



# *bloody* **BIG** **SURVEY**

**Australia's largest body of data on periods**

Commissioned by Share the Dignity, written by Dr Jane Connory,  
Swinburne University of Technology, with analysis by WhyHive

*July 2024*



share<sup>the</sup>  
dignity

*bloody*  
**big survey**

# Disclaimer

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share*thedignity*



whyhive

### **Acknowledgment of Country**

In the spirit of Reconciliation, the collaborators on this report acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

### **Contact**

Rochelle Courtenay  
Founder and Managing Director, Share the Dignity  
founder@sharethedignity.org.au

Dr Jane Connory  
Swinburne University of Technology, jconnory@swin.edu.au

T Guthrie  
CEO and co-founder, WhyHive, t@whyhive.com

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## *From our founder, Rochelle Courtenay*



Share the Dignity has always been passionate about providing period products to people who need them. We know that the best way to do this is by hearing directly from menstruators about how we can help. This allows us to track rates of period poverty, identify areas of need, and continue to advocate for menstrual equity. We have committed to conducting our Bloody Big Survey every three years so we can further understand where change is needed and measure the impact of any improvements that have been made.

This is our second Bloody Big Survey, and I was so excited that over 150,000 bloody legends completed our survey. We have learned so much and have already begun to think about how we can best use this data to create lasting change here in Australia.

Share the Dignity has come a very long way since our first survey in 2021. We have now provided over 4.9 million period products to people in need across Australia and have collected and distributed over 900,000 It's in the Bag donations filled with essential hygiene items. It will be Share the Dignity's tenth birthday in 2025, and we are so excited to be smashing our goal of 5 million period products donated in the coming months.

Data from the Bloody Big Survey is so important to us because it means that we can take a targeted and evidence-based approach to helping all Australians who menstruate. This year, we asked for postcodes so that we could track which areas of Australia are doing it hardest. Our next step is to contact every in-

dividual council with relevant data to show them the prevalence of period poverty in their local community. We will then be able to show the difference that has been made when we conduct our survey again in three years' time.

I would like to thank Dr Jane Connory who worked to compile and design this report and WhyHive for providing early access to their intuitive data analytics software which allowed our team to explore the data ourselves. Thanks also goes to Ashish Chopra from The Good Data Institute who collaborated with WhyHive to find insights for this report. I would also like to thank U By Kotex who donated a period product on behalf of the first 100,000 survey respondents and Decjuba for their generous donation to assist us with conducting a sponsored ad campaign. 💧

*People of all ages support Share the Dignity spreading our message of period pride. Photo credit: Share the Dignity*

## *Executive summary*

**This report has dug deep into the core factors and data that contribute to high levels of period poverty and period shame, and reveals crucial data to help us continue making positive changes.**

Our work at Share the Dignity directly benefits those in crisis who are experiencing period poverty.

However, in the long term, we are working to ensure menstrual equity here in Australia which takes a multi pronged approach. Not only do we need to ensure free and dignified access to period products, but we also need comprehensive period education for all genders to eradicate the shame and stigma surrounding periods.

Share the Dignity works with a variety of organisations including government bodies and corporate partners, as well as individuals to create positive and sustained change. With this report we can be armed with the evidence-based data we need to highlight where further change is needed. Some examples of how we've done this previously include helping

to axe the tampon tax in 2018 and ensuring all public high schools offer free period products to those who need them. The key findings we uncovered from this data set reinforce current knowledge.

Social injustices like family and domestic violence, homelessness, and unemployment escalate period poverty, as does the current high cost of living. Gender diverse and First Nations people are disproportionately impacted by period poverty.

Our most unique finding to date is the total dollar figure we can attribute to missed work days due to periods—\$9.6 billion annually. Endometriosis, the fear of leaking, period pain and other medical issues associated with periods result in many people taking time off work every month. These are all things that we can take action on. 💧

**Now that this report is done we can act fast on three main areas where we would like to see immediate change take place.**

1. Target councils with information about period poverty impacting their location population
2. Ensure that period products are available in hospitals
3. Help our student population in universities and TAFEs, where we have seen a rise in rates of period poverty



## Key findings

### We have a clear picture of period poverty in Australia

The 2024 Bloody Big Survey is the biggest body of data in the world which captures valuable information and insights into the experiences of people with a period.

- Period poverty exists across Australia with **Tasmania** having the biggest struggle and the **ACT** having the least.
- **Students at schools, TAFEs and universities** are struggling with the cost of living and being able to afford period products.
- **83 per cent of Indigenous people** have found it difficult to afford period products.
- **78 per cent of people with a disability** found it difficult to buy period products.
- People enjoy swimming but their **fear of leaking** will cause them to miss engaging in the sport.
- **Children get their periods as young as eight years old** but might not be educated about them at school until they are ten.
- **Domestic and family violence, homelessness and unemployment** escalate the problem of period poverty.
- **83 per cent of our gender diverse participants** found it difficult to buy period products.
- **All hospitals are not mandated to supply period products.**

• **\$9.6b** is the total dollar figure attributed to missed work days due to periods per year, showing more help is needed.



**Left.** All sorts of period products can help eliminate period poverty—from tampons to pads, and menstrual cups to period undies. Photo credit: Share the Dignity

**Right.** Children being educated on periods. Photo credit: Share the Dignity

## Data collection methods

We were amazed that we had 153,620 responses to our 2024 Bloody Big Survey. This is an increase of almost 30,000 from our first survey in 2021. To date, it is the largest survey of its kind, and reached a broad section of Australian community, including our First Nations and gender diverse communities.

### How we did it

The Bloody Big Survey was run online using Typeform software and was comprised of 49 questions. These varied between open-ended, multiple choice, yes/no answers, and asking respondents to rate their feelings on a five-point scale. The survey was opened on March 1 2024, and ran until May 31 2024.

Since our 2021 survey, we expanded the number of questions we asked in order to better capture the demographic of our respondents and to deeply consider who is most impacted by issues such as period poverty and menstruation-related medical conditions.

We made space to include our culturally and linguistically diverse participants, as well as people with disabilities, and gender diverse

identities. Share the Dignity's founder, Rochelle Courtenay, played an instrumental role in generating responses. In early April, the number of responses was sitting at just over 20,000 leading Rochelle to post a plea on social media for help to increase the numbers.

This had a positive effect, increasing our survey responses by over 56,000 in two days. The 2024 Bloody Big Survey is the biggest body of data in the world which captures valuable information and insights into the experiences of people with a period.

U By Kotex committed to donating a packet of period products to Share the Dignity for each of the first 100,000 survey responses, which Share the Dignity was able to use to motivate their supporters to take the survey to help end period poverty right now, while making a lasting



impact through the survey. We also received generous funding from Decjuba for our social media ad campaign which helped us reach people outside of our community to see a wider range of respondents take the survey.

We were able to get early access to WhyHive's intuitive data exploration software and also had support from Ashish Chopra from The Good Data Institute to clean and draw insights from the data. The report was written and designed collaboratively with Dr. Jane Connory from Swinburne University of Technology, School of Design and Architecture.

We recognise the crucial research conducted by other researchers and through other surveys across Australia. We are proud that our Bloody Big Survey remains the largest survey of its kind across the globe.

### Limitations

We acknowledge that there are some hurdles in the way we gathered participants, and that some of the key people that Share the Dignity assists may not have been aware or able to access this survey.

As the Bloody Big Survey was conducted online, we know that people with limited access to appropriate technology (such as a personal device on which to complete the survey, or stable internet access) may not have been able to complete the survey. This includes people in remote and rural locations, and people who are hospitalised, incarcerated, or experiencing homelessness. We also know that some of the questions we ask can be personal and confronting, and this is not always culturally appropriate.

To address some of these concerns, we made some questions optional with the hope to encourage people to complete the full survey in a way they feel comfortable.

In the future, we hope to also conduct more targeted surveys in order to better capture the experiences of all menstruators and work closer with communities to understand their needs.

### Some notes about our data

Some of the data for our open-ended questions is still being cleaned and analysed by the team, so is not included in this report.

All graphic representations of percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. 💧

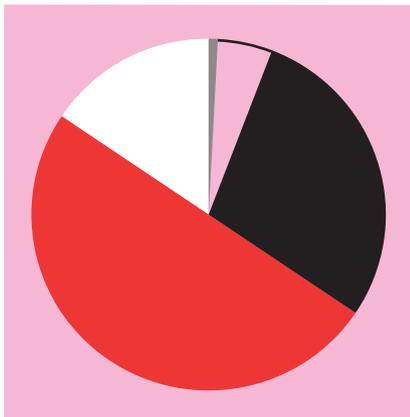


**With the cost of everything rising, sometimes I had to make decisions between whether I buy food or buy period products. Could I stretch my pads or tampons out and use toilet paper or socks towards the end of my period.”**

— participant story

# Demographics

The data below gives a visual representation of what the demographics were of the people who participated in our survey.

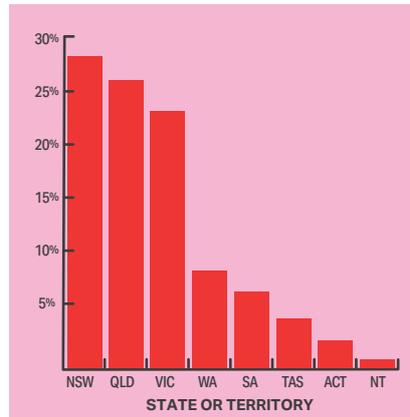


## What generation are you?

Millennials are defined as being between 27 and 42 years of age and were our largest age group of respondents. Baby Boomers are between 55 and 77, Gen X are 43 through to 58 and Gen Z are between 11 and 26 years old.

### Generation

- Silent Gen .... 0.1%
- Millennials .... 50.6%
- Baby Boomer .. 4.9%
- Gen Z ..... 15.4%
- Gen X ..... 28.9%



## Where do you live?

New South Wales remained the leading state while Queensland and Victoria were not far behind as per the number of people that responded to the survey. This reflects the large populations of these states.

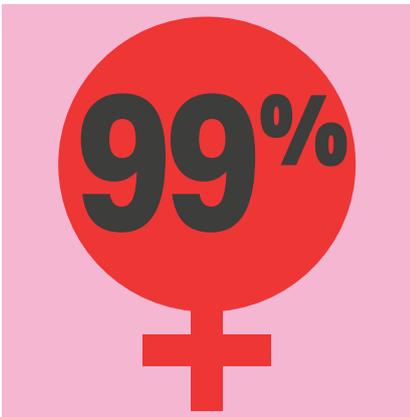
### State or territory

- NSW ..... 27.9%
- QLD ..... 25.8%
- VIC ..... 23.0%
- WA ..... 8.7%
- SA ..... 6.8%
- TAS ..... 4.4%
- ACT ..... 2.5%
- NT ..... 0.8%



**Have used toilet paper in my undies so many times when I was younger because of not being able to afford tampons or products on top of pain relief suffering with endometriosis since 14 years of age and needing to pay for doctors.”**

— participant story

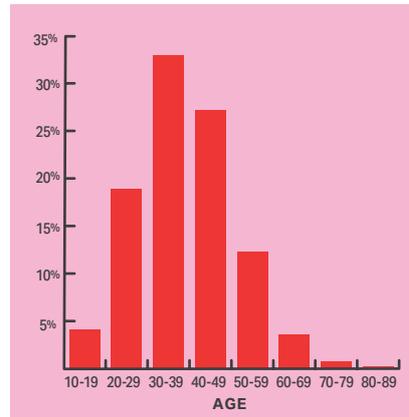


### What is your gender?

Not all women menstruate and not all who menstruate are women. Our 2024 data includes responses from 1,735 people who identified as gender fluid, non-binary, and/or trans, demonstrating a diverse and inclusive data set.

#### Gender identity

Female	.....	<b>98.7%</b>	Trans man	.....	<b>0.2%</b>
Non-binary	.....	<b>0.8%</b>	Prefer not to say	..	<b>0.1%</b>
Gender fluid	.....	<b>0.2%</b>	Male	.....	<b>0.1%</b>



### How old are you?

In 2024, our survey reached people of all ages, with 33 per cent in the 30 to 39 age bracket. We measured age brackets slightly differently in our previous survey in 2021, but the biggest age bracket then was very similar for 32 to 40 year olds.

#### Ages

10 to 19 yo	.....	<b>4.1%</b>	50 to 59 yo	.....	<b>12.3%</b>
20 to 29 yo	.....	<b>18.9%</b>	60 to 69 yo	.....	<b>3.6%</b>
30 to 39 yo	.....	<b>33.0%</b>	70 to 79 yo	.....	<b>0.8%</b>
40 to 49 yo	.....	<b>27.2%</b>	80 to 89 yo	.....	<b>0.1%</b>



**I was in a psychiatric hospital when I started my period. The only thing that was available to me were huge maternity pads - very noticeable under the clothes I had to wear. I stayed in my room for days because I didn't want the pad to be visible."**

— participant story

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## *Our current initiatives*

Every year with the help of our dedicated volunteers, we undertake a variety of initiatives to help work towards ensuring menstrual equity here in Australia.

### **Dignity Drive**

No one should have to choose between purchasing period products and other essential items to just get by. This is why twice a year in March and August we call on Australians to donate period products and incontinence aids to help ensure people don't have to choose.

With the help of our dedicated volunteers, we collect period products at Woolworths supermarkets nationwide and select businesses, and then distribute them to our 3,000+ charity partners across Australia. Since Share the Dignity was founded in 2015, we have collected and distributed over 4.9 million period products to help support those who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, domestic violence or poverty.

### **It's in the Bag**

It's in the Bag is one of Australia's most loved Christmas appeals, where we encourage everyday Australians to put together Adult, Teen or Mum and Bub bags filled with essential items, and some everyday luxuries and a handwritten note, to donate to someone in need for Christmas. It's in the Bag collection points open at every Bunnings nationwide and collection dates vary each year, so head to [sharethedignity.org.au](http://sharethedignity.org.au) to see this year's campaign dates. Our wonderful volunteers help collect, sort and distribute the communities' generous donations to our 3,000+ charities who support vulnerable women and girls. Our aim through It's in the Bag is to ensure every woman and girl spending Christmas in a domestic violence refuge or homeless shelter receives a little bit of love and hope.

### **Creating Period Pride competition**

After we conducted our 2021 Bloody Big Survey we discovered that the shame and stigma around periods was still prevalent and affecting our future leaders. We strongly believe that if we want to end period poverty, we must first work to smash the shame and stigma that surrounds periods. In response, we set about creating a program to help equip kids with the tools and confidence to talk openly about periods. This led to the creation of our Creating Period Pride Competition which was launched in January 2022 with the aim to educate kids about periods, regardless of gender. The competition encourages kids to get creative and work to create some thought-provoking content around periods. Categories include a video, short film, a song, an artwork, a major art installation, or a written piece.

*Below. The #PadUpPublicHealth campaign is making a real impact.  
Photo credit: Share the Dignity*

## Status of public hospitals around Australia in response to #PadUpPublicHealth campaign

**NSW**

Provides access to free pads and/or tampons to patients who are unable to supply their own.

**TAS**

As of 2022 four major public hospitals have period products available for patients.

**SA**

Ensures patients have access to period products if needed.

**ACT**

Has a Period Products and Facilities Access Bill that is soon to be rolled out.

**VIC**

Has an election promise to provide period products in public places.

**Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory** are all yet to react to create positive change.

## #PadUpPublicHealth

In 2021, we began advocating to #PadUpPublicHealth after hearing people were being given adult nappies, bed pads, towels, gauze and other unsuitable items when unexpectedly getting their period in hospital.

After discovering this, we put a call out on social media for people to share their experiences which resulted in hundreds of shocking stories being shared of how they had to go without period products in hospital.

In response to this, we launched a federal petition asking for it to be a federal mandate that period products are provided in Australian public hospitals. The petition opened for signatures on 16 February 2022 and



closed on 16 March 2022. The petition garnered a lot of media attention and received 53,259 signatures. The petition was tabled by Hon Anika Wells MP in the House of Representatives on 20 March 2022, accompanied by the stories

of 211 women, girls and people with a period who detailed the humiliating experiences they endured because the health system failed to ensure they had the essential items they needed.

The NSW Swifts joined Share the Dignity's movement to end period poverty.



# Our impact as of July 2024

**2,660**

volunteers  
making  
Share the Dignity  
possible



**295k<sup>+</sup>**

period products  
shipped to  
remote Indigenous  
communities

**900,975**

It's in the Bag donations  
filled with essential items



**59,322**

reusable period  
products collected  
and distributed  
via our  
Dignity Drives



**4.9m<sup>+</sup>**

period products collected and  
distributed to those in need



**833**

Dignity Vending  
Machines  
dispensing free  
tampons and pads



**When I was growing up, especially if I was at my dad's house (separated parents) period products weren't a high priority so often I had to use toilet paper while waiting for products to be purchased."**

— participant story

# The extent of period poverty over the last 12 months

Our data has enabled us to get a clear picture of the demographics and locations that make someone more at risk of experiencing period poverty.

## What is period poverty?

Period poverty is defined "as a lack of access to menstrual products, hygiene facilities, waste management, and education".<sup>1</sup> When people hit hard times they sometimes have to choose between purchasing period products, buying food for their families or paying their rent. People without full-time employment and those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are disproportionately impacted by this problem.

## What it looks like in Australia

Tasmania is shown to have the highest instance of period poverty among Australia's states and territories and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has the least. One of the many factors that leads to period poverty is unemployment, and it is interesting to note that Tasmania's unemployment rate sits at Australia's average of approximately 3.8 per cent, while the ACT sits slightly below at 3.1 per cent, which reflects the highest at (10.1 per cent) and lowest (at 5.5 per cent) areas of period poverty in Australia.<sup>2</sup> More rural and remote areas in Australia have a higher unemployment rate which directly affects period poverty



**A stay at home parent in Tasmania or a rural setting is at a high risk of suffering from period poverty**

## Unable to afford period products in the last 12 months

State or territory	Percentage of respondents
ACT	5.5%
NSW	7.3%
NT	5.7%
QLD	7.8%
SA	7.7%
TAS	10.1%
VIC	6.9%
WA	7.6%

**KEY**  Extremely High  High  Medium  Low

### Period poverty per urban and rural areas \*

\* This doesn't include ACT respondents due to unavailability of ACT postcode classification

Urban / rural	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. use toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
<b>Rural</b>	<b>73.6%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>29.9%</b>	<b>24.3%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>33.4%</b>
<b>Urban</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>23.9%</b>	<b>18.7%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>

rates. As our data shows, rural areas experience a higher percentage of period poverty. For example 74 per cent of people in rural areas found it difficult to buy period products while 63 per cent found the same in urban areas. Rural areas are also more likely to use free period product dispensers or Dignity Vending Machines indicating lack of accessibility to these products

and services there. Another factor that influences these statistics is the rates of domestic violence women endure in Australia. The most recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that in 2021-22, one in six women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previously cohabiting partner since the age of

15.<sup>3</sup> In 2022, 6,743 incidents of family violence were attended by the police in Tasmania wherein the ACT it was almost 2,000 incidents lower at 4,331 (explored later on in the report).<sup>4</sup> This data suggests a close correlation with people who experience the highest rates of period poverty with those most likely to experience family and domestic violence. 💧

#### Unable to afford period products in the last 12 months by household income

Household income	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
<b>\$0 - \$19,999</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	1,316
<b>\$20,000 - \$49,999</b>	18.9%	2,530
<b>\$50,000 - \$89,999</b>	11.3%	<b>3,167</b>
<b>\$90,000 - \$129,999</b>	6.2%	1,914
<b>\$130,000 - \$149,999</b>	5.0%	856
<b>\$150,000 - \$199,999</b>	2.9%	714
<b>\$200,000 +</b>	1.6%	404

#### Unable to afford period products in the last 12 months by employment status

Employment status	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
<b>Casual</b>	12.9%	1,265
<b>Full-time</b>	5.5%	<b>4,003</b>
<b>Not working</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	758
<b>Part-time</b>	6.3%	2,128
<b>Retired</b>	0.4%	16
<b>School student</b>	10.6%	317
<b>Self-employed</b>	5.8%	537
<b>Stay at home parent</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	1,585
<b>Uni/TAFE student</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	831

KEY



Extremely High



High



Medium



Low



**My best friend was caught stealing tampons at Woolworths as she couldn't afford them. She was too embarrassed to ask me to get them for her. She was 22 at the time. She had a part time job also."**

— participant story

## *Shame and stigma across the country*

Period shame can manifest as being too embarrassed to talk about periods, or hiding anything that shows you are menstruating.

### **No need to be embarrassed**

Our analysis shows that people at opposite ends of our age scale are the most embarrassed about periods. People aged up to nine who participated in the survey would have recently experienced menstruation for the first time, and people aged over 60, who in most circumstances are in menopause, were secretive about the topic. It is also important to note that there were only 14 respondents between

0-9 in this section, however researchers across the world are reporting that this shame still exists everywhere for many reasons.<sup>5</sup> They also agree that better education in the area and greater access to period products can have a positive impact and help people celebrate their period rather than hide them in shame.<sup>6</sup> It's also interesting to note that people with chronic illnesses related to periods and our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants had the lowest levels of shame. 💧



### **Level of embarrassment about anything that shows I am having my period**

Never  
(1)

Sometimes  
(3)

Always  
(5)

Level of embarrassment about anything that shows I am having my period				
National average				
Trans, gender fluid and non-binary people				
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people				
People with a chronic illness/disability				
People with a medical condition relating to their period				
People aged: 0 to 9				
People aged: 10 to 19				
People aged: 20 to 29				
People aged: 30 to 39				
People aged: 40 to 49				
People aged: 50 to 59				
People aged: 60 to 69				
People aged: 70 to 79				
People aged: 80+				
	Never		Sometimes	Always

Level of secrecy respondents buy their period products in				
National average				
Trans, gender fluid and non-binary people				
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people				
People with a chronic illness/disability				
People with a medical condition relating to their period				
People aged: 0 to 9				
People aged: 10 to 19				
People aged: 20 to 29				
People aged: 30 to 39				
People aged: 40 to 49				
People aged: 50 to 59				
People aged: 60 to 69				
People aged: 70 to 79				
People aged: 80+				
	Never		Sometimes	Always

Level of embarrassment when people talk about periods				
National average				
Trans, gender fluid and non-binary people				
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people				
People with a chronic illness/disability				
People with a medical condition relating to their period				
People aged: 0 to 9				
People aged: 10 to 79				
People aged: 80+				
	Never		Sometimes	Always

# A focus on councils throughout Australia

## Period poverty throughout Australia

State or territory	City council	Percentage not educated about periods	Number not educated about periods	Percentage who find it difficult to buy products	Number who find it difficult to buy products	Median spend per month on period products	Percentage who missed school
ACT	Unincorporated ACT	12.6%	479	60.0%	2,287	\$12	61.2%
ACT	Yass Valley (A)	14.3%	1	28.6%	2	\$4	14.3%
NSW	Brewarrina (A)	33.3%	1	100.0%	3	\$30	66.7%
NSW	Yass Valley (A)	14.29%	1	28.57%	2	\$4	14.29%
NT	Roper Gulf (S)	-	-	100.0%	5	\$20	60.0%
NT	Barkly (S)	-	-	40.00%	2	\$40	60.00%
QLD	Boulia (S)	50.0%	1	100.0%	2	\$30	50.0%
QLD	Diamantina (S)	-	-	50.00%	1	\$50	50.0%
SA	Coober Pedy (DC)	-	-	100.0%	3	\$23	100.0%
SA	Kimba (DC)	-	-	33.3%	1	\$25	66.7%
TAS	Flinders (M)	10.5%	2	89.5%	17	\$20	79.0%
TAS	Tasman (M)	10.00%	1	60.0%	6	\$20	70.0%
VIC	Pyrenees (S)	8.82%	3	85.3%	29	\$15	73.5%
VIC	Bayside (C)	12.7%	52	48.5%	199	\$12	52.7%
WA	Brookton (S)	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	\$50	100.0%
WA	Bruce Rock (S)	-	-	33.3%	1	\$25	33.3%
<b>KEY</b>	 High instances of period poverty			 Low instances of period poverty			

## Measuring change at the local council level

Below is a table of local councils that measure with the highest (in the red rows) and lowest (in the white rows) percentages of respondents who found it difficult to buy period products in the states or territories in which they reside. We have a full listing of every local

council in Australia that is not included in this report but we have included this summary as a gauge to see what areas need immediate improvement. Local councils play an enormous role in looking after their constituents and once they know better they can do better. And in this case that would be for them to offer free access to period products. 🍷



### Period poverty throughout Australia

State or territory	Number who missed school	Percentage who missed work	Number who missed work	Percentage who missed sport	Number who missed sport	Percentage who missed socialising	Number who missed socialising
<b>ACT</b>	2,329	57.4%	2,185	65.9%	2,510	42.20%	1,608
ACT	1	28.6%	2	28.6%	2	-	-
<b>NSW</b>	2	-	-	100.0%	3	-	-
NSW	-	28.6%	2	28.6%	2	-	-
<b>NT</b>	3	60.0%	3	80.0%	4	60.00%	3
NT	3	60.0%	3	100.0%	5	60.00%	3
<b>QLD</b>	1	50.0%	1	100.0%	2	-	-
QLD	1	100.0%	2	100.0%	2	100.00%	2
<b>SA</b>	3	100.0%	3	33.3%	1	66.67%	2
SA	2	33.3%	1	66.7%	2	-	-
<b>TAS</b>	15	52.6%	10	73.7%	14	47.37%	9
TAS	7	70.0%	7	60.0%	6	70.00%	7
<b>VIC</b>	25	70.6%	24	76.5%	26	52.94%	18
VIC	216	43.7%	179	70.0%	287	33.90%	139
<b>WA</b>	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.00%	1
WA	1	33.3%	1	66.7%	2	33.33%	1
<b>KEY</b>	🍷 High instances of period poverty		💧 Low instances of period poverty				



**As a very young working woman, my mum and flatmate's mum would buy us tampons and pads as a treat, so we could afford food.”**

— participant story

## *Snapshot of period poverty across Australia*

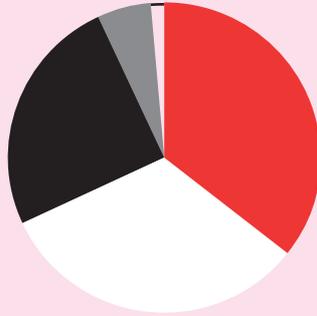
We asked participants six questions that all related to period poverty and grouped the answers into Australia's states and territories, showing a discernible difference between them all.

**Period poverty per state or territory**

State or territory	Found it difficult to afford period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to the cost (e.g. using toilet paper etc...)	Used a Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours because you didn't have enough pads or tampons
ACT	60.0%	6.2%	3.9%	21.7%	18.4%	7.0%	26.0%
NSW	63.1%	6.4%	3.8%	24.5%	18.2%	5.9%	25.8%
NT	63.5%	7.1%	5.0%	23.3%	20.7%	8.5%	24.2%
QLD	66.0%	7.4%	4.6%	26.4%	20.4%	6.1%	28.1%
SA	65.8%	7.8%	4.7%	25.4%	19.9%	6.7%	28.8%
TAS	70.1%	9.6%	5.8%	26.7%	22.7%	9.2%	30.8%
VIC	63.0%	6.5%	3.9%	24.3%	17.7%	7.8%	26.3%
WA	65.2%	7.8%	4.4%	24.4%	20.3%	7.3%	27.3%
KEY	Extremely High		High		Medium		Low

*Right. A school student accessing free period products via a Share the Dignity Dignity Vending Machine. Photo credit: Maryborough State High School*

### Have you ever found it difficult to buy period products because of how much they cost?



- Never ..... 35.6%
- Sometimes ..... 32.4%
- Rarely ..... 25.0%
- Regularly ..... 5.7%
- Every month ..... 1.2%

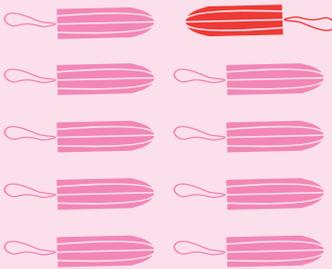
### The big picture

A glance at our data shows that the ACT suffers the lowest rates of period poverty in Australia. Access to period products and levels of education about menstruation contribute to these statistics. When we compare it to the overall statistics of poverty in Australia, the ACT has the lowest there too.<sup>7</sup>

Tasmania had the highest instance of period poverty in Australia with participants in our survey demonstrating that 69 per cent found it difficult to afford period products and 31 per cent had to wear a tampon or pad for more than four hours because they could not afford to replace them when required. 🩸

# ACT

has the least period poverty in Australia



**1 in 10 respondents in TASMANIA** regularly find it difficult to buy period products because of the cost



### What are Share the Dignity Vending Machines?

The Dignity Vending Machine is a world-first innovation that dispenses a free period pack at the push of a button.

Share the Dignity purchase and supply the specially made period packs in the Dignity Vending Machines.

At Share the Dignity, we are passionate about empowering and supporting people to live a life of dignity and safety.

To ensure access to pads and tampons for our vulnerable community members, we will continue installing Dignity Vending Machines in as many places as possible.

These include public toilets, charities, homeless hubs, domestic violence refuges, community centres and Aboriginal Health Services working on improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples menstrual health across Australia.<sup>8</sup> 💧

# Comparing states and territories

People in each state and territory experience periods in vastly different ways.

## Snapshot of period poverty across Australia's states and territories

State or territory	Experienced period poverty in the last 12 months
ACT	5.5%
NSW	7.3%
NT	5.7%
QLD	7.8%
SA	7.7%
TAS	10.1%
VIC	7.0%
WA	7.6%

## Impact of periods across Australia's states and territories

State or territory	Missed school	Missed work	Missed sport	Missed socialising with friends
ACT	61.1%	57.3%	65.8%	42.2%
NSW	62.3%	54.6%	68.3%	43.1%
NT	61.8%	58.5%	67.2%	46.0%
QLD	63.6%	57.1%	70.1%	44.5%
SA	63.9%	55.0%	60.7%	43.8%
TAS	66.2%	55.4%	67.3%	43.5%
VIC	62.7%	55.5%	67.1%	42.5%
WA	62.6%	55.0%	70.5%	43.5%
KEY	 Highest instance		 Lowest instances	

# 80%

of Australians use pads when menstruating

Tampons	.....	64.0%
Period underwear	..	43.1%
Menstrual cups	..	12.5%
Reusable pads	.....	7.7%
Period discs	.....	1.3%

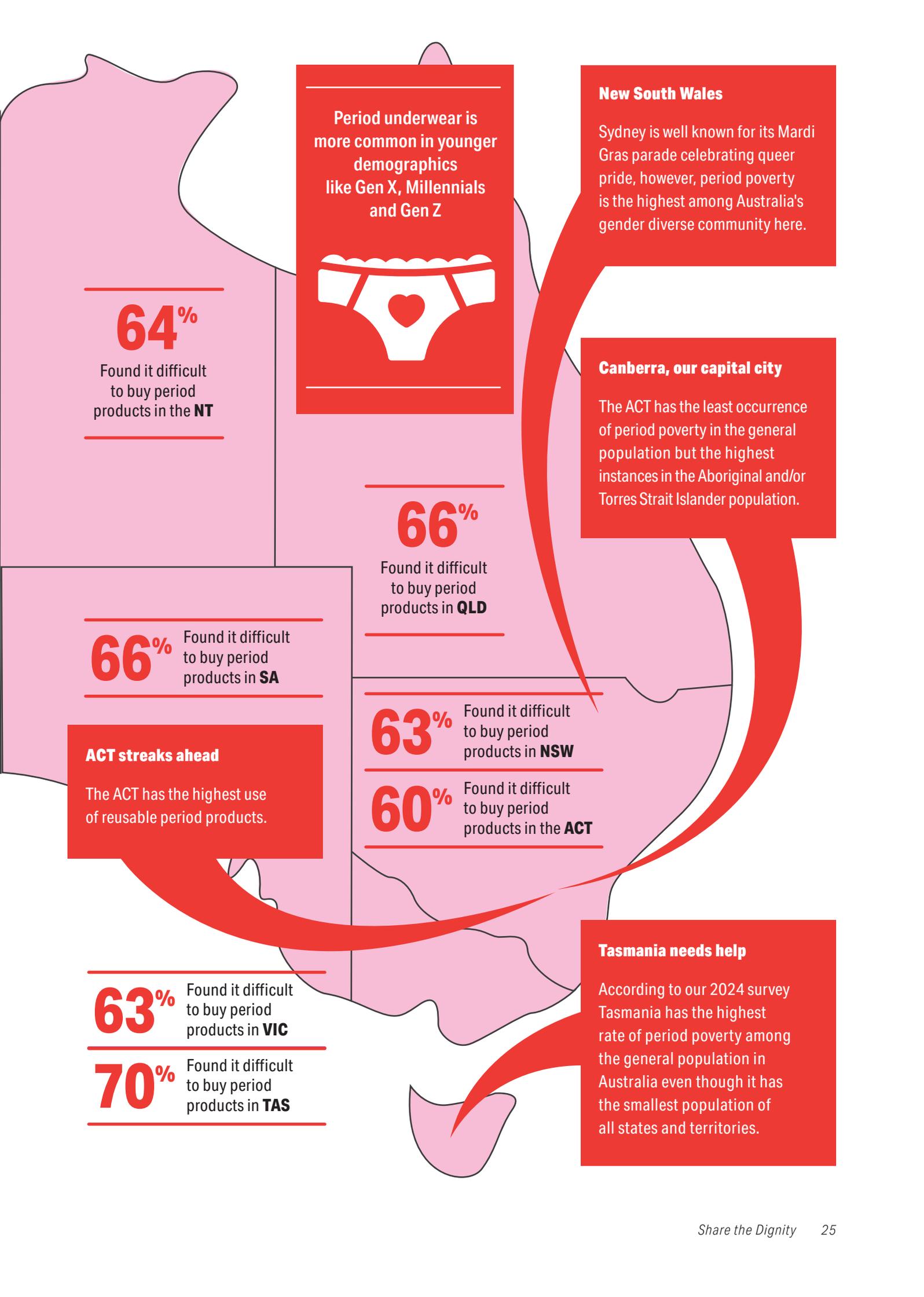
# 65%

Found it difficult to buy period products in **WA**

# 71%

of Australians crave chocolate on their period

Chips	.....	36.5%
Soft drink	.....	16.0%
I don't crave anything	.....	15.6%



Period underwear is more common in younger demographics like Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z



**New South Wales**

Sydney is well known for its Mardi Gras parade celebrating queer pride, however, period poverty is the highest among Australia's gender diverse community here.

**Canberra, our capital city**

The ACT has the least occurrence of period poverty in the general population but the highest instances in the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population.

**64%**

Found it difficult to buy period products in the **NT**

**66%**

Found it difficult to buy period products in **QLD**

**66%**

Found it difficult to buy period products in **SA**

**63%**

Found it difficult to buy period products in **NSW**

**60%**

Found it difficult to buy period products in the **ACT**

**ACT streaks ahead**

The ACT has the highest use of reusable period products.

**Tasmania needs help**

According to our 2024 survey Tasmania has the highest rate of period poverty among the general population in Australia even though it has the smallest population of all states and territories.

**63%**

Found it difficult to buy period products in **VIC**

**70%**

Found it difficult to buy period products in **TAS**



**When I was working a below minimum wage job/traineeship, I could hardly afford to feed myself. When I could only afford rice and lived on that with some sort of sauce (bbq or tomato) I didn't have any spare money after bills, so I needed to choose between toilet paper or period products."**

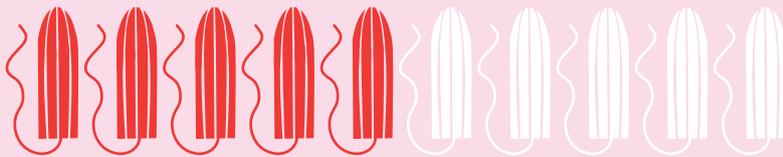
— participant story

## Counting the cost of having a period

The cost of living crisis in Australia has caused the prices of period products to rise, increasing instances of period poverty.

**Total annual dollar figure that can be attributed to missed work days due to periods is estimated to be**

**\$9.6 billion annually**



**5 out of 10 respondents missed work due to fear of leaking**

**55%**

**missed work due to their period**

**\$15**

**median monthly spend on period products**

### Financial impact of days off due to periods

Yes, you read that correctly—it costs Australia's economy \$9.6 billion per year in missed days of work due to periods. This calculation was based off of our finding that people miss 6 days of work per year due to periods. We then devised the median daily earnings for women as \$230 by noting statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Family Statistics.

This total of \$230 was devised from the facts that cis-women represent 99 per cent of our survey respondents, that 14.5 million Australians are employed, and that 48 per cent of the workforce are women.<sup>9</sup> By calculating 48 per cent of 14.5 million we get 6.96 million. Note that because the Australian census does not count trans, non-binary and

gender diverse people who menstruate we could not include them in this calculation.

**14.5 million x 48% x \$230 per day x 6 days per year = \$9.6 billion**

It is important to note that this estimate does not take into account other costs to the economy such as respondents requiring medical attention and healthcare.

Given that the respondents are taking off work due to their period, it is fair to assume there is no upside to the economy like increased spending in eating out at restaurants and experiencing other hospitality and entertainment aspects of Australian culture. From the data we are unable to ascertain if those who missed work were also negatively financially impacted due to not having access to paid leave.

### **So what does it cost to have a period?**

People spend a median of \$15 per month on period products. The average menstruator will have 450 periods in their lifetime. That's \$6,750 on period products.

### **That's \$54 billion spent on period products every year in this country alone.**

This cost does not take into account what people spend on pain management, treatment of medical conditions related to periods, or the time people take off work, sport and social activities to deal with negative side effects—let alone the time and resources used to clean up leaks. 💧

### **Why did you miss work?**

# 33%

**missed work due to fear of leaking**



# 45%

**missed work due to moods and emotions**

# 91%

**missed work due to period pain**



## Having a period is expensive for everyone

Unsurprisingly those in the lowest household income bracket reported spending the highest proportion of their wages on managing their period.

Of the people we surveyed in the lowest earning per household range, 82 per cent found it difficult to buy period products and 43 per cent had worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost. According to the Australian Bureau

of Statistics the median yearly earnings in Australia is \$67,600 per year for all employees.<sup>10</sup> While 34 per cent of our respondents have a combined household income of over \$150,000, just over 4 per cent lived below the poverty line which is defined as earning lower than \$25,428 per year.<sup>11</sup>

Participants who were casually employed, not working or stay at home parents also reported extremely high instances of period poverty.

Respondents per income	
What is your household income?	Percentage of respondents
\$0-\$19,999	3.9%
\$20,000 - \$49,999	9.3%
\$50,000 - \$89,999	19.4%
\$90,000 - \$129,999	21.3%
\$130,000 - \$149,999	11.8%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	16.8%
\$200,000+	17.4%

### Period poverty per household income

Household income	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. use toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
\$0 - \$19,999	82.4%	17.2%	13.1%	34.0%	17.2%	17.2%	43.2%
\$20,000 - \$49,999	82.8%	16.1%	9.8%	36.9%	10.7%	10.7%	42.3%
\$50,000 - \$89,999	76.9%	9.7%	6.1%	31.8%	8.4%	8.4%	34.9%
\$90,000 - \$129,999	67.6%	6.2%	3.5%	26.8%	6.1%	6.1%	27.7%
\$130,000 - \$149,999	62.9%	5.4%	3.0%	23.8%	16.7%	5.4%	24.6%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	56.3%	4.1%	4.2%	20.3%	4.6%	4.6%	19.8%
\$200,000 +	43.0%	3.1%	1.4%	13.7%	4.1%	4.1%	15.3%

**KEY**  Extremely High  High  Medium  Low

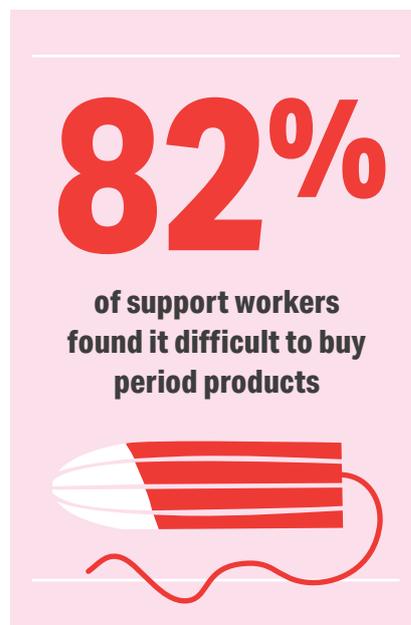
## Carers roles are hit hard by period poverty

Support workers, retail workers, cleaners and customer service representatives experience the most period poverty. This is likely a result of these occupations being on the lower end of the wage scale.

In comparison, higher paying roles such as teachers, doctors and nurses experience lower levels of period poverty. The occupations suffering most from period poverty are lower paying than others, however they are also

typically feminised carers jobs. Women make up the greatest part of the paid and unpaid support workforce in Australia and operate in roles that are typically undervalued and insecure.<sup>12</sup>

This same research by the Australian Government confirms that women still do the majority of unpaid carers work for children, the elderly and people with special needs in their families. Together these situations feed into the period poverty reported here. 



### Period poverty per employment status

What best describes your employment status	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. use toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
Casual employment	73.6%	10.7%	7.4%	29.9%	24.3%	9.9%	33.4%
Full-time	63.1%	6.2%	3.3%	23.9%	18.7%	6.1%	25.8%
Not working	77.6%	17.9%	11.0%	34.2%	31.9%	9.1%	41.4%
Part-time	61.4%	5.1%	3.1%	24.0%	15.5%	5.0%	24.3%
Retired	55.5%	5.1%	1.3%	18.4%	15.8%	1.5%	23.9%
School student	60.3%	4.7%	8.0%	14.8%	15.9%	21.6%	25.1%
Uni/TAFE student	77.3%	10.4%	8.9%	29.5%	25.0%	21.1%	36.2%
Self-employed	60.1%	6.8%	3.1%	22.9%	17.9%	4.2%	24.0%
Stay at home parent	77.3%	11.9%	7.3%	32.9%	24.4%	5.4%	36.2%
<b>KEY</b>	 Extremely High	 High	 Medium	 Low			

### Period poverty per occupation

What best describes your occupation	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. use toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
Accountant	43.4%	2.6%	1.2%	13.6%	10.0%	3.4%	17.7%
Administration	56.3%	5.6%	2.7%	26.1%	17.5%	4.7%	25.4%
Cleaner	81.3%	12.0%	7.0%	32.3%	31.3%	8.0%	37.6%
Consultant	50.0%	4.4%	1.0%	16.0%	13.0%	6.2%	17.9%
Customer service	74.5%	8.9%	5.2%	32.9%	22.7%	5.3%	31.7%
Doctor/Nurse	58.8%	4.8%	2.6%	22.7%	16.3%	4.6%	24.1%
Education	66.8%	4.9%	2.0%	30.7%	18.0%	8.6%	27.1%
Lawyer	46.9%	3.4%	1.8%	16.0%	12.8%	7.5%	18.8%
Manager	56.0%	6.0%	2.5%	21.0%	16.1%	4.0%	23.4%
Marketing	53.2%	3.3%	1.5%	17.8%	11.0%	4.1%	18.5%
Public servant	55.0%	4.7%	1.8%	18.9%	15.8%	3.3%	23.1%
Receptionist	71.9%	7.8%	4.4%	26.3%	21.0%	5.8%	31.3%
Retail	76.8%	8.6%	6.9%	30.6%	23.3%	8.3%	33.5%
Sales	65.7%	7.0%	3.6%	26.6%	18.1%	5.5%	27.7%
Social worker	66.7%	6.9%	3.2%	26.8%	19.7%	7.7%	25.6%
Student	66.3%	7.0%	8.3%	21.3%	19.3%	21.6%	29.3%
Support worker	82.4%	13.0%	8.1%	39.3%	31.6%	9.0%	35.0%
Teacher/Educator	61.0%	3.6%	1.8%	22.7%	14.9%	6.8%	22.1%

KEY  Extremely High  High  Medium  Low

### Spend on period products per household income

Household income	Median spend on period management per month	Median spend on period products per month	Total annual spend	Median household income	Spend as a percentage of income
\$0-\$19,999	\$20	\$20	\$480	\$9,999.50	4.8%
\$20,000 - \$49,999	\$20	\$15	\$420	\$34,999.50	1.2%
\$50,000 - \$89,999	\$20	\$15	\$420	\$69,999.50	0.6%
\$90,000 - \$129,999	\$15	\$15	\$360	\$109,999.50	0.3%

KEY  Extremely High  High  Medium  Low



**When I had to leave my job due to my disability, my partner was fired soon after, and we dropped below the poverty line. I used a cut up t-shirt for pads because we had 35 dollars a week for groceries and that did not cover sanitary items most of the time, even soap or toilet paper.”**

— participant story

## *Disability and its effects on period poverty*

Period poverty has shown to particularly affect those with a disability and hinder their quality of life.

A high number of people who were suffering from period poverty also identified as a person with a disability or other chronic condition. Over a third of these respondents have worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to the cost of the products. Again

research from the The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare tells us that people with a disability in Australia are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than those that are not. This puts them at a higher risk of suffering from period poverty.<sup>13</sup> 

### Period poverty among those who identify as a person with a disability or other chronic condition

Do you identify as a person with a disability or other chronic condition?	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
No	60.9%	5.3%	3.1%	22.6%	16.4%	5.8%	24.0%
Yes	77.9%	14.3%	8.6%	34.5%	30.1%	10.3%	38.8%
KEY	 Extremely High		 High		 Medium		 Low



... I was a stay at home mum of five kids, four of whom had medical issues/ disabilities and my husband had gone back to uni so he could get a better job. Going without and relying on the generosity of local support agencies allowed us to get by. But period products weren't supplied in donated grocery hampers.”

— participant story

## Capturing Australia's diverse population

We made space to consider diverse identities, as we know that some populations are disproportionately impacted by issues such as period poverty.

People who experience period poverty and violence		Period poverty in the gender diverse community	
State or territory	Experienced violence	State or territory	Found it difficult to buy period products / Number of gender diverse respondents
ACT	31.0%	ACT	74.7% / 517
NSW	32.3%	NSW	87.0% / 415
NT	35.9%	NT	84.0% / 373
QLD	34.8%	QLD	82.3% / 135
SA	33.4%	SA	84.3% / 134
TAS	36.3%	TAS	78.3% / 75
VIC	30.5%	VIC	82.8% / 69
WA	32.7%	WA	80.0% / 13

**KEY** Extremely High High Medium Low

**Of all the people that experienced period poverty**

# 33%

experienced some form of violence

**Gender-diverse folks are disproportionately affected by period poverty**

## What sort of data have we collected?

Period poverty is compounded by many variables in a person's life including their gender, their cultural background, whether they have a condition relating to menstruation, their income, exposure to homelessness, if they have a disability and if they suffer from

some form of violence in their lives. Over the following pages we have broken down the data to look deeper into these problems and find areas where our local, state and federal governments, workplaces and our volunteers can create radical and positive change to alleviate and eliminate the problem of period poverty. 💧

**78%**  
of people with a disability found it difficult to buy period products

### Period poverty by gender identity

Gender identity	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
Female	64.2%	6.9%	4.1%	24.9%	19.0%	6.6%	26.8%
Gender fluid	82.9%	21.8%	15.4%	38.3%	33.6%	21.5%	46.0%
Non-binary	82.8%	19.6%	14.4%	36.8%	39.2%	20.2%	45.8%
Transgender man	84.4%	14.8%	21.7%	31.1%	39.3%	18.4%	44.3%

### Period poverty by disability

Disability	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
Identify as having a disability or chronic condition	77.90%	14.3%	8.6%	34.5%	30.1%	10.3%	38.8%
Not identifying as having a disability or chronic condition	60.9%	5.3%	3.1%	22.6%	16.4%	5.8%	24.0%
KEY	 Extremely High		 High		 Medium		 Low



# Indigenous menstrual health

We are working with Indigenous communities to relieve period poverty.

## Working towards menstrual equity

Many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities do not have access to clean water, working toilets, and affordable period products. At Share the Dignity, we are committed to giving all Australians access to period products and ensuring Indigenous communities have the tools they need to make this happen. We've worked with a team of researchers to assess the issue and understand how Share the Dignity can assist in empowering these communities with the tools and education they need to combat period poverty.<sup>8</sup>

In many remote communities across Australia, the cost of period products is much higher due to freight costs and lack of competition in these areas. We distribute thousands of

packets of period products to those in need across the country to ensure that they are empowered to manage their period. When we looked at the data pertaining to our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants the patterns were unique. We found that people from across Australia who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders found it difficult to buy period products due to cost.

Similarly it is important to note that just under two-thirds of this population live outside of Australia's major cities in regional communities where traditional distribution of retail products can be limited.<sup>14</sup>

The Australian Human Rights commission reflects our findings and have reported 40 per cent of Indigenous people live without two or more essentials.<sup>15</sup> 💧

Average number of days of school missed per year is

**6**

**This jumps to 10 for First Nations people**

Average number of days of work missed per year is

**5**

**This jumps to 10 for First Nations people**

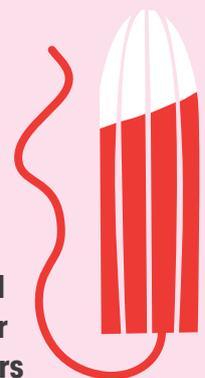
Average number of days of sport missed per year is

**5**

**This jumps to 10 for First Nations people**

**83%**

**of Indigenous people find it difficult to afford period products and may improvise with other items or wear a tampon for more than four hours**



## Period poverty in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
Aboriginal	83.3%	19.7%	13.2%	37.7%	36.4%	13.5%	41.2%
Torres Strait Islander	78.2%	15.3%	12.9%	29.0%	36.3%	8.9%	39.5%
Neither	63.6%	6.6%	3.9%	24.5%	18.5%	6.5%	26.4%

**KEY**  Extremely High  High  Medium  Low

### Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are experiencing disproportionate levels of period poverty

State or territory	Found it difficult to buy period products	Number of respondents who find it difficult to buy period products	Total number of Indigenous respondents
ACT	85.7%	72	84
NSW	82.5%	1,494	1,817
NT	76.4%	68	89
QLD	83.4%	1,077	1,291
SA	81.6%	169	207
TAS	82.7%	383	463
VIC	83.4%	427	512
WA	83.3%	229	275

**KEY**  Highest instance  Lowest instance

# ACT

experiences higher period poverty in its Indigenous community compared to other states

# NSW

had the largest proportion of responses from Indigenous people



**It was three days before payday and I got my period as I travelled into work on the train. I could not afford to buy a packet of pads, especially in the city, so i used rolled up toilet paper all day and had to go to the bathroom every 40 minutes to change.**

— participant story

## *Period poverty is also a question of gender*

**Gender-diverse folks are disproportionately affected by period poverty.**

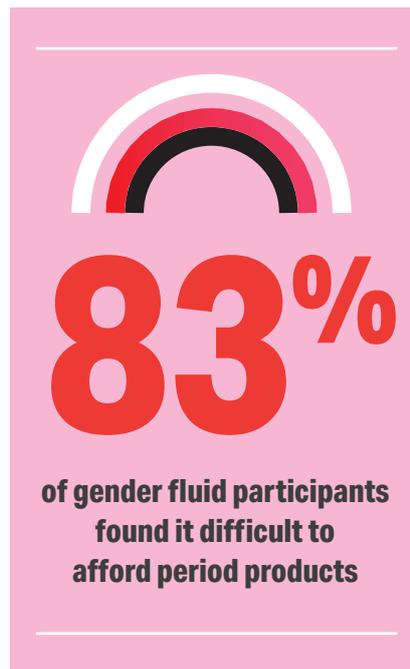
### **Gender as a contributing factor**

Part of understanding the complex stigma connected to periods is understanding that not all women menstruate and not all people who menstruate are women.

This fact is often politicised and adds to the shame associated with menstruation. Gender fluid people, non-binary people and transgender men may all menstruate and these people were specifically counted as participants in our survey. 1,735 of our participants were part of this gender diverse community, with the biggest group being from Victoria.

We found that gender diverse communities are more affected by period poverty compared to the cis gendered women who participated in our survey.

It is also concerning to note that the gender-diverse community in Australia is the most impacted by period poverty in NSW, while the results indicate period poverty across the entire population is most prevalent in Tasmania. 🩸



### **Number of gender diverse respondents in each state or territory**

State or territory	Number of gender diverse respondents
ACT	75
NSW	412
NT	13
QLD	372
SA	133
TAS	69
VIC	516
WA	135

Breakdown of difficulty to afford period products by state for the gender-diverse community		Proportion of people who experienced both period poverty and gendered violence	
State or territory	Found it difficult to buy period products	State or territory	Number of participants
ACT	74.7%	ACT	31.0%
NSW	87.0%	NSW	32.3%
NT	84.6%	NT	35.9%
QLD	82.3%	QLD	34.8%
SA	84.3%	SA	33.4%
TAS	78.3%	TAS	36.3%
VIC	82.8%	VIC	30.5%
WA	80.0%	WA	32.7%

**KEY**  Extremely High  High  Medium  Low

**VIC**  
had our most gender diverse respondents

**NSW**  
had the highest instance of period poverty for gender diverse folks

### Period poverty experienced by university, TAFE and school students by gender

Gender	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
Female	71.1%	8.0%	8.0%	24.5%	21.2%	20.7%	31.9%
Gender fluid	78.2%	18.4%	10.3%	31.0%	28.7%	40.2%	42.5%
Non-binary	80.4%	17.7%	21.2%	30.8%	39.2%	31.5%	46.9%
Transgender man	76.0%	8.9%	15.2%	16.5%	31.7%	22.8%	30.4%

**KEY**  Extremely High  High  Medium  Low



**Many years ago I was a single mum coping with domestic violence and trying to live away from my ex husband. I left my husband when our son was six weeks old. We left with little or nothing as I had a short window to leave. At times I struggled with buying sanitary items ...”**

— participant story

## The impact of violence

Many of the people who shared with us that they were suffering from period poverty were also suffering from violence in their lives.

### Domestic and family violence and violent relationships

Of the people we counted in our survey who experience period poverty, approximately a third also suffered from some form of violence—whether it be domestic, family or relationship violence. Participants living in Tasmania (36 per cent) and the Northern Territory (36 per cent) had the highest instances of this.

People experiencing violence reported higher rates of period poverty than those who do not. This is particularly true for gender diverse people, who disproportionately experience violence and period poverty.<sup>16</sup> 

Proportion of people who were unable to afford period products and also experienced violence	
State or territory	Number of participants
ACT	31.0%
NSW	32.3%
NT	35.9%
QLD	34.8%
SA	33.4%
TAS	36.3%
VIC	30.5%
WA	32.7%

**KEY**  Extremely High  High

# 36%

**Tasmania and the Northern Territory** both have the highest instance of people who suffer both from period poverty and violence





**I had been in a violent controlling relationship where he had my bank card and would control the money. I used to open packets of pads or tampons in the shop and steal individual products if I didn't think I could get away with taking a whole packet. I was so isolated that I didn't even have anyone to ask for help.”**

— participant story

**Period poverty experienced by those who suffer from violence**

Type of violence	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
Domestic violence	82.3%	20%	10.2%	29.2%	38.3%	10.3%	44%
Family violence	82.7%	20.1%	10.9%	39.8%	39.1%	12.1%	45.2%
Violent relationship	54.7%	24.7%	14.1%	44.5%	44.2%	12.5%	48.6%

**KEY** Extremely High High Medium Low

**Period poverty among those who suffered from some form of violence**

**82%**

**Found it difficult to buy products due to cost and suffered domestic violence**

**45%**

**Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost and was in a violent relationship**

**49%**

**Wore a pad or tampon for more than 4 hours due to cost and was in a violent relationship**



**When I was a teenager I was homeless and could not afford period products. I had to steal products and use them for days a time. I developed a terrible stench and people would avoid me everywhere I went. It was particularly hard at school.”**

— participant story

## *Homelessness and period poverty*

Large numbers of people are facing homelessness in Australia and many of them experience period poverty.

### **A big problem that needs big and empathetic solutions**

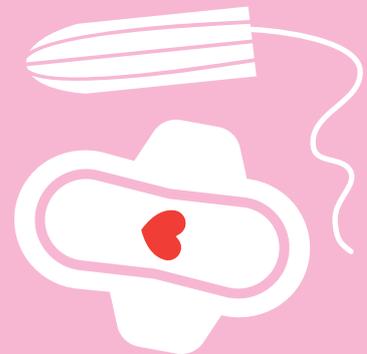
Homelessness can look different for different people. It includes people who are couch surfing and also those housed in temporary accommodations.<sup>17</sup>

Without money for rent or for a deposit on a room, it is easy to see how people without permanent housing have a difficult time affording or accessing period products. The Australian census in 2021 revealed that on any given night, 122,494 people are experiencing homelessness.<sup>17</sup>

This is a big problem and these people are vulnerable to assaults, poor health and serious mental health issues that need urgent and specialised attention. 💧

**61%**

**Wore a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost**



**91**

**People identified as trans, gender fluid or non-binary and were homeless in our survey results**

**318**

**People identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders and were homeless in our survey**



Photo credit: Share the Dignity

### Period poverty and homelessness in Australia

	Been unable to afford period products in the last 12 months	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Wore a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost	Been unable to afford products
<b>Reported experiencing homelessness</b>	29.0%	20.8%	52.4%	59.6%	17.3%	61.1%	40.5%
<b>KEY</b>	Highest		Lowest				



# Learning how periods effect education

Young children are being educated on their periods, but not early enough, and they want to know more.

Over half the students in Australia that menstruate are essentially missing a day of school a month due to their period. Whether it is because of the pain they endure, a fear of stains appearing on their clothes or the negative moods they might feel, the side effects are real and are effecting their attendance at school.

This is of great concern for students in remote and very remote areas where literacy and numeracy skills are much lower than students in major cities across Australia. Low attendance at school has been shown to result in higher drop out rates.<sup>18</sup>

However, we are happy to report that since our last survey in 2021, all state and territory Governments in Australia now provide free period products in all high schools — but we need this extended to primary schools and to also include compulsory period product

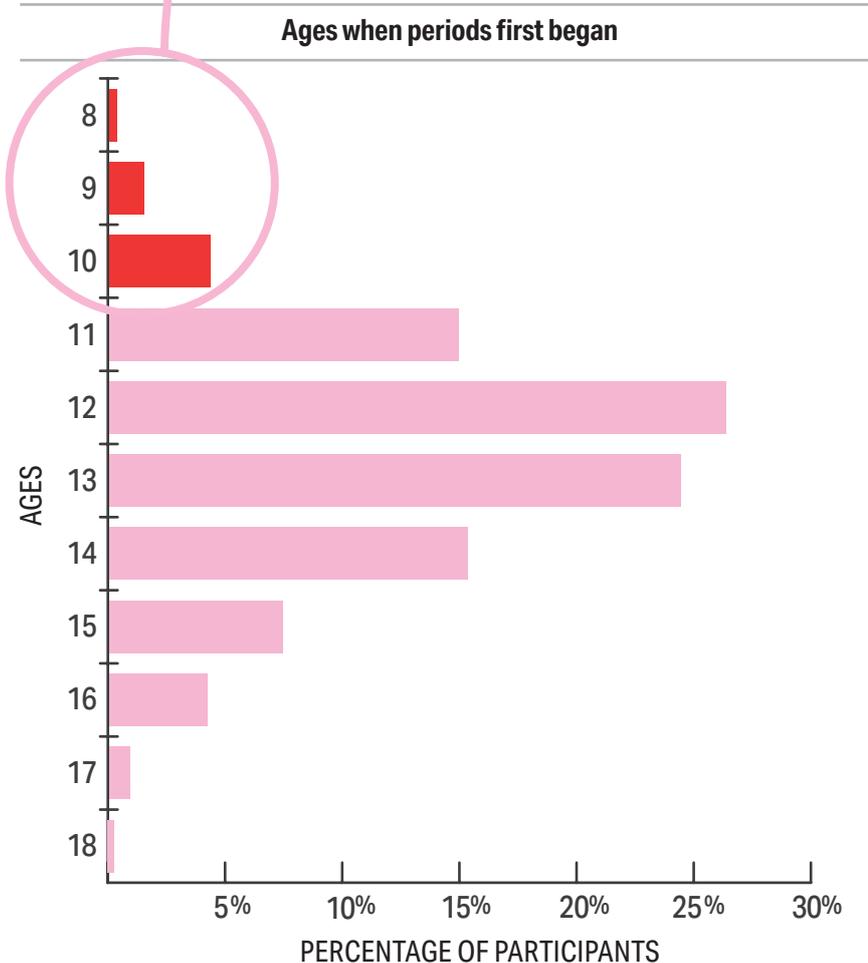
bins in all public school toilets to take the pressure off students of all genders suffering from period shame.<sup>19</sup>

## We're falling behind

Considering our survey shows that 6 per cent of students experience their first periods between 8 to 10 years of age, we are not educating our children early enough to deal with periods in primary schools. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority guide teachers to begin puberty education in grade five and six (10 to 12 years old) however our survey shows that this is needed earlier.<sup>20</sup>

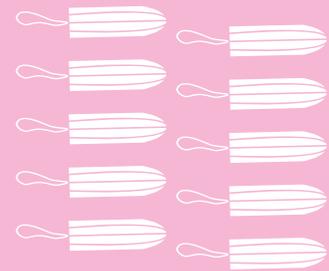
### Were you educated about menstruation before you got your first period?

State or territory	No education or wish I'd known more as a percentage	No education or wish I'd known more as a number
ACT	62.0%	2,394
NSW	63.0%	27,066
NT	66.0%	849
QLD	66.0%	26,128
SA	65.0%	6,853
VIC	63.0%	22,472
TAS	64.0%	4,358
WA	63.0%	8,518



**6%**

**of respondents experienced their first period between the ages of 8 and 10**



**First Nations students miss an average of 10 school days per year due to their period**

**63%**

**of respondents have missed school due to their period**

**49%**

**of respondents have missed school due fear of leaking**



**My periods regularly went for up to eight or nine days, and were very heavy. I often had to wear two tampons plus a pad at once. I failed a very important exam when I was 34 because I started leaking blood and had to leave the room, and wasn't allowed back in."**

— participant story

## Studying the different education sectors

Inflation, or the rising costs of living, has made it difficult for Australians to cover their basic bills. Students are among those who are feeling this pinch which is causing them to suffer from high levels of period poverty.

### Higher education and period poverty

Over 77 per cent of university and TAFE students have found it difficult to buy period products and 36 per cent have worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to the cost of them. Recently, living expenses have risen in Australia and incomes have remained stagnant. This in turn has impacted university and TAFE students disproportionately because they often hold uncertain, casual positions with lower wages.<sup>21</sup> Apprenticeships and other roles also pay lower wages due to the younger ages of students. Raising rents, utility costs and grocery bills affect a student's propensity to suffer from period poverty. The price of period products has dramatically increased over the past 12 months in Australian supermarkets, with the average cost being \$9.75, which is an "increase of approximately 7 per cent per year".<sup>22</sup> 

**WA**

**has the highest instance of period poverty among TAFE, uni and school students**

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**TAFEs and unis generally do not supply free period products or bins in all toilets**

### Total number of university, TAFE and school student respondents

State or territory	Number of students
ACT	249
NSW	2,392
NT	39
QLD	2,080
SA	753
TAS	359
VIC	1,984
WA	774

NB// There is a low number in some states and territories

### Period poverty per education level

Education level	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
School student	60.3%	4.7%	8.0%	14.8%	15.9%	21.6%	25.1%
Uni/TAFE student	77.3%	10.4%	8.9%	29.5%	25.0%	21.1%	36.2%
KEY	 Extremely High		 High		 Medium		 Low

### Period poverty among university, TAFE and school students

State or territory	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise on period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free period products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
ACT	69.9%	6.8%	10.0%	19.3%	20.9%	24.5%	31.7%
NSW	70.2%	7.4%	7.80%	24.5%	22.1%	18.9%	30.9%
NT	61.5%	10.3%	5.10%	25.0%	20.5%	15.4%	38.5%
QLD	72.2%	9.4%	8.8%	25.0%	22.7%	19.8%	34.0%
SA	69.5%	8.5%	9.4%	23.5%	23.0%	15.9%	29.7%
TAS	74.9%	9.2%	9.1%	25.6%	23.4%	21.8%	30.9%
VIC	71.0%	7.5%	8.0%	24.4%	19.3%	26.3%	32.8%
WA	75.6%	11.2%	9.7%	25.6%	23.5%	23.5%	34.8%
KEY	 Extremely High		 High		 Medium		 Low



When I was 13 and just started my periods, I was too embarrassed to tell my mum and she did not ever talk about them to me. We didn't have much money so I felt it was a burden. I used my lunch money to buy pads on my way to school and took the rubbish with me to put in the bins at school.”

— participant story

## Menstruation education

Getting your first period can be overwhelming especially if you have not learnt about what to expect and how to manage it.

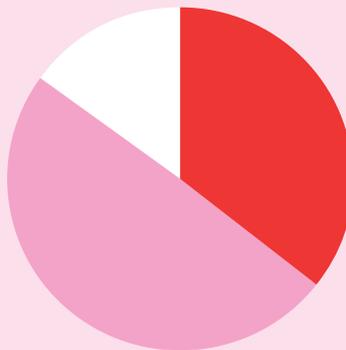
**1 in 5**

with South and East Asian backgrounds were not educated before they got their first period

**64%**

had no menstruation education or wish they had known more

Were you educated about menstruation?



- Yes .... 35.6%
- Somewhat (I wish I had known more) .... 49.4%
- No .... 15.0%

**66%**

of respondents in QLD had no menstruation education or wish they'd known more

**78%**

of respondents aged 80+ had no menstruation education or wish they'd known more

### Had no education or wished they had known more before their first period by age and jurisdiction

State or territory	10 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39
	Had no education or wished they had known more	Had no education or wished they had known more	Had no education or wished they had known more
ACT	43.0%	62.0%	65.0%
NSW	47.0%	65.0%	66.0%
NT	54.0%	68.0%	65.0%
QLD	50.0%	67.0%	68.0%
SA	49.0%	69.0%	68.0%
TAS	54.0%	67.0%	68.0%
VIC	45.0%	63.0%	66.0%
WA	50.0%	63.0%	67.0%
<b>KEY</b>	 Highest	 Lowest	

#### Percentage who had no period education or wish they'd known more before their first period by State or Territory

State or territory	Had no education or wished they had known more
ACT	62.0%
NSW	63.0%
NT	66.0%
QLD	66.0%
SA	65.0%
TAS	63.0%
VIC	64.0%
WA	63.0%
<b>KEY</b>	 Highest  Lowest

#### Percentage who had no period education or wish they'd known more before their first period by age

Age	Had no education or wished they had known more
10 - 19	48.3%
20 - 29	65.0%
30 - 39	66.0%
40 - 49	62.0%
50 - 59	65.0%
60 - 69	70.0%
70 - 79	72.0%
80+	78.0%
<b>KEY</b>	 Highest  Lowest



**I found it incredibly difficult as I do a lot of water sports and I don't use tampons and I have a heavy flow, so there was a big struggle for me to not bleed through my swimmers."**

— participant story

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## *Sport and periods, it's an uncomfortable pairing*

**Having a period drastically effects people's abilities to engage in sport. Whether it's elite or school yard activities, abnormal bleeding, low iron and fear of leaking lead menstruators to endure stress and reduced participation.**

In 2021 our Big Bloody Survey gave insight into periods being one of the factors that contributed to the high rates in which women skipped swimming. Our data this time shows over half of survey participants, 68 per cent, skipped sport due to their periods. The physical and mental benefits of participating in sport is widely acknowledged however we continue to see that people are missing out on participating due to their period for fear of leaking, pain or being unable to access period products.

63 per cent of our survey participants reported low iron levels or iron deficiency. This jumps to 77 per cent when we combined those who experienced abnormal bleeding with low iron levels. These conditions, endemic to the menstruating population, directly affect women's participation and enjoyment of sport.

Equating blood loss to low energy levels is not new knowledge, however medical researchers still call for further work to fully understand the impact of menstruation on women's sport as they are physiologically different to men.<sup>23</sup>

### **Participant's stories**

Many of the people who filled out our survey shared stories about how much periods affect their ability to participate in sport. Many of them are quoted on the following pages. Swimming is still widely avoided when people menstruate, often due to common myths and a general lack of period education. Luckily, there are multiple options for period products that will keep you in the pool, such as tampons, menstrual cups and period-friendly swimwear. 💧





**It was really uncomfortable to run, I would do exercises like sit ups or push ups instead. Doing stuff like relays, feeling your stomach swirl or feeling the rush of [your] period doesn't mix with running. Or jumping."**

— participant story

**Top ten sports played by our respondents**



**First Nations respondents missed an average of 10 days of sport due to their period per year**



**77%**

**of people who missed sport did so due to a fear of leaking**

**Why did you miss sport?**

- Fear of leaking ... **76.5%**
- Period pain ... **64.5%**
- Mood/emotions ... **24.7%**
- Couldn't afford ... **2.9%**  
period products





**I am prone to fainting, light-headedness, painful cramps and back pain during my period so it was hard and painful to be physical and I sometimes nearly passed out and had to sit out anyway.”**

— participant story

## *Iron levels and abnormal bleeding*

People may experience pain and discomfort during their period, but where this is excessive or having a negative impact on their everyday life, support from a medical practitioner is strongly recommended.

### **Low iron and period discomfort**

"Iron deficiency (ID) is the most common micro-nutrient deficiency in the world."<sup>24</sup> It's been found that low iron levels are globally high in peri-menopausal women and can cause anemia.<sup>25</sup>

This is also found to be the case for those who menstruate or sweat heavily during sports.<sup>26</sup>

It has been reported that iron issues "affect up to 35 per cent of female athletes – around 20 per cent more than their male counterparts."<sup>27</sup>

Treatment of low iron levels will vary upon the individuals circumstance (and it is always recommended to seek medical advice from your trusted physician).<sup>28</sup>

### **Abnormal bleeding and the fear of leaking**

Unexpected periods or heavier than expected blood flows can lead to period products becoming ineffective and for visible stains to appear on clothing.

The shame so often associated with periods feeds into this problem and as a result people who menstruate of all ages avoid or skip sporting activities due to this possible embarrassment. Our data supports this showing 77 per cent who skipped sport did so due to a fear of leaking.

Slowly across the globe, we are beginning to see instances of women in professional sports or with high profiles trying to change this stigma. British triathlete Emma Palant-Browne refused to be embarrassed after being trolled online for an event

photograph that exposed a period stain on her sports wear during an event. Instead she urged menstruators to feel "liberated and powerful."<sup>29</sup>

The prestigious tennis tournament at Wimbledon is known for having long traditions of strict all-white dress codes. However in 2023 it relented to protests against these traditions and allowed women to wear black underwear to relieve "anxiety and even trauma" surrounding period stains.<sup>30</sup>

Australia and New Zealand were the host nations for the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023 and both teams also designed their uniforms to combat these perceived problems.<sup>31</sup>

From all these examples we can see that the fear of leaking in sport can be combatted through uniform design and period pride. 💧

Iron and abnormal bleeding		Iron deficiencies	
Abnormal bleeding	Iron deficiency	Age brackets	Percentage of respondents who reported having iron deficiencies
Yes	77.1%	10-19	56.0%
		20-29	67.0%
No	22.9%	30-39	67.0%
		40-49	61.0%
		50-59	57.0%
		60-69	45.0%
		70-79	44.0%
		80-89	39.0%

<b>KEY</b>	
 Extremely High	
 High	
 Medium	
 Low	

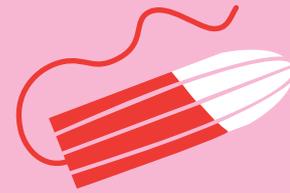
Rochelle Courtenay receives an iron transfusion.  
Photo credit: Share the Dignity



How many people report having low iron?

**63%**

96,000+ of our respondents reported diagnoses of low iron levels or deficiency



**98 per cent**

have felt tired or fatigued due to low iron levels

**77%**

of all the respondents that experience abnormal bleeding also reported being diagnosed with low iron levels or iron deficiency





**My wage [...] was not enough to sometimes have [...] enough period products including pain medication for severe endometriosis. I have also had 12 operations for endometriosis, with recovery time costing money.”**

— participant story

# Endometriosis and other medical conditions

Period poverty affects people with endometriosis and other serious medical conditions associated with periods.

Endometriosis is when a lining similar to the uterine lining grows outside the uterus and can cause severe pain. It can have a huge physical and mental health impact on those who suffer from it. But these are not the only side effects of such conditions. Our survey found

that people experiencing medical conditions related to periods spend double the amount on period management per month than those who don't. Such costs could include medications as well as specific period products to cater for heavy bleeding. Overall, 76k people

had some medical condition related to their period. Considering the overall approximate Australian population of people who menstruate — 6 million menstruators — this results in 289k people who might have a medical condition related to their period.<sup>32</sup> 

## Period poverty among those who experience a medical condition relating to their period

Experience medical condition	Found it difficult to buy period products	Been unable to afford period products	Asked a friend to purchase them for you	Changed to a less suitable period product due to cost	Had to improvise period products due to cost (e.g. used toilet paper etc.)	Used a free period product dispenser or Dignity Vending Machine to access free products	Worn a tampon or pad for more than four hours due to cost
Yes	71.7%	9.9%	5.9%	30.6%	24.1%	8.0%	32.2%
KEY	 Extremely High		 High		 Medium		 Low



Our Dignity Vending Machines ensure free and dignified access to period products for anyone who needs them.  
Photo credit: Share the Dignity

### Spend on period management

Have medical condition	Median spend on period management per month	Median spend on period products
Yes	\$20	\$15
No	\$10	\$12

### Medical conditions and how period poverty affects daily life

Have medical condition	Average school days missed per year due to period	Average sport days missed per year due to period	Average school days missed per year due to period
Yes	14	7	12
No	7	13	6

KEY ● Extremely High ● High ● Medium ● Low

# \$\$

Folks experiencing period related medical conditions spend double the amount on period management per month compared to those without conditions

# 63%

reported having been diagnosed with low iron levels or iron deficiency

# 71%

who experienced medical conditions related to periods had found it difficult to afford period products

# 47%

of people have medical conditions related to their period



**I experienced homelessness while doing unpaid nursing placements ... not only didn't the university care but the hospitals ... didn't have any available products. I found myself stealing gauze and using the hospital showers to wash out blood stained underwear just to get by."**

— participant story

## *Hospitals and period product availability*

There's a short supply of period products in our hospitals which leaves many patients vulnerable.

When you're in hospital sick, stressed, vulnerable, or recovering from childbirth, it's not guaranteed that you will have access to period products if you need them.

In public hospitals across Australia, there is access to band-aids, bandages, painkillers, and incontinence aids, but not period products. Respondents in every state and territory in Australia were not able to access period products in hospital with people in South Australia recording the highest demand at 13%. 

**Percentage who needed period products in hospitals and weren't able to receive them by state and territories**

State or territory	Percentage of recipients
ACT	11.0%
NSW	12.7%
NT	12.2%
QLD	11.7%
SA	13.0%
TAS	11.5%
VIC	11.6%
WA	10.7%
<b>KEY</b>	 Extremely High  High

# 12%

**needed period products in Australian hospitals and were unable to receive them**



*Below: Rochelle Courtenay and sports personality Liz Ellis promoting our Bloody Big Survey. Photo credit: Share the Dignity*

## Perimenopause and menopause

Menstruating begins to slow during perimenopause. Menopause is when menstruation has stopped completely for 12 months.

Perimenopause can be accompanied by hot flashes, mood swings and irregular periods. It is a lot to manage when you're also at an age when you could be caring for aging parents, teenagers or working full time. 🩸



8%

of our respondents were going through perimenopause

11%

of our respondents have been or were going through menopause



47

is the median age for our respondents that menopause began



With the current cost of living it's getting more and more unaffordable to buy period products lately. Especially since my periods are quite heavy, I go through a lot of products. The last thing I want to do each month when I'm already in pain and struggling to make ends meet, is buy more period products."

— participant story

## Levels of pain and periods

The majority of menstruators experience period related pain which can interfere with their everyday lives.

Condition	Not painful	Slightly painful	Moderately painful	Very painful	Severely painful
None	13.2%	32.2%	38.4%	14.1%	2.0%
Hormonal bleeding	5.3%	11.7%	27.4%	34.4%	22.1%
Suspected and diagnosed endo	1.4%	6.0%	19.5%	39.2%	3.4%
PMDD	3.5%	12.3%	29.1%	33.5%	21.7%
PCOS	5.0%	15.7%	30.7%	30.1%	18.6%

KEY



Highest instances



Lowest instances

# ENDO

is short for for endometriosis

# PMDD

stands for premenstrual dysphoric disorder

# PCOS

stands for polycystic ovary syndrome

**The amount that people would spend on managing their monthly period increased with their pain levels:**

Slightly painful	.....	<b>\$10</b>
Moderately painful	.....	<b>\$15</b>
Very painful	.....	<b>\$20</b>
Severely painful	.....	<b>\$30</b>

**91%**

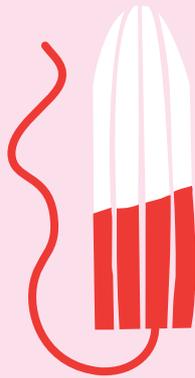
**of respondents reported period pain**

**Spend on managing periods every month compared to people without a diagnosed condition:**

No diagnosed condition	...	<b>\$10</b>
PMDD	...	<b>\$20</b>
PCOS	...	<b>\$20</b>
Abnormal bleeding	...	<b>\$20</b>
Suspected/diagnosed endo	...	<b>\$25</b>

**47%**

**of respondents reported having a medical condition relating to their period.**



**60%**

**of First Nations people experienced period pain that was either moderately or very painful**

State or territory	Number of people who missed school because of period pain	Number of people who missed sport because of period pain	Number of people who missed work because of period pain
ACT	56.0%	44.4%	54.5%
NSW	55.2%	44.4%	44.6%
NT	54.2%	44.3%	53.1%
QLD	56.1%	43.8%	52.0%
SA	56.8%	41.1%	50.7%
TAS	58.1%	43.0%	50.4%
VIC	55.7%	43.6%	50.7%
WA	55.0%	46.0%	45.0%

**KEY** High instances of period poverty Low instances of period poverty

## Comparing 2021 with the 2024 survey data

The Big Bloody Survey has become a crucial measure for how we can improve period poverty and shame in Australia.

Please note that questions on similar themes, shown here, were asked differently in the two different surveys. As such, the data here compares similar statistics but are worded slightly differently.



# 2021

## 125k

number of respondents

## 22%

had to improvise  
on period products  
due to cost



## 48%

at least sometimes missed  
class due to their periods

## 65%

at least sometimes  
missed sport due to their  
periods

# 2024

## 153k

number of respondents

## 19%

had to improvise on period  
products due to cost  
(e.g. used toilet paper etc.)

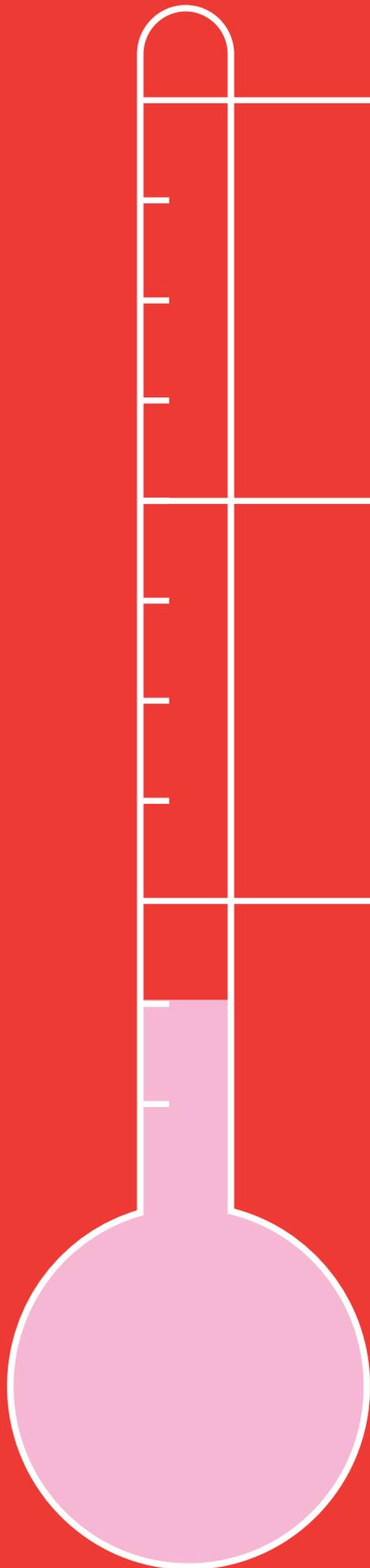


## 63%

of respondents have missed  
school due to their period

## 68%

of our participants  
missed sport due to their  
period



## *What's better?*

Every state and territory in Australia now mandates free period products in public high schools.

## *What's stayed the same?*

The shame and stigma in Australian society towards periods is not budging nor are we educating people early enough to help improve this.

## *What's worse?*

Students at universities and TAFEs are suffering higher levels of period poverty due to the rising cost of living.



*Below right: Founder,  
Rochelle Courtenay  
and Australian Olympic  
Swimmer Brooke Hansen.  
Photo credit:  
Share the Dignity*

## *What are the next steps?*

**We are proud of the positive changes our advocacy work has achieved in Australia. But as you have seen from this report, there's still work to do.**

### **Continuing the fight**

45 per cent of school age respondents told us that they have skipped school due to fear of leaking. No person should miss a day of learning because of their period. This extends to tertiary education, TAFE, apprenticeships, trades, and internships.

Since our last Bloody Big Survey in 2021, we have been so happy to see that the state governments in Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, the ACT, and the Northern Territory, have committed to free period products in public high schools. In Queensland, we have a partnership with the Department of Education to install our Dignity Vending Machines in all state primary and high schools. So far, 553 machines have been installed as part of this program.

This is amazing work, but we know that there is a lot more to be done. Our 2024 and 2021 surveys have proven that people as young as 8 get their period—these are kids in Grade 3. People of all ages deserve the dignity of accessing the period products they need, when they need them. We want to see governments extend their commitment and provide free period products in primary schools too.

52 per cent of people had missed sport due to fear of leaking, and 18 per cent had missed work for the same reason. We see this as a fixable issue: we will continue to provide and to advocate for period products to be made freely available in sporting venues and workplaces.

We are working with federal, state, and council governments, and sporting bodies, to push for the availability of period products and sanitary bins

so that people can manage their periods with dignity. The Victorian and ACT governments have taken further steps. The ACT has become the first Australian jurisdiction to enshrine access to free period products in law. The Period Products and Facilities (Access) Act will hold future governments accountable to this commitment.

In Victoria, the state government has announced an initiative to install vending machines with pads and tampons across public hospitals, TAFEs, courts, libraries, train stations, and major cultural institutions.

We want to see this state by state, school by school, sporting body by sporting body, to ensure that no one ever has to go without.

## Helping people who need it most

As part of our data collection, we recorded postcodes in order to identify the areas impacted most by period poverty. We will be compiling reports to send to every council office across Australia to detail this issue and explain how they can better support their local population.

Since our 2021 survey, we have seen an increase in the number of university and TAFE students experiencing period poverty. We were saddened to find that 77 per cent of university and TAFE students found it difficult to buy period products because of how much they cost.

This has forced them to wear products for more than four hours, change to a less suitable product, and improvise on products (such as using toilet paper instead of a pad), in order to save on the cost of managing their period.

We were also shocked to hear that in every state and territory, at least 10 per cent of people were unable to access period products in hospital. This is next on our agenda.

We will continue our work and advocacy for period products to be made freely available in more spaces.

The 2024 Bloody Big survey showed us that First Nations and gender diverse populations are disproportionately impacted by period poverty. In the last 12 months, they were unable to afford period products at a higher rate than cis-gender and non-Indigenous people. We have shipped 295,000+ period products to remote Indigenous

communities and are continuing to make changes internally here at Share the Dignity so that we are able to meaningfully connect with First Nations communities and assist in ways that are culturally sensitive.

## Battling the shame and stigma of menstruation

We believe that the key to addressing period poverty is to address shame and stigma around menstruating.

Shame and stigma continue to be an issue. 48 per cent of people said that they often hide anything that shows they have their period. 23 per cent of people told us that they always do—it is disheartening that this is an increase from our 2021 survey. The clearest way to decrease levels of shame and stigma around menstruation is through education. Beginning conversations about periods at a

young age, and with all genders, will normalise and ensure that people can always ask for help when they need it, and feel more confident when they menstruate.

Only 23,066 respondents said they were well educated about menstruation before their first period. 130,554 weren't educated or wish they knew more. Only 15 per cent said they were well educated about periods beforehand.

People aged 10-19 appear to be more satisfied with their menstrual education, however dissatisfaction still sat at 48.25%. This number is far too high and is a clear indication that we are failing at equipping menstruators with the knowledge they need. If we can't talk about periods, then we can't address period poverty. No one should feel embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help, and no one should go without. 🩸



*Every possible effort was  
put into ensuring the  
Bloody Big Survey received  
over 150,000 responses.  
Photo credit: Share the Dignity*



# Terminology

**Gender:**

Refers to how a person identifies or expresses their masculine or feminine characteristics. A person's gender identity or gender expression is not always exclusively male or female and may change over time.<sup>35</sup>

**Gender diverse community:**

A group of people who don't prescribe to the binary male or female way of identifying. They may identify as trans, non-binary or gender fluid among many other labels.

**Gender expression:**

Refers to the way in which a person externally expresses their gender or how they are perceived by others.<sup>35</sup>

**Gender identity:**

Refers to a person's deeply held internal and individual feelings of gender.<sup>35</sup>

**LGBTQIA+:**

Refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual or allies and others on the spectrum of gender and sexuality.

**Menopause:** Your final period was 12 months ago and your ovaries no longer release any eggs.

**Menstrual/period cycle:**

This begins with the first day of the period and ends with the start of the next period. Usually 28 days.

**Menstruation/period:**

The period of bleeding where the lining of the uterus is shed through the vagina.

**Non-binary:**

Refers to any gender that falls outside of the categories of male and female.<sup>35</sup>

**Pads:** These single use products sit inside underwear to absorb period blood.

**Period underwear:**

These sustainable period products are worn like normal underwear but absorb period blood.

**Peri menopause:**

The time during which a pre-menstruating body makes the natural transition to menopause.

**Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS):**

Symptoms that occur a week or two before periods, such as bloating, headaches, and moodiness.

**Reusable Period Products:**

These products, like period cups and period underwear, are used to absorb period blood but can be washed and reused. They are a sustainable alternative to disposable, single use products.

**Tampons:**

These single use products are used inside a vagina to absorb period blood.

**Toxic shock syndrome:**

A rare but serious medical condition caused by a bacterial infection when a tampon is left in for longer than the recommended period.

**Transgender:**

People who have gender identities and expressions that differ from their assigned sex at birth.<sup>35</sup>

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