

Period Poverty and Equity, On Campus and Beyond

With funding from the University of Manitoba (UM) Strategic Initiatives Support Fund and the Faculty of Arts, researchers and staff at the UM undertook a project to explore **access to period supplies** and **work towards menstrual justice**.

To learn more about the project and access the full report, visit <https://chrr.info/current-projects-2/period-poverty-and-equity-on-campus-and-beyond/>

Centre for Human Rights Research



Graphic Design: Angela Ciceron

Key Findings

In Fall 2023, we conducted an audit of washrooms on UM campuses. Over **two weeks**, we surveyed **503 washrooms** in 86 buildings counting **more than 1,074 bathroom stalls**.

Of the **503** washrooms we were able to access, period supplies were freely available in only **15 (2.98%)** washrooms.

Only **60 (11.93%)** bathrooms had baby change tables; **8 (1.59%)** had condoms; and **6 (1.19%)** had sharps disposal boxes.

Of the 503 washrooms, **43** had coin-operated dispensers for menstrual supplies. However, **27 (62.8%)** dispensers were empty of supplies or malfunctioning.

Of the **138 washrooms** audited that were **designated for men**, there were **no period products available** on any campus.

1,304 (77.9%) respondents reported that they had experienced **starting their periods unexpectedly** while on campus.

1,102 (66.23%) respondents had experienced a **spill, leak, stain, or overflow of menstrual blood** while on campus.

850 respondents shared having to **miss work or class to manage menstruation**, with impacts on assignments, meetings, labs, study time, as well as social activities

In Spring 2024, we shared a survey to all UM students, faculty, and staff to capture experiences of menstruation on campus. We received a total of **1,732 responses**.

In Canada, urban menstruators spend as much as **\$6,000** on menstrual supplies in their lifetime, while in rural or remote areas, that amount may double.



Out of 1,674 respondents, **50.5%** earned an annual income below \$20,000, with **63.4%** living below Winnipeg's 2023 recommended livable income of \$39,957 (\$19.21/hr).

Challenges people with periods face

Lack of understanding

Lack of education

Access to supplies

Period poverty

Built design

Symptoms

Many respondents recall experiencing stigma around periods, using words such as "embarrassing", "humilitating", & "horrifying" when recalling experiences.

To address menstrual justice on campus, we identify the following priorities:

1. We advocate for the permanent implementation of free menstrual supplies in all washrooms on campus.
2. We urge the University of Manitoba to reconsider its decision to offer menstrual supplies through a dispenser model.
3. We recommend that the University offer a range of menstrual supplies including both reusable and disposable supplies.
4. We must ensure disposal facilities in all washrooms and considerations of the built environment.
5. We recommend a more efficient system for managing and tracking available period supplies on campus.
6. We encourage addressing menstrual justice as part of efforts towards Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

When faced with **unexpected menstruation** on campus, some of the most common actions from respondents were to:

- use a menstrual product that they had with them (1036);
- use a makeshift pad (toilet paper) (666); and to
- ask a friend for menstrual supplies (450).

Periods must be treated as an issue **beyond the cisgender binary.**

- Bodily autonomy
- Accessible washroom design & period-friendly built environments
- Accessible education about menstruation & menstrual justice
 - Workplace & classroom accomodations
 - Destigmatization of periods
- Equitable access to menstrual supplies
- Livable income & housing for all

Visions for Menstrual Justice