

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.^{1,2}

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

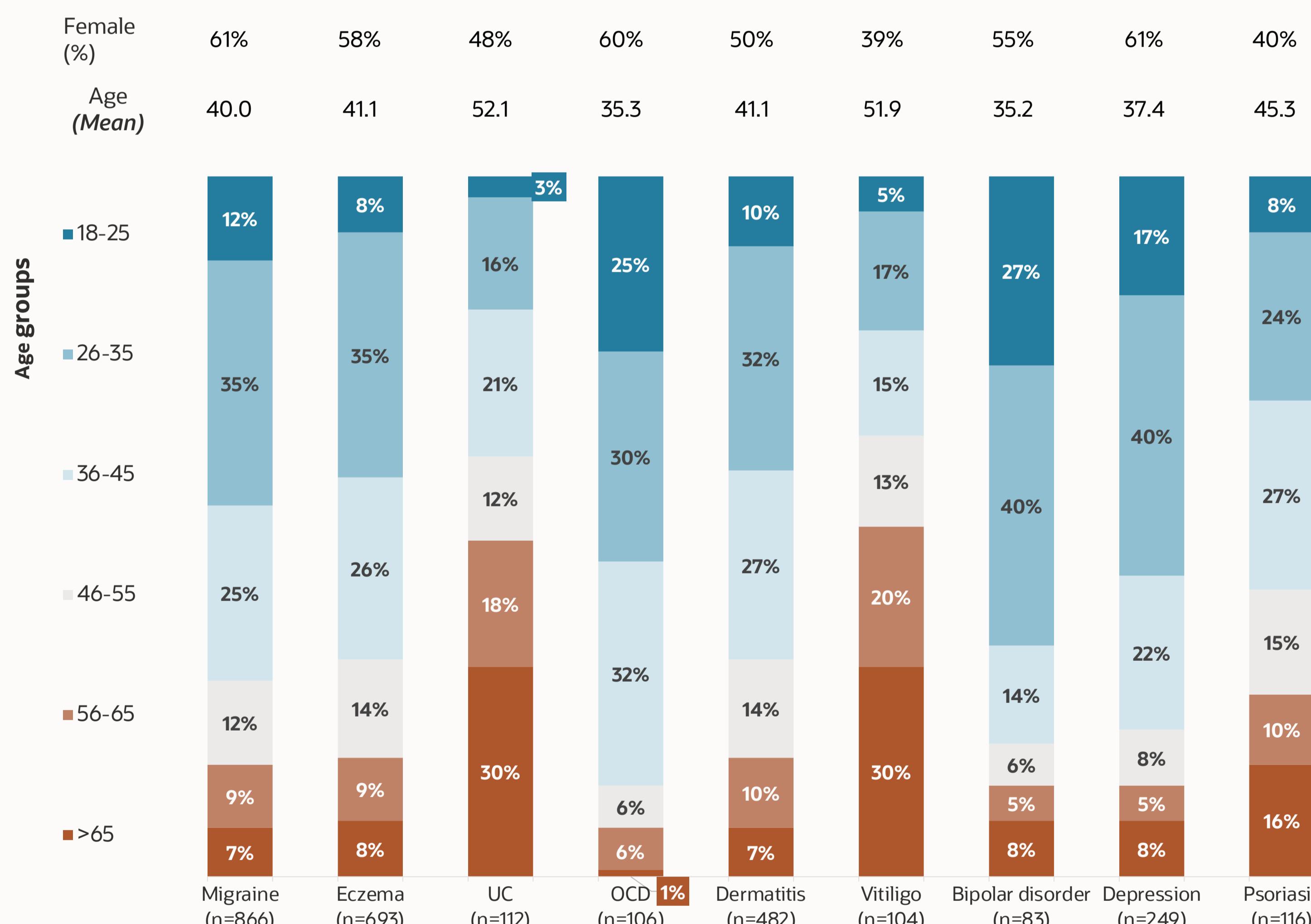
- Data from the 2025 National Health and Wellness Survey (NHWS) in China (n=20,001), a cross-sectional, general population survey of adults age 18 years and over, were used. The NHWS has a demographically representative sample, mirroring age and sex distribution of adults in urban China.
- Disease-specific 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 of 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

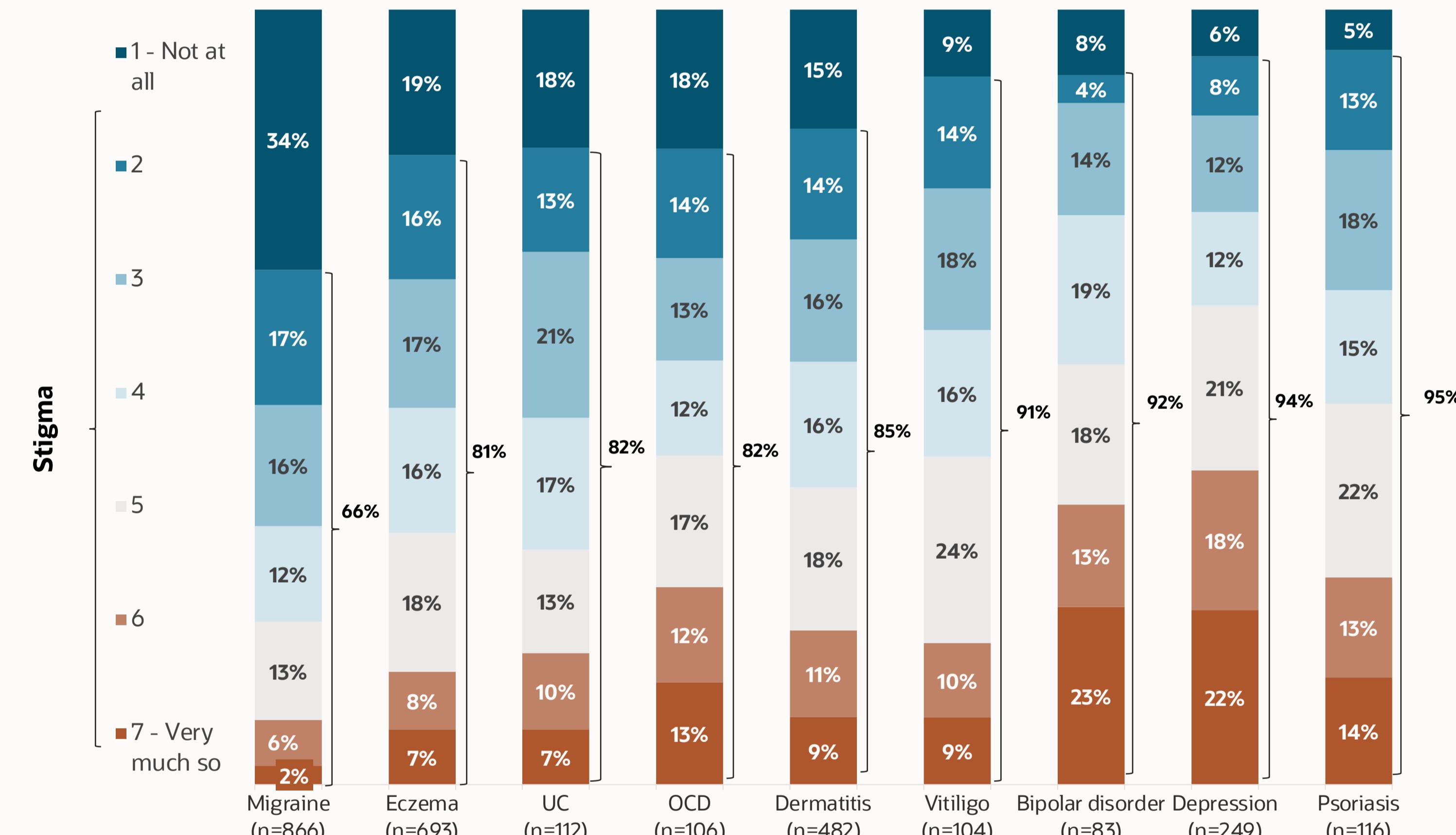


Figure 3: Overall stigmatization across conditions treated with prescription

