

Attitudes and behaviors regarding sun exposure of French Population

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INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE

Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the main preventable risk factor for skin carcinomas Limited information is available regarding sun protection behaviour in patients in France. The aim of this study was to aims to investigate the level of awareness on the risks related to sun exposure, attitude towards sun protection and sun protection behaviour in French Population.

MATERIAL & METHODS

A representative sample of the French population over the age of 16 was selected using the quota method. The questionnaire gathered information about the patients' demographic and socio-demographic profiles. The patients were asked to specify the times of exposure to the sun, the notion of knowledge of the recommendations of the public health experts who advise against exposure between 11 am & 4 pm, the reasons for which they were exposed to the sun at these times and the use or not of sun protection products. It was asked to specify the motivations given by the users and the justifications delivered by the non-users of sun protection products.

RESULTS

A population of 4000 was selected, including 1954 (48.9%) males and 2046 (51,1%) females respectively (mean age 45.54+/-16.69. (16-83 years). 1607 (40.2%) respondents reported that they were exposed to the sun between 11am & 4pm. The most frequent reason for this risk behaviour was that it corresponded to the most pleasant hours of the day (31.9%) and those the most convenient times of the day for their activities (28.2%). Only 3.5% say they don't believe prevention messages! Age less than 40 years (48.7% vs 34.3%, p <0.0001) and gender (Male 45.8% vs Female 34.8%, p: <0.0001) are associated with a risk of exposure between 11 am & 4 pm. 75.9% (n=3038) of the respondents declared being aware of the recommendations of public health experts who advise against exposure between 11am & 4pm. Respondents who expose themselves between 11 am & 4 pm were less informed of these recommendations as other patients (71.4% vs 79.0%, p <0.0001) Among respondents who say they have been exposed to 2076/2776 (74.8%) used sunscreen products during the sunniest period (32.8%-n=910- every two hours). The motivation of those who use sun protection products is mainly the wish and to reduce the risk of sun burns (71.0%) and to limit the risk of skin cancers (46.0%) (table 1). Even so, 22.7 % admit to using sun cream to spend more time in the sun. On the other hand, among those who say they expose themselves, 700 individuals (25.2%) replied that they do not apply sun protection products and 1166 (42%) that they do not apply sun cream as recommended. They explain their behaviour by the fact that they do not think about it (55.7%), they find it tedious (21.9%). While 19% find the products too expensive, 17. % think it's not useful!

DISCUSSION

This is the first study to assess both sun exposure risk behaviours and sunscreen use in a French representative population. Despite widespread dissemination of public health messages about the importance of sun protection almost 40.2% of French adults do not protect themselves from sun exposure between 11 am & 4 pm. It is interesting to note that these high-risk skin cancer patients were less informed about sun protection recommendations as other patients. This suggests the need for an additional education program among these high-risk skin cancer patients to change their behaviour. Only 32.8% used sun protection products every 2 hours during the sunniest time. We have highlighted that the motivation of those who apply sunscreen products is not only the desire to protect themselves from the risk of sun burns but also to limit the risk of skin cancers It is important to pursue an effective education policy on the effective use of sun protection. More targeted methods should be developed to prevent skin cancer.

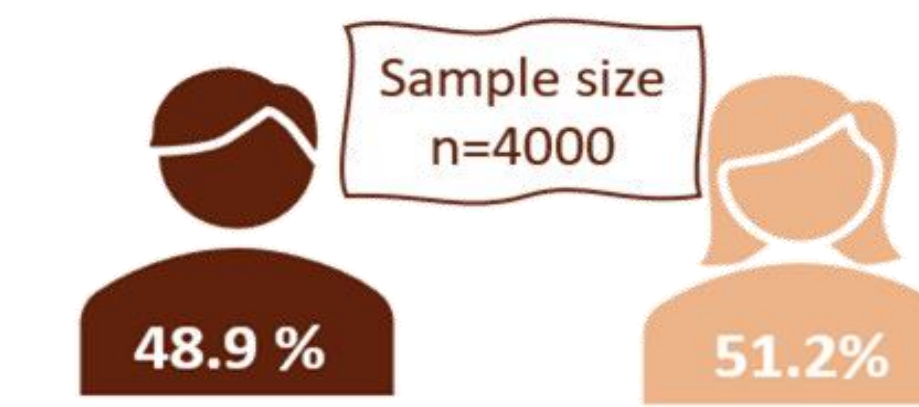


Figure 1 : Why are public health messages not respected ?

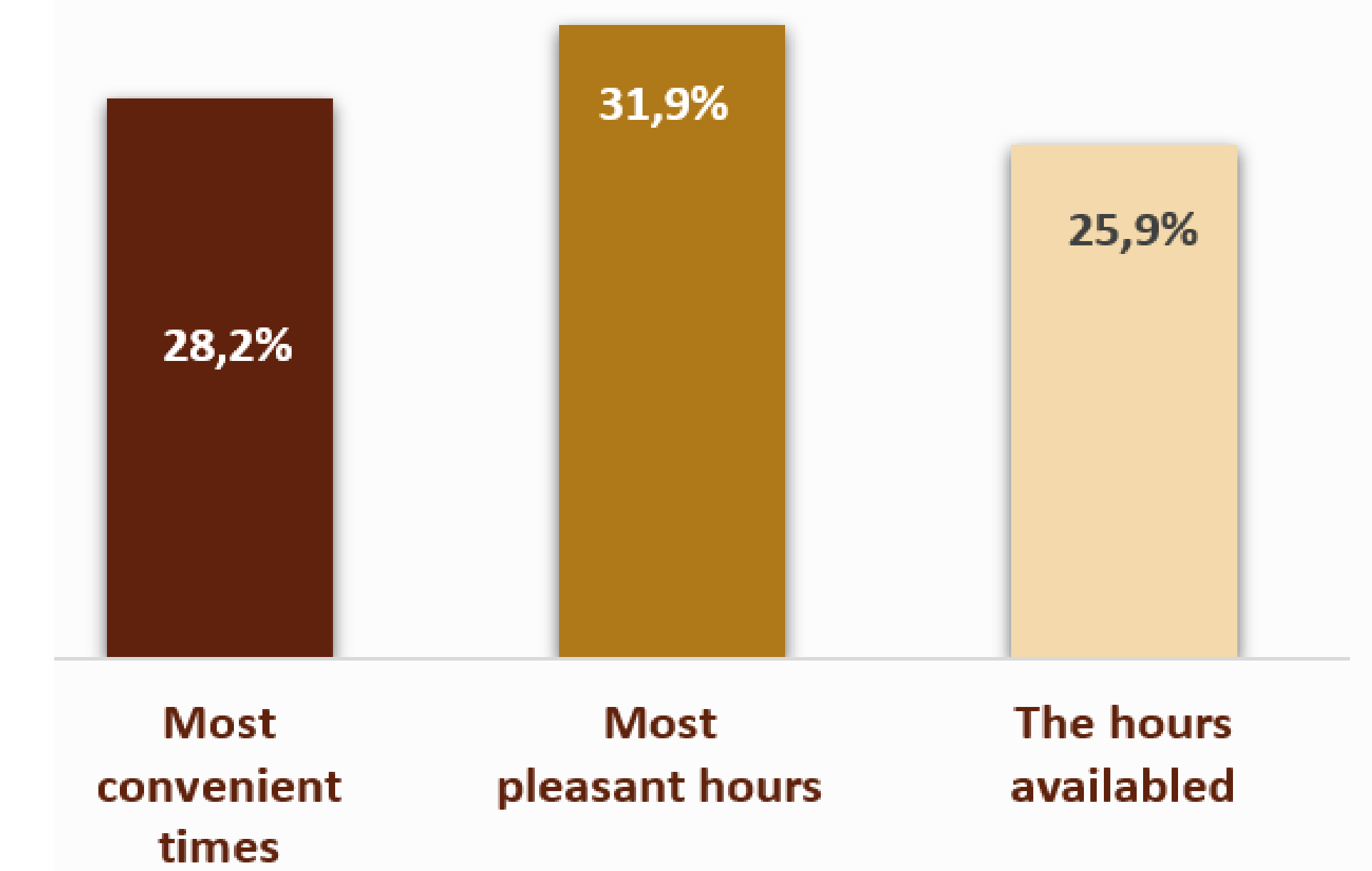


Table 1 Motivations of users and justifications of non-users of sun protection products

	Motivation	N	%
Rationale for respondents who use sunscreen products N = 2076	To avoid sunburn	1473	71,0%
	To spend more time in the sun	471	22,7%
	Because of a history of sun burns	425	20,5%
	As protection against accelerated skin aging	863	41,6%
	As protection against the risk of skin tumors	955	46,0%
	For other reason	69	3,3%
Rationale for respondents who do not use sunscreen products as recommended N = 1866	The products are too expensive	353	18,9%
	I don't think about it	1039	55,7%
	I don't think it is useful	315	16,9%
	It is too tedious	408	21,9%
	I didn't know about this recommendation	86	4,6%