

Note: Cordis Bright believes it is important to take an inclusive representation of the population who might experience period poverty. As a result, we use the term “people who menstruate” in this summary. There is limited published research that uses the widest possible definition. Therefore, some research cited has focused on the experience of period poverty of women and girls.

1 Period poverty

Period poverty is the lack of access to appropriate period products due to financial barriers. Without access to these products, people who menstruate can experience exacerbated physical, mental, and financial hardships.¹

2 Period poverty in the United Kingdom

2.1 Demographics at risk

People who menstruate who experience financial insecurity are at risk of period poverty as they may not be able to afford period products or may have to prioritise other needs over purchasing these products. However, as most public health issues are, period poverty is dynamic and systemic. Therefore, the intersectionality of marginalised identities, such as disability status or race, adds complexity to the discussion of who is “most at risk”.^{2,3}

2.2 Downstream affects

In the UK, a 2020 Plan International survey found that 1 in 10 girls can't afford menstrual products and 49% had missed an entire day of school because of their period.⁴ A 2019

¹ [Period poverty facts](#)

² [Period Poverty: Everything You Need to Know](#)

³ [The price of period poverty](#)

⁴ [Plan International survey report](#)

One Poll survey found that 27% of girls aged 10-18 reported avoiding going out during their period because their families could not afford menstrual products.⁵

The use of makeshift alternatives or the overwearing of products may lead to urinary tract infections, urogenital infections, and bacterial vaginosis.⁶

In the previously mentioned One Poll survey, 39% of women surveyed reported that a lack of access to sanitary products led to increased anxiety and depression.⁷ Research has also linked an inability to manage periods safely with increased feelings of shame and embarrassment and negative impacts on school and work participation.⁸

2.3 Current state

The context surrounding period poverty has been made worse by COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. A 2022 study reported that 85% of those surveyed had had trouble getting period products during lockdown. Of those struggling to get products, 30% had reported financial difficulties such as unemployment.

There has been a large increase in demand for products as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. People are forced to turn to hygiene banks as costs of other needs such as energy and food continues to rise. Simultaneously, inflation has led to an increase in the production cost of disposable period products which has limited the impact of the recent abolition of the VAT tampon tax. Organisations have reported a decrease in donations of these products, likely due to the increased costs.⁹

3 How are we trying to help?

Each sector Cordis Bright specialises in is affected by period poverty as it is the people who menstruate in hard-to-reach communities that have been identified as most at risk.

We are conducting a month-long, office-wide period product drive during March 2023 (Women's History Month). The collected period products will be donated to our local project of the Hygiene Bank (Square Mile).

The Hygiene Bank is a grassroots charity which seeks to bring communities, businesses, and thought leaders together to tackle hygiene poverty by giving access to products and being a voice for change. They collect, drop off, sort, box up, deliver, and distribute hygiene products for people facing hygiene poverty. They work with local projects to

⁵ [One Poll survey report](#)

⁶ [Changing the cycle: period poverty as a public health crisis](#)

⁷ [One Poll survey report](#)

⁸ [Four questions about period poverty: answered](#)

⁹ [How is the cost-of-living crisis affecting period poverty?](#)

ensure that products are reaching those who need them most.¹⁰ In 2021, The Hygiene Bank distributed 441,882kg of personal and household hygiene products with an estimated value of over £2.2 million.¹¹

¹⁰ [The Hygiene Bank](#)

¹¹ [The Hygiene Bank: Impact report](#)