

# ARE CLOTH PADS A VIABLE MENSTRUAL ABSORBENT FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM LOW INCOME BACKGROUNDS?

Presenting evidence from user studies across India | March 2020 | The Period Junction Conference, Bangalore

## 01 ABOUT

Founded in 2010, Eco Femme is a women-led social enterprise based in Auroville, Tamil Nadu. Our goal is to create environmental and social change through revitalising and promoting menstrual practices that are healthy, dignified, affordable and eco positive. Our **hybrid model** enables us to provide free or subsidized cloth pads. While the pricing varies depending on the customers' capacity to pay, the quality of pads remains the same! This is possible because of the successful reach of commercially priced pads to affluent women across India and around the world.

### RURAL OUTREACH

MHM Training  
Free pad distribution  
Subsidized Pad Sales

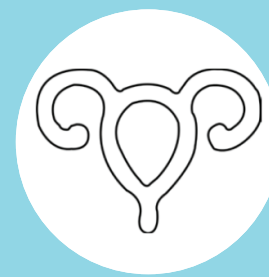
PAD PRODUCTION  
Design  
Production  
Livelihood generation

### SALES & MARKETING

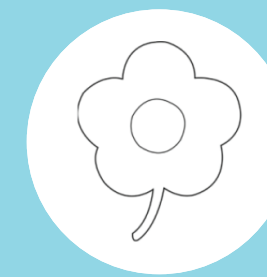
Wholesale to international & domestic retailers  
Own Online shop

## 02 ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL

We offer 2 outreach programs - **Pad for Pad** and **Pads for Sisters**. Both programs combine menstrual health education and provide access to cloth washable pads as a choice. The core elements of our educational approach are:



Female Anatomy, menstruation and menstrual cycle



Taking care of ourselves during menstruation: Hygiene, Nutrition Exercise and natural remedies



Menstrual product analysis to engage informed choice



Safe space for speaking about menstruation

Key insights revealed through evaluating school going girls and women, about their experiences after using our cloth pads. These surveys have been conducted with users who we directly serve in our local bioregion as well as with our partners who work in remote areas across India. Prior to being introduced to cloth pads, almost all the respondents have been using disposable pads, often supplied under the government free pad distribution scheme. All data has been collected between 1st April 2018 and end of February 2020.

## PAD FOR PAD

### What?

Menstrual health education and free pad gifting to adolescent girls, sponsored by international customers

### Why?

To normalise menstruation and enable girls to manage their periods hygienically with safe, non-polluting menstrual products

## IMPACT GRAPHS

### 01 SAMPLE

433 GIRLS  
12 - 19 years

direct reach

implementing partners

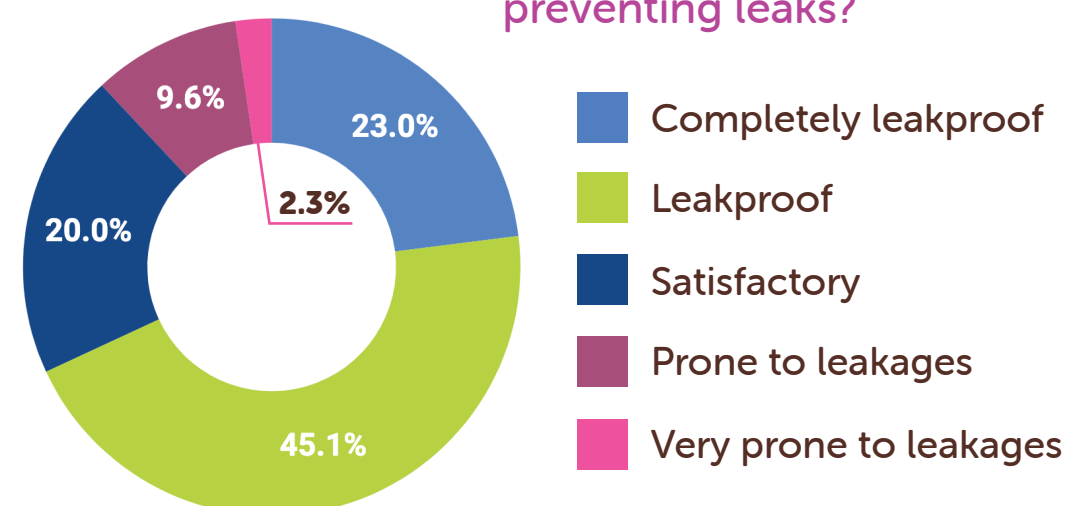
251

182

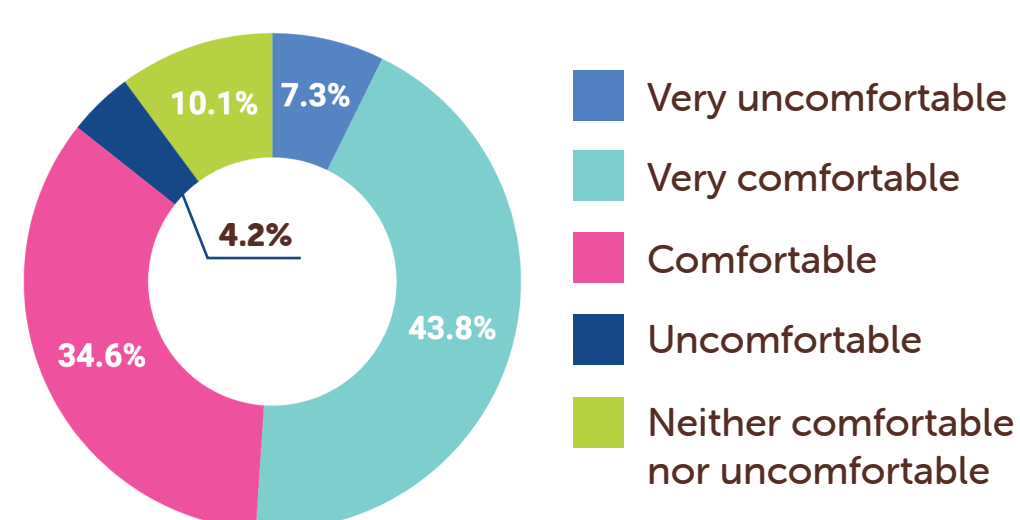
- 83.6% of girls used them for more than 1 cycle
- 68.9% of girls are using for more than 3 cycles
- We observed a decreased use of cloth pads after many months.
- Girls received the cloth pad kits 3 to 16 months prior to data collection

### 02 PAD PERFORMANCE

How effective are Eco Femme pads at preventing leaks?



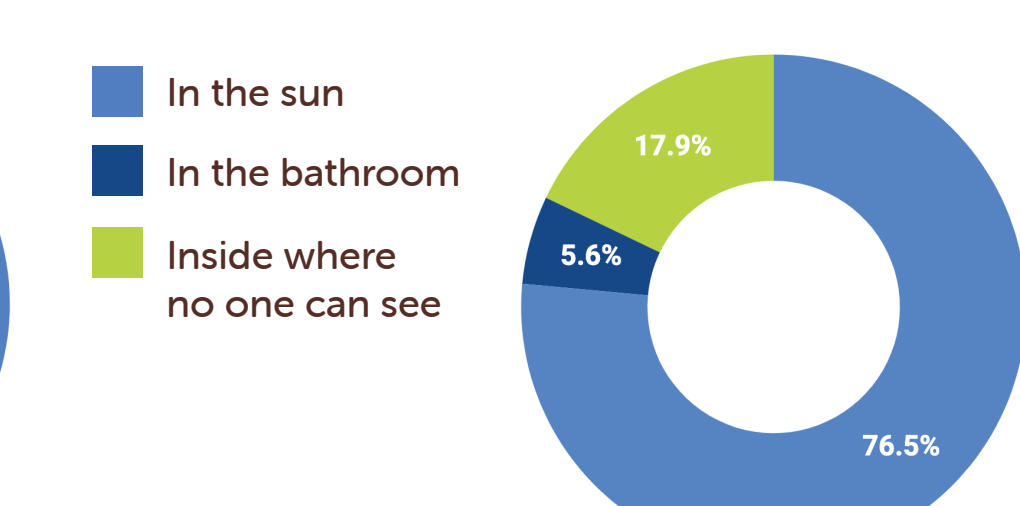
How comfortable are the Eco Femme pads?



How do you wash your Eco Femme pad?

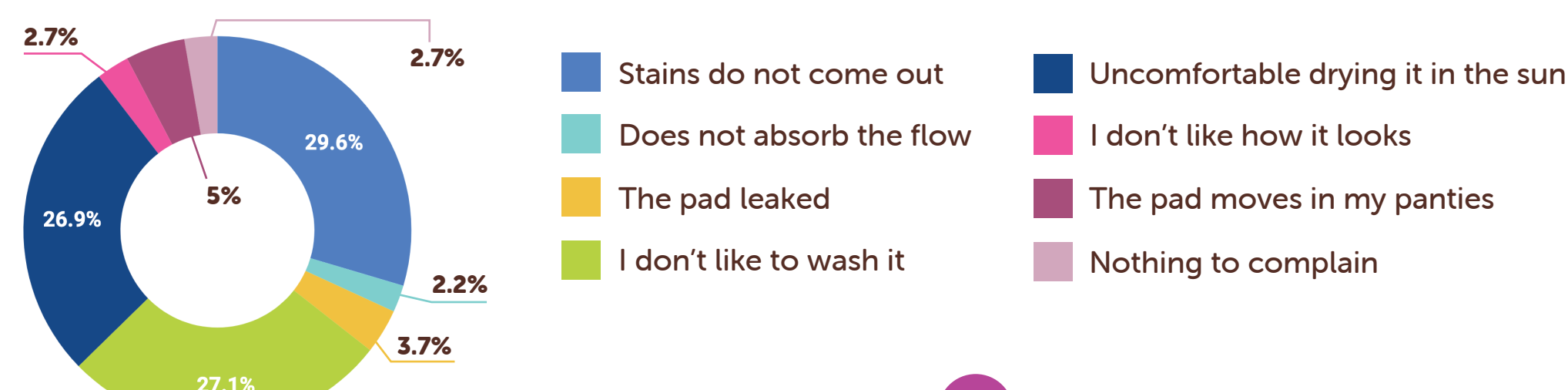


Where do you dry your Eco Femme pad?

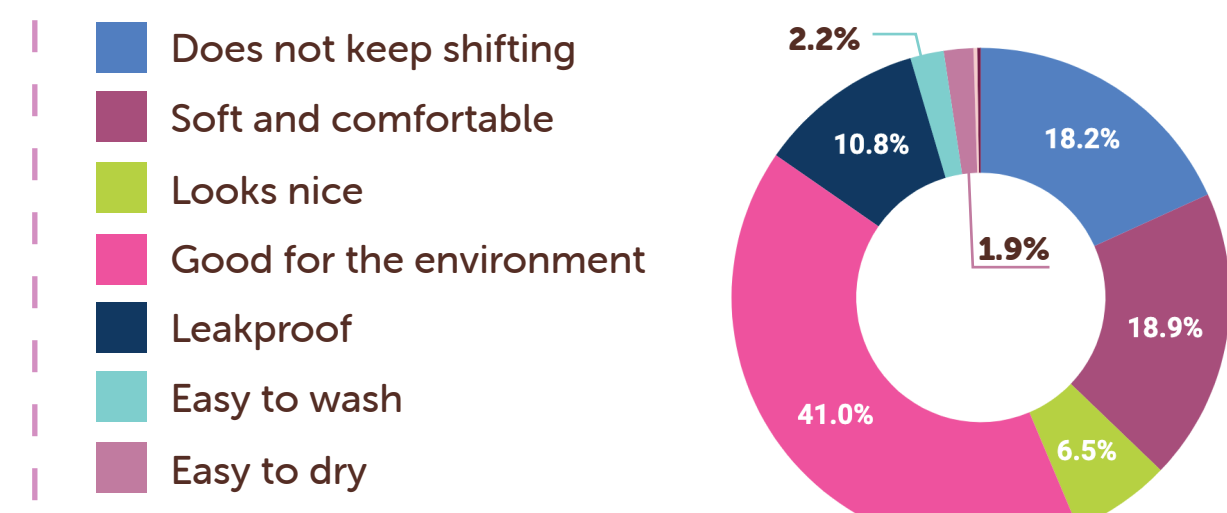


### 03 LIKES AND DISLIKES

What do you not like about the Eco Femme pads?

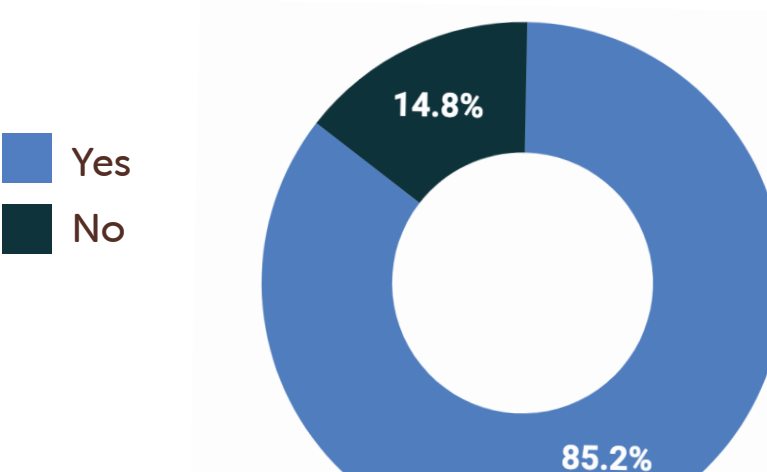


What do you like most about Eco Femme pads?



### 04 PERCEPTIONS : FUTURE USE

Will you use Eco Femme cloth pads in the future?



## PAD FOR SISTERS

### What?

Affordable access to cloth pads for women who would like to make the switch to cloth pads but cannot afford premium priced pads

### How?

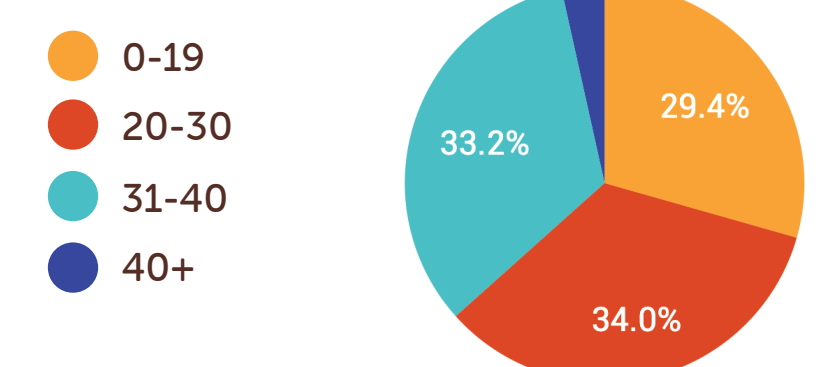
- Pads are offered:
- At cost price to organisations and individuals who wish to sponsor/gift pads
  - At a subsidised rate (Rs.60 - 100) for these women to purchase for their own use

## IMPACT GRAPHS

### 01 SAMPLE

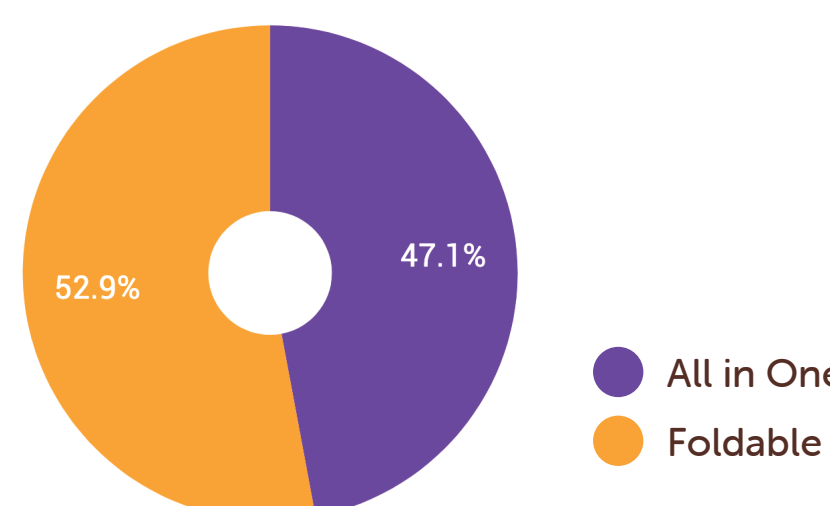
- The data is compiled from 4 different user studies collected from 374 women and adolescents across 6 locations : Sikkim, Tripura, Nagaland, Hyderabad (Telangana), Tirupur (TN), Lucknow (UP).
- All the respondents had received the pads at least 3 months prior to data collection.

Age split of participants was as follows:

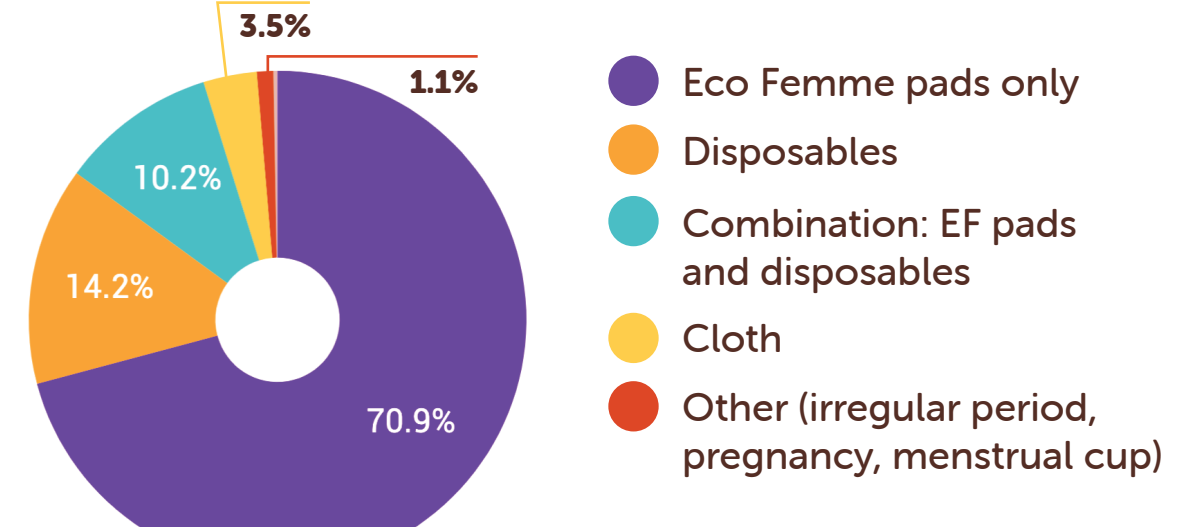


### 02 PRODUCT PREFERENCE

Pad model preference

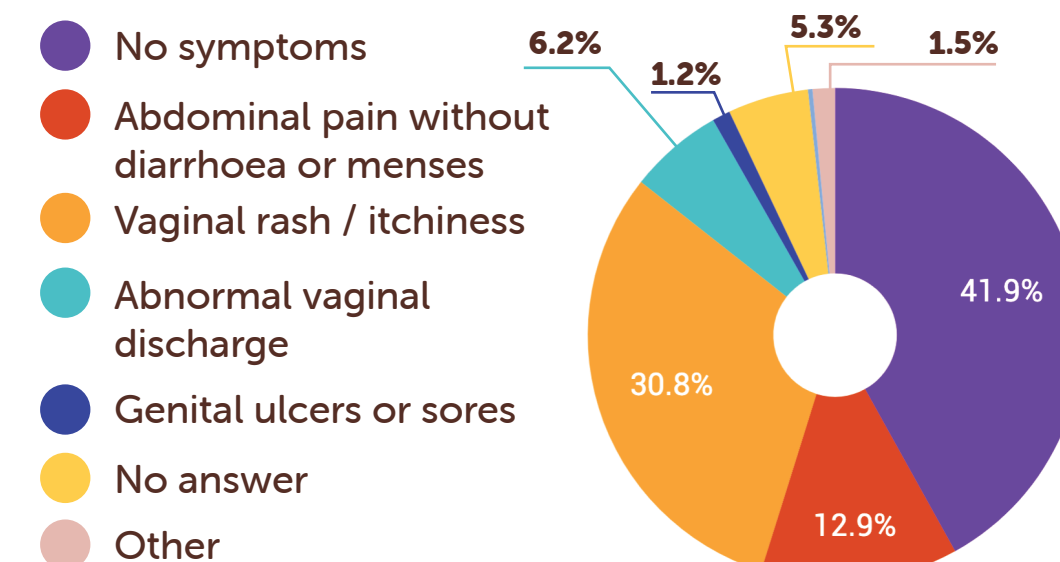


Products used during the last period

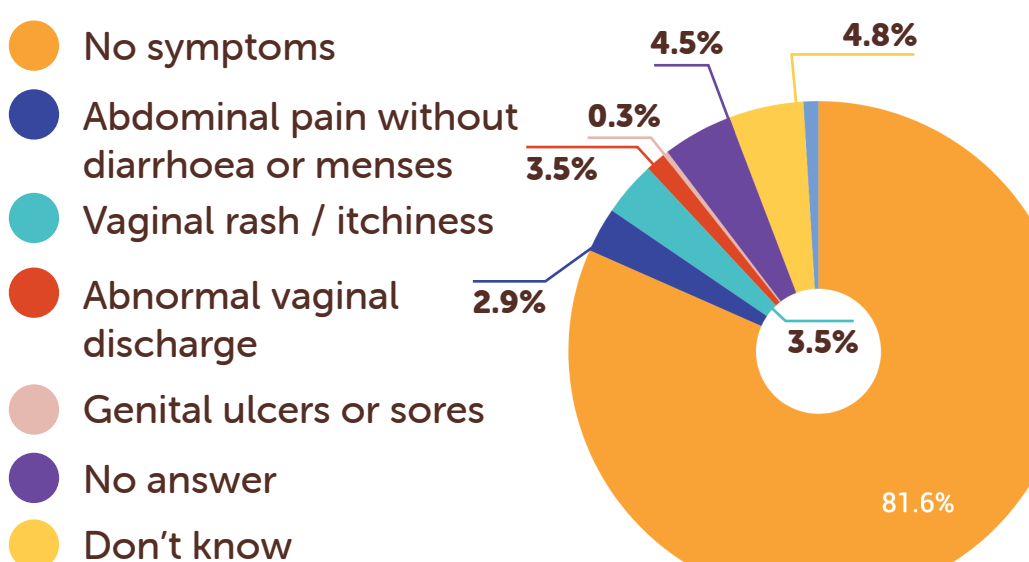


### 03 HEALTH

Symptoms : Prior to using cloth pads

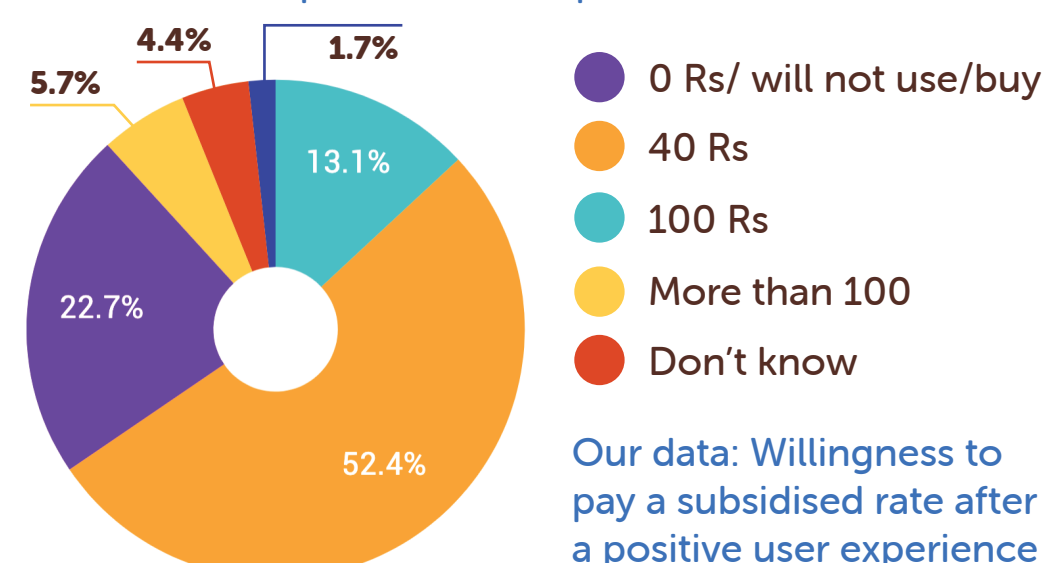


Symptoms : After using cloth pads



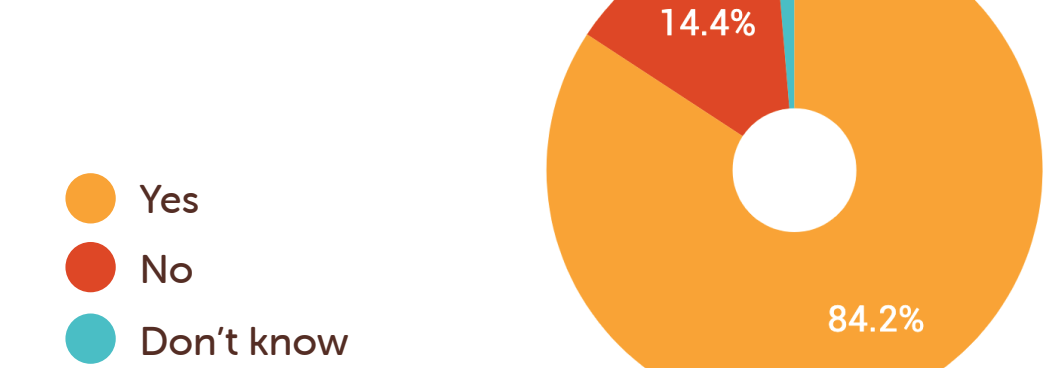
### 04 WILLINGNESS TO PAY

Assumption: Women won't pay because cloth pads are too expensive.



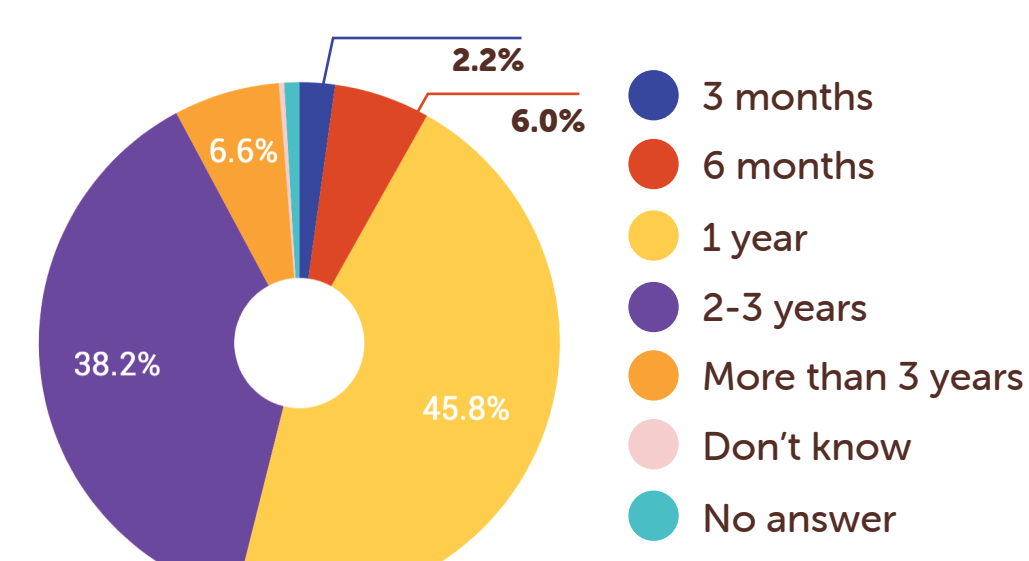
Our data: Willingness to pay a subsidised rate after a positive user experience

Intention to use in the future



### 05 PERCEPTIONS : FUTURE USE

Perception : Lifespan of the pad



Would you recommend it to others?



## CONCLUSIONS

Are cloth pads a viable menstrual absorbent for women and girls from low income backgrounds? The answer is a resounding **YES!** For girls in particular however, to sustain use may require engaging mothers more proactively to support girls' choice to make this switch at home.

Is protecting the environment the only reason to switch to a reusable menstrual product?

There are many compelling reasons beyond not burdening the earth, to make the switch. Various user studies capturing feedback from a total of 807 women and girls have consistently shown that cloth pads:

- Perform well compared with disposable sanitary napkins and are easy to maintain
- Potentially result in beneficial health outcomes
- Are attractive for purchase to women when offered at an affordable rate

## CONTACT US!

Want to know more? Interested in partnering with us? We have over 40 NGO and individual partners across India. For more information reach out to us at:

[www.ecofemme.org](http://www.ecofemme.org)  
[info@ecofemme.org](mailto:info@ecofemme.org)  
Ph:(+91) 94871 79556

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Join the Cloth Pad Revolution!