

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

# Office of the Corporate Ombudsman

July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016



**American  
Red Cross**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CORPORATE OMBUDSMAN



I am pleased to present the ninth annual report on the activities and initiatives of the Office of the Corporate Ombudsman for fiscal year 2016—from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, in accordance with the Governance Modernization Act of 2007.

This report reflects concerns that internal and external constituents raised with us, as the designated neutral party for the Red Cross, and as an informal, independent and confidential office.

In FY16, the Ombudsman Office handled 1,090 issues raised by 707 constituents, and had direct contact with another approximately 1,700 volunteers, employees and leaders through our outreach, trainings, and group facilitations. We provided coaching, mediation, process consulting and facilitation to support Red Cross leaders, employees and volunteers as they worked together to serve our donors, clients, and the general public.

The issues raised with the Ombudsman comprise a small slice of data from self-selecting internal and external constituents. Moreover, the role of our Office is to provide informal dispute resolution, and guidance on how best to raise or address issues with the organization, and not to investigate or determine the veracity of the issues raised. The interpretations we make in this report are necessarily constrained by these factors.

This Office is always available to assist staff and volunteers at all levels and in all lines of service as well as any recipient of Red Cross services. For more information on our office, please visit [redcross.org/ombudsman](http://redcross.org/ombudsman).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Jessar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kevin Jessar

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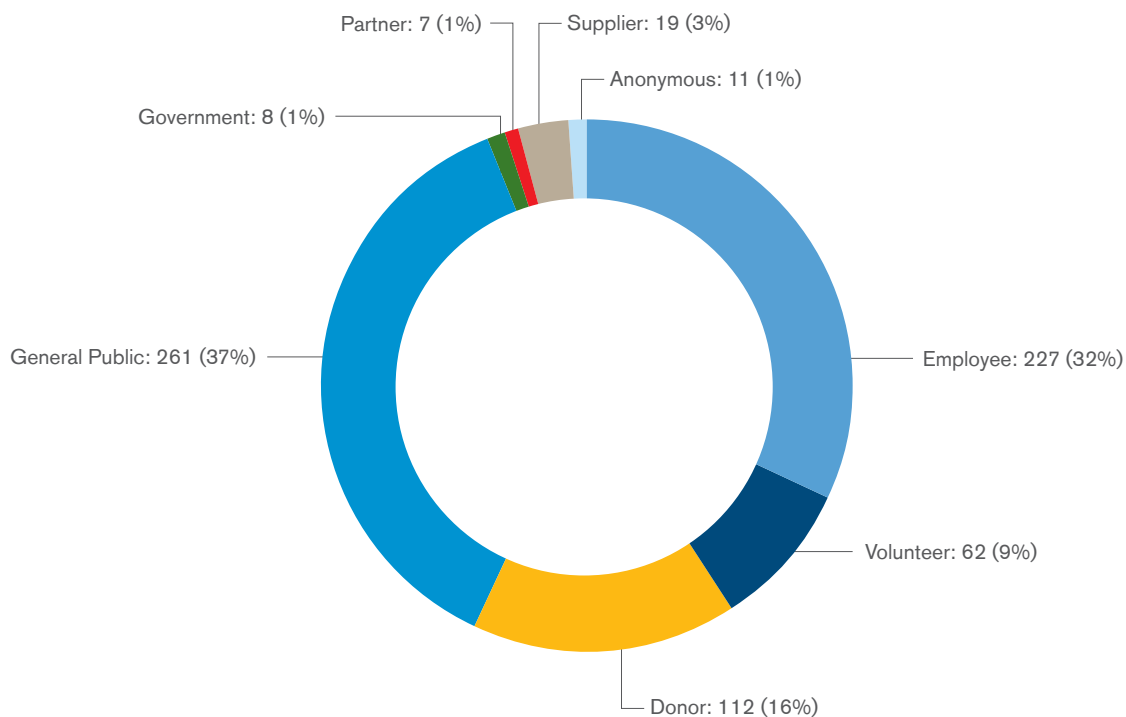
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### Constituent Profile

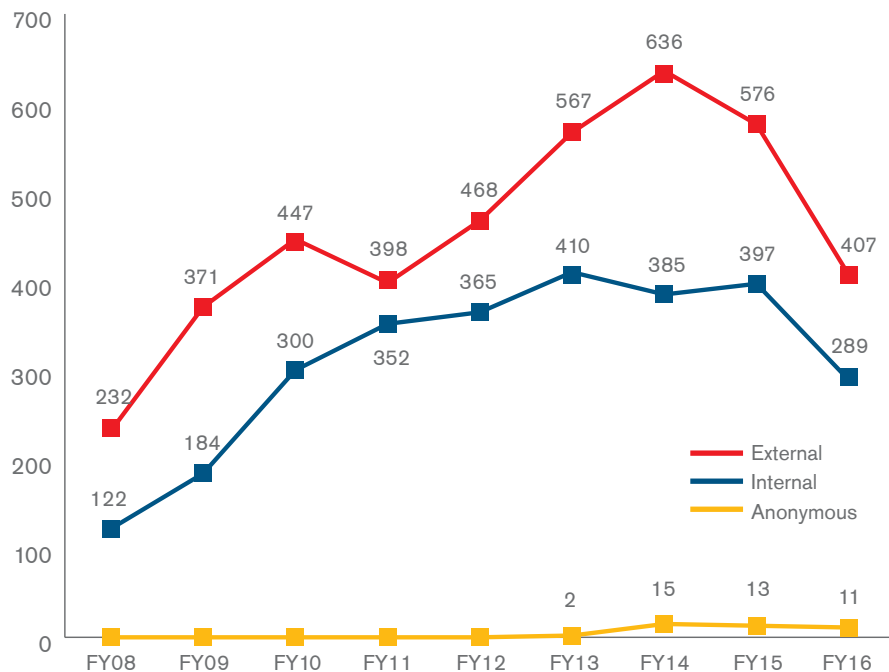
In FY16, 707 constituents contacted the Ombudsman Office. While the overall annual number of constituents utilizing the office has increased from FY08 to FY14, the number of constituents contacting over the last two years have shown declining numbers. Figure 1 illustrates the number and composition of internal and external constituent contacts in FY16.

**Figure 1. All Constituents (707 total)**



In FY16, 58 percent of contacts with the Ombudsman were initiated by external stakeholders, while 41 percent were initiated by internal stakeholders. The remaining one percent of contacts, identified as “anonymous,” represented 11 contacts, two of which were callers looking to file a formal complaint who were referred to the Concern Connection Line (CCL), a whistleblower hotline operated by the Red Cross Office of Investigations, Compliance and Ethics. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship of internal and external contacts since the Office began its operations in FY08.

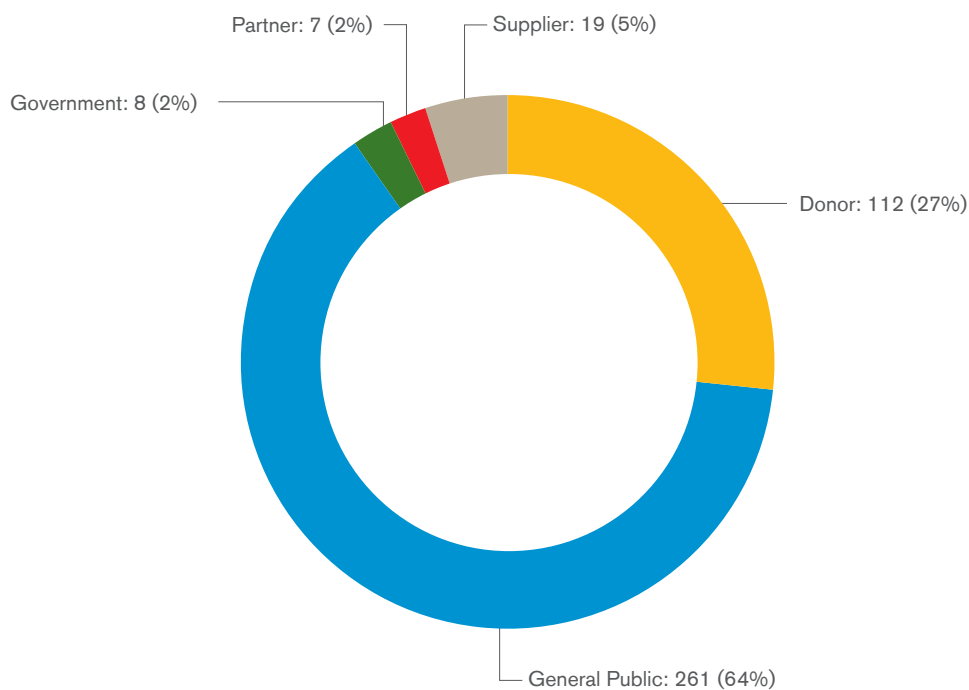
**Figure 2. Internal and External Constituents by Fiscal Year**



## External Constituents

The total number of external contacts rose steadily from 232 in FY08 to 636 in FY14. In FY15 there was a drop to 576 external contacts, and in FY16 this number dropped to 407 external contacts. Figure 3 illustrates the various types of external contacts relative to one another, such as partners, suppliers, donors, and the general public. Combined financial and blood donor contacts to the Ombudsman increased from 20 in FY08 to 244 in FY14, but has fallen over the last two fiscal years. This fall is attributable primarily to a reduction in the number of blood donors contacting the office. However, contacts by financial donors decreased as well. During FY16, blood donors accounted for 86 percent of the donor contacts to the Office and 24 percent of all external contacts, while financial donors accounted for 14 percent of donor contacts and four percent of all external contacts. It should be noted that the blood donor contacts are from a base of roughly 2.8 million blood donors nationwide.

**Figure 3. External Constituents (407 Total)**



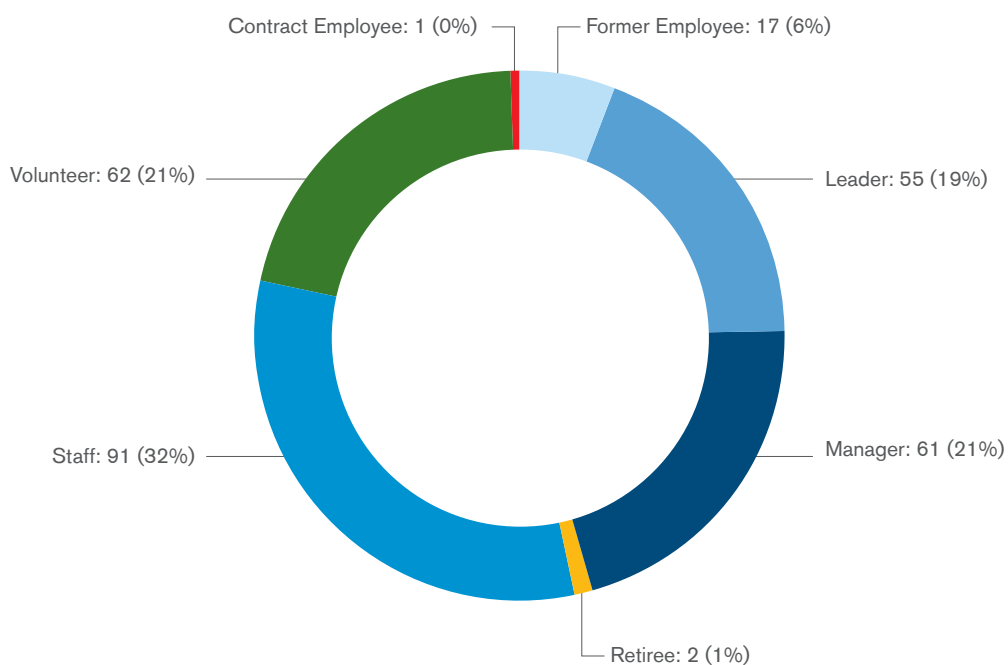
## Internal Constituents

Internal constituents decreased from 397 in FY15 to 289 in FY16. The number of employees contacting the Ombudsman Office decreased from 329 in FY15 to 227 in FY16. Employees comprised 79 percent of internal constituents and 32 percent of the total contacts to the Ombudsman Office in FY16.

Figure 4 reflects internal constituents by job category. FY16 showed a steady utilization of the office by leaders and managers, which comprised 40 percent of internal contacts in FY16.

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**Figure 4. Internal Constituents (289 Total)**



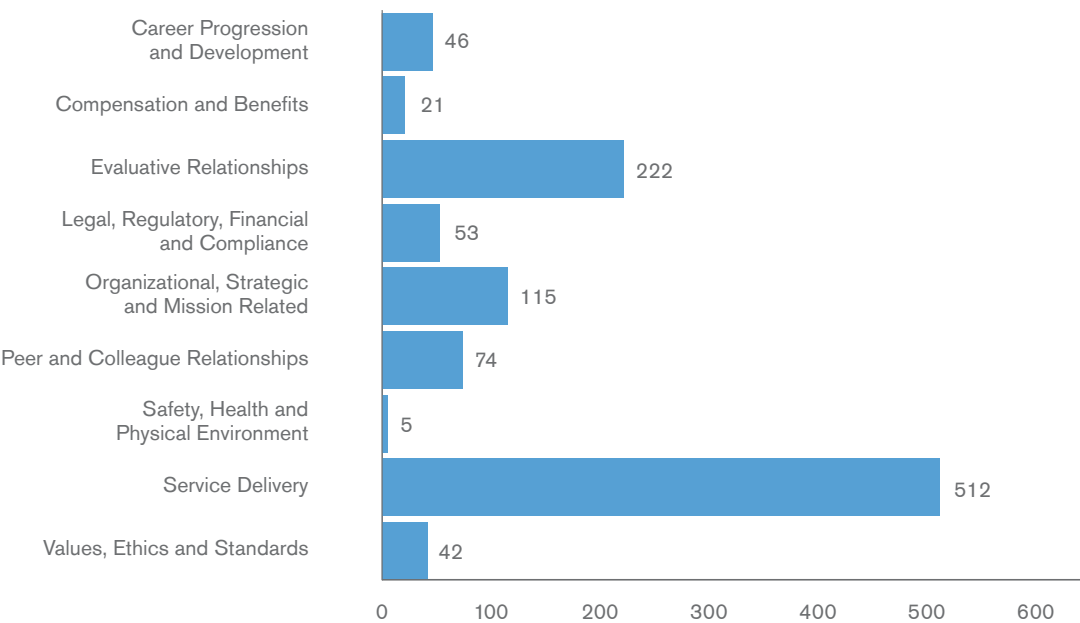


# Issues

## Why Have People Consulted the Ombudsman?

Figure 5 illustrates the overall issue profile of the 1,090 issues raised with the Ombudsman in FY16. The issues are represented according to the uniform reporting categories promulgated by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and are designed to classify the kinds of issues for which people use Ombudsman services and identify trends in requests for services.

**Figure 5. All Issues\* Identified Under IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (1,090 Total)**



\*It is important to note that the issue count reflects single contacts to the Ombudsman Office raising multiple concerns as well as those issues raised by people who have used the office on multiple occasions.

Every year since FY08, Service Delivery continues to be the most prominent issue category, even though it decreased from 617 in FY15 to 512 in FY16. Service delivery typically involves prospective questions regarding potential service or concerns with the quality of service, the timeliness of service, the behavior of the service provider, or the interpretation and application of policies that affected service delivery.

Evaluative Relationship issues comprised the next greatest issue area with 222 issues in FY16; a slight decline from FY15. Evaluative Relationship issues involve the supervisory relationships of employees or volunteers and can be initiated by either supervisors or staff. The most prominent concerns pertained, in particular, to communication, respect or treatment, supervisory effectiveness, performance grading, and departmental climate.

Organizational, Strategic and Mission Related issues, which include issues related to change management, organizational climate, restructuring and relocation, priority setting and funding, comprised the third greatest issue area in FY16. Issues most commonly raised in relation to organizational strategy, direction, and mission pertained to change management, organizational climate, and use of position or authority.

Figure 6 illustrates the issues raised across the past three fiscal years.

**Figure 6. Issues—Yearly Comparison**

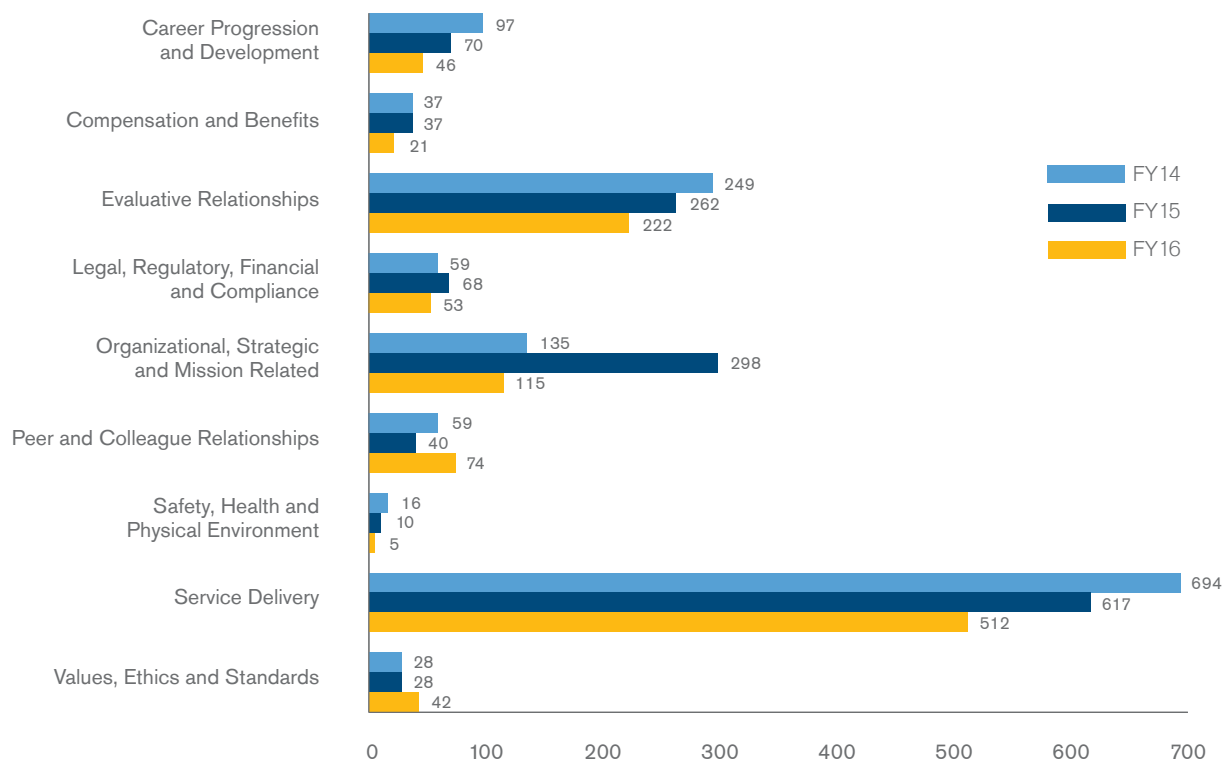


Figure 7 reflects that the greatest number and percentage of issues raised in FY16 pertained to Humanitarian Services, followed by Biomedical Services; national headquarters; Preparedness, Health and Safety Services; general questions; and International Services. It should be noted that the number for Humanitarian Services includes Disaster Cycle Services.

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**Figure 7. Issues Per Organizational Unit (1,090 Total)**

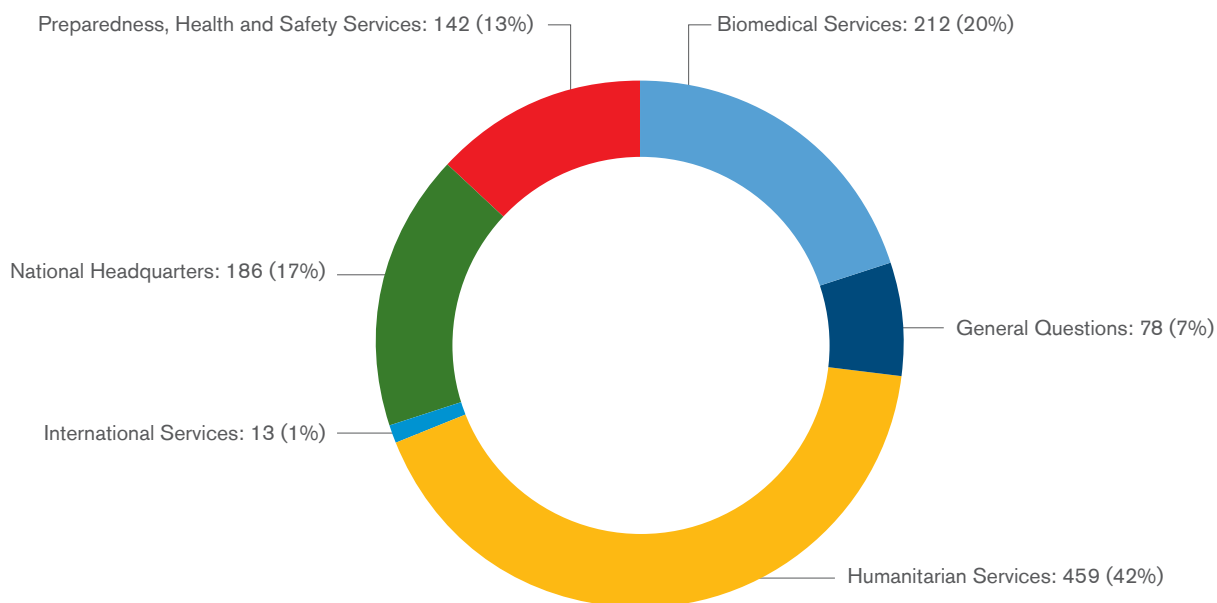
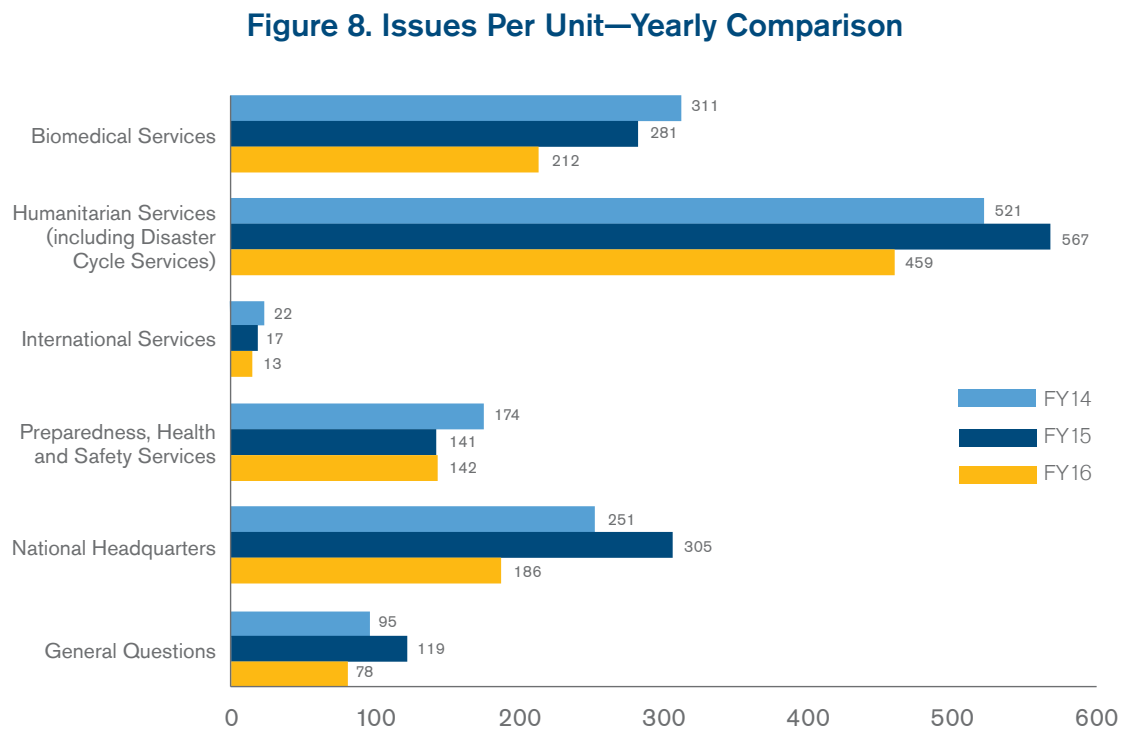


Figure 8 illustrates issues in relation to the major components of the Red Cross from FY14 through FY16.



Of the 459 issues pertaining to Humanitarian Services that were raised in FY16, 175 pertained to supervisory relationships and career progression. There were 116 issues relating to legal, ethical or organizational concerns, and an additional 116 issues reflected service delivery concerns. Remaining issues included concerns with peer and colleague relationships; compensation and benefits; and health and safety in the physical working environment.

Among issues raised pertaining to Humanitarian Services, the greatest number concerned the Chapter network (54 percent), followed by Disaster Cycle Services (32 percent), Volunteer Services (10 percent), and Service to the Armed Forces (three percent). The vast majority of concerns pertained, in descending order, to evaluative relationships; service delivery; the direction, strategy and mission of the organization; and peer and colleague relationships.

The Ombudsman received 212 issues pertaining to Biomedical Services in FY16, down from 281 in FY15. Service delivery issues comprised 70 percent of the issues raised. This represents a drop in the number of Biomedical Services service delivery-related concerns from 169 in FY15 to 149 in FY16. Issues pertaining to evaluative relationships were the next largest category in Biomedical Services with 20 issues (nine percent).

In FY16, 186 of the total 1,090 issues raised (17 percent) pertained to national headquarters, which consists of Human Resources, the Office of General Counsel, Development, Finance, Information Technology, Audit, Public Affairs, Marketing and other smaller offices. Of the issues raised, 102 (55 percent) pertained to service delivery concerns, representing a decrease of such issues from FY15 (120). An additional 22 issues involved legal, regulatory and compliance concerns. The remaining issues pertained, in descending order, to evaluative relationships; compensation and benefits; the strategy, direction and mission of the organization; peer and colleague relationships; values, ethics and standards; and career progression.

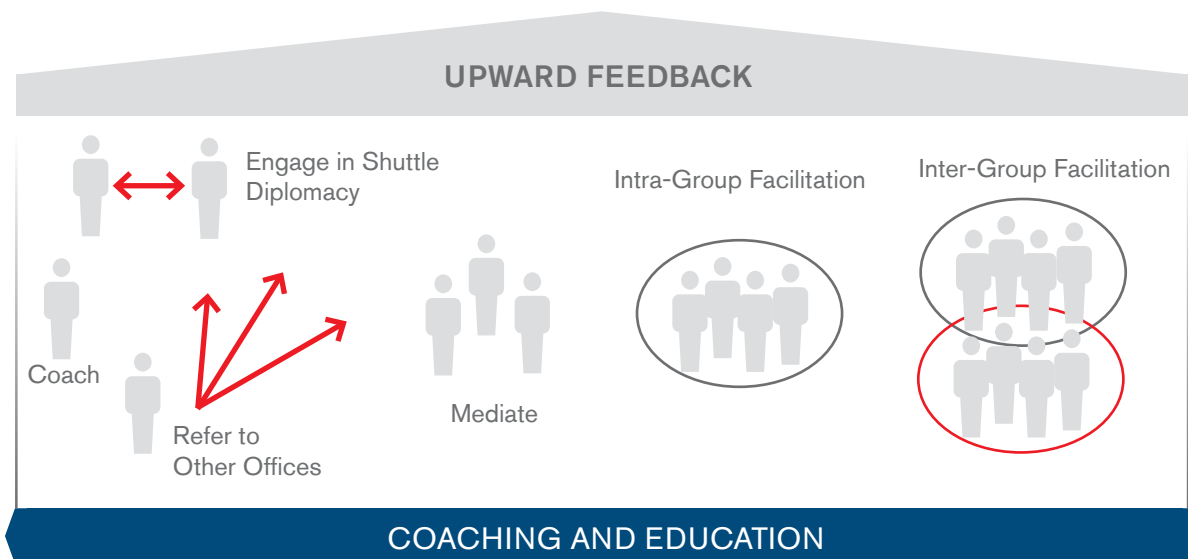
Concerns regarding Preparedness, Health and Safety remained consistent with 141 issues in FY15 and 142 in FY16. Slightly more than half of the issues involved service delivery, while 34 (24 percent) pertained to evaluative relationships.

## ACTIONS

The Ombudsman provides guidance to parties on how best to bring forward issues or concerns in the organization so that they can be raised in the most constructive way and addressed at the most appropriate level. Ombudsman cases utilize diverse approaches and actions, such as confidential coaching, to help people think strategically through difficult situations. The Ombudsman also, as appropriate, uses shuttle diplomacy, in which we alternate speaking with each party to move toward a mutually satisfactory resolution. We can also bring disputing parties together and mediate a face-to-face resolution, where both parties are interested.

We also utilize facilitated processes for handling issues within a team, or between teams, to enhance working relationships, intra-team functioning, and inter-team coordination and collaboration. Work teams and their leaders look to us in our neutral role as subject matter experts in process consulting, group dynamics and facilitation. In FY16, the Ombudsman Office engaged in 62 activities relating to outreach, training and group facilitation, touching approximately 1,700 people across the Red Cross. Ombudsman training includes topics relating to handling difficult conversations, giving effective feedback, working effectively in virtual teams, supporting and managing a volunteer workforce, identifying what effective teams need, managing effective group meetings and decision-making, and facilitative leadership skills. Finally, the Ombudsman Office engages in “upward feedback,” meaning that we follow up with management to identify issues that may impact the Red Cross in a broader way or in the future.

**Figure 9. Ombudsman Work With Internal and External Constituents**



As we look ahead in 2017, the Office of the Ombudsman remains committed to serving the American Red Cross, its employees, volunteers, donors and the public.

## **Contact Information**

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