

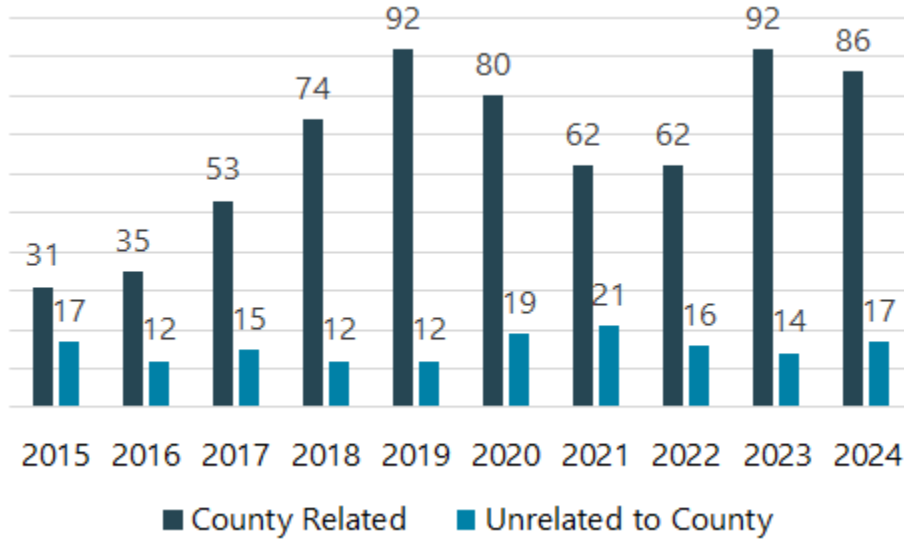
# Good Government Hotline Activity Report 2024



The Multnomah County Auditor's Hotline provides a way for county employees and community members to report concerns of fraud, waste, inefficiency, and abuse of position.

After increasing by nearly 50% in 2023, the number of county-related hotline reports dipped by about 7% in 2024.

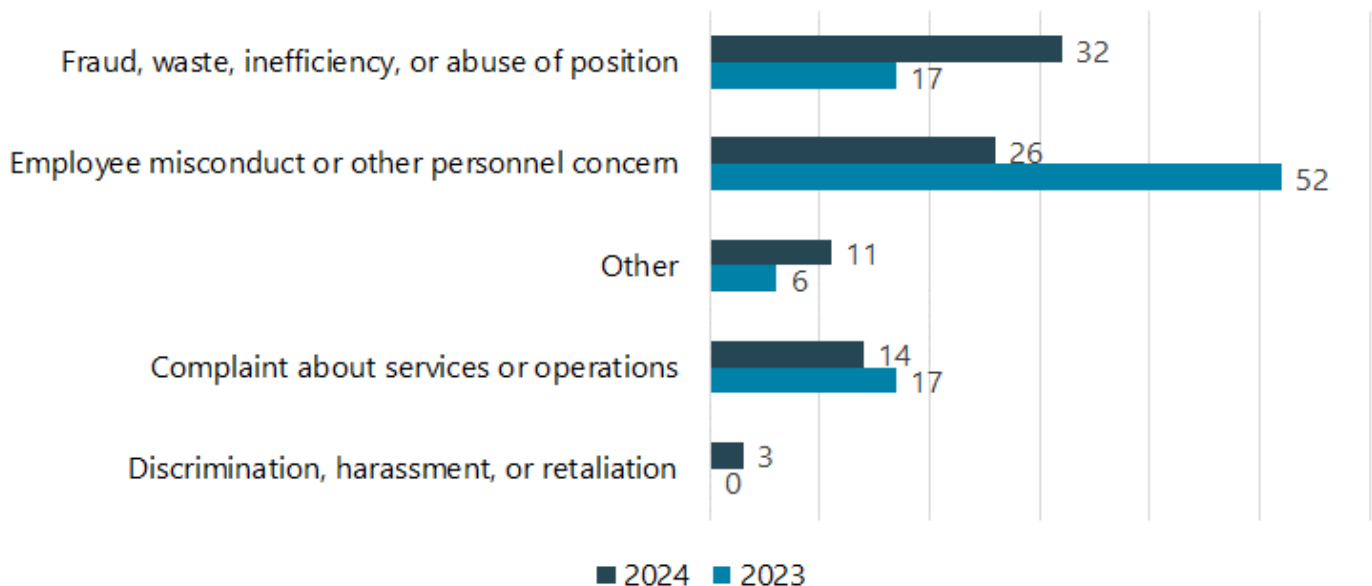
The number of county-related reports dipped slightly in 2024



Reports can be made anonymously. Reporter confidentiality is protected by Oregon Law.

In 2024, we received 32 fraud, waste, inefficiency, or abuse of position reports, an increase of over 88%. We attribute this increase to more frequent and extensive outreach to employees in 2024. In 2025, we plan to extend our outreach through an on-demand training video available to all county employees.

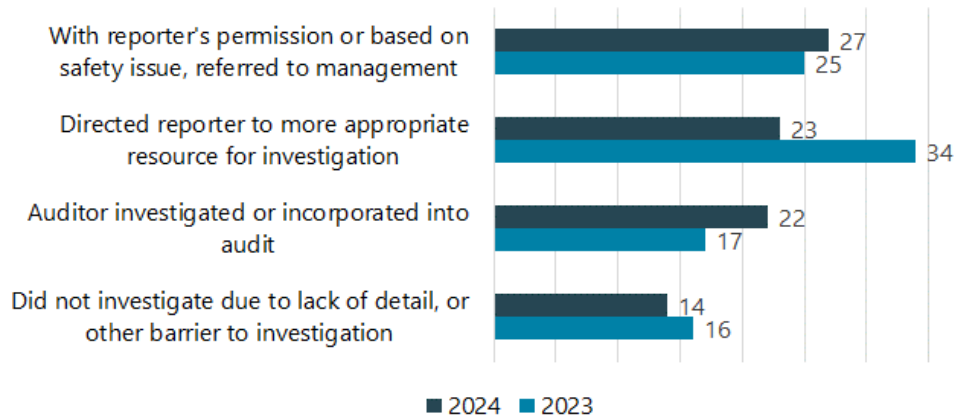
Fraud, waste, and abuse of position reports increased by 88%, while employee misconduct reports declined by 50%



# Good Government Hotline Activity Report 2024

The Auditor's Office reviews every hotline report that comes in, and determines the best way to handle the report. In some cases, there isn't enough detailed information to investigate. In other cases, the issue the reporter has identified is not related to fraud, waste, inefficiency, or abuse of position, but an issue of employee misconduct. Examples of employee misconduct include poor job performance, not showing up on time, or rude behavior. We typically request that reporters take these issues directly to management, but in some situations we refer these reports directly to department human resources or management.

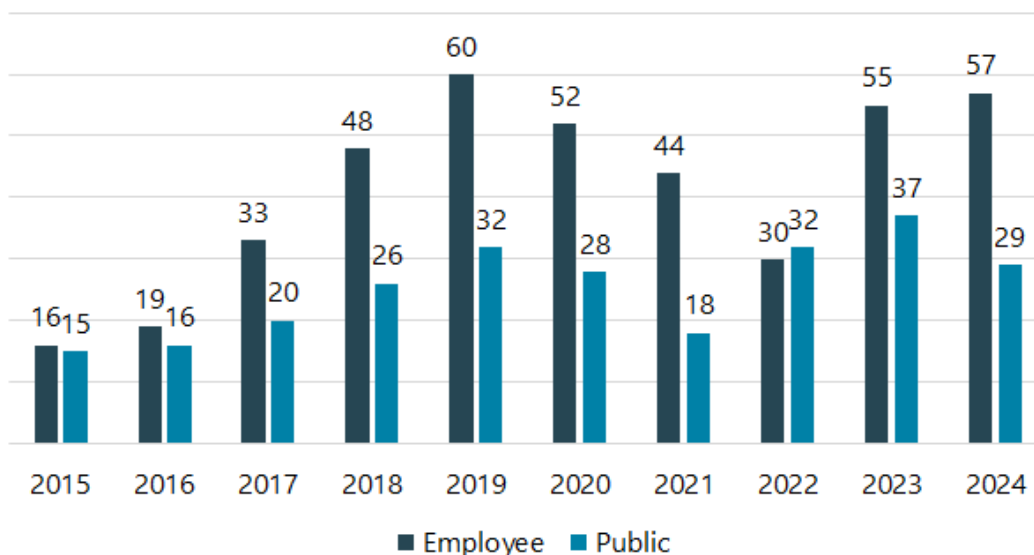
In 2024, we investigated, or incorporated into audit or a potential audit, 22 reports, a 29% increase over 2023



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Reports from the public, such as community members and county contractors, decreased by 22% from 2023 to 2024. This decrease is a negative trend we intend to reverse through increased community engagement in 2025. Community members, including county contractors and vendors, are an important source for reports of fraud, waste, and abuse.

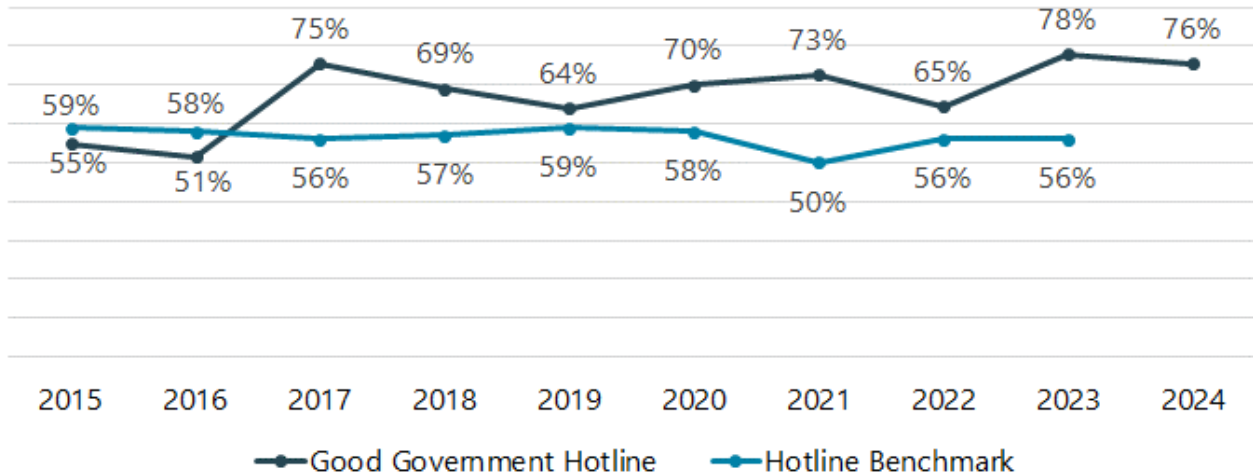
Reports from employees increased slightly in 2024, while the number of reports from the public decreased by 22%



# Good Government Hotline Activity Report 2024

The rate of anonymous reports declined slightly to 76% in 2024. Because anonymous reports tend to be more difficult to substantiate, we want this rate to be as low as possible. The ability to report anonymously is a best practice for an effective hotline. However, when reporters leave contact information, we are more likely to be able to ask follow-up questions and gather more information, which may help substantiate reports. In addition, a high rate of anonymous reports may indicate that reporters fear retaliation.

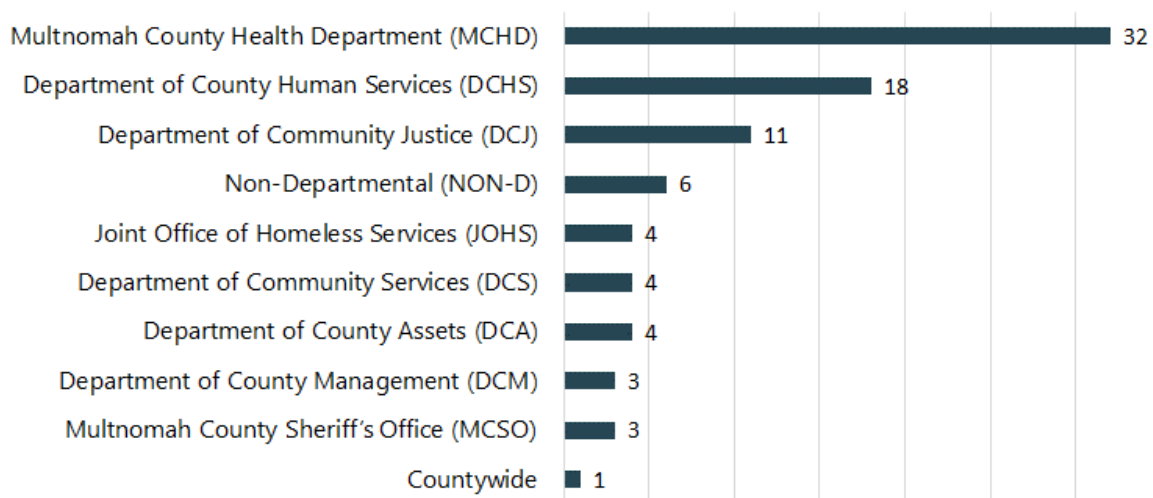
## 2024's rate of anonymous reports was again far above the benchmark



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We categorize each county-related hotline report we receive based on the department in which the allegation was reported to have occurred. The hotline received 32 reports regarding the Health Department. Next highest was the Department of County Human Services with 18, followed by the Department of Community Justice, with 11. The Health Department has by far the largest number of employees among county departments and among the largest budget. However, it is cause for concern that about one third of the county-related reports received to the hotline were regarding the Health Department.

## For the second consecutive year, about one third of 2024 hotline reports were related to the Health Department



To report suspected fraud, waste, or misuse of Multnomah County resources, call 1-888-289-6839, or go to [goodgovhotline.com](https://goodgovhotline.com)

## 2024 Fraud, Waste, Inefficiency, or Abuse of Position Investigation Results

The Hotline investigated 17 reports in 2024, and incorporated 5 additional reports into a current audit or potential audit. Of the 17 reports the Hotline investigated, we determined 1 to be partially substantiated, 12 to be unsubstantiated, and 4 investigations are still in progress. In 2024, we released one hotline tip report follow-up, and two memos to management.

### Recap of reports we issued in 2024

#### [Memo to Board of County Commissioners: Mid-stream changes to a contract allocation process raised questions about the impartial and open nature of the process\\*](#)

In January, Auditor McGuirk issued this memo, after the Good Government Hotline received a hotline report in the spring of 2023 regarding a contract award allocation process taking place in the Joint Office of Homeless Services. The allegation was that an elected official used their position to gain an advantage for a particular provider in the contract award allocation process.

The memo provided transparency about what we found when investigating this report. Our investigation caused us concern that the county's contract award allocation process was not insulated enough from outside influence to assure impartial and open competition, and that outside influence put undue pressure on Joint Office employees.

#### [Hotline tip report follow up: Animal Services should use donation funds for their intended purposes](#)

We issued this report in August 2024 to follow up on a June 2023 report about Animal Services' use of its restricted-use donation accounts. We found that Animal Services significantly increased spending from the restricted-use donation accounts between July 1, 2023 and May 1, 2024, but the increased spending was primarily the result of shifting existing expenses – which in years past had been paid for with General Fund money – to the donation accounts.

For example, the Spay/Neuter Fund is supposed to supplement spay/neuter surgeries for pet owners in financial need, as described in a Board of County Commissioners' resolution and Animal Services' website. But between July 1, 2023 and May 1, 2024, Animal Services mostly spent from the fund for spaying and neutering of adopted animals. The purpose of the donation accounts is to expand, enhance, and supplement services for animals and community members through innovative pilot programs, not replace General Fund support.

#### [Memo to Board of County Commissioners: County used a state contract to enter into agreements with a vendor, but has not complied with state contract financial terms](#)

In November, Auditor McGuirk issued this memo after an individual alleged to the hotline that a contract was overpriced and a waste of county resources. We did not substantiate the allegation as meeting the definition of waste, but were concerned that the county, in entering into a cooperative contract based on a state contract, did not abide by the original contract's financial terms – as it was required to do. We were also concerned that the contracting process may have led to a more expensive project than necessary.

\*We reported on this memo in last year's annual report, as well, since the report originated in 2023.

## A brief history of the Hotline

The County Auditor established the Good Government Hotline in 2007 to provide county employees and community members with a secure, confidential method for reporting suspected fraud, waste, or abuse of position.

Hotlines are effective reporting mechanisms and are an integral part of an anti-fraud control system. Organizations with hotlines experience significantly fewer fraud losses than organizations without hotlines. And tips are by far the most effective method for detecting fraud.

The hotline was adopted into county ordinance in 2023 as an operation of the Auditor's Office.

## How we process and investigate reports

We take all reports made to the Good Government Hotline seriously. If you suspect fraud, waste, inefficiency, or abuse of position in the county government, we want you to know that you can confidentially report to the hotline. We know it takes bravery to make a report to the hotline, and that matters to us.

All of our hotline investigations are the result of tips from people who made a report to the hotline. While not every allegation made to the hotline results in a public report, the Hotline investigates all complaints of suspected fraud, inefficiency, waste, or abuse of position in county government. This investigatory work requires significant skill so that substantive reports are investigated fully with a solid chain of evidence. It is essential work to help maintain the government's integrity.

Upon receiving a hotline report, the Good Government Hotline investigator does an initial review of the report for relevance to county operations, quality of the information provided, and nature of the report, among other considerations. Some reports lack the detail to investigate, and some are really customer-service issues that can be resolved relatively easily without an investigation.

For each county-related report, the investigator conducts a preliminary review. Depending on the type of report, preliminary review may include reviewing documents and/or data, or talking with employees. In that preliminary review phase, our fact finding is used to determine whether the report will be further investigated, and who will investigate.

If we decide, after preliminary review, that a report needs further investigation, we initiate a principal investigation. Through the process of the investigation, we do fact-finding and analysis of the facts to standards, rules, and laws. If a report is substantiated, we create a public report, and share it with the Board of County Commissioners. We often include recommendations when we issue reports. We do not have disciplinary authority over county employees. However, the county may choose to use our investigation results as a basis for disciplinary action.

While reporters can report anonymously if they choose, it is worth noting that even if they don't, we protect reporter confidentiality to the fullest legal extent. According to Oregon Revised Statute 297.765, reporter identity cannot be disclosed without the reporter's explicit permission. When referring anonymous reports to management, we summarize details of the report and remove any information that would potentially identify the reporter.