

# GLOBAL V TABOO TRACKER

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.

The survey was fielded between January 15th, 2020 and January 23rd, 2020.

The margin of error at a 95% confidence level is +/- .83%.

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.



While **66%** of women say that periods are being portrayed in adverts in a more normalised way, they are just as likely as men to hold taboos surrounding menstruation.

Moreover, **a third** of women and men both believe vaginal discharge is gross and further perpetuate taboos surrounding women’s intimate area.

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:

All women: n=7,055  
All men: n=7,034

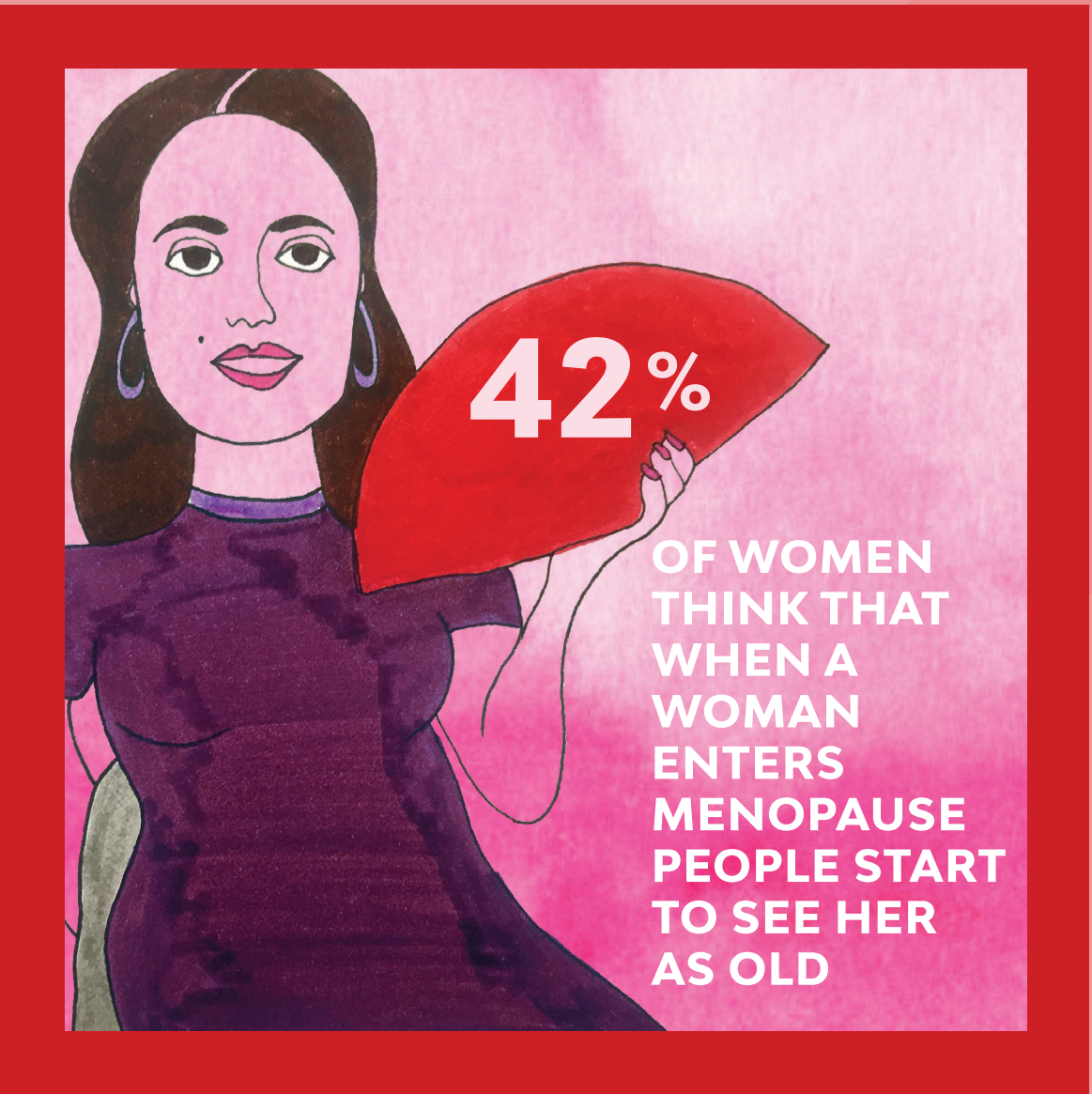
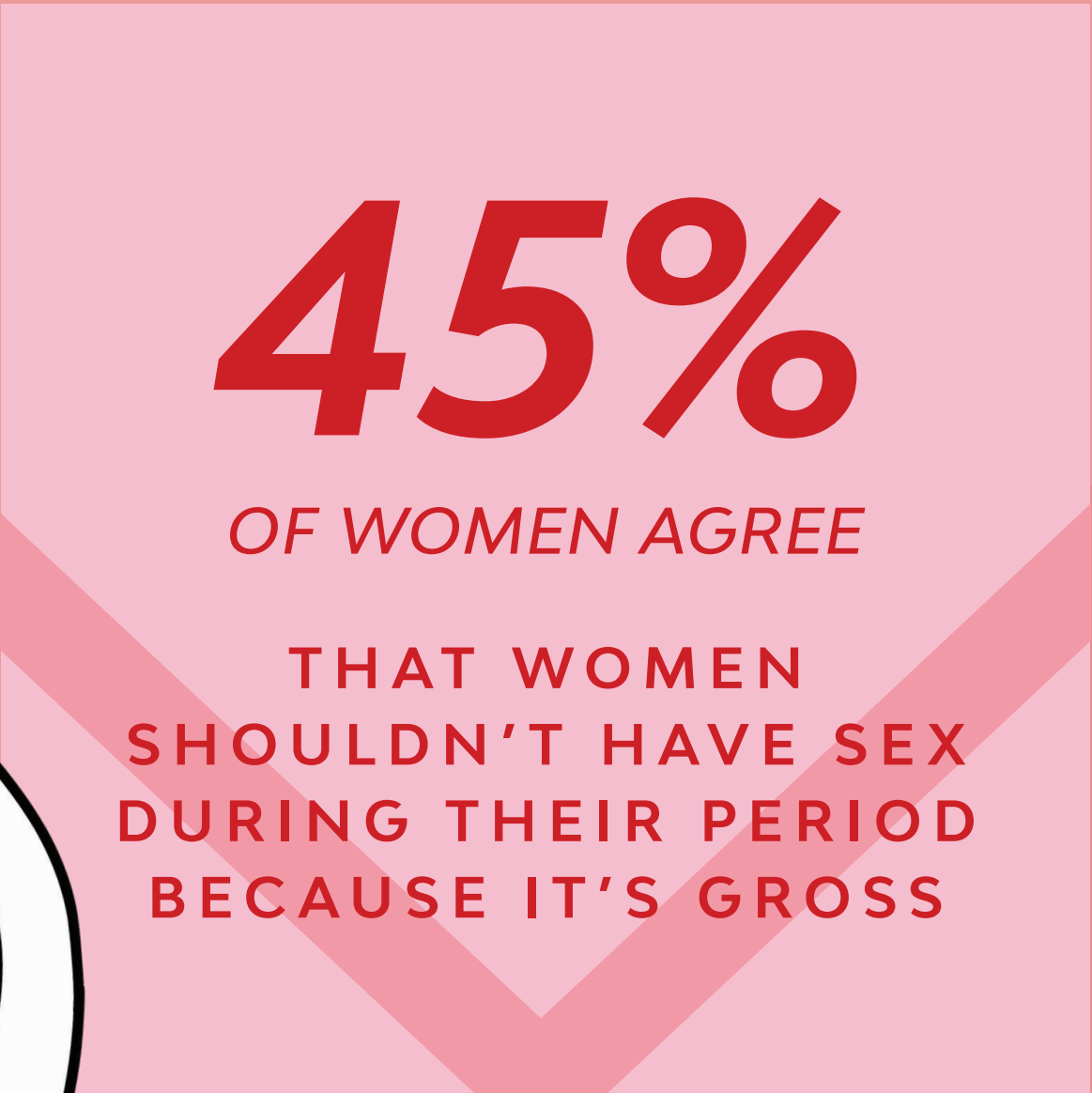
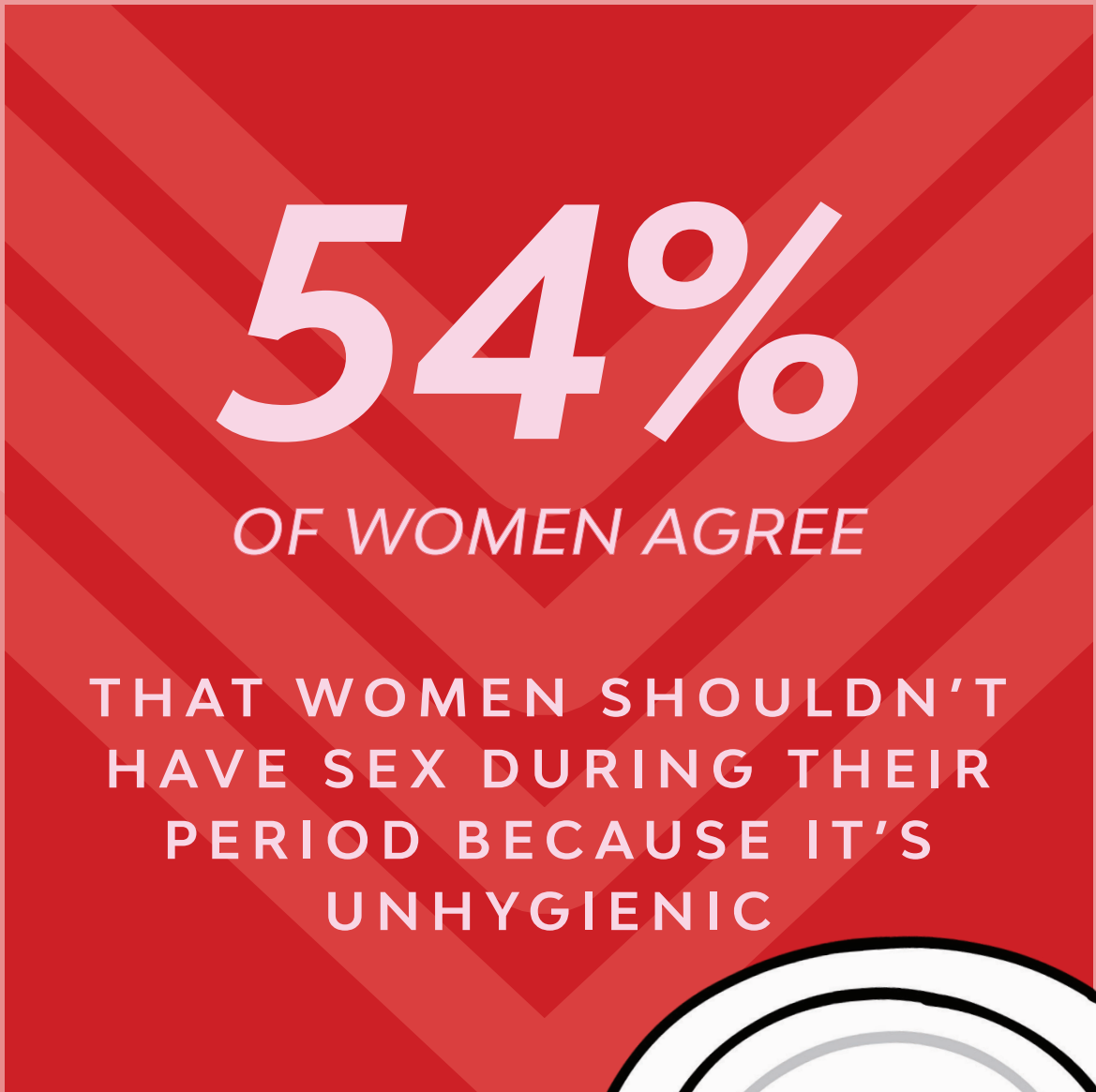


In an ideal world, women and men would both abandon societal conventions about womanhood.

However, there are instances where women continue to perpetuate taboos against themselves.

Although women hold these taboos, men continue to perpetuate the stigma.

THE TOP TABOOS THAT WOMEN ARE FUELING:



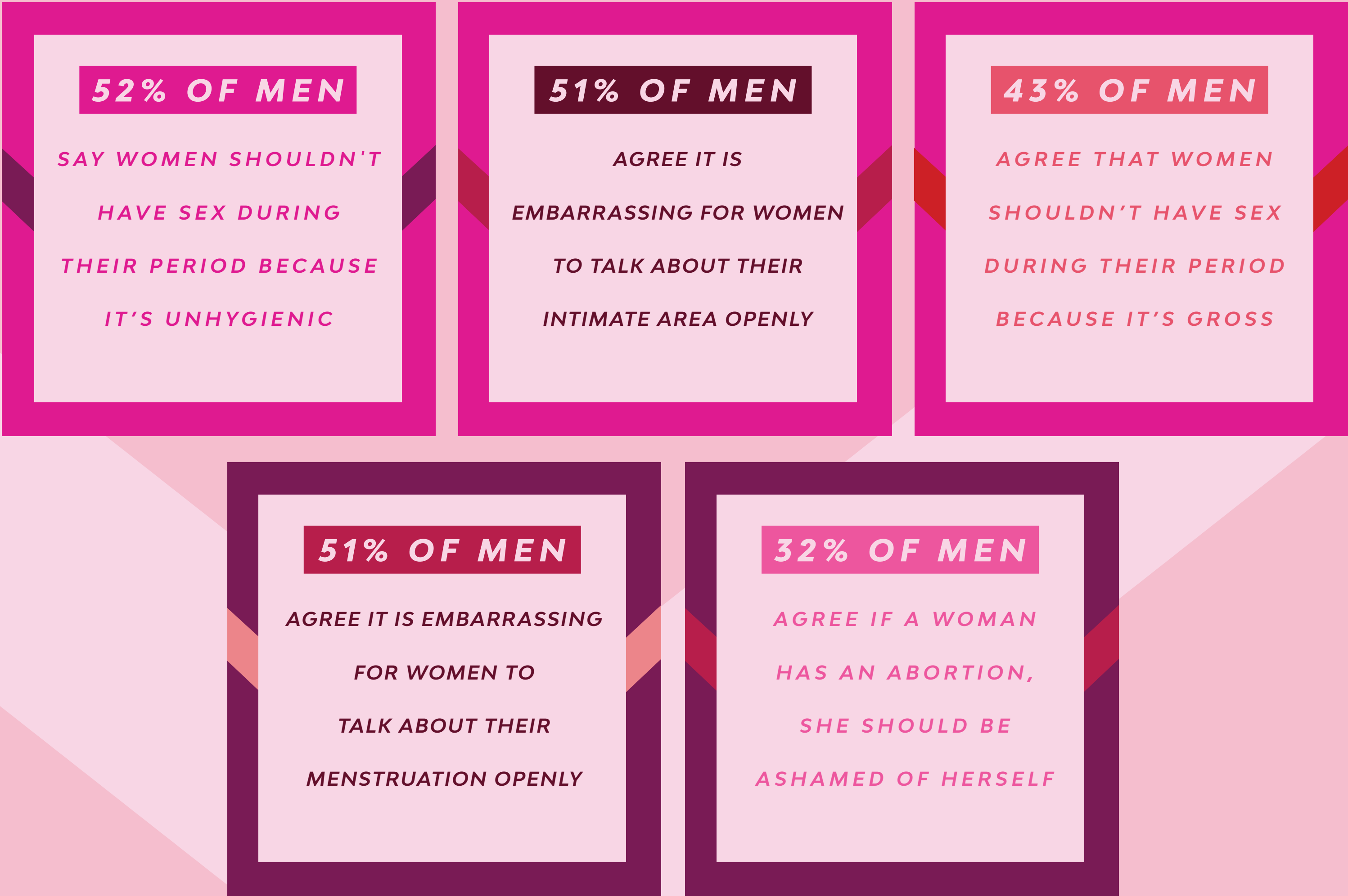
**NOTES:**  
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree  
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

**BASE:**  
All women: n=7,055

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

There are several instances where men hold these stigmatizing views, with menstruation featured in **three of the top five** taboos 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:**  
All men: n=7,034



Women’s intimate area causes the most shame and embarrassment for women.

**One in two** women find the subject embarrassing to discuss, with **one in five** women reporting feelings of shame attached to their intimate area.

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



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

**BASE:**  
All women: n = 7,055



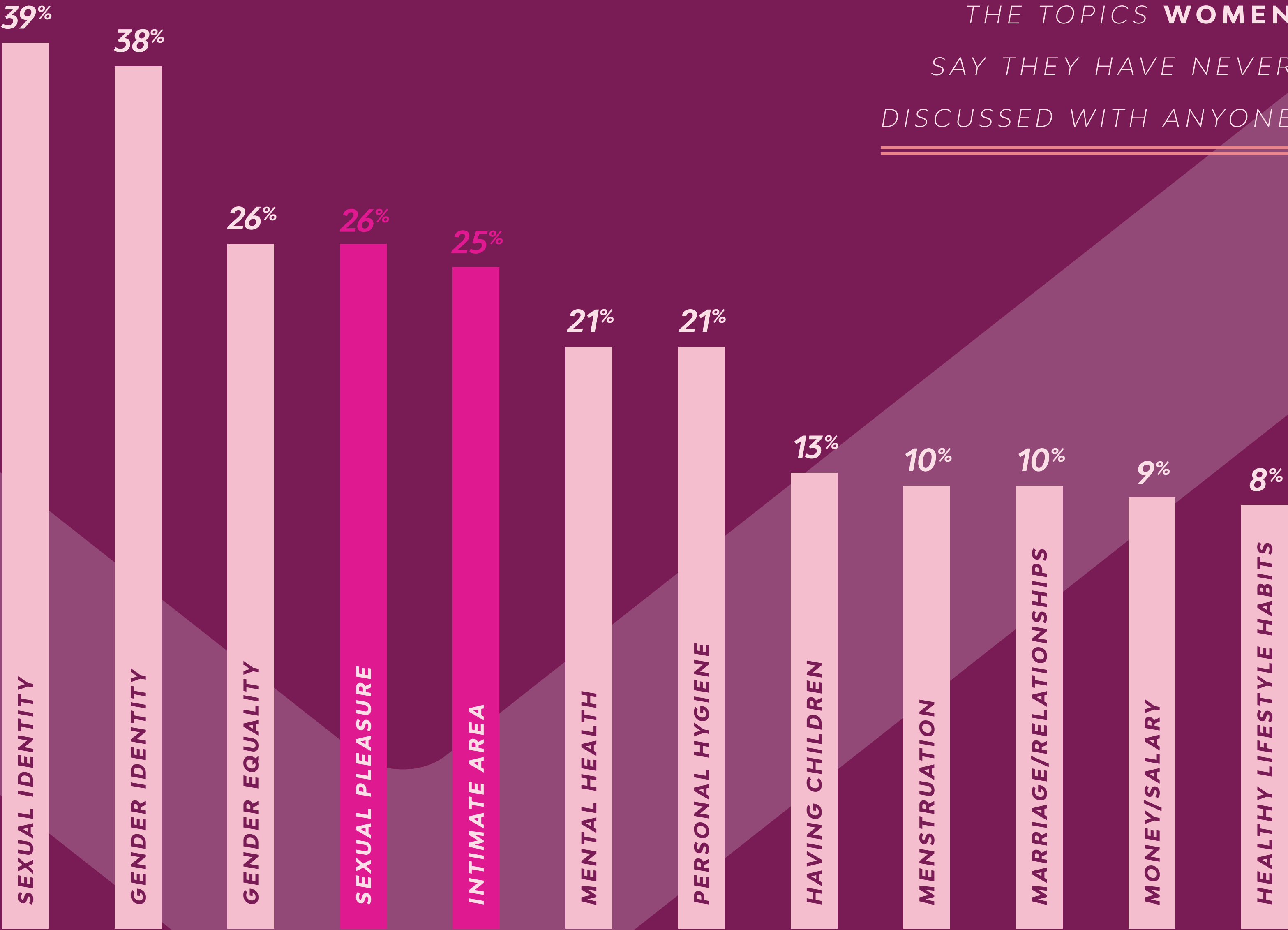
A QUARTER OF WOMEN SAY THEY HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED THEIR INTIMATE AREA OR SEXUAL PLEASURE WITH ANYONE

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

A **quarter** of women have never discussed their own sexual pleasure and 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:  
All women: n = 7,055



OVER A THIRD OF MEN HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED MENSTRUATION WITH ANYONE, MORE THAN THEIR OWN MENTAL HEALTH

There are some topics men do not share with anyone.

Over a *third* of men have never discussed menstruation with anyone, even more so than their mental health or having children.

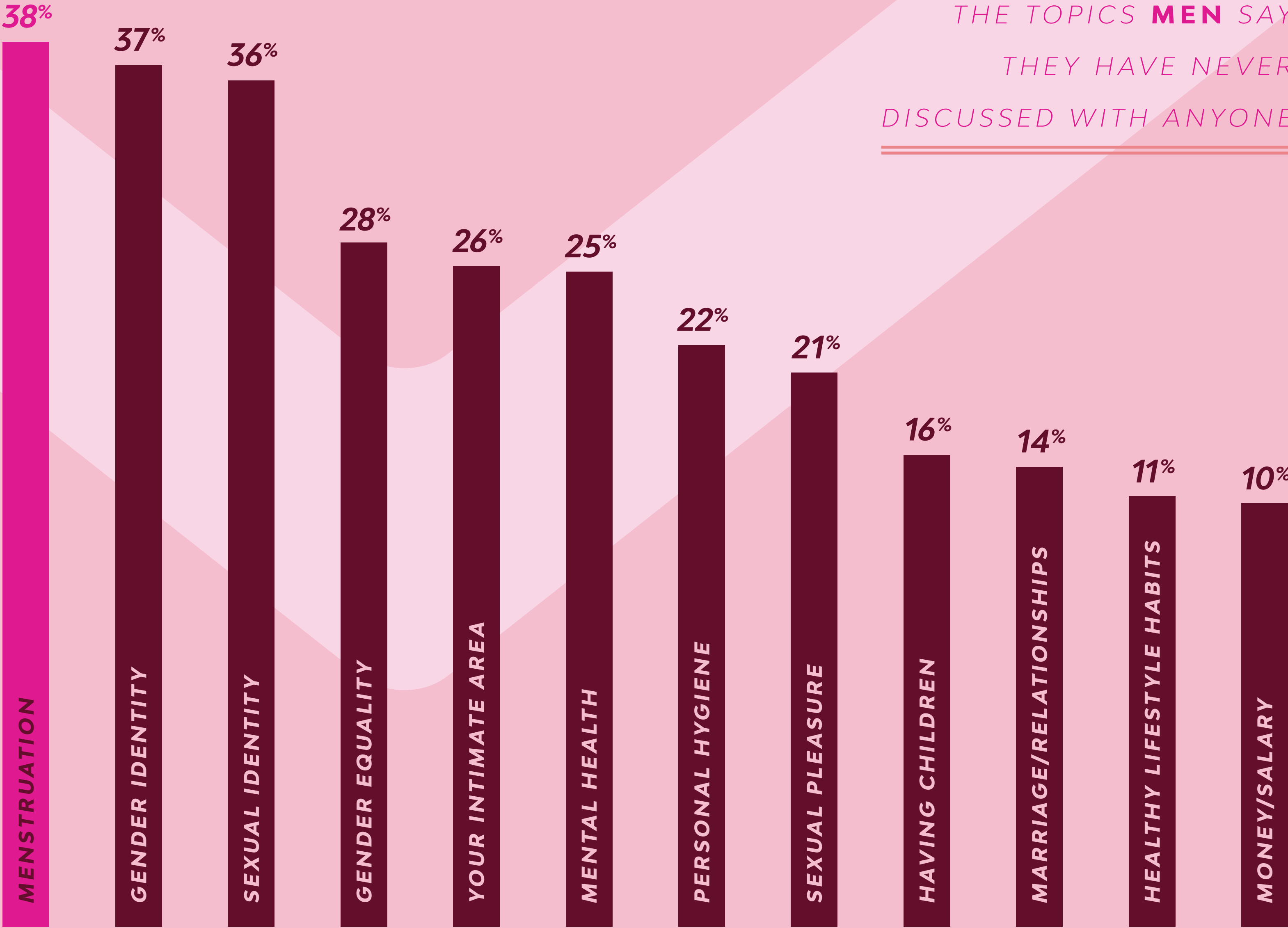
THE TOPICS **MEN** SAY THEY HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED WITH ANYONE

**NOTES:**

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

**BASE:**

All men: n = 7,034



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

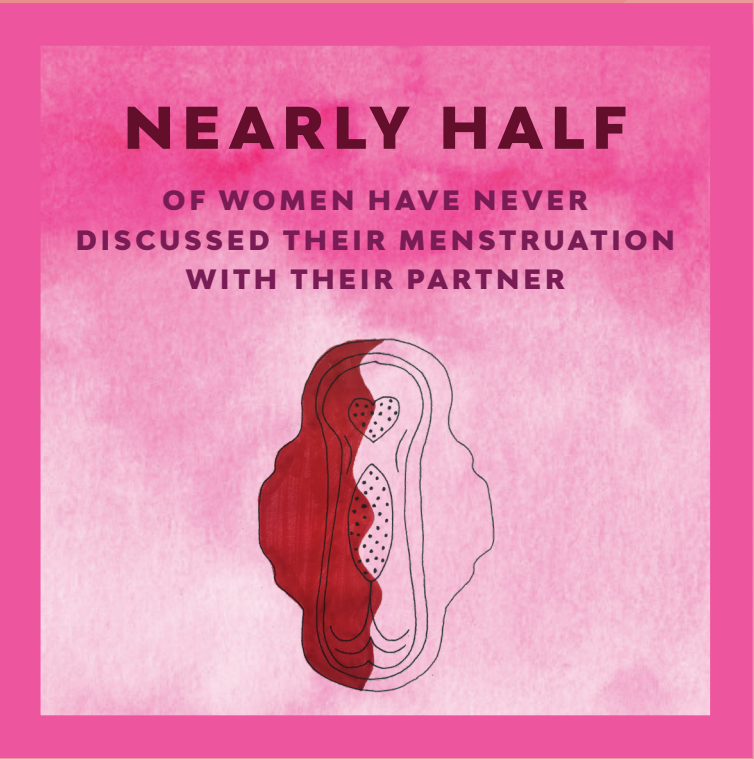
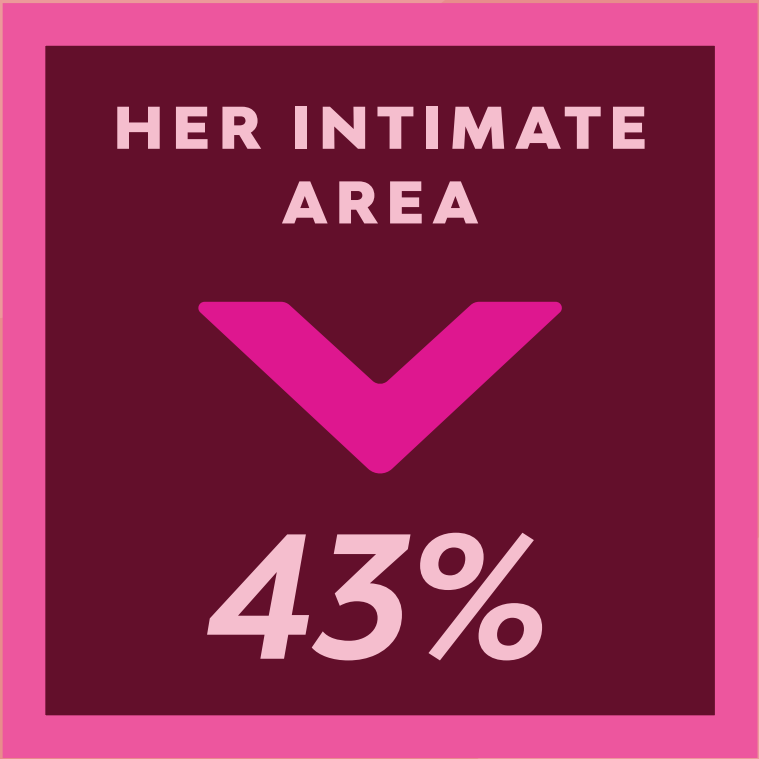
Likewise, only **43%** of women say they have talked about their intimate area with their partner and only **56%** have discussed sexual pleasure with their partner.

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

ATTITUDES TO PERIOD PAIN:



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



**BASE:**  
All women: n=7,055  
All men: n=7,034

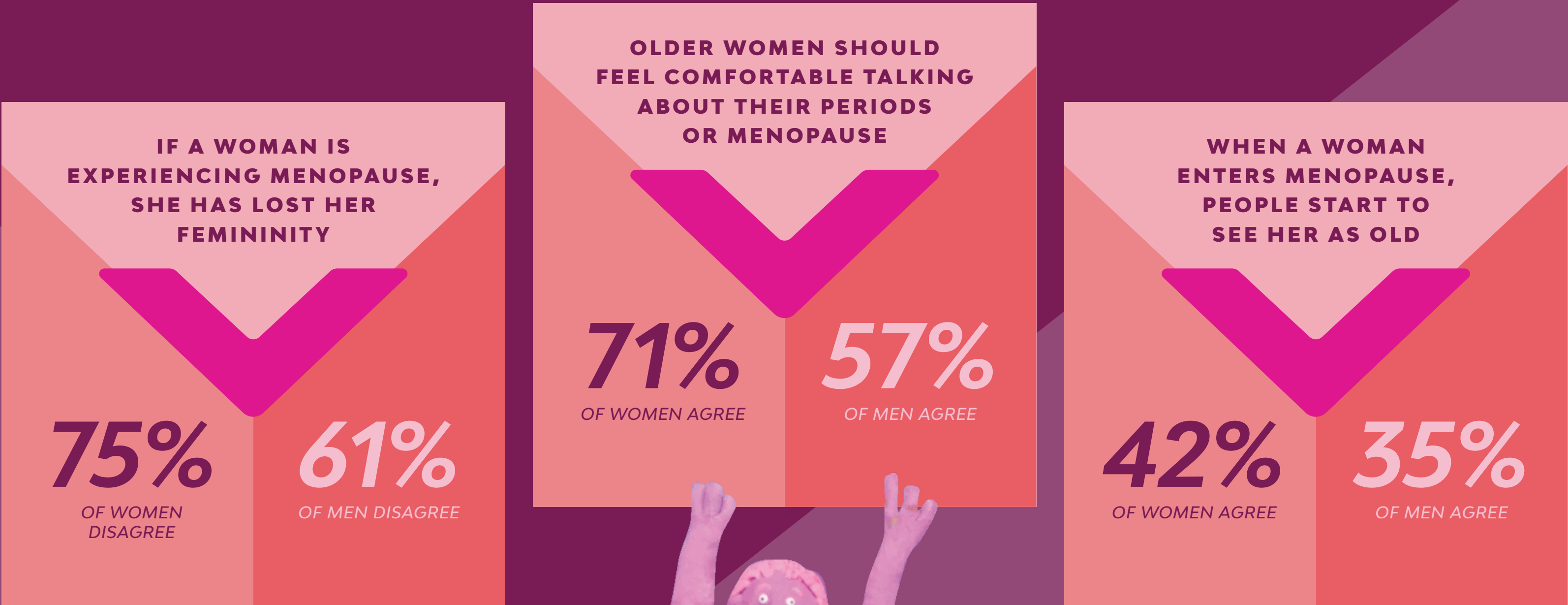


Taboos around menopause and ageing are present globally.

Compared to men, women more often show more positive attitudes towards older women.

However, women also perpetuate menopause and ageing taboos as they are more likely than men to believe society sees those who have entered menopause as old.

TWO-FIFTHS OF WOMEN BELIEVE THAT SOCIETY SEES WOMEN WHO HAVE ENTERED MENOPAUSE AS OLD

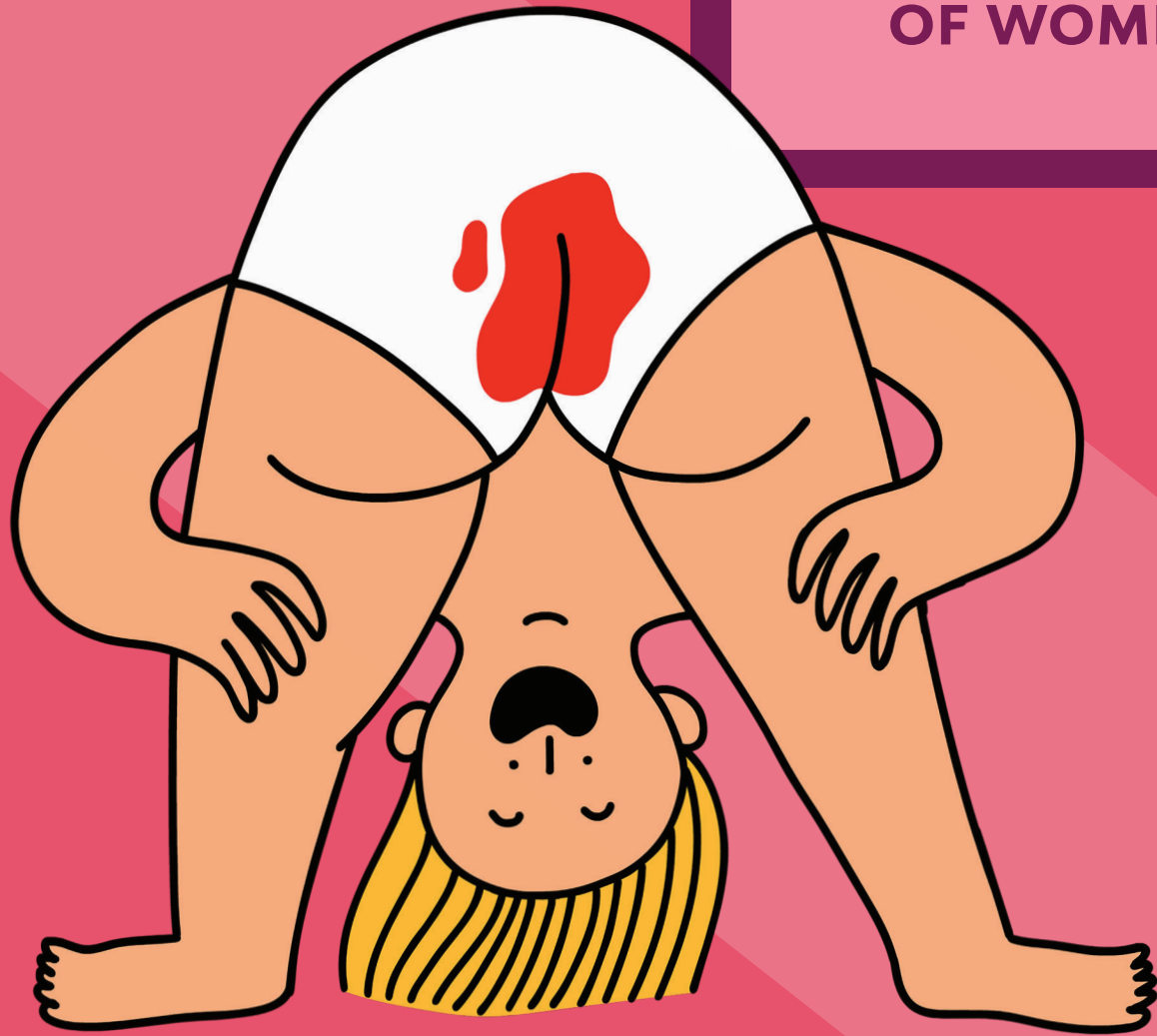


**NOTES:**  
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree  
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

**BASE:**  
All women: n=7,055  
All men: n=7,034

Globally, women face taboos every day.

However, the current landscape showcases areas of hope and progress as women are embracing themselves and their bodies as well as seeing periods being portrayed in adverts in a more normalised way.



WOMEN SHOULD NOT FEEL  
ASHAMED FOR WANTING  
TO EXPERIENCE PLEASURE  
DURING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

84%  
OF WOMEN AGREE

WOMEN HAVE  
BECOME MORE  
BODY POSITIVE

72%  
OF WOMEN AGREE

WOMEN'S EQUALITY  
HAS COME MORE INTO  
FOCUS CULTURALLY

70%  
OF WOMEN AGREE

PERIODS ARE BEING  
PORTRAYED IN  
ADVERTS IN A MORE  
NORMALISED WAY

66%  
OF WOMEN AGREE

ATTITUDES TO WOMEN'S  
INTIMATE AREAS ARE  
BECOMING MORE POSITIVE  
IN YOUR COUNTRY

52%  
OF WOMEN AGREE

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:

All women: n=7,055

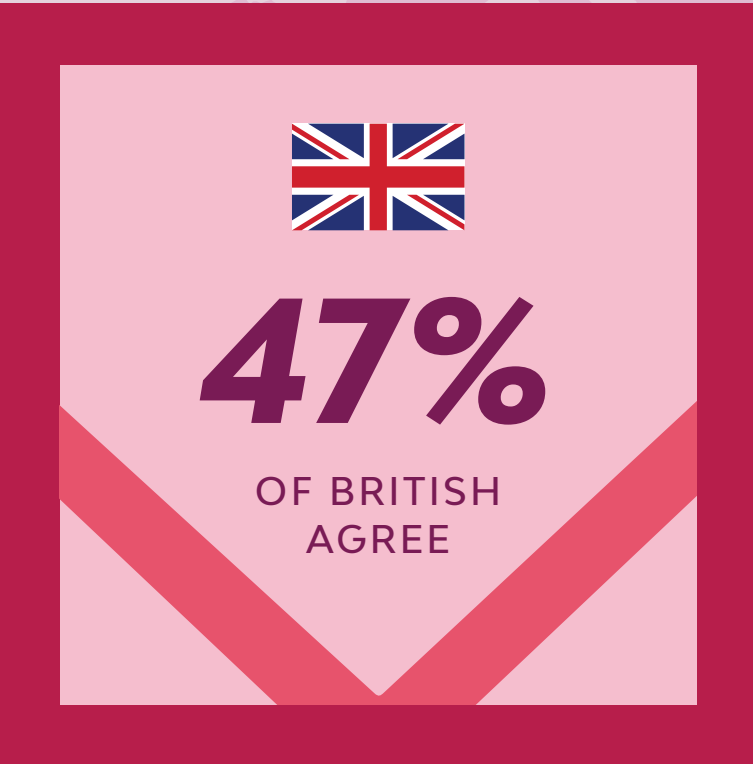
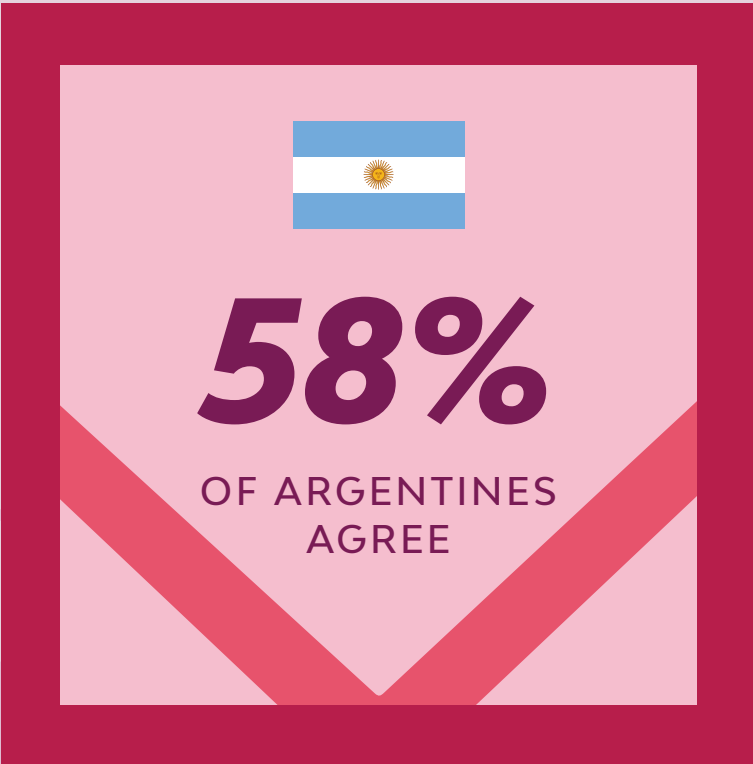
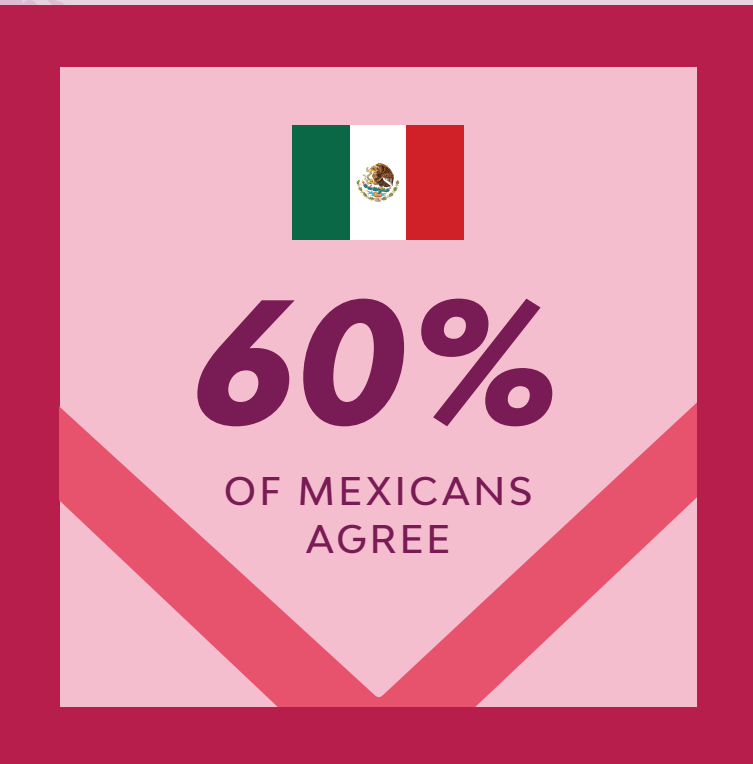
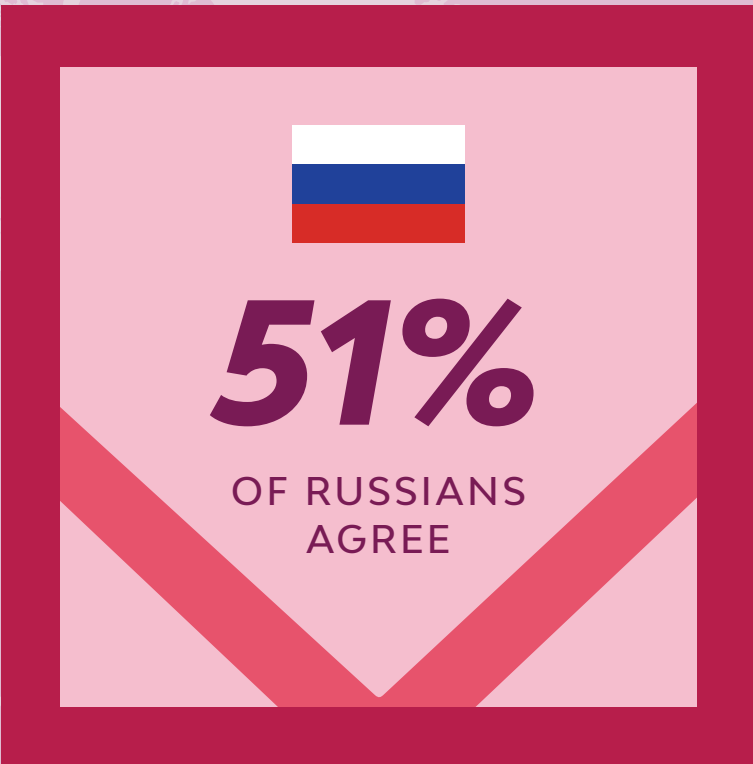
# MARKET COMPARISONS



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.

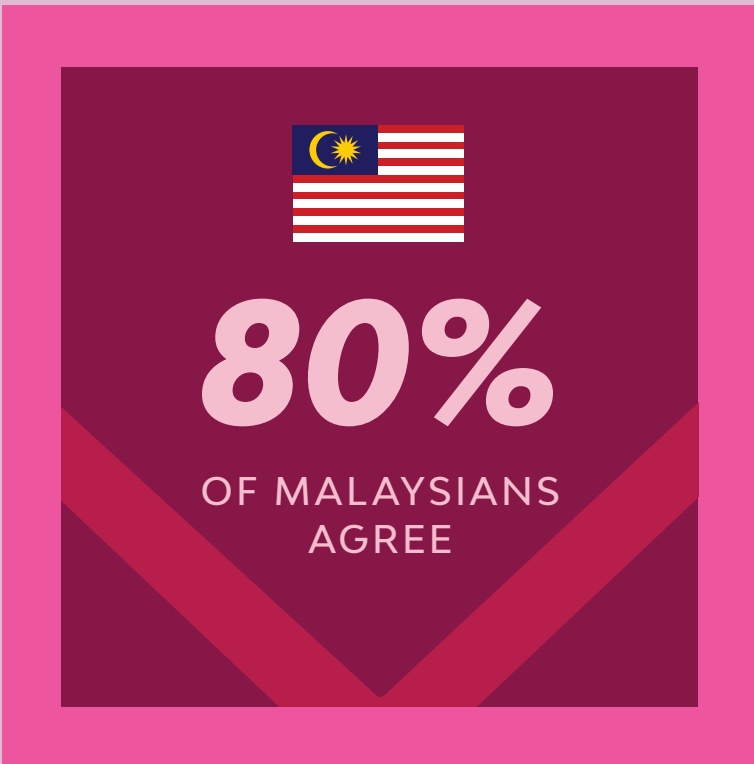
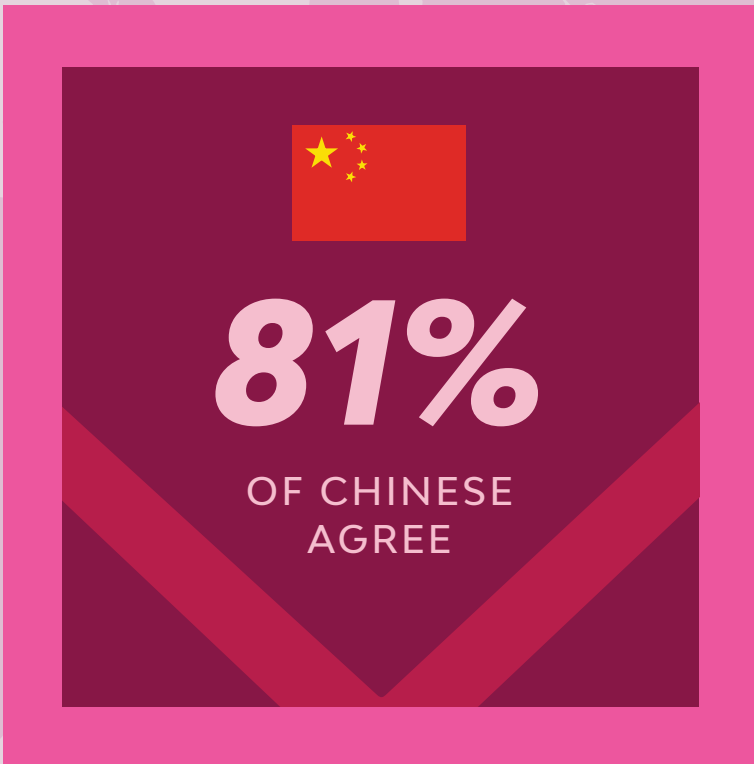
52% GLOBALLY

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



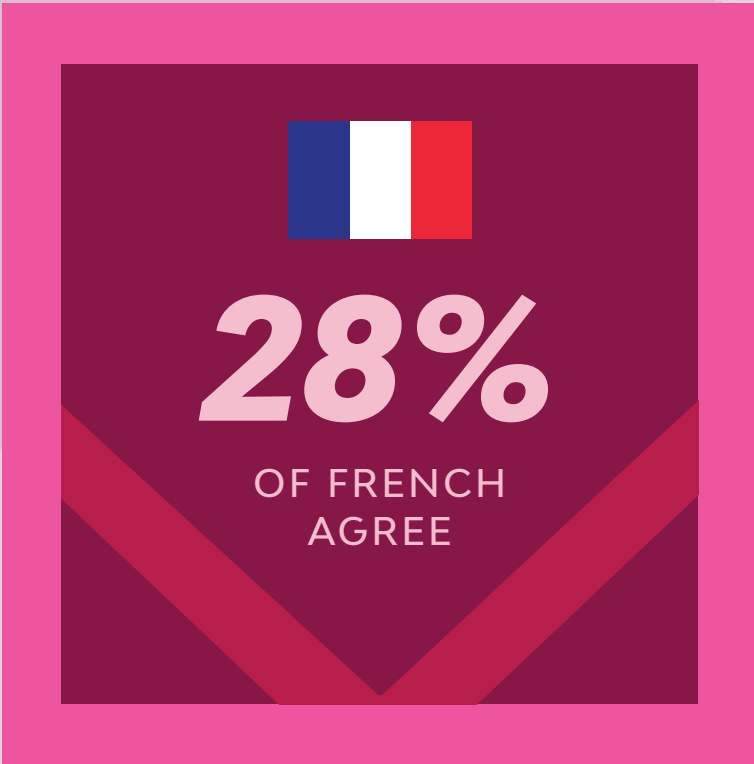
53% GLOBALLY

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: 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:

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

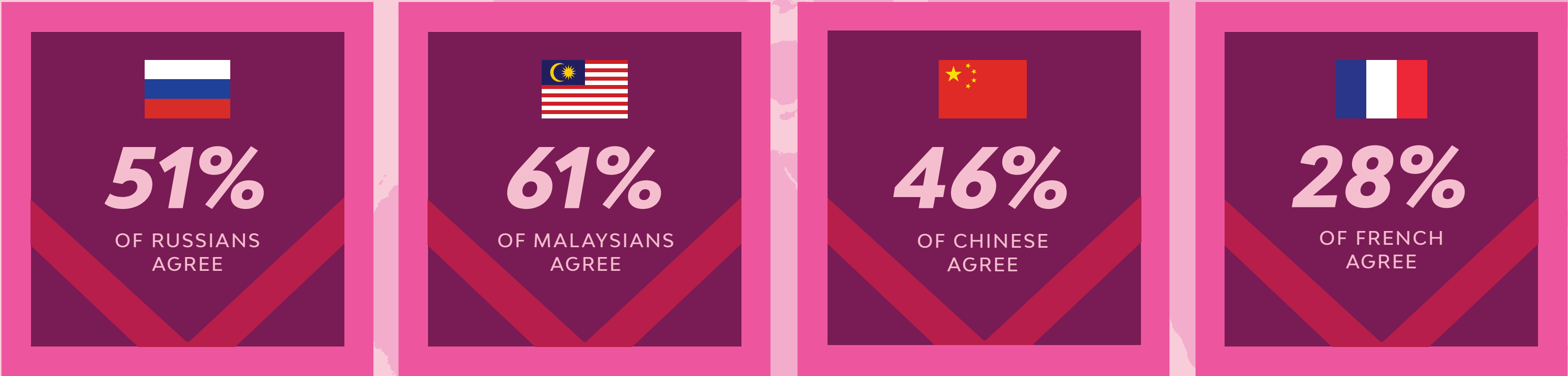
Total UK (men and women): 2,003

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



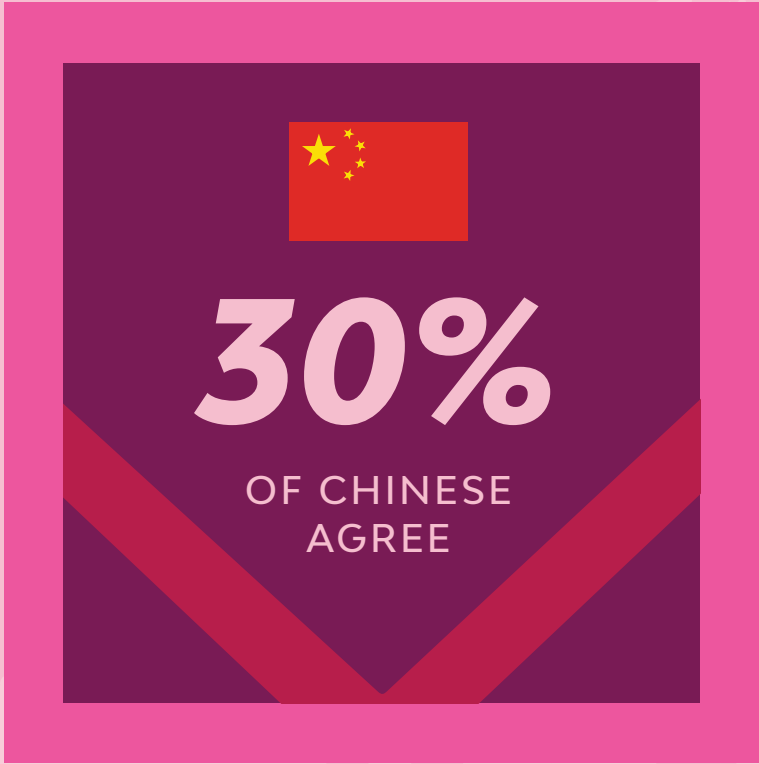
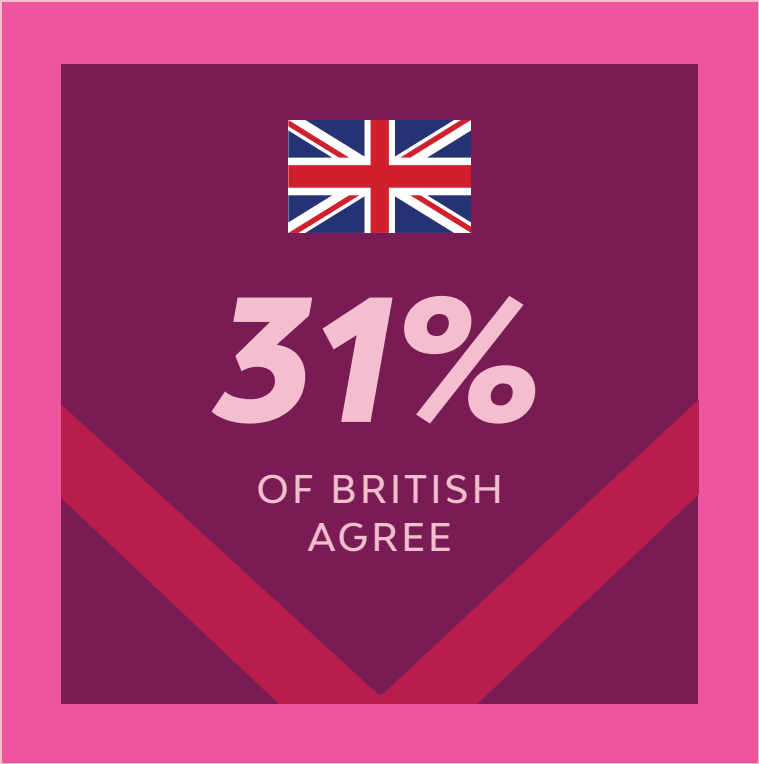
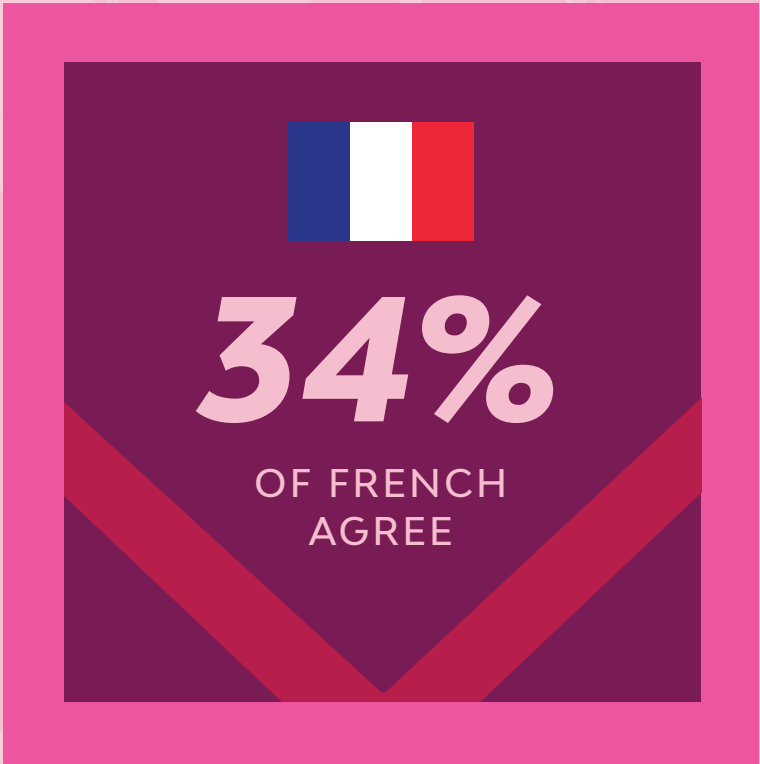
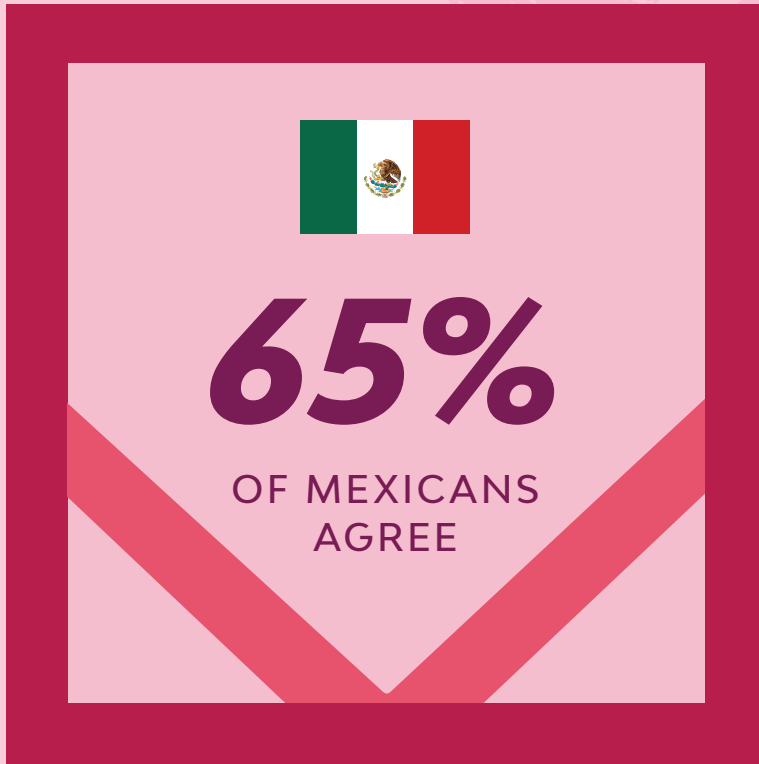
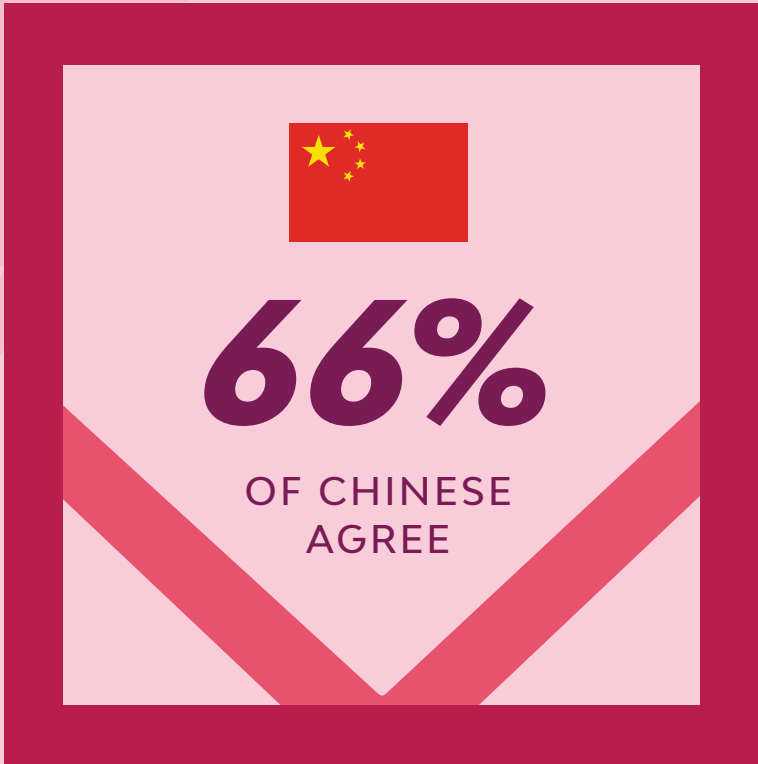
**NOTES:**  
**Agree:** % selecting somewhat or completely agree  
**Q:** To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?

**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



26% *GLOBALLY*  
SAY THAT THEY HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED THEIR  
INTIMATE AREA WITH ANYONE

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  
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



# **KEY TABOOS BY THEMES FROM THE GVTT**

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



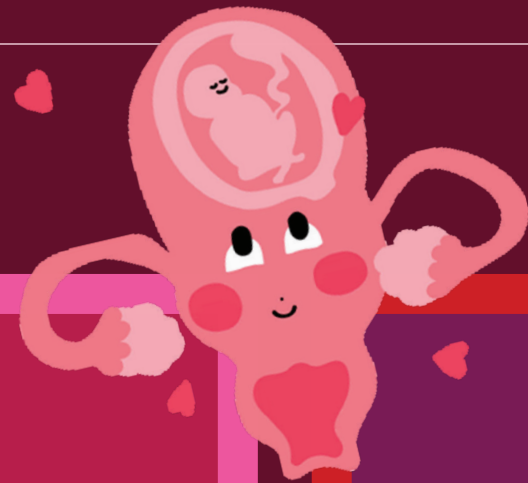
***PERIODS  
AND  
PERIOD  
PAIN***

***FERTILITY  
AND  
CHOICE***

***FEMALE  
PLEASURE***

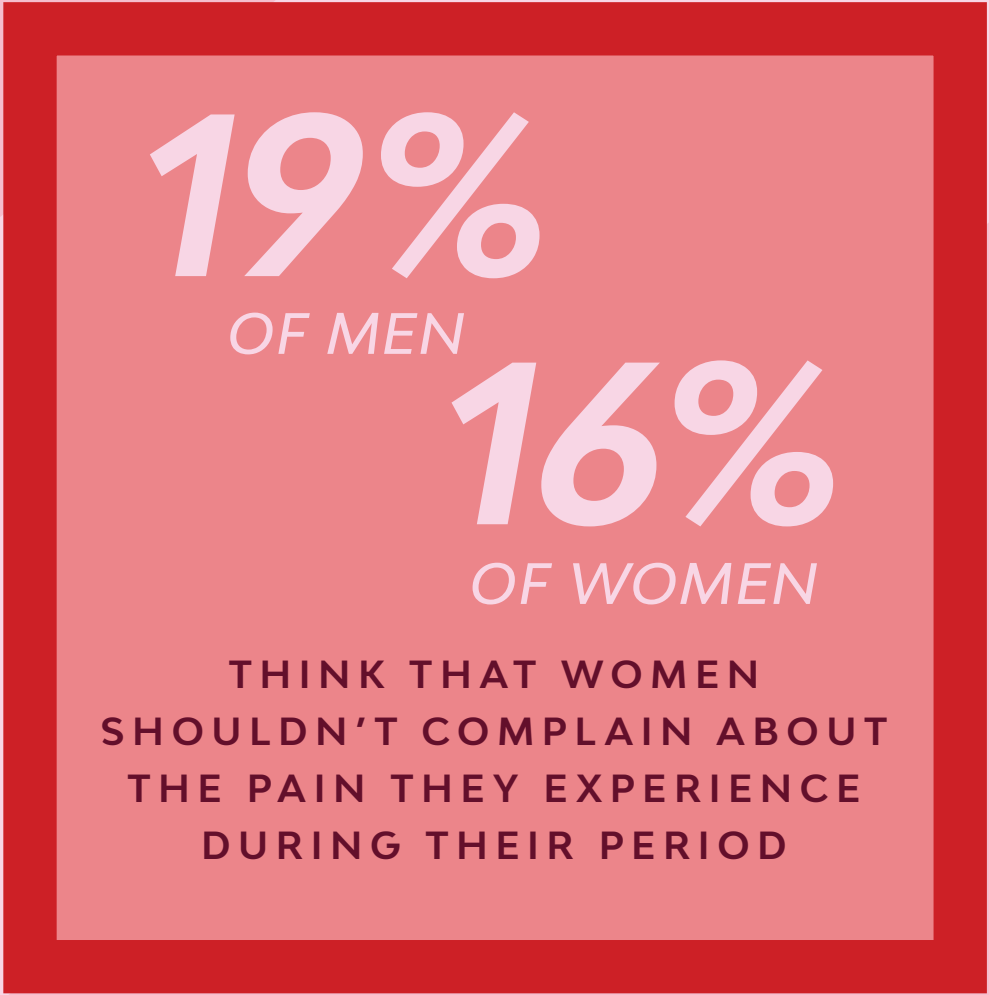
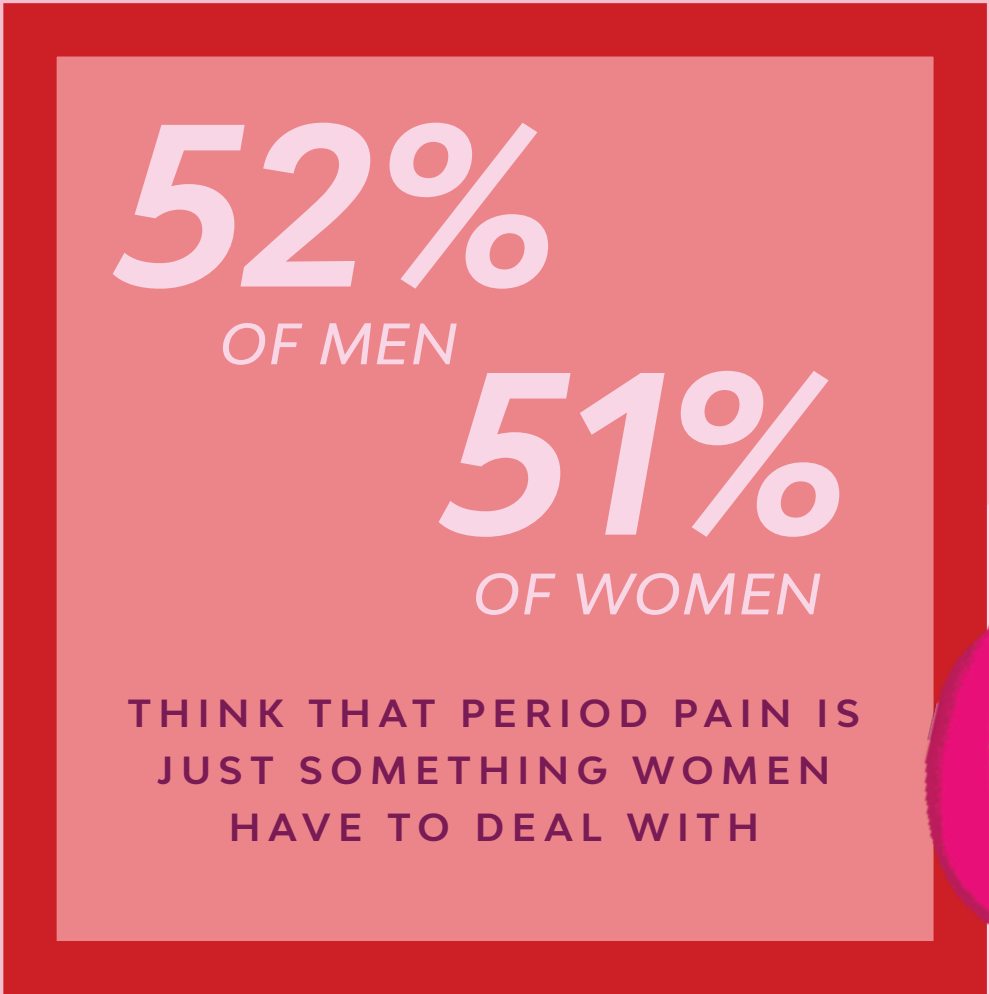
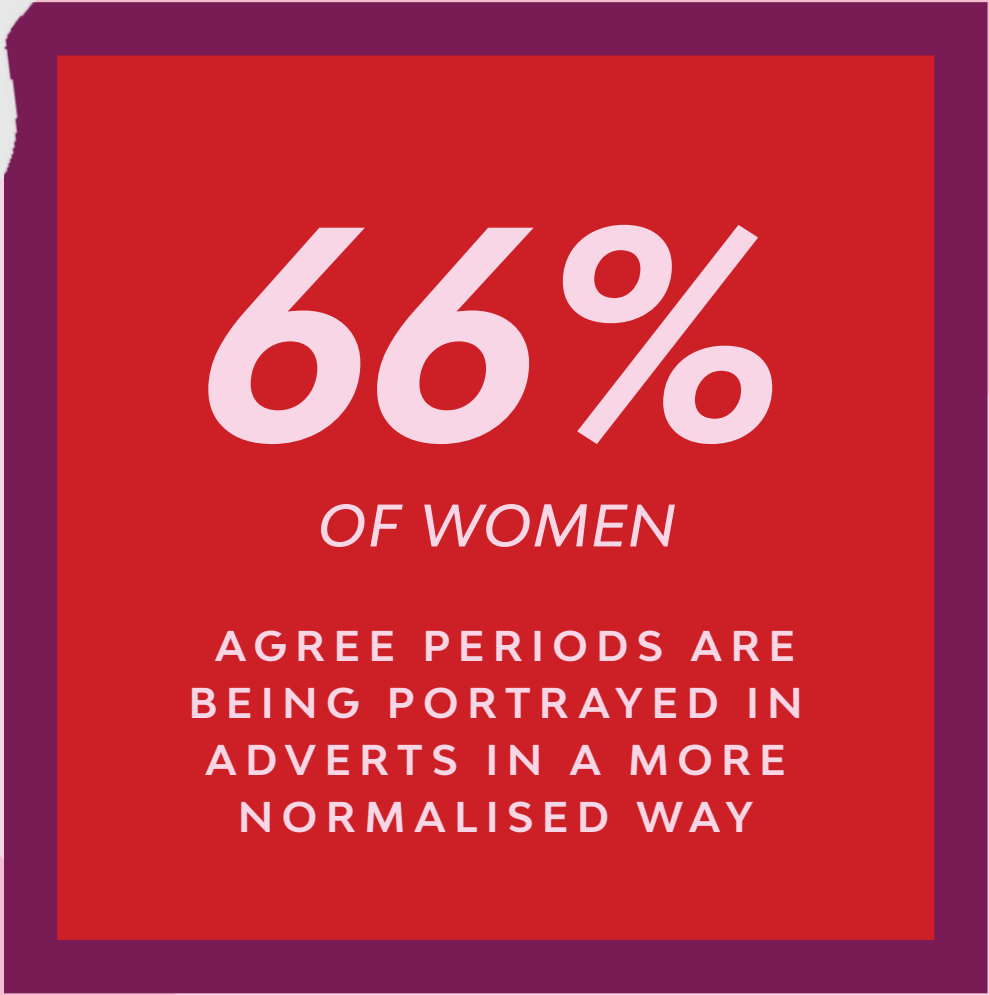
***VULVA  
AND  
VAGINA***

***AGEING  
AND  
MENOPAUSE***



Although periods are a part of women’s lived experience, only two in five women have discussed them with their partner.

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

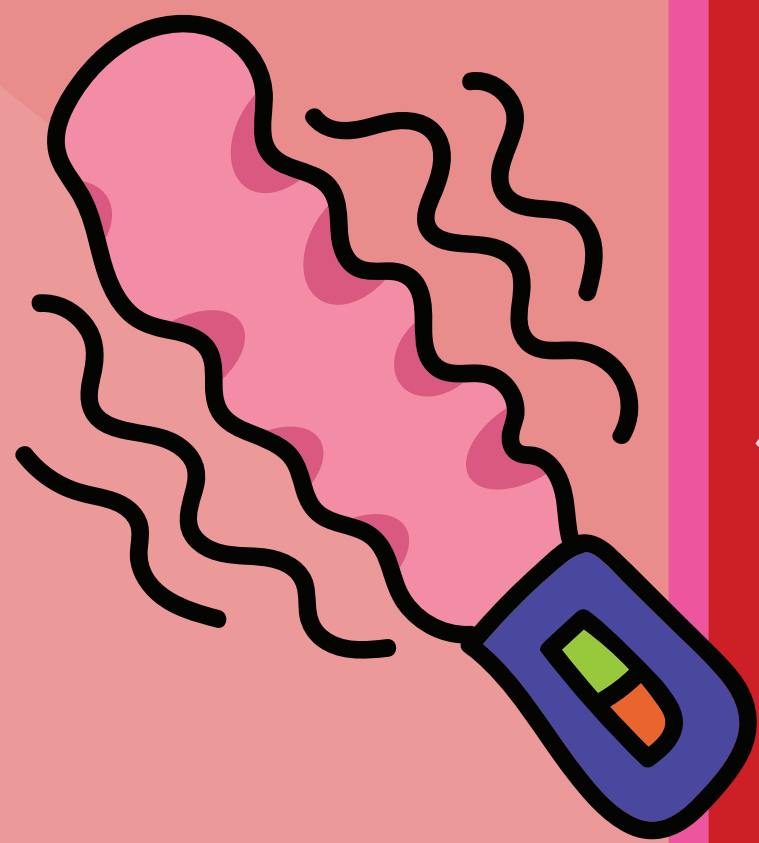


**NOTES:**  
**Agree:** % selecting somewhat or completely agree  
**Q:** To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements?  
**Q:** To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements on period pain?  
**Q:** Indicate your level of agreement regarding current efforts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

**BASE:**  
All women: n=7,055  
All men: n=7,034

Sexual pleasure is not widely discussed among women, even less so than salary.

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?

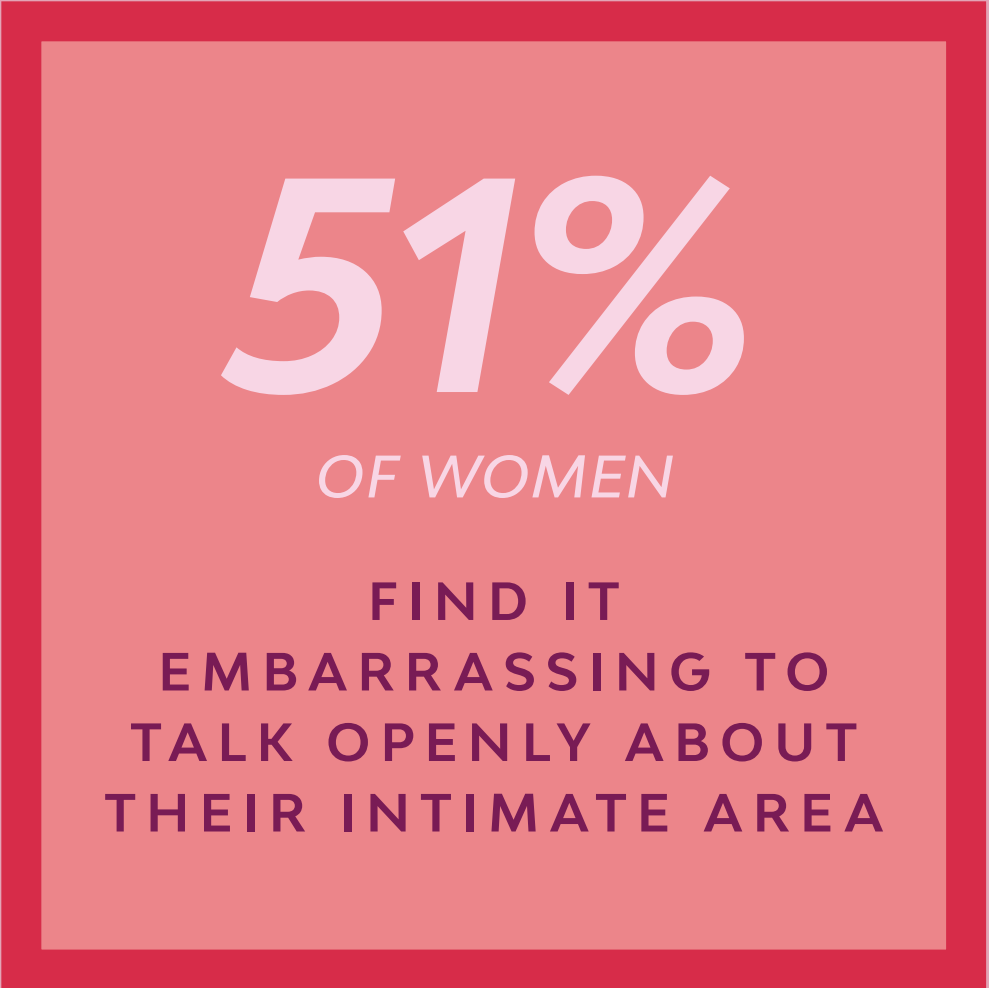
BASE:

All women: n=7,055

All men: n=7,034



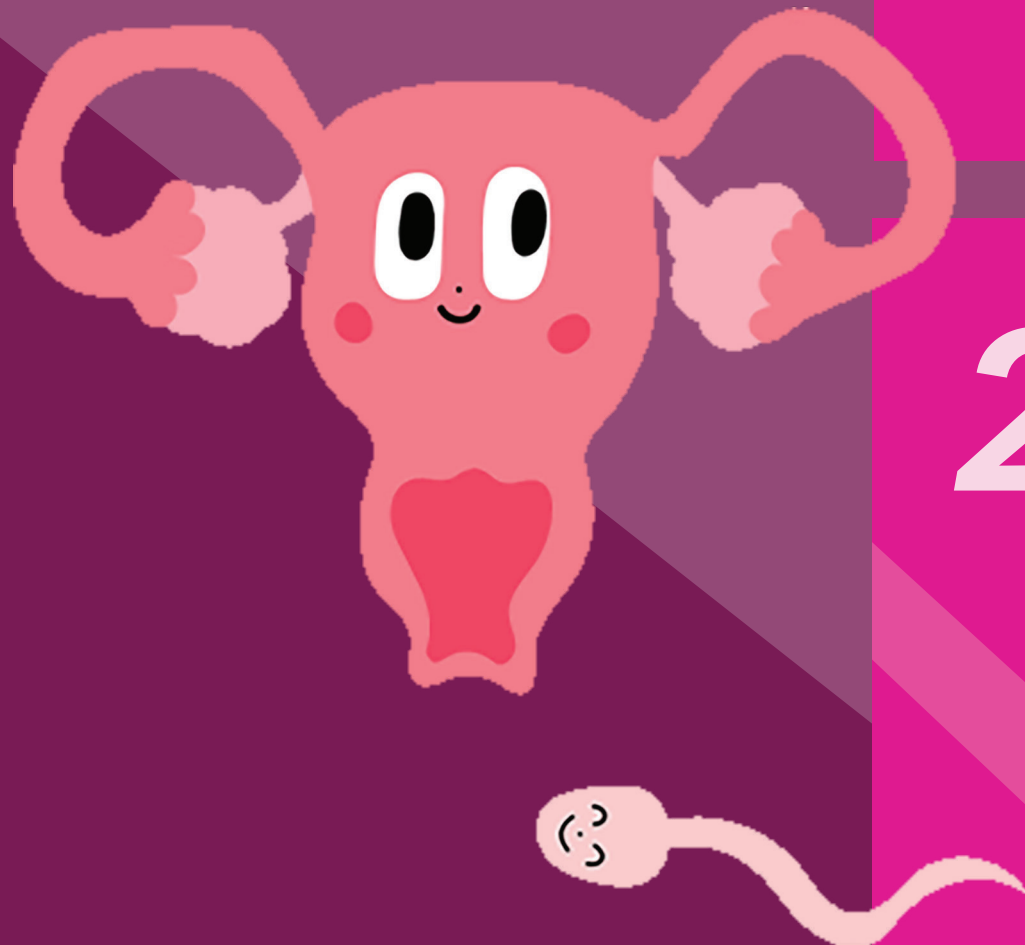
Women not only keep silent about their intimate area, but also feel pressure to maintain a certain image of it.



**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...

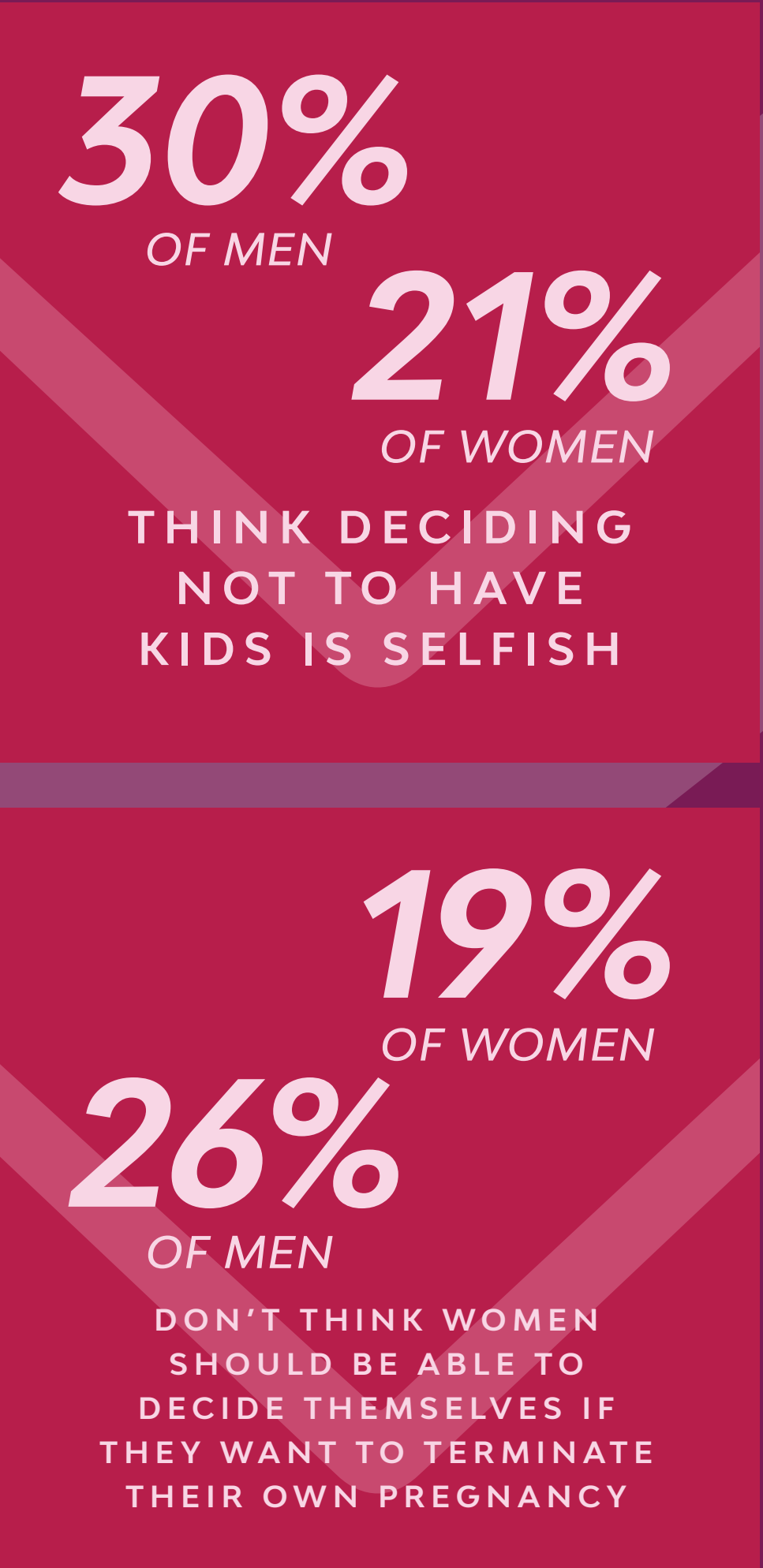
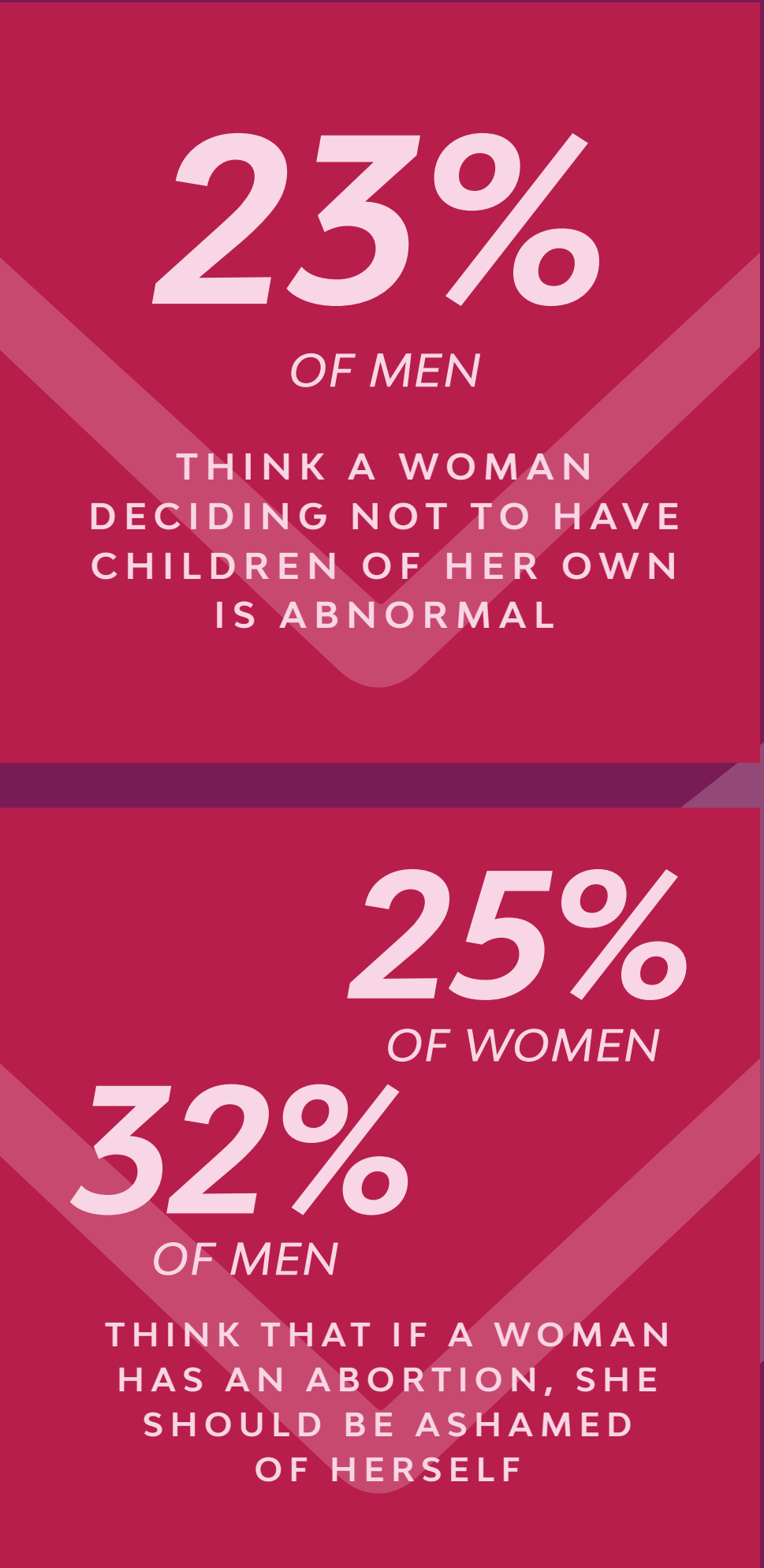
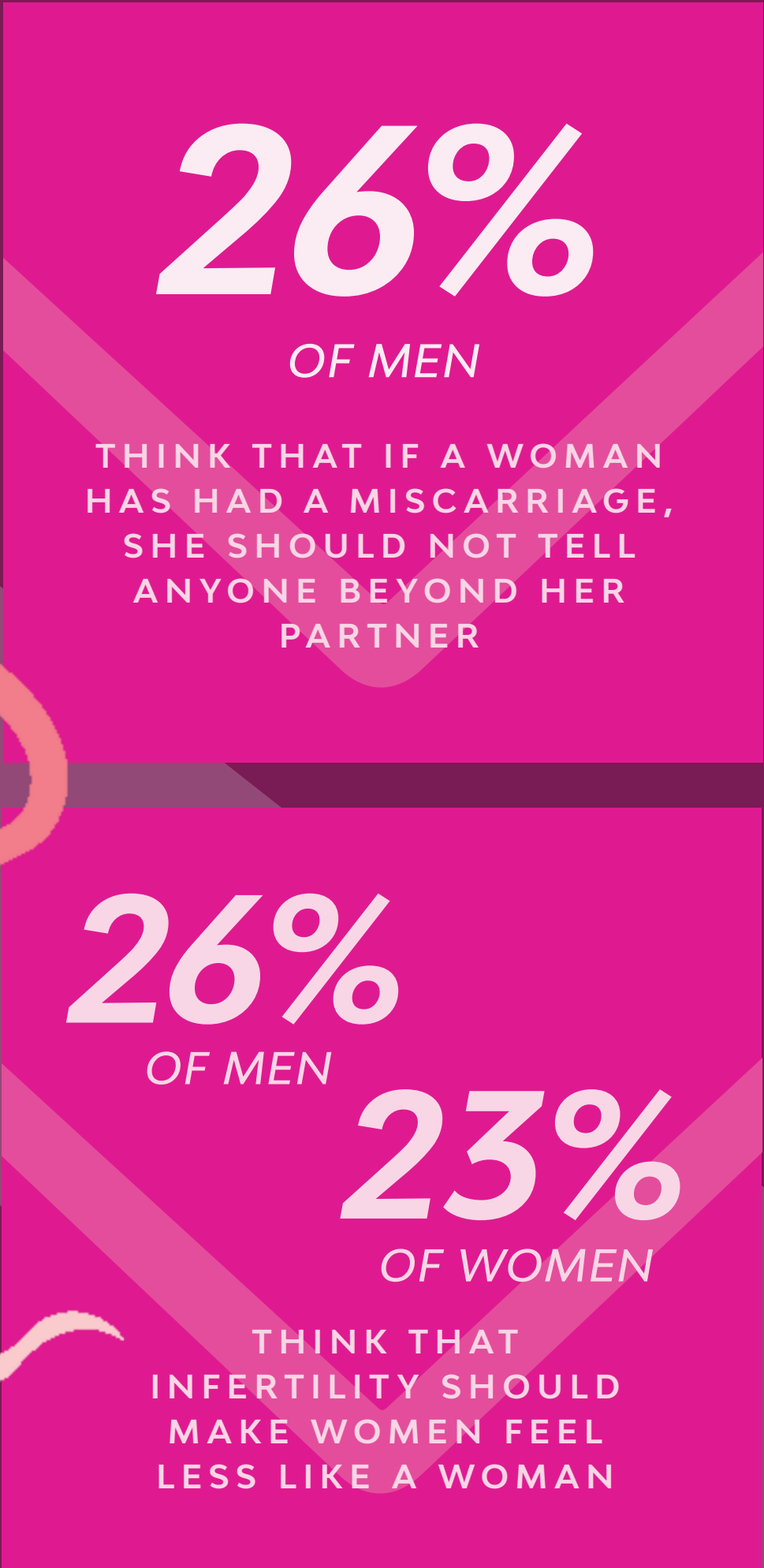
**BASE:**  
All women: n=7,055  
All men: n=7,034

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



FERTILITY

CHOICE

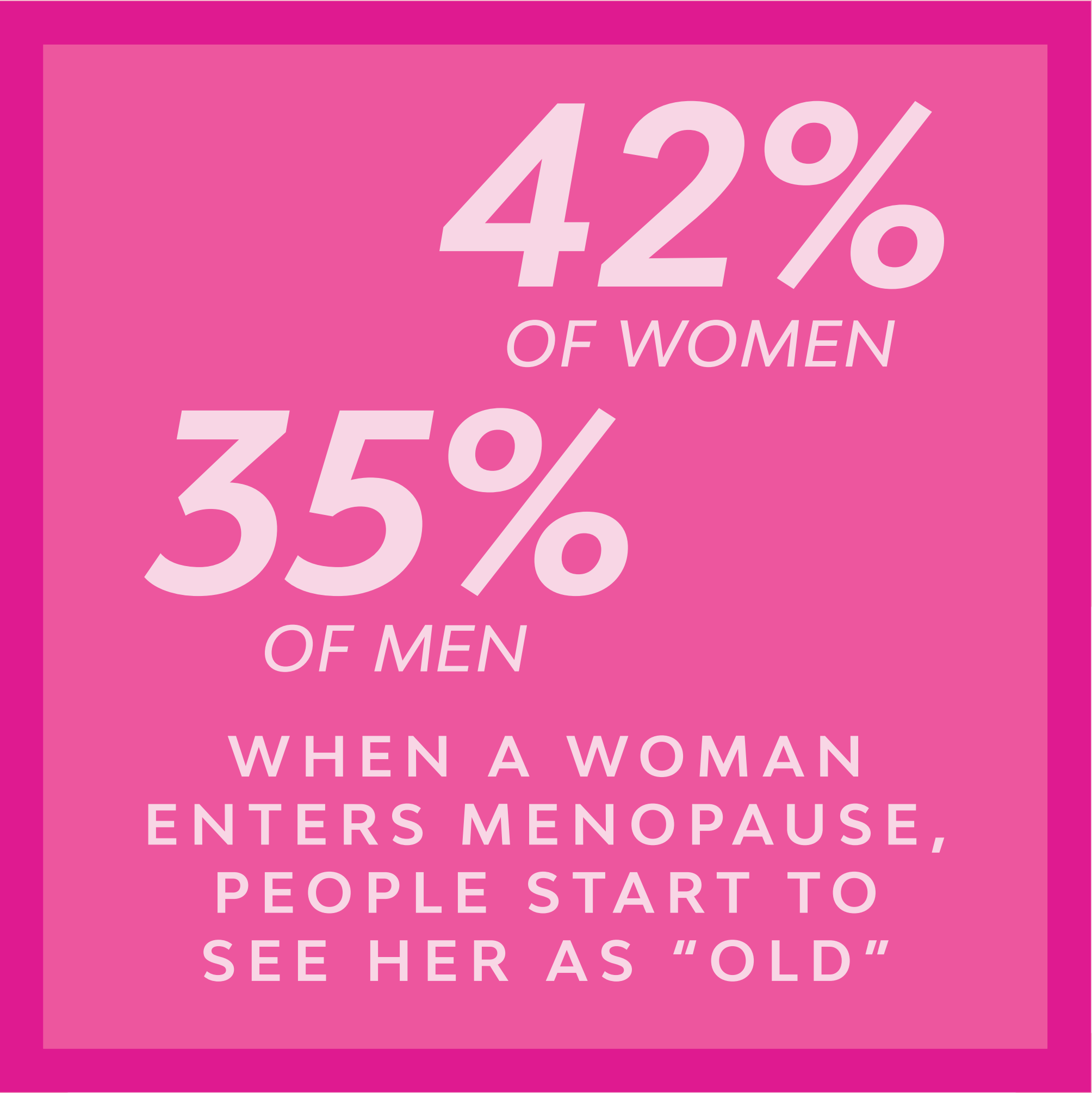


**NOTES:**  
Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree  
Q: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements on women’s fertility?

**BASE:**  
All women: n=7,055  
All men: n=7,034

There is more global acceptance surrounding ageing and menopause taboos.

However, a large proportion of women still feel societal prejudice related to ageing and menopause.



NOTES:

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

BASE:

All women: n=7,055  
All men: n=7,034



**THANK YOU**

