

# DOES A PERSPECTIVE TAKING INTERVENTION CHANGE ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER FLUIDITY?

**Using Behavioral Science to chart the nonconscious building blocks of  
attitude change**

**Luke Nowlan, Ph.D.**

Director

Behavioral Science Center, Ipsos

**Jesse Itzkowitz, Ph.D.**

Chief Behavioral Scientist

Behavioral Science Center, Ipsos

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## The Ipsos Behavioral Science Center

is staffed with scientists having academic and industry backgrounds, enabling us to apply cutting edge theory in a practical way to change attitudes, perceptions, and behavior.



**Jesse Itzkowitz, Ph.D.**  
*Chief Behavioral Scientist*

Jesse specializes in behavioral decision making, specifically the effects of consumers' contexts and cognitive processing of their choices.



**Greg Gwiasda, Ph.D.**  
*VP & Behavioral Scientist*

Greg has 20 years of experience in integrating innovation research with BeSci understanding of consumer thinking to drive business growth.



**Kathryn Grater**  
*VP & Behavioral Scientist*

Kathryn specializes in the study of human behavior, with a breadth of consumer insights and analytics experience across categories on both the agency and client sides.



**Micah Goldfarb, Ph.D.**  
*VP & Behavioral Scientist*

Micah's research focus lies in incorporating social psychological theories in applied settings to create positive behavior change.



**Sarah Mittal, Ph.D.**  
*Director & Behavioral Scientist*

Sarah has been conducting consumer psychology research for over 10 years, focusing on how both context and individual differences can affect consumer perceptions and judgments.



**Luke Nowlan, Ph.D.**  
*Director & Behavioral Scientist*

Luke's research examines how conscious and nonconscious psychological processes influence consumer behavior.



**Emily Powell, Ph.D.**  
*Director & Behavioral Scientist*

Emily's expertise lies in consumer judgment and decision making, with a focus on how contextual and psychological forces shape behavior and choices.



**Vinci Ng, M.P.S.**  
*Account Manager, Associate Behavioral Scientist*

Vinci applies BeSci in market research and consulting projects to reveal often hidden consumer insights and create consumer centric marketing strategies.



**Ben Zelinskas**  
*Account Manager, Associate Behavioral Scientist*

Ben is experienced in applying BeSci insights within retail & corporate environments to drive meaningful behavior change.



**Linda Betesh, M.S.**  
*Senior Research Analyst, Associate Behavioral Scientist*

Linda utilizes BeSci principles to uncover actionable, data driven insights that help clients anticipate the needs of consumers and drive business strategy.



**Nathan Rosenstein, M.B.D.S.**  
*Senior Research Analyst, Associate Behavioral Scientist*

Nathan's background includes quantitative choice modeling for tech companies as well as utilizing applying behavioral science to create novel solutions in the insurance industry.

## IPSOS ALSO HAS THINK TANK PARTNERSHIPS WITH



**Ravi Dhar, Ph.D.**  
*Professor of Management and Marketing, Yale University*

Ravi's research focuses on investigating fundamental aspects about the formation of consumer preferences and goals.



**Gavan Fitzsimons, Ph.D.**  
*Professor of Marketing and Psychology, Duke University*

Gavan's research focuses on understanding the ways in which consumers may be influenced without their conscious knowledge or awareness by marketers and marketing researchers.

# BeSci delivers a new way to understand - and influence - behavior

## WE ARE A TEAM OF EXPERTS

The Ipsos Behavioral Science Center consists of talents with both academic as well as market research industry experience who work across all Ipsos organizations as well as with Ipsos clients to develop and apply behavioral science to understand how consumers actually behave.

## A NEW LENS REVEALS NEW INSIGHTS

Marketing research often provides rich information on what people are doing and their stated attitudes and beliefs, but rarely illuminates **how to speak** to them – through language or design.

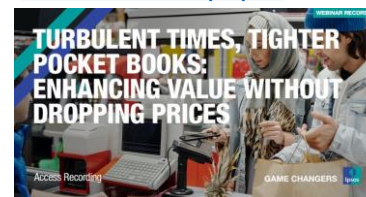
A behavioral science approach amplifies the power of consumer research by understanding nonconscious drivers of behavior and revealing the often-overlooked hidden paths to engagement, persuasion, and receptivity.

## BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE IN ACTION

[Blueprinting Webinar](#)



[Inflation Whitepaper](#)



[F&B Webinar](#)



[WSJ Article](#)



# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Understand factors that change attitudes about gender fluidity.

- We test whether perspective-taking increases conflict experienced when stating one's opposition to gender fluidity
- We measure attitude change likelihood using an Ipsos proprietary tool that measures cognitive conflict
- We test whether nonconscious motivations predict cognitive conflict when stating one's attitude in general

## RESEARCH EXECUTION

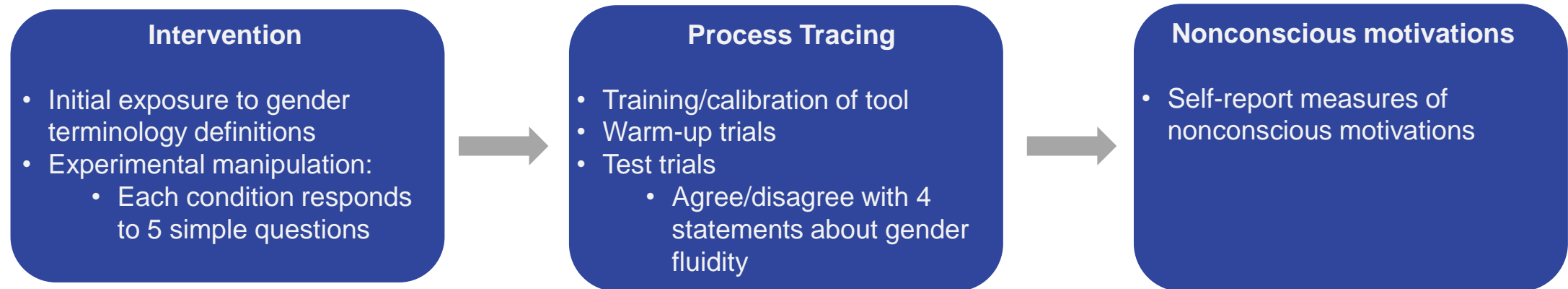
We developed a mobile survey that:

- Adapts a perspective-taking intervention from the behavioral science literature
- Measures the intervention's impact on nonconscious cognitive conflict by tracking respondent thumb movements as they decide whether they agree or disagree with statements about gender fluidity
- Measures nonconscious motivations to seek predictability and structure in one's life

# RESEARCH METHOD

*We recruited a nationally representative sample of 1000 U.S. respondents to complete the mobile survey.*

## Mobile survey procedure:



# PERSPECTIVE- TAKING INTERVENTION

# 1

# A SCIENCE-INSPIRED INTERVENTION FOR ATTITUDE CHANGE

*Behavioral science research shows that perspective-taking is about **more than just thinking about others' actions**. A new paper finds that **taking an outgroup's perspective** increased acceptance of the outgroup.*

## Perspective-taking increases empathy

When we imagine another person's thoughts, we adopt their perspective in a deeper way than merely thinking about their observed behavior.



## A meta-cognitive perspective works best

“Meta-cognitive thoughts” is a complicated way to refer to when a person thinks about their own thoughts or feelings.

For instance, in our lives we sometimes observe how we're feeling about something, or wonder “Is my conclusion here correct?” These are meta-cognitive thoughts.

When we think about *other people's* meta-cognitive thoughts (e.g., “They *realize* how they *feel* about it”), the effects of perspective-taking on empathy are the strongest.



# THE INTERVENTION EXPOSES RESPONDENTS TO HYPOTHETICAL THOUGHTS OF TRANS PEOPLE

*Participants were randomly assigned to either the intervention condition or the control condition, and evaluated different statements in each condition:*

## Intervention condition

Trans individuals realize there are things they don't know  
Trans individuals like to think about their inner world  
Trans individuals trust their own ideas  
Trans individuals are uncertain about their own decisions  
Trans individuals have doubts about their beliefs

## Control condition

Trans individuals usually wear jackets  
Trans individuals usually go with backpacks  
Trans individuals wear socks  
Trans individuals don't wear ties  
Trans individuals have several slippers

*Meta-cognitive thoughts used in statements*

Please select your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

**{Slightly agree – Moderately agree – Agree – Strongly agree}**

*Agreement options positively biased in order to stimulate greater perspective-taking*

The task appears to be designed to measure respondents' agreement...  
**We actually used it as a way to expose respondents to the perspective-taking intervention.**



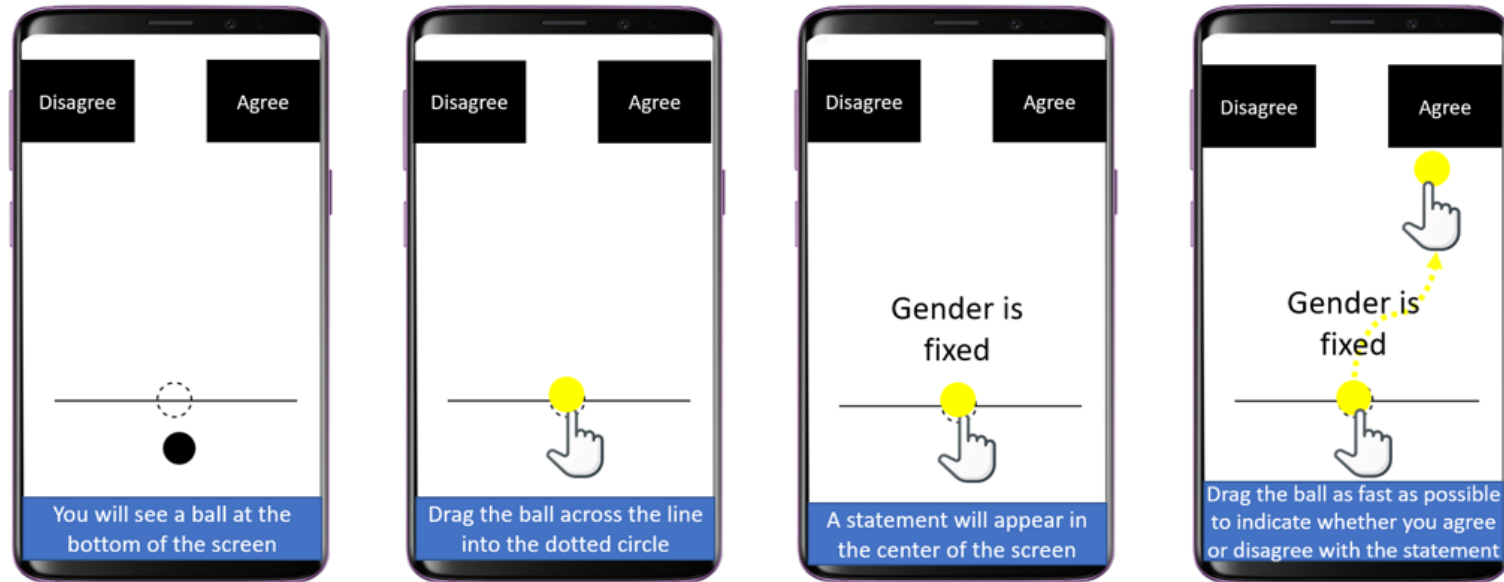
# MEASURING COGNITIVE CONFLICT WITH PROCESS TRACING

# 2

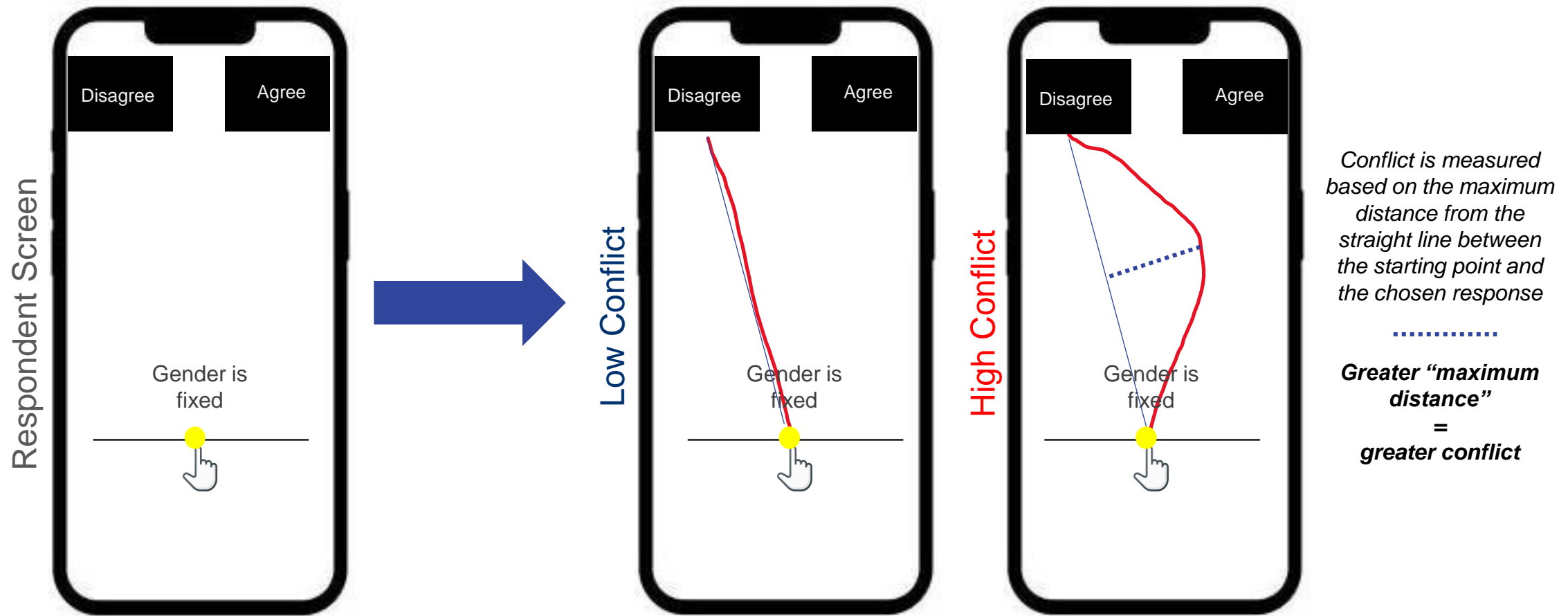
# MOBILE PROCESS TRACING FOR INVESTIGATING DECISION CONFLICT AND ATTITUDE CHANGE LIKELIHOOD



Process tracing builds on mouse tracking academic research and provides a scalable approach on mobile devices to capture the path that individuals follow when selecting between options. It has been used in brand choice, with political candidates, with attitude change, and with attribute evaluation.



# HOW MOBILE PROCESS TRACING WORKS

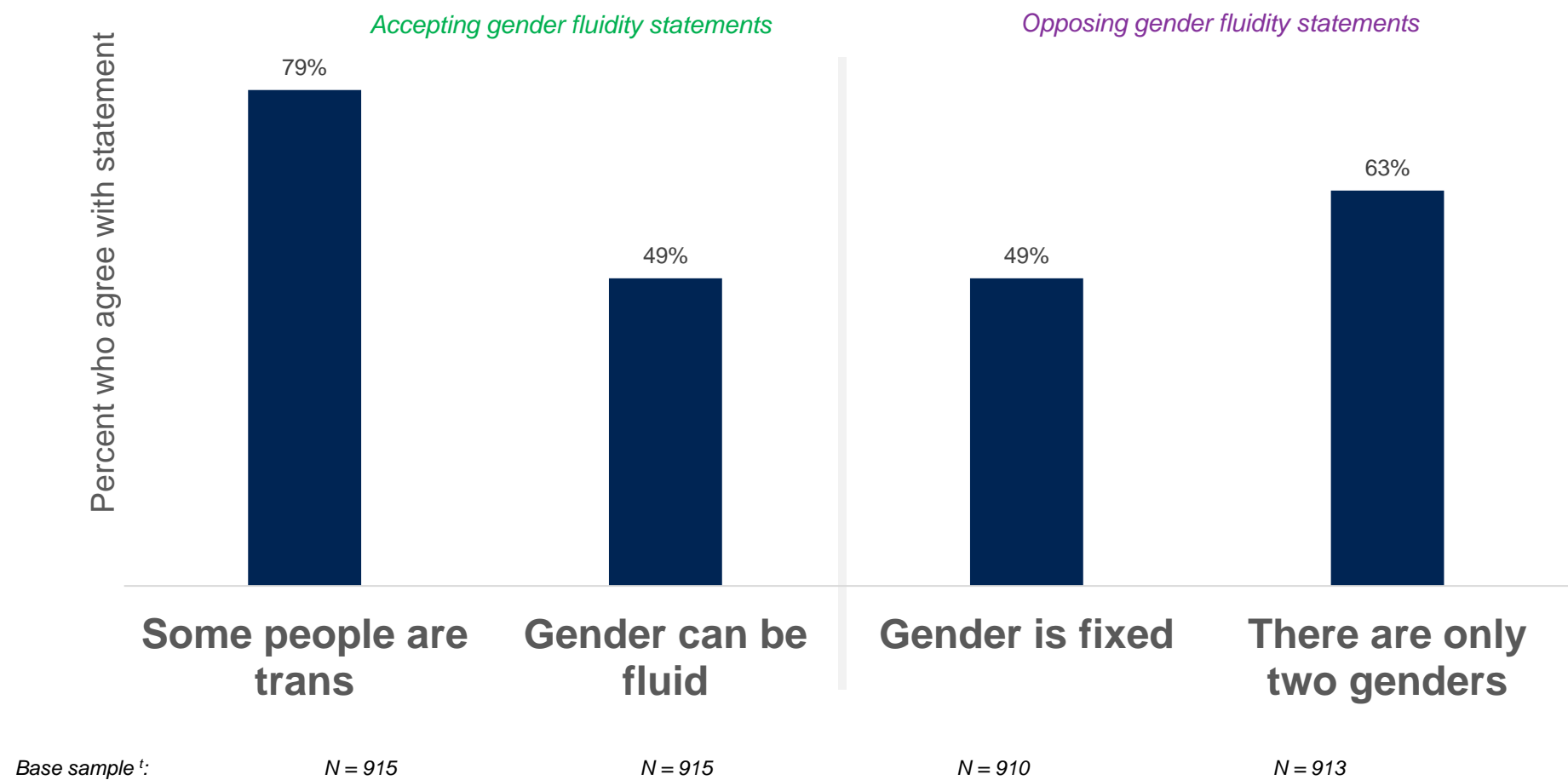


Process tracing works by identifying the deviation from direct path to a choice, where deviations represent "nonconscious conflict" and are predictive of future attitude change from stated agreement/disagreement.

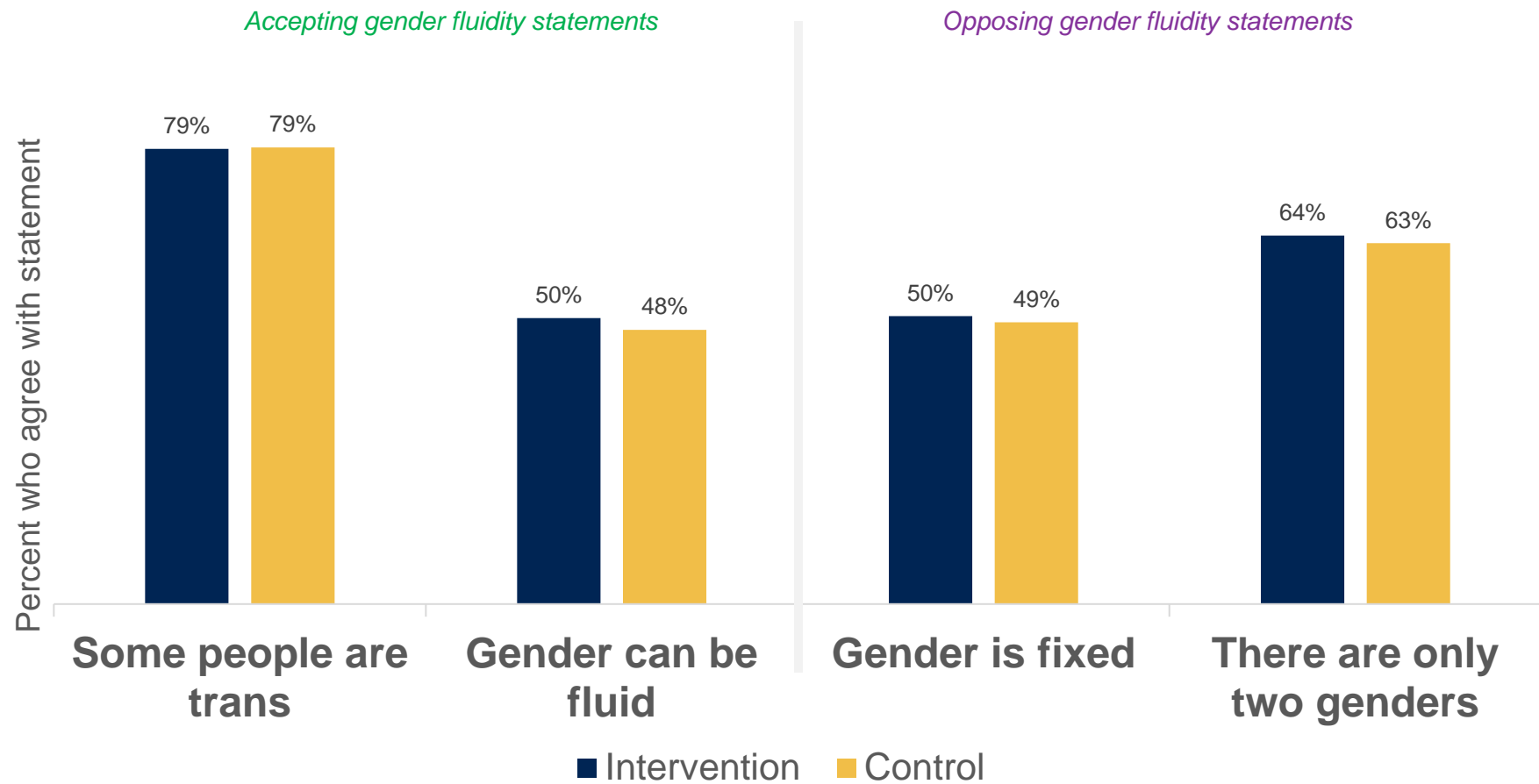
# MAIN STUDY RESULTS

# 3

# AGREEMENT VARIED ACROSS THE FOUR STATEMENTS ABOUT GENDER



# THE INTERVENTION HAS VERY LITTLE IMPACT ON EXPLICIT AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT GENDER



Base sample <sup>†</sup>:

N = 915

N = 915

N = 910

N = 913

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF THE PERSPECTIVE-TAKING INTERVENTION DOES NOT AFFECT EXPLICIT ATTITUDES ABOUT GENDER?

As a politically-charged\* topic in today's climate, people's stated beliefs about gender are very resistant to change.

However, even “sticky” beliefs can shift over time. This shift starts at the **nonconscious level**.

Using Process Tracing, we can measure the impact of perspective-taking on **nonconscious conflict** in beliefs about gender fluidity.

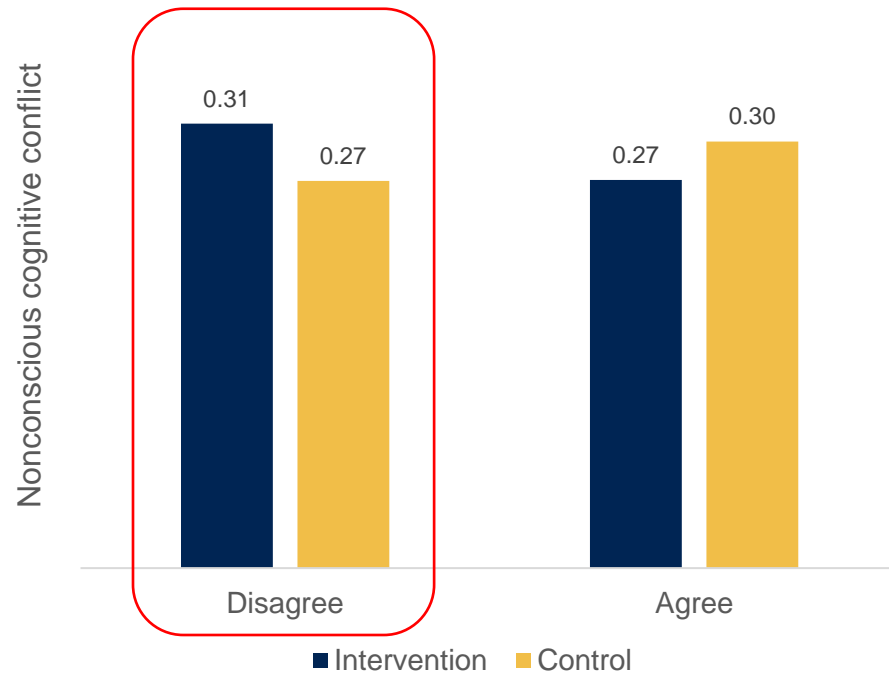


WHEN STATEMENTS **ACCEPT GENDER FLUIDITY:**

# FOR THOSE WHO FEEL GENDER IS FIXED, PERSPECTIVE-TAKING CHANGES IMPLICIT ATTITUDES

*Those who disagree with these two statements feel **less conviction** (i.e., greater conflict) in their disagreement after undergoing the perspective-taking intervention.*

## Some people are trans

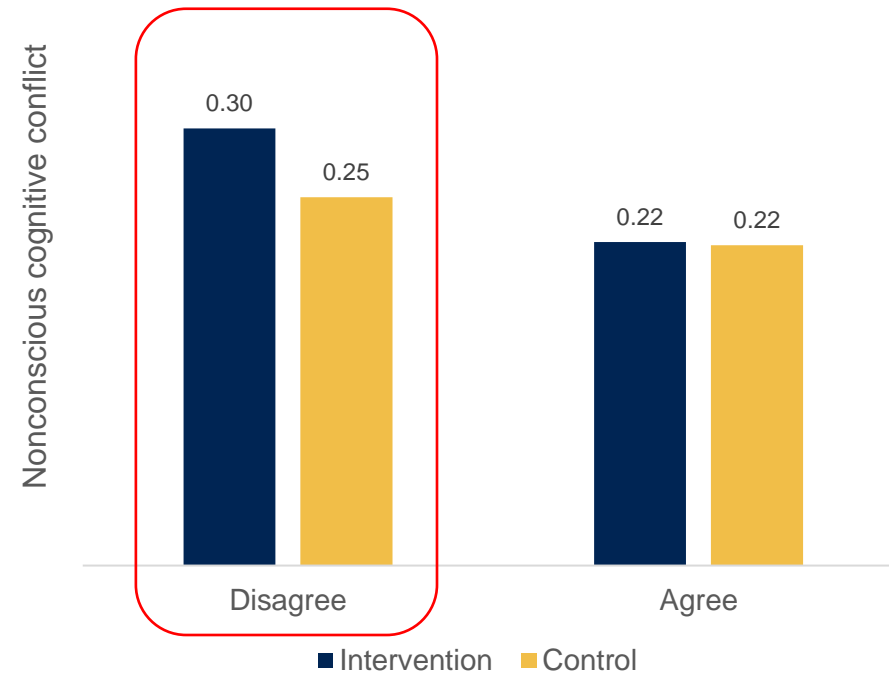


Base sample<sup>†</sup>:

N = 192

N = 722

## Gender can be fluid



N = 471

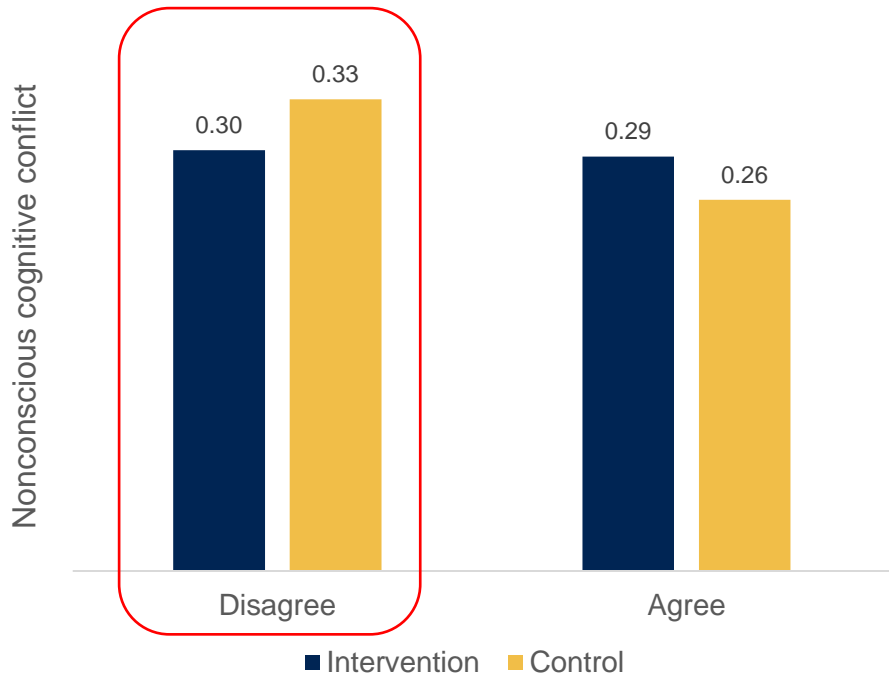
N = 444

WHEN STATEMENTS **OPPOSE** GENDER FLUIDITY:

# PERSPECTIVE-TAKING INCREASES PRE-EXISTING ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS GENDER FLUIDITY

Those who disagree with these two statements feel **more conviction** (i.e., less conflict) in their disagreement after undergoing the perspective-taking intervention.

Gender is fixed

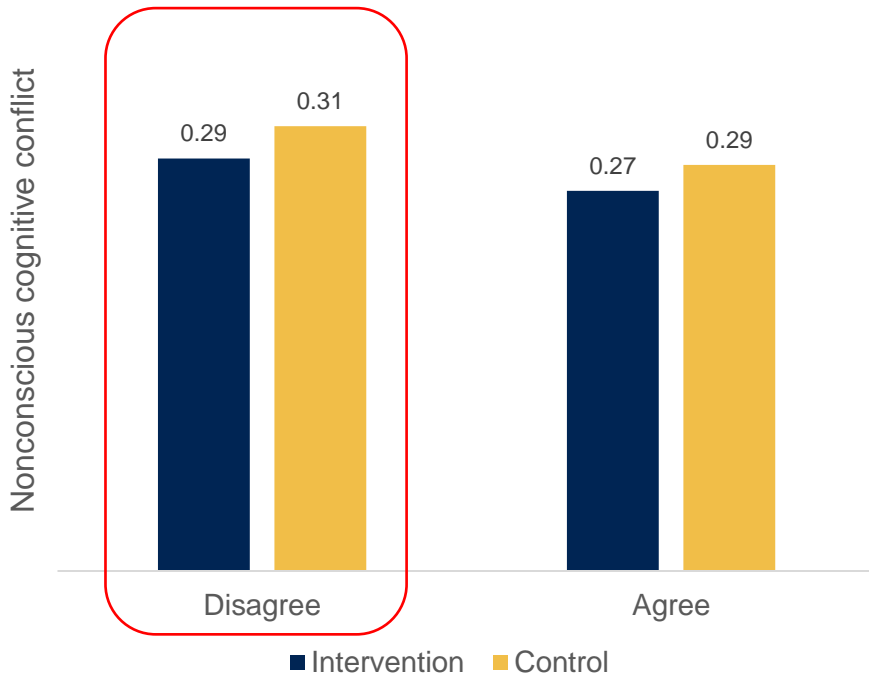


Base sample <sup>t</sup>:

N = 461

N = 449

There are only two genders



N = 336

N = 577

# IMPLICATION: PERSPECTIVE TAKING INCREASES EMPATHY, DRIVING COGNITIVE CONFLICT FOR THOSE WITH MORE RIGID ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER

*While it does not drive explicit attitude change immediately, the perspective-taking intervention increases conflict (i.e., less attitude conviction) in most instances where respondent beliefs opposed gender fluidity. Likewise, the intervention decreases conflict (i.e., greater attitude conviction) in most instances where respondent beliefs accepted gender fluidity.*

## How to use perspective-taking as an instrument of attitude change:

- When portraying an outgroup's *perspective*, try to emphasize not just their thoughts, but their *thoughts about their thoughts/feelings*
  - “I’m **thinking** about what I **learned**...”
  - “They were **curious** why they **felt** dejected...”
- When portraying an outgroup's *behavior*, highlight the *thoughts associated with that behavior*
  - “I **realized it was best** to take action by...”
  - “They **reflected** on their **decision** to go to...”

# BEHAVIORAL BLUEPRINTING: NEED FOR STRUCTURE

# 4

# DOES NONCONSCIOUS NEED FOR STRUCTURE PREDICT GENDER FLUIDITY BELIEFS?

*We also examined whether nonconscious motivations—which differ between individuals—drive differences in explicit agreement with statements about gender fluidity.*

## What is Need for Structure?

Need for structure (NFS) is an individual difference variable from the behavioral science literature; it refers to the **desire for order and predictability in one's environment**.

People high in need for structure:

- Like having a routine
- Have little tolerance for uncertainty
- Are more set in their beliefs

## Why would NFS impact gender fluidity beliefs?

More rigid beliefs about gender convey a sense of certainty and predictability about other humans—people are easier to categorize and mentally assign characteristics to if they can be classified into two groups.

Because people with low NFS are more tolerant of uncertainty, they may be more accepting of gender fluidity.



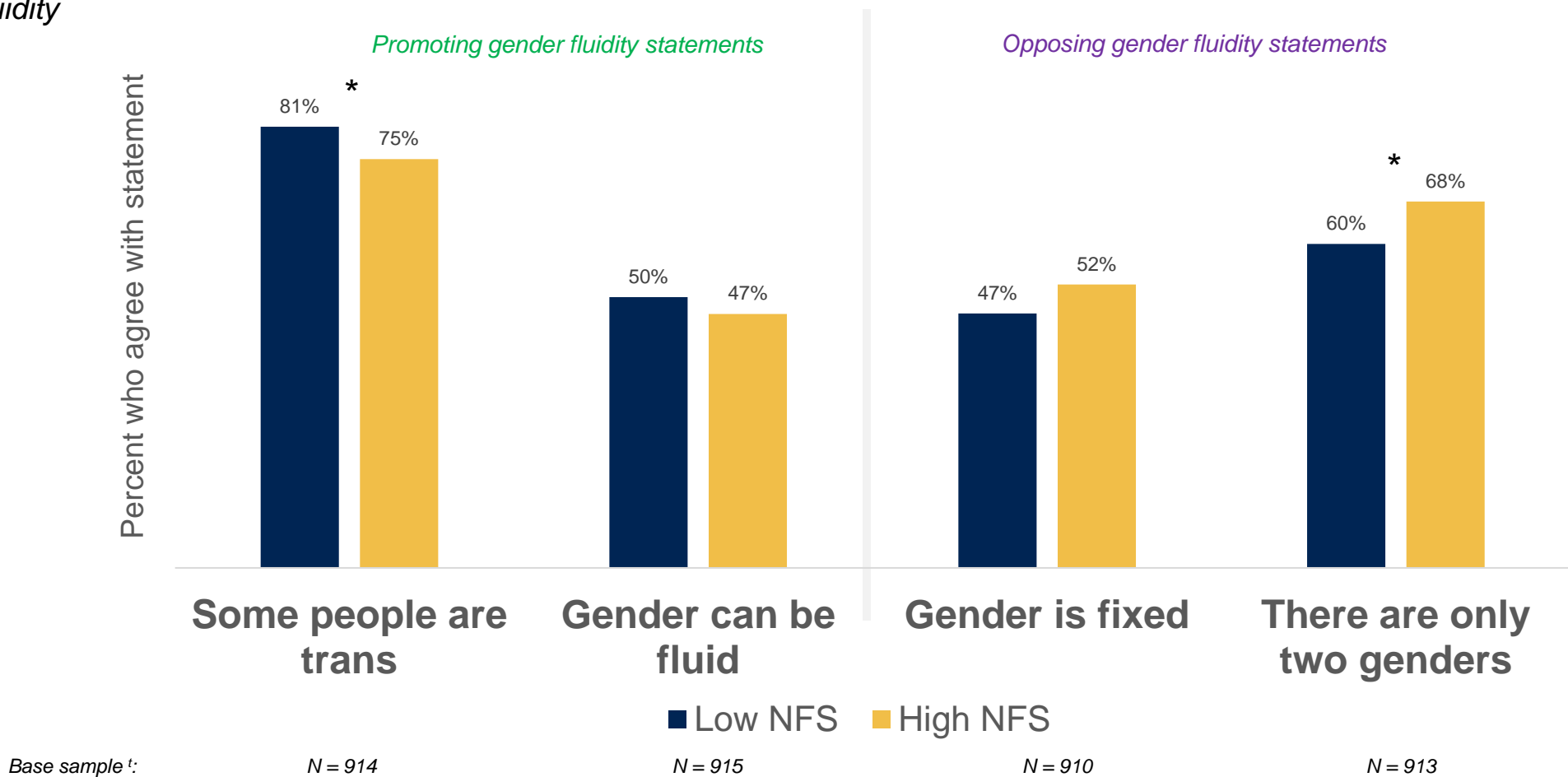
High NFS



Low NFS

# LOW NEED FOR STRUCTURE PREDICTS GENDER FLUIDITY BELIEFS

People with lower need for structure were more likely to agree with statements promoting gender fluidity and disagree with statements opposing gender fluidity



# IMPLICATION: NONCONSCIOUS MOTIVATIONS IMPACT OUR BELIEFS ABOUT GENDER

Nonconscious motivations characterize how we like to process information about our environment.

This can shape our beliefs about politically-charged topics.

Further inquiry into the benign factors that make certain beliefs more (or less) appealing may help identify common ground among polarizing issues.



# THANK YOU!

**Luke Nowlan, Ph.D.**

Director, Behavioral Science Center, Ipsos

luke.nowlan@ipsos.com