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Demographic Differences in Responses to a Two-Step Gender Identity Measure

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Abstract: Strategies for including noncisgender responses in demographic analyses remain subjects of ongoing debate and refinement. The Household Pulse Survey is one of the first data products by the U.S. Census Bureau to incorporate a two-step gender identity measure. This is significant because the survey, although experimental, is one of the largest federal nationally representative samples (n = 668,273) that allows for the enumeration of noncisquender people. These data enable researchers to examine how respondents' selection of different response categories may differ across their demographic characteristics. Many studies using a two-step gender measure either exclude noncisgender respondents or aggregate them into a single analytic group, obscuring within-group heterogeneity. We find significant socioeconomic differences between cisgender and noncisgender responses, with cisgender individuals generally faring better. There is additional heterogeneity within noncisgender groups; for example, individuals who mark "transgender" are more likely to identify as non-heterosexual and never married, and those outside defined gender categories often report "don't know" or "something else" about their sexual identity. Although differences persist between cisgender and noncisgender populations, this work emphasizes the need to also perform within-group analyses (e.g., with a two-step measure) to capture the unique and shared experiences of noncisgender populations.

Keywords: transgender; two-step gender measure; gender diverse; gender minority; gender identity

Reproducibility Package: Stata replication code is available on the Open Science Framework (OSF), https://osf.io/vk36p/. At the time of writing, data are publicly available via the U.S. Census Bureau website: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data/datasets. html. Please contact the authors if there are difficulties accessing the data.

A N important strand of methodological work has demonstrated the utility of the two-step gender measure, which asks about sex and gender identity, in population-level surveys (Lagos and Compton 2021; Lett and Everhart 2022; Lombardi and Banik 2016; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2022; Reisner et al. 2015). The two-step gender measure was born out of the acknowledgement that sex and gender refer to and capture unique constructs. Sex (assigned at birth) generally acknowledges sex as a category assigned to people by the state and other institutions to classify people as "males" or "females," based on socially agreed upon biological criteria (West and Zimmerman 1987). On the other hand, gender refers more to the social and cultural overlay that the sexed body assumes (Butler 1988).

Citation: Pao, Christina, Christopher A. Julian, D'Lane Compton, Danya Lagos, Lawrence Stacey. 2025. "Demographic Differences in Responses to a Two-Step Gender Identity Measure" Sociological Science 12: 277-293.

Received: February 12, 2025

Accepted: March 24, 2025

Published: May 6, 2025

Editor(s): Arnout van de Rijt, Kristen Schilt

DOI: 10.15195/v12.a13

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The two-step gender measure has become one of the most commonly recommended and widely employed tools for identifying noncisgender respondents (for further discussion, see National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2022). The adoption of two-step gender measures has allowed researchers to better capture noncisgender, including transgender and non-binary, identities among respondents in recent birth cohorts. From this point, we employ the umbrella term of "noncisgender" to be inclusive of transgender, non-binary, and other noncisgender identities (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2022).

Despite the growing use of the two-step gender measure and its recent testing for the American Community Survey (Reamer 2023; Stepler 2024), there is still little consensus on how to best employ the data resulting from the two-step measure in demographic analyses—particularly for noncisgender respondents. For example, many studies drawing on national survey data continue to drop noncisgender respondents from analyses due to small samples or create a single (aggregate) analytic category for all noncisgender respondents (Compton, Meadow, and Schilt 2018). One way to inform these decisions is to understand the demographic distinctions to different response types using a two-step measure.

A robust literature has documented demographic differences within the noncisgender and between cisgender and noncisgender populations (Bradford and Catalpa 2019; Burgwal et al. 2019; Fiani and Han 2020; Kaufman, Taniguchi, and Compton 2024; Miller and Grollman 2015). The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) has been one of the more widely employed surveys to ascertain inequalities between and within gender identities (Baumle and Nordmarken 2022; Cicero et al. 2020; Lagos 2018; Meyer et al. 2017; Stacey 2024). Although an important advancement, BRFSS data remain limited by their lack of national representativeness (as not all states adopt the module), and its measure has been critiqued for introducing greater misclassification of the noncisgender population, which may bias estimates when comparing noncisgender and cisgender groups (Lett and Everhart 2022).

We draw on large-scale national data from the Household Pulse Survey (HPS), an experimental data product by the U.S. Census Bureau to collect information about the health and well-being of the nation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. We use these data to analyze different subpopulations of noncisgender respondents—in particular, those who self-report as "transgender" as their gender identity; those who say that their identity corresponds to "none of these" listed gender identities (i.e., "male," "female," and "transgender"); and those who identify with a binary gender identity different from their sex assigned at birth (e.g., "male" for sex and "female" for gender). Furthermore, we compare each of these groups to cisgender men and women, showing inequalities between cisgender and noncisgender populations. This article elucidates a demographic profile of those who select each option in the two-step measure, providing insight into the noncisgender population at large.

Background

Although the two-step measure has been in use since 1997 (Lett and Everhart 2022; Reisner et al. 2015), Tate, Ledbetter, and Youssef (2013) first tested the two-step measure against a one-step measure in the early 2010s. This study was followed by a bevy of other studies performed on a two-step measure—such as by Lombardi and Banik (2016) and the Gender Identity in U.S. Surveillance (GenIUSS) group in the early and mid-2010s (Lombardi and Banik 2016; Reisner et al. 2015; The GenIUSS Group 2014). Notably, Lombardi and Banik (2016) used cognitive interviews to test the feasibility of a two-step gender measure for the general population. Participants read questions aloud, answered them, and explained their reasoning. The authors found that the measure effectively captured a range of transgender identities while consistently and reliably capturing cisgender participants.

Lombardi and Banik (2016) found that transgender and cisgender participants viewed sex and gender differently: cisgender participants often saw sex and gender as interchangeable concepts, whereas transgender participants viewed sex as a physical status and gender as an internal sense of identity. In other words, for cisgender respondents, the two-step measure did not ultimately cause too much confusion; for transgender respondents, the measure helped distinguish different and important constructs. Other studies have tested the validity of the two-step measure (Cahill et al. 2014; Reisner et al. 2014, 2015; Tate et al. 2013; The GenIUSS Group 2014), but Lombardi and Banik's (2016) study is particularly significant because it examined how participants understand the questions and meanings inherent in the conceptualizations of "sex" and "gender" for measurement. In one of the more recent tests using a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults, Saperstein and Westbrook (2021) found greater support for a two-step categorical approach than for a single question assessing transgender status. The latter approach was less reliable online and over time.

The two-step measure has gained popularity, helping triangulate contemporary population estimates across surveys (Gates 2014). The 2018 General Social Survey, which was one of the first nationally representative surveys to implement the two-step gender measure (Lagos and Compton 2021), corroborated national estimates of the transgender population at the time coming from BRFSS (Flores et al. 2016) and a meta-analysis of probability-based samples (Meerwijk and Sevelius 2017). As of 2024, there was ongoing experimental data collection on one of the largest U.S. Census data products, the American Community Survey, with the two-step gender measure (Reamer 2023; Stepler 2024). With further testing and adoption in national data products, the two-step gender measure had the momentum to become the dominant way of enumerating gender-diverse populations in future data collection processes in the United States.

However, in January 2025, new Executive Orders were issued to restrict the collection and analysis of data on transgender and gender-diverse populations in the United States. At the point of writing, all publicly available briefs and reports utilizing the HPS on the transgender population have been removed from the U.S. Census Bureau website. In addition, the entire U.S. Census Bureau website was temporarily scrubbed of all references to gender identity as of January 31, 2025,

	Year	Sex	Gender
Country	Implemented	Question	Question
Argentina	2022	¿ Cuál es el sexo registrado al nacer? (Mujer/ Femenino, Varón/Masculino, X/Ninguna de las ante- riores)	De acuerdo a la identidad de género ¿se consid- era (mujer? Mujer trans/travesti? Varón? Varón trans/masculinidad trans? Nobinario? Otra identi- dad/ningunda de las anteriores? Prefiero no contestar. Ignorado.)
Canada	2021	What was this person's sex at birth? Sex refers to sex assigned at birth (male/female).	What is this person's gender? Refers to current gender that may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal doc- uments (male/female/or please specify this person's gender).
Chile	2024	; Cuál es el sexo de [NOMBRE]? (Hombre/Mujer)	Con cuál género se identifica [NOMBRE]? (Mas- ¿Con cuál género se identifica [NOMBRE]? (Mas- culino/Femenino/Transfemenino /No binario/Otro (especifique)/No sabe/Prefiere no responder). ¿[NOMBRE] se identifica como trans? (Sí/No/No sabe/Prefiere no responder)
England and Wales	2021	What is your sex? Note: A question about your gender will follow if you are aged 16 or over (female/male).	Is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth? Note: This question is voluntary (yes; no, write in gender).
Malta	2021	Indicate your registered sex (male; female; other)	Is the gender you identify with the same as your reg- istered sex? (Yes; no); specify the gender you identify with.
New Zealand	2023	What was your sex at birth? For example, what was recorded on your birth certificate (male/female). Were you born with a variation in sex characteristics (otherwise known as an intersex variation)? (yes/no/don't know/prefer not to say)	What is your gender? (Male/female/another gender. Please state below.)
Scotland	2022	What is your sex? (female/ male)	Do you consider yourself to be trans or have a trans history? (no/yes—please describe your trans status [e.g., non-binary, trans man, trans woman])
Note: This table was last updat	ed at the time of writing in	n January 2025.	

along with other federal data and websites including but not limited to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), National Parks Services, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Future access to these data remains uncertain, with the CDC website reading, "CDC's website is being modified to comply with President Trump's Executive Orders." Because the HPS uses a two-step measure, we can distinguish between different identity responses within a large, nationally representative sample. Moving forward, it is unfortunately unclear when the next large U.S. sample will be fielded with a two-step measure.

Globally, eight countries around the world have adopted a version of a two-step measure for their national censuses—such as Argentina, Canada, Chile, England and Wales, Malta, New Zealand, and Scotland (for the two-step measures used, see Table 1). Although U.S. federal data may not include detailed gender identity data for the foreseeable future, other countries continue to demonstrate the utility of the two-step measure. Our work builds on these international cases to continue working on and integrating a two-step measure into U.S. national data collection.

We have a robust literature that has examined demographic differences between gender identities but not drawing on a two-step measure. For example, studies using BRFSS data have documented demographic differences and social inequalities between cisgender and transgender/gender-diverse groups. Demographic differences between transgender and cisgender individuals include variations in mean age (Carpenter, Eppink, and Gonzales 2020), birth cohort (Lagos 2022), family characteristics (Stacey and Wislar 2023), and sexual identities (Carpenter et al. 2020). Additional disparities are observed in employment rates, household incomes (Carpenter et al. 2020; Ciprikis, Cassells, and Berrill 2020), and experiences of financial insecurity (Stacey, Reczek, and Spiker 2022).

Other work using the BRFSS has evaluated heterogeneity within the transgender and gender nonconforming population: adjusting for age, Stacey (2024) found that gender nonconforming individuals, transgender men, and transgender women differed in their employment, education, income, union status, and health. Work beyond the BRFSS has also tackled differences within transgender populations and beyond the U.S. context (Carpenter et al. 2024; Carpenter, Lee, and Nettuno 2022; Hughes et al. 2022a, 2022b; Kaufman et al. 2024; Kolk et al. 2025; Suárez et al. 2022; Thomsen, Andersen, and Greve 2024). These findings indicate that there are distinct populations within the noncisgender umbrella. This article builds on this literature: employing large, federally collected, nationally representative HPS data, we examine demographic differences in respondents according to their selections on a two-step gender identity measure.

Methods

Data

The HPS is an experimental data source initiated by the U.S. Census Bureau to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on U.S. households (U.S. Census Bureau 2022). Data collection for the HPS is done in weekly intervals (U.S. Census Bureau 2022). In July 2021, the HPS adopted and included a two-step gender measure (Anderson et al. 2021). For the current study, we pooled data in 2022 from week 42 (between January 26 and February 7) to week 52 (December 9 and December 19). These 2022 data have been triangulated with other surveys with national samples and have relatively comparable estimates (see Julian, Manning, and Westrick-Payne 2024b). Our pooled sample includes 668,273 respondents overall.

Measures

Gender identity is measured in the HPS using a two-step measure. First, respondents were asked, "What sex were you assigned at birth on your original birth certificate?" Respondents could select: "male" or "female." Respondents who did not report sex assigned at birth were allocated one by the Census Bureau using a hot-deck procedure. Next, respondents were asked, "Do you currently describe yourself as male, female, or transgender?" Available response options included "(1) male, (2) female, (3) transgender, and (4) none of these." Respondents with a missing gender identity response were not allocated one.

If a respondent selected a different response for their sex assigned at birth and gender identity, they were asked an additional confirmatory question to check if their prior responses were accurate. If they responded no, indicating a reporting error, they were asked the question again. We coded our measure of gender identity into the following categories: cisgender man, cisgender woman, transgender, "male sex female gender" or "female sex male gender," and "none of these." For our analyses, we excluded all individuals of an allocated (i.e., imputed) sex, and we discuss this decision further in the discussion section. Our pooled sample included 11,345 recorded noncisgender respondents.

It is important to acknowledge that "woman" and "man" are typical gender terms, instead of "female" and "male," which are typically sex reference terms. Nonetheless, testing has shown that using the same response options of "female" and "male" may be less confusing for respondents in a two-step measure (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2022), and these are the ones used in the HPS. We group these respondents using a blanket term of "noncisgender" and acknowledge that some respondents may not identify themselves as transgender (Julian et al. 2024b). Because respondents in the HPS were given the mutually exclusive option to mark "transgender" as their gender identity, transgender women, for instance, who may identify as transgender and as a woman would have had to somewhat arbitrarily decide whether to mark "transgender" or "woman" on the survey. Similarly, a respondent who marked "none of these" for their gender identity may identify as non-binary and transgender and decide to select "none of these" instead of "transgender" for their response.

Our demographic characteristics of interest include age, sexual identity, race/ ethnicity, employment, household income, whether the respondent lives alone, and marital status. Age was a continuous measure captured by subtracting the respondent's birth year from 2022. Sexual identity was measured as gay or lesbian, straight, bisexual, something else, or "don't know." Race/ethnicity was measured as non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic Asian, Hispanic, or non-Hispanic other. Employment was measured by whether the respondent was employed in the past seven days. The household income included <\$25,000, \$25,000–\$49,000, \$50,000–\$74,999, and >\$75,000. Lives alone measured whether the respondent reported living alone. Finally, marital status was a categorical variable measuring whether the respondent was married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married.

Analytic Strategy

In Table 2, we present descriptive statistics, reporting means and proportions across the five categories from the two-step gender measure. We test for statistically significant differences across these categories using an alpha-level of 0.05 and a series of Wald tests. In Table 3, we present these same characteristics adjusted for age by performing multinomial (for multiple category characteristics) and logistic (for two category characteristics) regressions predicting each characteristic with age as a control stratified by the two-step gender category. We then predicted the proportion of each characteristic across the two-step gender categories and tested differences across the predicted values (Long and Mustillo 2021; Mize, Doan, and Long 2019). All analyses use person-level replicate weights designed by the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau 2022) to account for the complex survey design of the HPS; standard errors were calculated using successive difference replication. We adjusted the weights by dividing them by 10 to account for pooling weeks together; in other words, our weighted population size is the average across the 10 weeks. We report 95 percent confidence intervals for all estimates presented. Analyses were conducted using Stata 18 (StataCorp 2023).

Results

Table 2 presents percentages, 95 percent confidence intervals, and results from statistical significance tests comparing sociodemographic characteristics across the two-step gender identity responses. We find differences across nearly all characteristics. As anticipated, there are differences across almost every outcome between cisgender men and cisgender women, reinforcing the existing body of literature on binary (cisgender) gender/sex gaps in demographic research (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård 2015; Riley 1998). Furthermore, there are statistically significant differences across many characteristics of interest between the three noncisgender groups: "transgender," "male sex female gender"/"female sex male gender" (hereafter MSFG/FSMG), and "none of these." For instance, transgender and MSFG/FSMG respondents are significantly younger than those who report "none of these." Respondents who report being transgender are significantly less likely to report having a straight sexual identity than their MSFG/FSMG and "none of these" counterparts, and MSFG/FSMG respondents are significantly less likely to report being straight than their "none of these" counterparts. Transgender respondents are also significantly more likely to be Hispanic than both their MSFG/FSMG and "none of these" counterparts, and they are significantly less likely than their MSFG/FSMG counterparts to reside in households that bring in

more than \$75,000 in household income a year. These findings allude to meaningful *within*-noncisgender differences and marked differences, in particular, compared to respondents who explicitly identify as "transgender" within this sample.

There were many wider and statistically significant differences between both of the cisgender (man and woman) groups and all of the noncisgender groups. For instance, all noncisgender groups were significantly younger than cisgender men and cisgender women, and all were significantly less likely to report straight sexual identities. Both cisgender women and cisgender men are more likely to be non-Hispanic white than the rest of the noncisgender groups and are less likely to be Hispanic. Cisgender men (and, in most cases, cisgender women) are also significantly more likely to be in households that make more than \$75,000 a year and more likely to be married than all noncisgender groups. The largest social inequality (as proxied by characteristics such as household income) and demographic differences (as proxied by characteristics such as race/ethnicity and age) still occur between cisgender and noncisgender groups. Although there are differences between them, noncisgender groups are more likely to hold other marginalized identities (such as in the case of sexual identity), which may make them multiply marginalized.

Given the stark age differences between all groups and past demographic research (Herman et al. 2017; Herman, Flores, and O'Neill 2022; Julian et al. 2024b), Table 3 provides age-adjusted predicted probabilities and confidence intervals for the same variables. Once we account for age, significant differences between the gender groups remain. Table 3 shows a similar response distribution for sexual identity: noncisgender individuals are less likely to identify as straight than cisgender individuals and differences remain *within* noncisgender groups. A similar response distribution emerges for race/ethnicity, though with some varying statistically significant differences with age adjustment. For example, in the age-adjusted model, individuals who identify explicitly as "transgender" are less likely to be non-Hispanic black than any of the other gender groups. In addition, all noncisgender groups (transgender, MSFG/FSMG, and "none of these") are more likely to be Hispanic than their cisgender men and cisgender women counterparts.

Notably, with age adjustment, cisgender men are more likely to be employed than all gender groups and are most likely, by a wide margin, to be in households that make more than \$75,000 a year. Age adjustment uncovers more of the variation in the middle household incomes. The adjusted results show that the MSFG/FSMG population is less likely than their cisgender and "none of these" counterparts to be in households in the \$50,000–\$74,999 income range and much more likely than these same groups to be in households in the <\$25,000 range. In general, we find that cisgender men are the most likely to be in households that bring in more than \$75,000 a year, cisgender women the second most likely, and all the remaining noncisgender groups are statistically indistinguishable from each other below these two groups.

The results for living alone do not change much between the unadjusted and adjusted results, with the only consistent difference being that cisgender men are more likely than transgender and "none of these" respondents to live alone. Age adjustments also do not drastically change the patterns for marital status, but as anticipated, the proportions of never married noncisgender individuals do decrease;

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	Cisgender Man	Cisgender Woman	Transgender	"Male Sex Female Gender" or "Male Sex Male Gender"	None of These
Age	48.34 ^{bcde} [48.28, 48.40]	49.03 ^{acde} [48.98, 49.07]	35.76 ^{abe} [34.13, 37.39]	36.63 ^{abe} [34.47, 38.79]	42.22 ^{abcd} [41.25, 43.20]
		Sexual	l identity		
Gay or Lesbian	4.09 ^{bcde} [3.92, 4.28]	1.96 ^{acde} [1.88, 2.05]	18.60 ^{abe} [15.68, 21.92]	23.25 ^{abe} [18.58, 28.69]	8.25 ^{abcd} [6.99, 9.70]
Straight	90.28 ^{bcde} [90.00, 90.51]	88.34 ^{acde} [88.18, 88.50]	5.35 ^{abde} [3.86, 7.38]	16.34 ^{abce} [12.74, 20.71]	34.32 ^{abcd} [32.15, 36.56]
Bisexual	2.72 ^{bcde} [2.57, 2.88]	6.21 ^{acde} [6.08, 6.34]	31.28 ^{abe} [28.32, 34.39]	31.84 ^{abe} [27.51, 36.51]	13.27 ^{abcd} [12.28, 14.51]
something else Don't know	1.11 ^{50de} [1.67, 1.92]	1.77 ^{cde} [1.70, 1.85]	36.02 ^{mure} [32.03, 40.21] 8.75 ^{abe} [6.87, 11.09]	20.61 ^{mov} [16.68, 25.18] 7.96 ^{abe} [5.17, 12.08]	27.82 ^{mord} [26.07, 29.64] 16.34 ^{abcd} [14.57, 18.28]
		Race/	ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic white	63.14 ^{bcde} [63.01, 63.27]	61.90 ^{ace} [61.80, 62.00]	54.57 ^{abe} [51.26, 57.85]	56.34 ^{abe} [50.36, 62.15]	48.06 ^{acd} [45.93, 50.20]
Non-Hispanic black	9.93 ^{bce} [9.80, 10.06]	12.34 ^{ac} [12.26, 12.42]	4.78 ^{abe} [3.52, 6.46]	8.51 [5.27, 13.47]	12.58 ^{ac} [11.09, 14.23]
Non-Hispanic Asian	5.88 ^{bc} [5.76, 6.00]	4.77 ^{ac} [4.68, 4.87]	2.59 ^{abe} [1.87, 3.57]	3.75 [2.00, 6.91]	$5.16^{\rm c}$ [4.00, 6.63]
Hispanic	17.43 ^{bcde} [17.29, 17.57]	16.66 ^{acde} [16.58, 16.74]	30.09 ^{abde} [27.25, 33.09]	23.68 ^{abc} [18.87, 29.28]	23.65 ^{abc} [21.60, 25.83]
Non-Hispanic other	3.62 ^{bcde} [3.51, 3.74]	4.33 ^{acde} [4.24, 4.43]	7.98 ^{abe} [6.49, 9.76]	7.71 ^{ab} [5.20, 11.31]	10.55 ^{abc} [9.08, 12.22]
Employed	63.48 ^{bce} [63.05, 63.89]	54.69 ^a [54.43, 54.96]	57.47 ^a [53.82, 61.04]	60.00 [53.71, 65.97]	54.28 ^a [52.13, 56.41]
		Househo	old income		
<\$25,000	11.07 ^{bcde} [10.81, 11.34]	17.32 ^{acde} [17.05, 17.61]	30.69 ^{abe} [26.77, 34.92]	28.43 ^{ab} [23.05, 34.50]	25.39 ^{abc} [22.86, 28.10]
\$25,000-\$49,999	21.64 ^{bce} [21.24, 22.06]	25.70 ^{ace} [25.38, 26.01]	30.24 ^{ab} [26.54, 34.21]	23.22 [17.77, 29.73]	28.73 ^{ab} [26.32, 31.25]
\$50,000-\$74,999	17.60 ^c [17.26, 17.94]	17.44° [17.19, 17.68]	13.91 ^{ab} [11.27, 17.03]	$14.38 \left[10.14, 20.00 \right]$	15.82 [14.02, 17.79]
>\$75,000	49.68 ^{bcde} [49.28, 50.09]	39.54 ^{ace} [39.29, 39.80]	25.16 ^{abde} [21.88, 28.74]	33.97 ^{ac} [28.12, 40.36]	30.06 ^{abc} [27.69, 32.54]
Lives alone	8.85 ^{ce} [8.50, 9.21]	$9.02^{ m ce}$ [8.75, 9.29]	6.67 ^{ap} [5.59, 7.94]	7.8 [6.15, 9.93]	7.53 ^{ap} [6.80, 8.32]
		Marit	al status		
Now married	59.57 ^{bcde} [59.22, 59.93]	51.68 ^{acde} [51.37, 51.99]	15.00 ^{abe} [13.00, 17.24]	17.65 ^{abe} [14.61, 21.16]	34.64 ^{abcd} [32.42, 36.92]
Widowed	2.29 ^{bcde} [2.19, 2.39]	6.66^{a} [6.51, 6.81]	6.00^{a} [4.15, 8.60]	7.31^{a} [4.77, 11.03]	6.03^{a} [4.93, 7.36]
Divorced	9.49 ^{bc} [9.25, 9.74]	14.48 ^{acde} [14.27, 14.69]	6.81 ^{abe} [5.37, 8.59]	8.60^{b} [5.74, 12.69]	10.08 ^{bc} [8.85, 11.46]
Separated	1.80 ^{bce} [1.71, 1.90]	2.74^{a} [2.63, 2.86]	3.64^{a} [2.28, 5.76]	3.13 $[1.63, 5.91]$	2.72 ^a [2.03, 3.62]
Never married	26.85 ^{bcde} [26.51, 27.19]	24.44 ^{acde} [24.21, 24.67]	68.55 ^{abde} [64.94, 71.94]	63.32 ^{abce} [58.52, 67.86]	46.53 ^{abcd} [44.33, 48.75]
Sample size	275,784	381,944	2,553	887	7,105
<i>Note:</i> Analyses were weighted usi women, "c" denotes a significant di difference from "none of these" res <i>Data Source:</i> HPS, 2022.	ug replicate weights generated by the Ce fference from transgender individuals, " pondents. Differences are at $p = 0.05$ lev	ensus Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). 1″ denotes a significant difference from "n rel.	"a" superscript denotes a significant dif nale sex female gender" and "female sex	ference from cisgender men, "b" denote. male gender " individuals (hereafter MSF	s a significant difference from cisgender $G/FSMG$), and "e" denotes a significant

	Cisgender Man	Cisgender Woman	Transgender	"Male Sex Female Gender" or "Male Sex Male Gender"	None of These
		Sexua	l identity		
Cav or Leshian	3 gobcd [3 73 4 05]	1 00acde [1 83 0 01]	10 47abe [15 05 23 80]	17 Agabe [11 07 77 10]	4 86 bcd [3 81 5 97]
Straight	91 30bcde [91 08 91 52]	91 90acde [91 70 92 10]	6 78abde [4 50 9 06]	22 58abce [16 50 28 65]	47 13abcd [39 26 45 00]
Bisexual	2.06 ^{bcde} [1.91, 2.22]	3.14 ^{acde} [3.04_3.24]	21.36 ^{abe} [18.03, 24.69]	22.00 [10.00, 20.00]	4.25 ^{abcd} [3.41, 5.09]
Something else	1.06 ^{bcde} [0.96, 1.17]	1.42 ^{acde} [1.34, 1.52]	41.09 ^{abde} [36.09, 46.09]	27.27 ^{abc} [21.51, 33.03]	28.83 ^{abc} [26.00, 31.67]
Don't know	1.68 ^{cde} [1.57, 1.79]	1.61 ^{cde} [1.50, 1.72]	11.30 ^{abe} [8.51, 14.10]	11.02 ^{abe} [6.62, 15.42]	19.92 ^{abcd} [17.58, 22.26]
		Race/	ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic white	63.68 ^{bcde} [63.54, 63.81]	62.17 ^{acde} [62.06, 62.28]	40.56 ^{abe} [35.52, 45.60]	47.41 ^{ab} [41.23, 53.59]	46.24 ^{abc} [44.13, 48.35]
Non-Hispanic black	10.06 ^{bce} [9.92, 10.19]	12.56 ^{ac} [12.48, 12.64]	5.12 ^{abde} [3.08, 7.16]	11.13^{c} [5.72, 16.55]	13.20 ^{ac} [11.59, 14.81]
Non-Hispanic Asian	5.81 ^{bcd} [5.69, 5.94]	4.69 ^{acd} [4.58, 4.79]	3.29^{ab} [1.96, 4.63]	2.27 ^{abe} [0.64, 3.90]	5.22 ^d [3.75, 6.69]
Hispanic	16.85 ^{bcde} [16.70, 16.99]	16.22 ^{acde} [16.12, 16.31]	41.20 ^{abde} [37.00, 45.41]	30.95 ^{abce} [24.73, 37.17]	24.19 ^{abcd} [21.99, 26.40]
Non-Hispanic Other	3.61 ^{bcde} [3.49, 3.72]	4.37 ^{acde} [4.27, 4.47]	9.82 ^{ab} [7.25, 12.40]	8.24 ^{ab} [4.83, 11.65]	11.15 ^{ab} [9.46, 12.83]
Employed	65.30 ^{bcde} [64.80, 65.81]	55.94 ^{ace} [55.63, 56.25]	46.69 ^{abd} [41.36, 52.02]	56.82 ^{ac} [49.28, 64.35]	49.23 ^{ab} [47.05, 51.41]
		Househ	old income		
<\$25,000	11.05 ^{bcde} [10.78, 11.31]	17.34 ^{acde} [17.06, 17.62]	35.90 ^{abe} [29.44, 42.36]	37.34 ^{abe} [30.01, 44.68]	26.04 ^{abcd} [23.35, 28.73]
\$25,000-\$49,999	21.65 ^{be} [21.24, 22.06]	25.67 ^{ad} [25.35, 25.99]	23.13 [17.13, 29.14]	19.39 ^{be} [13.51, 25.28]	26.60 ^{ad} [24.40, 28.81]
\$50,000-\$74,999	17.60 ^{cd} [17.26, 17.94]	17.42 ^{cd} [17.18, 17.67]	12.54 ^{ab} [9.88, 15.21]	9.93 ^{abe} [5.52, 14.35]	15.72 ^d [13.90, 17.55]
>\$75,000	49.71 ^{bcde} [49.31, 50.11]	39.57 ^{ace} [39.32, 39.82]	28.42 ^{ab} [23.74, 33.11]	33.32 ^a [26.60, 40.06]	31.64 ^{ab} [29.12, 34.16]
Lives alone	8.72 ^{bce} [8.36, 9.08]	7.49 ^a [7.25, 7.74]	6.59 ^a [5.22, 7.96]	7.94 $[5.99, 9.90]$	7.88 ^a [7.07, 8.70]
		Marit	tal status		
Now married	69.84 ^{bcde} [69.43, 70.25]	61.75 ^{acde} [61.34, 62.16]	21.40 ^{abe} [17.38, 25.43]	24.47 ^{abe} [18.11, 30.82]	43.46 ^{abcd} [40.40, 46.53]
Widowed	0.93^{bcde} [0.83, 1.02]	2.43 ^{acde} [2.28, 2.58]	7.66 ^{ab} [4.65, 10.66]	9.07 ^{ab} [3.95, 14.18]	6.67 ^{ab} [4.54, 8.80]
Divorced	10.39 ^{be} [10.11, 10.67]	15.00 ^{ace} [14.77, 15.24]	10.06 ^b [7.27, 12.85]	12.38 [6.71, 18.05]	12.47 ^{ab} [10.75, 14.18]
Separated	2.20 ^{bce} [2.08, 2.32]	3.32^{a} $[3.18, 3.46]$	5.40^{a} [2.62, 8.18]	4.47 [1.28, 7.65]	3.18^{a} [2.26, 4.09]
Never married	16.64 ^{bcde} [16.24, 17.04]	17.49 ^{acde} [17.11, 17.86]	55.48 ^{abe} [47.72, 63.24]	49.62 ^{abe} [37.85, 61.38]	34.23 ^{abcd} [30.63, 37.82]
Sample size	275,784	381,944	2,553	887	7,105
<i>Note:</i> Analyses were weighted u cisgender women, "c" denotes a s denotes a significant difference fr <i>Data Source:</i> HPS, 2022.	ing replicate weights generated by the ignificant difference from transgender i om "none of these" respondents. Differ	Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 5 ndividuals, "d" denotes a significant di rences are at $p = 0.05$ level.	2022), "a" superscript denotes a signific lifference from "male sex female gender'	ant difference from cisgender men, "b ' and "female sex male gender" indivić	" denotes a significant difference from tuals (hereafter MSFG/FSMG), and " $e^{\prime\prime}$

despite this, all noncisgender groups remain more likely to be never married than their cisgender man and cisgender woman counterparts.

Discussion

The two-step gender identity measure, which distinguishes between sex and gender identity, has proven to be a valuable tool in population-level surveys for counting noncisgender groups (Reisner et al. 2015). Still, there is a lack of consensus on how to analyze these data, particularly with nuanced attention to noncisgender respondents, as many studies either exclude noncisgender respondents or group them together (Compton et al. 2018; Pao et al. 2025). Understanding the demographic distinctions of different response types from the two-step measure may help guide these analytic decisions as more data become available. In this article, we use large-scale national data from the HPS to analyze different subpopulations of noncisgender respondents, comparing them to cisgender men and women. The research sheds light on who selects each option in the two-step gender measure and highlights distinctions and inequalities between cisgender and noncisgender groups. As two-step gender identity measures gain traction in large national data collection efforts, this study offers a framework to guide demographers in analyzing these data.

Our findings reinforce other empirical literature that indicates both demographic differences and social inequalities (such as through socioeconomic status markers) between all gender groups (Carpenter et al. 2020; Hughes et al. 2022b; Lagos 2018; Stacey 2024). In addition, similar to prior work, we find several differences between noncisgender groups—that is, those who explicitly select "transgender," those who select a gender identity that does not traditionally correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth, and those who select "none of these" to describe their identity. Overall, we find that many of the largest substantive gaps tend to be between noncisgender and cisgender groups, particularly in sexual identity, marital status, and household income. These gaps remain even when accounting for differences in the underlying age distributions of these different gender groups. Although we urge researchers to be aware of underlying subgroup heterogeneity within the noncisgender population, we find that—when required due to sample size constraints—researchers may still be justified in aggregating across noncisgender groups due to overarching shared experiences of social inequality in reference to cisgender groups. Specifically, the largest differences of social inequality still exist between cisgender and noncisgender groups. Understanding the mechanisms that produce disadvantages for noncisgender groups should still remain a priority for demographic research.

Several caveats and areas for further research should be noted. First, the twostep gender question used for the HPS allows respondents to only select one answer, when many (particularly noncisgender) respondents may have selected multiple if they had been provided the option (Julian, Manning, and Kamp Dush 2024a). This creates some conceptual challenges when analyzing distinct noncisgender groups, such as "transgender" and "male sex female gender," which may both contain individuals who share community, senses of self-identity, and experiences; in a different survey design, these respondents may have feasibly selected the same responses, but in this analysis, we treat them as distinct.

Future research using different two-step gender question designs may help us untangle these dynamics more clearly. For example, Argentina's census invites people to identify as "trans woman/travesti," "trans man/trans masc," non-binary, other, man, or woman in their gender identity question, in addition to a question about sex assigned at birth (Silva Fernández and Matus 2023). This question format helps disentangle different noncisgender groups with more detail than the two-step measure used in the HPS. Importantly, even though we are detecting demographic differences across response selection patterns, we cannot speak to rationales on how noncisgender individuals decide to self-identify on a survey.

Second, one of our sample criteria was having a non-allocated sex—that is, having a self-reported, instead of Census Bureau imputed, sex. Robustness checks including those with an allocated sex reveal different results than those we find above. We hypothesize that these differences in results stem, at least in part, from error (i.e., misassignment) in the sex imputation process. Similar to other researchers, we urge caution when using a two-step measure when respondents have an imputed sex (Carpenter et al. 2022; Jesdale n.d.)—an issue that has a longer history in Census data (Compton 2007).

Finally, we acknowledge that the HPS data are experimental and use a different survey mode and recruitment than other Census Bureau data products (U.S. Census Bureau 2022). Therefore, we believe that it is important that our study should be replicated with future data using the two-step gender question in large samples. Given the contemporary restriction on gender identity recognition in U.S. federal data ecosystems, we encourage researchers to continue studying responses to two-step measures from original data collection and international data sources.

The two-step measure provides a unique opportunity to evaluate gender identity response heterogeneity, particularly as new developments to the measure emerge (e.g., a more expansive list of gender identity options, such as shown by Argentina's most recent census, and "mark-all-that-apply" options, as was being piloted by the American Community Survey). We encourage researchers to employ these novel data to further our knowledge on noncisgender populations. Ultimately, this work advocates for both within- and between-group analyses to capture the diversity and shared experiences of noncisgender populations. Understanding the mechanisms driving disparities remains a priority for demographic research, particularly as the incorporation of two-step gender identity measures in surveys continues to grow.

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Acknowledgments: This publication was supported by the Princeton University Library Open Access Fund.

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