

# Let's Talk Periods!

## Menstrual Health & Hygiene in Canada

Always® is committed to supporting good Menstrual Health & Hygiene (MHH). This report makes available research that helps shed light on the status of MHH in Canada. By sharing this information and supplementing existing knowledge, Always, along with key contributor Plan International, hopes to help policymakers, organizations, media and others make informed decisions to improve MHH in Canada. We believe we all have a role to play.

### Periods are still surrounded by shame & secrecy and too often result in negative feelings.

When getting their first period, young people feel:<sup>1</sup>

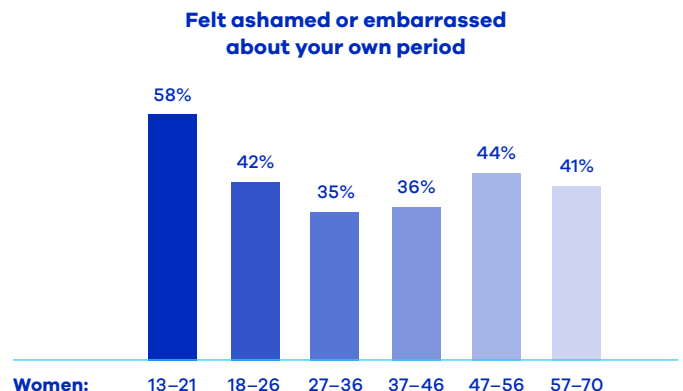
Confused	39%
Scared	36%
Embarrassed	33%

### Period hiding behaviors are common among young people (age 13–21).<sup>1</sup>

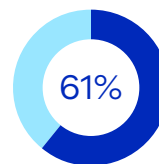
- 83% have tried to hide the fact they're on their period from those around them.
- 50% have lied about being on their period.



Feelings of period shame are more common among girls compared to women of older age cohorts.<sup>1,2</sup>



But — young people are likely to be inheriting these feelings and behaviors from those around them.



**61% of women** (ages 18–70) have tried to hide the fact they're on their period from those around them.<sup>2</sup>



**Nearly 1 in 2** have referred to period blood as gross or disgusting!<sup>2</sup>



## Talking about periods is taboo.

- Canada ranks in the bottom half of countries surveyed with respect to society’s support of talking openly about periods. It ranks about mid-way on support for sexuality and relationship education in schools.

### % of society that supports talking openly about periods/menstruation<sup>3</sup>

Portugal	84%
Mexico	82%
Croatia	78%
Brazil	77%
Spain	75%
France	72%
Belgium	72%
Germany	72%
Sweden	71%
Vietnam	70%
Poland	69%
Netherlands	68%
India	67%
Italy	66%
Romania	66%
<b>Canada</b>	<b>66%</b>
South Africa	64%
Czech Republic	63%
United Kingdom	63%
Australia	62%
Turkey	57%
United States	54%
Indonesia	43%
South Korea	36%
Japan	32%
Russia	25%
China	25%

### % of society that supports sexuality and relationship education in school

Sweden	87%
Mexico	85%
Spain	84%
Portugal	82%
South Korea	80%
Poland	80%
Belgium	79%
Germany	79%
Vietnam	79%
Croatia	78%
Czech Republic	77%
India	74%
Netherlands	72%
<b>Canada</b>	<b>72%</b>
United Kingdom	71%
Italy	71%
Romania	71%
South Africa	70%
France	69%
Australia	66%
United States	64%
Japan	61%
China	61%
Brazil	57%
Indonesia	54%
Turkey	52%
Russia	49%

- While 66% of people (ages 18–70) say they support talking openly about periods, only 40% actually do.<sup>2</sup>
- People feel more comfortable talking openly about sex and politics than they do periods and equally comfortable talking about STDs and periods.

### % of population that feels comfortable talking openly about:<sup>2</sup>

Sex	49%
Politics	49%
STDs	46%
<b>Periods</b>	<b>46%</b>
Family problems	45%

## Period teasing and shaming is common in Canada.

- More than 2 in 5 young people (44%, ages 13–21) have experienced it.<sup>1</sup>
- While nearly 1 in 4 believe that period jokes are harmless fun,<sup>2</sup> they are causing young people to feel:<sup>1</sup>

Self-conscious	44%
Embarrassed	35%
Less confident	26%

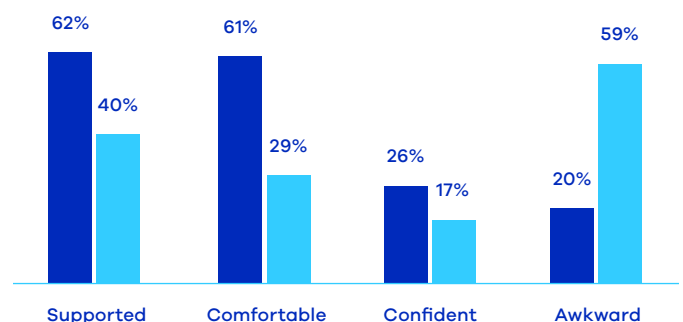
## The media contributes to the negative portrayal of periods in society.

Nearly 1 in 4 young people have seen periods referred to negatively in a movie or on TV.<sup>1</sup>

## Talking more openly about periods will help young people with periods feel more confident.

In households that don’t talk openly about periods, young people anticipate the conversation would make them feel awkward. In households that do, young people actually feel supported, comfortable and confident.

### Talking openly about periods at home makes me/would make me feel...<sup>1</sup>



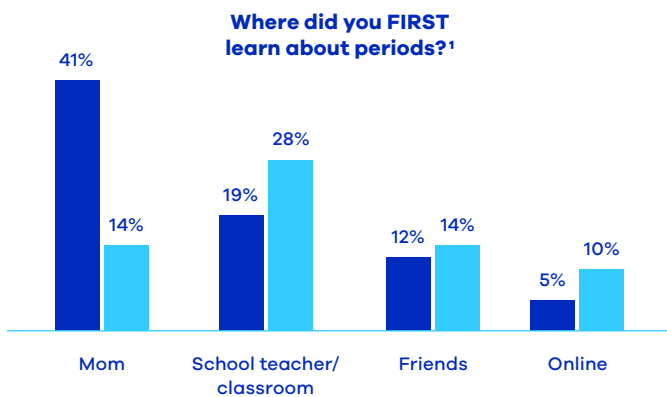
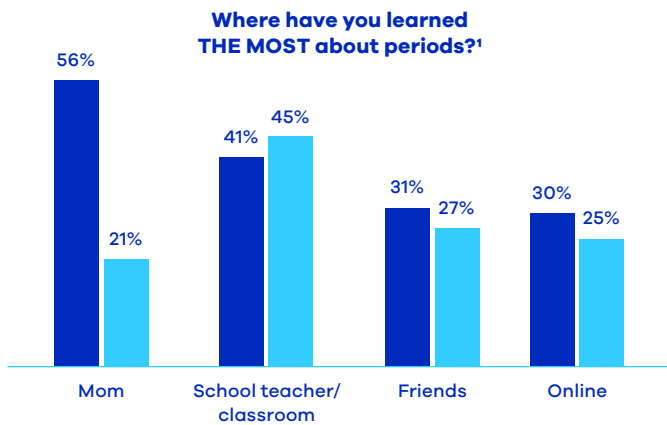
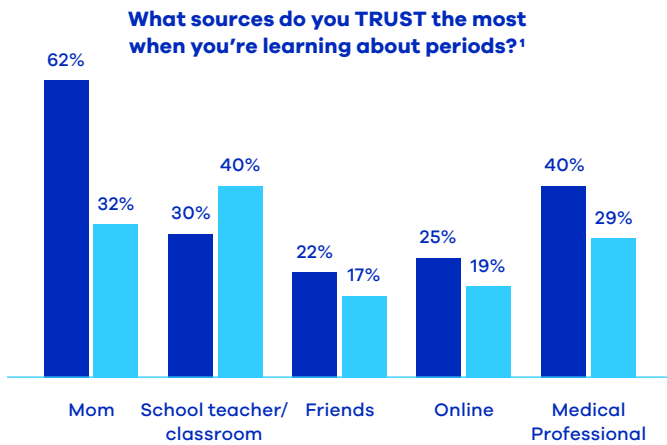
- Young people in households that talk openly about periods
- Young people in households that don't talk openly about periods

**There is a low level of understanding about periods in Canada.**

- Nearly 1 in 4 young people don't know why some people get periods and how to manage them.<sup>1</sup>
- Over 1 in 3 don't feel prepared for their first period (37%).<sup>1</sup>

75% of young people agree they should be taught about the changes both sexes go through during puberty.<sup>1</sup>

**Moms and teachers are the most influential sources of information for young people.**



● Young people with periods ● Boys

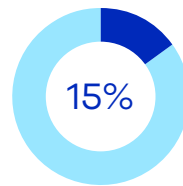
Nearly 1 in 5 feel like they've learned less about puberty and periods due to COVID-19 related school closures.<sup>1</sup>

**Online, young people are learning about periods from:<sup>1</sup>**

Googling it	40%
Social media	24%
Video platforms	22%
Online advertising	12%

Very few young people rank apps as either their first, most useful or most trusted source of period information. But among users, the most popular are Flo and Clue.<sup>1</sup>

**Access to period products continues to be an issue, especially given the impact of COVID-19.**



During COVID-19, **1 in 7 young people with periods (15%)** have struggled to get period products.<sup>1</sup>

**1 in 7 (15%)** are worried about their ongoing ability to afford them.<sup>1</sup>

**63% of young people believe the government needs to do more to provide period products for free to those who need them.<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup>SurveyMonkey, May-June 2020: Quantitative survey of young people ages 13-21 yrs, n=1,095.

<sup>2</sup>Glocalities, January-February 2020: Quantitative nationally representative survey of adults 18-70 yrs, n=1,027.

<sup>3</sup>Glocalities, January-February 2019: Quantitative nationally representative survey of adults 18-70 yrs, World n=30,057; Canada n=1,033.

# What Needs to be Done?

Always believes that periods shouldn't get in the way of young people reaching their full potential. To help drive meaningful progress towards this mission, Always will continue to work with organizations like Plan International Canada and people across the country to:



**Encourage society to talk more openly about periods** by raising awareness of the issues surrounding MHH and the positive impact that this openness will have.



**Elevate the voices of young people** who are already leading the charge against period shame.



**Improve the standard and intentionality of MHH education** in schools across the country by continued collaboration across sectors.



**Enable parents, especially Moms, with the tools and information** they need to feel confident explaining puberty and periods to their kids.



**Address the lack of access to period products** that too many people across Canada face today.

To learn more about Always' work around the world, visit [always.com](https://always.com) or contact Charlotte Le Flufy ([leflufy.c@pg.com](mailto:leflufy.c@pg.com)).

