

# Accelerating Action on Hygiene and Health for All

The Hygiene and Health Report  
2020-2021

# Executive Summary

For centuries society has seen that good hygiene and health saves and improves lives. Research and innovation continue to advance knowledge and approaches, but the importance of basic hygiene and health practices and the need for more inclusive societies remains fundamental. This has been even more evident during the pandemic caused by a coronavirus, which causes an infectious disease (COVID-19).

This report is a collaboration between Essity and the UN-hosted Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC). It aims to bring much needed insights, evidence and solutions to the societal and political debate, in order to accelerate action on improving hygiene and health standards and practices around the world. A central part of the insights builds on a biannual global survey, conducted by Essity - the Essentials Initiative Survey.

## Putting insights into action

The first theme in this report, *Hygiene and health saves and improves lives*, findings and cases underline the importance of basic hygiene and good health for all, particularly to avoid infections such as healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and viruses such as the one that causes COVID-19.

In the second theme, *More inclusive societies*, research and testimonials highlight how important it is to break barriers on social norms surrounding menstruation and incontinence. It also stresses the importance of a

person-centered approach and underlines the opportunities that innovation and digitalization brings, in order to ensure that large groups of people can participate fully in society.

Since it is vital to put insight into action, Essity and WSSCC also provide policy makers with a set of *Calls for actions* to help overcome the hygiene and health challenges and build on the opportunities addressed in the report.



# Contents

## The Hygiene and Health Report 2020-2021

<b>Collaboration for positive change .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The need for a decade of action .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>About this report .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Hygiene and Health saves and improves lives.....</b>	<b>8</b>
The importance of basic hygiene.....	8
Prevention agenda in hospitals and healthcare.....	12
Antimicrobial resistance and infection management.....	15
Hygiene and health issues high on the public agenda.....	16
The added value of investing in hygiene and health.....	18
<b>Calls for action to save and improve lives .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>More inclusive societies.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Menstruation and personal hygiene should not be a barrier to well-being .....	24
Policy makers act on menstrual health issues.....	28
Break the stigma on incontinence and improve everyday life.....	30
Design for all – a tool for inclusivity.....	37
Innovative ways to improve or shift behavior .....	38
<b>Calls for action on more inclusive societies .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>The decade of accelerating actions and results .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Endnotes.....	43

# Collaboration for positive change

**In this report, Essity and WSSCC partner to put global hygiene and health issues in the spotlight. The unprecedented pandemic has indeed underlined the importance of hygiene and health in our lives. How is this reflected in this report?**

**Magnus:** We are highlighting two themes in this report – how hygiene and health can save and improve lives and how all of us collectively can contribute to more inclusive societies. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that millions of women, men and children face obstacles in their daily lives due to basic hygiene and health-related constraints. The right actions can improve hygiene and health conditions globally and benefit both individuals and society.

**Sue:** The COVID-19 pandemic is also a wake-up call to re-focus on what is essential for preventive health. The pandemic has underlined the importance of the fundamental practices learned since childhood, such as handwashing with soap, in promoting basic hygiene to combat infections all around the world. It is also times like these where we appreciate well-resourced and competent health services and count on them to save lives.

**Magnus:** The time for prioritizing and investing in hygiene and health is certainly now. The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all of us and the full humanitarian, economic and social consequences are obviously to be seen. One thing is for sure: improved hygiene and health standards as well as awareness and education will be more important than ever.

**Essity and the WSSCC have partnered since 2014 and both have been working on global hygiene and health issues for decades. What is the added value of collaborating and what role do the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) play?**

**Sue:** The SDGs provide an opportunity to accelerate progress on some of the world's most critical issues: poverty, education, health, sanitation and hygiene, gender equality, etc. We know that many of these issues are cross-cutting, and that addressing them in silos hasn't worked in the past. The SDGs are a call to action to stakeholders from all backgrounds: governments, UN, civil society, academia, private sector to work together to collectively implement solutions that benefit society and our planet. We continue to work with Essity to suggest actions, provide evidence and amplify messages, especially in the dialogue with key decision-makers.

**Magnus:** The SDGs create a structure for driving actions and partnerships, which are critical to success. As a UN-hosted entity, the WSSCC supports programs on the ground and collaborate broadly across sectors to accelerate progress on sanitation and hygiene at national, regional and global levels.

**Sue:** Essity brings power of innovation as well as customer and market knowledge for hygiene and health solutions. They are an ethical international business leader with a person-centered approach to research and development. With their network of professionals around the world they are able to reach audiences and question social norms. It is essential for large-scale progress on these issues, and we feel that our complementarity as partners strengthens our work.

**What needs to be done and who should act?**

**Sue:** The basic requirements to achieve good hygiene and health conditions are universal and the actions must be at all levels: individual, community, national, regional and global. We now need to work together to ensure policies that continuously drive an inclusive public health approach that focuses on prevention. Concrete preventive actions need to be planned for, prioritized, financed and implemented everywhere for the benefit of everyone.

**Magnus:** There is a renewed opportunity to prioritize hygiene and health for all, and the suggested calls to action for policy makers are outlined in this report. We continue to advance knowledge and facilitate solutions in order to support more inclusive societies and break barriers to health and well-being. We invite you to take part in this important mission.



**Magnus Groth**  
President and CEO  
Essity



**Sue Coates**  
Executive Director a.i.  
WSSCC



## Essity in brief

Essity is a leading global hygiene and health company dedicated to improving well-being through its products and services. The company has sales in approximately 150 countries and employs about 46,000 people. Essity breaks barriers to well-being and contributes to a healthy, sustainable and circular society. Essity is committed to contribute to the UN SDGs and have specifically focused on the SDGs where its business and operation can contribute such as SDG 3, 5, 6, 12, 13 and 15.

[www.essity.com](http://www.essity.com)

## WSSCC in brief

The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) is a global United Nations-hosted multi-stakeholder membership and partnership organization. It works with poor people, organizations, governments and local entrepreneurs to improve sanitation and hygiene at scale and is dedicated to advancing Sustainable Development Goal 6 and specifically Target 6.2 on sanitation and hygiene.

WSSCC advocates for improved sanitation and hygiene, paying special attention to the needs of women, girls and people in vulnerable situations. In 2021, the WSSCC will transform into the Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF).

[www.shfund.org](http://www.shfund.org) [www.wsscc.org](http://www.wsscc.org)

# The need for a decade of action

**We all have a part to play in making the 2020s a decade of action and to achieve results. The UN Secretary General's 2020 Progress Report<sup>1</sup> stated that even if progress in many areas of health continues, the rate of improvement has slowed down. Additionally, the start of the decade has been plagued by COVID-19, and we share the concern that the pandemic threatens progress on health made in recent years. However, we believe that together, we can break health and hygiene barriers and support the empowerment of people in order to achieve an inclusive society that releases both individual and societal value.**

The year 2020 marks the tenth Hygiene and Health Report and six years of collaboration between Essity, WSSCC and our other partners to raise awareness on global hygiene and health issues. The continuous learnings made now and in recent years add value and have the potential to contribute toward a decade of action to bring about positive change and achieve the SDGs. It is time to accelerate action to improve hygiene and health for all.

**SDG Target 17.17:** Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.



## Action on global challenges

Globalization, digitalization, population growth, urbanization, climate change and increasing resource scarcity continue to affect us all in different ways and our attitudes toward global hygiene and health. We are faced with a less secure world based on political, social and financial instability, while at the same time, the SDGs must be met by 2030. The full humanitarian, social and financial consequences of COVID-19 remains to be seen but it has further underlined the importance of hygiene and health in our everyday lives.

Much progress has been made, for example in reducing poverty and increasing child vaccinations, but progress in hygiene and health is lagging.

There are many global challenges related to hygiene and health. In this report, we focus on issues where there is a clear need for accelerated action and we provide policy makers with concrete calls for actions after each of the two chapters *Hygiene and health saves and improves lives* and *More inclusive societies*.

***“The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced this message more strongly than ever. We belong to each other. We stand together, or we fall apart.”***

**António Guterres,  
UN Secretary General<sup>2</sup>**

# About this report

**This report aims to address topical societal issues, showcase different perspectives and discussions. It also raises awareness about the pivotal role hygiene, sanitation and health can play in well-being for individuals and communities and provides solutions to some of the challenges and opportunities society faces in these areas.**

By combining research findings, statistical evidence, successful case stories as well as testimonies from people who can contribute to advancing progress on hygiene and health issue, this report offers new insights. It also highlights solutions and action that can be critical for improving hygiene and health standards around the globe. Our ambition is to inspire and invite more actors to collaborate, share insights and expertise and accelerate action to ensure hygiene and health for all.

## The global Essity survey

Essity conducts a global survey called the Essentials Initiative Survey (hereafter referred to as 'the Essity survey') every second year, to provide knowledge about attitudes, preferences and habits around the world. Some of the key findings from the Essity survey are highlighted in this report.

The questionnaire was conducted digitally with about 15.000 respondents from 15 country markets between December 2019 and January 2020. Just over 1.000 responses were gathered from each market and national quotas were used to obtain a balanced representation of age and gender. A mean average for each question was calculated

to obtain the survey figures. The countries surveyed included Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

An additional survey was conducted in July 2020 with hygiene and health questions concerning COVID-19. There were about 10.000 respondents in ten countries – France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Quotas were used to obtain a balanced representation of age and gender.

**The full results of the two surveys can be found at <http://reports.essity.com/2020-21/essentials-initiative-survey/results>.**



# Hygiene and health saves and improves lives

**Major progress has been made in improving the health of millions of people in recent decades. Still, more efforts are needed to fully eliminate a wide range of diseases and address the most pressing health issues. The COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated the critical importance of basic hygiene for preventing diseases. By focusing on providing improved sanitation and hygiene and increased access to health services, significant progress can be made in helping to save the lives of millions.**

Sanitation and hygiene are key to preventing and managing the outbreak of many deadly infectious diseases, including cholera, diarrhea, Ebola, tropical diseases, polio and now COVID-19. Sanitation and hygiene also reduce maternal and neonatal death, curb the spread of anti-microbial resistance, and prevent severe systemic infection also known as sepsis, which now kills more people globally each year than cancer.<sup>3</sup> Poor sanitation is responsible for more than 1.200 deaths of children under five years of age every day, which is more than the mortality of AIDS, measles and tuberculosis combined.<sup>4</sup>

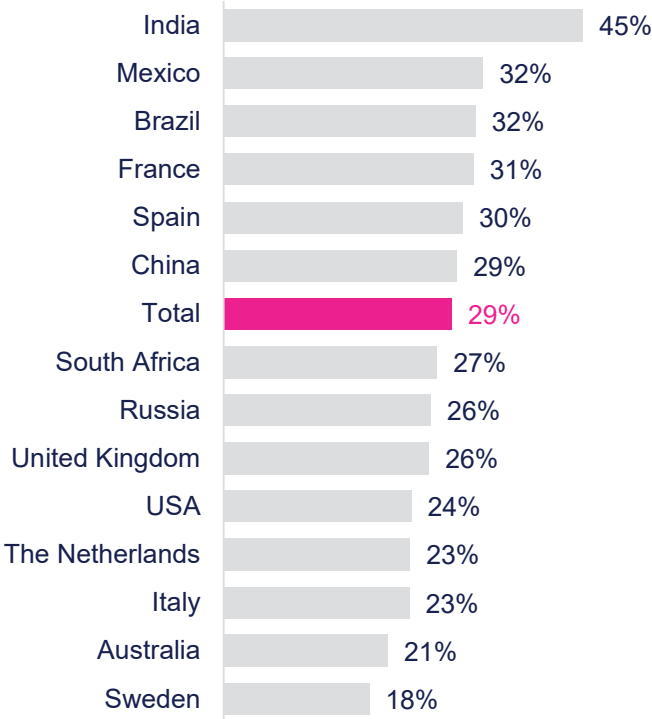
## The importance of basic hygiene

The need for improved hygiene is universal. Proper hand hygiene, including both hand-washing and hand sanitizing, is ranked as one of the most effective and affordable public health interventions, and yet global progress on good hygiene practices is severely lacking.<sup>5</sup>

Globally, 2.4 billion people live without basic sanitation services (flush latrine or pit latrine) in developing countries, and only 27% of the world population have adequate handwashing facilities at home, according to UNICEF.<sup>6</sup> People that lack handwashing facilities are therefore potentially even more vulnerable to crises such as COVID-19 and are also often left behind many public health interventions, such as access to adequate healthcare and education on good hygiene practices.

The Essity survey shows that lack of access to clean or safe toilets and washrooms is still an issue, with significant differences between countries.

Lack of access to clean or safe toilets and washrooms



Question: Have you refrained from going to school/work this last year because of any of the following reasons related to menstruation?

From the Essity Survey. Read more about the survey on page 7.



## Community empowerment - building toilets for improved health

Nearly 892 million of the total world's population still practice open defecation.<sup>7</sup> In September 2019, the Government of Nepal declared the country open defecation free. Continuing the people's momentum, the government announced a national campaign focusing on sustaining a country free from open defecation, addressing long-term behavioral changes and transformation of social norms.

The national campaign arrived in Sunaina Devi's village, promising to be transformational. Devi lives in Majhi, a village of 104 impoverished people in Nepal's Terai region. Working these fields is how Devi, and the majority of her neighbors, earn their living. Among their hardships has been the absence of sanitation.

### Poor sanitation lead to health issues

"Previously, people did not have toilets and they did not see the necessity of having a proper place to defecate," says Raju Prajad Sah, the Chief Administrative Officer of the rural municipality of Kalikamai, where the village of Majhi is located. He describes how open defecation has been an age-old and accepted practice.

The pond across the road where the villagers raised fish and watered animals often became contaminated. Sah recalls that outbreaks of diarrhea were common in Majhi with open defecation and a lack of handwashing compromising health and well-being. "Especially vulnerable were the young, the old, and anyone compromised by factors from disability to mental illness, or even just the misfortune of living alone," he explains.

### Empowering communities to construct their own toilets

After three intense months of discussing the health benefits of using a toilet, every household in Majhi decided to construct its own toilet. "Now they are all using toilets and obviously the difference is that there will be the reduction of diseases and the living standard will be, I think, uplifted," says Sah.

Devi leads the way through her house and out the back to show her new latrine. "I built it myself by taking a loan. I have not paid it back but I will within one year by cutting rice paddies," she says.



*Improved sanitation in Nepal has raised living standards for people all around the country, like Sunaina Devi from Majhi village.*

## Education on menstrual health and hygiene in Mexican schools

It is key to develop adequate spaces for health, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) and menstrual hygiene in schools. One example how this can be done is through a collaboration between UNICEF in Mexico and Essity.

Following the initiative, the National Institute of Physical Educative Infrastructure (INIFED), which is responsible for issuing standards and technical specifications, as well as managing resources for the educational infrastructure, including WASH services in schools - established of a federal-level strategy

focused on WASH in schools. This was framed within the 2030 Agenda, integrating aspects of behavior change, improvement of infrastructure and strengthening of the environment conducive to the articulation of public policies and sectoral programs. Moreover, in this collaboration Essity and UNICEF developed educational Manuals on Menstrual Health and Hygiene, aimed at primary and secondary school teachers, parents and children of those educational levels. These manuals were launched together with the Ministry of Education, underlining the importance of menstrual health.



**SDG Target 6.2:** By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.



**SDG Target 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

## Access to handwashing facilities and hygiene product.

Universal access to handwashing facilities with soap and water is already part of the Sustainable Development Agenda. We can do more. The COVID-19 pandemic underlines the importance of what is most needed to save lives today and in the future. As this pandemic has shown, together we can succeed, says the WHO report Hand Hygiene for All.<sup>8</sup>

The Essity survey shows that a lack of soap or hygienic soap dispensers and no or inadequate access to handwashing facilities in public spaces (e.g. restaurants and shops) are the top reasons why people do not wash their hands more often since the outbreak of the pandemic. No or inadequate access to proper handwashing facilities at work or school and hot/jet air dryers instead of paper towels also play a part. Only 41% say they wash their hands often enough.

around **1/3**

**of respondents don't wash their hands more often during the COVID-19 pandemic because of lacking facilities or hygiene products.** (Essity Survey)

## Early start to nurture kids' lifelong hand hygiene habits

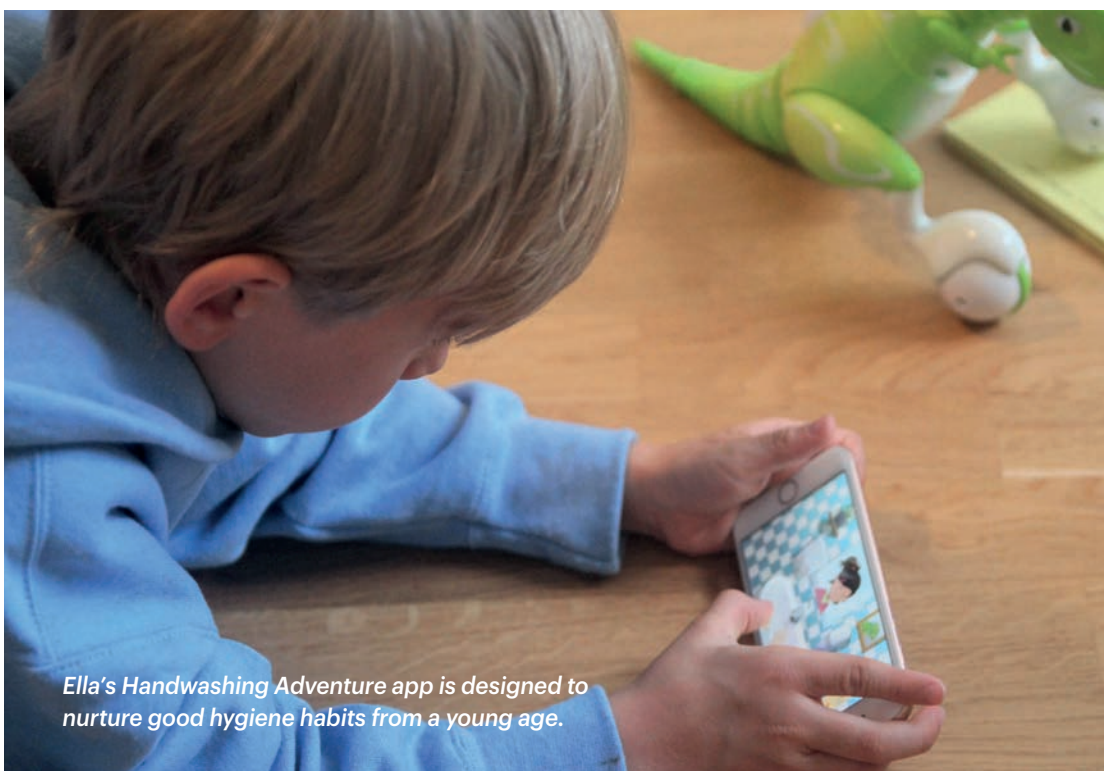
The Ella's Handwashing Adventure app is designed to make handwashing a little more fun for kids – to promote good hygiene practices from an early age.

Teaching good hygiene can be a challenge, but is critical in reducing the spread of colds, flu and viruses. COVID-19 has proven that hand hygiene has never been more important.

To nurture kids' life-long hygiene habits, Essity has advanced the knowledge in day care centers providing toolkits since 2007 and the 'Ella's Hand Washing School' package was launched already in 2013. The package includes a Handwashing Adventure app for smartphones and

tablets, pedagogical material as well as activities to help make handwashing a little more fun. The app has already been downloaded more than 70.000 times globally and is being used in pre-schools and kindergartens around the world.

As shown in the previous Hygiene and Health Report, preschools that have gone through hygiene programs show improved absence rates of between 7-13%<sup>9</sup> - leading to fewer doctors visits and prescriptions for antibiotics, as well as less work days missed by parents.<sup>10</sup> The Ella's Handwashing Adventure app is therefore a valuable tool to teach young children the importance of hand hygiene that creates shared value throughout society.



*Ella's Handwashing Adventure app is designed to nurture good hygiene habits from a young age.*

# Prevention agenda in hospitals and healthcare

The need for hand hygiene and prevention is universal all around the world. Even patients in the most high-tech hospitals are at risk from infections while receiving healthcare. Illnesses caused by healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) result in illnesses and long-term health impacts for hundreds of millions of patients around the world.<sup>11</sup> They occur in all countries but are several times higher in low and middle-income countries than in high-income ones.

According to the WHO<sup>12</sup>, HAIs are directly attributable to 99.000 deaths annually in the US and 37.000 deaths in Europe. In high-income countries, 30% of intensive care unit patients are affected by at least one HAI.

In England, HAIs are estimated to annually cost the National Health Service (NHS) around GBP 2.7 billion by taking up 7.1 million bed days each year.<sup>13</sup> To put this into perspective, HAIs bears about the same cost to the NHS as smoking. Furthermore, the number of beds HAIs take up equates to 21% of NHS bed capacity, which is equivalent to 38 average size hospitals in the UK.<sup>14</sup>

## Hand hygiene is the first line of defense

“Hand hygiene is the patient’s first line of defense because if we can prevent bacteria getting into the patient’s body in the first place, then we don’t need to deal with infections,” explains Dinah Gould, Professor of Nursing at London City University. “It is also affordable compared with other interventions and it is something that anyone can do.”

On the World Hand Hygiene Day in 2020, the WHO designated 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife”. The importance of hand hygiene for nurses, midwives, as well as all front-line healthcare staff is an integrated part of their everyday work. However, studies have shown that healthcare professionals non-compliance with hand hygiene routines is a major problem in a hospital setting, often due to stressful situations or lack of hand sanitizer products nearby.

Help is available to empower and support healthcare staff. Actionable recommendations and guidelines can contribute to elevating overall hygiene, such as tool-kits that include proper handwashing, hand sanitizing procedures and downloadable instructions.<sup>15</sup>

### What is a healthcare-associated infection?

Healthcare-associated infection (HAI), also referred to as ‘nosocomial’ or ‘hospital’ infection, is an infection occurring in a patient during the process of care in a hospital or other health-care facility that was not present or incubating at the time of admission. Patients may also be infected in nursing homes, elderly facilities or doctor’s offices.

### Dinah Gould

Dinah is Professor of Nursing at London City University, London, UK. She has specialized in the role of hand hygiene in preventing infections since the 1980s. Her work has been important in raising the profile of hand hygiene as an essential solution to prevent infections – both in the UK and beyond.

Studies show that manual observations of hospital hand hygiene behavior can serve as a physical reminder and educational opportunity, but the fact that people tend to change their behavior when being observed makes it difficult to draw conclusions on hand washing compliance from manual observation.<sup>16</sup>

“Hand hygiene is the patient’s first line of defense to prevent bacteria getting into the patient’s body in the first place.”

Dinah Gould, Professor of Nursing at London City University

## Following routines is key

Knowledge, training and culture are key to improving hand hygiene routines in a hospital environment. As in other areas of society, digital solutions can play an important role. More specifically, electronic monitoring systems (EMS) are one potential solution that can help provide more accurate monitoring of hospital hand hygiene practices.

Dinah Gould supported Essity with the development of the Tork Hand Hygiene Compliance Monitoring System and their observational studies at a hospital in UK. This involved advising on how the system should work and helping to define compliant and non-compliant hand hygiene events to ensure the right things are done by healthcare professionals at the right time.

Studies have shown that electronic monitoring systems can provide healthcare professionals with more accurate data that can be presented to staff in real time to help with awareness and improve hand hygiene compliance.

## The entire care environment matters

Methods and techniques to reduce the spread of viruses and infection in hospitals and long-term care facilities do not just apply to healthcare professionals. Both patients and visitors are also important, along with cleaning staff that have a special role to play.

“It’s not only about everyone working conscientiously with hand hygiene, the entire hospital environment needs to be clean too,” says Gould. “Hospital cleaning staff play an essential role in infection control by keeping surfaces clean and following stringent routines, and we have seen issues arise when cleaning contractors do not adequately train their staff.”

It is well known that implementing infrastructure or solutions without proper training and information can jeopardize investments. A hand hygiene compliance system takes this one step further by reassuring the return on investment. Moreover, it helps and empowers

### Tork Hand Hygiene Compliance Monitoring System

Essity, together with studies and learnings from an acute medical ward in a NHS trust in London, UK and Sahlgrenska University Hospital in Sweden, has tested and developed the automatic hand hygiene monitoring system (Tork Hand Hygiene Compliance Monitoring System). The system measures individual hand hygiene compliance automatically, objectively and continuously in clinical practice in one ward. The measured results have been fed back to the nurses in real-time, both individually and as a team. The preliminary results from Sahlgrenska University Hospital in Sweden show that the compliance at the ward has more than doubled. This is a significant achievement of the ward and a strong indication that the Tork Hand Hygiene Compliance Monitoring System can inspire a ward to more than double their compliance rate.



staff in their everyday efforts to advance care and secure a safe hospital and long-term care environment, both for patients and visitors, as well as cleaning and health-care staff.

“I think hygiene will become an even more important part of the solution in the future,” concludes Gould. “With COVID-19, we have recently seen that people are very interested in how the virus spreads, and people are much more aware of their own hand hygiene as a result of this – both in hospitals and in everyday life.”

Hospitals should provide a safe and hygienic environment both for receivers and givers of care. Even before the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, 57% of people were worried about getting sick from hospitals according to the Essity survey. These are global issues close to people’s hearts and it is time to accelerate action. There are opportunities to promote more hygiene prevention measures and empower healthcare professionals – all in order to improve health-care outcomes and save lives.



## Fear of infections in hospitals

**57%** are worried that a lack of proper hygiene practices in hospitals might expose them to multi-resistant bacteria

**China, Mexico and India** are the countries where people are most worried about antimicrobial resistance

**47%** are worried or very worried about antimicrobial resistance

*From the Essity Survey. Read more about the survey on page 7.*

# Antimicrobial resistance and infection control

Another important factor adding to the toll of HAIs is the increase in antimicrobial resistance (AMR). More than 70% of bacteria causing HAIs are resistant to at least one of the drugs most commonly used to treat them.<sup>17</sup> HAIs are closely linked to AMR and are often caused by an increased risk of resistant strains of bacteria found in infections. Fighting HAIs is an important, preventive measure against AMR.

AMR has become an increasingly serious threat to health care systems all over the world. It describes the ability of a pathogenic microorganisms to develop resistance to common antimicrobial medication. As a result, treatment options are limited and/or ineffective and patients suffer unnecessarily. AMR already contributes to 50,000 deaths a year in Europe.<sup>18</sup> The UN warns that drug-resistant diseases could cause 10 million deaths each year by 2050 and inflict damage to the global economy as catastrophic as the 2008-2009 global financial crisis.<sup>19</sup>

“Antimicrobial resistance is a significant threat to humanity,” says Gould. “Here, hand hygiene can be an effective preventative measure, but it is also essential that doctors are educated not to over-prescribe antibiotics, as well as raising awareness among the public that antibiotics should not always be expected.”

## Treating infected wounds

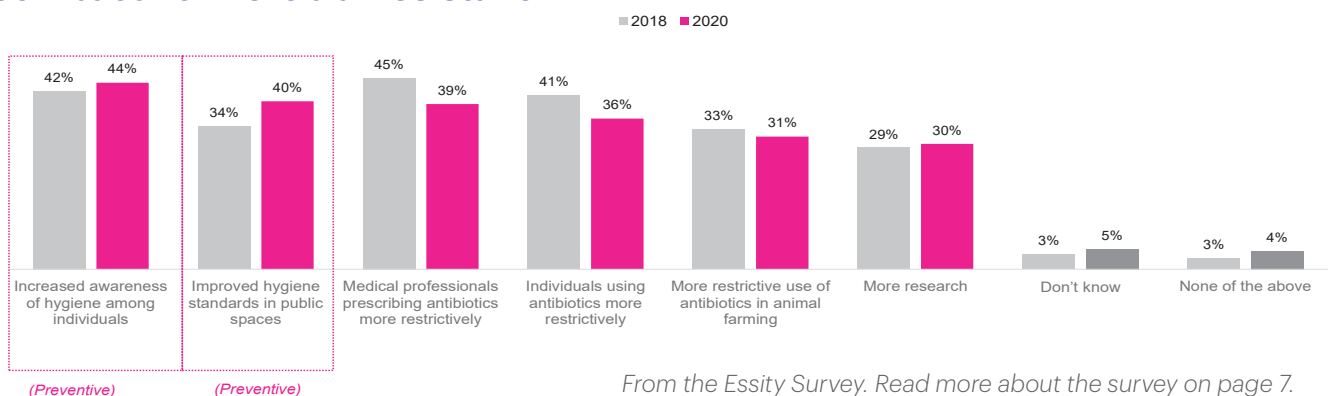
In the context of wounds, bacterial colonization and development of antimicrobial resistance can contribute to delayed healing and represents a major challenge for clinicians.

Fighting AMR starts with prevention of infections through general hygiene measures and hand hygiene of the health care professional. When it comes to the treatment of an infected wound, antibiotics should be used with care and can often rather be avoided in local application to not foster AMR. “Non-medicated dressings with bacterial binding actions to remove bacteria and fungi from a wound provide several advantages here”, says Prof. Dr Karsten Hemmrich, Vice President Health & Medical Solutions, Essity. “You can address infection prevention and infection treatment with the same measurement, without the risk for antimicrobial resistance”.

The fight against AMR will remain a joint effort between health care professionals, health care companies, medical societies, health associations and politicians alike. The awareness of the dangers of AMR and its impact, and initiated measures to limit its spread through respective treatment guidelines are first steps on this journey.

According to the Essity survey, more people required preventive measures to combat multi-resistant bacteria in 2020 than in 2018.

## Preventive measures wanted to combat antimicrobial resistant



Q: What of the following do you think would make the biggest difference in helping to stop the spread of resistance to antibiotics (i.e. multi-resistant bacteria) where you live?

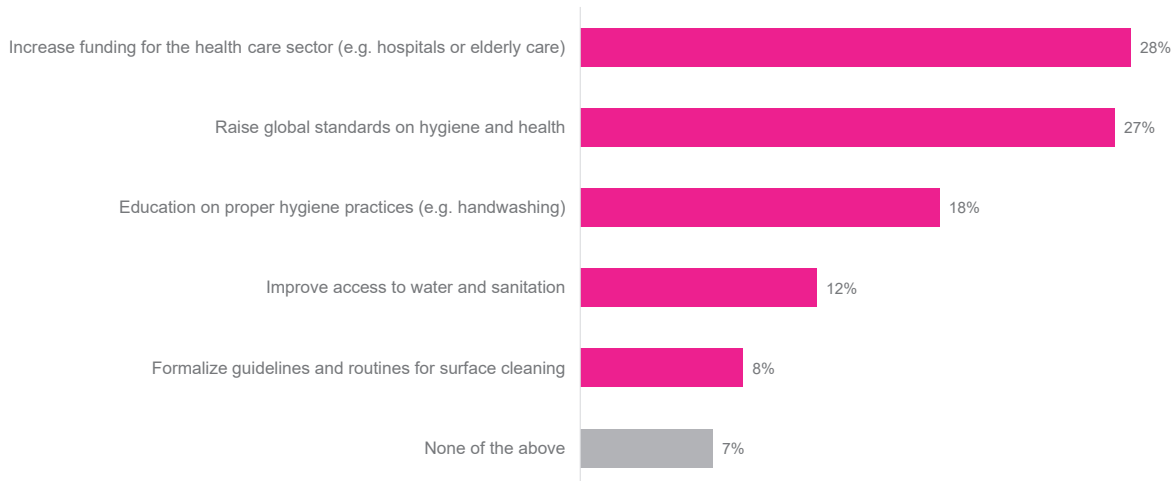
## What is antimicrobial resistance?

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when micro-organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change in ways that make medication ineffective. When micro-organisms become resistant to most antimicrobials they are often referred to as ‘superbugs’. As a result, the medicines become ineffective and infections persist in the body.

# Hygiene and health issues high on the public agenda

Viruses and multi-resistant microbial strains put pressure on policy makers to act to protect people. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted how the action – and inaction – of policy makers to protect their populations is scrutinized by their electorate.

## Most wanted political measures to improve hygiene and health worldwide



Learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, what do you think is the best preventive measure governments can take to improve hygiene and health worldwide?

*From the Essity Survey. Read more about the survey on page 7.*

The Essity survey highlighted what people think are the best preventive measures governments can take to improve hygiene and health in a post-COVID world. In countries with a general high level of access to water and sanitation, over half of the respondents answered either to increase funding for the healthcare sector or raising the global standards on hygiene and health.





## Collaboration and innovation made development of face masks possible

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Essity saw a growing need to keep its employees and their families around the world safe from infection. A speedy innovation process switched factories that normally produce personal hygiene products to produce face mask.

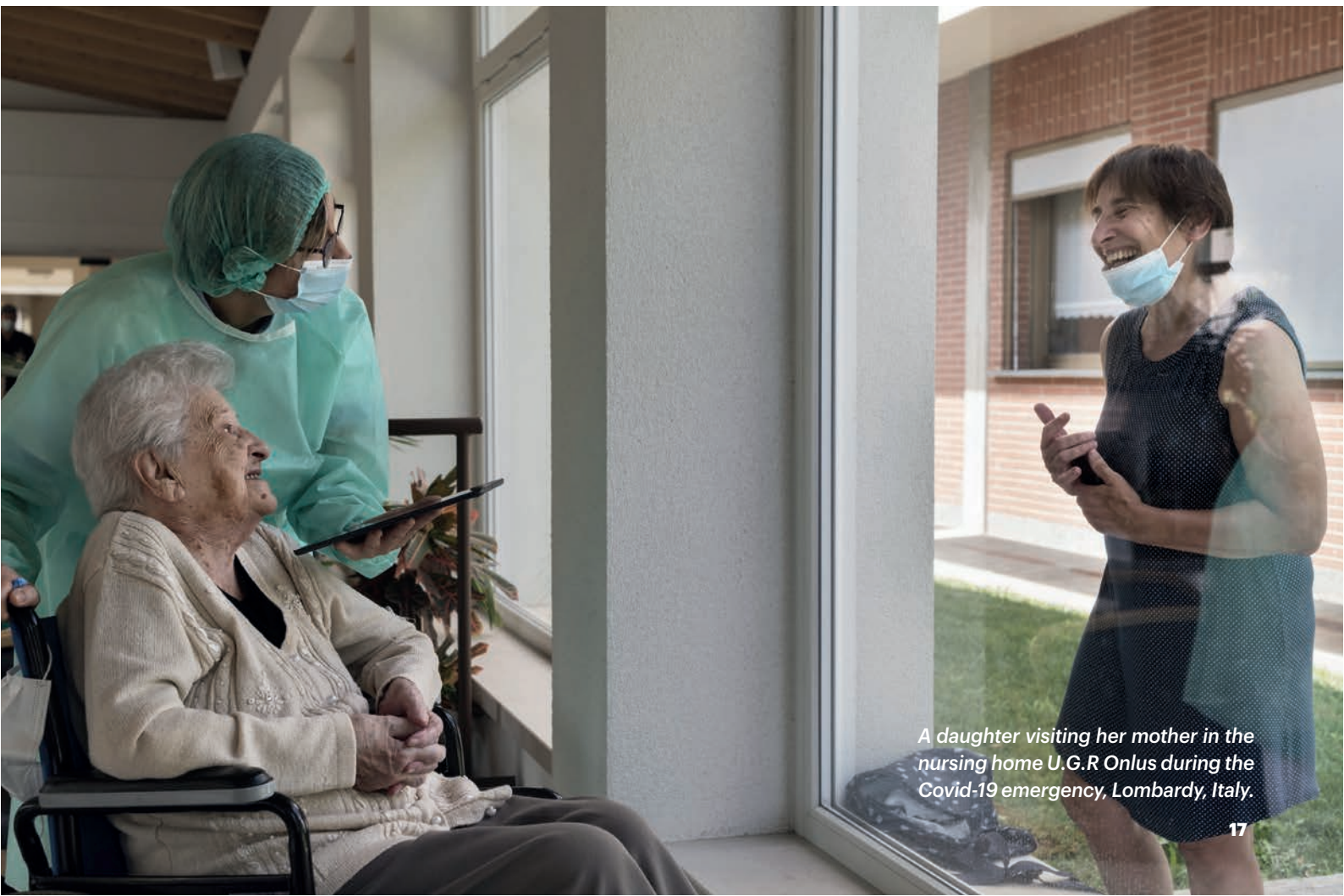
“The key priority for us was to keep our people safe while keeping our manufacturing running to be able to continue supply essential hygiene and health products to people around the globe. So, in developing the masks for internal use, we put together resources from different functions to figure out how to make them from existing assets in the shortest possible time. We worked as one team delivering something that in normal conditions would have been considered impossible. We also managed fast ways to distribute the masks in the most affected locations at the time, like Spain and Italy.” Donato Giorgio, President Global Manufacturing at Essity, recalls.

Thanks to many fast and bold decisions from top management, paired with the commitment of employees to work in new ways and around the clock, Essity managed to develop face masks that were approved within weeks. The internal need was covered for the time being.

Shortly after, the Swedish Government made a request to the national industry for help with providing protective equipment such as face masks at a time when Swedish healthcare and elderly care was experiencing a face mask shortage.

“All of us at Essity are part of a community, and therefore, it was natural that we wanted to help if we could. Through a clear and open dialogue with the authorities on the need and requirements we could, together with RISE, a Swedish research institute, ensure that our face masks met the specific requirements for the healthcare sector,” says Giorgio. “Within weeks, we were able to respond to the request. We donate one million face masks to the healthcare sector on top of the two million that were procured.”

After the start of the pandemic during spring 2020, the production of face masks was scaled up with investments in new machines and processes in Europe and Latin America. Thanks to an extremely rapid adaption and development, Essity can now provide face masks to millions of people.



*A daughter visiting her mother in the nursing home U.G.R Onlus during the Covid-19 emergency, Lombardy, Italy.*



*Farmer Janeth Sitilenie teaches her daughter to use a tippy tap handwashing station next to their latrine in Botoret village, Kenya.*

# The added value of investing in hygiene and health

There are considerable economic benefits from investing in water and sanitation. According to the WHO, these include an overall estimated gain of 1.5% of global GDP.<sup>20</sup>

The economic benefits of investing in hygiene and health, should be measured in terms of return on investment (ROI), as such investments decrease healthcare costs and increase productivity.<sup>21</sup> The WHO estimates that every dollar invested in sanitation provides a return on investment for society of US\$ 5.50 due to lower health costs, more productivity, and fewer premature deaths.<sup>22</sup> As shown in earlier reports<sup>23</sup>, handwashing stands out in comparison with other public health interventions. Research has found that a national handwashing behavioral change program would provide a 35-fold return on investment in China, and a 92-fold return in India.<sup>24</sup>

## Stepping up financing

To reach the SDG 6.2 target of safely managed sanitation, there is an urgent need to globally prioritize sanitation, hygiene and menstrual health. Therefore, WSSCC is evolving into the Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF) by 2021.

Today, 1 in 3 people in the world do not have basic handwashing facilities at home, and 70% of health workers are not able to routinely wash their hands at work. “We know now, more than ever, that this is unacceptable and a serious risk to everyone’s health. We have the opportunity now to make a difference and protect everyone’s health and well-being,” says O’Neill. In 2019, less than 15% of countries surveyed had policies, costed plans or adequate

financial and human resources to address their rural or urban sanitation gaps. To reach national urban and rural sanitation targets, countries face funding gaps of 74% and 59% respectively<sup>25</sup>.

“It is only with sustained and well targeted investments in countries, that we will see a tangible shift in attitudes and practices. I am proud to say that the Fund is ready to step up as a financing mechanism to fill the void in international response to sanitation and hygiene where it matters most – in schools, healthcare facilities and homes,” concludes O’Neill.

## The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund

The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund is a global financing organization designed to raise, catalyze and invest resources to accelerate delivery of sustainable sanitation, hygiene and menstrual health services for all. The Fund will invest in countries where the sanitation and hygiene needs are greatest and yet are least able to respond. Read more on page 5.



*Dominic O'Neill, Executive Director of the Sanitation and Hygiene Fund*

## Engaging with the ministers of finance



Catarina de Albuquerque is the CEO of the Sanitation and Water for All global partnership.

**Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) is a global partnership of governments, donors, civil society organizations and other development partners working together to coordinate high-level action, improve accountability and use scarce resources more effectively.**

Catarina de Albuquerque welcomes the Hygiene and Health Report, and its call to the prioritization of hygiene and health for all.

“In 12 years working in this sector, I have never seen hygiene so high on the political and media agenda. It may have unfortunately taken a global pandemic to raise the world’s awareness of its importance, but Sanitation and Water for All partners are committed to making the best of a bad situation, working to use this interest to push the sector forward in the longer term,” says de Albuquerque.

As COVID-19 demonstrates, we are only as healthy as the most vulnerable members of society. The economic argument for investment needs to go hand in hand with ensuring the elimination of inequalities. Women in particular suffer from inadequate access to water, sanitation and hygiene due to their traditional caring roles, preventing them from using their time more productively. Barriers that keep women from improving

their lives need to be broken, no matter if the barriers are related to legislation, policies, strategies or cultural norms. Sanitation and Water for All are doing this by using advocacy for the prioritization and financing of services for the people who are left behind.

“Currently, we are increasing our engagement with the ministers of finance. The objective is to effectively integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into the economic and health programs needed to manage and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent future health crises. The message is clear – investment in water, sanitation and hygiene is among the most cost effective, considering the reduction in costs for healthcare and prevented loss of education and productivity,” says de Albuquerque.

“Resilience to future crises depends on action taken now, so let us ensure this is not a missed opportunity to achieve our vision of water, sanitation and hygiene for all, always and everywhere,” de Albuquerque concludes.



# Calls for action to save and improve lives

**The situations where hygiene and health can save and improve lives are numerous, but so are the global challenges. In this chapter, we have chosen to focus on global hygiene and health issues where there is a lack of progress, but also where WSSCC and Essity have experience, knowledge and can share solutions. We can all contribute, drive change and accelerate action, but we especially ask policy makers to consider the following calls for action:**

- **Put people first.** The needs of the individual should always be at the center of public policy to secure the human right for basic hygiene and health for everyone. In healthcare, the needs of the individual must be reflected to empower both the receiver and giver of care.
- **Establish a prevention agenda.** Every country should establish actions to improve hygiene, health and sanitation as a fundamental prevention agenda. Investment in preventive actions such as handwashing can reduce additional healthcare costs, improve productivity and save lives. Access to clean water, safe, clean and private hygiene and sanitation facilities, and essential sanitary products for all is key, supported by information and training.
- **Invest in hygiene and health.** Prioritize and adequately fund hygiene and health policies – especially supporting people at different stages of life or those in vulnerable situations. These investments create shared value in terms of the individual, care provider and societal gains. Tenders should allow for innovation and digital solutions to enable technological evolution and optimize the use of resources. Supporting and funding research in these areas is also important to understand where the gaps or areas for improvement are. Research has found that, for example, a national handwashing behavioral change program would provide a 35-fold return on investment in China, and a 92-fold return in India.
- **Secure ownership.** Often hygiene issues are everyone's and yet nobody's business. Clear ownership is needed, as well as accountability. Prioritization and appropriate financing are key to improve global hygiene. Ownership from policy makers is required to realize the true societal value.
- **Improve hygiene and health standards.** Stakeholders at local, national and global level, should work together to establish and implement hygiene and health practices, guidelines and standards. These must be supported by education and training for users, caretakers etc. Innovation and digitalization within the sector provide disruptive opportunities for progress.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



# More inclusive societies

**Societal exclusion and isolation due to hygiene and health challenges is a global problem that can happen to anyone, anywhere and at any time in life. The needs of the marginalized, the vulnerable, and the discriminated in hygiene and health related decision-making is often overlooked. Stigmatization and taboos are other obstacles to achieve more inclusive societies. Two common and natural conditions that cause exclusion are menstruation and incontinence, which affect the every-day life of billions of people all around the world. There are however, initiatives and solutions to break the obstacles and barriers.**

Hygiene-related barriers can differ in different parts of the world, but the outcome of exclusion is remarkably similar. Typical barriers include environmental barriers, social factors and fears of sexual violence that can contribute to sanitation-related psychosocial stress for individuals.<sup>26</sup> The social and psychological impacts of hygiene and health-related exclusion are huge. According to the United Nations, half the world lacks access to essential health services, such as family planning and infant immunization.<sup>27</sup> Even in some countries with good healthcare provision, many people lack access due to their inability to afford healthcare or because of cultural taboos.

## Empower women and challenge social norms

WaterAid and its partners are making real progress on changing behaviors and social norms by empowering women and the marginalized.

Global hygiene and health initiatives, together with water and sanitation efforts, provide a platform to empower women and strengthen gender equality outcomes. WaterAid, together with colleagues and local partners, has made some crucial water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and gender achievements. This has included testing integrated menstrual health solutions with sexual and reproductive health and rights actors; encouraging men to do their share of WASH-related household labor, and increasing women's leadership in WASH governance systems. To move from these successes to achieving 2030 hygiene, WASH and gender aspirations, WaterAid will continue to strive towards gender transformative practice, building evidence of what works, and influencing policy makers to create space and listen to women and other marginalized voices.

**SDG Target 10.2:** By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

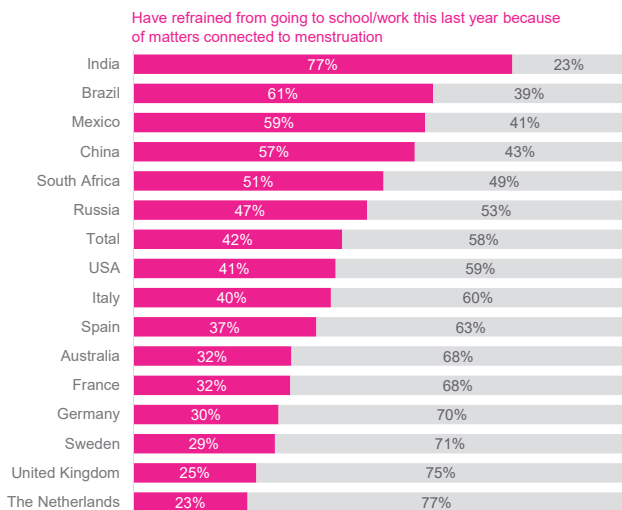


# Menstruation and personal hygiene should not be a barrier to well-being

At any given moment, about every fourth woman of menstruating age in the world has her period. For many women, this does not prevent them in their everyday life. For too many, the lack of a private space for washing and managing their menstruation, sanitary products to absorb or collect the blood or the ability to dispose of sanitary materials acts as barriers to community participation.

The Essity survey shows that millions of workdays and days in school are lost each year because women refrain from attending. Beside the medical reasons, social stigma and lack of basic access to toilet, washrooms and sanitary products explain the absence. This includes 15 million days of absence in the US, 6.1 million in Mexico, 1.7 million in France and 645.000 in Australia.

## 2 out of 5 women have refrained from going to school or work the last year due to menstruation



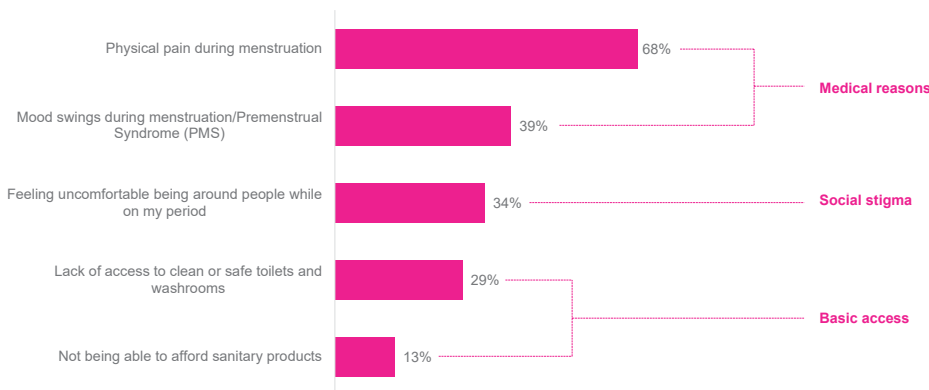
**42%**

have refrained from going to school/work because of matters connected to menstruation

Question: Have you refrained from going to school/work this last year because of any of the following reasons related to menstruation?  
Filter: Women

From the Essity Survey. Read more about the survey on page 7.

## 3 in 10 of those who have refrained from going to school or work lack access to clean and safe toilets



Question: Have you refrained from going to school/work this last year because of any of the following reasons related to menstruation?: "Have refrained"

From the Essity Survey. Read more about the survey on page 7.

Considering the many women with special needs and disabilities, women who live in conflict-affected areas or in the aftermath of natural disasters to mention a few, they often have even less access to the facilities and resources they need to manage their menstruation.



## Break the stigma of women's bodies

In many societies, there is still a culture of shame associated with menstruation. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of World Population 2019 Report, menstruation-related stigmas reinforce the notion that women are inferior to men, which can be used to justify preventing girls and women from going to school, cooking and attending religious ceremonies.<sup>28</sup>

In recent years, there has been a strong movement to break the stigma of menstruation. Women and men all over the world have been speaking up about menstruation and what is needed to break the related barriers to community participation. This has paved the way for a future where menstruation is recognized a normal bodily function, and as a sign of health than can be discussed openly.

Everyone can play a role in breaking down stigmas and myths. A new global research study<sup>29</sup> reveals that two thirds of women who experience miscarriage, endometriosis, fertility issues and menopause would find it easier to cope with these experiences by being open with family and friends. And yet, the same research found that half of women feel society wants them to keep silent about their experience and half of women felt that staying silent about their issues damaged their mental health.

It is important to create a more open culture to generate a virtuous circle of sharing and listening to bring about individual, cultural and ultimately institutional change. Diverse stakeholders have different opportunities to break barriers and challenge norms.

## Everyone is needed to break taboos

Businesses can contribute to breaking taboos in many ways. Besides providing products and services that lead to inclusive societies, companies can support actors such as civil society, academics or policy makers with their product and market insights. Businesses can also use their broad reach to empower people and break social stigmas directly.

For years, the Essity brand for Feminine care, Libresse, has been at the forefront of breaking taboos and stereotypes affecting well-being and health around the globe. The award-winning #BloodNormal initiative in 2017, which reached over 800 million people, tackled the stigma around periods and turned the socially acceptable 'blue liquid' visual depiction into the 'real' red.

With 'Viva La Vulva' in 2018, symbolic singing vulvas called out the body shaming culture that is prevalent today. In 2020, the latest initiative, #wombstories, highlights the

Chris Bobel, Professor of Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Massachusetts and author of *The Managed Body* examines the intersection of social movements, gender, health and embodiment. "Girls need to be able to live, study, work, and play in communities where menstruation is no longer deployed as ammunition. Menstruation must be read as a naturally occurring biological process. De-weaponized. To this end, everyone surrounding girls – boys, teachers, family members, religious leaders, policy makers, and so on – needs to challenge menstrual stigma." says Bobel.

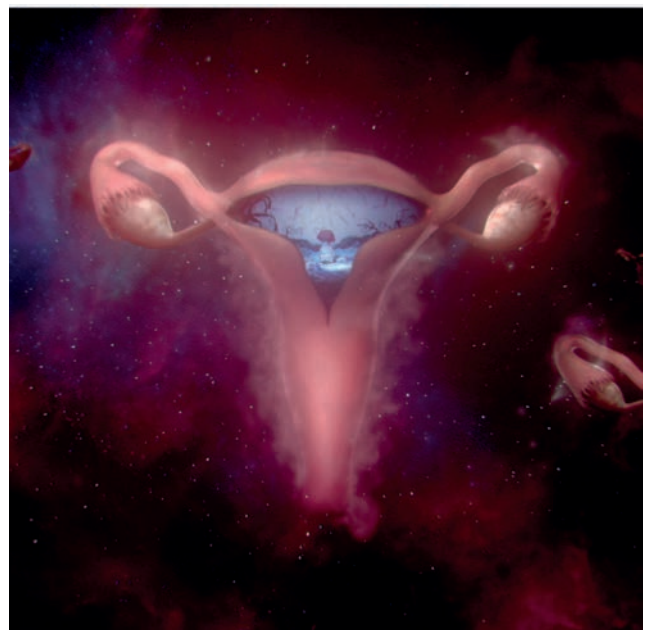


Image from the Libresse initiative #wombstories giving a voice to the unseen, unspoken and truths about women's bodies.

unseen, unspoken and unknown stories about periods, miscarriage, endometrioses, peril, menopause, vulvas and wombs by inviting people tell their own personal stories. The Golden Globe decorated director of #wombstories, Nisha Ganatra, explains the importance of #wombstories: "I feel particularly drawn to this project. The work I feel most passionate about is the work that meaningfully resists outmoded social norms that no longer fit the cultural moment but persist nonetheless."

Another example of reaching out on hygiene and health issues is the initiative 'Hygiene is our right'. UNICEF in Mexico and Essity have collaborated since 2016 to increase dialogue about menstruation and hygiene issues among young people in the country. This collaboration has reached 7,5 million people via various channels in Mexico.

## Empowering women to build toilets in Nepal

A female-led neighborhood group in Pokharigaun, Nepal, is championing basic sanitation in the village to ensure access for every household.

Fifteen years ago, ten women in the Nepali village of Pokharigaun stood up to change the behavior of their neighbors and went on to become the driving force for promoting the importance of sanitation. Sunita Gurung, a mother of three, is one of the founding members that formed a neighborhood group in the village.

She reflects on 13 years of her married life living in an open defecation community and cleaning up feces outside her house as an obedient and decent housewife. Like the other villagers, Gurung was unaware that pathogens from fecal matters often cause sickness. But worries about the family's health began, as she and her newborn baby often had to seek treatment for repeated infections.

The turning point for Gurung was a visit to another village, where she used toilets with running water for the very first time. She felt empowered to act not only in her household but the entire community to end open defecation. Now the neighborhood group, comprising 42 members, leads the drive to ensure that basic sanitation is accessible to all the 54 village households.



WSSCC is a partner supporting the implementation of Nepal's sanitation campaign – an intensive national push to achieve a dramatic transformation of the country's sanitation and hygiene practices through a behavior change approach.



*Sunita Gurung is a founding member of a neighborhood group working to bring basic sanitation to all households in Pokharigaun, Nepal.*

## Champion reaching out to hearing-impaired

Champions such as Patricia Mulongo are at the forefront of breaking taboos in emerging markets around the world. Patricia Mulongo is the only hearing-impaired menstrual hygiene management (MHM) trainer in Kenya. She trains people with disabilities to show that menstruation doesn't have to leave anyone behind. As she suddenly lost her hearing at the age of 13, and did not learn sign language until she was 18, Mulongo was excluded from learning about menstruation. Now in her early forties, Mulongo is an MHM champion training people with disabilities. She participated in the first national MHM Training of

Trainers in Kenya organized by WSSCC, UNICEF and the Kenyan Ministry of Health. A fashion designer by trade, Mulongo was identified through her links with the Deaf Women Empowerment (DWE) community organization. In just under a year, Mulongo has trained more than 200 people. She reaches out to people in schools, social events, through churches and the community. "MHM has stolen my heart and I make sure to bring up the topic every time I meet people as my aim is to reach as many hearing-impaired people as I can," Mulongo signs.

## Menstruation – a human rights issue?

Under the Women's Convention, practices related to menstruation may constitute discrimination if they affect "fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field". In this sense, lack of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene products to properly manage menstruation may constitute a human rights violation<sup>30</sup>.



Participants in the Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) workshop review learning materials. Both women and men take part in the workshop as a way break taboos on menstruation in society.

# Policy makers act on menstrual health issues

The silence and taboos on issues such as menstruation, incontinence and other stigmatizing conditions, such as lymphedema, need to be broken. Effective hygiene and health practices come from shifting behavior and social norms, which involves a long-term commitment from all of us. Policy makers and opinion leaders have a particularly important role to play and political leadership is required. In some countries, the focus on menstruation has already led to governmental initiatives and actions. Below are two examples of how governments have taken action on menstrual health issues.

## Kenya paves the way with Menstrual Hygiene Policy

The Government of Kenya is providing more robust support for menstrual challenges faced by girls and women throughout the nation after approving a landmark policy dedicated to menstrual health and hygiene in November 2019. The stand-alone policy aims to scale up national Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) for those in need.

In a statement issued by the President's Strategic Communications Unit, the Government of Kenya explicitly acknowledged menstrual health and hygiene as a rights issue, bringing it into "the mainstream of the country's health and development agenda by considering the prevailing social, economic, cultural and demographic contexts of women and girls."

Neville Okwaro, a WSSCC MHM trainer and consultant with the Ministry of Health WASH Hub, commended the government's decision. According to Okwaro, the new

MHM policy will help integrate MHM into existing state programs such as Anti-Female Genital Mutilation campaigns, campaigns against early child marriages and gender-based violence, and notably the Beyond Zero campaign that is spearheaded by the country's First Lady to address issues of child and maternal health.

The policy formulation process has been ongoing since 2016 with a first draft of the MHM policy developed by a technical working group, including Amref Health Africa, Kenya Water for Health Organization, UNICEF, WASH Alliance Kenya, World Vision, WSSCC and Zana Africa with support from the Ministry of Health. With the new policy put in place, key actions for effective policy implementation can begin, including multisectoral and stakeholder efforts to promote implementation, commitment to meaningful resources and investment, and clear measures to ensure that no one is left behind.



## UK government breaks barriers on menstruation

Period poverty is a widespread issue in the UK, and recent demonstrations and campaigns have brought about national media coverage as well as governmental initiatives. One initiative is the cross-sectoral Period Poverty Taskforce, initiated by the former Minister for Women and Equalities, Penny Mordaunt.

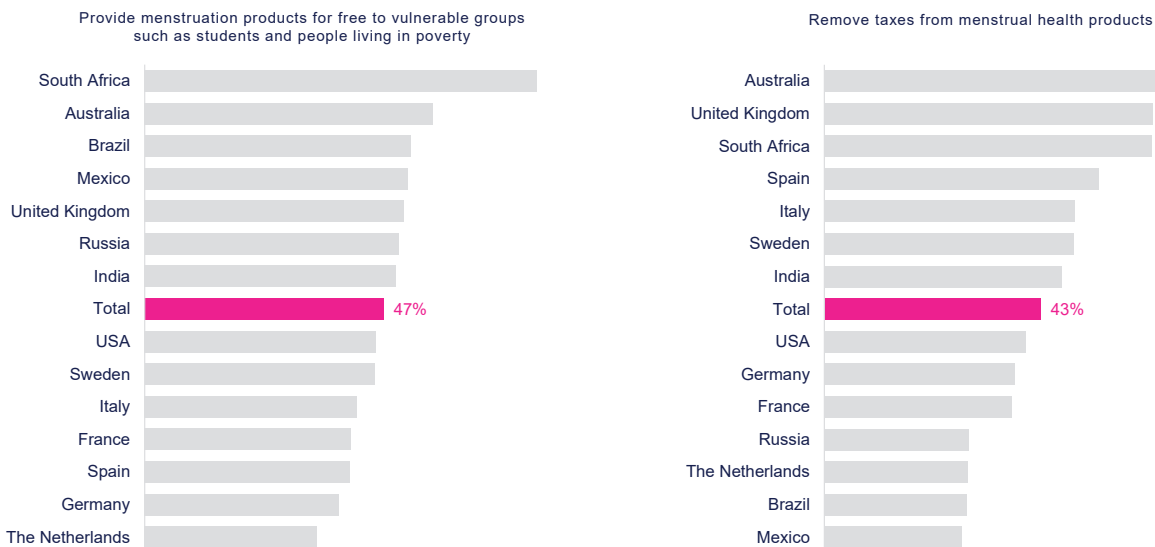
In 2019, the UK government announced that period products in schools, hospitals and police custody will be free for women and girls. The Taskforce, including members from grass-root organizations, businesses, public bodies, academics and social enterprises, was set up to build on this work, looking at where accessibility is an issue for women and girls. The Taskforce has since concluded that tackling stigma and shame around periods is just as important as creating access to related products.

At its first meeting in July 2019, Mordaunt stated that “for too long women and girls in the UK have faced unnecessary adversity around their periods, that is why we have formed this new Taskforce.”

Since the Taskforce formed, it has held regular meetings in workstreams with objectives to address the stigma surrounding menstruation. In its first phase, the workstream has further looked into the roots of the stigma.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Taskforce has had less meetings. However, all members are keen to continue the collaboration, especially since the issue of period poverty is only likely to have grown due to the societal consequences of COVID-19.

## Wanted measures to improve menstrual health



Question: Some might argue that the government has a very important role in ensuring access to health and hygiene for its people. In which of the following ways do you believe that the government and/or public authorities should engage in menstrual health? Filter: Women.

From the Essity Survey. Read more about the survey on page 7.

In the Essity survey, 47% believe that menstruation products should be provided free of charge to students and vulnerable groups (people living in poverty) and 43% think that taxes on menstrual products should be removed.



**SDG Target 5 focus on Gender Equality.** In SDG 5 C it is underlined to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

# Break the stigma on incontinence and improve everyday life

## Effective continence care key to good health

If incontinence was a country, it would be the third largest in the world, since 400 million people are affected by it. Almost 42% of people above 65 with daily incontinence are dependent on care of others and living at home.<sup>31</sup> Regardless of whether individuals with incontinence require a caregiver or not, they should be supported to be able to handle their incontinence (managing toileting and changing incontinence products) as far as possible by themselves.

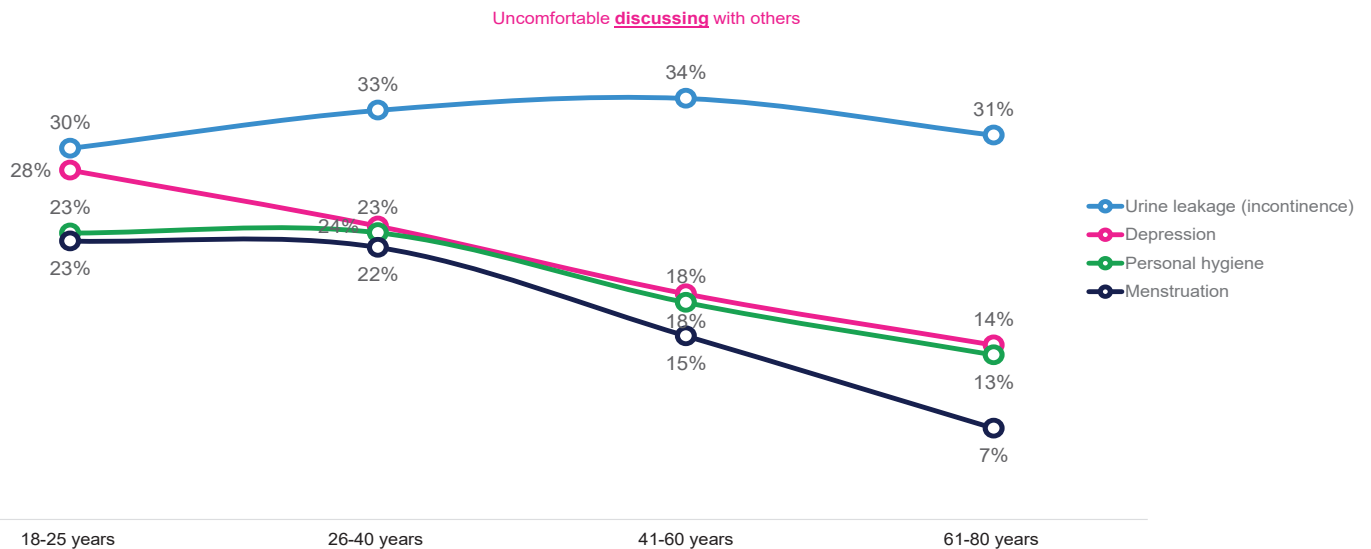
This is down to three reasons. First, self-management leads to less dependency on others, increasing dignity and well-being for the individual. Secondly, individuals who are able to self-manage their incontinence are more likely to function better in social context (e.g. at work), thus increasing their contribution to society. Thirdly, it places fewer demands on society, both in terms of people with incontinence needing less assistance from care giving relatives and professional

caregivers, as well as delaying or even avoiding institutional care. To live a more independent and dignified life for both the individual with incontinence and their caregivers self-management presents itself as an effective way that also creates a value to society, the shared value. Read more in the Essity report Shared value: Self-management of incontinence, that you find at [www.essity.com](http://www.essity.com).

When people are able to stay independent and continue to live at home, not needing to be institutionalized, there is value both for the person and society. Effective continence care through self-management increases the value for all actors involved – it helps to improve not just the quality of life of those suffering from incontinence and their relatives, but also positively impacts the care efficiency at point of care and thereby the use of available resources.



## Perceived stigmatization reduces with age - except for incontinence



Question: Some topics related to personal hygiene and health might be difficult to discuss with other people. Which of the following topics would you be most uncomfortable discussing with others?

*From the Essity Survey. Read more about the survey on page 7.*

The Essity survey shows that 33% of respondents find incontinence the most difficult issue to talk about, even more difficult than issues such as depression and personal hygiene. The Essity survey also shows that incontinence remains a stigma in many parts of the world.

Incontinence also stands out when it comes to the development of perceived stigmatization with age. Generally, the older people get, the more comfortable they are to discuss

topics related to personal hygiene and health. The exception is incontinence, which 61 to 80 year-old-people feel even slightly more uncomfortable discussing than 18 to 25-year-old-people.

Many people with incontinence suffer both from the perceived societal stigma and the physical implications. Together, they can have a substantial impact on the everyday life of a person suffering from incontinence.

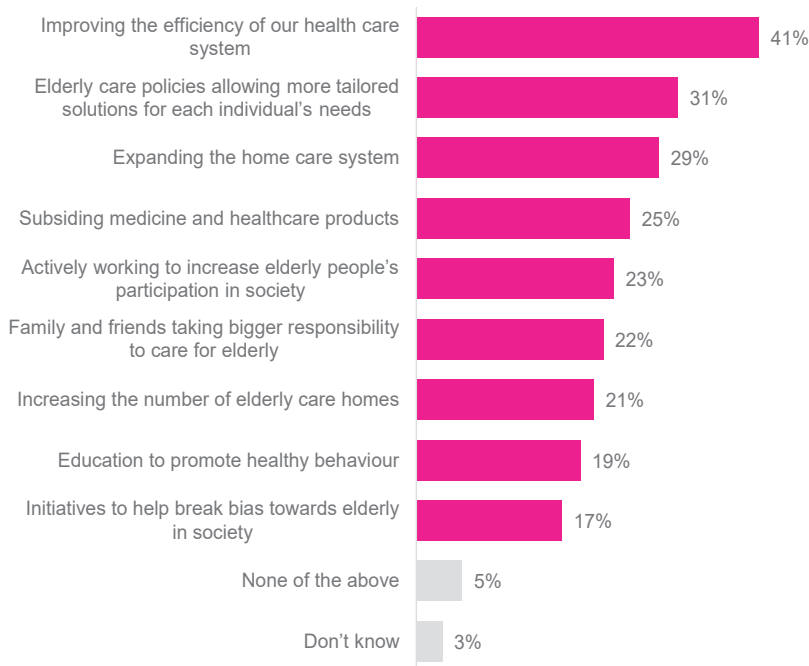
**Incontinence effects all ages. Here is a calculation from the Essity survey findings on number of work or school days lost per year because of incontinence:**

<b>Germany</b>	<b>2 million</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>2 million</b>
<b>Russia</b>	<b>19 million</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>290 thousand</b>

*From the Essity Survey.  
Read more about the survey on page 7.*

## Improving efficiency is considered key to improve the health of elderly people

To find out how the public thinks health of elderly people can be improved, the Essity survey posed the question; what of the following do you consider most important to improve the health of elderly people in your country? Improving the efficiency of the health care system was selected the most important element. The survey also shows that person-centered care is important as well as actively increasing elderly people's participation in society.



Question: Which of the following do you consider most important to improve the health of elderly people in your country?

*From the Essity Survey. Read more about the survey on page 7.*

## Person-centered care - putting people first and drives efficiency

Person-centered care is a well-established concept in Sweden that can empower both people living with incontinence and healthcare professionals. In 2015, legislation in Sweden was passed to ensure patients have the right to co-decision making. The Swedish person-centered care standard inspired a European standard that was launched in the summer 2020 and is currently being implemented in 13 countries.<sup>32</sup>

### Helle Wijk

Professor in nursing at the Institute of Health and Care Science, Sahlgrenska Academy at Gothenburg University. She is also a researcher at the Gothenburg Person Centered Care Center (GPCC). Wijk's area of interest is in geriatric nursing with a special focus on dementia, incontinence and how the living environment helps or hinders certain care processes.

Person-centered care differs from traditional treatment models that more see the person as the receiver of a medical intervention. The concept typically involves developing health plans together with the person to see and understand the whole person pathway and secure the best possible care all across the process.

"The great thing about person-centered care is that it informs and involves all parties to increase everyone's knowledge and find the best solutions and actions – all to make life as good as it can be for a particular patient," explains Helle Wijk, Professor in nursing at the Institute of Health and Care Science, Sahlgrenska Academy at Gothenburg University. "It's about promoting dialogue and spending time to try different solutions to find out what works best and is 'ok for me'."



### What is a person-centered care?

Person-centered care involves patients actively participating in their own medical treatment in close cooperation with health professionals.

*“Person-centered care starts with person-centered leadership.”*

Helle Wijk, Professor in nursing at the Institute of Health and Care Science

### Empowering nurses in continence care

Nurses and care aides are naturally often closest to the persons and the most active profession in finding continence solutions. A person-centered care approach can help, but they also need to have the tools and knowledge to perform continence assessments and have access to the full offering of solutions available.

“Professional carers in Sweden receive basic continence training, but they need to undergo a 10-week course to have the mandate to prescribe different containment products,” says Wijk. “I believe that many nurses would benefit from the course, which would result in better assessments of the care need for persons with incontinence and ultimately better care.”

Leadership can also have a big impact on empowering and motivating healthcare professionals. “Managers must have respect for and be engaged in their staff as person-centered care starts with person-centered leadership,” says Wijk.



*“Integrated people-centred health services means putting people and communities, not diseases at the heart of health systems, empowering people to take charge of their own health rather than being passive receivers,”*

Portuguese MEP Lidia Pereira, Europe’s People Party (EPP)

## Technological solutions in person-centered continence care

The care for people with incontinence in healthcare is about to transform from a “check and change” approach to more high-tech digitalized solutions, enhancing quality of life of the individuals and improving working conditions for caregivers.

“I believe that technology can promote person’s well-being and actually empower staff to do a better job,” claims Wijk. “For example, sensor solutions that indicate when incontinence pads should be changed – particularly for persons who cannot express their need for a toilet assistance or a pad change.” Such sensor solutions can help avoid unnecessary interventions to help staff know when changing pads is actually needed. Changing an incontinence pad unnecessarily at night can disturb sleep leading to fatigue and reduced appetite, which affects the overall quality of life. It can also lead to a waste of resources.

“We need policy changes to raise awareness of proven digital health technologies that are often overlooked,” says Wijk.

A modern policy framework to secure proper uptake supported by training as well as a value based approach to funding these digital health technology devices is needed. The overall value created for society should be accounted for, rather than focus on the costs per piece or intervention. This is important to secure further investments in innovation, research, new ways of working and digitalization. The digital tools can support a person-centered assessment, allowing the person and the caregiver to a greater understanding individual needs and pattern. The best suited assistance or product for that individual can be chosen, which leads to improved outcomes and better allocation of resources, generating value for the individual, health care systems and society.



### Examples of continence care sensor solutions

#### Tena Identifi™

Uses a pad with built-in sensors to record a person’s voiding pattern for 72 hours, to help make a personal toileting and containment plan based in individually timed assisted toilet visits and containment products.

#### Tena SmartCare™

A digital health technology device notifying the carer when to change the incontinence product. The notifications are received on an individual smartphone or dashboard in a nursing home.

## Inclusive continence care for persons with dementia

Contrary to the common stereotype, people with dementia often have a good quality of life and actively participate in society. This is increasingly the case as people are being diagnosed with dementia earlier in life. “People with dementia therefore need the support to overcome continence issues when they arise as they can hinder their participation in society,” says Dianne Gove, Director for Projects at Alzheimer Europe. “After all, access to continence care is a basic human right, and everyone should be entitled to all the care they need.”

## Prioritizing individual needs

Avoiding assumptions and stereotypes on what it means to have dementia is crucial. People with dementia can have a variety of symptoms, require different care and support, and are equipped with their own coping systems. “Failing to identify an individual’s specific needs risks overlooking potential solutions that might suit that particular person,” says Gove. “This is why it’s really important not to base care decisions on a generalized view of dementia.”

Ensuring access to a choice of continence care products that a person can adapt to their own lifestyle and needs

is essential. “The right products can empower people by giving them the confidence to go out in public and play an active role in society without worrying about having incontinence accidents,” says Gove. “For people with dementia, it is also important to have easy access to toilets and changing facilities when they’re in a public environment.” With the right level of support, carers can help and facilitate people with dementia to retain continence and independence for as long as possible.

### Dianne Gove

Dianne is Director for Projects at Alzheimer Europe where she has worked since 1996. She chairs Alzheimer Europe’s ethics working groups and represents the organization in various projects with partners. Gove has conducted extensive research into GP’s perceptions of dementia and how these relate to stigma and timely diagnosis.



“Continence care is a basic human right and everyone should be entitled to all the care they need. Policy makers should ensure that programs fund proactive continence care and support”

Dianne Gove, Project Director for Alzheimer Europe

## Digital health technology can play a role

The care pathway is helped using technology enabling a good assessment and an improved delivery of person-centred care. Technologies help to assist people with advanced dementia who experience difficulties in expressing their need to go to the toilet or have their pad change managed.

“Digital health technology can certainly play a role by not having to ask about or check a person’s pads,” says Gove. This helps avoid the overuse of products, as well as their underuse, which might lead to hygiene and skin issues. “Technological solutions might also be able to alert carers

when assistance is needed or help with a prompting plan, where appropriate, to ensure regular toilet visits, although they must be discreet to ensure privacy and self-esteem,” says Gove.

Digital health technologies, in combination with appropriate continence care products, can help ensure the good quality care for persons with dementia which meets their needs. This way, good outcomes can be achieved for the individual as well as for care giving relatives, whilst ensuring effective use of available resources provided by healthcare payers.

## Inclusiveness through continence care support

It is essential that caregivers have the support and training they need to enable people to be at home for as long as possible – particularly people who might not be used to managing incontinence.

“Alzheimer Europe recommends that carers receive the emotional and psychological support they need around continence care,” says Gove. “Policy makers should ensure that programs fund proactive continence care and support.” The possibility to manage your continence and stay at home provides a shared value to both the individual and to society. “We need a proactive approach to continence care where support, advice and counseling on continence problems is readily available to persons and carers alike,”

says Gove. “Such comprehensive home care packages for people with dementia are essential to avoid premature entry into residential care by helping people to manage at home for longer.”

Managing continence issues can take up a significant part of any society’s resources, whether it is the person living with continence problems managing their own situation, or if such support is provided by relatives or by care organizations. This shared value can only be created by integrating the efforts from many actors in the care system, as well as companies providing products and services, and policy makers setting priorities, policies and defining regulations.



## Design for all – a tool for inclusivity

To achieve more inclusive societies, it is important that all citizens have access to public environments, services and solutions. Lena Lorentzen, Professor of Industrial Design, Sweden is a champion for the approach Design for all. She explains the concept:

“Most products have a design based on the manufacturing capabilities of the 1950’s. Today, we have the technological ability to create products that have human needs as the starting point.” Lorentzen has developed a range of methods to help businesses involve stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and functional or cognitive disabilities in the design process.

She stresses the importance of involving stakeholders in all stages of the design process and to always involve the most demanding user. “Involving diverse stakeholders is not just about meeting the needs of people with functional disabilities, the result is a product that is better for everyone. And a product that is our friend will also have a longer life, contributing to a more sustainable society.”

Lorentzen has worked together with Essity in its development of the Tork hygiene concept which includes paper and soap dispensers for public environments. The multi-stakeholder design process included both users and the

cleaning staff aiming to ensure that the products were easy to use for everyone. “Design for all does not have to mean more expensive products, it can be simple changes. For example, changing the color indicators signaling a need to fill the paper dispenser so that it is visible for a person with color blindness.” Design for all is also about creating an inclusive workplace. It empowers more people to join the workforce which also brings economic benefits for society.

Lorentzen stresses that policy makers have an important role to play in setting procurement standards that create a demand for inclusive products and services. In the US, the Americans With Disabilities Act contributed to the development of the 7 Principles of Universal Design, which were created by a multidisciplinary group of architects, product designers and engineers at North Carolina State University in 1997.

“The developments in the US spurred the ‘Design for all’-movement in Europe and the concept is now recognized across the world. But we still have a long way to go before planning and design for all is universally adopted. Both policy makers and businesses need to take action, concludes Lorentzen.

*“Design for all is about making sure that public spaces, products, services and information are designed to take account of the fact that we humans are all different in terms of functional ability, size, language, ethnicity and gender. It is really about barrier-free design, creating a society that does not exclude people based on variations in ability”*

Lena Lorentzen, Professor of Industrial Design, Sweden

# Innovative ways to improve or shift behavior

Norms of how to behave often go unquestioned. Policy makers, organizations as well as companies can encourage people to adopt more responsible and sustainable lifestyles or shift behavior to improve hygiene and health.

## Cow-for-toilet competition

To address the challenge of open defecation, the Ugandan government launched a sanitation fund to promote the construction of toilets in rural communities. The Uganda Sanitation Fund (USF) was implemented by the Environmental Health Department within the Ministry of Health and supported by WSSCC to promote the demand for sanitation facilities and creative toilet solutions in rural communities. The program targets some 5.6 million people living in more than 9,000 villages throughout 44 of Uganda's 138 districts. Since its launch in 2011, toilet and latrine coverage in USF-supported districts has risen to 94% in 2019, according to Ministry of Health data.

In the town of Bulegeni in Uganda's eastern border district of Bulambuli, the cows were chosen as prizes in a latrine-building competition. To win, the latrines not only had to be the best and the cleanest, but also made from local materials.

"We have used banana fibers for the roof, and cow dung on the walls and even on the floor," said Stephen Mwangi, mayor of Bulegeni. "We decided that since we have low incomes, we should use local materials to build latrines." Amid cheers from villagers, Mwangi names 67-year-old Dafina Muzei as winner of the 2019 competition claiming, "she far exceeded the competition criteria."

Near the market, there is a sign that stands tall, proudly declaring the town to be open defecation free. Like many other regions in Uganda, where 80% of the population has no access to basic sanitation services, Bulambuli has faced outbreaks of waterborne diseases before, including at least two cholera outbreaks in the last five years, according to Dr Gidare Muiri Mudaya, District Health Officer.



## Positively influencing behavior through nudging

Companies do have an important role to play in society which goes beyond the core value of their products and services. One way is through nudging, which means positively influencing how people behave based on insights on human behavior.

Nudging plays an important role in Marie-Eve Laporte's teaching and research. Laporte is an Associate Professor at Sorbonne Business School and she believes that companies should take a position and engage in changing attitudes and behavior for the better.

"Either way, companies and brands impact people's behavior", explains Laporte. "How we perceive brands and marketing has changed. It is about creating shared value, that is not only for the company and the consumer but also for society at large."

Laporte is also a member of the jury of the Nudging for Good Awards, an initiative of AIM (the European Brands Association). The Nudging for Good Awards aim to inspire brands, promote the Nudging for Good concept, and showcase great initiatives.

### Marie-Eve Laporte

Associate Professor at Sorbonne Business School and a Senior Lecturer in Management Sciences. She teaches quantitative studies, marketing and communication in MBA and master. Member of the Scientific Council of Chaire Marques & Valeurs, her research focuses on three areas: consumer eating behavior, health marketing and the digital transformation of marketing. Marie-Eve Laporte previously worked as a marketing and quality director in the food industry.



### Nudging

Nudge comes from the academic world of behavioral economics and looks at influencing people's behavior positively and without constraints. According to Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, a nudge is, "any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives". From a brand perspective, nudging is a way for a brand, on the basis of consumer insights, to make it easy and desirable for consumers to change behavior or habit and adopt a healthier or more sustainable one.

In the Nudging for Good Awards 2019, Essity's Hungarian brand Zewa was the winner of the Society category. Laporte explains why the jury selected Zewa and its Hygiene Has No Gender campaign: "We considered the nudge itself and the ethical aspects of it. We looked for an initiative that had the potential to benefit all of society. Zewa highlighted gender inequality through the eyes of children, which was very powerful. When we see kids being treated unfairly, we react because we do not want to pass on inequality from one generation to the next. Finally, it was clear that promoting equality is very much part of Essity's and Zewa's DNA."

Some argue that brands should not take a stand in political and societal issues. Laporte does not quite agree. "It is true that companies are not elected, but we are able to vote with our wallets. So, in that sense there is freedom of choice and brands are either chosen or not."

*"I admire companies and brands that dare to take a stand. Companies used to say that marketing simply reflects society as it is, but now they show how society could or should be. Having said that, companies need to ensure that their values and actions are in tune, otherwise what they do may come off as insincere", says Laporte.*







# Calls for action on more inclusive societies

**In this decade of action, it is vital to co-operate and build partnerships in order to achieve the SDGs and their targets. The global challenges are numerous and in this report, we have chosen to focus on global hygiene and health issues where there is a lack of progress and where WSSCC and Essity can contribute with knowledge and solutions. We call on policy makers to consider the following calls for action:**

- **Promote more inclusive societies.** Effective hygiene and health practices evolves from shifting behavior and social norms. This shift requires long-term commitments from everyone, where we all play different roles. National policies need to support this transition by giving it special attention and putting financing behind. The silence and taboos on issues such as menstruation, incontinence and other stigmatizing conditions need to be broken. Policy makers also need to ensure dignity and promote equal opportunities. For example by:
  - Promoting of menstrual health literacy and education on the menstruation cycle at all levels can broaden understanding and help breaking taboos.
  - Funding research on women's health can also unveil how menstruation affects women's health and how to manage potential ill-health.
- **Endorse universal and inclusive policy.** Hygiene and health are truly universal and are relevant to everyone everywhere. The human rights perspective is ever present. Policy should aim to have hygiene and health solutions accessible for all, including those with special needs. For example, individuals with incontinence can live more dignified and inclusive lives, if the right care policies are applied, and the right solutions are provided. This can be achieved by improving self-management, taking a total care pathway approach to toileting and containment care, as well as recognizing the important role of incontinence products. Furthermore, policy makers have an important role to play in setting procurement standards that create a demand for inclusive products and services.
- **Support person-centered care.** Encourage and manifest person-centered care to empower both patients and healthcare professionals. By enabling health and social care systems to deliver person centered care better patient outcomes and care efficiencies can be achieved. Access to hygiene and health solutions often depend on certain policies and priorities, and equal access can contribute to more resilient, equal and sustainable societies. International bodies such as the WHO and OECD can therefore provide guidance on person-centered toileting and containment strategy provisions for individuals, their caregivers and society at large.
- **Promote value-based healthcare.** Assess the overall value created for society rather than focus on the costs per piece or intervention. This is important to secure further investments in innovation, research, new ways of working and digitalization, which can result in better hygiene and health outcomes. It contributes to inclusion, empowerment and creates a value benefiting individuals and society as a whole. Outcome based rules, regulations and standards needs to be developed.



# The decade of accelerating actions and results

Hygiene and health issues are often considered very personal. Therefore, they tend to be hidden, tabooed and stigmatized. The needs of hygiene and health are universal but the highest price is paid by the most vulnerable persons. By implementing the calls for action addressed in the report hygiene and health conditions will take gigantic leaps. Lives will both be improved and saved: for individuals around the world at different stages of life, gender, race or abilities. Societies will be better prepared for infections and viruses. At the same time global hygiene and health standards will be lifted, hence improving well-being and every-day life not the least for those most vulnerable in society.

Individuals, organizations, companies, civil society and academia shall collaborate and by complementing each other the actions will enhance. Decision and policy makers have a key role to improve and save lives; be it on a local, national or global level.

Both WSSCC and Essity seek to share information and advance knowledge by engaging with partners and stakeholders. We encourage policy makers to put the needs of people at the center by improving standards, and investing in, hygiene and health. As partners we look forward to the future discussion and invite you to join our mission to accelerate action on hygiene and health for all.



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*“The COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call to re-focus on what is essential for preventive health. The pandemic has underlined the importance of the fundamental practices learned since childhood, such as handwashing with soap, in promoting basic hygiene to combat infections all around the world.”*

Sue Coates Executive Director a.i. WSSCC

*“We continue to advance knowledge and facilitate solutions in order to support more inclusive societies and break barriers to health and well-being. We invite you to take part in this important mission.”*

Magnus Groth, President and CEO Essity



Breaking Barriers to Well-being

