



Access to Sanitary Products in Scotland

The Scottish Government has committed to make sanitary products available for free in schools, colleges and universities in Scotland. Young Scot worked with the Scottish Government to gather insight into young people and students' views on accessing sanitary products via an online survey and open letter. Young Scot received 2,050 survey responses and 181 letters.

To read the full report visit www.youngscot.net/periods

Summary of Findings

- » Around three quarters of respondents (74% of respondents in secondary school, college or university; 76% not in education) said that they were *very* or *quite comfortable* discussing sanitary products.
- » Respondents feel less comfortable asking for or buying products from someone: 57% of respondents in secondary school, college or university said that they were *very* or *quite comfortable* buying sanitary products, compared to 67% of respondents who are not in education.
- » Around a quarter of all respondents said that they had struggled to access sanitary products in the previous year. Of those in secondary school, college or university that struggled with access, 60% *didn't have the product [they] needed* and 43% *couldn't afford to buy sanitary products*. Of those not in education that struggled with access, 61% *couldn't afford to buy the products* and 40% *didn't have the product [they] needed*.
- » Having free products available in toilets was the most popular option for access. 53% in school, college or university and 47% not in education rated this as the number one out of five suggestions. Accessing products through a designated person was the least popular option for access.
- » Around a third of survey respondents provided further comments. Many responses commented on the type of products that should be available, with menstrual cups being highlighted as suitable alternatives. A number of responses also underlined that everyone's experiences of periods are different and it is important to take this into account when developing such initiatives.
- » *Dear Periods* Letters explored similar issues to those raised in the survey. Responses were split into nine key themes: physical features/physical impact of periods; difficulty with discussion; issues with affordability; difficulty with access; problems with existing products or facilities; opinions on Scottish Government commitment; emotional impact of periods, positive aspects of periods and description of a specific experience or story.

"It's great to be a girl. But sometimes things that come with being a girl can make life difficult. It's no secret that many people in Scotland find it difficult to afford or access sanitary products. This can lead to girls missing school and so losing out on vital education. This affects a girl's learning and therefore how well she does in school. It can lead to major issues in adulthood such as unemployment and health issues. More awareness needs to be spread around this issue as it is extremely important and has a huge impact on our society and our country."
