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**Survey Report**



# **Analysis of 2022 MQPL Survey Comments**

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

# Danville Correctional Center

Danville Correctional Center is a medium-security male prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that housed 1517 people on July 22, 2022. 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 Danville had an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. JHA received 560 responses to the MQPL survey from people at Danville through the end of 2022, representing approximately 37% of the static population.

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 Danville can be found in our [2022 MQPL Survey Comments](#) report. Quantitative survey results for Danville 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.

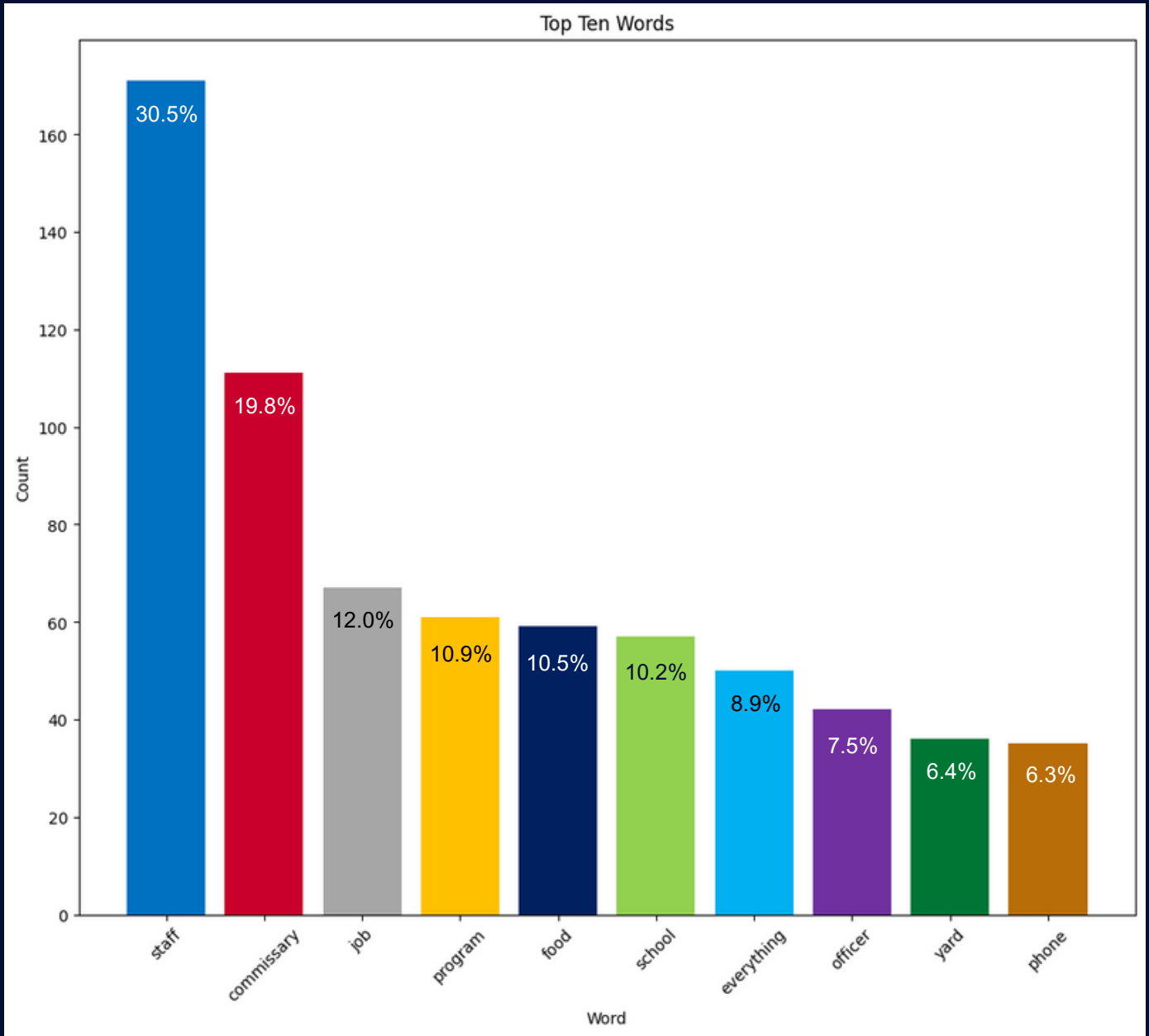
There are limitations with this method, such as sentiment analysis. For example we are unable to distinguish statements such as "The doctor is good" and "I haven't seen a doctor." However, it is reasonable to conclude that instances of "doctor" are in a negative context in response to the question. Additionally, 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.



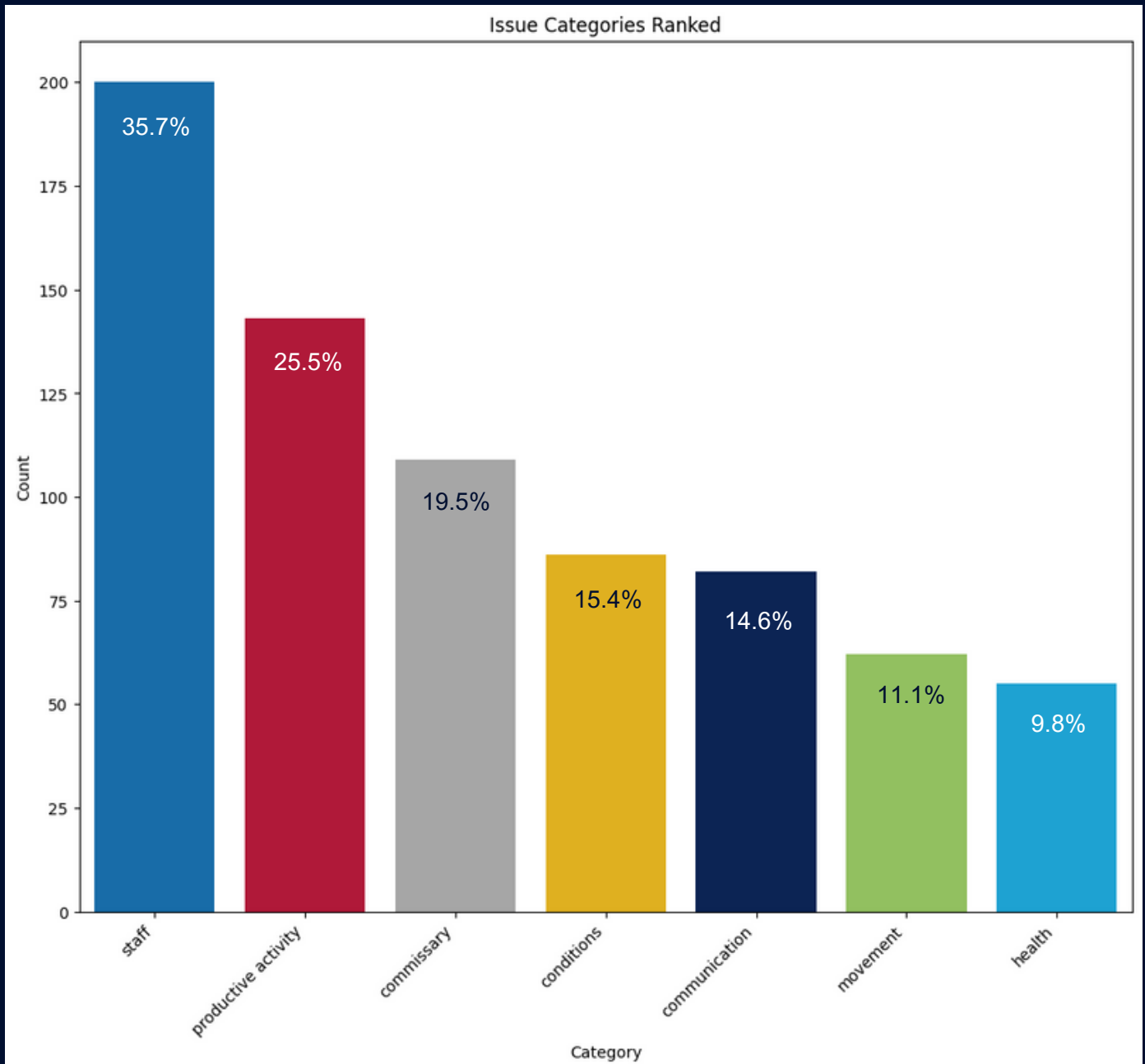
## Top 10 Indicator Words

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 "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 Danville survey responses

1

## STAFF

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

The officers are racist. They treat you with disrespect. White people get treated better. All white staff that can't relate to the majority.

The staff here at Danville are extremely prejudicial and hateful towards anyone who is convicted of a sex crime.

The staff and how they treat us. The complete lack of accountability for officers. They have circumvented and turned the grievance system into a joke. There is zero ability to hold them accountable when they violate our rights.

There is no consistency and the officers make up the rules as they go along. Every officer has different rules on what's approved.

Some staff are overboard with punishments.

2

## PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

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

Sitting in a cell not doing nothing. I can't work or go to school. With work you have to know somebody or kiss ass to get a job.

There aren't enough or any programs for drug treatment. There isn't enough school or vocational programs.

For good time you are expected to be in school or other programs but they won't enroll you in anything unless you are "in" with someone.

Not being able to participate in any programs that would help me get out sooner, due to being sentenced 85%.

That you have to be somewhere in the range of 3 to 2 years to get into any education. A lot of people have a lot of time to do and been wanting to enroll in school but they are being denied.

### 3

## COMMISSARY

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

Commissary doesn't have anything: T.V.s, hygiene items, hot pots, food, nothing.

Prices have tripled for commissary items.

The food portions in dietary and the commissary is horrible. There have been many times when the commissary is nearly empty and I've only been able to spend \$30-\$50/month because there is nothing to buy.

The prison commissary is run very badly. We never can buy enough food because everything is limited and unavailable.

We go to commissary almost Every 4 or 5 weeks instead of two.

### 4

## CONDITIONS

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

not enough food to keep a person from going to sleep hungry.

Living conditions—I'm sleeping on a filthy, foul-smelling, worn-out bed sheet with no pillow. I have only 1 pair of state-issued blue pants that are wearable.

unhumane treatment: filthy bed mattress, worn out bed sheets, no pillow, only one pair of wearable pants, paint chipping from ceiling and wall, cracks along the ceiling corner and along the corners of the walls are large enough that one can see into the cell next door, showers are filthy and the list goes on. And not to forget inadequate physical and mental health care.

spotty cable coverage, maintenance takes weeks to fix something, broken floor and ceiling tiles

the cells, Showers have mold, Dietary have roaches in the food, Mouse dropping be on the tray.



5

COMMUNICATION

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

Communication with family is poor due to the mail taking months at a time, as well as emails and video visits always being cancelled. It's hard to get on the phone with only 8 phones.

Not seeing family, watching CO's going home to theirs. Limited time on visits/phone calls, can't prove rehabilitation.

The phone situation, we barely get 20 minutes because only 8 phones for 56 people 2 hour at a time ALSO visits are not good

Mail takes 3 weeks thru 1 1/2 months to receive. Messages on tablet take a week.

How we can barely keep in touch with family because phones are so crowded.

6

MOVEMENT

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

Locked away & warehoused.

We are in the cell too much for this to be a program based prison.

Being in these cells 20 hrs out the day not being able to contact family as often

The C/O's are always short of staff so they constantly cancel yard, gym, even video visits.

Daily cancellations of healthcare, yard, gym, video visits, school, vocational, law library.

Healthcare. You have to see a nurse 3 times before ever seeing a doctor for a simple diagnosis. Only one doctor and it takes 3-5 weeks to see him, once put on the list. Then you are given ibuprofen without testing to see what's actually wrong.

How they handle COVID. They will give us tickets for not wearing a mask, yet they don't ever wear them.

*Having to go to sick call 3-times before seeing the doctor its mandatory here used to be twice*

Terrible healthcare, terrible dental—no fillings—they just pull teeth!!!

poor support for inmates with mental & stress issues, no consistent group counseling.



This report was written by JHA staff. Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz at [jvollen@thejha.org](mailto: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](http://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.