

INTRODUCTION

Nearly one in two (48.5%) individuals self-reported having a scar on their body : China (37%), Brazil (46%), the United States (53%), Russia (61%) and France (51%). For one subject in five [22%], the scar is less than 1 year old. The average number of scars reported, among people declaring scars, does not differ according to gender [4.1±4.9]. Despite their high frequency, no evaluation has previously considered the impact of climatic, daily life or hygiene factors on scars.

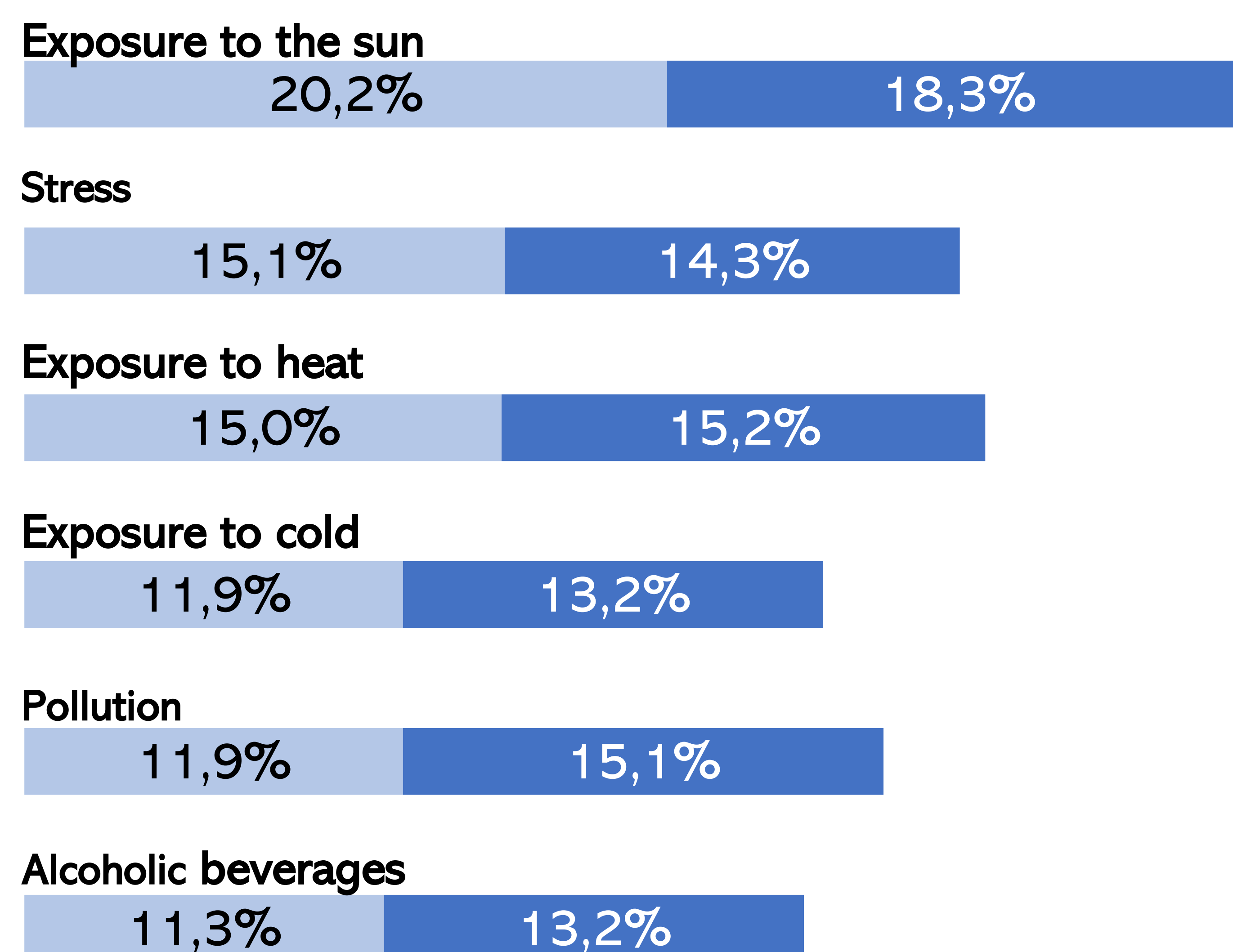
MATERIAL & METHODS

Participants were selected via a stratified random sampling method from a database including several million Internet users who agreed to participate in various panel surveys. We asked about the participants' socio-demographic information, presence and origin of scars, unpleasant sensations (pain) associated with scars by means of an online survey performed in April and May 2020. We asked the individuals who reported having a scar about any changes in the scar (positive, negative, or no change) according to certain factors: climatic factors (exposure to wind, sun, cold, heat, and pollution), daily life factors (food, sports activities, and alcohol consumption) and hygiene factors (shower or bath water temperature and use of cosmetics). To simplify completion of the surveys, we focused on the most recent scar only.

RESULTS

5384 individuals reported at least one scar. A total of 4412 individuals agreed to answer the series of questions. The 5 most frequent situations in which the individuals observed negative changes were exposure to the sun (19.2%), exposure to heat (15%), stress (14.6%), exposure to cold (12.5%) and alcohol consumption (12.2%). The 4 most frequent situations in which the individuals observed positive changes were consumption of a balanced diet (15.5%), the use of cosmetics (12.0%), sport activity (10.6%) and showering (10.0%). There were gender differences in perceived reasons for scar changes: 17.4% of the men (n=377) considered a balanced diet to have a positive impact, in comparison to only 13.7% of the women (n=304) (p-value=0.001).

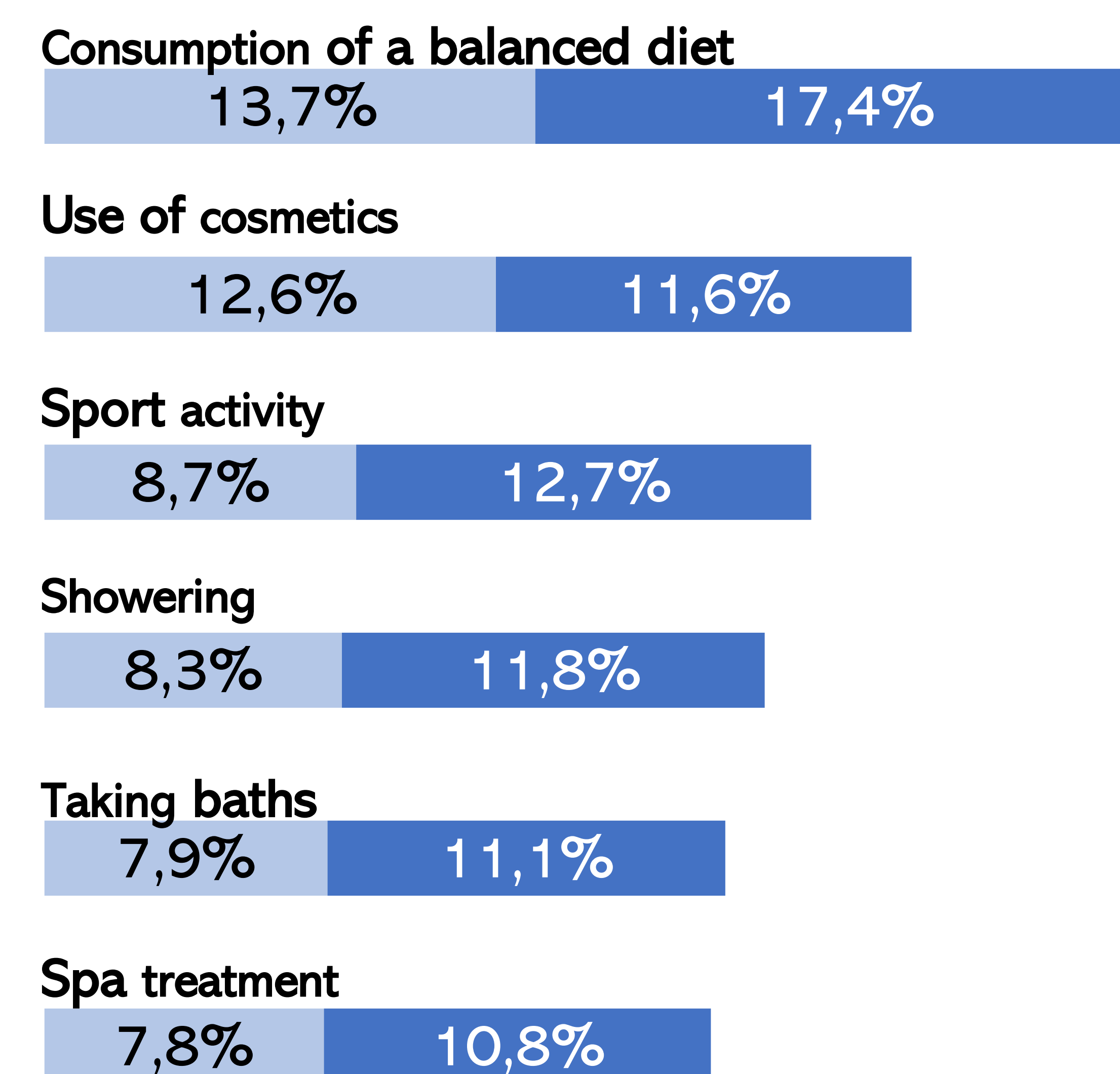
Situation considered to have a negative impact



A total of 12.7% of the men (n=275) considered sport activities to have a positive impact, compared to only 8.7% of the women (n=192) (p-value=0.001). In addition, 15.1% of the men (n=326) believed that pollution could have a negative impact, in comparison to only 11.9% of the women (n=263) (p-value=0.001).

A total of 18.3% of the men and 20.2% of the women indicated that sun exposure could have a negative impact on the scar. However, when we questioned the same individuals, only 31% declared that they protected their scars from the sun [36.2% of the women and 25% of the men, p-value <0.0001]. To protect themselves from the sun, 66% of the individuals used clothing, 47% used sunscreens and 7% used food supplements.

Situation considered to have a positive impact



■ Men ■ Women

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

There is room for improvement in the management of scars. Informing patients about the minimum precautions to be taken could improve scar management. Moreover, it would be appropriate to compare the perception of individuals regarding the (positive or negative) impact of certain situations on their scars with the scientific reality, when documented. Raising health professionals' awareness of this subject - which is not often discussed during consultations - would also improve management.