



Period Poverty in the Netherlands • 2024 Research

Neighborhood Feminists and award-winning research firm **Opinium** have carried out the largest ever study of its kind in the Netherlands. A total of 3,547 people took part, with 2,512 responses collected nationally and 991 from Amsterdam, with the latter collected to compare to Neighborhood Feminists' 2022 quantitative research.

Period poverty is the lack of access to period products and information essential for a healthy menstruation. It can mean resorting to unsafe or inefficient alternatives and results in added stress, with direct impacts on physical and mental health and participation levels in school and work.

Research findings

Period poverty is widespread across the Netherlands

Over 765,000 people in the Netherlands faced challenges accessing the period products they need in the past year. Of these, over 400,000 have been unable to afford period products at some point

That means

13% OF THOSE WHO MENSTRUATE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO PAY FOR THE PRODUCTS THEY NEED IN THE PAST YEAR

Nearly all (86%) of those who menstruate in the Netherlands and either struggled to afford but managed or couldn't afford products, resorted to alternative actions like **cutting back on other basic needs**:

- ▶ Nearly half (48%) cut back on groceries
- ▶ One third (34%) cut back on household products
- ▶ Over a quarter (27%) cut back on hygiene products
- ▶ Over a fifth (21%) cut back on health products, such as medicines

Among those who could not afford, struggled to afford, or struggled to access period products:

55% (over 610,000 people) had to use ineffective, unhealthy alternatives instead of period products

Of these, many resorted to **using toilet paper**:

- ▶ Nationally 45%
- ▶ In the province of North Holland 67%
- ▶ In Amsterdam 55%

OVER THE PAST YEAR, 28,000 PEOPLE IN AMSTERDAM WERE AT SOME POINT UNABLE TO AFFORD THE PRODUCTS THEY NEED

Amsterdam's rate of period poverty has been halved in two years, going from 27% to 14%, which is just above the current national rate. This reflects the impact and importance of the 2023 municipal funding for the distribution of free period products.

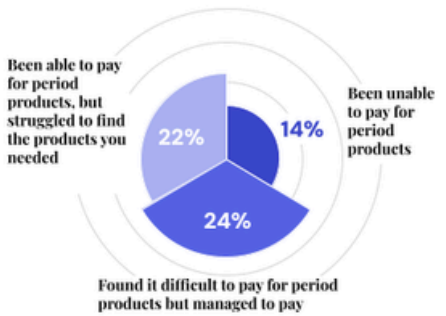
Over 1 in 5 of those struggling or unable to afford products had to alter their day-to-day routines, including:

19% OF YOUNG ADULTS (18-24) MISSING SCHOOL DAYS & 14% OF ADULTS MISSING WORK DAYS DUE TO PERIOD POVERTY

Although menstruation affects about half the population, products related to periods continue to carry **social stigma**. Respondents, regardless of income, experience **shame** (17%) and **stress** (13%) when trying to obtain the products they need. The **outlook is sobering**, with 24% in Amsterdam finding it **more difficult to afford period products**, and among 18-24-year-olds, a third (31%).

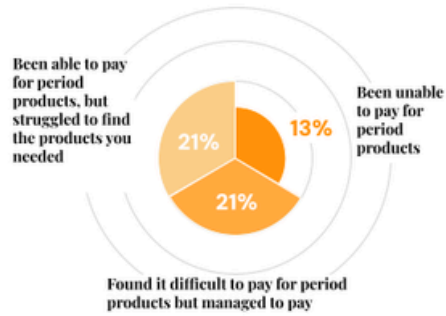
AMSTERDAM

% of people who menstruate answering "Yes" to each question



THE NETHERLANDS

% of people who menstruate answering "Yes" to each question



Q1. In the last 12 months, have you experienced any of these issues?
Base: All respondents. Base size: The Netherlands: 2539, Amsterdam: 1035



CODE RED

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Period poverty is not only significant and widespread in the Netherlands, the rate is 30% higher than previously understood. Exacerbated by the high cost of living, this directly impacts physical and mental health and participation levels at school and work – all of which negatively impacts individuals, communities, and the economy.



One in four (over 765,000 people) struggled to access the period products they need in the last year

Recommendations

Current levels of support for tackling period poverty should strategically increase in scale and continuity to match actual need. Investing in women's health yields significant returns, with the World Economic Forum and McKinsey Health Institute projecting a 3.5 to 1 ratio of returns.

At the national level, needed actions include:

- ▶ **Raising benefits and the minimum wage** (to 60% of the median wage) to more accurately reflect the rising cost of living in a way that addresses all forms of poverty, including period poverty.
- ▶ **Setting guidelines and standards for inclusive, comprehensive menstrual health education** as part of the core objectives in secondary education, which will enable awareness about menstrual health options and earlier detection of potentially serious health problems.
- ▶ **Promoting research in menstrual and reproductive health,** to help reduce the knowledge gap.
- ▶ **Building public awareness and helping reduce stigma** through a period education campaign developed in coordination with municipalities.

At the municipal level, needed actions include:

- ▶ **Making period products freely available in suitable locations,** including government buildings, public toilets, shelters, refugee centers and libraries.
- ▶ **Including menstrual health education in elementary education** in a manner that is inclusive, age-appropriate and comprehensive.
- ▶ **Tracking period poverty** as a structural part of local anti-poverty and health policies.
- ▶ **Monitoring, evaluating and adjusting period poverty initiatives** together with relevant groups in order to match actual need.
- ▶ **Organizing local awareness campaigns,** in partnership with schools, businesses, and relevant advocacy groups.

Both nationally and locally, it's crucial to:

- ▶ **Specifically allocate public funding.** Fighting period poverty must not come at the expense of other inequality- and poverty-fighting measures.

WITH COORDINATED ACTION

We can improve

- ▶ public health
- ▶ school & work participation
- ▶ gender equity

Whether in the public or private sector, when we take action together, we all benefit.

From elementary education on up, all schools should provide period products because they're as necessary for academic success as books and pens.

To read the full report and find out what you can do, go to