



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Office of the Corporate Ombuds



American
Red Cross

A Message from the Corporate Ombuds

The Office of the Corporate Ombuds delivers informal dispute resolution services to the various constituents of the American Red Cross. The Ombuds Office utilizes several safeguards to ensure it provides its visitors with a safe and confidential space essential to meeting their needs and assisting them in resolving and addressing conflicts and disputes. The Ombuds Office reviews its safeguards annually to ensure visitors' information is completely confidential.

This is the 17th annual report on the services provided by the Ombuds Office for Fiscal Year 2024, from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. In FY2024, the office responded to 631 constituents' inquiries and provided group training to 291 staff (employees and volunteers), for a total of 922 constituents served. Of the 631 constituents who made inquiries, 386 were external constituents and 245 were internal constituents. The three main themes identified through the Ombuds Office's engagement with the 631 constituents were workplace issues, donor-related concerns, and disaster-related matters. In addition, the Ombuds Office conducted 38 outreach events, which reached 1,126 Red Cross staff. Outreach events included organization-wide OmbudsTALK sessions for staff where tools and strategies were shared for improving communication and dispute-resolution skills.

Combining the 922 internal and external constituents served and the 1,126 staff who attended outreach events, 2,048 constituents interacted with the Ombuds Office in FY2024, a more than 40% increase from the 1,437 that interacted with the office in FY2023.

The Ombuds Office strives to provide a safe and confidential resource for anyone interacting with the Red Cross, including its workforce and services. The Ombuds Office is an organizational ombuds and its charter adheres to the International Ombuds Association standards of practice and code of ethics and defines the services it provides. The tenets of an organizational ombuds require it to be a confidential, informal, impartial and independent resource for its constituents. The Red Cross has formal reporting processes through its Human Resources, Volunteer Services, Office of General Counsel, and Office of Ethics & Compliance (OEC). Unlike the Ombuds Office, these departments are empowered to conduct formal investigations, make decisions and policies, produce written findings, and receive official notice for the Red Cross. The OEC provides oversight of the Red Cross Whistleblower hotlines.

The Ombuds Office can be transformative by allowing constituents to be heard and empowered to overcome barriers; it uses an informal process in a manner that promotes trust within the organization and assists individuals in achieving their potential. The Ombuds Office achieves these ends through the adherence of its charter.

In FY2024, the Ombuds Office collaborated with its constituents to help address and resolve their issues. This collaboration included sharing identified trends and concerns to assist leaders in having enhanced awareness when making business and management decisions. The Ombuds Office is committed to nurturing and strengthening its relationships with leaders, thus assisting the organization in better serving its constituents. The Ombuds Office promotes equitably administered processes and an engaged and inclusive culture.

Sincerely,



Ross T. Morton, M.S., CO-OP®
Corporate Ombuds

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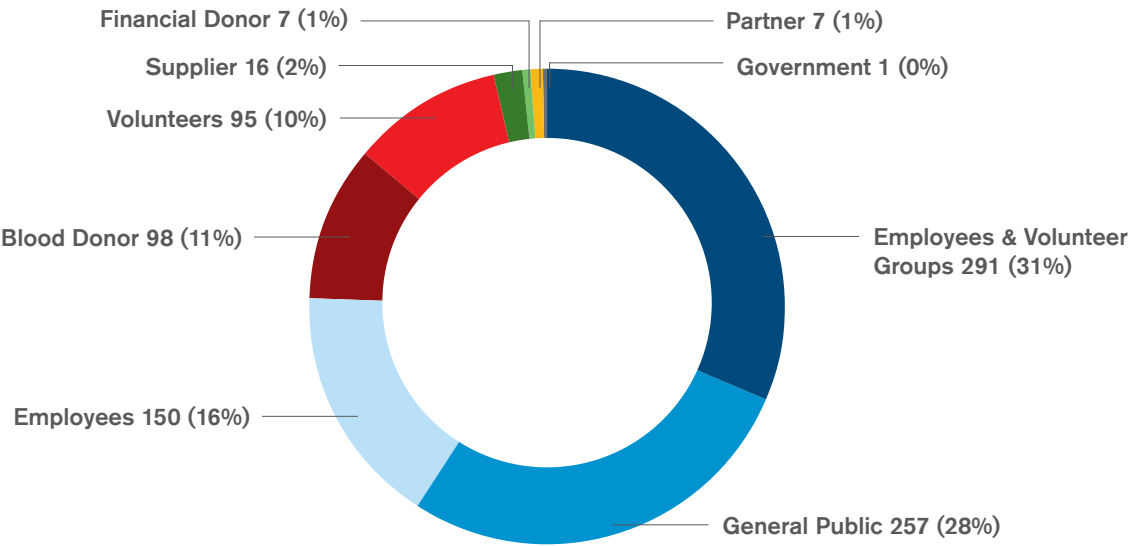
Constituent Profile

In FY2024, 922 constituents received resources and support to address their inquiries and issues through the Ombuds Office. This includes constituents wishing to remain anonymous, groups with multiple members, group facilitations, and training to address intergroup and intragroup conflict. The constituents described in this section are distinct from 1,126 Red Cross employees and volunteers served by the Ombuds Office through outreach events. Outreach event attendees are not included in the chart below.

Figure 1 illustrates the number and composition of internal and external constituents who contacted the Ombuds Office and received conflict coaching, training, and group facilitation in FY2024.

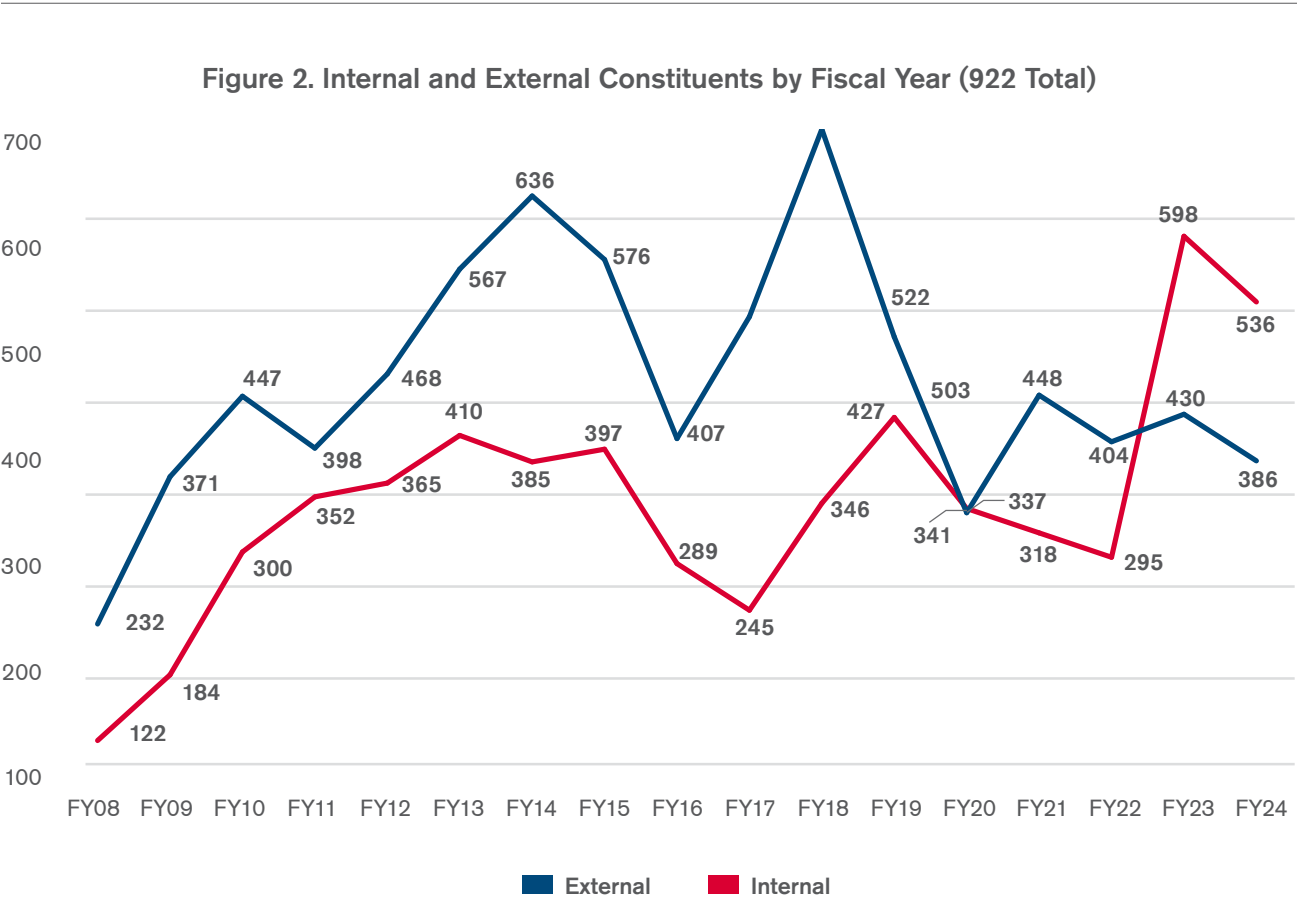


Figure 1. All Constituents (922 Total)



In FY2024, 536 internal constituents and 386 external constituents utilized the Ombuds Office services. External constituent contacts are categorized as government, current partner organizations and suppliers, prospective suppliers, blood donors, financial donors, service members and the public. Internal constituent contacts are categorized as employees, volunteers, former employees, former volunteers, current contractors, and retirees.

Figure 2 illustrates the long-term trends of this information.

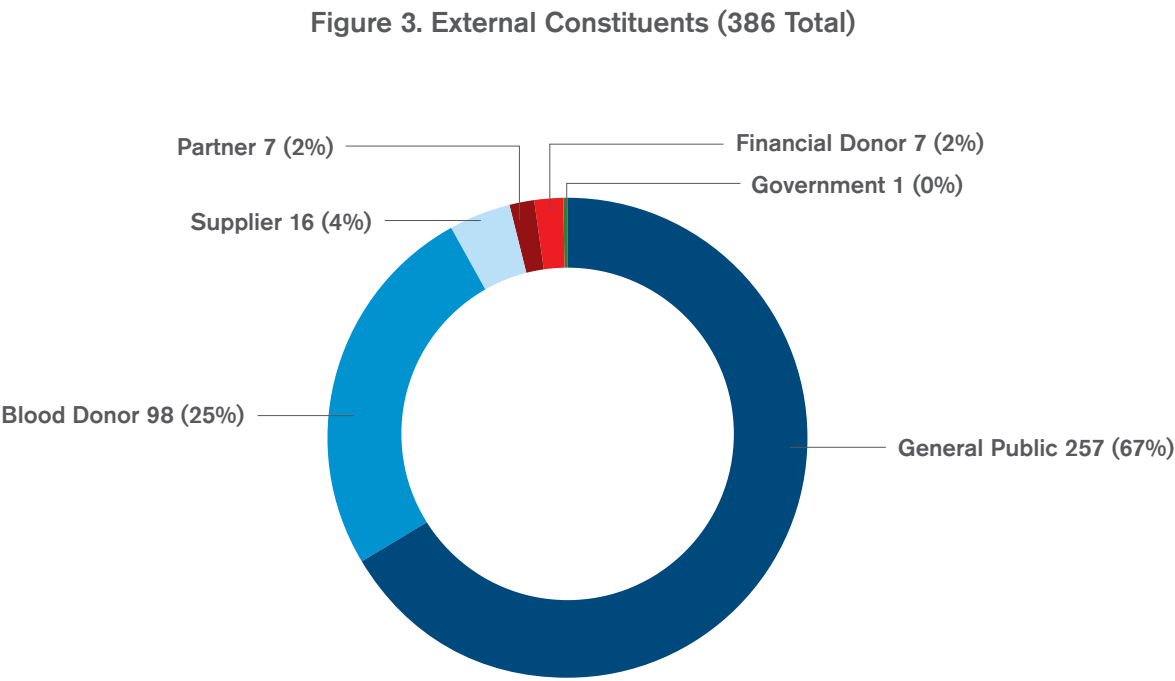


The sustained increase in internal constituents from FY2022 through FY2024 was likely influenced by increased outreach performed by the Ombuds Office and the resulting increased awareness of services available from the office.

External Constituents

In FY2024, 386 external constituents contacted the Ombuds Office with concerns or inquiries and received support and/or resources in addressing their issues.

During FY2024, most of the external inquiries were from the general public (257).¹ Figure 3 illustrates the diverse types of external constituent contacts.



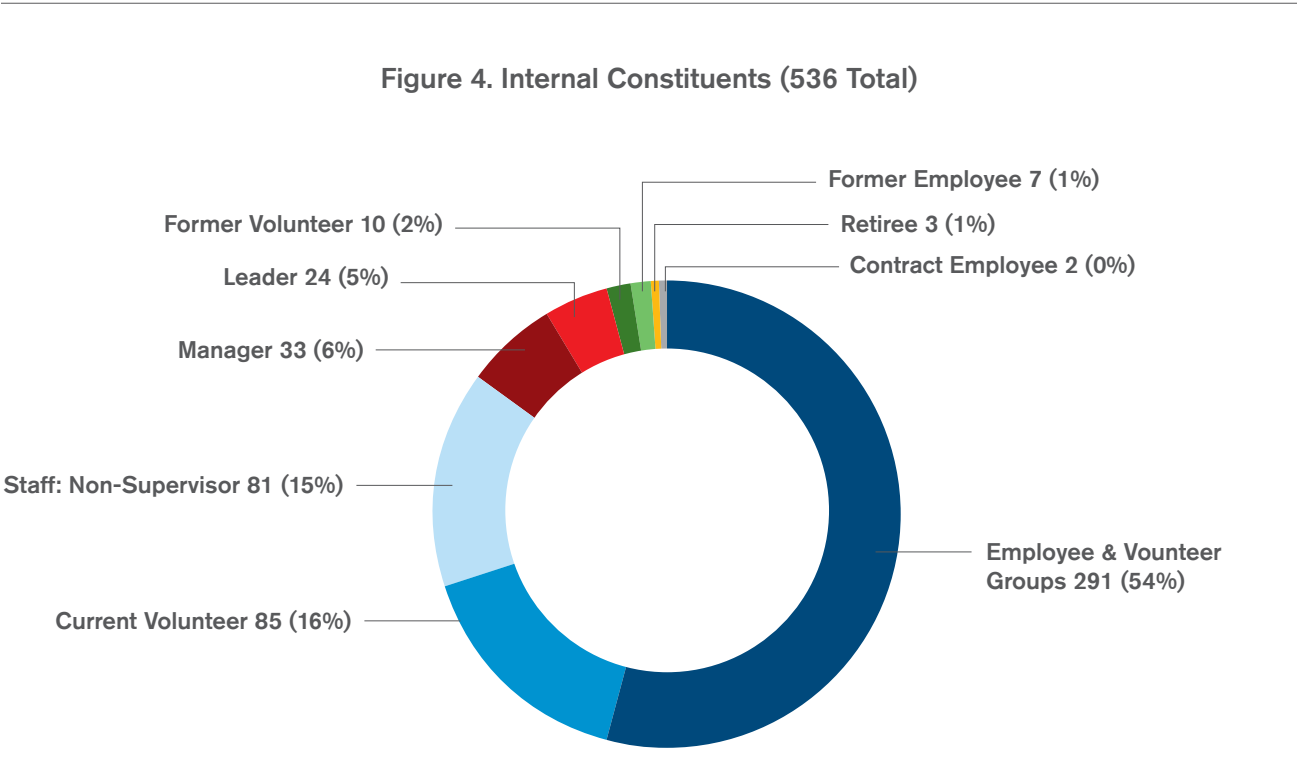
¹General Public category includes: individuals affected by disasters (63), Red Cross Training Services students (12), members of the U.S. military, veterans, and their families (8) and individuals raising general inquiries (174).

Internal Constituents

In FY2024, 536 internal constituents utilized the services of the Ombuds Office. This included 245 internal constituents that contacted the office and 291 Red Cross employees and volunteers that took part in group trainings scheduled with the goal of helping improve communication and conflict resolution skillsets. The group trainings were conducted by the Ombuds Office at the request of Red Cross leaders and managers.

For purposes of data collection and reflected in the graph below, a leader is defined as someone who supervises multiple teams or is in an executive role. A manager is responsible for a program and supervises work groups or teams with deliverables. A contract employee is hired for a specific job, for a defined period, at a specific rate of pay. AmeriCorps participants, temporary disaster employees and employees contracted through third-party agencies have been categorized as contract employees.

Figure 4 reflects internal constituents by category and role within the Red Cross.



Issues

Reasons for Contacting the Ombuds Office

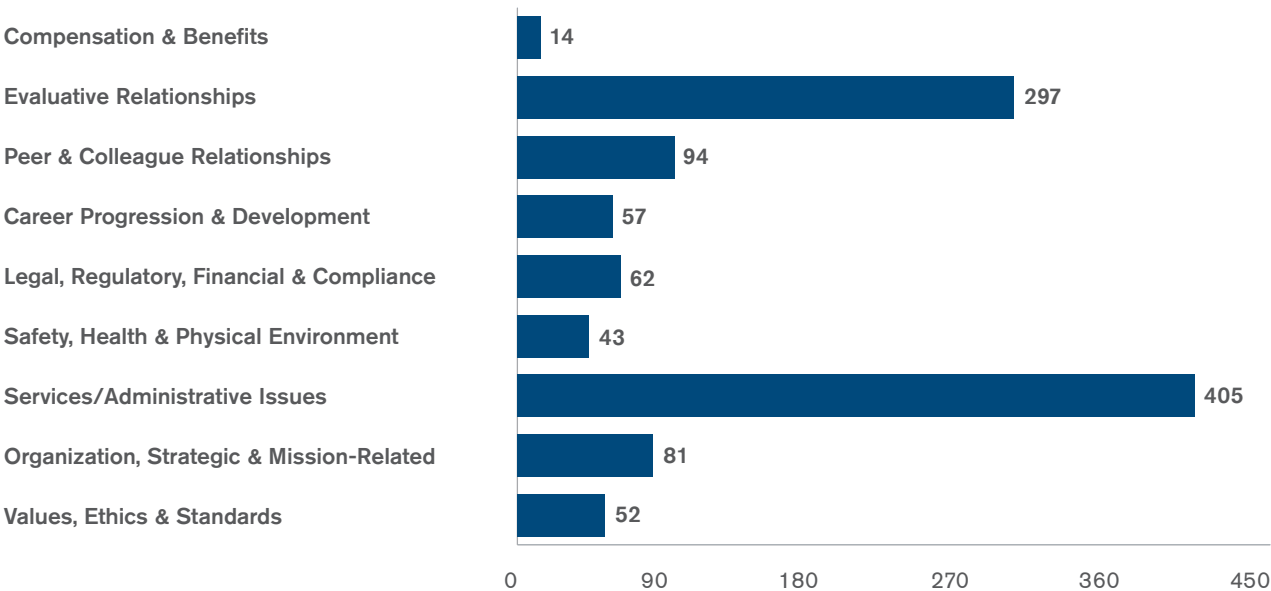
In FY2024, a total of 1,105 issues were brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office by internal and external constituents' requests for assistance, trainings and facilitated discussions. Typically, one inquiry reflects several issues. For data tracking purposes, no more than three issues are associated with one inquiry. Figure 5 identifies the 1,105 issues brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office through the inquiries of 631 internal and external constituents.

The issues have been categorized in a manner consistent with the guidance provided by the International Ombuds Association. The categories of issues used in this report are intended to assist in identifying the types of issues, identifying trends for consistent historical reporting, and allowing the organization to identify and/or address systemic issues in comparison to their other tools (such as pulse surveys).

The top issues brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office are as follows and illustrated in Figure 5.

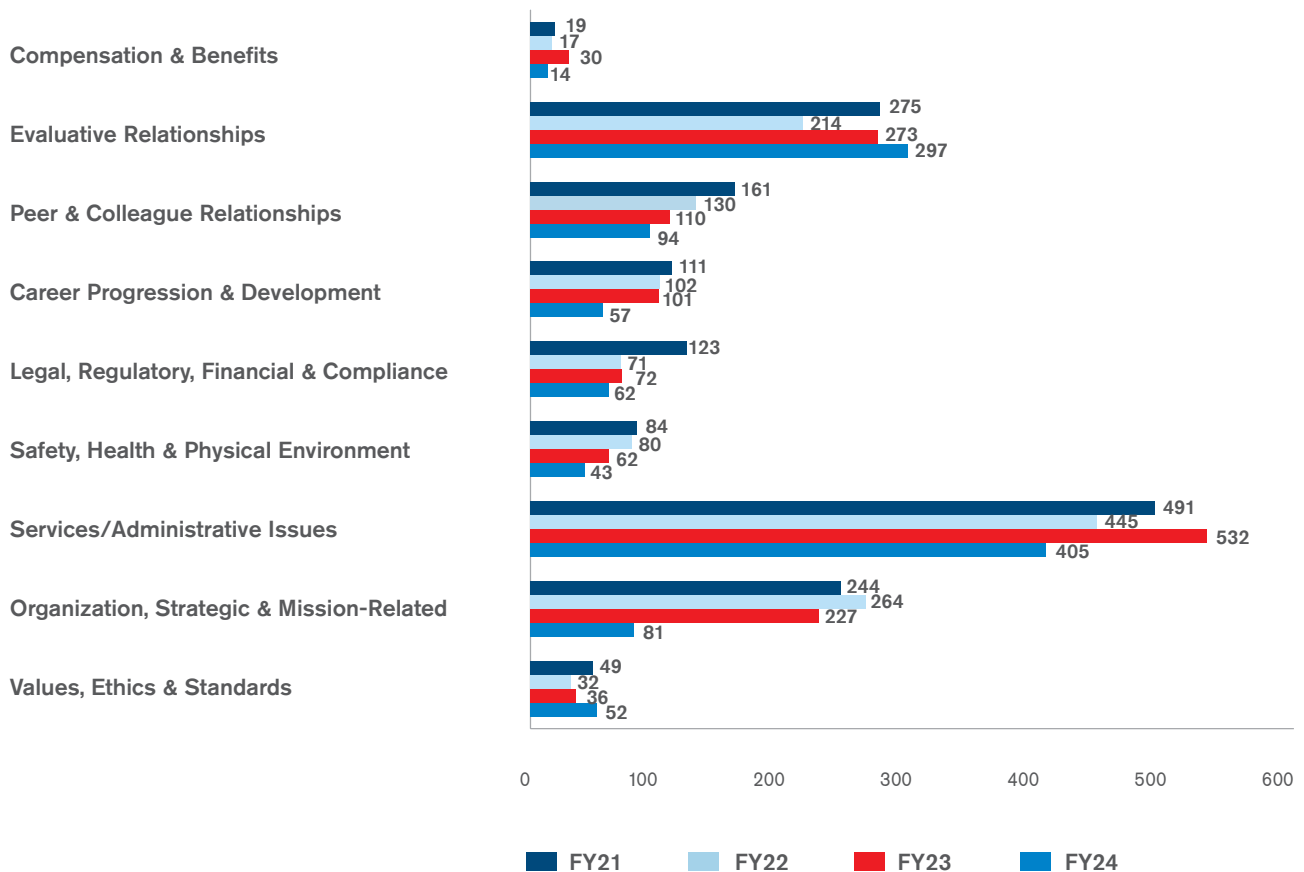
- Evaluative Relationships
 - The prevalent themes within this category involved communication and supervisory effectiveness.
 - This data includes those participating in training provided by the Ombuds Office.
- Peer and Colleague Relationships
 - The prevalent themes within this category involved communication, trust and integrity.
 - This data includes those participating in training provided by the Ombuds Office.
- Services Administration
 - The prevalent themes were quality of service, administrative decisions and responsiveness

Figure 5. Issue Identification
All Issues Identified Under IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (1,105 Total)



The graph in Figure 6, below, illustrates trends in issues raised from FY2021 through FY2024. It is important to note that some of the issues identified are beyond the scope of the Red Cross. For example, services/administrative issues can involve external constituents, such as donors, people affected by disasters or the general public, inquiring about issues outside the scope of the Red Cross mission, such as FDA blood donation requirements, policy changes, or international events. When issues raised are outside of the organization's mission, the Ombuds Office takes these as opportunities to provide relevant information and assist constituents in better understanding the mission of the Red Cross and the scope of its activities. For example, the Ombuds Office might coordinate within the organization to include content in relevant statements or press releases that address issues raised by constituents that are related to areas outside the purview of the Red Cross.

Figure 6. Issues – Yearly Comparison



Issues Per Organizational Unit

Figure 7 reflects the number and percentage of issues raised in FY2024 pertaining to Red Cross organizational units. These issues are raised by internal and external constituents requesting assistance from the Ombuds Office in resolving a matter utilizing its informal process. In this section, issues associated with group training requested by Red Cross leadership or management have been excluded.

Constituents raised the greatest number of issues related to Humanitarian Services: 550 issues raised through 276 constituent inquiries. These issues can be broken down into three top categories: (1) evaluative relationships, (2) peer and colleague relationships and (3) services/administrative questions. Services/administrative questions are typically attributed to external constituents.

Humanitarian Services includes International Services, Disaster Cycle Services, Service to the Armed Forces, Volunteer Services, and regions or chapters. The top four service areas where inquiries originate within Humanitarian Services are regions or chapters, Disaster Cycle Services, Service to the Armed Forces, and Volunteer Services.

Biomedical Services had the next highest number of issues, with 214 issues raised through 120 constituent inquiries. These issues include inquiries and concerns related to Red Cross operations associated with blood product recruitment, collections, manufacturing, testing and distribution.

Issues and concerns related to specific corporate departments (designated for tracking purposes as national headquarters). National Headquarters had the third-highest number of issues, with 210 issues raised through 126 constituent inquiries.

All issues presented to the Ombuds Office by a constituent are attributed to the identified primary unit of concern below, in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Issues Per Organizational Unit (1,105 Total)

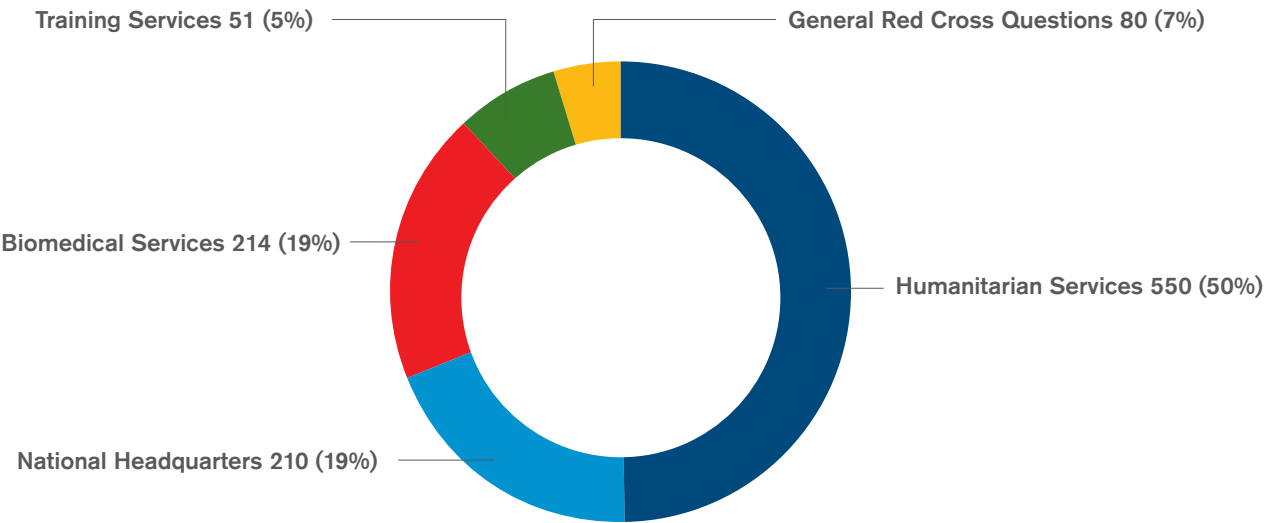
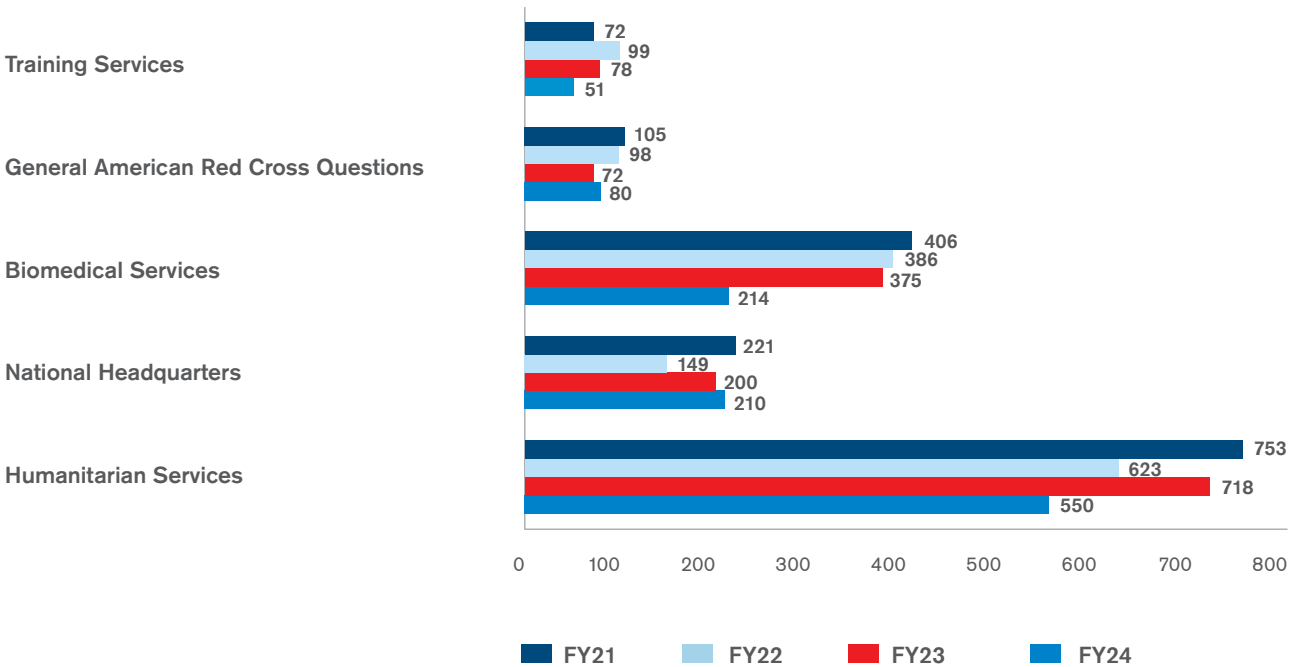


Figure 8 illustrates issues in relation to the Red Cross organizational unit from FY2021 through FY2024.

Figure 8. Issues Per Unit — Yearly Comparison



Ombuds Actions

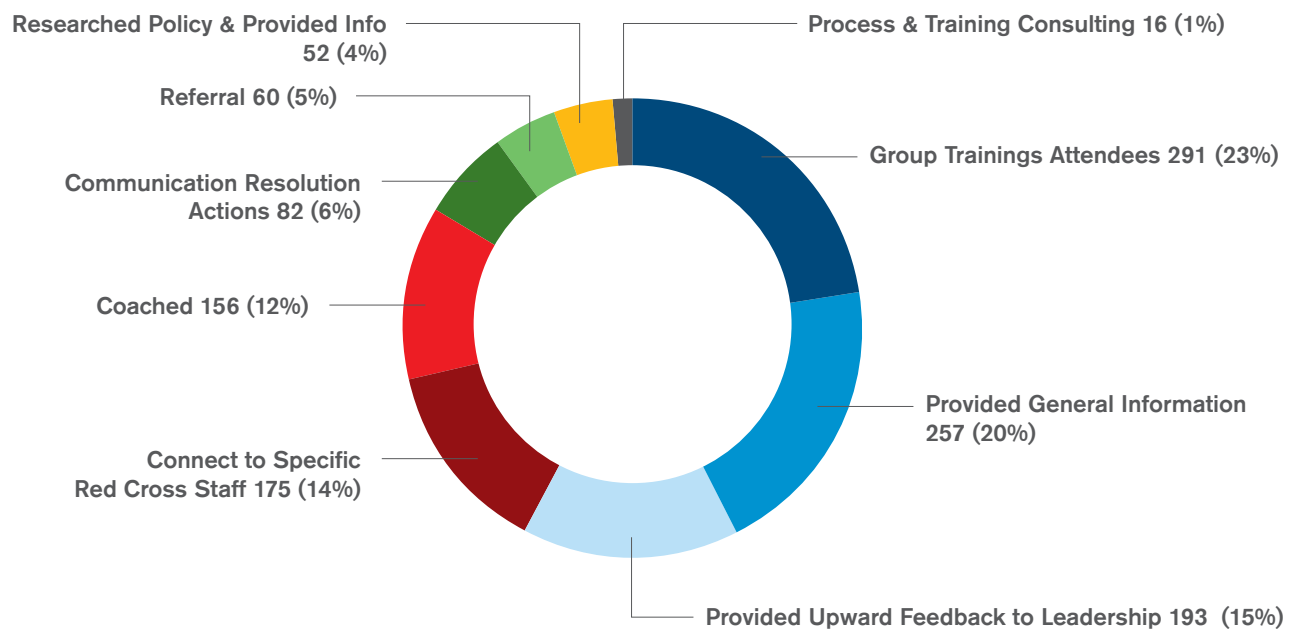
In FY2024, the Ombuds Office engaged with 291 employees and volunteers through group training, 245 employees and volunteers through individual inquiries, 386 external constituents, 1,126 employees and volunteers via outreach activities, for a total of 2,048 constituents served. In comparison to the categories referenced above, the total number of constituents served in FY2023 was 1,437. The increase in constituents' services in FY2024 is primarily due to Ombuds Office outreach activities, which included organization-wide OmbudsTALKs as well as overviews provided by the Ombuds Office to specific Red Cross units.

Figure 9 identifies the 1282 actions taken by the Ombuds Office in working with constituents and the organization in resolving and addressing issues. Actions identified as "Communication Resolution Actions" include dispute resolution techniques such as facilitated discussions, shuttle diplomacy, etc. The Ombuds Office conducted 12 group trainings attended by 291 Red Cross staff. The group trainings are identified and included in this figure to illustrate some of the proactive measures taken by leadership in requesting training from the Ombuds office for their staff (employees and volunteers).

The top four actions provided by the Ombuds Office for the 631 internal and external constituents that contacted the Ombuds Office (excluding group trainings) are categorized as follows:

- Provided general information (257)
- Resulted in feedback to leadership (193)
- Connected to a specific Red Cross staff (175)
- Coached (156)

Figure 9. Ombuds Actions (1,282 Total)



Supporting the Mission

The primary responsibilities of the Ombuds Office are to work with individuals and groups within the Red Cross to assist and empower them in determining options to help informally resolve conflicts, problematic issues, or concerns; to bring systemic concerns and risks to the attention of the organization for resolution and awareness; and to conduct education, coaching, and group facilitation to increase conflict resolution skills among employees and volunteers. The Ombuds Office follows its charter, which adheres to the International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice.

The Ombuds Office strives to empower individuals and the organization in a manner that builds awareness of potential issues and skill sets to effectively resolve conflict and disputes.

Here are a few examples of FY2024 accomplishments.

- Conducted 12 group training events with 291 Red Cross staff. Each training was requested by leadership and management and designed to specifically meet the group's needs. Trainings primarily focused on communication and dispute resolution skills.
- Conducted 38 outreach events with 1,126 Red Cross staff. The outreach events included OmbudsTALK, which is open to all Red Cross staff and covers topics oriented toward enhancing conflict resolution and communication skillsets.
- Updated internal and external websites providing information about the Ombuds Office. This included changing the term Ombudsman to Ombuds in the office name.
- Streamlined processes to reduce the time and labor required for data entry.
- Conducted outreach within the organization to increase awareness about the services provided by the Ombuds Office. Outreach consisted of informational sessions.
- Updated the Red Cross Office of Corporate Ombuds Charter to reflect the change from Ombudsman to Ombuds and to reflect the Red Cross commitment to the Ombuds Office role as an informal, impartial, and confidential service that is independent of the organization.
- Enhanced communication within the Red Cross by establishing points of coordination (i.e., divisions, departments, etc.) and conducting recurring meetings.
- Provided upward feedback to leadership on any trends and/or issues that were identified by the Ombuds Office.
- The assistant ombuds became a Certified Organizational Ombuds Practitioner (CO-OP®) in FY24. The Ombuds Office now has the distinction of having two practitioners with the CO-OP® certification.

OmbudsTALK, a monthly virtual outreach event was introduced to the internal Red Cross community this year and has received positive feedback from participants. The topics covered so far include conflict skill building related to compassion, humble inquiry, giving and receiving feedback, mutual learning, ladder of inference, resilience and decision making.

As the Ombuds Office celebrates its 17th year, it is focused on serving the Red Cross and its stakeholders in a capacity that reflects its Office of the Ombuds Charter with inclusivity and fairness. As well as remains committed to assisting the organization in proactively identifying trends and systemic matters and resolving/addressing them in an informal manner that promotes the values of the Red Cross and its mission.



Contact Information

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**American
Red Cross**

2007–2024



10,031
Constituents



Another **23,917** reached through
Outreach, Training and Facilitation



22,695
Issues