

It's Time to Talk!

Menstrual Health & Hygiene in the U.S.

Executive Summary

Always® is committed to supporting good Menstrual Health & Hygiene (MHH).

This summary is part of a more extensive [report](#) that helps shed light on the status of MHH in the U.S. By sharing this information and supplementing existing knowledge, Always, along with key contributor Plan International, hopes to help policymakers, organizations, media and others make informed decisions to improve MHH in the U.S. We believe we all have a role to play.

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

When getting their first period, young people feel:

Less confident	58%
Scared	47%
Confused	40%
Embarrassed	39%

Talking about periods is taboo.

- While 54% of people (ages 18–70) say they support talking openly about periods, only 36% actually do.
- People feel more comfortable talking openly about sex, politics, family problems and STDs than about periods.

% of population that feels comfortable talking openly about:

1 Sex	49%
2 Politics	47%
3 Family problems	44%
4 STDs	43%
5 Periods	41%

Period teasing and shaming is common in the U.S.

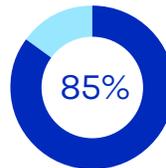


More than 1 in 3 young people (ages 13–17) have experienced it.

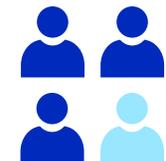
While nearly 1 in 3 believe that period jokes are harmless fun, they are causing young people to feel:

Self-conscious	42%
Embarrassed	33%
Less confident	28%

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



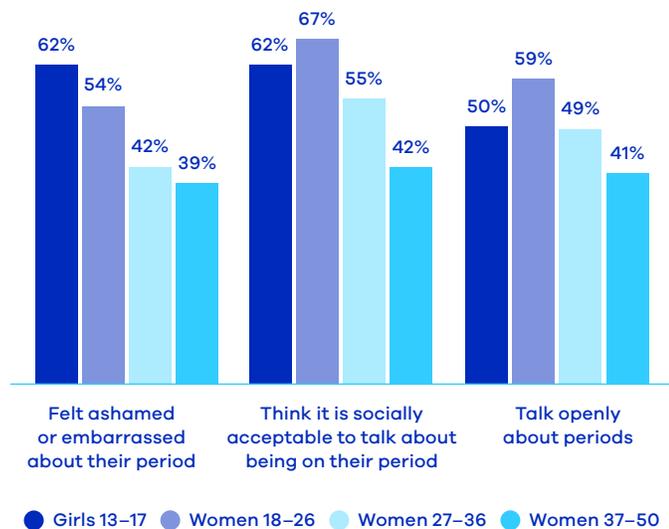
85% of young women agree that if they saw others talking openly about periods around them, they would feel more confident.



Nearly 3 out of 4 young women believe that boys and men need to be involved in the conversation about periods.



Despite feeling the most period shame, girls and young women are leading the charge against it by being the most likely to talk openly about periods.



There is a low level of understanding about periods in the U.S.



1 in 4 young people don't know why some people get periods and how to manage them.

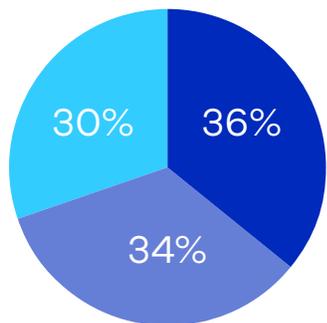


2 in 5 don't feel prepared for their first period.

The existence, level and quality of health education varies from classroom to classroom.

In 2017, school-based sexual and reproductive health education was:

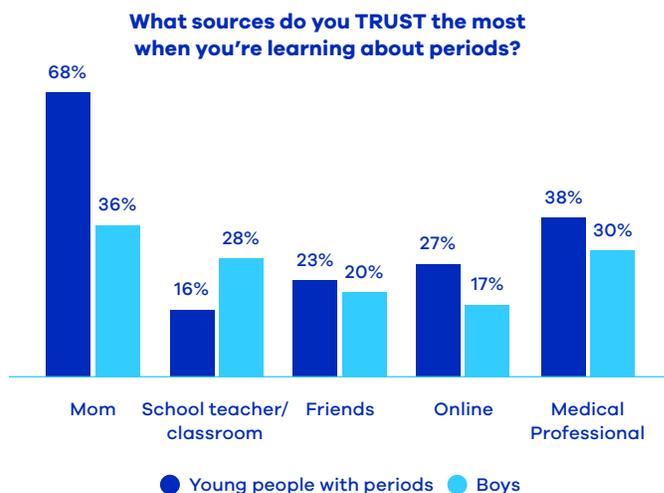
- Required in 18 states
- Permitted in 17 states
- Not addressed or regulated in 15 states



Where puberty and period education was provided at school, many young people said it failed to engage them in being active in understanding their bodies.

- Often just a slide show or educational video is used, with little opportunity to ask questions.

While moms are the most trusted source of period information, nearly 1 in 3 feel awkward explaining puberty & periods to their kids.



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

- During COVID-19, nearly **1 in 5 women** have struggled to get period products.
- Nearly 1 in 4** are worried about their ongoing ability to afford them, rising to nearly 1 in 3 among parents.

Not having access to period products in school causes girls* to:

Feel less confident	34%
Feel ashamed	29%
Avoid extracurricular activities	17%
Avoid spending time with friends	16%
Avoid sports	13%

Half of all U.S. citizens believe the government needs to do more to provide period products for free to those who need them.

*Data currently only available for girls vs. young people with periods.

What Needs to be Done?

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



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



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



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



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



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

To read the full report, visit always.com/ItsTimeToTalk.

If you want to learn more, go to always.com or contact Ivanette Bonilla (bonilla.i@pg.com).

