

Addressing misconduct and wrongdoing at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada: annual report 2025–2026



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Introduction

This annual report aims to increase transparency on how misconduct and wrongdoing are addressed at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). Now in its third edition, the report continues to build on previous years by providing a more comprehensive view of workplace integrity across the department. In addition to labour relations and harassment and violence statistics, it examines broader organizational trends and themes related to science ethics, security, values and ethics, and other key areas that support a respectful, accountable and ethical workplace. Beyond presenting a summary of misconduct and wrongdoing cases deemed founded in the department over the 2025–2026 fiscal year (which runs from April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026), this report also provides details on how these issues were addressed, and the mechanisms, both informal and formal, available to employees to report ethical issues in the workplace.

Departmental context

AAFC is a vital organization with approximately 5,750 employees working across Canada, in regional offices, research centres and national headquarters, supporting the nation's agriculture and agri-food sector. The department provides services, research and policy development to foster a sustainable and innovative agricultural industry. AAFC collaborates with stakeholders, including farmers, processors, exporters and provincial and territorial governments to address challenges and seize opportunities in the sector. As stewards of food security and sustainability, AAFC employees are key contributors to ensuring Canadian agriculture remains competitive and resilient in the global marketplace.

As a department committed to excellence, AAFC promotes a culture of collaboration, innovation and accountability. Whether conducting groundbreaking research, supporting programs for producers or developing policies to support and improve the industry, all employees and managers play a crucial role in fostering a workplace that is physically and psychologically safe, healthy, respectful, inclusive and free from harassment and discrimination.

[AAFC's Values and Ethics Code](#) outlines clear expectations for integrity, stewardship, excellence and respect for people and democracy. As a condition of employment, AAFC employees are required to abide by the ethical standards outlined in AAFC's code in performing their day-to-day responsibilities.

To maintain the highest standards of ethical behaviour in the workplace, employees are encouraged to report any misconduct or wrongdoing without fear of reprisal, confident that their concerns will be treated seriously.

The difference between misconduct and wrongdoing

Misconduct is defined as any action whereby an individual willfully contravenes an act, a regulation, a rule, a departmental or policy instrument, an approved procedure, a departmental code of conduct, a reasonable and lawful management request, and/or the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. In short, it is when an employee contravenes any of the obligations, which they agree to abide by when becoming an employee of the department.

Wrongdoing is strictly used to describe incidents addressed under the [Public Servant Disclosure Protection Act](#) (PSDPA). As per the PSDPA, wrongdoing is defined as:

- a. a contravention of any Act of Parliament or of the legislature of a province, or of any regulations made under any such Act, other than a contravention of section 19 of the PSDPA
- b. a [misuse of public funds or a public asset \(PDF\)](#)
- c. a [gross mismanagement in the public sector \(PDF\)](#)
- d. an act or omission that creates a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons, or to the environment, other than a danger that is inherent in the performance of the duties or functions of a public servant
- e. a [serious breach of a code of conduct \(PDF\)](#) established under section 5 or 6 of the PSDPA
- f. knowingly directing or counselling a person to commit a wrongdoing set out in any of paragraphs (a) to (e)

Descriptions of specific categories of misconduct and wrongdoing are provided throughout the report.

Addressing misconduct and wrongdoing at AAFC

All AAFC employees should feel safe reporting any situation where they feel there may be misconduct or wrongdoing, without fear of reprisal. Several recourse processes are available to employees facing real or apparent misconduct or wrongdoing. More information on these processes is provided to employees on the department's intranet, including details on available mechanisms and contact information.

To navigate the process and manage issues, managers always remain available as a first point of contact. Employees can also contact the Human Resources Branch or the Office of the Ombuds at AAFC.Ombuds.AAC@agr.gc.ca for informal services and assistance, or the Office of Internal Disclosure for matters involving wrongdoing. These offices can provide support and guidance, including on the various recourse options available.

AAFC addresses all suspected cases of misconduct and wrongdoing by following the guidance provided by policies and guidelines of the department and the Government of Canada. This includes:

- conducting fair and objective investigative processes as needed and as expeditiously as possible
- taking all measures to protect the confidentiality of the information collected and the privacy of individuals involved
- ensuring that there is procedural fairness for all

This includes those who are under investigation as well as those who have initiated a formal process.

For all cases of potential misconduct, an investigative process is launched.

For cases of wrongdoing, when a disclosure is received, an admissibility analysis is undertaken, based on a number of criteria "to determine whether the disclosure meets the requirements contained in the Act." Investigations are conducted as informally and expeditiously as possible, with appropriate rigour throughout the process. Procedures for the disclosures under the PSDPA are available on the departmental intranet.

While all complaints and allegations received are assessed to ensure they are addressed appropriately, not all allegations are subject to a formal investigation process. In some cases, the complaint or allegation may not be substantiated, or informal recourse mechanisms may be more appropriate. Either way, management plays a crucial role in maintaining a healthy work environment and services are available for all parties involved. AAFC's Workplace Wellness team provides various independent and confidential services, including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Informal Conflict Management Services (ICMS), to support employees and help the work environment. Additionally, the Labour Relations Centre of Expertise and Values and Ethics Policy Centre can support managers to promote and reinforce the importance of ethical conduct in the workplace and address inappropriate behaviours.

Measures taken in founded cases of misconduct and wrongdoing

After reviewing the available facts and applying the standard of proof for administrative investigations (which is the balance of probability), an allegation of misconduct or wrongdoing is determined to be unfounded or founded. As an employer, AAFC is dedicated to taking appropriate disciplinary or administrative measures when misconduct or wrongdoing is determined to be founded. In some instances, a situation may warrant the application of both disciplinary and administrative measures.

Disciplinary measures are formal corrective measures that seek to correct behaviours and are generally progressive, increasing in severity with successive acts of misconduct. To determine the appropriate measure, the manager must consider all aggravating and mitigating factors. In some cases, the misconduct may be sufficiently serious to warrant severe action even on a first offence.

Disciplinary measures range from oral reprimand, written reprimand, suspension (without pay), financial penalty, temporary demotion, and up to termination of employment. Individuals who have been subject to discipline can file a grievance.

Administrative measures are measures that may be taken to make the necessary adjustments to a situation. Some situations may require the application of one or more administrative measures. In some instances, it may be determined that an administrative measure is sufficient to address the situation.

Administrative measures may include placing an employee on administrative leave without pay, temporarily removing human resources and/or financial delegation or other measures as appropriate and depending on the situation.

Administrative measures can also be used to provide tools to the employee with a view to ensuring that the misconduct does not happen again. For example, providing a letter of expectations, developing an action plan for them to change their behaviour, providing training or coaching or scheduling regular meetings with management.

Harassment and violence cases

The *Canada Labour Code* defines harassment and violence as “any action, conduct or comment, including of a sexual nature, that can reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment.” This includes all types of harassment and violence, such as sexual harassment, physical violence and domestic violence, and can be a series of events or one severe event.

The Harassment and Violence in the Workplace Prevention Program (HVWPP) focuses on preventing and resolving harassment and violence at AAFC, providing impartial information, options and guidance to support parties through the resolution process with the aim of preventing future occurrences and restoring the workplace.

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, there were 58 new harassment and violence cases at AAFC.

Number of harassment and violence cases, by fiscal year, at AAFC



Examples of workplace harassment and violence

- Sending or requesting inappropriate electronic communications
- Intentionally damaging, hiding or stealing someone’s belongings or equipment
- Making derogatory remarks about someone’s gender identity or sexual orientation
- Spreading malicious rumours or gossip about an individual or a group
- Intentionally excluding or socially isolating someone
- Criticizing, undermining, belittling or ridiculing someone
- Publicly ridiculing or disciplining a subordinate
- Interfering with a subordinate’s performance or promotion in an arbitrary manner

Harassment and violence cases resolution mechanisms

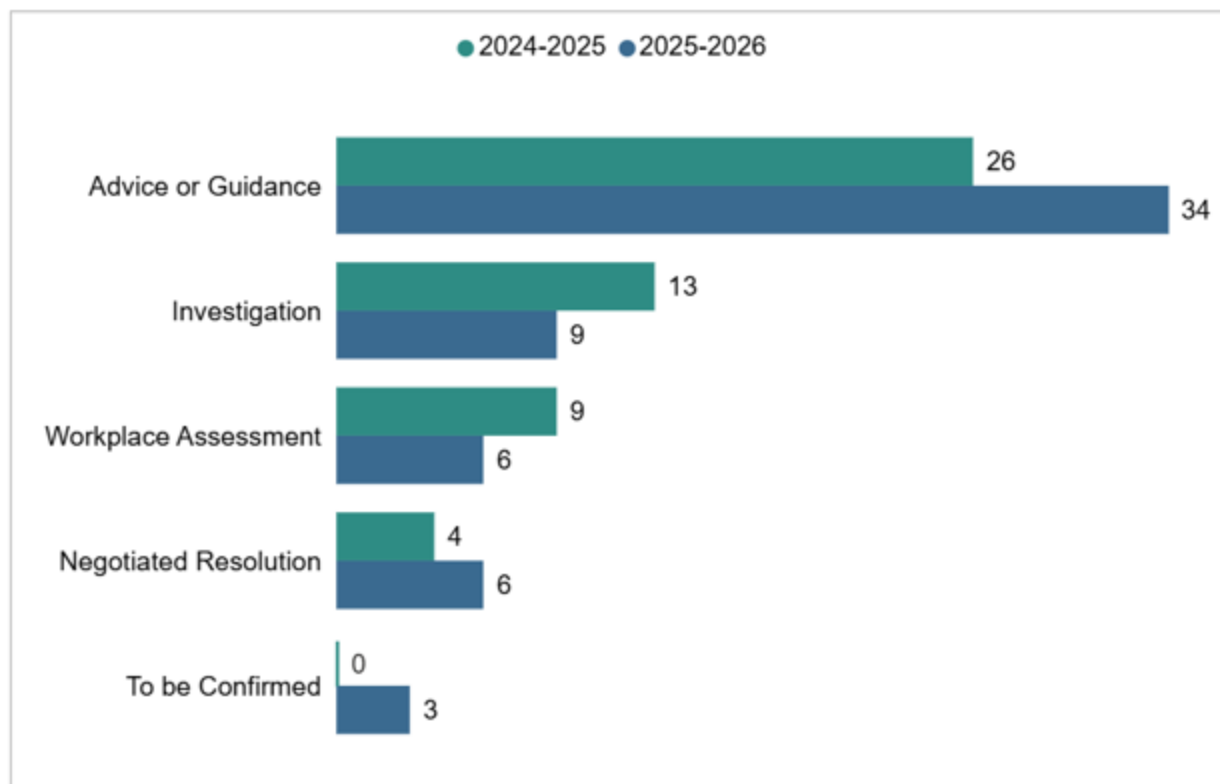
When an inquiry or notice of occurrence is received, the employer has an obligation to address it with guidance from the HVWPP, who is responsible for coordinating the harassment and violence resolution process.

The 58 harassment and violence cases opened during the 2025–2026 fiscal year were resolved through the following resolution mechanisms:

- 34 resolved through advice or guidance
- 9 resolved through an investigation
- 6 resolved through a negotiated resolution
- 6 resolved through a workplace assessment
- 3 cases with resolution mechanisms to be confirmed

The following chart provides statistical information on harassment and violence cases' resolution mechanisms for fiscal year 2025–2026, compared to fiscal year 2024–2025. Data reflects cases opened in the specified fiscal year.

Harassment and violence cases' resolution mechanisms, 2025–2026 and 2024–2025, cases opened in that fiscal year



Harassment and violence resolution mechanisms include:

- **Investigation:** Investigations are confidential and conducted by qualified, impartial third-party investigators. Investigative reports include conclusions as to whether the allegations met or did not meet the definition of harassment and violence, as well as recommendations to eliminate or minimize the risk of future harassment and violence occurrences
- **Negotiated resolution:** A confidential process undertaken to reach a mutually beneficial resolution between two or more parties involved in a conflict or disagreement through discussion, deliberation and compromise
- **Workplace assessment:** Process by which the relevant Occupational Health and Safety Committee/Representative and management jointly:
 - identify workplace harassment and violence risk factors and the root causes of conflict
 - develop an action plan to prevent future occurrences and restore the workplace
- **Advice or guidance:** Information sharing and discussions between the HVWPP and the principal party to determine whether the allegations meet the definition of harassment and violence, and exploring options that could resolve the issue informally before an official notice of occurrence is submitted
- **Mediation or conciliation:** Impartial third-party service that assists conflicting parties in reaching a voluntary and confidential agreement or settlement

Formal outcomes of harassment and violence investigations

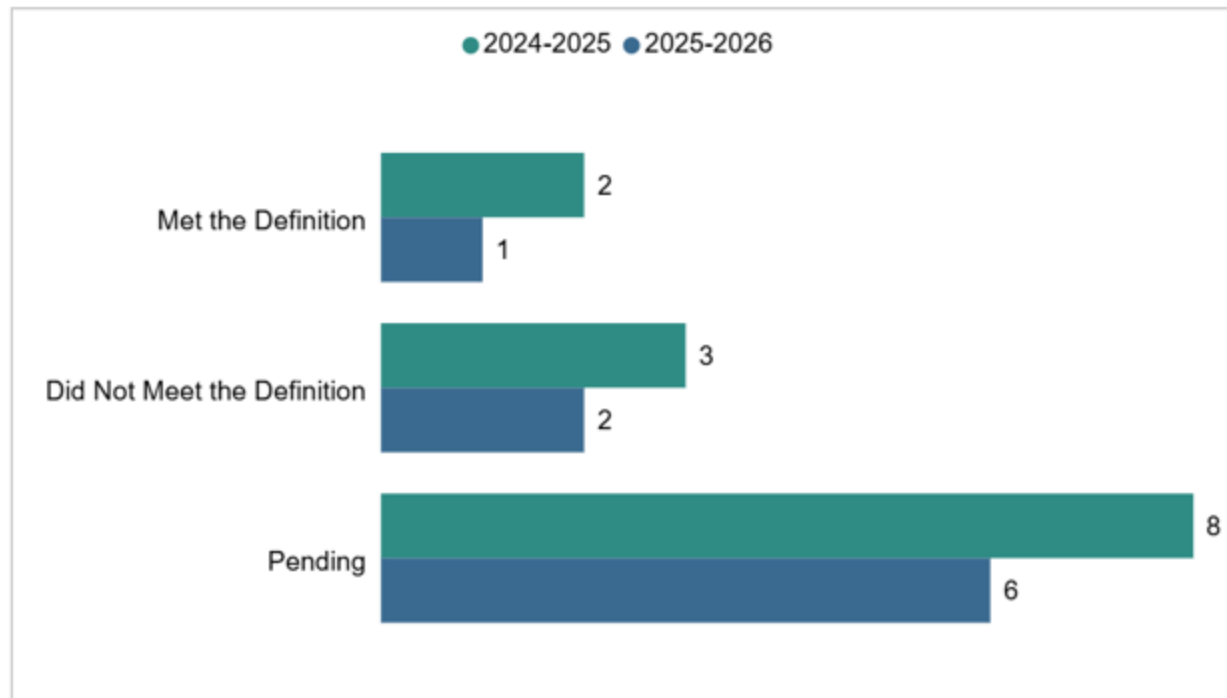
If the principal party (complainant) chooses to proceed with an investigation, AAFC must provide the responding party (respondent) with notice that an investigation will be carried out. The HVWPP supports parties throughout the process, ensuring procedural fairness and compliance with the Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations and the *Canada Labour Code*. The HVWPP will select an investigator from a pre-established list of qualified individuals, taking into consideration the nature of the allegations, the number of harassment and violence investigations and their outcomes for fiscal year 2025–2026 compared to fiscal year 2024–2025. Data reflects cases opened in the specified fiscal year allegations and the needs of the parties.

The following chart provides statistical information on the number of harassment and violence investigations and their outcomes for fiscal year 2025–2026 compared to fiscal year 2024–2025. Data reflects cases opened in the specified fiscal year.

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, AAFC coordinated nine workplace harassment and violence investigations:

- 1 case met the definition of harassment and violence under the applicable policy
- 2 cases did not meet the definition of harassment and violence
- 6 investigation outcomes are pending as of the publication date of this report

Harassment and violence investigations and their outcomes, fiscal years 2025–2026 and 2024–2025, cases opened in that fiscal year



There are two possible investigation outcomes:

- **Allegations did not meet the definition of harassment and violence:** Insufficient supporting evidence to determine that harassment and violence occurred, or allegations do not meet the definition of harassment and violence as defined in the *Canada Labour Code* and the applicable policy
- **Allegations met the definition of harassment and violence:** Investigation findings conclude that on the balance of probabilities, some or all allegations put forth constitute harassment and violence as defined in the *Canada Labour Code* and the applicable policy

Disciplinary measures and cases

Disciplinary measures

Disciplinary measures within the federal public service are intended to be corrective rather than punitive. They are applied to address behaviours that violate policies or standards of conduct and are intended to assist employees in correcting their behaviours to meet the high standards required to deliver on AAFC's mandate.

Most common disciplinary measures applied at AAFC include:

- **oral reprimand:** a formal verbal measure outlining the nature of the misconduct. No record of this measure is placed on the employee's personnel file
- **written reprimand:** formal written notice outlining the nature of the misconduct

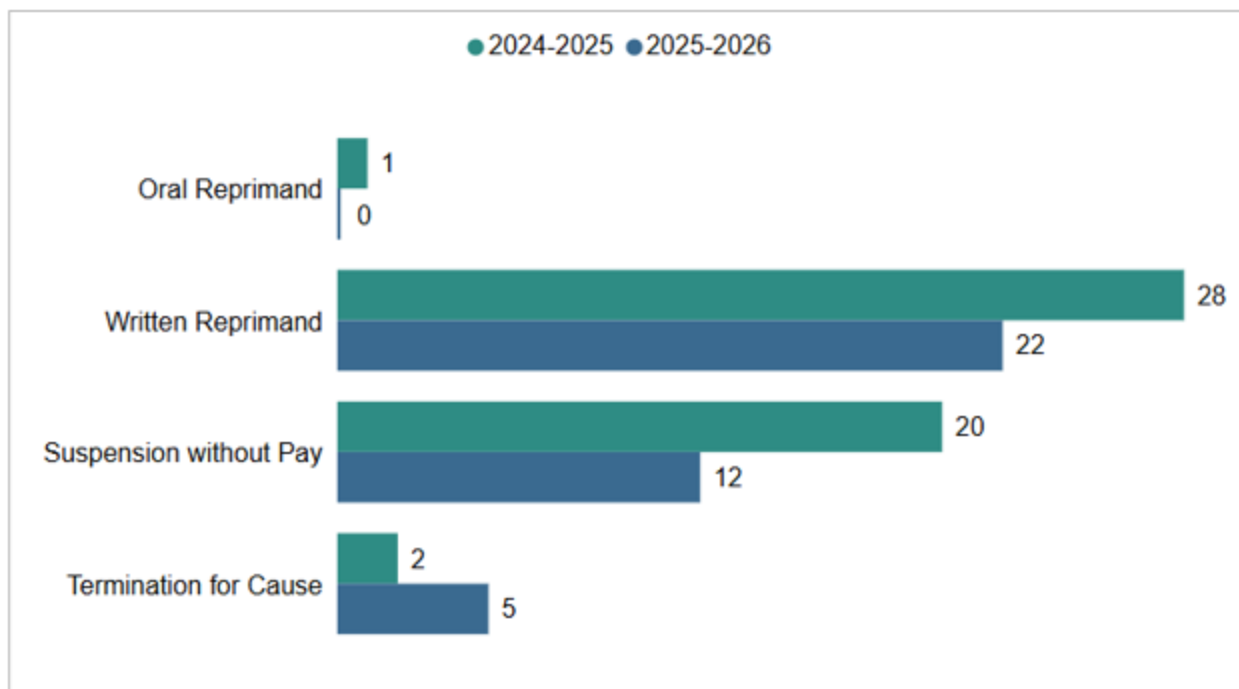
- **suspension:** temporary removal from duties and from the place of work without pay as a consequence of misconduct; duration varies based on severity
- **termination:** dismissal for serious or repeated violations

The following chart provides statistics on the disciplinary measures implemented during fiscal year 2025-2026 compared to fiscal year 2024-2025.

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, AAFC implemented 39 disciplinary measures in relation to the disciplinary cases noted below, including:

- 0 oral reprimand
- 22 written reprimands
- 12 suspensions without pay
- 5 terminations for cause

Disciplinary measures implemented, fiscal years 2025–2026 and 2024–2025



Disciplinary cases

In matters involving values and ethics violations, delegated managers are responsible for conducting thorough investigations with support from AAFC’s Labour Relations Centre of Expertise. Upon reviewing investigation outcomes with Labour Relations, managers are responsible for implementing appropriate corrective measures, as necessary, based on the nature and severity of the misconduct.

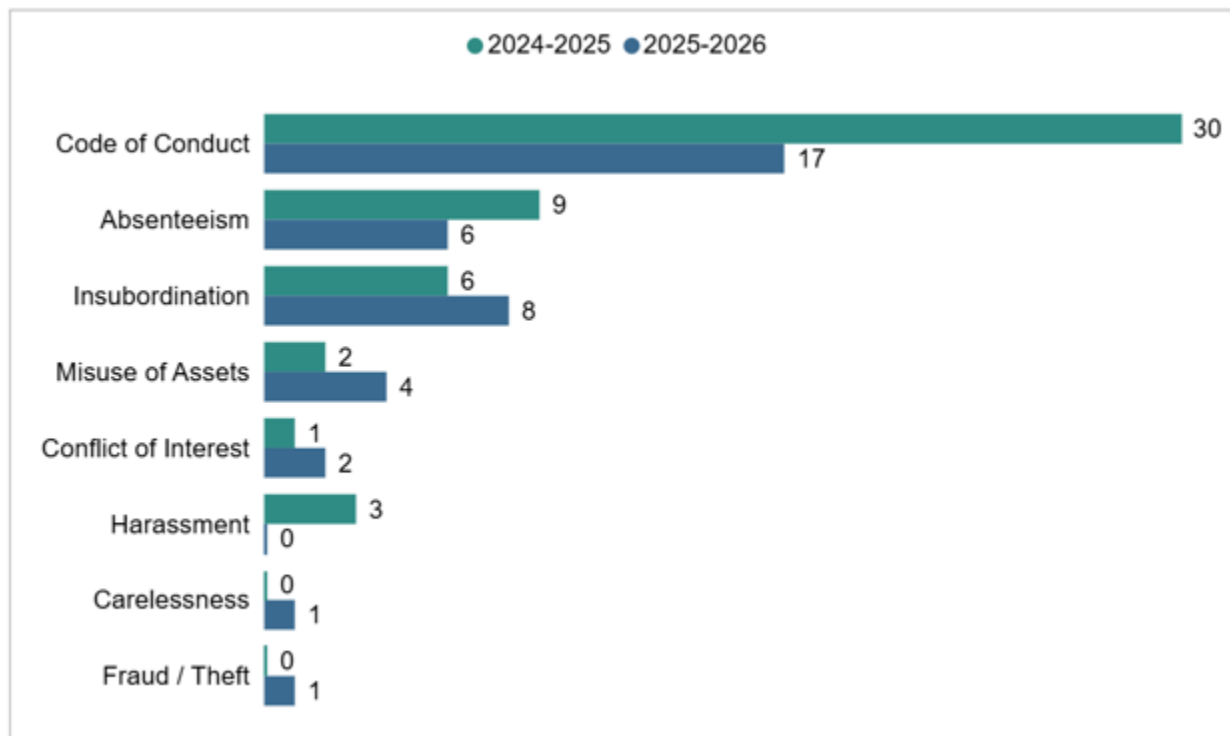
When it is determined that disciplinary action is necessary, the measures implemented are not intended to be punitive. They should be used as a means to address and correct behaviour or actions that are not in alignment with policies or standards of conduct.

The following chart provides statistics on the types of disciplinary cases identified by AAFC during fiscal year 2025–2026 compared to fiscal year 2024–2025.

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, AAFC identified 39 disciplinary cases:

- 17 related to the code of conduct
- 6 related to absenteeism
- 8 related to insubordination
- 4 related to misuse of assets
- 2 related to conflict of interest
- 0 related to harassment
- 1 related to carelessness
- 1 related to fraud/theft

Types of disciplinary cases identified by AAFC, 2025–2026 and 2024–2025



Several disciplinary cases identified were related to violations of AAFC's Values and Ethics Code, particularly the values of Respect for People, Stewardship and Integrity. The following sections outline misconduct grouped by these core values.¹

Respect for people

This value emphasizes treating all people with respect, dignity and fairness which contributes to an accessible, physically, and psychologically safe and healthy work environment that promotes equity, inclusion, engagement, openness and transparency. Recognizing and valuing the diversity of ideas, perspectives, lived experiences and people — including gender identity, sexual orientation, ancestry, origins and ability — is fundamental to the department's work. Breaches in this category included inappropriate and aggressive remarks and communication, failure to follow management direction and discriminatory behaviours.

- Written reprimands were issued for inappropriate workplace conduct—including the use of disrespectful or aggressive language and disparaging remarks about managers, supervisors, or colleagues — as well as for failure to comply with management direction, refusal to follow instructions, acts of insubordination and failure to communicate with management in a timely manner
- Suspensions were imposed in more serious cases, including:
 - hazardous workplace actions
 - sexually inappropriate or discriminatory remarks
 - threatening messages
 - being untruthful and dishonest
 - situations related to absenteeism or unauthorized leave

Stewardship

Public servants are responsible for the proper stewardship of departmental resources, including time, resources and assets. Employees are expected to comply with financial policies, meet work obligations and respect directives. Breaches in this category included misuse of acquisition cards, unauthorized use of AAFC resources, and repeated or unexplained absences that disrupted operations and team productivity.

- Written reprimands were issued for instances of inappropriate use or unauthorized purchases using a government-issued acquisition credit card, in violation of the *Financial Administration Act* and the Acquisition Card Policy

¹ The following information contains summaries of situations as well as the disciplinary measures imposed following the investigative process. In order to maintain confidentiality, case-specific details — sometimes crucial in determining the severity of the measure — may have been omitted. As a result, the reader may find it difficult to understand why a particular measure was applied for each of the situations described.

- Written reprimands and/or suspensions were rendered in the following situations:
 - inappropriate use of AAFC equipment in relation to outside activities
 - inappropriate use of AAFC network to view non-work-related websites/videos
 - failure to obtain management approval or provide appropriate notice of workplace absences

Integrity and conflict of interest

Employees must maintain the highest standards of integrity in all activities and avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest. Breaches in this category involved unauthorized engagement with foreign entities and the misuse of assets and resources. In these cases, AAFC's Departmental Security and Intelligence Services worked with Labour Relations and managers to investigate and review the cases and determine and implement the appropriate disciplinary measures.

- Written reprimands were issued for situations where employees failed to act in a way to maintain management's trust (that is, failure to follow directions related to workplace expectations or insubordinate actions toward management)
- Terminations of employment occurred for:
 - theft of AAFC property
 - conducting personal business under the guise of representing AAFC
 - taking and using AAFC equipment outside of the country without authorization
 - failure to disclose outside activities and personal benefits obtained from those activities

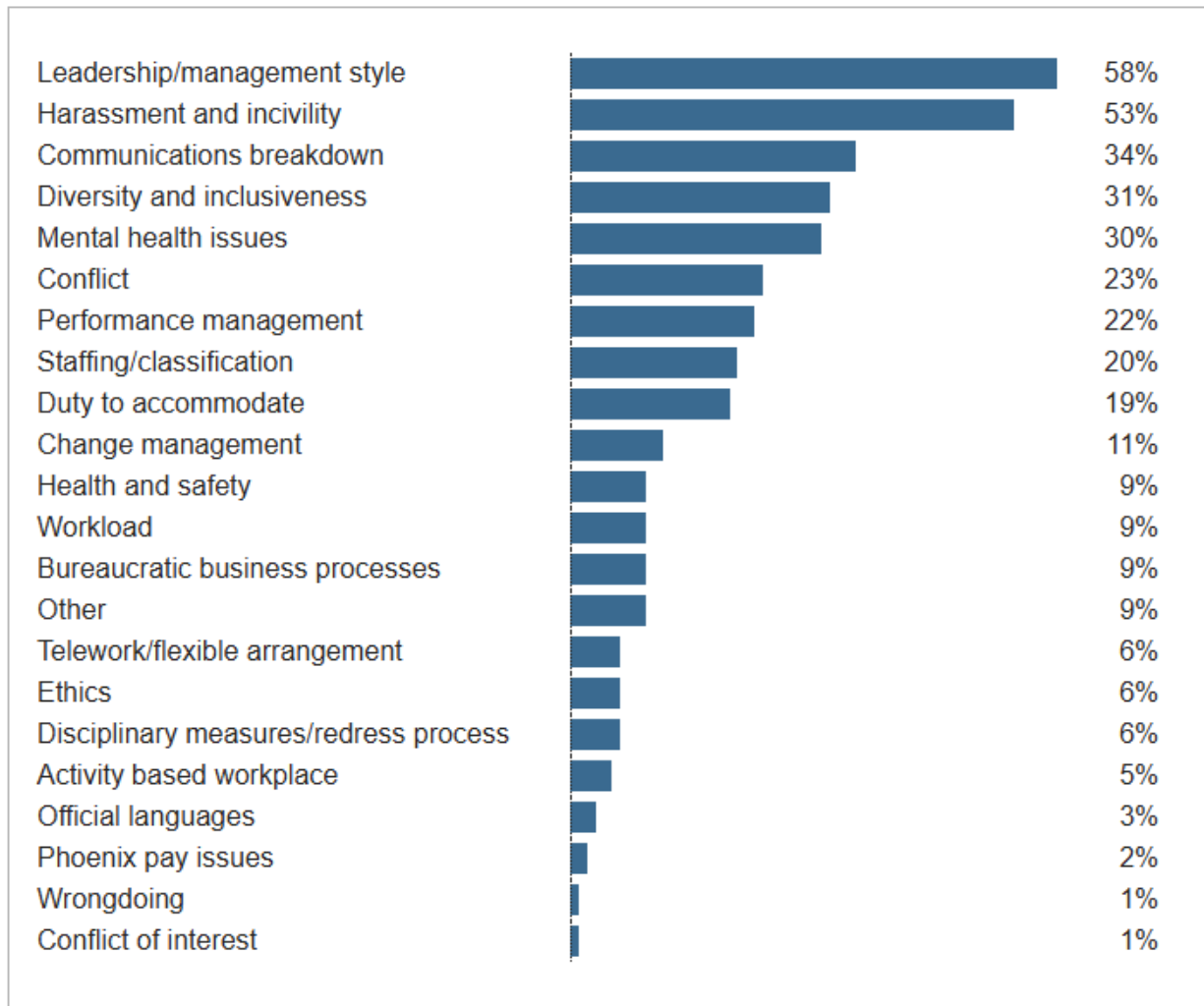
Office of the Ombuds

The Ombuds Office serves as a confidential and impartial resource where employees can bring forward workplace concerns and explore informal resolution options. This section summarizes the activities for the 2025–2026 fiscal year, based on voluntary employee outreach.

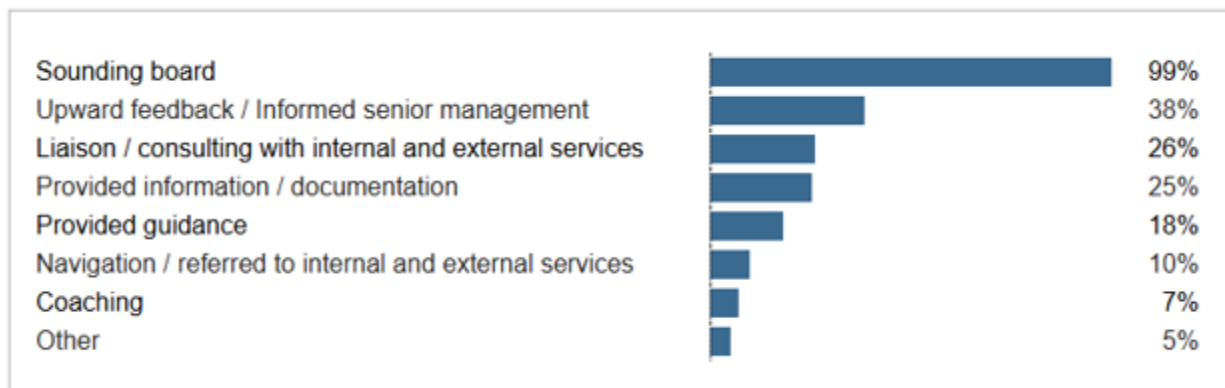
The data is presented under the table titled **Issues raised**, which captures the nature of concerns brought to the Office of the Ombuds and includes many employees raising more than one issue. The data presented under the table titled **Ombuds interventions** outlines the types of support or actions provided in response. The issues raised often require more than one intervention.

While not all concerns raised involved misconduct, the information provides valuable insight into emerging themes and areas where further attention or preventive efforts may be beneficial.

Issues raised



Ombuds' interventions



Science integrity

AAFC's Science Integrity Policy (SIP) establishes clear expectations for ethical and responsible conduct in science. The policy applies to all AAFC employees and affiliates involved in the design, conduct, management, review or communication of scientific activities. It also applies to non AAFC individuals who use AAFC facilities or contribute to AAFC-led research, including contractors, students and visiting scientists.

The SIP is supported by the [Breach of Scientific Integrity Guidelines](#), which provide definitions, examples and procedures for reporting, reviewing and resolving alleged breaches of scientific integrity.

A breach of scientific integrity is defined as any behaviour that could reasonably be viewed as inconsistent with the principles outlined in Section 6 of the SIP, such as honesty, objectivity, transparency and accountability.

Examples of breaches may include, but are not limited to:

- fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation of research data or methods
- improper authorship practices or failure to appropriately acknowledge scientific contributions
- interference with the communication, dissemination or use of scientific findings
- misuse of scientific credentials, authority or influence
- non compliance with ethical, legal or policy requirements related to research conduct or scientific practice

Breaches of scientific integrity may vary in severity, ranging from unintentional errors to serious misconduct.

The Science Ethics Committee (SEC) supports the operational implementation of the SIP by providing advice on ethical issues, reviewing potential breaches and promoting a culture of scientific integrity. The SEC operates under the [Science Ethics Policy Framework](#) (SEPF), which defines its mandate and outlines procedures for addressing ethical concerns and formal allegations of scientific misconduct.

In partnership with the SEC, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) serves as AAFC's informal research ethics board and is responsible for reviewing all research protocols involving human participants or human-derived materials. HREC's work is guided by the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans - TCPS2](#).

When potential breaches arise, employees are encouraged to pursue informal resolution through dialogue or mediation, where appropriate. In cases where a formal allegation is submitted, the SEC conducts a preliminary review in accordance with the SIP and the SEPF. If a breach is substantiated, follow-up actions are determined based on the nature and severity of the breach and may include corrective measures or disciplinary action.

Where an allegation falls outside the scope of the SIP, the SEC refers the matter to the appropriate authority, such as the Values and Ethics Policy Centre, the Office of the Ombuds, or the Human Resources Branch.

For the 2025–26 fiscal year, the SEC received two allegations:

- **Non-compliance of scientific publication requirements and unauthorized use of animals:** Concerns were raised regarding non-compliance with AAFC's Policy on Science and Technology Publications (PSTP) related to the publication of scientific articles and book chapters. Additional concerns were raised regarding the unauthorized use of animals for research purposes. These concerns were reviewed in accordance with the SIP, which requires AAFC scientists to comply with the policies and guidelines set out in the PSTP. The review determined that the individual did not comply with these requirements. As these issues were part of a broader pattern of concern, the matter was referred to Human Resources.
 - Concerns related to the unauthorized use of animals fall outside the mandate of the SEC and was therefore transferred to the local Animal Care Committee and the Associate Director for appropriate follow up.
- **Potential non-compliance of HREC policies:** Concerns were raised regarding appropriate approvals for human research and the handling and storage of human data. These concerns were reviewed in accordance with AAFC's Human Research Ethics Policy Framework. The review found no evidence of non-compliance. However, staff were reminded of their responsibility to provide supervisory oversight of student-led work, including consistency in research materials, proper data storage practices and controlled access to research data in accordance with approved protocols. Individuals were also reminded to consult AAFCs HREC to determine whether proposed human research activities require formal ethics approval.

External investigations

Other Canadian entities also undertake their own investigations of federal organizations as part of their mandate. This section provides information regarding the types of investigations these organizations undertake, as well as a summary of any investigations completed concerning the alleged misconduct and wrongdoing of AAFC employees or vendors.

Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner

The Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada is an independent federal organization that was established to implement the [Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act](#).

The Office investigates wrongdoing in the federal public sector and helps protect whistleblowers, those who make a protected disclosure of wrongdoing, and those who participate in investigations from reprisal.

The Office contributes to strengthening accountability and increases oversight of government operations by:

- providing an independent and confidential process for receiving and investigating disclosures of wrongdoing in, or relating to, the federal public sector from public servants and members of the public
- reporting founded cases of wrongdoing to Parliament and making recommendations to chief executives on corrective measures

- providing a mechanism for handling complaints of reprisal from public servants and former public servants for the purpose of coming to a resolution, including through conciliation and by referring cases to the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, six inquiries were received related to AAFC employees. No investigations were initiated, as the inquiries did not meet the threshold under the *Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act* to proceed. At the close of the reporting period, one inquiry remained under review to determine whether it met the threshold for wrongdoing under the act.

Administrative investigations

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, four administrative investigations related to allegations involving AAFC employees were initiated. Of these:

- 2 investigations were completed and reports submitted to Labour Relations
- 1 investigation was completed and the final report was being prepared at the close of the reporting period
- 1 investigation was withdrawn after it was determined there was insufficient evidence to proceed

The completed investigations involved allegations related to:

- misuse of departmental resources for personal purposes, where most allegations were unfounded and one instance of minor personal use of departmental equipment was substantiated
- allegations involving unauthorized representation as an AAFC employee, participation in unapproved outside activities, acceptance of third-party funded travel without authorization, potential violations of the AAFC Policy on Values and Ethics, signing of a fraudulent invoice, misuse of departmental equipment for personal gain, and misuse of funds

An additional investigation was undertaken during the reporting period when it was reported that an employee had travelled with a Government of Canada IT device contrary to departmental policy. The investigation could not determine if this in fact occurred. The subject denied the allegation and reported it was an authentication application that caused the issue.

Security clearance activities

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, two Requests for Cause (RFCs) related to employee security screening were initiated.

One RFC involved allegations related to misuse of departmental resources and conduct demonstrating poor judgement or non-compliance with applicable laws, rules or policies. The RFC was cancelled following the termination of the employee prior to completion of the review process.

The second RFC involved allegations of behaviours inconsistent with the employer's core values, raising concerns related to honesty, integrity and trustworthiness. Following review, the allegations were founded and the employee's Reliability Status was revoked.

Canadian Human Rights Commission

Under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, an individual or group of individuals may submit a Canadian human rights complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) related to any action or decision for which they have reasonable grounds to believe resulted in the unfair or negative treatment of a person under the 13 prohibited grounds of discrimination, which are:

- race
- national or ethnic origin
- colour
- religion
- age
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender identity or expression
- marital status
- family status
- genetic characteristics
- disability
- conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered

The CHRC reviews discrimination complaints. It may gather information from the parties to decide whether to refer the complaint to the [Canadian Human Rights Tribunal](#) (CHRT) in order to establish if the complaint is compatible with the definition of discrimination. Further information on their review process can be found on the [CHRT](#) website.

The Labour Relations Centre of Expertise is responsible for coordinating the departmental response to the CHRC complaints against AAFC. In fiscal year 2024–2025, the CHRC accepted two complaints against AAFC for review. No decision from the CHRT related to AAFC was issued in fiscal year 2024–2025.

Public Service Commission

As part of its mandate to oversee the integrity of the staffing system and ensure the political impartiality of the federal public service, the Public Service Commission (PSC) investigates concerns related to specific appointment processes and allegations of improper political activities for organizations subject to the *Public Service Employment Act*.

The PSC completed two investigations related to the integrity of AAFC's staffing system during the 2025–2026 fiscal year; both of which were not founded.

No political activity investigations were conducted by the PSC during the 2025–2026 fiscal year related to AAFC employees.

Year-over-year comparison

Compared to 2024–2025, AAFC saw a small increase in harassment and violence cases, from 52 to 58. Advice and guidance remained the most used resolution approach and increased from 26 to 34 cases, while the number of investigations decreased from 13 to 9. Overall disciplinary cases declined from 51 to 39, with fewer cases related to AAFC's Values and Ethics Code, absenteeism and harassment. At the same time, terminations for cause increased from two to five, reflecting a higher number of cases that resulted in this disciplinary outcome. New disciplinary case categories also appeared in 2025–2026, including carelessness, fraud and theft. In the area of science integrity, two allegations were received in both reporting periods; however, while no breaches were substantiated in 2024–2025, one allegation in 2025–2026 resulted in a finding of non-compliance and was referred for further action. Overall, the data suggests a continued focus on resolving issues early through informal approaches, while addressing serious misconduct when it occurs.

Conclusion

The Addressing misconduct and wrongdoing at AAFC: third annual report marks another significant step in AAFC's ongoing commitment to fostering an ethical, transparent and accountable workplace. As the report continues to evolve, it provides a broader view of workplace integrity across the department, while reinforcing AAFC's commitment to thoroughly reviewing allegations of misconduct and wrongdoing and taking appropriate action when concerns are substantiated. By outlining the resources, support services and recourse options available, the report seeks to empower employees to uphold AAFC's Values and Ethics Code in their daily work. This commitment contributes to a healthier, more respectful, inclusive, fair and trustworthy workplace.

All employees are encouraged to take advantage of the wide range of training available to support a respectful and ethical workplace. These include sessions focused on values and ethics, conflict of interest, appropriate workplace behaviours and ethical leadership, all designed to promote respect, integrity and excellence across the department. In addition, mandatory training ensures that all employees are aware of their responsibilities and equipped with the knowledge needed to uphold departmental values and standards.

Furthermore, employees who suspect or witness potential misconduct are encouraged to report it to their supervisor or manager without delay.

About the numbers

- Investigations are reflected in the statistics based on the year the case was opened
- The information in this report complies with the [Privacy Act](#)
- At the time of data collection, AAFC had approximately 5,750 employees

Annex A — Definitions

Investigation: The gathering and analysis of information related to an incident of alleged misconduct.

Conflict of interest: A situation, whether real, apparent or potential, in which the person employed has private interests that could influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities or in which the person employed uses their office for personal gain.

Disciplinary process: A structured process following alleged misconduct intended to motivate the employee to accept and abide by the rules and standards of conduct that are desirable or necessary to achieve the organization's goals and objectives.

Discrimination: Any action or decision that results in the unfair or negative treatment of a person under any of the 13 prohibited grounds of discrimination, such as race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability and conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.

Grievance: A written complaint that may be filed by an individual on their own behalf, by a bargaining agent representative on behalf of a group of individuals or, in the case of a policy grievance, by a bargaining agent or an employer.

Misconduct: Any action whereby an individual willfully contravenes, notably, an act, a regulation, a rule, a departmental or Treasury Board policy instrument, an approved procedure, a departmental code of conduct, and/or the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. In short, when an employee contravenes any of the obligations they agree to abide by when becoming a public servant. Examples of misconduct may include absence from work without authorization, insubordination and tardiness.

Wrongdoing: The [Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act](#) (PSDPA) defines wrongdoing as one or more of the following:

- a. a contravention of any Act of Parliament or of the legislature of a province, or of any regulations made under any such Act, other than a contravention of section 19 of the PSDPA;
- b. [a misuse of public funds or a public asset \(PDF\)](#);
- c. [a gross mismanagement in the public sector \(PDF\)](#);
- d. an act or omission that creates a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons, or to the environment, other than a danger that is inherent in the performance of the duties or functions of a public servant;
- e. [a serious breach of a code of conduct \(PDF\)](#) established under section 5 or 6 of the PSDPA; and
- f. knowingly directing or counselling a person to commit a wrongdoing set out in any of paragraphs (a) to (e).

Annex B — AAFC employee resources for addressing misconduct and wrongdoing

All employees have the right, and the responsibility, to speak up when workplace issues occur.

Employees who have experienced, witnessed, or have been informed of an incident should: speak with:

- their manager if they feel comfortable doing so
- the Values and Ethics Policy Centre or the Office of the Ombuds as confidential safe spaces to raise concerns outside the formal reporting channels
- depending on the issue and the situation, contact Informal Conflict Management Services, a representative of one of AAFC's employee networks or speak to a union representative
- managers may contact their Labour Relations Advisor
- executive employees can also reach out to the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX)

The following AAFC teams can help with the initiation of informal and formal mechanisms, including investigations into misconduct and wrongdoing. Contact points vary depending on the issue at stake:

- Values and Ethics Policy Centre: provides advice and guidance to employees and managers on values and ethics, conflict of interest and other ethical matters.
- Informal Conflict Management Services: provides AAFC employees and managers with options to help prevent, manage and resolve workplace conflict.
- Harassment and Violence in the Workplace Prevention Program: helps employees and managers navigate services and processes to address harassment and workplace violence.
- Labour Relations: provides managers with interpretation and advice on collective agreements, updates on collective bargaining negotiations, exclusion of managerial positions and guidance for managers regarding strike situations..
- Office of the Ombuds: provides employees with an independent, informal, confidential, and impartial space to address workplace issues.
- Science Ethics Committee: provides advice on ethical topics related to science, reviews and investigates allegations of ethical misconduct in scientific practices and non-compliance with established ethical guidelines.
- Human Research Ethics Committee: examines all experimental protocols involving human participants, provides recommendations and grants approval for the studies.
- AI Centre of Excellence: establishes standards, guidelines, and procedures for the responsible and ethical use of AI and reviews and approves AI digital initiatives from an ethical perspective throughout the initiative's lifecycle.

- Office for Internal Disclosure: provides a forum for all employees to report and disclose wrongdoing in the workplace and ensures that employees are treated fairly and with respect and are protected from reprisal.