

MENSTRUATION AT NEW JERSEY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

A STUDY CONDUCTED BY  **FLOW
FORWARD_{NJ}** IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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www.flowforwardnj.org
<https://goauntflow.com/>

INTRODUCTION

FROM KATHRYN SEU, RESEARCH DIRECTOR (2024)

Period poverty refers to the inadequate access to menstrual products, related Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, and accurate menstrual health education. It remains a pervasive issue that impacts millions of individuals worldwide. This survey report aims to showcase how period poverty impacts college and university students in New Jersey. Flow Forward NJ is a non-profit organization that works to provide educational tools and menstrual products to combat period poverty. As Research Director of Flow Forward NJ, I acknowledge how important it is to illuminate the challenges faced by students who experience period poverty, as it directly impacts their academic performance, mental and physical health, and overall well-being.

New Jersey is home to a diverse student population across a wide variety of educational institutions. This provides a unique data set for examining the pervasiveness of period poverty. Though the state historically has progressive stances on social issues, it is evident that period poverty is still a crucial and prevalent issue.

This study aims to fill the knowledge gap by providing both empirical data and first-hand testimonies from students. Through in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the survey results, this survey calls attention to the prevalence of period poverty among New Jersey college and university students. By examining the barriers that these students face, our findings explore the broader implications of a lack of access to menstrual products and education, including but not limited to class attendance, academic achievement, and mental well-being. Our findings serve as an important reference for college and university administrators, policymakers, and other advocacy groups to shape period equity initiatives and policies in their respective areas of jurisdiction

In presenting the results from this survey, I extend tremendous gratitude to the students who participated in this survey. The outcome of this survey would not have been possible without their courage and willingness to participate. It is Flow Forward NJ's goal that their experiences will trigger action and lead to an increased effort to combat period poverty in our educational institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FROM SARAH MCCLURE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As Executive Director of Flow Forward NJ, I naturally played a role in seeing this survey through. I helped coordinate the spread of the survey throughout the state and found a network of amazing, passionate volunteers who took time out of their crazy semesters to help us spread the survey to new places.

Thank you to...

Our amazing sponsor, Aunt Flow, with a special shout out and thank you to Sami Sharfin for helping to organize this initiative. We loved working with you Sami, keep being amazing! It means so much to us as a small nonprofit that Aunt Flow was willing to take a chance on us and conduct this research with us. Aunt Flow has been one of our favorite companies that we have admired since our founding in 2022, so we are incredibly grateful for this opportunity.

Our survey team: Research Director Kathryn Seu, Education Director Pranita Sannidhi, and Research Assistant Zarah Khondecker. You are all such talented, brilliant people and I was so thankful to have your hard work and dedication to producing this survey and report.

Our survey consultant Dr. Marybec Griffin from the Rutgers School of Public Health. Thank you for helping steer this crazy ship through slightly troubled waters.

Our school teams: My co-founder Logan Johnson and the members of our Rowan survey team: Scarlett Johnson, Ellie Gressman, and Abi Titus. The members of Rutgers University Planned Parenthood Generation Action for tabling and handing out survey materials, our friends Sam Agartap and Katie Zhang for helping hang survey materials at Rutgers New Brunswick; the Princeton Menstrual Products Task Force and their tabling team; Gaby Rivera-Peña, Professor Jessica Barnack-Tavlaris and the TCNJ Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Lab for tabling and handing out materials; and Victoria Miskulin and the Montclair tabling team.

A very special thank you to the TCNJ chapter of Delta Phi Epsilon, whose members saw the survey and took it upon themselves to share and take the survey. You guys are awesome!!!

Most of all, thank you to everyone who took the time to spread the word about the survey and more importantly, spent time taking the survey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FROM AUNT FLOW

We are thrilled to support and partner with student-led organizations, like Flow Forward New Jersey, that are advocating for menstrual equity through advocacy and research. At Aunt Flow, we are on a mission to ensure that every student has access to period products on campus. We never want students to miss class because they started their period unexpectedly. These survey results highlight the importance of ensuring students have what they need, when they need it. After all, toilet paper is offered for free, why aren't tampons and pads?[®]



To learn more about Aunt Flow and the menstrual product services they provide, visit <https://goauntflow.com/>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"I often times have to wear pads beyond the amount of time they should be worn (3+ days) because I can't afford to be regularly buying products or buy reusable pads. I know I get terrible body odor from these days so I tend to spend them in isolation and wear my most ruined black clothes in case of leaks."

48.2% OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES WITH PURCHASING MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS DURING THE YEAR.

3.4% SAID THEY ALWAYS STRUGGLE TO AFFORD PRODUCTS.

6.7% SAID THEY OFTEN STRUGGLE TO AFFORD PRODUCTS.

38.1% SAID THEY SOMETIMES STRUGGLE TO AFFORD PRODUCTS.

97.8%

OF STUDENTS BELIEVE PERIOD PRODUCTS SHOULD BE OFFERED FOR FREE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES IN NEW JERSEY.

30.1%

OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT PURCHASING MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IS DIFFICULT TO AFFORD EVERY MONTH.

25.2% OF STUDENTS ARE UNSURE IF THEIR SCHOOL OFFERS PERIOD PRODUCTS.

18%

HAVE BEEN TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK FOR A FREE PRODUCT.

32%

OF STUDENTS STATE THAT A LACK OF PERIOD PRODUCTS AFFECTS THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.



**“It is something my body does naturally,
why should I be ashamed of talking about
something that is out of my control?”**

MENSTRUATION AT NEW JERSEY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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INTRODUCTION

The impacts of period poverty, or the inadequate access to menstrual products, menstrual education and hygiene facilities, on college students is an under-researched subject. It lies at the intersection between gender and public health, thus highlighting a societal issue that can impact anyone who menstruates, who has menstruated, or who will menstruate. Due to a lack of research, there is a significant knowledge gap in understanding how the lack of access to period products impacts vulnerable populations: those with preexisting social, economic, or health conditions that put them at a greater risk for experiencing period poverty. Considering the varied experiences of young adults entering college for the first time, it is clear that this population is at an increased risk of being negatively affected. In 2019, a survey of college students found that 39 percent of students across 18 colleges experienced food insecurity, while 44 percent experienced housing insecurity. We know that these populations, especially those experiencing food insecurity, are often faced with the choice between buying food or buying menstrual products. This is period poverty.

While there are more surveys and research exploring period poverty among teens in the United States, there is a lack of research specifically pertaining to college students and period poverty. The most cited survey is one from 2021, “Period poverty and mental health implications among college-aged women in the United States”, which found that 14.2% of college-attending women had experienced period poverty in the past year, while 10% experienced it every month. The menstrual product brand Intimina released their survey results of college students at five schools, and their results found that a higher percentage - 18.7% - of students have had to choose between personal costs and purchasing menstrual products. However, these surveys did not include New Jersey in their pool of responses.

Previous research conducted by Flow Forward NJ at Rowan University concluded that students were experiencing period poverty at a higher rate than the national average. After these findings, Flow Forward NJ sought to discover how period poverty affects college students across New Jersey. College students deserve access to menstrual products on campus – in New Jersey and nationwide. This survey aims to provide a look at how college students in New Jersey are experiencing period poverty: how frequently, how it differs from school to school, and if their school has resources available for them, how those resources are being utilized.

SURVEY RESEARCH METHODS & DISTRIBUTION

The “Menstruation at NJ Colleges and Universities” survey was developed by Research Director Kathryn Seu, Executive Director Sarah McClure, Education Director Pranita Sannidhi in consultation with our sponsoring company, Aunt Flow. The survey was reviewed by Dr. Marybec Griffin of the Department of Health Behavior, Society, and Policy at the Rutgers School of Public Health. After rewriting and reviewing, our survey was ready for launch in February of 2024. The survey opened on February 12th, 2024 at 9AM and closed on May 10th, 2024 at 11:59pm.

The survey was divided into three sections. The first section gathered anonymous demographic information about respondents, the second measured attitudes toward menstruation generally, and the third measured experiences with using, purchasing, and locating menstrual products on college campuses.

To view the survey questions, please visit Appendix A (page 35).

Survey Distribution

Methods of distributing the survey consisted of a three pronged approach: campus marketing, social media advertisements, and email marketing. Viewers of survey content were prompted to take the survey anonymously for a chance to win a \$50 gift card. Upon completion of the survey, individuals were directed to a separate form to confirm their status as a student and submit their name and email address for entry into the giveaway.

The survey had a total of 614 unique responses that were determined to be valid, and 417 giveaway form responses. Validity was determined based on whether an individual selected that they were a college student in New Jersey. There were a total of 668 responses, with one duplicate response, forty-nine responses of individuals who did not attend college in New Jersey, and four fraudulent responses that were completed by individuals after our survey advertisement was shared to a hate group on Facebook. These were easily identifiable due to the entirety of the fill-in answers being completed with hate-based rhetoric, and were removed from the pool of answers.

Campus marketing included hanging full-size and miniature posters around campuses, distributing hand flyers, business cards, and stickers across campuses and to individuals, and conducting tabling events. We distributed over 300 posters, 500 flyers, and 200 stickers in partnership with campus teams. We conducted one tabling event each in partnership with campus teams at Rutgers, Montclair, The College of New Jersey, Princeton, and Rowan University. In-person marketing had the greatest impact on the survey.

SURVEY RESEARCH METHODS & DISTRIBUTION

TABLE 1: PARTICIPATION BASED ON ADVERTISEMENT TYPE

Question C: Where did you hear about the survey?*					
Poster on Campus	207	33.01%	Sticker	12	1.91%
Word of mouth	104	16.59%	Campus Newspaper	8	1.28%
Instagram	99	15.79%	LinkedIn	6	0.96%
Flyer	81	12.92%	GroupMe	6	0.96%
Email	74	11.80%	Business Card	3	0.48%
Tabling Event	53	8.45%	Discord	3	0.48%
Facebook	14	2.23%	Bus Ad	2	0.32%
*Individuals could select multiple responses. This question received a total of 672 responses.					

Flow Forward NJ ran a total of three social media advertisements, including one Meta ad that covered Instagram, Facebook, and Messenger, three ads on LinkedIn, and one boosted Instagram-specific post. Combined, these platforms comprised about 18% of engagement. Other social media platforms, including the messenger applications GroupMe and Discord, received some traction from individuals sharing the survey in Group chats, but only made up about 1.4% of responses.

Email marketing was an organic part of this survey process - members of our team reached out to staff members at Rowan, Rutgers, and Montclair Universities to ask them to send out the survey to their students. As word spread around, we received word that more professors had sent it out to their students, but we were unable to determine how many emails were actually sent since we were not copied on the emails. 74, or about 12% of respondents, stated they heard about the survey through email. Additionally, Flow Forward NJ included the survey link in their March newsletter, which was emailed to all of their subscribers.

The most effective survey distribution method was, by far, campus posters. Approximately one third of respondents heard about the survey through this method. This was followed by word of mouth; based on the number of responses, it can be determined that the survey did generate some good conversation around the survey and hopefully, menstruation. However, “word of mouth” could have been an interpretation of a tabling event, a GroupMe message or text, or a unique conversation on the topic.

To view the survey marketing materials, please visit Appendix B (page 50).

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA BREAKDOWN

TABLE 2: COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF PARTICIPANTS

University	Number of Respondents
Rutgers New Brunswick	188
TCNJ	180
Rowan GB	119
Princeton	39
Montclair	29
Stockton	9
County College of Morris	4
Kean	3
Monmouth University	3
Seton Hall	3
Other (<3 Respondents)	37
TOTAL	614

Table 2: Of the 665 total respondents, 614 were determined to be valid respondents. We performed a descriptive analysis of factors, including race, ethnicity, grade level, university, age, employment, income, dependents, and living status, for each of these participants. Of these respondents, we found that the majority (30.6%) of respondents were from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, closely followed by 29.3% from The College of New Jersey.

GRADE LEVEL AND AGE

FIGURE 1: GRADE LEVEL DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS

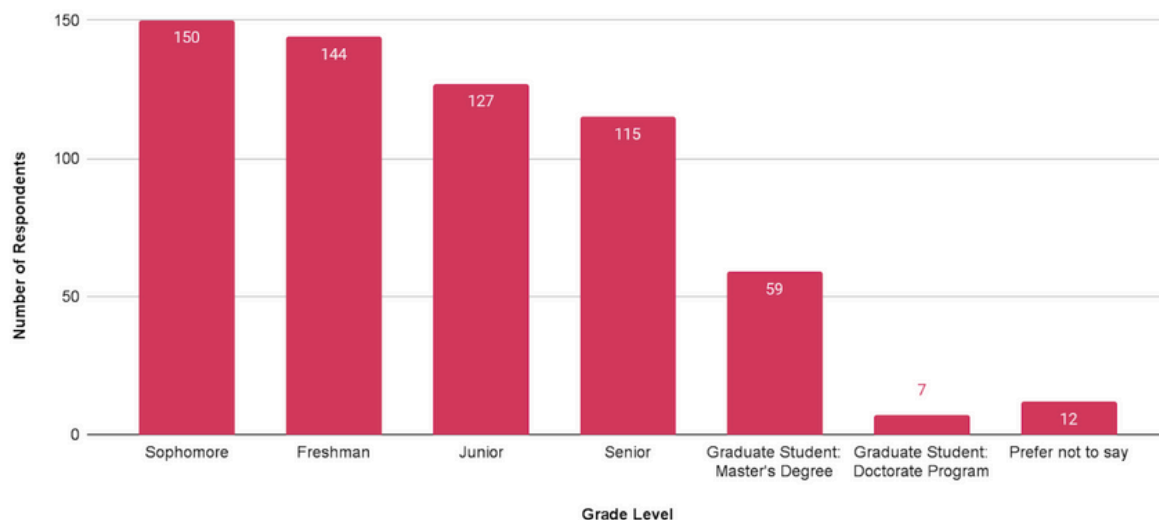


Figure 1: Most of the participants in the survey were undergraduate sophomores, with only approximately 65 graduate students enrolled in either Master's or Doctorate programs.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA BREAKDOWN

FIGURE 2: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS

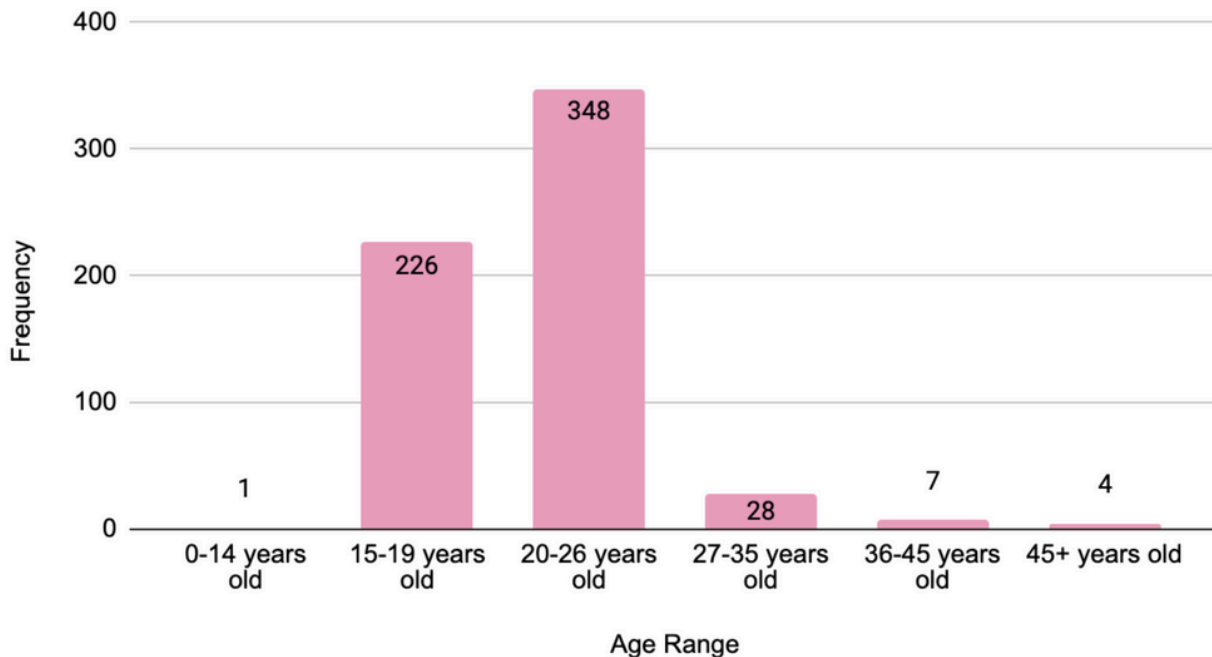


Figure 2: Most participants were 15 to 19 years old. One individual reported being below 15 years of age.

RESIDENCY AND CAMPUS LIVING

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDENCY STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS

Living Status	Frequency
I live at home with my family.	176
I live alone, OFF campus.	21
I live OFF campus with roommates.	110
I live ON campus with roommates.	255
I live alone, ON campus.	48
Prefer not to say.	4

Table 3: As expected, most of the respondents live in NJ, with only 23 individuals residing out of state while attending school in New Jersey. Of the in-state residents, the majority lived in Middlesex County, while only two lived in Salem County. Additionally, the majority of respondents reported living on campus with roommates.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA BREAKDOWN

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Questions prompting race were crafted utilizing the 1997 standard set in place by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Over the years, these categories have been, “[...] used to categorize U.S. citizens, U.S. residents, and other eligible non-citizens” (Institute of Education Science: National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

FIGURE 3: RACIAL BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS

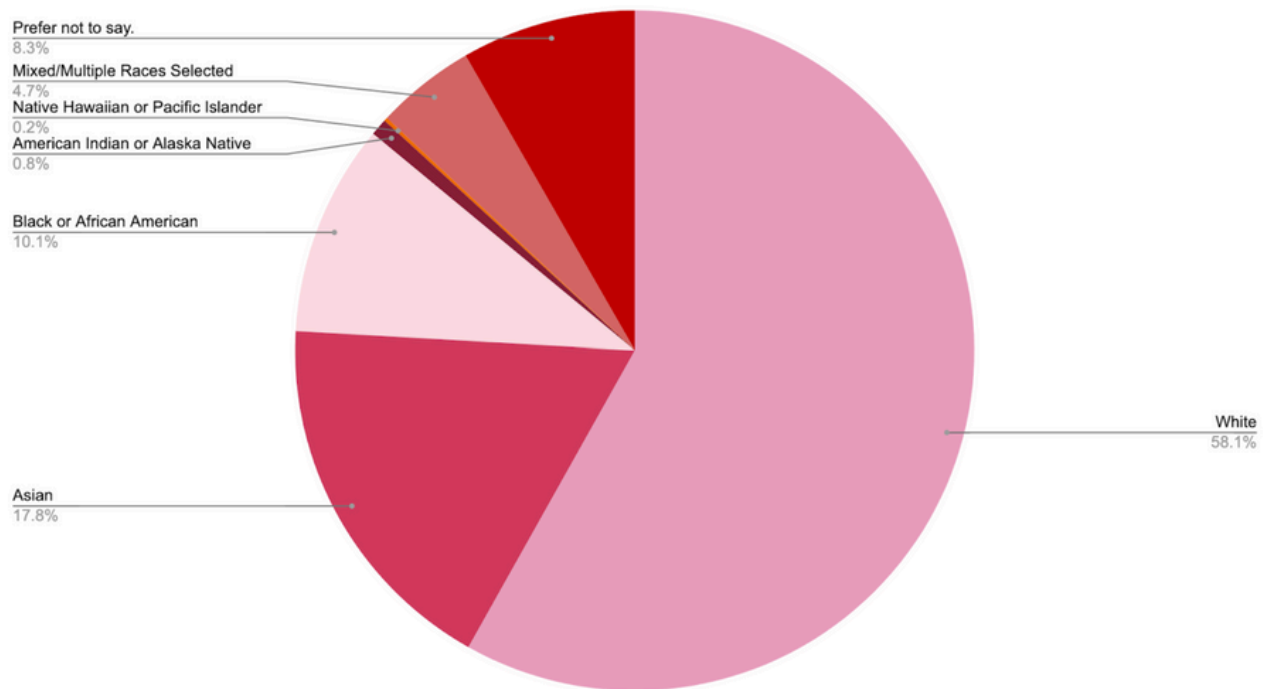


Figure 3: Over half of the respondents to the survey were individuals who identified themselves as white, due to the survey data being collected at predominately white institutions (PWIs). 58% of respondents identified as white, 17.8% as Asian, and 10.1% as Black or African American. 19% of the participants identified as Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin, while 76% stated they were not of Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA BREAKDOWN

INSURANCE AND INCOME

In regards to insurance: 60% have private health insurance, 33% have public health insurance, and 2% are not insured. The remaining participants did not provide their insurance status. Additionally, of the 614 patients total, 269 are employed part-time in one job, 85 are employed part-time in 2 or more jobs, 48 are employed full-time, and 187 are seeking job opportunities. 577 individuals responded stating they have no dependents, while 8 had 1 dependent, 11 had 2-4, and one individual reported having 3 or more.

FIGURE 4: REPORTED ANNUAL INCOME OF PARTICIPANTS

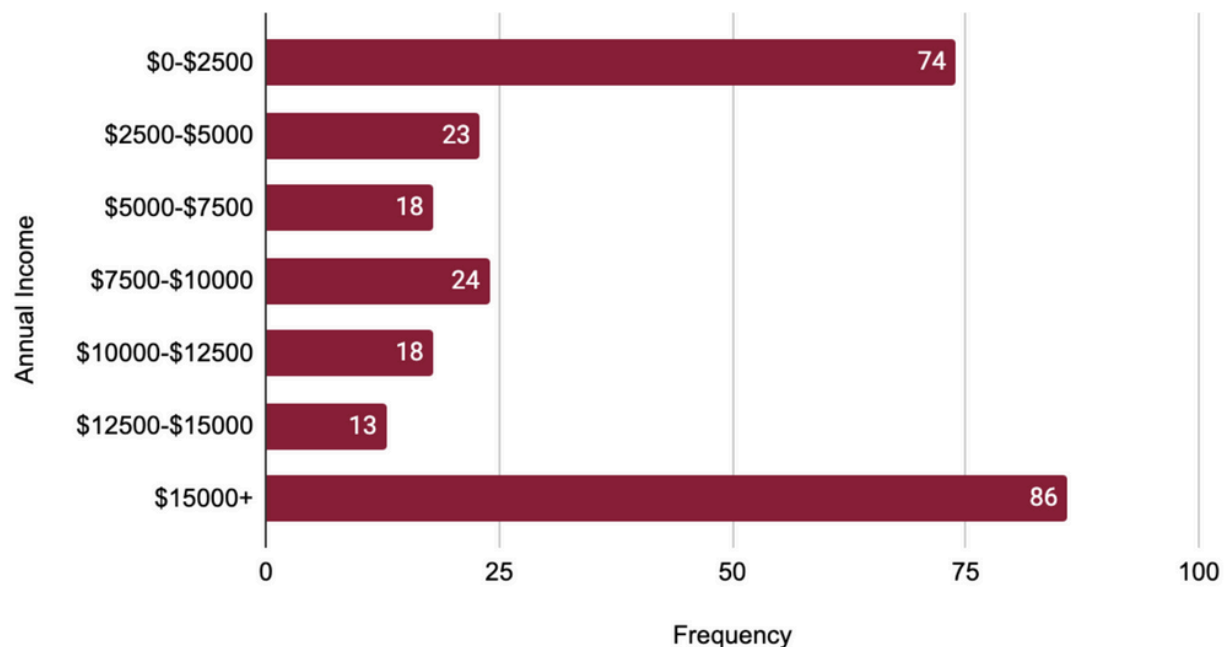


Figure 4: Of the total respondents, the majority made over \$15,000 per year, followed closely by those in the lowest bracket of \$0-\$25,000. This is most likely due to the large population of young full-time students who may be dependent on their parent's/guardian's income and may not have their own professions

From the data above, the majority of our respondents seem to be undergraduate Rutgers University students employed part-time who identify as White and are not of Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish descent.

The following data exhibits the responses from participants to each section of this survey.

ATTITUDES TOWARD MENSTRUATION (1-2 PAGES)

[QUESTIONS P, Q, R, AK, AL, AM]

TABLE 4: MENSTRUAL REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

Statement	Respondents	Percentage (% out of 614 respondents)
Menstruation is accurately portrayed in film and television.	42	6.84%
Menstruation is misrepresented in film and television.	360	58.63%
I have not seen menstruation represented in film and television.	209	34.04%
I often see menstruation represented in the media I consume.	84	13.68%
I believe that positive representation for menstruation in film and television benefits menstruators.	407	66.29%
I do not believe that menstruation should be portrayed in film and television.	13	2.12%
Prefer not to say.	5	0.81%

Based on the above data, it is clear that there is demand for positive representation of menstruation in the media. The majority thinks that menstruation is misrepresented, highlighting a perception of inaccurate or stigmatized portrayals. Despite the lack of accurate representation, 13.68% report often seeing menstruation in the media they consume, indicating some level of presence but possibly not positive or accurate. Only 2.12% do not believe menstruation should be portrayed in film and television, suggesting that most respondents see value in its representation. These findings suggest that there is a strong desire for positive and accurate representation of menstruation in the media.

“When I had my first period it was at college. I remember both crying in the bathroom because I finally felt “fixed” but horrified because I never bought a period product before. Of course I didn’t have anything and I felt so embarrassed to have to walk around with toilet paper between my legs. To have a period product there wouldve helped comfort me in that moment, and also let me feel supported as I finally just felt like a woman again.”

From “If comfortable, please use this space to recount a story or stories about menstruation and/or period poverty you feel would be impactful for university administrations in New Jersey to hear.”

ATTITUDES TOWARD MENSTRUATION (1-2 PAGES)

[QUESTIONS P, Q, R, AK, AL, AM]

TABLE 5: ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

Statement	Respondents	Percentage (% out of 614 respondents)
I do not feel embarrassed to purchase menstruation products in public.	360	58.63%
I have no strong feelings about purchasing menstruation products in public.	220	35.83%
I feel embarrassed to purchase menstruation products in public.	93	15.15%
I prefer to order menstruation products online rather than in-person.	44	7.17%
Purchasing menstruation products is difficult to afford every month.	185	30.13%
I believe that menstruation products are easy to access and are affordable.	33	5.37%
I view purchasing period products as a chore.	270	43.97%
I view purchasing period products the same as any other item on my shopping list.	221	35.99%
Prefer not to say.	5	0.81%

Only 7.17% prefer to order menstruation products online rather than in-person, possibly due to convenience or to avoid embarrassment. The low percentage indicates most people are comfortable purchasing in-person. Over 30% find it difficult to afford menstruation products every month, highlighting financial challenges for a substantial portion of respondents. More respondents reported that purchasing period products is a chore, signaling that purchasing these products is, more often than not, an inconvenience for menstruators. With these results, it is clear that there are significant concerns with accessibility and affordability.

ATTITUDES TOWARD MENSTRUATION (1-2 PAGES)

[QUESTIONS P, Q, R, AK, AL, AM]

TABLE 6: MENSTRUATION AS “UNCLEAN”

Statement	Respondents	Percentage (% out of 614 respondents)
I find it rude/impolite to discuss menstruation with non-menstruators.	44	7.17%
I can identify reasons why discussing my period with others is beneficial.	411	66.94%
I will not discuss my period with people who also menstruate.	16	2.61%
I see no issue with discussing menstruation with non-menstruators.	396	64.50%
There is no reason to discuss my period with others.	57	9.28%
I do not feel embarrassed to disclose that I am on my period to my peers.	356	57.98%
Prefer not to say.	10	1.63%

Being that over 66% of respondents stated that they could identify reasons as to why discussing their period with others is beneficial, it speaks to a societal standard that discussing periods is “unclean.” This is supported by the majority of respondents also agreeing that there is no issue with discussing menstruation with non-menstruators. Furthermore, more than half of respondents stated that they do not feel embarrassed to disclose that they are on their period to their peers. This evidence supports the notion that the stigma associated with periods being a taboo or “unclean” topic is something that is societally learned and imposed upon menstruators.

“I remember at an earlier age of getting my period, I didn’t understand how much flow I would have whether that would be heavy or light and one day I bleed through my school pants onto the seat and felt embarrassed and realized I didn’t have anything to change into or products to change with. The pricing of products continue to increase at a rapid rate and made it difficult for my family to constantly buy a lot of products. Also, the ones provided by the school were cheap material and bothered at times.”

ATTITUDES TOWARD MENSTRUATION (1-2 PAGES)

[QUESTIONS P, Q, R, AK, AL, AM]

TABLE 7: “HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COMFORT LEVEL IN TALKING OPENLY ABOUT PERIODS?”

Answers	Respondents	Percentage (% out of 614 respondents)
1	13	2.12%
2	36	5.86%
3	175	28.5%
4	202	32.9%
5	188	30.62%
TOTAL	614	

Figure 5: This question utilized a five point scale, with “1” being “not comfortable” and “5” being “very comfortable.” The majority of respondents felt that they are fairly comfortable discussing periods openly. This finding continues to support the conjecture that the stigma around periods is a societal expectation and not one put forth by menstruators.

“Last semester I had a midterm worth about 40% of my grade. I spent the entire weekend studying for it and was more than prepared to do well. Unfortunately, the morning of I woke up and started my period. I spent an hour before class crying on the floor of my bathroom before I felt okay enough to get up without feeling nauseous or lightheaded. I was scared to drive to class by myself but felt I had no choice as I didn’t believe the male professor would believe me if I told him about the severity of my symptoms. I came very close to passing out walking to class.”

One respondent, who selected a comfort level of “4,” elaborated by stating, “I feel okay talking about periods in a public setting, but I don’t actively bring it up or discuss it in detail with my peers.” A different respondent, who selected a comfort level of “3,” stated, “I will definitely talk about my period to other people who have a period, especially if they tell me they have it. I can ask for help if I need it. I don’t ever talk about it with people who don’t have a period.” One respondent who selected a comfort level of “1,” explained their stance in stating, “Menstruation has been shamed and not openly talked about during my youth and this has created an embarrassment for me to talk about periods, even with other people who menstruate.” Each of these sentiments express that menstruators feel comfortable discussing periods when there is an accepting environment.

ATTITUDES TOWARD MENSTRUATION (1-2 PAGES) [QUESTIONS P, Q, R, AK, AL, AM]

FIGURE 5: COMFORT LEVEL IN TALKING OPENLY ABOUT PERIODS

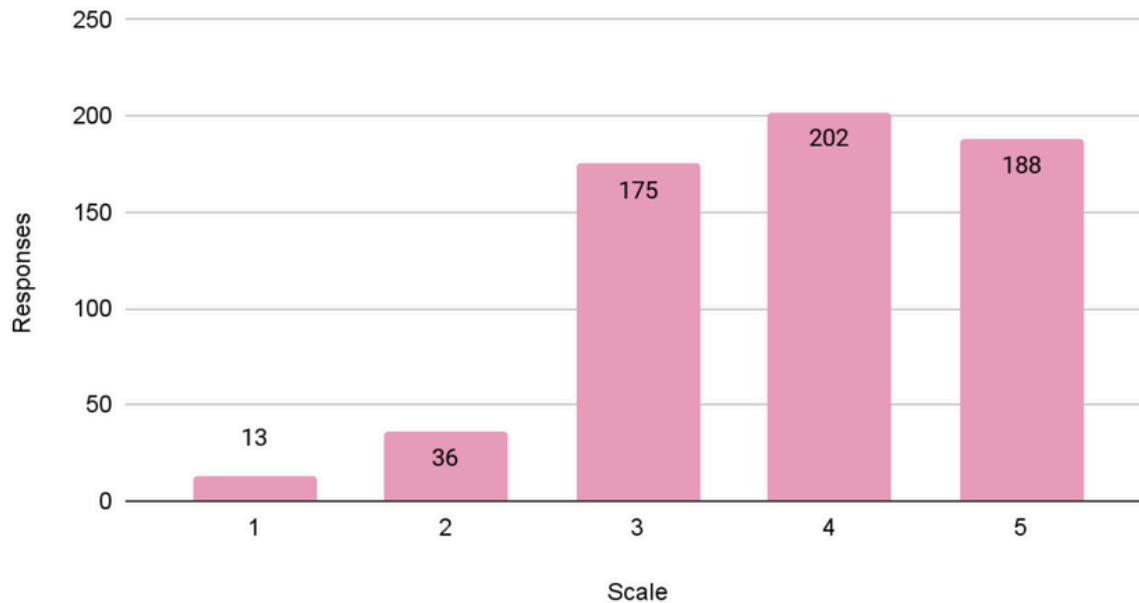


TABLE 8: “DOES IT MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE WHEN OTHERS TALK ABOUT MENSTRUATION OPENLY?”

“Yesterday I was in class and had to go to the bathroom, my period had started but it was very late so I hadn’t anticipated it. I didn’t bring any period products with me to the bathroom, and didn’t feel comfortable going back into the class to get some from my bag, and then go back to the bathroom because I didn’t want to come across disrespectful to the teacher, and I didn’t want people to speculate about what was going on. Because of this, I tried to use toilet paper which I quickly bled through, and which was uncomfortable.”

Answers	Respondent	Percentage (% out of 614 respondents)
Never	426	69.38%
Sometimes	162	26.38%
Often	13	2.12%
Always	6	0.97%
Prefer not to say	7	1.14%
TOTAL	614	

ATTITUDES TOWARD MENSTRUATION (1-2 PAGES) [QUESTIONS P, Q, R, AK, AL, AM]

FIGURE 6: DISCOMFORT WITH OTHERS DISCUSSING PERIODS OPENLY

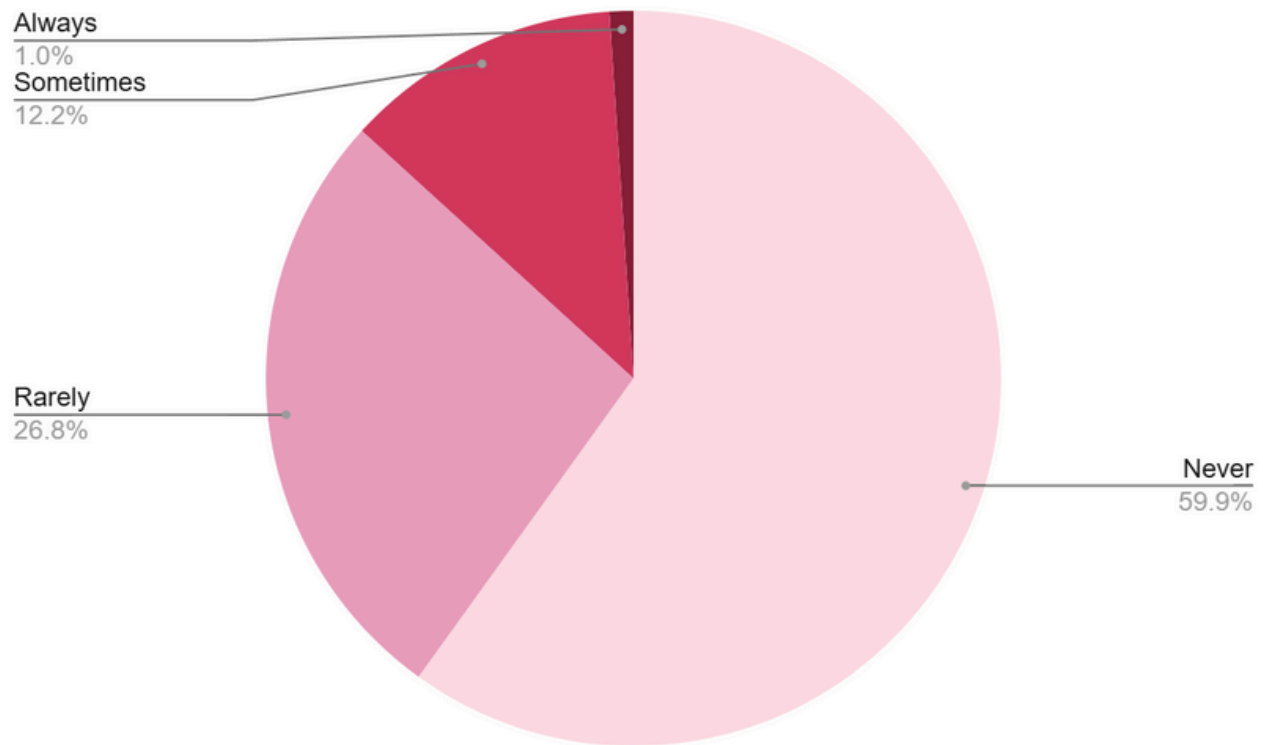


Figure 6: Here, 69.38% of respondents stated that they never feel uncomfortable to talk about periods openly. On the other hand, 26.38% of respondents stated that they sometimes feel uncomfortable talking about their period openly. This relates to the previous question, in that the comfort level of a respondent to talk about menstruation depends on the situation and environment. In a situation where respondents feel comfortable and with those who have a better understanding of menstruation, they are more likely to openly discuss periods. Surprisingly, only a minority of respondents reported feeling often or always uncomfortable to talk about their period, which speaks to a significant shift in stigma surrounding periods amongst younger menstruators.

“I saw a girl crying in the bathroom because her cycle started, she had no pads or tampons and no money to buy any. Her pants were stained and she she was embarrassed to go back to class. I had a spare on me which I gave her but it's unfair she wasn't able to fix this emergency due to the lack of free products in the building.”

ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES [QUESTIONS V-AF]

AWARENESS OF MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS ON CAMPUS

When considering the impact of period poverty on college, it is important to survey the existing access to menstrual products and the awareness of their availability. A lack of access to menstrual products can lead to individuals missing all or part of class, and impact their academic performance and overall attendance. Our questions explored the relationship between access to free products and the awareness and availability of products on campus.

FIGURE 7: “DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR SCHOOL OFFERS FREE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS?”

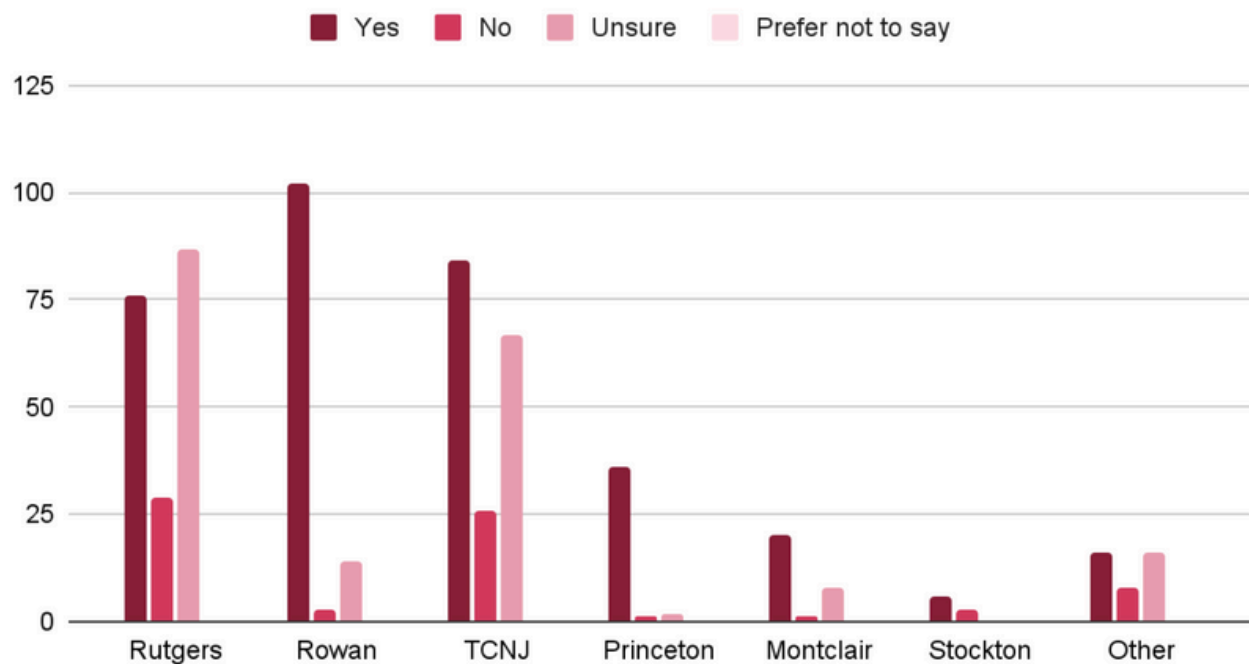


Figure 7: We first asked respondents if they knew whether or not their university provides free menstrual products. 55.5% of the respondents said that their university offered menstrual products, 32.4% of respondents said that they were unsure, and 11.7% said that their university did not offer menstrual products.

ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES [QUESTIONS V-AF]

From preliminary research, we are aware that the following schools have free menstrual product dispensers available to college students in at least some parts of their campus:

- [Princeton University](#)
- [Rutgers University New Brunswick](#)
- [Rowan University - Glassboro Campus](#)
- [New Jersey Institute of Technology](#)
- Stockton University (through word of mouth)
- [Seton Hall University](#)
- [Felician University](#)

While we were unable to survey Seton Hall and NJIT, we can see from the respondents here that Rutgers students are not aware of the implementation of free machines in some buildings at the New Brunswick campus. Rutgers previously implemented free product machines on their New Brunswick in 2019, but only allocated enough funding to last for three years. With recent student advocacy initiatives by previous Rutgers Undergraduate Student Assembly (RUSA) President Allison Smith, the University committed to installing and stocking new machines at the New Brunswick Campus in 2023, though the [availability of these products](#) does not appear to be well-advertised to the student body.

Rowan students, on the other hand, are well aware of the products available to them. This is likely due to the implementation, and visibility of free menstrual product dispensers in all Glassboro campus academic buildings' first floor bathrooms. This project was not publicized after its implementation, though their presence is clearly visible and known to the students at Rowan University.

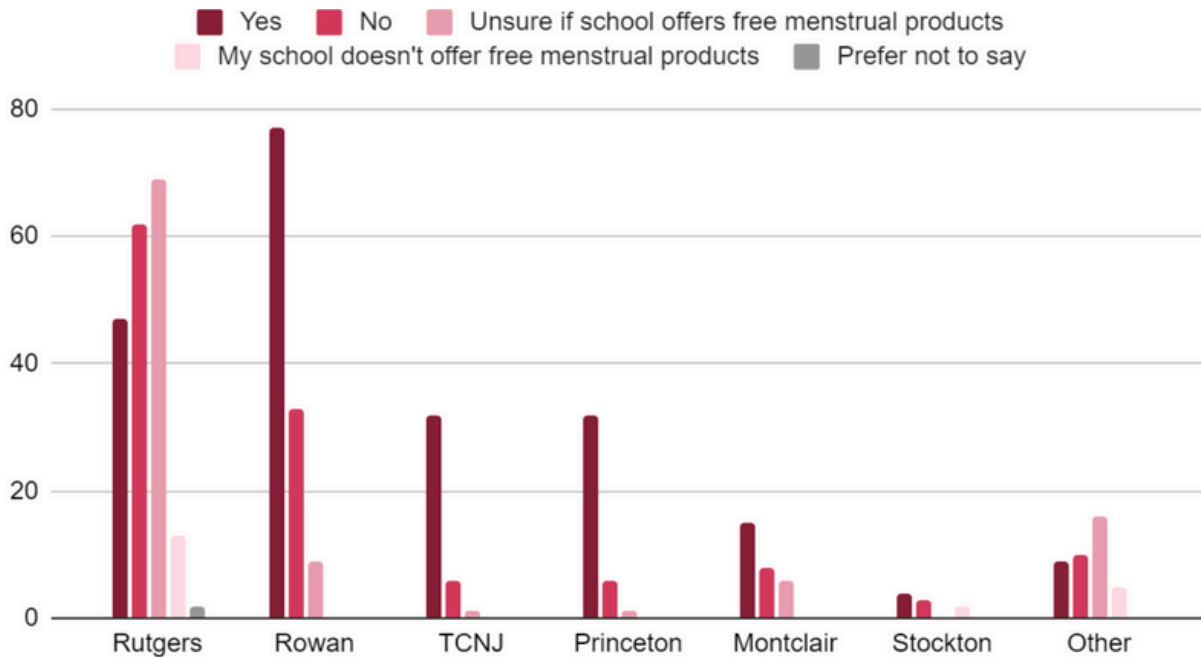
[The College of New Jersey \(TCNJ\)](#) does not currently offer free menstrual products to their students through their bathrooms, after rejecting a proposal from their Student Government for free menstrual products in bathrooms citing budget cuts. There are eight places on campus that offer free products of their own accord, and students report a [lack of access to resources](#) on campus and a lack of advertisement of these locations.

Princeton has offered free menstrual products in partnership with [Aunt Flow](#) since 2017, when the Menstrual Product Task Force advocated for their implementation. They were the first institute of higher education (IHE) in New Jersey to do so. Due to the University's history of providing these products, it is likely that it contributed to student awareness of free menstrual products.

ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES [QUESTIONS V-AF]

UTILIZATION OF FREE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

FIGURE 8: “HAVE YOU EVER USED YOUR SCHOOL’S FREE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS?”



When contrasting responses for “Have you used your school’s free menstrual products” with “Do you know if your school offers free menstrual products”, students at Rowan, TCNH, Princeton, and Montclair did not select the option “My school doesn’t offer free menstrual products”. There were some that answered that they were unsure, but many respondents appear to have utilized free menstrual products in the past. The only school where the majority of people either did not use them or were unsure if they were offered was Rutgers University - New Brunswick.

The next question surveyed individuals on whether they have spent a significant amount of time trying to locate a free product on their campus. The majority of respondents stated that they have not had this issue before. This could be due to a number of factors, including having easy access to a nearby dispenser or stock, carrying a product on them, or locating someone who has a product they could use.

ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES [QUESTIONS V-AF]

TABLE 9: “HAVE YOU EVER SPENT MORE THAN FIFTEEN MINUTES OF YOUR DAY TRYING TO FIND A FREE PRODUCT ON CAMPUS? (IE. TRYING TO FIND A LOCATION THEY’RE OFFERED, NEEDING TO GO HOME FROM CLASS/EXTRACURRICULAR TO GET ONE, ETC.)?”

	Overall	Rutgers	Rowan	TCNJ	Princeton	Montclair	Stockton	Other
Yes	165	52	33	36	12	9	3	15
No	435	129	94	139	26	20	6	26
Prefer not to say	14	7	1	4	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	614	188	128	179	38	29	9	43

FIGURE 9: “HAVE YOU EVER MISSED CLASS DUE TO A LACK OF MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS OR MENSTRUAL SYMPTOMS?”

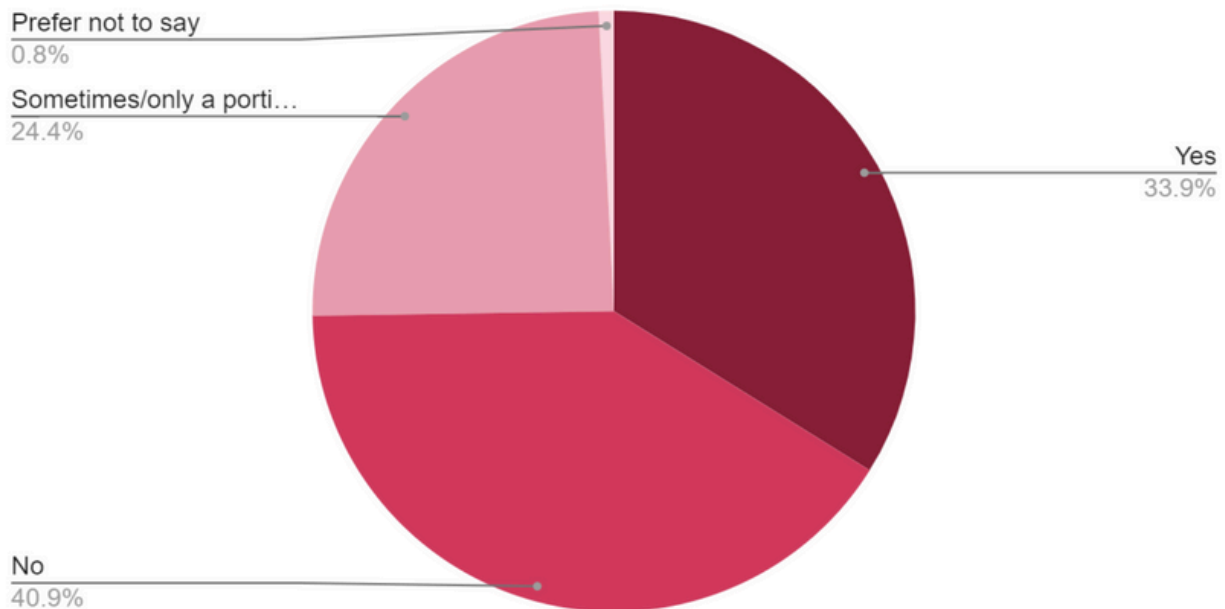


Figure 9: Our findings showed that about a third of individuals who answered the survey have missed class in college due to menstrual symptoms and/or a lack of access to menstrual products.

ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES [QUESTIONS V-AF]

As to whether the lack of resources has impacted academic performance, 56.8% of respondents stated that it has not had a noticeable impact on their academic **performance**, **while 32% stated that it had an impact at least some of the time**. 19.9% stated it only impacted their grades sometimes, while 12% stated that yes, it has made a noticeable impact on their academic performance. 10% of respondents were unsure.

EMBARRASSMENT AROUND ASKING FOR MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

Before Flow Forward NJ worked with the Rowan University Student Center to implement Aunt Flow machines outside of their bathrooms in 2022, students were told via signage in the women's restrooms to approach the Student Center desk and ask for a menstrual product. This service was underutilized, due to the awkward interaction of asking for a product. When we authored this survey, we wanted to see if people were affected by embarrassment as a barrier to asking menstrual products. 65% of respondents stated that they had not had the opportunity to ask for a menstrual product, while 34% stated they had. 18% of respondents stated that they were embarrassed to do so.

TABLE 10: REASONS FOR EMBARRASSMENT IN STUDENTS ASKING FOR MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

Reason for Embarrassment	Respondents	Percent of Responses
Embarrassed to ask stranger	86	26.5%
Embarrassment in asking for help	64	19.8%
Embarrassment you weren't prepared	60	18.5%
Embarrassed to ask male person	52	16%
Embarrassment related to menstruation	45	13.9%
Embarrassed because you couldn't afford products	17	5.3%

Table 10: Out of the six options on why respondents were embarrassed, the most commonly selected answer was embarrassment with asking a stranger, while the option with the least respondents was embarrassment around the inability to afford products.

ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES [QUESTIONS V-AF]

FREE PRODUCTS AT NEW JERSEY UNIVERSITIES

While running this survey, we were curious about the belief that menstrual products should be free on college campuses in New Jersey. We anticipated that many respondents, if not all, would be for the inclusion of free products in bathrooms at colleges and universities, based on previous anecdotal conversations and research initiatives.

97.8% of respondents stated they believe period products should be free at colleges and universities in New Jersey. Those who stated “no” reported that they would say yes if there was some way to prevent abuse of these resources, or instead offer an alternative in the form of access to low-cost products. One person expressed reservations over where the funding would come from.

Respondents were given the opportunity to state why they believed this should be true. Some answers stated that:

- These products are a necessary hygiene product, like toilet paper and paper towels, and should be offered for free as those materials are;
- Similarly, menstruation is a natural, unpreventable bodily function so products should be provided for free;
- Tuition should cover access to menstrual products;
- Products should be offered for free through dispensers to avoid any negative effects on academic performance due to a lack of access to menstrual products;
- Prevent barriers to inclusion and accessibility for students who cannot afford products;
- Students may get their period unexpectedly and not have products on them;
- Money is often tight for college students so these products should be offered for free.

These can be summarized into three main categories: affordability, hygiene necessity, and barriers to education. When categorizing written answers in this way, we found that the most common reasoning for why they believe products should be free*:

- **Hygiene Necessity** (ie. menstruation is unpreventable, products should be offered with toilet paper and paper towels): 65.2% (221 responses)
- **Affordability** (ie. I cannot afford menstrual products, helps low income students): 23.6% (80 responses)
- **Barrier to Education** (ie. not having products affects academic performance or attendance): 11.2% (38 responses) **out of 339 written responses of those who wrote “yes” for question AF*

COMPARATIVE DATA

While all menstruators are impacted by period poverty, variables such as race, household income, geographical location, employment status, educational level etc. greatly shape one's menstrual experience. A study by U by Kotex showcases that a quarter of Black and Latina menstruators strongly agree that they have struggled to afford period products, and that over 38% of low-income respondents report missing work or school due to their period.

In order to understand how period poverty impacts menstruators, specifically students in universities across New Jersey, we must employ an intersectional lens that considers variables such as income, race, access to free period products, and employment status. As all of the respondents of this study are students enrolled in universities across NJ, the study employs the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) definition to describe a low-income individual. According to the FPL, a low-income individual is one that earns \$15,060 or less annually.

RACE, INCOME, AND PERIOD POVERTY

Our findings show that out of the 78 respondents that identified as Black or African American, over 57% stated that they are sometimes, often, or always unable to afford period products. Furthermore, the inability to afford period products was prevalent amongst Asian respondents as well, with over 37% of the 124 Asian respondents stating that they struggle to afford period products 'sometimes, often, or always' as well.

The reasons for being unable to afford period products amongst Black/African American and people of color showed patterns of income inequality, difficulty with accessing products, and a culture of shame and embarrassment around menstruation. For instance, out of all the respondents that stated that they cannot purchase period products as they "do not feel comfortable buying them", over 42.86% of the respondents identified themselves as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish, or Asian.

Furthermore, our research showed that out of the 190 respondents that stated that they cannot afford period products as they "do not make enough money to afford them", over 52.36% identified as Black/African American, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native and/or Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish ethnicity. This may be the case due to inflation of raw materials used to make period products, and subsequent rising prices of these products. According to a Chicago based firm, the price of a pack of pads has risen by 41%, and tampons by 36% since 2019.

COMPARATIVE DATA

The hardships faced by non-white communities are compounded by financial hardships as well. Out of the 78 Black/African American respondents, over 23.6% reported that they were low-income students, i.e. their annual income was below \$15,060. Here, we must note that as this study focuses on students, several respondents may not have any campus/ outside part-time jobs at the moment, or would be seeking job opportunities, and therefore would have reported their income as 0. Furthermore, a majority of students across racial categories preferred to not disclose their (or their family's) income at all.

Over 60% of the **low-income Black/African American students that stated that they always/often/sometimes struggle to afford period products** further stated that they rely on the free period products provided by their schools- signaling that such initiatives are greatly helpful in combating period poverty on university campuses, and for promoting better learning outcomes and attendance for all menstruators. This is corroborated by our findings as well, wherein over 56% of all Black/African American respondents stated that they have had to miss class due to their period, and students with full-time jobs and a stable income saying that they still struggle to afford period products, and thereby end up relying on their schools' free supply of pads, tampons, and liners.

In fact, in a study conducted by Alliance for Period Supplies, over 76.5% of the respondents across racial, employment/income, and marital status supported free period product provisions on campus, and that such policies can improve academic performance, and attendance of menstruating students.

Similar patterns were found amongst low-income Asian students. Out of the 124 Asian respondents, approximately 26.6% of them identified as low-income individuals, including students seeking job opportunities (part-time or full-time), and those that live with their parents. Out of these low-income Asian students, almost 80% further stated that they struggle to afford period products. Interestingly, almost all Asian students **that are not low-income students and never struggle to afford period products** stated that they are either employed in one (or more) part-time/full-time job or that they live with their family (or both). This finding points to the trend that family income and employment, other than provision of free period products on campus, may be key in alleviating period poverty to some extent.

COMPARATIVE DATA

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MENSTRUATION

Our research also corroborates patterns of shame and embarrassment related to menstruation that exist amongst Black and Asian communities. From the total number of respondents that identified as Black/African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and/or Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin, over 22% stated that they were embarrassed to have to ask for a free menstrual product.

COUNTIES AND PERIOD POVERTY

While the data that we have collected on geographical county locations of students is not statistically significant, it can provide grounds for future research into the geographical spread of period poverty in NJ. From existing research, we have identified 5 counties with the highest levels of poverty in New Jersey.

TABLE 11: RACIAL BREAKDOWN OF COUNTIES WITH HIGH LEVELS OF POVERTY IN NJ

County	Racial Composition	Poverty Rate
Cumberland	W: 44.1% B: 17.7% H: 12.5%	15.5%
Atlantic	W: 55% B: 12.9% A: 7.7% H: 13%	13%
Salem	B: 58.7% W: 29.2% H: 6.3%	13%
Essex	B: 36.7% W: 28.5% H: 17% A: 5.5%	15%
Camden	W: 54.3% B: 18.1% H: 8.8% A: 5.8%	12.4%

Table 11: It is crucial to explore the relationship between students going to universities located in high-poverty counties, their racial/ethnic background, and provisions taken by their university to combat period poverty.

B: Black/African American, W: White, A: Asian, H: Hispanic

Data from Data USA

“Period poverty is real and I have experienced it. Feeling afraid of being wasteful of a product you have to change regularly and wondering if I’ll have enough to last me for the week it’s scary. So having these around campus for people to use can be beneficial to those who can’t afford it, are afraid to ask for one and just beneficial to all women.”

COMPARATIVE DATA

TABLE 12: RACIAL BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH COUNTY WITH HIGH LEVELS OF POVERTY

<i>County</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cumberland	5	1	N/A	3	9
Atlantic	8	1	1	3	13
Salem	1	N/A	N/A	1	2
Essex	11	10	3	8	32
Camden	14	5	5	2	27

It is integral to look at the relationship between students from diverse racial categories living in high poverty counties, and their struggle to afford period products. For instance, looking at Essex county, over 31% of the respondents identified as Black/African American, followed by 9.3% as Asian, and 25% as Hispanic. Respondents reported being from a wide variety of universities such as Caldwell, Rutgers- New Brunswick, Rutgers- Newark, Montclair, Princeton, TCNJ, and the College of New Jersey.

Amongst Black/African American respondents from Essex, 60% stated that they sometimes struggle to purchase period products, and 30% rely on the free period products provided in their schools. Interestingly, the other 70% that said that they do not use the free period products provided by their school either hail from universities that do not provide such products (such as Caldwell), live at home with their parents, or have a full-time/part-time job(s).

In the case of a student studying at Rutgers-New Brunswick, while they stated that the school does not provide period products (and hence, they do not rely on such free products), our research shows that Rutgers- New Brunswick does provide some menstrual products, which hints at a lack of proper advertising and information being communicated to students.

Amongst Hispanic respondents, 50% stated that they sometimes or always can't afford period products, and 33% said that they rely on free products on their campus. The rest of the students hailed from universities that do not provide period products, and either live at home or are employed part-time. Interestingly, the only Hispanic student that lives on campus and is unemployed stated that they have spent more than 15 minutes at a time to get a period product, and the lack of access to period products has affected their attendance and school performance.

COMPARATIVE DATA

Amongst Asians, 66.6% respondents said that they can't afford period products, and 33% stated that they rely on their school's free period products. The rest of the students that do not rely on free period products hail from Rutgers- New Brunswick, and stated that their school doesn't offer period products. These students also stated that the lack of period products has affected their attendance and academic performance.

CONCLUSION

Our research aimed to shed light on how rampant period poverty across higher education institutions in New Jersey affects physical well-being, academic outcomes, and mental health of student menstruators. An intersectional lens was employed to analyze circumstances that shape one's menstrual experience and student life, such as race, ethnicity, economic status, geographical location, access to public/private insurance, and residential status.

The research administered a survey that consisted of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs), Yes/No questions, and short/long form questions. This survey inquired about the respondents' demographic information (race/ethnicity, income, employment status, university, living situation) and provided a "Prefer not to say" option for respondents that were uncomfortable with sharing these details.

Then, the survey moved on to explore the state of period equity infrastructure in respondents' universities (or lack thereof) and their access to period products, and how this has impacted their student life including, but not limited to, academic performance/attendance, mental well-being, and overall perception about menstruation. Over 30% of respondents stated that they struggle to afford period products every month.

Over a third of all respondents stated that they had missed classes due to menstrual symptoms and/or lack of access to period products. Interestingly, while 55.5% of respondents stated that their schools provide period products (majority were from Rutgers and Rowan), at least 27% of respondents from these universities also stated that they had spent more than 15 minutes looking for a period product on campus when they needed one- showcasing that such period equity initiatives require to be properly advertised and marketed to the student body.

CONCLUSION

Furthermore, the research delved into perceptions about menstruation in diverse environments, such as popular media and real life interactions. An interesting trend came to light: while over 58% of respondents identified that menstruation was misrepresented in media, over 69% stated that they were never uncomfortable to talk about periods, and 66% stated that they can identify reasons why discussing their period with others is beneficial – over 40% of respondents still stated that they would be embarrassed to ask for a period product in the case of asking a stranger. A further 18% stated that they would be embarrassed due to lack of preparation, and a 16% stated that they would be embarrassed if they had to ask a man. These findings shed light on the finding that the intensity and prevalence of menstrual “stigma” and related embarrassment/shame rests on the kind of situation that the menstruator finds themselves in, rather than embarrassment stemming from the act of menstruating itself. In the future, it will be fruitful to explore how menstrual stigma varies across verticals such as race, age group, income etc.

The survey also shed light on the intersectional nature of period poverty, especially its acute impact on the BIPOC community along verticals such as race/ethnicity, income, and employment status. Over 57% of all Black respondents stated that they sometimes, often, or always struggle to afford period products, with over 23% being low-income. 26% of all Asian respondents reported being low-income, and over 80% of these low-income Asian students struggled with affording period products.

An interesting research gap that emerged from the study was the linkages between one's geographical location/county as a contributor to period poverty. The analysis of this research briefly delves into analysing BIPOC respondent responses from the top 5 poorest counties in New Jersey. Preliminary analysis of responses from Essex county indicate that over 60% of respondents identified as Black/African American, with over 60% of these respondents struggling to afford period products, and over 30% stating that they rely on the free period products provided by their schools. The remaining 70% stated that they do not rely on free period products either hailed from universities that don't provide such products, live at home with parents, or have a full/part-time job.

For the future, it would be meaningful to do a deeper analysis into how being in a high-poverty county impacts the menstrual experience of BIPOC menstruators, especially in counties such as Essex or Salem where the majority are non-white menstruators.

SOLUTIONS

To address the disparities that exist in menstrual health, various initiatives can be implemented in both academic and societal settings in New Jersey, as well as other states. There is a need to increase the amount of funding that exists for menstrual products, especially at various educational institutions, as the access to them can not only ensure their well-being, but also have a positive impact on their academic performance. There are some bills that exist, such as the Menstrual Equity for All Act, which aims to ensure that menstrual products are available for free in schools and universities, which we must continue to expand upon. In New Jersey, colleges such as Rutgers, Rowan, Seton Hall, NJIT, Stockton, and Princeton have offered period products, but some such as TCNJ do not offer these resources despite the on campus demand. Additionally, various social services programs available such as SNAP and WIC should aim to include menstrual products in their offerings

When implementing large quantities of free products in educational institutions, there must be corresponding signage to inform students about where to receive additional products. One way that this can be addressed is through the implementation of period pantries, which allow students access to products based on their needs, and additional campaigns that advocate for menstrual products on campuses. Our data concludes that 48.2% of students experience difficulties with purchasing menstrual products during the year, which can compare to the national average of 14.2% of college-aged women experiencing period poverty (Cardoso, et. al., 2021). Being that college students in New Jersey are experiencing period poverty more frequently than the national average, this demonstrates an immense need for better access to menstrual products.

“Even when I’m not on my period, I bring pads with me almost everywhere because I know that in some stall, there is going to be a girl that needs a pad because she is in an emergency, ran out, or just started her first period. I’ve been there and so many others have. This is my daily life. I’ve given out many pads and have receive many pads myself when i couldn’t afford my own. This might not seem impactful but basically every person that menstruates has this story. I am an immigrant, an it’s the same all around the world. Let it be different here, to show that WE matter and that you care about us.”

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“There has been more than one time in which I haven’t been able to afford buying my own necessities. For about a year I lived off of the occasional free food from events on campus and the food pantry, and period products are never free. I have had to pray that I used enough toilet paper in order to go to class and not embarrass myself in front of everyone with a stain.”

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you attend a college or university in New Jersey? *

- ☐ Yes, I attend college in New Jersey.
- ☐ No, I do not attend college in New Jersey.

Where did you hear about the survey? *

- ☐ Poster on Campus
- ☐ Tabling Event
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Sticker
- ☐ Business Card
- ☐ Flyer
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Bus Ad
- ☐ Campus Newspaper
- ☐ Other...

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

General Demographic Information



Please fill out the following demographic information so we can understand the demographic makeup of our survey responses.

What college or university in New Jersey do you attend? ****If you do not attend a university in NJ, please do not complete this survey**.** *

Short answer text



What is your grade level? *

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Graduate Student: Master's Degree
- ☐ Graduate Student: Doctorate Program
- ☐ Prefer not to say

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

...

In which NJ county do you currently live? *

1. Atlantic
2. Bergen
3. Burlington
4. Camden
5. Cape May
6. Cumberland
7. Essex
8. Gloucester
9. Hudson
10. Hunterdon
11. Mercer
12. Middlesex
13. Monmouth
14. Morris
15. Ocean
16. Passaic
17. Salem
18. Somerset

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

- 19. Sussex
- 20. Union
- 21. Warren
- 22. I reside out of state but attend school in New Jersey.
- 23. Prefer not to say.

What is your age? *

- ☐ 0-14 years old
- ☐ 15-19 years old
- ☐ 20-26 years old
- ☐ 27-35 years old
- ☐ 36-45 years old
- ☐ 45+ years old
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

Do you have health insurance? *

- ☐ Yes, I have private health insurance.
- ☐ Yes, I have public health insurance.
- ☐ No, I am not insured.
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

What is your approximate total annual income? If you do not wish to answer, please write "prefer not to say". *

Short answer text

...

Which of the following best describes your living situation? *

- ☐ I live at home with my family.
- ☐ I live alone, OFF campus.
- ☐ I live OFF campus with roommates.
- ☐ I live ON campus with roommates.
- ☐ I live alone, ON campus.
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

Please specify your race. You may select multiple. *

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

...

Please select your ethnicity. *

- ☐ Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish Origin
- ☐ Not Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish Origin
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

...

What is your employment status? *

- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time in one job
- ☐ Employed part-time in two or more jobs
- ☐ Seeking job opportunities
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Prefer not to say

...

Do you have any dependents? *

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-4
- ☐ More than 4
- ☐ Prefer not to say

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

General Attitudes on Menstruation Survey



Select the statement from each portion that best apply to you. Please reach each statement carefully and answer honestly.

Menstruation Representation in Media *

- ☐ Menstruation is accurately portrayed in film and television.
- ☐ Menstruation is misrepresented in film and television.
- ☐ I have not seen menstruation represented in film and television.
- ☐ I often see menstruation represented in the media I consume.
- ☐ I believe that positive representation for menstruation in film and television benefits menstruators.
- ☐ I do not believe that menstruation should be portrayed in film and television.
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

Access to Menstruation Products *

- ☐ I do not feel embarrassed to purchase menstruation products in public.
- ☐ I have no strong feelings about purchasing menstruation products in public.
- ☐ I feel embarrassed to purchase menstruation products in public.
- ☐ I prefer to order menstruation products online rather than in-person.
- ☐ Purchasing menstruation products is difficult to afford every month.
- ☐ I believe that menstruation products are easy to access and are affordable.
- ☐ I view purchasing period products as a chore.
- ☐ I view purchasing period products the same as any other item on my shopping list.
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Menstruation as “Unclean” *

- ☐ I find it rude/impolite to discuss menstruation with non-menstruators.
- ☐ I can identify reasons why discussing my period with others is beneficial.
- ☐ I will not discuss my period with people who also menstruate.
- ☐ I see no issue with discussing menstruation with non-menstruators.
- ☐ There is no reason to discuss my period with others.
- ☐ I do not feel embarrassed to disclose that I am on my period to my peers.
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

Flow Forward NJ Period Poverty Survey



This survey was developed by the members of Flow Forward NJ to gauge how many college-aged menstruating students in New Jersey experience period poverty, and the degree of severity with which they experience it.

Please read every question carefully and provide an honest answer. Some of these questions may be **optional** open-ended sections for you to provide your own opinions and/or experiences.

This is the final section of the survey.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

What period products do you use? Please select all that apply. *

- ☐ Pads
- ☐ Tampons
- ☐ Liners
- ☐ Menstrual cup
- ☐ Menstrual disc (reusable)
- ☐ Menstrual disc (disposable)
- ☐ Period Underwear
- ☐ Reusable Pads
- ☐ Reusable Liners
- ☐ None
- ☐ Prefer not to say.
- ☐ Other...

Do you struggle to afford menstrual products each month? *

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always
- ☐ Prefer not to say

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

What reasons keep you from regularly purchasing products? Please select all that apply. You may write additional reasons in "other". If you answered "Never" for the previous question, ignore this one.

- ☐ I do not make enough money to purchase them, or I have to spend the money I earn on other things.
- ☐ I can only afford a certain amount, but I have dependents that need them more.
- ☐ I do not have a store nearby that sells them.
- ☐ I do not feel comfortable purchasing them.
- ☐ Prefer not to say.
- ☐ Other...

Do you know if your school offers free menstrual products? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Prefer not to say.

Please describe the ways you know your school offers free products, if they do so. If your school does not offer free products or you are unsure if they do, leave this blank.

Long answer text

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Have you used your school's free menstrual products? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure if school offers free menstrual products
- ☐ My school doesn't offer free menstrual products
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Have you ever spent more than fifteen minutes of your day trying to find a free product on campus? (ie. trying to find a location they're offered, needing to go home from class/extracurricular to get one, etc.) *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Have you ever missed class due to a lack of menstrual products or menstrual symptoms? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes/only a portion of class or the school day
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Has the lack of resources/menstrual products ever had an affect on your academic performance? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Have you ever had the opportunity to ask for a free menstrual product? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If so, were you embarrassed to do so? (Choose "N/A" if you answered "No" to the previous question). *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Prefer not to say

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Why were you embarrassed? (Choose "N/A" if you answered "N/A" to the previous question). *

- ☐ Embarrassment in asking for help
- ☐ Embarrassment you weren't prepared
- ☐ Embarrassed to ask stranger
- ☐ Embarrassed to ask male person
- ☐ Embarrassed because you couldn't afford products
- ☐ Embarrassment related to menstruation
- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Have you ever had to purchase a product from a vending machine or a bathroom dispenser? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Do you believe period products should be offered for free on college campuses in New Jersey? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other...

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

If comfortable, share your reasoning for your answer to the previous question.

Long answer text

...

How familiar are you with reusable menstrual products? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never heard of them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very familiar

Has the price of a reusable or sustainable product kept you from switching from pads/tampons *
to something like a menstrual cup?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Would you be willing to switch to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly option if *
made available for free at your college or university?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

How would you describe your comfort level in talking openly about periods? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not comfortable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very comfortable

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Can you please explain your choice for the previous question, if comfortable?

Long answer text

Does it make you uncomfortable when others talk about periods openly? *

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If comfortable, please use this space to recount a story or stories about menstruation and/or period poverty you feel would be impactful for university administrations in New Jersey to hear.

Long answer text

Flow Forward NJ is an NJ non-profit that hopes to make menstrual products available for free to menstruators across New Jersey, with an emphasis on environmentally friendly reusables. We are always looking for students from other NJ campuses besides Rowan (our flagship campus) to join our team.

We would love for people interested in getting hands-on experience in a non-profit to join the team! We need help with social media content creation, lobbying efforts, fundraising + event planning, starting new chapters at new campuses, and being on the non-profit's leadership team. If any of this interests you, check out our LinkTree for our campus interest forms, social media, or to contact us today! <https://linktr.ee/FREEDOMTOBLEED>

Please use this space to provide any ideas for topics you feel Flow Forward NJ should research next, or use this space to suggest questions we should include on our next survey.

Long answer text

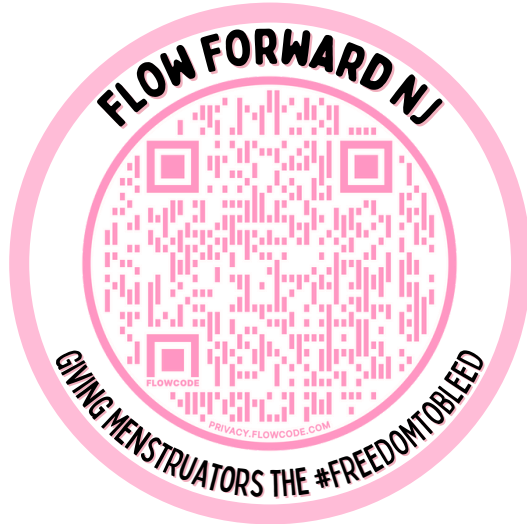
“When I had my first period it was at college. I remember both crying in the bathroom because I finally felt “fixed” but horrified because I never bought a period product before. Of course I didn’t have anything and I felt so embarrassed to have to walk around with toilet paper between my legs. To have a period product there wouldve helped comfort me in that moment, and also let me feel supported as I finally just felt like a woman again.”

APPENDIX B

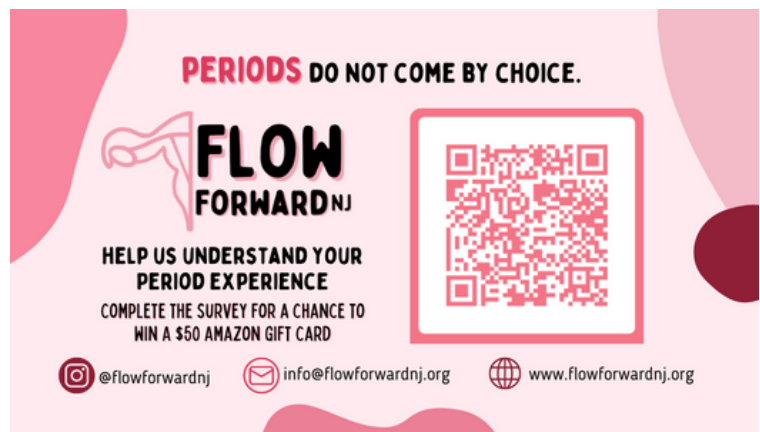
SURVEY ADVERTISING MATERIALS

ADVERTISEMENTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

STICKER OF QR CODE LINKED TO SURVEY



BUSINESS CARD WITH QR CODE LINKED TO SURVEY



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY NEW BRUNSWICK BUS AD



ADVERTISEMENTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

FLYERS WITH QR CODE LINKED TO SURVEY

4x6 Flyer (below)

8.5x11 flyer (next page)

**PERIODS DO NOT
COME BY CHOICE.**

TAKE THE SURVEY AND SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE.

**“MENSTRUATION AT NJ
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES”**

A SURVEY BY  **FLOW**
FORWARD^{NJ} IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  **AUNT**
flow

PARTICIPATION WILL HELP US GAIN
INFORMATION SO THAT WE CAN ENSURE ALL
MENSTRUATORS IN NEW JERSEY HAVE THE
#FREEDOMTOBLEED

*All responses will remain completely
anonymous.*



INTERESTED?

Scan the QR code to access the survey now!

 @flowforwardnj
 info@flowforwardnj.org
 www.flowforwardnj.org

Complete the survey for a
chance to win a
💧 \$50 **Amazon gift card!** 💧

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SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS

FIRST INSTAGRAM POST SLIDE CAROUSEL

A pink rectangular slide with white and black text. At the top, it says "Take our survey today" in a script font. Below that is the title "MENSTRUATION AT NJ COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES" in bold black. Then, "A survey by Flow Forward NJ in partnership with Aunt Flow" with small logos. The main text reads "PARTICIPATION WILL HELP US SHOW NEW JERSEY THAT ALL MENSTRUATORS NEED TO HAVE THE #FREEDOMTOBLEED." followed by "All responses will remain completely anonymous." and "But wait, there's more!" with a right-pointing arrow.

Take our survey today

**MENSTRUATION AT NJ COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES**

A survey by **Flow Forward NJ** in partnership with **Aunt Flow**

PARTICIPATION WILL HELP US SHOW NEW JERSEY THAT
ALL MENSTRUATORS NEED TO HAVE THE
#FREEDOMTOBLEED.

All responses will remain completely anonymous.

But wait, there's more! →

A pink rectangular slide with white and black text. It starts with "WE APPRECIATE YOUR TIME AND ENERGY". Then, "Participants may enter in a giveaway for a chance to win a \$50 **Amazon gift card** after completing the survey!". Below that, "LINK TO SURVEY IS IN OUR BIO!". At the bottom are the logos for Flow Forward NJ, a "Happy period" logo (a pink drop with the words "Happy period" curved around it), and the Aunt Flow logo.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR TIME AND ENERGY

Participants may enter in a giveaway for a chance to win a \$50 **Amazon gift card** after completing the survey!

LINK TO SURVEY IS IN OUR BIO!

FLOW FORWARD NJ Happy period. Happy period. **AUNT flow**

A pink rectangular slide with white and black text. It starts with "Take our survey today" in a script font. Below that is the title "MENSTRUATION AT NJ COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES" in bold black. Then, "A survey by Flow Forward NJ in partnership with Aunt Flow" with small logos. The main text reads "PARTICIPATION WILL HELP US SHOW NEW JERSEY THAT ALL MENSTRUATORS NEED TO HAVE THE #FREEDOMTOBLEED." followed by "Participants may enter in a giveaway for a chance to win a \$50 **Amazon gift card** after completing the survey!". At the bottom, "All responses will remain completely anonymous." and a "Happy period" logo (a pink drop with the words "Happy period" curved around it).

Take our survey today

**MENSTRUATION AT NJ COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES**

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PARTICIPATION WILL HELP US SHOW NEW JERSEY THAT ALL
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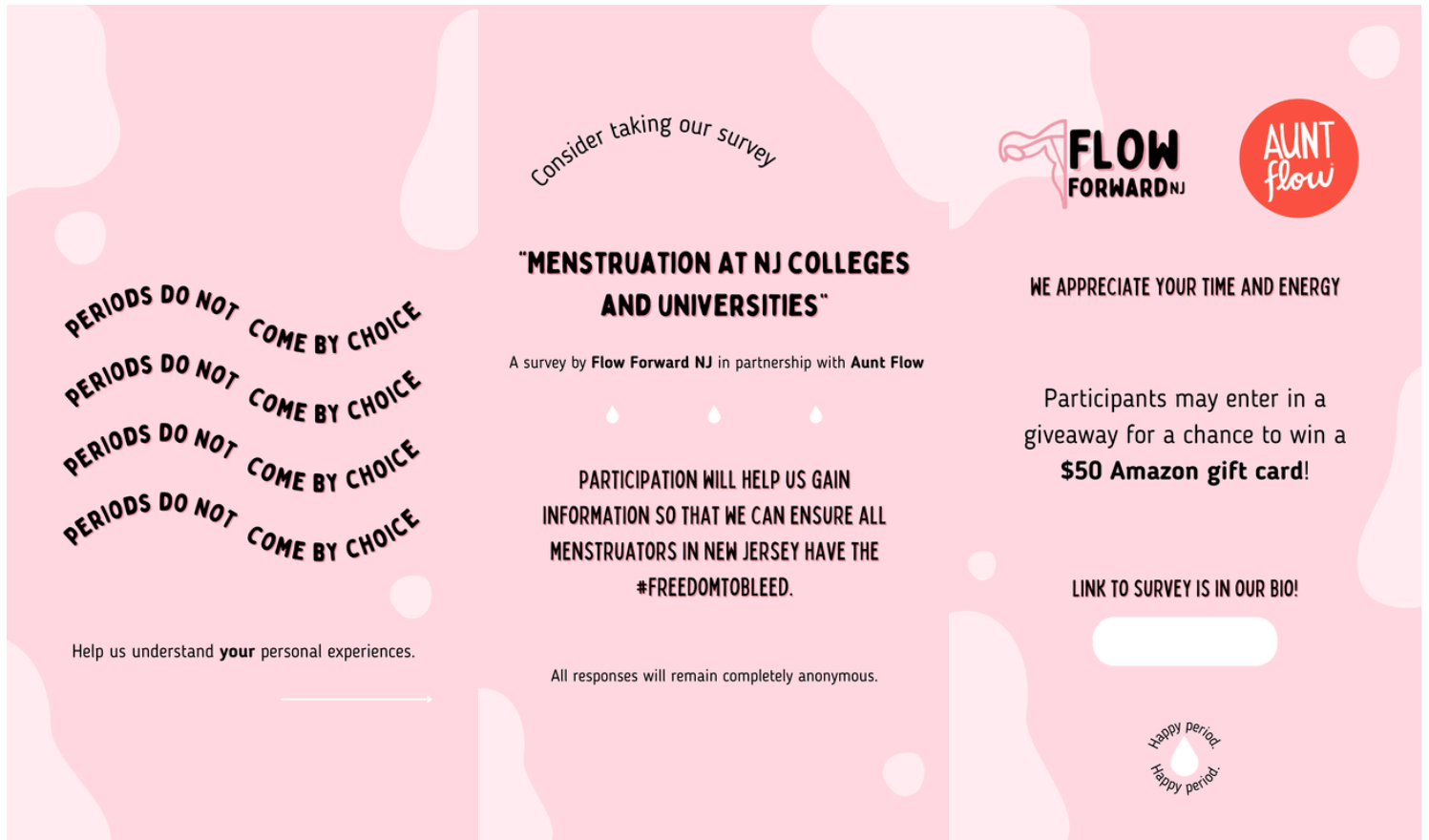
Participants may enter in a giveaway for a chance to win a
\$50 **Amazon gift card** after completing the survey!

All responses will remain completely anonymous.

Happy period. Happy period.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS

INSTAGRAM STORY (POSTED SEVERAL TIMES)

An Instagram story advertisement with a pink background and white text. It features the "Flow Forward NJ" and "Aunt Flow" logos. The text includes: "Consider taking our survey", "MENSTRUATION AT NJ COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES", "A survey by Flow Forward NJ in partnership with Aunt Flow", "PARTICIPATION WILL HELP US GAIN INFORMATION SO THAT WE CAN ENSURE ALL MENSTRUATORS IN NEW JERSEY HAVE THE #FREEDOMTOBLEED.", "WE APPRECIATE YOUR TIME AND ENERGY", "Participants may enter in a giveaway for a chance to win a \$50 Amazon gift card!", "LINK TO SURVEY IS IN OUR BIO!", and "Help us understand your personal experiences." There is a white button for the survey link and a small "Happy period" sticker.

Consider taking our survey

"MENSTRUATION AT NJ COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES"

A survey by **Flow Forward NJ** in partnership with **Aunt Flow**

PARTICIPATION WILL HELP US GAIN INFORMATION SO THAT WE CAN ENSURE ALL MENSTRUATORS IN NEW JERSEY HAVE THE **#FREEDOMTOBLEED**.

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LINK TO SURVEY IS IN OUR BIO!

Help us understand **your** personal experiences.

Happy period

META AND LINKEDIN PAID ADVERTISEMENT

A Meta and LinkedIn paid advertisement with a pink background and white text. It features the "Flow Forward NJ" and "Aunt Flow" logos. The text includes: "PERIODS DO NOT COME BY CHOICE.", "TAKE THE SURVEY AND SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE.", "MENSTRUATION AT NJ COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES", "A SURVEY BY Flow Forward NJ IN PARTNERSHIP WITH Aunt Flow", "PARTICIPATION WILL HELP US ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE TO LEGISLATORS IN NEW JERSEY AND BEYOND. HELP US SHOW THEM THAT MENSTRUAL EQUITY CANNOT WAIT!", "Complete the survey for a chance to win a \$50 Amazon gift card!", "All responses will remain anonymous.", and social media links for @flowforwardnj, info@flowforwardnj.org, and www.flowforwardnj.org.

PERIODS DO NOT COME BY CHOICE.

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@flowforwardnj info@flowforwardnj.org www.flowforwardnj.org

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS

FINAL INSTAGRAM POST

