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.
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%.

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.

**Notes:**

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

**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 HELD BY WOMEN AGAINST WOMEN**

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

54% of women agree that women shouldn’t have sex during their period because it’s unhygienic.

45% of women agree that women shouldn’t have sex during their period because it’s gross.

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

**BASE:**
All women: n=7055
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 HELD BY MEN AGAINST WOMEN**

- **52% OF MEN** say women shouldn’t have sex during their period because it’s unhygienic.
- **51% OF MEN** agree it is embarrassing for women to talk about their intimate area openly.
- **51% OF MEN** agree it is embarrassing for women to talk about their menstruation openly.
- **43% OF MEN** agree that women shouldn’t have sex during their period because it’s gross.
- **32% OF MEN** agree if a woman has an abortion, she should be ashamed of herself.

**Notes:**

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

- **51% of women** say it is embarrassing for a woman to talk openly about her intimate area.

- **21% of women** say they have been shamed by their partner for the way their intimate area looks or smells.

- **22% of women** say they have felt the need to apologise for the way their intimate area looks or smells when being with a partner.

**NOTES:**

Agree: % selecting somewhat or completely agree

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

**Notes:**

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

**Base:**

All women: n = 7,055
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.

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

**IF A WOMAN IS EXPERIENCING MENOPAUSE, SHE HAS LOST HER FEMININITY**

- 75% of women disagree
- 61% of men disagree

**OLDER WOMEN SHOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT THEIR PERIODS OR MENOPAUSE**

- 71% of women agree
- 57% of men agree

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

- 42% of women agree
- 35% of men agree

**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.

### Areas of Progress in 2020

- **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.

### Taboos Surrounding Periods Persists Globally

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>2,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (men only)</td>
<td>2,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (women only)</td>
<td>2,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (men only)</td>
<td>2,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (women only)</td>
<td>2,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (men only)</td>
<td>2,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (women only)</td>
<td>2,005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 = 14,889
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): 2,006
Total Russia (men and women): 2,055

Agreement:

75% OF ARGENTINES AGREE
77% OF MEXICANS AGREE
71% OF BRITISH AGREE
51% OF RUSSIANS AGREE
61% OF MALAYSAINS AGREE
46% OF CHINESE AGREE
28% OF FRENCH AGREE

60% OF CHINESE AGREE
46% OF RUSSIANS AGREE
51% OF MALAYSAINS AGREE
77% OF MEXICANS AGREE
71% OF BRITISH AGREE
75% OF ARGENTINES AGREE
51% OF RUSSIANS AGREE
64% GLOBALLY AGREE
THAT OLDER WOMEN SHOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT THEIR PERIODS OR MENOPAUSE

2020
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

34\%\ OF FRENCH AGREE
31\%\ OF BRITISH AGREE

66\%\ OF CHINESE AGREE

65\%\ OF MEXICANS AGREE

30\%\ OF RUSSIANS AGREE

30\%\ OF CHINESE AGREE

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): 2,001
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.

**PERIODS**

- **Only 40% of women** have discussed menstruation with their partner.
- **66% of women** agree that periods are being portrayed in adverts in a more normalised way.

**PERIOD PAIN**

- **52% of men** think that period pain is just something women have to deal with.
- **19% of men** think that women shouldn’t complain about the pain they experience during their period.

**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=7055
- All men: n=7034
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.

- 52% of men think women shouldn’t have sex during their period as it’s unhygienic.
- 45% of women think period sex is gross.
- 21% of men have never discussed sexual pleasure with anyone.
- 29% of women think that women who have sex on their periods are loose sexually.
- 42% of men think that women who use intimate care products are loose sexually.
- 30% of women have never discussed their salary than their sexual pleasure.

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

BASE:
All women: n=7055
All men: n=7034
Women not only keep silent about their intimate area, but also feel pressure to maintain a certain image of it.

- **50%** of men agree women have to work harder than men to keep their intimate area looking good for their partner.
- **57%** of women find it embarrassing to talk openly about their intimate area.
- **22%** of women have felt the need to apologize with a partner for how their intimate area looks and smells.
- **51%** of women have discussed their intimate area with their partner.
- **21%** of women have been shamed by their partner for how their intimate area looks or smells.
- **25%** of women keep silent about their intimate area.

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

42% OF WOMEN

35% OF MEN

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:
All women: n=7055
All men: n=7034
THANK YOU