
Survey Report



Analysis of 2023 MQPL Survey Comments

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

Pinckneyville Correctional Center

Pinckneyville Correctional Center is a medium-security male prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that housed 1,916 people on January 3, 2023. 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 Pinckneyville had an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. JHA received 612 responses to the MQPL survey from people at Pinckneyville through July 1, 2023, representing approximately 32% of the static population. JHA visited Pinckneyville in May 2023.

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 Pinckneyville can be found in our [2023 MQPL Survey Comments](#) report. Quantitative survey results can be found in our [Pinckneyville 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](#).

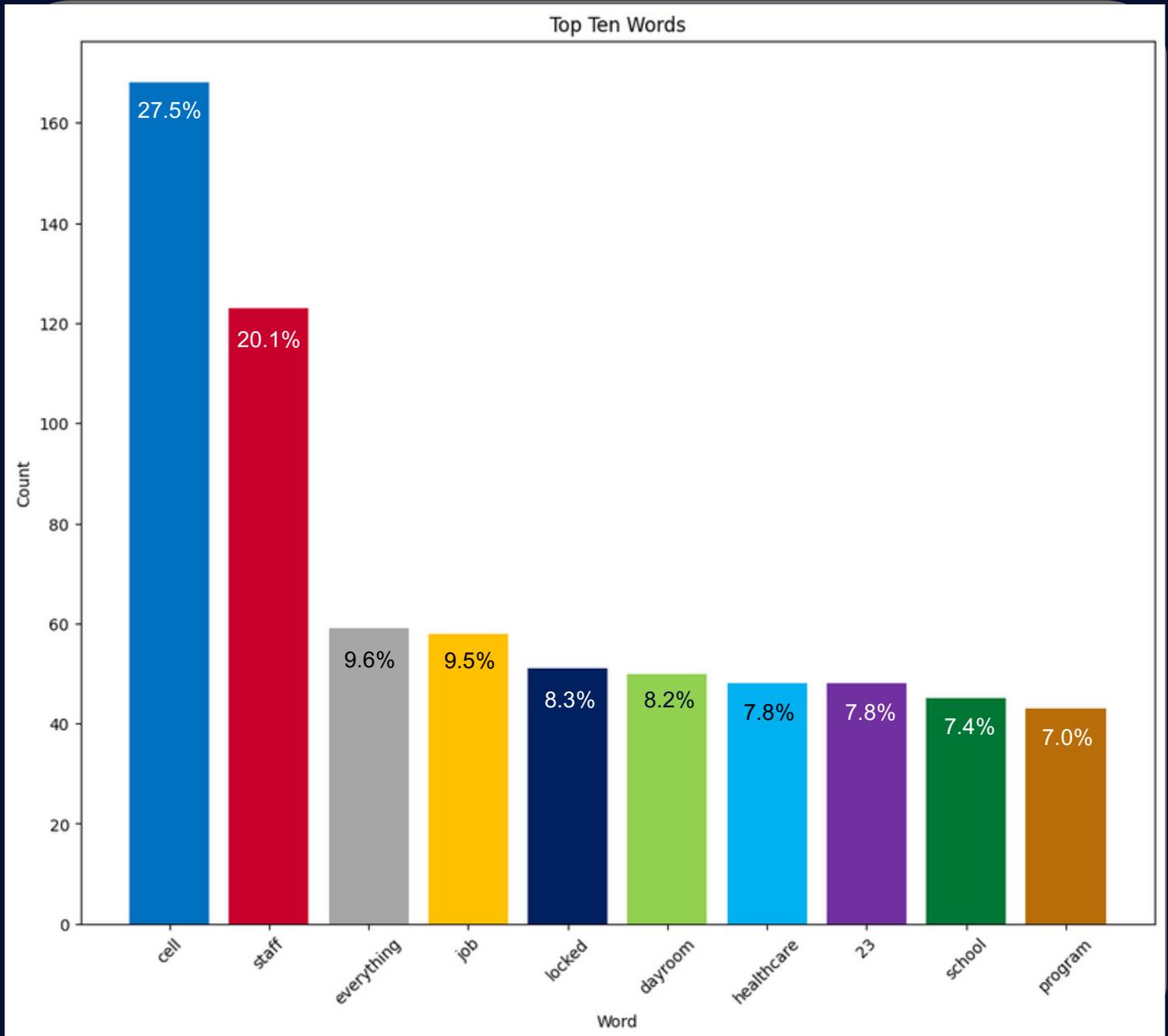
To avoid double-counting issues, issue categories were only counted once per response. This means that the response "the cells are cold and dirty" would count as raising only one issue related to conditions, even though two indicator words ("cold" and "dirty") are used in the response.

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.

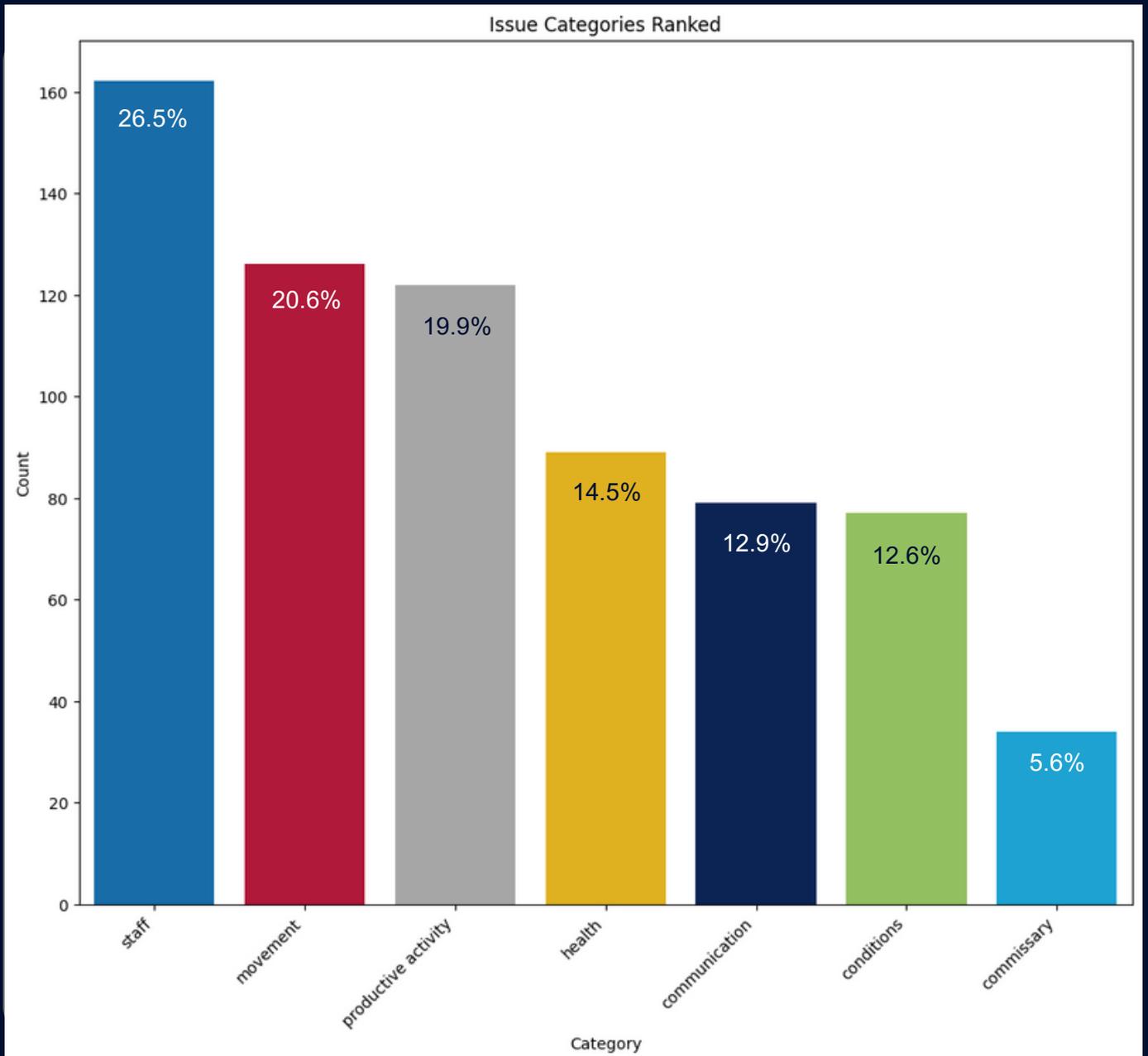
Top 10 Indicator Words

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 Pinckneyville survey responses

1

STAFF

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

The way the staff punishes inmates for other peoples wrong doing.

The most negative things about this prison is the racism and the lack of respect from staff and how they treat and talk to individuals in custody. It's a very toxic environment

Name Calling and bullying by staff and inmates.

Stress. There are some good CO's who are respectful and helpful but there are some who are not. More not so good than good.

Staff are unwilling to help when asked. Especially when concerning an issue between cellmates.

2

MOVEMENT

Includes concerns about time spent out of the cell or sleeping area and yard/dayroom availability.

Not enough time out of cell, not enough dayroom, no weights on the yard.

We are in the cell For too long, if you come out at 8am the next day you will not come out until 6pm. That's longer than 24 hrs.

only given one hour of dayroom; like being in seg.

No programs, time out of cell (they dont even walk us to chow for every meal anymore).

This cell is killing me mentally. But the negative is we come out an hour a day, and some days we have to choose between yard or dayroom.

3

PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

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

The fact that people with less time get more opportunity for classes than people with a lot of time. we deserve the opportunity to take classes as well.

No adequate academic classes, i.e., college courses

Not able to work a job or go to school to rehabilitate myself for society.

Lack of self-improvement programs with earned program sentence credit opportunities for people with 10 or more years to serve.

Can't get jobs unless you are a snitch or you know somebody

4

HEALTH

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

Health care. You don't receive it unless you are dying or the issue is obvious; like a bone popping out of your skin. Day room.

At times they only have one nurse.

Health Care ignores people's problems for months unless you press the issue with a grievance and even then, they do the bare minimum just so they can say they saw you. Pinckneyville Health Care is the worst I have experienced in the 16yrs I've been incarcerated.

Right now the most negative aspect of life at PNK is the lack of health care. No matter how much pain, no matter how many request for help, no response from Health Care Unit.

Healthcare is terrible. No sick call in 8 months! Treatment not given for chronic health issues.

5

COMMUNICATION

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

They cancel video visits on the regular making it hard to see your family who live long distance.

Only 1 Hour Out the Cell and is Hard to Communicate With Loved ones and that is **EXTREMELY** frustrating and Harmful

In the cell All day & most of the time fights start because we all dont have time to get on the phone.

Plexiglass on tables in visiting room, Because of covid. Totally unnecessary + only hurting our family quality Time!

No time for real to communicate with outside support. 20 minutes a day is unacceptable. Especially out of a whole 24 hours.

6

CONDITIONS

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

The Food that they serve is nasty & not enough to fill a person up.

No access to cleaning supplies and chemicals.

Bad Plumbing, No heat, and No one is actually even attempting to address these Problems Without Repeated filings of Multiple letters of complaints and Grievances

Terrible food, poor cable TV reception & limited channel choice

Everything in every single area is broke, or breaks down way too often. No matter what is offered here the quality is the absolute worst they can find. Lack of Hot water for showers.

Commissary is understocked, overpriced

Never have adequate items on commissary

There is a poor selection and amount of items in commissary. There are not enough health care workers to run HCU and medicine in a routine and timely manner.

Commissary is terrible, continuously depleted of common items.

Prices at the commissary are insane



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.