

## **Menstrual Health Awareness & Resources Coalition Distribution EOY Report:**

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Emory University - Spring 2024

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## **Acknowledgements:**

Firstly, we are grateful to our advisor Amanda Trubetskoy, and Student Case Management and Intervention Services for her continued support this year. We look forward to our partnership for years to come! Thank you to the Office of Belonging and Community Justice and the Office of

Sustainability Initiatives for their grant funding. A huge thank you to the greater Emory community and the Week of Giving team for the donations for our events. Additionally, to Deborah Lynn Harvey who donated menstrual cups and pads for distribution. Thank you to Kendra Murphy and Jack Henry at Dooley After Dark for the planning, rushed orders, and late-day emails. We would not have had such a successful event without you. Also, to Laura Christine Calvert from the Office of Health Promotion for taking the time and energy to speak at our event and help with programming! We are also very grateful to Lizzy Clements and the Theater Department studies for stepping in and being able to hold space for all of our ordered products and money. Thank you to AJ de Couteau and Danielle Bruce Steele for their continued support and for allowing us to use storage space as well as a table to distribute products for 3 weeks straight. Lastly, we'd like to thank all the new members of the MHARC executive team who supported, contributed ideas, and showed up to help and support whenever it was needed. This includes but is not limited to Naturi Scott, Erin Johnson, Emma Faz, Gabi Castillo, and Amruta Epari. Lastly, thank you to the MHARC members who shared information, came to events, and expressed their continued support for everything we have to offer at MHARC!

## **Project History & Overview:**

The Menstrual Health Awareness & Resources Coalition (formerly known as the Menstrual Product Initiative) was started by Sandra Bourdon 23C and Jonna Austin 23C in February 2021. They had received an email about the Office of Health Promotion's [Be-Well Mini-Grant](#) and were motivated to address period poverty on campus. This was during the COVID-19 Pandemic and both students were off-campus. They applied and received about \$500 from OHP to begin the Menstrual Product Initiative. The Center for Women also donated a \$100 gift card. Sandra and Jonna also partnered with Emory's Bread Coffeehouse for the venue and refreshments. They distributed half the packages on April 10th, 2021, and shipped half the products through the mail. There were about 50 participants.

In Spring 2022, Jonna and Sandra applied and received the Office of Health Promotion's [Be-Well Mini-Grant](#) (\$500) as well as the [Office of Belonging and Community Justice's Mini-grant](#) (~\$400). They partnered with the Office of Spiritual and Religious Life and used their AMUC space to host the Distribution Day. Bread Coffeehouse provided refreshments again (coffee and key lime pie). There were about 60 participants in 2022.

In 2023, they applied for and received \$500 from the Office of Belonging and Community Justice's mini-grant as well as \$605.54 from SCMIS in Spring 2023. The initiative reached about 126 students, but physically distributed about 50-60 packages. The team also applied to charter the initiative into a student organization in hopes of ensuring its continuation. The organization is now known as the Menstrual Health Awareness and Resources Coalition.

**Goals:**

Period poverty is an issue that affects menstruating students across all college campuses. Our main goal is to alleviate stress for Emory students by providing them with enough high-quality, free menstrual products for about three months or cycles. Of course, we acknowledge that some students have a lighter or heavier flow and might require additional or specific products, but we base our budget on the average pads and tampons used for three periods. Through distribution day, we want to promote a wide range of disposable and sustainable products to give students a lasting experience as well as opportunities to educate themselves about menstrual health issues and ask questions to destigmatize their understanding of periods and period health.

**Research & Application:**

We would like to propose a project to send students menstrual products this semester. Students on campus and students learning remotely would fill out a survey indicating their preferred menstrual product and receive about three months' worth of the product.

Menstrual products are expensive, and many college students cannot afford them. A study recently published in BMC Women's Health titled "Period poverty and mental health implications among college-aged women in the United States" found that 10% of the college-attending women in the survey struggled to afford menstrual products every month. Latina women, Black women, first-generation students, and immigrants were found to have the highest levels of period poverty. Struggling to afford menstrual products can negatively affect college students in many ways. According to the study, those experiencing period poverty used menstrual products longer than suggested, used other materials, or even went without them. This poor hygiene could lead to many health issues, such as infections. Many also reported borrowing menstrual products, which can be stressful and shameful. The study found that those experiencing period poverty were most likely to report moderate/severe depression, suggesting that period poverty can have an extremely negative impact on students' mental health.

We would like to relieve the stress of having to struggle to access menstrual products for Emory students. While Emory provides free menstrual products in certain bathrooms, many students do not know where to find them. In addition, due to Covid-19 restrictions and remote learning, many are not able to access them at this time. By providing students with menstrual products and other personal hygiene products, this project will improve and support their mental and physical health during this difficult time. It would support women at Emory, especially those in communities most at risk of period poverty. It would also bring awareness to this issue and could be an opportunity to inform students about the several locations on campus where they can find free menstrual products.

Source:

Cardoso, L.F., Scolese, A.M., Hamidaddin, A. *et al.* Period poverty and mental health implications among college-aged women in the United States. *BMC Women's Health* 21, 14 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5>

### **Funding:**

Total Grant/Funding for the 2024 Distribution Day:

\$2000	- Dooley After Dark (Programming Support)
\$1000	- UMMI Student Organization (Period Underwear Support)
\$1040.35	- Office of Sustainability Initiatives
\$1700	- Emory Week of Giving/ Donations
\$800	- Belonging & Community Justice Mini-Grant
<b>Total:</b>	<b>- \$6,540.35</b>

*\*We also recieved a discounted price on Period Underwear by collaborating with period company Pure Rosy, a woman owned-period underwear company. This caused a lot of pushback with delivery and payment, but nevertheless we got it done!\**

### **Student Demographics & Interest Form:**

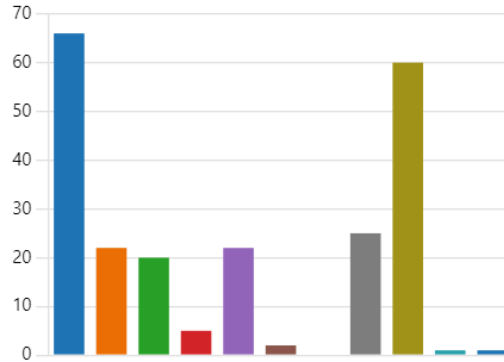
We sent out an interest form on February 6th and received 224 responses by February 12th. Due to our increase in funds, we did not have a waitlist and opted to provide all participants with 3 months' worth of their top choice. Most students learned about the initiative through multiple GroupMe chats, word of mouth, flyers around campus, and emails from SCMIS. For the form, we asked for their name, email, race/ethnicity, products they would be interested in receiving, graduation year, Emory affiliation, as well as general questions, comments, and concerns. This includes if they need any specific brand or type of product. This includes gender-affirming, organic, heavy flow, or branded products that may be fitting with their menstrual condition. The graphs below provide a breakdown of what the overall demographics looked like for the Spring 2024 Distribution Cycle.

*School & Graduation Year*

4. Which campus do you belong to?

[More Details](#)

Emory College	66
Oxford College	22
Nell Hodgson Woodruff School ...	20
Goizueta Business School (Unde...	5
Nell Hodgson Woodruff School ...	22
Goizueta Business School (Grad...	2
Candler School of Theology	0
Laney Graduate School	25
Rollins School of Public Health	60
School of Law	1
School of Medicine	1



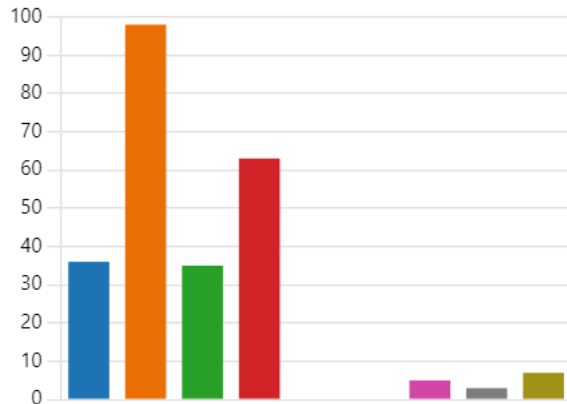
It is important to note this year that more than half of the participants are from an Emory campus that is not the College of Arts & Sciences. One of our primary goals was to increase the number of graduates we extend our services to. With this, there is at least one student from each school across all Emory campuses. (an exception to the Candler School of Theology)

*Race and Ethnicity:*

6. Race/Ethnicity:

[More Details](#)

White	36
Black/African	98
Hispanic/Latinx	35
Asian	63
Native American	0
Pacific Islander	0
Multiracial	5
Other	3
Prefer not to say	7

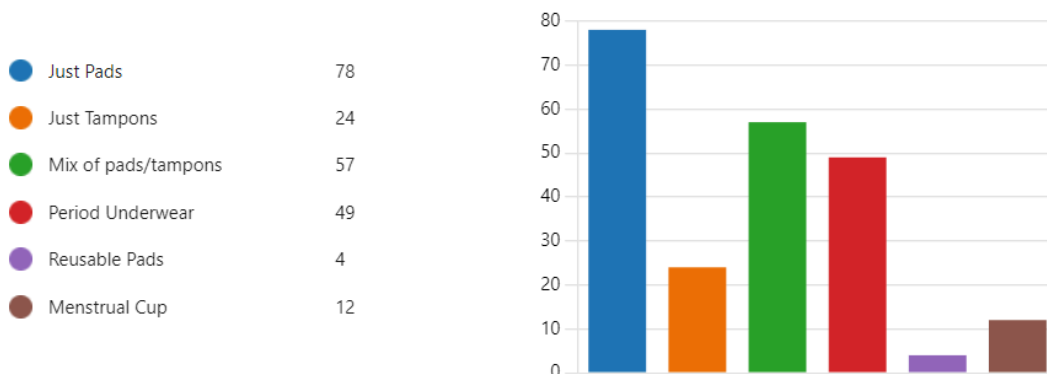


Over 40% of the students identified as Black/African and over 15% identified as Latinx which highlighted the disparities of period poverty. About 28% identified as Asian, 16% as White, and the rest selected multiracial, other, or prefer not to say.

### *Product Preference:*

7. Which menstrual products would you like in your period kit? Please select your **first** choice. We will provide based on availability:

[More Details](#)



The graph above shows the 224 students who completed the interest form. Most students rated “Just Pads” as their first choice, with “Mix of pads/tampons” as a close second. Of the sustainable products, the period underwear was most popular among the first-choice participants. We provided up to 4XL for the choice of period underwear size to maintain inclusivity.

### **Purchasing of Products & Costs:**

Our total funds allocated for the purchasing of Distribution Day products was around \$4,340.35. These funds came from the BCJ and OSI Grants, as well as donations made from EDOG and a donation from Uplifting Marginalized Mothers & Individuals (UMMI) student organizations.

The links to our breakdown of these products:

[MHARC Distribution Day Reporting 2024.xlsx](#)

### **Distribution of Products:**

On April 19th, we held a distribution day in the Math & Science Center from 6:30 pm-8:00 pm. About 73 participants showed up and most of them were not participants of the interest form. Due to a lack of participants from the interest form and the fact that some products were still not delivered at the time of the event, we opted for the event and distribution for the following weeks. We provided event participants with food from Mediterranean Grill and a drink selection of water, lemonade, and sweet tea. We started with a presentation on period poverty and menstrual equity and held a Q&A with Laura from OHP whilst participants had food and distributed products at the end. We also had raffles sprinkled throughout from the beginning of

the program to the end. Overall, many people enjoyed the event and appreciated the giveaways as well as the education we provided, and of course the free products :)

For weeks later, I sent numerous emails to all 224 participants to remind them to pick up products. I separated the emails to include the participants who got incoming delivered products. We distributed it in the lobby of Cox Hall 3rd floor from April 22nd to May 9th. This gave students easier access to Emory students from all campuses as Cox dining hall (just below) was a location of common knowledge. In all packages, handed out in person, we placed a tiny card reminding students to complete the feedback form using the provided QR code. We also sent emails with the links to the feedback form and reminders. See card below:



## **Impact & Data:**

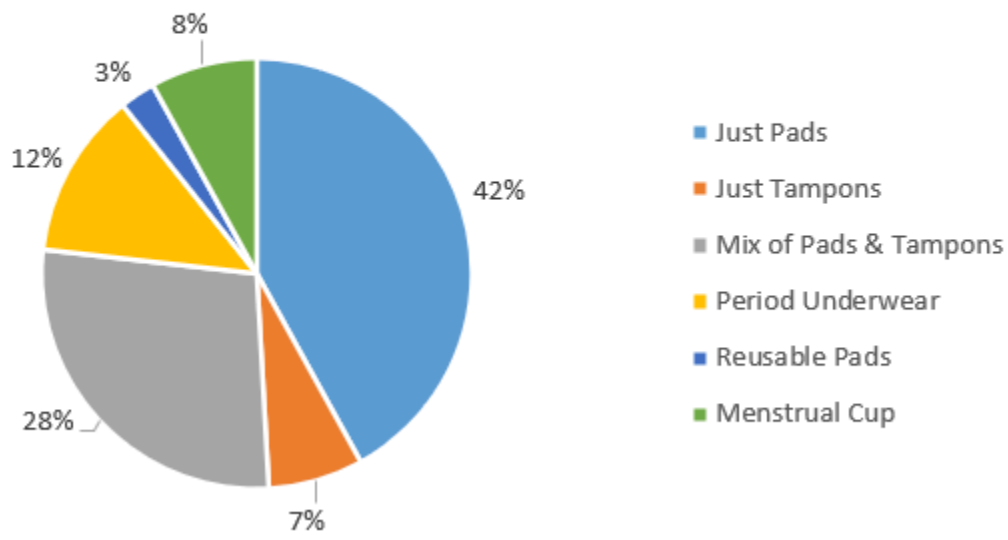
### **Feedback Form Overview:**

We sent out [this link](#) and received 15 responses.

The vast majority of students rated the project/satisfaction with their products at a 5 out of 5. The person who rated their satisfaction a 4 reported having hoped for more overnight products. As stated before we provide products for 3 months worth of products and if it was specified that they had a heavy flow or needed more overnights, that was given. However, our process for labeling and distributing products was vast so it is possible they did not receive the right products for the category they needed. That is an improvement we hope to make in the coming years.

*Products Distributed:*

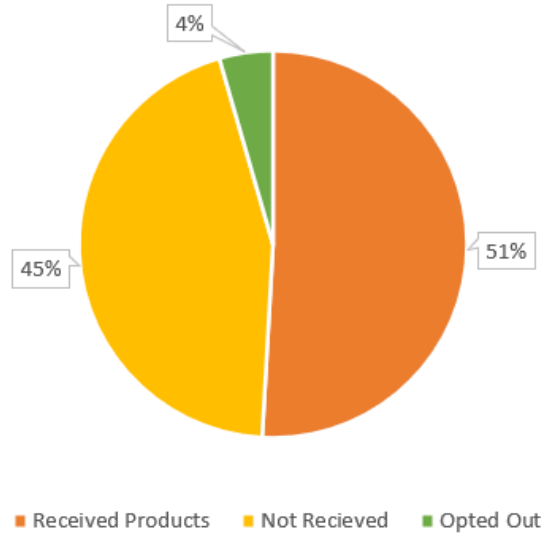
MHARC Distribution Day Breakdown: Product Distribution



*Distribution Day and Delivery*



### MHARC Distribution Day Breakdown: Products Recieved

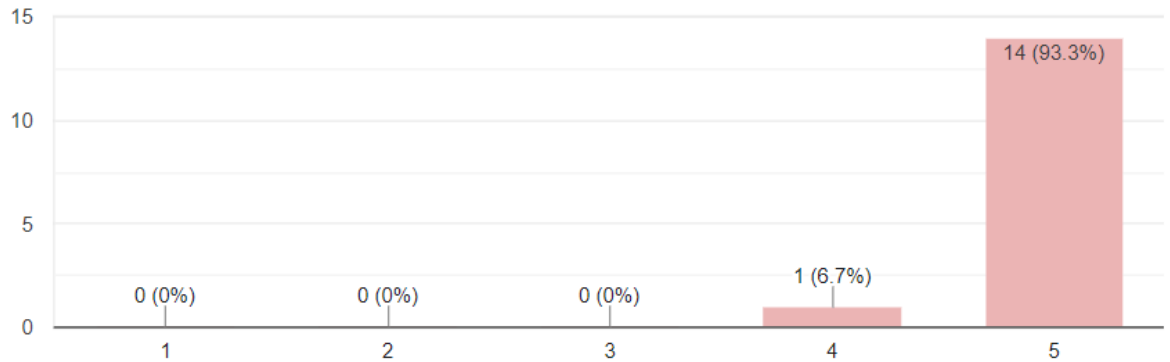


### Satisfaction with Products:

On a scale of 1-5 how satisfied were you with your items?

[Copy](#)

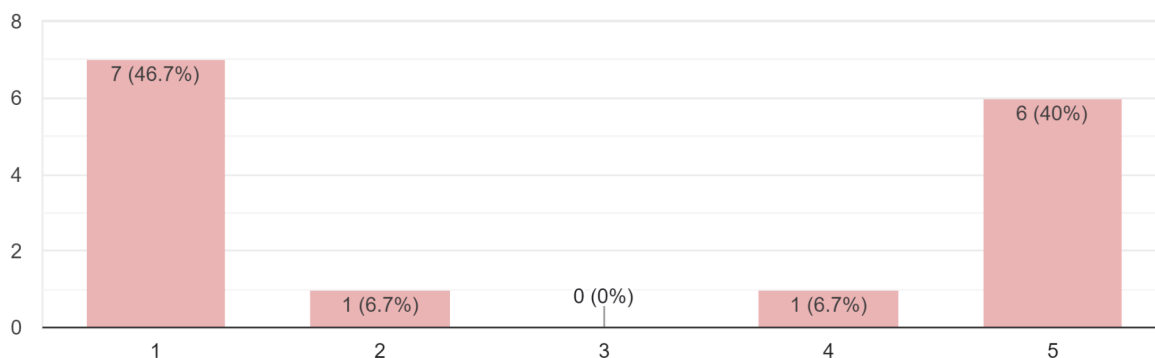
15 responses



### *Satisfaction with Overall Event:*

On a scale of 1-5 how satisfied were you with the event?

15 responses



#### **Reasons for Rating 1-2**

- These participants indicated that they did not attend the event.

#### **Reasons for Rating a 5**

- *The event was very informative and gave me a safe, inclusive, and fun environment. The discussions were incredibly helpful and the food was good :)*
- *It seemed a bit disorganized but I think the change in location had a huge role in this.*
- *I had other campus activities at Oxford that prevented me from picking up my products at the intended event.*
- *The giveaway concept didn't really work for various reasons*

#### *Feedback (Any additional feedback on your experience?)*

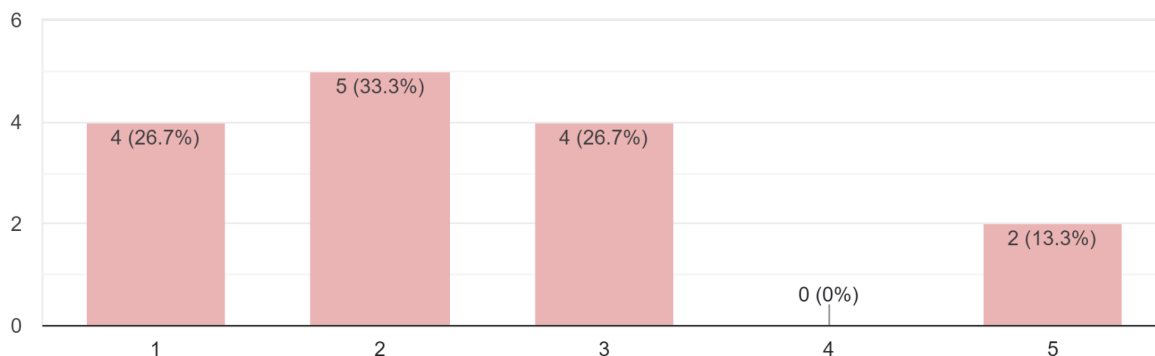
- There were a couple of spelling errors on the slides and it would be helpful to go over any of the event plans to avoid possible complications.
- This is so beautiful and amazing. As a non-binary person, I also really appreciated that there wasn't gendered language around period care/products. Thank you for all your work!
- Thank you for make this products accessible to us
- Thank you so so much this saves me so much
- This was awesome and I'm so grateful to the whole MHARC team for putting this together!
- It was hard for me to help volunteer for packaging because of the time. Maybe having packaging happen before the last few weeks of April would help MHARC get a better volunteer turnout.

- Just thank you for the work you're doing
- Thank you for being so flexible with pick up times and for opening in Cox Hall for an Oxford student to be able to quickly find and pick up the products as someone not well adjusted to the Atlanta campus.
- none. This was and is incredible. Thank you for your work.
- 

*Awareness (From 1-5, how aware do you think other students are about the issue of period poverty?)*

On a scale of 1-5 how aware do you think other students are about the issue of period poverty on college campuses?

15 responses



## **Conclusion:**

We are grateful for the opportunity to take over and continue this project this year. Even though this year was hectic with event coordination, financials, and an overall uptick in participants, it has been a journey that we learned lots from and are grateful to have overcome. It's been a pleasure to serve in this capacity, and we are forever grateful to Sandra and Joanna for passing the baton to us with an opportunity to make MHARC even greater.

## **The Period Pantry & Suggestions for future projects:**

As we prepared for this year's distribution day, we also paved the way for our future. In April of this year, we received \$7,000 from the Women's Impact Grant to fund a new project: The Period Pantry. This grant will allow us to grant year round care for Emory students to maintain a private

space for us to deliver products to students in need. We are so excited to keep expanding as a chartered organization and put on more events, spread awareness, and educate the greater Emory community.

### **Photo Album:**

We created a [photo album](#) for the project. While we give permission for the photos of the products to be shared, we ask that you do not post photos of other students without allowing us to ask permission first. There are a few students featured in the album who would probably be okay with their photo posted, but it's better to ask permission first.