

# Human Rights Office ANNUAL REPORT

May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025



# Human Rights Office – 2024-2025 Annual Report

The Human Rights Office (HRO) prepares an annual report as per the *MAPP 1.3.5 Non-Discrimination/Harassment/Sexual Misconduct Policy*. The report focuses on harassment, discrimination and sexual harassment and sexual misconduct addressed by the Human Rights Office and the Office of the Associate-Vice President, Human Resources.

## Policy Update

Effective February 6, 2025, Western's Non-Discrimination/Harassment/Sexual Misconduct Policy was updated to meet the new requirements under *Bill 166, Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act, 2024*. The University held consultation meetings in December 2024 and January 2025 with employee groups and student executives on the proposed requirements to meet compliance with the legislative requirements.





## About the Human Rights Office (HRO) at Western

The services of the HRO are available to all members of Western's community. Under the Policy, the HRO facilitates the development, implementation and ongoing management or coordination of Western's policies and programs relating to discrimination, harassment, workplace harassment or sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. Western's policies comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code and Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The HRO offers the following services:

- Confidential consultation, support, and information available to all Western students, staff, faculty, librarians and archivists and postdoctoral scholars
- Support, education and advice to administrative and academic leaders
- Culture and climate reviews, as appropriate
- Training and presentations



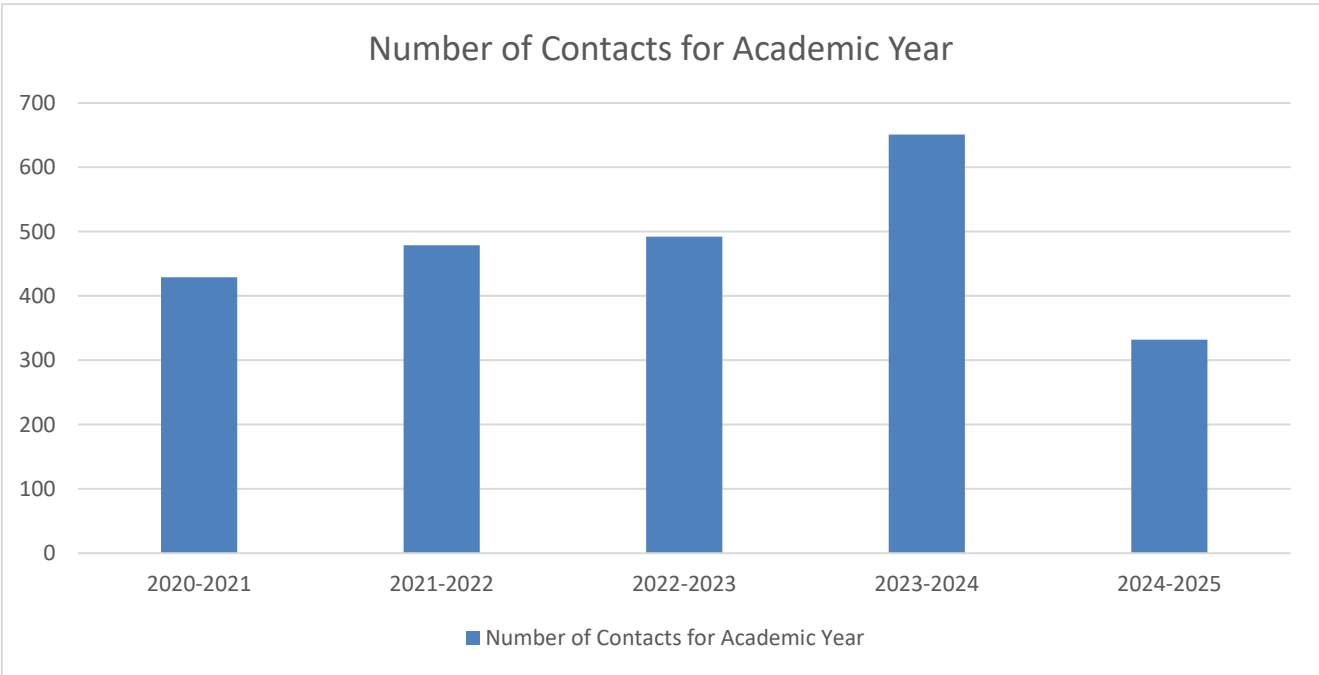
*Western University sits on traditional territory. The Human Rights Office acknowledges the Attawandaran (Neutral) peoples who settled the Southwestern Ontario region alongside the Algonquin and Haudenosaunee people, as well as the other longstanding Indigenous groups of this region: the Anishinaabe Peoples, the Haudenosaunee Peoples, the Leni-Lunaape People and Chonnonton People.*

# Contacts to the HRO

Over the past academic year, the Human Rights Office recorded **332 direct contacts** via the Office’s online reporting tool, email, phone calls and walk ins. **175** of those were through the online reporting form and **157** through email, phone or walk-ins.

Chart 1 below tracks the number of contacts over the past 5 years. The 2023-2024 increase in contacts was due to the events related to the impact of global events upon our campus. The higher number of contacts from the academic years between 2020-2023 were associated with the pandemic and the issues related to accommodations, health and safety concerns and the implementation of mandatory vaccine and masking policies. In contrast, over the past academic year, we have not seen significant external factors directly affecting the work of our office. The concerns and issues raised have primarily reflected the general broader societal and community trends.

Chart 1: Number of Contacts for Academic Year



- **64%** of contacts were from individuals who indicated they directly experienced the behaviours they were reporting to the HRO.
- **20%** of contacts indicated they were witness or were made aware of the concerns they were reporting to the HRO.
- **16%** of individuals contacted the Human Rights Office with general requests for information or advice. This included academic and administrative leaders, student leaders, faculty members and staff seeking clarification on processes, referring individuals and reviewing of materials to ensure compliance with human rights principles and the NDH/SM policy.

Chart 2: Individuals Reporting Concerns

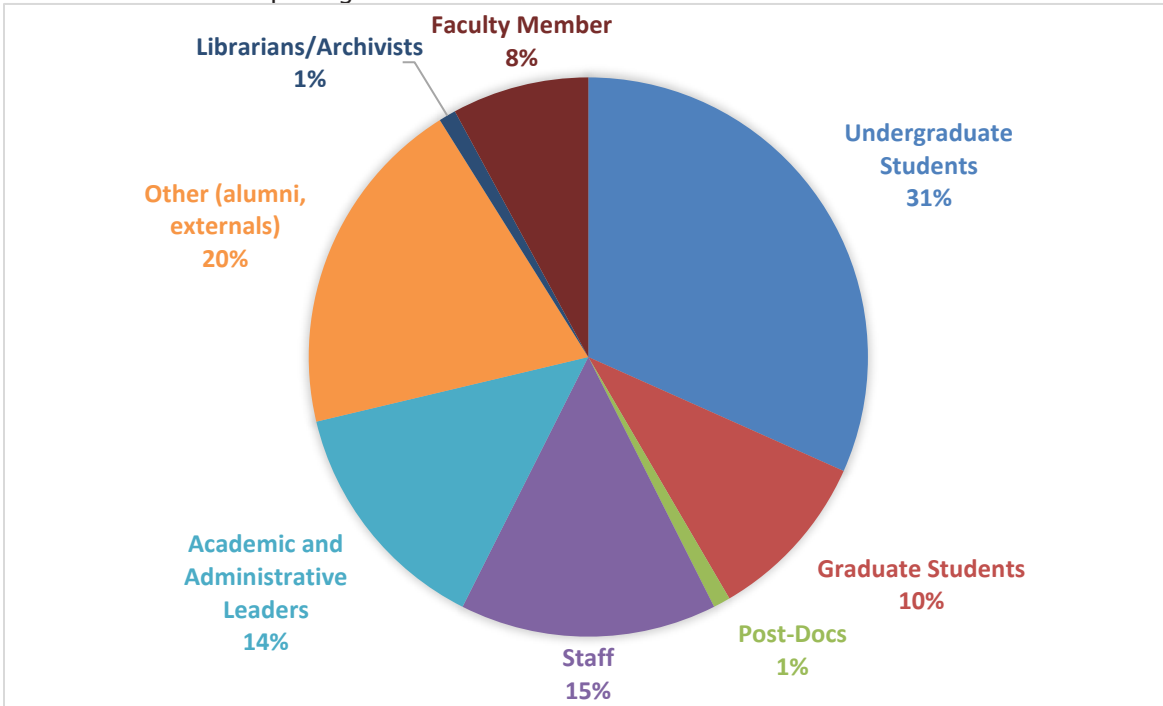
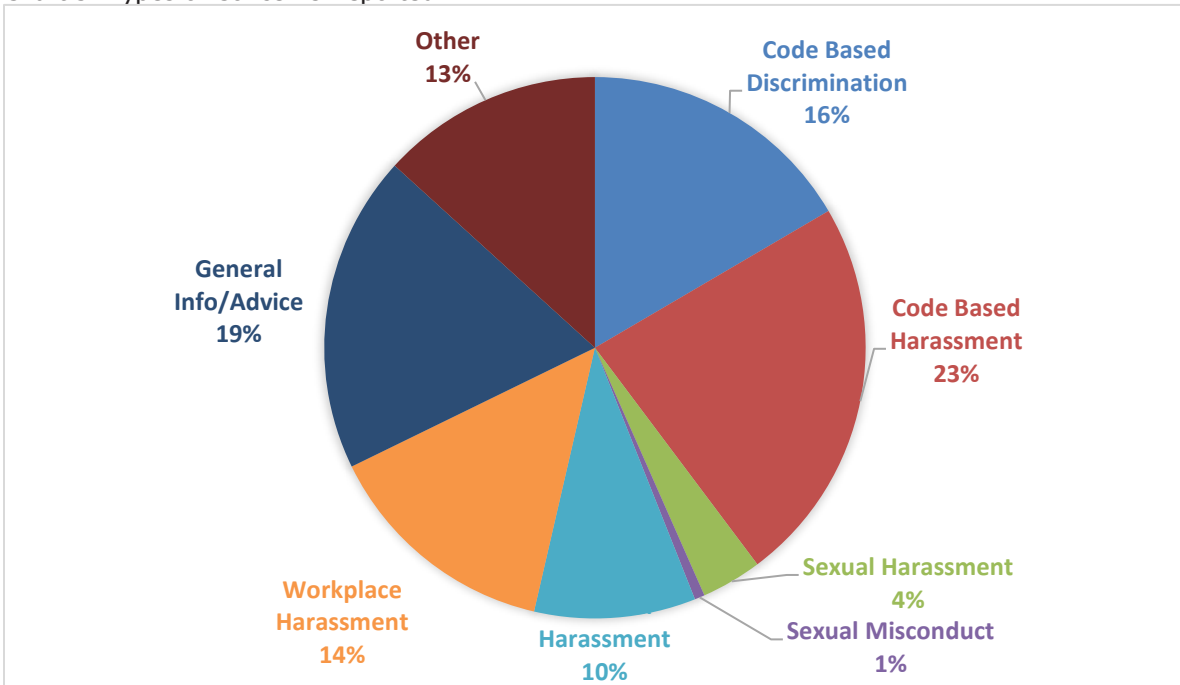


Chart 3: Types of Concerns Reported



- Chart 2 above illustrates the breakdown of individuals who brought concerns to the HRO. Undergraduate students made up the largest group using the HRO's services, followed by individuals not directly affiliated with the university such as alumni, former staff, parents, concerned citizens etc.
- Chart 3 above illustrates the nature of the concerns reported to the HRO. Individuals often raise multiple concerns to the HRO.
- In addition to harassment, discrimination, workplace harassment or sexual harassment individuals may report other types of conflict that do not fall within the scope of the Policy. Examples of this include interpersonal issues, misunderstandings about role or job clarity,



academic grading concerns, teaching styles of professors, etc. The HRO recognizes that unresolved conflict (s) can negatively impact the workplace and academic environments. In such cases, the HRO will collaborate with and/or refer matters to Western's network of support services that may be better positioned to assist the individual.

Table 1: Code-Based Discrimination and Harassment Grounds from Individual Contacts

Grounds	Contact
Age	3
Creed (inc. accommodation)	6
Disability (incl. accommodation)	17
Family & Marital Status	3
Gender Identity & Expressions	19
Sexual Orientation	3
Race and Race related grounds	66
Sex (incl. harassment, discrimination & sexual misconduct)	36

Table 2: Code Based Discrimination and Harassment Grounds reported by Graduate and Undergraduate Students

Code Based Grounds	Contacts
Age	1
Creed (inc. accommodation)	4
Disability (inc. accommodation)	6
Family & Marital Status	1
Gender Identity & Expression	1
Sexual Orientation	2
Race and Race related grounds	38
Sex (incl. harassment & discrimination & sexual misconduct)	17

Table 3: Code Based Discrimination and Harassment Grounds reported by Employees (staff, faculty, post-docs, librarians)

Code Based Grounds	Contacts
Age	2
Creed (inc. accommodation)	0
Disability (inc. accommodation)	8
Family & Marital Status	2
Gender Identity & Expression	1
Sexual Orientation	1
Race and Race related grounds	7
Sex (incl. harassment & discrimination & sexual misconduct)	8

## HRO and the Campus Community

The Human Rights Office is contacted by individuals in a wide range of roles across the Western community. We provide support to all members of the Western community, and regularly engage with

both academic and administrative leaders. Gaining insight into the challenges these leaders face enables us to tailor our support and resources effectively. In addition, we receive inquiries from alumni, members of the Affiliated Colleges, and individuals from the broader community who are not formally connected to Western. In such cases, we make every effort to offer appropriate referrals.

When a concern is brought forward, individuals are offered a confidential consultation with our office. The HRO conducts a preliminary review of the matter and advises the individual on the avenues available for resolution as outlined in university policy. Most concerns are addressed through alternate resolution mechanisms, which may include mediation, facilitated discussions, or HRO-led inquiries designed to ensure the appropriate application of university policies. Some individuals opt to pursue the formal complaint and investigation process, while others may ultimately choose not to proceed with any formal or informal resolution pathway.

This past year the Associate Vice-President, Human Resources administered 39 processes over the current academic year. There were 20 processes carried over from the last academic year ending April 30, 2024. There were 17 new complaints filed and/or initiated in the 2024-2025 academic year beginning in May 1, 2024. The two other matters reflect applications that were brought before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

## Safety Concerns

Where a concern is shared with the HRO that carries the possibility of violence or a threat to an individual's safety, the HRO refers or reports the concern to Campus Safety and Emergency Services (CSES). The HRO referred matters to or contacted CSES on 21 occasions this past year.



## End of Year Reflections

As the academic year concludes, the Human Rights Office (HRO) continues to witness evolving and complex concerns within the Western community. Amongst the troubling issues brought to our attention are ongoing incidents of anti-Black racism, including the repeated and casual use of derogatory slurs by students towards their peers at the university or outside in online social spaces. In response, the HRO is working with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Office to explore both preventative and responsive strategies. Together, we are examining interventions aimed at addressing these forms of racism more effectively and sustainably.



Another area of significant concern involves the misuse of social media and other electronic communication platforms by undergraduate students to harass or target their peers, such as cyber-bullying and cyber-sexual harassment. These cases often involve group chats, and anonymous or public posts. We continue to work with our colleagues in Student Support Case Management in addressing these concerns appropriately.

It is important to acknowledge that resolving concerns that are brought to our office is rarely a linear process. Many cases require multiple, layered interventions that may span over several months. This extended timeline reflects both the complexity of the issues and the need for careful, trauma-informed approaches that center the needs of those impacted while ensuring procedural fairness for all involved. We are often required to coordinate with various university departments and to fully address the concerns brought to our office to ensure individuals feel supported and heard.

The Human Rights Office assumed the role of Chairing the Gender-Based and Sexual Violence (GBSV) Advisory Committee. Through our work with the members of the committee and working with the Provost's office, with the leadership and support of the Acting Deputy Provost, we continue to guide institutional efforts in response to GBSV across campus.

As we reflect on the year's challenges and progress, we remain committed to advancing equity and human rights at Western through collaboration, education, and principled responses. The work of the Human Rights Office continues to be grounded in the belief that all members of our community deserve to live, learn, and work in a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment.

We express our sincere appreciation for all those who have entrusted us with their experiences and sought our assistance toward resolving matters. We also wish to thank our campus partners who continue to consult with our office in their commitment to support and advance human rights principles.







Western

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