Social Epidemiology of Hypertension Stages
To the Editor:

We read with great interest the article by Basu and Millett on social epidemiology of hypertension in low- and middle-income countries from World Health Organization’s Study on global AGEing and adult health (SAGE).

Categorical definitions of hypertension show additional variation in hypertension prevalence and social determinants of awareness compared with dichotomous definitions. Roughly half of the total SAGE sample with measured hypertension (n = 16,945) would be classified as stage 2. Half of those with stage 2 in SAGE’s South Africa and Ghana samples could be reclassified as World Health Organization/International Society of Hypertension stage 3. We found the association between sex and hypertension awareness Basu and Millett showed varied by hypertension stage. Men had significantly lower probability of hypertension awareness than women at stage 1 (Wald P < 0.001; Figure), but not at stage 2.

Extending Basu and Millett’s laudable work, future studies might examine social patterning across the full distribution of blood pressure. Disaggregated information on hypertension stages and their social determinants is critical for informed clinical decision making, epidemiological surveillance, and health policy planning and evaluation in low- and middle-income countries facing high burdens of hypertension.

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Figure. Association between sex and hypertension awareness. Dark-colored bar, stage 1; and light-colored bar, stage 2.

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