

Health, Safety and Well-being

Annual Report

A field of yellow daffodils with orange centers is shown in a close-up, slightly blurred perspective. A large, semi-transparent purple circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image, partially obscuring the flowers. The background is a bright, overcast sky.

2023

Message from the Executive Director

Health, Safety, Well-being & Labour Relations



In 2023, as our community emerged from the pandemic, we understood that our collective experience has forever changed the way we work. Hybrid work brought with it new considerations relating to physical and psychological health and safety, including ergonomics of workstations and the social health of employees and teams.

Along with this evolution of work, our community also experienced the excitement and uncertainty of new technology, continued to feel the impact of climate change, and endured the hurt and pain of world events. For the first time in our history, we issued air quality warnings and adjustments for outdoor workers due to smoke from wildfires. We supported safety planning and risk assessments for student group events held on topics that are emotionally charged and profoundly important. We launched mental health awareness training amidst national data showing that anxiety, isolation, and work productivity are persistent struggles for working Canadians. We introduced emergency preparedness to increase feelings of safety on our campus.

McMaster University remains deeply committed to the health, safety, belonging and well-being of its community, particularly in this rapidly changing world. Our health, safety, and well-being programming continues to evolve accordingly, to meet the needs of our growing population. In this report, you will read a reflection of metrics, trends, programs, and outcomes for 2023, and a preview of 2024 priorities.

The work reflected in this report is a tribute to the collaboration, dedication, and partnership of our leaders, campus partners, unions, and employees - all working together to protect the physical and psychological safety of the McMaster community.

We are grateful for this collaborative spirit and look forward to the year ahead!

Maggie Pooran, Executive Director
Health, Safety, Well-being & Labour Relations

Table of Contents:

Section 1:

Overview

Health, Safety, & Well-being Infrastructure	3
McMaster Community	4

Section 2:

2023 Programming and Achievements

Health, Safety, Well-being & Labour Relations Highlights.....	5
---	---

Section 3:

2023 Reporting

Hazard Identification.....	8
Incident/Injury	8
Health Screening and Medical Surveillance	9
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) Claims.....	10
Lost Time Injury Rate and No Lost Time Injury Frequency	10
WSIB Rate Framework.....	11
Medical Leaves for Non-Work-Related Reasons.....	11
Workplace Health and Well-being	13

Section 4:

Key Priorities for 2024

Key Priorities.....	15
Supplemental Information.....	15



Health, Safety & Well-being Infrastructure Overview

The Health, Safety, Well-being & Labour Relations portfolio in Human Resources Services, reporting to the Vice-President, Operations and Finance, is comprised of three centres of expertise that together *promote and contribute to a healthy, safe and inclusive community at McMaster University, in which every employee is accepted as a whole-person worthy of belonging, accountable to act in pursuit of institutional priorities, and supported in their overall well-being.*

This portfolio includes University Health and Safety (UHS), Employee/Labour Relations & Dispute Resolution, and Employee Health & Well-being.



The portfolio is one of many campus partners that collaborate to ensure the University is a healthy, inclusive and safe place to teach, learn and work. The chart below illustrates how key experts, campus offices and the community partner together in support of our collective commitment to health, safety & well-being.

Thank you to all of our partners, leaders, unions, and each and every employee for helping to keep our community healthy and safe.

University Community





Section 2

Achievements

Programming Highlights

The Health, Safety, Well-being & Labour Relations team manages numerous health, safety & well-being programs and activities across the institution in collaboration with community partners. This year, most programming returned to pre-pandemic levels. **The following were key programming areas of focus and achievement in 2023:**

Psychological Health & Safety

- A psychological health and safety website was launched in July 2023, with tools and resources to support employees and managers in the workplace. Topics include psychological health and safety, workload management, role clarity, delegation, building capacity, meetings, balance, and technology.
- Guidance and resources to foster a psychologically safe and trusting work environment, strategies to create psychologically safe teams, and learning opportunities are all available on the website.
- A new Wellness Ambassador program launched, introducing a network of more than 20 trained Wellness Ambassadors across the University, embedded in Faculties and Departments. Wellness Ambassadors serve as advocates for well-being, sharing ideas, current resources and initiating area-specific programs tailored to the needs of their colleagues.

The Working Mind Training Program

- The Working Mind program, developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, is evidence-based and aims to promote mental health while reducing stigma surrounding mental illness in the workplace.
- In 2022-2023, the University invested in training and supporting 25 employees in achieving certification to facilitate The Working Mind training for our community. In 2023, more than 200 McMaster leaders participated in the Working Mind Program.
- The implementation and expansion of The Working Mind program at McMaster University reflect the institution's commitment to prioritizing mental well-being in the workplace.

Health & Safety Training and Job Hazard Analysis Projects

- The health and safety training revitalization project progressed to launch the first updated training module in Fall of 2023 – S.A.F.E. The S.A.F.E. training combined the previous modules of Slips, Trips & Falls, Asbestos Awareness, Fire Safety & Ergonomics into one, updated and refreshed training program.
- Exploration of a Job Hazard Analysis solution continued, with a focus on automation and integration with training enrolment.

Incident Reporting and Response Review

- McMaster University is committed to providing and maintaining healthy and safe working and learning environments for all our employees, students, volunteers and visitors.
- To strengthen this commitment, McMaster invited all faculty and staff to participate in an anonymous survey regarding their experiences with the workplace incident reporting process.
- An external review of the university injury & incident reporting process was completed by an external consultant in 2023 and the university is reviewing the findings of the report.
- An external review of the university injury & incident reporting process was completed by an external consultant in 2023.

Violence in the Workplace Policy and Program Review

- The McMaster Violence in the Workplace Policy was reviewed for compliance in December 2023 as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act annual legislative review requirement.
- University Health and Safety, Campus Safety Services, Student Case Management and the Equity & Inclusion Office partnered on specialized training delivery for Faculties and departments to increase awareness of campus safety infrastructure, supports, and resources.
- Emergency guidance documents and training materials were prepared for instructors, Teaching Assistants, and presenters, and launched in Fall 2023 to increase awareness and emergency preparedness.

Student Event Risk Management

- McMaster University and the McMaster Students Union collectively support 300+ recognized student groups across the university. Student group activity is a fundamental component of the student experience at McMaster. Every activity conducted by a recognized student group is submitted through a formal risk management approval process.
- The University takes great measures to support these student group events and protect the safety of the McMaster community, while balancing the principles of freedom of expression.
- Since October 7, 2023, with the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine, there was a significant increase in student group activity which resulted in an increased need for risk management planning by the various consultation groups noted above. In the Fall of 2023, the university took great measures to support these student groups and the principles of freedom of expression of which university campuses are built upon.

HECHMET (Chemical Inventory Program)

- A thorough auditing process was initiated to validate the chemical inventory program which resulted in a year over year increase of chemicals consumed/disposed of from 1272 in 2022 to 12,110 in 2023. This continuous auditing process will ensure as best as possible the accuracy of the inventory going forward.

Section **3**

2023 metrics

41,110

Health and Safety Training Sessions

192

Joint Health & Safety Committee (JHSC) meetings held across 28 JHSC's

500+

Employees honoured through Awards & Recognition programs

326

Short Term Disability and **41** Long Term Disability claims actively managed in 2023

25 employees certified to deliver **The Working Mind Training;**

200+

leaders completed the training

HECHMET Chemical Inventory System:

10,000 chemicals added by Central Receiving, **12,110** chemicals consumed/disposed

375

Injury Reports for a population of **50,000+ visitors**

125

Formal Workplace Accommodations
Approximately **30%** of those were related to cognitive limitations and restrictions

Audiograms (Hearing Testing): **103 tests completed** in 2023.
41% increase in participation in **audiogram testing**

375

attended the McMaster University **Children's Party**

Total Number of **Water Samples** Collected:

260

Total **Lab Audits:**

361

This includes physical, laser, Designated Substances and inspections

Total Number of **Ergonomic Assessments:**

65

112 Hazard Identification Reports were filed in 2023

In 2023, 112 incident reports were received where no injury occurred, an increase of over 30% from 2022. This increase in hazard reporting continues to show a positive culture of incident reporting and is comparable to pre-pandemic levels (2019). Through early identification and community reporting, hazards can be proactively addressed before they lead to an injury.

Incident/Injury Reporting

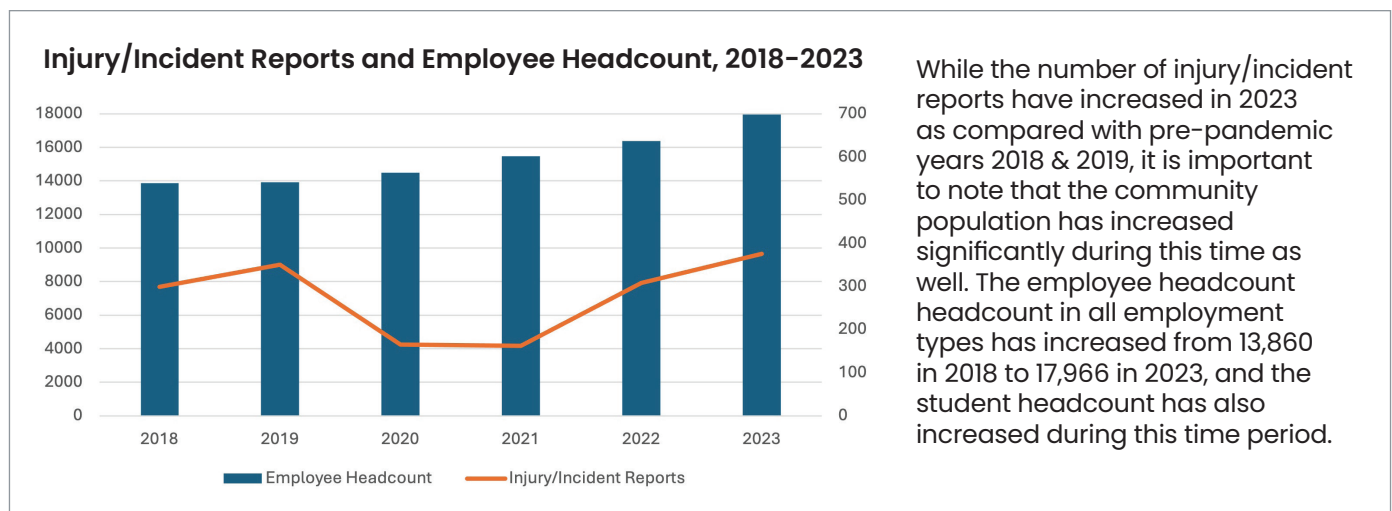
This chart outlines all incident types reported to University Health and Safety and the Faculty of Health Sciences Safety Office by category at McMaster between 2018–2023. **This data includes staff, faculty, students, volunteers and visitors.**

Type of Injury	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Abrasion/Contusion	63	55	35	28	61	50
Allergic Reaction	4	8	4	1	1	6
Burn	29	16	6	13	30	19
Cuts & Lacerations	55	69	38	29	68	128
Fracture	7	12	2	4	4	7
Irritation (epidermis, eyes, ears)	3	32	11	15	13	18
Medical Symptoms (faint, fatigue, head, thoracic, abdominal, insect etc.)	26	28	16	14	35	44
Psychological Health and Safety	–	–	–	–	14	16
Puncture	17	20	14	12	23	22
Sprain/Strain	95	110	39	46	59	65
Total Incidents	299	350	165	162	308	375

– Data was not available prior to 2022

The McMaster University employee of all employment types was 17,966 in 2023. The total number of incidents leading to injuries reported by employees in 2023 was 256, which is 1.4% of the total employee population and 68% of the total injuries reported in 2023.

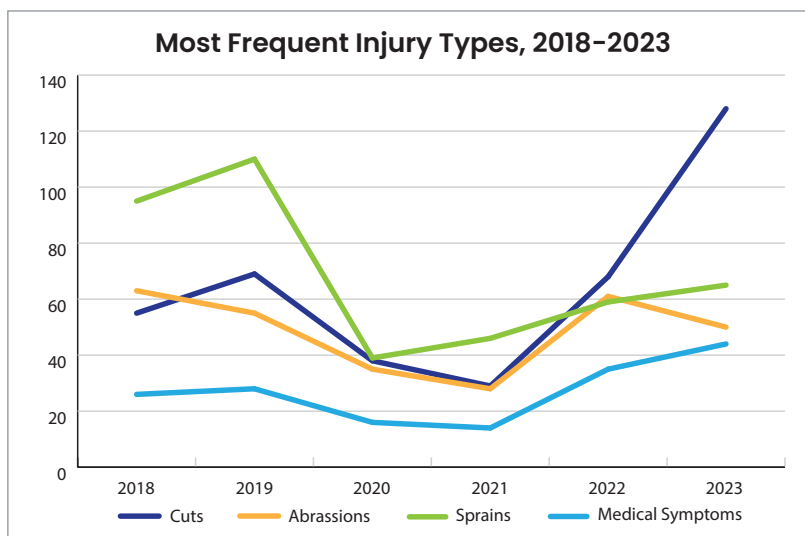
Injury Reports Total: Employee – **256**, Student – **103**, Visitor/Volunteer/Contractor – **16**



This chart shows the trends from 2018–2023 for the most frequent injury types at McMaster University.

The decreasing trend in ‘Sprains/Strains’ and ‘Abrasions/Contusions’ over the reporting period may be indicative of positive outcomes from prevention programming:

- In 2022–2023, the University coordinated a collaborative campus-wide slips/trips falls audit to identify areas for priority repair.
- In Fall of 2023, a winter slip/fall education campaign was launched, targeting prevention of snow and ice related falls.
- The launch of the new S.A.F.E. training module in Fall 2023, which includes refreshed material on slips, trips, and falls, as well as ergonomics.



The increased number of cuts/lacerations in 2023 was the result of specific project work completed by students in the School of the Arts during the Fall term. In response to those injuries, cut resistant gloves have been introduced and will be mandatory beginning Fall 2024.

Injuries relating to medical symptoms appear to be trending upwards over the reporting period. Generally, the University has observed an increase in issues relating to scent, allergic reactions, insect bites, and individuals generally feeling unwell. We will continue to monitor this trend.

Health screening programs include:

Tuberculosis Screening, Biosafety, Vaccinations, Pre-Placement Medical

Tuberculosis screening is required for certain instructors – including a baseline and negative Tuberculosis Skin Test (TST) or appropriate follow up if they have tested positive. The University has developed a process to ensure appropriate screening has been completed. To date 45 instructors have been part of this program.

BioSafety medical surveillance is a collaboration between the Employee Health & Well-being and BioSafety Office. Employees are provided health screening and ongoing medical surveillance related to the specific pathogens encountered in their laboratory work. Medical history is reviewed annually and any risks, accommodations or referrals are provided confidentially to each employee.

Certain **vaccinations** are required for some employees based on exposure risk. Following vaccination, in some cases regular titres are recommended to monitor for continued immunity. 26 employees have participated in the program to date.

Third party **pre-placement medicals** are completed for certain employees based on job requirements with 52 completed in 2023. These assessments consist of a general health questionnaire, physical assessment and provide baseline hearing and vision testing, and help identify any accommodations that may be required.

Medical Surveillance includes:

Audiograms and Pulmonary Function Testing

Hearing testing is offered annually for those working in high noise areas. These tests are done on an annual basis to detect changes in hearing. Personal follow-up completed for all participants where noise induced hearing loss was identified and employees were given the opportunity to identify risk and prevent any further occupationally related noise induced hearing loss.

The University offers **pulmonary function testing** annually for a small number of employees who worked with level 2 & 3 asbestos abatements prior to 1999. These tests are done on an annual basis to detect changes in pulmonary function as early as possible.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) Claims

In 2023, 77 workplace incidents were reported to the WSIB. Through the WSIB adjudication process, 56 of those claims were approved and McMaster employees received health care and/or loss of earnings benefits. The chart below shows the lost time incurred over a six-year period, 2018-2023, which is used to assess our experience and calculate WSIB premiums. The data shows that, despite the growth in employee population, the number of WSIB claims remains significantly lower than it was in pre-pandemic years 2018 & 2019. WSIB claims in 2023 are 37.4% lower than they were in 2018 and 42.5% lower than they were in 2019. *The data reported will fluctuate from year to year, as they reflect changes that occur as a file is managed. For example: appeals, late reporting, and ongoing accrual of lost time will impact the total numbers reported annually.*

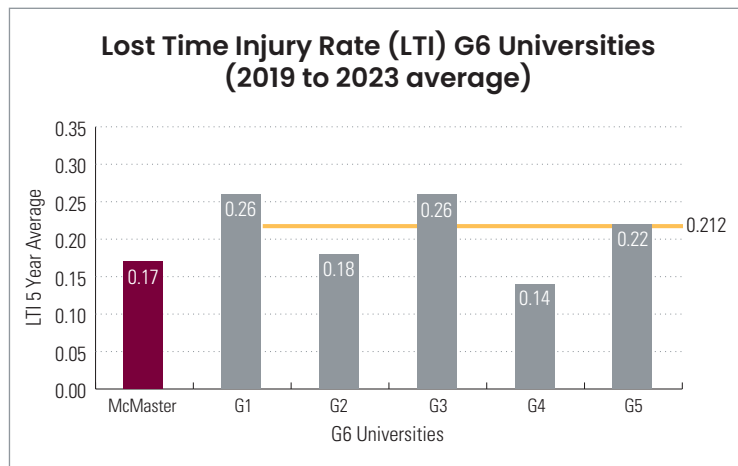
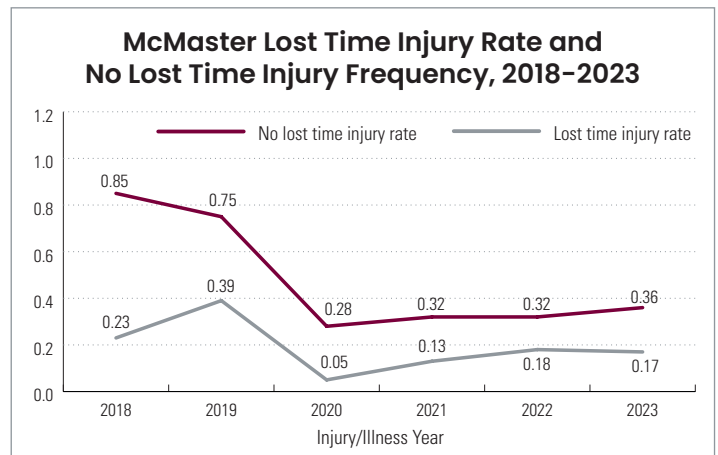
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Claims Reported to WSIB	123	134	42	66	71	77
Approved No Lost Time Injuries	72	69	30	29	34	37
Approved Lost Time Injuries	20	35	4	13	20	19
Lost Time Days	299	862	44	115	438	143
Average Lost Time Duration	14.95	24.6	11	8.8	21.9	7.5

19 cases (7.4% of all employee incidents reported) resulted in an approved WSIB Lost Time claim in 2023.

Lost Time Injury Rate and No Lost Time Injury Frequency: Occupational Injuries (WSIB)

The Lost Time Injury Rate (LTIR) and No Lost Time Injury (NLTI) Frequency measure an organization's safety performance. These rates represent the number of injuries within a calendar year that have resulted in time lost from work, and those that did not result in time lost from work, relative to the total number of hours worked in that year.

The data shows that both McMaster's Lost Time Injury Rate and No Lost Time Injury Frequency have been trending downward. These low injury rates are a testament to the successful safety programming, early and safe return to work initiatives, and the collaborative approach taken across the University.



McMaster's 5-year average Lost Time Injury Rate decreased by 15% in the period 2019-2023 (to .17) as compared to the period 2018-2022 (.20).

This graph illustrates the Lost Time Injury Frequency of McMaster University compared with the other G6 universities (our peer universities in Ontario, who are also members of the U15, which is an association of 15 Canadian public research universities).

McMaster's Lost Time Injury Frequency is **19.8% below the average** of our G6 university comparators

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) Rate Framework

The average premium rate for Ontario businesses remains steady at \$1.30 per \$100 of insurance payroll. WSIB reports the premium rates are the lowest they have been in 20 years.

The education sector class rate falls well below the average at \$0.38, even though it is up from \$0.34 in 2022. **McMaster's WSIB Rate in 2022 was \$0.23 and in 2023 was \$0.25.**

These lower rates reflect that our Lost Time and No Lost Time claim history is better than the sector average over the last 3 years. Based on Claims history and insurable earnings, our **2024 rate is \$0.29.**

McMaster's 2023 WSIB rate was **34% lower than** the WSIB rate for the education sector

Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) Excellence Program

In order to qualify for WSIB premium discounts, an institution must create new health and safety programming and have this assessed through the WSIB Excellence Program, which recognizes excellence in an organization's health and safety management system. A maximum of five programs may be created a year. The size of the potential premium discount varies, to a maximum of \$50,000 (or up to 100 per cent of the amount a business paid for their prior year's WSIB premiums).

Working collaboratively with our safety association sponsor for this program (Public Services Health and Safety Association, "PSHSA"), McMaster was successful in its 2023 submission on the topics of:

- Control of Hazards – Musculoskeletal Disorders
- Control of Hazards – Slips, Trips and Falls First Aid

The University received a WSIB rebate of \$50,2368.03 for its 2023 submission. This rebate, along with the \$46,571.18 rebate received in 2022, has been reinvested into health, safety & well-being program development.

The University will continue to work collaboratively with PSHSA to prepare submission for the next 3 topics:

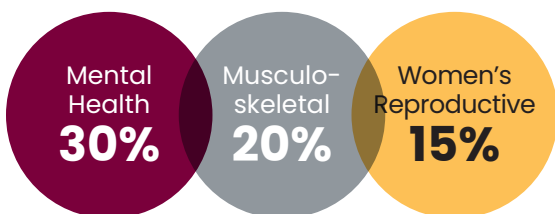
- Control of Hazards – Moving Vehicles
- Control of Hazards – Noise Control
- Control of Hazards – Violence and Harassment in the Workplace

McMaster received a WSIB Excellence Program **rebate in the amount of \$50,238.03**, in 2023, which it reinvested in Health, Safety & Well-being programming.

Medical Leaves for Non-Work-Related Reasons (Non-Occupational)

McMaster University leaders take a compassionate, supportive approach towards employees requiring medical leave related to non-occupational disability. Leaders explore the possibility for workplace accommodation based on an employee's limitations and restrictions.

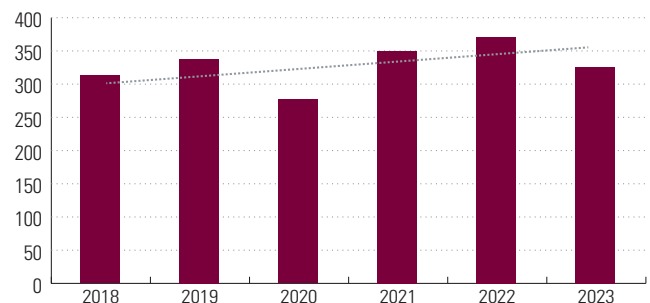
Primary Reasons for Short Term Disability Leaves 2023



These statistics represent an approximate percentage of the primary reasons for short term medical leaves at McMaster University, given the data is tracked manually. The frequency of these primary reasons has remained steady year over year, 2022-2023.

Short Term Disability Claims 2018-2023

Cases managed by Employee Health & Well-being



This graph outlines the total amount of Short Term Disability Claims managed by Employee Health & Well-being from 2018-2023.

The number of Short Term Disability Claims **decreased by 12%** in 2023, as compared with 2022.

While we saw a **132% growth** in approved LTD Mental Health Claims between 2019–2022, we saw a **50% decline** in such claims between 2022–2023.

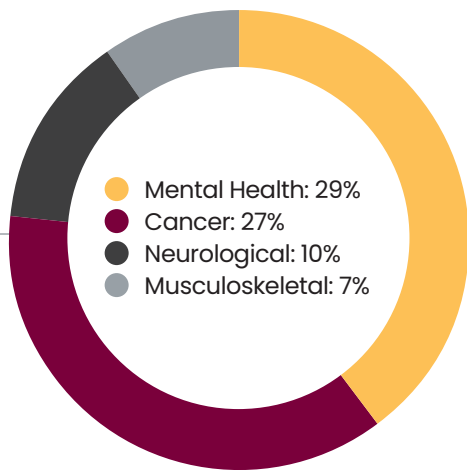
This decline in Approved LTD Mental Health Claims from 2022–2023 is significant and may be an indication that the University’s investment in psychological health and safety programming is having a positive impact for our employees. We will continue to monitor this trend.

The Employee Health and Well-being team focuses on supporting employees to participate in the workplace to the fullest extent of their abilities. From 2021–2023, **75% of all medical leaves returned to work within the short term disability period.**

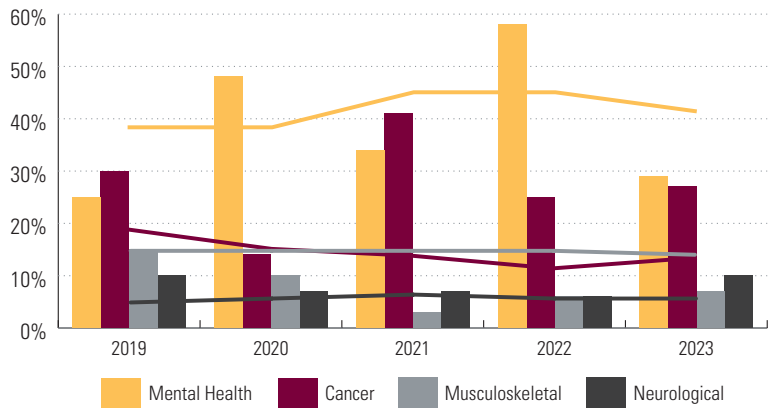
Although we have seen the number of the Short Term Disability leaves decrease, we continue to see an increase in approved Long Term Disability (LTD) claims. The primary reasons for approved LTD claims differ somewhat from our Short Term Disability leaves.

This graph below shows the primary reasons for Long Term Disability Claims as a percentage.

Primary Reasons for Long Term Disability Leaves 2023



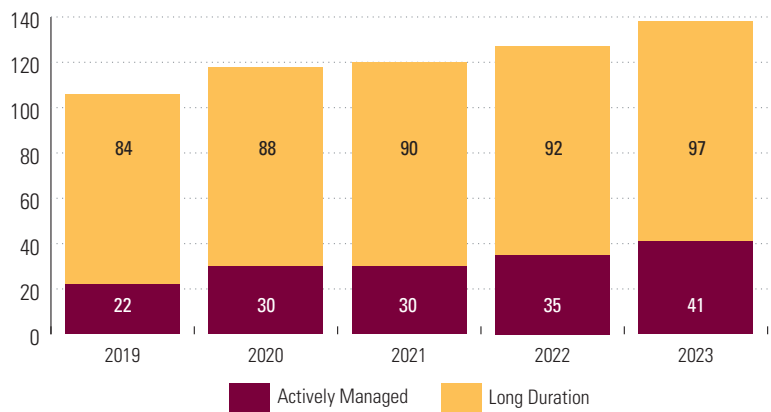
Primary Reasons for Long Term Disability Claims (2019 to 2023) McMaster Claims and Benchmark Data



** Lines represent benchmark values for Sun Life book of business in like industry.*

The following chart illustrates a 30% growth in the total number of approved LTD claims, and a 86% growth in actively managed approved LTD claims, between 2019 and 2023. Actively managed claims increased by 17% in 2023, as compared with 2022.

Total Long Term Disability Claims (2019 to 2023)



Workplace Health and Well-being

Creating a workplace culture that prioritizes mental well-being is essential for fostering a healthy and productive work environment. When employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to be engaged and productive. Additionally, a supportive culture can help reduce disability stigma, increase engagement, and enhance overall satisfaction among employees.

In 2023, McMaster University focused on offering programs that addressed **physical, mental, social, and financial** well-being. These programs were designed to engage the community in well-being strategies and contribute to a culture of equity, inclusion, diversity, and belonging.

The Working Mind Program

The Working Mind (TWM) program was rolled out in 2022 and continued to expand in 2023. TWM consists of three modules: Mental Health and Stigma, Mental Health in the Workplace, and Stress and Resilience. Additionally, a fourth module tailored for leaders focuses on how to support their team's mental well-being effectively. This training was implemented in partnership with the McMaster Okanagan Office of Health & Well-being, in response to recommendations by the McMaster Okanagan Mental Health Task Force (2021).

Wellness Ambassador Program

At McMaster University, fostering a culture of well-being is a shared responsibility among all employees, who are regarded as leaders in promoting a healthy work environment. Recognizing the importance of engaging the entire community in well-being initiatives. In 2023, McMaster launched a program to establish a network of over **20** Wellness Ambassadors, embedded in Faculties and Departments across the University.

The goal of the Wellness Ambassador empower employees to take an active role in promoting well-being within their teams and departments. Through the collaborative efforts of Wellness Ambassadors, McMaster continues to foster a workplace where well-being is prioritized, and employees feel supported in their personal and professional growth.

Launch of new Partnership with TELUS Health

Telus Health, McMaster's new provider of its Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), provides easier access to mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing supports than ever before. Telus Health is Canada's most expansive clinical network: those who need support or resources can access them through phone, in-person visits, video, or an online chat feature and self-guided learning. The Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) enables that eligible employees and their dependents to access confidential counselling and resources on a 24/7/365 basis, at no cost to the employee.

Counselling support is available for topics including, but not limited to:

- Stress & Life Management
- Depression, Anxiety, Grief, Loss, Anger & Violence
- Career Support & Resiliency Coaching
- Lifestyle Planning
- Substance Abuse, Addictions, Smoking Cessation
- Relationships, Life Changes, Family Matters, Parenting
- Personal Traumatic Events



Physical

- **Employee Wellness Week** in collaboration with Athletics and Recreation, offering physical recreation classes free to employees
- **Pulse at Pace program**, is a free gym program to McMaster employees, leveraging the **Physical Activity Centre for Excellence** during down times, in partnership with Athletics and Kinesiology
- **Mac Moves initiative**, a campus wide initiative to promote physical well-being, in collaboration with the McMaster Okanagan Office of Health & Well-being
- In-person and **virtual Fall Yoga Series** for McMaster employees
- In collaboration with **Healthy Workplace Committee**, monthly themed events
- Reviewed and refreshed the **Tobacco and Smoke-Free University** Policy



Mental

- 25 facilitators trained and deliver 13 sessions of **The Working Mind** to more than 200 leaders and employees
- Delivered **custom well-being coaching** solutions to faculties and departments
- A community of 20 embedded well-being champions through the launch of the **Wellness Ambassador Program**
- Development and implementation of the **Psychological Health & Safety** website and resources
- **Mental Health Awareness Week** programming
- **Thrive Week initiative**, in collaboration with the McMaster Okanagan Office of Health & Well-being, a campus wide initiative that focuses on **Mental Health & Wellbeing**
- **Inclusive Excellence Leadership Program and Belonging Sessions** for the McMaster community
- **Alternative Dispute Resolution** training for faculty members and administrators



Social

- **Service Awards** and the **President's Awards for Outstanding Service**
- **Inspiring from Within** conference for McMaster employees, **Take our Kids to Work Day**, and the **McMaster Children's party**
- **United Way Committee and Campaign**, engaging 244 donors, who contributed **\$250,000** to the United Way Hamilton & Halton, supporting the health & well-being of communities.
- The **Community Engagement Champions Committee** raised over **\$14,000** through fundraising events for the campaign.
- McMaster University received the **Joint Union-Management Award** at the 2023 United Way Evening of Celebration



Financial

- **Retirement planning** for over 100 employees
- **Healthy Workplace Committee**, launched monthly themed events including focusing on **Financial Literacy Month**
- **Employee Discount Program**, through a partnership with Venngo, McMaster is pleased to offer all employees (and their extended families – children, parents, grandparents, siblings, etc.) and retirees an employee discount program

Section 4

Key Priorities for 2024

Health, Safety, and Well-being remains a priority focus for the University.

In the 2024 calendar year, we will continue to advance:

- Psychological Health & Safety Infrastructure
- The Working Mind and the Wellness Ambassador Programs
- Incident Reporting and Response Improvements
- Health and Safety Training and Job Hazard Analysis
- Student Event Risk Management
- Violence in the Workplace Program
- International Travel Policy and Program
- Process Improvement Implementation

Supplemental Information

Additional University program information is available on all of the below topics on the **Health, Safety, & Well-being website**.

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. Health and Safety Training | L. Researcher/Fieldwork |
| B. Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSCs) | M. Occupational Hygiene |
| C. Workplace Safety and Insurance Board | N. Higher Education Cooperative for Hazardous Materials and Equipment Tracking system (HECHMET) |
| D. Ergonomics Safety Program | O. Chemical and Biological Hazardous Waste Use |
| E. Workplace Health Promotion | P. Violence Risk |
| F. Employee and Family Assistance Program | Q. Employee Recognition Programs |
| G. Fire Prevention | R. Workplace Well-being Committees |
| I. Mental Health Initiatives | S. Employee Engagement Initiatives |
| J. Student Event Risk Management | |
| K. Student Placements | |