

**To: The Unicode Consortium**

**Title: Proposal for a Period Emoji**

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### **Abstract**

This is a request for an emoji to represent menstruation, and allow people who menstruate to express being on their period through a single emoji.

### **Introduction**

Half of the world's population are women<sup>1</sup>, and on average each of them has 450 periods in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> That's billions of periods happening every single month, hundreds of millions every day – and yet there's no emoji that represents menstruation – or being on your period, making it harder to talk about periods.

There's a lot of silence, stigma and shame around periods and this can and does have a negative impact on girls and women, for example they can be ostracised from their communities and bullied at school<sup>3</sup>. As a children's and girls' rights organisation (Plan International UK), we believe that having a well-designed period emoji can help break these negative stereotypes. And that by creating more conversation around periods we can send a message that periods are something we should be comfortable talking about, that they are normal, natural and not shameful.

Not having an emoji that represents periods as part of our visual language could contribute to the silence and shame around menstruation. According to an article in The Guardian

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<sup>1</sup> According to the World Bank - <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS>

<sup>2</sup> According to the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals - <http://www.arhp.org/Publications-and-Resources/Studies-and-Surveys/Menstruation-and-Menstrual-Suppression-Survey/fact-sheet>

<sup>3</sup> According to WaterAid Report – Menstruation Matters - <http://www.wateraid.org/~media/Publications/Menstrual-hygiene-matters-low-resolution.pdf?la=en>

newspaper, emojis are used by over 92% of the online population<sup>4</sup> and are a way of adding emotion and identity to our digital communications. As our cultural norms change, so does our language both visual and verbal which is also reflected in the addition of recent emojis. For example with the addition of same-sex couples, the breastfeeding emoji and the ability to vary skin tone in emojis we've seen a move away from heteronormative emojis and an expansion of diversity in emoji designs. It's clear that these introductions should just be the beginning, and as emojis become more socially relevant they also need to be more inclusive – which is why we believe it is now time to create a period emoji.

## **1. Identification**

### **A. CLDR Short name**

The short name for the emoji could be – 'Period emoji'

### **B. CLDR Keywords**

Period | Menstruation | Time of the month | Time of month

## **2. Images**



### **A. Zip File**

Attached with this submission.

### **B. License**

The design has been created by us and is free to share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium and format) and adapt (remix, transform and build upon the material for any purpose) without permission.

## **3. Selection Factors – Inclusion**

### **A. Compatibility**

While there is no directly similar emoji, we believe that a period emoji would be most suitable for the 'medicine and bathroom' section in the 'Objects' category<sup>5</sup>, as Figure 1 shows below. This is the right context as it relates to hygiene with the shower and the toilet, or it could go into the in the 'smileys and people'<sup>6</sup> category alongside the new breastfeeding emoji or with the clothing (bikini, shirt, dress etc).

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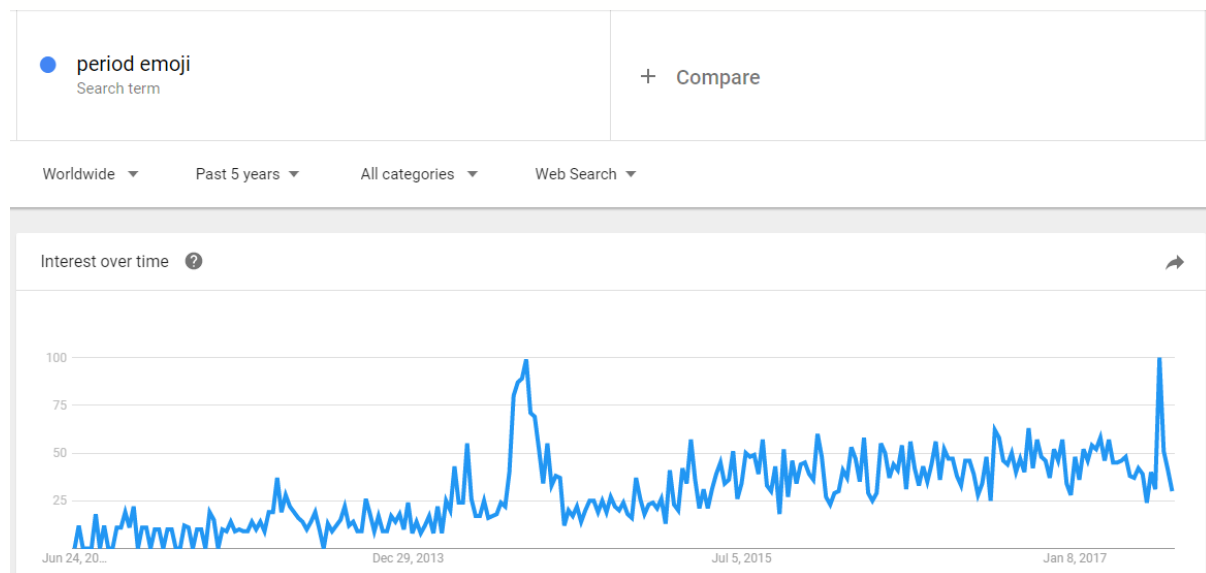
<sup>4</sup> According to this Guardian Article - <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/14/emojis-apple-text-iphone-diversity-representation>

<sup>5</sup> Objects Emojis - <https://emojipedia.org/objects/>

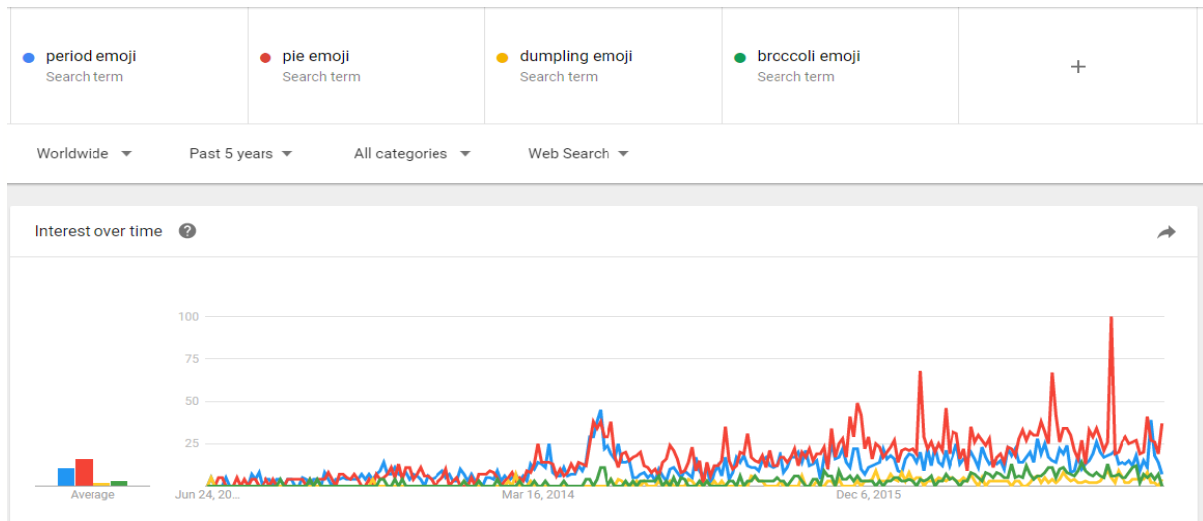
<sup>6</sup> Smiley and People Emojis - <https://emojipedia.org/people/>

### B. Expected Usage Level

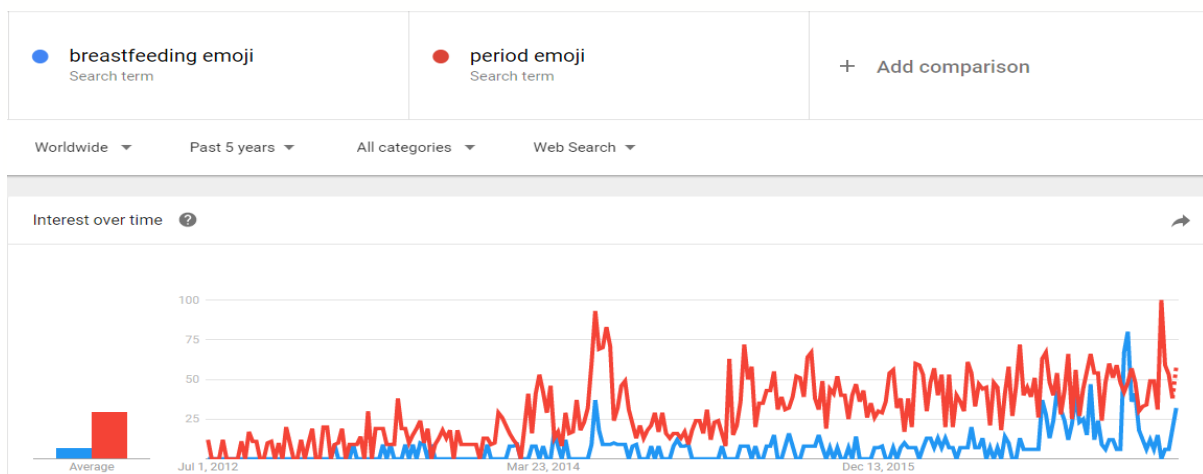
As we can see from Google Trends there has been an increasing number of searches around period emojis, and this is growing all the time.



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As there's no emoji that represents being on your period this has meant that we've not been able to compare 'period emoji' against a similar emoji that is currently in use. However we have done a comparison in searches for the soon to be introduced 'breastfeeding emoji' and according to Google Trends there are far more searches for 'period emoji' than for 'breastfeeding emoji'.



It's fantastic that breastfeeding is now able to be represented through an emoji, and it's clear there was genuine interest in that emoji from the public. However interest in 'period emoji' has been consistently higher and over the past 5 years the volume of searches has been far greater than for 'breastfeeding emoji'. We believe this Google Trends data shows a genuine desire, interest and need, and this would translate into frequency of use of a period emoji.

Furthermore, we can show that there is no viable alternative to a period emoji, as these articles from the last couple of years show:

- BuzzFeed: What should be the emoji for having your period?<sup>7</sup>
- Metro: We asked the women of yik yak: What's your period emoji?<sup>8</sup>
- Fusion: Someday, these bloody period emoji will be real<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> BuzzFeed Article - [https://www.buzzfeed.com/caseycline/oh-hello-aunt-flow?utm\\_term=.aoGEKJ1V92#.sf2X2mvNK6](https://www.buzzfeed.com/caseycline/oh-hello-aunt-flow?utm_term=.aoGEKJ1V92#.sf2X2mvNK6)

<sup>8</sup> Metro Article - <http://metro.co.uk/2015/01/17/we-asked-the-women-of-yik-yak-whats-your-period-emoji-5024599/>

<sup>9</sup> Fusion Article - <http://fusion.net/story/363598/annelies-hofmeyr-period-emoji/>

- BuzzFeed: 11 period emojis that need to exist<sup>10</sup>

Periods are global, people all around the world menstruate and this natural biological event transcends race, culture and language – currently (in 2017) this emoji would be relevant for an estimated 2,404,606,000 women aged 15-64 all around the world and this number is projected to grow to 2,580,194,000 by 2025<sup>11</sup>.

## Demand

As shown in the previous section there has been a considerable amount of demand for a period emoji over the last few years, and this is growing all the time.

We recently ran a campaign and poll to find out how many people would be interested in a period emoji, and also what kind of design they would like. The poll received over 37,400 votes (See Figure 2) from all over the world – showing a real global interest in creating a period emoji. The Plan International Australia office also ran a poll on Facebook (Please see Figure 3), asking people to vote for an emoji using one of the reactions (like, smiley face, angry face etc), they received over 17,000 votes<sup>12</sup> for the emoji designs.

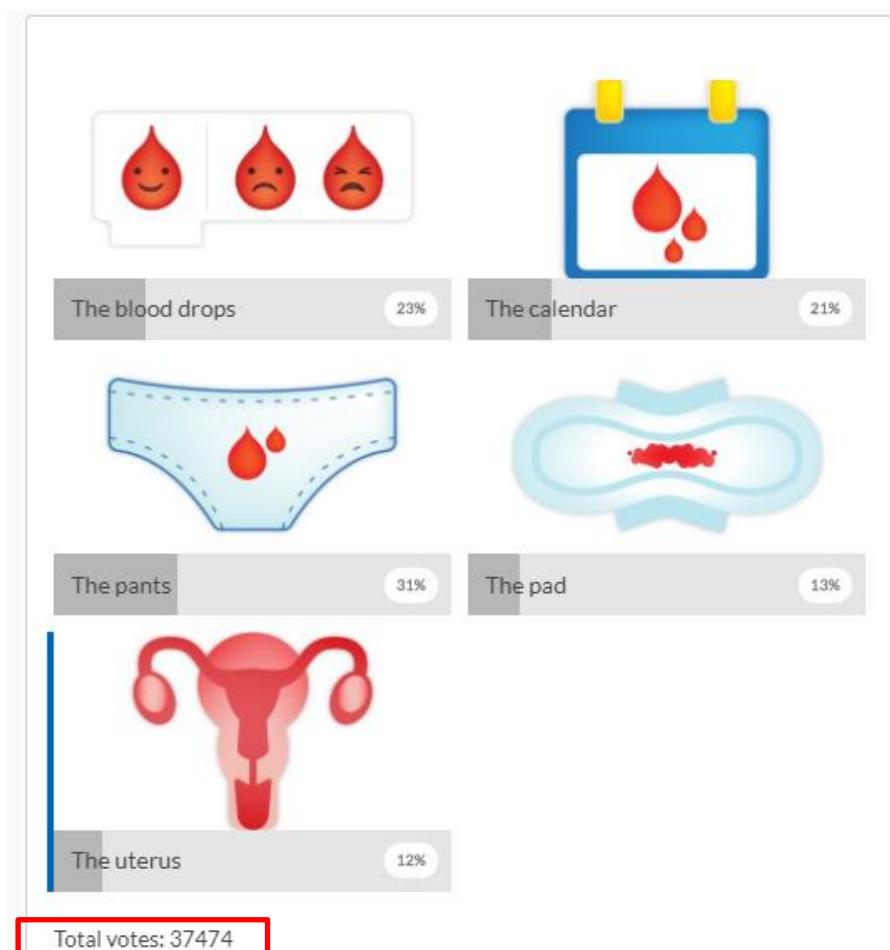


Figure 2 – A screenshot of our Emoji Poll (now closed) –this was open for voting for 11 days between the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and the 6<sup>th</sup> June.

<sup>10</sup> BuzzFeed Article - [https://www.buzzfeed.com/lorynbrantz/11-period-emojis?utm\\_term=.xtKZy2vQLR#.cvxX63kDxQ](https://www.buzzfeed.com/lorynbrantz/11-period-emojis?utm_term=.xtKZy2vQLR#.cvxX63kDxQ)

<sup>11</sup> Source – World Bank - <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=population-estimates-and-projections>

<sup>12</sup> Plan Australia Facebook Post - <https://www.facebook.com/planaustralia/photos/a.476146223332.253213.92824008332/10154679228708333/?type=3&theater>

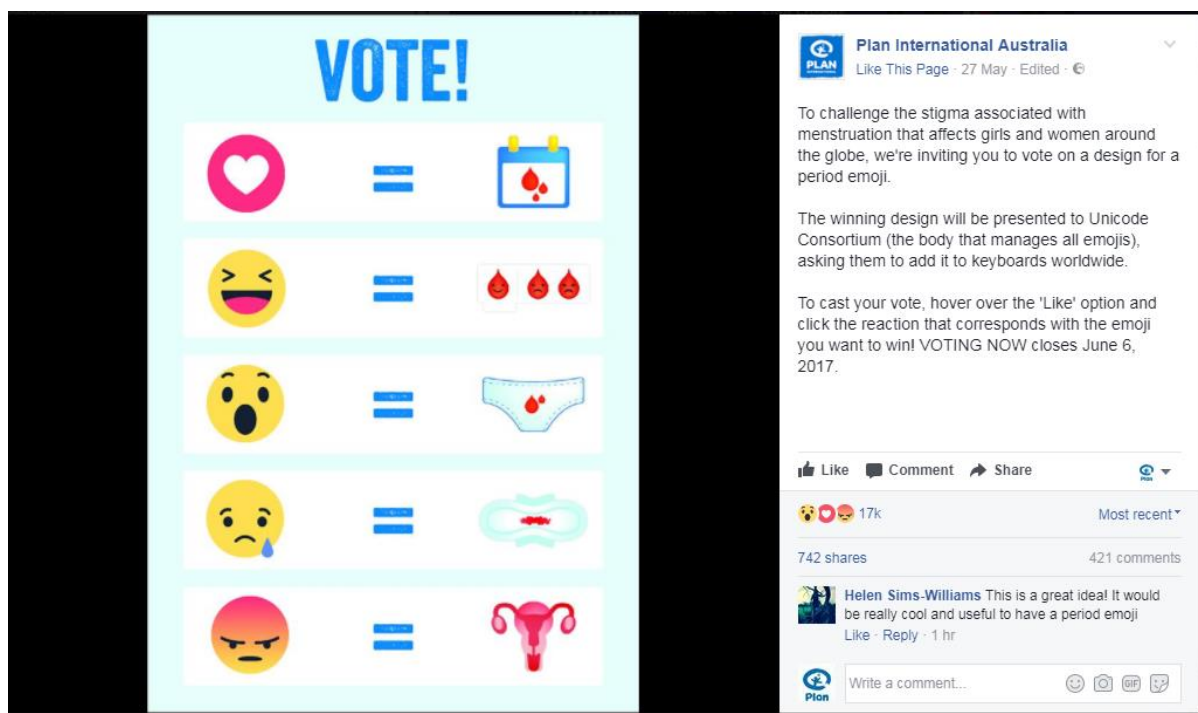


Figure 3 – A screenshot of the Plan International Australia Facebook post – published on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

Across the world the panties were the preferred design with over 18,700 combined votes between the UK and Australia polls.

Plan International UK also commissioned some research through polling agency Opinium, where a nationally representative set of UK women were asked if they wanted a period emoji, and if they would use it. Results showed that 48% of UK women aged 18-34 said they would use a period emoji, and the same percentage in this age group said it would be easier for them to speak to their partner about menstruation as a result.<sup>13</sup>

The campaign and research generated significant interest and support in the media, again demonstrating that there is an appetite and demand for a period emoji. We generated more than 100 pieces of media coverage in total, and notably this covered a range of audiences.

As you would expect, the campaign received strong support from popular and women's focused media, including Glamour magazine<sup>14</sup>, Elle magazine<sup>15</sup>, and Grazia magazine<sup>16</sup>. The campaign was also promoted by digital-focused media giants including BuzzFeed<sup>17</sup>, Mashable<sup>18</sup> and Metro<sup>19</sup>. Notably, however, the campaign also attracted interest and support

<sup>13</sup> Plan International UK Press Release - <https://plan-uk.org/media-centre/period-emoji-would-help-women-talk-about-menstruation>

<sup>14</sup> Glamour Magazine Article - <http://www.glamour.com/story/how-this-period-emoji-campaign-could-start-a-worldwide-conversation>

<sup>15</sup> Elle Magazine Article - <http://www.elle.my/life-and-love/News/A-period-emoji-is-coming-to-our-phones>

<sup>16</sup> Grazia Magazine Article - <https://www.grazia.fr/news-et-societe/news/une-ong-invite-la-toile-a-choisir-un-emoji-pour-les-regles-856611>

<sup>17</sup> BuzzFeed Article - [https://www.buzzfeed.com/bradesposito/period-emoji?utm\\_term=.puqYjZnanX#.rkL6Jb9y9G](https://www.buzzfeed.com/bradesposito/period-emoji?utm_term=.puqYjZnanX#.rkL6Jb9y9G)

<sup>18</sup> Mashable Article - <http://mashable.com/2017/05/27/period-emoji-campaign/#Eb.l7WYKfmqa>

<sup>19</sup> Metro Article - <http://metro.co.uk/2017/05/28/plan-international-has-just-launched-a-campaign-for-an-official-period-emoji-6668043/>



from high-brow publications, including The Guardian<sup>20</sup>, the Financial Times<sup>21</sup>, and most notably, globally renowned medical journal The Lancet<sup>22</sup>. The latter made the case that taboo and stigma around menstruation is a serious medical issue, and endorsed an emoji as an effective remediation.

## 2. Multiple Uses

An emoji representing a period would by its nature be relatively specific in use, however the design we have presented could have other uses for example expressing womanhood in general.


However we believe that because of the frequency and regularity of periods, and the clear demand demonstrated above, its use to represent periods alone would more than merit its inclusion on the keyboard. We would argue that having a period is a more regular occurrence for millions of women worldwide than eating a taco, playing snooker/pool or using a floppy disk (all represented by current emojis).

Additionally, we do not believe that the emoji would be exclusively used by women. Men too should be part of a healthy conversation about periods, and we believe that an emoji would help them talk about this more openly.

## 3. Use In Sequences

Though this emoji could be used in a sentence with other emojis e.g:

**Person 1:** Hey, are we still meeting tomorrow?

**Person 2:** Hey, sorry hun. I'm feeling under the weather – got my  early and have awful cramps. 🤢 Mind if we reschedule?

**Person 1:** Oh, that sounds awful. Sure-thing. Next Wednesday?

We believe that the main use of the emoji would be to express being on your period in a standalone way, rather than being used in a sequence.

## C. Image Distinctiveness

As there are no comparable or similar emojis currently in use, the period emoji would be distinctive for two reasons. The first is that there's no other underwear emojis (though there is a bikini emoji, however this clearly couldn't be confused for a period emoji), and second – the drops of blood on the front of the panties distinguish this from just being an emoji depicting normal underwear.

## D. Completeness

As mentioned, although the period emoji could fit within the 'medicine and bathroom' section in the 'Objects' category, or into the 'smileys and people' category with the new breastfeeding emoji. There aren't really any other comparable emojis so a period emoji wouldn't complete a set as such, however it would open the door to other inclusive emojis being created.

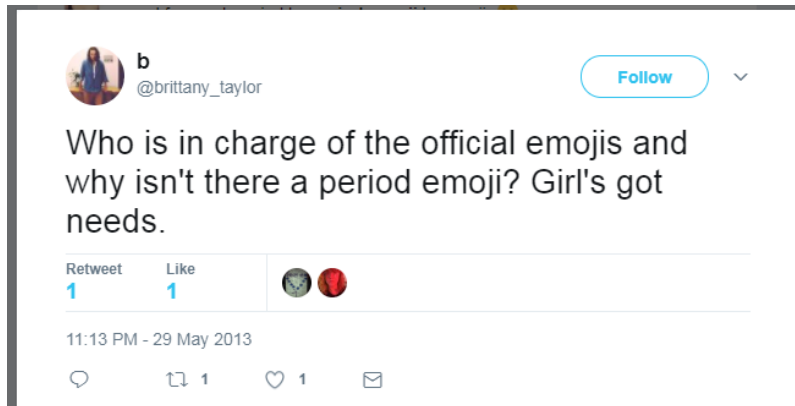
<sup>20</sup> Guardian Article - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/30/a-period-emoji-could-help-girls-talk-about-menstruation-that-would-be-a-big-deal>

<sup>21</sup> Financial Times Article - <https://www.ft.com/content/c718d21a-51c6-11e7-a1f2-db19572361bb?mhq5j=e1>

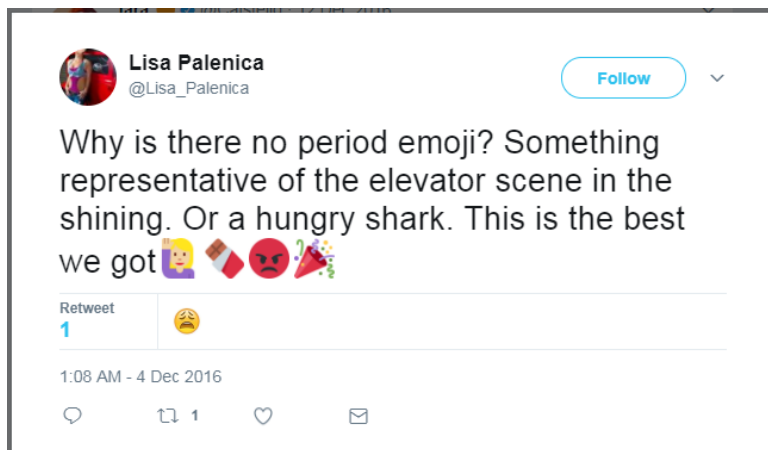
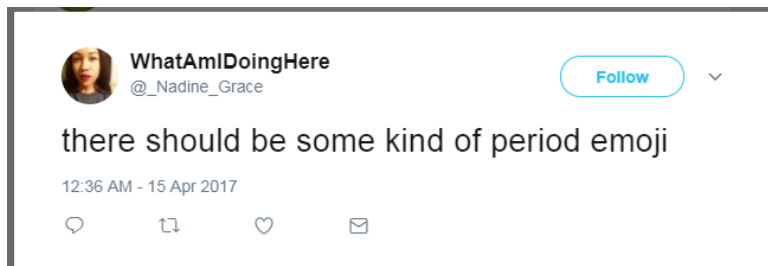
<sup>22</sup> Lancet Article - [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)31579-9/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)31579-9/fulltext)

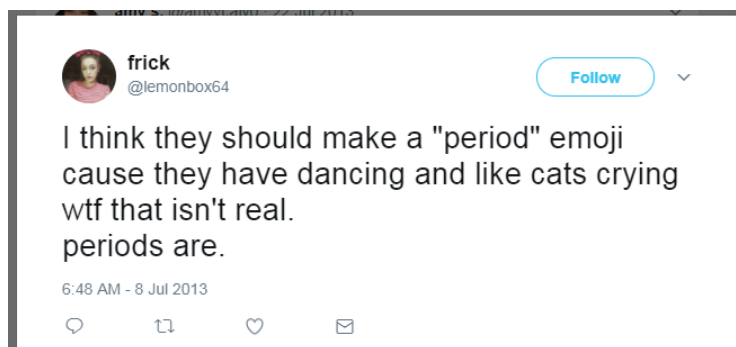
## E. Frequently Requested

A search on Twitter also shows that there's a demand and desire for a period emoji, and there are many tweets from people frequently requesting a period emoji, these are from before our campaign and poll:

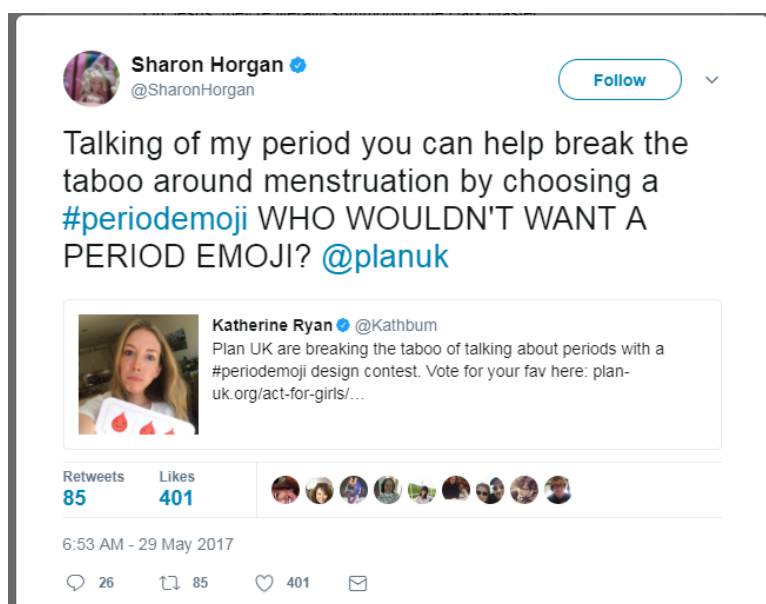


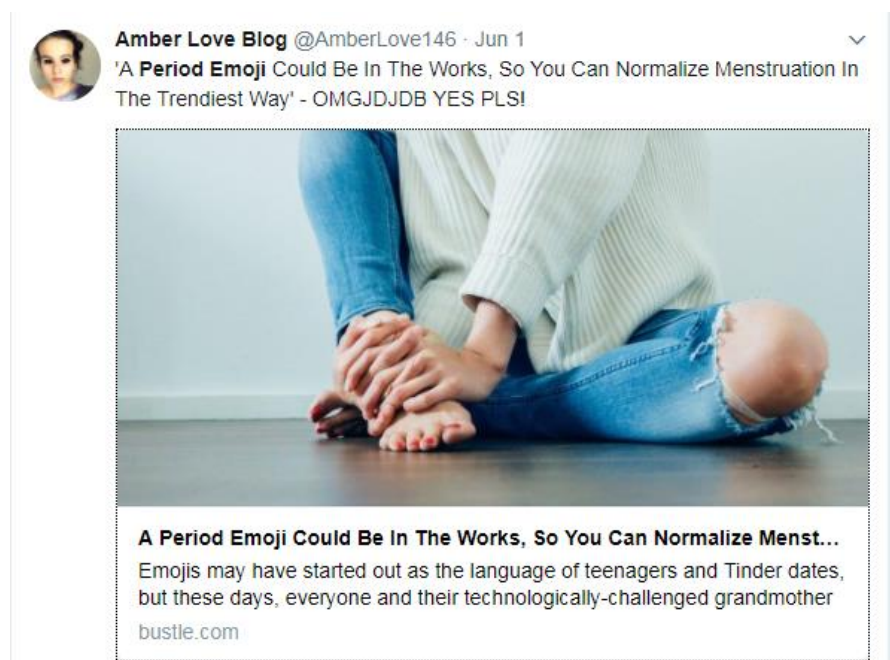






During our campaign and poll we saw many people requesting these emojis, and using the hashtag #periodemoji, here are some example tweets:





As well as large-scale demand from individuals, endorsement from influential media organisations, most notably the Lancet as listed above, adds significant weight to the case

for an emoji. We believe therefore that as well as being frequently requested, there is a strong and serious medical/scientific rationale.

#### **4. Selection Factors - Exclusion**

##### **F. Overly Specific**

This emoji would serve a specific purpose, however the panties design isn't an overly specific way of depicting menstruation as there would be other ways to represent being on your period (a tampon for example). There is also no 'type' of menstruation this emoji represents.

##### **G. Open-Ended**

There's currently no other emoji like this, and so there's no risk of a period emoji being open ended or for people to favour this particular emoji design over another.

##### **H. Already Representable**

There's currently no way to directly express being on your period through a single emoji, and no single way to express it through a sequence of existing emojis.

##### **I. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities**

This emoji design does not represent any brand, nor is part of any signage, logo or UI icon. It does not describe a specific person or deity.

##### **J. Transient**

As a natural biological process, humans have been experiencing periods since they have been on earth.

Menstruation isn't a passing fad, and it isn't going away any time soon – if anything as the world's population grows (it's expected to hit 9.7 billion by 2050<sup>23</sup>) there will be even more people experiencing menstruation.

Also as technology progresses and more of the world gets access to smartphones and the internet (from 2017 global IP traffic from mobile devices is expected to increase by 20% by 2021<sup>24</sup>), there are going to be more people than ever conversing on mobile devices.

These two things combined would mean that there's only going to be more women and people who menstruate using mobile devices to communicate, and therefore demand for a period emoji won't be going away, and will in fact be more relevant and necessary than ever.

##### **K. Faulty Comparison**

As there's currently no comparable emoji, this emoji isn't being proposed to change any sequences, add new versions of existing emojis or for compatibility, so there can be no faulty comparison.

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<sup>23</sup> UN Report - <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/2015-report.html>

<sup>24</sup> CISCO Report 'The Zettabyte Era – Trends and Analysis'  
<http://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/solutions/collateral/service-provider/visual-networking-index-vni/vni-hyperconnectivity-wp.html>