

GLOBAL **V** TABOO TRACKER – MALAYSIA REPORT

2020



We are committed to creating a world where women can live the life they want by breaking the taboos that can hold them back.

But we know this is no small task, discrimination in our societies is endemic and embedded.

We won't stop until taboos have been challenged, understood and accepted by society.



BY SHOWING PERIOD BLOOD FOR
THE FIRST TIME, WE WANTED
TO NORMALISE PERIODS



BY SHOWING SINGING
VULVAS, WE WANTED TO HELP
WOMEN UNDERSTAND THAT
THEY NEEDN'T BE ASHAMED
OF THEIR INTIMATE AREAS.



BY SHOWING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES,
WE WANTED TO GIVE A VOICE TO THE
UNSEEN, UNSPOKEN AND UNKNOWN
TRUTHS ABOUT WOMEN'S BODIES.

NOW

We've created the **Global V Taboo Tracker** to help women break free from the V-Zone* discrimination that can bring shame, pressure and embarrassment to their daily lives.

We are listening to the experiences of taboos to drive institutional change across the world, tracking and representing their experiences in an open and honest way, enabling cultural changes.

The **Global V Taboo Tracker** is a long-term commitment that will inform, inspire and help positively impact the conversation around women's V-Zone.

* The V-Zone is what we use to describe the vagina and vulva and the V-shaped front you can see. Everything inside your pants, that's the V-zone.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the strategic knowledge and framework developed by Kitchen8 to understand the nature of V-Zone taboos and how they affect women worldwide, Ketchum Analytics conducted an online survey among a total of 14,089 men and

women across seven markets: the U.K., France, Mexico, Argentina, Russia, China, and Malaysia.

In Malaysia, the survey was conducted among a total of 2,004 men and women. The survey was fielded between January 15th, 2020 and January 23rd, 2020.

The margin of error at a 95% confidence level is +/- 2.2%.

BENCHMARKING

For this research we conducted secondary research and identified the benchmark at which a topic or action is generally considered a taboo is 20%, or one in five.

However, we understand that taboos do not always

affect everyone in the same way.

For us, if even one woman feels stigma or shame towards an issue, that’s one woman too many.

Our ambition is to shine a light on these important issues and to not stop until all taboos have been tackled.

The taboos that are strongly held by both women and men in Malaysia center on topics surrounding motherhood, period pain, and woman’s intimate area.

Additionally, taboos related to menopause also exist for about **a third** of Malaysian women and men.

THE TOP TABOOS THAT MEN & WOMEN EQUALLY PERPETUATE:



NOTES:

Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?
Q: Indicate your level of agreement regarding current efforts in your country to improve perceptions of women’s intimate areas?

BASE:

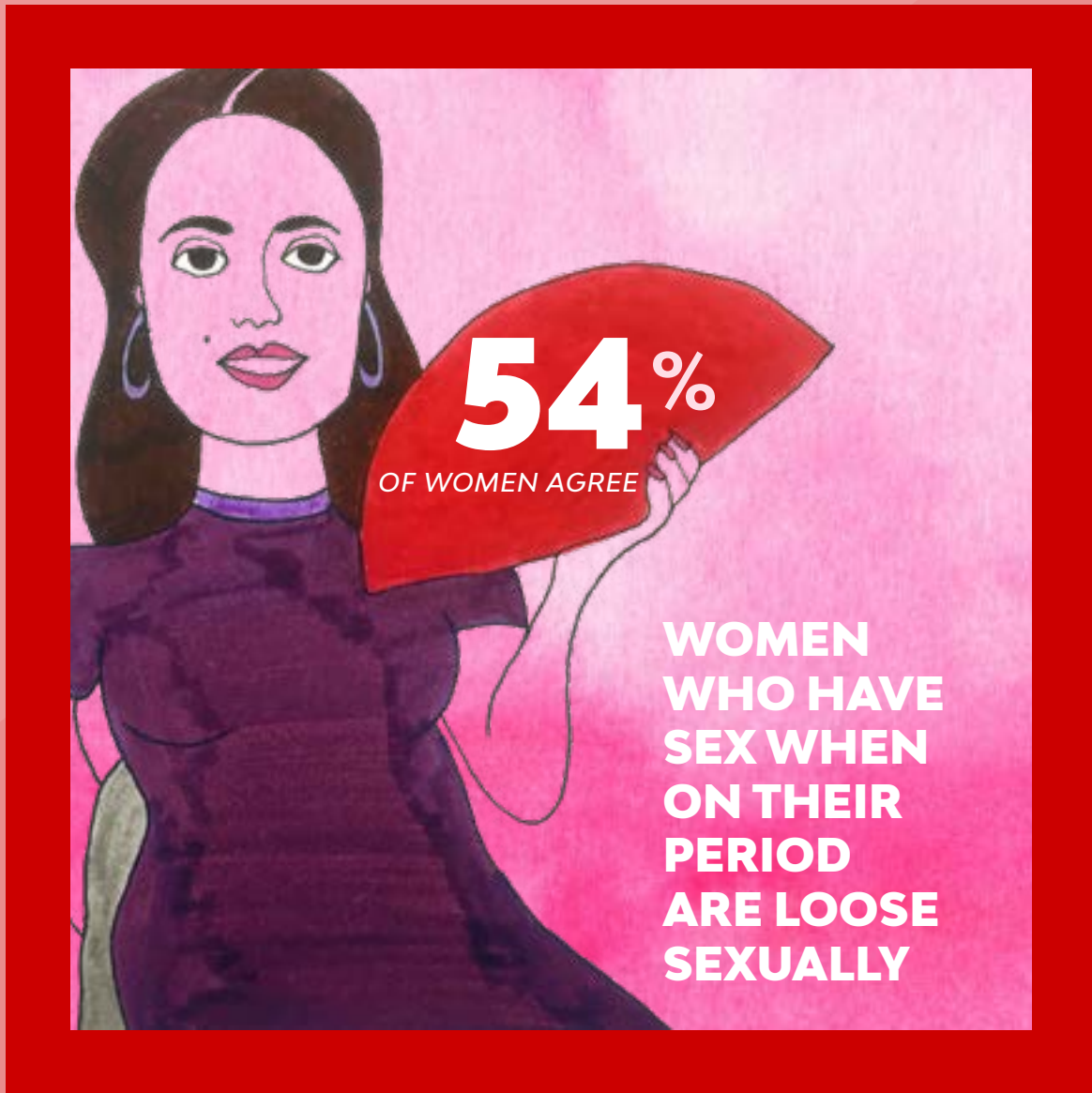
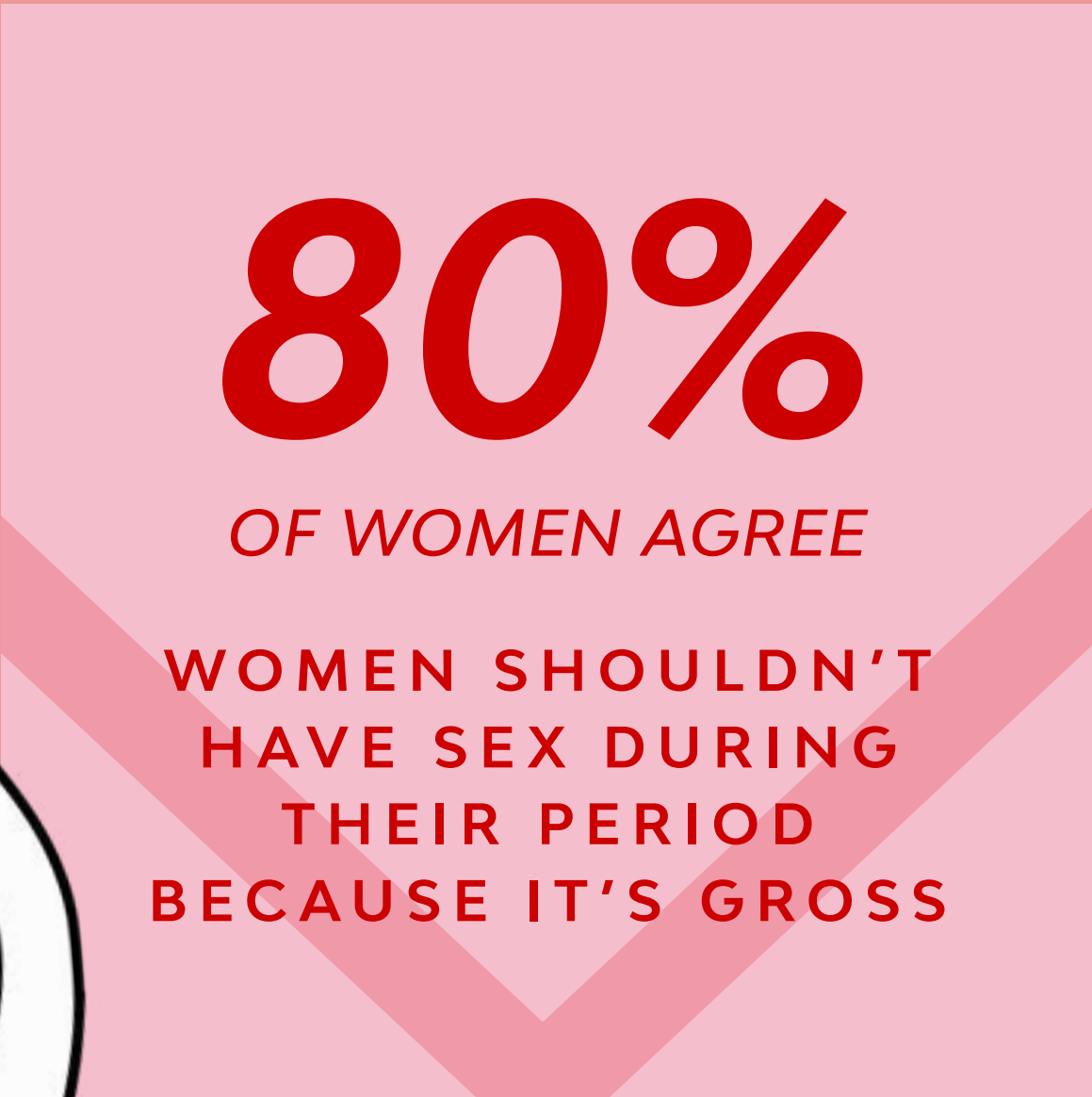
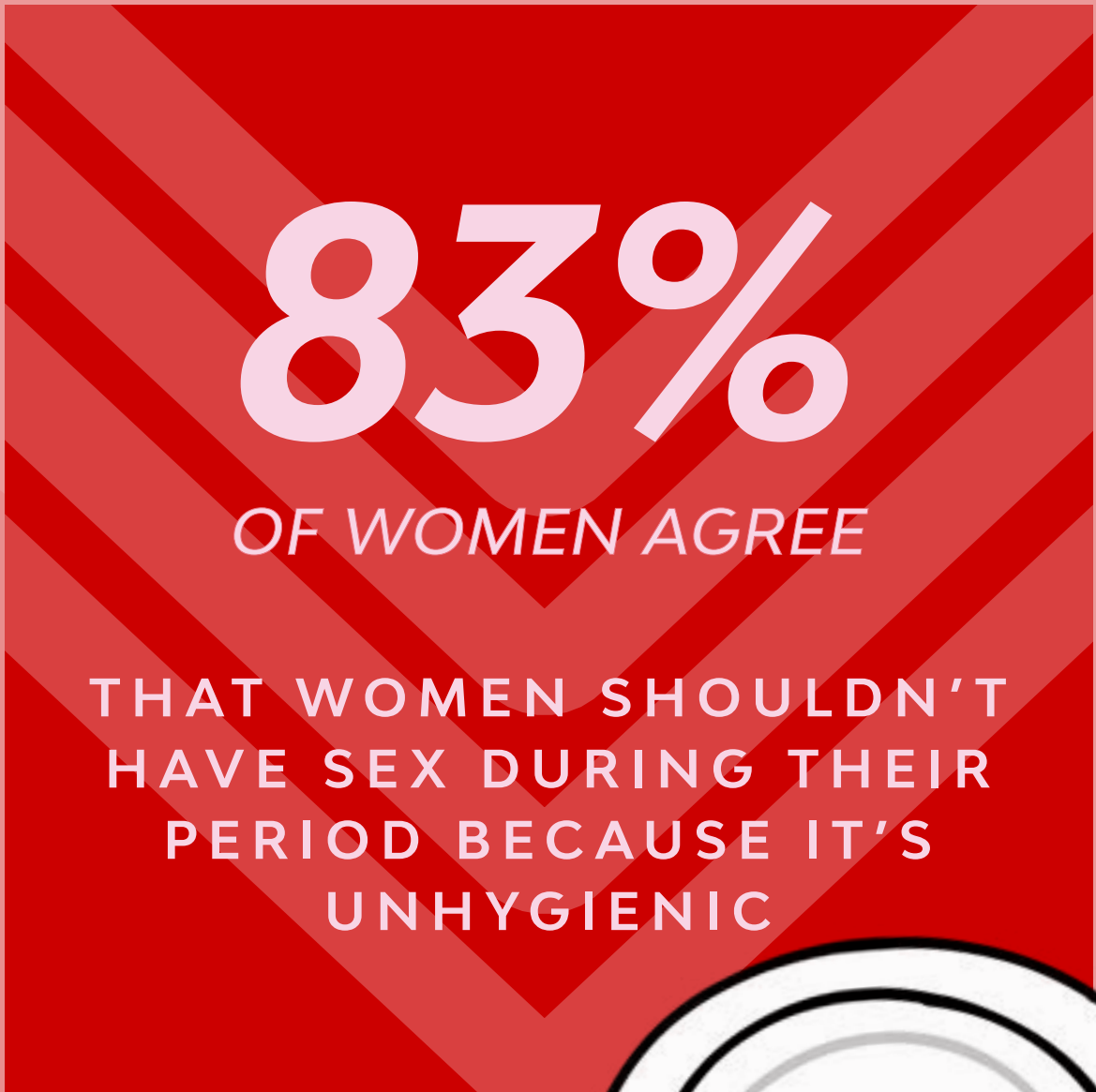
Malaysian women: n=989
Malaysian men: n=1,015

In an ideal world, women and men would both abandon societal conventions about womanhood.

However, there are instances where Malaysian women continue to perpetuate taboos against themselves, particularly surrounding menstruation and sex.

Although women hold these taboos, men also continue to perpetuate these stigmas.

THE TOP TABOOS THAT **WOMEN** ARE FUELING:



NOTES:

Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree

Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

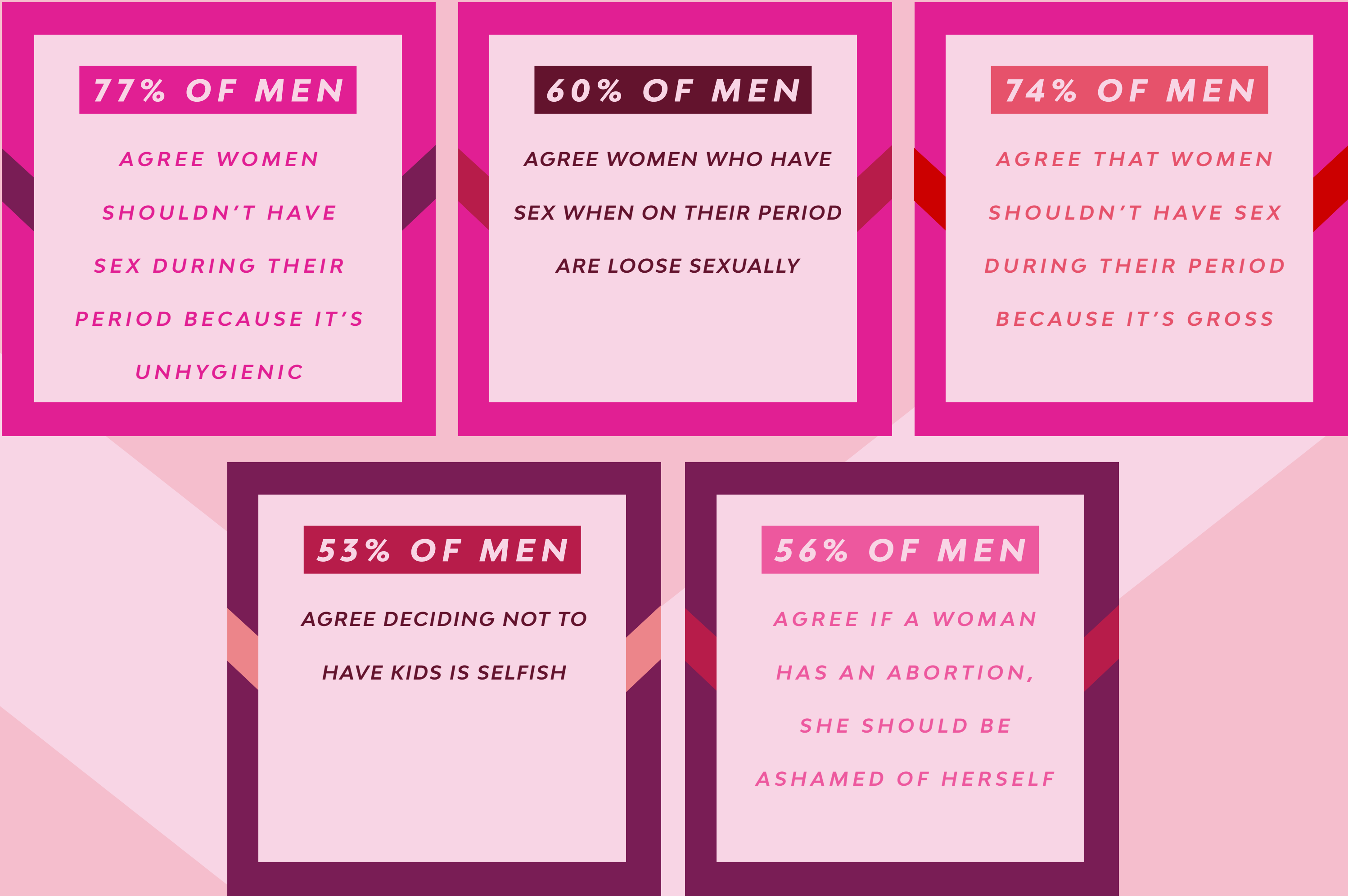
BASE:

Malaysian women: n=989

In an ideal world, women and men would both abandon societal conventions about womanhood.

There are several instances where Malaysian men hold these stigmatising views. Motherhood and the topic of sex during menstruation are in the **top five taboos** that men perpetuate against women.

THE TOP TABOOS THAT **MEN** ARE FUELING:



NOTES:
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

BASE:
Malaysian men: n=1,015

Speaking about a woman’s intimate area and menstruation causes embarrassment for a large proportion of Malaysian women.

Moreover, **a third** of Malaysian women report feelings of shame related to their intimate area.

THE TOP TABOOS AMONG **WOMEN** RELATED TO THEIR INTIMATE AREA:

50%
OF WOMEN

say it is embarrassing for a woman to talk openly about her intimate area



35%
OF WOMEN

say they’ve felt the need to apologise for the way their intimate area looks or smells when being with a partner



31%
OF WOMEN

say it is embarrassing for a woman to talk about their period/ menstruation openly



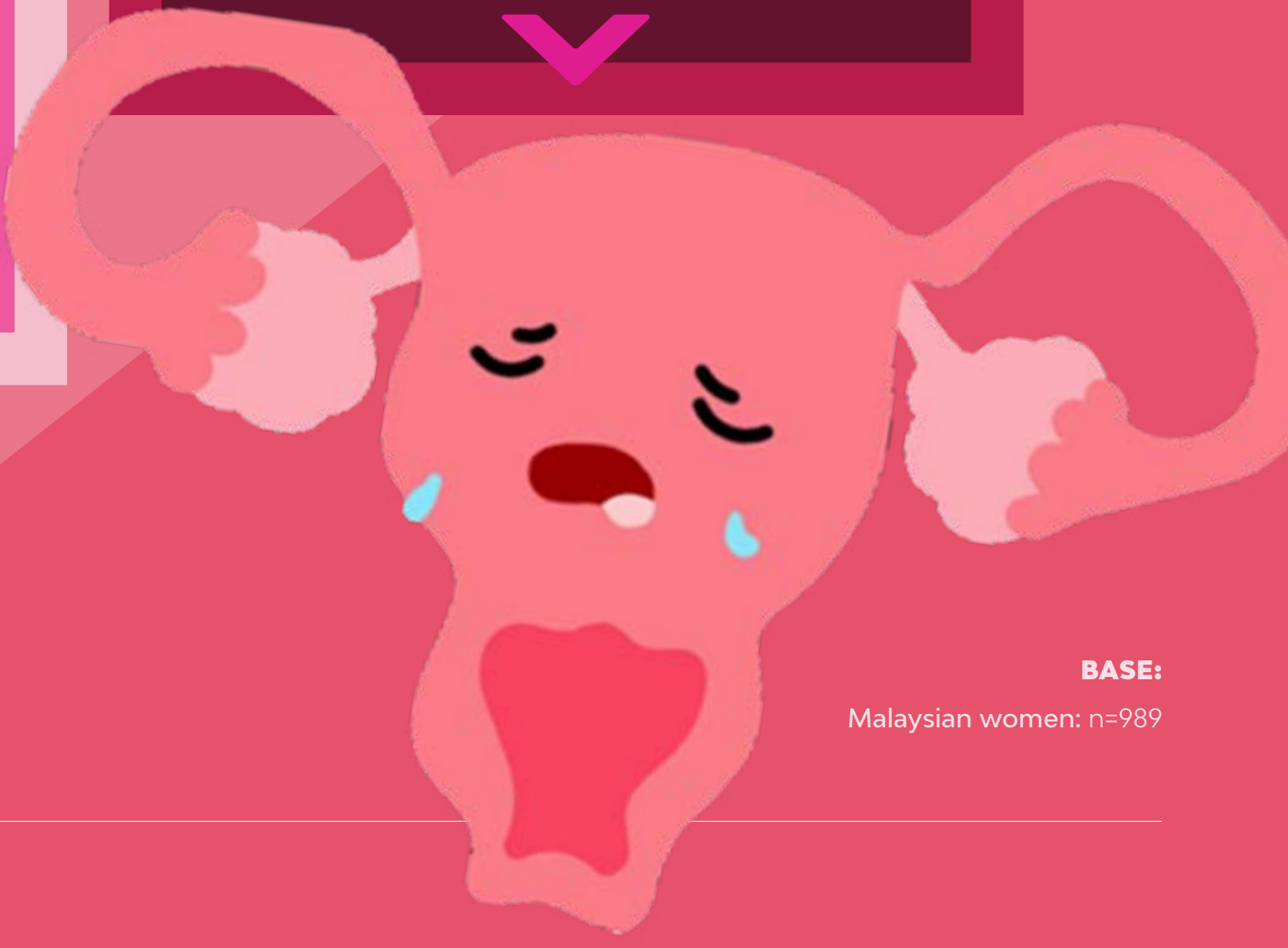
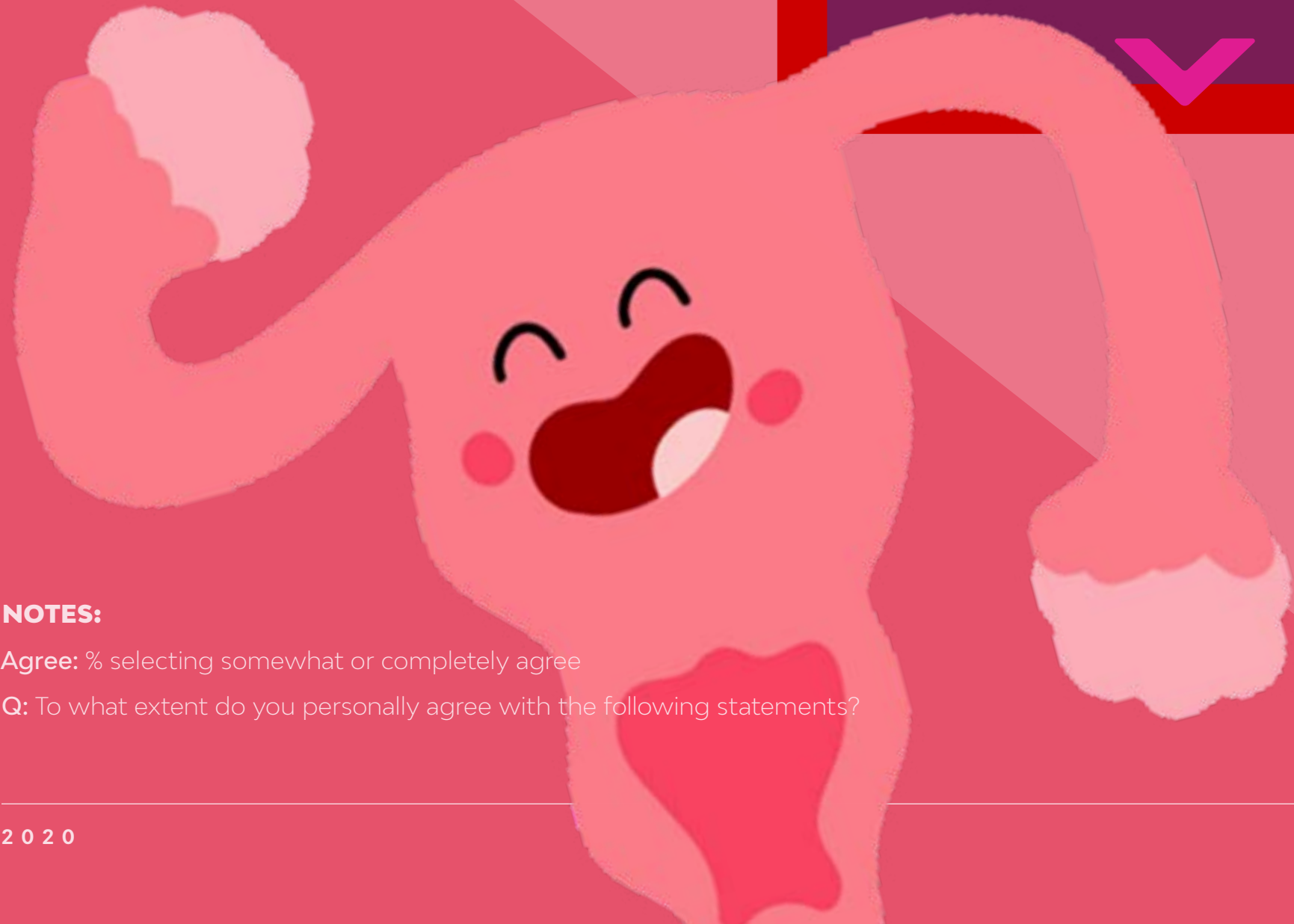
NOTES:

Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree

Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

BASE:

Malaysian women: n=989



TWO IN FIVE MALAYSIAN WOMEN SAY THEY HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED THEIR SEXUAL PLEASURE WITH ANYONE

There are some areas of a woman’s physical and emotional wellbeing that she doesn’t share with anyone.

Two in five Malaysian women have never discussed their own sexual pleasure and over **a quarter** have never discussed their intimate area, more so than money/salary.

THE TOPICS WOMEN SAY THEY HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED WITH ANYONE



NOTES:
Q: Which of these have you ever discussed with...
BASE:
Malaysian women: n=989

TWO IN FIVE MALAYSIAN MEN HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED MENSTRUATION WITH ANYONE, MORE THAN THEIR OWN MENTAL HEALTH

There are some topics men do not share with anyone.

Two in five Malaysian men have never discussed menstruation with anyone, even more so than their mental health or having children.

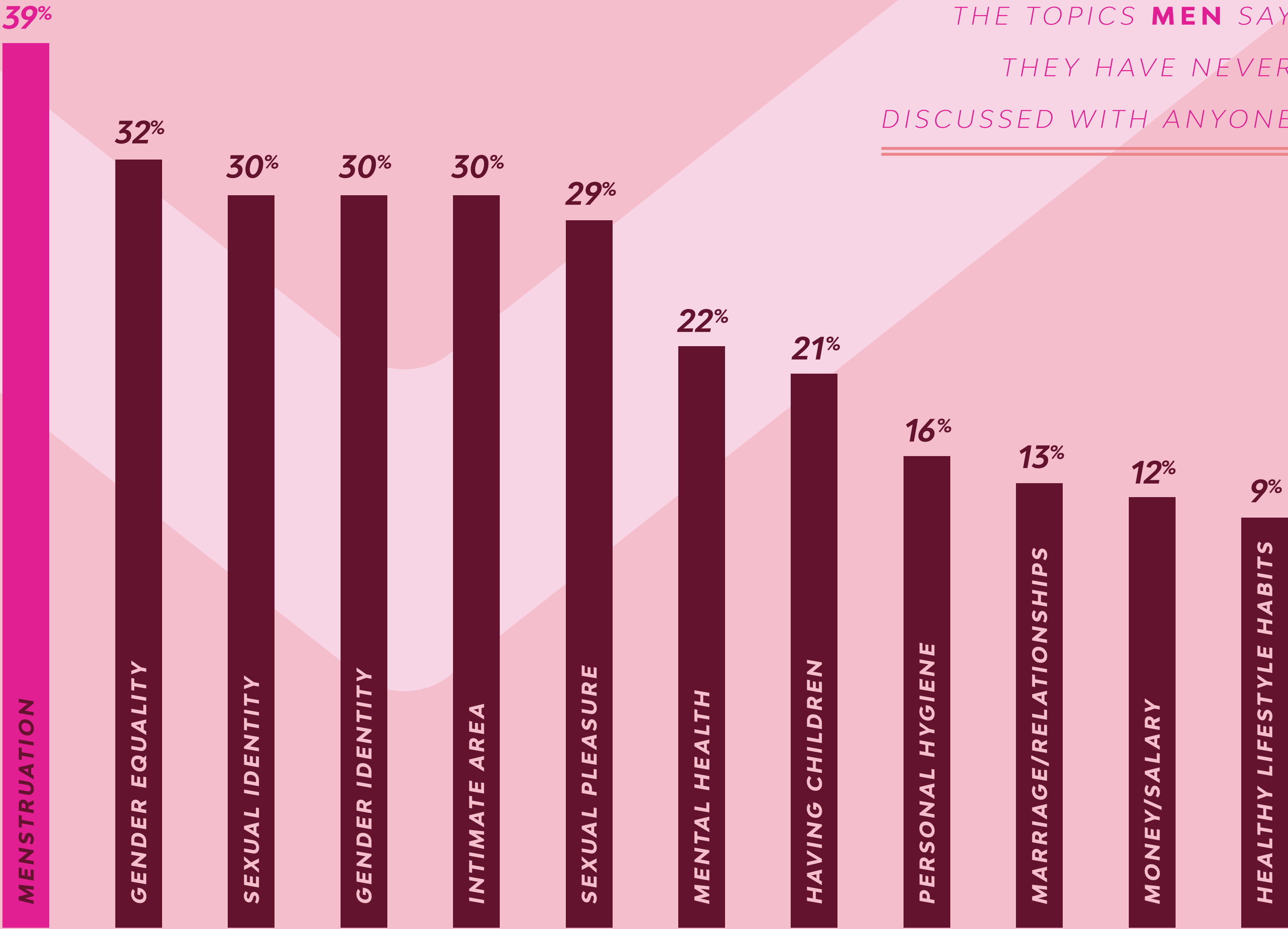
THE TOPICS **MEN** SAY
THEY HAVE NEVER
DISCUSSED WITH ANYONE

NOTES:

Q: Which of these have you ever discussed with...

BASE:

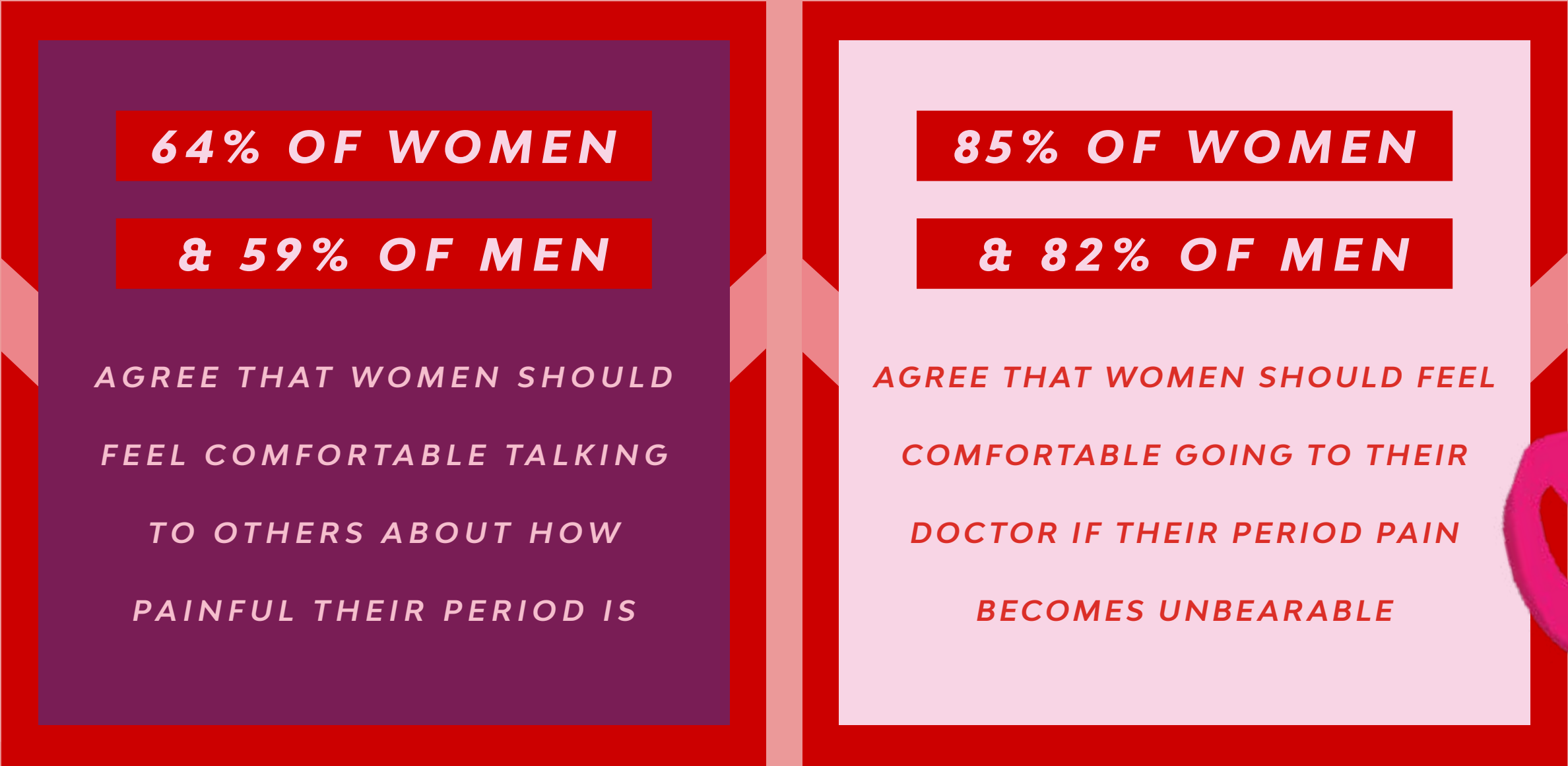
Malaysian men: n=1,015



Despite most Malaysian women and men saying that women should feel comfortable discussing period pain with others, this topic remains so taboo that only **a third** say they have discussed menstruation with their partner.

Likewise, only **a third** of women say they have talked about their intimate area with their partner, and only **46%** have discussed sexual pleasure with their partner.

ATTITUDES TO PERIOD PAIN:



KEY TOPICS **WOMEN** SAY THEY HAVE DISCUSSED WITH THEIR PARTNER/SPOUSE:



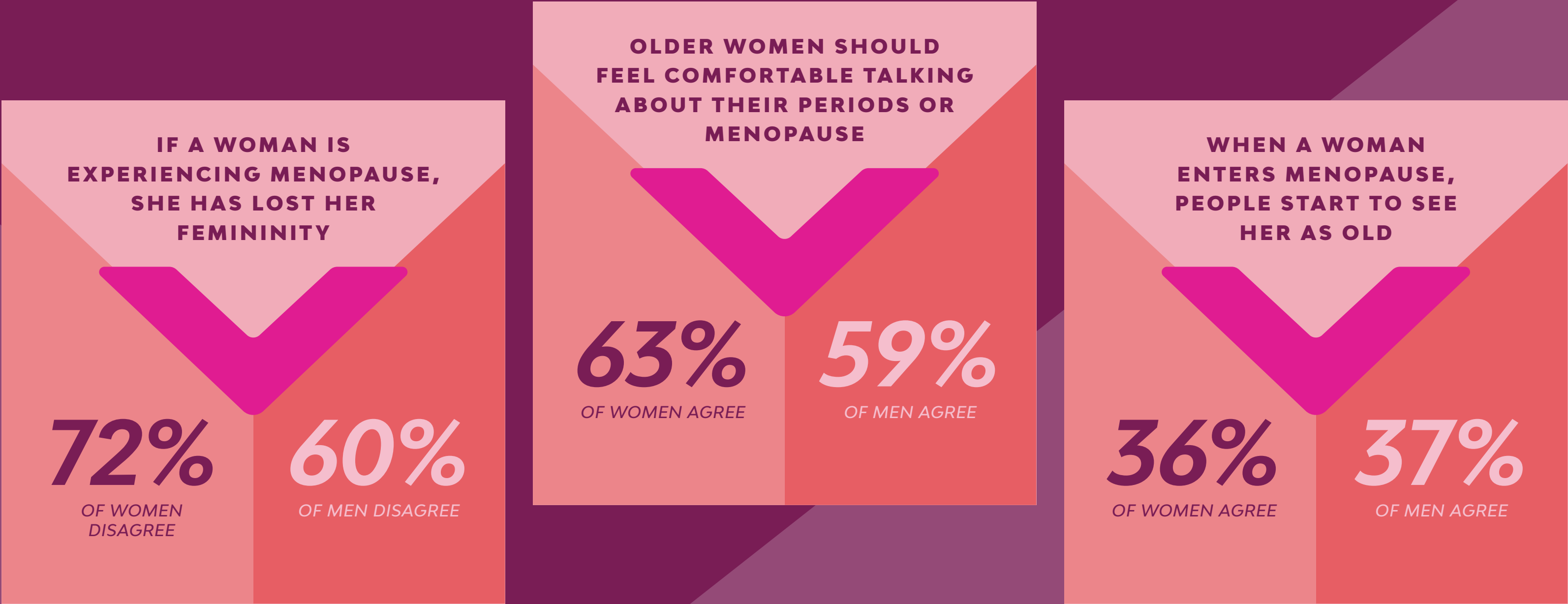
NOTES:
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?
Q: Which of these have you ever discussed with...

BASE:
Malaysian women: n=989
Malaysian men: n=1,015

In Malaysia, taboos around menopause and ageing are slightly stronger than their counterparts in the other countries surveyed.

This showcases men and women in Malaysia generally have less positive views toward older women, though women more often show more positive attitudes towards older women than men.

OVER A THIRD OF MALAYSIAN WOMEN BELIEVE THAT SOCIETY SEES WOMEN WHO HAVE ENTERED MENOPAUSE AS OLD

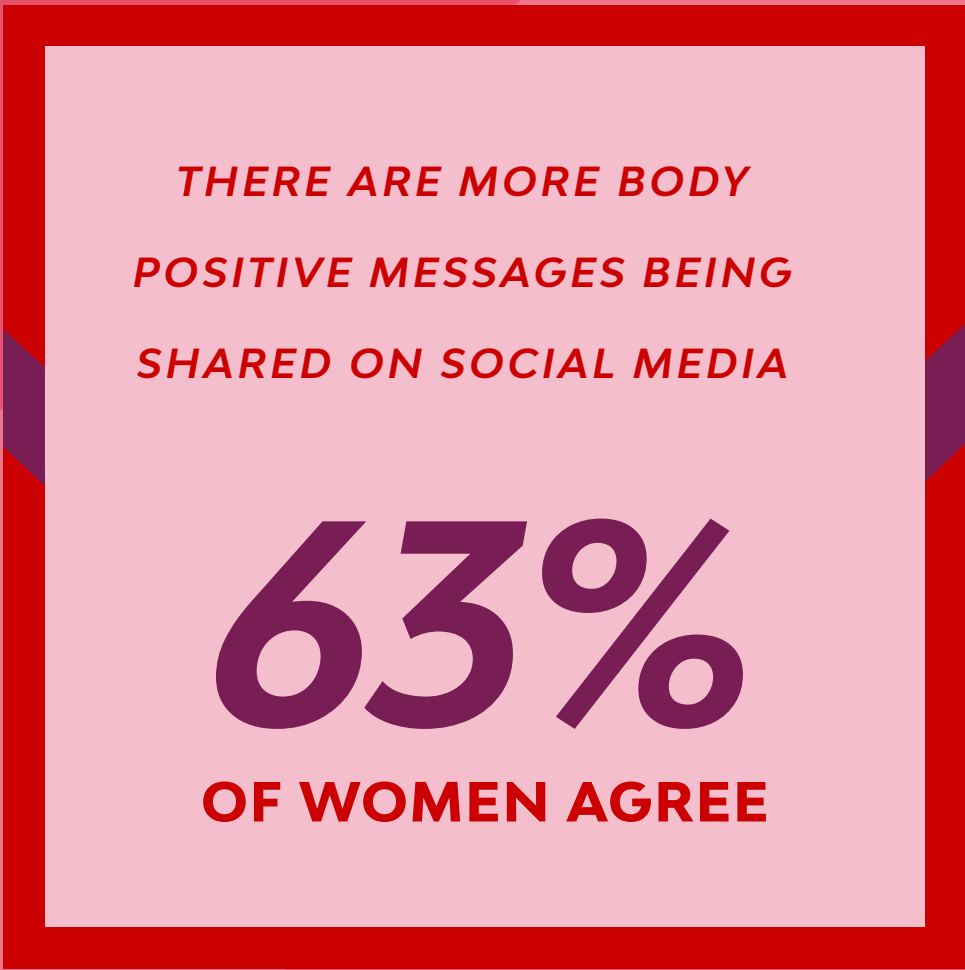
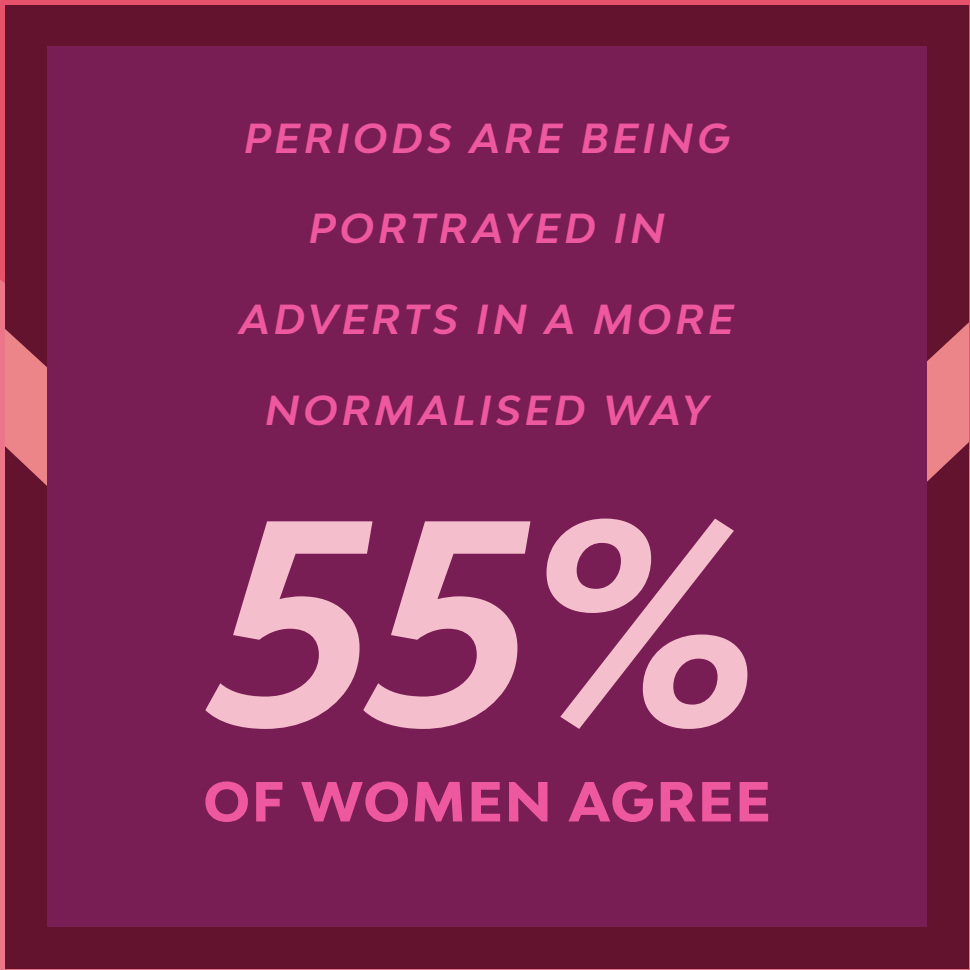


NOTES:
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

BASE:
Malaysian women: n=989
Malaysian men: n=1,015

Malaysian women face taboos every day.

However, the current landscape showcases areas of hope and progress as Malaysian women are embracing themselves and seeing body positivity and acceptance come into focus culturally.



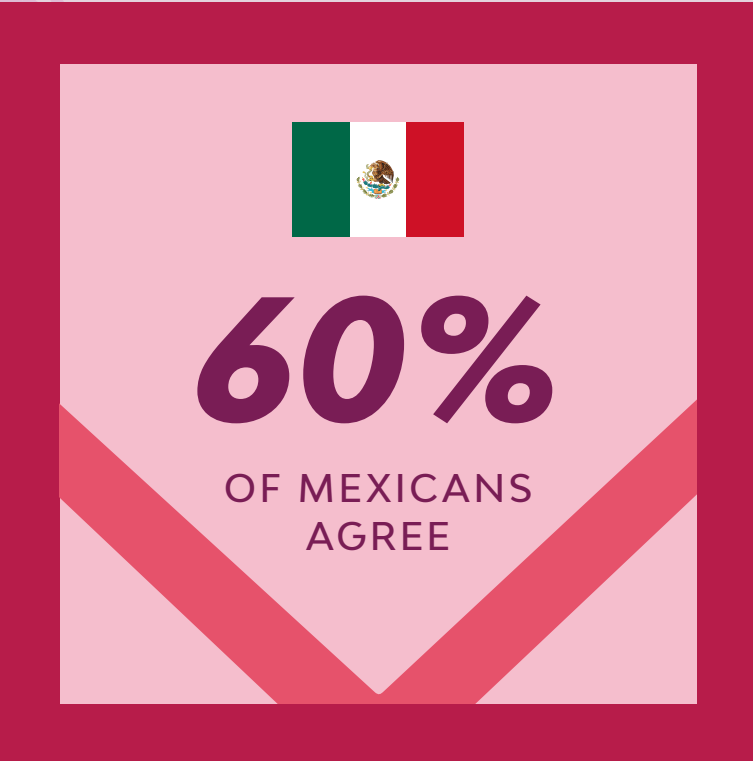
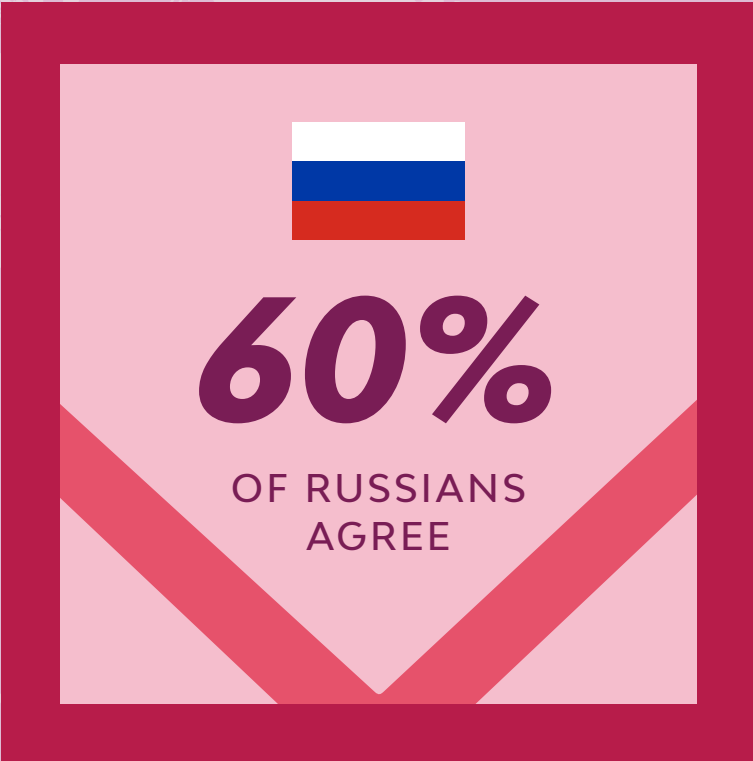
NOTES:
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?
Q: Are attitudes about women’s intimate areas becoming more or less positive in your country?
Q: Indicate your level of agreement regarding current efforts in your country to improve perceptions of women’s intimate areas?

BASE:
Malaysian women: n=989

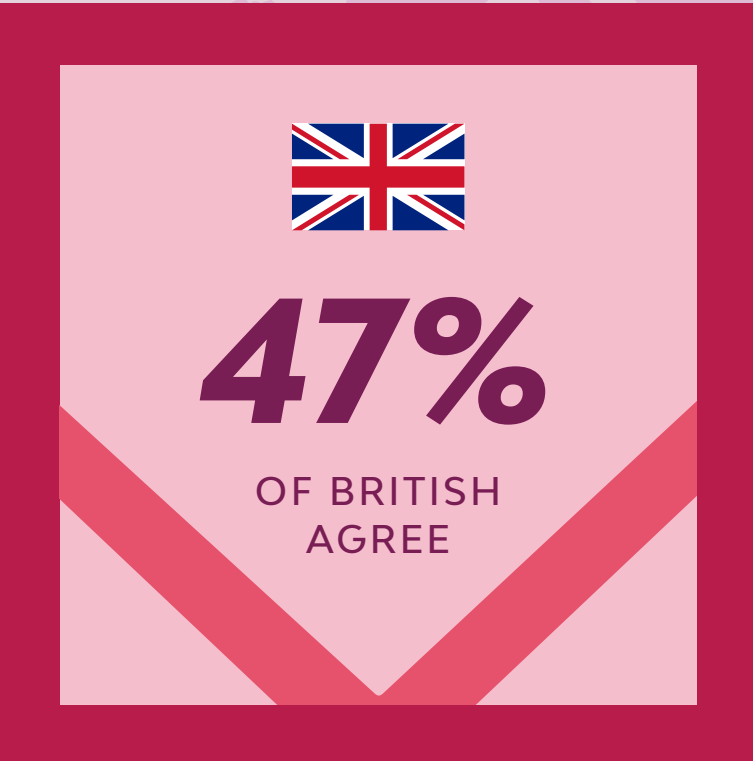
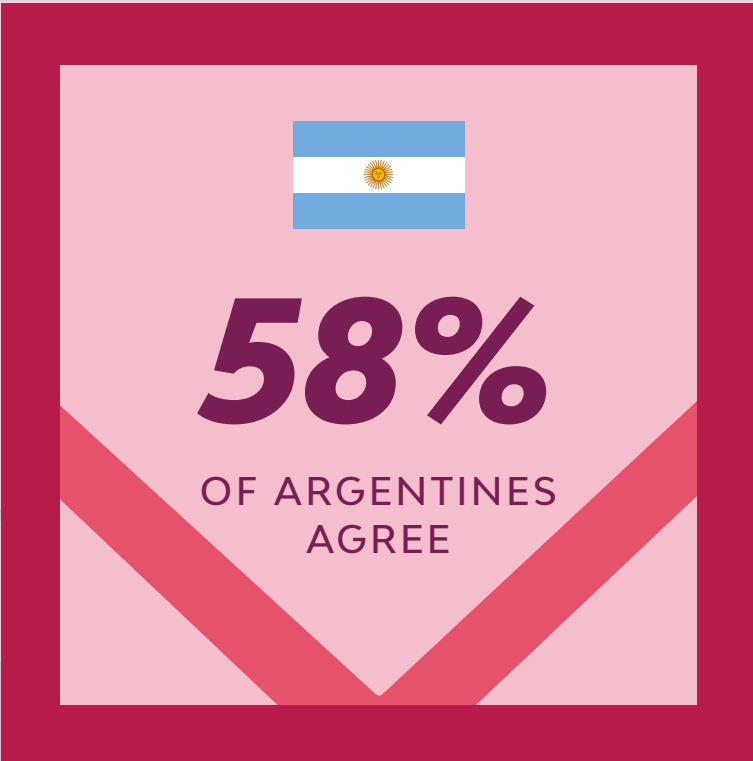
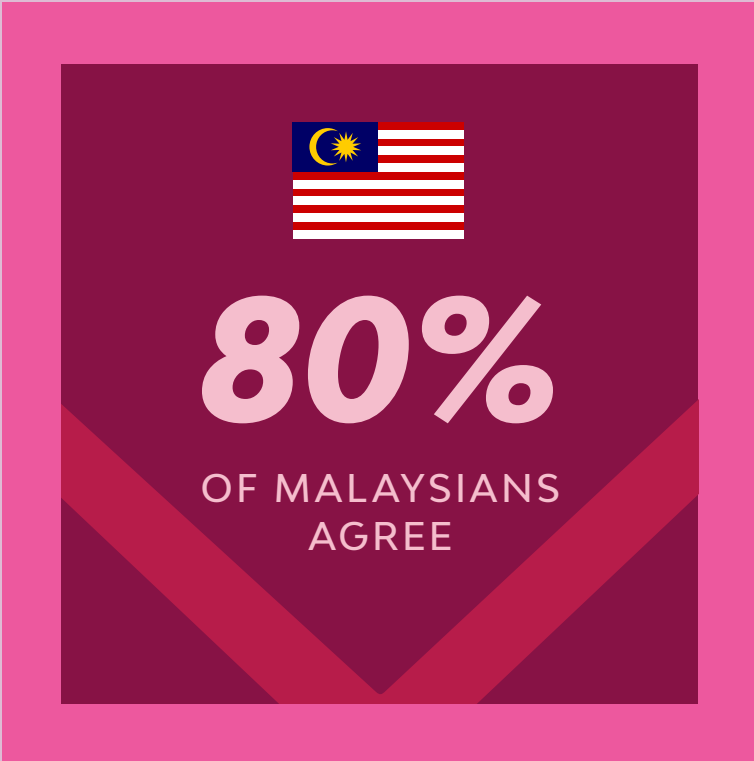
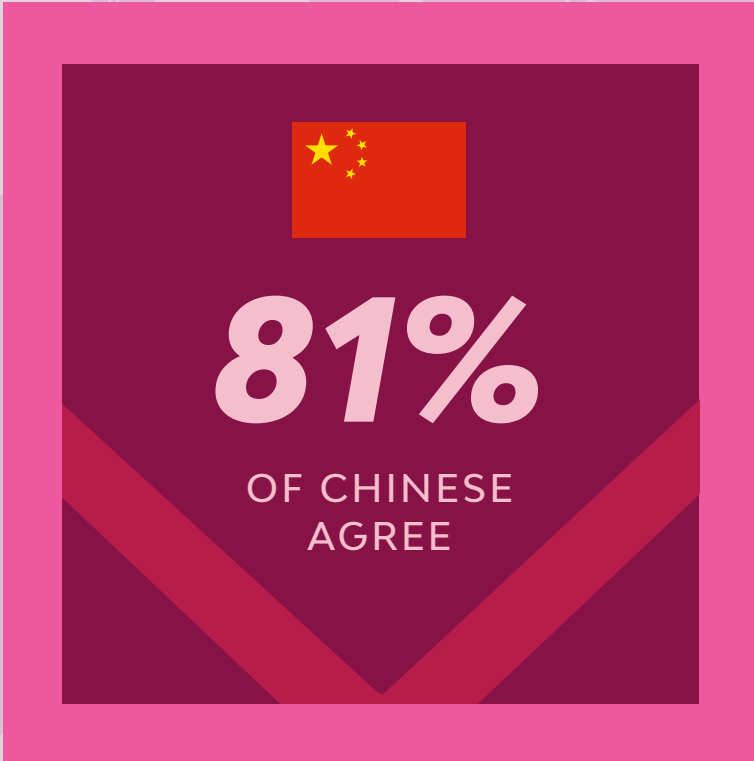
MARKET COMPARISONS

Latin American markets and portions of European markets are more likely to hold taboos regarding period pain, while Asian markets are more likely to hold prejudice toward period sex, deeming it unhygienic.

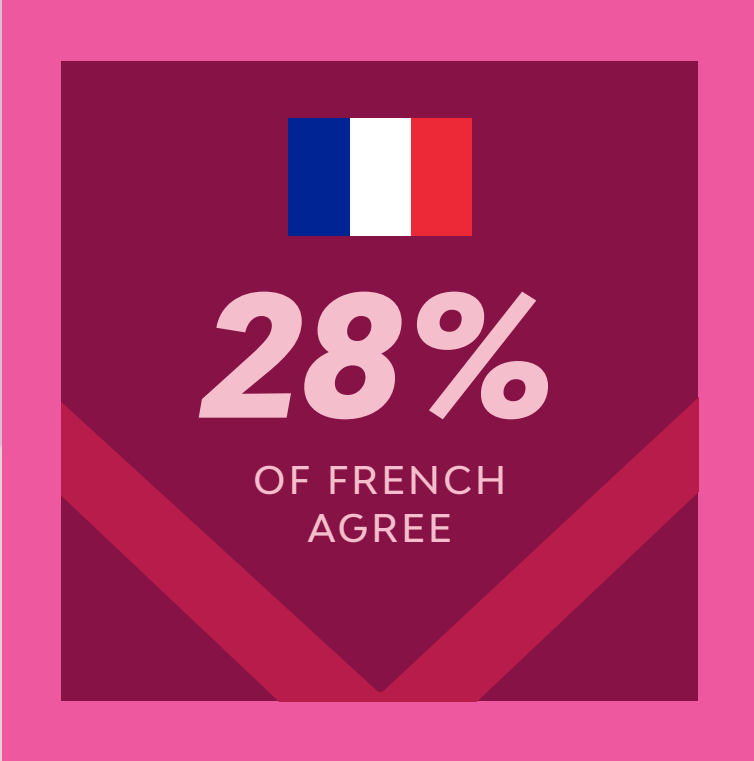
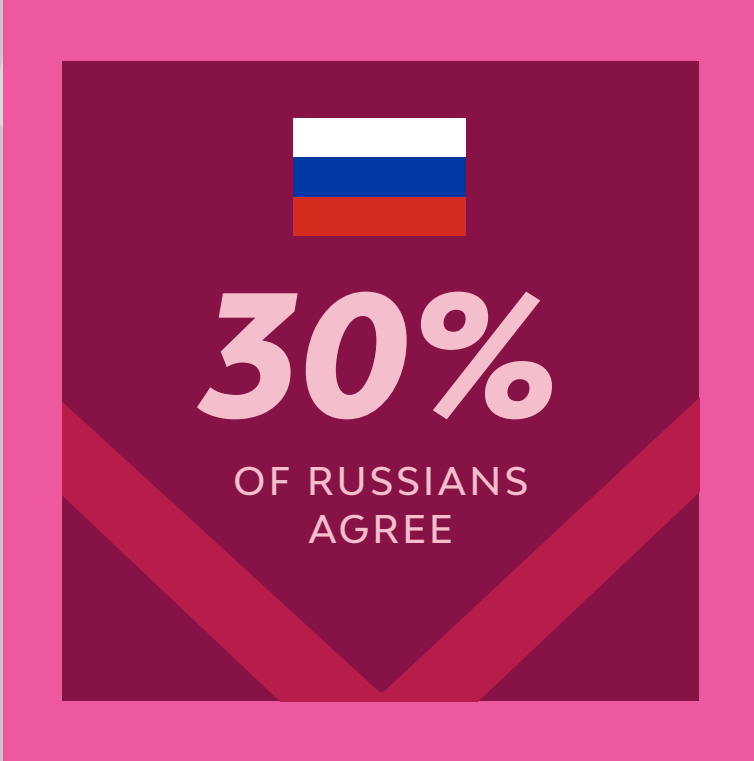
52% GLOBALLY
SAY THAT PERIOD PAIN IS JUST SOMETHING
WOMEN HAVE TO DEAL WITH



53% GLOBALLY
SAY THAT WOMEN SHOULDN'T HAVE SEX DURING
THEIR PERIOD BECAUSE IT'S UNHYGIENIC



24% GLOBALLY
SAY THEY'VE NEVER DISCUSSED
MENSTRUATION WITH ANYONE



NOTES:

Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree

Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements on period pain?

Q: Which of these you have ever discussed with...?

BASE:

Total (men and women): n=14,089

Total Argentina (men and women): 2,017

Total China (men and women): 2,002

Total France (men and women): 2,006

Total Malaysia (men and women): 2,004

Total Mexico (men and women): 2,002

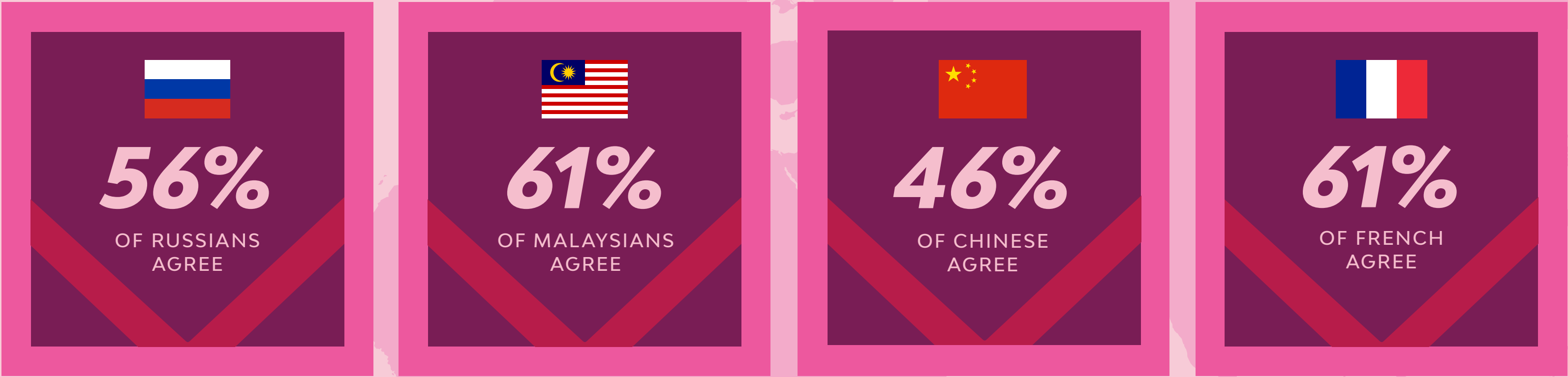
Total UK (men and women): 2,003

Total Russia (men and women): 2,055

Latin American markets and the UK are more accepting of older women speaking openly about their period or menopause.



64% GLOBALLY AGREE
THAT OLDER WOMEN SHOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT THEIR PERIODS OR MENOPAUSE



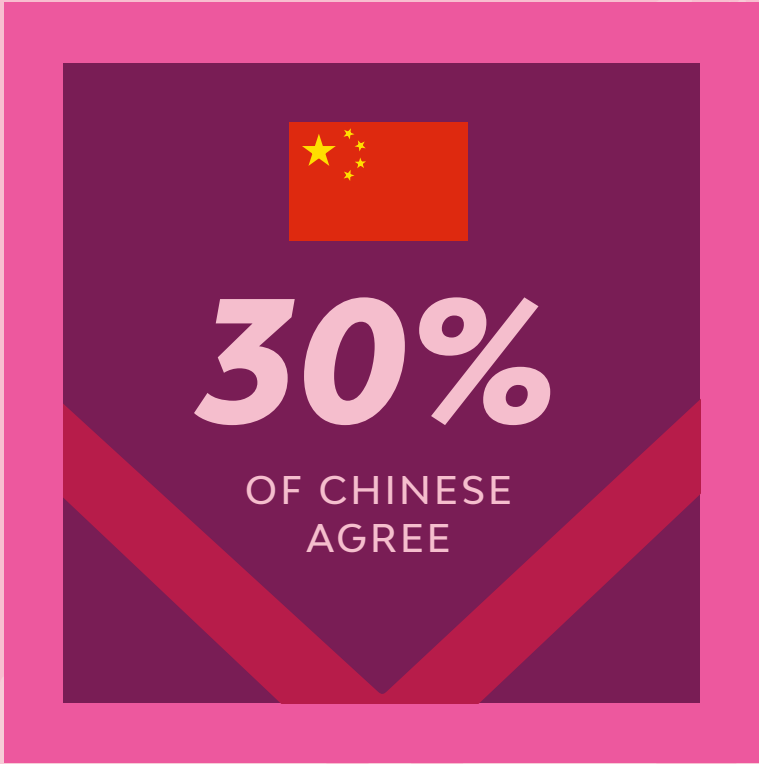
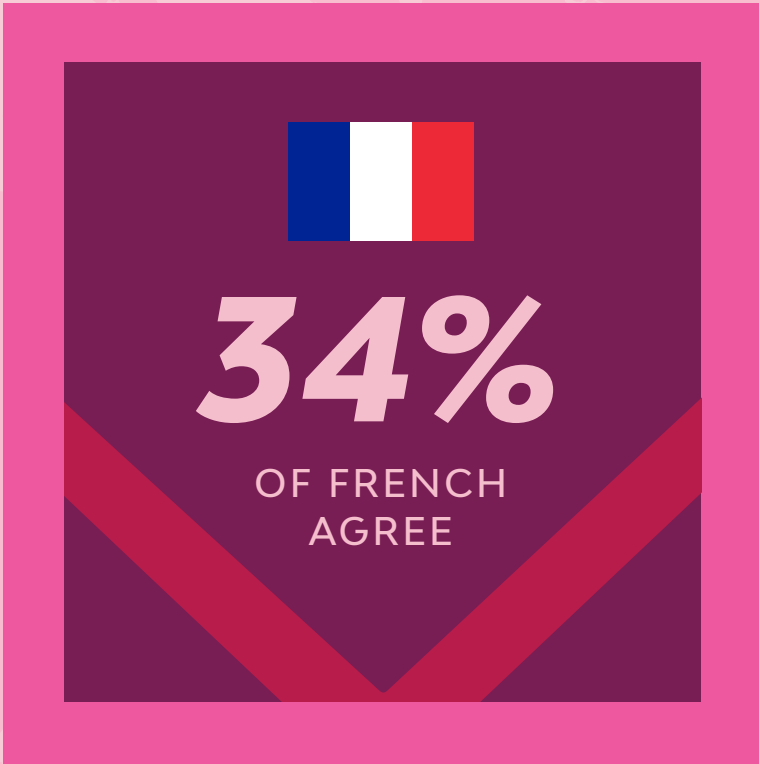
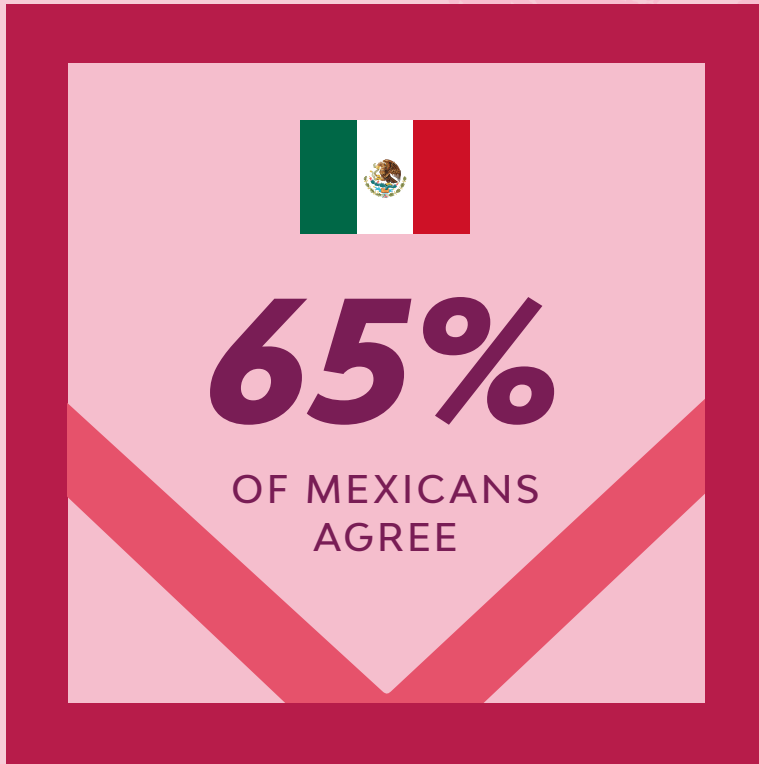
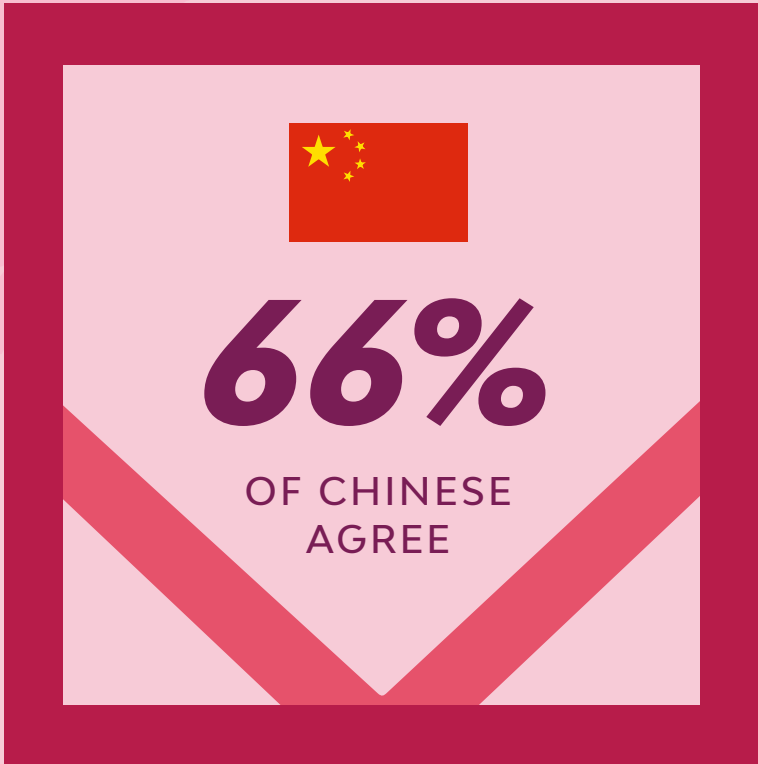
NOTES:
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

BASE:

- Total (men and women): n = 14,089
- Total Argentina (men and women): 2,017
- Total China (men and women): 2,002
- Total France (men and women): 2,006
- Total Malaysia (men and women): 2,004
- Total Mexico (men and women): 2,002
- Total UK (men and women): 2,003
- Total Russia (men and women): 2,055

European markets keep silent about their intimate area while shame and prejudice is driven by Latin American and Asian markets.

51% *globally*
globally that it is embarrassing for women
to talk about their intimate area openly




NOTES:

Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?
Q: Which of these have you ever discussed with...

BASE:

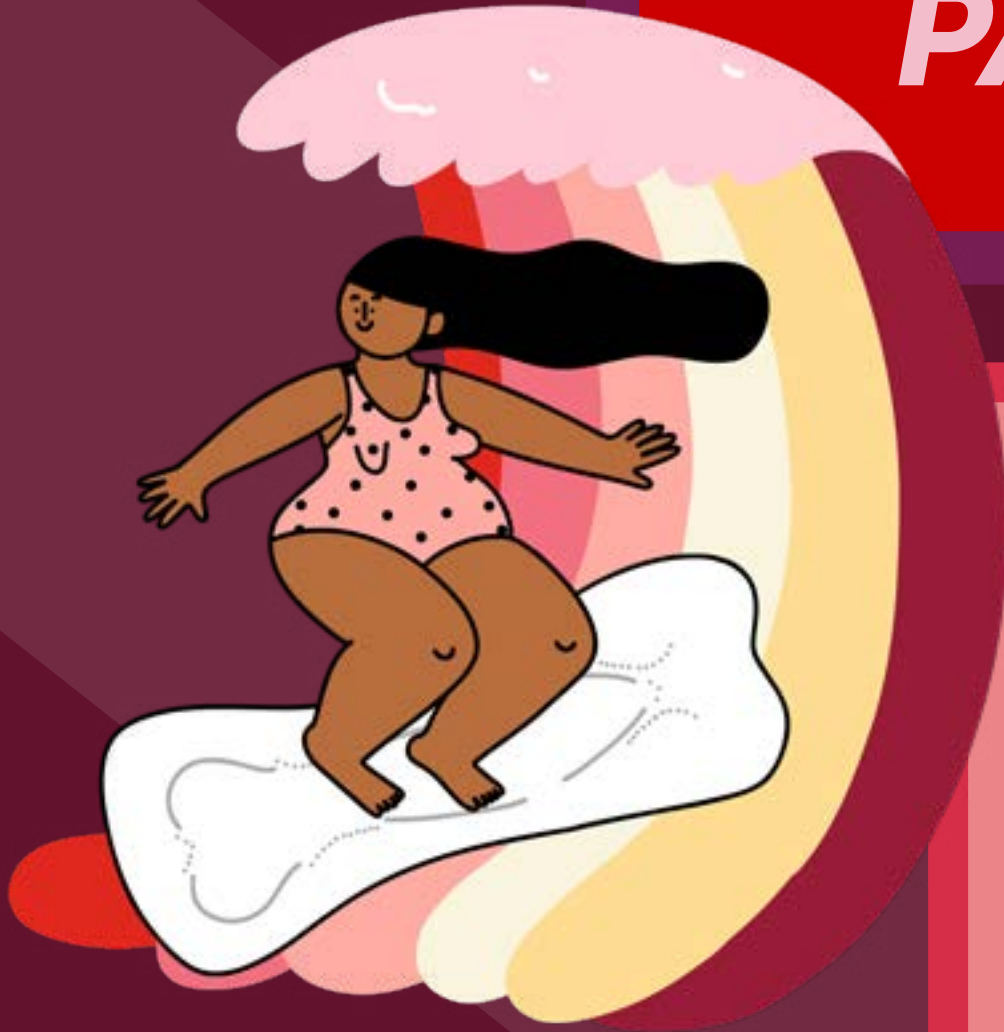
Total (men and women): n=14,089
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Total Malaysia (men and women): 2,004
Total Mexico (men and women): 2,002
Total UK (men and women): 2,003
Total Russia (men and women): 2,055



KEY TABOOS BY THEMES FROM THE GVTT

The Malaysian findings of the Global V Taboo Tracker found five key topics that drove taboos surrounding the V-Zone.



***PERIODS
AND
PERIOD
PAIN***

***FERTILITY
AND
CHOICE***

***FEMALE
PLEASURE***

***VULVA
AND
VAGINA***

***AGEING
AND
MENOPAUSE***



Men hold the taboo / prejudice more strongly



Women hold or suffer from the taboo / prejudice more strongly

Although periods are a part of Malaysian women’s lived experience, **less than half** women asked have discussed them with their partner.

Moreover, women experiencing period pain is an accepted reality for both women and men.



Men hold the taboo / prejudice more strongly

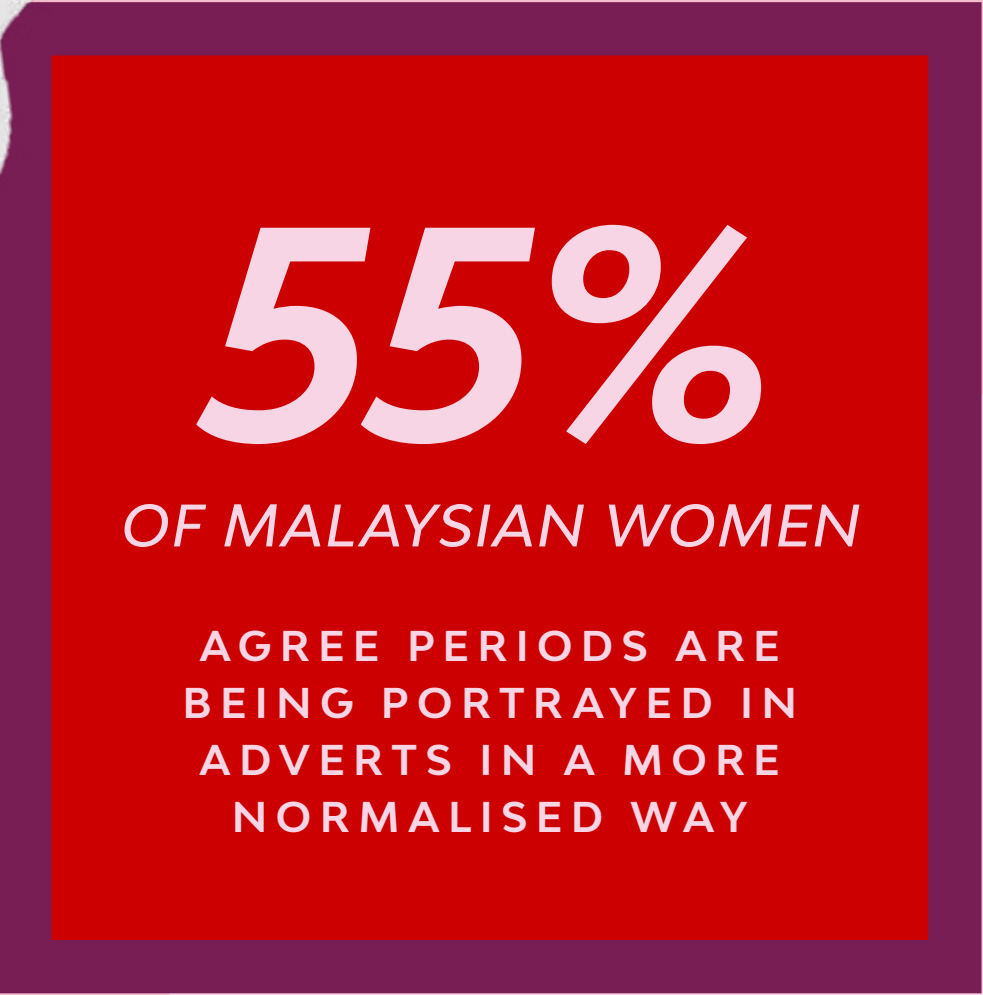


Women hold or suffer from the taboo / prejudice more strongly

- NOTES:**
- Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
 - Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?
 - Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements on period pain?
 - Q: Indicate your level of agreement regarding current efforts in your country to improve perceptions of women’s intimate areas?



PERIODS



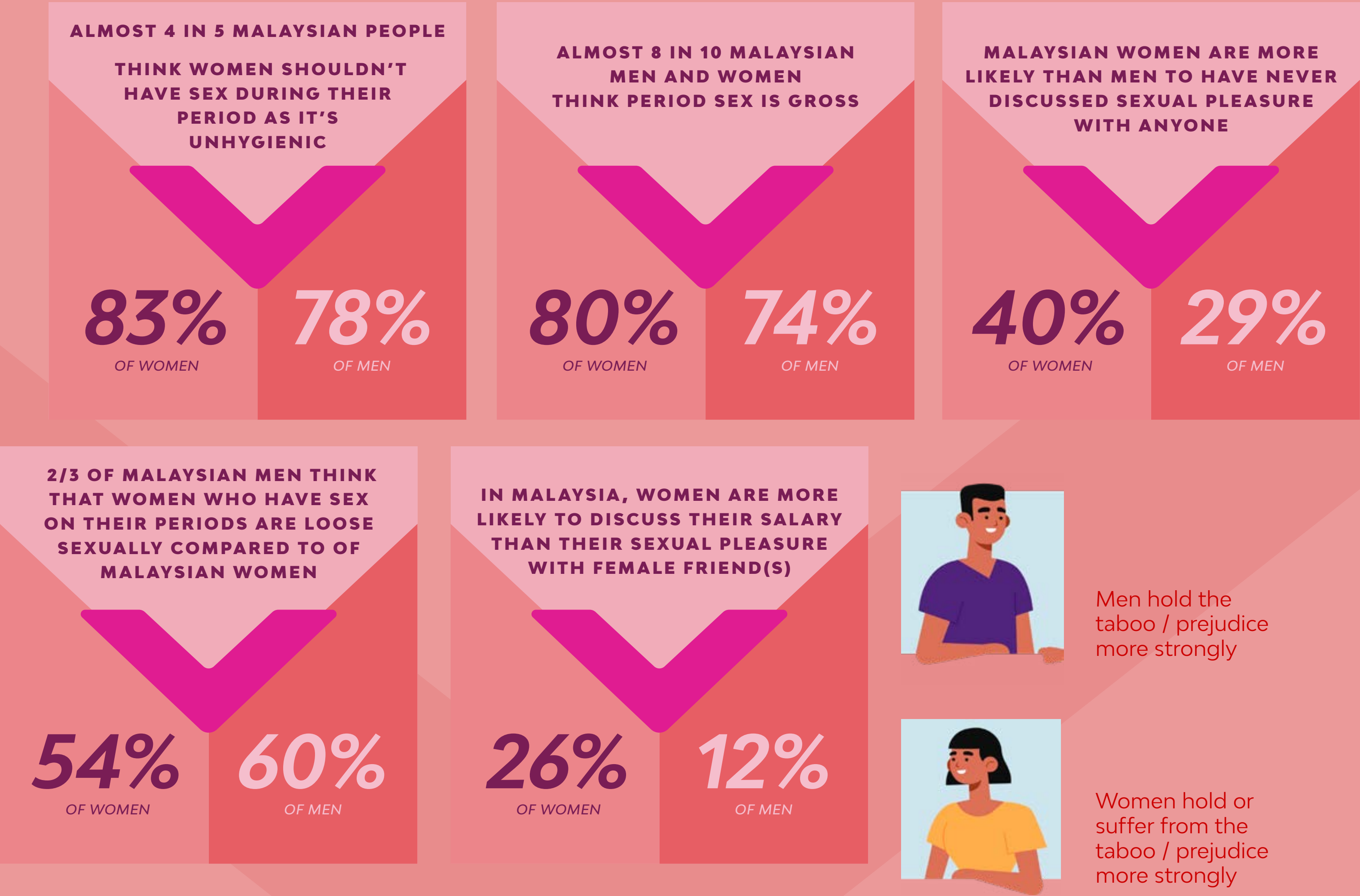
PERIOD PAIN



BASE:
Malaysian women: n=989
Malaysian men: n=1,015

Sexual pleasure is not widely discussed among Malaysian women.

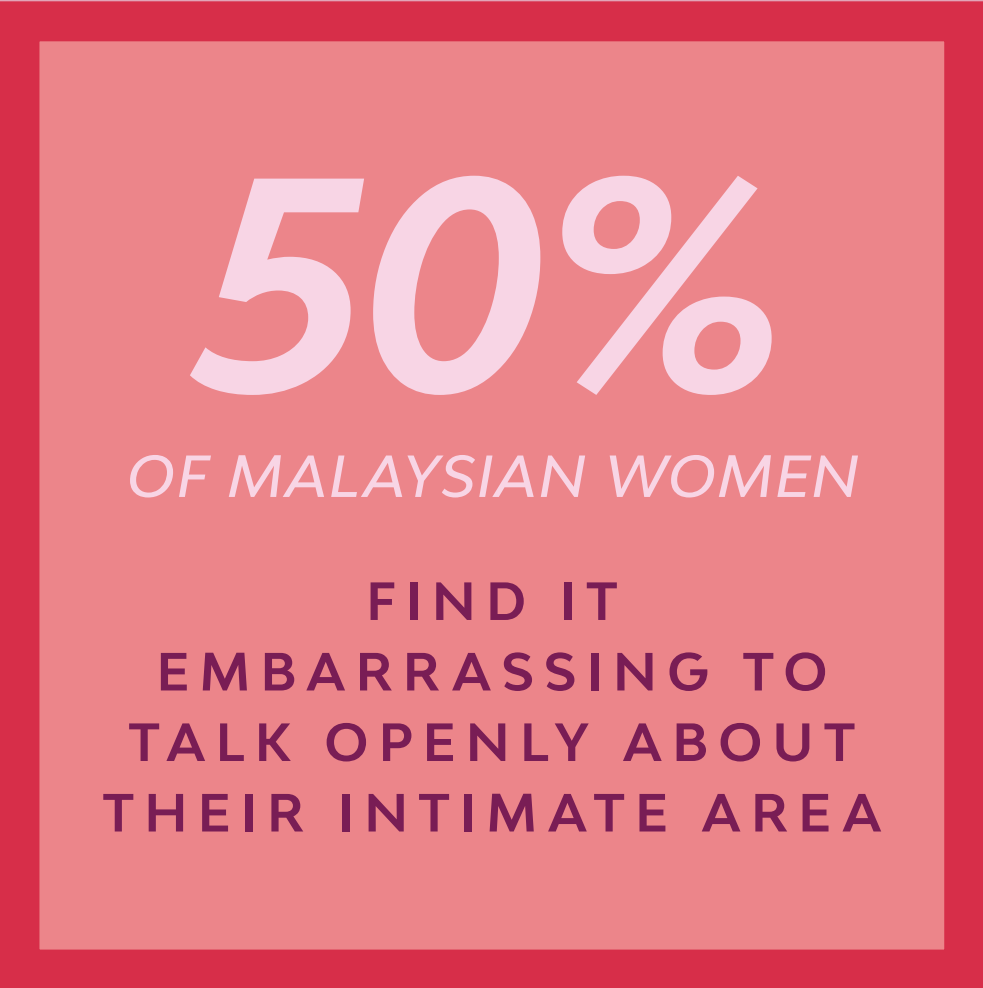
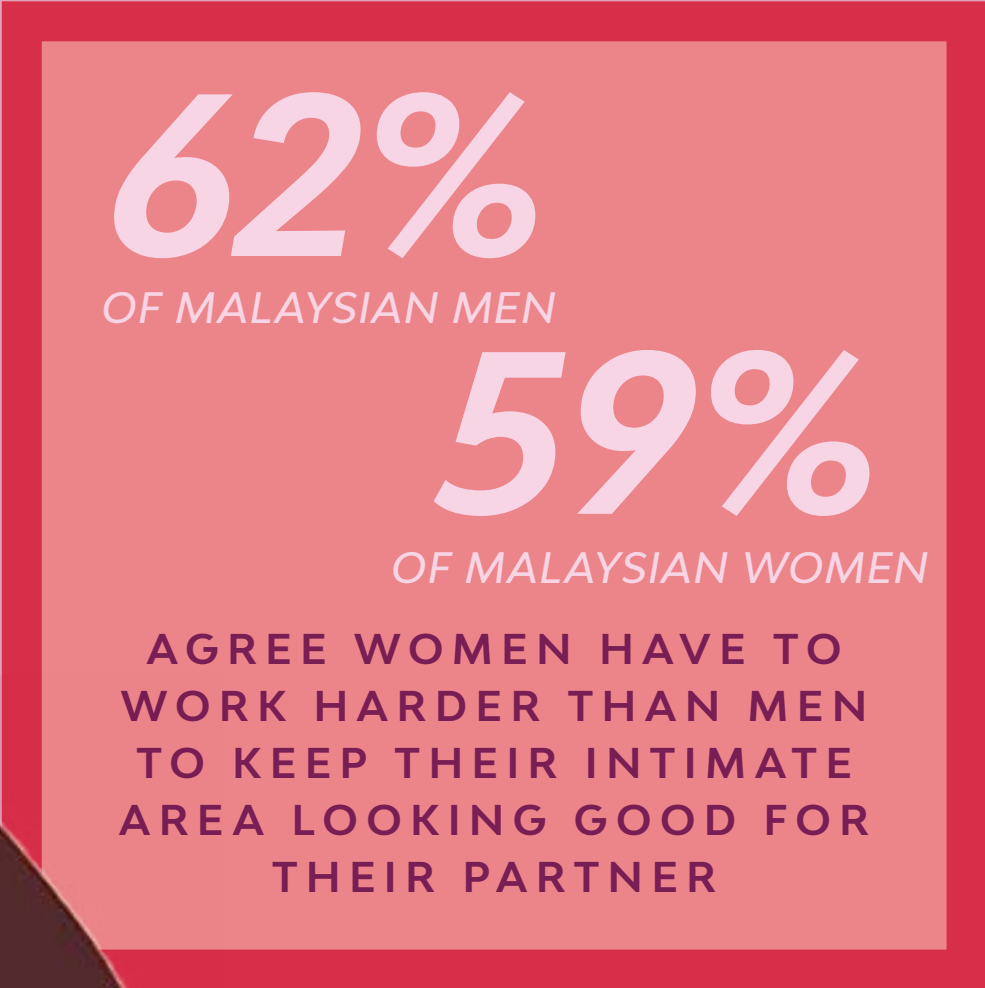
Additionally, both men and women perpetuate taboos about period sex and lack of hygiene.



NOTES:
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

BASE:
Malaysian women: n=989
Malaysian men: n=1,015

Malaysian women not only keep silent about their intimate area, but also feel pressure to maintain a certain image of it.



NOTES:
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?
Q: Which of these have you ever discussed with...

BASE:
Malaysian women: n=989
Malaysian men: n=1,015

Malaysian men hold more traditional views on choice and abortion and further perpetuate taboos surrounding motherhood and fertility.



FERTILITY

Nearly a third of men think that if a woman has had a miscarriage, she should not tell anyone beyond her partner

Around a third of Malaysian of men and women think that infertility should make women feel less like a woman

30%
OF WOMEN AGREE

33%
OF MEN AGREE

CHOICE

Nearly half of of Malaysian men think a woman deciding not to have children of her own is abnormal

Half of Malaysian men and women think that if a woman has an abortion, she should be ashamed of herself

53%
OF WOMEN AGREE

56%
OF MEN AGREE

Almost half of Malaysian men and women think deciding not to have kids is selfish

53%
OF WOMEN AGREE

45%
OF MEN AGREE

Still, people in Malaysia don't think a woman should be able to decide for themselves if they want to terminate their own pregnancy

44%
OF WOMEN AGREE

48%
OF MEN AGREE

NOTES:
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements on women's fertility?

BASE:
Malaysian women: n=989
Malaysian men: n=1,015

There is more acceptance surrounding ageing and menopause taboos in Malaysia. However, a large proportion of women still feel societal prejudice related to ageing and menopause.

36% OF WOMEN

**& 37% OF MEN
AGREE**

**WHEN A WOMAN ENTERS
MENOPAUSE, PEOPLE START
TO SEE HER AS “OLD”**

NOTES:

Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

BASE:

Malaysian women: n=989
Malaysian men: n=1,015

THANK YOU

