

# LET'S TALK ABOUT PERIODS

A Critical Analysis of Menstrual Inequities in Canada

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## INTRO

In the last five years, the movement to promote menstrual equity has gained momentum.

Canada removed federal taxes on menstrual supplies in 2015, **however, the effect of menstrual inequity continues to persist**, especially in marginalized communities.

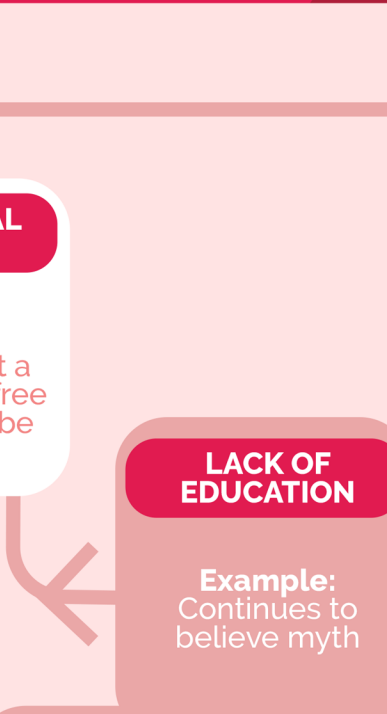
## MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

Lack of access to menstrual supplies place those who menstruate at a disadvantage.

The impact is higher amongst marginalized groups such as refugees, menstruators who are homeless, low-income families, sex-workers, trans and non-binary menstruators, Indigenous communities, people in rural areas, and those without access to WASH.

A 2019 survey by Plan International Canada found that

**34% of women and girls in Canada are regularly or occasionally forced to sacrifice something else within their budget to afford menstrual products.**



## WHY DOES MENSTRUAL INEQUITY EXIST?

### EVENTS



34% of Canadians struggle to afford period supplies

67% end up missing school and social events



86% get their period without immediate access to menstrual supplies

### PATTERNS



40% of dispensers remain broken/empty

3.2 million Canadians live in poverty

Lack of funding and resources

### UNDERLYING STRUCTURES



Non-menstruators in power

Lack of Policies

Capitalist and colonial systems in place

### MENTAL MODELS



Menstrual inequity does not exist  
People who menstruate should carry their own supplies

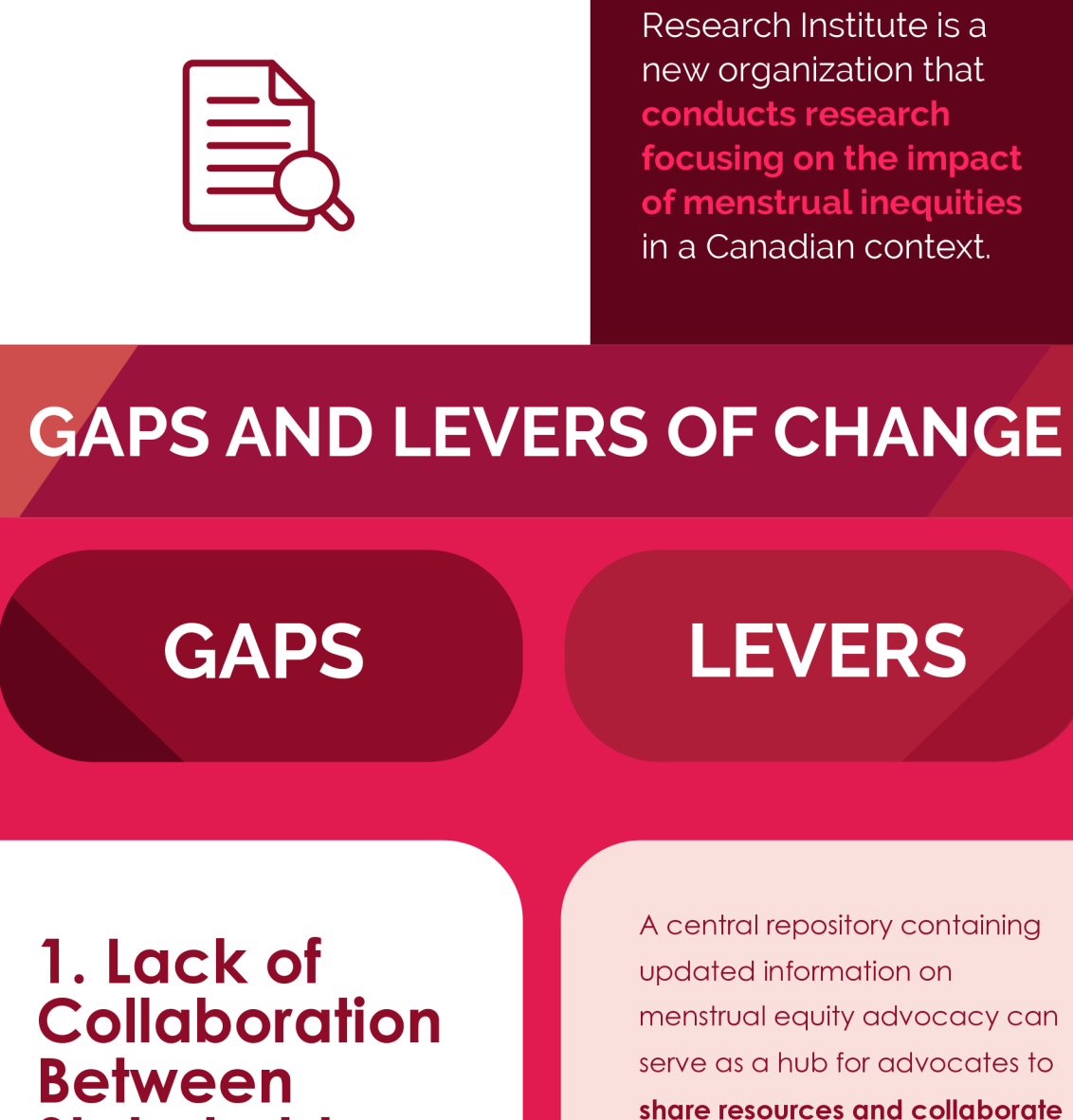


Due to stigma people don't feel comfortable asking for menstrual supplies

## MENTAL MODELS OF MENSTRUAL INEQUITY



## STAKEHOLDERS SYSTEM MAP



## LANDSCAPE SYSTEM MAPS

### PROBLEM

#### Perspectives of Community Members on Menstruation

### SOLUTION

#### Community Education and Awareness

#### Lack of Policies and Governing Structures/bodies

#### New Policies to Support Menstrual Equity

#### Lack of Funding and Resources

#### Advocacy Campaigns

#### Lack of Relevant Research

#### New Research Studies

## GAPS AND LEVERS OF CHANGE

### GAPS

### LEVERS

#### 1. Lack of Collaboration Between Stakeholders

#### A central repository containing updated information on community equity advocacy can serve as a hub for advocates to share resources and collaborate on campaign strategies.

Competition between stakeholder groups for funding and resources.

We suggest the creation of a national committee representing advisory groups from each province to help maintain the repository and streamline the advocacy efforts.

#### 2. Lack of Inclusion of Marginalized Populations

#### Develop intervention strategies that target marginalized groups. We suggest these groups be consulted in the development of these interventions to ensure that their menstrual needs are sufficiently met, while preserving cultural and religious beliefs.

Refugees, menstruators who are homeless, sex-workers, trans and non-binary menstruators, Indigenous communities, people living in rural and isolated areas, people with no access to WASH are left out of the conversation.

Appropriate language and branding should be used in campaign materials, and by menstrual product developers to ensure inclusivity. Inclusive language includes using terms such as "people who menstruate" as opposed to the traditional, gender oriented statements that focus on females as the only menstruators.

#### 3. Lack of Communication with Non-Menstruators

#### The distribution of educational materials should include the non-menstruating members of the community. A common misunderstanding is that non-menstruators don't feel comfortable, and are not supportive of menstrual equity. However, we learned that when community members are provided with the right information on the impact of menstrual inequity, they are overwhelmingly supportive of the movement.

Our survey shows that half of non-menstruating participants (53%) do not understand what menstrual equity is, and 77% don't understand the term 'period poverty'.

“ If we want to help homeless menstruators in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, for example, we ought to ask homeless menstruators what would be most helpful to them, and then accept what they say. ”

Conversations with administrators across the province have shown that there is ingrained stigma about the "theft" of supplies and entitlement to take all of the products made available.

Extensive teaching on menstrual health should be integrated in the sex-ed programming for schools through policy change. Creating opportunities for students of all genders to engage in this conversation at a younger age will help normalize periods.

#### 4. Inappropriate Budget allocation

#### Funding should be allocated towards research projects that explore a holistic solution to promote menstrual equity.

Insufficient funding is available for research and exploration of new programs.

Menstrual equity advocates often use absenteeism from school and other educational activities to highlight the long-term effects of unavailability of menstrual products on gender equity. However, there is a lack of substantiated evidence that investigates the context behind the positive correlation between absenteeism and poor menstruation management products.

Additionally, experiences and needs of marginalized groups should be included in research to achieve true menstrual equity. Subsidy programs to make sustainable menstrual products should be explored. Currently, Quebec is the only province that has taken an initiative to provide menstrual cups at a subsidized cost.

## THANK YOU

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