
Survey Report



Analysis of 2023 MQPL Survey Comments

**Top issues reported by
respondents at Graham
Correctional Center**

Graham Correctional Center

Graham Correctional Center (Graham) is a medium-security male prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that housed 1,311 people on March 27, 2023. Graham also operates the Central Reception & Classification Center (R&C or “X-house”), which housed approximately an additional 320 people. The John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA) conducted a modified short [Measuring the Quality of Prison Life](#) (MQPL) survey by providing enough survey packets (consisting of the [MQPL survey](#), an informed consent notice/instruction sheet, and a privileged mail prepaid business reply envelope addressed to JHA) so that every person incarcerated at Graham, other than those housed in reception, would have an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. In total, JHA received 471 responses to the MQPL survey from people at Graham through July 19, 2023, representing approximately 36% of the static population, excluding R&C. Some survey responses suggest that some individuals in reception did take the survey, however.

This report highlights some of the most common issues raised in response to our MQPL survey question **"What are the most negative things about life in this prison?"** We selected this question to analyze because it is where most survey respondents chose to report the issues that they were experiencing while incarcerated. All survey comments for Graham can be found in our [2023 MQPL Survey Comments report](#). Quantitative survey results for Graham can be found in our [2023 MQPL Survey Results](#) report.

Methodology

To identify the most common issues, we identified the most common words people used in response to the question "What are the most negative things about life in this prison?" For the Top Ten Words, all instances of each word and its plural form were counted (e.g., "program" and "programs.") Hyphenated words were counted as one word. Words like "the" and "not" were filtered from the analysis. Then, indicator words were counted under seven issue categories to determine top issues in each facility's survey responses. When an indicator word appeared within a longer word, the longer word was included. For example: the indicator word, "medic," picked up both "medical" and "medication." Prior to the issue analysis, the language in each report was standardized so that indicator words consistently appeared in a form that would be picked up by our software (e.g. "CO" was changed to "C/O," "good time" was changed to "good-time"). The indicator words by issue can be found [here](#).

To avoid double-counting issues, issue categories were only counted once per response. This means that the response "the cells are cold and dirty" would count as raising only one issue related to conditions, even though two indicator words ("cold" and "dirty") are used in the response.

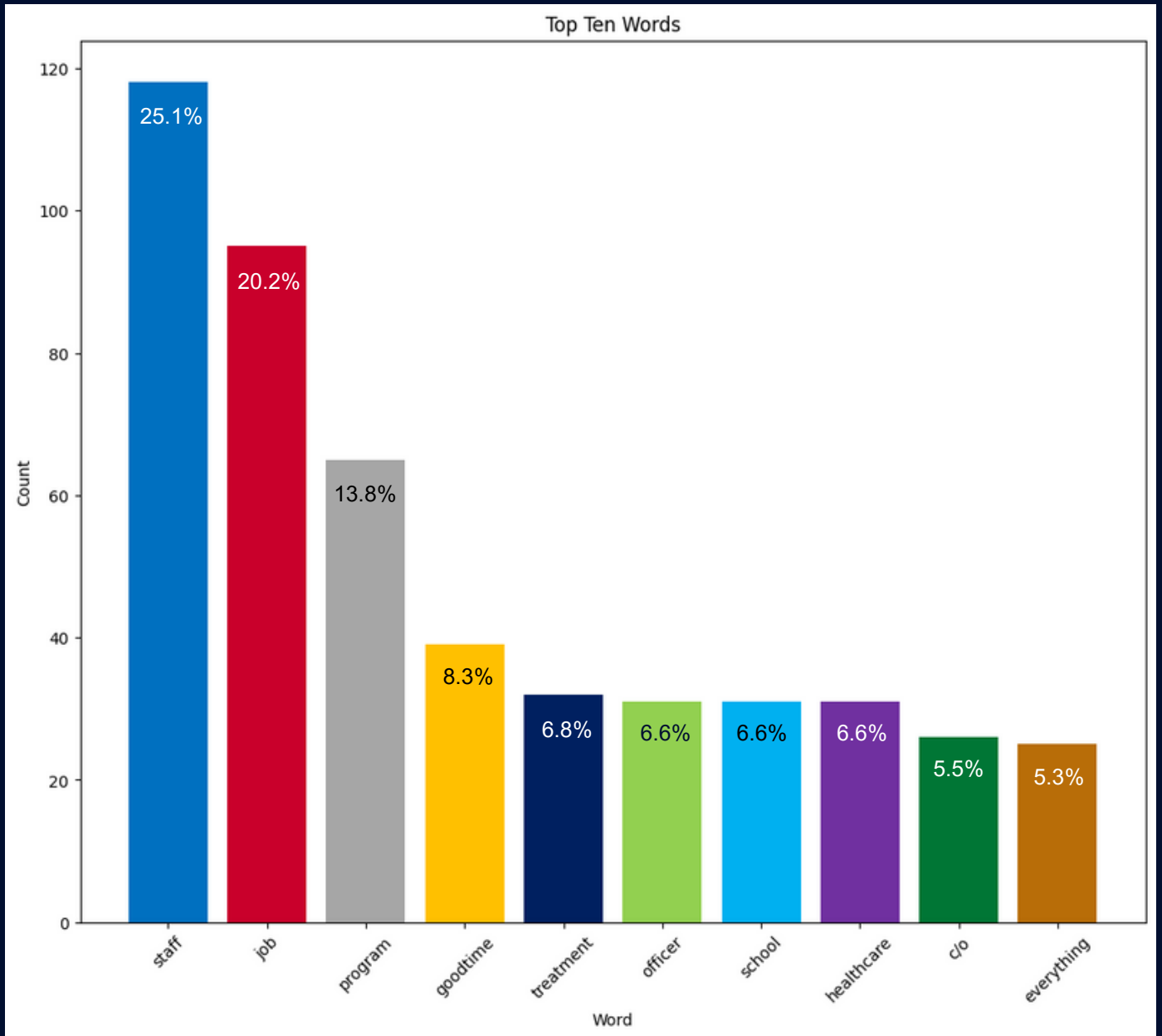
There are limitations with this method, such as sentiment analysis. For example we are unable to distinguish statements such as "The doctor is good" and "I haven't seen a doctor." However, it is reasonable to conclude that instances of "doctor" are in a negative context in response to the question. Additionally, some indicator words that were frequently applied to multiple issue categories were removed. For example, we did not include "job" under productive activity because we could not distinguish statements relevant to the issue area, like "I can't get a job," from statements relevant to other issue areas, like "Staff don't do their jobs." Nor did we include "cell" under movement, e.g. "I am in my cell 24/7," because we could not distinguish from "School is always cancelled" or "The cells are too small" under this method of counting.

This report includes quotes from survey responses that we found to be either representative of the diversity of issues raised for each category or particularly insightful. Some quotes have been abbreviated to highlight the relevant issue.

Top 10 Indicator Words

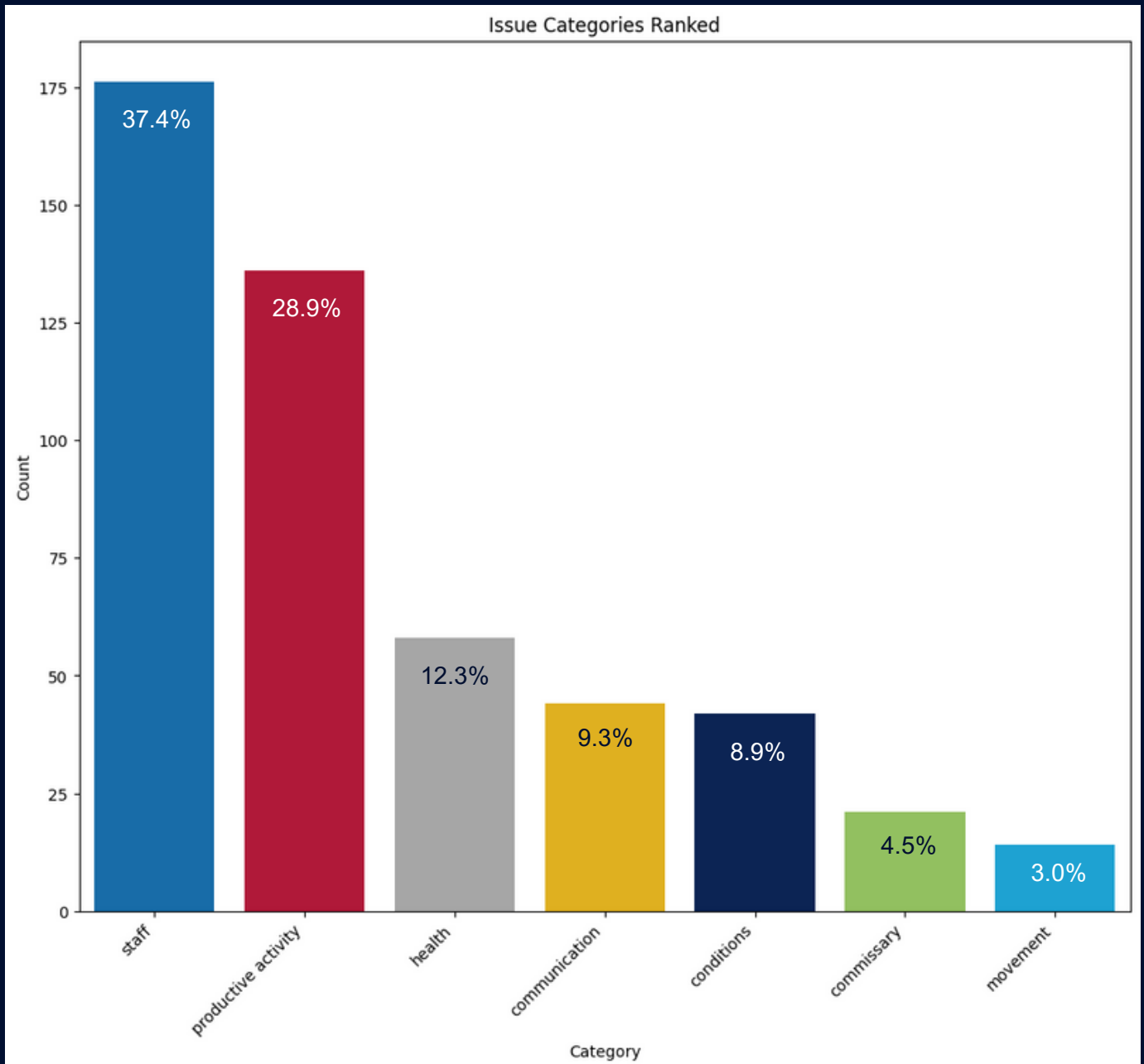
Used in responses to "What are the most negative things about life in this prison?"

Percentages are of the survey responses in which the word appeared.



Issue Categories Ranked by Prevalence

Issue rankings are determined by indicator word frequency. Common words used in survey responses have been sorted into seven issue categories. When a survey response uses one of a category's indicator words, it is tallied as raising an issue in that category. For example, a survey with the words "medical," "nurse," or "infection" is tallied as raising an issue related to health. Survey responses may include more than one issue. Percentages are of the survey responses in which an issue was raised.



Selected direct quotes from Graham survey responses

1

STAFF

Encompasses issues related to prison staff, such as lack of staff or staff conduct.

The way the Staff treats you. They do nothing for you. Especially if you have a sex case. They talk to you real bad and nasty and disrespectful.

Some of the staff look to cause problems to they can have a excuse to rough up or mace inmate's.

Staff is very confrontational and vindictive towards individuals in custody, thus fueling the "us against them" mentality.

All staffing is focused on security and never allocated to programming. Every inmate service has no staff. No chaplin, no barber, no librarian.

The Racism, of how white Guards show Favoritism to white inmates

2

PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

Includes issues related to productive activities, such as work assignments, education, or programming.

This prison and its programs only benefit inmates with short time and white inmates get the best jobs

if you are a sex offender you cannot work any job except dietary. No Industry here will let SO's work there. How can I better myself if I am not given a chance.

There are Not alot of programs to Earn good-time And there are no College Classes offered

jobs and school is impossible to get unless you're short time or snitching for IA.

No help for people with domestics. No treatment help with drugs.

3

HEALTH

includes issues related to healthcare, mental health services, and COVID-19 concerns.

Healthcare is a big disappointment. There is too many people here that need mental health and too few mental health professionals.

Bad health care I havent seen a Doctor over 5 mos and I went to outside hospital.

If you get hurt or have health issues, nothing really gets done and your treated as if your faking it. Ive had back issues and was treated inhumanely and they caused more pain than anything and never helped the issue and staff talk and treat you like your worse than trash.

lack of health care treatment, no real mental health outside of pills

Mental health staff do not answer requests or address concerns.

4

COMMUNICATION

Includes issues related to phone availability, visitation, mail, and other means of communication.

Certain inmates are running/bullying the phones. That is a huge problem here at Graham CC

They need to help us contact our family and friends more. And stop being so strict on visit rules, and punishment from phones.

The phone system is poor. they should have phones one tablets so that no fights are broken out.

Emails take a week to process they discourage visitation.

There are 4 phones for 50 people which causes many arguments and fights.

5

CONDITIONS

Encompasses issues related to living conditions, such as food, water, temperature, and sanitation.

no AC during the BRUTAL summers; we've been with some kind of contaminated water for months

No adequate hot water and clean water.

This prison doesn't give enough dietary foods to incarcerated people... Very small portion of foods... The barbershop isn't in operation anymore... ..

Showers cold, Plumbing falling apart

The heat in my room doesn't work.
Roach infested cellhouse.

6

COMMISSARY

Encompasses issues such as frequency of shopping opportunity and item availability.

Commissary in this Graham CC is way overpriced, they are stealing money from us.

they Don't have healthy options on commissary

The commissary could be better Due to Illinois PRYINS they're vendors

The list of Items at store is very limited

trying to live of \$13 a month with such High store prices

Gym is overcrowded.

locked up in cell to much

That people with sex cases are treated so bad. I understand it is a terrible crime, but people make mistakes and shouldn't be judged for them. They are stuck in the housing units cause they are in fear they will be hurt if they go to yard/gym.

Locked up 23 1/2 hrs a day.

always locked Down in Receiving were Im at



This report was compiled by JHA staff. Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz at jvollen@thejha.org or 312-291-9183.

Incarcerated individuals can send privileged mail to report concerns and issues to the John Howard Association, P.O. Box 10042, Chicago, IL 60610-0042. JHA staff read every letter and track this information to monitor what is occurring behind prison walls and to advocate for humane policies and practices. Family and friends can contact JHA via our website www.thejha.org or by leaving us a voicemail at (312) 291-9183.

Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois' juvenile and adult correctional facilities. Every year, JHA staff and trained volunteers inspect prisons, jails, and detention centers throughout the state. Based on these inspections, JHA regularly issues reports that are instrumental in improving prison conditions. JHA humbly thanks everyone who graciously shared their experiences and insights with us.



Defying Injustice. Defending Humanity.