

Misconceptions Around Mental Health: Survey Analysis

Speaking Grey has published two surveys in order to collect data regarding common misconceptions among the primary audience of Speaking Grey. The survey included questions regarding the responder's mental health history, their support system or lack thereof, as well as questions outlining the responder's biases. In order to obtain a clear grasp on biases in people who are confident in their mental health knowledge and people who are not, the respective groups were given different copies of the survey. It is important to note, however, that the two surveys contain the same questions in the same order.

Out of 167 responders total, the overwhelming majority (72.45%) responded that they have confidence in their mental health knowledge, while only a small percentage (27.54%) of the responders claimed not to have a confident grasp on mental illnesses.

Section 1- Responders Composition

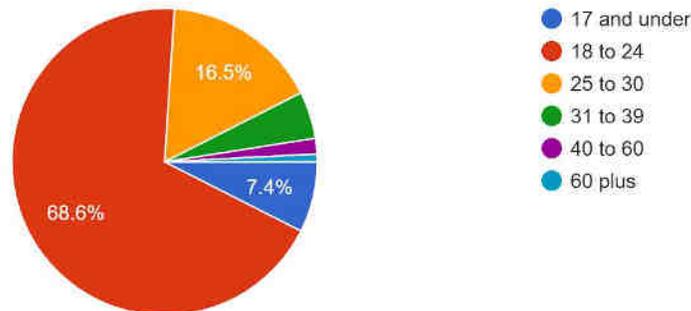
As stated above, out of 167 responders total, 121 responders felt confident about their mental health knowledge, while the other 46 did not feel confident. The two groups' compositions were similar, but unique in their own ways.

Confident

From this group, 42.1% of them claimed to be suffering from mental illness of any kind, while the majority (57.9%) claimed they were not. However, 75.2% from the total 121 confident responders confessed that they have suffered from any form of mental health issue in the past, making it highly probable that a significant portion of the confident group are composed of people who have overcome mental illnesses in the past.

4. Age Bracket

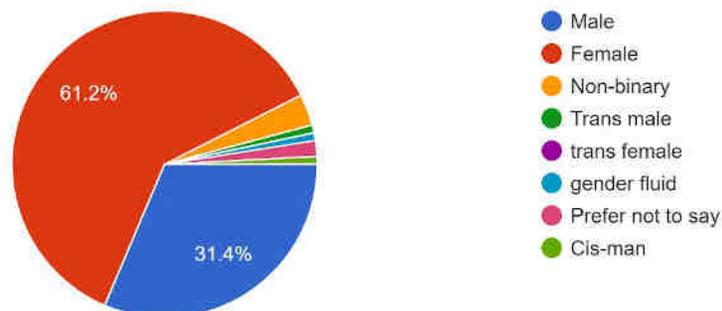
121 responses



As pictured above, the vast majority of the responders in the confident group are aged 18 to 24. This may be because the promotion for this particular survey has been through social media and the internet, exposing the survey to young adults more than any other age group. The smallest age group in the survey was age 60 and up, which only consisted of 0.8%. Additionally, age 31 to 30 made up around 5% of the confident responders, and age 40 to 60 made up 1.7%.

6. Gender

121 responses



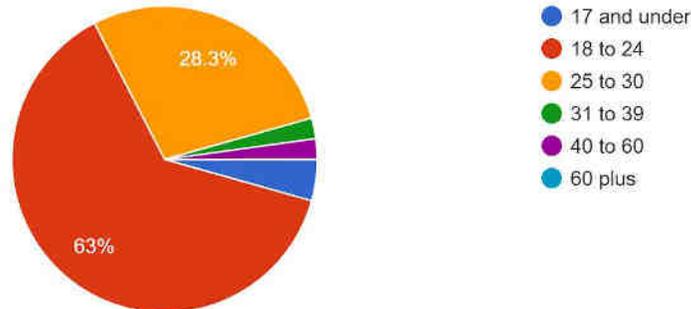
Majority of the confident group were female, with the next largest group being male (61.2% and 32.2%, respectively). While the chart above pictures 31.4%, one responder added their own category of “cis-man,” which has the same denotation of “male” category. Therefore, the two percentages (31.4% and 0.8%) were merged together. There were a significant percentage of non-binary people as well, 3.3% of the confident group. The other smaller groups of responders were transgendered male, 0.8%, gender fluid, 0.8%, and 1.7% of the confident responders preferred not to say.

Unconfident

Out of 167 responders, 46 of them claimed not to be confident in their knowledge in mental illnesses or in mental health. Out of those 46 responders, a simple majority of them claimed to be currently experiencing mental illnesses (58.7%), while the rest (41.3%) were not. Additionally, 71.7% of this group reported to have suffered from mental health problems in the past, while 28.3% did not. From this acquired data, it is possible that a significant portion of people in this unconfident group have been suffering from mental illnesses in the past, but are relatively new to living with mental illnesses. It is also possible that they have always been suffering from mental illnesses, but have recently been diagnosed.

4. Age Bracket

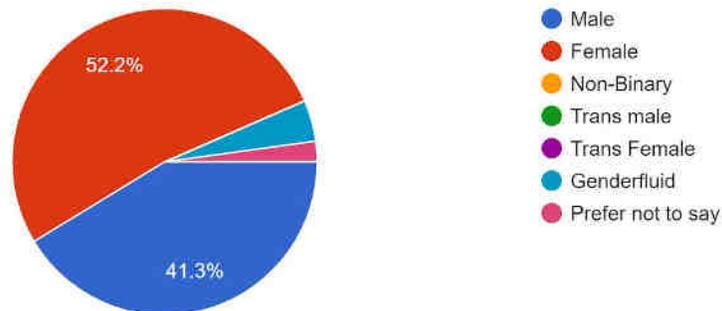
46 responses



As pictured above, the vast majority of the responders were aged from 18 to 25 (63%). However, this group is composed of a larger percentage of people from ages 25 to 30, making up 28.3% of the group. Other than the two major age brackets, the other age-groups include: ages 31 to 39 (2.2%), 40 to 60 (2.2%) and ages 17 and under (4.3%). There were no respondents aged 60 and above in the unconfident group.

6. Gender

46 responses

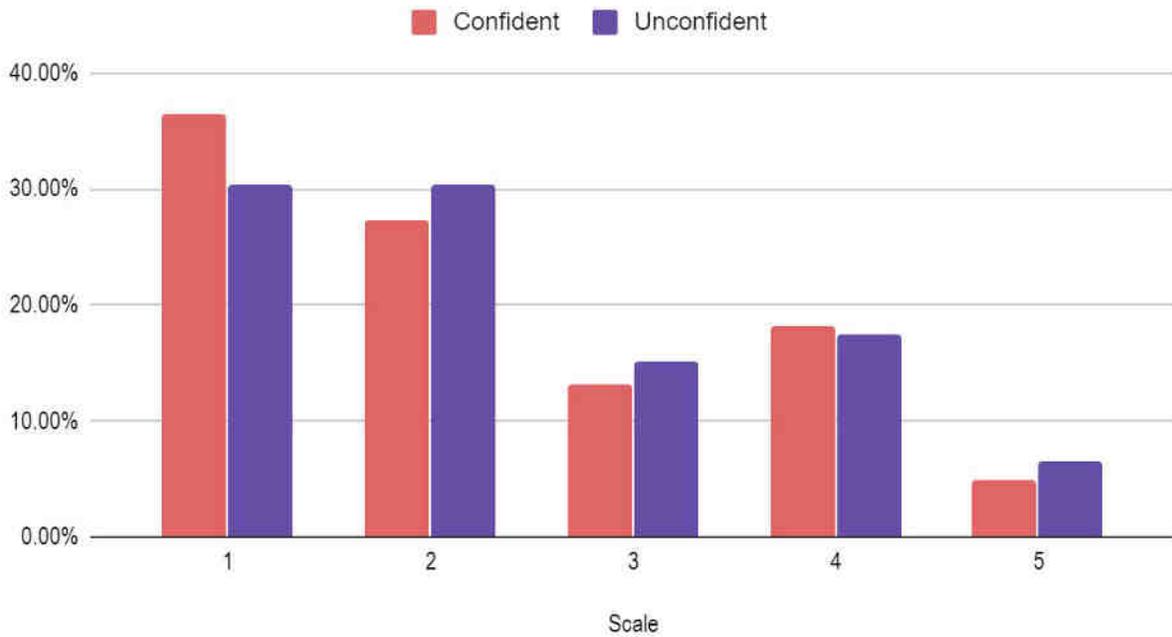


While the majority of people in this group was still female, the percentage of male is much greater in the unconfident group (52.2% and 41.3%, respectively). There is also less variation in the unconfident group, with 4.3% of the responders being genderfluid and 2.2% of the responders preferring not to disclose. Overall, there was less variation of gender in the unconfident group than the confident.

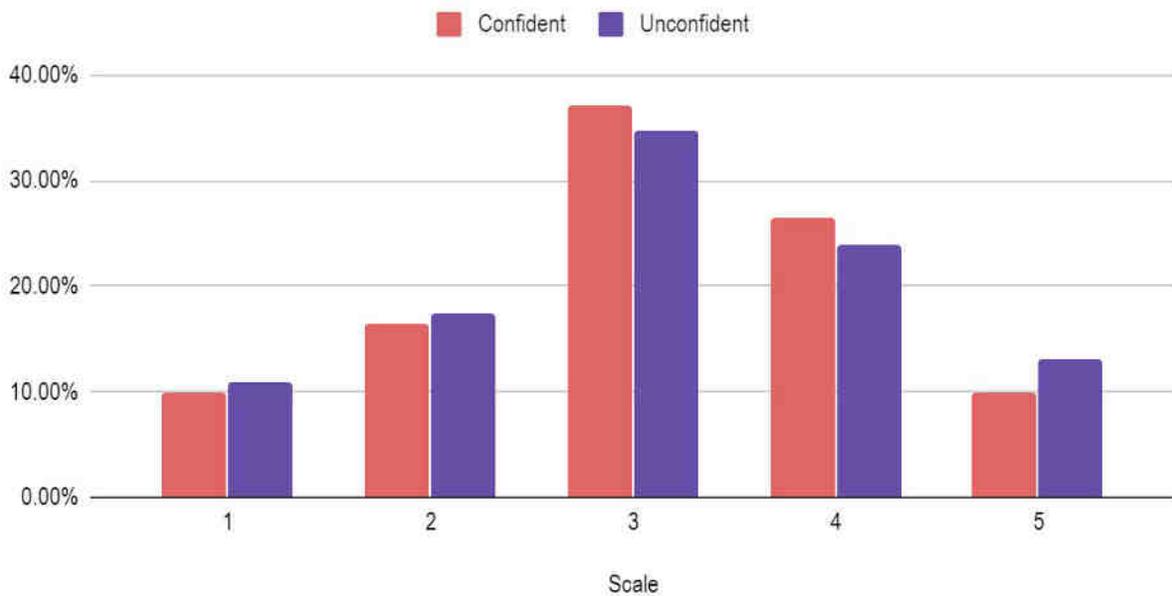
Section 2- Mental health priorities, and its perceived view

The first eleven questions were designed to find out how much the responders value their mental health, as well as how they think their peers perceive mental illness. Both groups of responders, people who are confident in their knowledge and people who are not, followed a similar trend in their answers, in questions number 2, 3, 4, and 10, as illustrated by the following charts. The responders answered from a sliding scale of 1 to 5, one being strongly disagree to five meaning strongly agree:

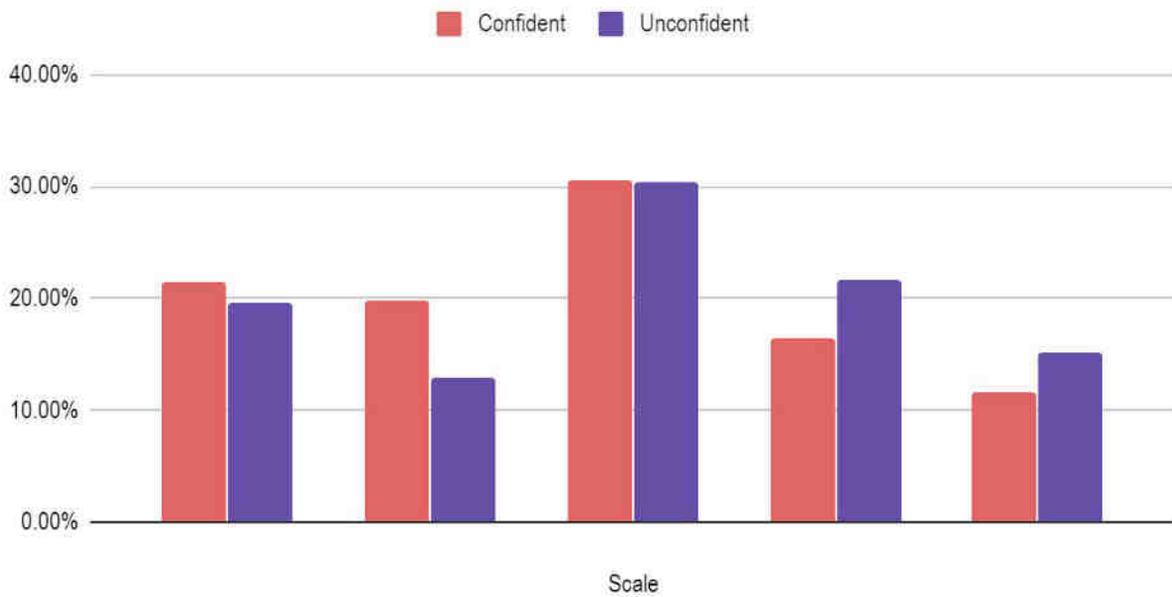
2. Mental Health is My Primary Concern: Confident v. Unconfident



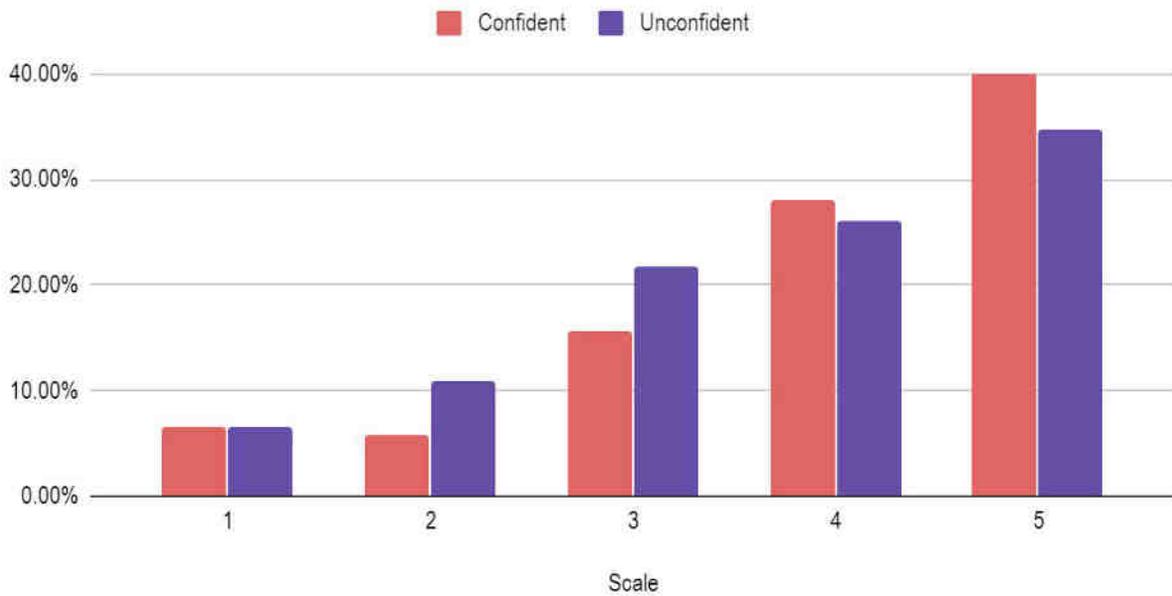
3. Physical Health Takes Priority in my Life: Confident v. Unconfident Comparison



4. I am to Blame for my own Mental Problems: Confident v. Unconfident Comparison

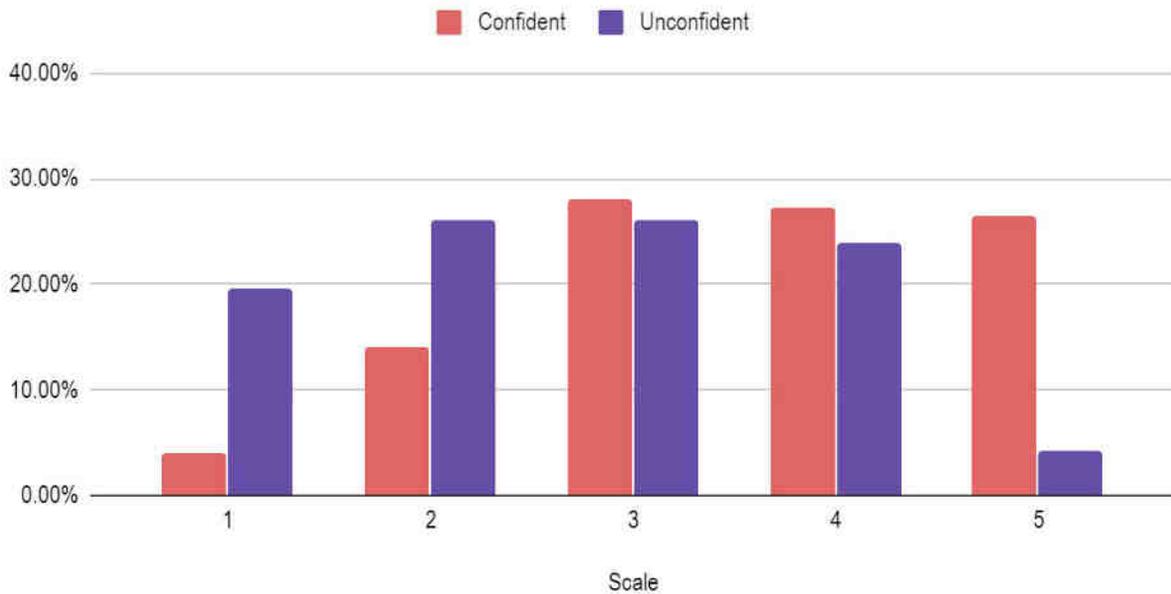


10. I am not Ashamed of my Mental Health Problems: Confident v. Unconfident Comparison



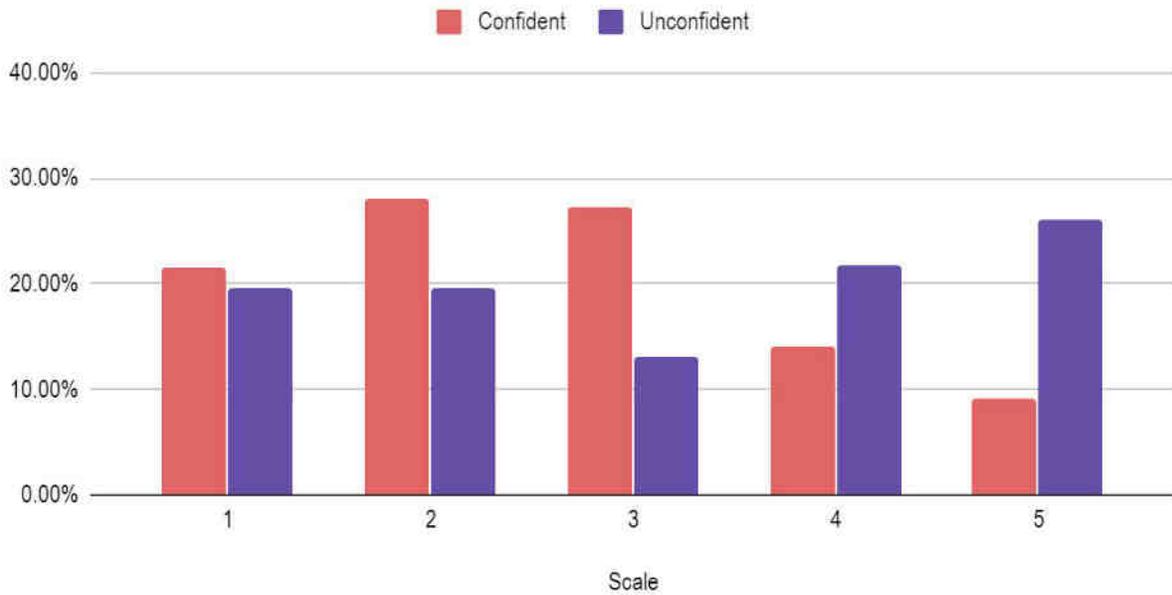
The rest of the questions, namely the questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11, all showed different trends.

1. I Feel Safe to be Open About my Mental Health with People Around me: Confident v. Unconfident



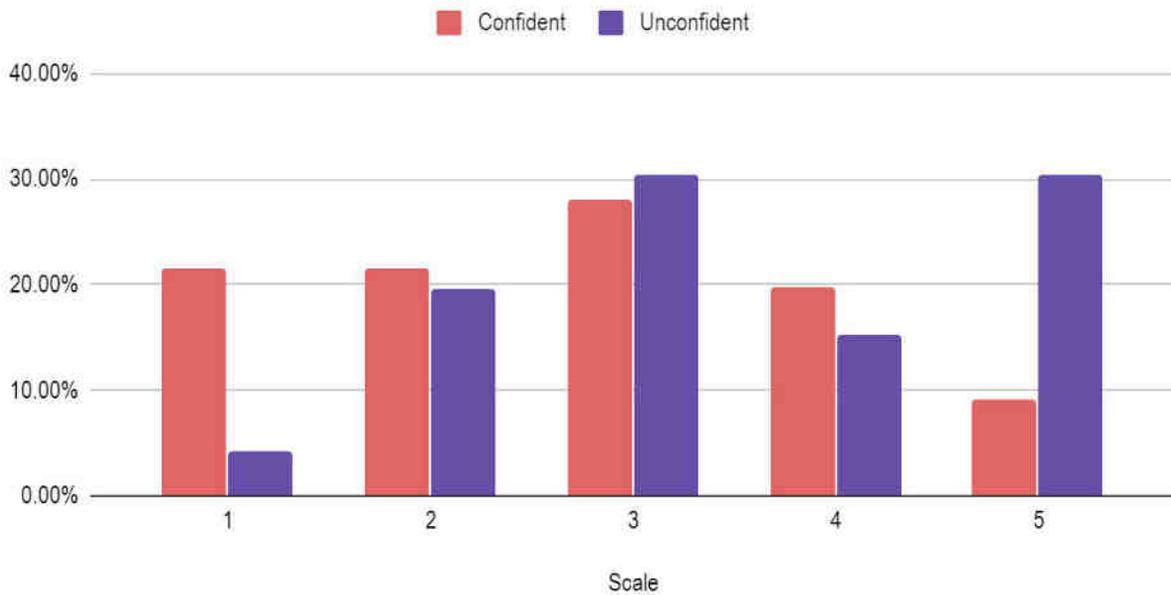
The first question asked if the responders felt safe to be open about their mental health with people around them. The answers from respective groups revealed two different trends, with people who are confident more likely in feeling safe to talk about their mental health with people around them. However, it should be noted that people who feel neutral about this matter are similar in both groups, for 26.1% of the not confident group and 28.1% of the confident group answered “3”.

5. I Would not Want to Tell Other People About my Psychological Treatments: Confident v. Unconfident Comparison



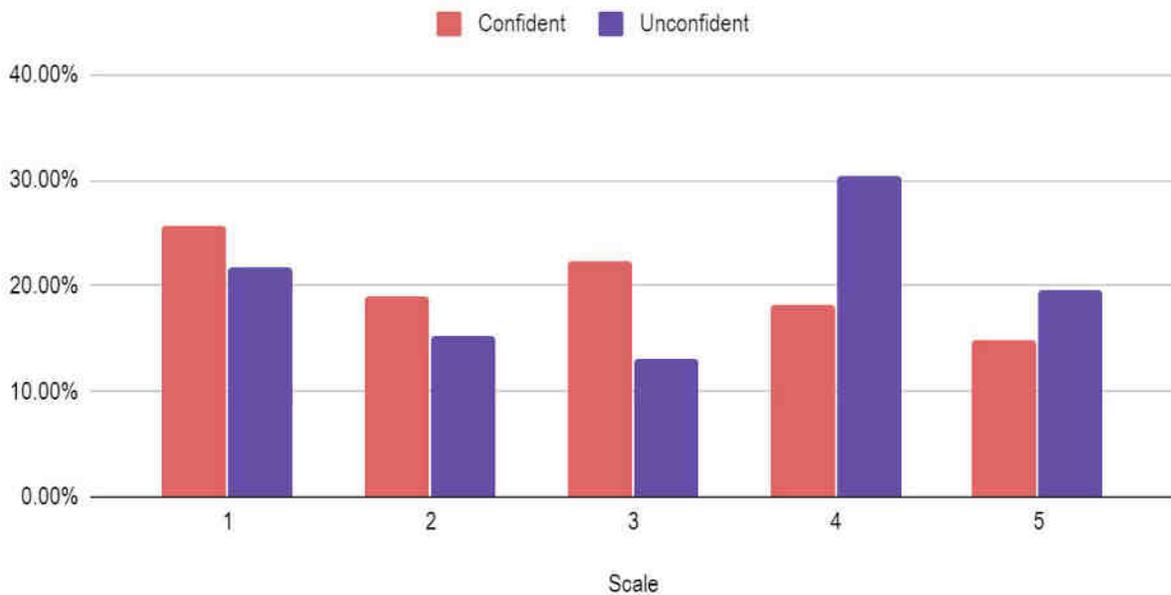
The fifth question inquired if the person would feel adverse to telling other people about their psychological treatments, including therapy. While the confident group's answer trend mostly disagreed with the question, the unconfident group's response was more evenly spread than the confident group. In other words, the confident group were more likely to feel comfortable disclosing their psychological treatment with other people than the unconfident group.

6. I Avoid Telling People About my Mental Health Problems: Confident v. Unconfident Comparison



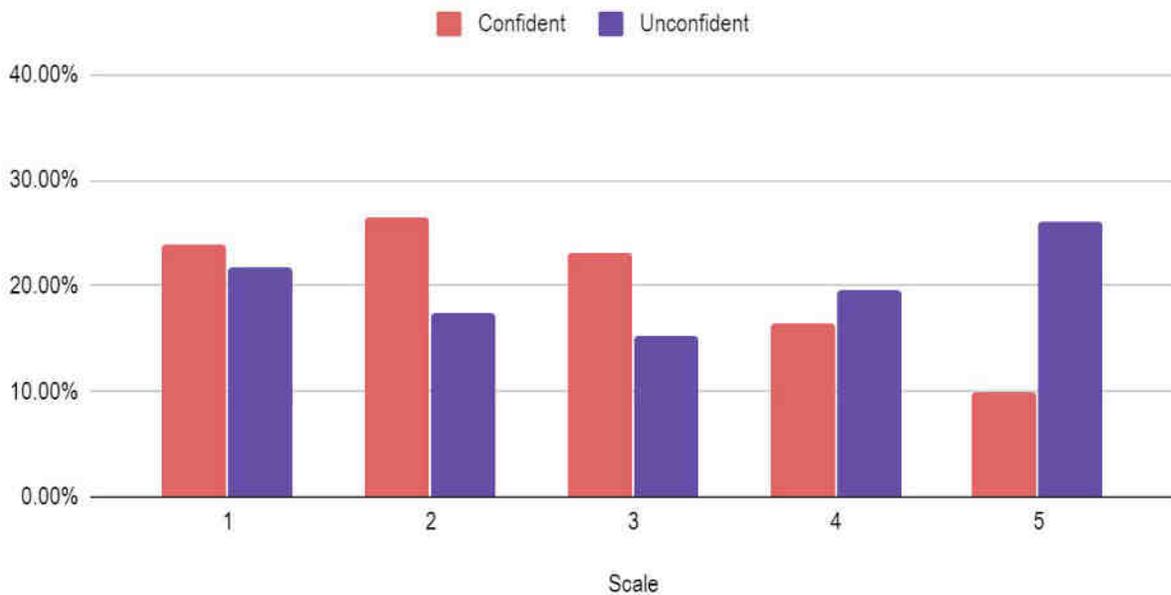
The sixth question was to analyze the differences in perceived social attitudes of both groups, as well as their own. The presented statement was if the responder would avoid telling others about their mental health problems. The confident group's response skewed towards disagreeing with the presented statement (43%) while the unconfident group's response skewed towards agreeing (45.6%). While the two percentages seem to be close, less percentage of people in the unconfident group disagreed with the statement (4.3%) than the confident group (21.5%). Furthermore, the unconfident group were more likely to respond neutrally to the statement (30.4%) than the confident group (28.1%).

7. Mental Health Problems Make me a Burden to Others: Confident v. Unconfident Comparison



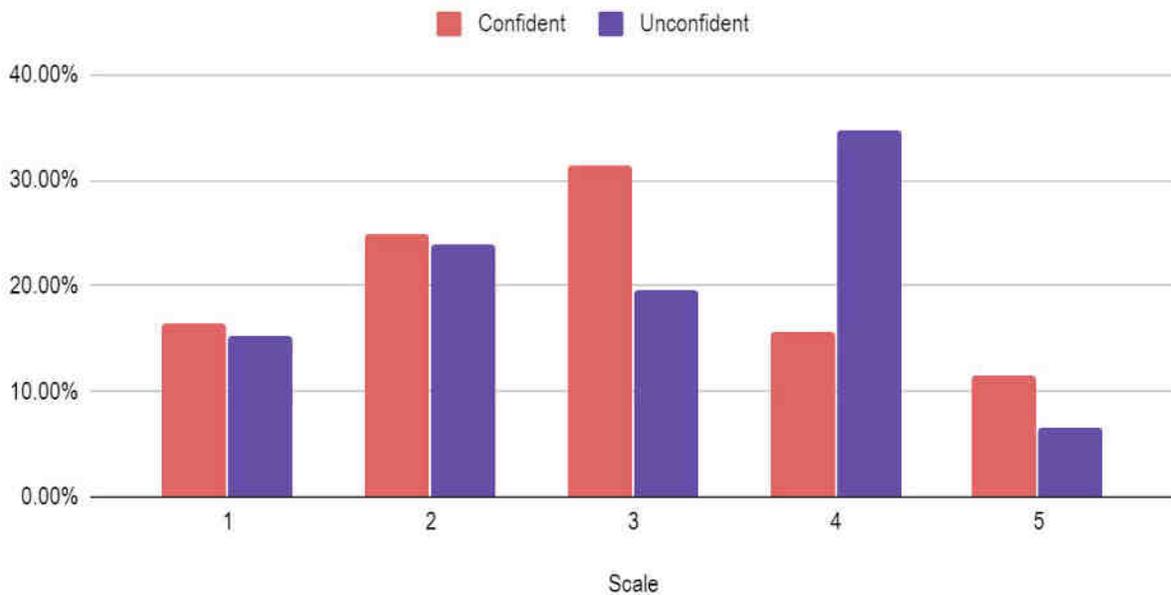
The seventh question was to analyze the perception of the both groups' perspectives on social stigmas of mental illnesses. The statement presented was "mental health problems make [the responder] a burden to others." The confident group response was favored towards disagreeing with the presented statement, with 44.6% of them either strongly disagreeing or simply disagreeing. The unconfident group, however, favored agreeing with the statement, with 50% of the responders either strongly or simply agreeing. It is also important to note that the confident group was more likely to be neutral regarding the presented sentiment (22.3%) than the unconfident group (13%).

8. I Would not Want People to Find out About my Mental Health Related Medications: Confident v. Unconfident Comparison



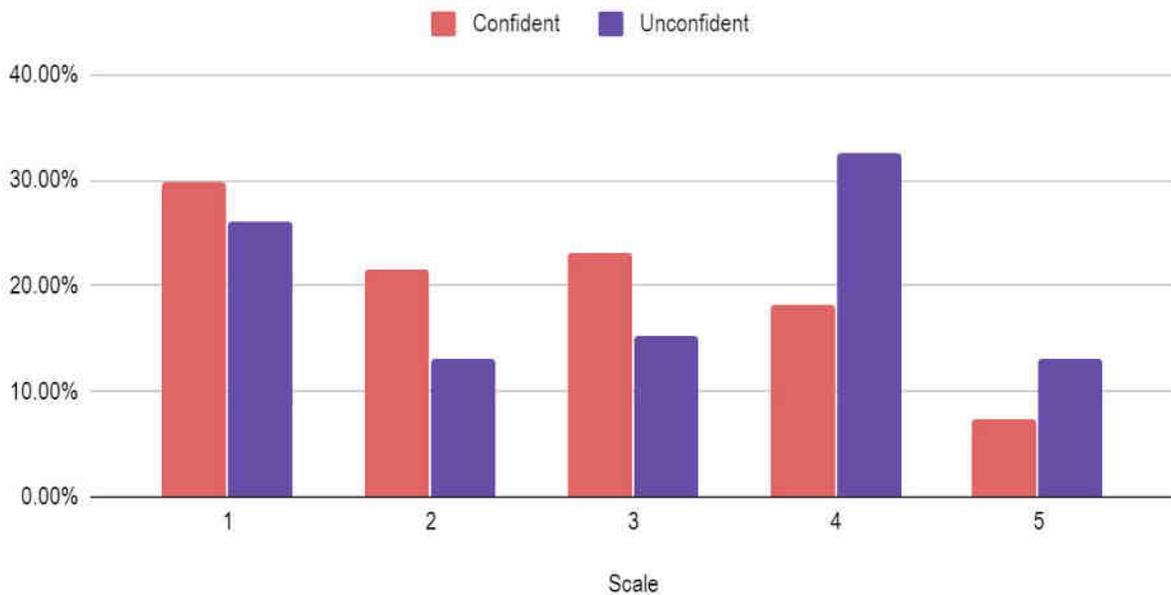
The eight statement was presented to find out about the both groups' biases in drugs for mental illnesses. The presented statement was “[the responder] would not want people to find out about [their] mental-health related medications.” The confident group once again favored disagreeing with the statement, with 50.4% of them choosing to strongly disagree or simply disagreeing, while the unconfident group favored agreeing with the sentiment (45.7%). However, it is imperative to note that a significant percentage of the unconfident group (39.1%) chose to disagree.

9. Some People with Mental Health Problems are Dangerous: Confident vs. Unconfident Comparison



The ninth question was to gauge the responder's stigma behind certain mental illnesses. The presented statement was: "some people with mental health problems are dangerous." The confident group's response slightly favored disagree (41.3%), though a significant percentage (31.4%) chose to neither agree or disagree. In the unconfident group, a significant percentage of responders chose to agree (41.3%), and the amount of people who stayed neutral were noticeably less than the confident group (19.6%).

11. I Feel People Will Avoid me if They Find out About my Mental Health Problems: Confident v. Unconfident Comparison



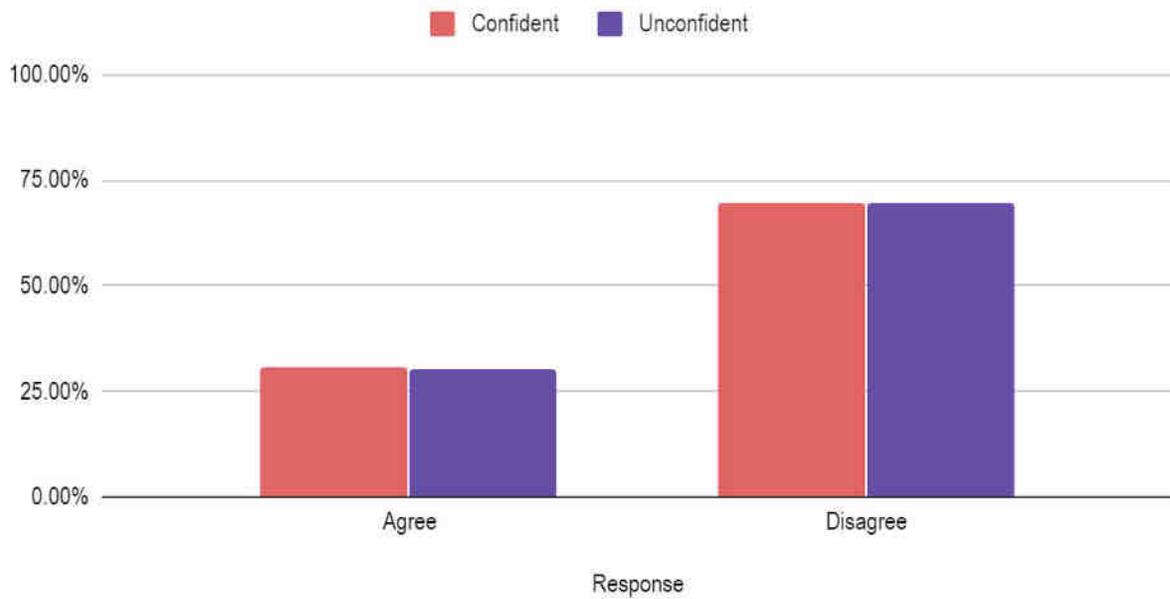
Lastly, the eleventh question was aimed to further obtain the responder’s perception of mental illness within their social circles. The presented statement was: “[the responder will] feel people will avoid [them] if they find out about [their] mental health problems.” The confident group’s response revealed a favor in disagreeing with the statement (51.3%) with a significant percentage of people (23.1%) staying neutral about the matter. In the unconfident group, 46.6% of the people agreed with the presented sentiment, with a significant percentage of them strongly disagreeing (26.1%).

Section 3- Biases of Mental Illnesses

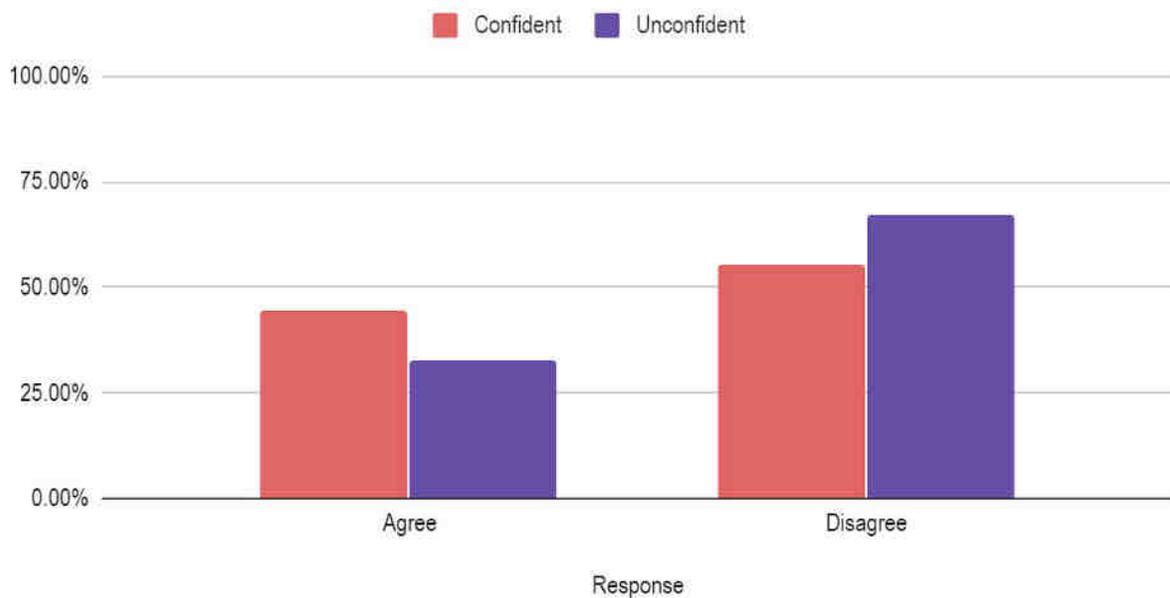
In this section, the questions were formatted as a fill-in-the-blank format, designed to gauge what kind of biases are present in two groups. The responders were given one incomplete sentence, and the questions were the blanks that completed the given phrase. They then answered from two choices “yes” or “no,” depending on if they agreed with the new completed sentence or not.

The two groups, unconfident and confident, followed the same general trend of answers throughout this section, but their answers were especially similar in questions numbers 1, 2, 3, and 8 as pictured be

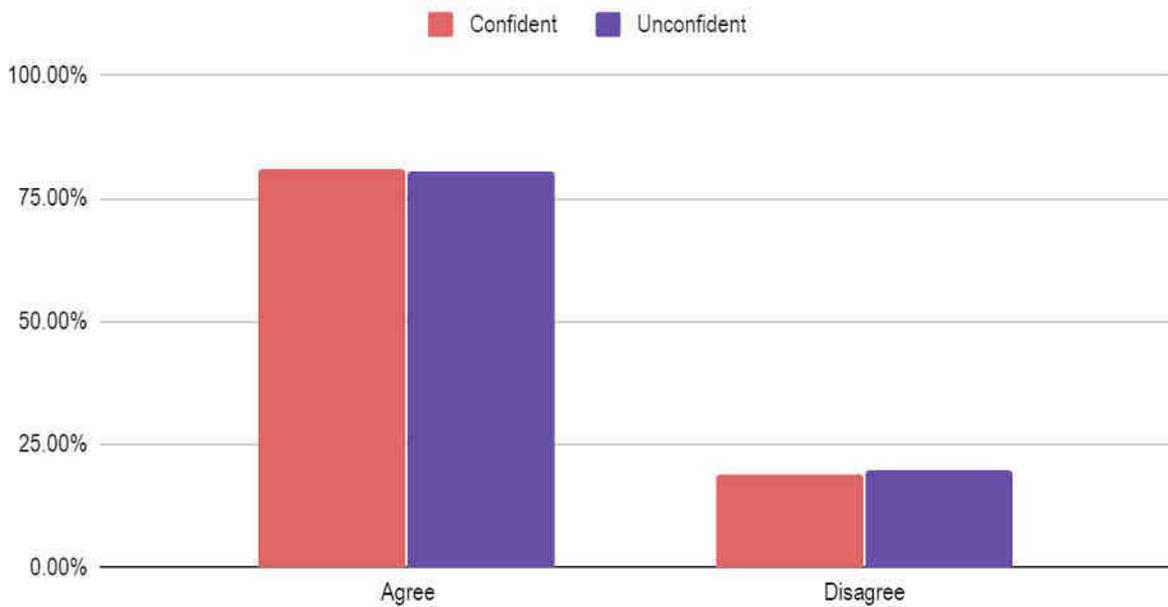
1. I Believe Mental Health Problems are Caused by Lack of Discipline: Confident v. Unconfident



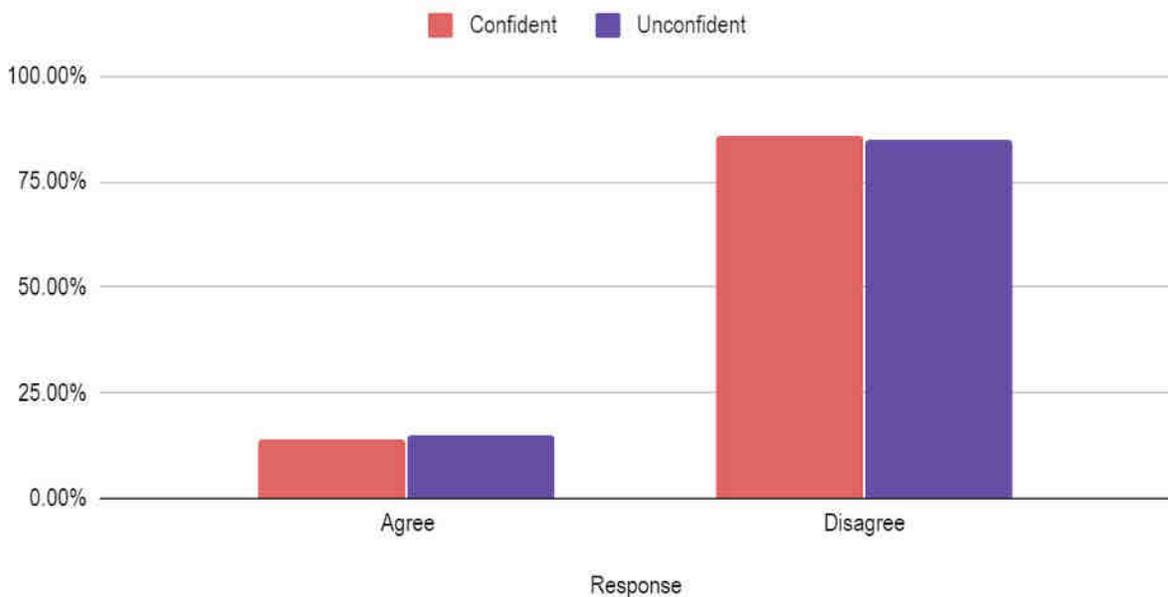
2. I Believe Mental Health Problems are Caused by Drug Use and Alcohol: Confident v. Unconfident



3. I Believe Mental Health Problems are Caused by Chemical Imbalances of the Brain: Confident v. Unconfident

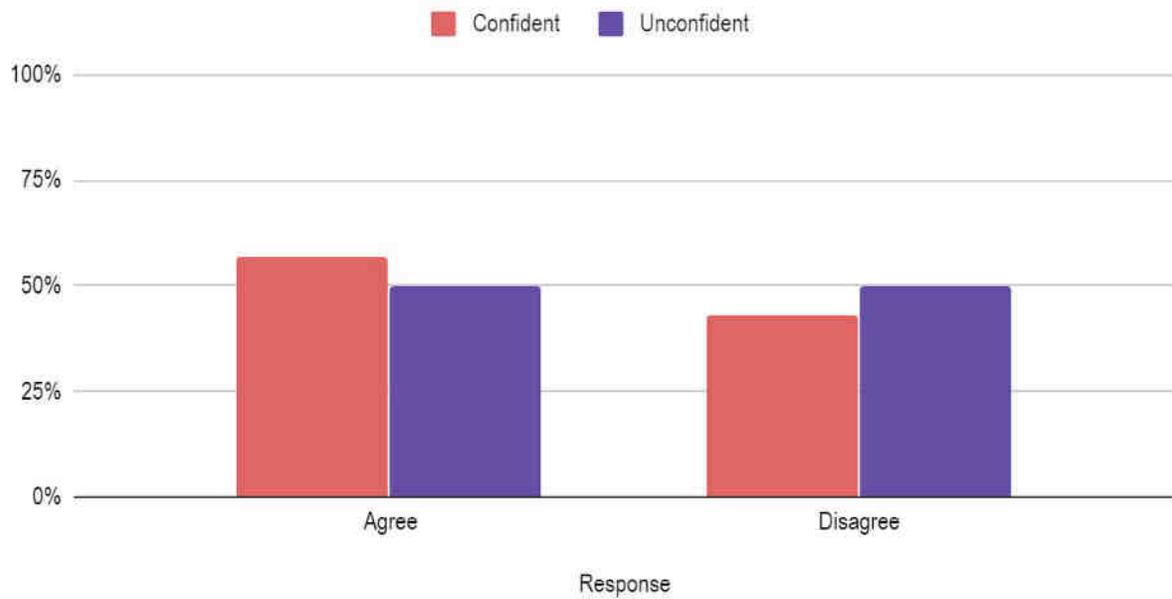


8. I Believe Mental Health Problems are Purely Mental, with no Physical symptoms: Confident v. Unconfident



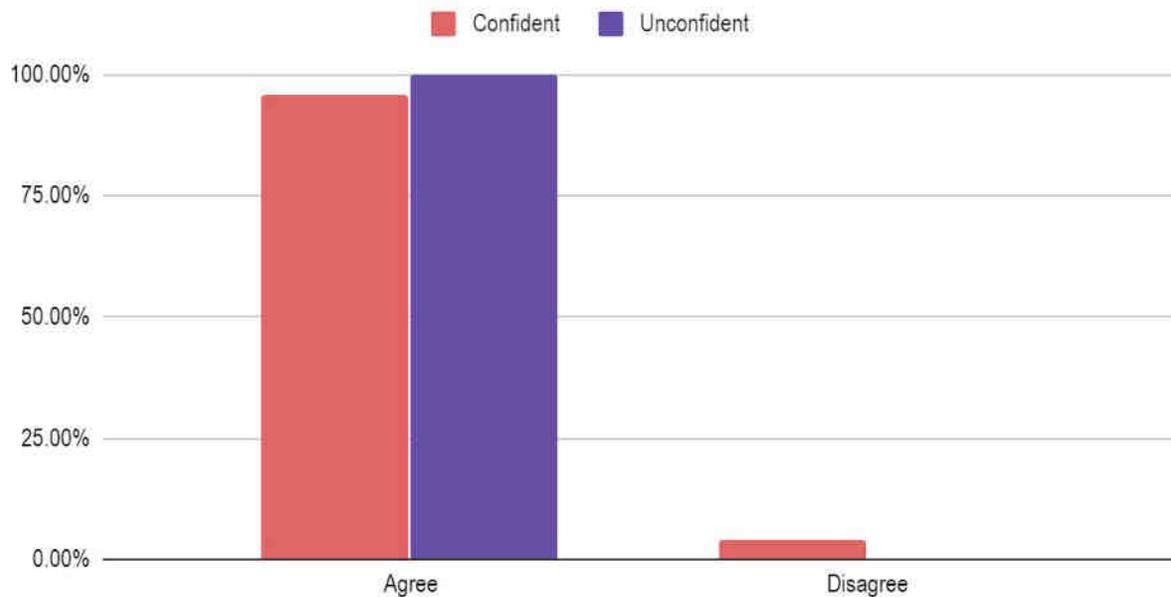
The rest, the question numbers 4, 5, 6, and 7, showed discernable variance between the two groups.

4. I Believe Mental Health Problems are Inherited: Confident v. Unconfident



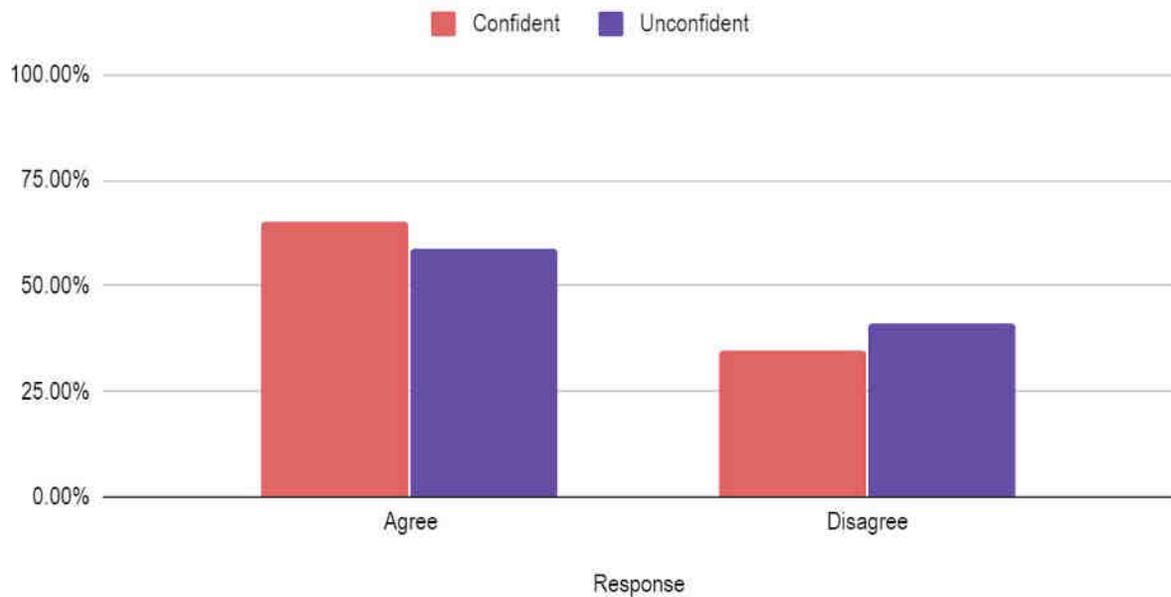
The fourth question asked the two groups regarding one of many factors of mental illnesses-inheritance. The unconfident group was split evenly between two stances, half disagreeing with the idea that mental illnesses were inherited, and the other half agreeing. Meanwhile, 43% of the confident group disagreed with the statement, while 57% agreed.

5. I Believe Mental Health Problems are Caused by Stresses of Life: Confident v. Unconfident



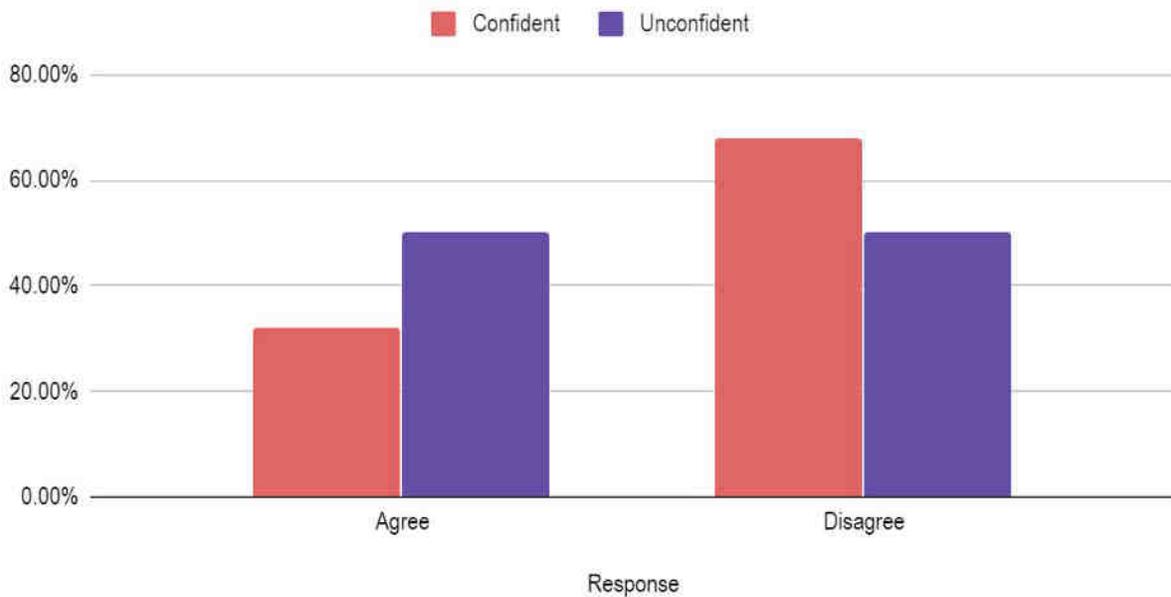
The fifth question asked if the responders believe that mental illnesses were caused by stresses in people's lives. The two groups' general trend in their answers were very similar, but people who did not feel confident in their mental health knowledge came to a general consensus; they all agreed that mental illnesses were caused by stresses in life. However, in the confident group, 4.1% of the group disagreed with the statement.

6. I Believe Mental Health Problems are Caused by Accidental Injuries: Confident v. Unconfident



In the sixth question, while the general trend was similar in both groups, the unconfident group had more percentage of people disagree with the statement: “[responders] believe that mental illnesses are caused by accidental injuries” (41.3%), while only 34.7% of the confident group disagreed.

7. I Believe People with Mental Health Problems Happens to People Who are Emotionally Weak: Confident v. Unconfident



The seventh statement was: “[responders] believe that mental illnesses happens to people who are emotionally weak.” In the unconfident group, this statement was both agreed and disagreed upon equally, while in the confident section, only 32.2% of the people agreed with the presented sentence.

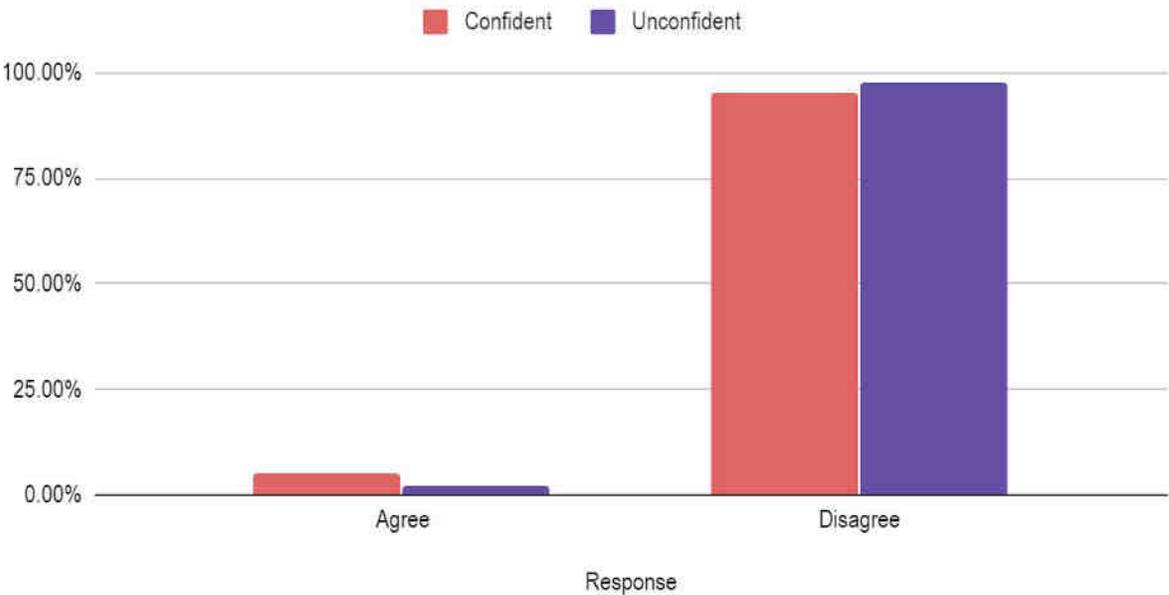
Section 4- General Questions about Mental Health

This section included a total of twelve yes-or-no questions, designed to gauge people’s general stigma and knowledge about mental health in both groups. The questions were also designed to reveal people’s internalized stigmas, and their attitudes of mental health.

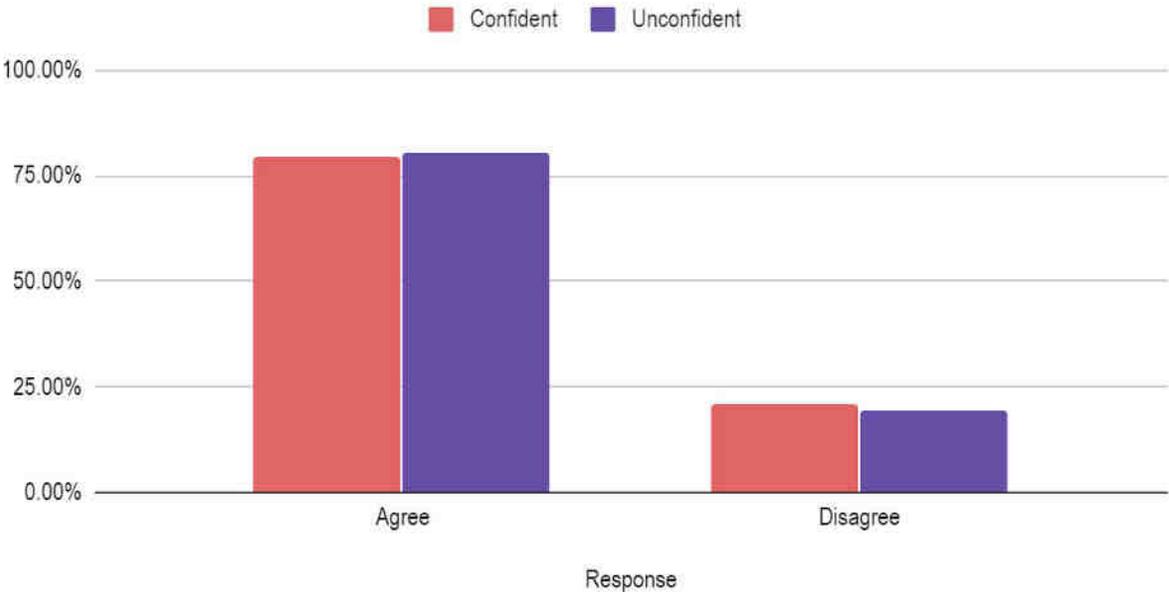
Surprisingly, the confident and unconfident groups followed a very similar pattern of responses throughout the majority of the questions, and whenever there were differences, it was more drastic than other sections.

Question numbers 2 through 7, then numbers 9 through 11, and 13 all yielded very similar trends:

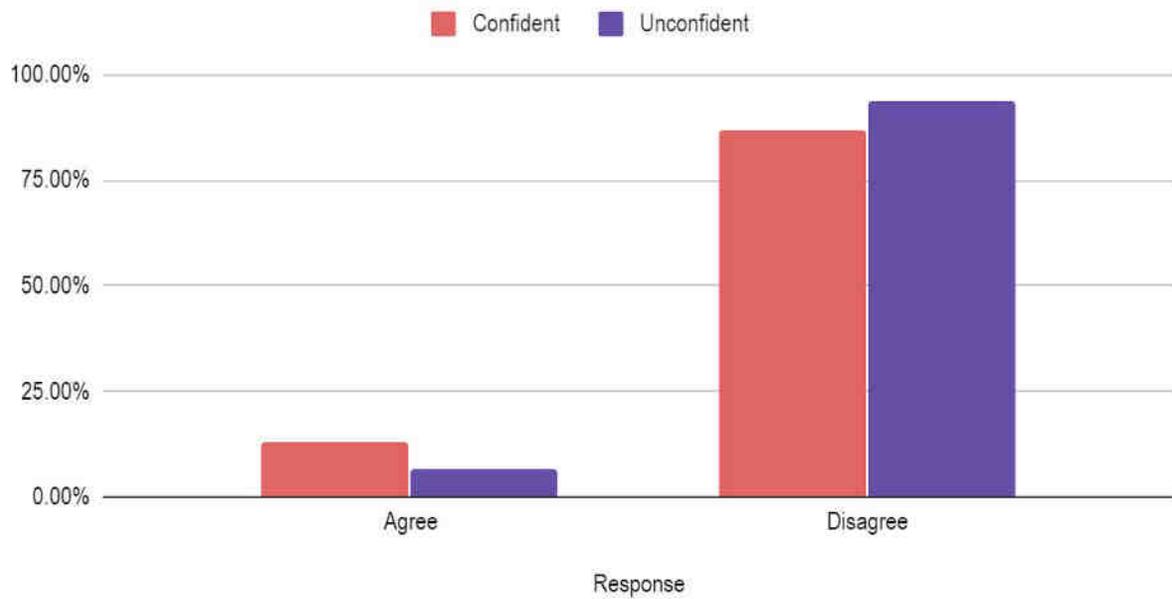
2. Mental Health Problems Only Occur in Adults: Confident v. Unconfident



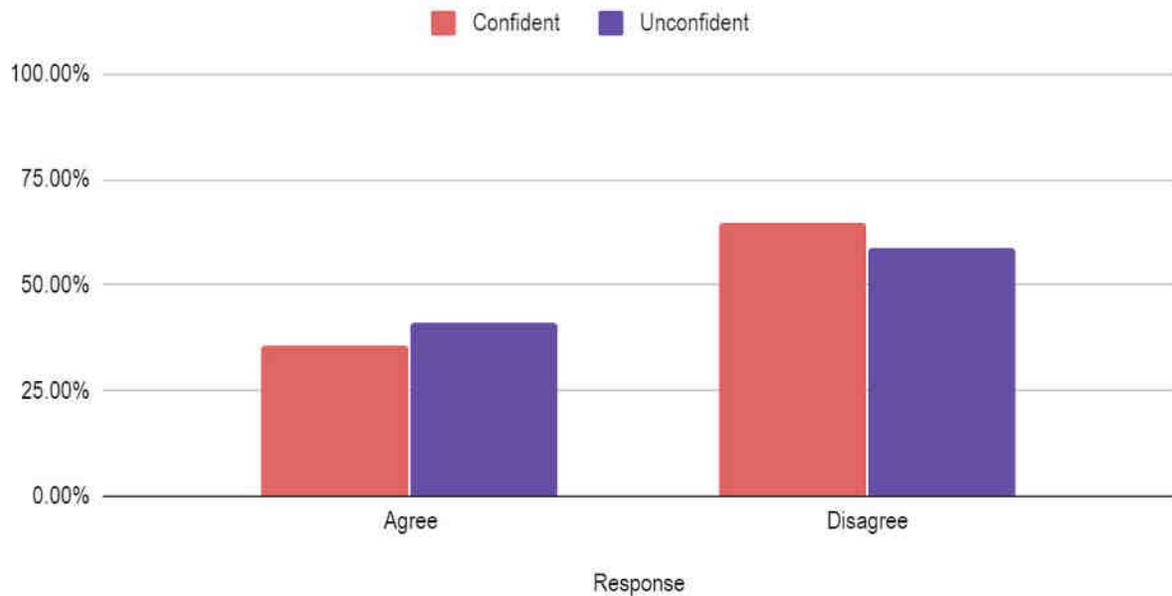
3. Mental Health Problems Arise from Traumatic Events: Confident v. Unconfident



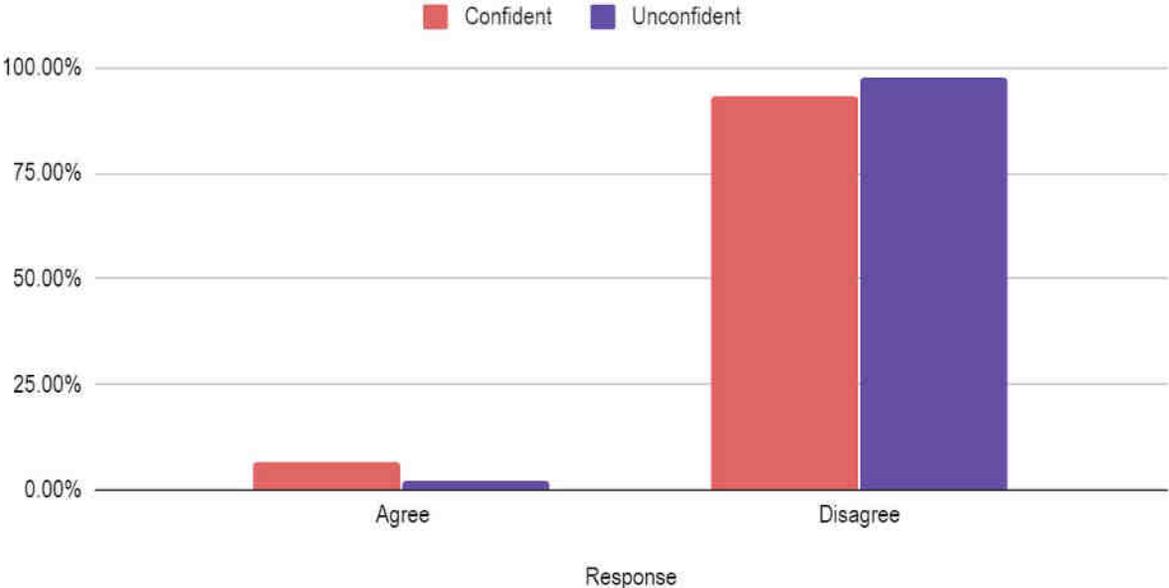
4. Nobody Around me has/had Mental Health Problems: Confident v. Unconfident



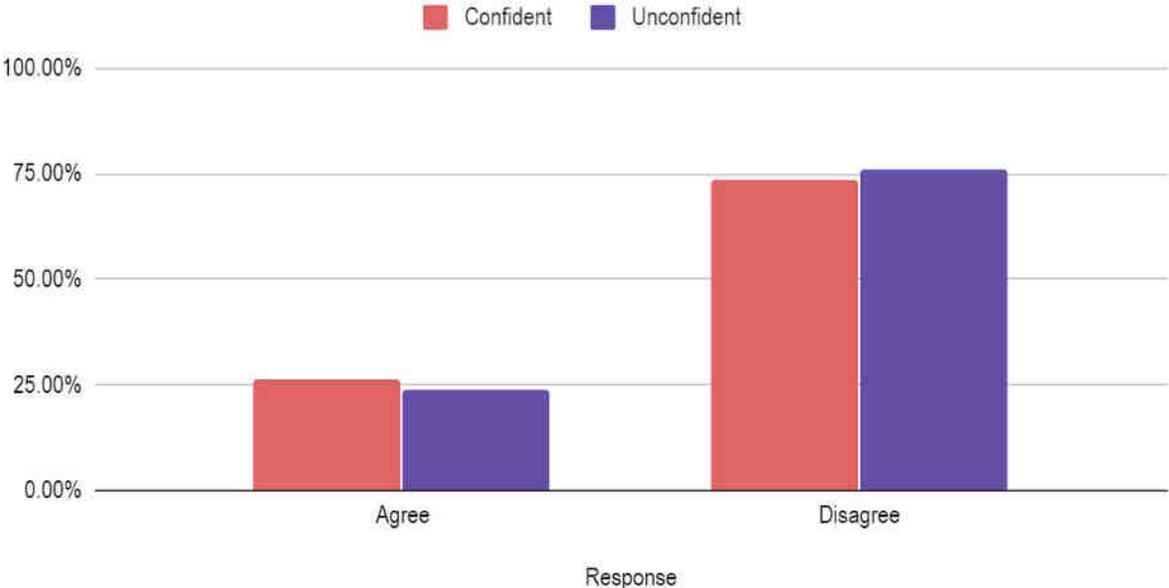
5. People with Mental Health Problems Feel Sad/Depressed most of the Time: Confident v. Unconfident



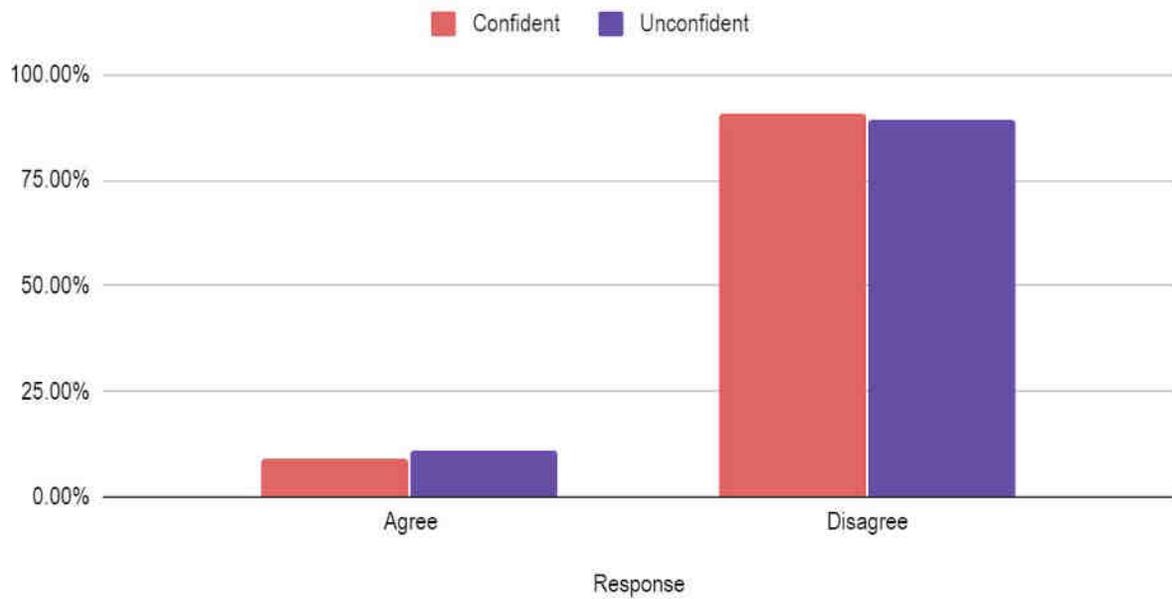
6. People Who are Happy all the Time Cannot Suffer from any Mental Health Problems: Confident v. Unconfident



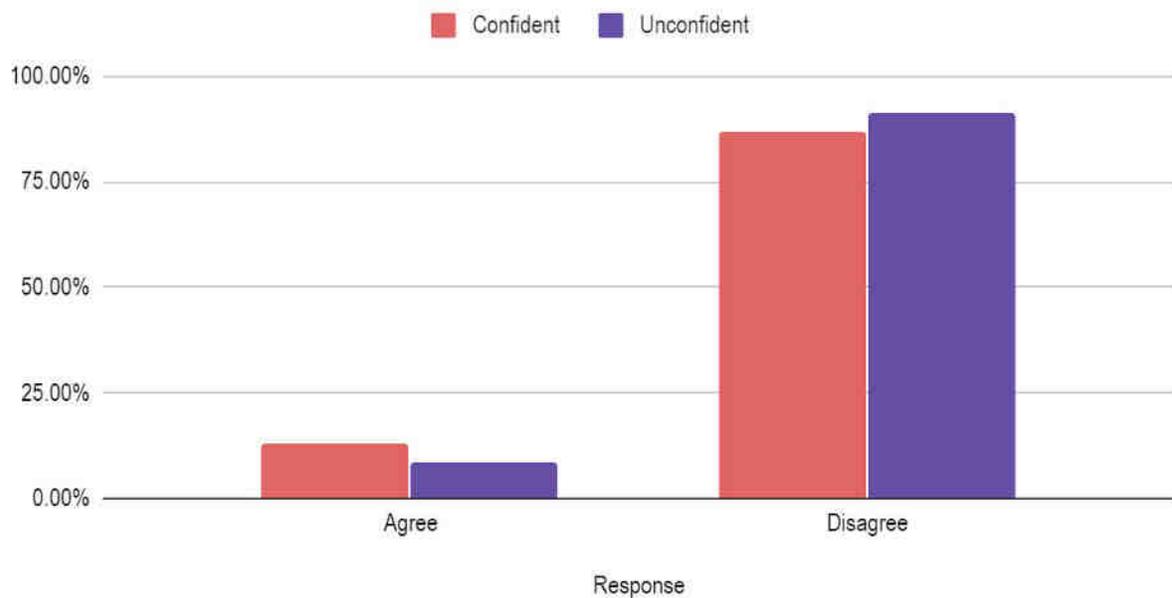
7. Mental Health Problems are More Common in Women: Confident v. Unconfident



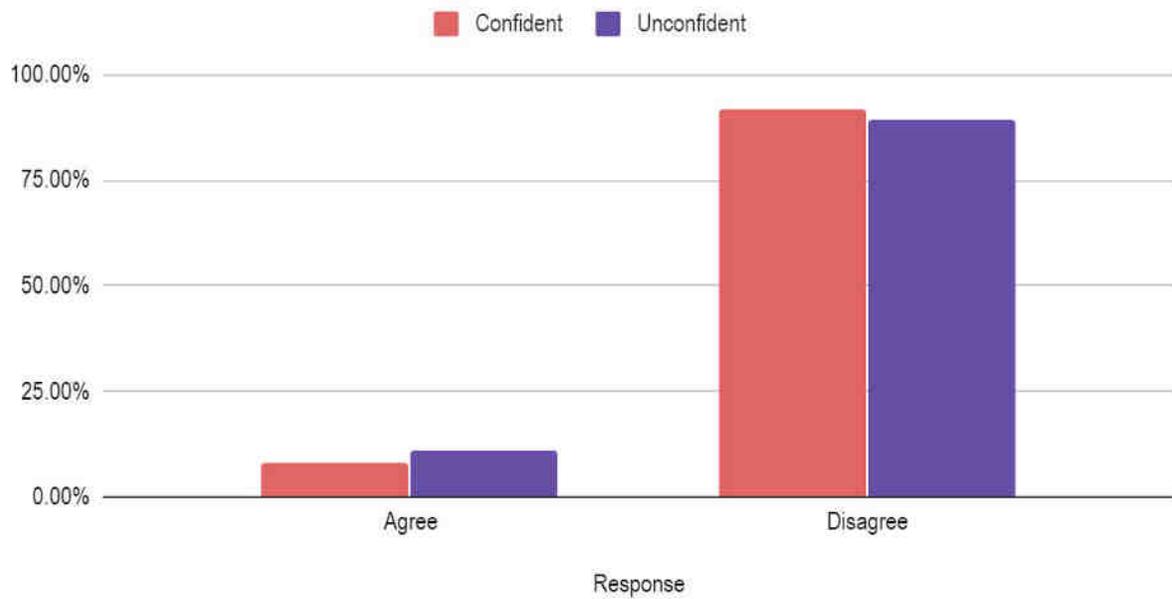
9. I am not Comfortable Around People, Even Friends, Who Have/Had Mental Health Problems: Confident v. Unconfident



10. People Suffering From Mental Illnesses are Violent: Confident v. Unconfident

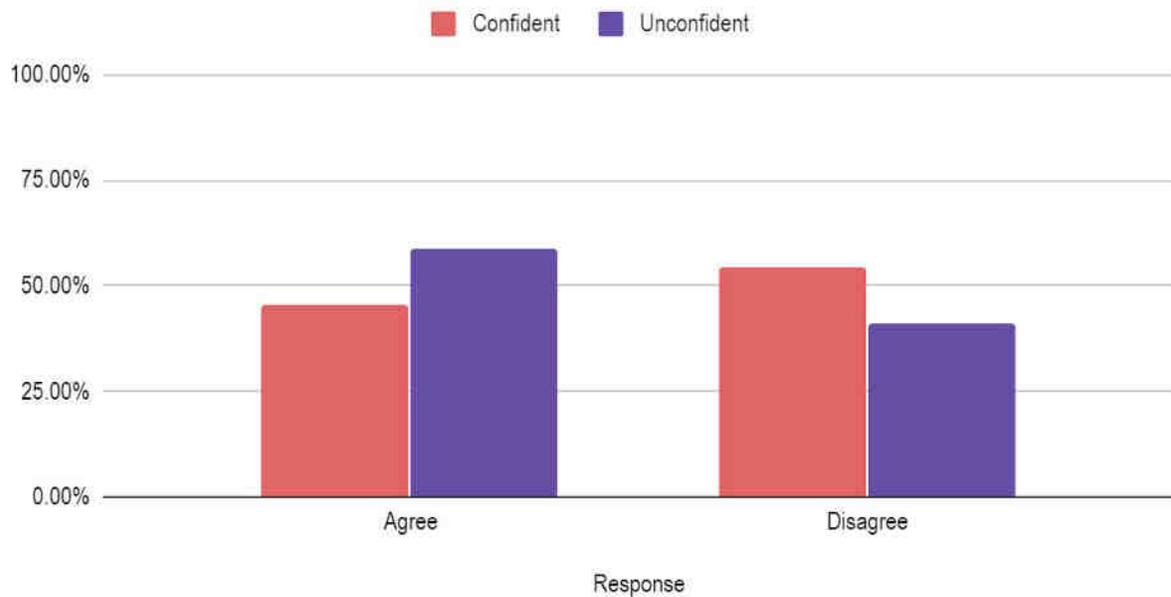


13. It is Embarrassing to Suffer from Mental Illnesses: Confident v. Unconfident



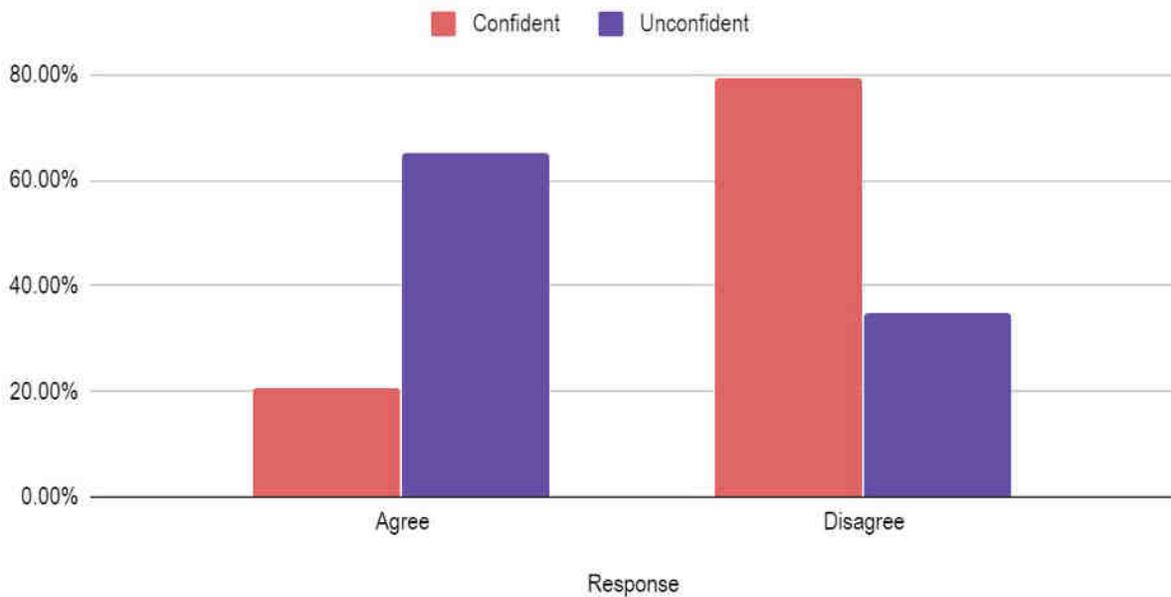
The rest, numbers 1, 8 and 12, either showed a difference in trend or showed a difference in proportion of agree to disagree.

1. It is not Possible to be Completely Free from Mental Health Problems: Confident v. Unconfident



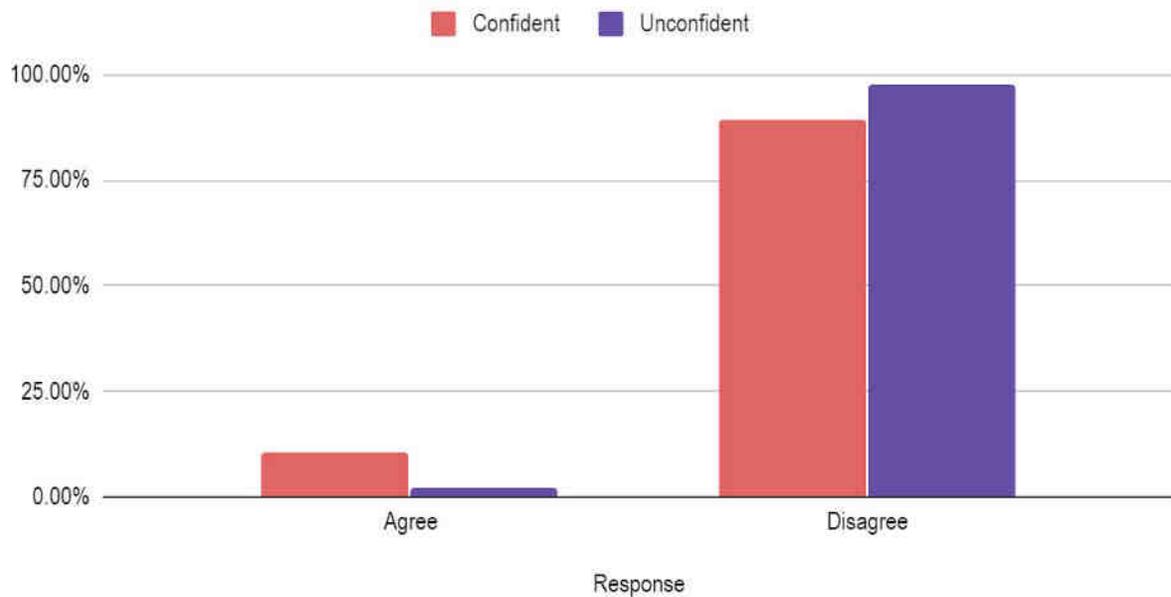
The first question was phrased to find out if either groups thought it was possible to be completely “cured” from mental illnesses. The trends between confident and unconfident groups were discernibly different. The majority of the unconfident group agreed with the presented sentence: “it is not possible to be completely free from mental health problems” (58.7%) while majority of the confident group (54.5%) disagreed.

8. I Don't Know How to React or Support Someone with Mental Health Problems: Confident v. Unconfident



The eighth question sought to learn about the responders' general attitude towards people with mental illnesses; the general trend in this question varied dramatically as well, almost an inverse of each other. The vast majority of the unconfident group (65.2%) agreed with the statement “[responder doesn’t know] how to react or support someone with mental health problems.” In the confident group, 79.3% disagreed.

12. People with Mental Health Issues Cannot be Good at What They Do: Confident v. Unconfident



The twelfth question sought to reveal stigmas people have of people with mental illnesses, asking the responders to either agree or disagree with the presented statement: “people with mental health issues can’t be good at what they do.” While the overall trend was very similar in both groups (97.8% unconfident, 89.3% confident), with the majority disagreeing with the presented sentence, the confident group had a larger percentage of people agree (10.7%).

About the Author

HeeJoo Roh is a Korean-American studying Art and Psychology at Pepperdine University. She aspires to combine her passions and pursue art therapy in the future. In the past, she has worked with various volunteer organizations, leading a group of Korean-American students to various community service events to represent her community. Her drive to represent and bringing down stigmas, as well as her passion for psychology, led to Speaking Grey. She now hopes to represent the mental health community in a more positive, informative light, and work to educate the masses about the truth of mental illnesses.