

MENSTRUAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

SARA DARWISH

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

MENTOR: BRITTNI HOWARD, GLOBAL GENDER CENTER, RTI INTERNATIONAL

Introduction

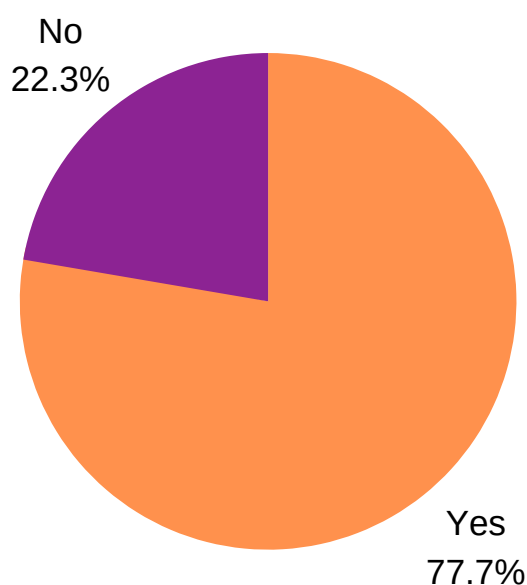
Despite significant focus on menstrual health initiatives abroad, research regarding the status of Americans' menstrual cycles is practically nonexistent. The research that does exist has identified key populations that are particularly affected by accessibility to menstrual products: homeless individuals, members of the LGBT+ community, incarcerated individuals, and students. The focus of this paper is the experience of menstruating students, particularly those currently in public higher education.

Methods

In order to assess college students' access to menstrual hygiene products and how being a menstruating person affects their education, data on the subject was obtained from a survey administered to NC State students, as well as in-person interviews with campus stakeholders. Students were asked questions that pertained to stigma, accessibility, educational impact, current campus initiatives, and personal attitudes.

Findings

The survey and interview both exhibited common themes regarding the experience of menstruating as a student in higher education. These themes include stigma as a barrier to access, menstrual hygiene product access and availability, lack of importance of menstrual access on campus, stigma, lack of availability of menstrual hygiene products, personal discomfort, and negative impact of periods on class attendance. Responses indicated that menstruating did have an impact on one's educational experience, particularly regarding accessibility to hygiene items, and that stigma acted as a barrier to adequate care.



70.7%

of respondents said that they have experienced negative reactions regarding periods or being a menstruating person.