



Period Product Research

September 2023

Background, approach and summary

Research objectives and approach

The Period Product survey gathered insight into customers attitudes and beliefs of flushing and binning period products, as well as attitudes and beliefs on the use of reusable period products.

The research sought to answer the following objectives:

1. Customers attitudes towards periods and period products, and whether this has changed over time
2. Customers education on the disposal of period products
3. Customers current method of disposal of period products, and the barriers/influences on binning or flushing period products
4. Types of period products that are being flushed down the toilet, and the location they are being flushed at Use of reusable period products

What we did:



An 11-minute qualitative and quantitative survey with 500 customers



Fieldwork took place 24th August – 11th September 2023

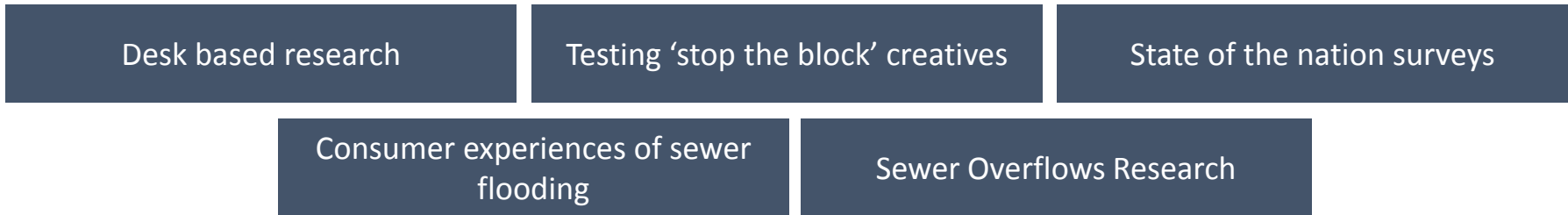


Customers were recruited from the 'In the Flow' community and from an external access panel.

Background

Regularly, United Utilities carry out communication campaigns to increase customer awareness of what not to flush down the toilet, nor pour down sinks and drains.

The United Utilities Wastewater blockage team have identified period products as one of the main causes of blockages, following wet wipes. Below is a summary of research that has been carried out, which provided insight into customers flushing period products.



The topic of period products has not yet been addressed in United Utilities communication campaigns. United Utilities want to understand key drivers that influence the flushing of these products. The findings of this research will support them to develop communication campaigns to both inform and educate customers of the 'do not flush' message.

Executive summary

Executive Summary

The majority of respondents used period pads or sanitary towels

- The most commonly used period product was period pads or sanitary towels (84%), followed by tampons (49%). 39% respondents used both period pads or sanitary towels and tampons.
- Overall, 26% (131 respondents) stated that they use at least one of the following re-usable period products:
 - Reusable pads
 - Menstrual cups
 - Reusable period underwear
- For respondents who stated they use 'Other' period products, respondents used underwear liners (3 respondents), flushable pads (1 respondent), or sponges (1 respondent).

Being environmentally friendly and providing long term cost benefits drove use of re-usable period products

- Overall, 26% (131 respondents) used reusable period products. 50% of these respondents felt that their use of re-usable period products was influenced by the environmental benefits they present.
- The long-term cost benefits provided by re-usable period products was another core theme, with 36% of respondents expressing this.
- For other respondents, their use of re-usable period products was due to being more comfortable to single-use period products (18%, 23 respondents), as well as minimising waste (9%, 12 respondents).

Over half of respondents felt that their comfort level had changed over time

- In total, 79% (395 respondents) felt either slightly comfortable or extremely comfortable in talking about their periods and period products
- However, 9% (45 respondents) felt slightly uncomfortable or extremely uncomfortable when talking about periods and period products.
- Considering this, 57% (287 respondents) felt that their comfort level had changed over time, with the highest percentage 63% (181 respondents) of these being aged 30-49. Whilst 38% (190 respondents) felt that their comfort hadn't changed.
- For those whose comfort level had changed over time, this was due to becoming more confident as they got older, as well as society being more open to discussing periods.

Executive Summary

75% of respondents only dispose of their period products in the bin, influenced by protecting the environment and preventing blockages

- Here, 75% of respondents were most likely to only dispose of their period products in the bin.
- 19% of respondents were likely to flush their period products. This coming from 15% both binning and flushing and 4% only flushing them.
- Of those respondents who dispose of their period products in the bin, preventing toilet and water system blockages, and limiting the impact on the environment were the key contributors for this.

Of those who only flush products, a third only do so down private toilets with tampons being the most disposed

- 29% of respondents declared that they only flush period products down private bathroom toilets.
- Within this, tampons were the most frequently disposed period product down private bathroom toilets (79%).
- A lack of available bins, current knowledge about the disposal of period products and greater privacy were the core reasons respondents disposed of period products down private bathroom toilets.

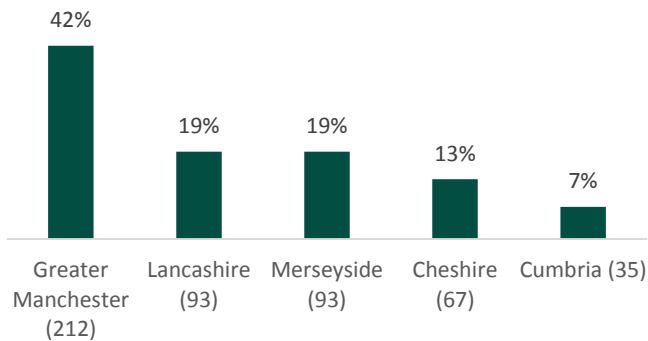
Of those respondents only flush period products down public toilets, a third flushed tampons and tampon packaging

- Respondents were less likely to only flush their period products down public bathroom toilets, with 9% of respondents doing this.
- Here, 33% of respondents stated that they flush tampons and tampon packaging down them.
- Within this, a lack of sufficient bins and feeling embarrassed drove respondents to flush their period products in public toilets. However, four respondents felt that there was no particular reason they flushed them in public toilets.

Demographics

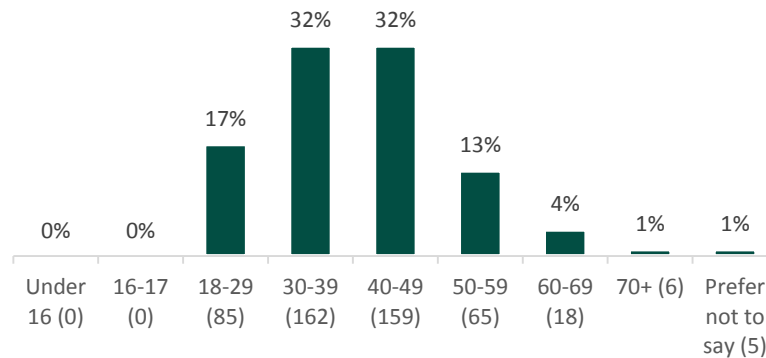
Demographic breakdown of respondents

Region (500)



Region	Count	Percentage
Greater Manchester	212	42%
Lancashire	93	19%
Merseyside	93	19%
Cheshire	67	13%
Cumbria	35	7%
Total	500	100%

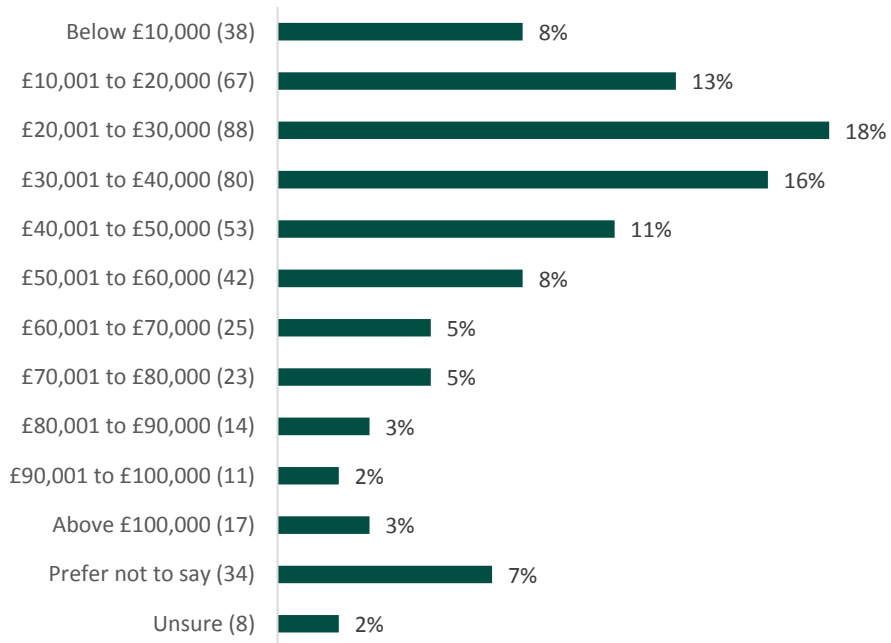
Age breakdown (500)



Age	Count	Percentage
Under 16	0	0%
16-17	0	0%
18-29	85	17%
30-39	162	32%
40-49	159	32%
50-59	65	13%
60-69	18	4%
70+	6	1%
Prefer not to say	5	1%
Total	500	100%

Demographic breakdown of respondents

From the options below, please could you let us know the option that corresponds with your most recent gross household annual income? (500)



Annual income	Count	Percentage
Below £10,000	38	8%
£10,001 to £20,000	67	13%
£20,001 to £30,000	88	18%
£30,001 to £40,000	80	16%
£40,001 to £50,000	53	11%
£50,001 to £60,000	42	8%
£60,001 to £70,000	25	5%
£70,001 to £80,000	23	5%
£80,001 to £90,000	14	3%
£90,001 to £100,000	11	2%
Above £100,000	17	3%
Prefer not to say	34	7%
Unsure	8	2%
Total	500	101%

Attitudes towards period products

Over half of the respondents (55%) felt extremely comfortable discussing periods and period products, whilst 2% of respondents felt extremely uncomfortable

Firstly, how comfortable are you talking about periods and period products on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is extremely uncomfortable and 5 is extremely comfortable? (500)

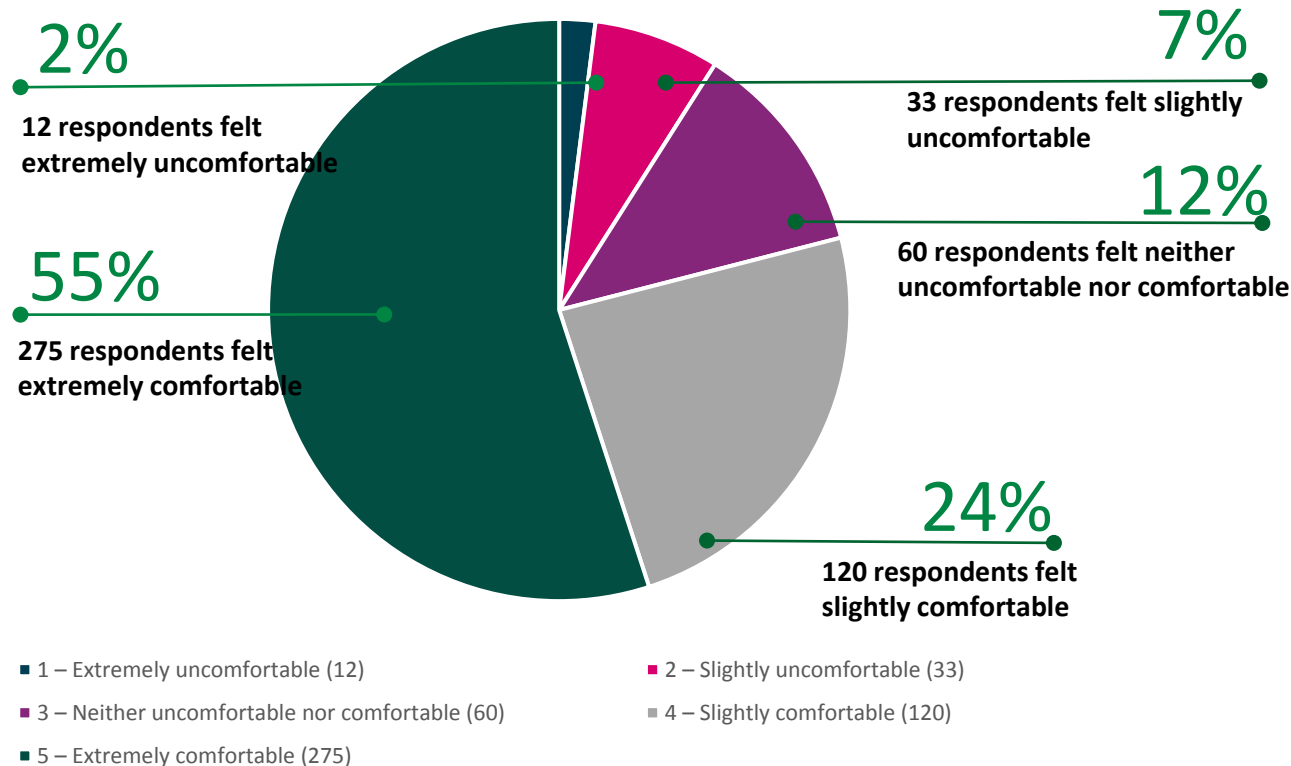
Sub group analysis

60% of customers aged 50-59 were *extremely comfortable*, this was significant higher than the other age groups.

18-39 were more likely to state they were *'slightly comfortable'*.

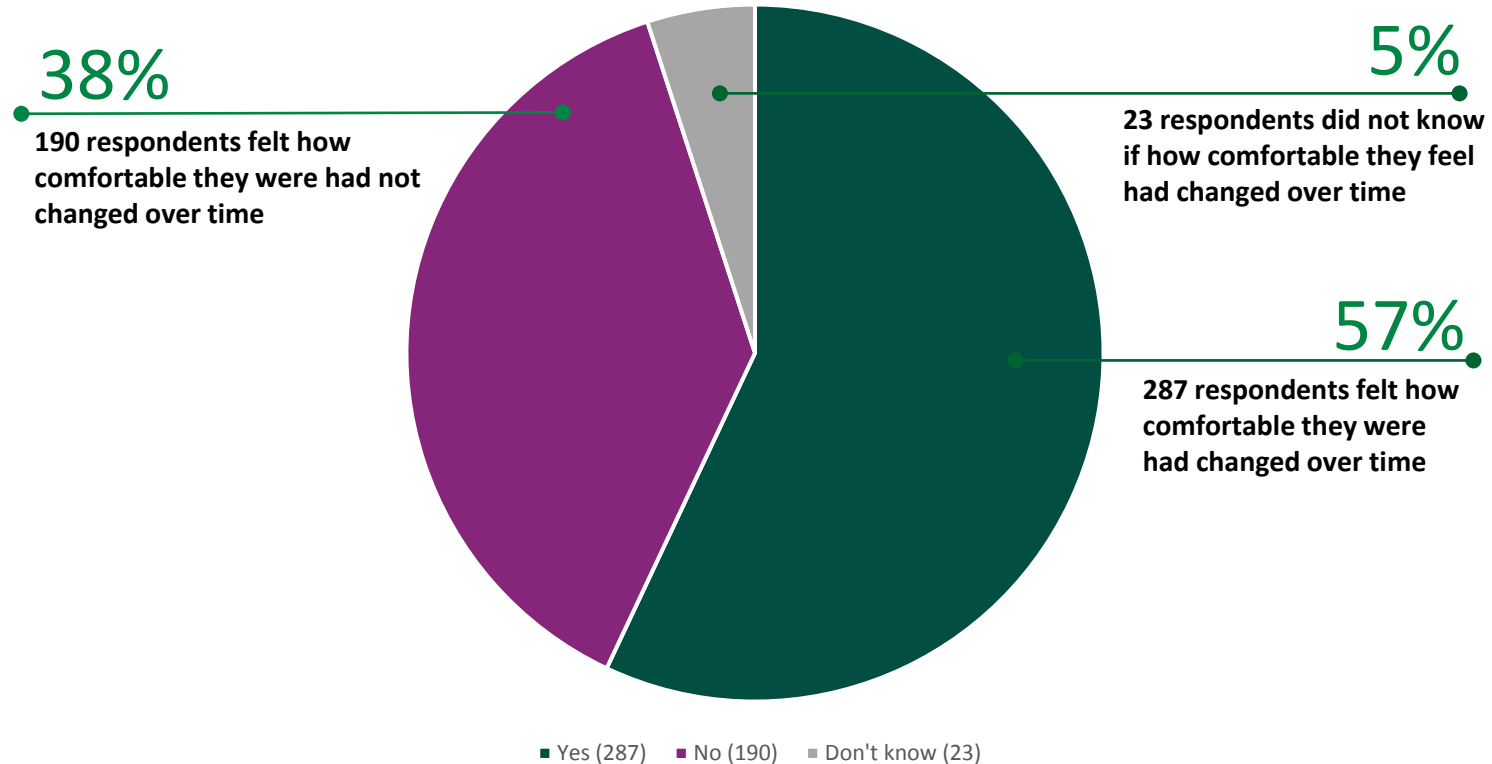
11% of customers aged 60-69 were *extremely uncomfortable*, this was a significantly higher response than all the other age groups.

Customers living in **Manchester** had a higher response to *extremely comfortable*. **Cumbrian** customers had a higher response to *neither*.



57% of respondents felt that their comfort level in talking about periods and period products had changed over time

When thinking about how comfortable you are currently when talking about periods and period products, has this changed over time? (500)



The 57% who stated how comfortable they were had changed over time felt that this was due to growing up and becoming more confident, and society being more open to discussing periods generally

Why do you think how comfortable you are currently has changed over time? (themes from open-ended responses)

5 respondents felt that there were no specific reasons why their comfort level has changed.

Getting older has made me more comfortable/confident
(158, 55%)

Society is more open/knowledgeable to talk about it
(48, 17%)

Other people talk about it more
(44, 15%)

Used to be embarrassed about it
(43, 15%)

“ As I've got older I'm more confident and more comfortable talking about this topic
Merseyside, 30-39

“ It has become more societally acceptable to acknowledge that women have periods and that it's a natural bodily function
Greater Manchester, 18-29

“ Being closer to friends over time, more products and conversations online, moved to a girls only school that was very open about it for 6th form
Lancashire, 18-29

“ I used to be embarrassed about it when I was younger, but as I got older, I realised that it was just part of life and I wasn't the only one experiencing it
Lancashire, 50-59

“ As I've matured I've become more comfortable having periods and the topic of periods. However, I don't talk about periods in front of my male friends. I also have a daughter so I needed to talk about periods with her
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ I'm more mature and society as a whole is slowly letting go of the stigma attached to periods
Greater Manchester, 18-29

“ When I was younger girls were made to feel that it was something private...Then when my daughter was at the age to start using them I told her that it isn't embarrassing...I'm glad that period products are now advertised more openly so young girls don't be made to feel the way girls used to feel about a normal part of growing up
Cumbria, 50-59

“ I was embarrassed about these things when I was younger but now I am not
Lancashire, 40-49

“ As you get older, it isn't embarrassing it's just a part of life
Greater Manchester, 18-29

“ As a society we speak more openly about these things
Greater Manchester, 18-29

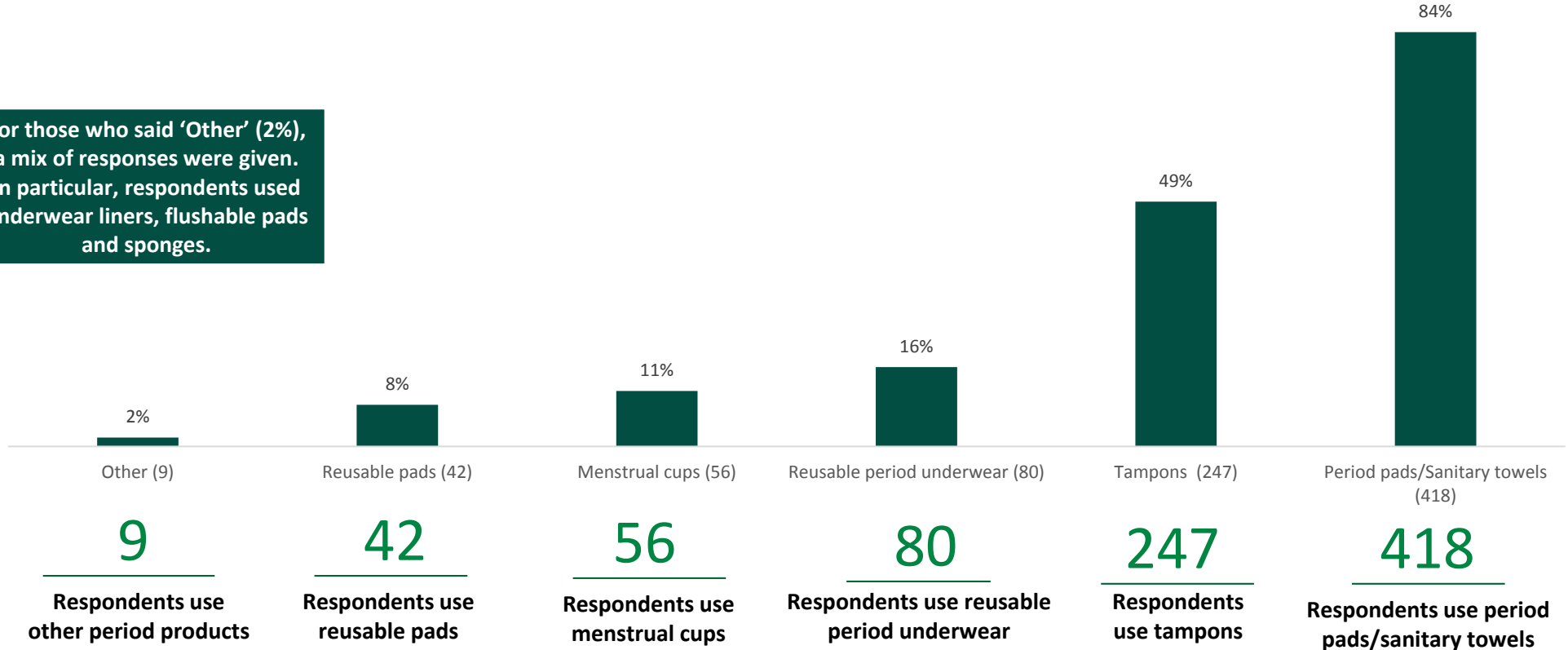
“ This is not a secret topic and we can talk with female friends about it
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“ I was very embarrassed of my period when i was younger
Merseyside, 30-39

The majority of respondents use period pads or sanitary towels (84%), or tampons (49%)

What type of period products do you currently use? Please tick all that apply (500)

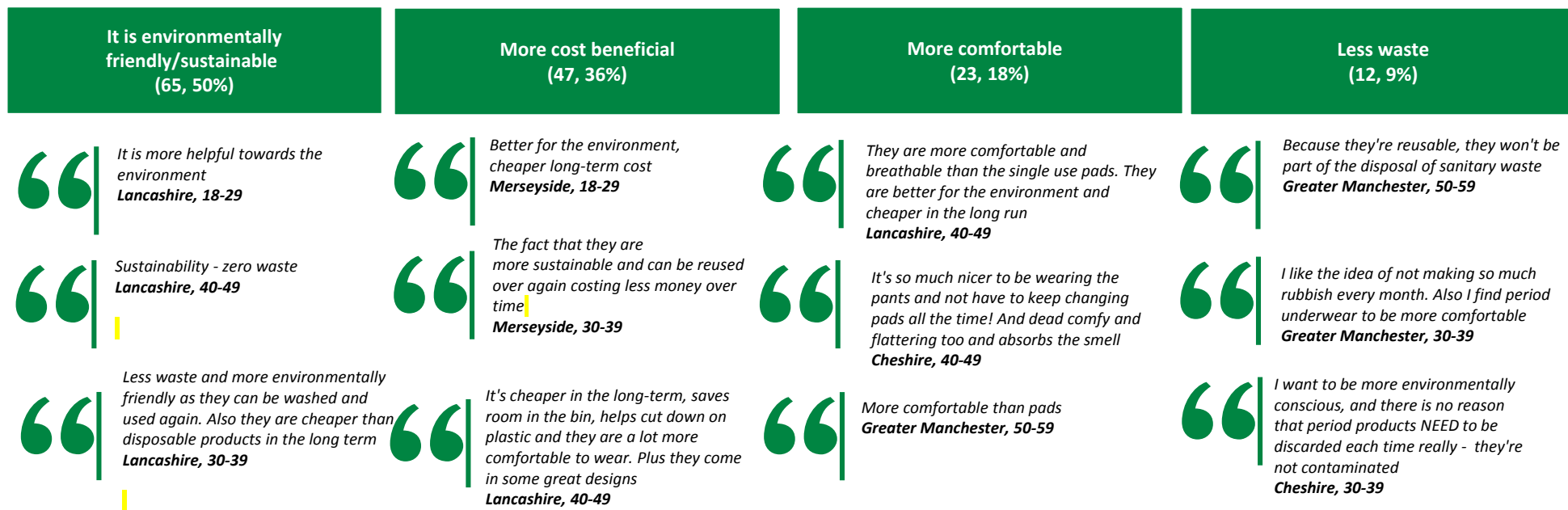
For those who said 'Other' (2%), a mix of responses were given. In particular, respondents used underwear liners, flushable pads and sponges.



26% (131) of respondents use reusable period products. The key driver was being environmentally friendly with 50% saying this. Cost benefits followed with 36% as well as comfort (18%) and a reduction of waste (9%).

What reasons, if any, influence you to use reusable period products? (themes from open-ended responses)

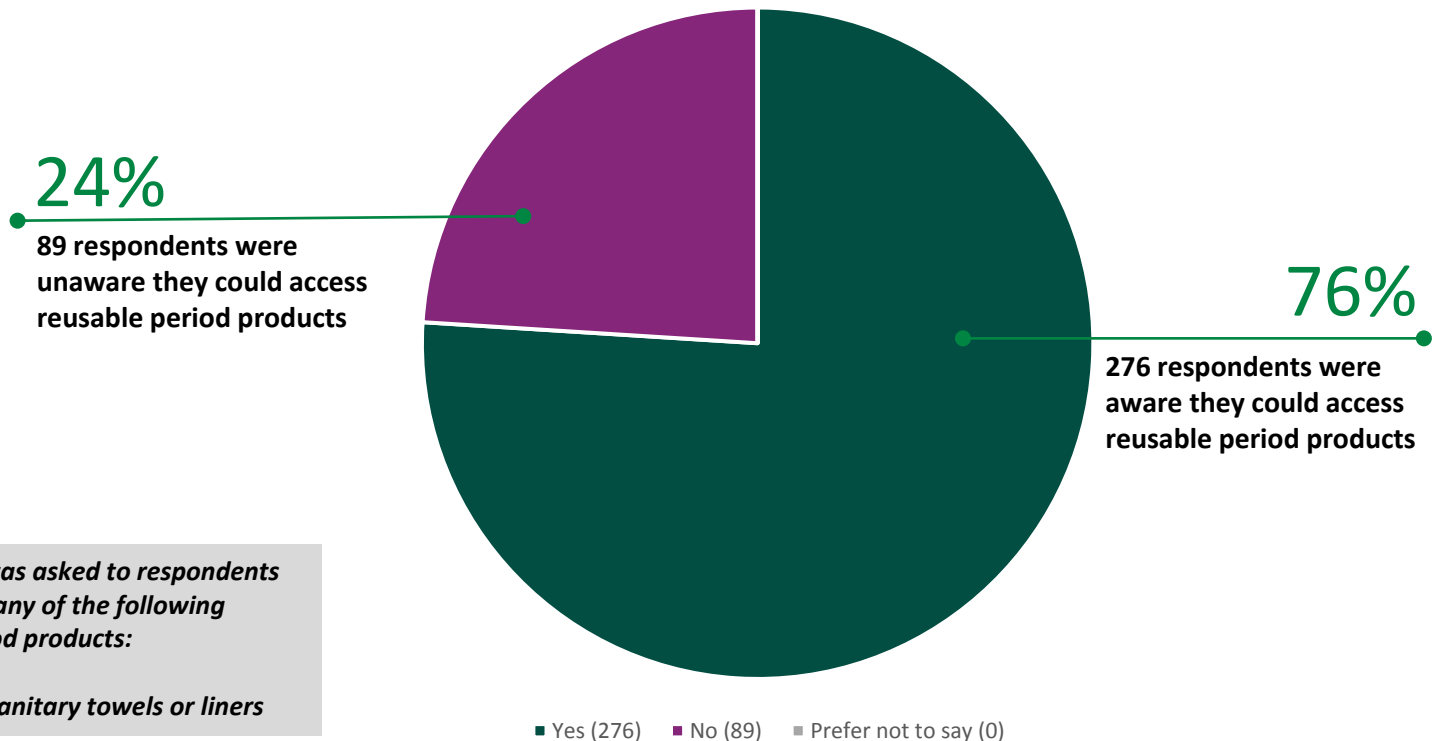
6 respondents felt that there were no specific reasons why they use reusable period products.



**Please note, this is based upon respondents using at least one of the following:
Reusable pads, menstrual cups, reusable period underwear**

Of the 73% (365 respondents) who only used single-use period products, 76% of those were aware they could access reusable period products, while 24% were unaware

Before today, were you aware that you can access reusable period products? (365)

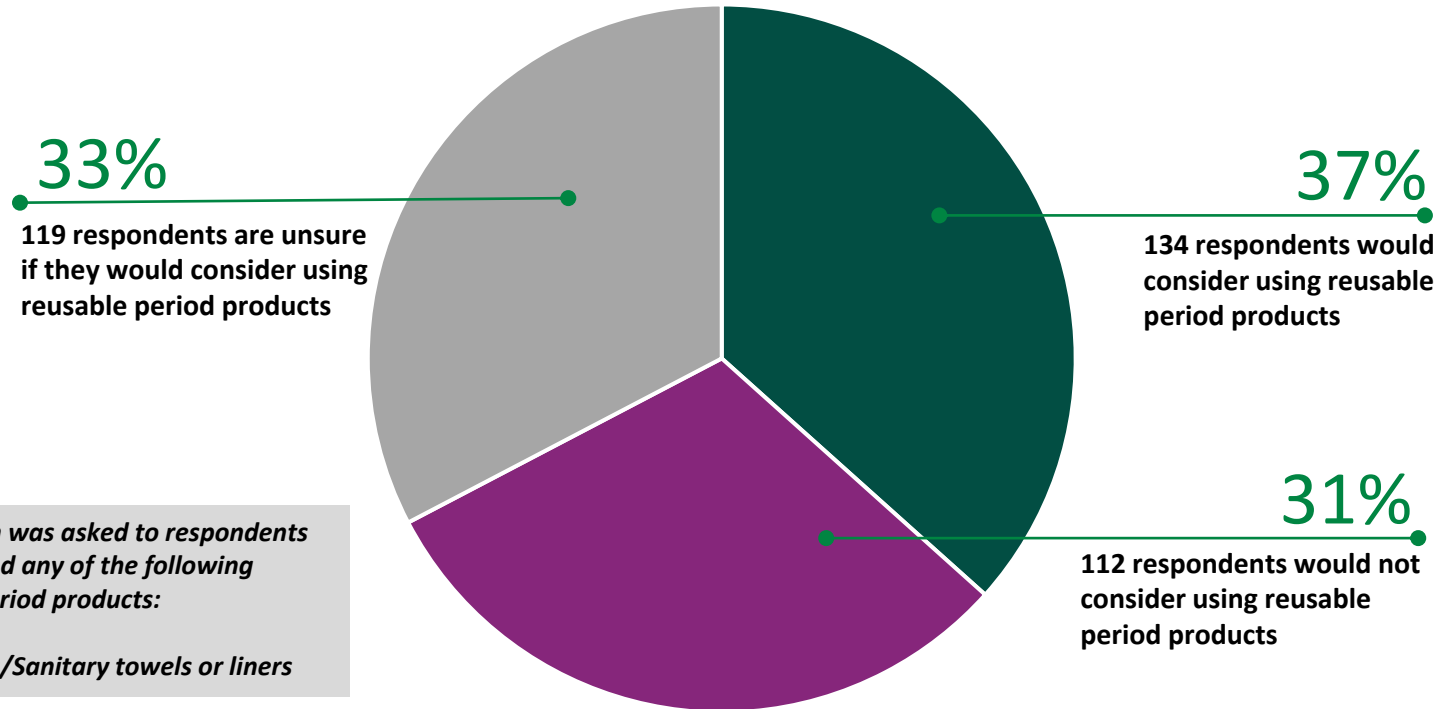


This question was asked to respondents who only used any of the following single-use period products:

- Tampons
- Period pads/Sanitary towels or liners

Of those respondents who only use single-use period products, 37% felt that they would consider using reusable period products in the future, whilst 31% would not consider it at all

Looking ahead to the future, would you consider using reusable period products?
(365)



*This question was asked to respondents who **only** used any of the following single-use period products:*

- Tampons
- Period pads/Sanitary towels or liners

■ Yes (134) ■ No (112) ■ Don't know (119)

Of the 37% of respondents who would consider using reusable period products, the main themes identified were due to being better for the environment, and more cost effective over time

Please let us know why you would consider using reusable period products? (themes from open-ended responses)

Better for the environment
(39, 52%)

“ Due to the environment being destroyed, I want to do my part to help
Cheshire, 18-29

“ They are better for the environment, but I'm going to have to make sure they work for me and get over any sensory issues I might experience before using them on a regular basis
Merseyside, 30-39

“ Seems more environmentally friendly
Greater Manchester, 30-39

More cost effective
(28, 37%)

“ They would be cost effective compared to the single use
Merseyside, 18-29

“ Saves a lot of money in the long run
Cheshire, 50-59

“ It would save a lot of money I still think period products should be free
Greater Manchester, 18-29

More sustainable
(13, 17%)

“ More sustainable
Lancashire, 30-39

“ It is more sustainable
Lancashire, 18-29

“ I think it makes sense to have something that you can reuse so you are not spending money on it every month. It's also better for the environment. I have looked at a few reusable things however at this time they are quite expensive but I think they will be made heaper as time goes on and there are more options
Greater Manchester, 30-39

Less waste
(5, 7%)

“ I am aware that disposable products use a lot of plastic that ends up in landfill and is not the best for the environment. Reusable products could also save me money
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ For the reduction of landfill
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“ To reduce landfill
Greater Manchester, 50-59

The key aspects preventing 31% of respondents from using reusable period products were due to feeling unclean and unhygienic, disliking the idea in general and personal preference towards disposable period products

Please let us know why you would not consider using reusable period products? (themes from open-ended responses)

Less hygiene friendly
(20, 29%)

“

*I don't think it's hygienic
Lancashire, 18-29*

“

*I just don't like the idea of reusing
a product like that
Greater Manchester, 40-49*

“

*I just think that is one area of my
life I don't want to be recycling
for. It feels cleaner and safer to
dispose of those products
Greater Manchester, 18-29*

“

*Far too messy when out in public
Greater Manchester, 50-59*

“

*I'd be worried about hygiene and then
not being cleaned enough
Greater Manchester, 40-49*

“

*Not for me, not something that
should be used, as once used
should be binned
Greater Manchester, 40-49*

“

*Too old in my ways. Don't think
they have made a washable
tampon yet... wouldn't use
anything else
Greater Manchester, 40-49*

“

*Too messy having to wash them
Cumbria, 50-59*

“

*I don't find them that sanitary and I
don't want to have more laundry to
clean
Cheshire, 40-49*

“

*Don't like the idea of it
Greater Manchester, 30-39*

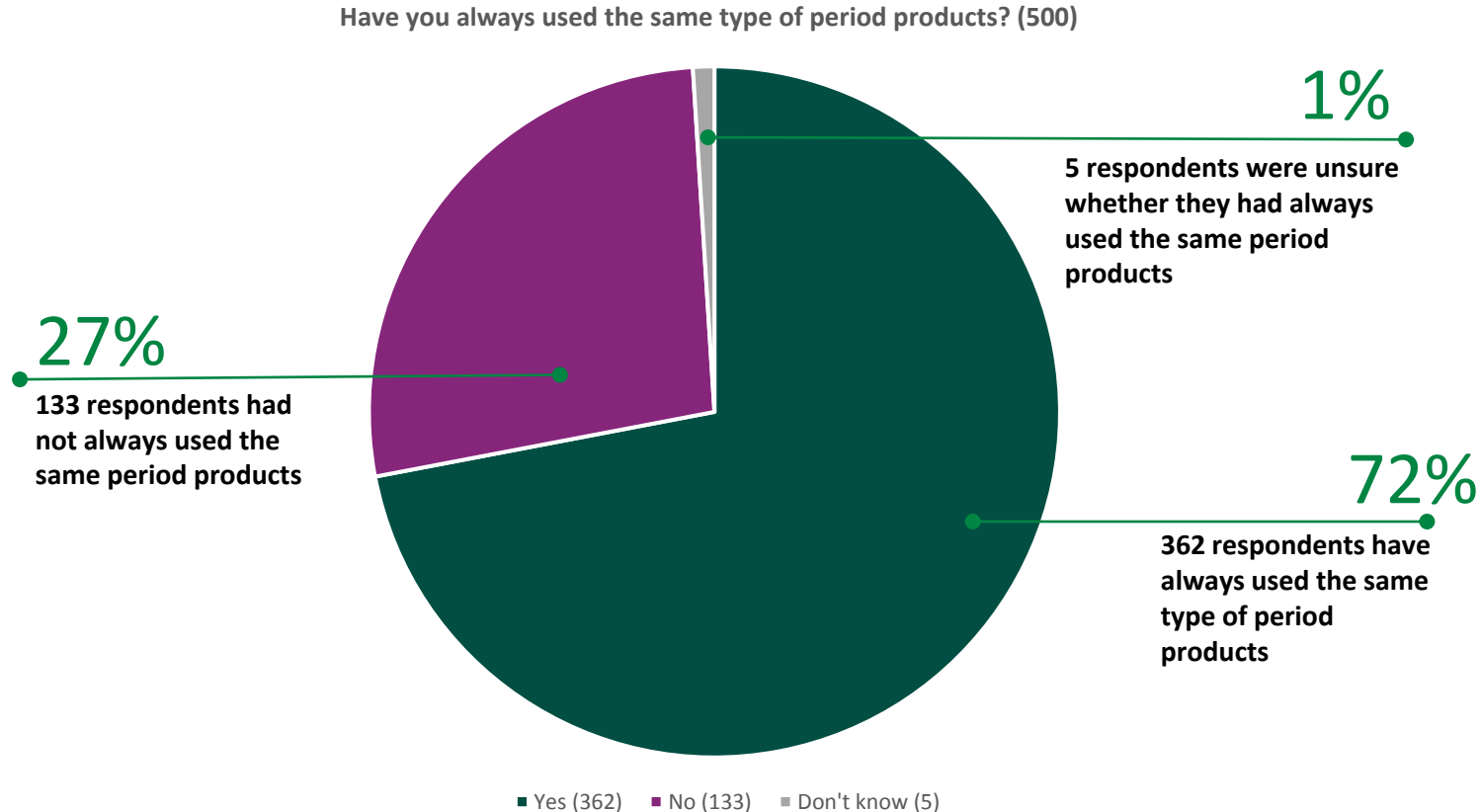
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*Disposable are better for me
Greater Manchester, 30-39*

“

*Too messy, nice idea if you live in a
shack without access to shops and
bins, but pretty unhelpful each
month if you work and leave the
house and go to the shops - this is
every month we have to do this
Merseyside, 30-39*

Here, 72% of respondents stated that there has been no change in the type of period products they use, whilst 27% stated that it had changed



Those who used the same types of period products felt that this was due to comfort, convenience, ease of use and habit. While cost impacts were also highlighted.

What are the factors that influence you to continue to use the same types of period products? (themes from open-ended responses)

They are comfortable
(93, 26%)

“ Comfort really influences my choice - I tried tampons over the many years of having periods and felt uncomfortable/tense
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ Easy to use and I feel comfortable using them
Lancashire, 18-29

“ Feel most comfortable and confident using the pads I have used for years
Greater Manchester, 40-49

They are convenient and easy to use
(84, 23%)

“ Ease and convenience and hygiene
Cheshire, 30-39

“ Easy and convenient it is what I know
Cumbria, 30-39

“ It is easy and convenient
Greater Manchester, 30-39

Use them out of habit
(79, 22%)

“ Creature of habit and not knowing/being able to test out new products first
Merseyside, 30-39

“ Familiarity to these products and the fact they are easy to purchase from most stores
Cumbria, 30-39

“ Habit I guess. Wanted to try a cup but fear of unknown
Cheshire, 40-49

The cost of them
(41, 11%)

“ Firstly that they don't leak or come apart and that they are comfortable and affordable as it can add up to be expensive as it was for me when I was younger for some time I would be on for 3 weeks and off for 1 as I had problems
Cumbria, 50-59

“ Good value for money, ease of use
Greater Manchester, 40-49

“ They are reliable and cheaper than alternatives
Greater Manchester, 40-49

For those who had changed products previously, feeling more comfortable in other products and the environmental impact of single-use products encouraged them to change

What are the factors that influenced you to change from other types of period products to the product/products you use now? (themes from open-ended responses)

Comfort of the product
(26, 20%)

“ Comfort, different clothing choices
Cheshire, 40-49

“ Find pads more comfortable than towels
Lancashire, 30-39

“ As I grew older, I started to feel more comfortable with tampons and menstrual cups
Merseyside, 30-39

Environmental impact and sustainability
(25, 19%)

“ Environment awareness and not buying into the ad man and destroying the planet
Lancashire, 50-59

“ I felt bad about binning lots of tampons - it felt like I was adding to environmental waste and I felt that a menstrual cup would be a lot better for the environment
Merseyside, 18-29

“ Hate waste and throwing things away, hence the menstrual cup
Cumbria, 40-49

The cost of them
(22, 17%)

“ ...Financial impact - initial outlay for a menstrual cup was I think £20. I still use the same one 6 years later and this is my main period product I use!
Cheshire, 18-29

“ The cost of tampons and also they made me sore
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“ Better quality and value for money product
Merseyside, 40-49

Trialling of other options
(11, 8%)

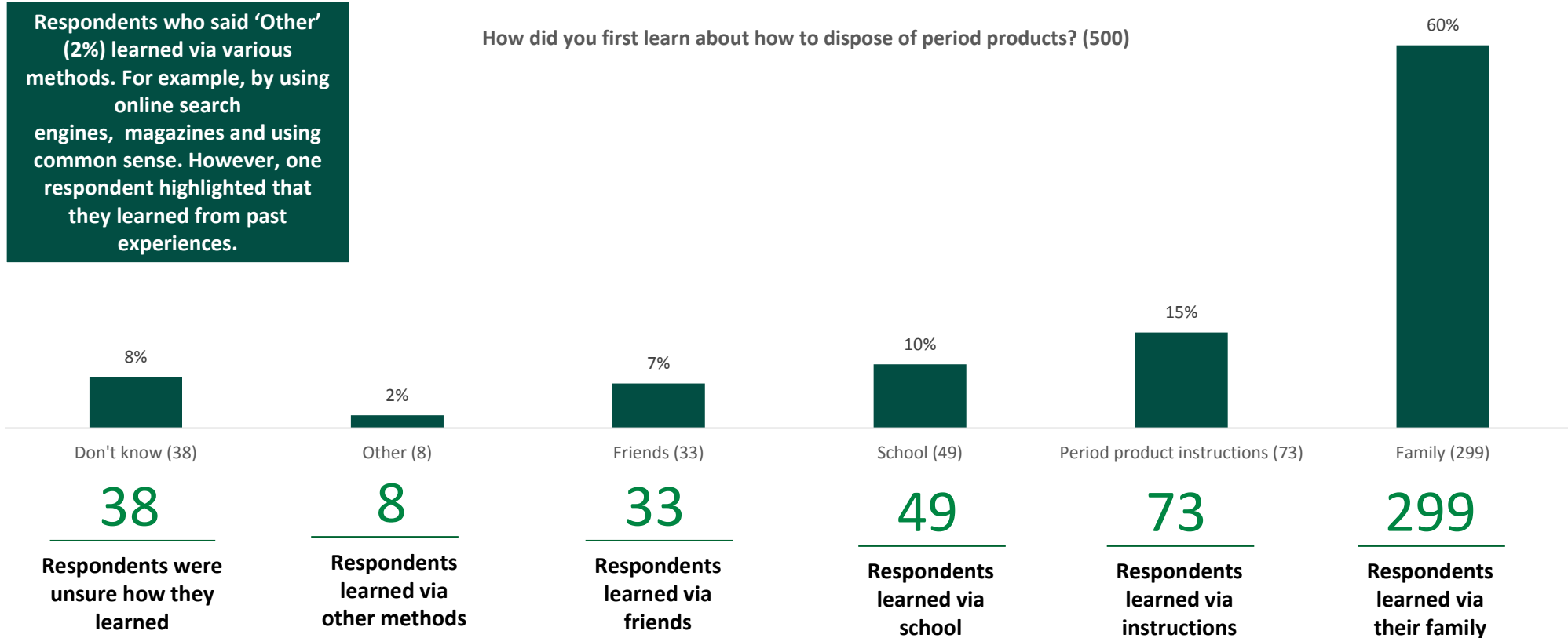
“ Found out more over the last few years about reusable period options
Cumbria, 40-49

“ I always like to check other products to know what works best for me
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ I started using washable pads 13 years ago. I previously did not know that they even existed! I wish I had known about them from when I first started my periods then I would have used them from the beginning
Lancashire, 40-49

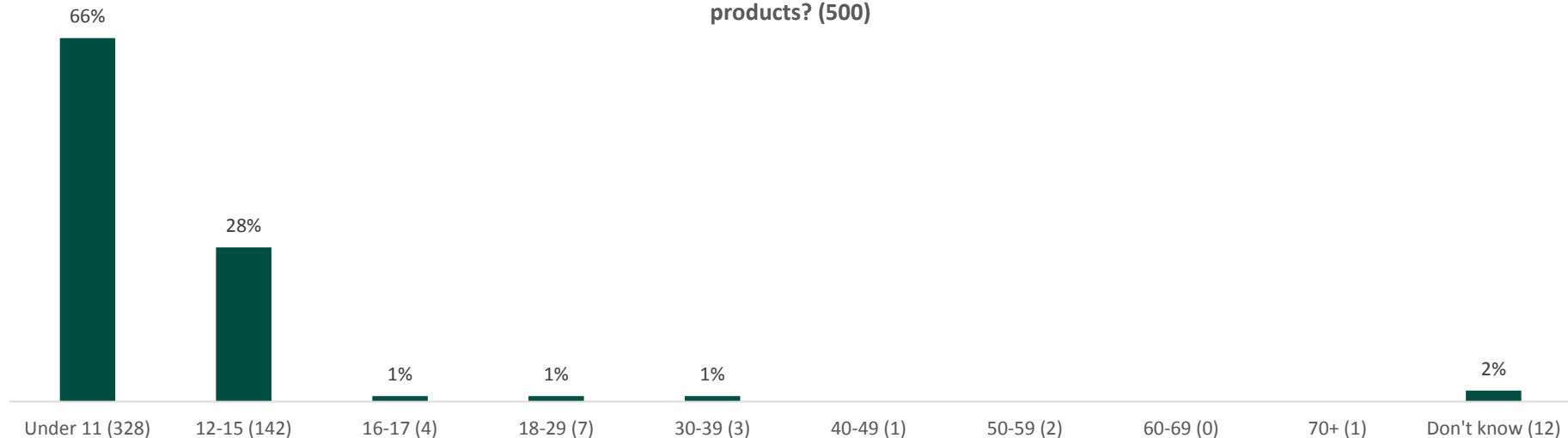
The majority (60%) of respondents learned how to dispose of products from family, followed by the products instructions (15%)

How did you first learn about how to dispose of period products? (500)



Predominantly, respondents felt that the most appropriate age for individuals to learn about periods and period products was under 11 (66%), followed by 28% respondents feeling ages 12-15 was the right time

When do you feel is the right time for individuals to be taught about periods, period products and how to dispose of period products? (500)



328

Respondents felt that under 11 was the right time

142

Respondents felt that 12-15 was the right time

4

Respondents felt that 16-17 was the right time

7

Respondents felt that 18-29 was the right time

6

Respondents felt that ages 30 and above was the right time

12

Respondents were unsure when the right time was

66% respondents justified that under 11 was the right time to learn about due to girls having periods early in life, ensuring girls are prepared in advance of their periods starting, and making them aware of what to expect

Why do you say that? (themes from open-ended responses)

Girls are having periods early in life
(159, 48%)

“ A lot of children are starting their periods earlier and earlier and need educating on how to dispose if the products too
Lancashire, 40-49

“ As girls can start periods before age 11 so important to know then
Lancashire, 30-39

“ Because a lot of girls start under the age of 11 like my daughter and unlike myself, not everyone's parents communicate with them about periods, I was terrified when I first started mine and it breaks my heart to think of girls going without support
Merseyside, 30-39

Prepare them earlier rather than later
(73, 22%)

“ The sooner a girl knows about these things the better. It makes them better prepared and able to cope
Cheshire, 50-59

“ My best friend started her period at 9. We didn't have the 'period lesson' until age 10 at school (year 6) by which time quite a few girls had already started. It was a very scary experience as they weren't prepared. It's not something to be ashamed or embarrassed about. I talk about it with my 6 year old daughter and she feels very comfortable asking about periods...
Cheshire, 18-29

“ Earlier the better, some people start young
Merseyside, 30-39

Girls need to be aware of what to expect
(58, 18%)

“ It is best to be prepared before the girls first period to ease any anxiety that may occur should she have her 1st period and be too shy to ask for help
Cumbria, 30-39

“ Many girls start periods under 11 so they need to be aware of what could happen to their body
Greater Manchester, 40-49

“ Some girls start their periods earlier than 11. It would be good if they knew what was happening to their bodies before it happened so they weren't scared by it all
Greater Manchester, 50-59

Girls need educating on periods and period product disposal
(53, 16%)

“ Because girls need to be prepared for what is going to happen to them once their periods start and what the options are for them to use and dispose of
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“ Because girls need to know about periods & period products before they start them. It's important to know how to dispose of them properly as otherwise it will cause big problems further down the line
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“ Early education about periods should be obligatory. It normalizes going through it and lessens the misinformation, shame and aids the girls who do not have a supportive family
Merseyside, 18-29

28% of respondents felt that teaching girls about periods, period products and the disposal of period products between the ages of 12-15 was the right age to have the conversation, with girls being most likely to start their periods then and able to better understand it

Why do you say that? (themes from open-ended responses)

Girls are likely to start their periods then
(69, 51%)

“

It is usually this age girls have their first period
Lancashire, 40-49

“

It seems the age when periods begin for most girls, so they're being educated about their periods and by extension they should be taught how to dispose of their period products
Greater Manchester, 18-29

“

I think most girls start periods around the age of 12 and once they start to use period products they need to learn how to dispose of them correctly
Cheshire, 50-59

The right age to have the conversation
(31, 22%)

“

I feel the right time is when you are growing into your teens
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“

It seem the right age to have this type of conversation
Lancashire, 60-69

“

I think under 11 is far too early but around 12/13 is a good time as a women is starting to grow and can understand more about what is happening with their bodies
Merseyside, 30-39

Can understand at this age
(11, 8%)

“

I feel like they are old enough to understand
Lancashire, 30-39

“

That age group most likely understand and curious about their bodies and will understand
Greater Manchester, 40-49

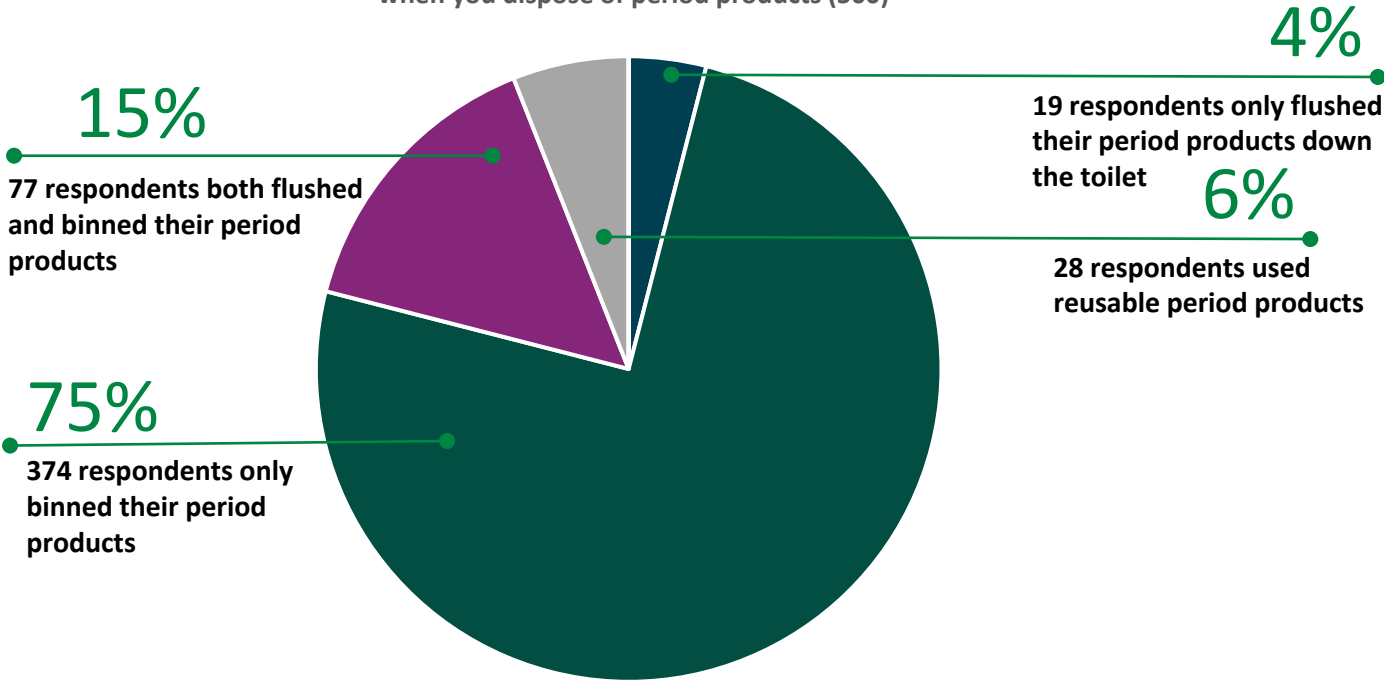
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Between 12 and 15 girls are able to understand more
Cumbria, 60-69

Current behaviours towards period products

The majority of respondents dispose of their period products by only binning them (75%), whilst 15% of respondents both flush and bin their period products

Please select which of the following statements best applies to you when you dispose of period products (500)



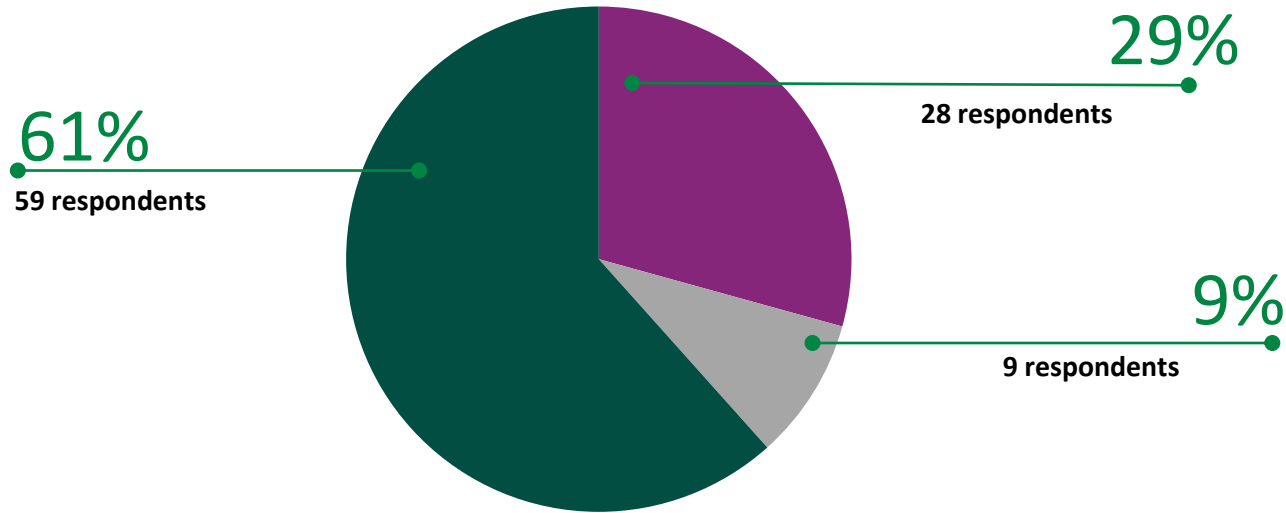
- I only dispose of period products by flushing them down the toilet (19)
- I only dispose of period products by putting them in the bin (374)
- I dispose of period products in the bin and by flushing them down the toilet (77)
- Not applicable – I use reusable period products (28)
- Don't know (2)

Flushing period products

Note: This section was only asked to respondents who stated 'I dispose of period products in the bin and by flushing them down the toilet' or 'I only dispose of period products by flushing them down the toilet'.

Most respondents who flush products stated they do so in both private and public bathrooms (61%), followed by 29% of respondents only flushing in private toilets

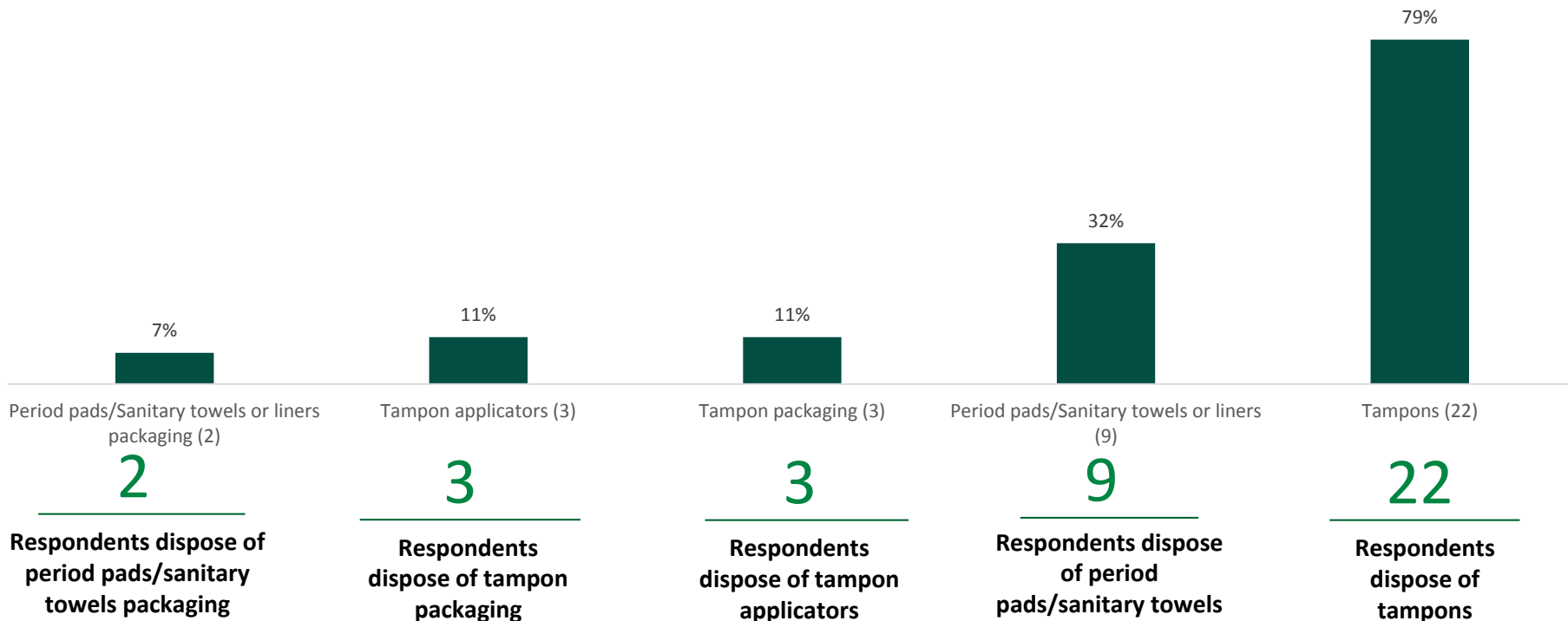
Thinking about when you flush period products, please select which of the following statements best applies to you (96)



- I only flush period products in private bathroom toilets (28)
- I only flush period products in public toilets (9)
- I flush period products both in private bathroom toilets and public toilets (59)
- Other (0)

Of the 29% who only flush period products down private bathroom toilets, they were most likely to dispose of tampons (79%) and period pads and sanitary towels (32%) down them

Which of the following period products are you likely to flush in private bathroom toilets? Please select all that apply (28)



The core barriers influencing 29% of respondents to only flush in private bathrooms are due to a lack of available bins, current knowledge about period product disposal and offering more privacy, particularly from male household members

Currently, what are the barriers causing you to flush period products in private bathrooms instead of putting them in the bin? (themes from open-ended responses)

Lack of available bins
(5, 18%)

““ The public toilets have the sanitary bins but some friends houses etc don't
Lancashire, 18-29

““ Lack of sanitary waste bins I guess
Merseyside, 40-49

““ Personal bathroom don't have bathroom bin as smell isn't nice in small space
Cheshire, 40-49

Felt this was the correct disposal method
(4, 14%)

““ I thought that was the correct way to dispose of them
Greater Manchester, 40-49

““ Not really thought about this before, it was the way I was taught to deal with
Greater Manchester, 50-59

““ I flush the product if it is designed to be flushed, such as a tampon, anything else goes in the bin
Lancashire, 40-49

Offers more privacy
(4, 14%)

““ I share a bathroom with my husband and two sons. I do not want them to see the blood stained towel/liner. I do not want the bin/bathroom to smell
Lancashire, 50-59

““ No one can see it
Lancashire, 30-39

““ I like privacy
Greater Manchester, 40-49

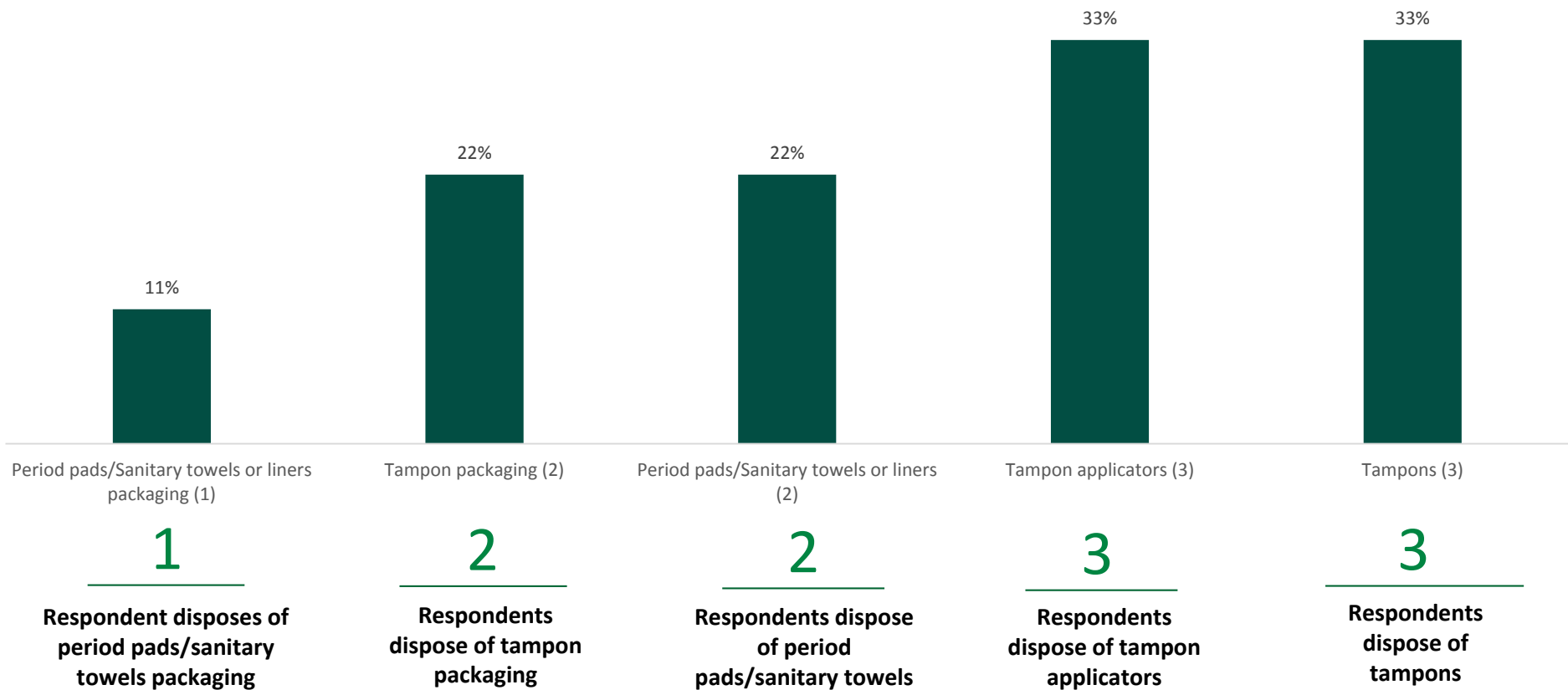
Concerns about blocking elsewhere
(2, 7%)

““ I just always have done that and wouldn't in a public bathroom or someone else's as I don't know what their flush capacity is like
Lancashire, 18-29

““ You never know what kind waste disposal a public bathroom uses so could block easily
Cheshire, 40-49

The 9% of respondents who only flush period products down public toilets were most likely to discard tampons and tampon applicators down them (33% respectively)

Which of the following period products are you more likely to flush in public toilets? Please select all that apply (9)



Lack of sufficient bins and feeling embarrassed were cited as reasons for those who only flush in public toilets

Currently, what are the barriers causing you to flush period products in public toilets instead of binning them? (themes from open-ended responses)

4 respondents felt that there were no specific reasons why they flush period products in public toilets.

Lack of sufficient bins
(3, 33%)

“

Don't have bin
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“

Products are binned. If there isn't any
bins, then they are flushed
Cumbria, 18-29

“

Bins are dirty
Lancashire, 30-39

Feeling embarrassed
(1, 11%)

“

The embarrassment
Greater Manchester, 18-29

Of the 19% (96) who said they flush products, 74% identified blockages, polluting water sources and environmental impacts as consequences to flushing products as being potential consequences.

What do you think are some of the possible consequences of period products being flushed? (themes from open-ended responses)

3 respondents felt that there were no consequences of flushing period products, and 7 respondents were unaware of any consequences.

They cause blockages
(54, 56%)

“

*Blockages in drains
Greater Manchester, 18-29*

“

*Flushing pads and tampons down the toilet causes sewer blockages. Worse, many pads and tampons end up in the sea and washed up on beaches
Merseyside, 30-39*

“

*I only ever flush a used tampon down the toilet, never the applicator tube or sanitary towels. If those were flushed down the toilet then the toilet/drainage system could get blocked
Cheshire, 40-49*

They pollute water sources
(10, 10%)

“

*Ending up in places they shouldn't such as rivers etc, risk of blocking pipes
Cheshire, 30-39*

“

*They are causing pollution in water sources etc.
Lancashire, 40-49*

“

*Potential to block sewers and pollute rivers
Merseyside, 60-69*

They negatively affect the environment
(8, 8%)

“

*Bad for the environment and sea/ocean creatures
Greater Manchester, 18-29*

“

*Obviously, the environment suffers because of slow decomposition, and they end up in waterways and the sea etc, which is obviously not right
Lancashire, 50-59*

“

*It is not good for the environment however it is also not good for them to go to the landfill
Greater Manchester, 30-39*

Various reasons influenced respondents to flush their period products down the toilet, with a lack of available bins and flushing being an easier alternative being the main themes

What reasons, if any, influence you to flush period products and not dispose of them in the bin instead? (themes from open-ended responses)

Lack of available bins
(13, 14%)

“ There is not always a bin available. At home I would only flush tampons not pads
Greater Manchester, 40-49

“ Whether there is a sanitary bin available
Merseyside, 40-49

“ Whether there's an appropriate bin around
Lancashire, 30-39

Easier alternative
(12, 13%)

“ Easier and much more hygienic
Cheshire, 60-69

“ Quicker and easier
Lancashire, 30-39

“ It's easier, I'm used to doing it that way so sometimes I forget I need to bin them
Greater Manchester, 18-29

Tampons are designed to be flushed
(12, 13%)

“ Because tampons are marketed as flushable
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ I only flush those and are designed to be flushed and say so on the packaging
Lancashire, 40-49

“ Tampons are flushable and sometimes sanitary bins are not available to use
Greater Manchester, 30-39

More hygiene friendly
(11, 11%)

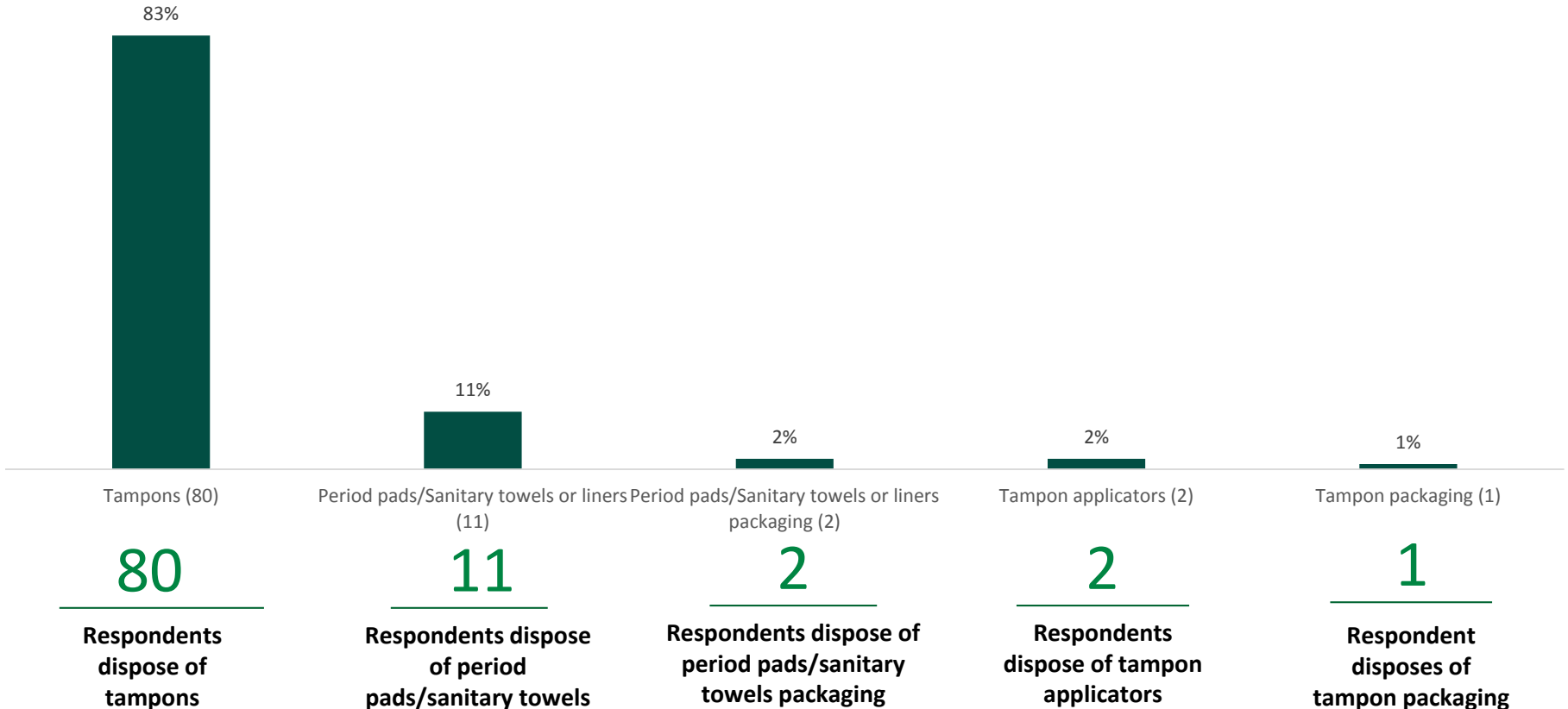
“ I feel it is more hygienic for a tampon to be flushed down the toilet as opposed to wrapping it in tissue and putting it in the bin. Generally, when used they are naturally quite wet and I think wrapping up in tissue which would go soggy isn't very pleasant, especially if other people are putting things in the same bin. Seeing bloody tissue wouldn't be nice
Cheshire, 40-49

“ Lack of bin facilities, bacteria and smell from stagnant blood, overflowing bins
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ It's unhygienic to have them in the bathroom
Greater Manchester, 40-49

Overall, respondents who flush period products were most likely to flush tampons (83%), followed by period pads and sanitary towels (11%)

Overall, which period product are you most likely to flush? (96)

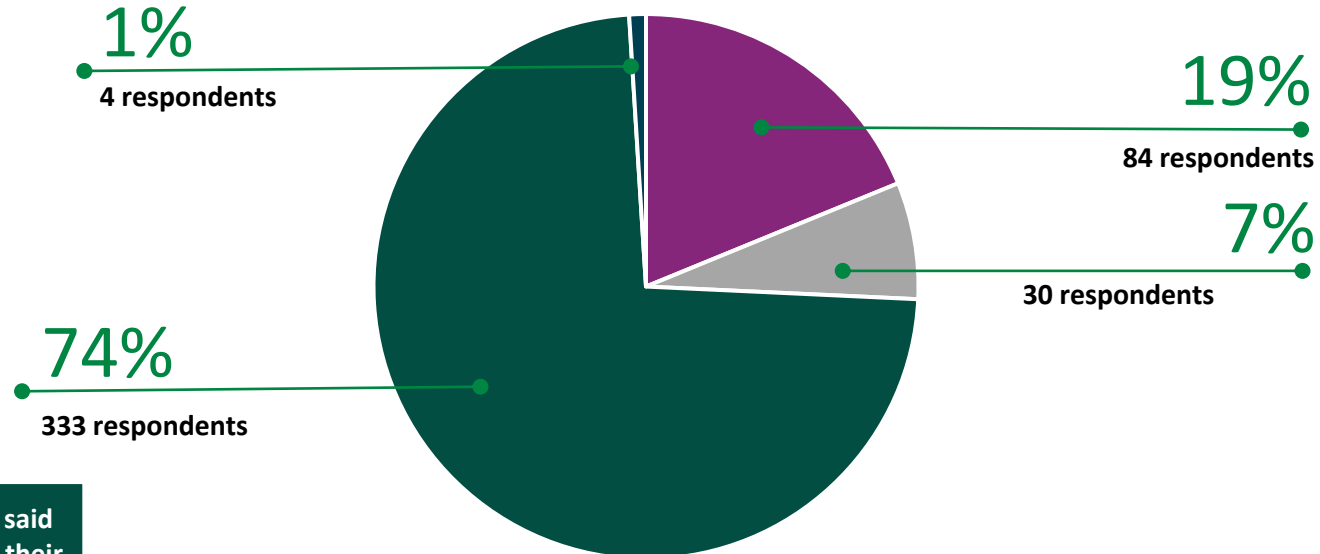


Binning period products

Note: This section was only asked to respondents who stated 'I dispose of period products in the bin and by flushing them down the toilet' or 'I only dispose of period products by putting them in the bin'

The majority of respondents disposed of their period products both in private bathroom toilet and public toilet bins.

Thinking about when you dispose of period products in the bin, please select which of the following statements best applies to you (451)



74%
333 respondents

1%
4 respondents

19%
84 respondents

7%
30 respondents

- I only dispose of period products in private bathroom bins (84)
- I only dispose of period products in public toilet bins (30)
- I dispose of period products both in private bathroom bins and public toilet bins (333)
- Other (4)

Of those respondents who said 'Other' (1%), some felt that their method of disposal was dependent upon their location, whilst others bagged their period products up or burned them.

Of those respondents who only binned period products in private bathroom bins (19%), this was due to respondents feeling more comfortable in them, whilst also being more hygiene friendly and private

You said that you only bin period products in private bathroom bins. What are the key factors influencing to dispose of period products only in private bathroom bins? (themes from open-ended responses)

More hygiene friendly
(13, 15%)

“ I feel it is more hygienic. I also see no reason to do it in public toilet bins
Merseyside, 18-29

“ The comfort of knowing it's your own space and the hygiene factor. Public period bins are unhygienic
Greater Manchester, 18-29

“ They are personal items and I don't feel it's hygienic to put them anywhere else
Lancashire, 40-49

Feel more comfortable
(10, 12%)

“ I feel like private bins make me feel more comfortable
Merseyside, 18-29

“ Because I am comfortable in private bathrooms rather public ones
Lancashire, 30-39

“ It's where I feel comfortable leaving them
Greater Manchester, 40-49

It is more discrete/private
(7, 8%)

“ It's more private as it's only for me
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ It's the most discreet and hygienic and convenient
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“ Because it is much more discrete than
Lancashire, 18-29

Tend to be at home when disposing of period products
(6, 7%)

“ I spend most of time in my own house
Greater Manchester, 40-49

“ Usually at home when I dispose of them
Cumbria, 50-59

“ My periods are so heavy (I can fill an always extra long nighttime pad in 45 minutes on heavy days which tend to be 3 days of my period) that I become effectively housebound for those days. I am then so wiped out by the pain, waking to change my pad every 45 minutes through the night, that the next few days whilst my period gets lighter and lighter till it goes, that I stay home. I'm therefore not out and about to use public toilets
Cheshire, 40-49

Of the 7% of respondents who only bin their period products in public toilet bins, the most common themes were due to the availability of bins, and offering greater privacy

You said that you only bin period products in public toilet bins. What are the key factors influencing you to dispose of period products only in public toilet bins? (themes from open-ended responses)

Availability of bins (11, 37%)



Bins are available
Cheshire, 40-49



There are bins provided for this purpose
Cheshire, 50-59



Availability of specific sanitary bins
Merseyside, 40-49

Offers more privacy (3, 10%)



Nobody knows it is mine and I don't know flush capacity of public toilets - they also have dedicated bins for sanitary products. Normal bathroom bins do not
Lancashire, 18-29



They have a special bin to put sanitary towels in, where you cannot see the towel. I cannot do that at home. If I put them in the bin, others will see it
Lancashire, 50-59



I'm not comfortable putting such products in someone's household bins, but proper sanitary bins in public places is fine
Greater Manchester, 30-39

In instances where a bin wasn't available, respondents would dispose of their period products at the nearest bin or at home, whilst others would flush them down the toilet

Thinking about past experience, what do you do in instances where there isn't a bin available to dispose of your period products? (themes from open-ended responses)

40 respondents stated that this had never happened to them previously.

Dispose of it at the nearest bin
(198, 44%)

“ I would wrap it in toilet paper and put it in the nearest bin
Lancashire, 40-49

“ I wrap it in tissue and put in one of my sons nappy bags and find a bin straight away
Greater Manchester, 40-49

“ I wrap it up and then put it in my pocket or bag till I can find a bin to discreetly dispose of
Greater Manchester, 30-39

Dispose of it at home
(62, 14%)

“ Wrap in a plastic bag and dispose of in a bin at home
Lancashire, 40-49

“ When there's no bin around to toss my period products, I usually keep a small, handy wet bag with me. I use it to stash the used stuff until I'm back home where I can dispose of it properly. It's a practical way to handle things and stay clean and considerate even when there's no trash can nearby
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ Wait until I get home then dispose of it
Cheshire, 60-69

Flush it down the toilet
(53, 12%)

“ I flush them down the toilet
Greater Manchester, 18-29

“ If in public, I'll flush down the toilet
Greater Manchester, 40-49

“ Sadly, they've gone in the toilet. Not something you can carry around
Merseyside, 40-49

Take it away to dispose of later
(41, 9%)

“ Put it in a bag and dispose when I can
Lancashire, 18-29

“ Keep in pocket (wrapped up) & dispose when can
Lancashire, 40-49

“ Wrap it in tissue and put in my bag to dispose of later
Greater Manchester, 40-49

Preventing period products from blocking the toilet and water system, as well as limiting the impact on the environment were reasons given for binning period products

What reasons, if any, influence you to bin period products rather than flushing them? (themes from open-ended responses)

Preventing them from blocking the toilet
(127, 28%)

“ I was always told you don't flush them and to bin them as they don't break down and block the toilet
Cumbria, 50-59

“ I think it helps the environment plus if you flush down the toilet you could block it
Greater Manchester, 50-59

“ If I flushed them, it would clog up the toilet and I don't want the person using the toilet after me to deal with that
Greater Manchester, 18-29

Limiting the impact on the water system
(126, 28%)

“ Better for the toilet and waste water system, less blockages, better for the environment and water supply
Cheshire, 40-49

“ They block pipe work! They're designed to absorb liquid and when they do they expand. Also they only have to be removed at some point in the wastewater process, so why put them in in the first place?
Cheshire, 30-39

“ Because that's the correct way to dispose of them and flushing them is bad for the planet/individual drainage systems
Greater Manchester, 18-29

Limiting the negative impact on the environment
(66, 15%)

“ I don't think it's good for the environment to flush them down the toilet, it's not as simple as tissue
Lancashire, 18-29

“ I know that this is not good for the environment as explained on the products and on TV
Merseyside, 40-49

“ It's better for the environment and marine life
Greater Manchester, 18-29

Period products are not designed to be flushed
(48, 11%)

“ You can't flush period products, or you're not supposed to at least
Greater Manchester, 18-29

“ They are not made for flushing
Merseyside, 40-49

“ They may block the toilet which would be embarrassing and costly to get someone out to fix it. Plus they are not meant to be flushed, they can't break down like toilet paper
Greater Manchester, 30-39

Causing blockages, and polluting water sources were raised as key consequences of flushing among respondents who bin their period products

What do you think are some of the possible consequences of period products being flushed? (themes from open-ended responses)

9 respondents felt that there were no consequences of flushing period products, and 10 respondents were unaware of any consequences.

They cause blockages
(354, 78%)

“ Polluting the environment.
Blocking pipes and sewers
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ Damage to system such as blocking
plus environmental
Cheshire, 40-49

“ They can get caught in the toilet or
the pipes. They can all get caught
up with other things like hair and
fat that have also incorrectly been
put in the waterways and create
massive problems
Greater Manchester, 30-39

They pollute water sources
(84, 19%)

“ Ending up polluting
water/rivers, not being
dissolved properly and polluting
the environment
Greater Manchester, 40-49

“ I think it can negatively impact
the environment. Make the sea
more dirty. Plastics etc
be flushed too as some products
contain that
Lancashire, 18-29

“ Clogged drains. polluting our
water stream. Plastics etc
getting in to rivers endangering
our wildlife
Lancashire, 40-49

They negatively affect the environment
(42, 9%)

“ Bad for the environment and
animals
Greater Manchester, 30-39

“ Bad for the environment
Lancashire, 18-29

“ Pollution, damage to the
environment
Greater Manchester, 40-49

Recap

Recap

Over half of respondents felt that their comfort level had changed over time, as periods are more accepted within society

84% of respondents used period pads or sanitary towels

Being environmentally friendly and providing long term cost benefits drove use of re-usable period products

75% of respondents only dispose of their products in the bin with preventing blockages to toilet and water systems, and protecting the environment being the top two reasonings behind this.

Under a third of respondents only flushed period products down private toilets, with tampons being the most disposed down them

Of those respondents only flushing period products down public toilets, a third flushed tampons and tampon packaging

Appendix

A breakdown of respondents by how comfortable they are talking about period products.

Extremely comfortable

Age	Count	Percentage
18-29	45	16%
30-39	89	32%
40-49	90	33%
50-59	39	14%
60-69	5	2%
70+	4	1%
Prefer not to say	3	1%
Grand Total	275	100%

Region	Count	Percentage
Cheshire	39	14%
Cumbria	15	5%
Greater Manchester	127	46%
Lancashire	46	17%
Merseyside	48	17%
Grand Total	275	100%

Row Labels	Count	Percentage
Below £10,000	19	7%
£10,001 to £20,000	33	12%
£20,001 to £30,000	49	18%
£30,001 to £40,000	39	14%
£40,001 to £50,000	32	12%
£50,001 to £60,000	24	9%
£60,001 to £70,000	15	5%
£70,001 to £80,000	13	5%
£80,001 to £90,000	12	4%
£90,001 to £100,000	5	2%
Above £100,000	12	4%
Prefer not to say	19	7%
Unsure	3	1%
Grand Total	275	100%

A breakdown of respondents by how comfortable they are talking about period products.

Slightly comfortable

Row Labels	Count	Percentage
18-29	24	20%
30-39	44	37%
40-49	38	32%
50-59	9	8%
60-69	3	3%
Prefer not to say	2	2%
Grand Total	120	100%

Region	Count	Percentage
Cheshire	11	9%
Cumbria	11	9%
Greater Manchester	53	44%
Lancashire	26	22%
Merseyside	19	16%
		0%
Grand Total	120	100%

Row Labels	Count	Percentage
£10,001 to £20,000	12	10%
£20,001 to £30,000	22	18%
£30,001 to £40,000	24	20%
£40,001 to £50,000	11	9%
£50,001 to £60,000	10	8%
£60,001 to £70,000	9	8%
£70,001 to £80,000	8	7%
£80,001 to £90,000	1	1%
£90,001 to £100,000	3	3%
Above £100,000	3	3%
Below £10,000	7	6%
Prefer not to say	6	5%
Unsure	4	3%
Grand Total	120	100%

A breakdown of respondents by how comfortable they are talking about period products.

Neither uncomfortable nor comfortable

Age	Count	Percentage
18-29	9	15%
30-39	15	25%
40-49	23	38%
50-59	7	12%
60-69	5	8%
70+	1	2%
Grand Total	60	100%

Region	Count	Percentage
Cheshire	9	15%
Cumbria	6	10%
Greater Manchester	20	33%
Lancashire	11	18%
Merseyside	14	23%
Grand Total	60	100%

Annual Income	Count	Percentage
Below £10,000	7	12%
£10,001 to £20,000	13	22%
£20,001 to £30,000	8	13%
£30,001 to £40,000	12	20%
£40,001 to £50,000	4	7%
£50,001 to £60,000	7	12%
£60,001 to £70,000	1	2%
£70,001 to £80,000	1	2%
£80,001 to £90,000	1	2%
Above £100,000	1	2%
Prefer not to say	5	8%
Grand Total	60	100%

A breakdown of respondents by how comfortable they are talking about period products.

Slightly uncomfortable

Age	Count	Percentage
18-29	5	15%
30-39	10	30%
40-49	5	15%
50-59	9	27%
60-69	3	9%
70+	1	3%
Grand Total	33	100%

Region	Count	Percentage
Cheshire	6	18%
Cumbria	3	9%
Greater Manchester	8	24%
Lancashire	8	24%
Merseyside	8	24%
Grand Total	33	100%

Annual Income	Count	Percentage
Below £10,000	3	9%
£10,001 to £20,000	7	21%
£20,001 to £30,000	8	24%
£30,001 to £40,000	4	12%
£40,001 to £50,000	5	15%
£90,001 to £100,000	2	6%
Prefer not to say	4	12%
Grand Total	33	100%

A breakdown of respondents by how comfortable they are talking about period products.

Extremely uncomfortable

Age	Count	Percentage
18-29	2	17%
30-39	4	33%
40-49	3	25%
50-59	1	8%
60-69	2	17%
Grand Total	12	100%

Region	Count	Percentage
Cheshire	2	17%
Greater Manchester	4	33%
Lancashire	2	17%
Merseyside	4	33%
Grand Total	12	100%

Annual Income	Count	Percentage
Below £10,000	2	17%
£10,001 to £20,000	2	17%
£20,001 to £30,000	1	8%
£30,001 to £40,000	1	8%
£40,001 to £50,000	1	8%
£50,001 to £60,000	1	8%
£70,001 to £80,000	1	8%
£90,001 to £100,000	1	8%
Above £100,000	1	8%
Unsure	1	8%
Grand Total	12	100%

Demographic breakdown of respondents who answered 'No' to 'When thinking about how comfortable you are currently when talking about periods and period products, has this changed over time?'

Age	Count	Percentage
18-29	25	13%
30-39	59	31%
40-49	65	34%
50-59	27	14%
60-69	8	4%
70+	3	2%
Prefer not to say	3	2%
Grand Total	190	100%

Region	Count	Percentage
Greater Manchester	82	43%
Merseyside	37	19%
Lancashire	32	17%
Cheshire	31	16%
Cumbria	8	4%
Grand Total	190	100%

Annual Income	Count	Percentage
Below £10,000	14	7%
£10,001 to £20,000	31	16%
£20,001 to £30,000	34	18%
£30,001 to £40,000	29	15%
£40,001 to £50,000	15	8%
£50,001 to £60,000	16	8%
£60,001 to £70,000	6	3%
£70,001 to £80,000	9	5%
£80,001 to £90,000	7	4%
£90,001 to £100,000	3	2%
Above £100,000	9	5%
Prefer not to say	15	8%
Unsure	2	1%
Grand Total	190	100%

Demographic breakdown of respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'When thinking about how comfortable you are currently when talking about periods and period products, has this changed over time?'

Age	Count	Percentage
18-29	55	19%
30-39	97	34%
40-49	84	29%
50-59	36	13%
60-69	10	3%
70+	3	1%
Prefer not to say	2	1%
Grand Total	287	100.00%

Region	Count	Percentage
Greater Manchester	120	42%
Lancashire	58	20%
Merseyside	50	17%
Cheshire	33	11%
Cumbria	26	9%
Grand Total	287	100.00%

Annual Income	Count	Percentage
Below £10,000	19	7%
£10,001 to £20,000	36	13%
£20,001 to £30,000	51	18%
£30,001 to £40,000	46	16%
£40,001 to £50,000	36	13%
£50,001 to £60,000	26	9%
£60,001 to £70,000	17	6%
£70,001 to £80,000	13	5%
£80,001 to £90,000	7	2%
£90,001 to £100,000	8	3%
Above £100,000	8	3%
Prefer not to say	15	5%
Unsure	5	2%
Grand Total	287	100%

The 'in the flow' panel

- In the flow is an online community designed to gather the views of those in the North West who have access to the internet (circa 90% of the population)
- Customer communities typically provide a deeper level of engagement with customers than ad-hoc pieces of research
- It provides rapid research access to United Utilities customers
 - This can provide fast and cost effective feedback on a wide range of issues
- Where appropriate, work is supported with other methodologies and samples to represent those not present on in the flow
- Over 1,100 United Utilities customers are on the community

To find out more about using the 'in the flow' panel to meet your business needs, please contact **Shy Sharma** or another member of the Insight Team:



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