

# Estimation of menstrual poverty in Macedonia



*Journalists for human rights*



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## **ABBREVIATION**

**JHR – Journalists for Human Rights**

**MHM - Management of menstrual hygiene**

**MS - Menstrual Poverty**

**UNECE - The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**SDG – Sustainable Development Goal**

**WHO - World Health Organization**

**IPH - Public Health Institute**

**RM - Republic of Macedonia**

## **Summary**

The survey on the assessment of menstrual poverty in Macedonia aims to analyze the conditions related to equitable access to menstrual hygiene in the Republic of Macedonia, and as one of the tasks for fulfillment within the SDG's, in this particular case, SDG's 6.2. At the same time, this research aims to study the determinants that affect the well-being and reproductive health of women on the one hand, and on the other hand pollution of the environment from the waste produced by the products of the MHM.

The survey was a prospective study of the intersection and was carried out in the period April - May 2018. on the territory of Skopje, Veles and Kumanovo, with 800 respondents, aged 14-45. The survey was done by Journalists for Human Rights in cooperation with IPH.

The targeted women were visited by door-to-door and they responded to a pre-prepared questionnaire. The collected data from the survey questionnaires were statistically processed and from the obtained data were prepared spreadsheets and graphic presentations.

With the survey survey we collected data in relation to the following blocs

- Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics
- Management of mechanical hygiene and its conditions
- Cost of funds for UMH
- Caring for your own health and care for the environment

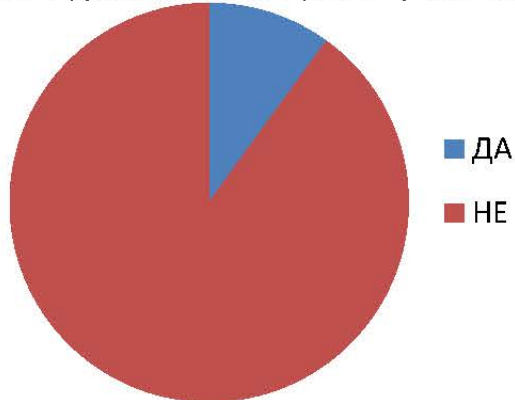
### **The following key findings and conclusions emerged from the research:**

From the results of the research it can be concluded that women in the Republic of Macedonia have a problem with menstrual hygiene management (MHM), and this is evident from the data that 90% of the students in the rural areas in Macedonia are absent from school for 4 to 5 days in during the month when they have a monthly cycle, while 75% of the students in the urban areas are absent from 2 to 3 days during the month, due to the same reasons.

The reason for this is: inadequate conditions for managing menstrual hygiene at school / work place and the high cost of managing the funds for managing it. In Macedonia only in one private school there are conditions / facilities for MHM, in the municipality of Veles, and in no other schools are suitable products for MHM (soap, toilet paper, water) nor appropriate places for removing waste from MHM.

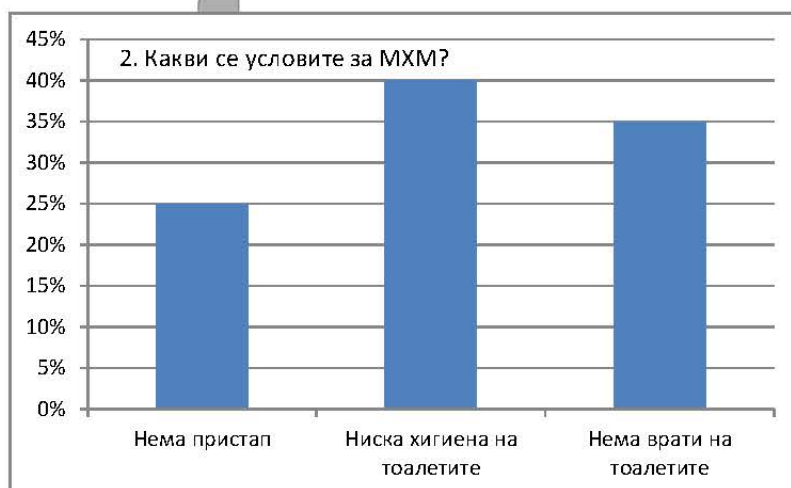
On the question - did you have conditions for maintaining menstrual hygiene at work / school, 90% of the respondents answered that they do not have conditions, while 10% answered positively.

1. Дали имате услови за одржување на менструалната хигиена на работа / училиште?



When asked if they have conditions for maintaining menstrual hygiene at work / school, 90% of the respondents answered negatively, and 25% of the ten percent who do not have conditions said that they work outdoors and have no access to toilets.

- 25% do not have access, we work outdoors (sellers, drivers, distributors)
- 40% low toilets hygiene
- 35% have no doors in the toilets



What caused the most attention are the answers to the question of whether you are missing from school / work during the period?

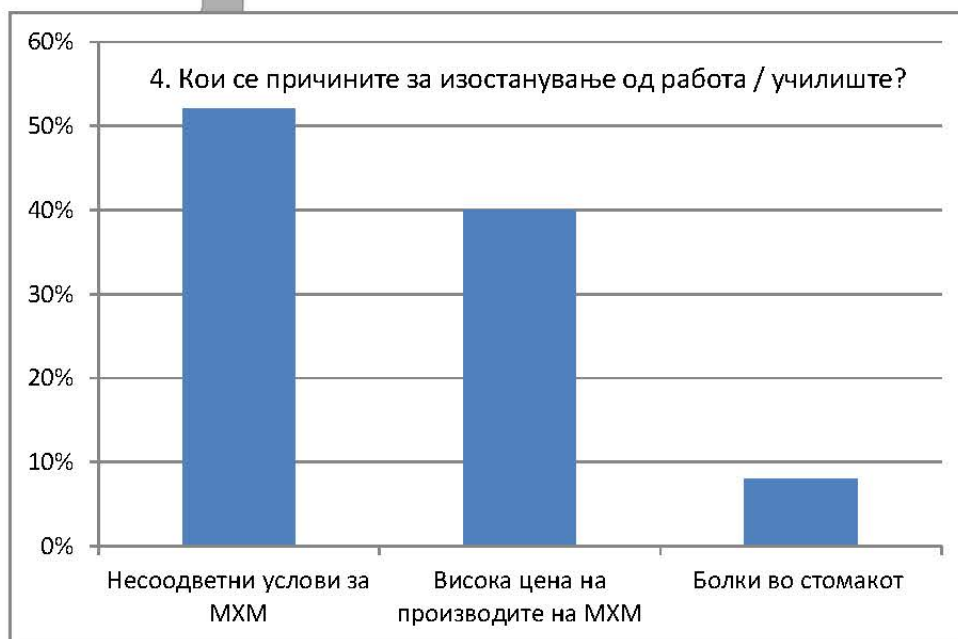
Namely, 90% of the rural population responded that 4 - 5 days of the month were absent from the school during the period, while 75% of the girls from the urban environment, 2-3 days a month;

### 3. Дали изостанувате од училиште / работа за време на периодот?



As reasons for absenteeism from work / school are listed:

- 52% - inadequate conditions for MHM
- 40% - high price of MHM products
- 8% - abdominal pain



When asked "What kind of hygienic products do you use to manage menstrual hygiene?", Over 80 percent said they use hygienic pads, 5 percent use tampons, while **15 percent** said they do not use any hygienic means during the monthly cycle, that is, they handle the textile self-made pads or paper / newspapers. For menstrual cups, only three respondents know that exist, but no one used it, and 63% of women answered that they would use a reusable hygienic pads. The largest percentage of them believe that reusable hygienic pads would be more affordable, and 30% would use it to reduce pollution.





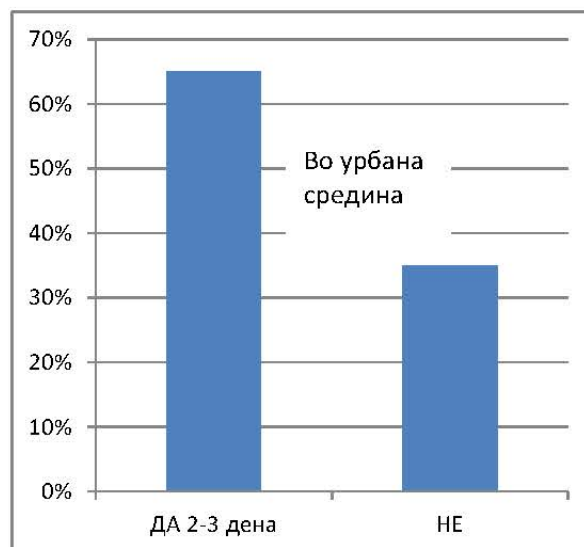
It's astonishing that in Macedonia, in the 21st century, there are no whereabouts of multiple-use pads, as well as a menstrual cup. At the moment, women can order the menstrual cup only on-line, while in neighboring Bulgaria there are a selection of 35-50 types of menstrual cups in the apothecaries, the price of which is from 300 to 1500 denars (5-25 euros), the duration of such a cup is up to 10 years and the pollution of the environment from it is reduced to zero.

Women in Macedonia know that the funds for UMH contain chemicals and plastics. 70% of respondents replied affirmatively, but do not know what the alternative is.

70% of the respondents would use alternative environmental pad for MHM, at most, 29.5% due to a reduction in the cost of the funds for the MHM, and at least 12.5% of the respondents would change the current products for sustainable health protection and environmental protection. Just for illustration, in Macedonia women throw between 6-6.5 million pieces of pads / tampons per month, whose decomposition lasts 500 years.

In Macedonia, there is a serious problem of the lack of sexual education, as well as the discussions within the family / parents on this topic. Namely, menstruation is still a taboo in Macedonia. To the question of who told you about menstruation, 80% of the respondents first learned about this from a sister or from a friend, 18% at school, and what is defeating, only 8% talked about the mentoring with their parents at home.

10. Дали поради месечниот период изостанувате од училиште / работа и ако е да колку дена?



### Recommendations

Taking into account all the challenges faced by women in Macedonia, both from this research and the Assessment of Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation implemented in the period 2015-2017 according to the UNICEF's and WHO Self Assessment Card, Journalists for Human Rights from the competent institutions and the business sector require:

- Establishment of the Fund for eradication of menstrual poverty!!!
- Reducing the tax for this type of products from 18 to 5%. Menstrual products are not luxury goods!!!
- Menstrual hygiene management should be included in gender budgeting (all public institutions / schools must provide an appropriate toilet for dignified management). This means that at least one toilet meets the standards - water, toilet paper and waste boxes.
- Introduction of sexual-reproductive education in the regular education system
- Benefits for companies that will be involved in the production and sale of products that are safe for the environment to manage menstrual hygiene.



**Menstruation is not TABOO!**