
Survey Report



Analysis of 2022-23 MQPL Survey Comments

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

Stateville Correctional Center

Stateville Correctional Center is a maximum-security male prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that housed 616 people on September 14, 2022. It is the parent prison for the Northern Reception and Classification Center (NRC) and the Stateville Minimum Security Unit (MSU). 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](#), informed consent notice/instruction sheet, and privileged mail prepaid business reply envelope addressed to JHA) so that every person incarcerated at Stateville in the max or MSU had an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. JHA did not survey people in NRC. At the time of the survey Stateville was in the beginning stages of transforming to become a multi-security prison. JHA received 189 responses to the MQPL survey from people at Stateville through February 15, 2023, representing approximately 30.7% of the static population. JHA also conducted a monitoring visit of the prison close in time to survey distribution.

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 chose to analyze responses to this question because it is where most survey respondents chose to report the issues that they were experiencing while incarcerated. All survey comments for Stateville can be found in our [2022 MQPL Survey Comments](#) report. Quantitative survey results for Stateville can be found in our [2022 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](#).

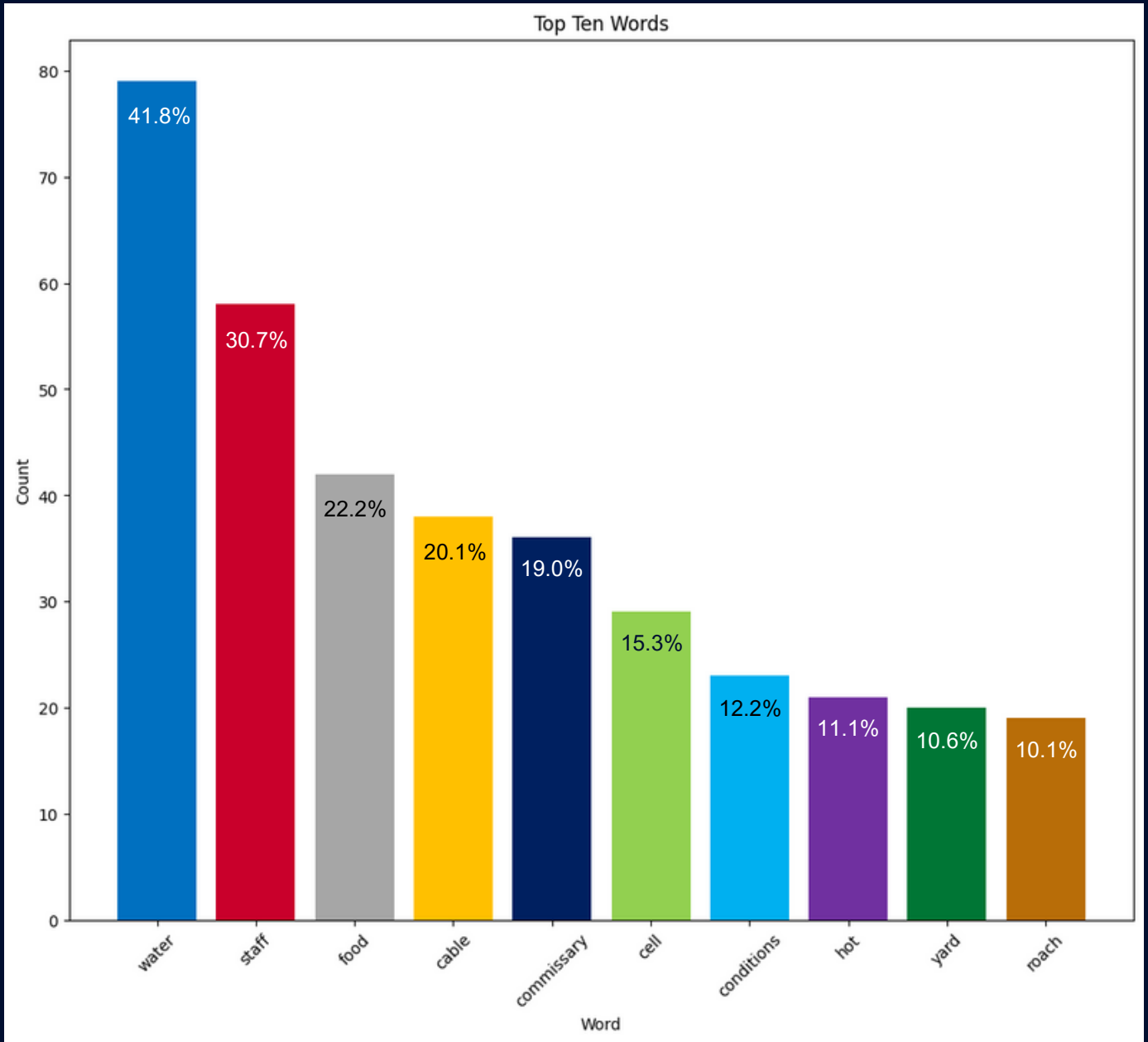
To avoid double-counting issues, issue categories were only counted once per response. This means that the response "the cells are cold and dirty" would count as raising only one issue related to conditions, even though two indicator words ("cold" and "dirty") are used in the response.

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.

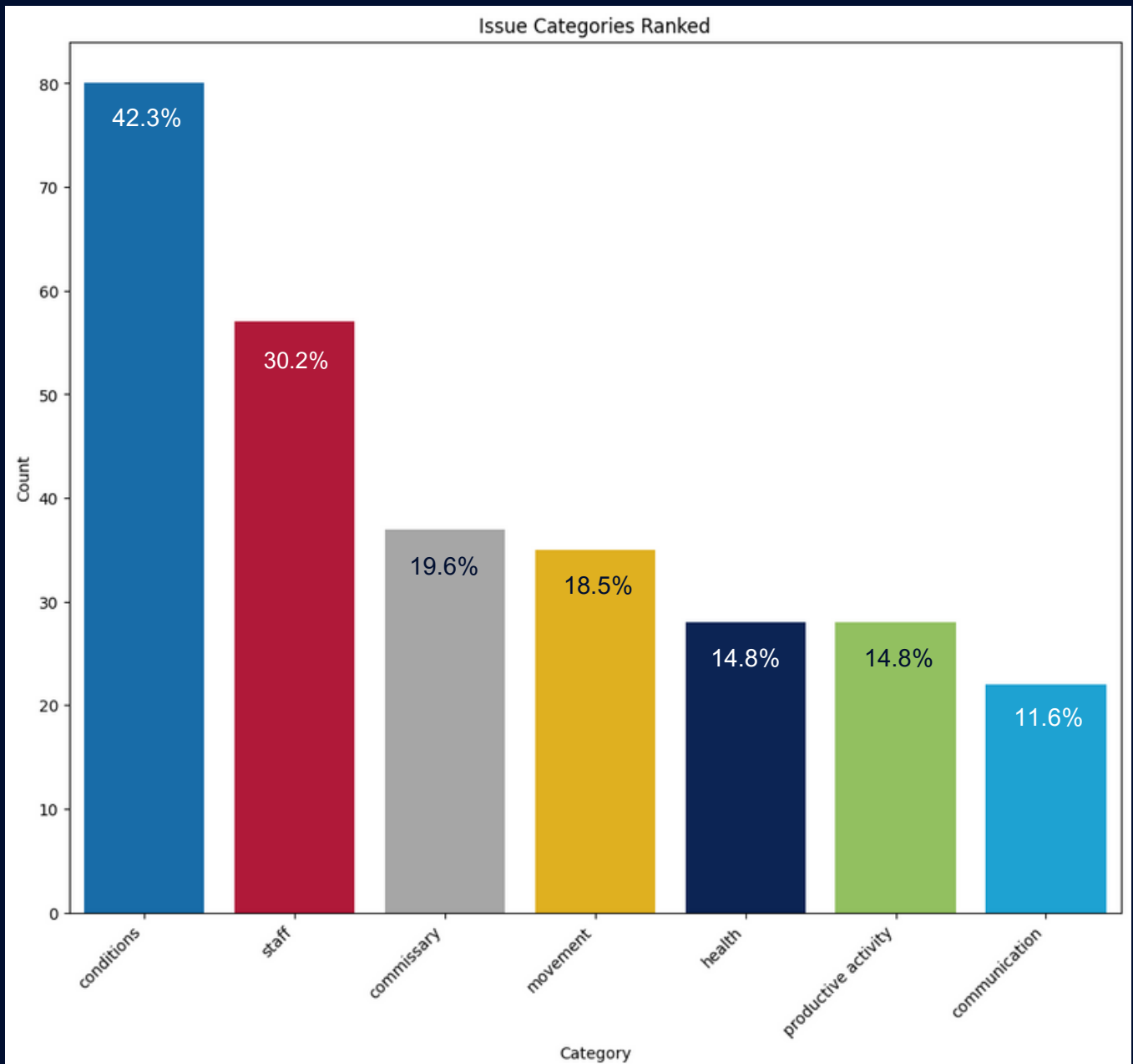
Top 10 Indicator Words

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 "COVID" 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 Stateville survey responses

1

CONDITIONS

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

The living conditions. NO hot water, no good water
I drink, roaches everywhere, mold, etc.

No hot water for the past two months. Infestation
of roaches and spiders. I sleep with roaches crawling
all in my bed and I keep myself and my cell clean.

No drinking water! Lead in tap water. They pass out water in a
bag that tastes like chemicals or some sort of contamination. occasionally
they sell bottled water but you cant count on it. we've had no hot water for
months. They've run out of soap. Food is terrible. Cable has been out for months.

Brown water, no cable, cold water for showers,
no hot food, dirty trays

No cable, no hot water, lead in drinking
water, roaches, mice, vermin infested and
rodent infested kitchen, mold in cells,
no ventilation, brutal heat in summer

2

STAFF

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

Every individual is treated inhumanly—
constantly judged by staff

Lack of staff training.

The degradation and dehumanizing behavior of staff. The less than
attitude.

Being in our cells most of the summer
due to staff shortages

If you complain the staff will retaliate against you

3

COMMISSARY

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

Lack of commissary items (food and toiletries and appliances, shaver, watches, radios, etc.)

Our commissary don't have enough stuff for everybody. My unit is always last to commissary

Commissary has too much Gas station food meaning Junk food instead of ~~Real~~ healthy products

lack of supplies (i.e. soap, deodorant, toothpaste, etc.)

Commissary is never stocked with items we need, all junk food.

4

MOVEMENT

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

The lack of order, like you never know when you gone be able to go to law library, yard and school programs, cause they always being canceled.

Closing law library, school. Cancelling yard.

The constant lockdowns, the cancelling of yard time, and especially how often they cancel the law library. They usually do these things using the excuse that they are short of staff.

Not enough time out of the cell.

No yard when on level 2 lock-down, in cell 24 hours a day when staff is short!

5

HEALTH

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

Can't see a dr. until 3-4 weeks after requested.

Poor healthcare. They lock you behind the N.R.C. doors when you complain about your health

HEALTHCARE STAFF ARE LIARS AND REFUSE TO PROCESS SICK-CALL REQUESTS TO SEE INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR VARIOUS PROBLEMS. RENEWALS OF MEDICATION REGULARLY EXPIRE WITHOUT NOTICE WHERE WE EXPERIENCE WITHDRAWALS AND ARE IN A GREAT DEAL OF PAIN! HEALTHCARE STAFF ARE INCOMPETENT! THERE IS FILTH EVERYWHERE, MOLD, MICE, ROACHES, CONTAMINATED WATER W/ FOREVER CHEMICALS, ET AL.

Lack of healthcare access

COVID visiting protocols are preventing families from visiting us

6

PRODUCTIVE
ACTIVITY

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

The lack of programs (education/trade) to transform inmates from bad mindsets/behavior patterns to be productive individuals to return to society. Such lack robs us from any form of hope

Hard to get in college programs.

THERE ISNT ANY ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE, AND NO REAL SKILL WORK PROGRAMS TO HELP INDIVIDUALS IN CUSTODY TO HAVE JOB TRADE SKILLS WITH RE-ENTRY SUCCESS BACK INTO THE REAL WORLD OF SOCIETY.

This institution won't allow you to have a job for 2-5 years depending on your last seg ticket.

The prison complex is only housing individuals not offering vocational trades which would offer relief to society, i.e. carpentry, plumbing, electrician, locksmith etc.

7

COMMUNICATION

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

Not seeing family, 30 people sharing one phone during covid

Not being able to have access to the phone app on our tablets. Not being able to have more visits and more visitation time.

The water
not enough phone time
No rec/yard time on regular basis
Food/Commissary

not enough visits (only 3)

Not enough phones

Mailroom—holding legal & personal mail over 30 days



This report was written 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.