



COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS



Let's pull together before we're torn apart.

2015

ANNUAL REPORT

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LCHR ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Mayor

February 2016

Dear Lincoln Residents,

In 1966, Title 11 on equal opportunity in employment and housing was added to the Lincoln Municipal Code. Since then, the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (LCHR) has worked to fulfill its mission of promoting equal opportunity and combating discrimination. This Annual Report highlights the work of LCHR in 2015.

This past year, LCHR has been very busy enforcing the protections afforded by local, state and federal law. I appreciate the willingness of the Commissioners to volunteer their valuable time and talents as well as their strong commitment to equality and fairness in employment, housing and public accommodation.

In 2015, Commissioners and our two LCHR investigators closed 28 housing cases, 33 employment cases and five public accommodation cases. LCHR also reached more than 6,000 residents with 108 educational sessions covering civil rights and responsibilities.

The annual Civil Rights Conference in April 2015 focused on both employment and housing. Presenters included local, regional and national experts in their fields. We appreciate our Conference sponsors for their continued support. They include the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, the Omaha Human Rights and Relations Department, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Nebraska Housing Developers Association. The success of our conference depends on their support.

The LCHR and its dedicated staff do important work every day on behalf of our community. I am proud to be the Mayor of a City that is committed to diversity and to ensuring that everyone is welcome in our Capital City.

Sincerely,



Chris Beutler
Mayor, City of Lincoln

LCHR ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Executive Director

Dear Friends of the Commission:

What a difference a year makes! In 2015, we bid farewell to Mary Reese and Takako Olson after each had served two full terms on the Commission. We could not begin the task of enforcing discrimination laws without the spirit of commitment and dedication demonstrated by all of our Commissioners. We are now awaiting the appointment of two new Commissioners to step up and provide this invaluable service to the community.

For the first quarter of the year, Margie Nichols carried the entire load of investigating cases for The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (LCHR). In March of 2015, we welcomed Abigail Littrell as a Sr. Civil Rights Investigator. Both Abby and Margie have worked diligently investigating housing, public accommodation, and employment discrimination cases. We are glad to have Abby join our ranks!

Loren Mestre-Roberts continued community outreach efforts through her association with the Lincoln Housing Authority, RentWise, Center Pointe and Community Action Partnership. Loren also maintained our tradition of advising Lincoln Public High School students about their rights related to housing and employment as they prepare to move into the workforce and out of the parental home. Additionally, Loren strengthened her outreach efforts involving distribution of Commission pamphlets at various locations, such as the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Clinics, the Center for People in Need, the Asian Center and the Malone Center to spread the word about the existence of the Commission and its role in the community. Loren resigned her position with LCHR in October to take another position with the City, as a Housing Rehabilitation Specialist in the Urban Development Department. We hated to see Loren go, but wish her all the best in her new position.

Our annual Civil Rights Conference was a great success! We had 200 professionals present and our speakers came to us from the U. S. Housing and Urban Development Office in Kansas City, MO and the Omaha Field Office as well, the District Office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in St. Louis, MO, and the Great Plains Americans with Disabilities Action Center. In addition to the legal updates that are provided every year, sessions were conducted on the Intersection of Diversity and Poverty, Contemporary Disability Discrimination Cases and Housing Best Practices. All were well received.

The LCHR continues its commitment to law enforcement and education while fostering a welcoming environment of inclusion in the City of Lincoln.

Best Regards,



Kimberley Taylor-Riley
Executive Director

LCHR ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Commission Chair

Dear Citizens and Friends of the Commission,

I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on the Commission's work throughout 2015. The Executive Director and staff of the LCHR continue to work in a professional manner to investigate complaints, discuss the cases brought before the Commission, and issue findings in a timely and just manner. We hope to educate the employers, employees, landlords, and tenants about acceptable practices and discriminatory ones that arise in the daily lives of our residents.

I am proud to serve with Amanda Baron, Elizabeth Kennedy-King, Susan Oldfield, Takako Olson, Mary Reece, Jon Rehm, Micheal Q. Thompson and Melanie Ways on the Commission. This diverse complement of individuals allowed the Commission to operate as an experienced set of fact finders, thoughtful problem solvers, and committed dispute resolution specialists. Their civic service on the Commission shows that Lincoln is a place where people count.

The terms of Commissioners Mary Reece and Takako Olson ended in December 2015. Additionally, we said goodbye to our Community Outreach Coordinator, Ms. Loren Roberts. She left the commission during 2015 to pursue other career interests. The LCHR will miss the experienced and judicious counsel of these women. We thank them for their service to the City of Lincoln and wish them well in their future endeavors.

The annual Civil Rights Conference was hosted by the LCHR staff in April 2015 and was again a resounding success. The Annual Conference is an educational and instructive how-to seminar focusing on compliance with housing and employment requirements that affect all of us.

It goes without saying, but I acknowledge the support, attention to detail, work ethic, and pure joy the Commissioners and I receive from working with Peg Dillon, Margie Nichols, and Kimberley Taylor-Riley—the dedicated staff of the Lincoln Human Rights Commission. During 2015, we welcomed one addition to the LCHR Staff. Abigail Littrell joined as a Senior Civil Rights Investigator in early 2015. I enjoy working with all of you. I appreciate your guidance, temperament, and skills. We continue to rely upon these attributes as the Commission goes forward with our designated tasks. Thank you.

Our work continues as we strive for fairness and equality in a city that supports a local Civil Rights Agency to specifically address housing and employment discrimination. How fortunate we are to live in Lincoln, Nebraska, a city committed to equity and fairness for all its residents.

Sincerely,



Bennie Shobe
Chair, 2015

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Commissioners

2015 Commissioners



2015 Lincoln Commission on Human Rights Commissioners: Front row, left to right: Amanda Baron, Chair-Bennie Shobe, Jr., Vice Chair-Mary Reece and Jonathan Rehm. Back row, left to right: Susan Oldfield, Melanie Ways, Elizabeth Kennedy-King and Micheal Q. Thompson. Not pictured Takako Olson.

The LCHR Commission is a nine member board of diverse people who hear and decide the cases presented to them. They are volunteers who are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. An additional goal of the Commission is to continue educating the public on discrimination laws in the hope of preventing and eventually eliminating unlawful discrimination. They meet on the last Thursday of each month at 4 p.m. in the City Council Chambers of the County/City Building. The public is welcome to attend.

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Commissioners continued



Takako Olson



Mary Reece

In 2015, two of our long time Commissioners completed their tenure with the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights. Takako and Mary both began serving on the Commission in March, 2010, and continued their service until December, 2015. Their commitment to the Commission and the work we do will be greatly missed.

Thank You!
Thank You!

Mission Statement

Mission

The administration of the Human Rights Division supports the enforcement of all provisions of Title 11 of the Lincoln Municipal Code. To receive, settle, conciliate, investigate, issue findings, and hold public hearings on complaints alleging discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, national origin, familial status, age, ancestry, marital status, and retaliation.

To perform functions and activities with community groups, businesses, schools, and governmental entities for the purpose of promoting understanding between races, cultures, and sexes, and to work to eliminate inequalities and sources of inter-racial friction.

Review all City of Lincoln procurement bids and awards in excess of \$10,000.00.

Review DBE (Disadvantaged Business Enterprises) program of minority and women-owned businesses and maintain directory.

Goals

To eliminate and prevent all forms of illegal discrimination, to assure and foster equal opportunity for all citizens of the City, and to act in all matters within its jurisdiction.

The Commission's Role

The Commission is a NEUTRAL agency. We do not serve as either side's lawyer, advocate, or advisor. We are not prosecutors. We do not take the side of either the complainant (the person who filed the complaint) or the respondent (the alleged discriminator).

The job of the Commission is:

- to *investigate* complaints of discrimination;
- to *settle* complaints, if possible;
- to *determine*, after investigation, whether there was discrimination in violation of the City of Lincoln Equal Opportunity Ordinance; and
- to *order remedies* if the complainant proves at a hearing that discrimination has occurred.

LCHR ANNUAL REPORT 2015

LCHR Staff

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Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (LCHR) is the primary City Agency that has the responsibility for the remedy of discrimination complaints brought by individuals. Any remedy pursued by the LCHR will be based on the enforcement authority of the Equal Opportunities Ordinance which provides a fair and impartial process for resolving charges of discrimination. The LCHR also provides community education and technical assistance in order for people to know and understand their rights and responsibilities under the law.

LOREN MESTRE'-ROBERTS
COMMUNITY OUTREACH
COORDINATOR



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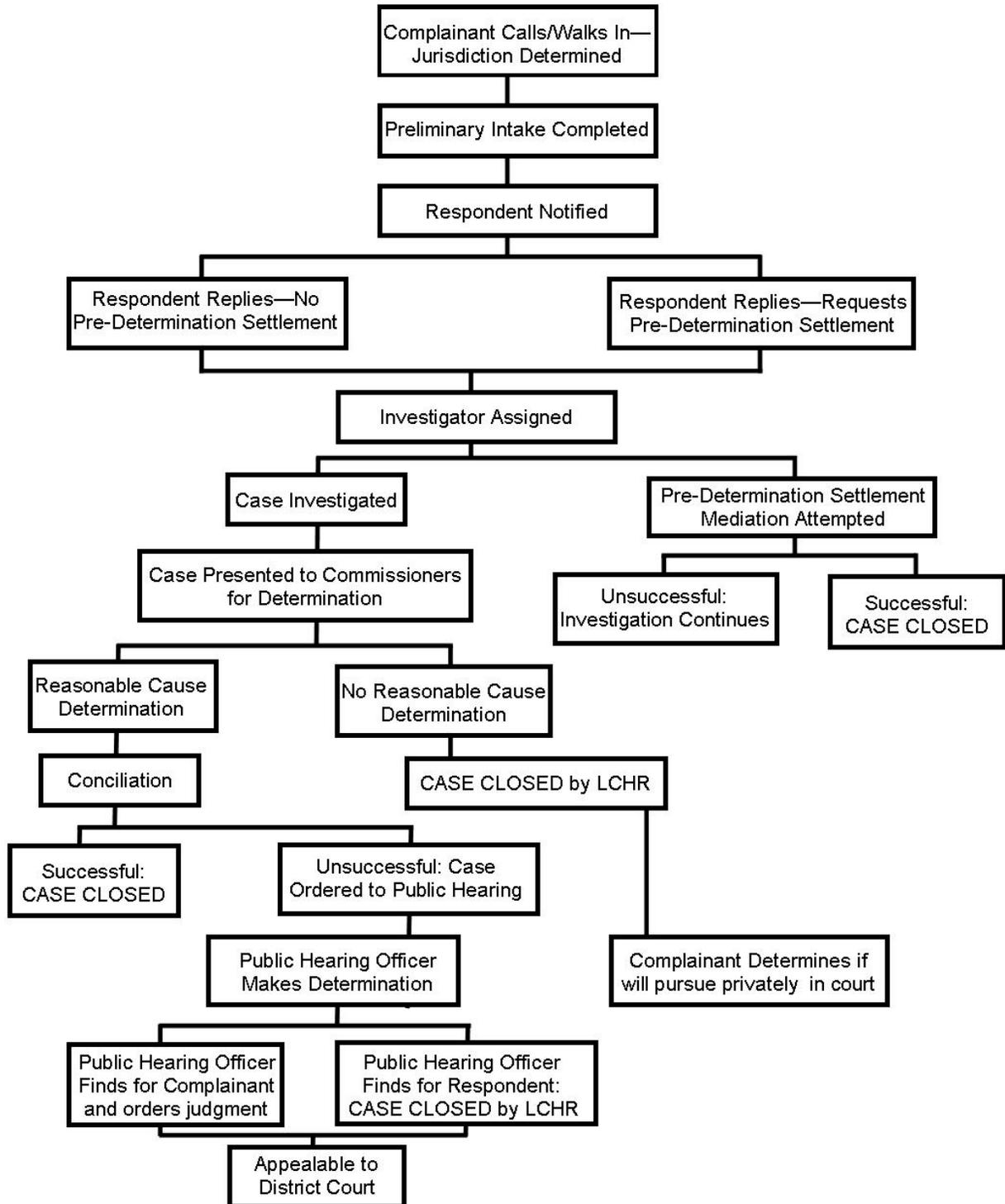
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Complaint Process*

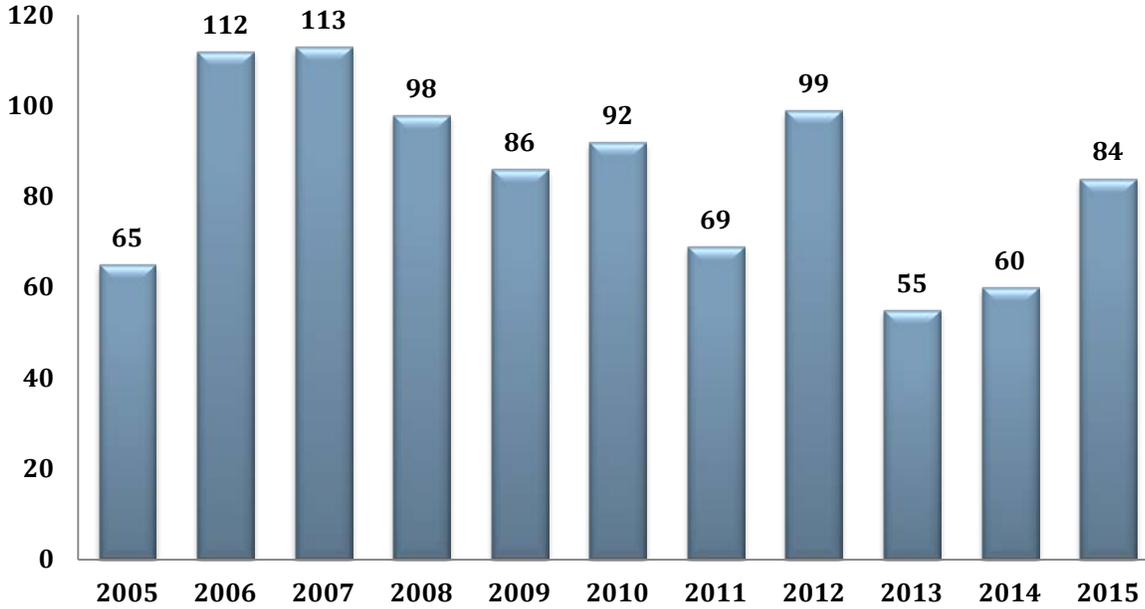


Complainant always has the option throughout the process of pursuing his or her case privately in court.

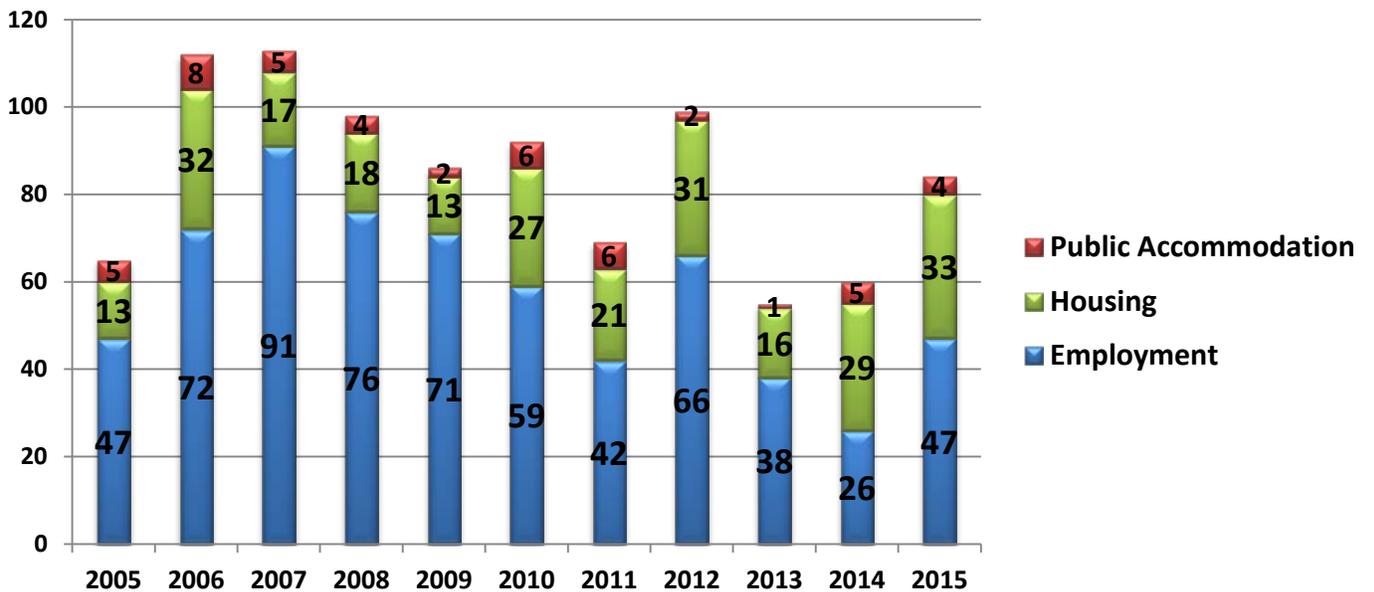
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Case Statistics

Cases Filed 2005-2015

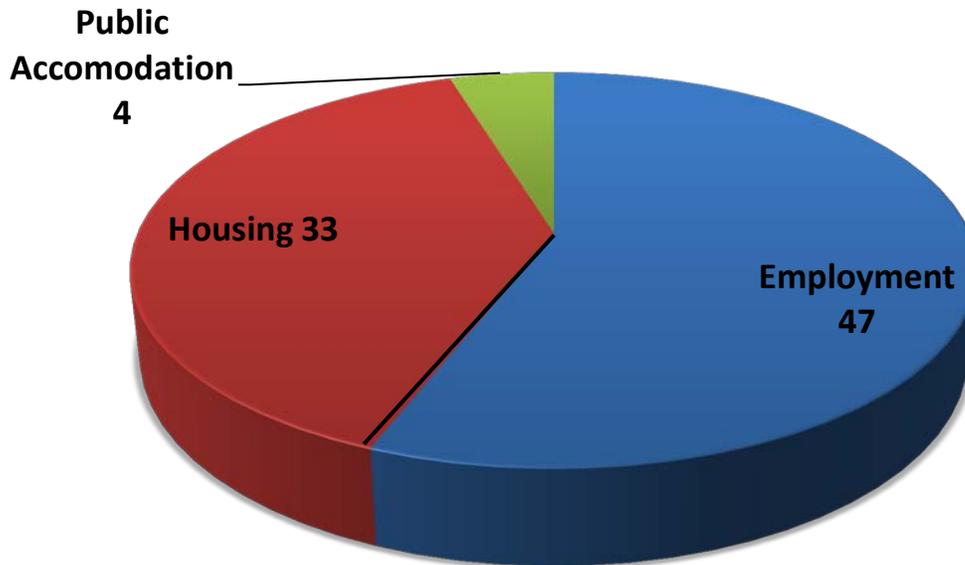


Cases Filed by Type 2005-2015

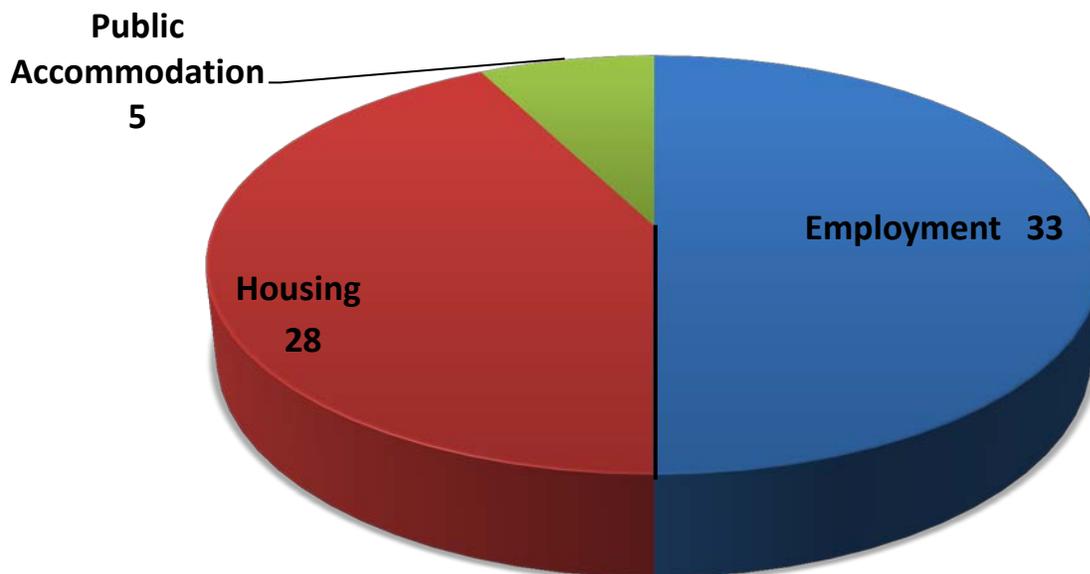


Case Statistics Continued

Cases Filed by Type, Total 84



Cases Closed* by Type, Total 66

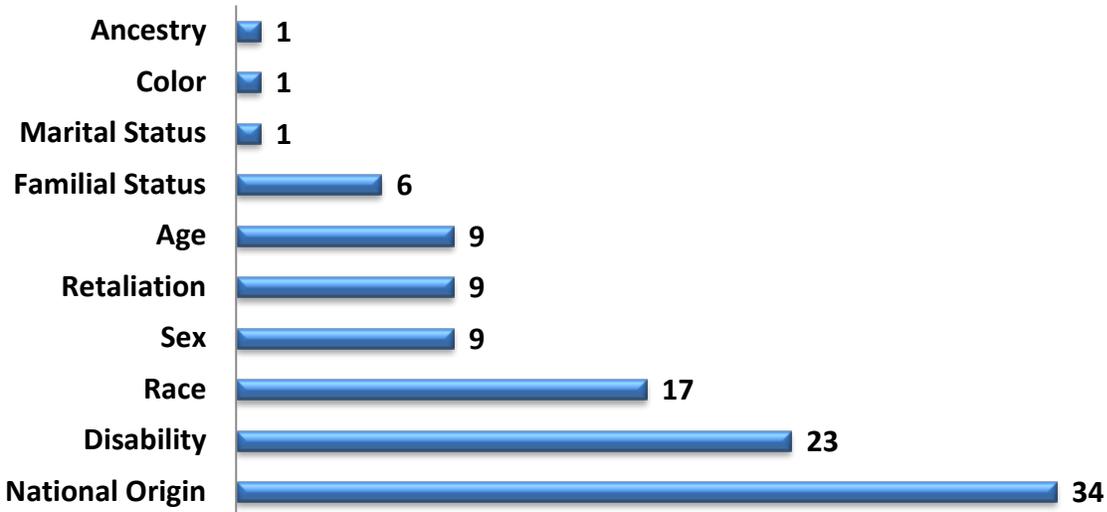


*Cases closed include cases filed from 2014-2015 but closed in calendar year 2015.

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Case Statistics Continued

Breakdown of Cases Filed by Basis*



*Cases are often filed under more than one basis, which could include a case filed, for example, on the basis of both sex and disability, or race and retaliation.

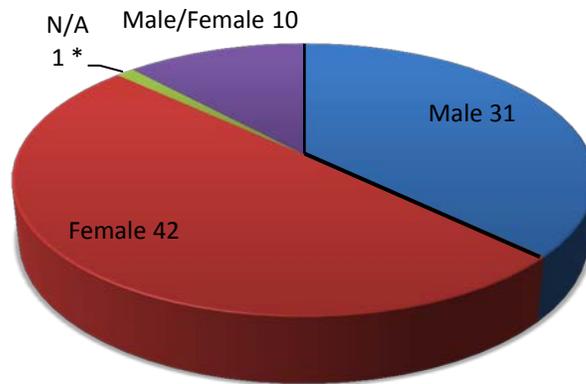
Breakdown of Cases Filed by Basis and Type*



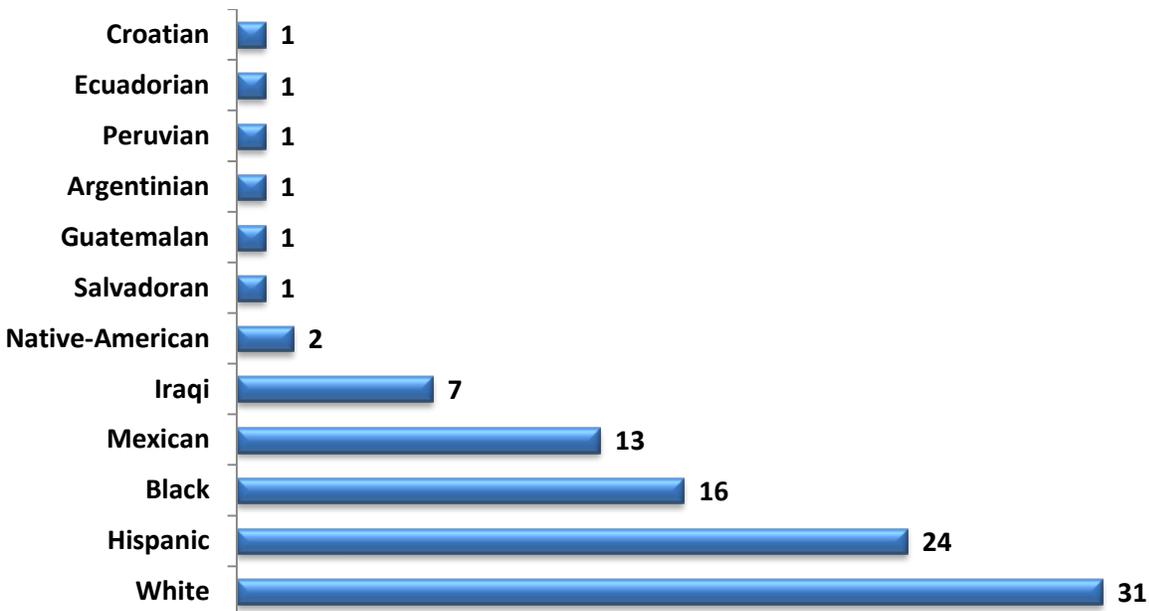
*The basis of age is only covered in employment, while familial status is only covered in housing.

Case Statistics Continued

Breakdown of Cases Filed by Gender



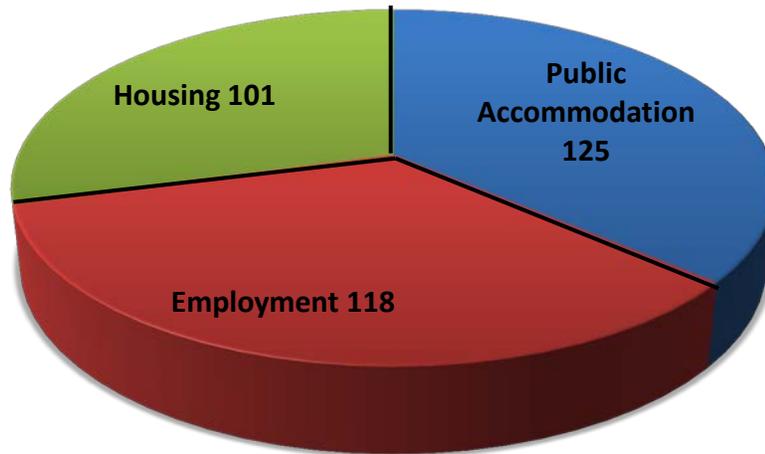
Breakdown of Cases Filed by Race / National Origin / Ethnicity** of Complainant



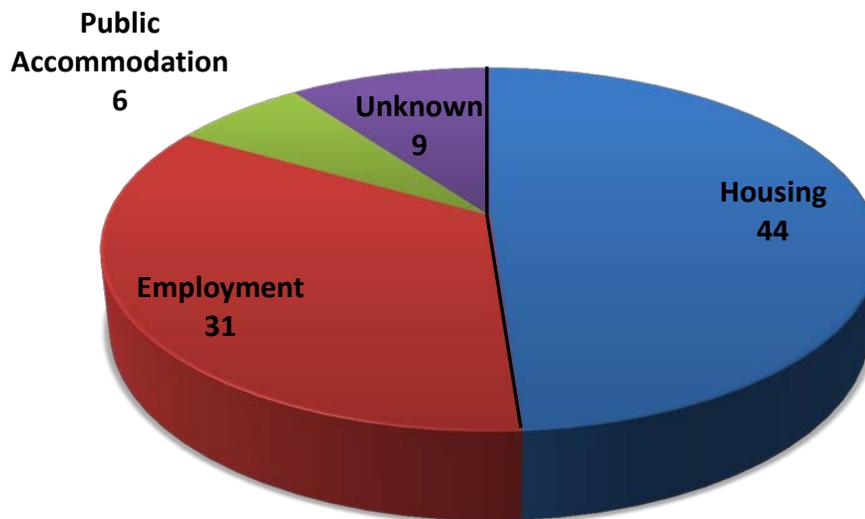
*N A / filed with the City of Lincoln as the Complainant.

**This provides an approximate demographic report based on the racial, national origin, or ethnic designation provided by the Complainant.

Average Number of Days from Filing to Closure



Inquiries Not Resulting in a Complaint*

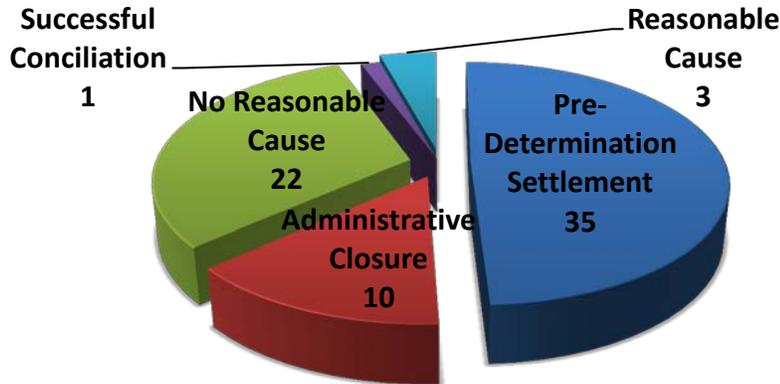


*There are various reasons why inquiries do not result in the filing of a complaint. They include, but are not limited to, the Commission not having subject matter jurisdiction, the individual not wanting to file a complaint or the individual failing to follow-through with the filing of a complaint.

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Case Statistics Continued

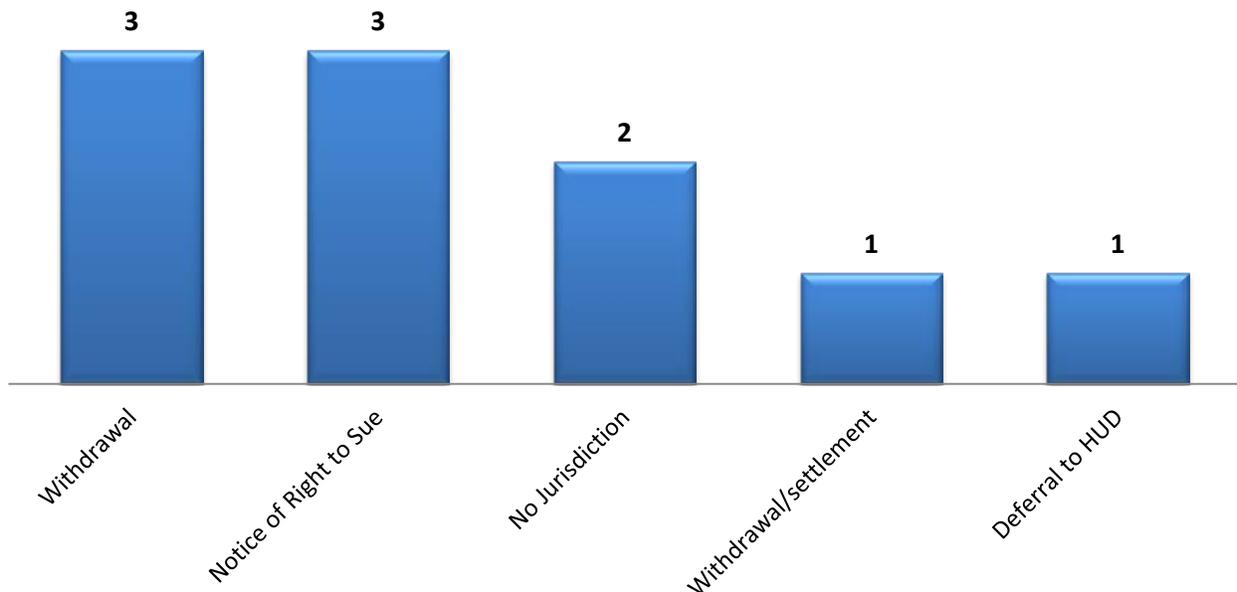
Breakdown of Commission Decisions



What do the numbers mean? No Reasonable Cause cases are when the Commissioners determine there is insufficient evidence to believe discrimination occurred. In Reasonable Cause determinations, Commissioners believe there is evidence of discrimination. Administrative Closures are cases closed for a variety of reasons (see chart below). Pre-Determination Settlements are cases closed due to a settlement agreement prior to a Commission decision. Successful conciliation occurs when the parties reach an agreement after the commission makes a reasonable cause finding.

Sometimes the Commissioners make more than one decision in a single case. Commissioners may determine that Reasonable Cause exists and those cases may later be closed in the same year by the Commission due to successful conciliation, public hearing determination, or issuance of a notice of right to sue. Because of this, the total number of Commission decisions may be greater than the number of cases closed.

Administrative Closures



Settlement Summaries

Pre-Determination*, Conciliation Settlements and Withdrawals with Settlements

Employment

Respondent pays Complainant \$825.

Respondent pays Complainant \$1,540; neutral reference; attend EOE training.

A Private Settlement agreement.

Pay Complainant \$306.

Neutral Employment Reference; designate end of relationship as 'separation'; disclose dates of employment.

Housing

Provide neutral reference; Forgive balance & damage fees; Respondent to attend LCHR Civil Rights Conference.

Complainant was allowed to move to a new rental with A/C, to transfer deposit, and was released from their lease. Attend Fair Housing Training and attend LCHR Civil Rights Conference.

Paid \$331.88; Attend Fair Housing Training.

Respondent rescinds money demands; Returns security deposit less water bill- \$565; post Fair Housing posters and property managers attend Fair Housing Training.

Rescind notice of termination of lease; begin 6 month lease; Respondent pays the Complainant \$600; Attend Fair Housing Training.

Rescind notice of termination of tenancy; post Fair Housing posters; conduct communication in a civil manner.

Provide denied lease applications & new lease agreements with # of bedrooms and # of tenants to LCHR; and attend Fair Housing Training.

Wave \$1,215 owed by Complainant, Fair Housing language added to new rental applications, Post Fair Housing posters.

Reduce amount owed to \$3,400 from \$8,317.

Move to new apartment, Refund pet deposits, Flyers Posted.

Forgive Complainant \$2,848 and pay \$525; letter of Reference; Fair Housing Training.

Respondent assist with alternative housing for tenant; Post Fair Housing Posters and Brochures will be given to new tenants.

A Reasonable Cause finding 10/29/2015. Conciliation 12/10/2015 - \$2,000; attend Fair Housing Training; Amend Criminal History/Conviction policy for applicants.

Release & forgive \$1,786.43 of the \$2,286.43 owed by Complainant; Complainant agrees to pay \$500; Attend Fair Housing Training.

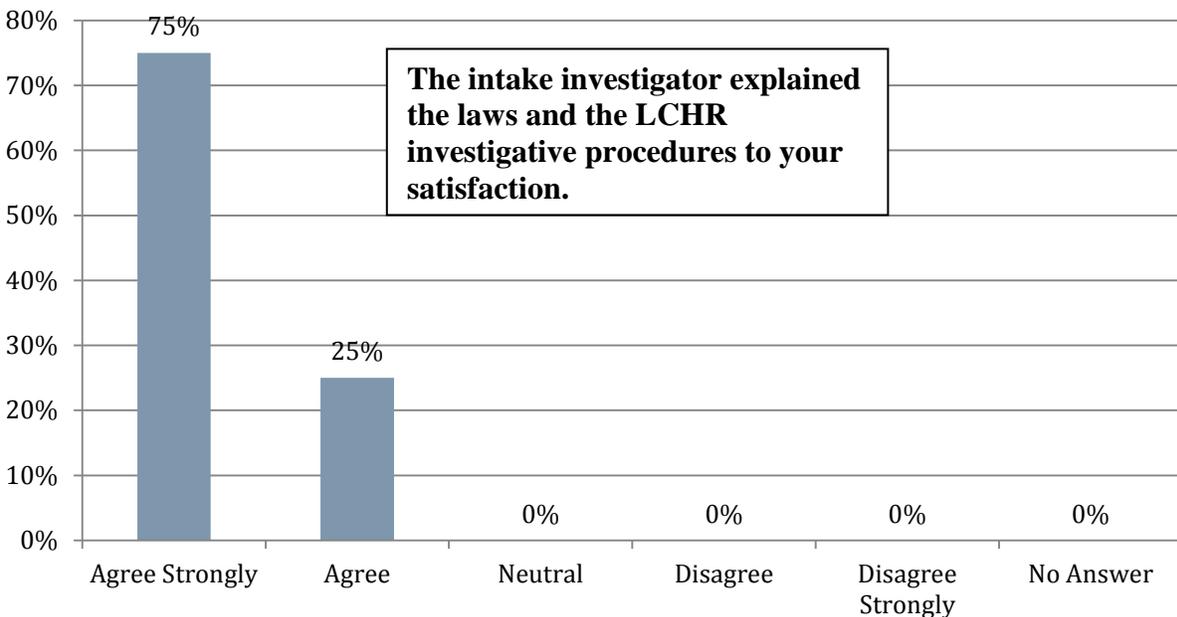
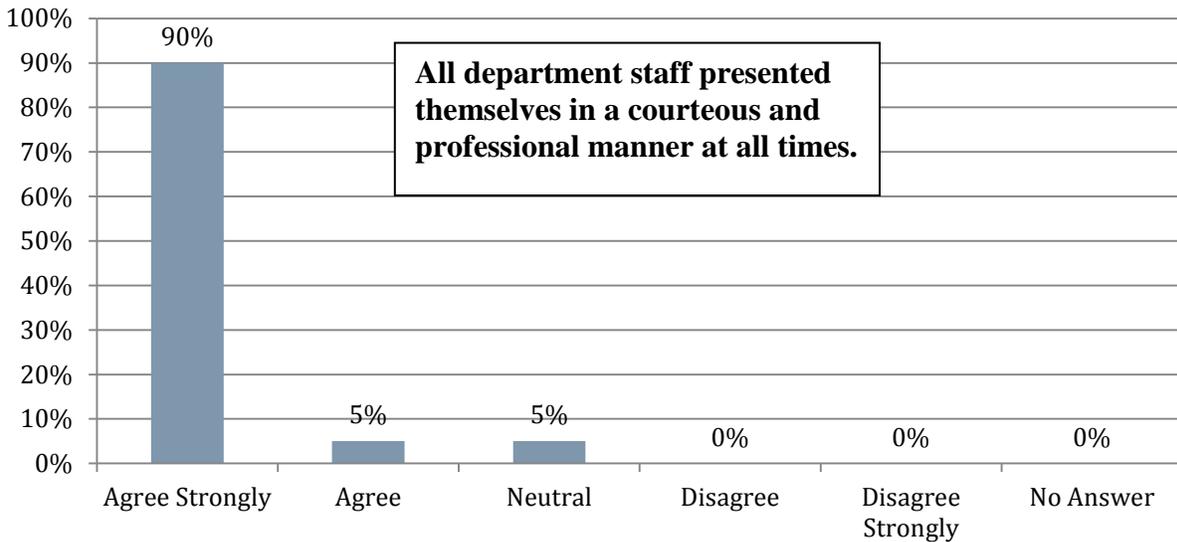
*A Pre-Determination Settlement (PDS) is a no-fault settlement agreement voluntarily entered into by both parties prior to the Commission making a determination in the case. Conciliation is a settlement agreement after a reasonable cause finding.

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Service Satisfaction Survey

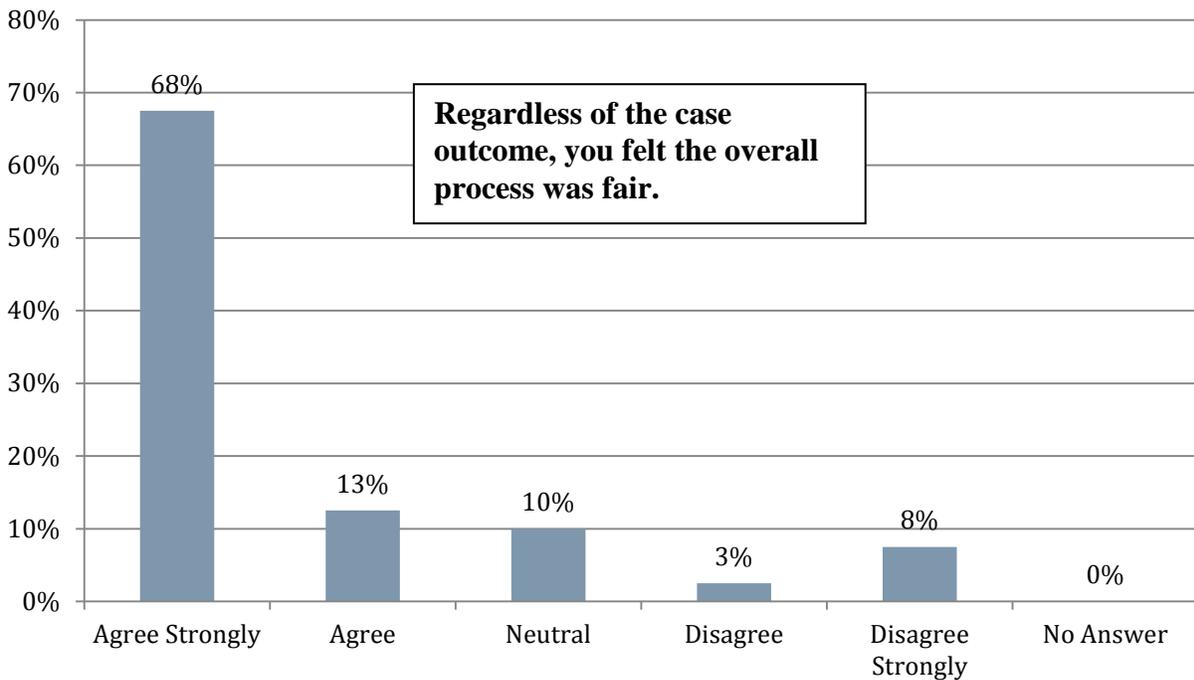
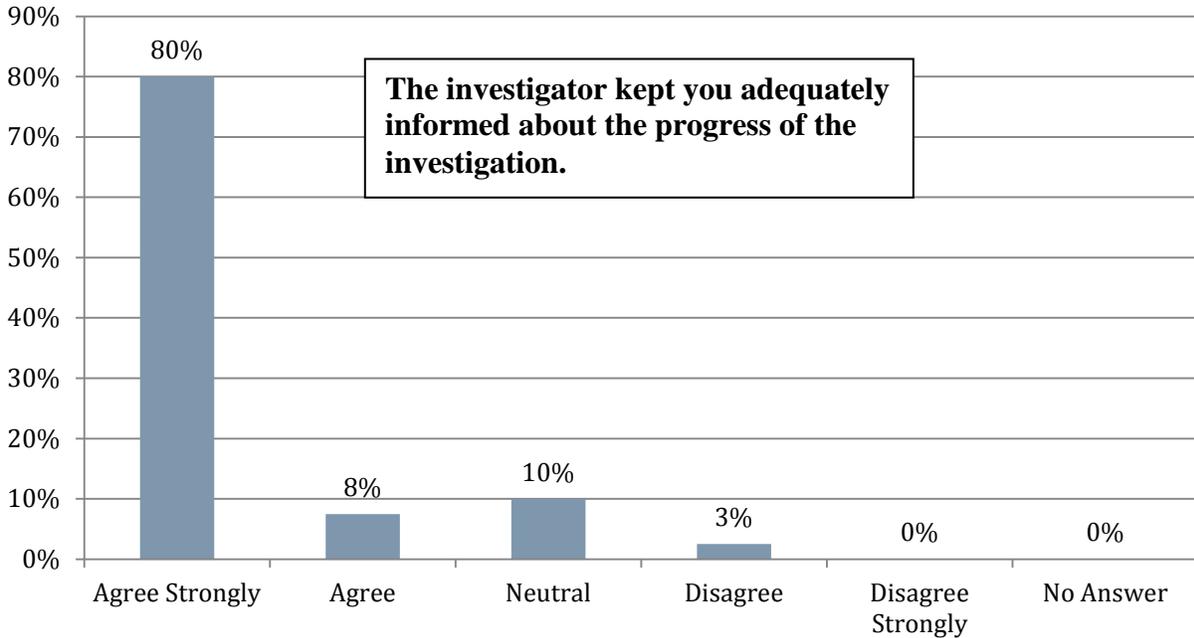
The Commission strives to achieve high satisfaction rates among Complainants and Respondents involved in investigations. In an effort to gauge how the staff and overall process is perceived Complainants and Respondents are asked to participate in a survey following case closure. Survey takers are asked to provide feedback on their comprehension of the process, overall satisfaction, and suggestions on how we could provide better service.

Complainants and Respondents were asked to rank our office on a 1 to 5 scale with 1 being “Disagree Strongly” and 5 being “Agree strongly”.



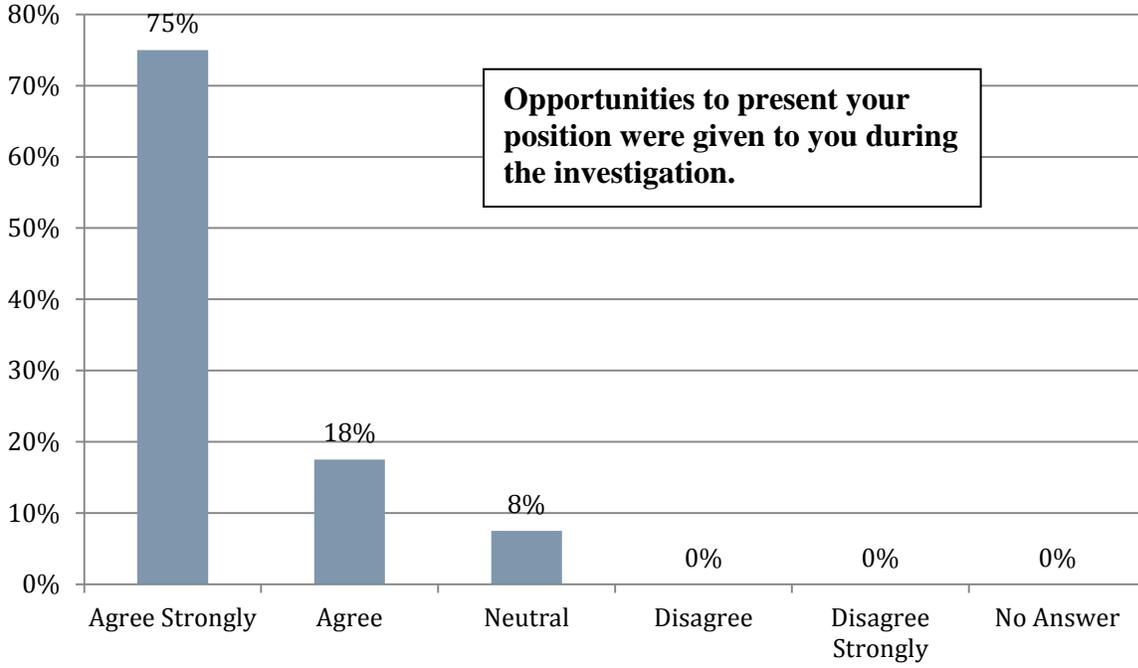
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Service Satisfaction Survey Continued

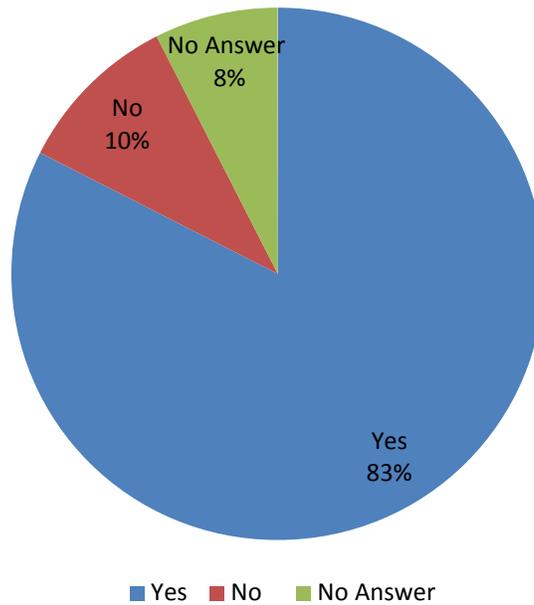


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Service Satisfaction Survey Continued



Would you refer someone experiencing discrimination to the LCHR?



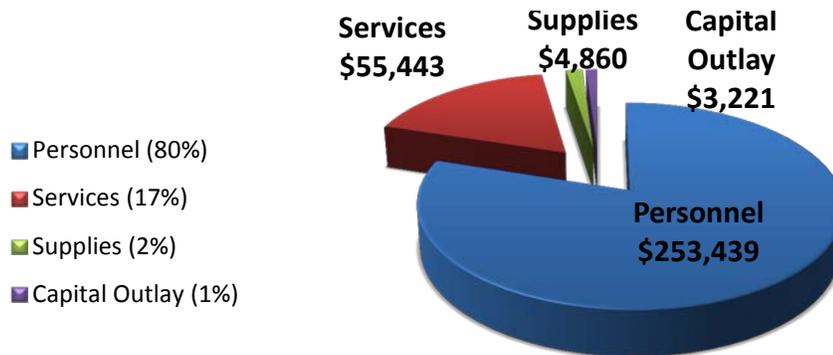
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Budget Fiscal Year 2014-2015

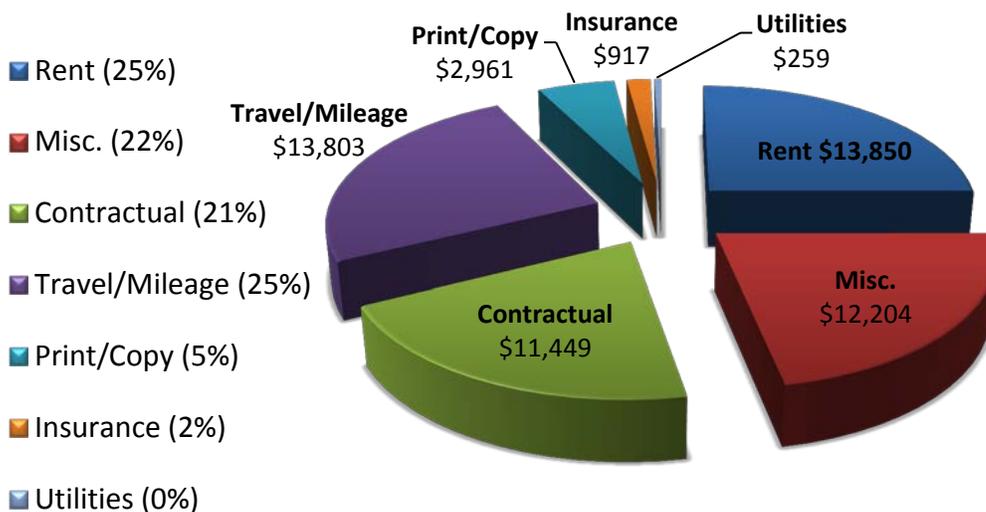
The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights' budget is comprised of funding from the City of Lincoln General Fund as well as two Federal funding sources—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. For FY 2014-2015, the budget expenditures were supported by \$196,480 from the General Fund and \$120,675 from federal funding sources for a total expenditure of \$316,963.

Where Did the Money Go?

Of the total, \$316,963, the largest percentage went to personnel for salaries and benefits, for a total of \$253,439 or 80%. Services* which expenditures cover insurance, travel, mileage, interpretation/translation costs, office rental, copying, printing and utilities totaling \$55,443 or 17% of the budget. Office supplies account for \$4,860 or 2% of the budget, and capital outlay for computer equipment was \$3,221 or 1% of the total budget.



*Services Summary



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Education and Outreach

The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (LCHR) provides services to the community to ensure that individuals are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Equal Opportunity and Fair Housing Laws. The LCHR works to reach as many agencies, groups, community-based organizations, employers, property owners, civic groups and individuals as possible. These efforts include training programs which can be customized to meet the needs of the target audience. Topics include: racial and sexual harassment; fair employment practices; fair housing laws; public accommodation laws; the Americans with Disabilities Act; and diversity training.

In 2015, the staff conducted training at a number of organizations for a total of 108 sessions reaching over 6,000 people. These organizations include LPS Career Education Classes; the Lincoln Housing Authority; Rentwise; and various fairs and festivals, such as: Juneteenth; Streets Alive; Project Homeless Connect; and Community Cultural Conversations. There were also training sessions held with several Respondents. The Civil Rights Conference was attended by over 200 individuals and continues to provide the attendees with information on a wide range of civil rights topics.



Many organizations are represented at the Civil Rights Conference.



Participants listen at the 2015 Civil Rights Conference.



Southeast Community College Job Fair



Indian Center Fair

Award Winners

Gerald Henderson Human Rights Award Recipient Wendy Francis



The **Gerald Henderson Human Rights Award** recognizes outstanding achievements in furthering human relations in Lincoln, including a demonstrated commitment to improving cooperation and understanding among people of different racial, ethnic, religious and diverse backgrounds.

Wendy Francis served as a Commissioner with the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights for 6 years. As a Commissioner, she volunteered her time to eliminate discrimination and ensure that all residents are treated fairly in her city.

While serving in this capacity, she worked tirelessly as a realtor connecting families with financial need programs when warranted and striving to secure affordable housing for her clients. Through her work with the Realtors Association of Lincoln Board of Directors, Public Policy Committee, Affordable Housing Committee, and Equal Opportunity Committee as well as her work with the Nebraska Realtors Association Equal Opportunity Cultural Diversity Committee and Diversity Advisory Council, Wendy has demonstrated an unyielding commitment to equity, diversity and fair housing.

The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights is proud to award the Gerald Henderson Human Rights Award to her in recognition of all that she has done to promote fair housing in Lincoln.

Award Winners Continued

Service Recognition Award Recipient Angela Lemke



Chair person, Bennie Shobe presents a **Service Recognition Award** to Angela Lemke at the 2015 Annual Civil Rights Conference.

Ms. Angela Lemke retired from her position with the City of Lincoln Commission on Human Rights in 2014. When she retired, she was a Senior Civil Rights Investigator and held that position for 6 years. She was a Civil Rights Investigator for 7 years prior to being promoted and began her long career with the Commission as an Office Assistant in 1997.

Ms. Lemke graduated from Lincoln School of Commerce in 1997 with an Associate Degree in Paralegal studies, and has continued her education in the Civil Rights field by attending various conferences and workshops involving equal opportunity.

Ms. Lemke was employed with LCHR for 17 years fulfilling her primary responsibilities of investigating and conciliating complaints of discrimination in the areas of housing, employment and public accommodation. Ms. Lemke was a great source of historical information about the Commission as well as a referral resource for many of the residents that presented at the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights office and were in need of other services not available through LCHR.

Ms. Lemke also provided training and outreach to the public on various civil rights and equal opportunity laws. Ms. Lemke demonstrated a strong commitment to equity and fair treatment for everyone. While her presence in this field will be sorely missed, certainly her dedication to this cause bears recognition.

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Contact Information



In 2015 LCHR updated our website with a new look and more information about our organization. Included on our website is a fill-in form to file a discrimination complaint with the Commission, Commission Meeting minutes, the Civil Rights Conference registration form, local resources and general information.

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Human Rights**

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