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Public Opinion & Knowledge on Period Product Safety

Community Research

Key Findings Report



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Introduction

At Manchester Community Central, we've been working on a dedicated project focused on menstrual health for the past 2 years, specifically around **menstrual health support in the workplace**, through a voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) lens. As part of this ongoing work, we conducted a community research survey to **better understand the knowledge, experiences, and opinions of women and people who menstruate, particularly around the safety and regulation of menstrual products.**

Rationale and Scope of Research on Toxicity of Period Products:

Before creating the survey, we compiled research from over 20 peer-reviewed studies which revealed that menstrual products, used by an estimated 300 million people daily and totalling more than 11,000 products per person over a lifetime, have been found to contain a range of potentially harmful chemicals, including pesticides, dioxins, phthalates, and endocrine-disrupting compounds. Given that **vaginal tissue absorbs chemicals at up to twice the rate of oral absorption**, bypassing the liver's detoxification system entirely, cumulative exposure over decades represents a significant and understudied public health concern.

Despite growing parliamentary pressure and a recently launched UK consultation with the Department of Business and Trade (June 2026), public awareness of these findings remains largely unknown. This survey therefore seeks to understand current levels of awareness, concern, and appetite for regulatory change among the public, in order to ensure that lived experience and consumer priorities are represented in the ongoing policy conversation.

What makes this concern particularly compelling is that it is neither new nor isolated. The Women's Environmental Network (WEN), alongside partner organisations including Women's Voices for the Earth, **has tracked and compiled testing on period products for over two decades**, documenting a consistent and growing body of international evidence spanning more than fifteen countries. Their timeline records findings beginning in 2002, when US researchers first identified dioxins and furans in tampons and charts a steady accumulation of evidence from government agencies, consumer groups, and peer-reviewed journals identifying pesticides, phthalates, PFAS, heavy metals, and volatile organic compounds across the full range of menstrual products.

Most recently, glyphosate was found in UK-sold tampons at 40 times the legal drinking water limit in WEN's own May 2025 testing. Yet despite over two decades of evidence, no country has introduced mandatory full ingredient disclosure, and public awareness of these findings remains largely unmeasured. It is precisely this gap that this survey seeks to address.

Methodology and Population Comparison:

This survey was conducted over a ten-month period (August 2025- June 2026), distributed primarily through network channels, word of mouth, and thematic events related to women's health and environmental advocacy. A total of 309 participants completed the survey. All participants submitted their responses anonymously. Given the non-probability sampling method, formal confidence intervals cannot be calculated, and findings should be treated as exploratory and indicative rather than statistically representative of the broader population. It is important to note that the distribution channels used, network events, word of mouth, and thematic women's health spaces, mean that a meaningful proportion of respondents are likely to have held prior awareness of or interest in menstrual health issues before completing the survey. This introduces a degree of selection bias that should be considered when interpreting certain findings, particularly those relating to awareness levels. The 56.9% of respondents who reported awareness of chemicals in period products, for example, is likely higher than would be found in a general population sample. Rather than undermining the findings, acknowledging this openly strengthens the integrity of this research. Where awareness levels appear relatively high, this may reflect the sample rather than the broader public, and findings on regulation, concern, and appetite for change, where responses were near-universal, are arguably more robust precisely because even an engaged and informed sample felt that current protections were inadequate.

Findings are therefore presented using directional language, and caution is exercised throughout in the interpretation of results. Despite these limitations, the dataset provides a valuable and timely snapshot of attitudes, awareness levels, and appetite for regulatory change among a meaningful cross-section of respondents and contributes a useful evidence base to the ongoing policy conversation around menstrual product safety in the UK.

Demographic Findings:

In designing the survey, the decision was taken to collect only two demographic variables: age and gender. This was a deliberate methodological choice reflecting two specific objectives. First, age data was collected in order to capture the range of life stages represented within the sample, recognising that awareness of, and relationship to, menstrual product safety is likely to vary across different points in a person's menstrual life, from adolescence through to perimenopause.

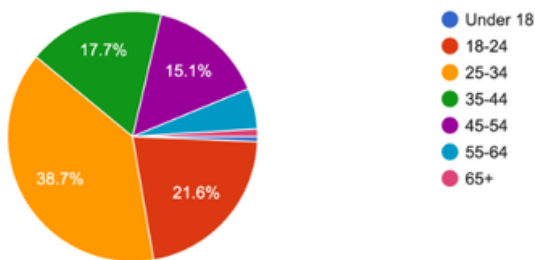
Secondly, gender data was collected to assess the inclusivity and accessibility of the language used throughout the survey, ensuring that the framing was appropriate and welcoming for women and all people who menstruate. It is acknowledged that the absence of additional demographic variables such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location limits the extent to which findings can be disaggregated or assessed for representativeness across different communities. This is noted as a limitation of the current study and represents an area for development in any future iteration of this research.

Age and Gender

Age:

The highest percentage of age represented in the survey findings is the 25-34 amounting to 38.7% of the participants. Secondly, the 18-24 age bracket was 21.6% of the percentage of respondents. The least represented age group were the under 18 groups, factoring only 0.7% of the survey respondents.

What is your age?
305 responses

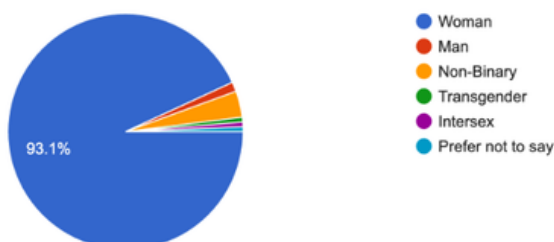


Gender:

In relation to gender, the majority of respondents at 93.1% identifying as a woman and 11 (3.6%) equating to non-binary people. 0.7% of respondents, 2 participants, were Transgender.

Overall, the large majority of respondents are women but with a minority of respondents being non-binary and transgender demonstrating that inclusive language in the survey aided the engagement of non-binary and transgender people within the survey.

What gender do you identify as?
306 responses

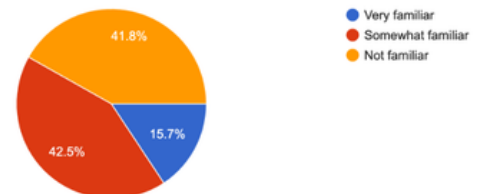


Familiarity with the Ingredients Used in Menstrual Products

The insight from the survey demonstrates that 41.8% of respondents are not familiar with the ingredients used in period products and 42.5% are somewhat familiar. That equates to 84.3% of respondents were not familiar and somewhat familiar of the ingredients which demonstrates the huge knowledge disparity present in society.

Although this is not surprising, due to the legislation stating it is not mandatory for period products brands to share ingredients, it is concerning that women and those who menstruate largely are unaware of the ingredients that are a present in period products that they use monthly and over decades in their lifetime.

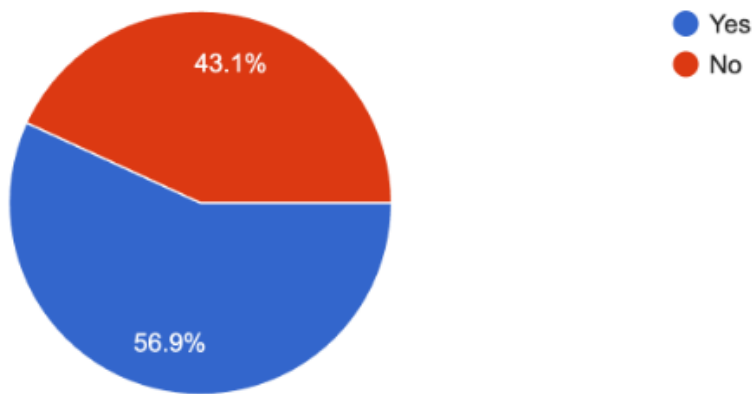
How familiar are you with the ingredients used in menstrual products (pads, tampons, menstrual cups)?
306 responses



Awareness of Chemicals in Menstrual Products

Findings from the survey demonstrate that 43.1% of respondents are unaware of the chemicals or substances that may be present in period products. That being said 56.9% are aware of the chemicals that may be present, indicating that campaigns and awareness are getting through to the public. On the other hand, it could also signify that the respondents were already aware of the toxic period product campaign and that drew them to complete the survey, demonstrating that potentially the sample size is not diverse enough.

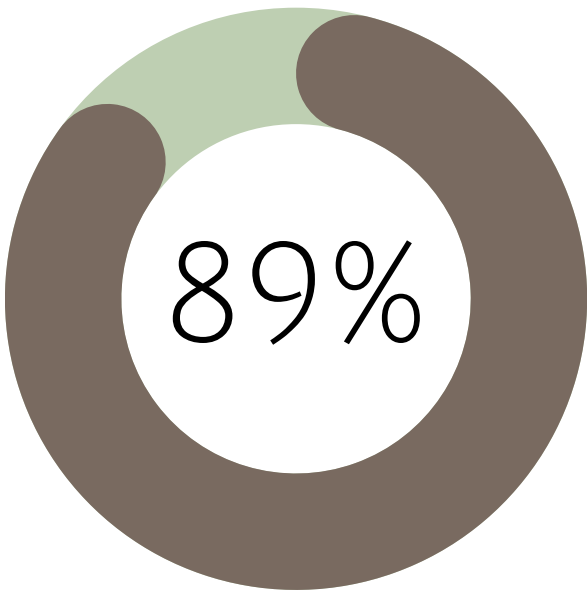
Are you aware of any chemicals or substances that may be present in menstrual products?
306 responses



Elimination of Toxic Period Products:

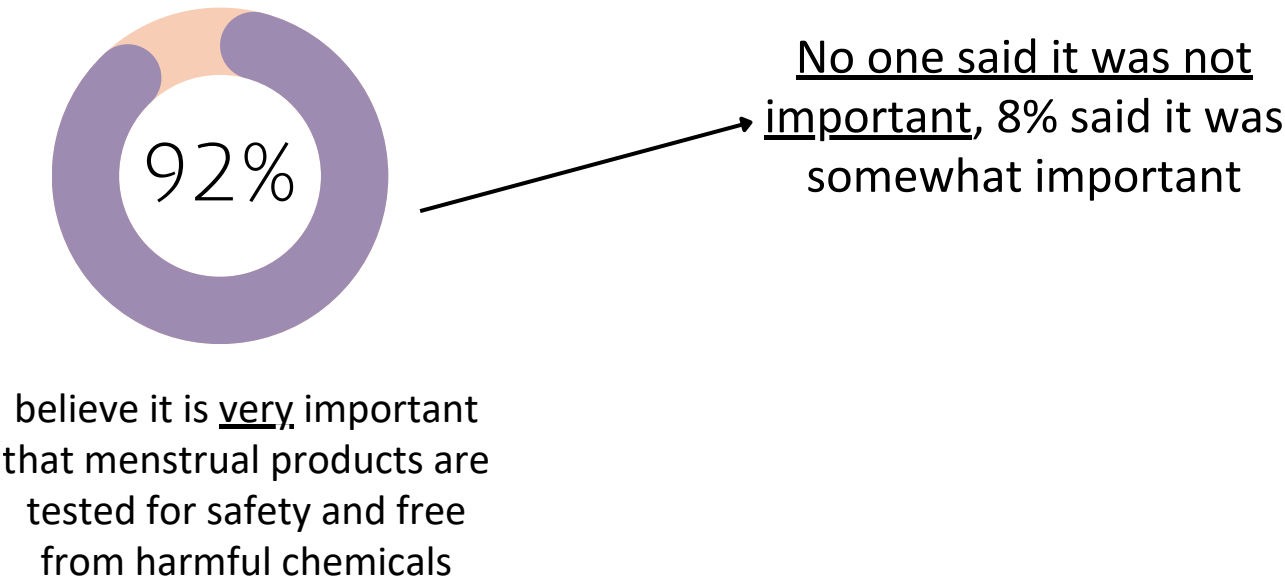
89.6% believe that any chemicals potentially harmful to their health should be completely eliminated from period products. This could be clearly achieved through greater regulation, ingredient transparency and better testing for period products. With such a high majority of respondents being concerned about the chemicals in period products, it really brings to the surface the concern and need for toxic free, highly regulated period products.

Believe that any chemicals potentially harmful to your health, should be completely eliminated from menstrual products



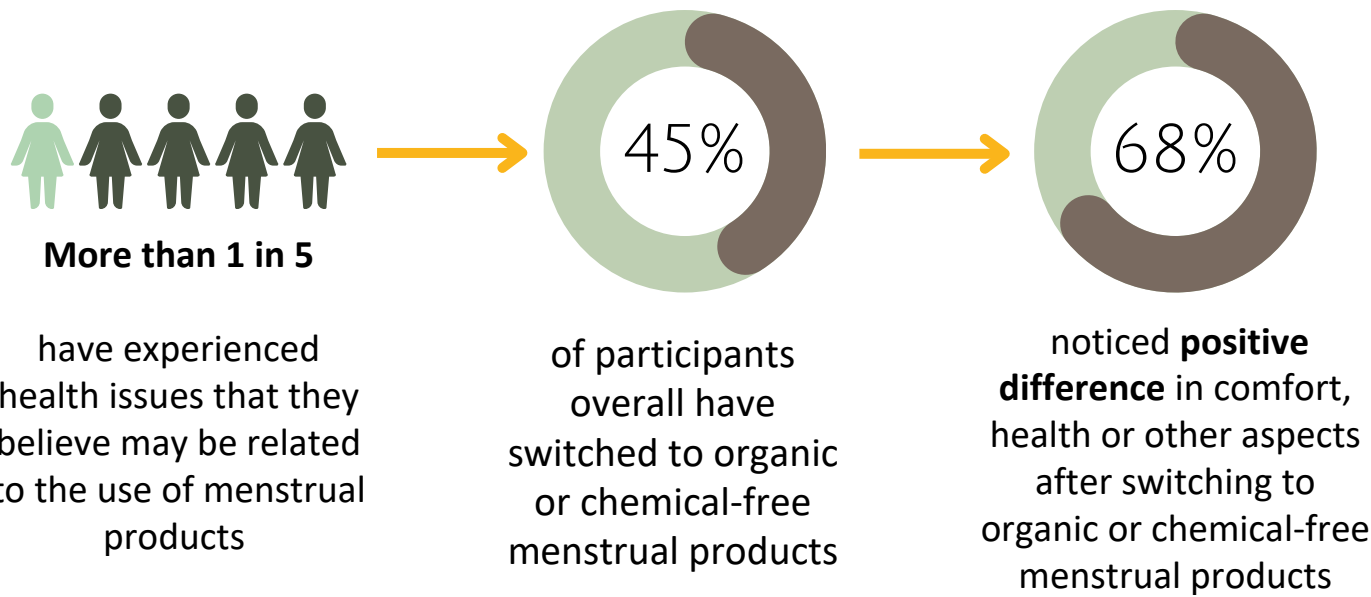
Period Product Testing

91.9% of participants said it was ‘Very Important’ that menstrual products are tested for safety and free from harmful chemicals. No participants noted that this was not important. 100% of participants believed it was very important or somewhat important, clearly demonstrating that the respondents felt that more testing, transparency and eliminating of toxic chemicals in period products is needed.



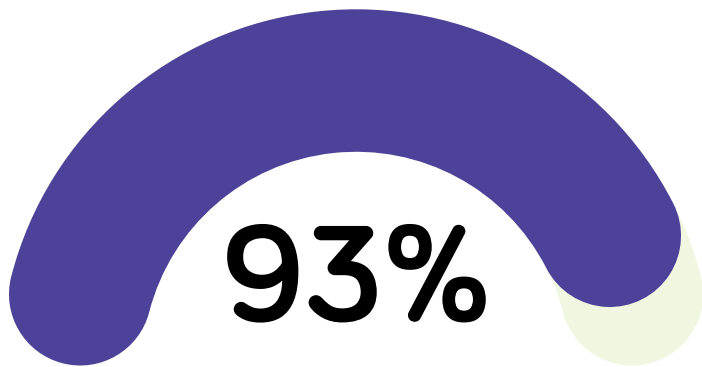
Health Issues and Period Products

Fascinatingly, more than 1 in 5 (23.4%) have experienced health issues that they believe may be related to the use of period products. 45% of participants overall have made the switch to organic or chemical free period products. From the 23.4% of participants who moved to organic and chemical free period products 68% noticed a positive difference in comfort, health or other aspects, this is a huge majority that really felt that moving away from toxic period products has had an impact on their health.



Knowledge on Regulation

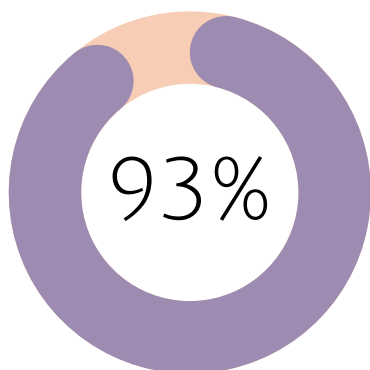
93% of the participants did not know that period products were regulated under the same legislation as candles and cutlery under the General Product Safety Regulations 2005. The more awareness about this lack of regulation on period products could lead to the stronger call on legislators to strengthen regulation for period products.



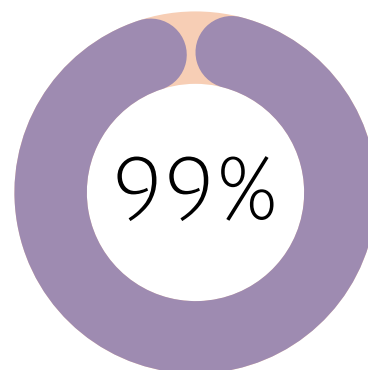
Did not know that in the UK period products are regulated under the same consumer legislation as candles

Public Knowledge on Regulation

93% of participants believe that there should be stricter regulations on the ingredients in period products. 99% would support policies or legislation that ensure menstrual products are safe and free from harmful chemicals. Even with this majority opinion, efforts via legislation have been slow even with strong advocacy and campaigning efforts. Even with efforts from WEN, a consultation was launched from the Department of Business and Trade and Office for Product and Safety on The UK's New Product Safety Framework, with only 2 questions in the consultation linked to period products. The Consultation is very inaccessible for the public to complete and therefore WEN have conducted pre-written responses for people to use if that is useful to ensure greater response. From campaigning efforts, the dismissal for legislators has been difficult to work with. Overall, there seems to be a dismissal on the need for greater regulation and on the research to state that the period products that millions use over decades of their lives are not 'toxic enough' to have stricter regulation, transparency of ingredients and better testing and research.

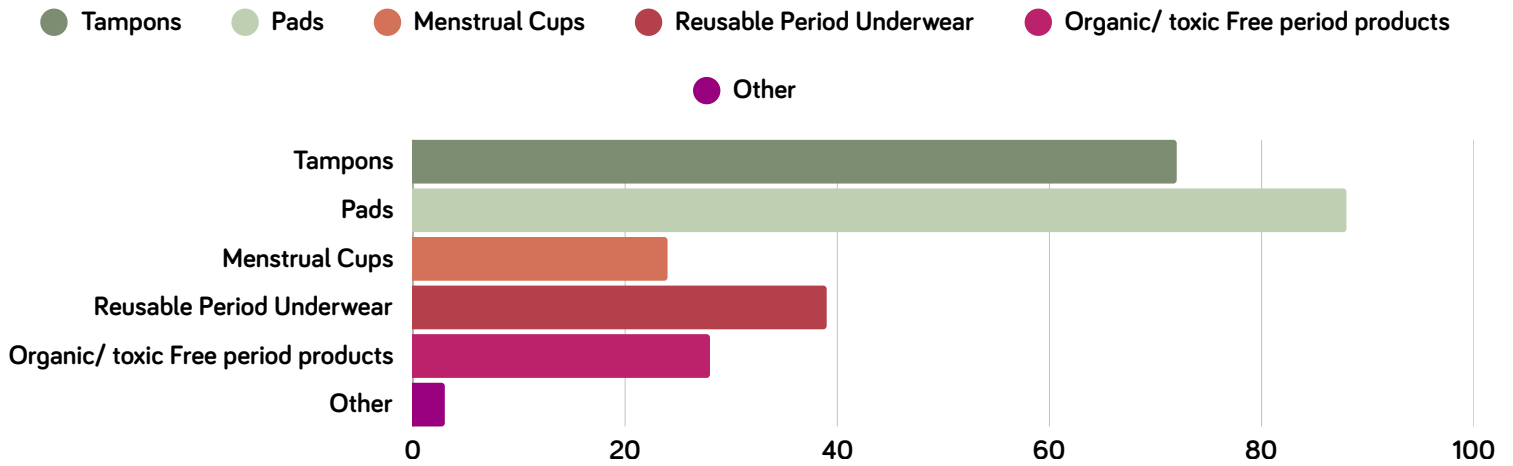


believe there should be stricter regulations on the ingredients in menstrual products



Would support policies or legislation that ensure menstrual products are safe and free from harmful chemicals

Types of Period Products Being Used



Qualitative Section: Any further comments

Below is the thematic breakdown across the 92 responses. Many responses touched on multiple themes, so the counts below reflect how many responses meaningfully referenced each area.

Affordability & access (41% of responses): the most recurring concern. Respondents consistently noted that organic and chemical-free products carry a price premium that makes them inaccessible, particularly for young people, those with heavy bleeding conditions, and those already experiencing period poverty. Several called for products to be free or for the price gap between standard and safer alternatives to be closed.

Education & awareness (38% of responses): many respondents described learning about product safety late in life or only through friends, social media, or personal research. Common calls were for school-based education (primary as well as secondary), clearer labelling on packaging, and broader public information campaigns. Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) in particular was cited as something people had heard of but not received formal guidance on.

Health concerns & lived experience (34.7% of responses): respondents shared personal experiences of skin irritation, sores, infections, allergic reactions, and discomfort linked to mainstream products, often noting improvement after switching to organic alternatives. Concerns about PFAS, heavy metals, bleach, and other chemicals were raised, alongside anxiety about long-term effects of internal product use.

Regulation & transparency (30.4% of responses): several respondents expressed shock at the current regulatory framework (notably that period products sit under the same legislation as candles). There were calls for ingredient disclosure on packaging, stricter controls on harmful chemicals, and more independent research. A tension was noted between tighter regulation and the risk of pushing prices higher still.

**Affordability &
Access**

38

**Education &
Awareness**

35

**Regulation &
Transparency**

28

**Health Concerns &
Lived Experience**

32

Affordability & Access

Throughout the qualitative insight, there was a consistent frustration with the affordability of both mainstream period products but mainly organic toxic free period products. There were still a clear appetite and keen-ness for buying and using organic period products but a clear point that toxic-free period products should be affordable, more accessible and in more available retail options.

“ I don't know much about what chemicals are found in the products. I would LOVE to use chemical-free, plastic-free, organic cotton etc products but they are so expensive and I just can't afford them which makes me feel really sad ”

“ Chemical free are too expensive I think that's why they are less used and not enough advertising goes into shouting about them ”

“ I would prefer to use organic tampons (having found that reusable sanitary products like the menstrual cup to be uncomfortable). However, I find organic tampons to be inaccessible in most shops and the ones I have found online are too expensive and outside of my budget ”

“ its hard to go organic when they are more expensive or harder to come by - in certain supermarkets - for example when I go to my local shop, a co-op or small store the only ones available are the big brands so I would have to buy them as I need them and cant wait till i can go to a big supermarket further from me to get them. ”



Education & Awareness

The respondents stated that education around period product safety, the burden of self-management, and overall menstrual education should be a priority and more accessible. There was a clear call for better menstrual education for young people and those who are also out of education, including adults who may have had their period for decades.

“Yes more education should be in place when it comes to period products as I was 9 when I started my periods then later on in the years my best friend when we where at school got toxic shock syndrome and nearly died ! I at the time at the age of 14 never heard of it so more education is needed ”

“I didn't know much until my friend started working for a company supplying organic care and then I was educated on it, my lack of awareness on this actually embarrassed me!

“We need to understand more about what chemicals or toxins are in our menstrual products. More research needs to be funded, and more awareness should be made to women (and men) about menstrual products, the risk, the benefits and how to use them. I shouldn't only just be learning about toxic shock syndrome at 30 years old ”

“Period education is necessary and should be taught in primary school - as a young woman who started their period when they were 10/11, horrified, and suffered two decades - period education is vital and safe period products is a basic human right. Thank you for the work you're doing!

“I've spoke with other menstruating friends about these harmful chemicals in period products and have found that they are largely unaware of the harmful effects of them. More information campaigns should be shared so women have the information needed to make an informed choice. ”



Regulation & Transparency

Many respondents shared that they had a real concern with the lack of regulation and transparency around the ingredients in period products and expressed frustration about the lack of awareness and potential health-related impacts from toxic chemicals such as PFAS.

“Just that this questionnaire has horrified me - I had no idea they were regulated by the same legislation as candles and I'm going to do more research now”

“I think better transparency is needed around what goes into period products. Many people assume they're automatically safe, but ingredient lists can be vague, and potential long-term effects aren't always clear. More education and clearer labelling would really help build trust and allow us to make informed choices”

“There should be more awareness of the harmful chemicals in period products and strict regulations on their inclusion in such products. Products that are free from harmful chemicals need to be more readily available in supermarkets and be cheaper”

“This needs to be public information. How can something we put in our bodies be SO unregulated. It is shocking.”

“The fact that PFAS are found in period products is highly concerning, especially considering that they are used internally (depending on the product). PFAS have been linked to hormone disruption, increasing the risk of cancer development and fertility issues in women/ AFAB people.”



Health Concerns & Lived Experience

Many respondents shared their lived experience with regards to health and skin irritation from mainstream toxic period products. Many shared their experiences through their menstrual conditions like endometriosis and adenomyosis and the health benefits they experienced after switching to organic and toxin-free period products. Some of the health concerns shared were really concerning, such as developing sores around their perineum and TSS.

“ I recently changed to organic bamboo product as I found that the ones I was using from the supermarket had gotten worse in quality, I constantly was having irritation and burns on and around my private areas. Since using the organic it feels so much more comfortable with no itching or irritating feeling of my skin burning. ”

“ I have adenomyosis and have to use pretty heavy duty period products. I also developed an allergy to every product other than non-toxic and organic products. This has been solved by making the switch to organic products but it feels frustrating that women have to pay a premium just to be safe and have access to products that are comfortable and non-harmful ”

“ I have actually experienced worse symptoms from swapping to organic/chemical free products. I prefer products that may contain some chemicals that have been tested and are safe to use ”

“ I have noticed recently, when I use the make Always pads, I develop sores around my perineum. ”

“ It's only been brought to my attention recently after vigorous research. It's very under looked and hard to find accessible period products that are just cotton or have no other chemicals in there after having a number of infections. I'm still looking to do more research but noticed a big difference in infections as it's happened less.”

“ My mum actually went into toxic shock as a child from tampons. She has always been upset with me using them because of this. With me being so heavy when it's the time of the month, I feel safer to have both a tampon and pad. ”

Period Poverty

It is deeply troubling that in 2026, accessing a period product that does not contain potentially harmful chemicals is still considered a luxury. The financial premium placed on organic and chemical-free products means that the burden of exposure to toxic ingredients falls hardest on those who are least able to afford an alternative. This is compounded by a practice that is rarely spoken about but urgently needs addressing: when large corporations, supermarkets, and retailers donate period products to community groups, food banks, and charitable organisations as part of their social value commitments, they often send the cheapest, mainstream products, the very ones most likely to contain the harmful chemicals highlighted throughout this research. Those experiencing period poverty are therefore not only unable to afford safer products, but they are also being actively supplied with products that may harm them. Toxic-free period products must not remain a luxury for those who can afford to pay more. Ensuring that safe, chemical-free period products are affordable, widely available, and ultimately free to all who need them is not a niche concern; it is a matter of health equity and social justice.

Cross Sector Collaboration and the creation of the Period Product Safety Campaign (Key Collaborators Catch Up)

The Period Product Safety Campaign Key Collaborators group was formed in November 2025, born out of a recognized gap in cross-sector communication and joined-up working within the menstrual health space. Having encountered fellow passionate researchers, activists, campaigners, volunteers, menstrual coaches, and advocates across various events and spaces, the group was created to bring these voices together under one collective effort, avoiding duplication and working more strategically toward stronger regulation of period products.

The online space was established to share updates on the national campaign picture, foster collaboration, and ensure that those working across different areas of menstrual health could communicate and coordinate effectively. The group brought together a diverse range of collaborators, including the Women's Environmental Network (WEN), researchers from Manchester Metropolitan University, women's health advocates, activists, passionate volunteers, and the ethical and organic period care brand Grace & Green.

Within less than a year of its formation, the group had already made significant strides, culminating in a collaborative event that brought cross-sector partners together to educate, raise awareness, and build relationships across the sector. The community research featured in this report was shared and promoted through the group's networks, reflecting the collective commitment of its members to evidence-based advocacy.

The group was chaired and created with a clear purpose: to ensure that those working toward safer, better-regulated period products are not working in isolation, but together, with greater reach, stronger evidence, and a unified voice.

National Menstruation Research Conference

This research has been selected to be presented at the Menstruation Research Conference in July 2026, where the findings of Public Opinion and Knowledge on Period Product Safety will be shared as a piece of community-led research. The selection, supported by a bursary, is a testament to the importance of this work and provides a significant opportunity for these findings to reach a wider audience, amplifying the voices of those who participated and furthering the case for meaningful change in period product safety and regulation.

Calls to Action and Recommendations:

Education

Period product safety should be incorporated into the school curriculum at both the primary and secondary levels. The findings of this research reveal that many respondents began their periods as young as 9 or 10 with little to no guidance on product safety, and several described learning about risks such as Toxic Shock Syndrome only in adulthood. Education around TSS, harmful chemicals, and safer alternatives and usage should be a mandatory component of menstrual health education, ensuring young people are informed before they begin using period products rather than years after. Beyond schools, community-based education sessions should be developed for adults, as this research highlights that many people are reaching their thirties without adequate knowledge of the products they use every single month. Posters and accessible information in public toilets, community centers, and healthcare settings (i.e., GPs) could serve as a low-cost and highly visible way of reaching people who may have missed formal education on this topic.

Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals have a vital role to play in addressing period product safety, yet this is an area that remains largely absent from clinical conversations. Professionals should be equipped to discuss period product safety with patients, particularly those living with conditions such as adenomyosis, fibroids, or sensitive skin, who may be disproportionately affected by chemicals in mainstream products. Respondents to this research also highlighted a lack of clear professional guidance around the use of period products alongside other menstrual health interventions, such as IUDs and menstrual cups, and this gap must be addressed. Healthcare professionals should also be aware of the potential links between period product use and symptoms such as skin irritation, dermatitis, sores, and increased bleeding, and feel confident raising product safety as part of routine conversations. Even with more research that needs to be done on longitudinal studies regarding menstrual health and period product safety, the current research landscape and lived experience can be utilised to recommend to patients that a switch may help with symptoms, although it is not guaranteed. Information about safer and organic alternatives should be made available through healthcare settings, alongside an honest acknowledgment of the cost barriers many patients face in accessing them.

Legislators and Policy Makers

The current regulatory framework for period products, which sits under the same consumer legislation as candles, is widely regarded as wholly inadequate for products that are used internally and in close contact with vaginas monthly. Legislation must be reviewed and strengthened to reflect the nature of these products and the potential health implications of their ingredients. Mandatory ingredient disclosure should be introduced for all period products sold in the UK, giving consumers the information they need to make fully informed choices. Chemicals with no safe exposure level, including arsenic and PFAS, should be explicitly prohibited from use in period products, with clear and enforceable mechanisms in place. The government should also explore fiscal measures to reduce the cost of organic and chemical-free products and consider funding a national public awareness campaign on period product safety. England should look to Scotland and Wales as models of what progressive, government-led action on this issue can look like, demonstrating that free and safer period products can be embedded into public life as a matter of policy rather than charity (please see their models below).

Learning from Wales: A Model for England

The Welsh Government's Period Dignity Grant offers a compelling example of what progressive period product policy can look like in practice. The scheme funds local councils to supply free, eco-friendly period products across every school, college, library, leisure centre, and food bank in Wales, with certified organic and biodegradable products available to anyone who needs them, no questions asked. Ethical brand Grace & Green is a primary approved supplier for the scheme, providing plant-based, plastic-free alternatives that meet the government's sustainability targets, even recognizing that this as a government initiative is a huge step for policy change that England should take inspiration from.

The findings of this research suggest that England has much to learn from this approach. Respondents consistently highlighted the cost of safer, chemical-free products as a significant barrier, alongside a lack of availability in local and convenience stores. Wales demonstrates that it is possible to make organic and eco-friendly products the default rather than the premium option by embedding them within a publicly funded supply chain. An equivalent scheme in England could go a long way toward addressing both period poverty and period product safety simultaneously, ensuring that access to safer products is not determined by postcode or income.

Learning from Scotland: A Legislative Milestone

Scotland set a landmark precedent in 2022 by becoming the first country in the world to make period products free to anyone who needs them through the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act. This legislative milestone went beyond a funding scheme, enshrining the right to access period products in law and removing financial deprivation as a barrier entirely. Products are available in a wide range of public settings, ensuring that no one has to go without regardless of their circumstances.

For England, Scotland's approach demonstrates that period product access can and should be treated as a matter of social justice and public health, not a discretionary provision. The findings of this research highlight that cost remains one of the most significant barriers to accessing safer, chemical-free products. A similar legislative commitment in England would not only address period poverty but could, if coupled with safety and sustainability standards, ensure that the products being provided are also free from harmful chemicals.

Period Care Brands

Period care brands have a critical and unavoidable role in addressing this issue. Ethical and organic brands are already demonstrating that it is possible to produce products that are safe, sustainable and effective, and the wider industry must be held to the same standard. Transparency around ingredients should become the norm rather than the exception, and a genuine commitment to removing harmful chemicals from all products should be an industry-wide expectation rather than a differentiating selling point. Brands must also take seriously the accessibility gap highlighted throughout this research. Safer products need to be available not just in health food shops or online, but in local convenience stores and supermarkets, and at price points that do not exclude those on lower incomes. Collaboration between brands, campaigners, researchers and government is imperative to perpetuate meaningful and lasting change.

Conclusion

The findings of this research paint a clear and urgent picture. Women and people who menstruate in England are using products every month, often from a young age, with little knowledge of what those products contain, limited access to safer alternatives, and almost no formal education to help them make informed and safe choices. The chemicals found in mainstream period products, the inadequacy of current regulation, and the cost barriers that prevent people from accessing safer options are not abstract concerns. They are issues that are playing out in the daily lives of the people who participated in this research, and they demand a meaningful response.

Period poverty remains one of the most pressing dimensions of this issue. When safer, chemical-free products carry a price premium that puts them out of reach for many, the burden of harmful products falls heaviest on those who are already most vulnerable. As the examples of Scotland and Wales demonstrate, governments can and should take legislative and financial action to ensure that no one is forced to choose between affording the cheapest period products and affording safer ones. Period poverty and period product safety are not separate issues, they are deeply interconnected, and any meaningful solution must address both together.

Period care brands also have a critical role to play. Ethical and organic brands are already demonstrating that it is possible to produce products that are safe, sustainable and effective. The industry must be held to a higher standard, with transparency around ingredients, a commitment to removing harmful chemicals, and a genuine effort to make safer products more affordable and widely available. Collaboration between brands, campaigners and government to work collectively is imperative.

What makes this research particularly significant is not just what it found, but how it came to exist. This is a small, community-led piece of work, driven by a small charity and a network of passionate volunteers, researchers, advocates and collaborators who came together because they saw a gap and refused to leave it unfilled. In less than a year, that network grew into a cross-sector collaboration that has produced findings now recognised at national level and selected for presentation at the Menstruation Research Conference in July 2026. That journey reflects what is possible when people with lived experience, expertise and passion are given the space and support to work together.

The solution to this problem is within reach: it requires government to strengthen regulation, mandate ingredient transparency, and invest in making safer products accessible to all. It requires period care brands to lead with ethics and sustainability. It requires education settings to equip young people with the knowledge they need from the very start of their menstrual lives. And it requires charities, researchers, advocates and government personnel to keep connecting, keep collaborating, and keep amplifying the voices of those whose health and wellbeing depend on change.

Thanking Participants:

This report would not exist without the generosity of every person who took the time to share their experiences and insights. Their honesty, their frustration, and their hope run through every page of this research. It is their voices that make the case most powerfully, and it is for them, and for every person who menstruates, that this work continues.

Appendix

Here are all the quotes from the Qualitative section of the research within the categories listed above in the full report.

Affordability & access

1. "There should be more awareness of the harmful chemicals in period products and strict regulations on their inclusion in such products. Products that are free from harmful chemicals need to be more readily available in supermarkets and be cheaper (my perception is that they are not, but I don't know how true this is)"
2. "concerns that regulation (whilst needed) may lead to period products being unaffordable for many, particularly those who have fibroids etc which leads to excessive bleeding and needing lots of products"
3. "I know such little about products I use every month inside my body. I try and buy plastic free but often even these options aren't available or are more expensive. I feel like women and others who get period's health care is secondary"
4. "Chemical free are too expensive I think that's why they are less used and not enough advertising goes into shouting about them"
5. "I don't know much about what chemicals are found in the products. I would LOVE to use chemical-free, plastic-free, organic cotton etc products but they are so expensive and I just can't afford them which makes me feel really sad"
6. "I switched to reusable period underwear due to the cost of living but I used to get sore using cheaper pads so always had to pay for expensive ones that did make me sore"
7. "I would prefer to use organic tampons (having found that reusable sanitary products like the menstrual cup to be uncomfortable). However, I find organic tampons to be inaccessible in most shops and the ones I have found online are too expensive and outside of my budget."
8. "It is so expensive anyway but seems even more expensive to get healthier products."
9. "If I am experiencing discomfort due to low hormones (long story) I have to use the free from period products, but otherwise I can't afford the price difference. I wish the better options were affordable and easily available!"
10. "The cost of organic or chemical free single use period products can be a barrier for some people. As period poverty is already such an issue, any steps to eliminate products which include chemicals but sit on the cheaper end of the market should ensure that period poverty is also centred."
11. "It should be free"
12. "There should be financial help for reusable period underwear for primary age (schools only provide free products for secondary age)"
13. "Free pads available non chemicals for all menstruating"
14. "I am aware of more organic and safe options, however these are often more expensive. I have had dermatitis issues that have been linked to the use of period products, as I have sensitive skin and have to be careful of the products I use to wash my clothes. But the organic options seem to have a hefty price tag/are harder to find."
15. "The price of period products are too high - these products are a necessity and should be cheaper!! It would be interesting to look into how period products are taxed and how people are affected by period poverty."

Appendix

- "I would like to try organic/free from harmful chemicals period products. All period products are very expensive in general."
- "high cost of menstrual products they should be free"
- "Cost for ages 12-16 , those who are not working how can they afford it"
- "its hard to go organic when they are more expensive or harder to come by - in certain supermarkets - for example when i go to my local shop, a co-op or small store the only ones available are the big brands so i would have to buy them as i need them and cant wait till i can go to a big supermarket further from me to get them. I also find the organic brands aren't made for women with heavier periods and they can't sustain for the amount of bleeding during this time - they constantly leak or they need constant changing whereas the big brands have ones for heavier flows which i know will work - there needs to be a better range of products from the organic brands that i know will work for me if they're going to change - im also wary that if it does come into legislation - will women have to pay even more for organic brands?"
- "Period products should not only be safe but should also be free."
- "I switched to organic products over the last year as was worried about the impact/ discomfort I was having pre-period. I worry about the affordability, I stick to ones of a lower income but they do come in smaller packs/ having to rebuy more frequently. I have stocked up on period underwear too but again feels like an investment that is worth it but may not be accessible to all."
- "I would like to try alternatives but they are so expensive! I have always wanted to try period underwear but I am worried if they don't work, I'll lose my money (and they aren't really things you want to donate to others once used)"
- "Are period products taxed in the UK, if so, like what other products (in the US they used to be a luxury good tax)."
- "Period product needs to be free and free from harmful chemicals"
- "Keep them affordable"

Education & awareness

- 1."I have thought about moving to organic tampons and pads but find that even the cotton alternatives might contain bleach or chemicals. Information about safe alternatives would be useful, and there needs to be better education about period product safety at school. Thank you for the work you are doing on this!"
- 2."I didn't know much until my friend started working for a company supplying organic care and then I was educated on it, my lack of awareness on this actually embarrassed me!"
- 3."Yes more education should be in place when it comes to period products as I was 9 when I started my periods then later on in the years my best friend when we were at school got toxic shock syndrome and nearly died ! I at the time at the age of 14 never heard of it so more education is needed x"
- 4."The main element that I've been made aware of that would be harmful in period products is bleach and similar chemicals in production of tampons- I haven't been informed of further potentially harmful chemicals (perhaps there should be legislation surrounding highlighting risks of these products on major packaging etc)"
- 5."TSS is something that is always a concern when using tampons and I think more education needs to be done on this."

Appendix

- "There has been a lot of awareness raising around period poverty in recent years and I am glad to see so many places offering free period products now in their bathrooms. It could be a good idea to raise awareness of safety on toilet posters around any chemicals that are in period products. I have no awareness of this other than you can get toxic shock syndrome from tampons left in."
- "We need to understand more about what chemicals or toxins are in our menstrual products. More research needs to be funded, and more awareness should be made to women (and men) about menstrual products, the risk, the benefits and how to use them. I shouldn't only just be learning about toxic shock syndrome at 30 years old."
- "More education and awareness for younger and older women"
- "I've spoke with other menstruating friends about these harmful chemicals in period products and have found that they are largely unaware of the harmful effects of them. More information campaigns should be shared so women have the information needed to make an informed choice."
- "Period education is necessary and should be taught in primary school - as a young woman who started their period when they were 10/11, horrified, and suffered two decades - period education is vital and safe period products is a basic human right. Thank you for the work you're doing!"
- "I think there needs to be more awareness about leaving a talpin in too long, I've done this twice. Also more info on period symptoms (or lack of periods) that can be symptoms of undiagnosed health issues. Maybe for both things - posters in toilet cubicles and also education in community settings for adults and schools/youth centres for kids"
- "More than anything more education on these things! Felt slughtly unsure answering these at times since I've realised I simply don't know enough!"
- "TOTM is a great brand that spreads awareness around this topic and they only sell organic cotton and sustainable products and they are a registered B-Corp, might be a useful link to have :)"
- "I saw a social media post that said they could contain heavy metals but I thought this wouldn't be to a harmful degree because I figured it would be regulated"
- "Switching to a more sustainable option is a start, and well needed education on the ones we have all been brought up on and the health risks/ what they contain."
- "Do we check that the free period products provided in the service are chemical-free?"
- "I have 4 daughters 2 1 not started puberty yet so it's would hope a safer healthier product would be available soon"
- "I have 2 daughters and 6 granddaughters, i would like them not to have toxic pads"

Appendix

Regulation & transparency

- "Just that this questionnaire has horrified me - I had no idea they were regulated by the same legislation as candles and I'm going to do more research now."
- "I think better transparency is needed around what goes into period products. Many people assume they're automatically safe, but ingredient lists can be vague, and potential long-term effects aren't always clear. More education and clearer labeling would really help build trust and allow us to make informed choices"
- "This needs to be public information. How can something we put in our bodies be SO unregulated. It is shocking."
- "The fact that PFAS are found in period products is highly concerning, especially considering that they are used internally (depending on the product). PFAS have been linked to hormone disruption, increasing the risk of cancer development and fertility issues in women/ AFAB people."
- "There should be more awareness of the harmful chemicals in period products and strict regulations on their inclusion in such products. Products that are free from harmful chemicals need to be more readily available in supermarkets and be cheaper"
- "Ingredients disclosure on pack."
- "I am concerned that there is a huge gap in research on menstrual products."
- "Chemicals with no safe exposure level (e.g. arsenic) have no reason to be present in menstrual products. It's worth noting that I have come across relatively fear inducing headlines regarding the presence of chemicals in period products alongside the understanding that there is limited research into if they can enter the body/blood stream in such limited quantities etc. I also feel this can penalise those unable to access organic/reusable menstrual products (whether as a result of knowledge gaps or resource shortage). This does not, however, negate my complete agreement that period products and women's health more generally, continue to be under-researched/under funded and demand increased attention to stop putting women at additional risk."
- "There is so much misinformation and contradictory information about what is "good" for or "bad" for women, particularly around pregnancy and menopause. It would be great if there was more independent and accessible information out there enabling people to make an informed choice without "good for" or "better for" statements. Or at least balanced across pros and cons"
- "I'm really supportive of this study. I think it's incredibly important to better regulate these products as they are a basic necessity and people with a period deserve to have full autonomy and authority over what they choose to put on/in their bodies. This won't happen without clear evidence based research around the impact these products might be having on people's health."
- "Appalling that women's bodies, health and wellbeing are not taken seriously this day and age."
- "Women's health deserves equity"
- "What are you going to do with the outcome of this research? Would be interested to see what you do."
- "Policies that are being done to support it"
- "Unfortunately some questions are loaded. I.e. Who would wish there to be harmful chemicals in products? I mean, no one realistically is going to say yes!"

Appendix

- "Did you know that in the UK period products are regulated under the same consumer legislation as candles?" - i.e. product safety legislation. I commend you on doing this research but my concern is that this questionnaire is more like propaganda than unbiased research."
- "For people using tampons, the risks are significantly higher in terms of health impacts - due to these being internal. Sepsis (if someone forgets to removed a tampon within 8 hours) is a real risk alongside the chemicals used in the products."

Health concerns & lived experience

1. "I recently changed to organic bamboo product as I found that the ones I was using from the supermarket had gotten worse in quality, I constantly was having irritation and burns on and around my private areas. Since using the organic it feels so much more comfortable with no itching or irritating feeling of my skin burning."
2. "I have adenomyosis and have to use pretty heavy duty period products. I also developed an allergy to every product other than non-toxic and organic products. This has been solved by making the switch to organic products but it feels frustrating that women have to pay a premium just to be safe and have access to products that are comfortable and non-harmful."
3. "I have actually experienced worse symptoms from swapping to organic/chemical free products. I prefer products that may contain some chemicals that have been tested and are safe to use."
4. "I have noticed recently, when i use the make Always pads, i develop sores around my perineum."
5. "It's only been brought to my attention recently after vigorous research. It's very under looked and hard to find accessible period products that are just cotton or have no other chemicals in there after having a number of infections. I'm still looking to do more research but noticed a big difference in infections as it's happened less."
6. "My mum actually went into toxic shock as a child from tampons. She has always been upset with me using them because of this. With me being so heavy when it's the time of the month, I feel safer to have both a tampon and pad."
7. "My mum actually went into toxic shock off tampons as a teenager. She never wanted me to use them, but having heavy periods I feel more comfortable to have both tampons and pads. I think it's definitely something that needs to be changed and women to be more aware. I know a tiny bit but not a lot atall. I think it's mainly not wanting to know what's in it, knowing it's definitely not ok what is in it."
8. "I feel as though certain period products which I have used previously, have actually made my bleeding and pain more severe- with both tampons and pads. Unsure whether this is due to any harsh chemicals used but I certainly notice a difference in comparison to free bleeding"
9. "Just thought I would mention that I used to reusable cotton pads for maybe 2/3 years, but eventually the rubbing back and forward cause irritation and I had to go back to using disposable pads :(I couldn't afford to pay for the organic ones so kept using plastic ones :(although now have found reusable knickers so enjoying them, will see how that goes."
10. "Safety with using IUD and menstrual cups. I have not been able to find good evidence about the safety of use of these two things at the same time."

Appendix

- "I am aware of more organic and safe options, however these are often more expensive. I have had dermatitis issues that have been linked to the use of period products, as I have sensitive skin and have to be careful of the products I use to wash my clothes."
- "I am aware of the harmful chemicals in tampons and pads etc but feel that is a lack of guidance on use of alternatives e.g. moon cup. And whilst travelling it can be hard having reusable things with you I, ends up being easier to use single use tampons"
- "It's a scandal that we have very little information about what these products do to us. I'm allergic to many brands except the organic ones."
- "Is this specific to menstruation or could it also be inclusive of incontinence products?"
- "no option for cloth/reusable pads"
- "More information should be given regarding toxic shock syndrome"



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