



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Office of the Corporate Ombuds



**American
Red Cross**

A Message from the Corporate Ombuds

The Office of the Corporate Ombuds was launched in October 2007 in accordance with the [Governance Modernization Act of 2007](#). Our Office was created with the intention and focus of being a safe and confidential resource for all persons impacted by the American Red Cross, its workplace, mission and services to share their concerns. This year, in support of diversity, inclusion, and belonging efforts, and in response to industry best practices, we have changed our name to the Office of the Corporate Ombuds.

I am pleased to present the fourteenth annual report on the activities of the Office of the Corporate Ombuds for fiscal year 2021 — from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. This report summarizes the concerns and inquiries brought forward from both internal and external constituents. In FY21, the Ombuds Office provided resources and supported 1,557 issues raised by 800 constituents. Through outreach, trainings, and group facilitations we were able to reach an additional 1,488 volunteers, employees and partners while supporting our donors, and recipients of our mission-related services.

The issues raised with the Ombuds comprise a small slice of data from self-selecting internal and external constituents. Moreover, the role of the Office of the Ombuds is to provide informal dispute resolution and informal mediation, and to provide guidance on how best to raise or address issues within the organization. While we do not investigate or determine the veracity of the issues raised, we advocate for a fair process.

The office of Investigations, Compliance and Ethics investigates allegations of wrongdoing in administrative, civil and criminal matters. The office of Investigations, Compliance and Ethics provides oversight of the Whistleblower hotlines and fully supports any employee, volunteer or member of management who reports fraud, waste, abuse, Red Cross policy violations, illegal, unsafe or unethical conduct, or any other misconduct within the organization.

This year, the demand for our assistance grew by eleven percent from last fiscal year and we have experienced an increase in the number of referrals to the Ombuds Office from staff, managers and leaders seeking coaching and consultations. We engaged in outreach events through town hall meetings, attended regional meetings and collaborated with several divisions and authored an article on compassion which was shared across various departments. Although we are available to respond to a wide range of issues, during the first six months of the fiscal year issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and diversity and inclusion were the most prevalent.

I am looking forward to continuing to provide support to the American Red Cross by offering additional resources to constituents and empowering individuals to identify solutions. The Office of the Ombuds is committed to supporting the dispute resolution process as a confidential, neutral, informal and independent office in the American Red Cross and cultivating new relationships with the formal parts of the organization.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Villafañe, Psy.D., CO-OP®
Corporate Ombudsman

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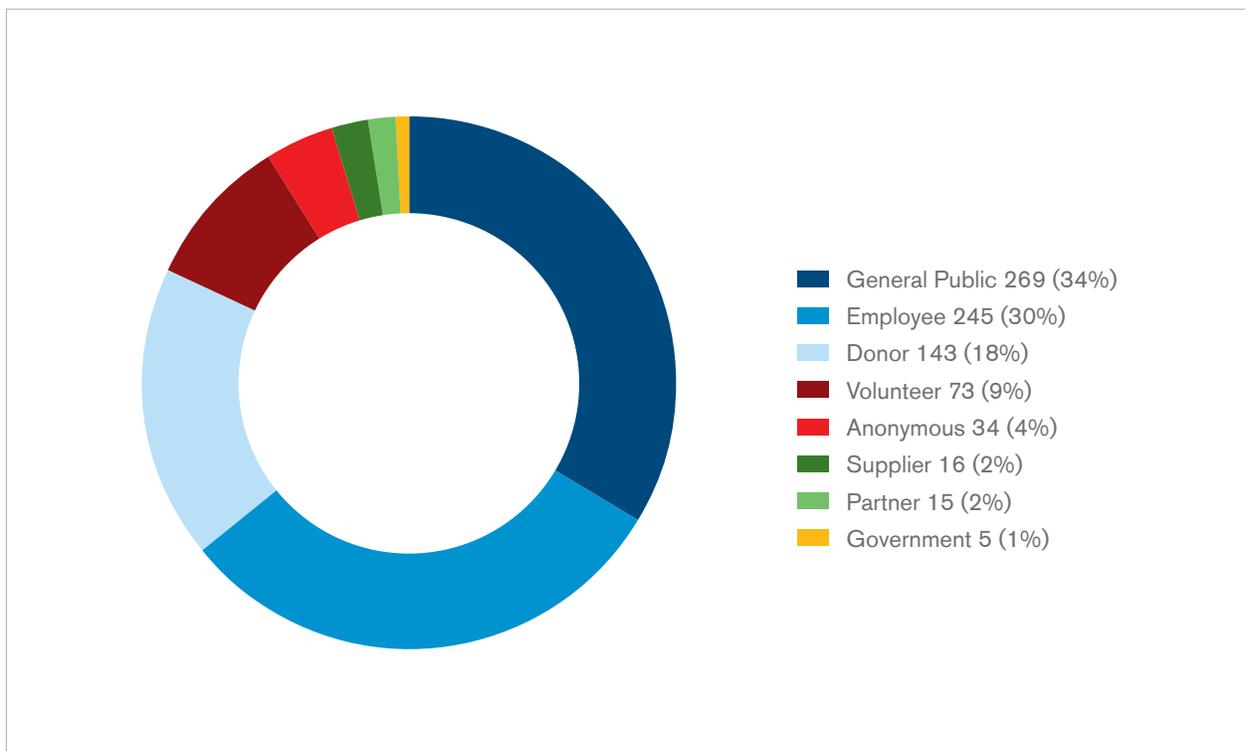
Constituent Profile

It is important to note that an increase or drop in the number of contacts with the Ombuds Office does not necessarily indicate growing or reduced problems in the organization.

In FY21, 800 constituents reached out to the Ombuds Office, and received resources and support to address their inquiries and issues compared to 719 constituents in FY20. The increase in constituent contacts was primarily due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, diversity and inclusion issues, and concerns from clients related to the virtual service delivery in the pandemic environment.

Figure 1 illustrates the number and composition of internal and external constituents who contacted the Ombuds Office in FY21. The total does not include an additional 1,488 recipients to whom the Ombuds provided proactive outreach, group facilitations and training. There were an additional 111 contacts who either: did not leave a message, were unable to schedule time, or the reason for reaching the Ombuds Office was resolved or was outside the scope of the office, and no further action was needed by the Office of the Ombuds.

Figure 1. All Constituents (800 Total)

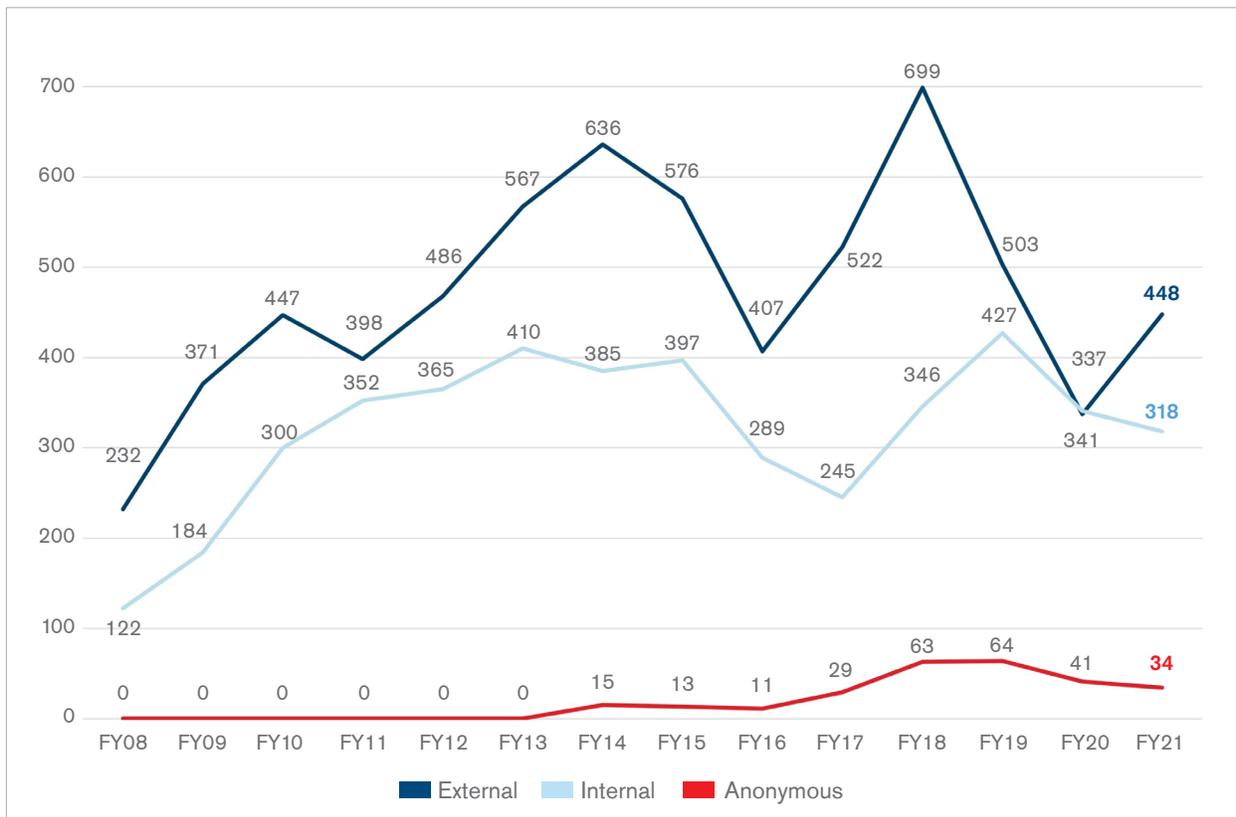


In FY21, 56 percent of contacts receiving Ombuds resources and support were initiated by external stakeholders, while 40 percent were initiated by internal stakeholders. The remaining 4 percent of contacts identified as “anonymous” represents 34 contacts compared to 41 anonymous contacts in FY20.

External constituent contacts are categorized as government, current partners, suppliers (prospective), blood donors, financial donors, service members and the general public. Internal constituent contacts are categorized as employees, volunteers, former employees, former volunteers, current contractors, and retirees.

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship of internal, external and anonymous contacts since the Ombuds Office began its reporting in FY08.

Figure 2. Internal and External Constituents by Fiscal Year



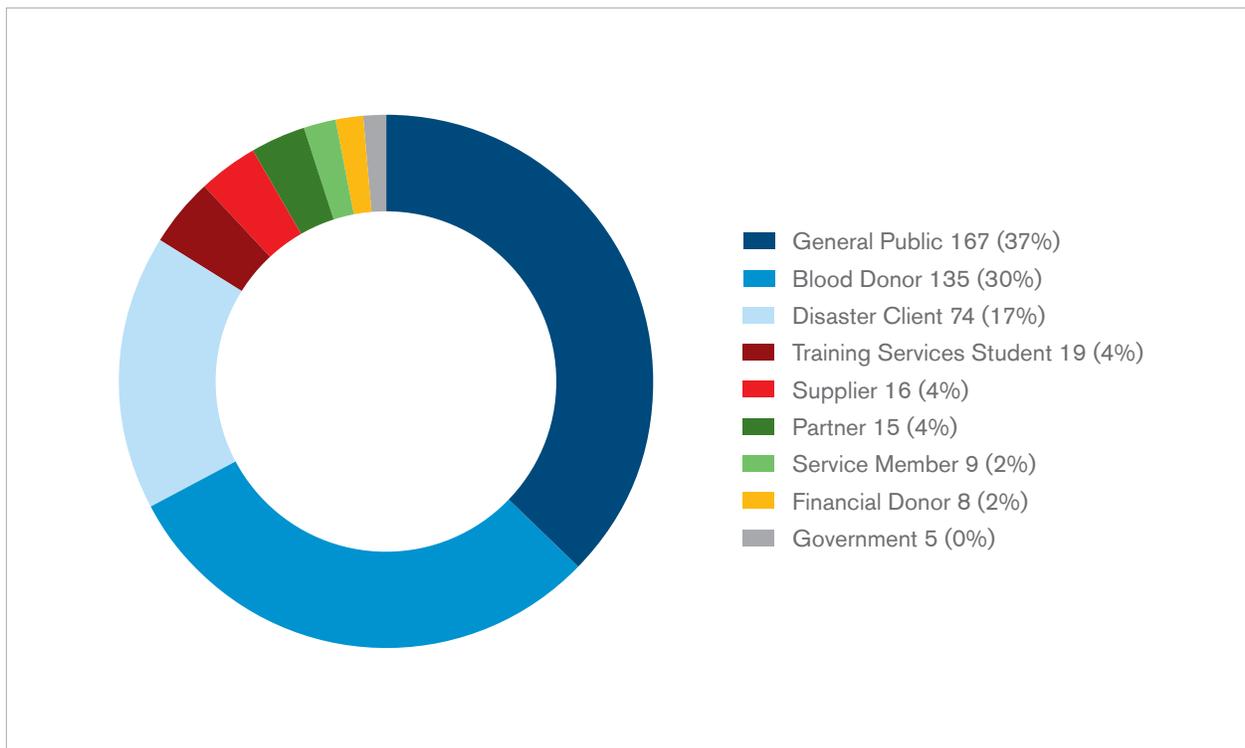
External Constituents

In FY21, a total of 448 external constituents contacted the Office of the Ombuds with concerns or inquiries and received support and resources. We do not report detailed information on those that wish to remain anonymous, and they are not included in this part of the report.

During FY21, Red Cross donors accounted for 18 percent of all constituents contacting the Ombuds Office and 32 percent of external constituents. Of the 143 donors reaching out to the Office of the Ombuds, 135 were blood donors and 8 were financial donors with various concerns. It should be noted that the blood donor contacts are from a base of nearly 2.6 million volunteer donors.

Figure 3 illustrates the various types of external constituent contacts.

Figure 3. External Constituents (448 Total)



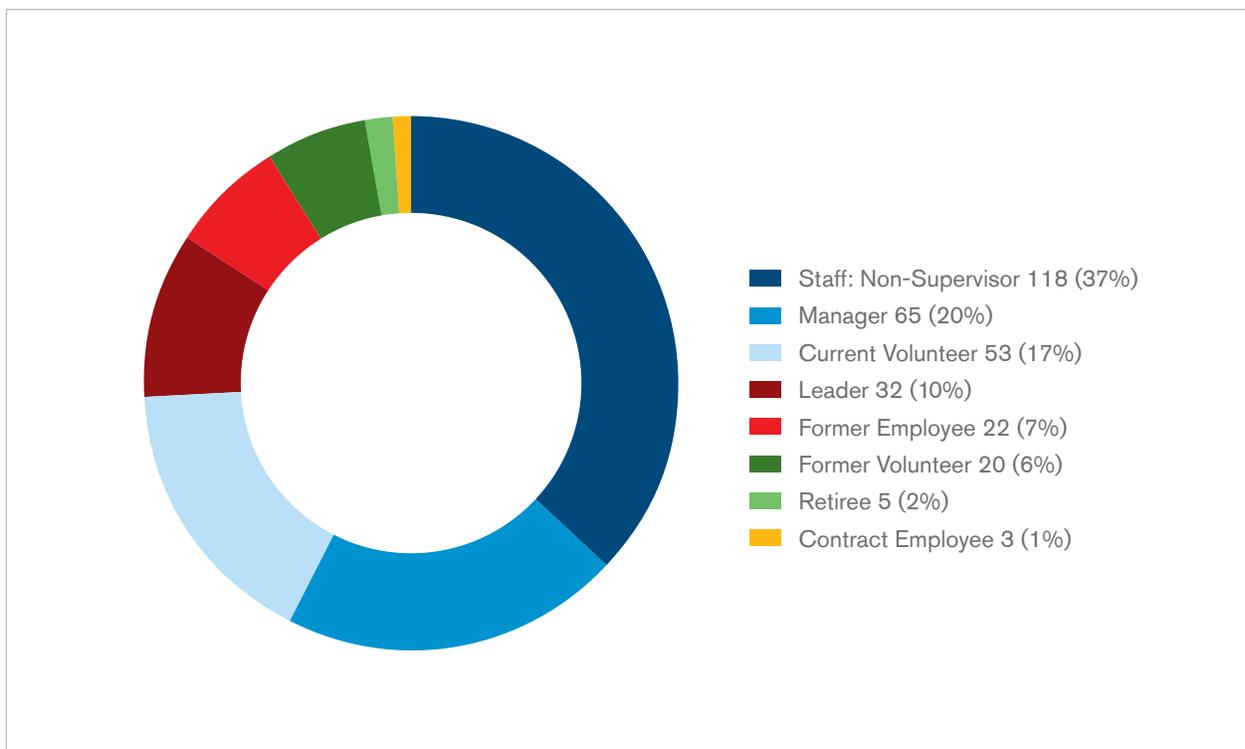
Internal Constituents

In FY21, 318 current employees contacted the Ombuds Office. Employees comprised 68 percent of internal constituents and 31 percent of all constituents to the Ombuds Office in FY21. We do not collect detailed information on those that wish to remain anonymous and they are not included in this part of the report.

Leader is defined as someone who supervises multiple teams or is in an executive role. A manager is responsible for a program, supervises work groups or teams with deliverables. A contract employee is generally hired for a specific job, for a defined period of time, at a specific rate of pay. AmeriCorps participants, temporary disaster employees or an employee contracted through a third-party agency have been categorized as contract employees for data purposes.

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

Figure 4. Internal Constituents (318 Total)



Issues

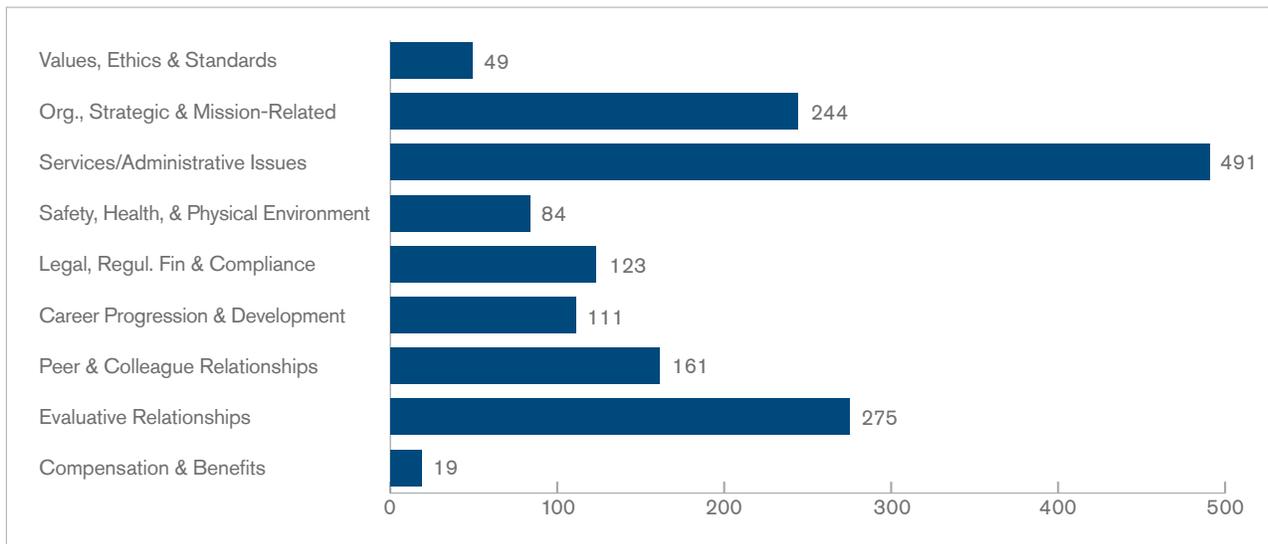
Reasons for Contacting the Ombuds Office

In FY21, a total of 1,557 issues were brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office. The issues are represented according to the uniform reporting categories promulgated for the Organizational Ombuds field by the International Ombuds Association (IOA). The reporting categories are designed to classify the types of issues for which people use Ombuds services and help identify trends for consistent reporting.

The top issues which were brought to the Ombuds Office are:

- Services/Administrative Issues: (1) quality of services provided, (2) administrative decisions and interpretation of or application of rules, and (3) concerns about the behavior of the service provider toward a constituent.
- Evaluative Relationships: (1) giving and receiving feedback with concerns of performance evaluations, (2) respect and treatment impacting department climate, and (3) concerns of retaliation if concerns are addressed with management.
- Organizational, Strategic & Mission-Related: (1) principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving, including records management, (2) technology systems as it related to blood donor appointment scheduling, and (3) organizational climate and communication around change management.

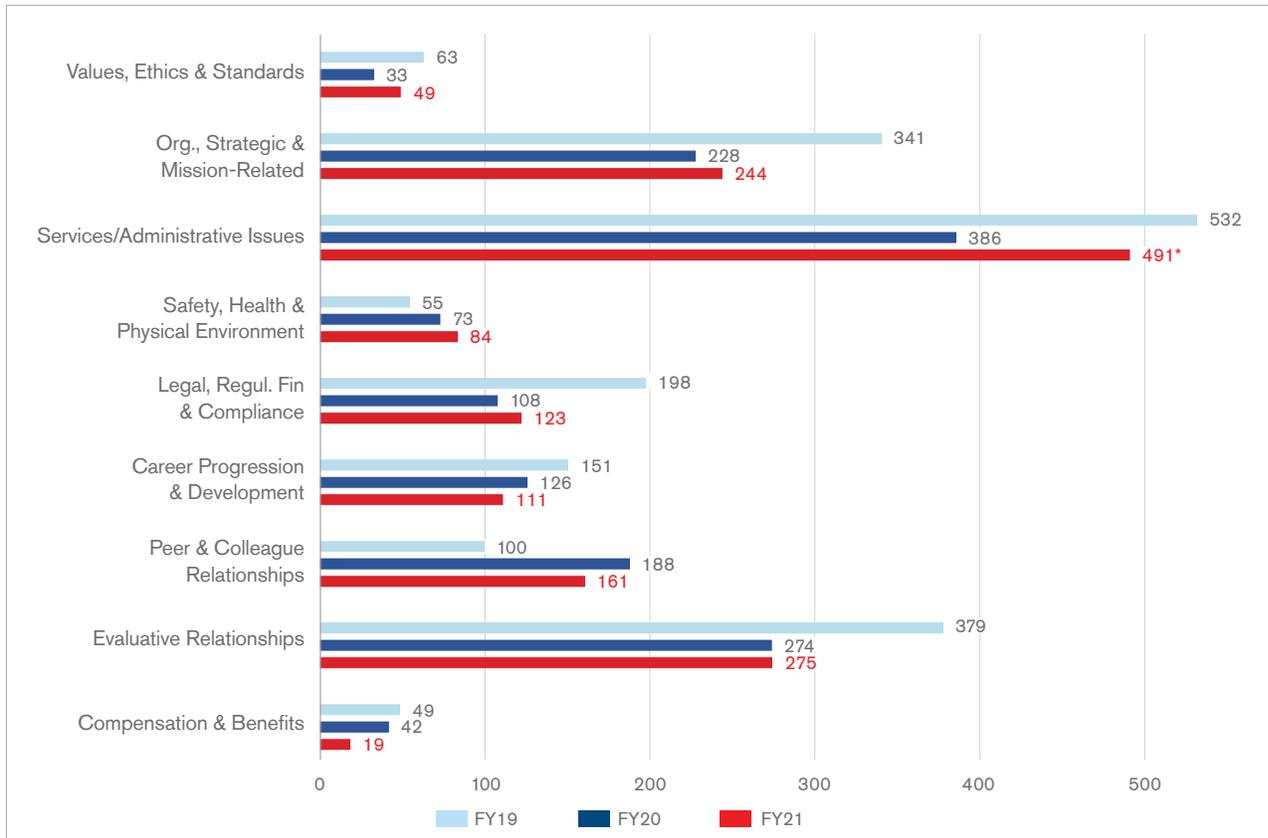
Figure 5. Issue Identification
All Issues Identified Under IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (1,557 Total)



It is important to note that the issue count reflects individual contacts to the Office of the Ombuds raising multiple concerns through trainings and group facilitations to address organizational issues; and issues raised by constituents who have reached out to the Office of the Ombuds.

Figure 6 illustrates the issues raised across the past three fiscal years (FY19–FY21).

Figure 6. Issues – Yearly Comparison



*Note that Services/Administrative Issues inquiries and concerns include requests from external constituents seeking information on services which are out of the scope of the Red Cross mission, questions regarding how the American Red Cross is supporting the COVID-19 pandemic, and other general inquiries including prospective vendor inquiries.

Issues Per Organizational Unit

Figure 7 reflects the number and percentage of issues raised in FY21 pertaining to Red Cross organizational units. There were 105 inquiries from the general public including 58 inquiries about Red Cross services that were not mission related or related to a corporate department specifically and have not been assigned to an organizational unit.

Humanitarian Services includes: International Services, Disaster Cycle Services, Service to the Armed Forces, the Office of Volunteer Services and the chapter networks in the field. Biomedical Services includes inquiries and concerns related to all Red Cross operations focused on blood product recruitment, collections, manufacturing, testing and distribution. Issues and concerns related to specific corporate departments have been designated to National Headquarters (NHQ). All issues presented by a constituent have been attributed to the identified primary unit of concern.

Figure 7. Issues Per Organizational Unit (1,557 Total)

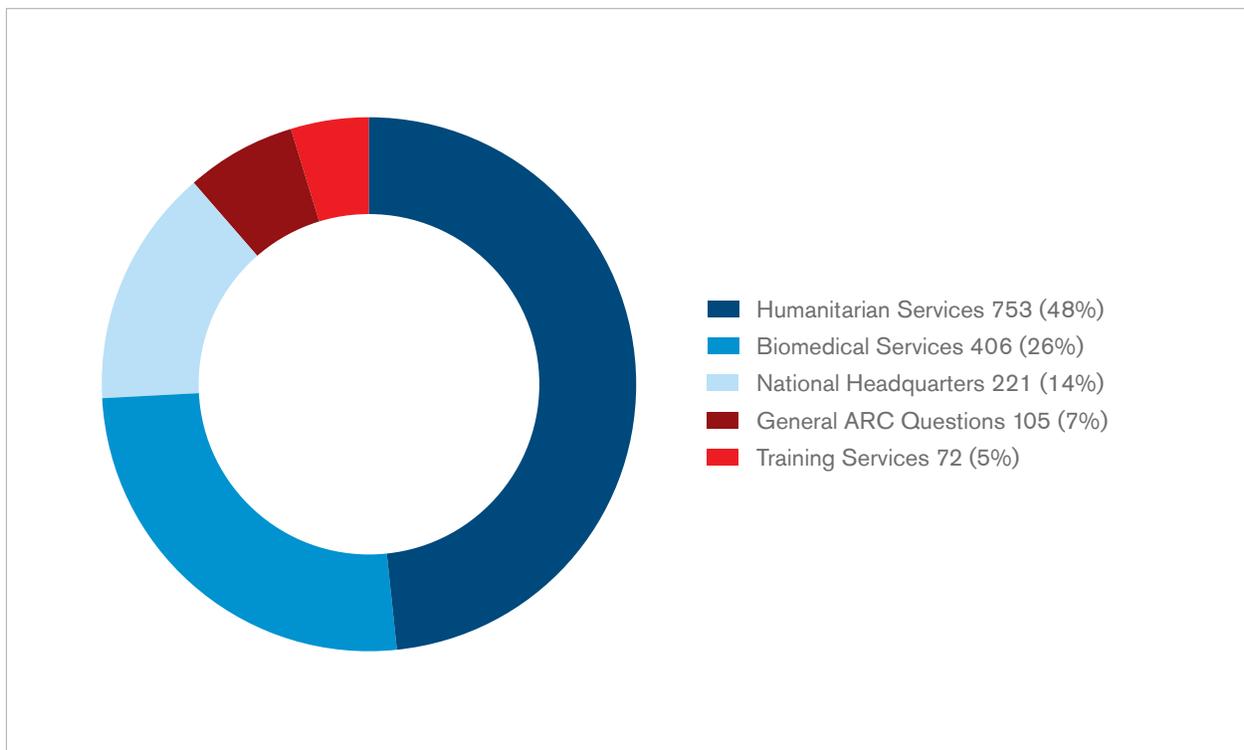
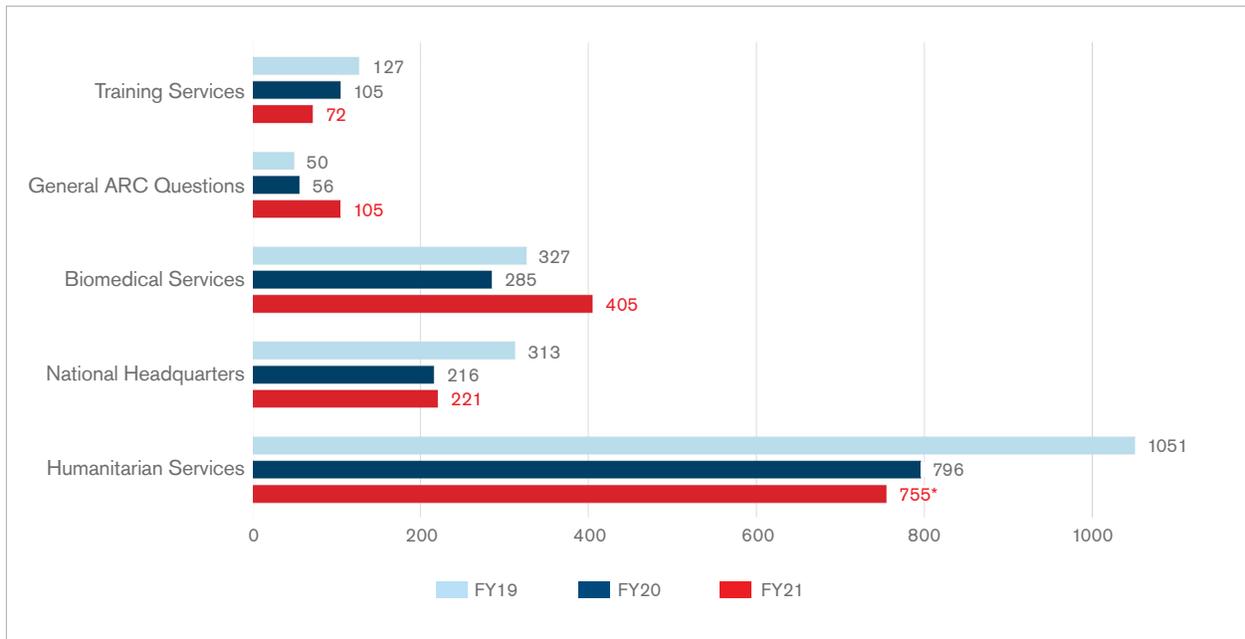


Figure 8 illustrates issues in relation to the Red Cross organizational lines of service from FY19 through FY21.

Figure 8. Issues Per Unit – Yearly Comparison



*The top three issues for Humanitarian Services are: (1) Evaluative Relationships, (2) Services/Administrative questions or concerns about the services or administrative offices typically from external constituents, and (3) Organizational, Strategic and Mission-Related Issues.

Ombuds Office Actions

In FY21, the Ombuds Office engaged in 9 activities related to outreach, training and group facilitation, reaching approximately 1,488 employees, volunteers and partners, and provided support to Spanish speaking constituents.

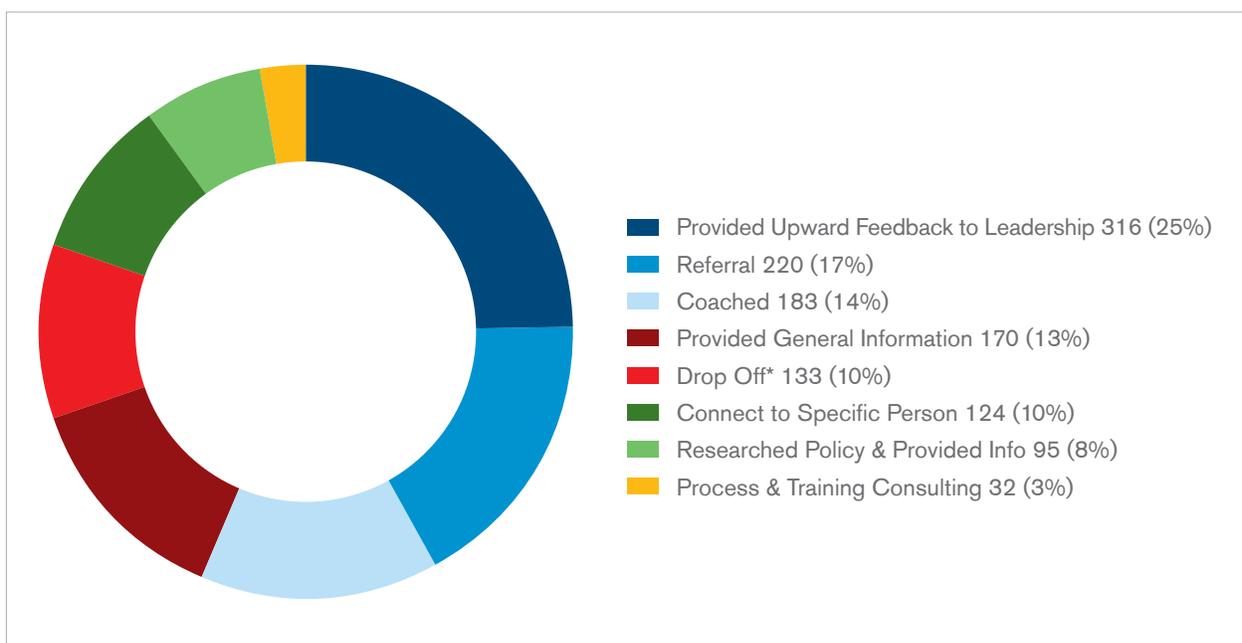
As an enhancement to other parts of the organization, and when appropriate, the Ombuds Office refers constituents to appropriate departments for formal resolution. In FY21, we:

- made 220 referrals to formal parts of the organization such as Concern Connection Line, Human Resources, or the Office of General Counsel,
- connected 124 constituents to various departments in the Red Cross,
- coached, provided process and training consultation to 215 constituents, and
- researched policy and provided general information to 265 constituents.

In addition, the Ombuds helped 128 constituents facilitate conversations to help resolve conflict in the workplace, informal mediation was provided to three constituent groups, and virtual shuttle diplomacy was delivered to 74 constituent groups where resolutions were discovered and embraced, preventing a formal grievance and complaint from being made against the organization.

Figure 9 demonstrates the actions taken by the Ombuds to bring cases towards resolution and includes actions taken from individual conflict resolution work, group facilitations, and trainings for volunteers and employees.

Figure 9. Ombuds Actions (1,273)



*Drop Off contacts are categorized as questions, inquiries or concerns that come to the Ombuds Office and the contacts are voluntarily “dropped” without a need for Ombuds Office assistance.

Supporting the Mission

The Ombuds Office provides an independent, neutral, informal and off-the-record, confidential and alternate channel of communication for all constituents to bring forward and resolve workplace issues and concerns without fear of retribution at any level.

One of the roles of the Ombuds Office is to provide “upward feedback” to leaders to proactively address workplace and service delivery questions, concerns and issues while maintaining the confidentiality of individual communications. In this way, the Ombuds can serve as a valuable early warning system for the Red Cross to identify trends and systemic matters to help Red Cross leaders successfully manage risk and ensure the American Red Cross values and its mission are not compromised. Working with a few large groups we held mediations which could have significantly impacted operations within the organization. We provided upward feedback on: diversity related issues, introduced the idea of an issue resolution process for external constituents, and gave feedback on the absence of narrated training course offerings for a segment of the workforce. Occasionally, we may serve as resource for brainstorming ideas on behalf of the workforce and were able to share an idea for a national volunteer recognition initiative.

Ombuds Office cases are handled in a variety of ways to help meet the needs of various constituents. These include confidential coaching to help individuals think strategically through difficult situations, shuttle diplomacy where we reach out to individuals involved in conflicts or disagreements independent of each other to help move them toward a mutually satisfactory resolution, and other dispute resolution techniques using mediation methodology. As a neutral and independent office, we provided process consultations to assist managers and leaders to identify interventions to address intragroup conflict concerns, including but not limited to ambiguous and challenging communications; behaviors impacting the team or department morale; workforce care; creating a culture of trust and credibility; identifying challenges preventing inclusive decision-making; change management, supervisor effectiveness; management and delegation of tasks; feedback and evaluations; team collaboration and trust.

Leaders, managers and supervisors have reached out to the Ombuds Office in its neutral and informal role as a facilitator to identify root issues impacting team performance. The following issues have been addressed through group facilitations: race and inequality issues; team and group dynamics as it relates to communicating in a virtual environment; change management; interpersonal behaviors impacting teamwork; and help applying conflict resolution techniques and coaching to real issues, supported by the Human Resources training curriculum.

Ombuds training addressed topics such as promoting a culture of trust, improving teamwork, helped leaders develop and design strategies to create the space in which the teams could share open honest feedback, and leadership biases and microaggressions to support the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion department initiatives.

In response to what was happening in our country, the first six months of the fiscal year, the Ombuds Office provided support to leaders and teams in the area of Diversity & Inclusion related to race, managing an inclusive work environment, and preventing workplace harassment. When requested to do so, we facilitated team discussions and helped leaders create psychological safety for their teams, as they introduced opportunities to share experiences and emotionally unpack much of what has transpired in our country from the pandemic to race and inequity issues. The Ombuds Office provided coaching, tools and resources on issues related to communication, while supporting the crucial conversation skills offered to managers and leaders from the Human Resources department.

As we celebrate our fourteenth year, the Office of the Ombuds remains committed to serving the American Red Cross and its stakeholders in a capacity that reflects the [Office of the Ombuds Charter](#).



2007–2021



7,700
Constituents



Another **21,190** Reached through
Outreach, Training and Facilitation



18,900
Issues



**American
Red Cross**

Contact Information

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