
Survey Report



Analysis of 2023 MQPL Survey Comments

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

Centralia Correctional Center

Centralia Correctional Center (Centralia) is a medium-security prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that housed 1,142 people on March 27, 2023. Centralia houses the Prison Rehabilitation & Identity Sensitivity Mentorship Program (Prism), which is “designed for diverse individuals in custody who have historically been the targets of peer abuse or stigma based on their identity and others’ perceptions of their identity,” including transgender individuals. 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 Centralia had an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. JHA received 327 responses to the MQPL survey from people at Centralia through May 24, 2023, representing approximately 29% 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 Centralia can be found in our [2023 MQPL Survey Comments](#) report. Quantitative survey results for Centralia 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.

Word Cloud

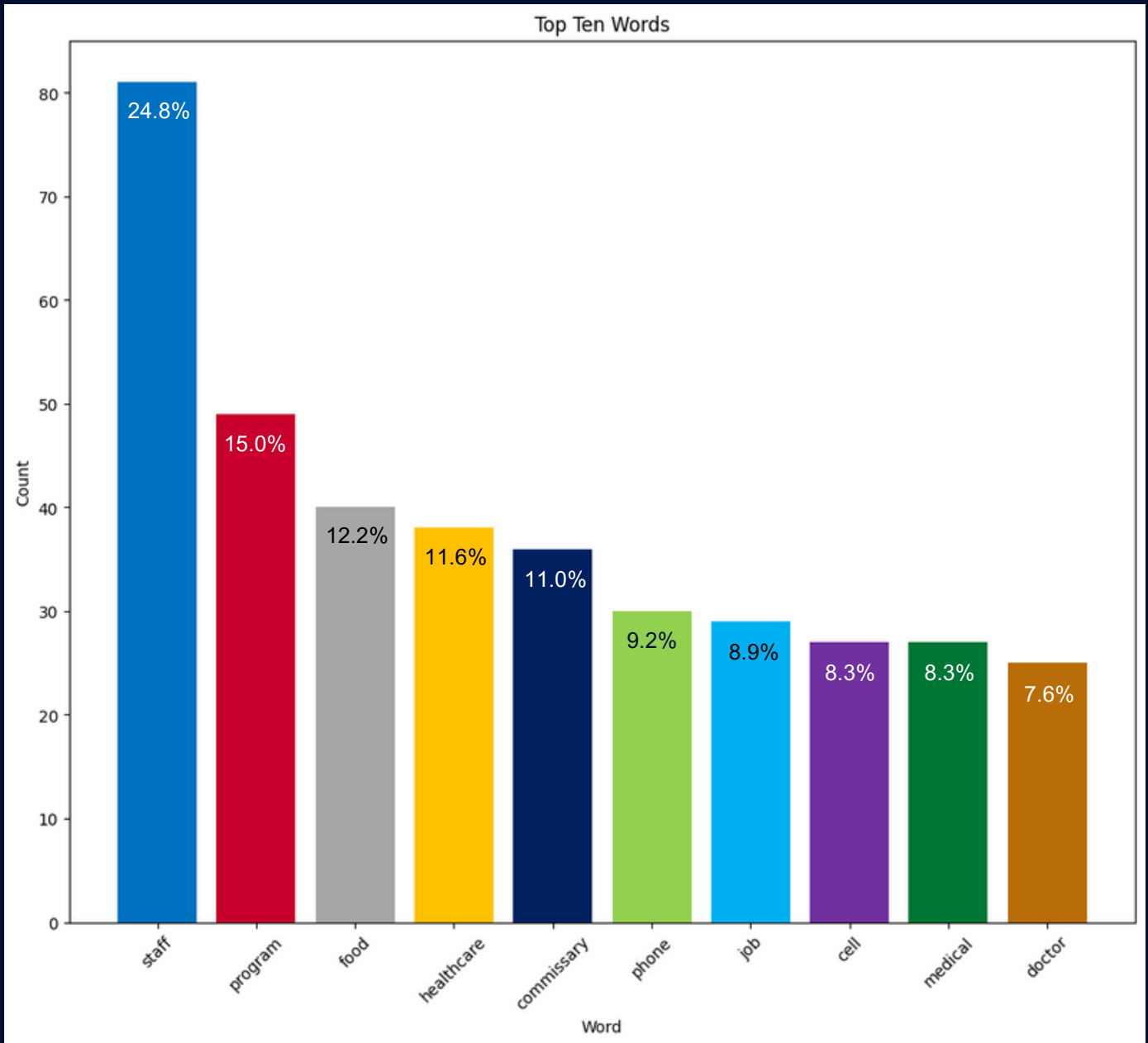


Word cloud generated using the most common words used in Centralia survey responses to the question "What are the most negative things about life in this prison?"

Top 10 Indicator Words

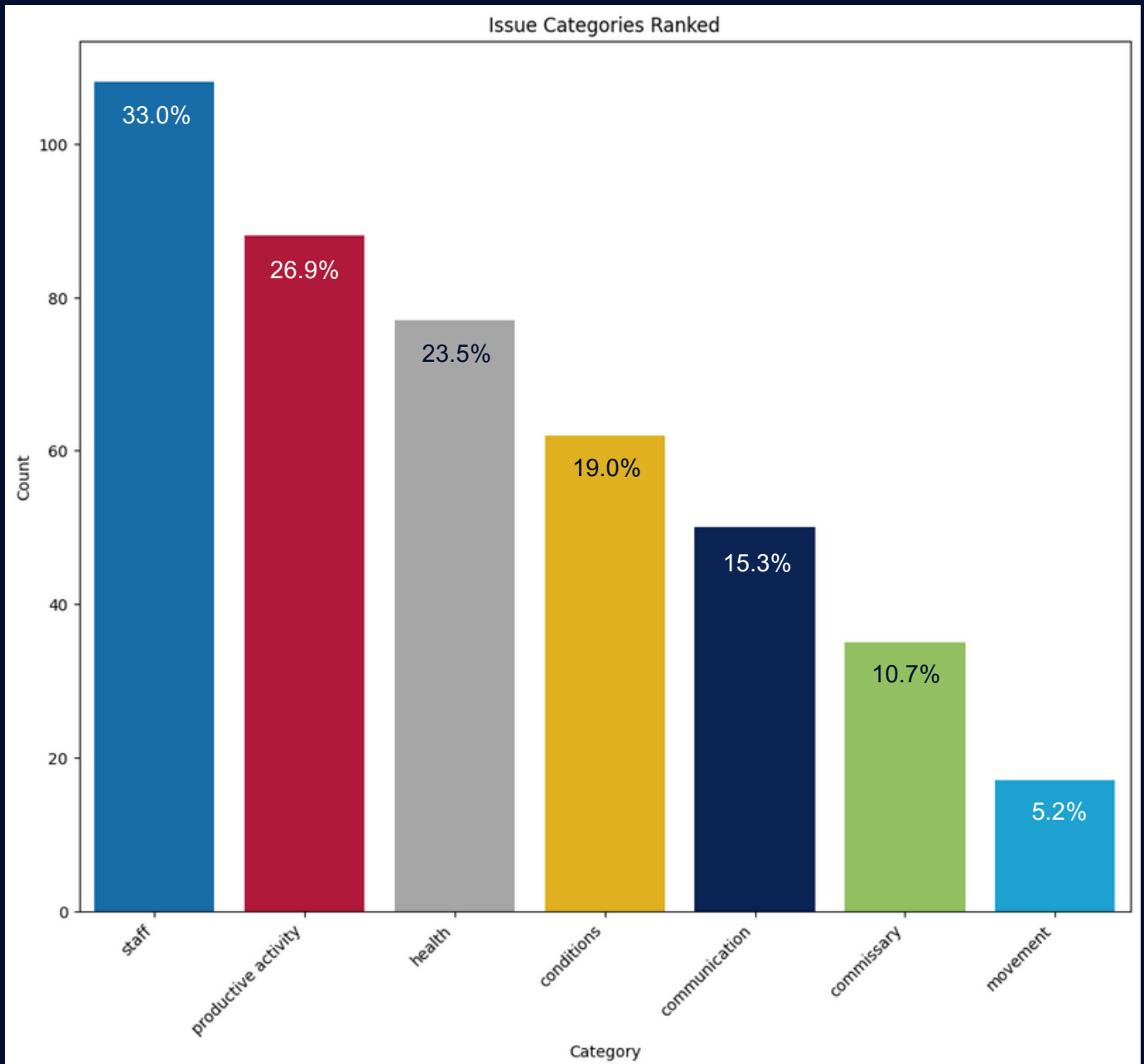
Used in responses to "What are the most negative things about life in this prison?"

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 Centralia survey responses

1

STAFF

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

The Racist CO.s The Racist Administration, How they treat Black Men At Centralia C.C.

Alot of staff dont know or do there jobs correctly. Enforce rules how they see fit not how Springfield sets them. They do whatever easier for them. The lazyness here creates a dangerous invierment

How they treat us like we're not human, they take their athority to the extreme. They talk to us crazy and if we talk back we get in trouble. You cant go to the white shirts or wardens about any problem because the CO's are always right.

Staff members who make their Job about making life harder for incarcerated people, instigating negative behavior. It's pretty sickening to observe the behavior of a couple of the LT.'s here.

The Homphobic/Transphobic enviroment that is encouraged by staff along with the incentives for bad behavior mainly not punishing the people who smoke spice.

2

PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

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

limited education, substance abuse help/programs, programs in general

Nothing here helps me rehabilitate. I have been here for 4 years and havent gotten my GED nor any programs.

There is no Substance Abuse program here And they Dont Allow us to Double Contract where we can earn goodtime at either working 2 Jobs or working and going to school at the same time like you can at other prisons here in Illinois. So, it keeps us in Prison longer, here in Centralia Correctional Center

all of the education programs are for "short timers." All programs have a waiting list and your place on the list is affected by your out date. The non-GED track courses here are vocational; there are no college-level courses even though Kaskaskia College is nearby.

It is difficult to get job assignments unless you are buddy buddy with C/O.

3

HEALTH

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

The healthcare is horrible here. It takes 3-4 months to see a doctor and I have not have a chronic clinic for Diabetes in 13 months.

The fact that you can't see a doctor, and the fact that when you do, your treated as just a complaining person or just someone that's just trying to get drugs.

Medical treatment & health care problems OR follows up on anything !!	Nobody listens	to your
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The mental health is a Joke they ask the same stupid 5 questions every time and rush through it as if they don't care because they don't.

Medical, being made to suffer in pain even after surgery's because nothing is given for pain.

4

CONDITIONS

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

We are given 3-5 minutes to get our meals. The dietary does not have enough cups, often we must swallow our food without chewing and without cups of water this is difficult

Washing + dryer machines on unit are always Broke. We went three months without a washer.

The food is of the lowest quality Full of starch and sodium old bread and low grade vegetables. Washers and dryers often breakdown and are out of the house for weeks, months. The ventaltation is of poor quality.

The Rooms are made for two people but the space is so small it should only be one person per room. No air cond. Day Rooms to small.

Cold showers sometimes in the winter and hot steamy showers in the middle of summer!

5

COMMUNICATION

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

the in person visiting is very difficult to deal with

There are not nearly enough telephones to accommodate everyone & staff allow inmates to control who uses the phones & when. This causes the most conflicts and fights in this prison.

They never respond to your request & you can never speak to a staff member in person to get help or questions answered. They will hold your mail from the outside from your support system. They don't approve visitation & phone list to keep in contact with you loved ones. They don't approve your messages on the tablets so you don't get your messages for a week. It makes it impossible to stay in contact with your loved ones. They don't allow loved ones to bring in books during visits either, which isn't right.

Letters and especially photo's are almost always sent back because of some arcane or arbitrary reason!

Visits are being denied constantly!!

6

COMMISSARY

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

No detergent big bottles on sale in the commissary, must use shampoo!!

Commissary is terrible at keeping things in stock and only gets the lowest quality items.

Very poor choices at Commissary, due to Springfield's Stranglehold on All prison's Commissary Choices.

Only small 6" fans available at commissary. No shorts or athletic shirts available for purchase at commissary.

The commissary has poor inventory/little items (no hats, shorts, decent pens for > a year).

7

MOVEMENT

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

Not enough yard for workers

They have dumbbells in the gym but they won't let inmates use them

Not enough yard/gym		
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No yard for workers!

very little yard



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.