



# Consumer attitudes towards reusable menstrual products in Scotland

August 2019

[zerowastescotland.org.uk](http://zerowastescotland.org.uk)

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**EUROPE & SCOTLAND**

European Regional Development Fund  
Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future



progressive

Research undertaken by:

Progressive Partnership

Research findings – August 2019



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# Project background



Single-use menstrual products have a significant, negative impact on the environment in terms of waste and pollution.

The average woman will dispose of an estimated 11,000 sanitary products in her lifetime. In total, 427.5 million single-use period products are disposed of every year in Scotland.

This research project was commissioned by Zero Waste Scotland and funded by both Scottish Government and European Regional Development Funding.

The findings presented represent the views of participants as reported to us by the Progressive Partnership, and are not the views of Zero Waste Scotland or Scottish Government



Some 340,860 single-use period products are flushed down the toilet every day in Scotland.

Most disposable menstrual products are made of plastics and other synthetic materials, with many featuring plastic applicators. Most are also individually wrapped in plastic film and come in plastic film packaging.

This research was undertaken to support a Zero Waste Scotland communications campaign on reusable menstrual products to tackle a significant and little-discussed problem in our throwaway society. The aim is to cut waste and carbon emissions from single-use products and to educate the public and raise awareness that reusables are better for the environment than disposables and recycling.

Feedback was also received on proposed campaign options.

Final campaign creative can be seen at [zerowastepartners.org.uk/trialperiod](https://zerowastepartners.org.uk/trialperiod)

# Research objectives



The overall aim was to conduct research with consumers on reusable menstrual products to support a behaviour change campaign designed to encourage people to switch from single-use period products to reusable alternatives. Associated research objectives were to:

1: Understand consumers' attitudes to reusable period products

2: Understand current patterns of use in the period product market

3: Identify what would motivate – or discourage – people to switch from disposable period products to reusable alternatives

# Research methods: A staged approach



## 1) Evidence review

- Topline review of existing evidence on consumer behaviour and market trends, perceptions/attitudes, what could motivate people to switch
- This included a review of menstrual product provider websites and social media platforms
- **Identified evidence gaps to be met by the primary research**

*Full report has been provided separately, along with Mintel data*

## 2) Qualitative research

- 59 respondents
- 1:1, paired depths/triads, mini groups
- Mix of users/non-users of reusables
- Mix of socio-economic groups (SEGs), ages, period stage, environmental attitudes
- Female team of moderators
- Five locations - Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dumfries, Aberdeen & Inverness
- Included community organisations to engage with harder to reach groups
- **Used to inform quantitative survey design**

Qualitative results slides:



## 3) Quantitative survey

- Online survey of 1,015 people across Scotland
- Dynata online panel
- 16-55 year olds using menstrual products
- Loose quotas set for age group and SEG
- Data weighted to be nationally representative

Quantitative results slides:



# Qualitative sample



Area	#
Aberdeen	8
Dumfries	9
Edinburgh	15
Glasgow	19
Inverness	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

Age group	#
16-25	21
26-39	24
40-55	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

Socio-economic Group	#
ABC1	35
C2DE	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

Children	#
Have children	25
No children	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

Reusable product use	#
Users	17
Non-users	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

Ethnicity	#
White/White Scottish/White British	52
Black/African/Caribbean/Black Scottish/Black British	3
Asian/Asian Scottish/ Asian British	2
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	1
Other	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

*The qualitative sample also included five students.*

*We aimed to include representation from the transgender community through engagement with community groups, but unfortunately this was not possible.*

# Quantitative sample



Age group	Unweighted	Weighted
16-25	18%	<b>24%</b>
26-34	28%	<b>23%</b>
35-44	32%	<b>26%</b>
45-54	22%	<b>28%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

Period stage	Unweighted	Weighted
Regular periods	72%	<b>71%</b>
Temporary break	10%	<b>9%</b>
Peri-menopausal	17%	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

Have children	Unweighted	Weighted
Yes	53%	<b>52%</b>
No	46%	<b>47%</b>
Prefer not to say	1%	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

Socio-economic group	Unweighted	Weighted
AB	26%	<b>18%</b>
C1	35%	<b>31%</b>
C2	17%	<b>22%</b>
DE	21%	<b>27%</b>
Prefer not to say	2%	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

Region	Unweighted	Weighted
Central Scotland	8%	<b>8%</b>
Glasgow	15%	<b>15%</b>
Highlands and Islands	6%	<b>6%</b>
Lothian	19%	<b>18%</b>
Mid Scotland and Fife	9%	<b>9%</b>
North East Scotland	16%	<b>17%</b>
South Scotland	13%	<b>13%</b>
West Scotland	12%	<b>12%</b>
Don't know/not sure	<1%	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Prefer not to say	1%	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

NB: The main body of this report generally includes sub-group analysis based on current/previous use of reusable products. Demographic and attitudinal analysis is included in the 'target market' section.



A vertical olive-green bar is positioned to the left of the text.

# Current product use and drivers of choice

# Pads and tampons were the most commonly used disposable products among qualitative respondents; menstrual cups were the most used reusable option



- Focus groups and interviews included a mix of participants who used one type of menstrual product and those who used several types, either on different days depending on how light or heavy their period was, or to manage heavy bleeding (such as using both a tampon and a pad).
- Those who used reusable products were most likely to use a menstrual cup.
- In some cases menstrual cup use was supplemented by, or interchanged with, other products:
  - Some people used an alternative to the menstrual cup before their period if they thought it may be about to start
  - In some cases people used alternatives at the start or end of their periods when bleeding was lighter
  - Some people used pads or pantyliners as well as the menstrual cup when their periods were heaviest, in case of any leakage (this was also reported as something some women had done when they were first trying a menstrual cup)
- Products used alongside or interchangeably with menstrual cups included period pants and reusable pads, but also disposable pads and disposable tampons. Where women used a mix of reusable and disposable items there was some interest in replacing disposable products with reusable ones. However some people were comfortable using disposable products alongside their 'main' reusable option. They prioritised managing the different stages of their period with easily available products in a way they felt was most effective for them, over switching to a fully reusable option.
- A minority of women using reusable products used period pants or reusable pads exclusively. This included some women who had started doing so after pregnancy, having looked for different options following physical changes after childbirth.
- Women who used disposable products used pads or tampons, or a combination of both. Their reasons for using more than one product mirrored those of reusable product users: to ensure leakage prevention, depending on their flow, and in a few cases because they preferred different options for day and night time.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*I mostly use the cup, but I also have these pants, like reusable period pants, but yes, sometimes obviously I use tampons because I'm going around, I have them probably in my bag somewhere. Emergency tampons. So, I mix*

**User**

*Just towels.... It's just the only thing that I've felt comfortable with really*

**Non-User**

*I have just started using the menstrual cup - I've been using that with liners just to get the confidence*

**User**

*I use towels at night*

**Non-User**

*After the first couple of days, I'll just swap the tampon into a sanitary pad*

**Non-User**

*I use a menstrual cup as my main thing and if I'm having a heavier day then I reinforce with sanitary pads. They are just regular ones*

**User**

*My periods are quite heavy, so I actually feel that I would just have to be changing constantly if I didn't use tampons*

**Non-User**

# The primary influencers of people's initial period product choice were female relatives. Most participants had used disposable pads for their first periods



- Qualitative respondents included some women who lived outside Scotland when they started menstruating. Some of these women reported having initially used folded cloth to manage their periods, both because of access and cost issues. In these cases women had changed to disposable products once they had access to them and could afford the cost; this change was welcomed as offering them a much more effective option for leakage control and comfort.
- None of the women were living in Scotland when they began menstruating had used a reusable option as their first product.
- The majority of respondents had used pads when they started menstruating, with some saying that they considered tampons to be something you then progressed to.
- In the large majority of cases the primary influence on initial product choice came from female relatives, typically mothers, who were the most commonly cited sources of information about menstruation and practical advice related to this.
- Mothers generally told their daughters about the products they themselves used, giving them products they had supplies of rather than presenting them with a choice. Some participants said they had always used a particular product, and even brand, because this was what they had been introduced to by family members when they started menstruating.
- School was also an important information source for participants and some recalled having been given free products to try after talks about menstruation at school.
- Only a small minority of those interviewed remembered having been educated about reusable options when at school.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*I think I remember being told at school – here are pads, here are tampons, oh and here are cups – they were very much brushed over. But it wasn't till about fourth or fifth year. Too late. You had chosen by then*

**Non-User**

*When I first started my mum said that's what she used so she was like: 'You should start with this'*

**Non-User**

*When I first started my period my older sister said 'wear these' as she was the kind of person I went to. It's what you know so you just continue to use it*

**Non-user**

*When you start your period you go to your Mum or your maternal figure to kind of figure out what you're supposed to do. And so you naturally drift towards the products they have got experience of because they can tell you about them*

**User**

*I remember my mum just put the pack of pads in the bathroom and that was it. That was conversation over*

**Non-User**

*I don't really remember making a decision to be honest. I do remember someone came to our school when we were in first year at secondary school and sort of talked about tampons and demonstrated how to use them and gave a box away. But I don't think I used them initially. I think I used pads, probably from my mum*

**User**

# Effectiveness, convenience and comfort were key factors in choosing products, but most did not consider a wide range of options



- Participants said their choice of products was based on how those products met their personal needs, with an emphasis on effectiveness (specifically leak prevention), convenience and comfort. These factors were important to all participants, regardless of the types of product they used.
- Those using disposable products described choice as being between two options: tampons and disposable pads. Other products were not a ‘top of mind’ consideration. Tampons were associated with a more ‘hygienic’ experience by those who used them, while pads were more likely to be described in terms of their comfort, with some women saying they found tampons uncomfortable or difficult to insert.
- Choice was affected by the type of periods people had, with many saying they selected products based on their flow – but choices were typically being made within a product category. For example, participants would choose between pads of different lengths or thickness, or between tampons of different absorbency levels.
- Cost was an important consideration for some people, leading some disposable product users to choose own-brand products or to look for discounts. Again, people looked for the cheapest version of the product they chose to use, rather than the cheapest of the different products which were available.
- Several of the women who had chosen reusable products said they had looked into alternatives to disposable options due to frustration at the cost of period products, saying they resented what felt like paying a tariff for a natural bodily function.
- Reusable products were also generally chosen by people for whom environmental issues were a higher priority. Their choice was described in relation to awareness of issues around single-use plastics and waste going to landfill.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*The reason for tampons, I guess, is I feel a bit more in control of it, so you get more confident. There's not going to be any accidents or anything like that*

**Non-User**

*I go on a rant every month about tampons. I'm like 'I have to pay five pounds that I can't help!', and my mum's like 'Calm down'*

**Non-User**

*There is an environmental aspect for me, but it's more about the plastic content in things that I put inside myself. Even the standard tampons are quite high in plastic content*

**User**

*It sounds bad but I care more about comfort*

**Non-User**

*It's what you're told your two options are: tampons and pads*

**Non-User**

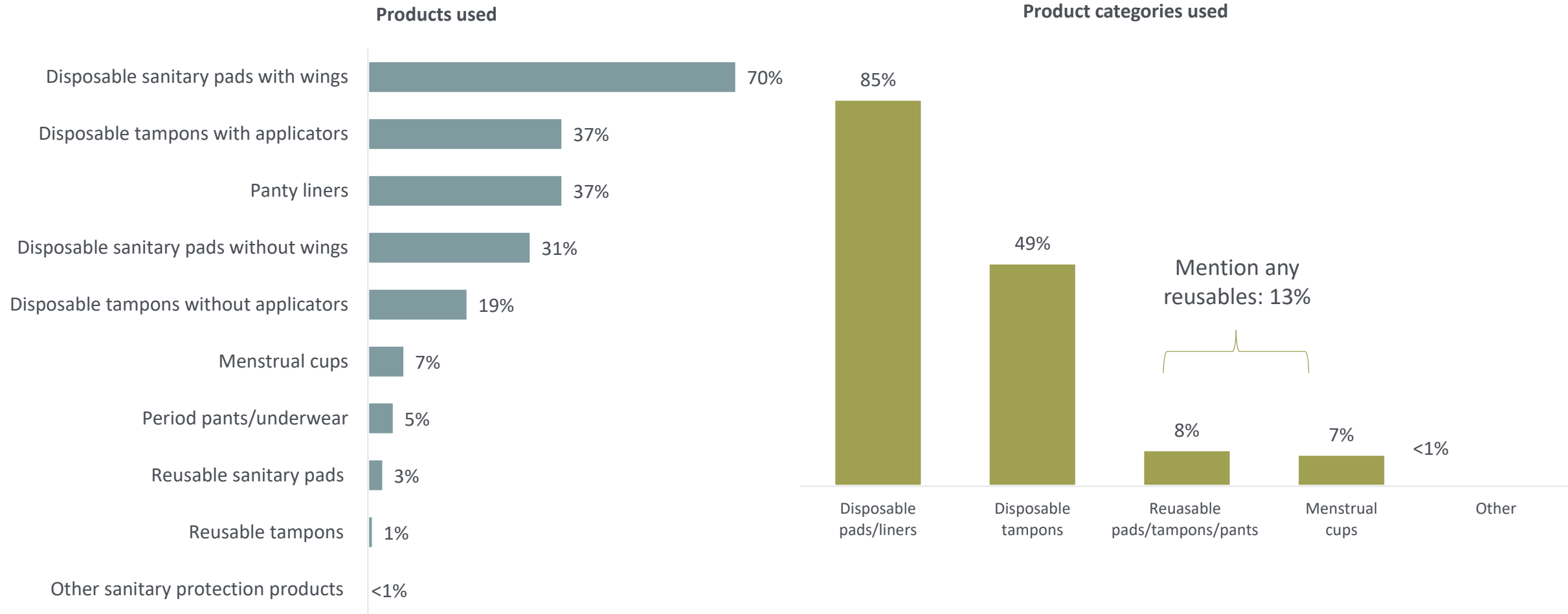
*It was the money incentive, and I do care about the environment*

**User**

*It's convenient to go and buy a packet of tampons sometimes, isn't it? And then you've got them and you don't need to wash them and do anything, you just chuck them away...*

**Non-User**

# Disposable products by far the most common – but 13% mentioned reusables

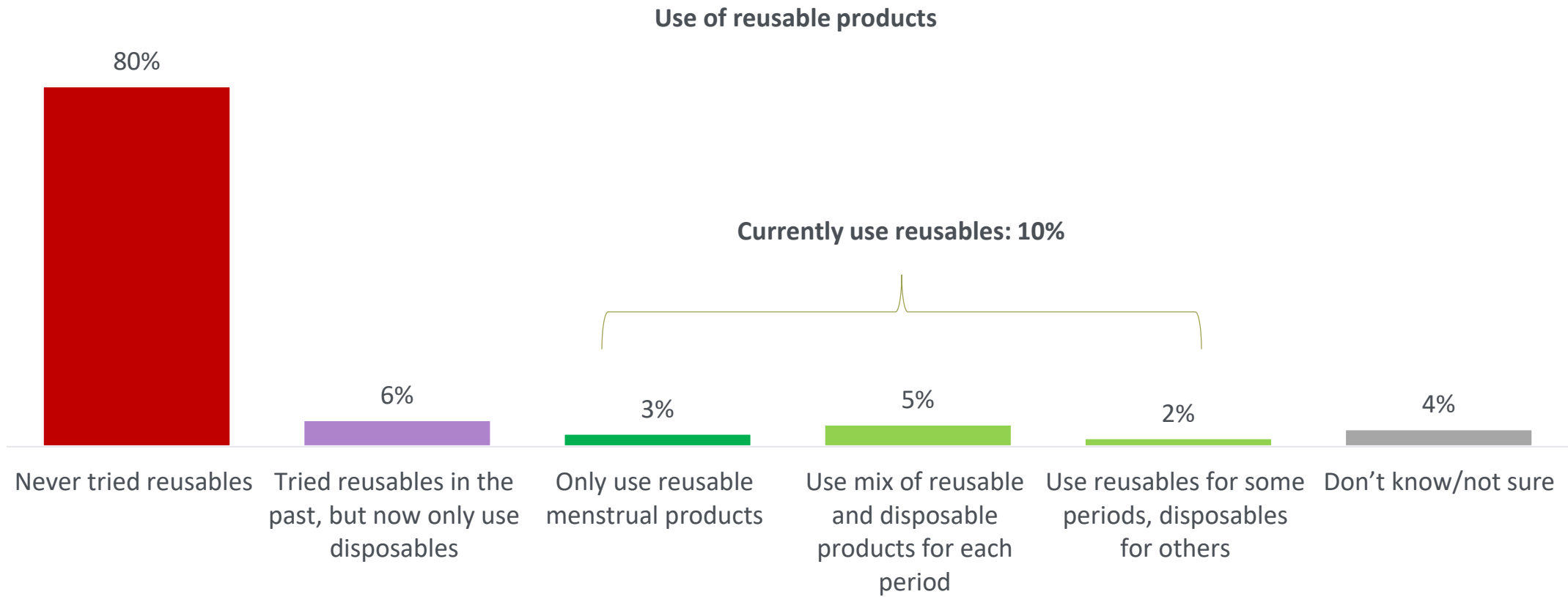


Q4. Which of the following menstrual products do you typically use? (Multicode) Base (all): 1,015) Note that this includes respondents ticking more than one option.

*Data is broadly comparable with Mintel's smaller UK-wide 2018 study, though a slightly higher percentage mention reusable products in this sample.*



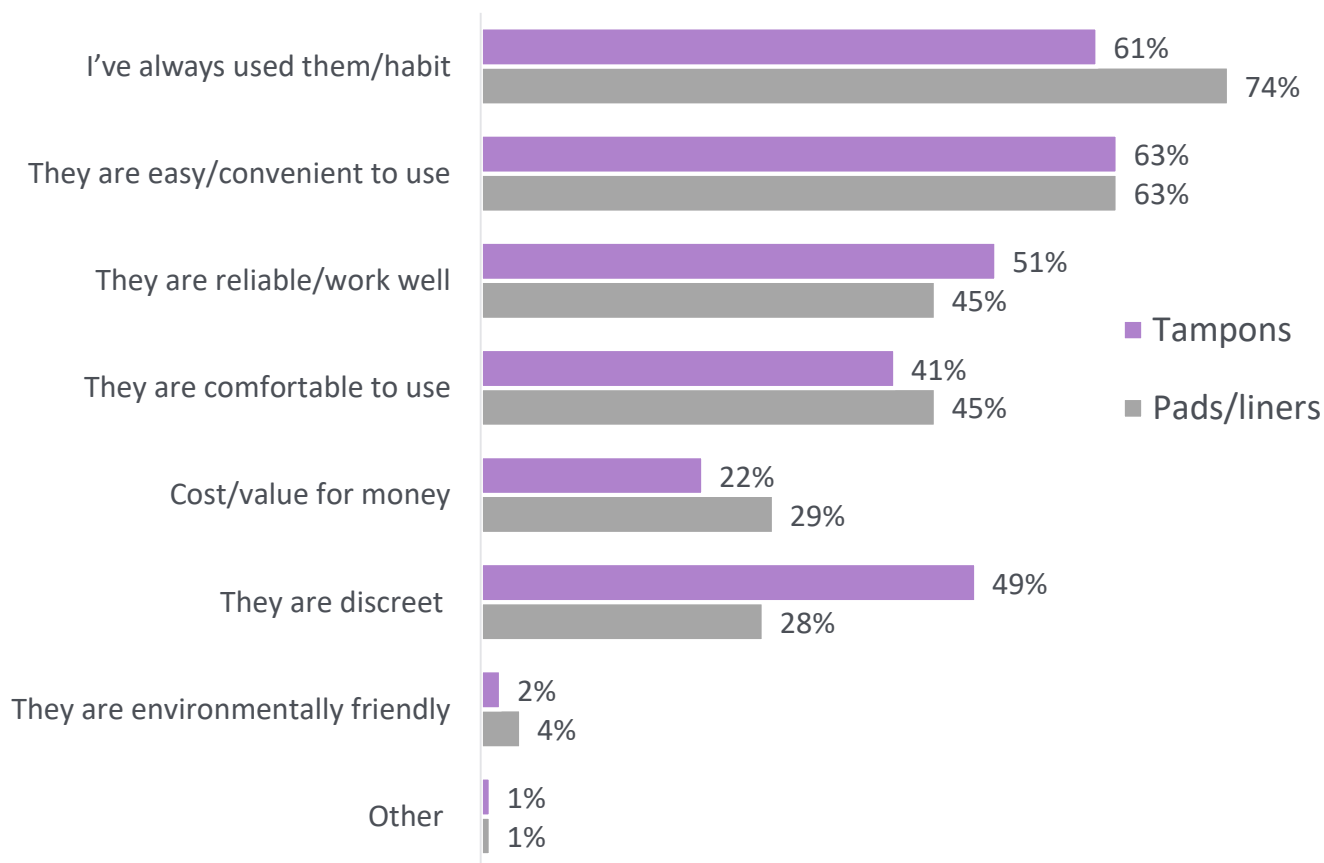
Most people (80%) have never tried reusables. But one in ten do use them (10%). Of those, just 3% use reusables exclusively



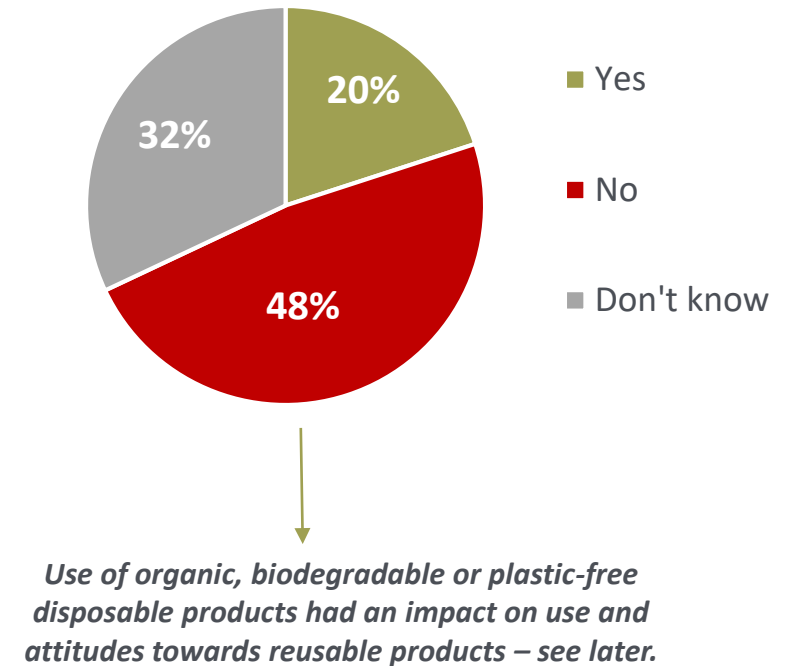


Most people use disposables out of habit, for convenience, reliability and comfort – and for tampons, discretion. A fifth use organic, biodegradable or plastic-free disposable products

Reasons for using (disposable products)

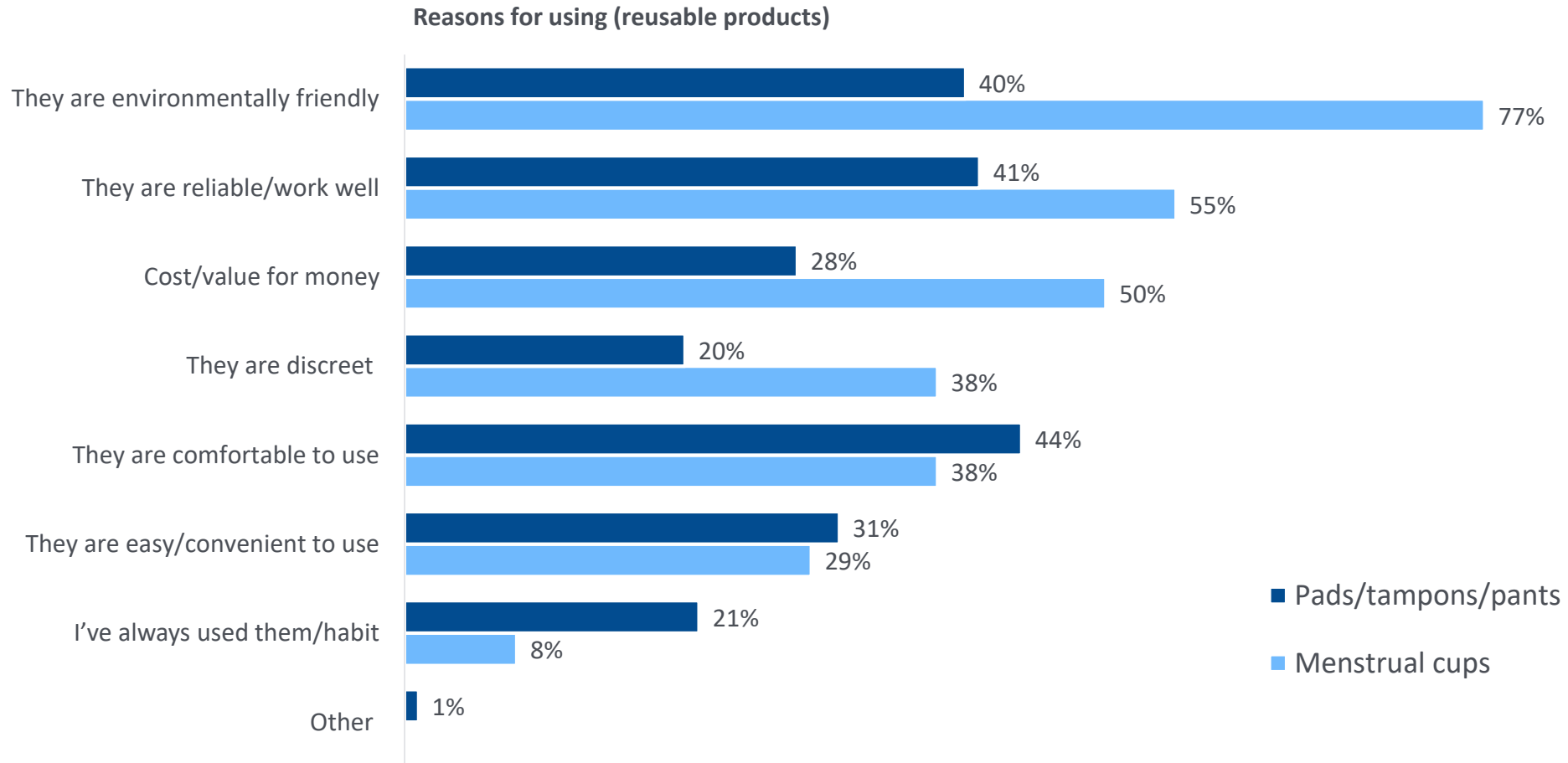


Use organic, biodegradable or plastic-free



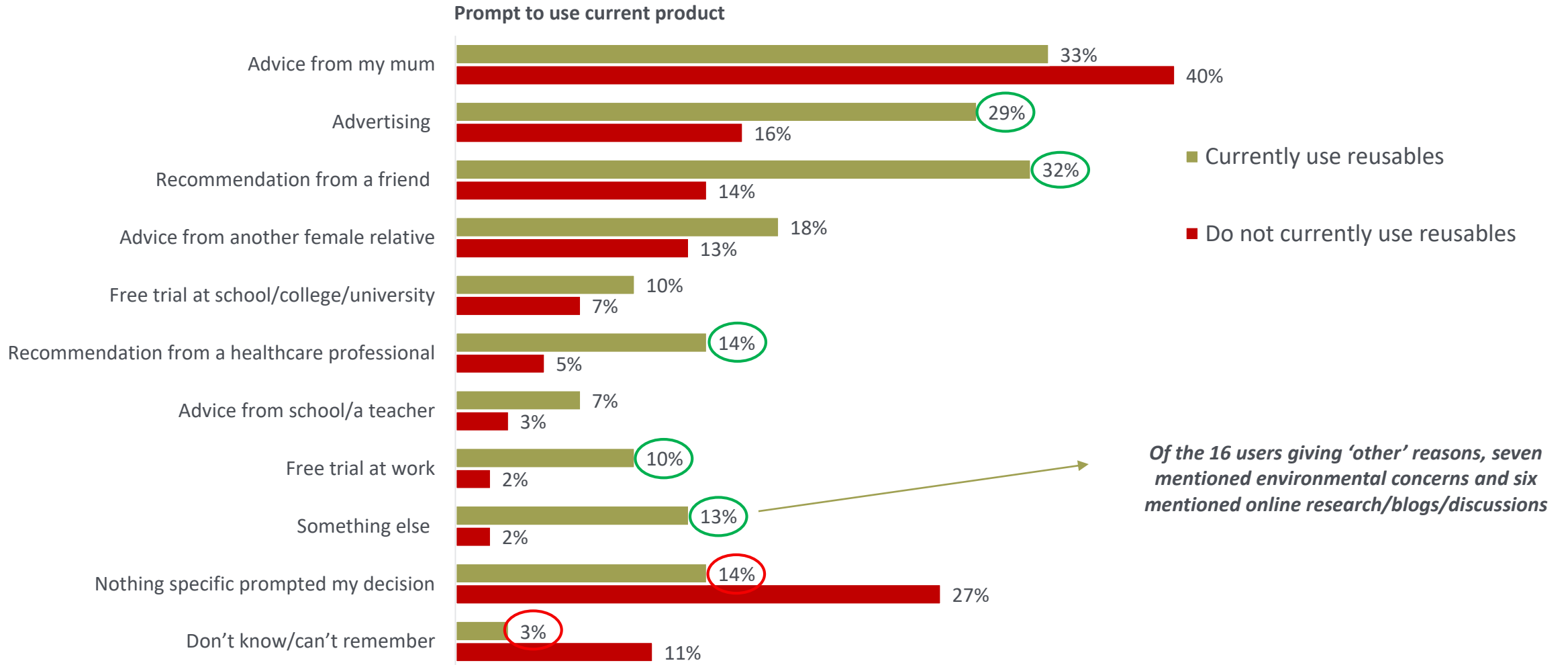


Reasons for using menstrual cups focused on them being environmentally-friendly, comfortable and good value for money. Users of the other reusables tended to mention comfort, followed by environmental reasons and reliability





Main prompts of product choice were advice from mums, advertising and recommendations from friends. Those currently using reusable products were more likely to mention advertising, recommendations from friends/healthcare professionals and free trials at work



Q10. What, if anything, prompted you to start using the products you currently use? (Multicode)  
Base (all currently using): 103; (all not currently using): 912



# Prompts to change product



# Unlikely to consider changing products often

- Focus groups and interviews revealed some changes in product use amongst women, for example switching between brands depending on discounts available, but changes in *types* of products used were rare. Most participants used the same product consistently. Buying these products was a habitual, ingrained behaviour, with women unlikely to spend time considering – or reconsidering – their choices.
- That said, a significant number reported that they had transitioned to tampons after initially using disposable pads (and some then stopped using pads completely). This change generally happened within a few years of starting their period and was related to reaching an age where they were making their own decisions or buying products themselves, or where they felt more confident managing their periods.
- Once settled on a product further changes were uncommon, suggesting the introduction of reusable products may be most effective at an early stage of menstruation.
- There were some other reasons for changing disposable products mentioned over the course of qualitative research, including:
  - Transitioning from pad to tampon use because of swimming or other sports activities
  - Changing products after having had children
  - Changes in periods, such as periods becoming heavier or lighter when approaching menopause.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*When I first started my period I used pads maybe for the first year. Then I went straight on to tampons. I think I was 15, 14. I think it was discretion for me. I was getting older and going out. I felt more comfortable wearing a tampon. I think it was my friends as well. They were like: 'Why do you wear pads when you can wear tampons?'*

**Non-User**

*It's actually hard for me to get my head around these because I'm so used to using the same thing*

**Non-User**

*I just stopped liking using tampons. I don't know. I just felt – I don't know if it was after I had my second child – I just didn't want to use them any more*

**Non-User**

*I think I was about 15 when I went onto tampons, just because of sports at school*

**Non-User**

*I just go straight for what I know because I have been using it for so many years so that's what I want... I'm not the type of person to stand around Boots and think, 'Oh tampons'. I'm just there for tampons. I'm not going to stand there and analyse the different boxes*

**Non-User**

*You go through a lot of experimentation when you are younger. In terms of what works for you and what doesn't. Now that I'm in my 30s I'm not in the mood to kind of try a bunch of different products. I know what works and it's fine*

**User**

# The change to reusables was not a decision that was taken lightly and typically included some hesitation



- Those who had changed to reusable products were often looking for options to avoid paying for disposable products every month. Several mentioned resenting this cost.
- However, considerations around cost also meant several women had been hesitant about buying a reusable option that was (initially) more expensive than what they were using without being sure it would work. As a result, making the change to reusable products typically involved an information seeking process (generally exploring brand websites and reviews online) . For many there was an interval between considering a reusable option and the actual purchase. This was especially true for menstrual cups, around which there was more hesitation about fit and size.
- A few participants had taken the step of trying reusable products because they had been given free or discounted products (often at university), reducing the financial risks of making the change.
- Unsurprisingly, awareness was also important in prompting the switch to reusable products. Hearing about these products through word of mouth from friends and family was noted by several users as having been a trigger to them considering reusables. Participants told us that those already using products described them as more comfortable than disposable products, as well as more cost effective and environmentally friendly than disposable options. A personal recommendation normalised the idea of reusable products and in particular how they worked in terms of concerns around how to change, clean or insert them.
- Most of those who were using reusable products also mentioned environmental factors in their decision. This was often described as a supporting rather than primary factor in decision-making, however.
- Concern about chemicals and toxins in disposable products was mentioned as another reason for making the change. One person also said they bought a menstrual cup to take with them while travelling to an area where they wouldn't be able to buy disposable products, as it wouldn't take up much space in their luggage. They had then continued to use it once back at home.



# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*For me it was about chemicals as well. I know there are a lot of chemicals in tampons and I don't need any additional chemicals in my life and in my body*

**User**

*One of my friends starting using a menstrual cup, and also my sister-in-law raved about hers... they were both like: 'It's actually much better and you can keep it in for longer'*

**User**

*I'm very into environmentally-friendly kind of things. I follow a lot of stuff on Facebook and Instagram and stuff and I think, especially recently, there's been a lot more about it.... I think the reason it's taken me so long is because there's so many brands and types. And I want to find the right one for me because even though they're like £20, £30 for me that's a lot of money to invest for it not to fit or not to feel right*

**User**

*Financially I was just thinking about the waste: tampons every month - and the sea, wherever they end up - but also the money. If you think about when I started my period when I was 13, 14, the amount of money that is profiting these companies. It's like a tax on women. So it was the environmental and financial side of it*

**User**

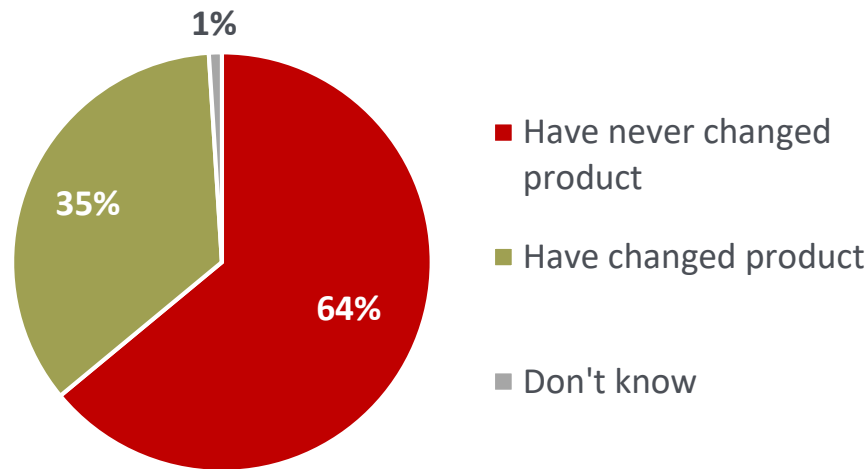
*I wanted to start using it for a long time but I thought it was very expensive... then I came across this offer on a website which was a menstrual cup basically for free and I just had to pay for the shipping, so that was very cool, so I went for that*

**User**



Survey results confirm that habits are well ingrained – two thirds of participants had never changed product type. For those who have changed, main drivers were cost/value, environmental concerns, comfort and changes in periods/flow

Ever changed type of product



Reasons given for changing product	%	Reasons given for changing product	%
Cost issues (expense, value, price, offers)	19%	Recommendations	4%
Environmental issues / waste	12%	Ease of use	4%
Comfort (including irritation/pain)	12%	Seeing advertising/information	4%
Changes in period/flow	12%	Hygiene/felt cleaner	3%
After childbirth/having children	10%	Wanted something more discreet	3%
Want to try new things	10%	Contraception caused changes in period	2%
Reliability/protection	8%	Convenience	2%
Natural progression from pads to tampons	8%	Sport	2%
Availability of products (for example when abroad/travelling /living elsewhere)	6%	Becoming sexually active/starting a relationship	1%
Health issues/safety	6%	Free trial	1%
Newer products became available	5%	Other	5%
<b>Base (all who changed product and provided a comment)</b>			<b>286</b>

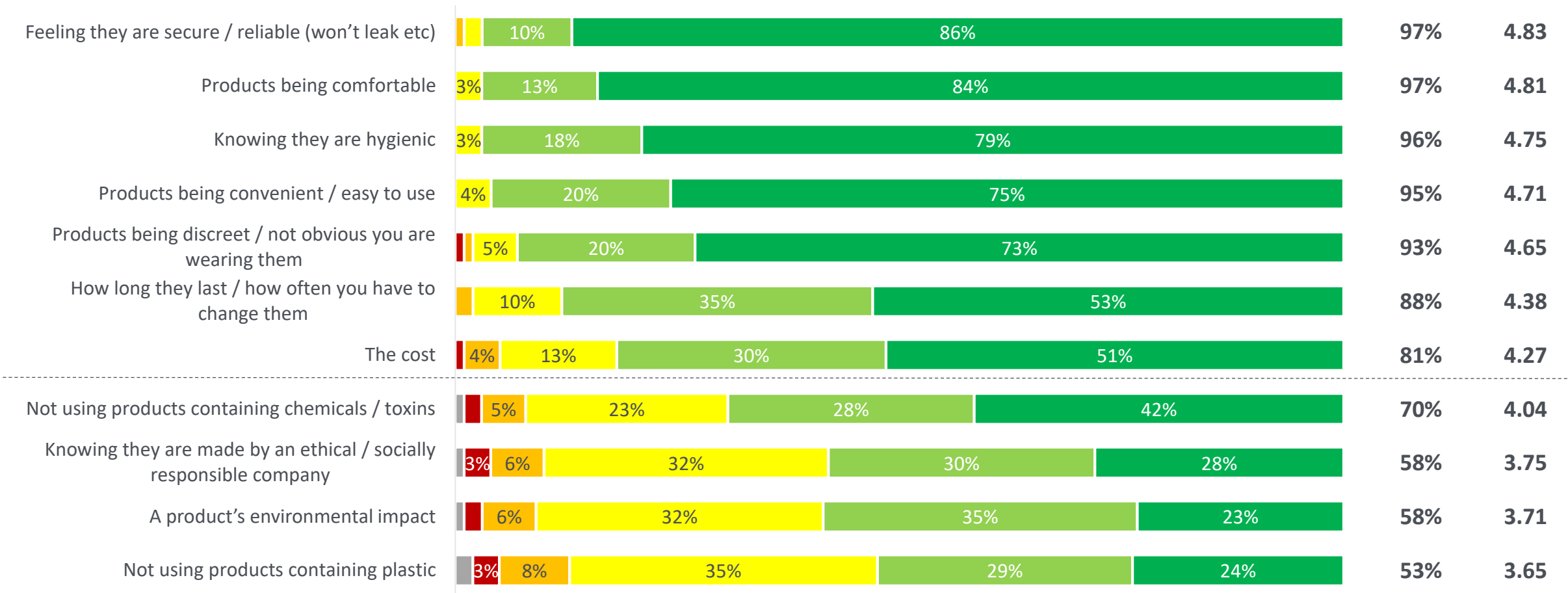
Q11. Have you always used the same type of menstrual products? By this we mean the type of product (such as pads, tampons, liners), rather than the brand you use.

Base (all): 1,015

# Environmental and social/ethical concerns are at the bottom of the list when choosing menstrual products – reliability, comfort, hygiene and ease of use are key



■ Don't know  
 ■ Not at all important  
 ■ Not very important  
 ■ Neither nor  
 ■ Quite important  
 ■ Very important  
 Net important  
 Mean score



Q13. How important are the following factors to you when choosing your menstrual products? Base (all): 1,015  
 Mean scores out of 5 (1=not at all important, 5=very important)

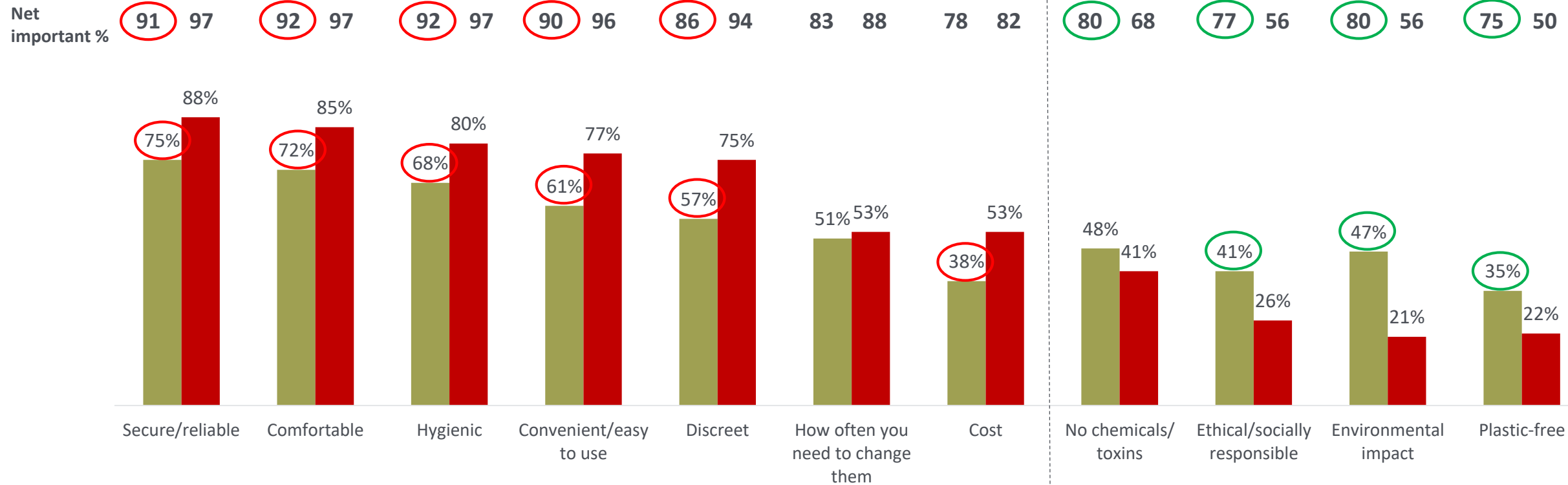


While users of reusables said environmental/social aspects were more important to them than non-users did, they still rated other personal/practical aspects as being more important (such as reliability, comfort and hygiene). Environmental benefits could help persuade people to try reusables, but potential users will need to be persuaded of these practical aspects too

**% saying very important**

■ Current use reusables

■ Do not currently use





# Awareness of reusable products

# There was little familiarity with reusable products among non-users



- In the qualitative research, awareness of reusable options was generally low among those using disposable products. Some were aware of reusable options but many participants had not seen these products before being shown them in focus groups or interviews.
- While products were not ‘top of mind’ for most, there was some recognition once participants were shown example stock – including some women who said they’d seen products when visiting people they knew, without realising what these were.
- There was some non-specific recall of having seen information about products in the media, including a few comments that there was an increasing number of articles relating to reusable products – and periods more generally – in mainstream media. A few respondents also recalled having seen advertising for menstrual cups on the backs of public toilet doors.
- Some women knew friends or family members who used a reusable product and people were often described as being advocates for reusables and actively recommending that they try them.
- Awareness of menstrual cups was higher than other products and the brand name ‘Mooncup’ was familiar to several participants.
- Levels of awareness of period pants and reusable pads was mixed and there was very little awareness of reusable tampons.
- Those who were aware of reusable options had generally not seriously considered using them themselves and had not looked into products further, however. They typically said they found the idea of reusable products unappealing and dismissed reusables as ‘not for them’.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*I never thought there were any options. It wasn't until my daughter said about the menstrual cup. I had never heard of it at all. I didn't really think there were any other options*

**Non-User**

*I've heard of the cup, it gives me the fear*

**Non-User**

*I didn't even know they existed*

**Non-User**

*I think that it's probably about what your friends are doing – the word spreads around. It's 'I use this' and 'Have you tried one of these?'. Just the fact that my daughter used one got me curious*

**Non-User**

*I think when I was in high school, there was a sticker on the door. There was a Mooncup sticker on the toilet door but in my head I just dismissed it all the time*

**User**

*When I go to Boots all I see is Tampax*

**Non-User**

*A woman at my work knows another nurse that she works with in another practice who uses a Mooncup. She said she was maybe going to try it and I was: 'Ew – no'*

**Non-User**

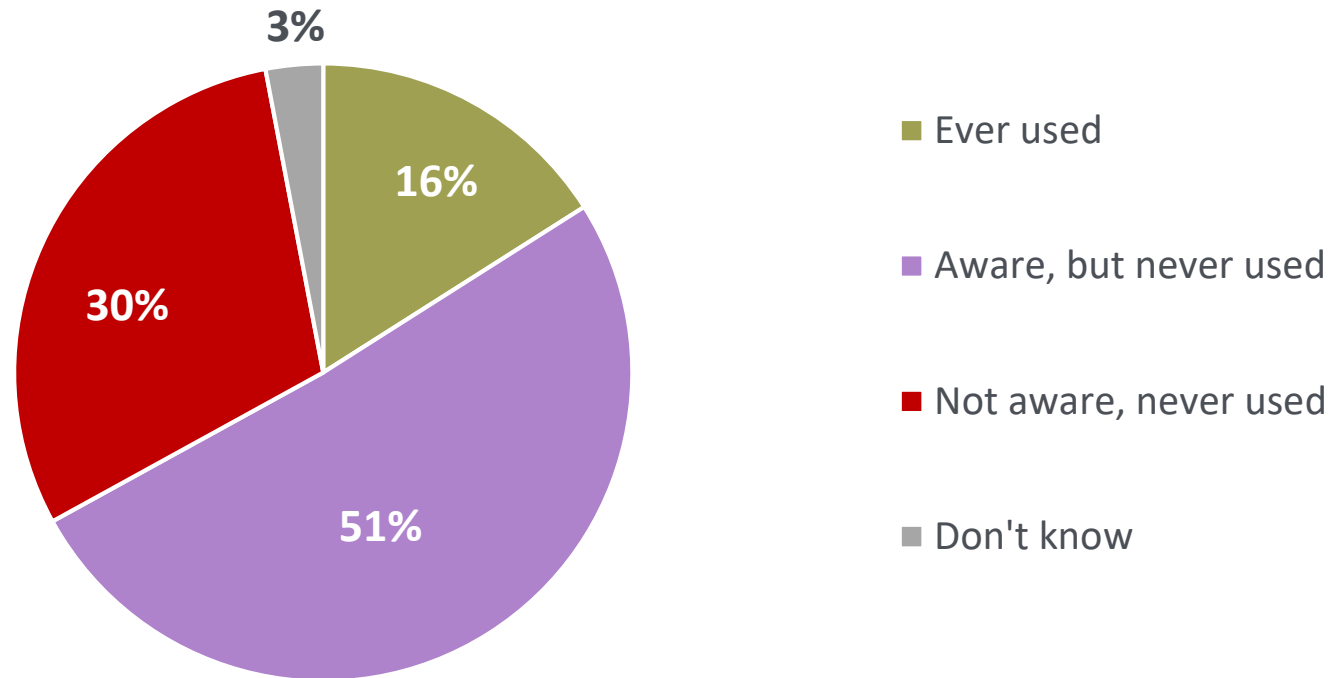
*There's been so much in the media recently about period poverty*

**Non-User**

# Three in ten participants had never heard of reusable menstrual products – while half were aware but had never used them



Awareness and use





# For users, awareness of reusables often came from recommendations, peers at university, or online



- Even among qualitative participants who were using reusable products, not all were familiar with all the different types of product available. Awareness of reusable tampons was particularly low.
- Those who had converted to reusable products had often become aware of them in the same ways as disposable product users, with several saying they had heard about products through friends or family.
- University was cited as a source of awareness for several women (with advertisements on toilet doors on campus mentioned again here). A few participants reported that free or discounted products had been made available to them through universities. In some cases information and awareness about products also came from university groups, such as women's groups, as well as a student run vegan cooperative.
- Users had also actively sought out information online to explore options in more detail and become more informed. Almost all had also bought the products they used online, with some commenting that most 'bricks and mortar' retailers did not stock reusable options, or had a limited range. This was borne out by the fact that none of those interviewed said their awareness of reusable products had come from noticing them being sold alongside disposable options.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*You have to really look for them to find them. Say you have your first period you wouldn't think I have all these options available to me. You would have to know someone who has used them*

**User**

*I had to go to special effort to order them online... it's just more effort than just going to the shop*

**User**

*I did an online search for 'washing of the Mooncup'*

**User**

*I heard about them from my students' association because we used to have a little shop*

**User**

*I had seen adverts for them in cubicle doors and the toilets in university so I was aware of them for a long time. I had always meant to try them*

**User**

*I saw someone else that I knew had bought reusable pads and was quite environmentally conscious and had posted it on Instagram*

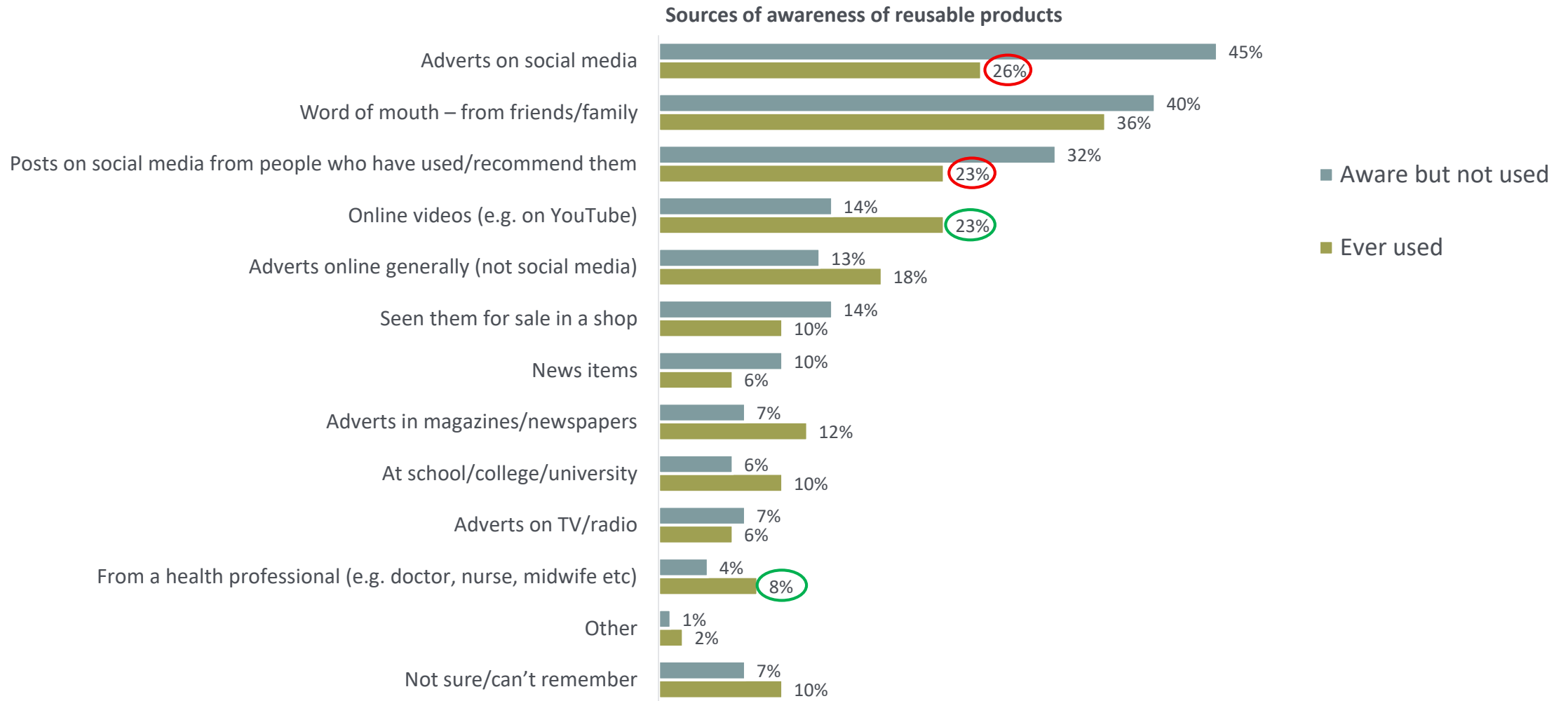
**User**

*In terms of reusable pads I have never seen them commercially available so I got mine off Etsy off someone who has made them and through my friend. You can't really go in to any shop and buy them and broadly speaking most people wouldn't be aware of them as they are not advertised anywhere. I'm not aware of any company that manufactures them on a large scale*

**User**



Main sources of awareness were social media and word of mouth – but those who have actually used these products were more likely than others to have heard about them via online videos and health professionals; those who are aware but never tried them were more likely to mention social media (advertisements or posts)

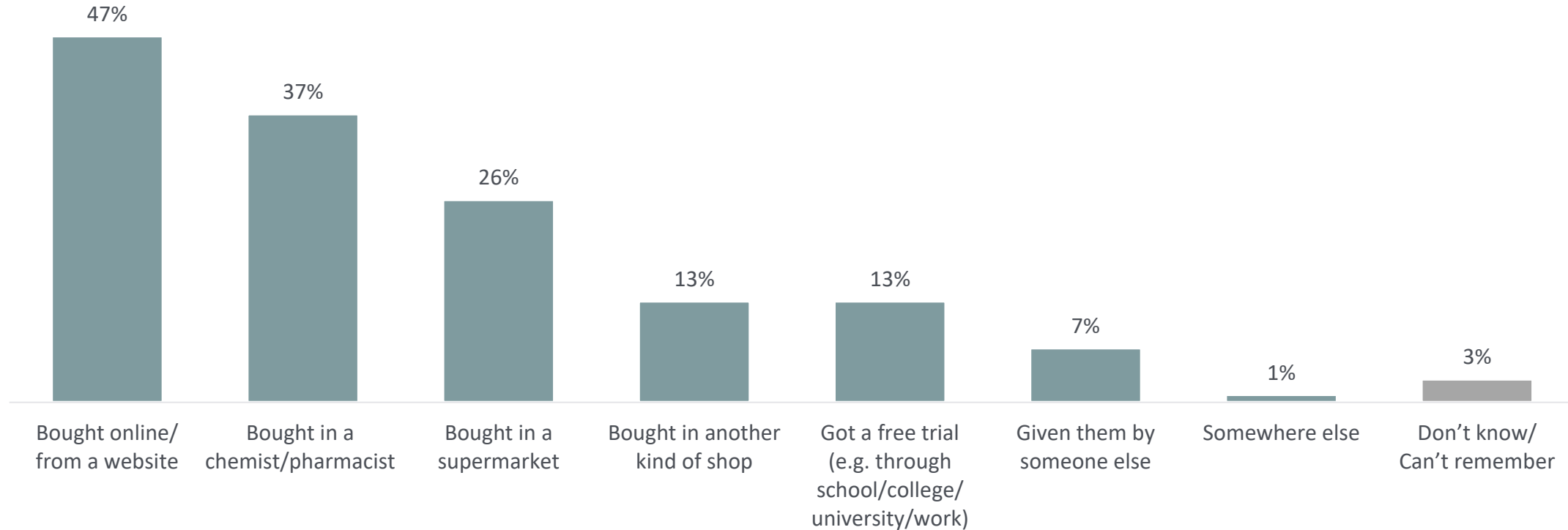


Q16. Where have you seen or heard any information about reusable menstrual products? [OR] When you first used reusable products, where had you heard about them? (Multicode)  
Base (all not used but aware): 513; (all who use/ever tried): 167 (From total sample of 1,015)

# Access to products is most often online, followed by buying in a chemist or supermarket



Where people have bought/accessed reusable products



A vertical yellow bar is positioned to the left of the text.

# Attitudes towards and responses to reusable products

# Initial responses to reusable tampons were largely negative. Period pants were considered expensive and there was some concern around the practicalities



- When shown examples of reusable products in the qualitative sessions, responses differed depending on the product type.
- Reusable tampons were the least preferred option overall:
  - Participants were not convinced these would absorb their period effectively.
  - Several people expressed doubts around ease of insertion, saying the tampons seemed too flimsy (even with an applicator).
  - Many felt they would be difficult and unpleasant to wash.
- Period pants received mixed responses from participants:
  - Some were surprised that the pants looked like ordinary underwear and considered them a ‘discreet option’.
  - Others (mainly younger participants) felt they were too big and not like the kind of underwear they would choose to wear.
  - The pants’ capacity for absorption was also questioned, leading to concerns about having to change pants when not at home. The idea of having to take off shoes and clothing in public toilets to change into a new pair, as well as having to carry the used pair with them, was off-putting for some.
  - The cost of period pants also meant they were dismissed by some participants, who felt that the number that would be needed per period made this option prohibitively expensive.
  - However, there was some positivity around using period pants as a supporting product option, for example to wear instead of a pantyliner or when periods were lighter.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*Epecially if you have to spend £200 [on pants] to start then that would be quite a barrier for some people*

**User**

*They're not for me to be honest. The pants are not discreet in the slightest. I don't own any pants that are that size for a start. That's quite a large pair of pants for me. That pair of pants is quite bulky*

**Non-user**

*I quite like the idea but I don't know how they would get it [the tampon] firm enough to go in. It's too floppy. I think the application could be difficult*

**Non-user**

*I feel reusable tampons creep me out. It's actually a lot different putting that inside of yourself because you don't know who has made it and in what conditions? Is it sterile?*

**User**

*What would you do with it if you needed to change it? Where would you put it? You have got to carry lots of stinky pants around with you*

**Non-user**

*The pants look fine, they look fairly comfy*

**Non-user**

*No, no, no!*

**Non-user**

*That [tampon] wouldn't last me five minutes..... That can't be absorbing*

**Non-user**

# Practical concerns re effectiveness and changing or inserting them were top of mind for participants when shown reusable pads/menstrual cups



- Reusable pads also had mixed feedback:
  - Some liked the soft fabric and thought this looked comfortable and compared well to disposable pads which could be rough or sticky.
  - The patterned/coloured fabric used for pads also received some positive feedback.
  - Again, there were doubts over the absorbency of pads which were considered less technologically advanced than disposable pads, which were perceived to be made with hygienic materials which were able to draw blood away from the top layer of the pad.
  - Many people asked how products should be washed and some did not like the idea of these going into their washing machine, feeling they were too dirty. There were comments that pads would need to be washed at high temperatures, also reflecting a feeling that they would be unsanitary after use.
  - Some people felt pads would need to be washed separately from other items, prompting comments that doing so undermined the status of pads as being environmentally-friendly as it would mean more washing machine use.
  - Overall, the aspect of reusable pads prompting the most discussion was what people should do with a used pad if they were not at home. The idea of carrying it with them was distasteful to many. Worst case scenarios in which others may see the used pad were discussed in horror.
  - Some people were unsure about how long reusable pads would last before they needed to be replaced.
- Menstrual cups also prompted practical questions from participants:
  - It was not immediately clear to some participants how the cup was meant to be positioned
  - People asked how to insert cups and there were some concerns about how easy this would be to do and about the risk of inserting the cup too far.
  - The look of the cup was commented on as intimidating by several women and there was some scepticism about the likelihood of the cup feeling comfortable once inserted.
  - Changing or emptying the cup was a major stumbling block for participants, and some thought it would only be suitable if you were at home. There was a perception from some that removing a cup may be noisy (some worried about it making a ‘popping sound’ that could be heard by others) which contributed to this being off-putting for people.
  - There was interest in the length of time cups could be worn before needing to be emptied; however, some doubted the claims made on packaging about length of use, thinking this was likely to be less long than stated.



# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*See in terms of these pads and things, don't they start to smell throughout the day? I have quite a heavy period and I only get six hours maximum out of a pad some days at the start of my period. At the end I feel stinking. Even having to change it, you still have to put that in your handbag or your schoolbag if you're a child*

**Non-user**

*It looks like it would be a little jacket for a guinea pig*

**Non-user**

*I actually think that would spill. It would be a bloodbath. It would be a massacre. How are you supposed to wear it at work? If you're in the toilet you would have to come out of the cubicle and go to the sink. If I saw someone next to me...*

**Non-user**

*It actually looks like it would be quite comfy. It looks like nice material. It would be nice feeling on you. Pads irritate your skin so it looks like it would be nice and soft on the skin*

**Non-user**

*I would be worried that it was going to pop. It could go down the toilet*

**Non-user**

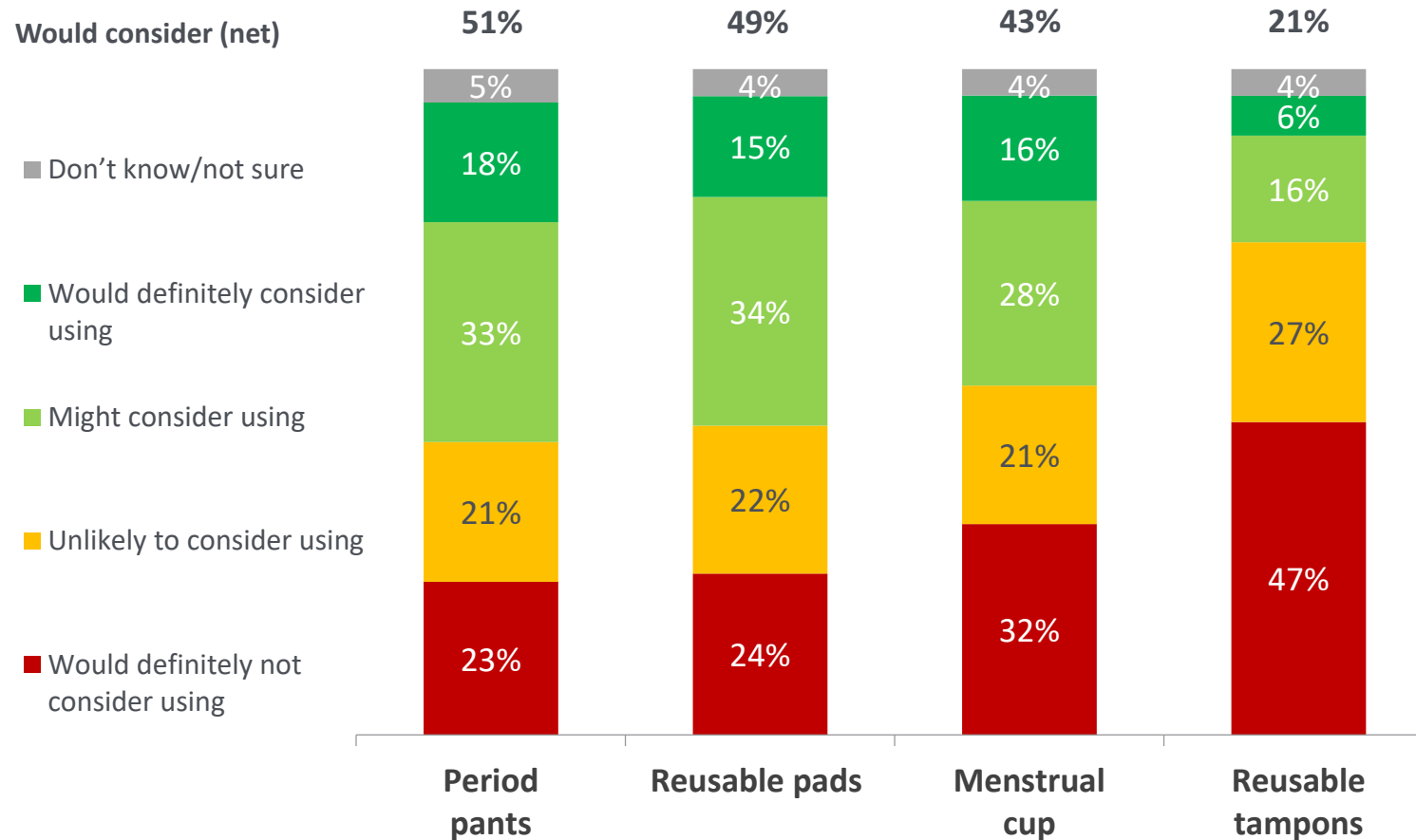
*The thought of even seeing blood and what comes out. It would be in your hand. The thought of washing it yourself and then reusing it. Imagine putting the same thing up you... Is that even comfy? What's this cup made of? How would you get the cup up there? So far up as well?*

**Non-user**

*If it lasts twelve hours day to day then it could be used for work but not nights out. I think it is more intriguing. I want to know what it's like*

**Non-user**

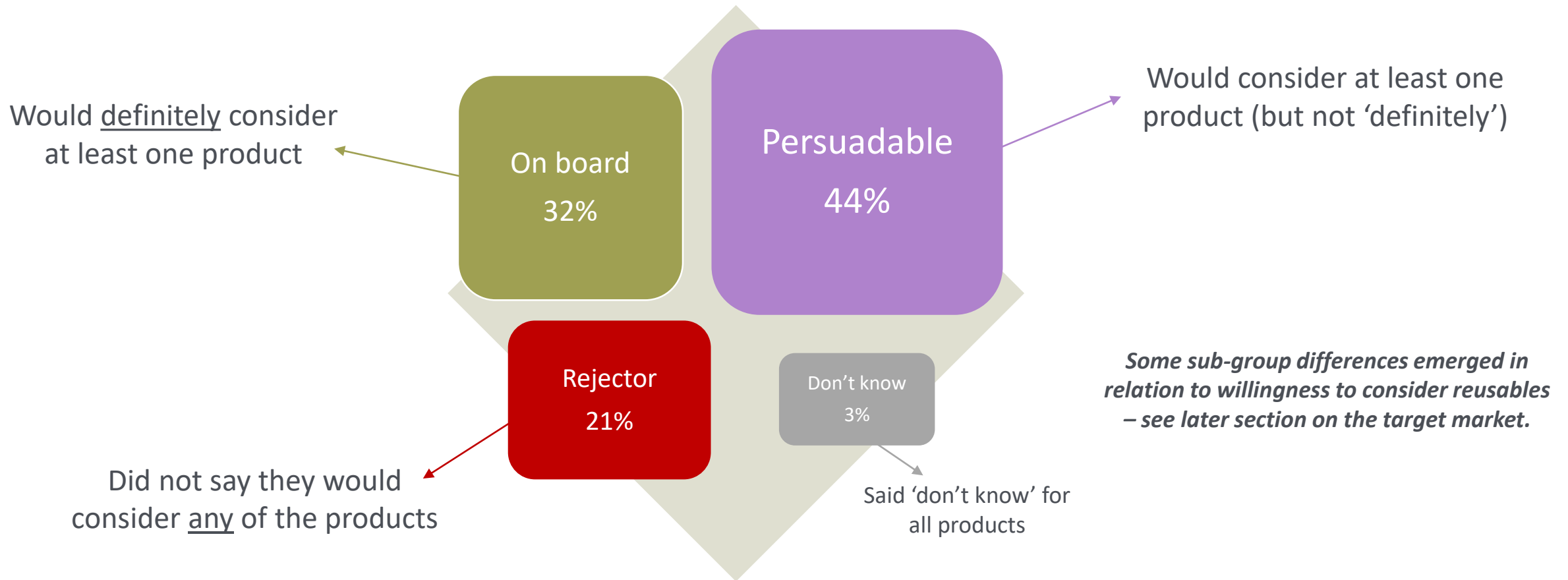
Those who had never tried reusables and were shown descriptions and images of the options were most likely to consider period pants (51%) and least likely to go for reusable tampons (21%)



Clear pattern in likelihood to consider different reusables by current product use:

Would consider...	Currently use disposable...	
	Tampons	Pads/liners only
Menstrual cup	57%	29%
Reusable pads	43%	54%
Reusable tampons	31%	9%
Period pants	47%	54%
<b>At least one product</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>Base</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>419</b>

The majority of those who had never used reusables were either on board or persuadable – around three quarters said they would consider trying at least one reusable period product, while a third said they would definitely give it a try



A note of caution: this is a top of mind reaction after reading short product descriptions. Discussion in the qualitative research, where there was more time for detailed consideration, suggested few people were persuaded to 'definitely' consider trying reusables - but this gives an indication that products would at least be considered, even if people would still have questions/concerns to be addressed.

What would motivate people to switch?

# Personal factors were the primary concern in considering switching to reusable products



- In considering the change to reusable products, personal factors were the primary concern for the women we spoke to in the qualitative research.
- Even those with high levels of environmental awareness, or who said they resented paying for period products, wouldn't consider a product they did not believe would manage their period effectively or be convenient to use, comfortable and hygienic.
- Those already using reusable products described having had questions about the practical experience of the products before switching that mirrored those asked by non-users, including:
  - How long products could be worn and their absorbency
  - How to deal with changing products and how to wash them
  - How to choose the right shape and size of menstrual cup, how to insert and remove it, queries about the comfort of wearing the cup and what to do in case of problems
- Users had sought knowledge and understanding online to answer these questions, reading articles and looking at reviews and YouTube videos. This stage provided necessary reassurance that encouraged women to make the change, and it was noted that a significant amount of information was available online. However, the decision to switch was often built up to slowly.
- In focus groups in which there were a mix of women using disposable and reusable options it was interesting to note that user advocacy was highly effective in persuading those who used disposable products that reusable options may be worth considering. Mixed groups included participants who used a menstrual cup alongside those using disposable pads and/or tampons. Cup users influenced opinion by relaying positive experiences where using a cup was described as offering a better personal experience than disposable options (such as being able to wear a cup for up to 12 hours, even if flow was considered heavy; not being aware of the cup once inserted and as a result not feeling as though you were on your period; and in some cases feeling that periods were less heavy or that cramping was reduced since using the cup).

# Cost and environmental considerations were secondary factors in considering reusables



- Menstrual cup users were also effective in normalising the idea of the cup and providing examples of how non-users' concerns were overcome in practice. For example, explaining that removing the cup was not generally very messy, or saying that they took a bottle of water with them so they could rinse the cup in a toilet cubicle if they needed to change it during the course of the day when not at home. Users were candid about the practicalities of cup use (advising, for example, that there had been some initial discomfort before they had got used to positioning the cup correctly). Non-users were receptive to these frank accounts, suggesting real life experiences from peers has the potential to be a motivating influence.
- Cost had played a part in the decision to switch for several of those who used reusable products. It should be noted, however, that many disposable product users accepted paying for monthly products as an unavoidable reality, particularly older participants who had been doing so for longer. Few were actively seeking cheaper or more cost-effective options.
- Where cost was a greater consideration, women were more likely to be receptive to reusable products (though period pants were less likely to be included in this) if they were convinced of a product's effectiveness. Without that certainty, buying them was considered a potential – or likely – waste of money.
- Almost all of those involved in the qualitative research said they used some reusable products (other than period products) in day to day life, such as reusable coffee cups or bags. There was general awareness of environmental issues such as single-use plastics, but awareness of the composition and environmental impact of disposable period products was lower. Generally, products being environmentally-friendly was seen as a benefit. However for most people this was not a high priority in decision making, though it supported or reinforced positive opinions of reusable products for participants who used them, or those who considered them to be of interest. ***See also the later section on environmental attitudes and behaviour.***

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*Not knowing whether they would work, that's why I didn't do it straightaway when I was a teenager. I sort of forgot about it for a while as you get into a habit. How easy is it? How much are you in a space where there is a sink opposed to a cubicle that is set up at your work?*

**User**

*It's more convenient for me than changing tampons every four hours and things. You can keep it in all day*

**User**

*I think for me it was an added benefit I wasn't going to be creating waste*

**User**

*I think it's important to focus on easing the concerns that people might have, like what if it leaks? What if I don't like it and I waste my money? Like the concerns that I had before buying it*

**User**

*You have explained it and it is actually not that scary*

**Non-User (to a User)**

*I actually did a quiz online. So it took into account your measurements and your daily activities because I do a lot of stuff at the gym and I'm quite active, so it took into account all that kind of stuff*

**User**

*Financially I was just thinking about the waste: tampons every month and the sea, wherever they end up, but also the money. If you think about when I started my period when I was 13,14, the amount of money that is profiting these companies. It's like a tax on women. So it was the environmental and financial side of it*

**User**



A free trial to test products themselves was by far the most likely way to prompt non-users to try reusables, followed by more information about various aspects of reusables (though one in ten said they were not persuadable)

What might prompt you to try reusable products

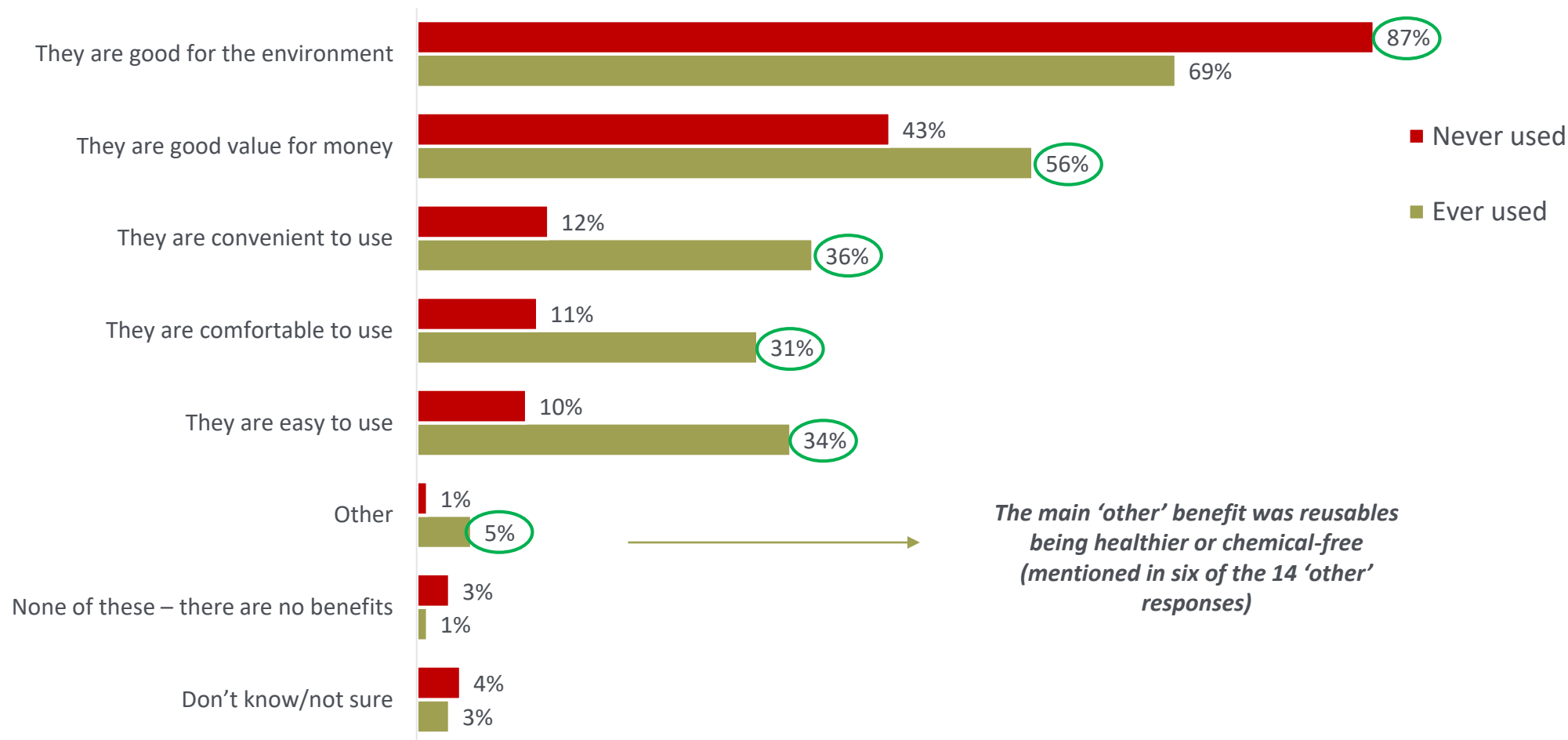





Environmental benefits were most often mentioned – but users were more likely to mention value, convenience, comfort and ease of use than non-users – so these benefits could be highlighted to encourage use



Benefits of reusable products





# Barriers to switching



## Main barriers were: concerns about contact with period blood and hygiene, practical queries on use and lack of awareness of products

- A range of barriers to switching to reusable products were mentioned in the qualitative research.
- To consider their use, many first had to overcome an initial distaste for the idea of handling and washing bloodied products with many thinking of this as unhygienic and 'gross', and mentioning concerns about mess and smell.
- Perceptions around lack of hygiene were related to period products being in a machine wash with other items. Many women considered items with period blood on them to be too dirty to mix with others or found this distasteful.
- One Muslim participant did not like the thought of washing period products with items of her family's clothing that may then be worn to prayer. This concern related to women being excused from prayer when menstruating as well as the general emphasis on cleanliness in preparation for prayer meaning that clothing stained with any type of blood would not be worn to prayer. She did not like the idea of washing these products separately either as it was not an eco-friendly option. While she said rinsing products and using a wash bag to keep them separate would alleviate this to some extent, she felt she was still unlikely to choose these products.
- Practicalities relating to emptying menstrual cups and changing pads or pants when not at home were off-putting for many women. Their concerns around this were again based on hygiene, smell, and a desire for products to be discreet and not seen by others. For example, several women mentioned they were put off by the idea of emptying a menstrual cup in a public bathroom with no sink and then having to wash their hands in front of others.
- Low awareness of reusable products was also a barrier to their use, with participants reporting little exposure or access to reusables. Alongside this there was also low awareness of the composition and environmental impact of disposable products, which contributed to limited understanding of product options.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*I can't imagine emptying a (menstrual) cup... Imagine being on a night out and having to empty it. Where would you clean it? How would you clean it? Would you empty it? I don't know. There's so many questions*

**Non-user**

*I don't really want to put that in with the rest of my clothes but that means you're going to have to wash that on its own which in itself is bad for the environment*

**Non-User**

*For me it's always about the worst case scenario. In my head I think surely this can get stuck*

**User**

*I think you would need to be quite comfortable with your body.... You can't really be squeamish or anything*

**Non-User**

*I had no idea that there were chemicals in a tampon until today, which obviously makes sense. I don't think we were ever educated. I think if someone was to come to me and say that they had x, x and x and it does this to your body, I honestly think that would make me think about it more.*

**Non-User**

*I wouldn't want to wash that. I just think you would feel unhygienic... it's like a nappy*

**Non-User**

*There is quite a lot of work involved in this. There's more washing and you need to plan ahead so you have got them all washed and cleaned for the next cycle. And what if you get caught short or you forget about it? It's a bit more drudgery around menstruation again. It's not like the Bodyform thing where you are roller skating or anything like that. There's more washing to do. It's sort of putting women back in the kitchen*

**Non-User**

# Doubts about product effectiveness, feeling products were ‘not for them’ and hesitation around the cost of making the change were also barriers to switching



- For all reusable products, there was some scepticism about the ability of these unfamiliar items to absorb or hold enough blood. Many participants assumed these products were unlikely to be effective.
- A high proportion of women described themselves as having very heavy periods, and were likely to assume reusable options would not be effective in managing their flow. Some of the products used to prompt discussion contained estimates of how much blood they would absorb or hold, and those who said they had heavy periods were not convinced that the protection offered would be enough – though some said they may be suitable for ‘others’.
- There was some stereotyping attached to reusable products, which were not considered mainstream and were seen as being the province of ‘hippies’ and ‘vegans’, with some women dismissing them on this basis of being ‘not for them’.
- Initial cost was also a barrier. The idea of potential savings was undermined by the uncertainty of whether products would fit, work and be comfortable. Participants considered the value of reusable products, weighing up how long products were likely to last before they would need to be replaced and how many they were likely to need to buy in total to determine whether they felt reusables may be a cost-effective option.
- Some had started using reusables as a result of a free trial at university and had become advocates as a result. A free trial was an attractive proposition to participants. Work trials were attractive to those working in large institutions, such as schools, banks and offices. However, those working for smaller companies and in environments where toilets were often mixed gender were less enthusiastic.

# Verbatim comments from qualitative research



*It's a balance with being cost-effective as well. I probably wouldn't notice a couple of pounds here and there buying stuff but then if somebody said to me 'Go and buy this for £25' I would notice that more and probably would be less likely to purchase it then based on the initial outlay*

**Non-User**

*It seems like a good idea but I don't know if personally I'd use it*

**Non-User**

*I think definitely for me the biggest fear would be that they don't work*

**Non-User**

*I would be interested to know what's their [pants'] lifespan? Would they become less absorbent over time?*

**User**

*I wouldn't pay £20 or anywhere near that for a pair of [period] pants because you can get a box of liners for a pound*

**Non-User**

*My manager and her sister are vegan so they use the cup thing*

**Non-User**

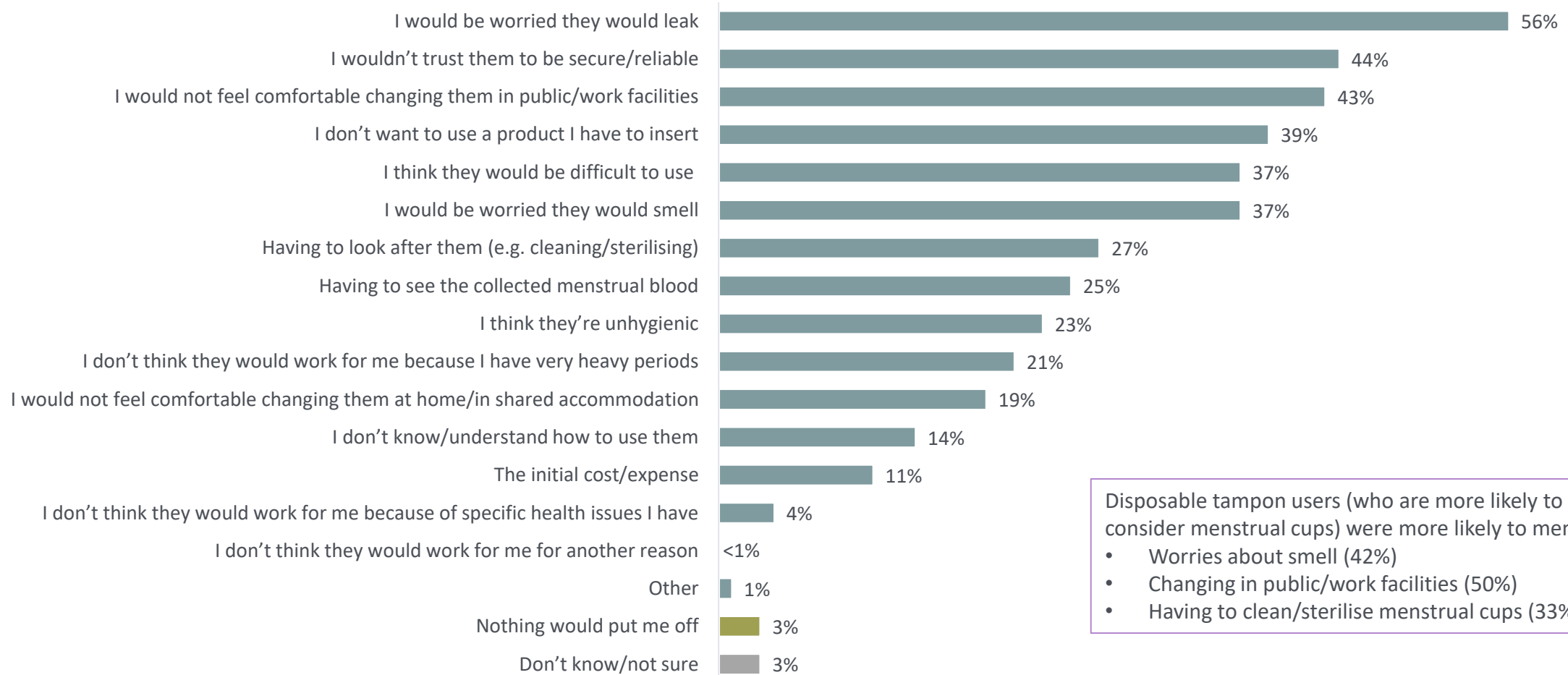
*Maybe it would be something my daughter would consider*

**Non-User**



# Main barriers for menstrual cups were concerns about leakage and reliability, and changing them in public facilities. Only 3% had no concerns about using these

What would put you off using menstrual cups



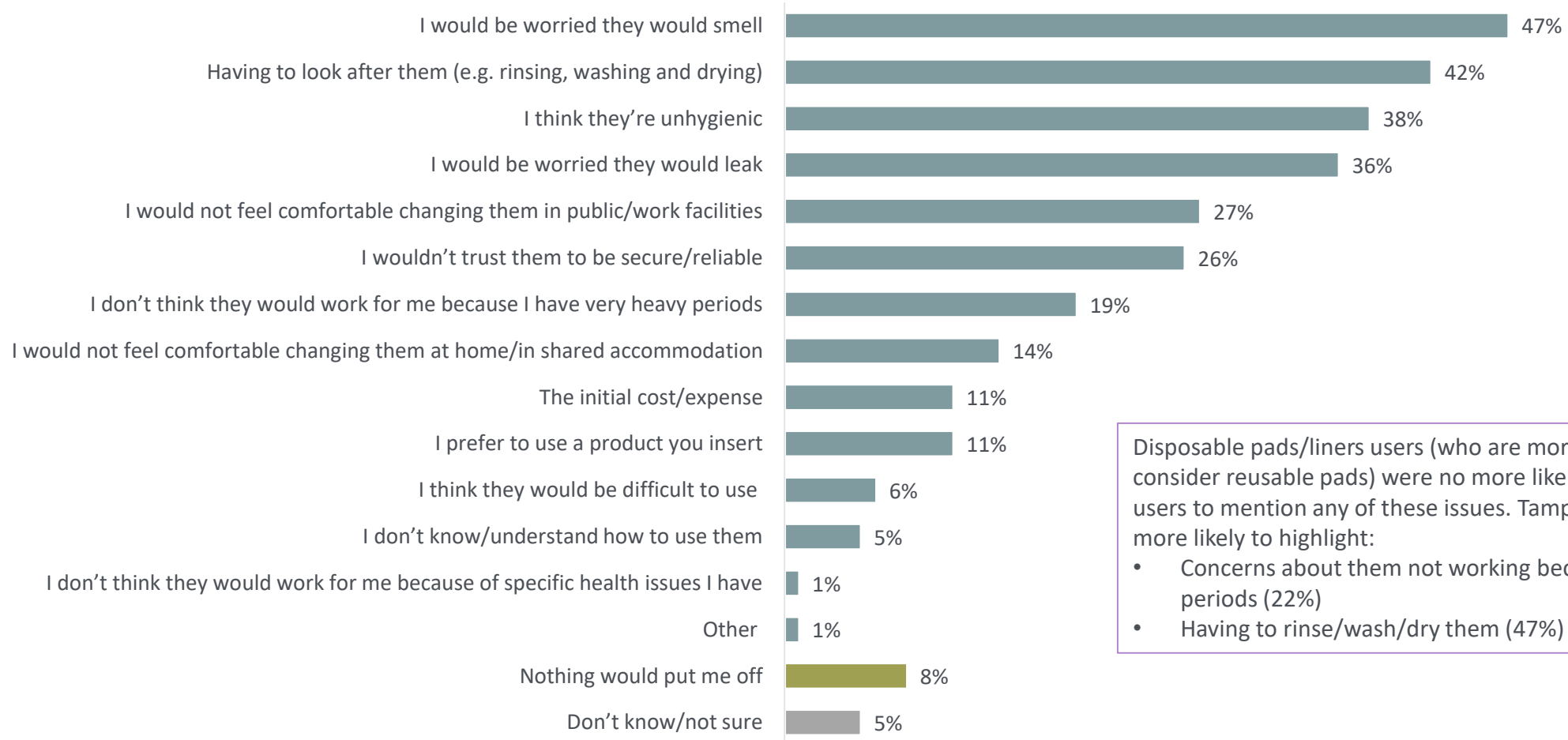
Disposable tampon users (who are more likely to consider menstrual cups) were more likely to mention:

- Worries about smell (42%)
- Changing in public/work facilities (50%)
- Having to clean/sterilise menstrual cups (33%)



Main barriers for reusable pads were worries about them smelling, having to rinse/wash/dry them, and concerns about hygiene and leakage. However, nearly one in ten (8%) said nothing would put them off

What would put you off using reusable pads



Disposable pads/liners users (who are more likely to consider reusable pads) were no more likely than tampon users to mention any of these issues. Tampon users were more likely to highlight:

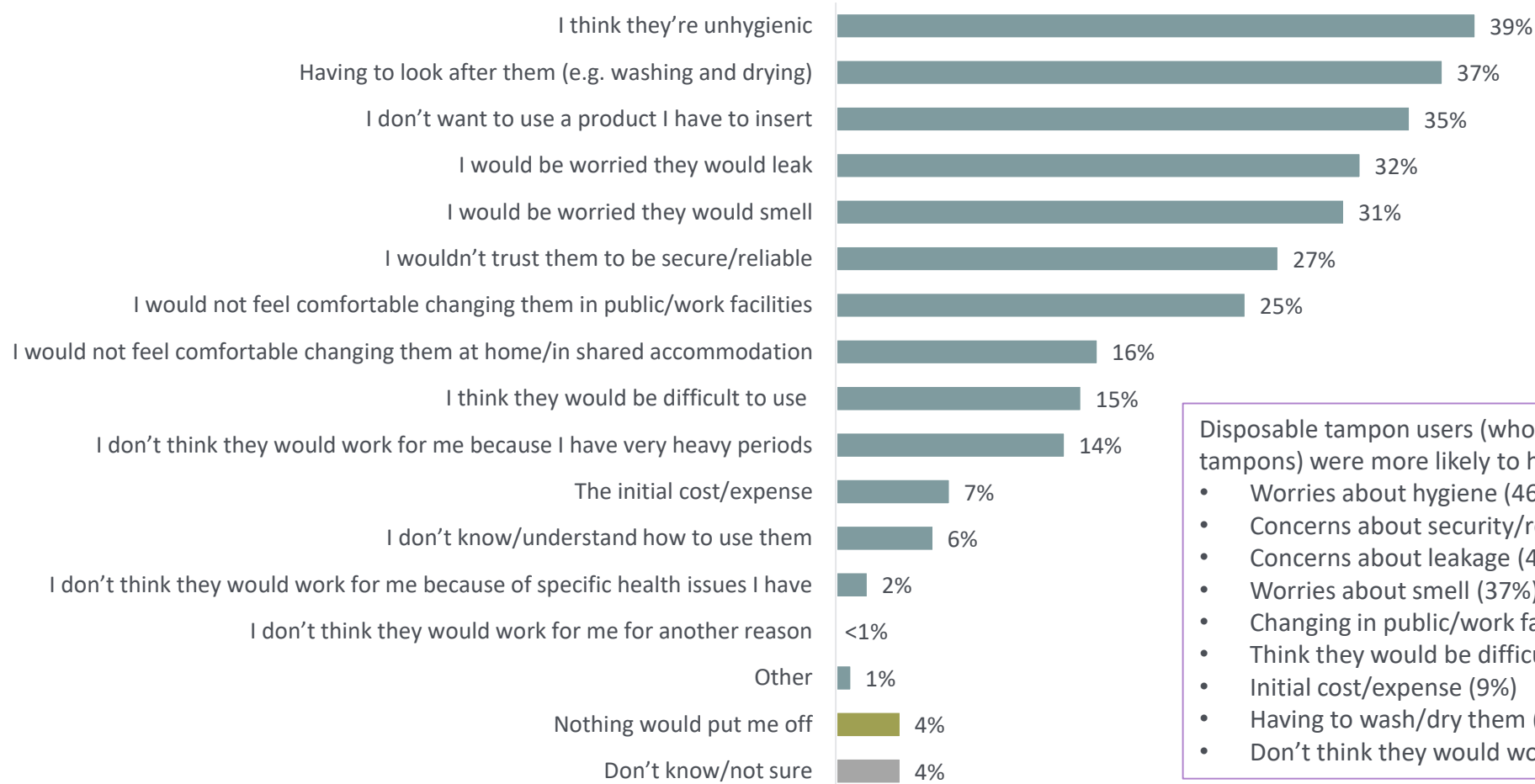
- Concerns about them not working because of heavy periods (22%)
- Having to rinse/wash/dry them (47%)





Main barriers for reusable tampons were feeling they were unhygienic, having to wash/dry them, not wanting a product you insert, and worries about leakage and smell. Only 4% said nothing would put them off

What would put you off using reusable tampons



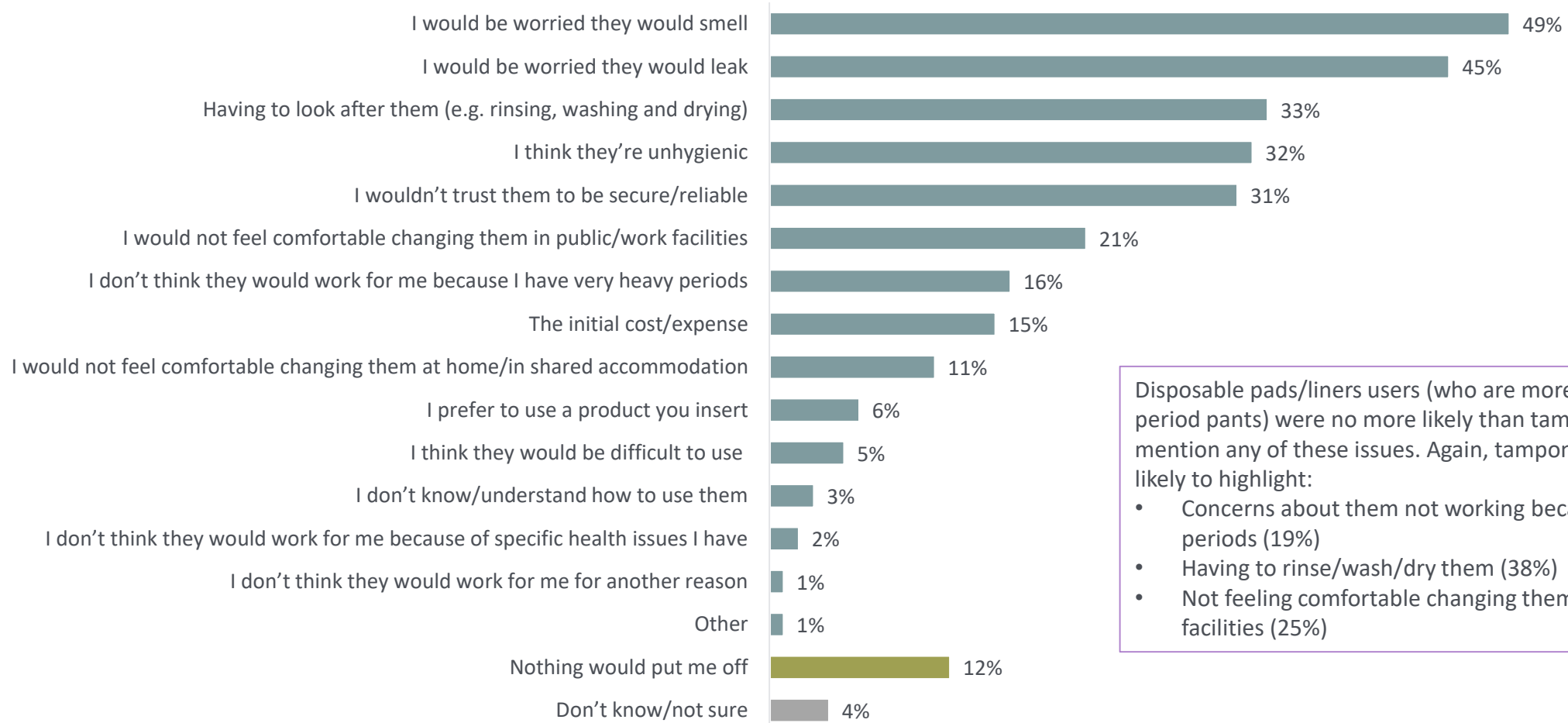
Disposable tampon users (who are more likely to consider reusable tampons) were more likely to highlight:

- Worries about hygiene (46%)
- Concerns about security/reliability (32%)
- Concerns about leakage (40%)
- Worries about smell (37%)
- Changing in public/work facilities (34%)
- Think they would be difficult to use (18%)
- Initial cost/expense (9%)
- Having to wash/dry them (52%)
- Don't think they would work because of heavy periods (19%)




Main barriers for reusable pants were concerns about smell and leakage, followed by having to rinse/wash/dry them and worries about hygiene and reliability. But 12% said nothing would put them off using these (the highest of all the products)

What would put you off using period pants



Disposable pads/liners users (who are more likely to consider period pants) were no more likely than tampon users to mention any of these issues. Again, tampon users were more likely to highlight:

- Concerns about them not working because of heavy periods (19%)
- Having to rinse/wash/dry them (38%)
- Not feeling comfortable changing them in public/work facilities (25%)

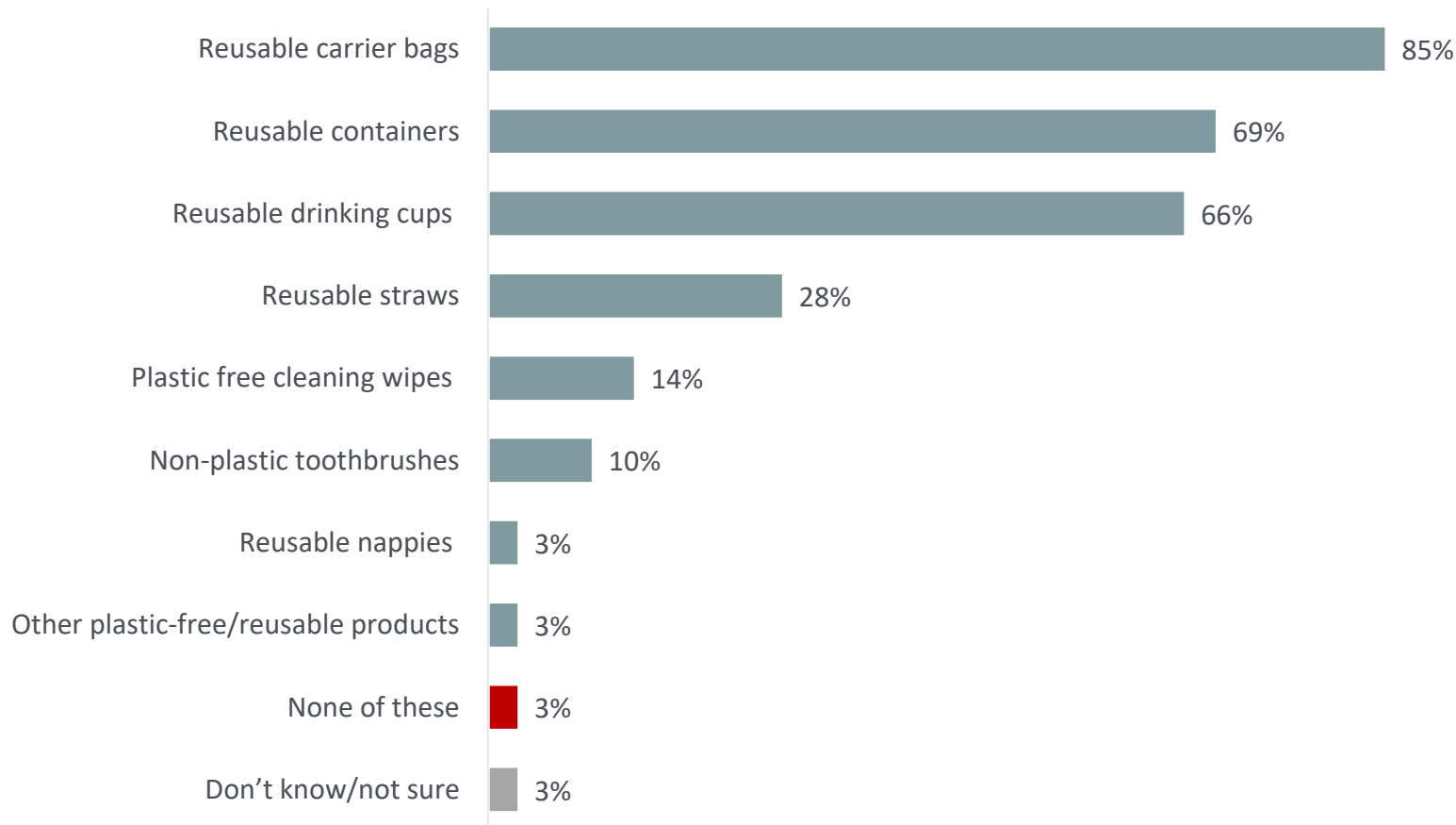


How important are environmental attitudes?



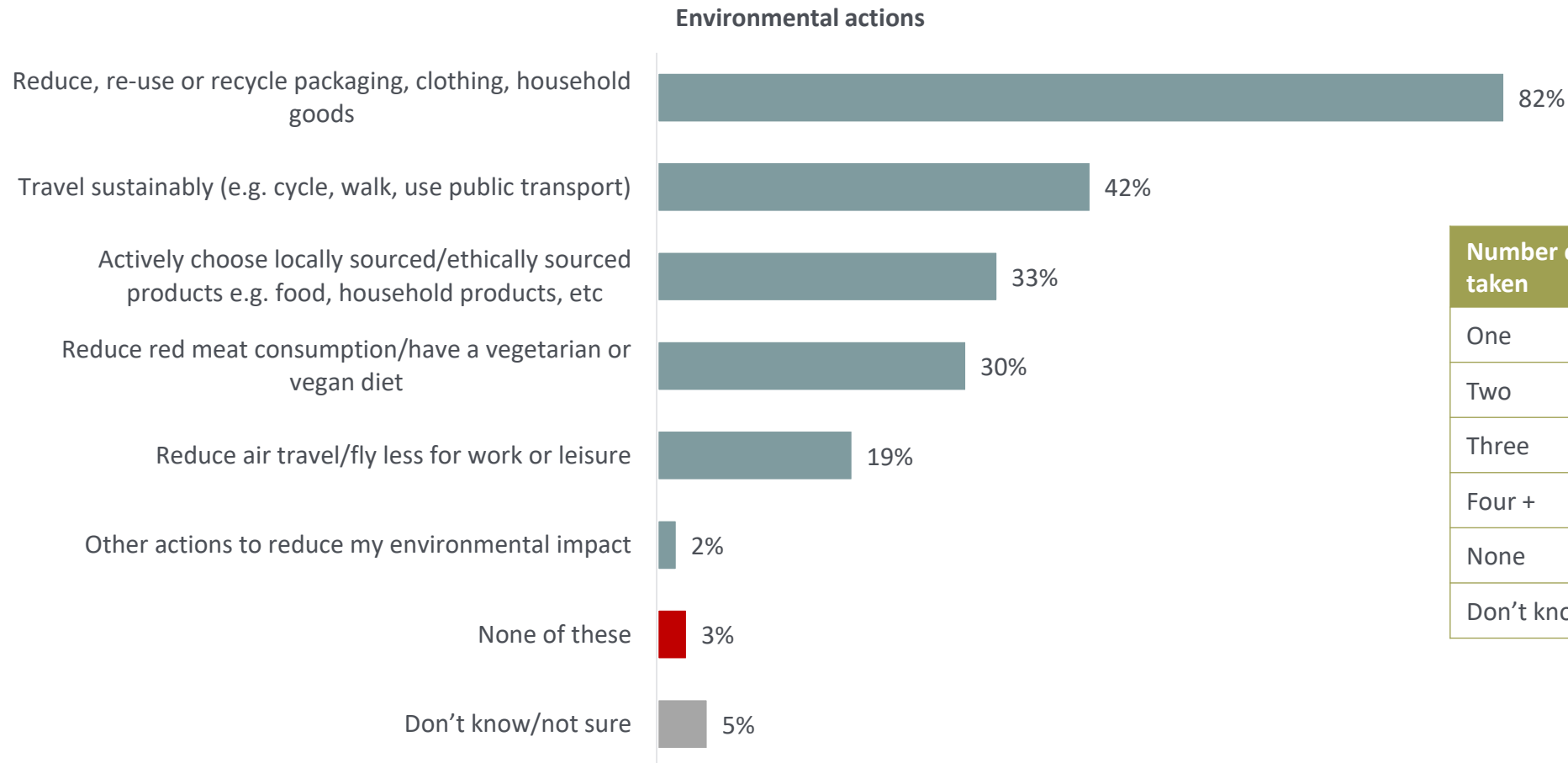
Use of other reusable products is relatively high (only 3% of participants used none of these and 3% didn't know). Reusable carrier bags were the most commonly used, followed by reusable containers and drinking cups

Other reusable products used



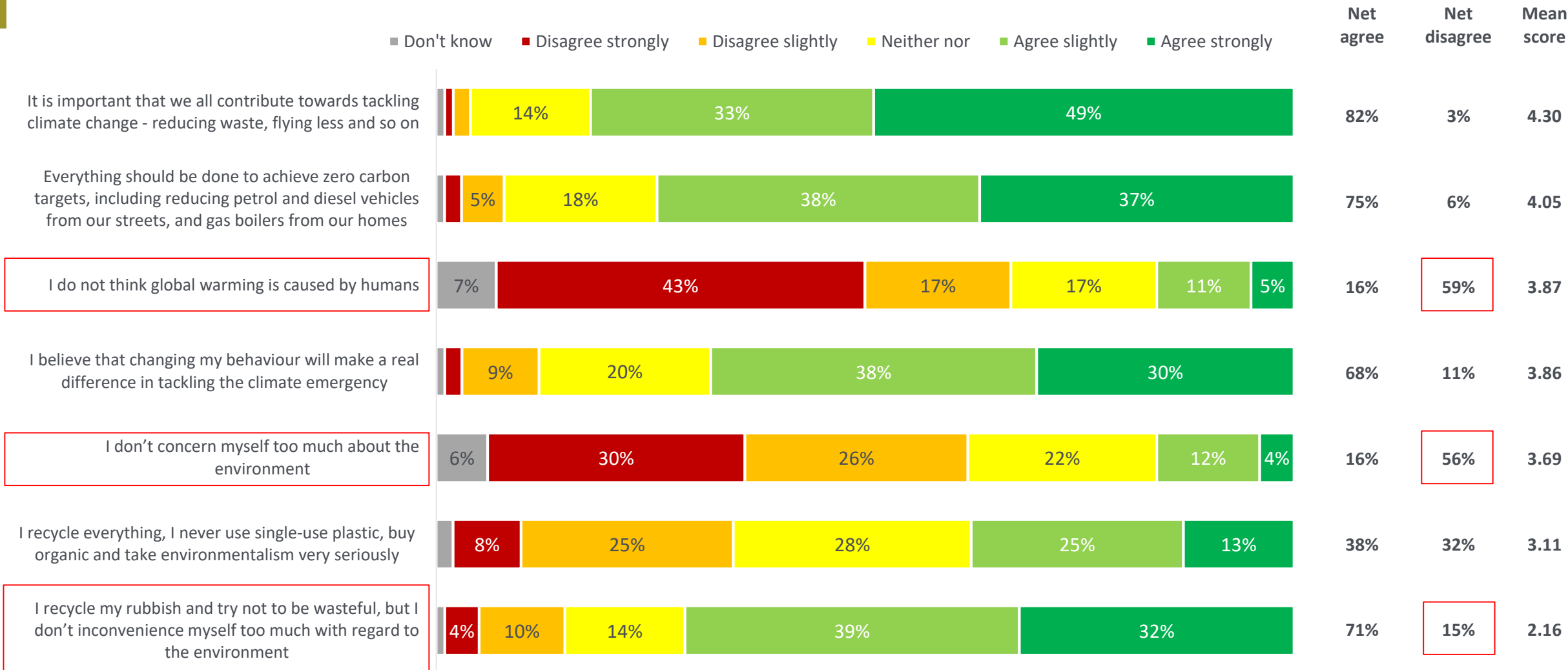
Number of reusable products used	%
One	12%
Two	21%
Three	33%
Four	20%
Five +	9%
None	3%
Don't know	3%

# Most people reported acting for environmental reasons – mainly reducing, reusing or recycling, and travelling sustainably



Number of actions taken	%
One	31%
Two	26%
Three	19%
Four +	16%
None	3%
Don't know	5%

# Mixed attitudes – most claimed it was important that we all help to combat the climate emergency, but also admitted that they don't inconvenience themselves too much to help protect the environment



Q32. How strongly do you agree with the following statements on the environment? Base (all): 1,015  
 Mean scores reversed for the negative statements (identified in red boxes), so 5 always = environmentally positive attitude.

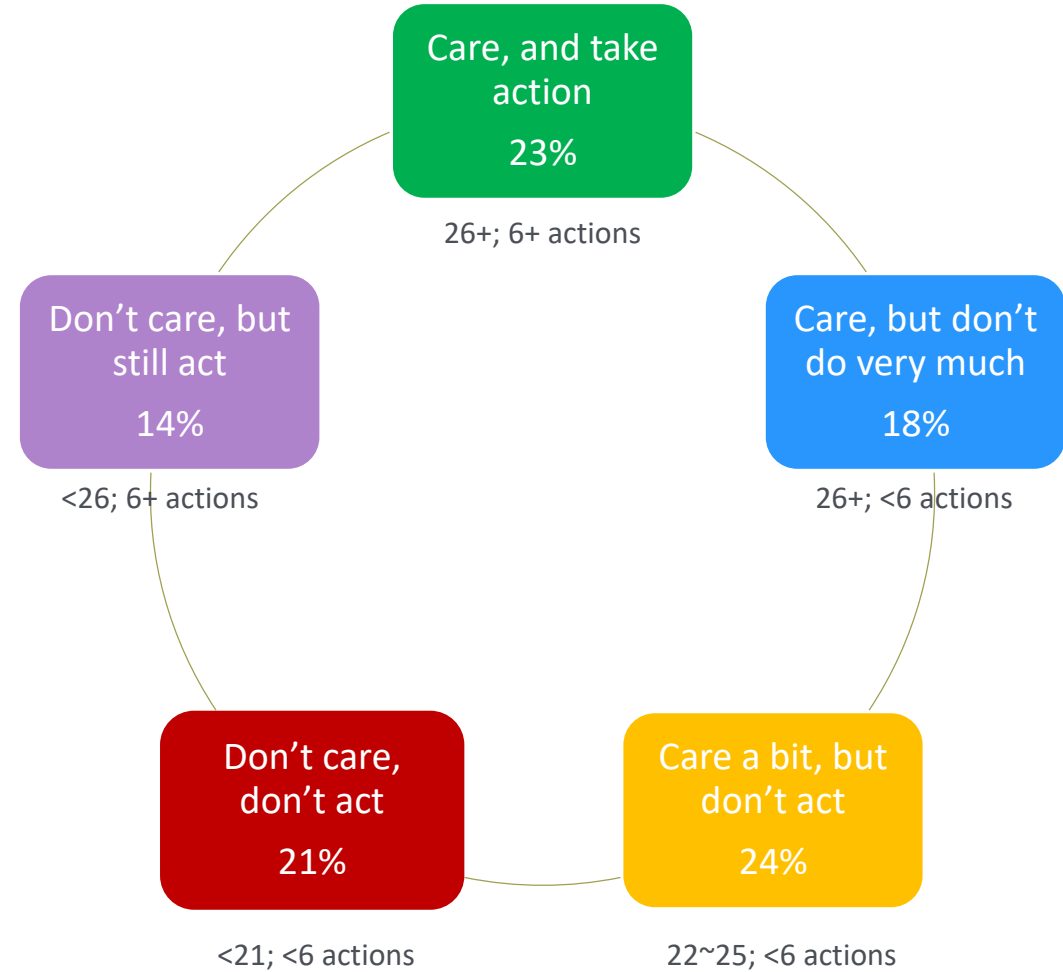
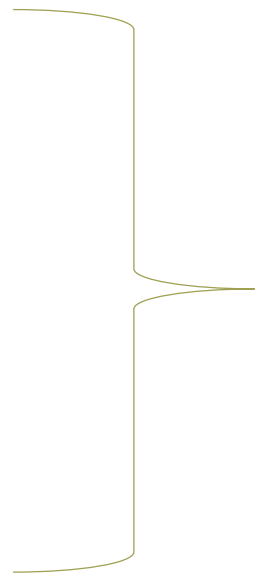


Respondents were grouped based on their stated environmental attitudes and behaviours. More detailed sub-group analysis explored whether their attitudes to reusable menstrual products were related to their environmental attitudes and behaviours more generally

Data was combined based on the total **NUMBER OF ACTIONS** taken, and an **ATTITUDE SCORE** based on environmental views.

Attitudes – score/35	%
0-21	26%
22-25	33%
26-28	21%
29-35	20%

Actions – no/14	%
<4 actions	27%
4-5 actions	36%
6-7 actions	25%
8+ actions	12%





Data suggests that while environmental attitudes do matter to an extent, some less environmentally conscious people were open to trying reusables, while some of those who were more environmentally aware were not more likely to consider the environment in their choices. The links are not clear cut.

**Care, and take action  
(23% of sample)**

**The most environmentally conscious group were most likely to:**  
 Already use organic disposables (29%)  
 Slightly more likely to be using reusables already (16%, v 10% average (avg))  
 Consider each of the four reusable products – and 88% would consider at least one (v 76% avg)  
 Be ‘on board’, would definitely consider a reusable (47% v 32% avg)  
 Change product use over time – so behaviour is not as ingrained/habitual (46% v 35% avg)

**BUT: some users also fell into the other groups, so environmental attitudes are not the only driver**

**BUT: even two thirds of those who ‘Don’t care and don’t act’, that is the least environmentally conscious, would consider at least one product (64%), and 23% are on board**

**Links with other demographics and impact on attitudes towards reusables:**

Students were more likely to be in the environmentally conscious group (30% v 23% avg) and less likely to be in the ‘Don’t care, don’t act’ group (6% v 21% avg).

However, being young was not as closely related to environmental attitudes.

There were also differences in environmental attitudes by socio-economic group (SEG) (ABC1s were more likely to be in the ‘Care and act’ group (27% v 19%); C2DEs were more likely to be in the ‘Care a bit, but don’t act’ group (27% v 21%) – but this did *not* translate into a difference in attitudes to reusables between SEGs.

**The link between environmental attitudes and reusables is therefore not clear cut.**







# Conclusions

# Conclusions



## Overview

- This research provides a wide-ranging, in-depth and robust study of attitudes towards reusable menstrual products across Scotland, addressing evidence gaps identified in the literature and providing a clear steer on how to promote the use of reusables.

## Current behaviour

- The vast majority of women surveyed used disposable products, most commonly pads/liners. One in ten currently use reusable products – although they tend to use a combination of reusable and disposable products, rather than solely using reusables.
- Habits are ingrained – two thirds of participants had never changed the type of period product they use. Advice from mums was the biggest influence on product use.
- The most important factors when choosing menstrual products are reliability, comfort, hygiene and ease of use.

## Attitudes towards reusable products

- There is a significant need to raise awareness of reusable period products, as 30 per cent of participants had never heard of them. However, around half of the people in the research had heard of but never tried reusables.
- Period pants generally had the most appeal to participants, while reusable tampons were least likely to be considered. There were differences however, based on current product use. Disposable tampon users were more likely to consider menstrual cups or reusable tampons; pad users were more likely to consider reusable pads or pants.
- The majority of those who have never used reusables are either *on board* or *persuadable*. Some three quarters would consider at least one reusable period product, while a third would 'definitely' consider at least one. Only a fifth rejected the idea of reusables – so there is definitely an audience for these products.

## Barriers and motivators

- The following were the main barriers to trying reusables: Concerns about leakage and reliability; about absorbency and how long products could be worn; on how to care for and wash products, and issues surrounding hygiene/smell.
- Qualitative respondents who had converted to reusables said that they had often heard about these products through personal recommendations, and then sought out further practical information (often online). Being reassured in this way of the products' ease of use and effectiveness was crucial for them in motivating the switch. Non-users had a lot of questions about the products when they saw them, and discussion between users and non-users helped to reassure them.
- People were concerned about buying products that were more expensive initially without knowing if they would work and were secure and effective. Consequently, a free trial to allow people to test products was by far the most popular way to prompt non-users to give reusable period products a go, followed by more information about various aspects of reusables.
- Although products being environmentally-friendly was viewed as a benefit, for most qualitative respondents this was not a high priority in decision-making. This was supported by the survey results. While users of reusable period products said environmental aspects were more important to them than non-users did, they still rated the personal/practical aspects as being of greater importance. Users were also more likely than non-users to mention value, convenience, comfort and ease of use as being benefits of reusable products than non-users.

# Appendix 1: Sample – quantitative



Health conditions	Unweighted	Weighted
A hearing impairment	3%	<b>3%</b>
A visual impairment	2%	<b>2%</b>
Physical co-ordination difficulties	5%	<b>5%</b>
Reduced physical capacity	12%	<b>12%</b>
A gynaecological health condition	3%	<b>3%</b>
A learning disability	2%	<b>2%</b>
A mental health condition	15%	<b>17%</b>
Other long-term health condition	2%	<b>2%</b>
None of these	63%	<b>60%</b>
Prefer not to say	5%	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

Working status	Unweighted	Weighted
Full time paid work	48%	<b>43%</b>
Part-time paid work	25%	<b>25%</b>
Government or other training scheme	<1%	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Unemployed	4%	<b>5%</b>
Retired	1%	<b>1%</b>
Temporary sick	<1%	<b>1%</b>
Long-term sick/disabled	5%	<b>6%</b>
Looking after the home/family	10%	<b>10%</b>
Student/full time education	6%	<b>7%</b>
Prefer not to say	1%	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

Living arrangements	Unweighted	Weighted
I live with my parents	12%	<b>15%</b>
I live alone	19%	<b>19%</b>
I live with friends or flatmates	4%	<b>5%</b>
I live in shared student accommodation	<1%	<b>1%</b>
I live with my spouse/partner	58%	<b>55%</b>
I live with my children	6%	<b>6%</b>
Other	<1%	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Prefer not to say	<1%	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

Household income	Unweighted	Weighted
< £15,000	14%	<b>17%</b>
£15,001 – £30,000	32%	<b>34%</b>
£30,001 – £50,000	28%	<b>26%</b>
£50,000+	17%	<b>14%</b>
Prefer not to say	5%	<b>5%</b>
Don't know/not sure	3%	<b>4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

Ethnicity	Unweighted	Weighted
White/White Scottish/White British	94%	<b>94%</b>
Black/African/Caribbean/Black Scottish/Black British	1%	<b>1%</b>
Asian/Asian Scottish/ Asian British	3%	<b>3%</b>
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	2%	<b>2%</b>
Other	<1%	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Prefer not to say	1%	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>1,015</b>

# Appendix 2 technical notes

## Qualitative research



- The data was collected by in-depth interview (or paired depths/triads) and mini groups.
- The target group for this research study was women aged 16-55 in Scotland using menstrual products.
- In total, 59 respondents took part in the research.
- Fieldwork was undertaken between 26<sup>th</sup> June and 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019.
- Respondents were recruited face to face by Progressive's team of skilled qualitative recruiters. These recruiters worked to predetermined quota controls to ensure that the final sample reflected the requirements of the project. All respondents were screened to ensure that they had not participated in a group discussion or in-depth interview relating to a similar subject in the last six months prior to recruitment.
- Respondents were paid £35 in compensation for their time. This encouraged a positive response.
- In total, four moderators were involved in the fieldwork for this project.
- Stimulus materials were used during the group discussions/in-depth interviews. These included sample reusable menstrual products.
- Each recruiter's work was validated as per the requirements of the international standard ISO 20252. Therefore, all respondents were subject to validation, either between recruitment and the date of the group discussion/in-depth interview, or on the day of the group discussion/in-depth interview. Validation involved respondents completing a short questionnaire asking pertinent profile questions and checking that they have not participated in similar research in the past six months.
- It should be noted that, due to the small sample sizes involved and the methods of respondent selection, qualitative research findings do not provide statistically robust data. This type of research does however, facilitate valid and extremely valuable consumer insight and understanding.
- All research projects undertaken by Progressive comply fully with the requirements of ISO 20252.

# Appendix 3 - Technical notes

## Quantitative research



- The data was collected by online survey. The target group for this research study was a representative sample of women aged 16-55 in Scotland using menstrual products.
- The sampling frame used for this study was via the Dynata online panel.
- The target sample size was 1,000 and the final achieved sample size was 1,015.
- Fieldwork was undertaken between 23<sup>rd</sup> July and 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019.
- Respondents were selected using non-probability (quota) sampling, with invitations sent to members of the Dynata panel fitting the quota requirements.
- Respondents to paper and internet self-completion studies are self-selecting and complete the survey without the assistance of a trained interviewer. This means that Progressive cannot strictly control sampling and in some cases, this can lead to findings skewed towards the views of those motivated to respond to the survey.
- The sample is judged to represent the target population well.
- The final data set was weighted to reflect age group and socio-economic group (SEG) based on Scottish Census data. The sample base before and after weighting is 1,015.
- Quota controls were used to guide sample selection for this study. This means that we cannot provide statistically precise margins of error or significance testing as the sampling type is non-probability. The margins of error outlined below should therefore be treated as indicative, based on an equivalent probability sample. The overall sample size of 1,015 provides a dataset with an approximate margin of error of between  $\pm 0.61\%$  and  $\pm 3.08\%$ , calculated at the 95% confidence level (market research industry standard).
- Data gathered using self-completion methodologies are validated using the following techniques:
  - Where the data is collected via an internet survey using an access panel, password protection ensures that each respondent can only submit one response. Our internet panel supplier, Dynata, also complies with the rules of the MRS and ESOMAR.
  - The sampling for this project was sub-contracted to Dynata.
  - Our data processing department undertakes a number of quality checks on the data to ensure its validity and integrity. For CAWI Questionnaires these checks include:
    - Responses are checked for duplicates where unidentified responses have been permitted.
    - All responses are checked for completeness and sense.
    - A computer edit of the data carried out prior to analysis involves both range and inter-field checks. Any further inconsistencies identified at this stage are investigated by reference back to the raw data. Where 'other' type questions are used, the responses to these are checked against the parent question for possible up-coding. Responses to open-ended questions will normally be spell and sense checked. Where required these responses may be grouped using a code-frame which can be used in analysis.
  - A SNAP programme set up with the aim of providing the client with useable and comprehensive data. Crossbreaks are discussed with the client in order to ensure that all information needs are met.
- All research projects undertaken by Progressive comply fully with the requirements of ISO 20252.