



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

# Office of the Corporate Ombuds



**American  
Red Cross**

## A Message from the Corporate Ombuds

This year, the Office of the Ombuds continued to provide resources to meet the needs of the external constituents and supported volunteers and employees in the dispute resolution process. As always, the Office was and remains focused on being a safe and confidential resource for anyone impacted by the American Red Cross, its workplace, mission, and services to share their concerns per the [Governance Modernization Act of 2007](#).

As I share the fifteenth annual report on activities of the Office of the Ombuds for the fiscal year 2022 — from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022 — it is a reminder that the Office communicates the experiences of our constituents to the appropriate leaders of the American Red Cross. The Office serves as an outlet for people who may not have otherwise known how best to raise or address issues within the organization and may seek guidance on how to navigate through the organization. For those who choose to use the services of the Ombuds Office, having a resource available as an impartial, confidential, and informal listening partner has been personally transformative.

In FY22 the Ombuds Office provided resources and supported 1,355 issues raised by 730 constituents. Through outreach, trainings, and group facilitations we were able to reach an additional 199 volunteers, employees and partners while supporting our donors, and recipients of our mission-related services.

Additionally, 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 serve to advocate for a fair process.

In contrast to the Ombuds Office, the Office of Ethics and Compliance investigates allegations of wrongdoing in administrative, civil, and criminal matters. In addition, the Office of Ethics and Compliance 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.

Being agile and adapting to the challenges of the last two years presented an opportunity for the Ombuds Office to meet the needs of a virtual constituency base. The demands for Ombuds services increased for external constituents, and in managers and leaders reaching out for coaching and consultations this fiscal year.

Reflecting on the past year, we were able to support issues related to the pandemic, diversity, reintegration into the workplace, work-life stress, workforce care, career related concerns, and challenging conversations. Externally we were able to connect blood and financial donors to various parts of the organization to address concerns and connect disaster clients to regional team members to identify the most appropriate resources. The myriad of issues presented have increased in complexity, requiring the cooperation of various departments and leaders.

In the coming year, I am looking forward to supporting the constituents of the American Red Cross by delivering creative ways in which to identify solutions to promote positive conflict resolution. The Office of the Ombuds is committed to supporting the dispute resolution process and acting as a no-barrier, first-stop when seeking information and insight from a trusted advisor who is independent, impartial, confidential and informal and will continue to identify trends and emerging issues while advocating for a fair process.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Villafañe, Psy.D.  
Corporate Ombudsman

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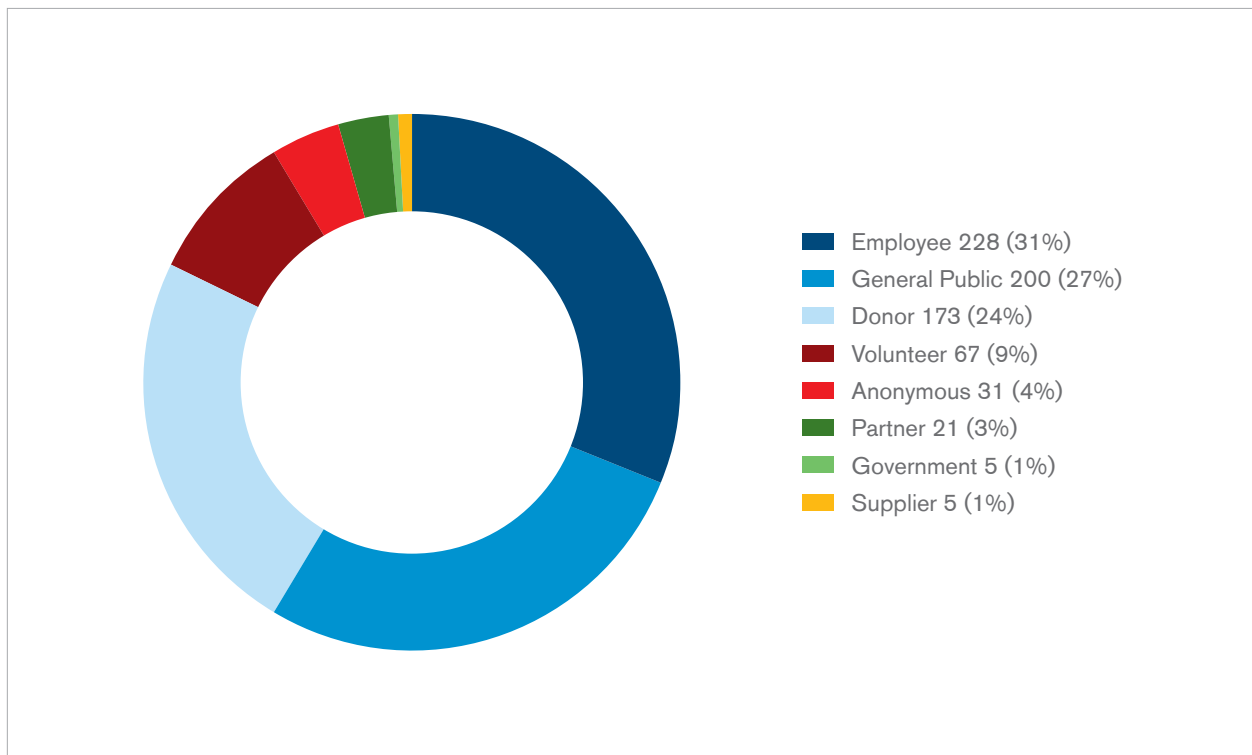
## Constituent Profile

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 FY22, 730 constituents reached out to the Ombuds Office, and received resources and support to address their inquiries and issues compared to 800 constituents in FY21. There was an increase in blood and financial Donor inquiries from last year which are attributable to policy and practice mandates related to the pandemic, general inquiries about migration and international issues, and issues impacting the work environment as we define our new “normal”.

Figure 1 illustrates the number and composition of internal and external constituents who contacted the Ombuds Office in FY22. The total does not include an additional 199 recipients to whom the Ombuds provided outreach, group facilitations and training for smaller teams using virtual platforms. There were an additional 118 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 (730 Total)**



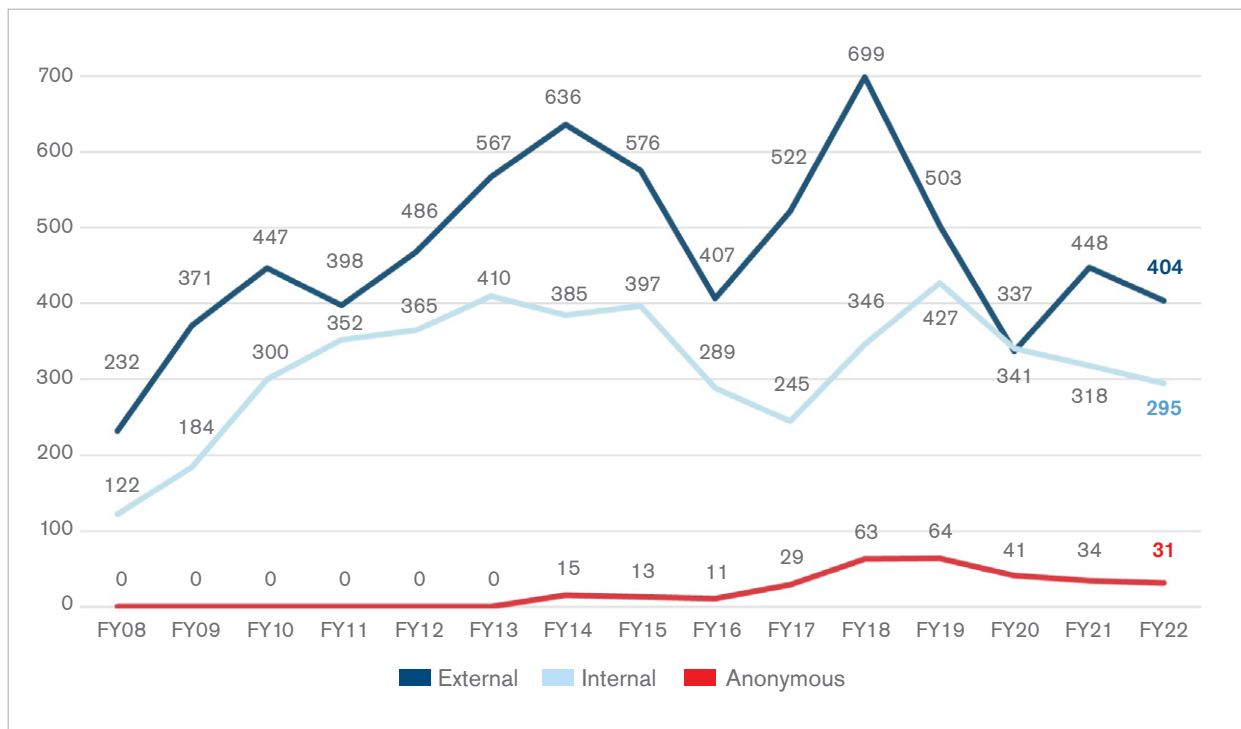


In FY22, 55 percent of contacts receiving Ombuds resources and support were initiated by external stakeholders, while 40 percent were initiated by internal stakeholders. The remaining 4 percent of contacts identified as “anonymous” represents 31 contacts compared to 34 anonymous contacts in FY21 and are comprised of internal and external constituents.

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**



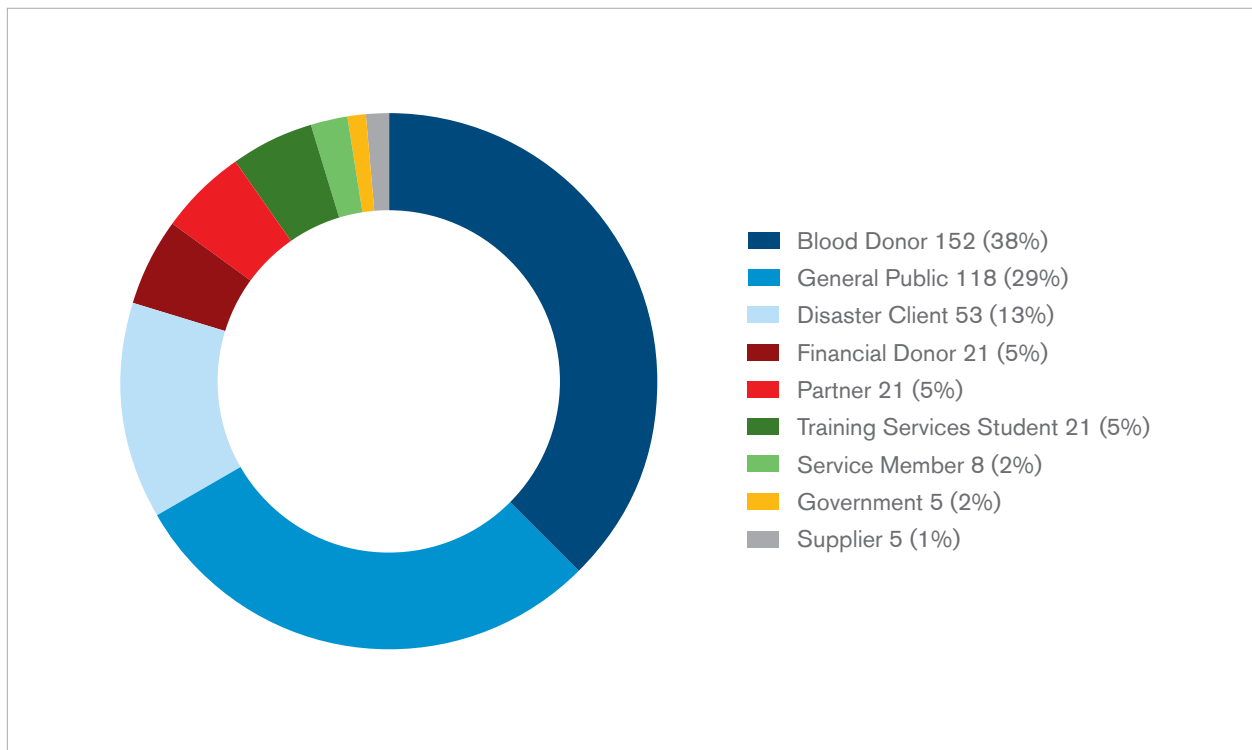
## External Constituents

In FY22, a total of 404 external constituents contacted the Office of the Ombuds with concerns or inquiries and received support and resources.

During FY22, Red Cross donors accounted for 24 percent of all constituents contacting the Ombuds Office and 42.8 percent of external constituents. Of the 173 donors reaching out to the Office of the Ombuds, 152 were blood donors and 21 were financial donors. It should be noted that the blood donor contacts are from a base of over 2.2 million active volunteer donors for FY22. Although there was an increase in donor concerns from the previous fiscal year, we experienced a decrease in contacts from disaster clients, suppliers, and the general public.

Figure 3 illustrates the various types of external constituent contacts.

**Figure 3. External Constituents\* (404 Total)**



\*We do not report detailed information on those that wish to remain anonymous, and they are not included in this part of the report.

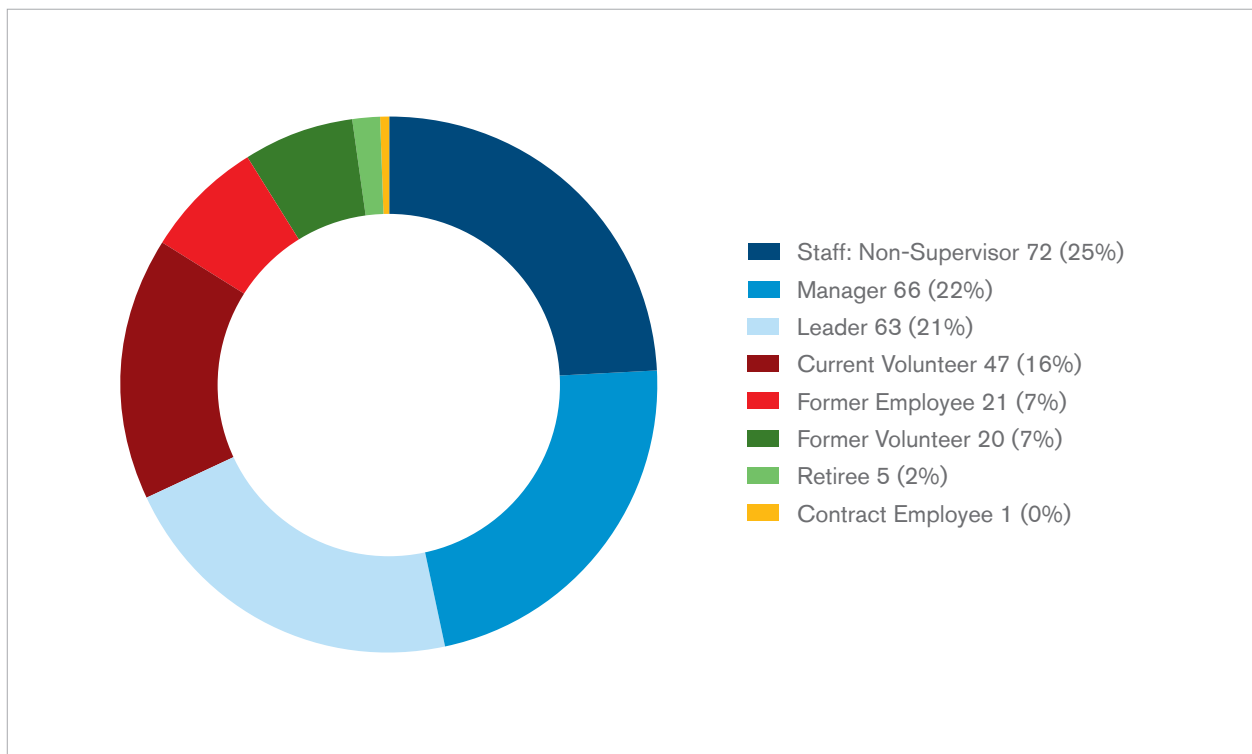
## Internal Constituents

In FY22, 295 internal constituents contacted the Ombuds Office. Employees comprised 75 percent of internal constituents and 31 percent of all constituents to the Ombuds Office in FY22. We do not collect detailed information on those that wish to remain anonymous, and they are not included in this part of the report. In FY22, leaders and managers leveraged the resources of the Ombuds 13% more than in FY21.

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, 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\* (295 Total)**



\*We do not report detailed information on those that wish to remain anonymous, and they are not included in this part of the report.

# Issues

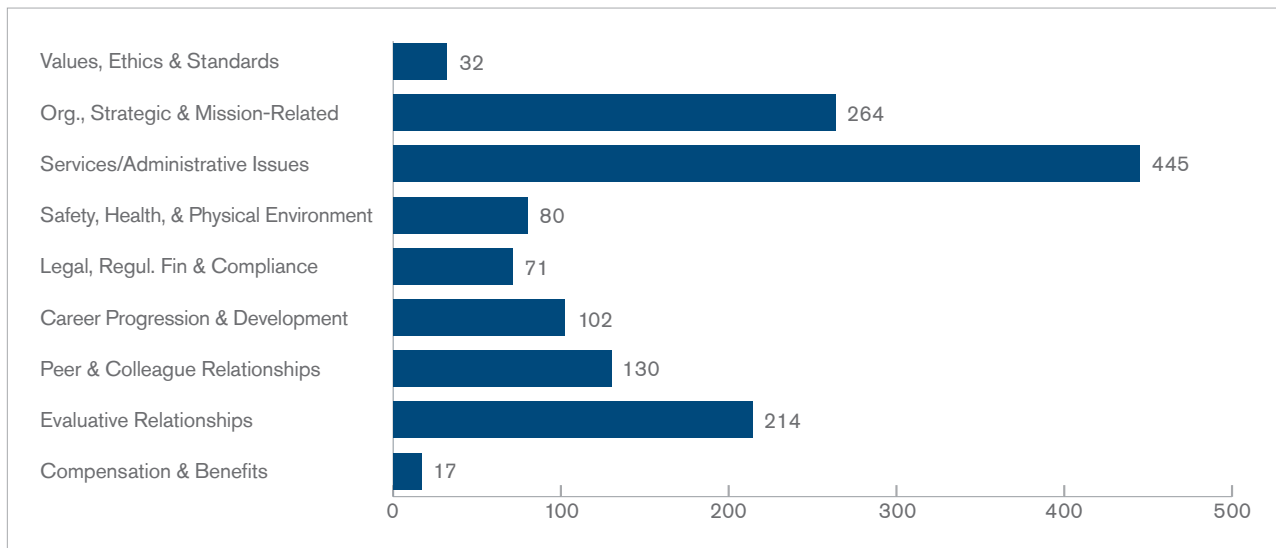
## Reasons for Contacting the Ombuds Office

In FY22, a total of 1,355 issues were brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office and include trainings and facilitations. 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 and remain relatively stable across the years are:

- Services/Administrative Issues: (1) quality of services provided, (2) administrative decisions and interpretation or application of rules, and (3) concerns about the behavior of the service provider toward a constituent.
- 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.
- 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.

**Figure 5. Issue Identification**  
**All Issues Identified Under IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (1,355 Total)**

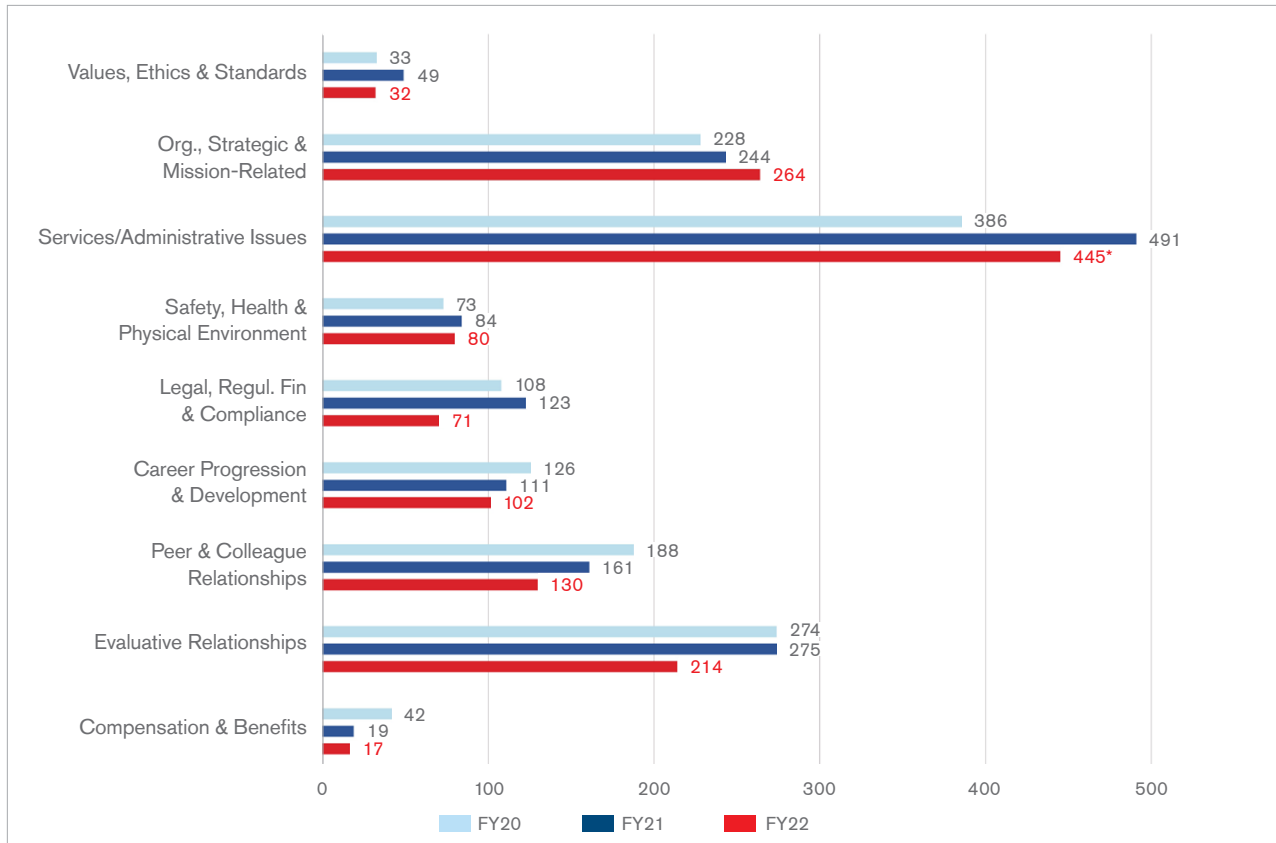


It is important to note that the issue count reflects individual contacts to the Office of the Ombuds raising multiple concerns.



Figure 6 illustrates the issues raised across the past three fiscal years (FY20–FY22).

**Figure 6. Issues – Yearly Comparison**



\*Note: Services/Administrative Issues inquiries and concerns include requests from external constituents seeking information on services which may be out of the scope of the Red Cross mission, questions regarding how the American Red Cross is supporting the pandemic, migration, international events, and other general inquiries including prospective vendor or partnership inquiries.

## Issues Per Organizational Unit

Figure 7 reflects the number and percentage of issues raised in FY22 pertaining to Red Cross organizational units. There were 98 inquiries from the general public including 44 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 (1,355 Total)**

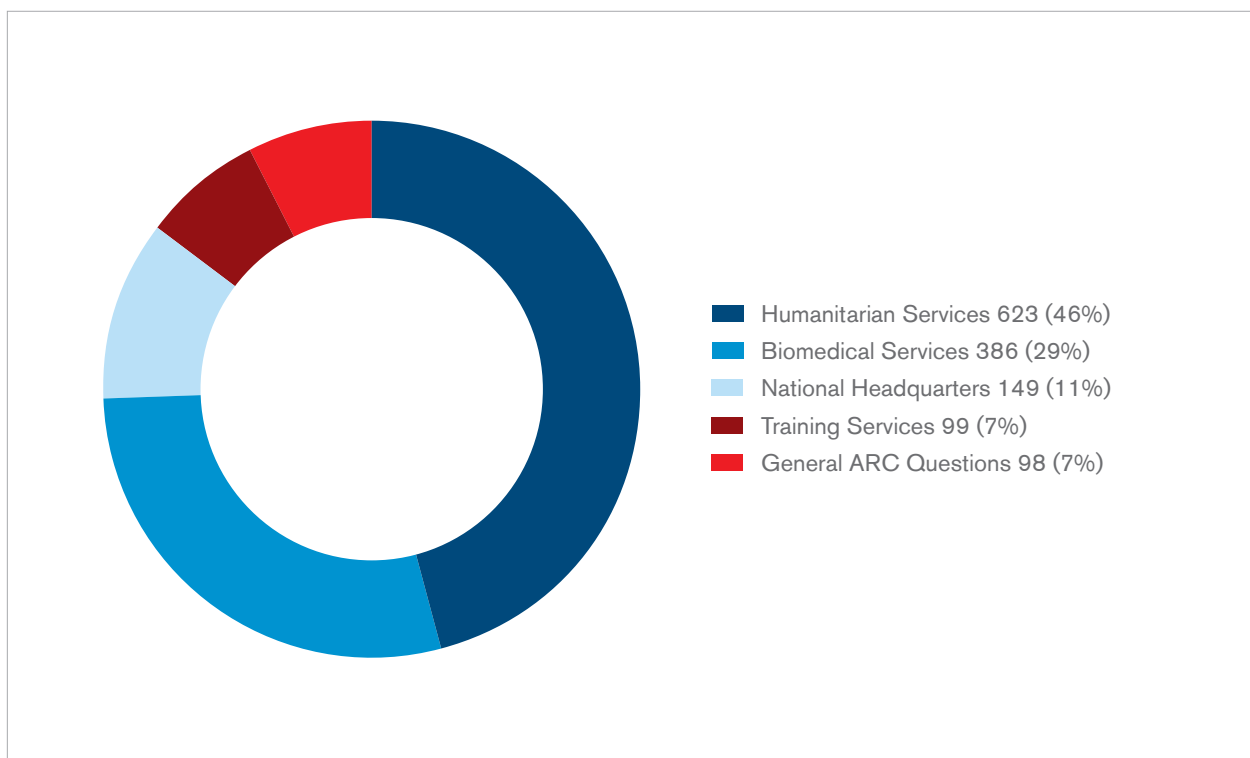
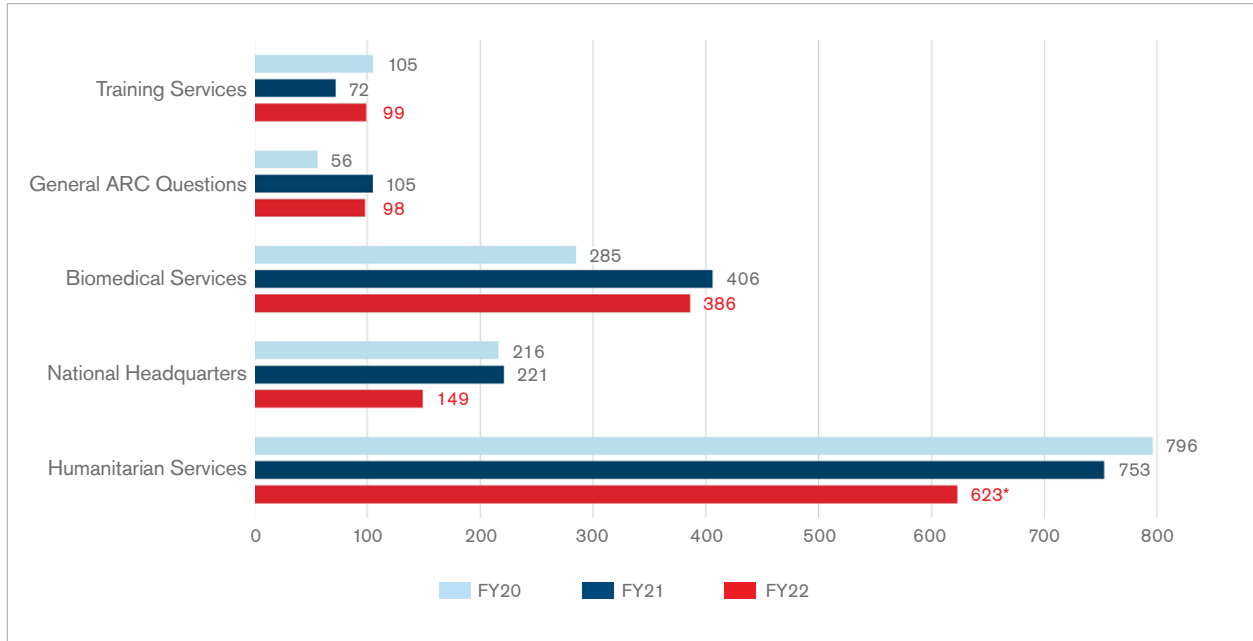


Figure 8 illustrates issues in relation to the Red Cross organizational lines of service from FY20 through FY22.

**Figure 8. Issues Per Unit – Yearly Comparison**



\*The top three issues for Humanitarian Services remain stable from last fiscal year: (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 FY22, the Ombuds Office engaged in 20 activities related to outreach, training, and group facilitation, reaching 199 employees, volunteers, and partners. Of the 20 activities, eight group facilitations, one training and eleven Outreach events were fulfilled virtually to remote teams with new managers and leaders.

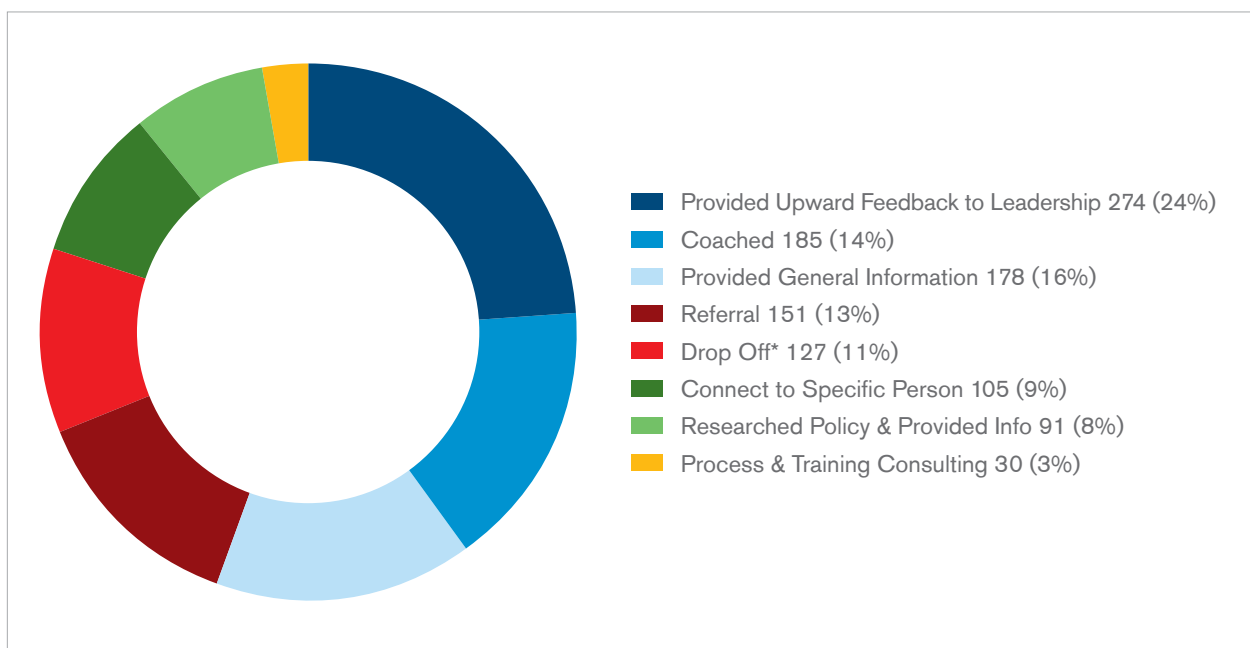
When appropriate, the Ombuds Office refers constituents to appropriate departments for formal resolution. In FY22, we:

- made 151 referrals to formal parts of the organization such as Concern Connection Line, Human Resources, or the Office of General Counsel,
- connected 105 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 269 constituents.

In addition, the Ombuds helped 89 constituents facilitate conversations to help resolve conflict in the workplace, informal mediation was provided to four 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 (1,141)**



\*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 Office of the Ombuds is the neutral, informal, and confidential resource for constituents of the Red Cross and it serves as an alternate channel of communication for issues and concerns to be brought forward without fear of retribution at any level.

The primary responsibilities of the Office of the Ombuds are: (1) to work with individuals and groups within the American Red Cross to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues, or concerns, and (2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution. We fulfill our duties according to the International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice: independence, impartiality, informality and confidentiality.

Every issue and concern brought to the Ombuds Office is uniquely different and complex. Where there was a breakdown in team communication which negatively impacted engagement, informal mediation was used. Shuttle diplomacy was a technique frequently used to help all parties involved in conflict or disagreement, independent of each other and to help move them toward a mutually satisfactory resolution or sense of understanding. The Ombuds team responded to concerns and disputes from constituents to the Office and conveyed trends, systemic problems, organizational and service delivery issues to leaders and executives in a confidential manner using “upward feedback”. We provided upward feedback on pandemic and diversity related issues from constituents.

External constituent upward feedback consisted of:

- quality of service,
- behavior of service provider, and
- technology challenges.

Internal constituent upward feedback focused on:

- organizational, strategic, or mission-related concerns, organizational climate, change management;
- career progression and development, work related stress and work life challenges; and
- issues related to communication with colleagues and supervisors.

The Ombuds team worked collaboratively with internal departments such as Development, Communications and Marketing, Biomedical Services, and Disaster Cycle Services. Using feedback from constituents, we assisted in surfacing issues to formal resolution channels and provided unfiltered information to these departments to help them achieve insights to issues. Upward feedback was provided to help identify systemic changes to existing processes.

Managers and leaders leaned into the Ombuds Office for process consultations and for support to facilitate conversations concerning team engagement, communication, change management, and ways to create strength-based departments this year. The Ombuds Office offered internal constituents the opportunity to apply the skills learned from human resource trainings offered through facilitated events (i.e., Crucial Conversations, InsideOut coaching), promote peer to peer coaching, create strength-based leadership activities, facilitate intragroup conflict resolution and feedback sessions.

We added an Assistant Ombuds to the team allowing us to provide higher quality services to constituents who reach out for assistance this fiscal year. We are looking forward to continuing the work in our neutral and informal role, to serve as an early warning system for the Red Cross to identify trends and systemic matters that may impact the American Red Cross values and its mission.

The Ombuds team remains committed to serving the American Red Cross and its stakeholders in a capacity that reflects the [Office of the Ombuds Charter](#). As we celebrate our fifteenth year, our pledge is to practice the standards of confidentiality, impartiality, informality and being independent in an inclusive manner.





**2007–2022**



**8,400**  
Constituents



Another **22,100** reached through  
Outreach, Training and Facilitation



**20,250**  
Issues



**American  
Red Cross**

**Contact Information**

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[redcross.org/Ombudsman](https://redcross.org/Ombudsman)