





KCRHA
King County Regional Homelessness Authority

Ombuds Office
2025 Annual Report

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Letter from the Ombuds Office

Dear Community Members,

As you read through our 2025 Annual Report, it is important to remember that the following data represents more than just cases, numbers, and trends. It reflects the real experiences of people experiencing homelessness, providers who offer homelessness services, and community members trying to understand how homelessness services operate in our community. Each person we interact with helps us better understand how the system is functioning and where opportunities exist to improve outcomes.

Since its inception in 2022, the Ombuds team has been committed to creating a process that translates constituent experiences into actionable service and system improvements. By identifying trends and recurring issues, we help transform individual concerns into opportunities for policy, service, and operational improvements. This work reflects a commitment to centering the voices of people with lived experience and recognizing that homelessness services work best when informed by the people who use them every day.



The KCRHA Ombuds Team

While navigating challenges, the Ombuds Office has remained committed to our core responsibilities: gathering feedback, ensuring ease of contact, resolving concerns, investigating complaints, and recommending improvements to services and operations. We have also taken seriously our role in helping KCRHA assume ownership of its responsibility to assist its contract holders in resolving complaints and to maintain a standard of excellence in service delivery, program administration, and policy implementation.

As an Office, we have learned how important it is to have a space where people can share their concerns, receive help navigating services, or raise issues. This is true regardless of how homeless services are structured. The Ombuds function fulfills that need by providing an impartial, accessible resource for program participants, providers, and system partners.

We value the opportunity to create a space where people feel heard, and their experiences can inform meaningful improvements. We remain committed to translating what we hear directly from community members into insights and recommendations that support the continuous improvement of homelessness services.

With gratitude,

The Ombuds Team

Executive Summary

2025 At-A-Glance

631 cases

413 system support cases

63 concerns or comments

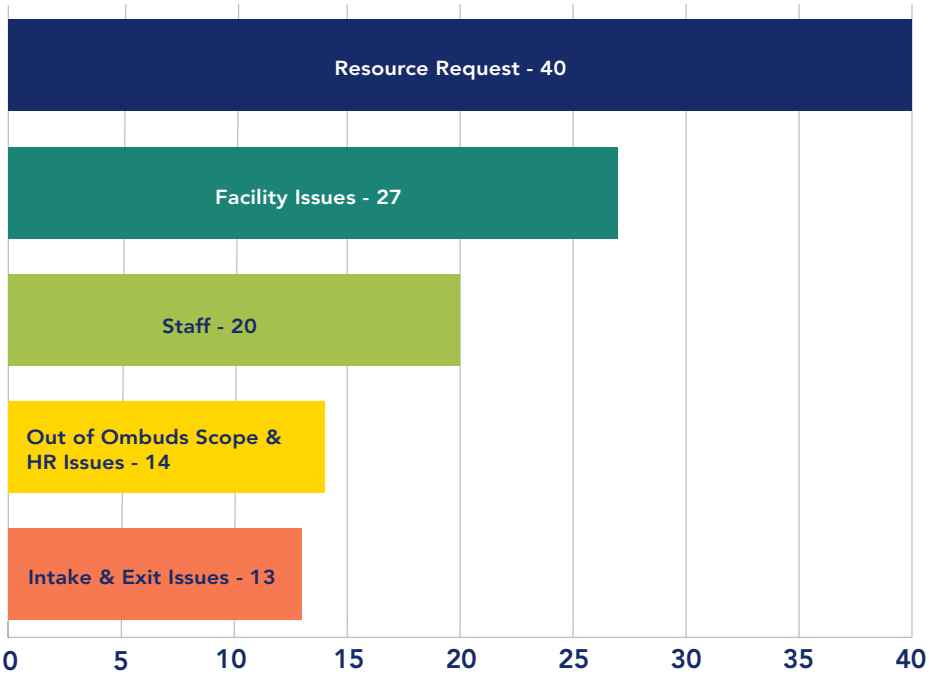
155 complaints received

22 investigations completed

2025 Progress and Accomplishments

- Contributed to the implementation of KCRHA's Five-Year Plan by completing key goals and providing strategic updates related to the Ombuds Office.
- Established five key performance indicators (KPIs) to strengthen measurement of the Ombuds Office's impact on system learning and responsiveness.
- Implemented new data tracking to support future reporting, including case-level reporting by program type and enhanced tracking of Coordinated Entry issues related to housing navigation, access, and mobility requests.

Top 5 Webform Issue Submissions



Looking Ahead to 2027

1. Integrating learnings from the Grievance Guidance Project into system practice
2. Expanding the Ombuds Office's system-wide scope and reach
3. Strengthening impact measurement and reporting

The Ombuds Office and System Learning

The Ombuds Office helps ensure the homeless response system is fair, responsive, and accountable by providing an avenue for individuals to raise concerns, understand decisions made by system actors, and seek resolution of complaints. Using a hybrid ombuds model grounded in the principles of fairness and impartiality, the Office supports individuals connected to the homeless response system through customer service, complaint resolution, systems facilitation, and issue identification.[1] Through this work, the Ombuds Office helps drive improvements in service delivery, program administration, policy implementation, and activities overseen or funded by KCRHA.

Why the Ombuds Office Matters

Since 2022, the Ombuds Office has responded to more than 2,400 unique inquiries from homeless service program participants and community members seeking support, clarification about resources, or help resolving issues. It offers a safe way for people experiencing homelessness to ask questions, raise concerns, learn about the options available to them, and seek assistance when they encounter barriers to services.

The Ombuds Office also works directly with service providers to help navigate challenges, clarify policies, roles, and expectations, and offer guidance on complex situations. Through this partnership the Ombuds Office creates a built-in feedback loop where providers can improve and correct policies and services in real time. By integrating community feedback and providing an accessible and trusted pathway for all groups served (program participants, providers and community members) the Ombuds Offices ensures concerns and complaints are addressed thoroughly and consistently.

From Feedback to System Improvement

The Ombuds Office identifies patterns, raises concerns with the appropriate decision-makers, and makes recommendations regarding policy, practice, and service delivery based on information that it receives directly from program participants and community members. The Ombuds Office tracks this information and regularly publishes data on who contacts the Office and the types of cases it handles.

This work supports the Ombuds Office's commitment under KCRHA's Five-Year Plan to create a continuous feedback loop that identifies trends, insures transparent communication, and recommends system changes to support the homeless response system. As part of this work, the Office has continued to expand its approach to data collection to better understand the issues brought forward by program participants and community members.

1 Hybrid ombuds are usually established by policy or terms of reference by both private and public sector organizations. They primarily use informal methods to resolve complaints but also have the power to investigate and the authority to publish annual and special reports. For more information, please see https://www.ombudsassociation.org/ombuds-faq

Ombuds Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The Office also recognizes that measures of activity, such as case counts or the types of cases it receives, cannot fully demonstrate its effectiveness or impact. To address this limitation, the Office has established a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that focus on awareness, engagement, responsiveness, and ongoing system improvement.

Collectively, these KPIs are intended to help answer two important questions:

1. Is the Ombuds Office effectively carrying out its role and responsibilities?
2. Is the system responding meaningfully to the concerns raised and recommendations offered by the Ombuds Office?

The following KPIs provide a more thorough picture of both the Ombuds Office's performance and agencies' responsiveness. The Office anticipates beginning measurement and reporting of select KPIs in 2027, with additional indicators added as data becomes available through 2028.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

1. **Scope Accuracy Rate**
   Represents the percentage of inquiries within the Ombuds Office's jurisdiction, including policy, program administration, and service delivery. This performance indicator evaluates awareness of the Ombuds Office's role and the accuracy of referrals.
2. **Provider Engagement Reach**
   Indicates the percentage of providers who have engaged with the Ombuds Office via outreach activities, presentations, consultations, and related efforts. This KPI assesses the office's visibility and accessibility within the provider community.
3. **Ombuds Follow-Through & Case Resolution Timeliness**
   Evaluates the Ombuds Office's responsiveness and its ability to follow up on inquiries and complaints. This performance indicator reflects the office's timeliness in responding to concerns, maintaining communication, and providing assistance at each stage of the complaint process.
4. **Recurring Issue Reduction**
   Measures trends in recurring concerns and patterns identified through Ombuds cases. This KPI helps identify systemic issues, informs policy or operational improvements, and helps determine whether the corrective actions taken are reducing the number of recurring concerns over time.
5. **Department and Agency Integration of Ombuds Recommendations**
   Assesses the extent to which departments and agencies consider and implement Ombuds' recommendations in operational decision-making, policy development, and complaint resolution. This indicator measures agency responsiveness to Ombuds' recommendations and their influence on system improvements.

Ombuds Case Data

The Ombuds Office collects more than 200 data points across 16 categories to identify trends, monitor recurring concerns, and inform opportunities for system improvement. Our data is grouped into two main areas: case data, which includes all 631 cases received by the Office in 2025, regardless of how a case was initiated, and webform data, which includes the 160 submissions received directly through the Ombuds Office webform and the demographic information individuals choose to provide. Together, these data provide insight into the issues brought to the Ombuds Office and the experiences of those seeking assistance.

Please note: *Reported data may vary slightly from year to year because some cases remain open and continue into subsequent reporting periods. Ongoing data cleanup may also result in slight changes to previously reported figures.*

Case Data

Case data includes all 631 cases received by the Ombuds Office, regardless of how the case was initiated. These data help us understand the types of concerns raised, how cases are resolved, and trends across the homeless response system.

Ombuds Office Utilization and Case Trends

Figure 1. Ombuds Cases, 2022–2025

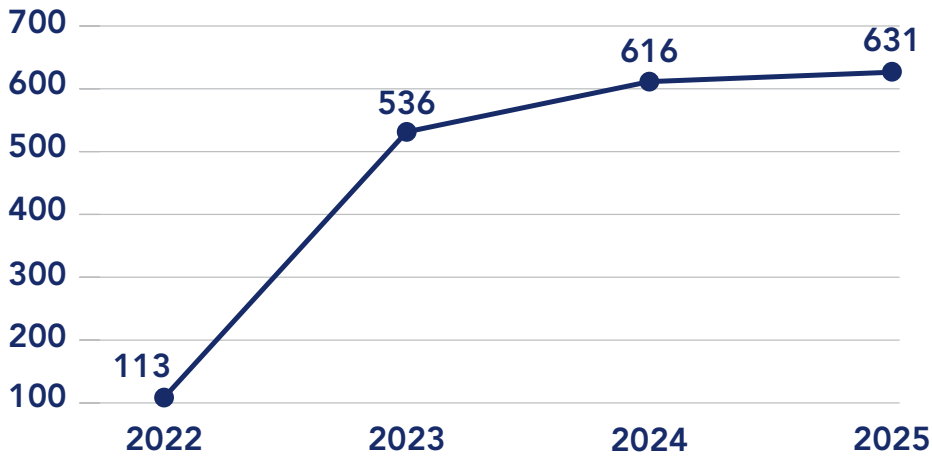


Figure 1 shows the number of people who contacted the Ombuds Office each year from 2022 to 2025. During this period, cases increased from 113 in 2022 to 631 in 2025.

The most significant increase occurred between 2022 and 2023, when cases rose from 113 to 536. This increase coincided with the addition of three new staff members in 2023, which expanded the Ombuds Office's capacity to respond to inquiries and assist more people.

Since 2023, the number of cases has remained above the 2022 baseline, indicating that the Office has maintained a higher level of engagement with the community.

An increase in the number of people contacting the Office does not necessarily indicate more problems. The higher numbers may indicate that more people understand the support available through the Office. The sustained number of contacts reflects the Office's ongoing role as a resource for information and problem-solving related to the homelessness response system.

Figure 2. Case Types, 2022–2025

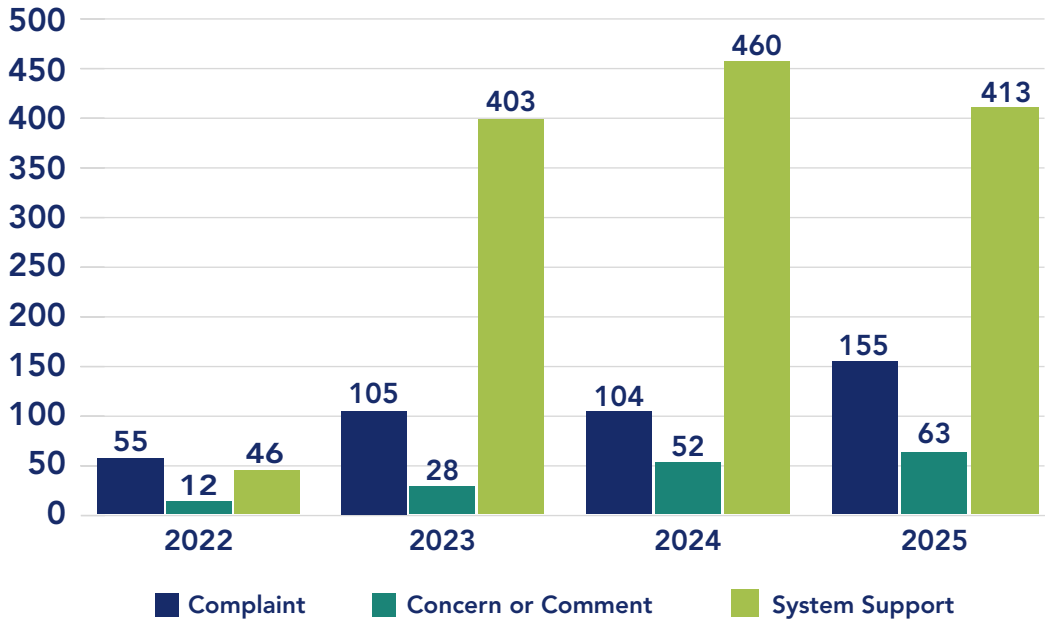


Figure 2 shows the number of cases received by type from 2022 through 2025 across three categories: complaints, concerns or comments, and system support.

The Ombuds Office categorizes cases as follows:

- **System Support**: Requests for information about the homeless response system or other resources.
- **Complaints:** Expressions of dissatisfaction regarding the actions or inaction of a program or service.
- **Concerns or Comments:** Observations, feedback, or concerns relating to situations that an individual believes require further attention.

System support remained the most common case type throughout the reporting period. Complaints increased overall, remaining relatively stable from 2023 to 2024 before rising sharply in 2025. This trend may reflect several factors, including increased awareness of the Ombuds Office, and changes to the complaint submission process, such as improvements to the case submission web form. Concerns or comments also increased over time and may help identify issues that require further attention.

The large number of system support cases reflects the Ombuds Office's focus on early intervention, problem-solving, and helping people understand the homeless response system. It also reflects the Office's broader role in providing education, facilitation, navigation, and conflict resolution, as well as complaint review and investigation.

Figure 3. Case Types by Agency Contract Status

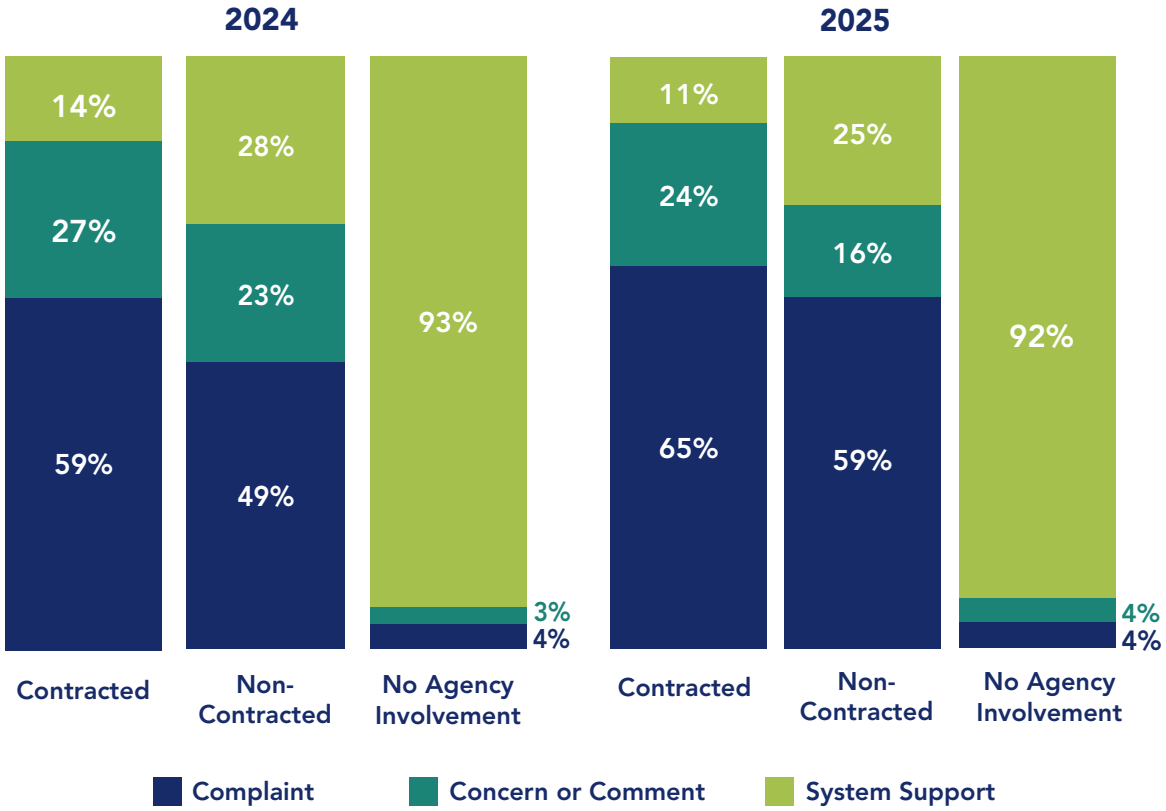


Figure 3 compares contracted and non-contracted cases received by the Ombuds Office in 2024 and 2025. It also includes a category for cases with no agency involvement, meaning these cases did not involve issues that required the Ombuds Office to determine whether a provider was funded by the City, County, or another government entity.

In both years, complaints made up the largest share of contracted and non-contracted cases. Cases with no agency involvement were primarily classified as system support. The overall distribution of case types remained consistent from 2024 to 2025, although the share of complaints increased slightly in both contracted and non-contracted cases in 2025.

A substantial portion of complaints received by the Ombuds Office involve providers that are not funded or overseen by KCRHA. People contacting the Office are usually focused on getting help with an immediate concern, not on which agency funds or oversees a provider. Because of this, the Ombuds Office regularly receives concerns involving providers that fall outside KCRHA's direct oversight.

The Ombuds Office works to assist whenever possible, but its authority to investigate or resolve concerns is more limited when a provider is not subject to KCRHA oversight. These cases illustrate the gap between how the homeless response system is currently organized and how people experience it when seeking help.

Figure 4. Types of Cases, 2025

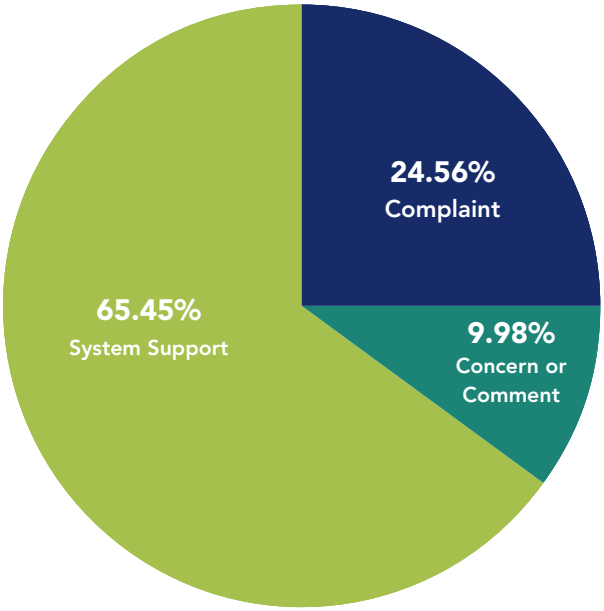


Figure 4 shows the distribution of the 631 cases handled by the Ombuds Office in 2025. System support was the most common case type, comprising 65.45% of all cases. Complaints accounted for 24.56%, while Concerns or Comments represented 9.98%.

Figure 5. Cases by Communication Source

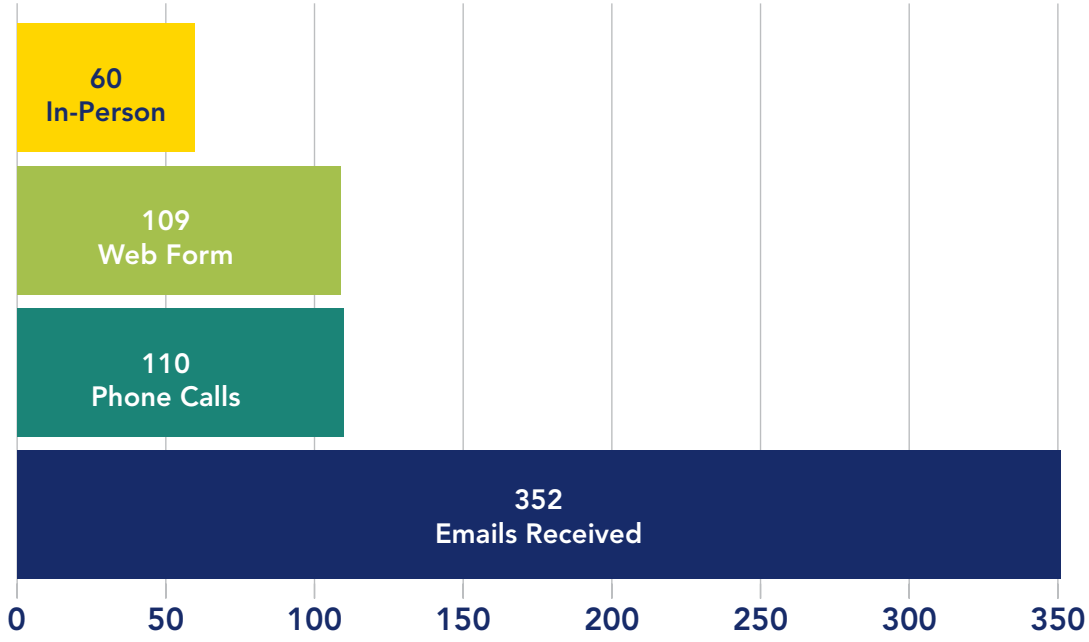


Figure 5 shows how people contacted the Ombuds Office in 2025. Email was the most common method of contact, accounting for 352 of the 631 cases. In-person contact was the least common method, with 60 cases. Phone calls accounted for 110 cases and web form submissions accounted for 109 cases.

Figure 6. Cases by Issue Resolution Pathway

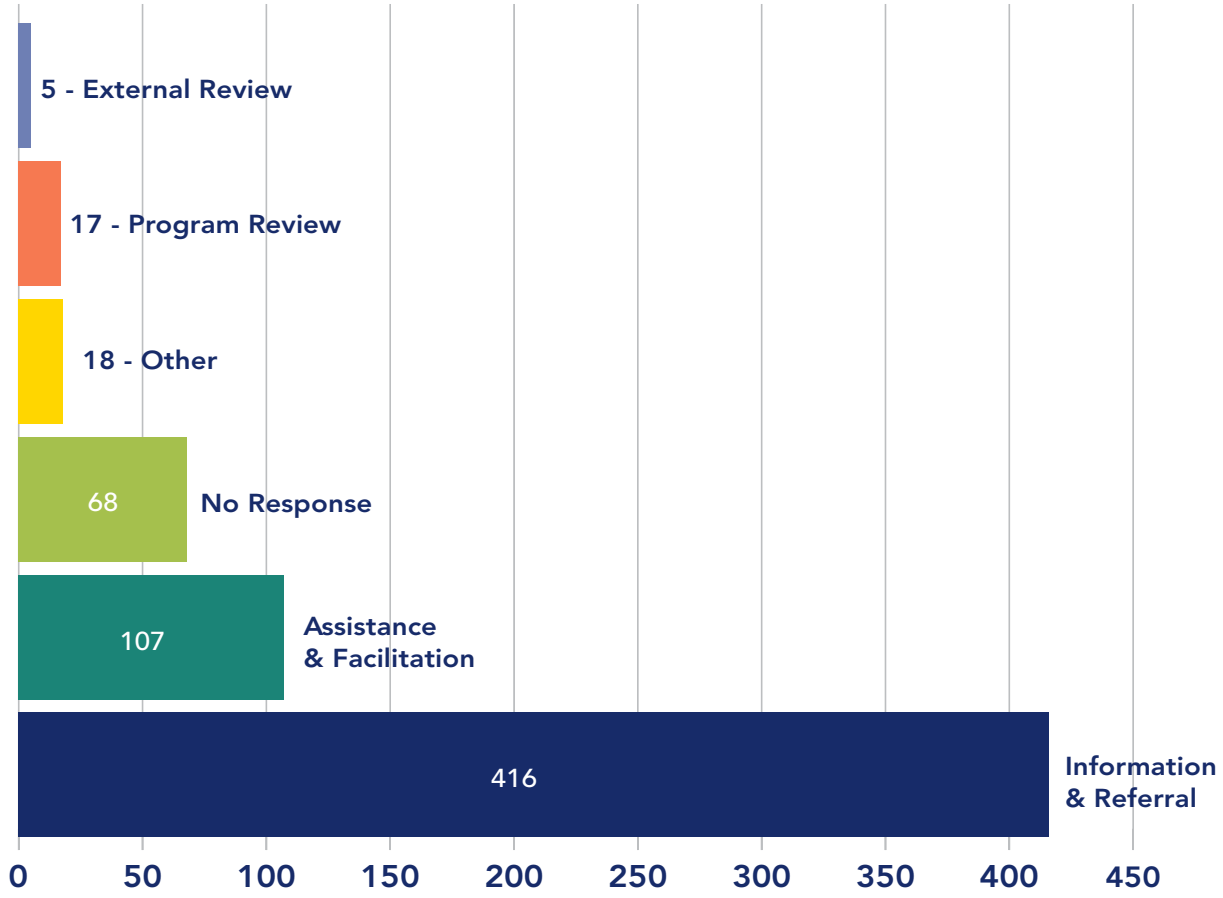


Figure 6 presents the resolution pathways, or the primary methods used by the Ombuds Office to respond to issues, for the 631 cases managed in 2025. Information and referral was the most common resolution pathway, with 416 cases. Assistance and facilitation accounted for 107 cases. A total of 68 cases were categorized as no response due to a lack of follow-up from the individual. Program review accounted for 17 cases, and external review accounted for 5 cases, while the other category included 18 cases. Definitions of resolution pathways are provided in the Appendix.

Figure 7. Cases by Outcomes

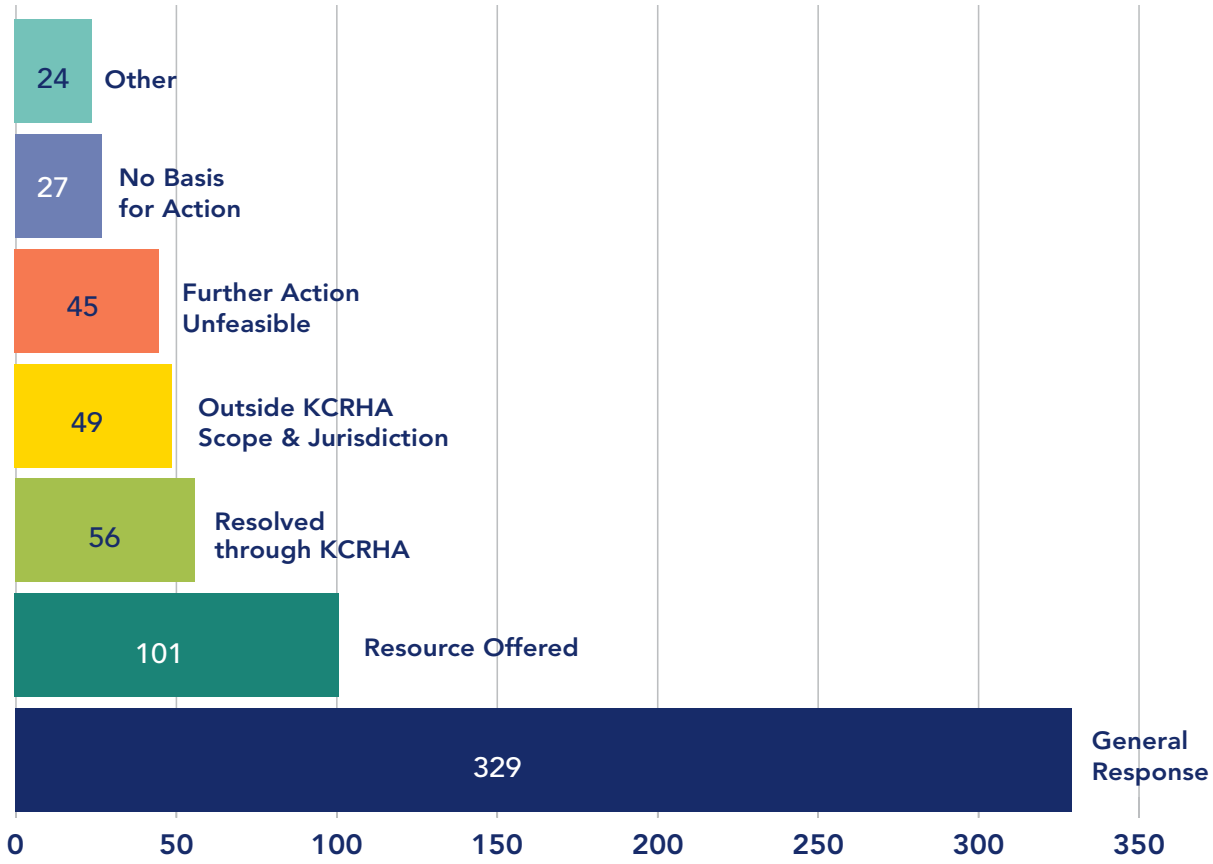


Figure 7 presents the outcomes of the 631 cases managed by the Ombuds Office in 2025. General response was the most common outcome, with 329 cases. Resource offered accounted for 101 cases, and 56 cases were resolved through KCRHA. A total of 49 cases were determined to be outside KCRHA's scope and jurisdiction, while 45 cases were categorized as further action unfeasible. No basis for action accounted for 27 cases, and 24 cases were categorized as Other. Definitions of case outcomes are provided in the Appendix.

Webform Data

Webform data includes the 160 submissions received directly through the Ombuds Office webform in 2025, as well as the demographic and background information constituents chose to provide. These data help us better understand who is accessing the Ombuds Office and the experiences and concerns they bring forward. Because the Ombuds Office prioritizes ease of contact and privacy, constituents are not required to complete webforms in order to receive assistance. Our webform captures sensitive demographic data that not all constituents are comfortable providing or documents identifiable data they do not want to share for safety or privacy reasons.

Frequent Webform Issues

Figure 8. Frequent Issues 2025 via Webform

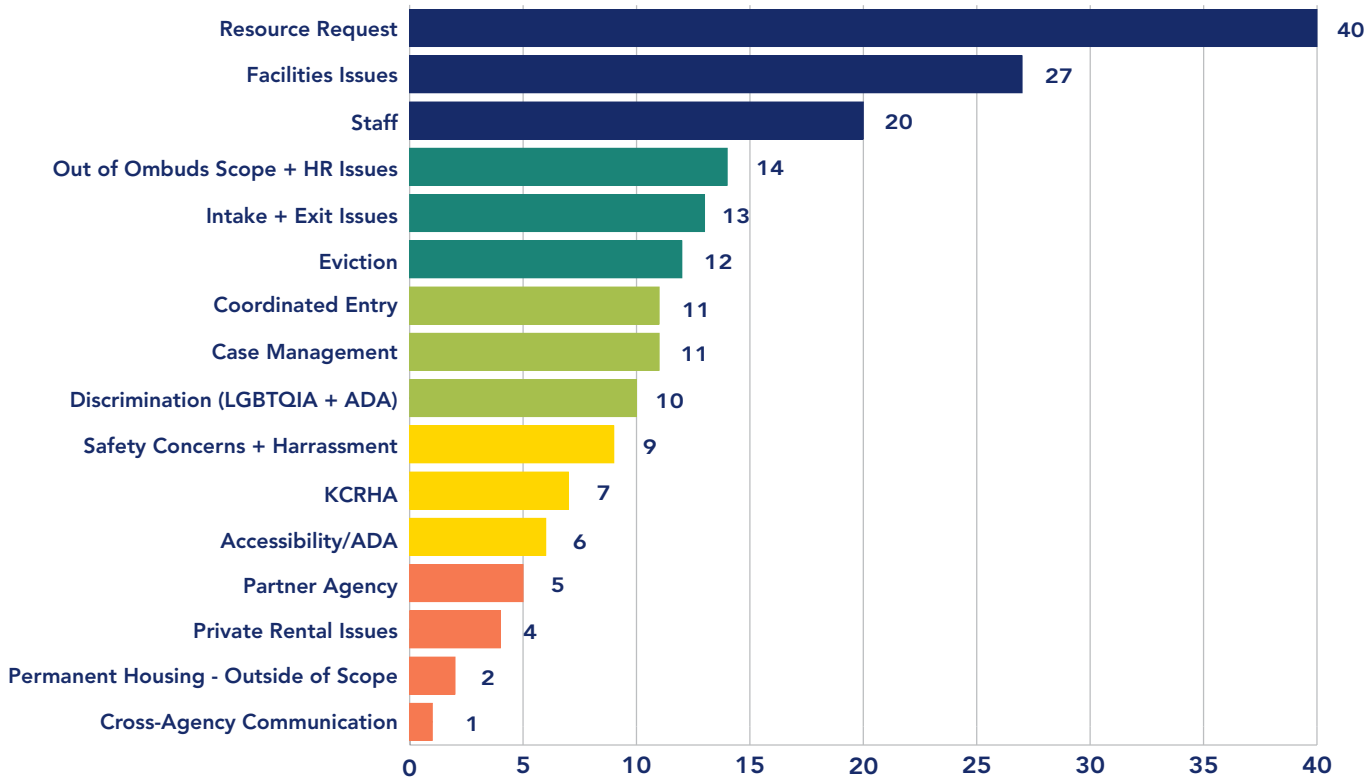


Figure 8 presents the most common issues identified by program participants, providers, and community members who contacted the Ombuds Office through the webform in 2025. People using the Ombuds Office webform most often asked for information or resources, with 40 contacts in this category, followed by facilities issues (27), staff-related issues (20), out-of-ombuds-scope and HR issues (14), and intake and exit issues (13). Similar to overall contact trends, resource requests, a form of system support, remained the leading issue category. This suggests that people continue to need information and assistance in understanding existing homeless services, regardless of how they contact the Ombuds Office.

Figure 9. Webform Submissions by Region

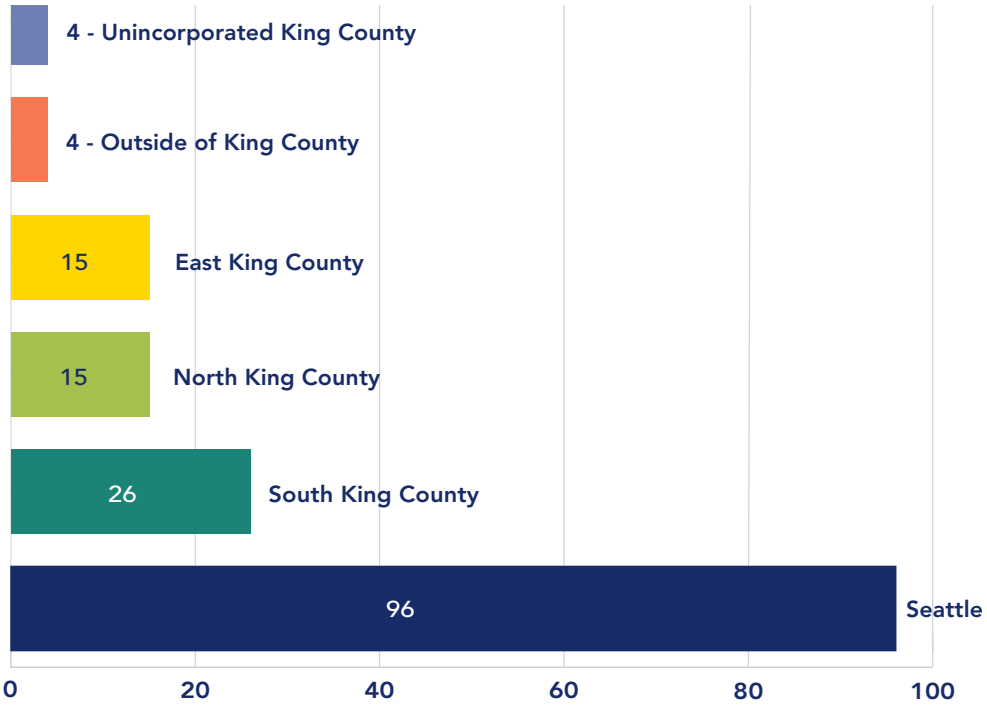


Figure 9 shows the geographic region of people who contacted the Ombuds Office through the webform in 2025. Most people who contacted the Ombuds Office were located in Seattle (96), followed by South King County (26), North King County (15), East King County (15), unincorporated King County (4), and outside King County (4).

Figure 10. Amount of Time Experienced Homelessness

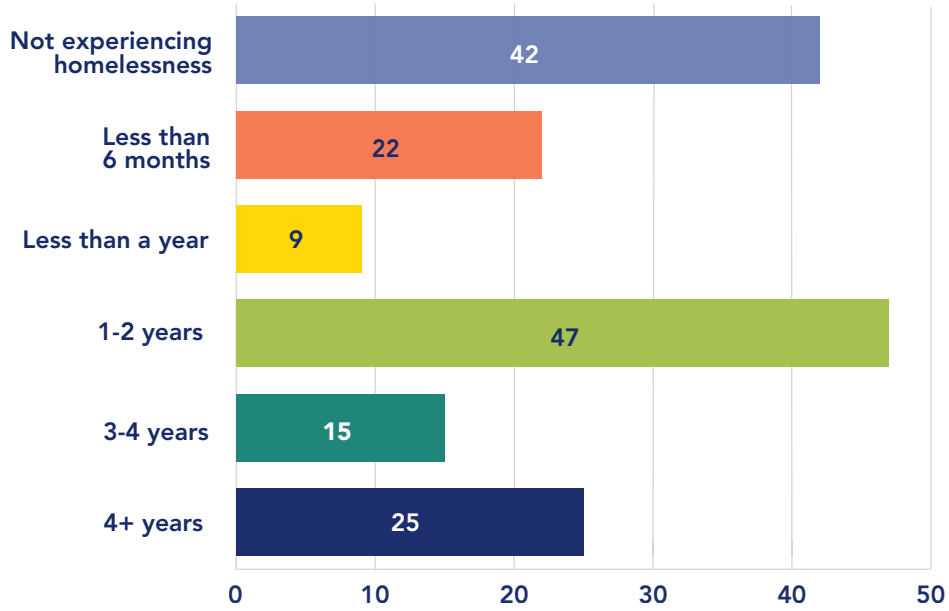


Figure 10 shows the length of homelessness reported by people who contacted the Ombuds Office through the webform in 2025. The largest group reported experiencing homelessness for 1 to 2 years (47), followed by people who were not experiencing homelessness (42). Smaller numbers reported experiencing homelessness for 4 or more years (25), less than 6 months (22), 3 to 4 years (15), and less than one year (9).

Figure 11. Distribution of Subpopulation

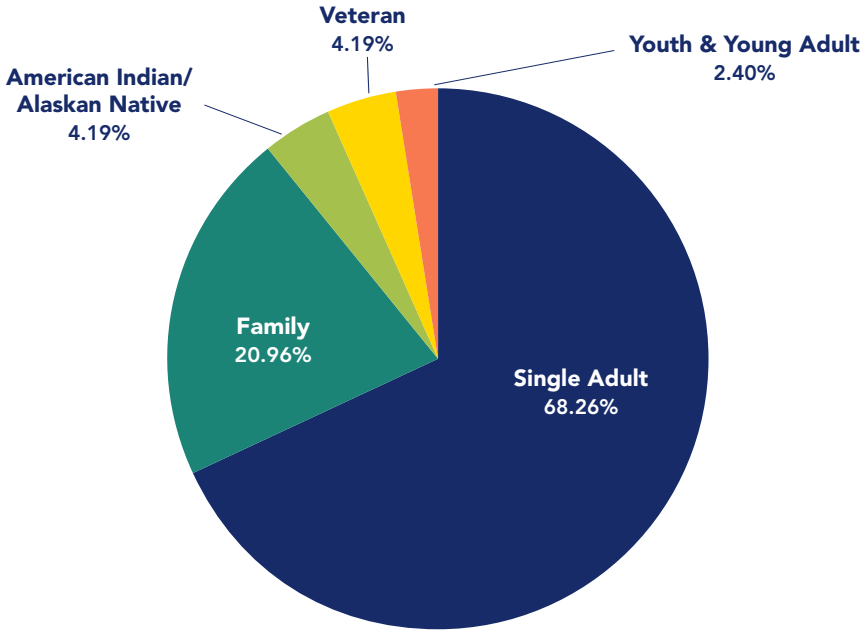


Figure 11 shows the distribution of people by subpopulation who contacted the Ombuds Office through the webform in 2025. Single adults were the largest group, accounting for 68.26% of web form contacts. Families represented the second-largest group at 20.96%, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native individuals (4.19%), Veterans (4.19%), and Youth and Young Adults (2.40%).

A Concluding Note

While this report focuses on the Ombuds Office's activities in 2025, many of the issues we've encountered reflect similar issues and patterns from previous years. Readers interested in learning more about specific case studies are encouraged to read our 2023 annual report. For narratives from community members about some of our most frequent issues, please see our 2024 annual report. As the homeless system evolves through changes in governance, funding, and service providers, what should not change is the need for a safe and trusted space where people can raise concerns, navigate barriers, and help improve the system. The Ombuds Office exists to provide that function, and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve this community.

Appendix

Ombuds Office Resolution Pathways

A resolution pathway is the approach used by the Ombuds Office to address a concern or complaint.

Information and Referral: Information about available resources and services, or referral to a more appropriate resource.

Assistance and Facilitation: Support in addressing service gaps, including connections to outreach teams and warm handoffs to service providers.

Program or Department Review: A formal review of complaints or concerns regarding services, policies, or program administration, resulting in findings and recommendations. Applies only to KCRHA-funded homeless service programs.

External Review: Complaints or concerns regarding homeless services not contracted by KCRHA that are documented and forwarded to the appropriate external partner for review.

Ombuds Office Outcomes

Because resolution often depends on factors outside the Ombuds Office's control, the Office focuses on reporting outcomes rather than resolution rates. Outcome categories provide information about the actions taken in response to a concern and how a case was handled.

General Response: General information provided by the Ombuds Office about 211, Coordinated Entry, eviction resources, and other common requests for assistance.

Further Action Unfeasible: The individual seeking support stopped communicating, preventing further action.

No Basis for Action: The issue does not present an action that the Ombuds Office can address.

Outside KCRHA Scope and Jurisdiction: The issue falls outside the scope of matters the Ombuds Office is authorized to address.

Resolved through KCRHA: The issue was resolved through KCRHA.

Resource Offered: The Ombuds Office provided a community resource, such as a shelter or outreach referral, or assistance connecting to other systems.