



# Leger

THE LARGEST CANADIAN-OWNED  
POLLING, MARKET RESEARCH  
AND ANALYTICS FIRM

MONTREAL • QUEBEC

TORONTO • WINNIPEG • EDMONTON • CALGARY

VANCOUVER • PHILADELPHIA

# Report

## The Hidden Cost of Periods: A Canadian Perspective

**DATE** 2023-05-19

**PROJECT NUMBER** 81852\_034



---

# Methodology



In partnership with Leger, Plan International Canada conducted an online survey in April 2023 of 1,000 women aged 18-plus, 667 of whom are not yet menopausal.

The survey examined attitudes and perceptions related to menstrual product affordability, menstrual health education and stigma around menstruation.

No margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample (a web panel in this case). For comparative purposes, though, a probability sample of 1,000 respondents would have a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1\%$  19 times out of 20.

## Leger's online panel

Leger's online panel has more than 400,000 members nationally and has a retention rate of 90%.

## Quality control

Stringent quality assurance measures allow Leger to achieve the high-quality standards set by the company. As a result, its methods of data collection and storage outperform the norms set by WAPOR (The World Association for Public Opinion Research). These measures are applied at every stage of the project: from data collection to processing, through to analysis. We aim to answer our clients' needs with honesty, total confidentiality and integrity.

Also, poll aggregator *338Canada.com* gave Leger the highest rating among all polling firms in Canada for the accuracy of its studies. (See <https://338canada.com/pollster-ratings.htm> )





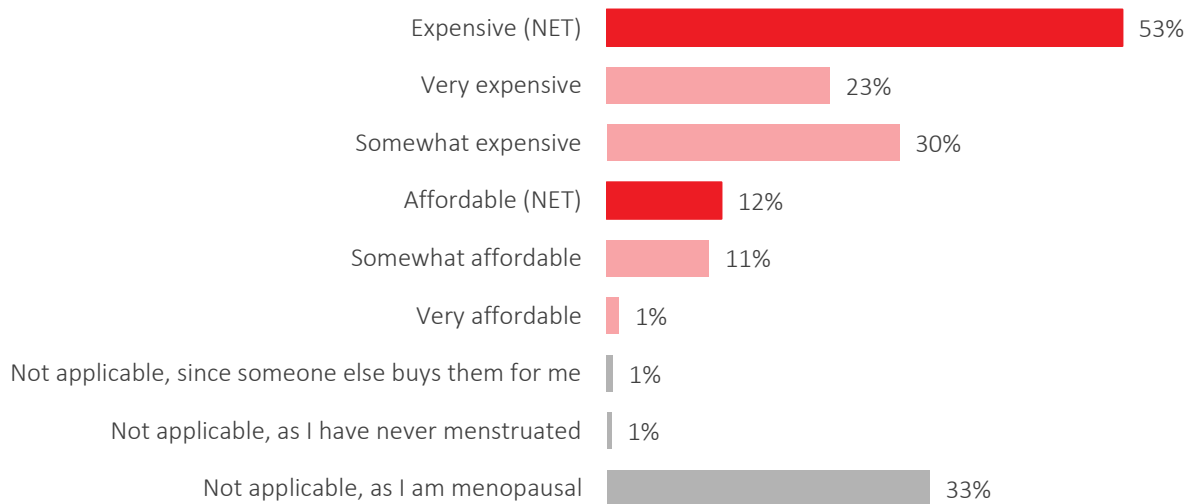
Detailed Results

# More than half of Canadian women feel menstrual products are *expensive* – this perception goes up to 88% among those aged 18-24.

53% of respondents said the last time they purchased menstrual products, they felt the products were expensive, with one-quarter (23%) saying they were *very* expensive. Those aged 18-24 are especially likely to perceive menstrual products as expensive (88%), as compared to those aged 25 and up (50%). Conversely, those earning an annual household income of \$100k or more are more likely than those earning <\$100k to perceive menstrual products to be expensive (62% vs. 51% of those earning <\$100k).

Only one in ten respondents (12%) felt that the last time they purchased menstrual products they were affordable.

0001 The last time I purchased menstrual products, I felt that they were:  
Base: All (n=1005).

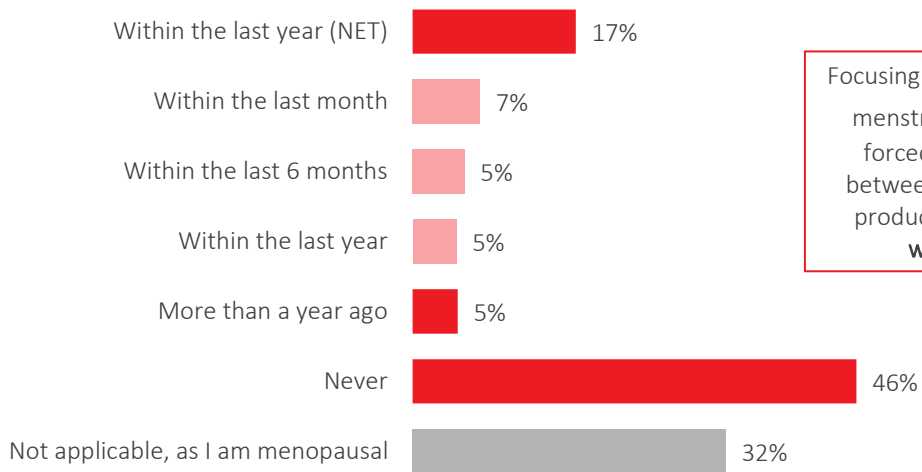


Focusing on women who currently menstruate, **80%** believe period products are **expensive**.

# One in four Canadian women who menstruate (25%) have been forced to make the decision between purchasing menstrual products and purchasing other essentials such as food or rent *within the last year*.

Overall, one-quarter of Canadian women (22%) have had to choose between menstrual products and other essential items at some point, including 17% having had to make that decision in the last year. Among women between the ages of 18 and 34, one-third (31%) have been forced to make this choice in the past year (vs. 23% among 35-54). Household income plays a role here: those earning a household income of less than \$60k per year are more likely to be among those who have had to make this choice in the last year (23% vs. 13% of those earning \$100k+).

0002 How recently have you been forced to make the difficult decision between purchasing menstrual products and other essential items such as food or rent?  
Base: All (n=1000).



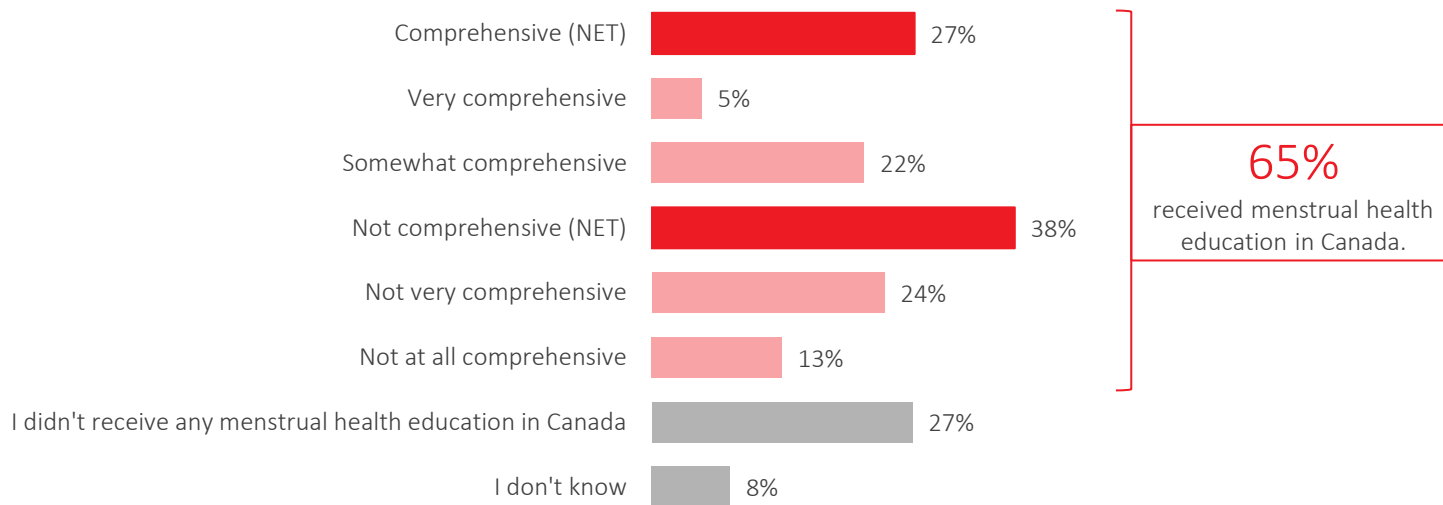
Focusing on women who currently menstruate, **25%** have been forced to make the decision between purchasing menstrual products and other essentials **within the last year**.

# Women are split on the comprehensiveness of their menstrual health education in Canada.

While one-quarter of respondents (27%) indicate they did not receive any menstrual health education in Canada, another two in five (38%), feel that their menstrual health education was not comprehensive compared to only one-quarter (27%) who considered it comprehensive. Demographically, those under the age of 55 (34% vs. 19% among those aged 55+) are more likely to feel that the menstrual health education they received in Canada was comprehensive, perhaps speaking to an improvement in the state of education over time. On the other hand, those aged 55+ are more likely to report they did not receive any menstrual health education in Canada (42% vs. 16% among those aged 18-54).

0003 How well do you feel the menstrual health education you received in Canada covered important topics such as anatomy and physiology, PMS, menstrual hygiene and other related topics, or did it miss the mark?

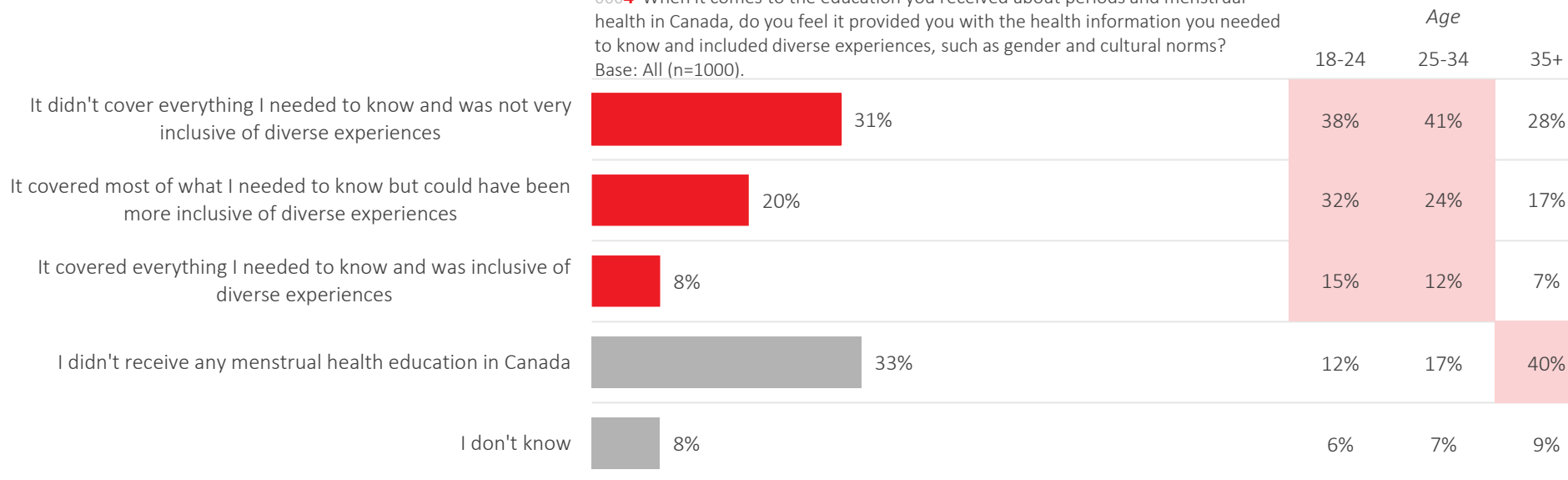
Base: All (n=1000).



# Over half of women (51%) feel that the menstrual health education they received did not cover what they needed to know or was not inclusive of diverse experiences.

This includes one-third (31%) who said their menstrual health education experience in Canada did not cover everything they needed to know and was not very inclusive of diverse experiences. This also includes the 20% who feel their education covered most of what they needed to know but could have included more diverse experiences. Those over the age of 34 were more likely to feel their menstrual health education fell short compared to those aged 55+.

0004 When it comes to the education you received about periods and menstrual health in Canada, do you feel it provided you with the health information you needed to know and included diverse experiences, such as gender and cultural norms?  
Base: All (n=1000).





---

Most women have been held back from participating in daily activities due to their period, mostly due to period pain or discomfort.

Six in ten (59%) agree period pain or discomfort has held them back from daily activities, but significantly fewer agree that a lack of knowledge about periods (18%) or an inability to afford menstrual products has held them back from daily activities (15%).

Younger respondents (18-34 vs. 35+) and those who have had to choose between menstrual products and other essentials (vs. those who have not) are more likely to agree that *any* of the reasons below have kept them from daily activities.

As would be expected, those with a household income of <\$60K are more likely to agree that their inability to afford menstrual products has held them back from activities (22% vs. 10% among \$60K+).

**Results on next page.**

# Most women have been held back from participating in daily activities due to their period, mostly due to period pain or discomfort.

Agree % (somewhat + strongly)

Q5 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:  
Base: All (n=1000).

My period pain or discomfort has held me back from daily activities, such as sports, or from attending school or work



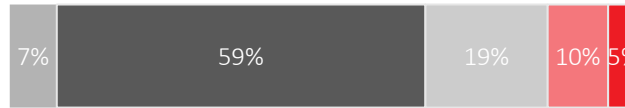
Total agree

Age	Has had to choose between period products and essentials	
	Yes	No
18-24	84%	61%
25-34	74%	16%
35+	53%	7%

My lack of knowledge about periods and menstrual health has held me back from daily activities, such as sports or from attending school or work



My inability to afford menstrual products has held me back from participating in daily activities, such as sports, or from attending school or work



■ I don't know ■ Strongly disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Strongly agree

---

Over eight in ten (82%) women agree that period products should be available for free in public washrooms.

In fact, 50% *strongly agree* period products should be free in public washrooms. Support for 'period leave' is split, with 47% agreeing menstruators should be able to take paid days off when menstruating.

Two in five have felt embarrassed talking about PMS (38%) and feel that the word 'period' is considered dirty in Canadian society (36%), while one in five has seen a negative impact on their mental wellbeing by not being able to talk openly about their period or PMS (22%).

For all statements below, agreement is likely to be higher among younger respondents (aged 18-34), compared with respondents over the age of 34. Particularly those aged 18-24 are likely to feel their mental wellbeing has been negatively impacted by not being able to openly discuss periods or PMS.

**Results on next page.**

# Over eight in ten (82%) women agree that period products should be available for free in public washrooms.

0005 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:  
Base: All (n=1000).

Agree % (strongly + somewhat)

Age

18-24 25-34 35+

Total agree

Period products should be available for free in public washrooms to those who need it



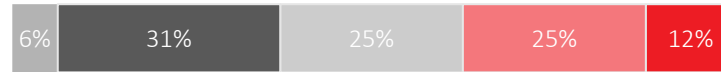
**82%**

Menstruators should be able to take 'period leave' (paid days off from work when menstruating)



**47%**

I have felt embarrassed talking about my experiences with pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS)



**38%**

The word "period" (menstruation) is considered dirty or inappropriate in Canadian society



**36%**

Not being able to talk openly about my period or pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) has negatively impacted my mental wellbeing



**22%**

■ I don't know ■ Strongly disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Strongly agree

Agree % (strongly + somewhat)		Age		
		18-24	25-34	35+
Period products should be available for free in public washrooms to those who need it	82%	95%	90%	79%
Menstruators should be able to take 'period leave' (paid days off from work when menstruating)	47%	71%	72%	38%
I have felt embarrassed talking about my experiences with pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS)	38%	54%	50%	33%
The word "period" (menstruation) is considered dirty or inappropriate in Canadian society	36%	52%	46%	31%
Not being able to talk openly about my period or pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) has negatively impacted my mental wellbeing	22%	44%	31%	17%

---

Among women aged 18-24, half (51%) have felt the need to hide that they are on their period even when they are at home.

Over half (52%) of women say they sometimes or always feel the need to hide that they're on their period at school or work, and one-third (36%) feel the need to hide it due to societal or cultural expectations. Among those aged 18-24, half (51%) feel the need to hide they are on their period even at home (vs. 38% among 25-34, and 24% among 35+).

Roughly one-third of those under the age of 35 say they hide their period at home due to societal or cultural expectations.

Nearly half (46%) of women overall often experience or witness negative comments and jokes about periods and PMS in their social circles. Again, age plays a factor, where women under the age of 35 are more likely to regularly experience all of the circumstances below compared with those 35+.

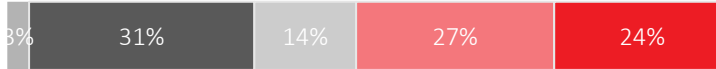
**Results on next page.**

Among women aged 18-24, half (51%) have felt the need to hide that they are on their period even when they are at home.

Q6 How often do you experience each of the following:  
Base: All (n=1000).

Often % (sometimes + always)

I feel the need / felt the need to hide that I'm on my period at school or work

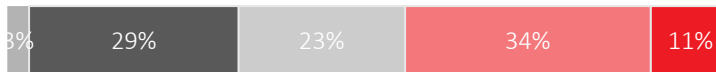


Total

52%

Total	Age		
	18-24	25-34	35+
52%	78%	67%	45%
46%	51%	53%	43%
36%	59%	48%	30%
29%	51%	38%	24%
21%	32%	27%	18%

I have experienced or witnessed negative comments or jokes about menstruation and pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) in my personal or social circles



46%

I feel the need/ felt the need to hide that I'm on my period at school or work due to societal or cultural expectations



36%

I feel the need/ felt the need to hide that I'm on my period at home



29%

I feel the need/ felt the need to hide that I'm on my period at home due to societal or cultural expectations



21%

■ I don't know ■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Always



One in five women (21%) have felt judged or treated unfairly in the workplace or in personal relationships because of their period.

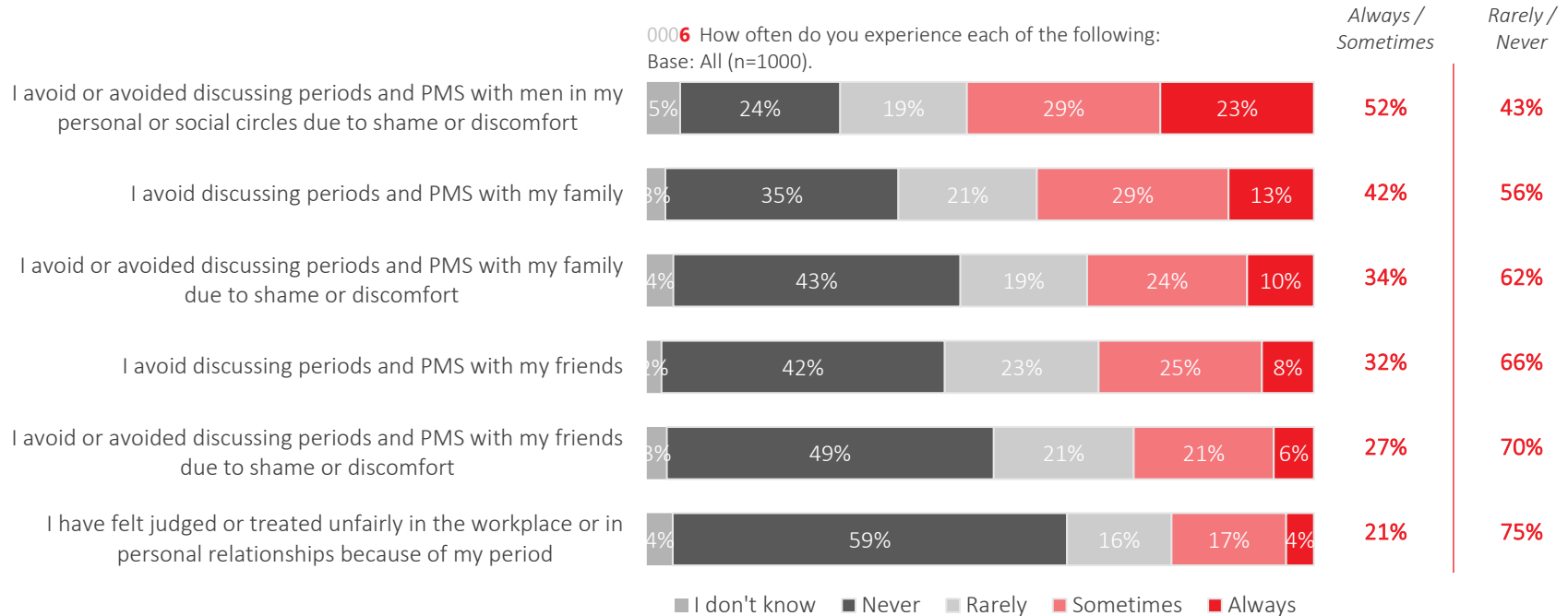
Around half (52%) regularly avoid discussing periods and PMS with men in their personal or social circles due to shame or discomfort. Another two in five (42%) say they avoid discussing these topics with their family, and 34% often avoid this out of shame or discomfort.

However, respondents are most comfortable discussing periods and PMS with friends; only 32% avoid it and 27% avoid it due to shame or discomfort. One in five women has felt judged or treated unfairly at work or in their relationships because of their period. Once again, women under the age of 35 are more likely than those older to avoid discussing periods and PMS with their social circles.

**Results on next page.**

# One in five women (21%) have felt judged or treated unfairly in the workplace or in personal relationships because of their period.

Q006 How often do you experience each of the following:  
Base: All (n=1000).



# Leger

*We know Canadians*

