Gay and bisexual men face stigma and criminalization in many countries, leading to undercounts in UNAIDS estimates. As a result, they may receive insufficient funding for HIV programs.

### Why is it necessary?

The estimated number of gay and bisexual men drives HIV programming. PEPFAR and the Global Fund set targets and budgets for HIV prevention work by aiming to reach a percentage of a given population, based on this estimate.

### Hornet Gay Social Network

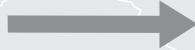


- Hornet shared the number of unique active users in 2015 in a number of countries.
- We used this number as the lowest number of MSM in a country.

### Facebook Ad Manager



- Facebook allows tailoring of ads to users based on “behaviors.”
- Until recently, this included men interested in men (MIM) and men interested in men and women (MIMW).
- The ad manager returned an estimated “potential reach” of Facebook users.



### Real World Impact

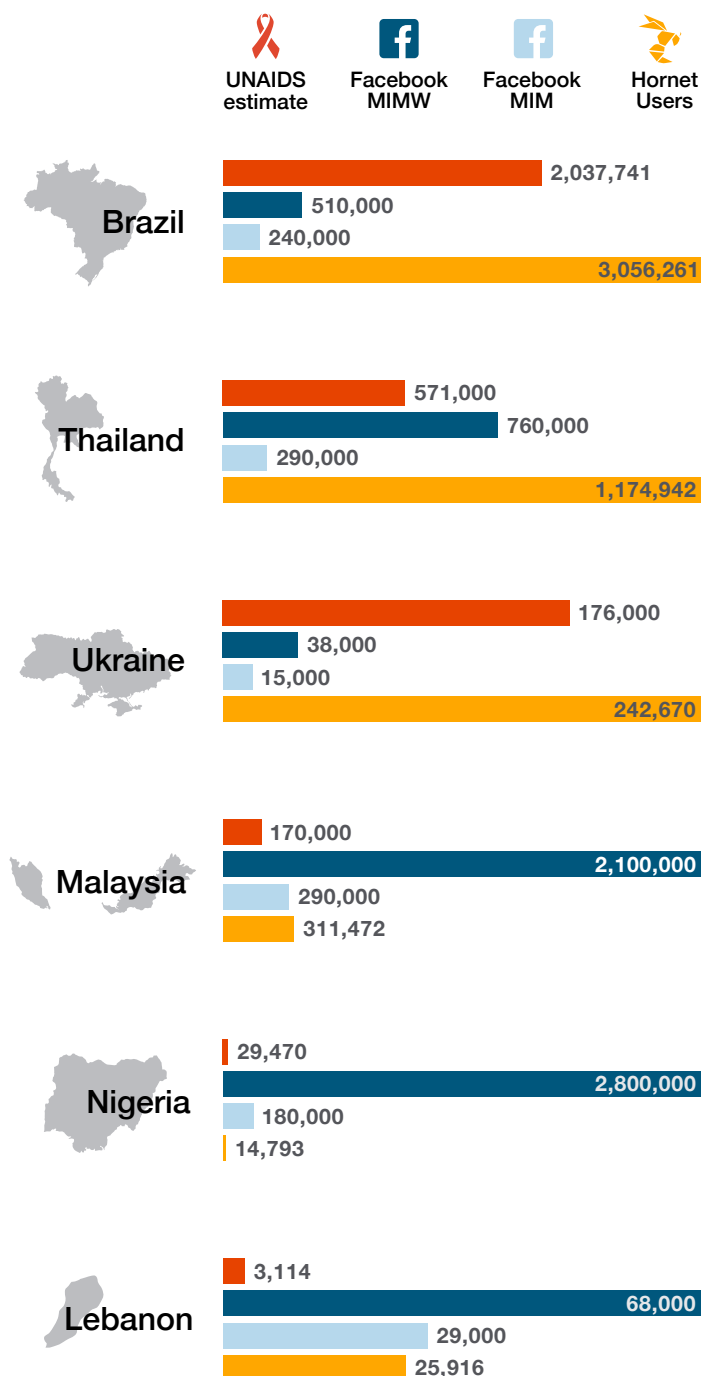
Data from the Facebook analysis were recently used to reevaluate the population size of gay and bisexual men in Tanzania. In meetings with Tanzanian civil society groups and others, the **Tanzanian government tripled the MSM population size estimate from 49,000 to 150,000**. This was viewed as a success story by many advocates on the ground and abroad.

amfAR used these data during the last round of PEPFAR country operational plan (COP) reviews. amfAR replicated the Facebook Ad Manager analyses for every PEPFAR country and incorporated the results in summary PEPFAR program fact sheets. These fact sheets are available at <http://mer.amfar.org>

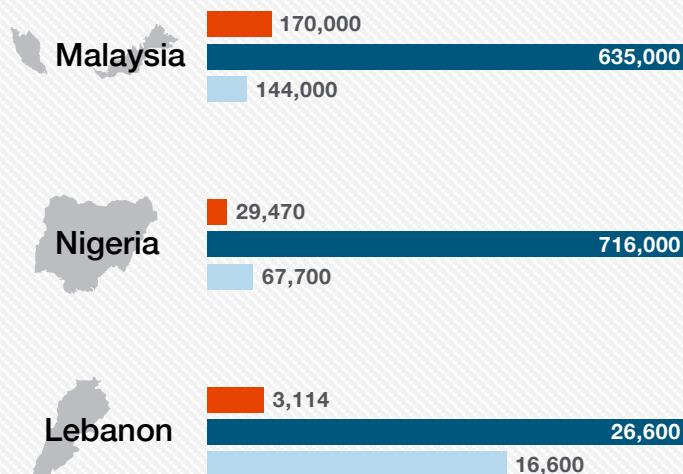
Tanzania

# What We Found:

UNAIDS estimates for the total number of gay and bisexual men in each country were **almost always smaller** than gay and bisexual Hornet or Facebook users.



In some instances, the **number of young gay and bisexual men** (ages 13-24) on Facebook was **LARGER** than the UNAIDS estimate for all gay and bisexual men in a given country.



## Take Home Messages

Although population size estimates **SHOULD** serve an important function in resource allocation and prioritization efforts for HIV, they can **HARM** programming decisions by starving programs of resources to scale up HIV prevention efforts for key populations when size estimates are demonstrably low despite existing evidence.

UNAIDS Atlas has begun to use data from social media to gain more accurate population size estimates by adding Hornet user data for selected countries, and should continue to triangulate social media and other data to determine more accurate key population size estimates.