



# Where Do You Change Your Tampon?: An Assessment of Infrastructure and Usability of Menstrual Product Disposal Devices Across Campus

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## Background:

- Lack of access to sanitary disposal measures for menstrual products can lead to embarrassment and anxiety for people who menstruate (Schmitt et al., 2018).
- Having regular access to clean and private means of disposing menstrual products in public restrooms is a necessity (Sumpter & Torondel, 2013).
- For students on this campus, the disparity of sanitary disposal measures in restrooms can create a stigma against menstruation and can impact student success.

## Aim:

- This study investigated the access to proper disposal features for menstrual products in female restrooms on the Starkville campus of Mississippi State University.

## Methods:

- Undergraduate research assistants surveyed all the restrooms on MSU's main campus.
- They recorded whether the restroom had the necessary amenities for sanitary disposal of feminine hygiene products (i.e., metal disposal bin or trashcan in restroom stall) and its useability (e.g., lining in bin).

## Analyses:

- Building types were coded as "Hard Science," "Liberal Arts," or "Other."
- Useability: Lining in bin or trashcan (see Figure 1).
- Infrastructure: Mounted disposal bin or trashcan in restroom stall (see Figure 2).
- Gender ratio was estimated using departmental website photos and names.

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Figure 1. Sanitary disposal bin with liner

On average **79.7%** of stalls in women's washrooms on campus have infrastructure for disposal of menstrual products and **62.12%** are actually usable.



Figure 2. Sanitary disposal bin without a liner

## Results:

- Logistic regression analysis was implemented to examine building type and gender ratios as predictors of infrastructure and useability.
- There was a significant difference in infrastructure between hard science and liberal arts (OR: 0.72, 95% CI [0.55, 0.93]).
- There was not a significant difference in infrastructure between liberal arts and other (OR: 0.87, 95% CI [0.69, 1.08]) or gender ratio (OR: 1.02, 95% CI [0.97, 1.07]).
- There was a significant difference in useability between hard science and liberal arts (OR: 0.66, 95% CI [0.49, 0.91]) but not between liberal arts and other (OR: 0.7, 95% CI [0.47, 1.05]) or gender ratio (OR: 1.05, 95% CI [0.96, 1.15]).

## Discussion:

- The observed difference between hard science and liberal arts infrastructure and usability of sanitary disposal measures suggests that **there are not currently practices in place to ensure that sanitary disposal devices are available on the Starkville campus.**
- This observed disparity can make students, faculty members, and staff uncomfortable with using the restrooms on campus.
- Janitorial staff members may struggle with keeping restrooms clean if there are not safety measures in place for later disposal of menstrual products in restrooms.
- The results of this study can be used to help implement consistent sanitary disposal measures in all restrooms on campus.
- Future research to further examine the underlying reasons for disparities in sanitary menstrual product disposal measures should be conducted.

## References:

- Schmitt, M. L., Clatworthy, D., Ogello, T., & Sommer, M. (2018). Making the case for a female-friendly toilet. *Water*, 10(9), 1193.
- Sumpter, C., & Torondel, B. (2013). A systematic review of the health and social effects of menstrual hygiene management. *PLoS One*, 8(4), e62004.