

# OSAKA

## MULTI-CITY “MENSTRUAL FRIENDLY PUBLIC TOILET” STUDY



JUNE 2024

### People around the world lack the facilities they need to manage menstruation in the public space.

Menstrual Friendly Public Toilets (MFPT) enable equitable participation in public life by providing those who menstruate the space and resources to navigate cities with dignity and comfort.

#### WHAT IS AN MFPT?

MFPTs are safe, clean toilets that are accessible to the public and include features that make any toilet functional, such as water and soap, light, and locking doors. Additional menstrual friendly aspects include, but are not limited, to:

- Lidded bins or menstrual product disposal units
- Free or low-cost menstrual products
- Large enough mirrors for checking stains
- Hooks or shelves for hanging bags in stalls

MFPTs are funded or managed by the government and can be standalone, single-use, or multi-stall.

#### WHY MFPTs MATTER

By making public toilets menstrual-friendly, cities can enhance equitable access to the public space. For those who menstruate, a lack of MFPTs in an urban context can hinder the ability to go to work, school, visit the market, or be a tourist. This may create unnecessary stress and anxiety in daily life and prevents full participation in public. Despite growing attention to provide menstrual products in schools, shelters, and government buildings, little attention is given to the need for menstrual-friendly public toilets.

#### THE MULTI-CITY MFPT STUDY

The MFPT study was conducted in six cities globally:

- Barcelona
- Manila
- **Osaka City**
- Kampala
- New York City
- Rio de Janeiro

The study was launched to explore the availability and accessibility of MFPTs in a diversity of urban sites, including in high-, middle-, and low-income countries.

**Osaka City:** A dense hub of business, with a daytime population of 3.5 million, it represents an urban East Asian context where MFPTs could serve as a valuable resource for millions of residents, workers, and visitors.

In early 2023, study teams from each city assessed the current state of public toilets’ menstrual-friendliness and identified barriers and opportunities to improve public toilets for those who menstruate. This included:

- (1) Conducting toilet audits to explore how menstrual-friendly current public toilet infrastructure is within four areas of each city: business, tourist, residential, transit (*see Fig. 1*).
  - Capturing overall “menstrual friendliness” and key categories related to MFPT (*see Fig. 2*).
- (2) Interviewing key stakeholders to better understand the challenges and possibilities for providing MFPTs. In **Osaka**, this included staff in local government, private companies, and non-governmental organizations responsible for public toilets, sanitation, or menstrual health promotion.

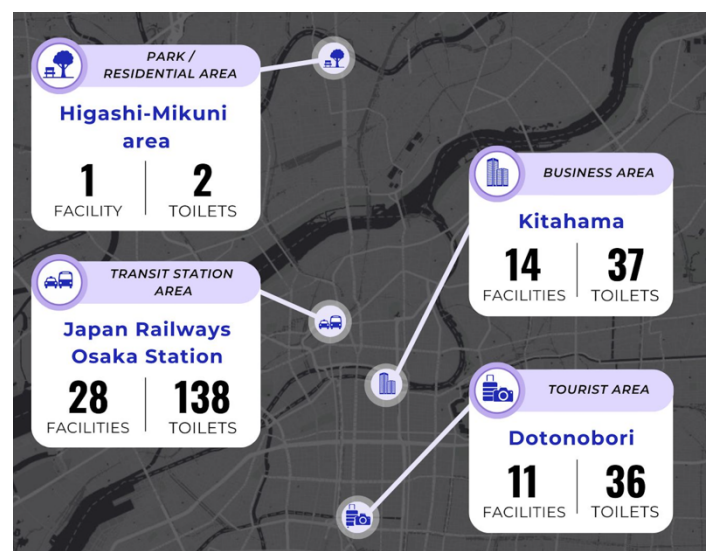
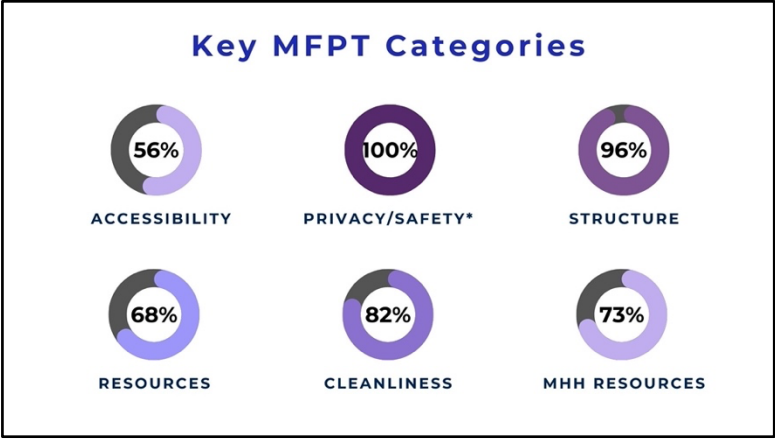


Figure 1. Osaka Site Map with Toilet and Facilities Findings

Figure 2. Average Calculated Scores for Six Key MFPT Categories<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Study team identified **Accessibility, Privacy/Safety\*, Structure, Resources, Cleanliness, and MHH Resources** as six main MFPT categories that make up MFPT. See *Table 1* for example category characteristics. Averaged scores from 0-100 were calculated for each category. Higher scores indicate relatively higher menstrual friendliness. *\*Note: Privacy/Safety was measured objectively and does not capture the social and/or reported experiences related to safety.*

Table 1. Brief Highlights of Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) Characteristics that Make Up the MFPT Categories<sup>2</sup>

DOMAINS	EXAMPLES OF MHH CHARACTERISTICS WE MEASURED
Accessibility	No permission needed to use the bathroom
	Open 24 hours, 7 days a week
Privacy/Safety*	>75% of stalls with functional locks
	Functional electric light
Structure	>75% of cubicles/stalls with functional hooks/shelves
	"Good condition" toilets
Availability of Resources (general)	Available and useable trash cans/dust bins
	At least one functional hand-dryer or stocked towels
Cleanliness	Visibly clean
	No noticeable odor
Availability of MHH Resources	Full-length mirror
	>75% of cubicles/stalls with disposal bins
	Menstrual products stocked or working machine

<sup>2</sup> Only select characteristics shown above for each identified category. Data was collected from the audit tool and then coded to "Met Criteria" (1) or "Did Not Meet Criteria" (0).

OSAKA KEY INSIGHTS

- Public toilets are generally clean and safe, but there is a significant discrepancy between government-managed "public toilets" and those managed by rail or transportation companies.
- Limited budget is the reason for low prioritization of public toilets and posed as a challenge for MFPTs.
- Even supportive pro-menstrual friendly stakeholders were not familiar with the concept of MFPTs and provided varied suggestions for MFPT elements.
- Local stakeholders identified political and organizational complexities as a barrier to MFPT implementation.

OSAKA RECOMMENDATIONS

- Utilize the high standards and pride in Japanese toilets as a motivator to improve and promote MFPTs.
- Involve the tourism sector in enhancing public toilets, leveraging the rise in inbound tourists and the upcoming Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai.
- Seek collaborations between public and private sectors to improve infrastructure and provide menstrual products.
- Identify a model and guidelines for an MFPT.
- Utilize social media and mass media to raise awareness about the importance of MFPTs.

For additional resources, visit <https://bit.ly/MultiCityMFPTStudy>.

The Study Team

**Osaka MFPT Study Team:** Professor Elli Sugita  
**Global MFPT Study Team:** Justine Bukenya, Helen Cole, Natália Helou Fazzioni, Ernesto R. Gregorio, Jr. Kim Hopper, Marian Fe Theresa C. Lomboy, Andrew Maroko, Marni Sommer  
**CU Team:** Sarah Blake, Susi Martinez, Angela Nguyen, Natalie Wyss

This work was generously supported by the Osprey Foundation and the Sid & Helaine Lerner MHM Faculty Support Fund.

