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**Survey Report**



# **Analysis of 2023 MQPL Survey Comments**

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

# Lincoln Correctional Center

Lincoln Correctional Center (Lincoln) is a minimum-security male prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that housed approximately 763 people on March 27, 2023. Lincoln is an IDOC designated “Rapid Re-entry” prison primarily for people within 18 months of release. 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 Lincoln had an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. JHA received 193 responses to the MQPL survey from people at Lincoln through June 7, 2023, representing approximately 25% of the static population. JHA visited Lincoln 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 Lincoln can be found in our [2023 MQPL Survey Comments](#) report. Quantitative survey results for Lincoln 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.

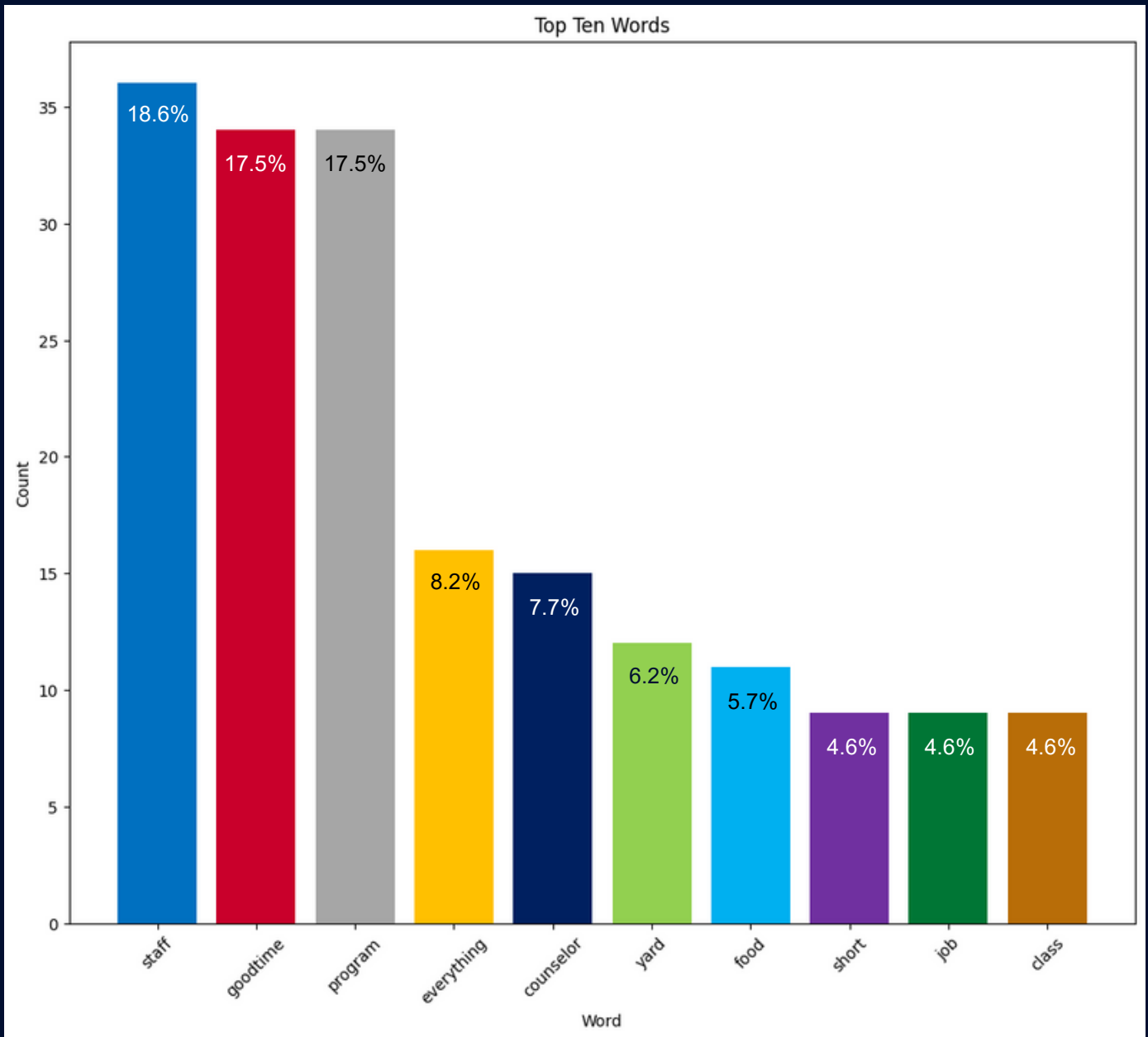
This report includes quotes from survey responses that we found to be either representative of the diversity of issues raised for each category or particularly insightful. Some quotes have been abbreviated to highlight the relevant issue.



## Top 10 Indicator Words

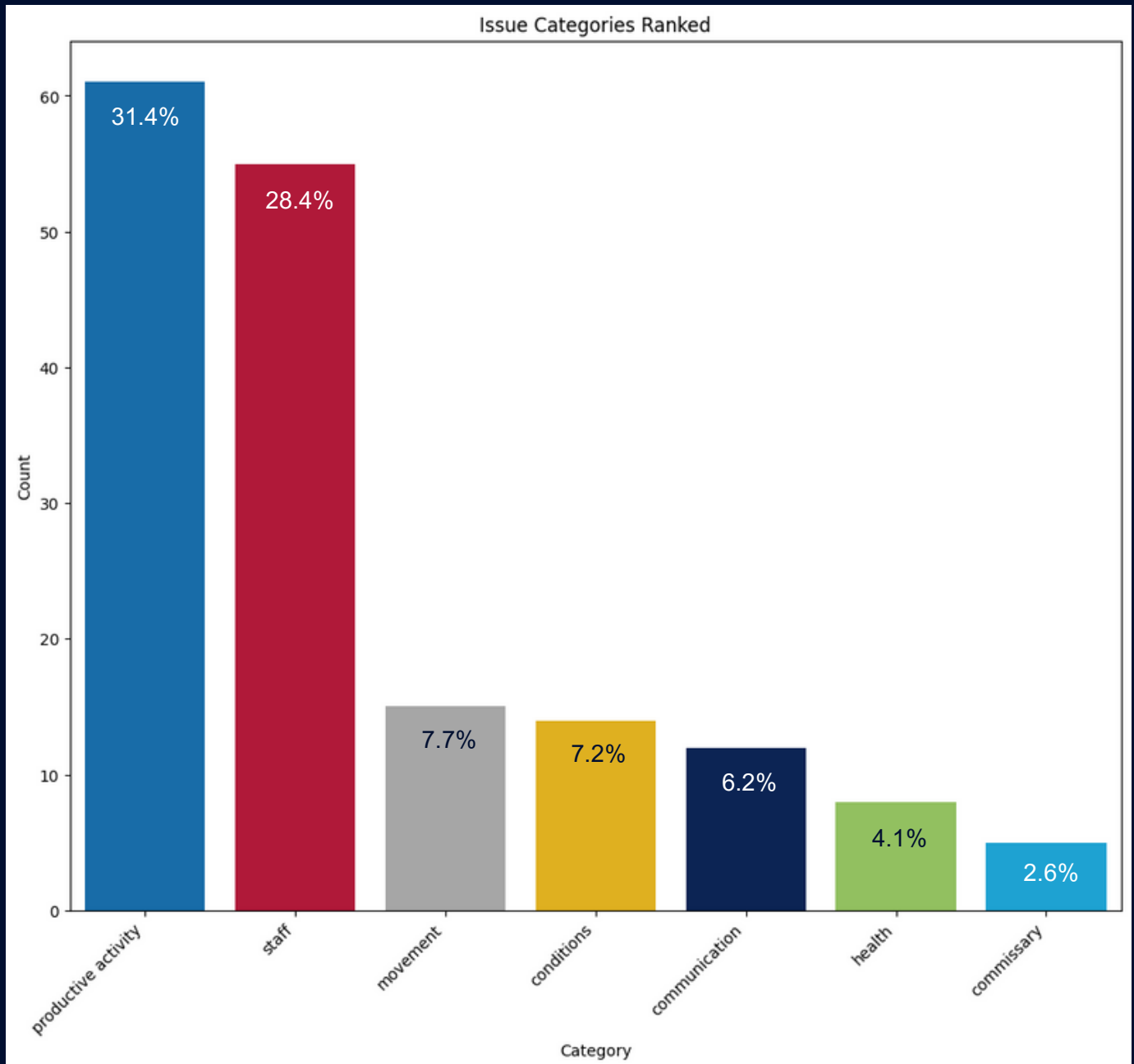
Used in responses to "What are the most negative things about life in this prison?"

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 Lincoln survey responses

1

## PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

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

This prison is suppose to be a reentry facility and I scored 8.0 on tabe test and haven't been in a classroom or class to help with problems, i.e. Anger Management, ect.

People who want to take classes to help their anger management, bipolar, etc. can't take classes unless it is on their parole plan

This prison is supposed to be a rehabilitating prison, everyone has 18 months and under, but there is no programs or jobs its almost like they dont want you to get good time and go home fuster.

for all programs here you start on a waiting list and then directly go to you are to short for the program like mandatory ABE class

no school, college teachers, even if you have a job you may not be called for work because there is not enough staff to run your assignment

2

## STAFF

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

Some CO's are very cocky and arrogant and look down on us. It's like they WANT us to make a mistake... just to ticket us.

Staff don't monitor the dorms a lot. They pass through once and awhile. To many people dorm hop.

NOT ENOUGH STAFF TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC NEEDS, COUNSELING, SUPPORT GROUPS WORK, POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT NEEDS

The facility is severely under staffed for recreation and programs.

you can't expect Help from counselors, because they were officers before they became counselors; and the maintain the same attitude (secretly) NO-ONE cares!

3

**MOVEMENT**

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

We never, go out side unless we go to chow or to the doctor, we never go to yard

our yard time and outside time is Next to None we are lucky to see 1 hour a week of yard time

CANCELLED YARDS REGULARLY!

They Run Patio, Yard, Gym late, and then they cut our time short. It's demoralizing.

Not enough Freedom Outside

4

**CONDITIONS**

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

Over crowding, ventilation . . . Foul air fants/gas, Noise, yelling/banging.

you have to have everything in a property box that is not very big barely fits bowls, food, and clothes, table space is small/nonexistant, food is horrible for chow

The showers has mold on the floor and walls

No privacy/dorms

Shitty dietary food!



5

COMMUNICATION

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

I am afraid to use the phone because of violence.

They take away our families visiting rights

I'm too far from home to get visits (4 years).

Contact on phone.

6

HEALTH

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

There is no healthcare, and I'm old.

It's hard to see a doctor.

Health care, such as the eye doctor, is nearly non-existent. I've been waiting for over 5 months and haven't even taken the exam.

medical treatment is delayed and ineffective

no access to mental health

7

COMMISSARY

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

Commissary the way they try to make us spend our money on items if we dont have an Alternate we dont get Anything and our tablets and electronic be taking to long

Commissary does not have enough items on it for Food & electronics.

Lack of commissary being stocked and lack of medications being stocked.

No commissary!

need better commissary



This report was compiled 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.