



# MENSTRUAL DIGNITY & DISCRIMINATION

PERSPECTIVES OF MEN AND BOYS IN NINE COUNTRIES FROM A BASELINE POPULATION-BASED SURVEY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Study Overview

This cross-country report presents findings from **a baseline population-based survey of men and boys** across Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Guinea, Haiti, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the Philippines. It explores current realities surrounding menstrual health and dignity by specifically **examining men's and boys' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to menstruation.**

This focus on men and boys is important because it generates contextual data on the socio-cultural factors influencing the experiences of female and gender-diverse menstruators. It also establishes a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to and facilitators of male support for developing enabling environments for menstrual dignity in the nine countries surveyed.

The baseline data collection was conducted through an online **mixed methods survey of 3,465 men and boys.** Respondents were from a broad range of demographic groups across age, income, education levels, and geographical locations.

### Key Findings

#### MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION OFTEN GOES UNRECOGNIZED BY MEN AND BOYS.

**49%**

**of men and boys have never noticed menstrual discrimination, despite evidence of it affecting 93% of menstruators.**

- Nearly half of the surveyed men and boys reported that they have never noticed menstruation-based teasing or exclusion in their lifetimes. This contrasts sharply with the lived experiences of menstruators, 93% of whom reported experiencing teasing or exclusion related to menstruation in the last six months. This gap indicates that **many men and boys are unaware of or unable to identify menstrual discrimination. This prevents them from being able to challenge this harmful practice in contexts where it is highly prevalent.**

#### MOST MEN AND BOYS DO NOT STAND UP TO MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION.

**Only 8%**

**of men and boys have ever intervened to stop menstrual teasing or exclusion.**

- **Active intervention is rare.** Only a small minority of men and boys intervene when they witness menstrual discrimination. This reveals that there are critical gaps in the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and confidence necessary to effectively challenge these behaviours.
- Inaction is widespread. **39% of all the men and boys surveyed reported being passive bystanders to menstrual discrimination.** This means that they took no action to challenge discriminatory behaviours despite recognizing them and having an opportunity to disrupt them.
- **Self-reported perpetration of menstrual discrimination is low, at 8%.** This contrasts sharply with the high prevalence of menstrual discrimination reported by menstruators, particularly given that 57% of those who experienced teasing identified boys as the perpetrators. Such a discrepancy suggests that the actual discriminatory conduct by men and boys may be higher than the survey data suggest.
- Among the men and boys who admitted to being involved in menstrual discrimination, 70% engaged in both exclusion and teasing. The co-occurrence of multiple discriminatory behaviours implies that **a small group of perpetrators may be responsible for multiple forms of harm to menstruators.** This reinforces the need for targeted behavioural change interventions focused on this group.

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## DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES TOWARDS MENSTRUATION ARE WIDESPREAD.

**53%**

of men and boys hold attitudes that support at least one type of menstrual exclusion.

- **Over half of men and boys oppose menstruators' participation in at least one routine activity during their period.** Support for exclusion is highest for religious activities, with 41% of respondents opposing menstruators' participation in such events. This is followed by opposition to menstruators playing or engaging in physical exercise (40%) and participating in paid work (36%).
- Other stigmatizing attitudes that contribute to and reinforce discrimination are also commonplace. About **42% of men and boys believe that menstruation is dirty or shameful,** and **43% believe that it makes women inferior to men.**

## CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND HARMFUL MISCONCEPTIONS PERSIST.

**Only 7%** of men and boys accurately understand the physiological basis of menstruation.

- **Just 7% of men and boys correctly understand why menstrual periods occur, and only 14% can accurately define menstruation.**
- Less than half of the surveyed men and boys (48%) can correctly identify the fertile period in the menstrual cycle. This reveals a gap in their basic reproductive health knowledge.
- **Harmful misconceptions of menstruation are common. Men and boys frequently mischaracterize menstruation as dirty or shameful.** 32% incorrectly believe that it is “the flow of dirty blood”, while 31% inaccurately think it serves to “release bad blood”. **Many wrongly consider menstruation a pathological condition rather than a normal bodily function.** 24% of men and boys inaccurately report that it is an “illness” and 13% incorrectly define it as “the flow of white discharge”. **Damaging myths that menstruation is morally wrong or evil also exist.** 15% of men and boys inaccurately indicate that menstruation occurs due to “personal sin”, and 12% believe it is caused by “outside evil forces”. These misunderstandings sustain the rampant stigma and discrimination towards menstruators.

## DESPITE THE CHALLENGES, MEN AND BOYS EXHIBIT STRONG WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE WITH EFFORTS TO ENHANCE MENSTRUAL DIGNITY.

**2 in 3** male survey participants are interested in creating better, more supportive environments for menstruators.

- 66% of men and boys affirmed that it is important for men and boys to learn about menstruation and its impact on menstruators. Further, 67% are willing to purchase menstrual products on behalf of a menstruator. Also, 61% support open discussion about menstruation. This openness presents a critical opportunity to engage men and boys as allies in advancing menstrual dignity.

### Implications

The findings reveal a clear paradox. **Men and boys play a central role in shaping the social environments for menstruators, yet limited awareness, knowledge, supportive attitudes, and action constrain their ability to uphold menstrual dignity.**

At the same time, **their willingness to engage in discussion, learn, and act as allies offers a powerful starting point for change.** Realizing this potential will require targeted interventions that transform men and boys from perpetrators of menstrual discrimination or passive bystanders into informed, active allies.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report consolidates the findings from a baseline survey of men and boys as part of the Sang pour Sang project. The project is a three-year initiative led by [Fòs Feminista](#) to address menstrual discrimination in nine countries: Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Guinea, Haiti, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the Philippines. It aims to challenge the structural drivers of menstrual discrimination and ensure that women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals have access to the information, services, products, infrastructure, and supportive environments they need to menstruate with dignity.

With funding from [Agence Française de Développement](#), the project is implemented by a consortium of four international organizations: Fòs Feminista, [PSI-Europe](#), [Equipop](#), and the [Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation](#). This collaboration leverages diverse expertise to address systemic barriers to menstrual health and amplify the voices of marginalized groups.

### 1.1 Menstruators' Experiences with Menstrual Discrimination in the Nine Countries

The baseline population-based survey of menstruators,<sup>1</sup> which was conducted in conjunction with this survey of men and boys, reveals that **menstrual discrimination is highly prevalent in the nine countries covered by this study** (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). A staggering 93% of the menstruators surveyed reported that they experienced exclusion from at least one of their routine activities during their last period and/or menstruation-related teasing in the last six months.

#### Menstruation-related exclusion

Restrictions on participation in regular activities emerged as the dominant form of menstrual discrimination faced by women, girls, and gender-diverse people. The types of exclusion are multifaceted. Menstruators were stopped from touching certain objects (reported by 61% of respondents), sleeping in their usual place (mentioned by 56% respondents), playing or exercising (affecting 53%), entering certain rooms in the house (51%), participating in religious or cultural activities (51%), socializing (50%), eating or drinking specific items (43%), cooking (42%), interacting with men (39%), bathing (39%), leaving the home (34%), attending school (27%), and engaging in paid work (17%). Attitudes and behaviours towards menstruation, including those of men and boys, play a substantial role in this form of menstrual discrimination. Menstruators identified stigma as a top structural driver of their inability to equitably participate in regular activities during menstruation. Meanwhile, in instances where a menstruator did not experience exclusion during their period, supportive social norms and attitudes were identified as key enablers of their full participation.

#### Teasing due to menstruation

Menstrual teasing, the other form of menstrual discrimination, was experienced by 36% of the menstruators surveyed in all nine countries. Men and boys were identified as the main perpetrators of teasing. 57% of menstruators who were teased due to their period in the last six months were

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<sup>1</sup> "Menstruators" primarily refers to individuals who are currently menstruating but may also include those with the ability to menstruate; those who have not menstruated in the last 6–12 months due to pregnancy, recent childbirth, or health conditions; and those who are going through menopause.

ridiculed by boys. This highlights that engaging with male populations is key to eliminating menstrual discrimination so that women, girls, and gender-diverse people can menstruate with dignity.

## 1.2 Scope and Objectives of the Report

**This baseline population-based survey focuses on understanding the knowledge, attitudes, and role of men and boys in shaping menstrual health and dignity across nine countries.** Conducted as part of the Sang pour Sang project, the survey findings aim to inform interventions that engage men and boys as allies to reduce stigma and promote a supportive environment for menstruators. By capturing pre-intervention conditions, it identifies key facilitators and barriers to menstrual dignity and establishes benchmarks for tracking progress.

This report complements the separate cross-country report on menstruators' experiences, based on a survey administered in the nine Sang pour Sang target countries. Together, the two reports provide a comprehensive overview of the socio-cultural dynamics shaping menstrual dignity and discrimination.

## 1.3 Added Value

This study contributes to the evidence base on menstrual dignity by expanding the scope of research to include men and boys. It enables direct comparisons with data from menstruators and identifies actionable opportunities to address menstrual discrimination by engaging men and boys.

**Comprehensiveness:** This study makes an important contribution to the evidence on menstrual health and dignity by systematically examining the perspectives of men and boys, who are highly influential actors in shaping menstruation-related norms, behaviours, and decision-making. Most research on menstrual health and dignity focuses on women and girls. However, this study is distinct in its generation of complementary evidence on the knowledge, attitudes, and roles of men and boys across nine countries. It therefore offers a more comprehensive view of menstrual dignity.

**Comparability:** A key strength of this research study is that its data is comparable with data from menstruators. The men and boys surveyed come from the same communities as the menstruators who participated in the aligned survey conducted under the Sang pour Sang project. Also, the survey questionnaires were intentionally designed to ensure data comparability between groups. This approach enables an analysis of where perspectives align and where gendered gaps persist. It thus provides a more complete picture of what menstrual dignity and discrimination look like in these contexts.

**Actionable:** This research study also identifies actionable ways to engage men and boys in the bid to eliminate menstrual discrimination. The responsibility for addressing menstrual discrimination cannot rest solely with the menstruators who experience it. Efforts to promote menstrual dignity require the involvement of people present in the broader social environments that shape attitudes and behaviours related to menstruation. By examining the role men and boys already play, and the positive ways they can contribute, this study highlights pathways to position men and boys as allies who can support menstrual dignity within households, schools, workplaces, and communities. In doing so, it expands the evidence base needed to develop more inclusive and transformative approaches to ensuring menstrual dignity.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Baseline Survey Design

The baseline survey targeting men and boys was designed to collect representative data on respondents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to menstruation.

An online survey was selected as the data collection method to ensure wide-reaching, population-based coverage. Quota sampling based on age, geographical location, and socio-economic status was utilized to guarantee the survey's representativeness. A sample size of 385 participants per country was determined to be statistically significant, ensuring a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

The survey was designed to correspond with key indicators used in the Sang pour Sang survey of menstruators. Based on the indicators from the menstruators' survey, aligned proxy indicators were developed for men and boys; these are detailed in Table 1. Methodologies were standardized across countries using this shared indicator framework to facilitate analysis across nations and the two distinct survey populations.

**Table 1. Proxy Indicators for Men and Boys Based on Sang pour Sang Indicators for Menstruators**

Domain	Indicator for the Survey of Menstruators	Aligned Proxy Indicator for the Survey of Men and Boys
Knowledge	% of menstruators who knew about menstruation before menarche	% of men and boys who are aware of the age when menstruation begins
	% of menstruators with correct knowledge of the fertile period during the ovulatory cycle	% of men and boys with correct knowledge of the fertile period during the ovulatory cycle
	Not applicable	% of men and boys who have accurate knowledge of what menstruation is
	Not applicable	% of men and boys who have an accurate understanding of why menstruation occurs
Attitudes	% of menstruators who believe menstruation is dirty or impure	% of men and boys who believe menstruation is dirty or impure
	% of menstruators who think menstruation should be discussed openly with everyone	% of men and boys who think menstruation should be discussed openly with everyone
	% of menstruators who believe that women are inferior to men because they menstruate	% of men and boys who believe that women are inferior to men because they menstruate
Behaviours and Supportive Environment	% of menstruators who experienced teasing for menstruating in the last six months	% of men and boys who report that they teased menstruators for menstruating in the last six months
	% of menstruators who were excluded from regular activities during their last menstrual period	% of men and boys who report involvement in excluding menstruators from activities due to their menstrual period

<b>Behaviours and Supportive Environment</b>	Not applicable	% of men and boys who believe it is important for men and boys to learn about menstruation and the challenges faced by menstruators
	Not applicable	% of men and boys who feel comfortable purchasing menstrual materials for a family member or friend

Source: Compiled by the research study team based on the Sang pour Sang project indicators for menstruators and comparable proxy indicators developed specifically for men and boys.

The survey adopted a mixed methods approach to ensure robust, insightful, and actionable findings. Structured, closed-ended survey items were employed to generate quantitative data. Open-ended questions were utilized to gain qualitative insights in order to facilitate in-depth exploration of the socio-cultural dynamics involved.

## 2.2 Data Collection Process

The online survey of men and boys was conducted between October and November 2024 in nine countries. It was administered to 385 participants in each country using local languages, totalling 3,465 men and boys.

Before the full rollout, a pilot survey was conducted with 10% of the target sample to validate the survey tool and refine the data collection process. The insights obtained from the pilot helped improve the clarity of questions and the reliability of the survey methodology. The pilot process also enabled localizing the survey instrument for each country and target population. This ensured that the questions were appropriate for the given context and the translations into the local languages could be clearly understood by participants.

## 2.3 Data Analysis

A mixed methods approach was utilized to analyse the data on men’s and boys’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding menstruation.

### Quantitative data

The structured, closed-ended survey items generated both categorical and continuous data. Age was treated as the primary continuous variable. Data on demographic characteristics (such as geographical location, educational background, and income) and behaviours (such as participants who reported perpetuating actions to exclude menstruators or being involved in teasing menstruators) were treated as nominal categorical variables.

The survey items assessing knowledge and attitudes generated categorical data that were either nominal or ordinal, depending on the nature of the response options. Some knowledge and attitudinal questions had categorical response options without inherent rankings and were therefore treated as nominal variables. Other items, including Likert-scale questions measuring agreement with statements related to menstruation, produced ordinal data.

In particular, the ordinal ranking of men’s and boys’ knowledge of menstruation was assessed using multiple-choice questions that measured understanding of what menstruation is and why it occurs.

There were both correct and incorrect options to choose from; correct answers were assigned one point, and one point was deducted for incorrect answers. Composite scores were calculated and respondents were classified into three knowledge categories: high knowledge (average score = 3), moderate knowledge (average score  $\geq 1$  and  $\leq 2$ ), and low knowledge (average score  $< 1$ ).

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyse the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the key indicators and assess the distribution of responses. During this process, the demographic characteristics of the sample were compared with national demographic and health survey (DHS) benchmarks to assess the survey's representativeness. Frequency tables and data visualizations were also generated in Microsoft Excel to analyse key data. Statistical significance testing was conducted using chi-squared tests and t-tests, as appropriate, to determine associations between key variables. Statistical significance was calculated using a  $p$ -value threshold of  $< 0.05$ .

### Qualitative data

The open-ended questions generated qualitative data that were translated from local languages into English and then analysed using inductive coding to identify prominent themes related to menstruation. The coding and analysis were done on Microsoft Excel and ATLAS.ti.

The mixed methods analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the ways men and boys influence menstrual stigma and discrimination while maintaining a clear distinction between their behaviours and underlying knowledge and attitudes.

## 2.4 Ethics and Safeguarding

The baseline survey adheres to Q<sup>3</sup> Strategy's code of ethical principles and conduct. It was granted ethical approval from the [HML IRB](#), an independent ethics review board.

The primary data collection was done online to reach a broad population of men and boys while minimizing the risks associated with discussing sensitive topics related to menstrual health and discrimination. All participants provided informed consent electronically, and specific consent mechanisms were used for minors requiring parental or guardian approval.

Safeguarding considerations were integrated into the study design and implementation. The questionnaire was carefully designed to avoid causing discomfort in respondents. Participants were free to skip questions that they found too sensitive. The data collection and management processes adhered to strict confidentiality protocols – all personal information was anonymized and securely stored to protect participants' privacy.

## 2.5 Limitations

The baseline survey provides valuable insights into the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of men and boys regarding menstrual dignity. However, to contextualize the findings and recommendations, several limitations should be acknowledged.

- **Sampling bias:** The reliance on an online survey may have limited the participation of men and boys from areas with limited internet connectivity, such as rural or underserved communities. Thus, the data might potentially underrepresent key groups of men and boys from such communities.

- **Educational skew:** Respondents with higher levels of education were slightly overrepresented. As such, the perspectives of less educated populations, where stigma and misinformation may be more entrenched, may be less represented.
- **Social desirability bias:** Respondents may have provided socially desirable answers regarding their behaviours and attitudes towards menstruation, rather than reporting their true beliefs or actions. In particular, some respondents may have hesitated to admit to perpetrating discriminatory behaviours. This might have led to underestimation of the prevalence of such practices.
- **Temporal limitations:** The survey reflects attitudes and behaviours at a single point in time. This may not account for seasonal, economic, or social events that influence perceptions of menstruation. Therefore, the findings provide a baseline but do not capture long-term shifts in attitudes or practices.

### 3. MEN AND BOYS SURVEYED

#### 3.1 Demographic Overview of Respondents

The baseline survey of men and boys reached **3,465 respondents in nine diverse countries**: Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Guinea, Haiti, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the Philippines. This extensive population-based study captured the views of men and boys from varied backgrounds. Figure 1 shows the geographical spread of the survey.

**Figure 1. Map of Areas Included in the Population-Based Survey**



*Source: Generated by the research study team on Google Maps using final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.*

Table 2 provides a demographic overview of the respondents. Nearly all respondents identified as male. The sample was predominantly composed of young men – 51% of the participants were 20–24 years of age. Respondents lived in urban (52%), rural (34%), and peri-urban (14%) settings. Self-reported household income varied, with 31% reporting that they could meet all their household needs, 33% reporting no financial difficulties, 22% facing difficulty making ends meet, and 12% experiencing poverty. Education levels were relatively high, with 41% having completed tertiary education and 31% senior high school. Respondents with less schooling were less represented.

**Table 2. Demographic Overview of Survey Respondents Across All Nine Countries**

Demographic Factors	Benin n (%)		Cameroon n (%)		Côte d'Ivoire n (%)		Dominican Republic n (%)		Guinea n (%)		Haiti n (%)		Nigeria n (%)		Pakistan n (%)		Philippines n (%)		Total N (%)	
<b>Gender Identity</b>																				
Male	381	99%	371	96%	380	99%	380	99%	375	97%	382	99%	358	93%	374	97%	385	100%	3,386	98%
Transgender	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Prefer Not to Say	3	1%	14	4%	5	1%	5	1%	10	3%	3	1%	27	7%	11	3%	0	0%	78	2%
<b>Age</b>																				
16–19	9	2%	43	11%	51	13%	60	16%	12	3%	34	9%	52	14%	45	12%	81	21%	387	11%
20–24	194	50%	180	47%	212	55%	178	46%	206	54%	213	55%	197	51%	189	49%	205	53%	1,774	51%
25–39	175	45%	148	38%	111	29%	119	31%	154	40%	126	33%	126	33%	135	35%	89	23%	1,183	34%
≥40	7	2%	14	4%	11	3%	28	7%	13	3%	12	3%	10	3%	16	4%	10	3%	121	3%
<b>Geographical Location</b>																				
Peri-Urban	51	13%	52	14%	32	8%	49	13%	40	10%	64	17%	68	18%	66	17%	63	16%	485	14%
Rural	132	34%	112	29%	121	31%	99	26%	183	48%	122	32%	146	38%	133	35%	120	31%	1,168	34%
Urban	202	52%	221	57%	232	60%	237	62%	162	42%	199	52%	171	44%	186	48%	202	52%	1,812	52%
<b>Perceived Household Income</b>																				
Able to Meet All Needs	108	28%	159	41%	129	34%	107	28%	134	35%	91	24%	113	29%	129	34%	118	31%	1,088	31%
Do Not Have Financial Difficulties	137	36%	115	30%	136	35%	148	38%	94	24%	136	35%	117	30%	118	31%	129	34%	1,130	33%
Struggle to Make Ends Meet	114	30%	76	20%	81	21%	86	22%	116	30%	96	25%	2	1%	89	23%	94	24%	754	22%
Experiencing Poverty	25	6%	27	7%	34	9%	41	11%	41	11%	61	16%	107	28%	33	9%	44	11%	413	12%
Prefer Not to Say	1	0%	8	2%	5	1%	2	1%	0	0%	1	0%	46	12%	16	4%	0	0%	79	2%
Don't Know	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
<b>Education Level Completed</b>																				
Not Completed Any Formal Education	75	19%	27	7%	7	2%	37	10%	52	14%	16	4%	25	6%	39	10%	11	3%	289	8%
Primary School	49	13%	17	4%	17	4%	50	13%	70	18%	13	3%	28	7%	21	5%	20	5%	285	8%
Junior High School	19	5%	48	12%	17	4%	0	0%	51	13%	43	11%	43	11%	7	2%	50	13%	278	8%
Senior High School	79	21%	86	22%	152	39%	111	29%	126	33%	168	44%	104	27%	136	35%	124	32%	1,086	31%
Tertiary Education	162	42%	189	49%	164	43%	179	46%	86	22%	144	37%	183	48%	148	38%	159	41%	1,414	41%
Prefer Not to Say	1	0%	18	5%	28	7%	8	2%	0	0%	1	0%	2	0%	34	0%	21	0%	113	3%

Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

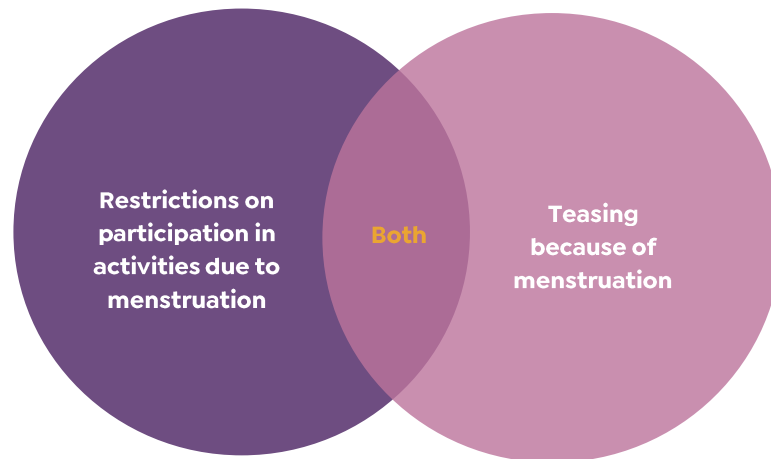
## 4. FINDINGS ACROSS COUNTRIES

This chapter summarizes the findings from the baseline survey of men and boys in all nine countries. Drawing on data from each country's report, it offers a comprehensive overview of men's and boys' perspectives on menstrual dignity and discrimination in the surveyed countries.

### 4.1 Key Findings on Menstrual Discrimination

Menstrual discrimination is the negative treatment of people who menstruate because of their menstrual period. This social process, which includes cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural elements, leads to inequities that disadvantage menstruators. In this study, **menstrual discrimination is defined as at least one restriction on a menstruator's regular activities during their menstrual period and/or menstruation-related teasing** (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Menstrual Discrimination



Based on the multiple elements that influence menstrual discrimination, this section explores the findings on discriminatory behaviours towards menstruators that are carried out by men and boys. This is followed by a complementary analysis of the discriminatory attitudes and beliefs that shape these adverse behaviours. This information provides a nuanced understanding of the menstrual discrimination perpetuated by men and boys in all nine countries.

**Despite the high prevalence of menstrual discrimination, many men and boys attest that they have never observed it being carried out.**

**49%**

**of men and boys reported never having witnessed or recognized any form of menstrual discrimination in their lifetime.**

Only 51% of men and boys have ever noticed menstrual teasing and/or menstruation-based exclusion. This contrasts sharply with the experiences of menstruators in the same communities, 93% of whom have faced menstrual discrimination (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). This disparity

of 42 percentage-points highlights **a substantial gap between genders in both exposure to menstrual discrimination and ability to recognize such harmful practices.**

The gender gap in exposure to menstrual teasing and exclusion, and in the capacity to identify it, is greatest in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, followed by Haiti and the Philippines (Figure 3). The smallest discrepancy between male respondents and those who menstruate is in Nigeria, with a 16 percentage-point difference.

**Figure 3. The Percentage of Men and Boys Who Observed and Recognized Menstrual Discrimination Compared to the Percentage of Menstruators Who Reported Experiencing It**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024, and final menstruators' survey data from all nine countries, October 2024.

These gaps indicate that **menstrual discrimination is often invisible to many men and boys, despite taking place frequently in the lives of menstruators.** When discriminatory practices involving teasing or restrictions are not recognized, they can be passively condoned and normalized within households, schools, workplaces, and communities. A lack of awareness of menstrual discrimination also limits the likelihood that such behaviours will be challenged by male counterparts. This places the burden of identifying and responding to discrimination on menstruators themselves.

Clearly, **men's and boys' limited awareness of menstrual discrimination is a critical barrier to advancing menstrual dignity.** Creating more supportive social environments for menstruators requires raising awareness among men and boys so that they gain the capacity to recognize the highly prevalent practices of menstrual discrimination. These efforts must include information about what menstrual discrimination looks like, why it is harmful, and why it matters. Helping men and boys recognize this issue will enable them to transform from passive supporters of menstrual discrimination to key allies who can change these adverse behaviours.

## Very few men and boys report that they engage in discriminatory behaviours towards menstruators.

8%

of men and boys reported that they have perpetrated menstrual discrimination.

Across all countries, a total of 273 of the 3,465 men and boys admitted that they have teased menstruators and/or excluded them from routine activities in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> **While only 8% of men and boys reported that they had engaged in menstrual discrimination, 93% of menstruators reported experiencing such prejudicial practices.**

This discrepancy may be explained, in part, by social desirability bias. Since this study used self-reported measures, respondents may have been hesitant to disclose their participation in discriminatory behaviours perceived as socially unacceptable. As such, actual engagement in discriminatory behaviours may be higher than the data indicate. Responses may also have been influenced by an inadequate ability to identify menstrual discrimination. Indeed, perpetrators may not be aware that they are carrying out these practices.

Of the men and boys who participated in these discriminatory acts, a sizeable 70% (191) acknowledged that they had perpetrated both forms of menstrual discrimination (Figure 4). Meanwhile, 18% (50) reported only being involved in restricting menstruators' participation in routine activities and 12% (32) in teasing menstruators. This pattern indicates that **discriminatory practices often co-occur** and may reinforce one another rather than taking place in isolation. It also suggests that individuals who engage in one form of menstrual discrimination may be more likely to engage in others. This reflects that underlying attitudes support multiple expressions of stigma. Such findings underscore the importance of prioritizing the inclusion of perpetrators of menstrual discrimination in menstrual dignity interventions, as their involvement in multiple prejudicial behaviours may play a disproportionate role in shaping adverse social environments for menstruators. They also highlight the need for interventions that simultaneously address a range of discriminatory practices and target the underlying attitudes that drive them.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the survey responses, men and boys were classified as perpetrators of menstrual discrimination, passive bystanders, interveners, and those who did not witness/recognize it. The figures collated for these roles men and boys play in menstrual discrimination are not unique counts of individuals, as a single respondent may have been classified under multiple categories. This is because responses were collected for two forms of menstrual discrimination: teasing and exclusion. Consequently, a respondent who reported engaging in teasing but not exclusion, or vice versa, is classified into a different role for each of the two behaviours. Therefore, the total number of men and boys classified under each role exceeds the total number of survey respondents (3,465). This overlap should be considered when interpreting the findings, as it reflects the complexity and fluidity of men's and boys' involvement in menstrual discrimination.

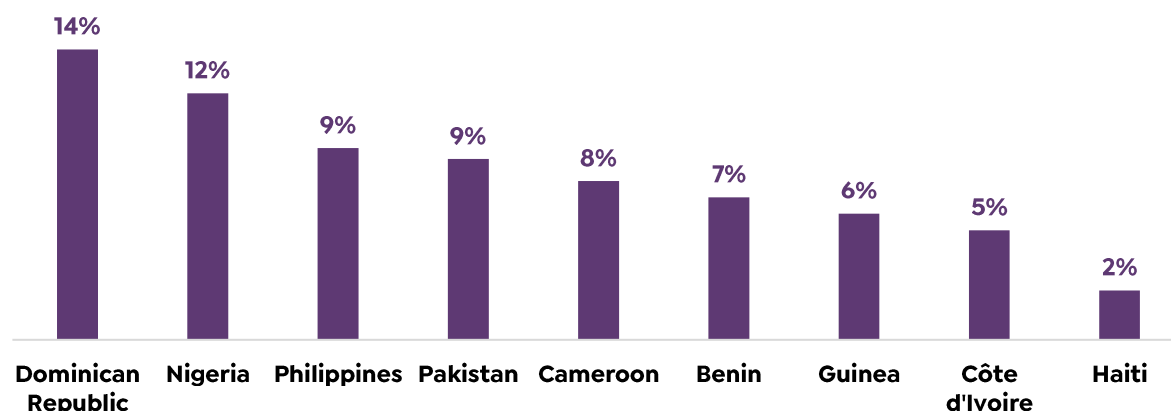
**Figure 4. The Forms of Menstrual Discrimination Perpetrated by Men and Boys**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

Figure 5 demonstrates that, across all survey respondents, the Dominican Republic has the highest proportion that admitted to participating in discriminatory behaviours, with 14% of all men and boys self-identifying as perpetrators of menstrual discrimination. Nigeria is next, with 12% of respondents, followed by 9% of men and boys surveyed in the Philippines and Pakistan. In contrast, Haiti, with 2% of respondents, has the lowest self-reported participation in menstrual discrimination.

**Figure 5. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Admitted That They Have Engaged in at Least One Form of Menstrual Discrimination in Their Lifetime**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

Patterns of exclusion and teasing are similar among the men and boys surveyed. 7% of all respondents reported that they excluded menstruators from routine activities. Meanwhile, 6% admitted to teasing menstruators for having their menstrual period. This difference is not significant, indicating that both forms of menstrual discrimination occur at comparable levels.

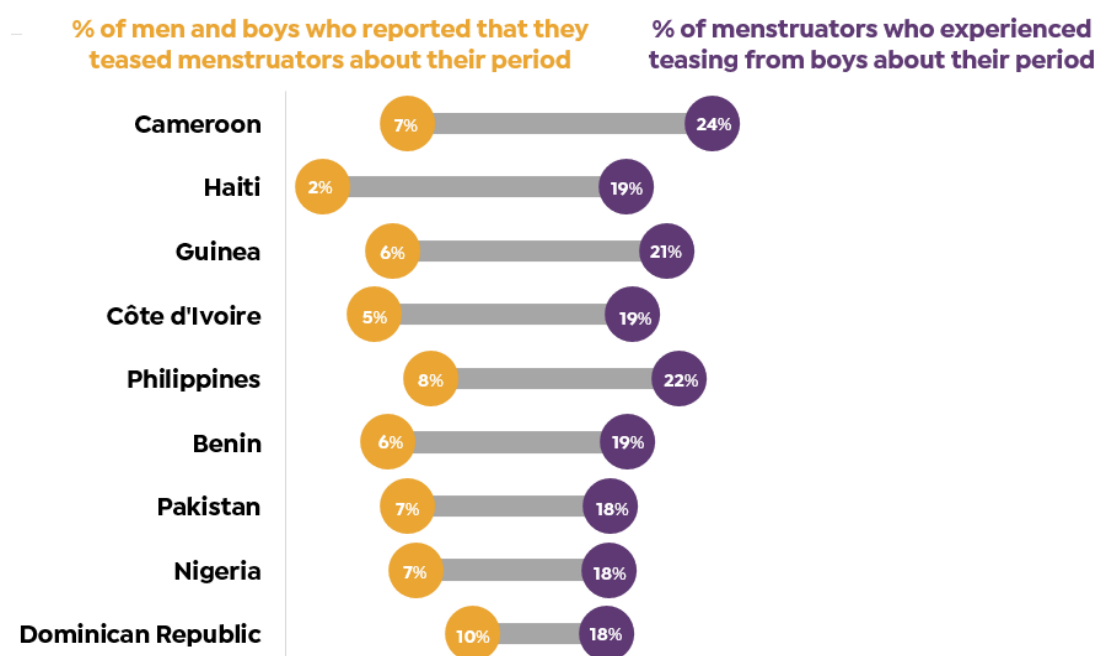
While few male survey participants acknowledged their role in menstruation-related teasing, menstruators identified men and boys as the most common source of such ridicule.

**Only 6%** of men and boys indicated that they have teased menstruators due to their period, whereas 20% of menstruators reported that they were teased by boys in the last six months.

Of the menstruators who reported that they experience teasing in the corresponding survey of women, girls, and gender-diverse people, 57% (974) indicated that boys were a source of this harassment. This is equivalent to **20% of all menstruators surveyed being subjected to teasing by boys** (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). This is **starkly different from the mere 6% (223) of men and boys who indicated that they have been perpetrators of menstrual teasing.**

When compared across countries, the discrepancy in teasing reported by men and boys versus menstruators is greatest in Cameroon and Haiti, both of which have a gap of 17 percentage-points (Figure 6). Several factors may explain these gaps. Men and boys may underreport discriminatory behaviour due to social desirability bias or a lack of ability to recognize menstrual teasing as being discriminatory in nature. **This once again highlights the importance of raising awareness among men and boys about menstrual teasing and its adverse impact on menstruators.**

**Figure 6. The Percentage of Men and Boys Who Reported Teasing Menstruators Compared to the Percentage of Menstruators Who Reported Being Teased by Boys in the Last Six Months**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024, and final menstruators' survey data from all nine countries, October 2024.

It is also possible that a small group of boys may repeatedly target multiple menstruators with teasing, meaning that relatively few perpetrators could account for a large number of reported

experiences among menstruators. This highlights the critical need to work closely with perpetrators of menstrual bullying to transform their behaviour so that their harmful impact on menstruators is not further magnified.

Overall, however, the divergence between the perspectives of menstruators versus those of men and boys indicates that menstrual teasing remains a significant but potentially normalized or minimized behaviour among men and boys. This reinforces the need for educational and social interventions that **ensure that male individuals identify menstrual bullying as unacceptable and instead promote respectful behaviour towards menstruators.**

**Many men and boys are idle bystanders who witness menstrual discrimination and do nothing to address this prejudicial behaviour.**

**39%**

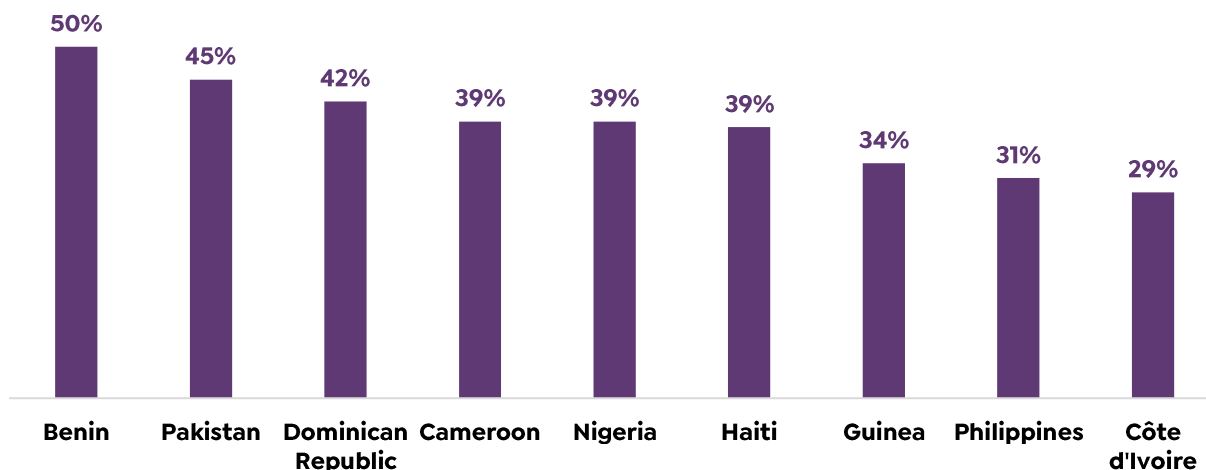
**of men and boys reported that they have been passive bystanders who observed menstrual discrimination and took no action.**

A bystander is an individual who observes a situation involving discrimination and has **an opportunity to take action to confront it** (Rodenhizer-Stämpfli et al., 2018). **A substantial 39% (1,347) of the men and boys surveyed reported that they had been bystanders who did nothing to challenge menstrual discrimination when they witnessed it.**

This high proportion of idle bystanders is staggering on its own, as it shows that most male individuals who have seen and could identify menstrual discrimination ignored it. This is particularly concerning because when an individual witnesses and ignores discriminatory conduct against menstruators in their community, whether by choice or due to ignorance of the harmful nature of the situation, they can appear to condone the discrimination. This could add to the alienation of menstruators who are already being discriminated against.

Across the nine countries, Benin and Pakistan have the highest proportion of male bystanders who observed menstrual discrimination and did nothing, at 50% and 45% of men and boys, respectively (Figure 7). The Dominican Republic also has a relatively large share of passive bystanders, at 42%. Meanwhile, Côte d'Ivoire has the lowest percentage, at 29%.

**Figure 7. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Were Bystanders to Menstrual Discrimination and Did Nothing to Address This Derogatory Practice**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

While various factors could be preventing men and boys from intervening to challenge these harmful practices, one thing is clear: **the lack of action by male bystanders validates and upholds this discriminatory behaviour, ultimately sustaining a hostile social environment for menstruators.** This highlights the importance of equipping men and boys with the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and confidence to identify such behaviours and intervene effectively.

### Very few men and boys have ever intervened to stop menstrual discrimination.

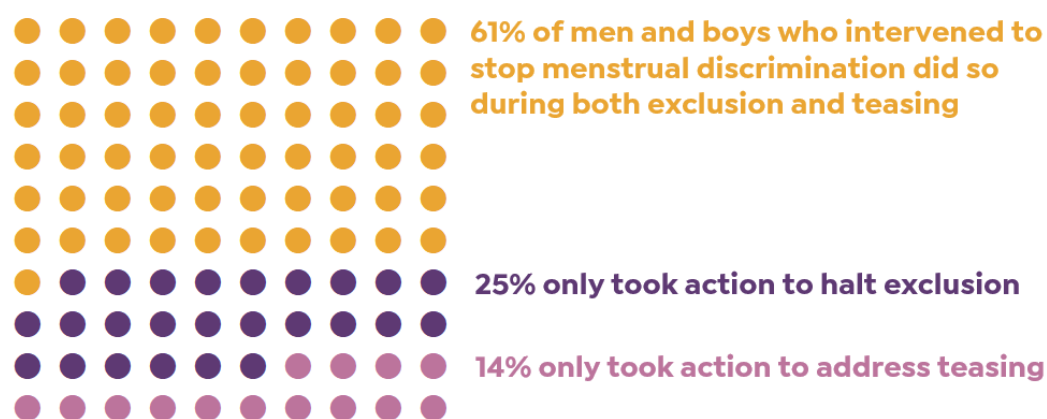
**Only 8%**

of men and boys reported that they have intervened in an instance of menstrual discrimination in their lifetime.

An intervener is a person who witnesses discrimination and takes a stand against it by interrupting or challenging such a prejudicial practice. When confronted with menstrual discrimination, **a scant 8% (266) of the men and boys who were surveyed had ever taken action against such behaviour. This represents a small proportion of male allies who actively prevent or mitigate menstrual discrimination in their communities.**

When men and boys intervened in menstrual discrimination, they were most likely to take action against both menstruation-based restrictions and teasing, accounting for 61% of male interveners (Figure 8). This aligns with existing evidence on bystander intervention, which highlights that individuals who overcome barriers to action are more likely to intervene in multiple situations rather than in isolated instances (Latané & Darley, 1970; Banyard, 2011). Similarly, literature on male allyship also suggests that once men and boys are engaged as allies, they tend to challenge multiple forms of harmful behaviour (Jewkes et al., 2014). This reflects the **amplified positive impact that male allies can have when they become interveners in discrimination.** It underscores their importance in creating supportive environments for menstruators to menstruate with dignity.

**Figure 8. The Forms of Menstrual Discrimination in Which Men and Boys Intervened**

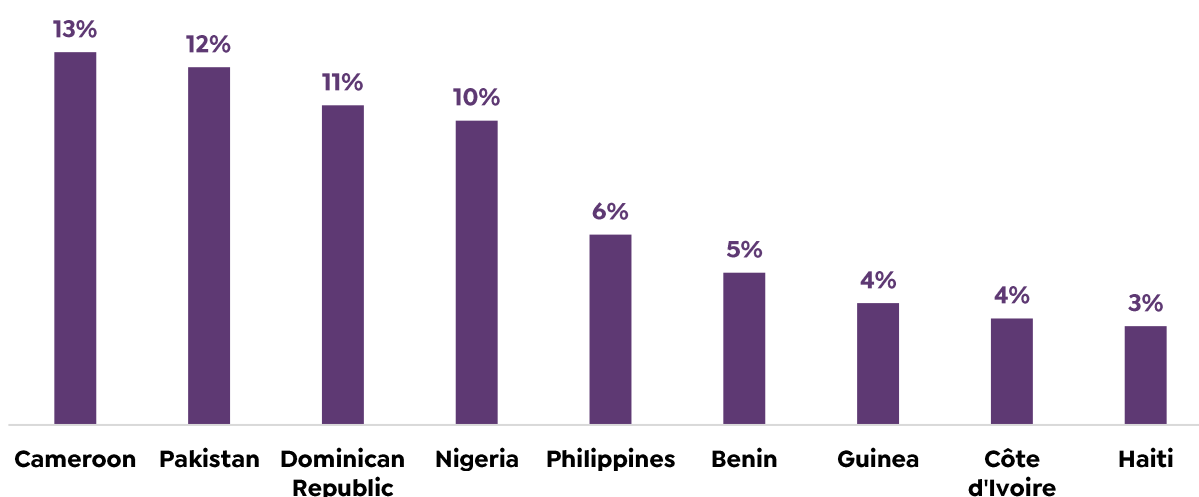


Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

Conversely, in cases of isolated interventions, 25% of men and boys got involved in situations where menstruators were excluded and 14% interceded in instances of menstruation-related teasing. Since this subset represents a small number of respondents, the rates of isolated intervention to stop exclusion and halt teasing are comparable.

Across the countries, Cameroon and Pakistan have the highest proportion of men and boys who reported that they had intervened when they witnessed menstrual discrimination, although their numbers are still relatively small. In Cameroon, 13% of male respondents interceded, while in Pakistan 12% intervened. In contrast, only 3% of the men and boys in Haiti, 4% in Côte d'Ivoire, and 4% in Guinea got involved. These low rates of intervention suggest a potential lack of awareness, intervention skills, and/or confidence to act in such contexts.

**Figure 9. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Intervened in Menstrual Discrimination**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

The country-specific trends reveal that although there are variations across countries in how men and boys challenge discriminatory practices against menstruators, overall, **male individuals rarely intervene in situations of menstrual discrimination**. Increasing the number of men and boys who stand up against menstrual exclusion and bullying will help make anti-discriminatory behaviour the

social norm, and create safer, more supportive communities for people who menstruate. **It is thus critical to not only raise awareness about menstrual discrimination among men and boys, but also equip them with the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and confidence to intervene effectively when they witness such behaviour.**

## 4.2 Key Findings on Attitudes Towards Menstruation

In addition to the behavioural aspects of menstrual discrimination covered in the previous section, there are cognitive and attitudinal elements. This section delves into the discriminatory attitudes that men and boys hold in relation to menstruation. It examines how these beliefs reinforce exclusionary practices and expressions of stigma towards menstruators. Understanding these attitudes is essential to promote supportive environments in which women, girls, and gender-diverse people can menstruate with dignity.

**More than half of men and boys have discriminatory attitudes that support the exclusion of menstruators.**

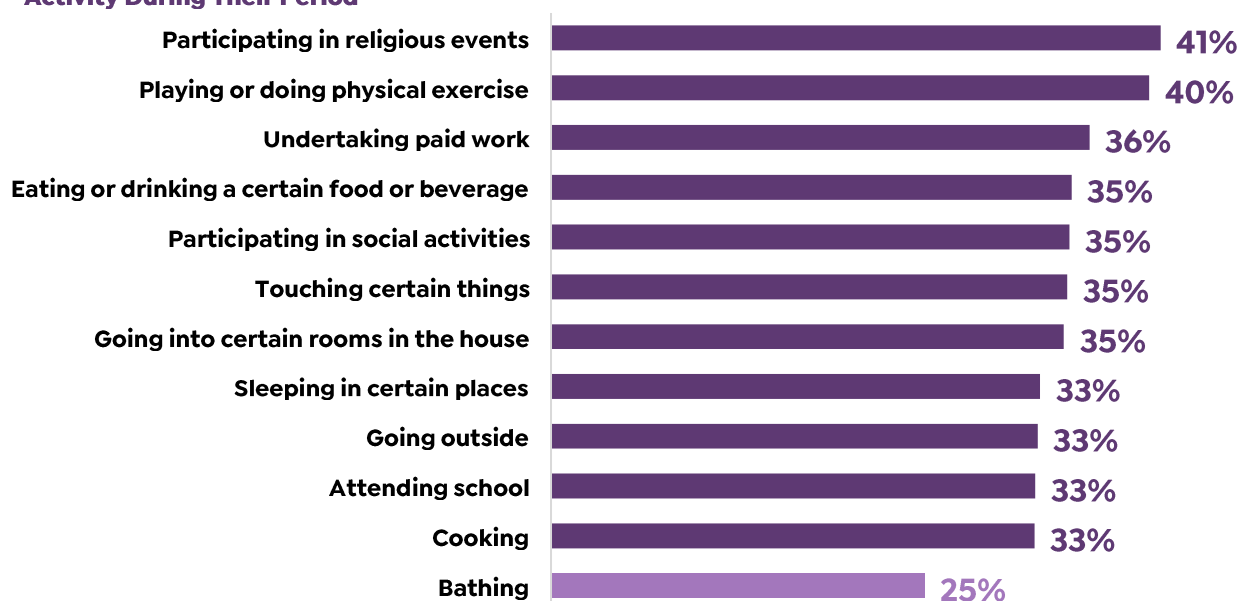
**53%**

**of men and boys believe that menstruators should be restricted from participating in one or more routine activities while menstruating.**

Although just 8% of the male survey respondents admitted that they exclude menstruators from activities during their period, **over half of them oppose menstruators' participation in at least one routine activity during menstruation.** This reveals that men and boys think of menstruation as a valid reason to exclude a person. It also shows that **a substantial portion of men and boys have beliefs that support this form of menstrual discrimination, even if they did not report that they acted upon them.**

Figure 10 demonstrates that men and boys expressed the greatest opposition to menstruators participating in religious activities. **41% (1,423) of respondents disagree that menstruators can continue engaging in religious events during their periods.**

**Figure 10. The Percentage of Men and Boys Who Opposed Menstruators' Participation in a Routine Activity During Their Period**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

**The high level of disapproval of menstruators' equal participation in religious activities highlights the pivotal role that religious beliefs and religious institutional norms can play in either perpetuating or dismantling menstrual exclusion.** Engagement with faith-based institutions and groups is therefore a critical step for advancing menstrual dignity. Table 3 demonstrates that the highest male opposition to menstruators attending religious events during menstruation is in Guinea (49%), followed by Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Haiti, and Pakistan (43% each).

**Table 3. The Number and Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Disagree or Strongly Disagree With Menstruators Continuing to Participate in Routine Activities During Their Menstrual Periods**

Activity	Benin n (%)		Cameroon n (%)		Côte d'Ivoire n (%)		Dominican Republic n (%)		Guinea n (%)		Haiti n (%)		Nigeria n (%)		Pakistan n (%)		Philippines n (%)		Total n (%)	
Religious Events	164	43%	167	43%	132	34%	151	39%	189	49%	166	43%	165	43%	164	43%	125	32%	1,423	41%
Playing or Doing Physical Exercise	160	42%	132	34%	139	36%	143	37%	188	49%	176	46%	168	44%	158	41%	132	34%	1,396	40%
Undertaking Paid Work	151	39%	107	28%	128	33%	133	35%	177	46%	174	45%	136	35%	119	31%	132	34%	1,257	36%
Eating or Drinking Certain Foods or Beverages	127	33%	119	31%	111	29%	131	34%	174	45%	156	41%	148	38%	128	33%	121	31%	1,215	35%
Participating in Social Activities	133	35%	113	29%	126	33%	132	34%	171	44%	158	41%	135	35%	116	30%	126	33%	1,210	35%
Touching Certain Things	136	35%	107	28%	124	32%	128	33%	171	44%	165	43%	131	34%	111	29%	132	34%	1,205	35%
Going Into Certain Rooms of the House	139	36%	103	27%	116	30%	125	32%	162	42%	163	42%	138	36%	117	30%	134	35%	1,197	35%
Sleeping in Certain Places	135	35%	92	24%	117	30%	124	32%	164	43%	155	40%	129	34%	103	27%	122	32%	1,141	33%
Going Outside	142	37%	99	26%	114	30%	122	32%	161	42%	154	40%	126	33%	103	27%	115	30%	1,136	33%
Attending School	130	34%	103	27%	113	29%	122	32%	170	44%	141	37%	122	32%	104	27%	125	32%	1,130	33%
Cooking	127	33%	89	23%	111	29%	125	32%	165	43%	149	39%	130	34%	110	29%	123	32%	1,129	33%
Bathing	111	29%	75	19%	87	23%	109	28%	122	32%	109	28%	97	25%	81	21%	80	21%	871	25%

Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

Similarly, **40% (1,396) of the men and boys surveyed believe that menstruators should not participate in physical exercise or play during their periods.** Opposition is highest in Guinea (49%), Haiti (46%), and Nigeria (44%). These findings indicate that **many men and boys associate menstruation with reduced capabilities or weakness.** Such attitudes may also reflect broader **inequitable gender norms that limit women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals from participating in leisure activities.** This reinforces their already limited ability to partake in recreational activities and supports a prejudicial belief that they are not equally entitled to having fun or enjoying leisure pursuits.

In addition to showing support for excluding menstruators from religious rituals and play or exercise, men and boys also expressed strong support for menstruation-based restrictions on paid employment. **36% (1,257) of respondents disapprove of menstruators engaging in remunerative work during their periods.** The men and boys from Guinea (46%) and Haiti (45%) voiced the greatest resistance to menstruators continuing to engage in paid work while menstruating. Exclusion from participation in paid work not only **results in economic disadvantages for menstruators,** but it also **reflects a harmful perception that menstruation reduces the capabilities of menstruators, and that menstruators do not belong in the workforce.**

Interestingly, participation in paid work is the least prevalent form of exclusion that menstruators experience, with only 17% of them reporting that they could not engage in paid work during their last period (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). Another difference between menstruators and male respondents relates to touching certain items and sleeping in certain places. These are the most prevalent restrictions according to menstruators, with limitations on touching certain things affecting 61% and being unable to sleep in one's normal location affecting 56%. But male opposition to excluding menstruators from these activities is moderate, at 35% and 33%, respectively.

Conversely, **the greatest support is shown for menstruators' ability to bathe during menstruation.** 75% of male respondents approve of menstruators' participation in this routine activity. This could suggest that men and boys do not perceive menstruation as a barrier to personal hygiene or other basic rights. However, it could also reflect that men and boys believe that menstruation is dirty and impure. This indicates that these views may need to be investigated further.

### **Men and boys identified the same drivers of menstruation-based restrictions as menstruators.**

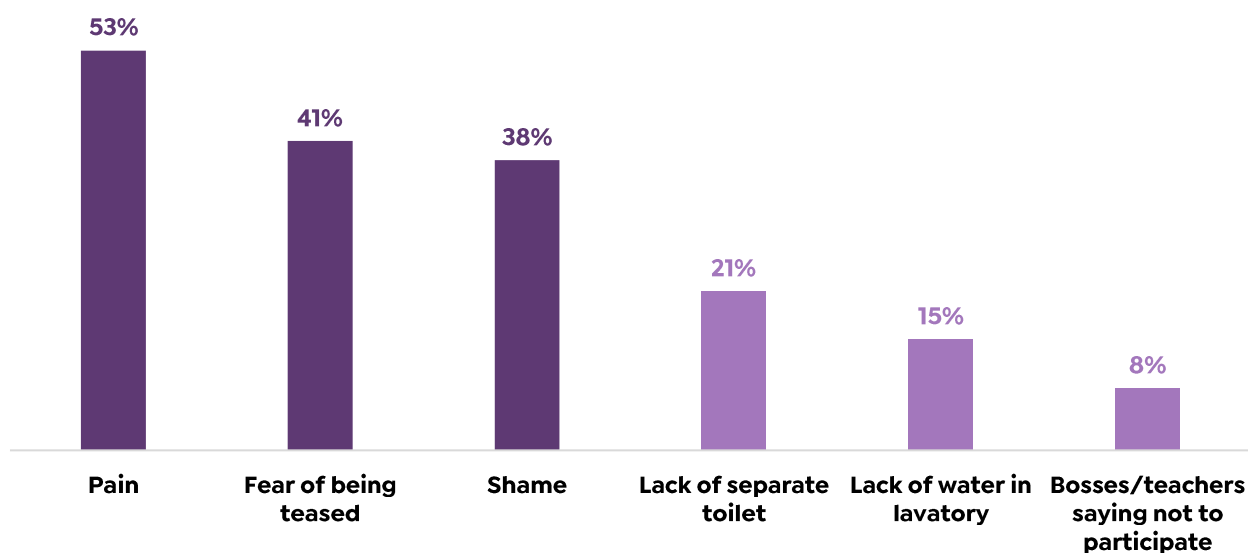
**Pain and stigma**

are most frequently identified by men and boys as key reasons for menstruators' exclusion.

When men and boys were asked why they thought menstruators were restricted from participating in everyday activities, **pain emerged as the leading factor.** Across all countries, 53% of men and boys (840 of the 1,590 respondents to this survey item) cited pain as the most common reason for menstruators not being able to participate in typical activities (Figure 11). This aligns with findings from the survey of menstruators, in which menstruators qualitatively highlighted pain as the most frequent

barrier to their full participation in routine activities (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). These findings indicate that **inadequate access to effective menstrual pain management solutions is a noticeable structural factor driving the exclusion of menstruators.**

**Figure 11. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Identified Certain Drivers of Menstruation-Related Exclusion**



*Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.*

**The other leading drivers of menstrual exclusion identified by men and boys were related to stigma.** Specifically, 41% (650) cited the fear of being teased as a reason that menstruators cannot fully participate in everyday activities. Meanwhile, 38% (610) identified shame as a contributor. This highlights that stigmatizing attitudes and behaviours prevalent among those in menstruators' social environments play a key role in perpetuating their exclusion. Menstruators themselves also identified stigma as a pervasive factor that limits their full participation in activities (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). This further underscores the importance of addressing negative views people have of menstruators.

Menstruators identified water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure challenges as a top barrier to equitable inclusion (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). However, men and boys noticed these systemic infrastructure issues to a lesser extent. Just 21% (334) of men and boys cited the lack of a separate toilet as a reason for menstruators' exclusion, and 15% (233) mentioned the lack of water in lavatories. This highlights that men and boys may be less aware of the exclusionary impacts of inadequate WASH facilities on menstruators.

While physical pain remains the primary reason for exclusion, social stigma that generates fear and shame in menstruators is almost as significant. This reveals the need for anti-stigma interventions in menstruators' social environments. Additionally, addressing infrastructure issues – for instance, improving toilet facilities in schools and workplaces – can reduce barriers and promote the inclusion of menstruators during their periods.

**Even though menstruation is a natural and healthy part of life, stigmatizing attitudes towards it are widespread among men and boys.**

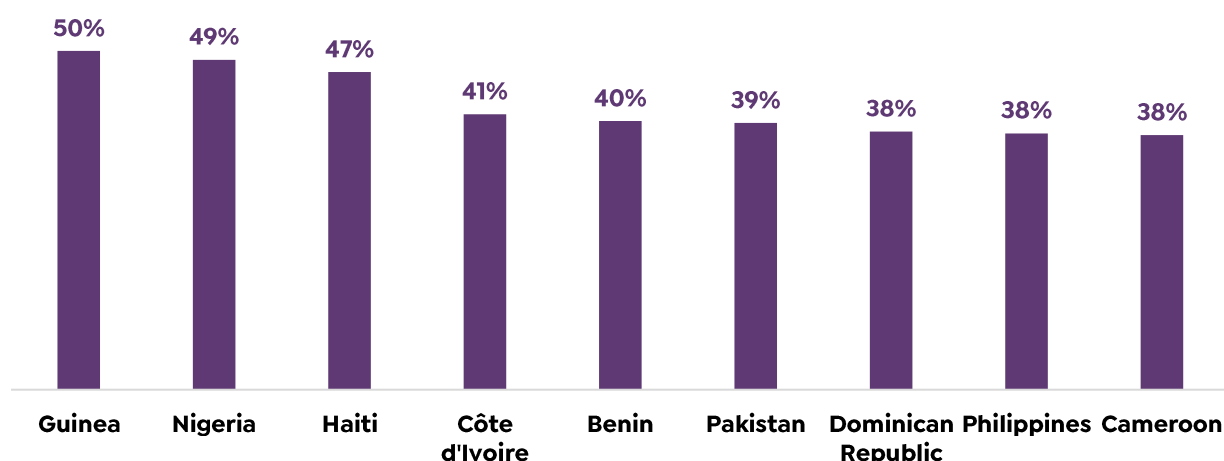
**42%**

**of men and boys agree or strongly agree that menstruation is dirty and shameful.**

Across all nine countries, nearly half (1,462) of the male respondents reported that they perceive menstruation to be dirty and shameful. This indicates a high prevalence of period stigma among male populations.

As shown in Figure 12, these stigmatizing beliefs are consistent across countries, with moderate variation. The highest agreement with the perception that menstruation is dirty and shameful is by men and boys in Guinea (50%), Nigeria (49%), and Haiti (47%). Lower levels were reported in the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, and Cameroon, where 38% of respondents endorsed this prejudicial belief.

**Figure 12. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Agree or Strongly Agree That Menstruation Is Dirty and Shameful**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

The qualitative findings provide insight into the underlying drivers of these perceptions. **Stigma is frequently associated with notions of uncleanness and impurity.** Respondents often linked menstruation to blood, odour, and staining, which were interpreted as unhygienic or contaminating. For example, in Benin, a young man stated, "Menstrual blood is a dirty, polluting, malodorous substance," reinforcing the idea that menstruation is inherently unclean. In Haiti, a respondent remarked, "It is dirty as [menstruators] have a bad odour." This was echoed in the Dominican Republic, where a respondent noted, "Women on their periods can contaminate public spaces and the food they touch." Similar sentiments were expressed by a participant in Côte d'Ivoire: "Menstruation involves blood and bodily fluids, which can be perceived as unhygienic." In Nigeria, an adolescent boy said, "Females become impure during that time." Some respondents even pointed to the need to frequently change sanitary products as "proof" that menstruation is an unclean process. Together, these responses illustrate that menstruation is commonly associated with impurity and disgust.

**Menstruation is also widely perceived as shameful.** Many respondents described being socialized to view menstruation as embarrassing or an inappropriate topic of discussion. A young man from Cameroon shared, “I feel uncomfortable discussing menstruation, and also, it is considered dirty and shameful in my community.” In Côte d’Ivoire, a respondent recalled, “Growing up, I was taught that menstruation was a negative experience.”

In some contexts, the shame surrounding menstruation is reinforced by cultural and religious practices. A young man in Benin reflected, “All our traditional rituals exclude menstruating women, so it must be shameful and embarrassing.” Respondents in Pakistan and Nigeria described similar restrictions on menstruators’ participation in religious activities, reinforcing the perception of menstruation as impure or spiritually compromising.

The concealment of menstruation further contributes to its association with shame. Men and boys noted that menstruation is often hidden, with menstruators managing it discreetly and avoiding open discussion about it. A man from Guinea shared, “I’ve seen women hide their menstrual products out of embarrassment.” Another from Haiti observed, “The whole discussion about periods seems shrouded in shame.” This lack of visibility reinforces discomfort and limits opportunities to challenge negative beliefs.

**At the same time, a significant number of men and boys rejected the idea that menstruation is dirty or shameful.** Many men and boys argued that menstruation is a natural biological process that should not carry negative connotations. A man from Cameroon stated, “Menstruation is a natural part of life, like breathing – nothing to be ashamed of!” Similarly, in Côte d’Ivoire, a male respondent insisted, “To call menstruation dirty is simply wrong. It’s a healthy bodily function.”

Some spoke about the need to positively reframe attitudes towards menstruation and actively challenge harmful myths. Towards this, a male respondent from Cameroon shared, “As a man, I think it’s essential to challenge these taboos and ensure that we talk about menstruation as a matter of health, not shame.” Similarly, in Guinea, a male respondent stated, “Menstruation should not be viewed as dirty or shameful, as it is a natural and essential biological process that all menstruators experience.” These perspectives highlight that there are many men who hold inclusive, anti-discriminatory attitudes, and can be key allies in promoting menstrual dignity.

Education emerged as an important factor in shaping attitudes. Respondents with greater access to information were more likely to challenge stigma. In Nigeria, a man explained, “Though many societies see menstruation as dirty, people with the right knowledge won’t consider it that way.” In Cameroon, another explained, “Menstruation has been wrongly stigmatized for generations, but we should focus on education rather than perpetuating myths.” Many emphasized that reducing stigma is necessary to promote gender equality, improve menstrual health outcomes, and foster better-informed communities.

Overall, the findings indicate a divergence in attitudes among men and boys, with **persistent stigma coexisting alongside more informed, supportive perspectives.** While religious, cultural, and social norms continue to reinforce negative perceptions of menstruation, some men and boys are actively challenging these beliefs within their communities. As menstruation is increasingly recognized as a natural biological process – rather than a source of shame – there is potential to shift prevailing

prejudicial norms to promote more supportive environments for menstruators. These findings highlight the importance of engaging men and boys as allies in efforts to advance menstrual dignity.

### Perceptions of menstrual stigma differ across genders.

**28%** more menstruators believe that periods are dirty compared to men and boys.

A comparison of men’s and boys’ perceptions of menstruation with results from the menstruators’ survey reveals that a larger share of menstruators believe that menstruation is dirty and impure. About 70% of menstruators across all nine countries believe that menstruation is dirty (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025), whereas only 42% of men and boys agree or strongly agree with the same statement. This 28 percentage-point difference suggests that the **stigma surrounding menstruation is internalized more by menstruators themselves than by male individuals, who are not directly impacted by these negative beliefs.** Figure 13 displays the gaps in internalized menstrual stigma between male survey respondents and menstruators.

**Figure 13. The Percentage of Men and Boys Who Agree That Menstruation Is Dirty Compared to the Percentage of Menstruators Who Agree That Menstruation Is Dirty**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data from all nine countries, November 2024, and final menstruators’ survey data from all nine countries, October 2024.

A similar pattern is observed in respondents’ perceptions of community attitudes. Overall, 69% of menstruators reported that others in their community think menstruation is dirty (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025), compared to 45% of men and boys who stated that people in their community

hold the same negative belief. This gap indicates that **menstruators perceive higher levels of stigma in their social environments than their male counterparts do**. It also suggests that men and boys may be more limited in their ability to recognize stigma, particularly when stigmas are normalized and embedded in everyday practices.

These findings highlight the **need to address both external and internalized forms of menstrual stigma**. Interventions should not only engage men and boys to recognize and challenge stigmatizing attitudes, but also support menstruators in challenging negative self-perceptions. Promoting open dialogue across genders at the community level may help correct misperceptions, foster mutual understanding, and contribute to more supportive environments for menstrual dignity.

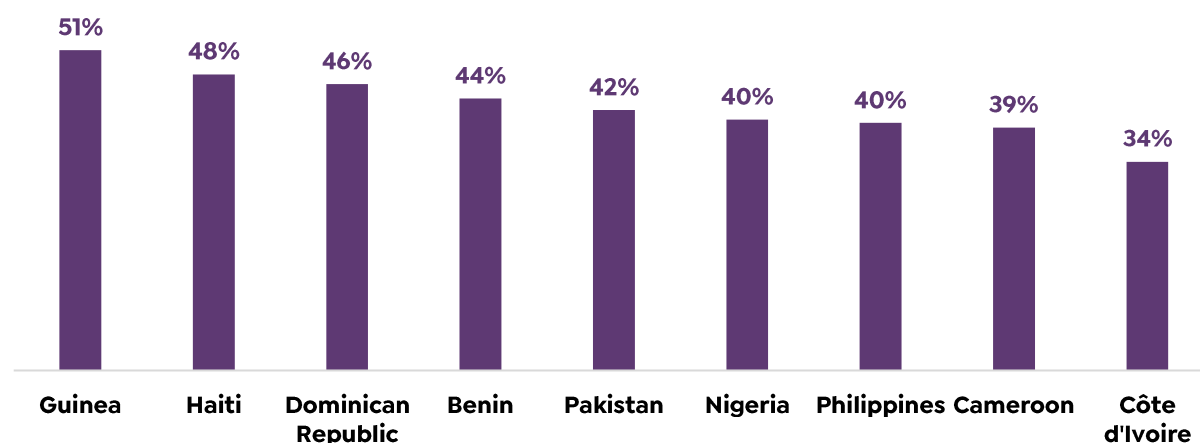
### **Harmful gender norms are embedded within menstrual stigma, as many men and boys believe that women are inferior to men because they experience menstrual periods.**

**43%** of men and boys across all nine countries agree or strongly agree that women are inferior to men because they menstruate.

Across the surveyed countries, 43% of male respondents believe that women are inferior to men because they menstruate. This is similar among menstruators, 39% of whom have this same negative perception (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). The comparable level of agreement between groups indicates that **period stigma is not limited to one gender**. It also highlights that **prejudicial opinions about menstruation are deeply intertwined with harmful gender norms that reinforce inequities for women, girls, and gender-diverse people**.

The disparaging belief that menstruation renders women inferior to men varies moderately across countries, as shown in Figure 14. Men and boys in Guinea (51%), Haiti (48%), and the Dominican Republic (46%) demonstrate the highest levels of agreement, whereas those in Côte d'Ivoire (34%) have the lowest.

**Figure 14. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Agree That Women Are Inferior to Men Because They Menstruate**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data from all nine countries, November 2024.

Qualitative responses provide insight into what underlies these attitudes. **The men and boys who endorsed the belief that menstruation makes women inferior frequently cited the belief that menstruation causes weakness and fragility as reasons they consider women less capable.** For example, in Cameroon, a man remarked, “Menstruation makes women physically weaker than men, contributing to the idea that women are inferior.” A respondent in Benin echoed this belief, saying, “I think menstruation shows a weakness in women’s bodies that men don’t have to deal with, making them less capable.” In Guinea, this stereotype was echoed by a young man, who shared, “The biological process of menstruation seems to be a sign that women are less physically stable and therefore less reliable than men in [executing] demanding tasks.”

Respondents’ belief that women are inferior due to weakness and fragility was also connected to the emotional fluctuations associated with menstruation. A respondent from Benin stated, “Menstruation comes with emotional instability, which I think is a drawback [for menstruators] as compared to men.” Another in Nigeria similarly explained, “I feel that menstruation causes emotional instability in women, and this makes them less capable in leadership roles compared to men.” In Pakistan, an adolescent boy shared, “Generally held beliefs that women are less intelligent than men are reinforced by the idea that women are excessively emotional or unstable during their periods.” A man in Cameroon stated, “I agree with the statement because menstruation can bring physical and emotional challenges that may affect a woman’s daily life and productivity.” These responses reflect beliefs that link menstruation to perceived limitations in both the physical and emotional capabilities of women.

**Other respondents explicitly identified that cultural and religious norms shape these harmful views.** In Guinea, one participant noted, “In our culture, women in menstruation are considered as less capable.” A respondent from the Dominican Republic stated, “I was exposed to cultural narratives that associate menstruation with impurity or weakness, which influence my views on gender dynamics.” Similarly, in Haiti and Pakistan, men and boys highlighted that religious norms describe menstruation as an impurity of female populations. One respondent said, “According to our religion, menstruating women are considered sinners, which makes them inferior.” This highlights how cultural and religious forces substantially influence perceptions towards menstruators.

While these stigmatizing attitudes are prevalent, there are also men and boys who reject the notion that women are inferior because they menstruate. **Respondents who disagree with this prejudicial view framed menstruation as a natural biological process that is unrelated to women’s abilities or worth.** For example, a young man in Cameroon shared “Women’s capabilities extend far beyond their biological functions.” Similarly, a participant in Côte d’Ivoire emphasized, “A woman’s worth is not determined by her physical experiences.” Another in the Philippines stated, “Periods don’t define who a woman is or what she can achieve.”

**Many respondents pointed out that women manage menstruation while also excelling, demonstrating strength rather than inferiority.** As a respondent from Nigeria put it, “Women face period cramps for days and still work with the same efficiency. Men can never do that.” Similarly, a young man from the Dominican Republic noted, “Successful women in leadership roles demonstrate that menstruation does not hinder capability or achievement.” These sentiments challenge the idea that menstruation is a source of weakness and instead highlight the toughness and resilience of menstruators.

**Some respondents linked their views to broader considerations of equality.** A respondent from Benin stated, “Menstruation is a part of life that should be normalized rather than stigmatized.” Meanwhile, another from Guinea noted, “Viewing menstruation as inferior undermines the progress women have made.”

Overall, the findings reveal a clear divide between those who continue to view menstruation as a limitation and those who see it as an ordinary biological process that does not reduce a woman’s worth. For some men and boys, beliefs about physical and emotional weakness, as well as cultural and religious perceptions of impurity, perpetuate the idea that menstruation diminishes a woman’s capabilities. For others, normalizing menstruation as a shameless natural physiological process and embracing gender equality narratives that challenge harmful views reinforce the idea that menstruation is neither a disadvantage nor a justification for discrimination. Growing the number of male individuals who fall into the latter group is crucial to enhance menstrual dignity throughout diverse contexts.

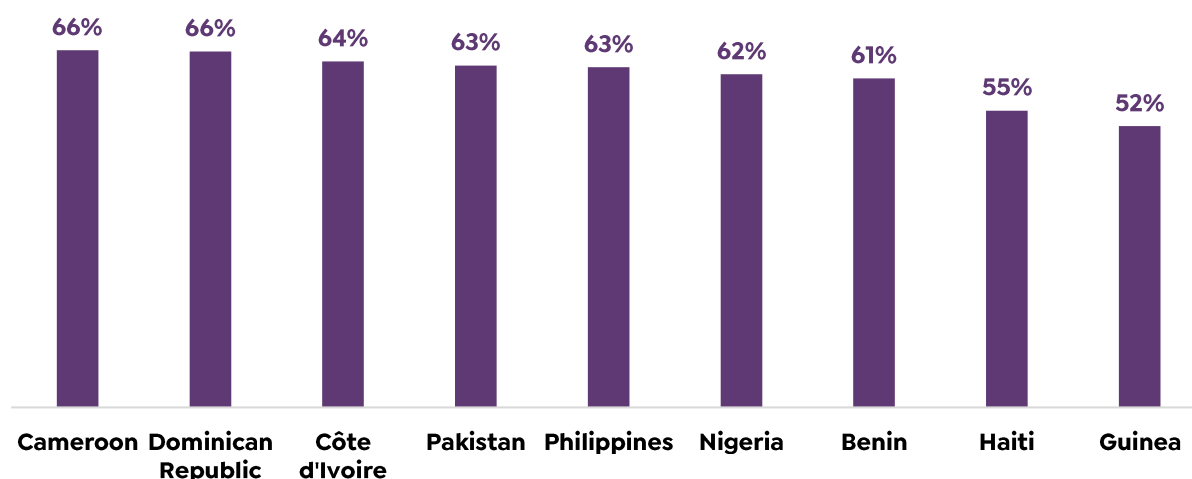
**Many men and boys support open dialogue about menstruation, which presents an opportunity for advancing menstrual dignity.**



Across the nine surveyed countries, 61% of male respondents (2,120) reported that menstruation should be openly discussed with everyone. **This is higher than menstruators’ support for conversations about menstruation** – only 41% agree that it should be openly discussed with everyone (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). This gap suggests that men and boys are more willing to talk and learn about menstruation. Meanwhile, menstruators, who often directly experience stigma and the adverse social consequences of discussing this topic, are more cautious.

As shown in Figure 15, male support for open exchanges about menstruation is substantial. Respondents in Cameroon (66%) and the Dominican Republic (66%) demonstrate the most support for greater transparency about menstruation. The lowest levels of support are observed in Haiti (55%) and Guinea (52%), suggesting greater resistance to talking about this topic in these countries.

**Figure 15. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Think Menstruation Should Be Openly Discussed**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

Qualitative responses provide insight into the reasoning behind respondents' support for open dialogue. Among the men and boys who support open conversation about menstrual periods, many believe that **menstruation should be discussed because doing so will increase understanding and normalization of a natural part of life that should not be shrouded in secrecy**. As a young man from Benin explained, "I feel that keeping menstruation a secret only perpetuates shame." Another said, "Menstruation is a natural part of life for half the population, and discussing it openly helps normalize it, reducing stigma." Similarly, a respondent in Cameroon explained that open discussion about menstruation "allows everyone to understand it better and helps normalize something that's completely natural". This view is supported by a man in the Dominican Republic, who explained, "We should talk openly about menstruation, [as doing so] will ultimately help to normalize it as a natural process that everyone should understand."

**Men and boys also support open discourse because it challenges taboos and stigma.** A survey participant from Haiti noted, "Conversations about menstruation help to destigmatize it, making it a normal part of life rather than a taboo subject." A respondent in the Dominican Republic agreed: "Open conversations about menstruation challenge the cultural taboos and stigma that often surround it." In the Philippines, a respondent explained that talking about menstruation is important because "societal taboo and stigma on this topic can only be solved in this way".

**Respondents expressed interest in open discussion about periods to ensure greater inclusion, equality, and support for women, girls, and gender-diverse people.** A respondent from Benin noted, "I believe open discussions challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality." Another shared, "By talking about menstruation openly, we can create more inclusive spaces." Many respondents argued that breaking the silence around menstruation could help create more supportive interpersonal relationships, families, schools, and workplaces. A respondent from Côte d'Ivoire attested to this, saying, "It helps partners and family members offer better emotional and physical support."

Despite this significant amount of support, resistance to open discussion about menstruation is also evident across countries. Men and boys frequently cited **cultural and religious customs, traditions, and beliefs** as reasons for this position. In Guinea and Haiti, in particular, many respondents are concerned that open discussions about menstruation are inappropriate or disrespectful of tradition.

In Benin, a young man stated, “An open discussion [about menstruation] will kill our society’s customs and peace.”

Others highlighted the **deep-seated stigma around menstruation as the reason they do not support discussing it**. They expressed the belief that periods should be kept private because they consider them shameful, impure, or dirty. For example, a respondent from Guinea stated, “Periods are a shameful act and should [only] be discussed privately.” Similarly, in Haiti, another shared, “Discussing menstruation in public is not considered good in our elders’ eyes.”

**Reluctance to engage in open conversation also stems from a belief that menstruation is not relevant to men or that it should only be discussed among women.** This is illustrated by a respondent, who said, “Men don’t experience menstruation, so I don’t see why we should be involved in those conversations.” A respondent from Pakistan echoed this sentiment, stating, “I think it is something personal to women; they would not want people to comment on this.”

Overall, the findings indicate variations in attitudes towards openly discussing menstruation, with many respondents expressing support and others reporting reservations linked to cultural norms, stigma, and perceived gender roles. **The relatively high level of support among men and boys suggests that there is potential to engage in dialogue, promote education, and foster information-sharing initiatives that can address the underlying drivers of menstrual stigma and discrimination.** This is promising and can be leveraged to cultivate social environments that support menstrual dignity.

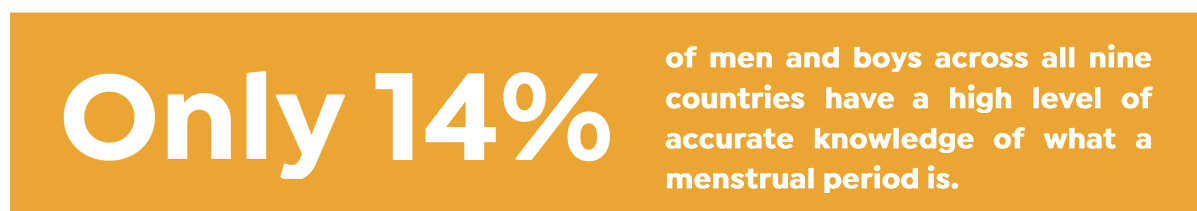
### 4.3 Key Findings on Knowledge of Menstruation

Accurate knowledge of menstruation among men and boys is critical to advance menstrual dignity, as knowledge shapes attitudes and behaviours towards menstruators. Given that men and boys often influence decision-making within households, workplaces, schools, and communities, their understanding can either reinforce discrimination or contribute to fostering more supportive environments.

Examining men's and boys' knowledge in greater depth is also important because of the various implications of knowledge gaps and misconceptions related to menstruation. While a lack of knowledge might reflect an absence of information, misconceptions represent inaccurate beliefs that can actively sustain stigma and may be more resistant to change. Analysing these patterns can provide important insights.

Ultimately, these findings can facilitate designing interventions that not only increase knowledge but also address harmful beliefs and practices that undermine menstrual dignity.

**Most men and boys do not have an accurate, functional understanding of menstruation.**



**Most men and boys cannot accurately define what menstruation is without some misunderstanding.** 45% (1,545) of the men and boys in all the surveyed countries demonstrate a moderate level of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> They conceive of menstruation using some accurate evidence-based definitions and a couple of inaccurate misconceptions. Meanwhile, about 42% (1,446) have a low level of accurate knowledge of what menstruation is. They predominantly define it based on misconceptions. This means that only 14%<sup>4</sup> (474) have a completely accurate understanding of menstruation. These respondents rely on accurate, evidence-based definitions and no misinformation. This shows that **the majority of men and boys have incomplete knowledge of**

<sup>3</sup> These findings were generated from a survey item with six response options, three of which contained scientifically accurate descriptions of what menstruation is, and three of which included misconceptions. They align with validated and evidence-based definitions used to assess the presence of both accurate knowledge and misconceptions. Based on their answers, respondents were classified into three knowledge levels:

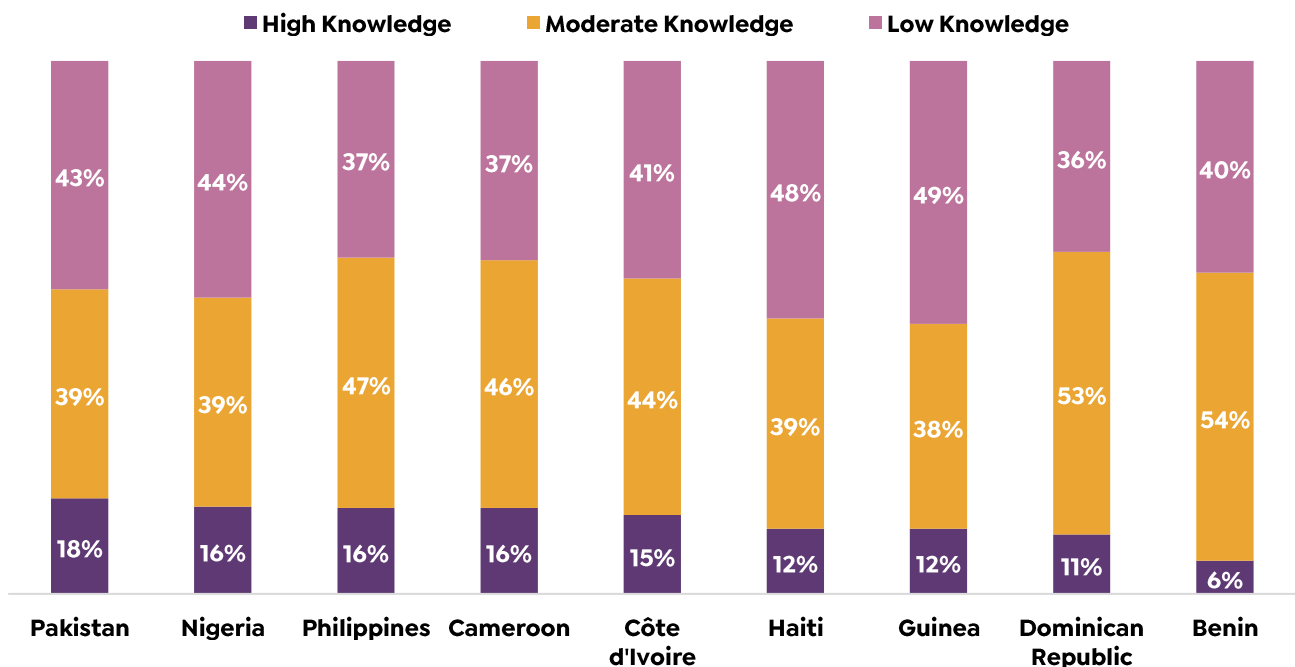
- **High knowledge:** Respondents who selected all three correct responses and no misconceptions generated a total score of 3.
- **Moderate knowledge:** Respondents who chose a mix of inaccurate and accurate definitions of what menstruation is scored between 1 and 2.
- **Low knowledge:** Respondents who selected predominantly incorrect definitions of menstruation or "Don't know" received a score of 0 or less.

<sup>4</sup> Percentages may not sum up to 100% due to rounding.

**menstrual functions. Moreover, misconceptions persist and influence male attitudes and behaviours towards menstruation.**

Figure 16 demonstrates **a consistent pattern across all nine countries: only a small minority demonstrates a high level of accurate knowledge about menstruation.** The greatest proportion of correct understanding is in Pakistan, where 18% of men and boys exhibit high knowledge, followed by Nigeria, the Philippines, and Cameroon, each at 16%. This suggests that the men and boys in these countries may have greater exposure to formal or informal education on menstruation. Meanwhile, Benin stands out as having the lowest percentage of men and boys with high knowledge, at 6%. In countries with less accurate knowledge of menstruation, there are gaps in education or prevailing cultural narratives that result in a failure to connect menstruation with accurate information on basic health and reproductive functions.

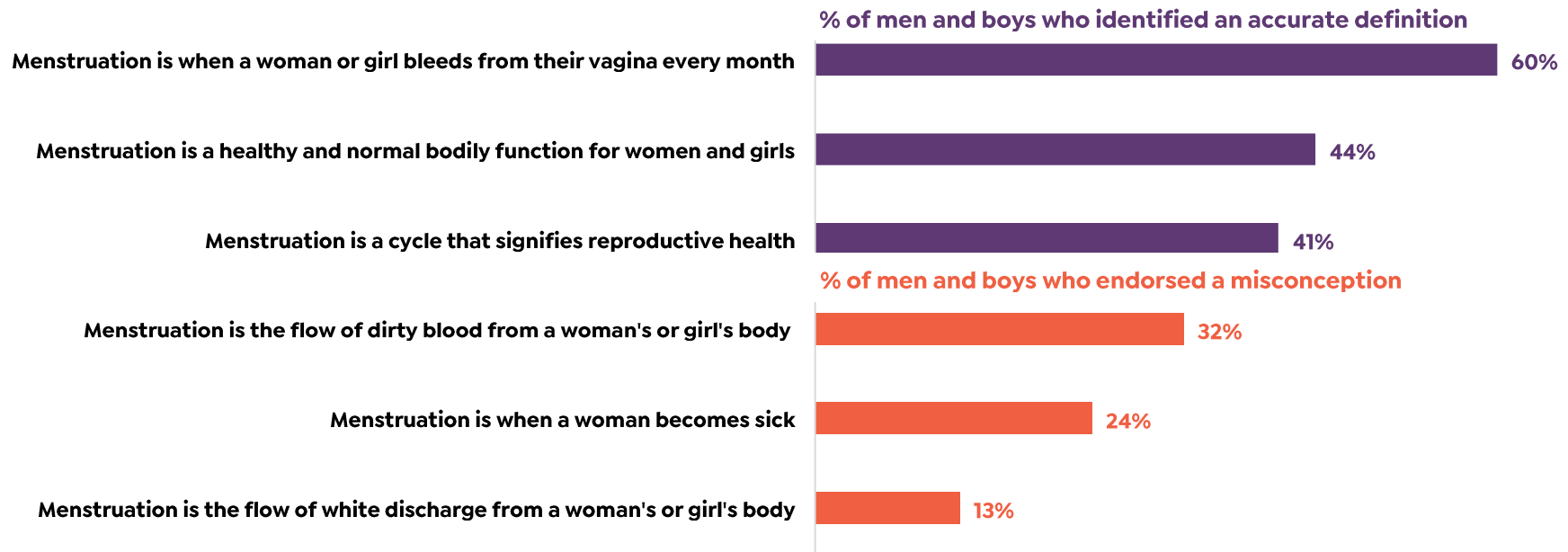
**Figure 16. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Demonstrate Different Levels of Knowledge About What Menstruation Is**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

Figure 17 illustrates the range of understanding of menstruation, as reported by male survey participants, encompassing both accurate definitions and prevalent misconceptions. Across all the surveyed countries, the majority of men and boys identified menstruation as “when a woman or girl bleeds from their vagina every month”, with 60% (2,067) of respondents selecting this correct description. In contrast, the most widespread misunderstanding is the inaccurate belief that menstruation is “the flow of dirty blood from a woman’s or girl’s body”. This reflects stigmatizing perceptions of periods as unclean or impure. This view is held by 32% (1,117) of participants.

**Figure 17. The Percentage of Men and Boys Who Identified Menstruation Using Accurate Definitions and Misinformation**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

This highlights that while many men and boys know that menstruation is a monthly biological process involving bleeding (the proportion ranges from 69% in Cameroon to 50% in Côte d'Ivoire), few recognize it as a normal bodily function (ranging from 54% in the Philippines to 34% in Benin) or as a sign of reproductive health (varying from 50% in Pakistan and the Philippines to 32% in the Dominican Republic). This pattern suggests that **functional knowledge of menstruation is more common among men and boys than a deeper conceptual understanding of its physiological significance**. At the same time, misconceptions of menstruation remain prevalent. 32% of men and boys (1,117) falsely described menstruation as the flow of "dirty blood". Meanwhile, 24% (840) mistakenly associated it with illness and 13% (439) incorrectly defined it as the flow of white discharge. These findings indicate that **inaccurate beliefs are widespread, and they often coexist with correct knowledge**.

The nature of these misconceptions is particularly important. Beliefs that menstrual blood is “dirty” or that menstruation represents illness or abnormalities reinforce associations with impurity, contamination, and weakness. Such interpretations can contribute to stigma and discriminatory attitudes, even among individuals who have some accurate knowledge of menstruation.

Given the significant adverse impacts of misconceptions, it is critical to examine the fallacies associated with menstruation in greater detail. **The belief that menstrual blood is “dirty” is the most common misconception.** Figure 18 demonstrates that this inaccurate characterization is most frequent in Haiti (42%) and Guinea (37%), followed by Nigeria (36%). In contrast, Benin (26%) and Cameroon (25%) have the lowest prevalence of this stigmatizing notion. The misrepresentation of periods as dirty was often cited by men and boys as the reason for their menstrual stigma. This confirms that challenging this widespread falsehood in all countries is critical to reduce discrimination related to menstruation.

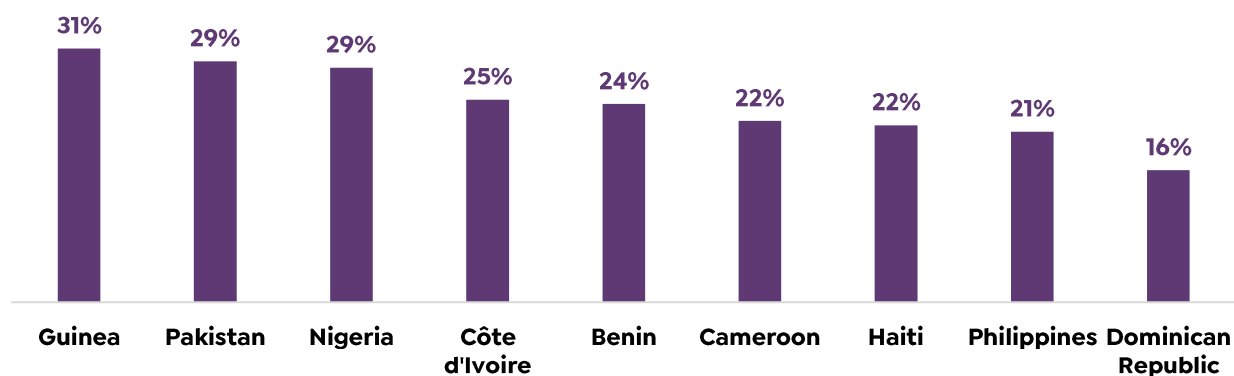
**Figure 18. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Inaccurately Believe That Menstruation Is the Flow of Dirty Blood From a Woman’s or Girl’s Body**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

Another frequently mentioned misconception is the belief that menstruation signifies illness; this misunderstanding is held by 24% of all male respondents. This inaccurate perception is most pronounced in Guinea (31%), Pakistan (29%), and Nigeria (29%), as shown in Figure 19. In contrast, the Dominican Republic (16%) has the lowest proportion of participants who think of menstruation as a form of sickness.

**Figure 19. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Inaccurately Believe That Menstruation Is When a Woman Becomes Sick**

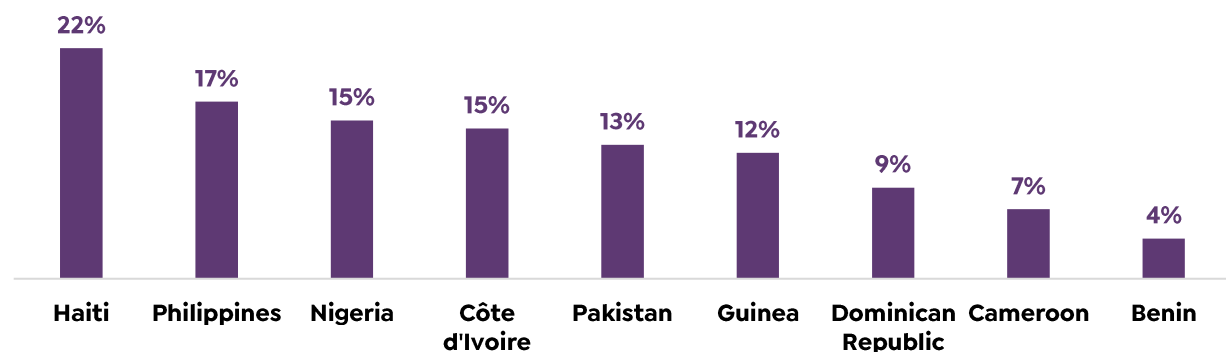


Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

These findings indicate that, in certain contexts, **menstruation is incorrectly conceptualized as a health problem rather than a normal physiological process**. This reinforces the associated stigma and exclusion of menstruators during their menstrual periods. This is further supported by a notable share of respondents who reported that menstruation makes women inferior to men because they believe it renders them weak and unstable. Addressing and reframing the false notion that menstruation causes weakness and diminishes capabilities are critical to reduce menstrual discrimination and transform harmful gender norms.

The misconception that menstruation is the flow of white discharge from a woman’s or girl’s body is the least commonly reported among male respondents. This misinterpretation is most prevalent in Haiti, where 22% of men and boys hold this view (Figure 20), followed by the Philippines at 17% and Nigeria at 15%. In contrast, lower proportions are observed in Benin (4%) and Cameroon (7%). The comparatively higher prevalence of misconceptions in places such as Haiti and the Philippines indicates that menstruation is, in some settings, conflated with general bodily discharge or framed as an abnormal condition, rather than understood as a distinct and healthy biological process. This underscores the need for more comprehensive reproductive health education.

**Figure 20. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Inaccurately Believe That Menstruation Is the Flow of White Discharge From a Woman’s or Girl’s Body**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that **gaps in knowledge are not solely attributable to limited information, but are also shaped by the persistence of specific, culturally embedded misconceptions**. Negative and inaccurate beliefs can coexist with accurate knowledge, and have the potential to significantly influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours related to menstruation. Addressing these misconceptions is, therefore, essential, as they have broader implications for social norms, gender dynamics, and the realization of menstrual dignity.

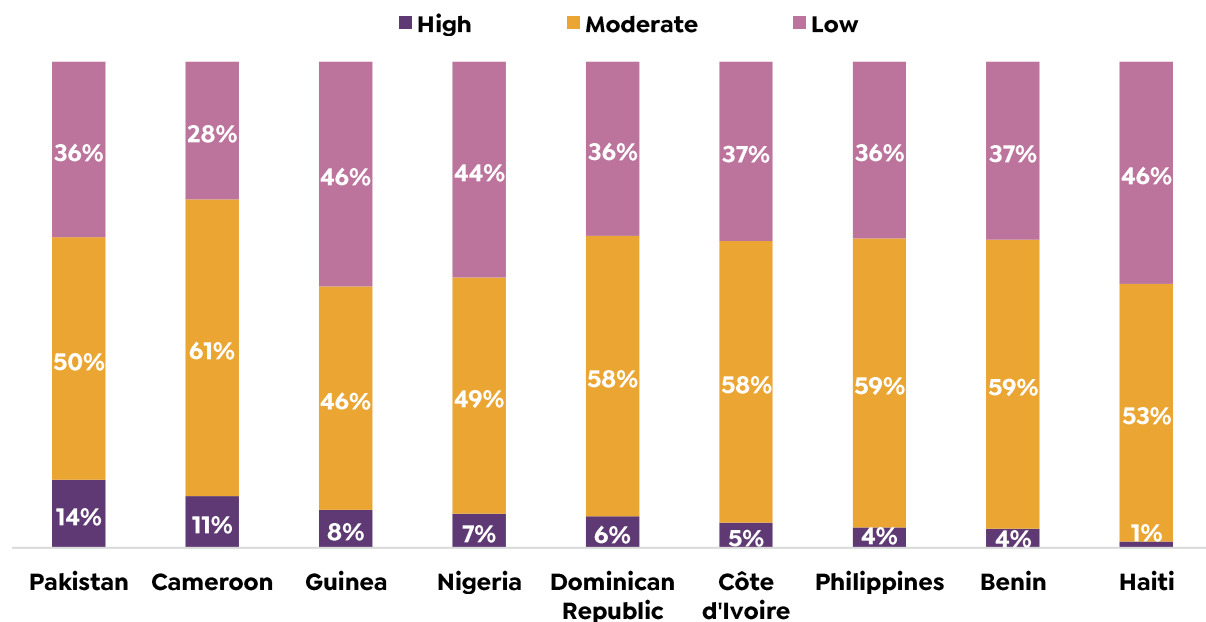
**The vast majority of men do not have an accurate understanding of the biological reasons for menstruation.**

**Just 7%** of men and boys across all nine countries have a high level of accurate knowledge of why menstruation occurs.

**Nearly all men and boys surveyed do not correctly understand the underlying biological mechanisms and purpose of menstruation.** Only 7% (233) of all respondents have a high level of knowledge,<sup>5</sup> correctly identifying all scientifically correct explanations for why menstruation occurs, without any misconceptions. Meanwhile, 55% (1,898) have moderate knowledge of why menstruation occurs, with partial understanding and some misconceptions. 38% (1,334) have low knowledge, where their understanding of the causes of a menstrual period is substantially shaped by misinformation. **This highlights that comprehensive and accurate knowledge of menstrual physiology is rare among men and boys. Indeed, most rely on incomplete and incorrect information.**

Figure 21 shows that accurate knowledge of the biological reasons for menstruation is low in all countries. Respondents in Pakistan and Cameroon have relatively higher levels of knowledge compared to other countries, with 14% and 11% of respondents demonstrating high knowledge, respectively. Alarming, however, only 1% of the men and boys surveyed in Haiti have a completely accurate understanding of the biological basis of menstruation. Similarly, respondents in Benin and the Philippines show concerning low levels of comprehensive evidence-based knowledge (4% each). **The consistently low levels of knowledge across countries confirm that information deficits are widespread rather than context specific.** This underscores the need to strengthen reproductive health education as part of the broader effort to address menstrual discrimination and support menstrual dignity.

**Figure 21. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Demonstrate Different Levels of Knowledge About Why Menstruation Occurs**



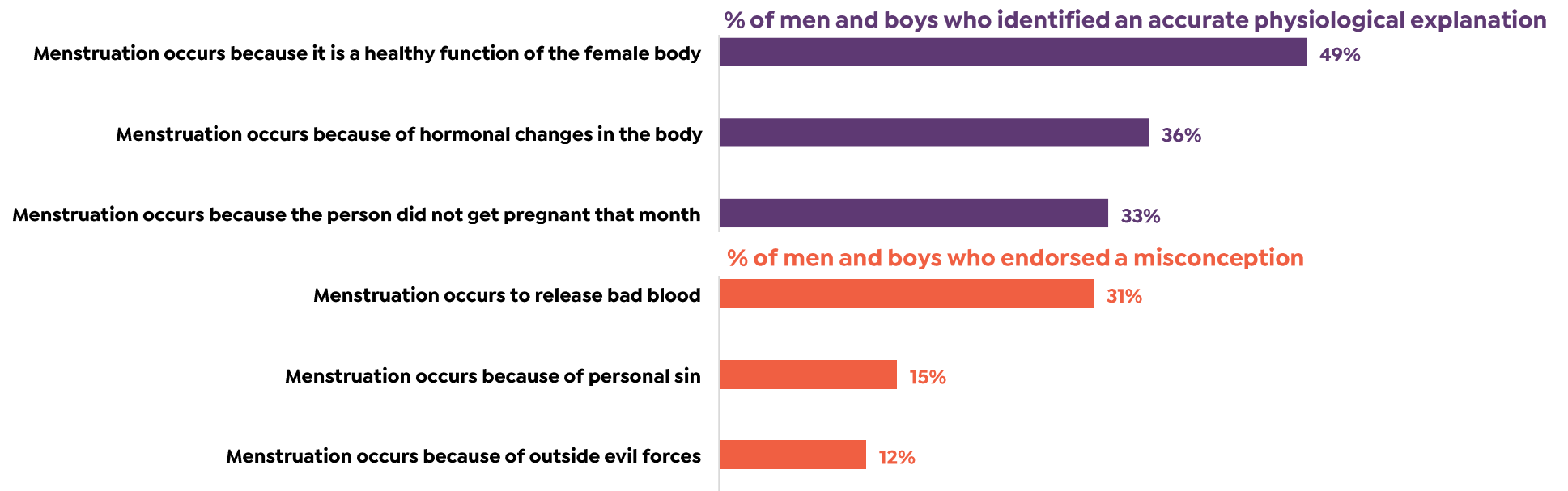
Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

<sup>5</sup> These results were generated using the same methodology as the prior knowledge question. The survey item contained six response options, three of which were scientifically accurate explanations of why menstruation occurs, and three of which were misconceptions. Using the same scoring system, respondents were categorized into high knowledge, moderate knowledge, and low knowledge groups based on their answers.

Respondents' limited knowledge of why menstruation occurs is concerning on its own, but it is also worrisome because it may contribute to the persistence of inaccurate stigmatizing beliefs and interpretations. This is particularly problematic where evidence-based explanations of reproductive health are replaced by culturally or socially derived myths with embedded negative biases.

Figure 22 illustrates the range of understanding of menstruation, as reported by male survey participants. It encompasses both accurate explanations and prevalent misconceptions. Across all the surveyed countries, the most common explanation of menstruation is that it is a healthy biological function, with 49% of men and boys cognizant of this fact. Other accurate explanations are less common. 36% of men and boys correctly identified that menstruation occurs because of hormonal changes in the body and 33% indicated that it happens because a menstruator is not pregnant.

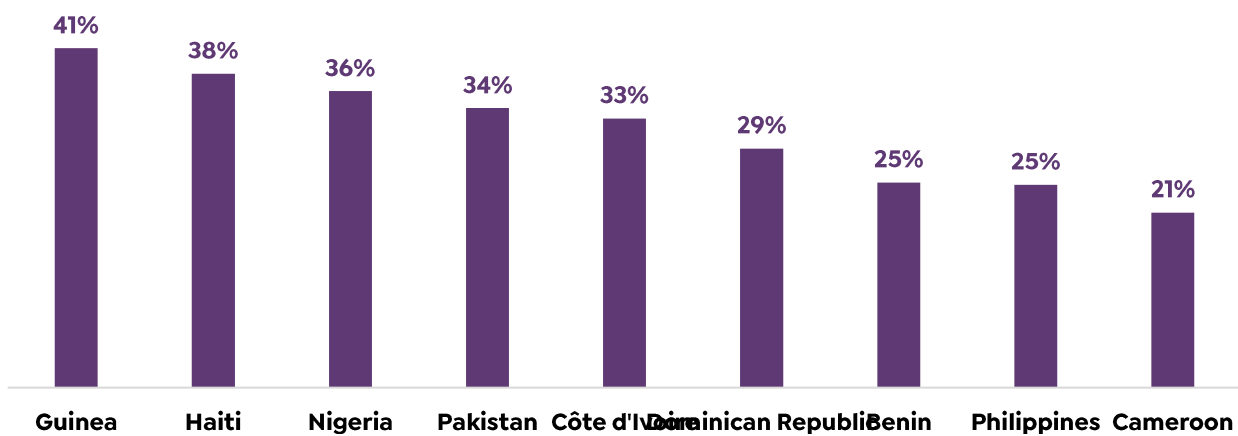
**Figure 22. The Percentage of Men and Boys Who Describe the Reasons for Menstruation Using Accurate Explanations and Misinformation**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

The results also demonstrate that accurate understandings of the biological basis of menstruation coexist with misconceptions, many of which have negative connotations. Notably, **31% of men and boys reported the false belief that menstruation serves to expel “bad blood”**. As shown in Figure 23, Guinea has the highest proportion of men and boys (41%) who hold this harmful misconception, followed by Haiti (38%) and Nigeria (36%). Cameroon has the lowest proportion, at 21% of respondents. Although comparatively lower, this still indicates that over one-fifth of respondents in Cameroon associate menstruation with impurity. **These results point to a widespread tendency to frame menstruation as the removal of something inherently negative and corrupt, rather than as a normal, positive reproductive process.** Such interpretations reinforce notions of contamination, shame, and inferiority, which can generate and justify discriminatory attitudes and practices towards menstruators.

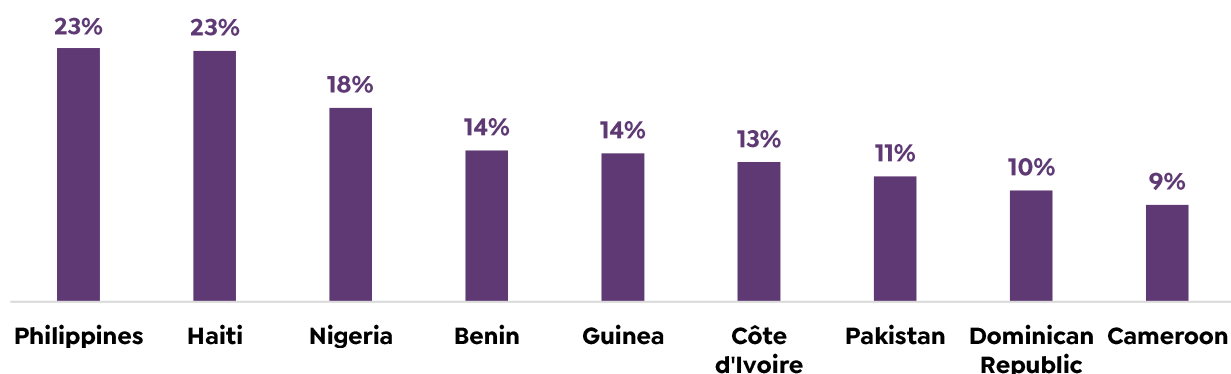
**Figure 23. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Inaccurately Believe That Menstruation Is the Process of Releasing “Bad Blood”**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

Another negative misconception is **the belief that menstruation is caused by “personal sin”**. **This fallacy is supported by 15% of the men and boys surveyed.** The Philippines (23%) and Haiti (23%) have the greatest share of respondents who believe this misinformation, with Nigeria following at 18% (Figure 24). Cameroon has the lowest proportion of respondents who hold this belief, at 9%, in line with the comparatively lower prevalence of other misconceptions in the country. These responses indicate that **many men and boys have a stigmatized understanding of menstruation because they perceive it as a moral failing. This can reinforce shame, generate stigma, justify exclusion and teasing, and perpetuate harmful gender norms.**

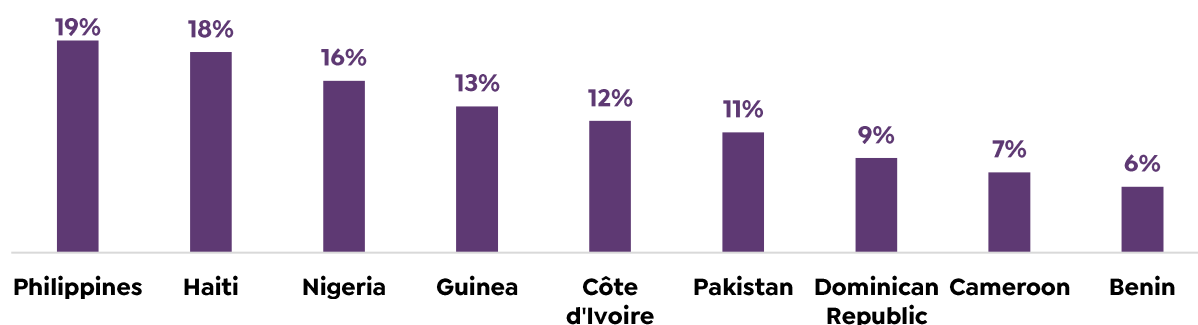
**Figure 24. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Incorrectly Believe That Menstruation Is Due to “Personal Sin”**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

Additionally, **12% of men and boys believe the harmful misconception that menstruation is caused by “outside evil forces”**. Figure 25 demonstrates that this misunderstanding is most prevalent in the Philippines (19%) and Haiti (18%). In contrast, Benin has the lowest proportion of respondents who selected this response (6%), indicating comparatively lower prevalence of this myth in the country. These findings reveal that some men and boys consider menstruation to be innately dangerous, morally corrupt, or wicked. Such misplaced perspectives **label menstruators as inherently tainted with malicious forces. They reinforce perceptions of them as contaminated or threatening, which further entrenches discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.**

**Figure 25. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Inaccurately Believe That Menstruation Is Caused by “Outside Evil Forces”**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

Overall, these findings indicate that although some men and boys do recognize menstruation as a normal biological process, only an incredibly small proportion demonstrate a totally accurate understanding of its causes. At the same time, many continue to endorse harmful misconceptions that undermine menstrual dignity, such as perpetuating the belief that menstruation is inherently negative. These patterns highlight the **pressing need for targeted, context-specific education interventions that not only improve knowledge of the biological basis of menstruation but also debunk harmful myths that sustain menstrual stigma and discrimination.**

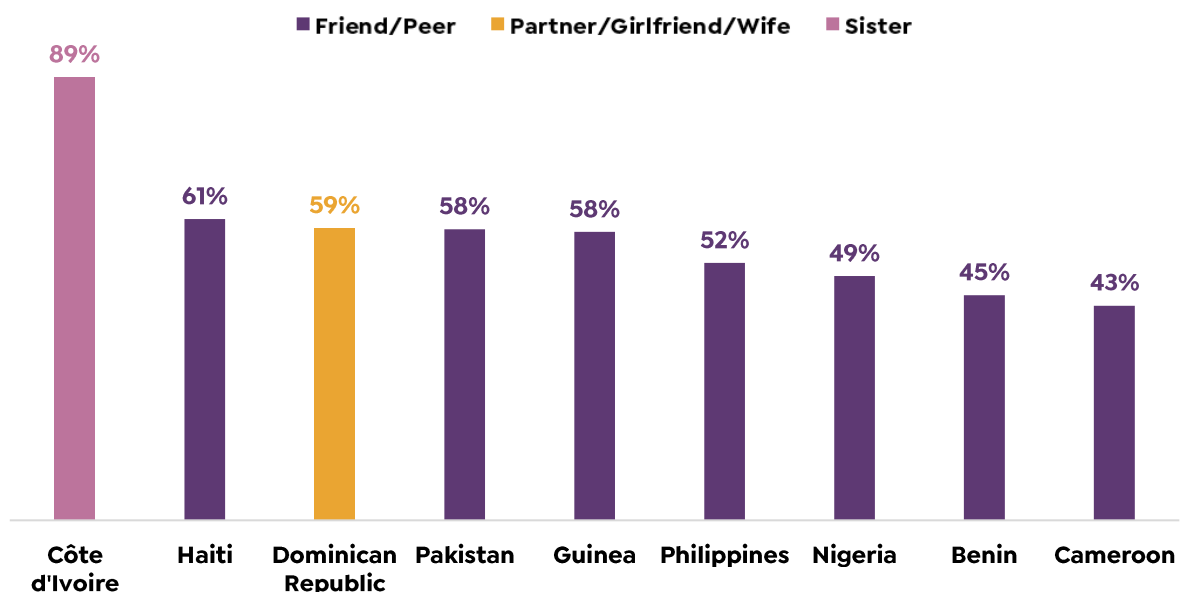
**Friends are the primary means by which men and boys learn about menstruation.**

**52%** of the men and boys surveyed in all nine countries learned about menstruation from their friends or peers.

Given the low levels of accurate knowledge of menstruation demonstrated by men and boys, with only 14% correctly defining menstruation and just 7% accurately understanding the physiological reasons for it, it is important to identify the major sources of information about menstruation. By doing so, this data can be used to close the existing gaps in men’s and boys’ access to accurate, evidence-based information.

Across all countries, **friends and peers (52%) were the most common source of information about menstruation for men and boys.** More than half of the respondents from Haiti (61%), Pakistan (58%), Guinea (58%), and the Philippines (52%) cited friends and peers as key sources. As displayed in Figure 26, peers are the main source of menstrual health information in seven of the nine surveyed countries. Evidently, peer networks play a significant role in shaping the knowledge around menstruation. This could result in both positive and negative perceptions, depending on the accuracy of the information circulated.

**Figure 26. The Most Common Source of Information on Menstruation Across Countries and the Percentage of Men and Boys Who Receive Information From It**



Source: Final men’s and boys’ survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

The second-most common source is wives, girlfriends, and partners, as reported by 48% of men and boys surveyed. In particular, wives, girlfriends, and partners are the most significant source of menstrual knowledge in the Dominican Republic (59%), bucking the trend of other countries. Côte d'Ivoire (57%) and Guinea (55%) also reflect substantial information sharing in intimate partnerships. These findings highlight the role of close partners in menstrual education. However, they also suggest

that men's and boys' understanding often relies on interpersonal relationships rather than formal education systems or health professionals.

The third-most common source across all male survey respondents across the nine countries is the internet (38%). The internet is a particularly influential source of menstrual information in Pakistan (49%), Cameroon (42%), and Côte d'Ivoire (40%). This demonstrates the growing importance of digital platforms in disseminating information, especially among younger men, who are more likely to access online resources.

In contrast, family members, such as sisters and brothers, are less prominent but still notable. In Côte d'Ivoire, 89% of men reported learning about menstruation from their sisters. This figure is significantly higher than in other countries, where the range is 16–49%. Brothers are more commonly cited as sources in Nigeria (36%) and Cameroon (32%), reinforcing the idea that male family members can act as conduits for menstrual knowledge.

Meanwhile, formal education and health professionals play a very limited role, with teachers providing menstrual health information to 17% of men and boys and healthcare providers supplying this information to just 8% of them. This confirms that **most men and boys do not get information about menstruation from formal education and health systems.**

These findings demonstrate that **men and boys predominantly rely on their peers and intimate partners for menstrual knowledge**, and less on formal education and health professionals. This reliance on informal sources risks perpetuating myths and misinformation. Therefore, it underscores the **need for comprehensive education programmes to ensure that men and boys receive medically accurate and stigma-free information about menstruation.**

**While there are knowledge deficits about menstruation among men and boys, most are aware of the age when menstruation begins.**

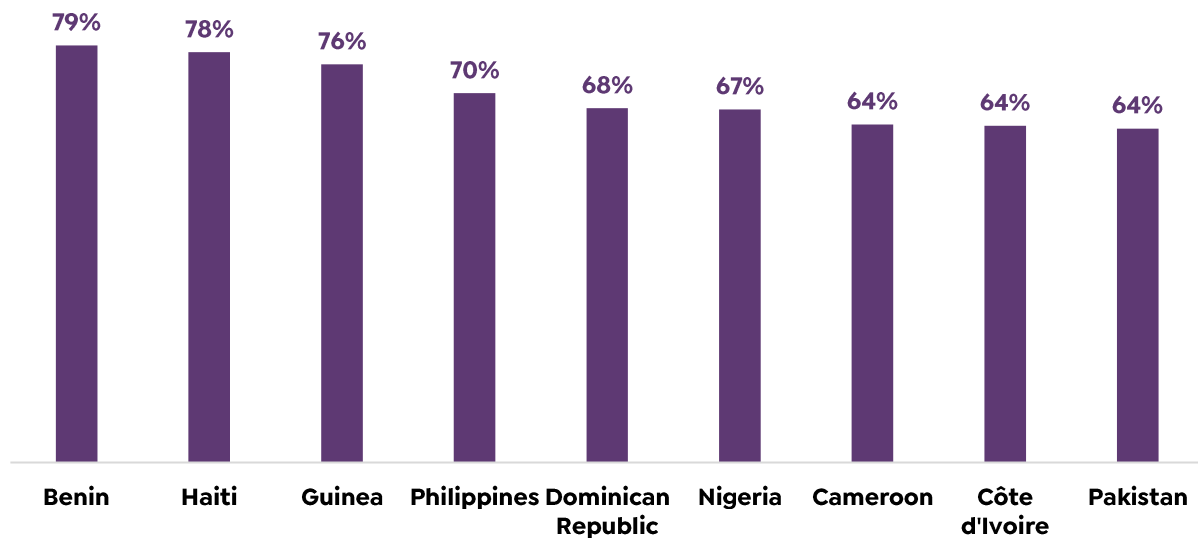
**70%**

**of men and boys correctly identified the age at which menstruation begins as 9–16 years.**

**The majority of men and boys are aware of the age range during which a woman, girl, or gender-diverse person typically starts menstruating.** Across all countries, 70% of respondents (2,420) correctly identified that menstruation generally begins between the ages of 9 and 16. Across all the assessed domains, this one has the highest share of respondents demonstrating accurate knowledge.

As shown in Figure 27, knowledge of the age of menarche varies modestly across countries. The most correct responses are observed in Benin (79%), Haiti (78%), and Guinea (76%), indicating relatively high awareness in these contexts. Lower levels are reported in Pakistan, Côte d'Ivoire, and Cameroon (64% each), although the majority of respondents in these countries still identified the correct age range.

**Figure 27. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Correctly Identified 9–16 Years as the Age When Menstruation Typically Starts**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

These results suggest that **awareness of basic, often observable aspects of menstruation – such as the typical age of onset – is more widespread than understanding of its biological mechanisms.** This indicates that some knowledge of menstruation is currently accessible through social observation or simple information sharing, even in contexts where comprehensive reproductive health education is limited. However, this form of knowledge does not necessarily reflect a deeper understanding of menstruation and may coexist with gaps in knowledge and inaccurate beliefs.

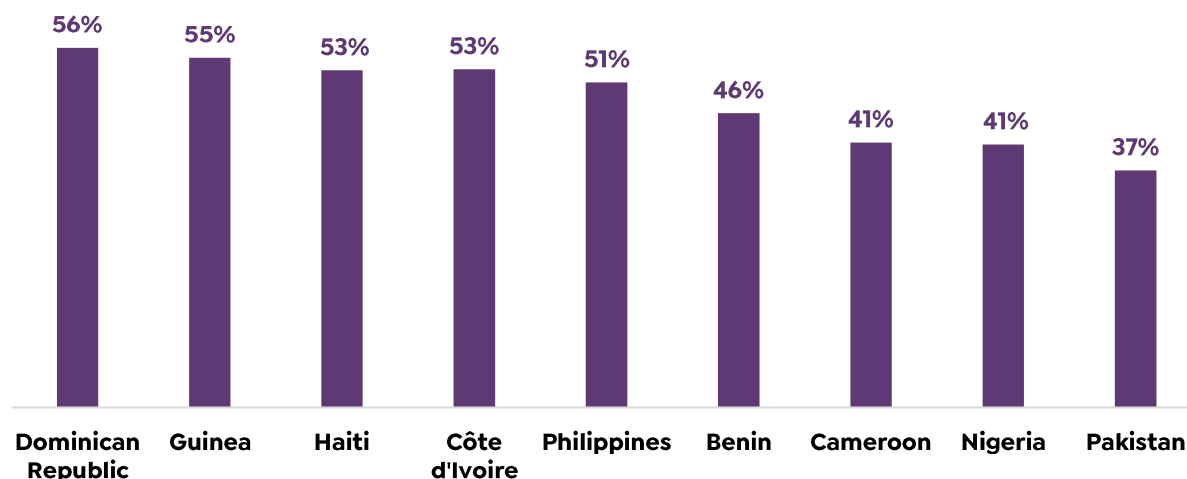
**Less than half of men and boys know about the fertile period in the menstrual cycle, highlighting a substantial gap in reproductive health knowledge.**

**48%** of men and boys correctly identified the fertile period during the ovulatory cycle as halfway between two periods.

Across all nine countries, only about half of the men and boys (1,192) can correctly identify the fertile period as halfway between two periods. This highlights **a substantial lack of reproductive health knowledge about ovulation and the menstrual cycle.**

Figure 28 demonstrates that the highest proportion of respondents who correctly identified the fertile period is in the Dominican Republic (56%), followed closely by Guinea (55%), Haiti (53%), and Côte d'Ivoire (53%).

**Figure 28. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Correctly Identified the Fertile Period as Halfway Between Two Periods**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

In contrast, the proportion of men and boys who responded correctly is lowest in Pakistan (37%) and Nigeria (41%), indicating significant gaps in knowledge of ovulation and the menstrual cycle in these countries. This suggests limited access to evidence-based information and education on reproductive health.

When comparing these results with those from the menstruators' survey, 48% of all men and boys surveyed correctly identified the fertile period, which exactly matches the 48% awareness of the fertile period among menstruators (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). This suggests that, on average, **men and boys are as likely as menstruators to know about the fertile window in the ovulatory cycle.** However, country-specific trends reveal some disparities. In the Dominican Republic, male awareness surpasses that of the menstruators', with 56% of men and boys correctly identifying the fertile period versus 52% of menstruators. Meanwhile, knowledge in Pakistan among men and boys lags, with only 37% of men and boys accurately identifying the fertile period, as opposed to 52% of menstruators.

These findings emphasize **the need for culturally responsive, evidence-based reproductive health education** for all genders to address both overall and country-specific gaps in crucial reproductive health knowledge.

#### 4.4 Key Findings on Supportive Environments for Dignified Menstruation

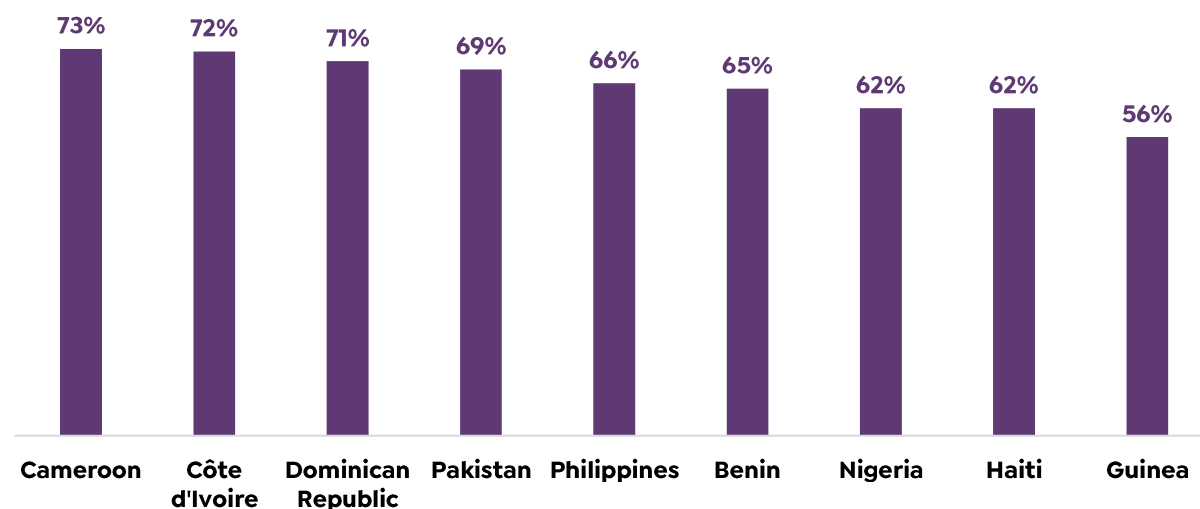
Two-thirds of men and boys believe it is important to learn about menstruation and its impact on menstruators. This is a valuable starting point from which to build supportive environments for dignified menstruation.

**66%** of men and boys surveyed in all countries agree that it is important to learn about menstruation and the challenges faced by menstruators.

The findings presented in prior sections of this report reveal substantial deficits in men's and boys' menstrual knowledge and awareness of menstrual discrimination. Only 7% of all male survey respondents across all nine countries accurately explained why menstruation occurs without relying on harmful misconceptions. Moreover, a mere 14% had fully accurate knowledge of what menstruation is. Similarly, there is limited awareness of menstrual discrimination, with only 51% of men and boys reporting that they have ever detected menstrual discrimination in their environments. This is despite a staggering 93% of menstruators experiencing discrimination in the last six months alone. These findings confirm that **there are significant gaps in knowledge among male individuals in these contexts. For social environments to be more supportive of menstruators, men and boys must fill these gaps by learning about menstruation and its associated forms of discrimination. Encouragingly, 66% of the male survey respondents shared that they think such learning opportunities are important for themselves and their male peers.**

Levels of support for menstrual education vary modestly across countries but remain positive overall (Figure 29). Cameroon (73%), Côte d'Ivoire (72%), and the Dominican Republic (71%) have the largest shares of men and boys who reported that menstrual education is needed among men and boys. Meanwhile, Guinea (56%) has the lowest level of agreement, suggesting some recognition of the importance of menstrual knowledge and awareness, but at a comparatively lower level.

**Figure 29. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Agree or Strongly Agree That It Is Important for Them to Learn About Menstruation and the Challenges Faced by Menstruators**



Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.

### ***Reasons for supporting more menstrual education for men and boys***

Many men and boys advocated for knowledge building around menstruation and its challenges because they recognize that **it is critical to reduce menstrual discrimination and stigma**. For example, a participant from Cameroon noted, “Educating boys about menstruation can reduce teasing or bullying directed towards [their] menstruating classmates.” A respondent from Côte d’Ivoire similarly stated, “Men and boys who learn about menstruation are less likely to make harmful or insensitive comments, [which can foster] a more respectful environment.” Respondents also described how increased knowledge could reduce negative perceptions of menstruation. As noted by a participant from Guinea, “Learning about menstruation helps reduce ignorance and break the stigma surrounding a natural process that affects half the population.”

Other men emphasized that menstrual education is important because **it can foster gender equality and respect for women, girls, and gender-diverse people**. A participant from Cameroon stated, “As a man, I think that understanding menstruation can enhance mutual respect between genders.” Another from Nigeria noted, “Menstruation is relevant to men because it impacts the women we care about.” A respondent from Guinea emphasized, “Men’s engagement in menstrual health advocacy supports the broader struggle for gender equality.” Similarly, a respondent from Pakistan highlighted, “Understanding menstruation is a step towards gender equality and mutual respect.”

Others said that knowledge building is important because **it can make men and boys do better** in their roles in society. They explained that education on menstruation and the adverse experiences of menstruators might enable men to be better fathers, partners, family members, colleagues, and community members. A respondent from Haiti explained, “Educated fathers can guide their children, particularly daughters, in approaching menstruation without fear or shame.” Similarly, a participant from the Philippines stated, “Men’s knowledge of menstruation encourages inclusion and makes it possible for people of both genders to have conversations about health and well-being.” This was also echoed by a respondent from Nigeria: “Men can advocate for access to menstrual health products and hygiene facilities in schools and workplaces.”

Finally, other supporters of menstrual education said that **it is important because of the influence men and boys have in society**. In the Dominican Republic, one participant stated, “Men and boys play a critical role in challenging societal taboos around menstruation, helping to normalize the conversation.” Another in Benin noted, “By recognising the significance of menstruation, men and boys can contribute to a more informed and respectful society.”

### ***Barriers to increased education on menstruation***

While there is some support, resistance to becoming more knowledgeable about menstruation is also present. **Many men claimed that menstruation is exclusively a woman’s issue and thus irrelevant to them**. They, therefore, feel that men and boys do not need to be learn about menstruation. For example, responses from Benin and Cameroon frequently framed menstruation as private for women, with one man stating, “Menstruation is something that doesn’t concern my gender.” Another one said they did not need to learn more about menstruation because, “As a man, I believe menstruation is best handled privately among women.” This view was echoed in Côte d’Ivoire, where a respondent noted, “I don’t experience menstruation myself, so it feels distant from my daily life.” In Guinea, a participant stated, “As a man, I feel that menstruation has nothing to do with my life.”

Similarly, in Nigeria, a respondent explained, “Since men don’t menstruate, I don’t think it’s important for us to learn about it – it’s not relevant to our lives.”

For some, the **reluctance to engage in education on menstruation and its impacts stemmed from discomfort or traditional views on masculinity**. In Pakistan, one respondent noted, “I think discussing menstruation would embarrass both the men and women involved.” In Haiti, cultural taboos reinforced this resistance, with a participant stating, “We do not even touch a female who is menstruating. Discussion is a far cry for our community.” Some fear that engaging with menstruation conflicts with their male identity, as reflected in a comment from a respondent in Benin: “I think learning about menstruation could confuse my identity as a man.”

Overall, the findings highlight a willingness among men and boys to learn more about menstruation. However, the resistance across countries underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches to education and information sharing.

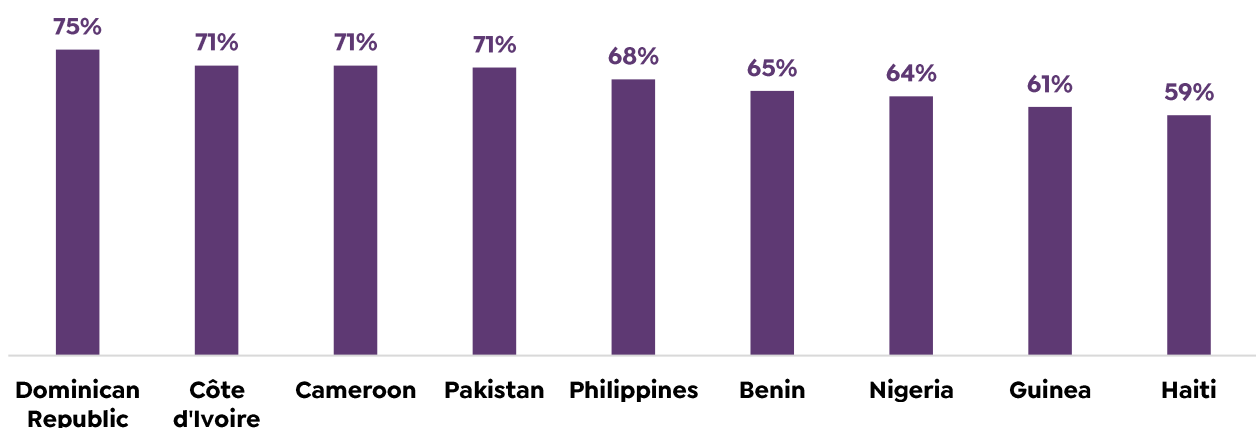
### Two-thirds of men and boys are willing to purchase menstrual materials on behalf of a menstruator.

**67%** of men and boys across all nine countries feel comfortable buying menstrual products for a family member or friend.

A substantial number of respondents (2,327) expressed a willingness to purchase menstrual products for a menstruator. This indicates that **numerous men and boys are open to supporting menstruators with managing their periods in a practical way**.

As shown in Figure 30, the level of comfort with purchasing menstrual materials on behalf of menstruators varies modestly across countries. The men and boys with the highest levels of willingness are in the Dominican Republic (75%), Côte d’Ivoire (71%), Cameroon (71%), and Pakistan (71%). Lower levels are observed in Haiti (59%) and Guinea (61%), suggesting that there are more barriers to men and boys supporting menstrual health and dignity in this manner in these contexts.

**Figure 30. The Percentage of Men and Boys Across All Countries Who Feel Comfortable Purchasing Menstrual Materials for a Family Member or Friend**



*Source: Final men's and boys' survey data across all nine countries, November 2024.*

The qualitative responses indicate that men and boys are willing to purchase menstrual products when doing so is perceived as **an act of care, responsibility, and support**. For example, a respondent in Benin noted, "Buying menstrual items for the one who needs it shows care and importance of that person." Another said that it "demonstrates care for the person's well-being during their period". Similarly, a participant in Cameroon stated, "Supporting a family member or friend during their period is a sign of compassion." Some participants linked this behaviour to their roles within their families, with one respondent in Benin saying, "I am a responsible dad and husband." Likewise, another noted, "It is my responsibility to take care of them."

Respondents also support purchasing menstrual materials because they believe **that doing so can reduce stigma**. A participant from the Dominican Republic remarked, "I think it's important to break the taboo surrounding menstruation; buying products is a small step towards that." Another from Haiti noted, "Buying menstrual materials helps normalize conversations about menstruation, reducing stigma and promoting openness." Similarly, a respondent from Nigeria stated, "Men can assist in breaking social taboos and lessen the shame associated with menstruation by normalizing the act of purchasing menstruation supplies."

**The normalization of menstrual products as common, basic necessities** is correlated with men's and boys' willingness to support menstruators. In Cameroon, one participant stated, "Menstrual products are a basic necessity, just like any other health item." Then, a respondent in Nigeria noted, "It is a normal biological function that everyone should be allowed to talk about and support." This normalization is further reflected in statements such as this, from a man in Benin: "I see it as just another shopping item; it is not a big deal." Also, a respondent in Haiti said, "Buying sanitary pads is just another shopping task, and I'm comfortable doing it for the people I care about."

**Knowledge and familiarity with menstruation** facilitate comfort with supporting menstruators in this manner. A respondent in the Dominican Republic stated, "I feel confident in choosing the right products after learning about them from conversations or research." Another respondent said, "Recognising how important these products are for [menstruators'] health makes me feel more at ease with buying them."

Some participants link their willingness to purchase menstrual products on behalf of menstruators to the **values of gender equality and inclusion**. In Côte d'Ivoire, a respondent stated, "I believe in gender equality and supporting women's needs, so I feel comfortable in buying menstrual materials." A participant in Pakistan added, "Traditional gender norms are challenged when men carry menstruation products." Meanwhile, a respondent in Cameroon emphasized, "It's important for men to participate in conversations about menstruation, including [by] buying products."

Finally, several respondents advocate for purchasing menstrual products as **a way to strengthen relationships and build trust**. In Benin, one participant stated, "Being willing to buy menstrual products can strengthen trust and openness in relationships, showing that I care." A respondent in Cameroon also noted, "Helping with such personal needs can strengthen trust and deepen relationships." Similarly, a participant in Guinea emphasized, "Supporting someone in a time of need strengthens our relationship."

These findings demonstrate that men and boys are willing to take practical action that contributes to more supportive environments for menstrual dignity. Their willingness is driven by framing these actions as expressions of care; a normal way to fulfil a basic health need; and a means of challenging menstrual stigma, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and advancing gender equity. Greater knowledge and familiarity with menstruation are also key enablers of this male support. Together, these findings suggest that **interventions emphasizing normalization, education, and positive social roles may be particularly effective to mobilize men and boys to support menstrual health and dignity through everyday actions.**

**Men's and boys' willingness to actively contribute to building a supportive environment for menstruators varies widely, indicating that diverse and tailored approaches are needed to effectively engage them.**

## A spectrum of perspectives

related to supporting menstruators were expressed by men and boys, spanning active support to complete disengagement.

On future involvement in supporting menstruators, the surveyed men and boys are not homogeneous in their views. Respondents expressed a wide range of perspectives on their role in supporting menstrual dignity. While many articulated an intent to engage in efforts to promote menstrual dignity, others expressed hesitation and some rejected the prospect outright.

**A key to engagement is for men and boys to recognize their personal role and responsibility in advancing menstrual dignity.** Respondents who demonstrated an intent to support menstruators overwhelmingly recognize that they play a role in supporting menstrual dignity, rather it being solely the responsibility of menstruators. These individuals are committed to advocating for menstrual health education, ensuring access to products, providing interpersonal support, and serving as role models for future generations.

In contrast, respondents who reject such participation believe they are not responsible for contributing to more supportive environments for menstruators. In Cameroon, one young boy explained that he does not intend to engage in future efforts to build more supportive environments for menstruators because menstruation is “not relevant to boys”. Another male respondent in Guinea explained, “I believe it’s best to let women handle their own issues regarding menstruation.” This was echoed in Côte d’Ivoire, where a respondent remarked, “My traditional views lead me to think this is primarily a women’s issue.” These findings highlight that perceived personal accountability for advancing menstrual dignity strongly influences whether men and boys take action in support of menstruators.

**Discomfort and limited knowledge are key barriers.** Many respondents who are hesitant or uncertain about helping to create supportive environments for menstruators indicated that they feel uncomfortable or ill-equipped to participate. They cited limited experience with discussing

menstruation due to social norms that discourage such conversations, as well as a lack of familiarity with the topic. This shows that both knowledge gaps and inadequate opportunities to discuss menstrual health topics in everyday, judgement-free settings limit men and boys from participating meaningfully and acting as effective allies.

**Engagement at the institutional and policy level is more widely accepted**, as it is perceived as less personal and, therefore, less associated with individual discomfort. Respondents support workplace policies, school-based initiatives, and government efforts, including improving access to menstrual products, increasing their visibility, and integrating menstruation education into curricula.

There are several key implications for strategies regarding engagement with men and boys. Increasing knowledge and normalizing discussion are critical to reducing discomfort and enabling participation. Positioning menstrual dignity as a shared responsibility – rather than an issue that is exclusive to menstruators – is essential to encourage men and boys to contribute to fostering supportive environments. Providing highly accepted, low-barrier entry points for engagement, such as institutional and policy-level advocacy, may further increase willingness to participate. Finally, the **variation in the types of commitment that men and boys are willing to make to support menstruators underscores the importance of utilizing context-specific and tailored approaches that account for differing levels of readiness to engage.**

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion 1: Almost half of men and boys report not noticing menstrual discrimination, despite it being a highly prevalent issue in their communities.**

**A staggering 93% of menstruators report having experienced at least one form of menstrual discrimination** (The Sang pour Sang Consortium, 2025). This highlights that menstrual discrimination is widespread and systematically shapes the lives of women, girls, and gender-diverse people. The magnitude and consistency of these findings across diverse contexts demonstrate that menstrual discrimination is a pervasive structural barrier to health and dignity.

Yet **49% of men and boys report not noticing that menstrual discrimination occurs in their communities**. This substantial discrepancy reveals that menstrual discrimination remains largely invisible to male community members. It suggests that many men and boys are unable to recognize discriminatory practices and may even perceive them as normal or acceptable. This lack of recognition limits opportunities for both enhancing accountability and implementing behavioural change, ultimately reinforcing menstruation-related inequities in Global South countries.

**Recommendation 1: Increase awareness of menstrual discrimination and its adverse impacts among men and boys.**

**Increasing awareness is a critical first step to eliminating menstrual discrimination**, as men and boys will be able to challenge harmful practices only if they can identify them. Efforts should therefore focus on making menstrual discrimination visible to them. They should be educated about its various forms, including teasing and exclusion of menstruators from everyday activities.

Awareness-raising efforts targeting men and boys must also highlight the adverse impact of menstrual discrimination on menstruators so that they shift from accepting such practices to acknowledging them as harmful. Lacking an understanding of the detrimental consequences of menstruation-based exclusion and harassment, men and boys may dismiss such behaviours as normal or appropriate. Consequently, highlighting the negative impacts can help reframe menstrual discrimination as a violation of dignity and equity, and motivate men and boys to halt these practices.

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**Conclusion 2: When men and boys witness menstrual discrimination, most are passive bystanders, and very few intervene to challenge it.**

**A substantial 39% of men and boys were idle bystanders who took no action to address menstrual discrimination, even though they recognized it and had the opportunity to stop it, and just 8% intervened to challenge this harmful practice.** This confirms that even when discriminatory behaviours are evident, men and boys rarely take action against them. Thus, they implicitly allow these practices to persist. To increase the number of male allies who take action, passive male bystanders to menstrual discrimination should be prioritized as a key subpopulation for engagement.

**Recommendation 2: Implement evidence-informed interventions to transform idle bystanders into active interveners who stand up to menstrual discrimination.**

To reduce menstrual discrimination, it is critical to equip men and boys with knowledge, confidence, and skills to intervene when they witness discriminatory behaviours. This will enable them to shift from being passive bystanders who implicitly condone discrimination to active allies who confront it. Research on transforming bystanders into allies to mitigate discrimination and violence indicates that effective approaches include increasing knowledge and awareness of discrimination and the harm it can cause (Nelson et al., 2011); improving men's and boys' ability to identify a situation as discriminatory (Kawakami et al., 2019); building attitudes and social norms that do not tolerate discrimination (Nelson et al., 2011); engaging bystanders in intervention training or programming (McMahon et al., 2021); and enhancing the self-efficacy of bystanders to intervene (Mujal et al., 2021; Parrott et al., 2020). Such evidence-informed interventions can help grow the share of male interveners who stand up against these harmful practices. This can be particularly impactful given the substantial influence that many men and boys have in their communities.

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### **Conclusion 3: Many men and boys hold discriminatory attitudes, but few acknowledge that they engaged in menstrual discrimination.**

**Only 8% of men and boys reported direct involvement in menstrual teasing or exclusion at least once in their lifetime. However, a much larger proportion hold attitudes that support discrimination against menstruators.** Specifically, 53% believe that menstruators should be excluded from at least one of their routine activities while menstruating. Additionally, 42% think that menstruation is dirty and shameful, and 43% believe that menstruation makes women inferior to men. These widespread stigmatizing beliefs drive discriminatory practices against menstruators. Therefore, it is critical to not only address men's and boys' discriminatory behaviours, but also their discriminatory attitudes, in order to ensure menstrual dignity.

### **Recommendation 3: Implement social norms change and behaviour change interventions with men and boys to transform their discriminatory attitudes and practices.**

Men and boys who engage in menstrual discrimination, as well as those who hold discriminatory views, must be engaged in **social norms and behaviour change initiatives to transform these harmful practices and attitudes**. Interventions should guide men and boys to critically reflect on how their beliefs and everyday actions contribute to menstrual discrimination and the inequities experienced by menstruators. The interventions may include communications campaigns, education, capacity building, and other programming designed to challenge stigmatizing norms and promote attitudes and behaviours that support menstrual dignity.

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### **Conclusion 4: Men and boys have low levels of menstrual health knowledge.**

**Very few men and boys demonstrate an accurate understanding of menstruation.** Only 14% can correctly define menstruation, and just 7% know the physiological reasons for it. This is compounded by the prevalence of harmful misconceptions. Specifically, 32% of men and boys incorrectly believe menstruation is "the flow of dirty blood", 31% think it serves to "release bad blood", 24% believe it is an "illness", 15% attribute it to "personal sin", 13% define it as "the flow of white discharge", and 12% believe

it is caused by “outside evil forces”. Mischaracterizations of this normal biological process as dirty, pathological, morally wrong, and even evil or dangerous serve to legitimize exclusion, shaming, and inequitable treatment of people who menstruate. These findings point to the urgent need for education that not only disseminates accurate menstrual health knowledge but also actively counters the misinformation that sustains discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

#### **Recommendation 4: Expand access to evidence-based menstrual health education and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) for men and boys.**

**Menstrual health and sexuality education initiatives targeting men and boys should be expanded to address deficits in accurate knowledge.** Programmes should provide accurate, evidence-based information that frames menstruation as a normal biological process, while also correcting entrenched misconceptions.

Research indicates that menstrual health education can effectively improve knowledge and counter harmful beliefs. For example, menstrual health education interventions targeting men and boys in Global South contexts can help increase accurate menstrual knowledge and improve societal understanding of menstruation as a natural process rather than an illness (Mbizvo et al., 1997). Other studies demonstrate that such initiatives improve male comprehension of menstruation and reduce menstrual stigma (Allen et al., 2011). CSE, in particular, improves knowledge, corrects misconceptions, reduces stigma, and promotes more equitable social norms (UNESCO, 2018; Zablock & Fei, 2024). This highlights that CSE is particularly effective for addressing poor understanding of menstruation among men and boys.

Given that many of the male survey respondents learned about menstruation from their peers rather than formal education systems, peer-based education models may serve as effective entry points for both CSE and other menstrual health education initiatives.

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#### **Conclusion 5: Men and boys show a strong willingness to learn about menstruation, which presents a key opportunity to address limited awareness, knowledge gaps, the lack of intervention skills, stigmatizing beliefs, and discriminatory practices.**

**The majority of male respondents expressed openness to learning about menstruation**, with 66% reporting that it is important for them and their peers to learn about menstrual health and dignity, and 61% supporting open discussion about menstruation. This presents a significant opportunity to address gaps in awareness of menstrual discrimination, accurate knowledge, and intervention skills. It also provides the chance to challenge harmful misconceptions, stigmatizing attitudes, and discriminatory behaviours.

This study’s qualitative findings suggest that men and boys are more likely to engage in education and capacity-building interventions related to menstruation when menstrual health education is framed as a way to normalize menstruation, reduce stigma, and promote gender equality. Learning is also more appealing when it is positioned as relevant to men’s and boys’ roles as partners, fathers, peers, and community members.

However, engagement is constrained by persistent stigma and social norms that deem menstruation as shameful or exclusively a women's issue. These norms contribute to men's and boys' discomfort in engaging with these topics, particularly in mixed-gender settings. They also reinforce the perception that it is a topic that is irrelevant to men and boys, which limits their participation in menstrual health education.

**Recommendation 5: Leverage men's and boys' willingness to learn by expanding accessible, relevant, and stigma-sensitive menstrual health education.**

Programmes should take advantage of the demonstrated openness among men and boys by providing accessible and contextually relevant education that **emphasizes the practical and social value of learning about menstrual health**. Education initiatives targeting men and boys should frame menstruation as a normal biological process, highlight its relevance to their families and communities, and connect it to gender equality and fostering respectful relationships.

To maximize engagement, interventions should utilize educational and capacity-building **methodologies that create safe, non-judgemental, and stigma-free spaces** for learning. Education initiatives should also **actively challenge norms that position menstruation as shameful or exclusively a women's issue** by highlighting the positive aspects of menstruation and emphasizing that menstrual dignity is a shared responsibility.

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**Conclusion 6: Men's and boys' willingness to support menstrual dignity is highly variable and shaped by multiple, interrelated factors.**

**Men and boys demonstrate a wide spectrum of willingness to contribute to creating supportive environments for menstrual dignity**, ranging from active engagement to hesitation and, in some cases, outright rejection. This variation underscores that men and boys are not a homogeneous group, and they differ significantly in their willingness to support menstruators. Critically, this willingness is not random. It is shaped by a diverse set of cross-cutting and interrelated factors. These include whether menstruation is viewed as normal or a taboo, comfort with discussing the topic, views on its relevance to men and boys, beliefs about masculinity, and existing willingness to support women, reduce stigma, and advance gender equality. The interplay of these factors determines whether men and boys disengage, remain passive, or actively support menstrual dignity. While there are varying degrees of male allyship, the important takeaway is that this diversity is not arbitrary; it is shaped by identifiable factors that can be addressed by targeted interventions.

**Recommendation 6: Develop tailored, context-specific strategies that account for men's and boys' varying levels of willingness to support menstrual dignity as well as the key factors that shape this willingness.**

Given the wide variation in men's and boys' willingness to support menstrual dignity, **interventions must offer multiple pathways for engagement rather than a one-size-fits-all approach**. Strategies should take into account men's and boys' current level of interest in being allies and leverage factors that shape this interest. This aligns with existing evidence that demonstrates that tailored, stage-based approaches are effective for transforming behaviours and social norms (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997; Noar et al., 2007).

Strategies should provide entry points for men and boys on all parts of the spectrum of willingness to contribute to building more supportive environments for menstruators. Low-barrier forms of participation, such as offering general support for institutional initiatives or improved policies, or other less personal forms of engagement, can serve as starting points for men and boys who are hesitant. For individuals who are resistant, indirect approaches such as gradual exposure to positive norms, community dialogue, and messaging from trusted sources can incrementally initiate a shift in perspectives. At the same time, men and boys who are already supportive should be actively mobilized as champions and role models to reinforce positive norms and influence their peers.

Tailored strategies should also consider the diverse factors affecting men's and boys' willingness to contribute to fostering supportive environments for menstruators. To maximize their impact, interventions must directly address the key determinants of male allyship that were identified by this study:

- **Normalize menstruation:** The degree to which men and boys normalize or stigmatize menstruation strongly influences their willingness to actively support menstrual dignity. Interventions should therefore frame menstruation as a normal biological process commonly experienced by millions of people and systematically position menstrual products as standard hygiene items.
- **Minimize discomfort and embarrassment:** Discomfort or embarrassment about menstruation strongly shapes whether men and boys intend to be allies. Menstrual dignity interventions should take participants' comfort levels into consideration, and gradually progress towards more open and active forms of participation. Interventions that cultivate judgement-free spaces can also address this key determinant of male allyship. Approaches include ensuring confidentiality and offering options for anonymity, emotional safety, and single-gender discussions, where appropriate. Men and boys also highlighted that greater knowledge of menstrual health and more discussions on this topic make them feel more comfortable contributing, further confirming the need to expand education to reduce discomfort with the topic.
- **Emphasize the relevance of menstrual dignity to men and boys:** The perceived relevance of menstrual health and dignity to men and boys is a key determinant of their engagement. Framing menstruation as exclusively a menstruator's issue is correlated with an unwillingness among men and boys to be involved. However, acknowledging it as an important, shared responsibility is associated with greater intent among men and boys to act as allies. To encourage men and boys to take greater responsibility for menstrual dignity, it should be framed as directly relevant to them. Their role in upholding menstrual dignity within their intimate relationships, households, communities, institutions, and society must be emphasized. Efforts to promote supportive environments should also highlight the substantial influence of men and boys in society. Several men and boys emphasized that their influential role in decision-making bestows a sense of personal responsibility to help enhance menstrual health and dignity.
- **Support positive masculinities:** Conceptions of masculinity shape how men and boys perceive their role in supporting menstruators. Traditional norms around ways of being a

man, grounded in dominance, control, conformity, and emotional detachment, can position actions in support of dignified menstruation as incompatible with male identity. Interventions should promote positive masculinities that value care, empathy, accountability, and equality. This may enable men and boys to see support for menstrual dignity as part of their male identity rather than conflicting with it.

- **Adopt gender-transformative approaches:** Men and boys who already have supportive attitudes towards women, girls, and gender-diverse people, challenge gendered stigma, and are committed to advancing gender equality are more willing to act as allies for menstrual dignity. This highlights that menstrual dignity is inherently a gender issue and should be addressed through gender-transformative approaches. Strategies should also elevate visible male allies who model gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours. This will help reinforce positive gender norms and encourage wider allyship.

Overall, effective strategies must simultaneously reduce barriers and leverage facilitators of male allyship. They must ensure that men and boys across all levels of willingness can meaningfully support menstrual health and dignity.

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## Implications

The findings from this multi-country population-based study of men and boys underscore a perverse inversion of norms: **menstruation, a normal biological process experienced by more than half of the world's population at some point in their lives, is often stigmatized rather than normalized. In contrast, menstrual discrimination itself has been normalized across many countries.**

This is reflected in the overwhelming share of menstruators who report exclusion from routine activities, experiences of teasing, or both. Indeed, menstrual discrimination is not an isolated occurrence but a widespread, systemic reality. Still, most men and boys do not recognize these harmful practices. This signals a critical gap, as behaviours that remain unseen or accepted as normal are unlikely to be challenged. Even when men and boys recognize these prevalent practices, they frequently remain passive bystanders or, at times, perpetuate them; only a small minority intervenes to stop them. These dynamics highlight that advancing menstrual dignity requires addressing individual attitudes and behaviours as well as transforming broader social norms and structures that perpetuate menstrual discrimination.

Importantly, the study identifies a clear way forward. Despite significant behavioural, attitudinal, and knowledge-based challenges, a sizeable portion of men and boys demonstrate openness to discussing menstruation, learning about it, and acting as allies who promote menstrual dignity in diverse ways. This presents a critical opportunity for targeted interventions that engage men and boys as agents of change. Ultimately, realizing menstrual dignity across countries will depend on leveraging this potential while systematically dismantling the structural, cultural, and social drivers that perpetuate discrimination against menstruators.

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