

Patient-Reported Stigma Across Health Conditions:  
Insights From the National Health and Wellness Survey (NHWS) in China

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Background

- Stigma surrounding conditions such as mental health disorders, dermatological diseases, and sexually transmitted infections can significantly reduce the likelihood of individuals seeking diagnosis and appropriate care.<sup>1,2</sup>

Objectives

- Using a nationally representative real-world dataset of the urban population of China, we examined to what extent people with commonly stigmatized conditions reported feeling stigma as a consequence of their condition.
- This study highlights the extent to which stigma is present in people with commonly stigmatized conditions in the urban Chinese population.

Methods

- Data from the 2025 National Health and Wellness Survey (NHWS) in China (n=20,001), a cross-sectional, general population survey of adults age 18 years and over, were used. The NHWS has a demographically representative sample, mirroring age and sex distribution of adults in urban China.
- Disease-specific stigmatization was assessed with a self-report Likert-type three-item composite scale (1 “Not at all” and 7 “Very much so”). Each item captured a different dimension of stigma: embarrassment, poor treatment and negative judgement. Overall stigmatization was derived by taking maximum answer across the three questions.

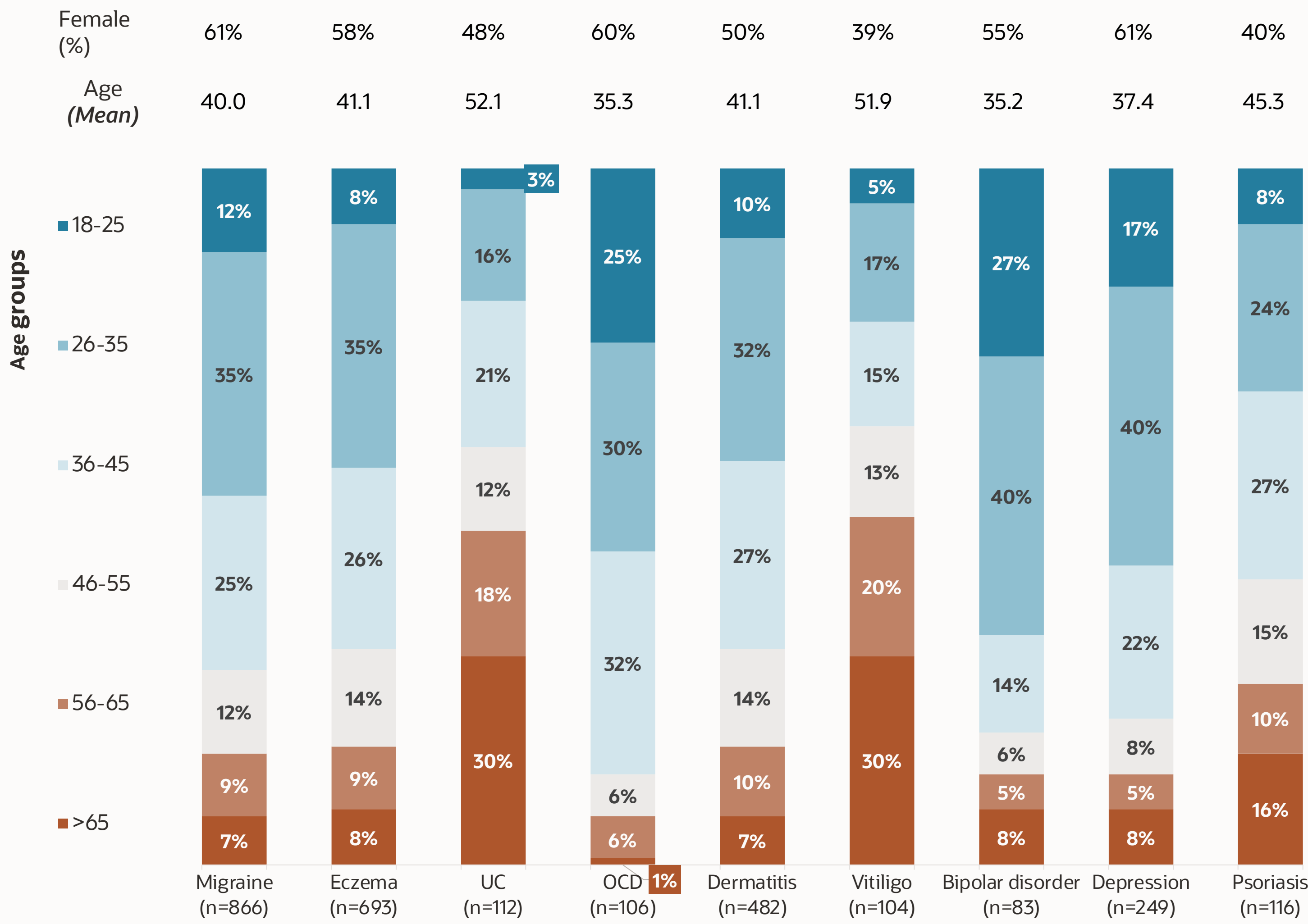
- Stigma scale items:  
“Do you feel embarrassed to have this condition?”  
“Do you think that others judge you negatively if they know you have this condition?”  
“Do you think that others treat you negatively if they know you have this condition?”
- In this analysis, overall stigmatization was assessed across nine diagnosed conditions : Migraine, Eczema, Ulcerative Colitis (UC), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Dermatitis, Vitiligo, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Psoriasis.

Results

Analyses included 20,001 respondents across China NHWS, looking into reported stigma across nine diagnosed conditions.

- Vitiligo patients were more likely to be male (61%) and being one of the oldest group with mean age 51.9 years old.
- Patients with migraine (61%), depression (61%) and UC (60%) had the highest rate of females and bipolar disorder (35.2 yrs) and OCD (35.3 yrs) were the youngest across the conditions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Demographic characteristics across diagnosed conditions



- The proportion of respondents reporting stigma varied across each condition. The lowest proportion of respondents with migraine reported stigma (66%), whereas psoriasis was associated with the highest proportion of respondents reporting stigma (95%). Over 80% of respondents reported feeling stigmatized because of their condition in 8 out the 9 reported conditions (Figure 2).
- Similar proportions of diagnosed respondents who reported receiving treatment reported stigma. The lowest proportion of treated respondents with migraine reported stigma (69%), while over 80% of respondents in 6 out of the 7 reported conditions reported stigma (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Overall stigmatization across diagnosed conditions

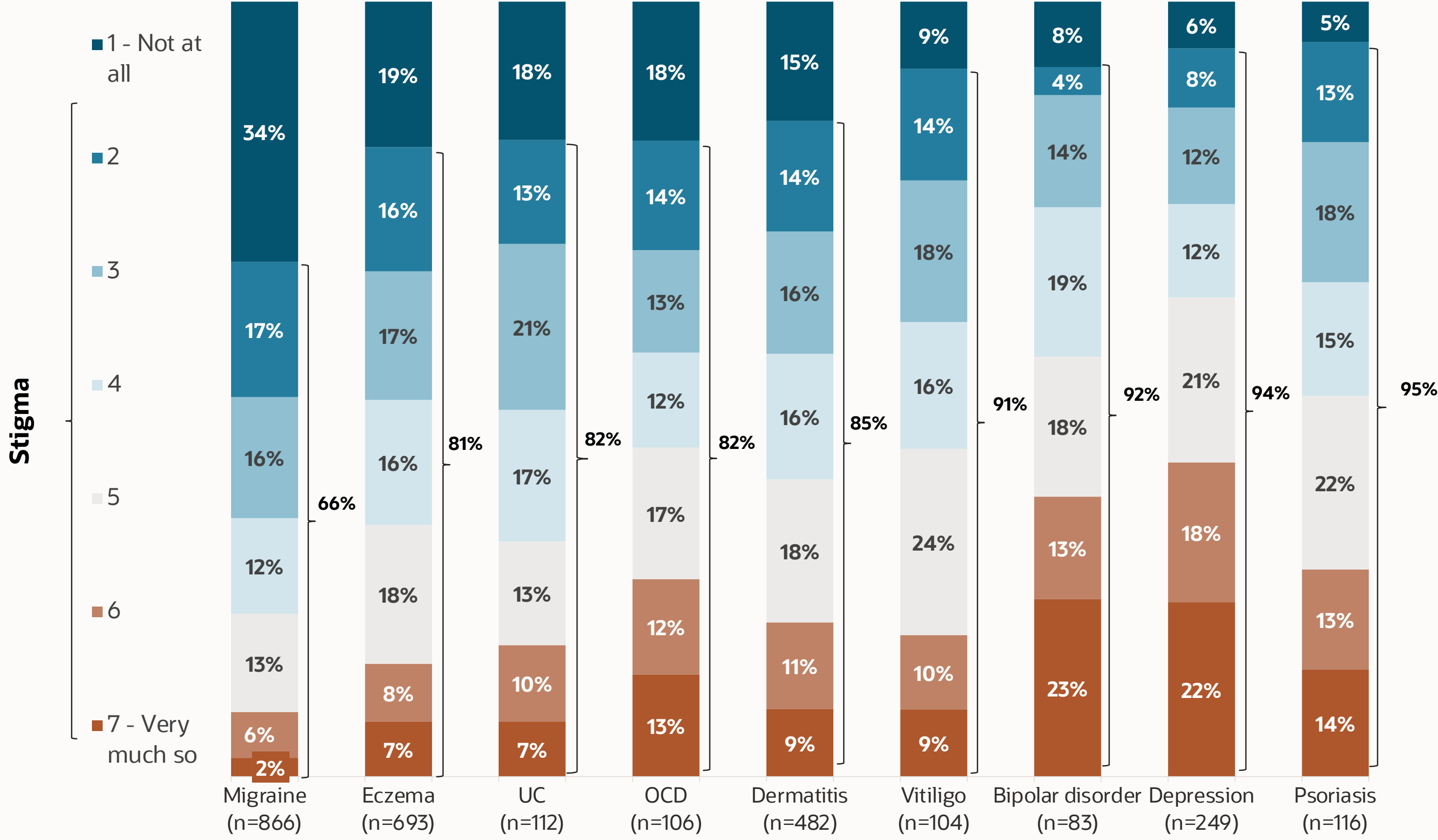
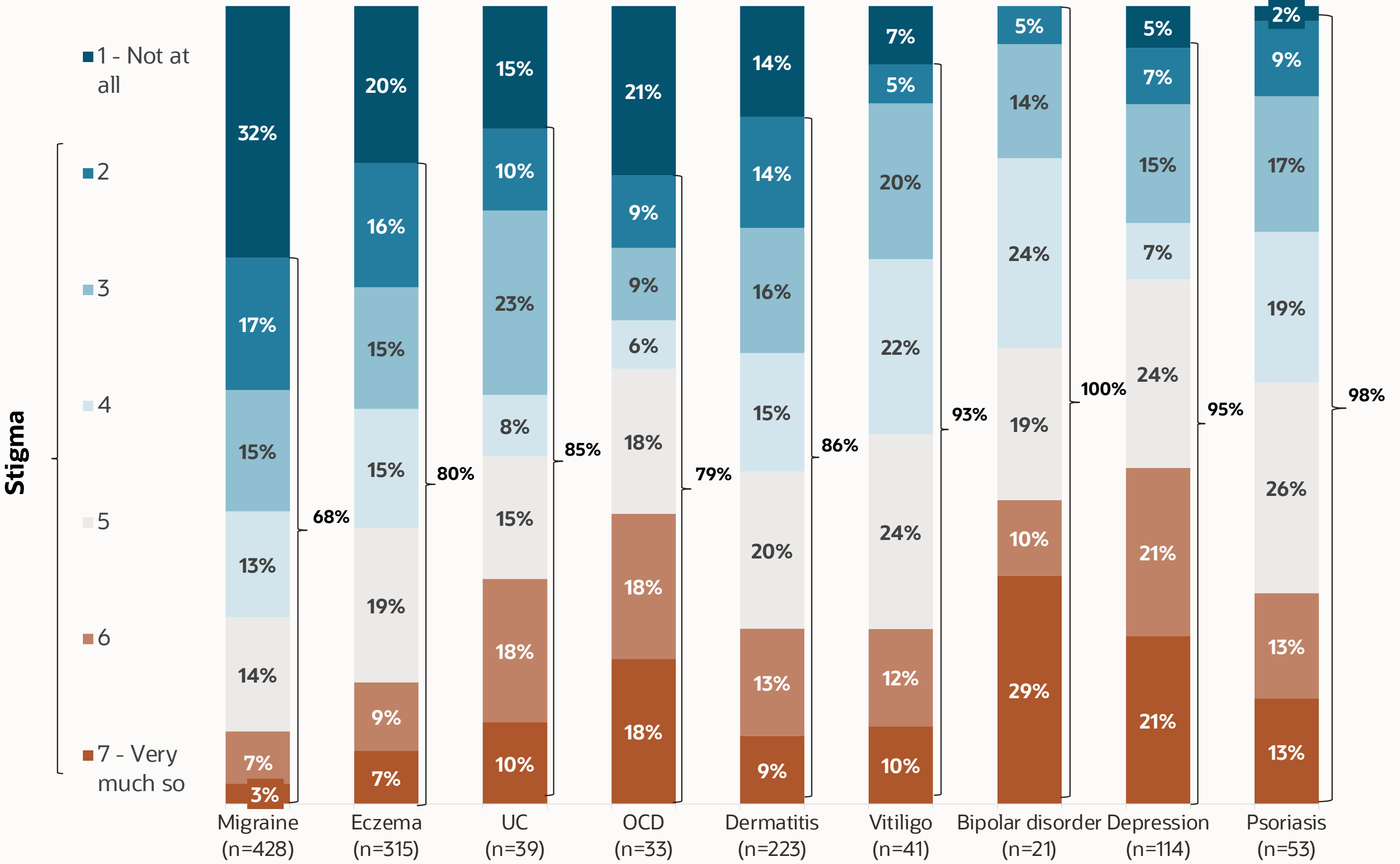


Figure 3: Overall stigmatization across conditions treated with prescription



Conclusion

These findings highlight significant variation in the amount of stigma people reported in commonly stigmatized health conditions. Stigma maybe a barrier to diagnoses and treatment uptake and future research should consider the relative impact of stigmatization alongside more routinely examined barriers such as transportation, socioeconomic status, and health literacy.

References

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