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**Survey Report**



**JHA 2022-2023  
Staff Quality of Life  
Survey Results**

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# Overview

This report presents results from the Staff Quality of Life (SQL) survey administered by the John Howard Association (JHA) from November 2022 through June 2023. The majority (87%) of respondents completed the survey during the 4-month period between December 2022 and March 2023. The survey was made available online to all Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) staff and contractors, and was anonymous. A total of 143 survey responses<sup>1</sup> were received, representing approximately 1% of IDOC staff and at least 18 different IDOC facilities across the state.<sup>2</sup> Postings regarding the survey availability were provided by JHA to IDOC and union officials, and staff surveys were promoted in conjunction with JHA prison monitoring visits and the 2022-2023 [JHA Measuring the Quality of Prison Life \(MQPL\) survey](#) of people incarcerated within IDOC. The SQL survey results provide valuable insights into the quality of working life for IDOC staff; however, due to the small sample size, the results are not generalizable and caution should be exercised when interpreting the findings. Also due to the small sample size, results are not broken down by facility or other respondent background information.

The JHA SQL survey was adapted for use in Illinois from the SQL instrument originally developed by the [University of Cambridge Prisons Research Centre](#). The adapted SQL includes questions classified into 17 dimensions that are designed to capture the quality of working life; attitudes toward the facility and agency; relationship dynamics with peers, supervisors, and incarcerated people; and perceptions of working in a prison. The 17 SQL dimensions include:

1. Attitudes towards the Warden
2. Attitudes towards the senior management team
3. Treatment by senior management
4. Treatment by supervisors
5. Relationship with the organization
6. Commitment
7. Recognition and personal efficacy

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<sup>1</sup> Three surveys were excluded due to missing data (i.e., respondents opened the survey but did not complete any survey items).

<sup>2</sup> According to the IDOC [Operations and Management Report for Fiscal Year 2023](#), the agency had 10,827 total staff as of June 2023. Additionally, 1,255 non-IDOC staff, or contractors, were reported to work at IDOC prisons.

8. Involvement and motivation
9. Stress
10. Relationships with peers
11. Safety, control, and security
12. Punishment and discipline
13. Dynamic authority
14. Professional support for incarcerated people
15. Positive attitudes towards incarcerated people
16. Trust, compassion, and commitment towards incarcerated people
17. Relationships with incarcerated people

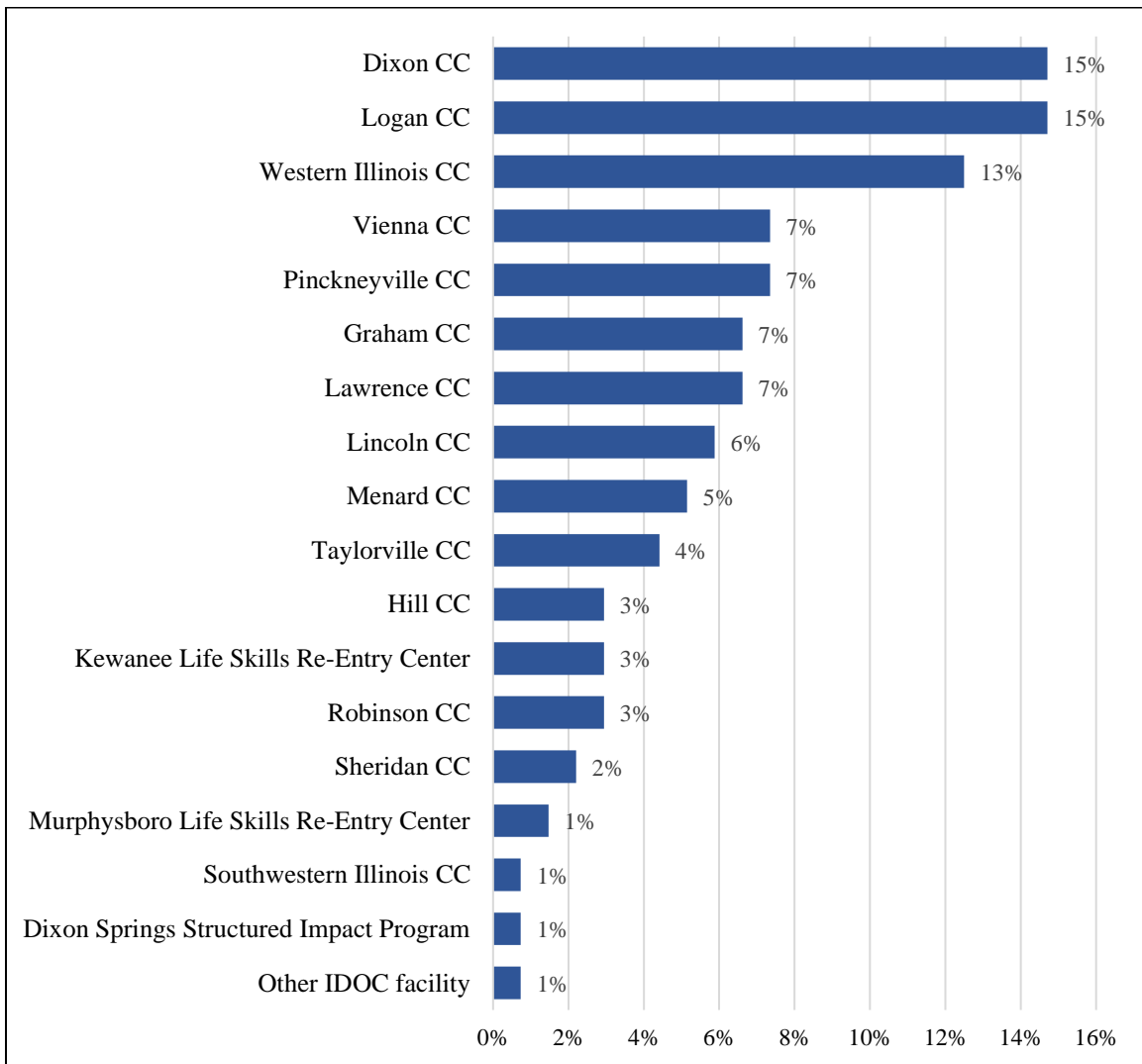
In addition to the 17 dimensions described above, the survey included other standalone survey items from the SQL and an adapted SQL used by JHA partners in New York, and items that were modified from JHA's adapted MQPL survey administered in 2022 and 2023 to incarcerated people residing in IDOC facilities. There were also two survey questions asking staff to give numerical rankings 1-10 to their quality of work life and current stress level. Survey respondents also had the opportunity to answer five open-ended survey questions asking about the most satisfying and stressful aspects of working in the facility; one primary area of concern about the facility; suggestions for improving the identified concerns; and any further comments.

Responses to the open-ended survey questions are not included in this report; however, JHA continues to use these responses to inform its ongoing work to improve conditions in IDOC. The final SQL survey included 149 items and took an average of 30 minutes to complete.

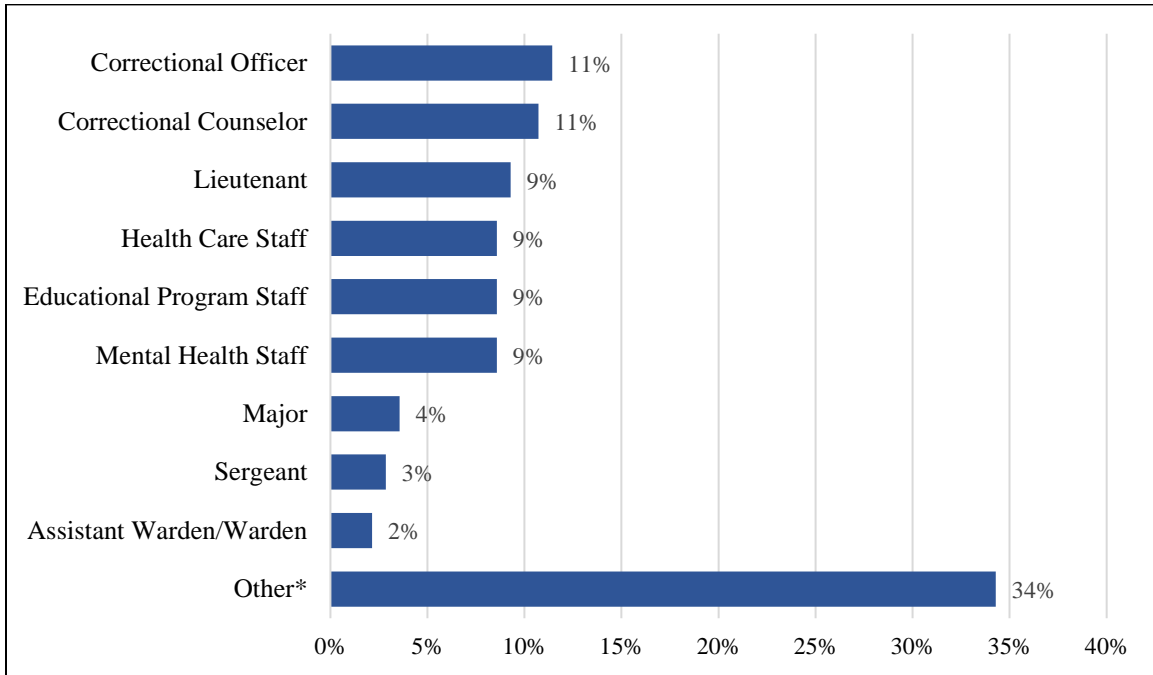
# Background of Respondents

For information on respondents' current facility affiliation, position, years of service, level of contact with incarcerated people, number of IDOC facilities they have worked in, age, gender, and race/ethnicity, see Figures 1–9. Respondents could skip any question.

**Figure 1: Facility affiliation (n=136)**

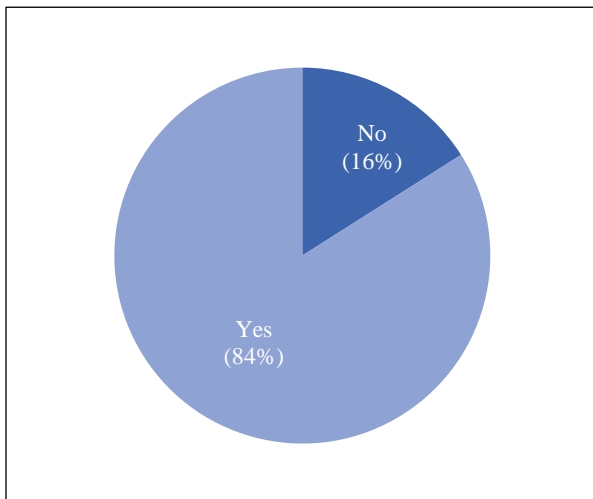


**Figure 2: Job title (n=140)**

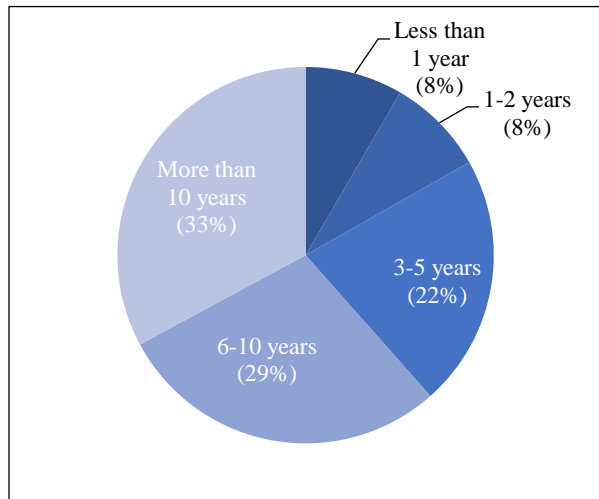


\*"Other" responses include positions such as: Bureau of Identification, Business Office, Casework Supervisor, Chaplain, Clerical, Clinical, Corrections Assessment Specialist, Dietary, Maintenance, Records, and Substance Abuse Counselor.

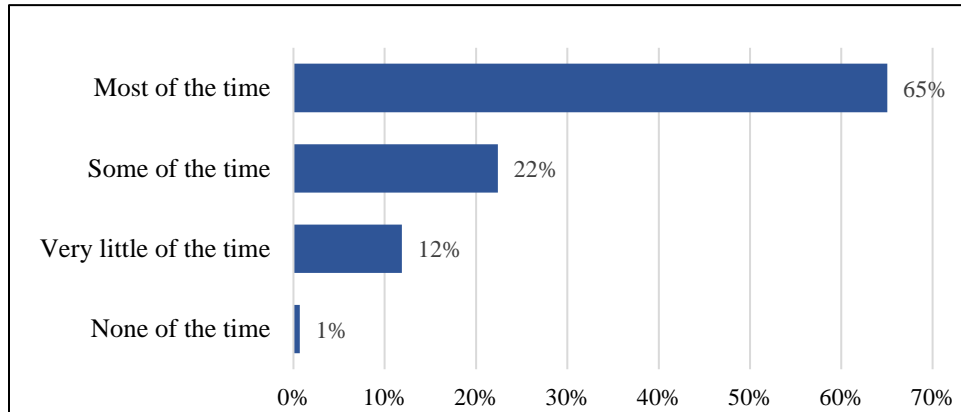
**Figure 3: Employed by IDOC (n=143)**



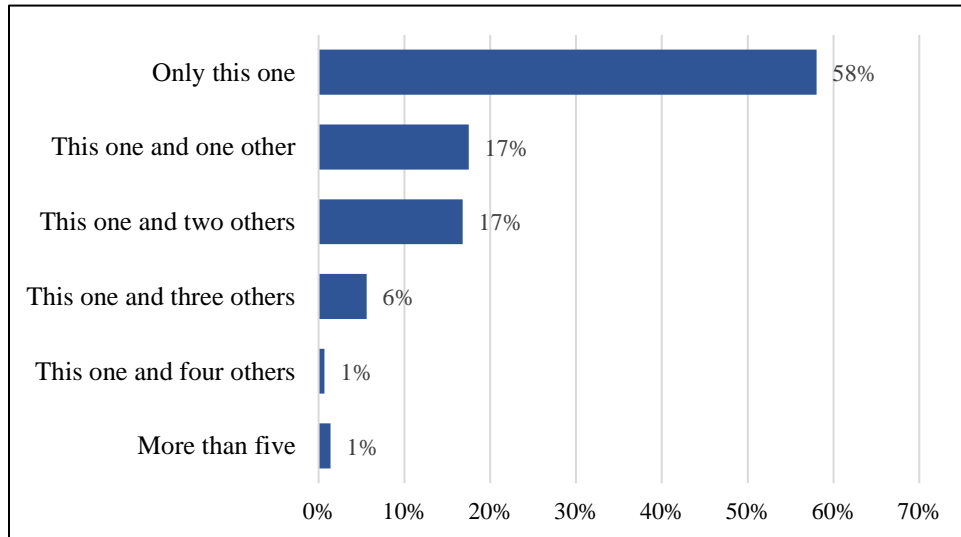
**Figure 4: Years worked in current facility (n=143)**



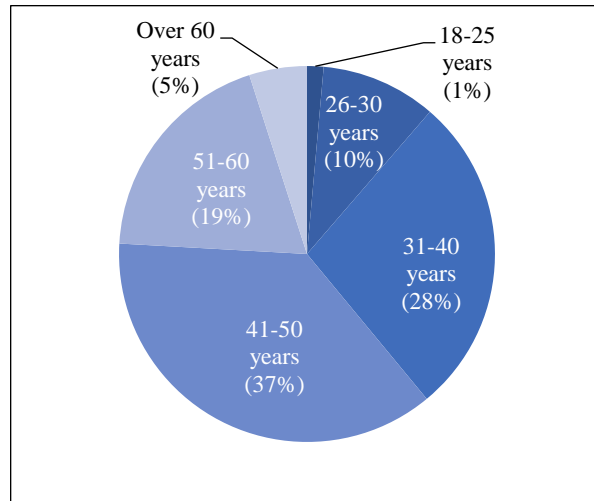
**Figure 5: Extent of contact with incarcerated people (n=143)**



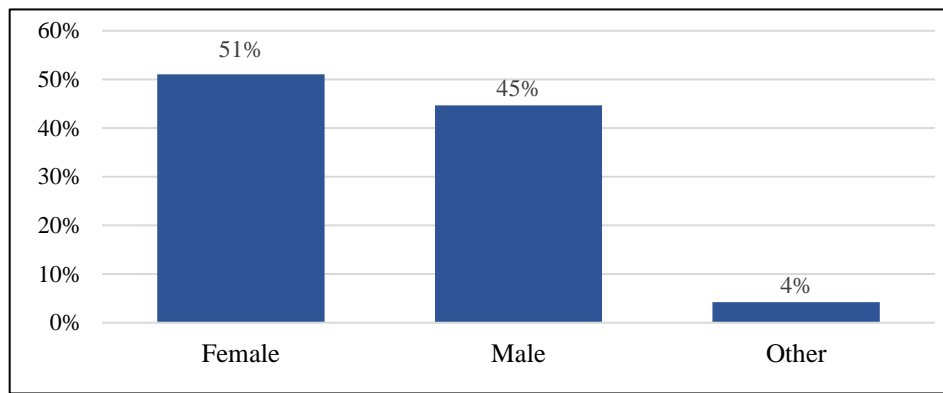
**Figure 6: Number of IDOC facilities where respondents have worked (n=143)**



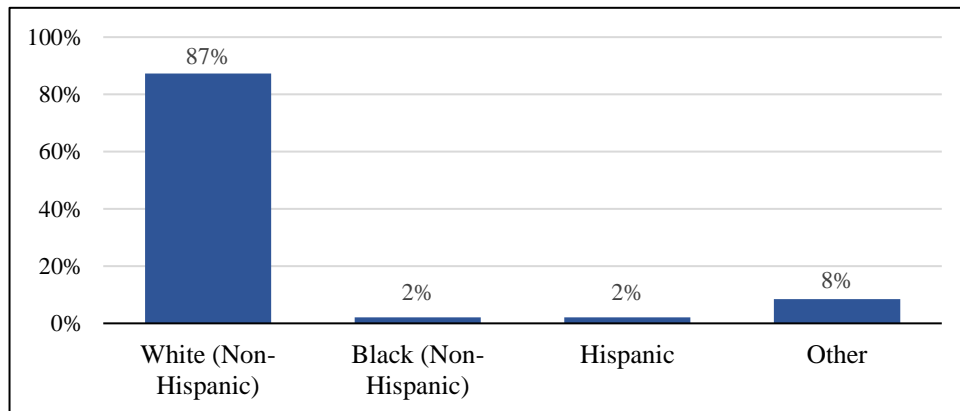
**Figure 7: Age (n=141)**



**Figure 8: Gender (n=141)**



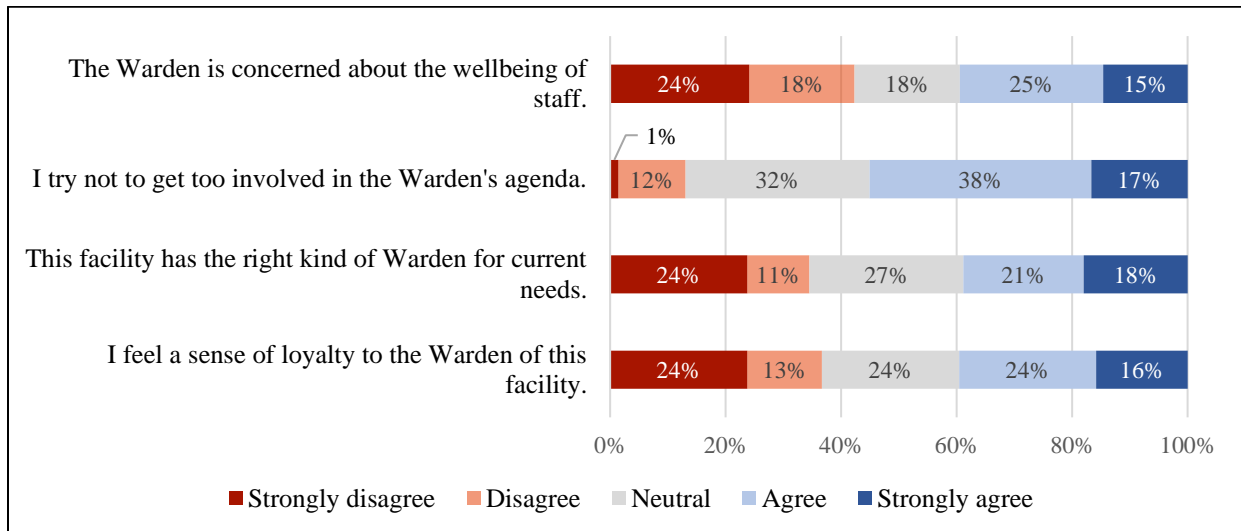
**Figure 9: Race/ethnicity (n=142)**



# Survey Findings

For each survey item, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with the statement using a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree). Respondents also had the option to select Not Applicable (N/A) if the statement was not relevant to their role or skip the question.<sup>3</sup> Survey findings are organized by dimension. For each chart presented below, the sample size represents the number of survey respondents who responded to at least one question; therefore, the sample size for each question may vary.

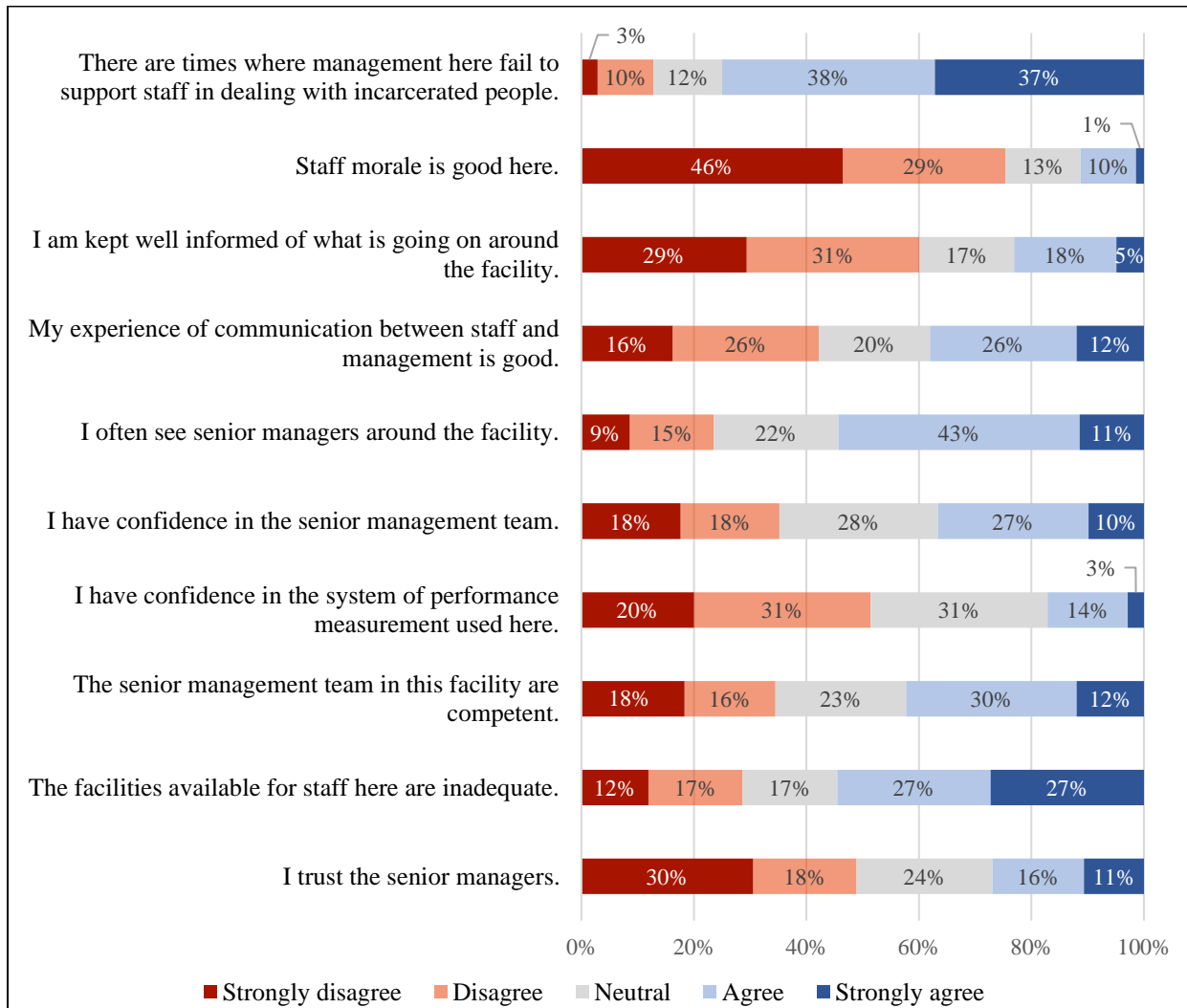
## Dimension 1: Attitudes towards the Warden (n=139)



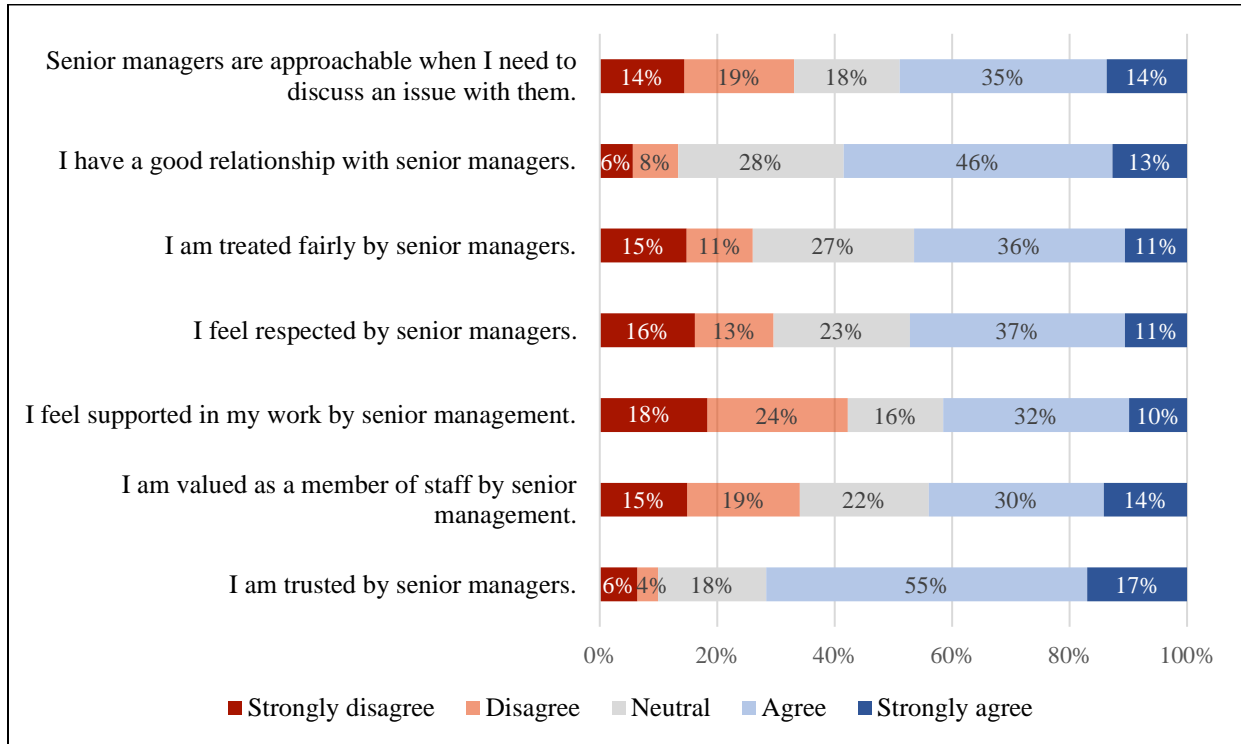
<sup>3</sup> N/A responses were excluded from analysis.



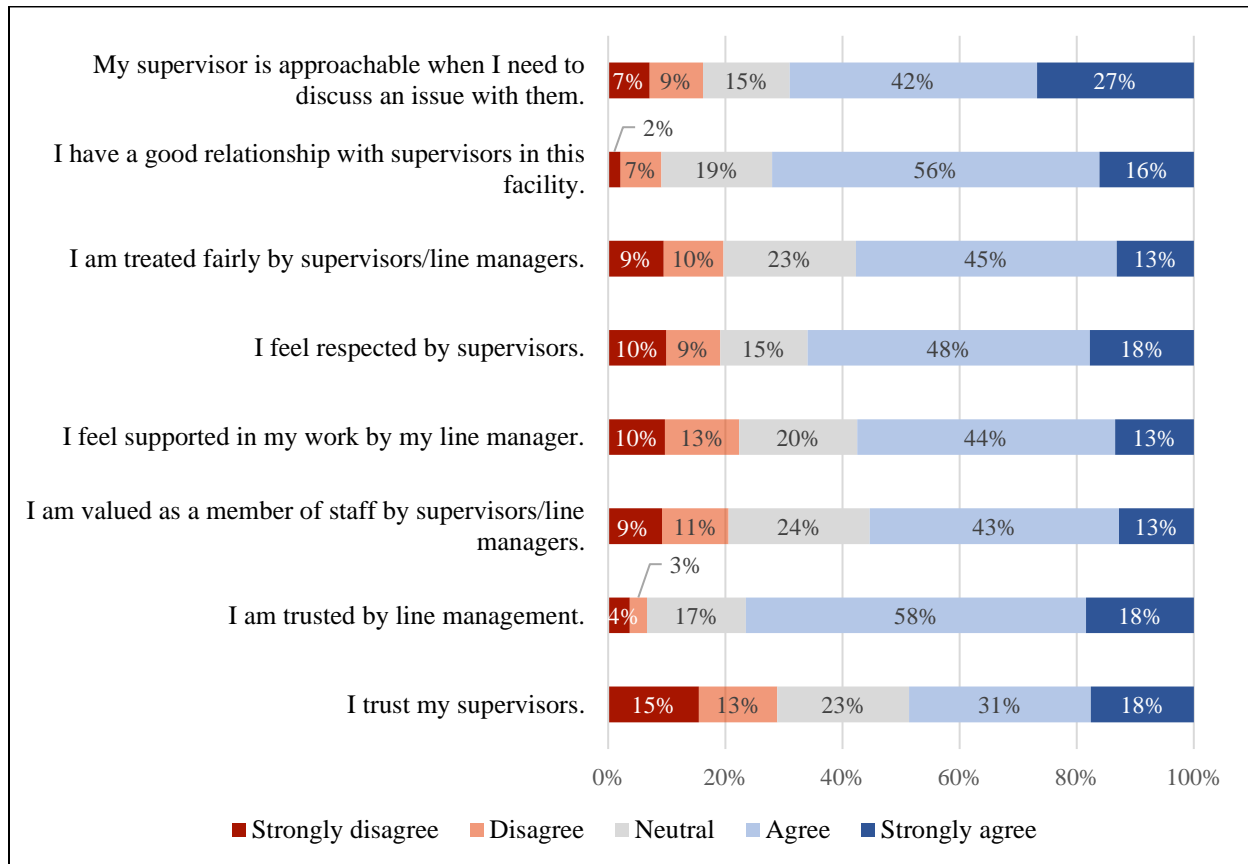
## Dimension 2: Attitudes towards the senior management team (n=143)



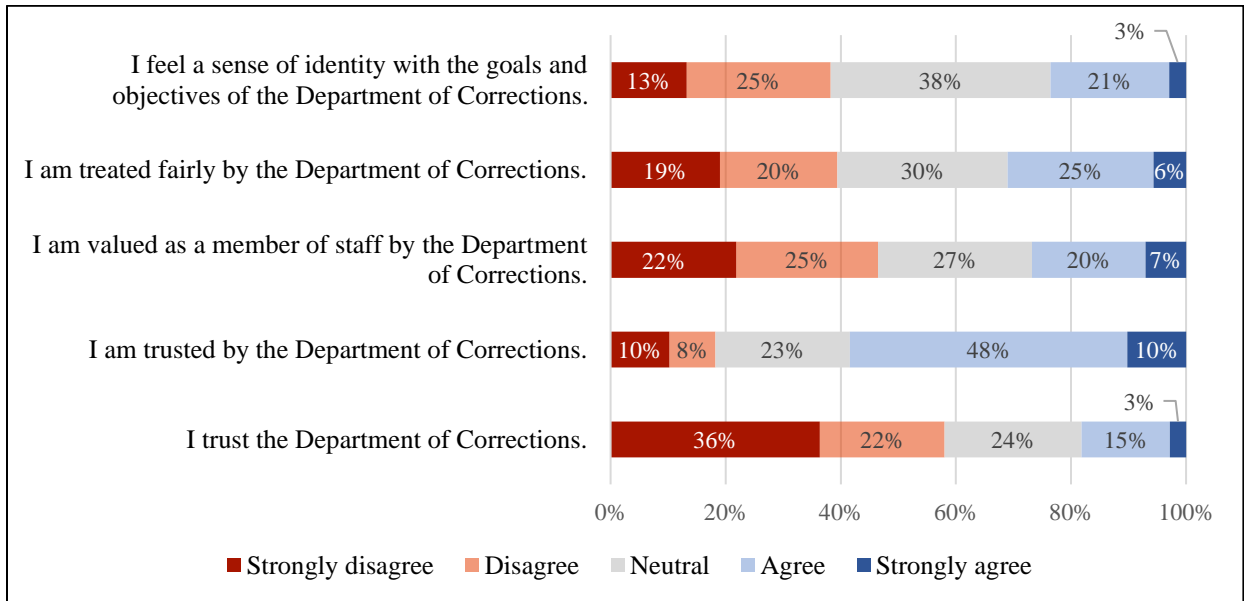
### Dimension 3: Treatment by senior management (n=142)



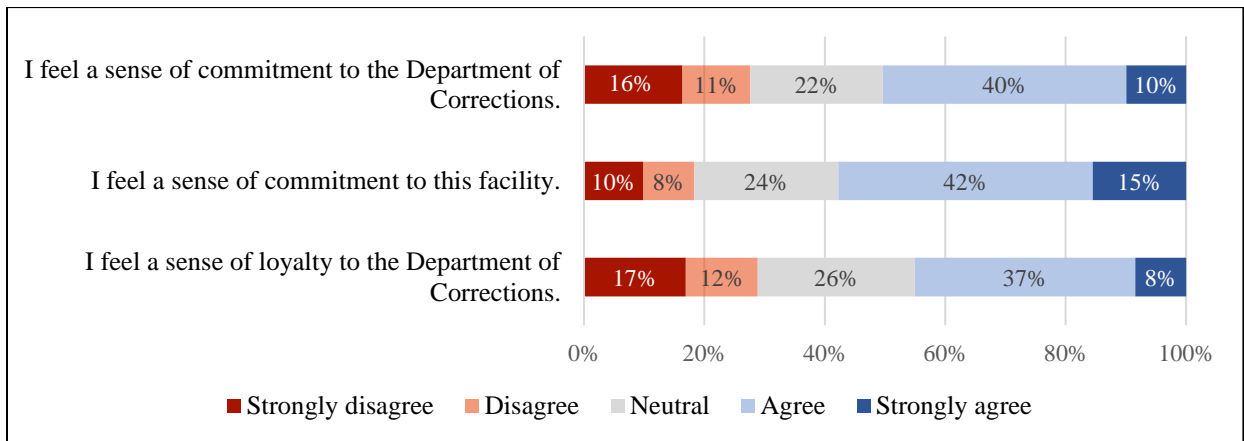
### Dimension 4: Relationships with supervisors/line managers (n=143)



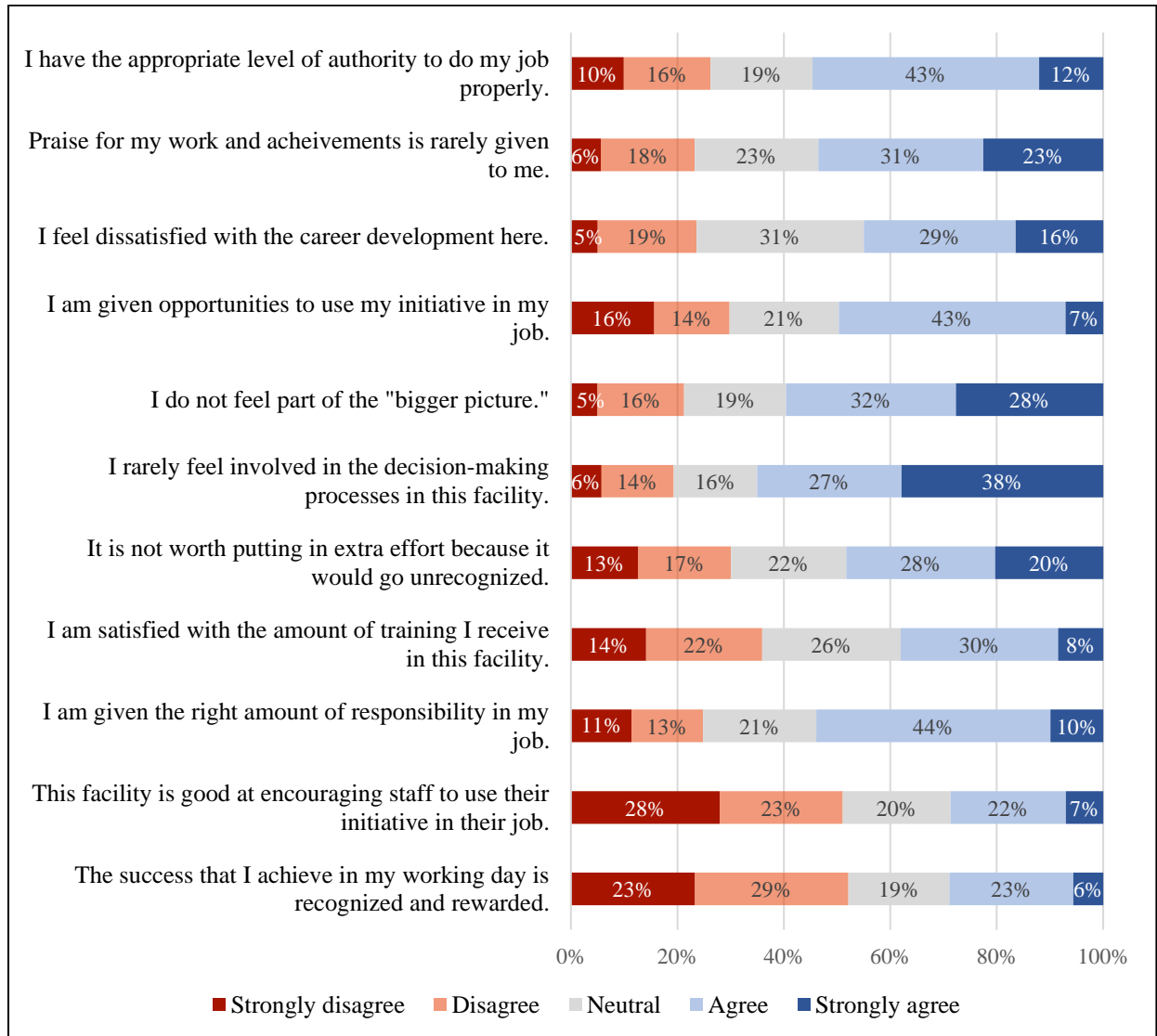
### Dimension 5: Relationship with the organization (n=143)



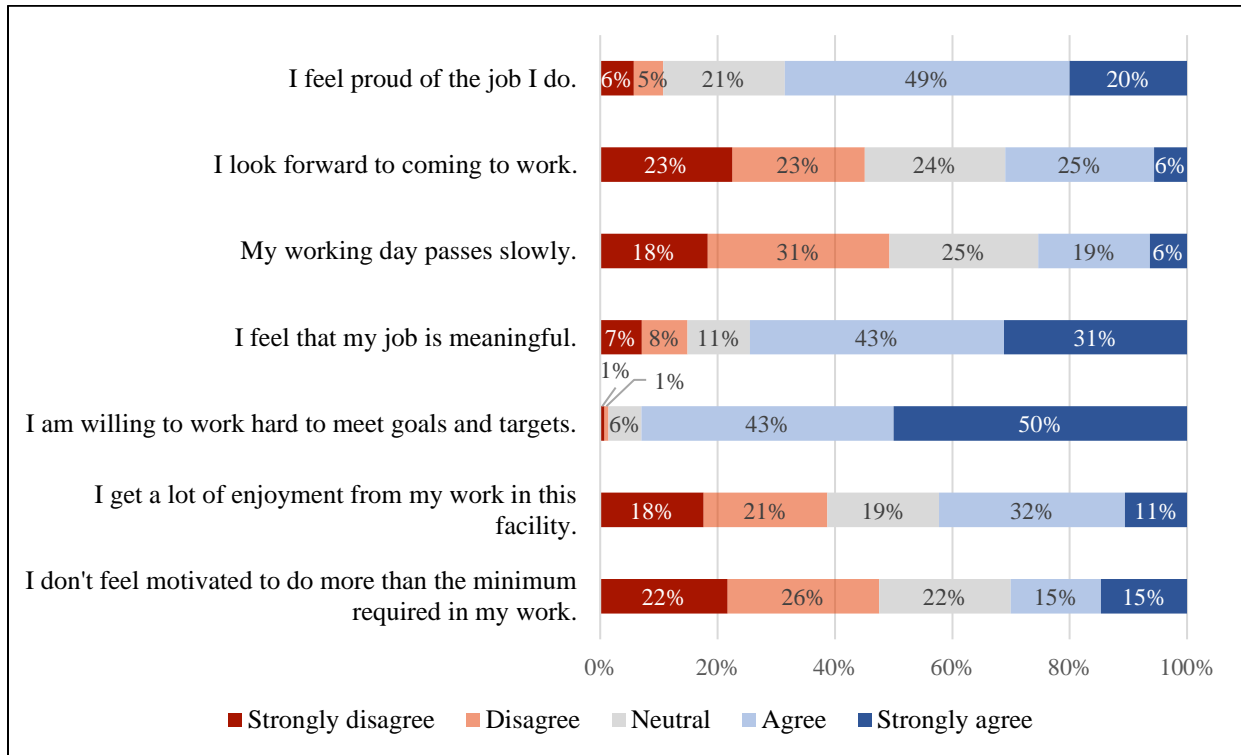
### Dimension 6: Commitment (n=142)



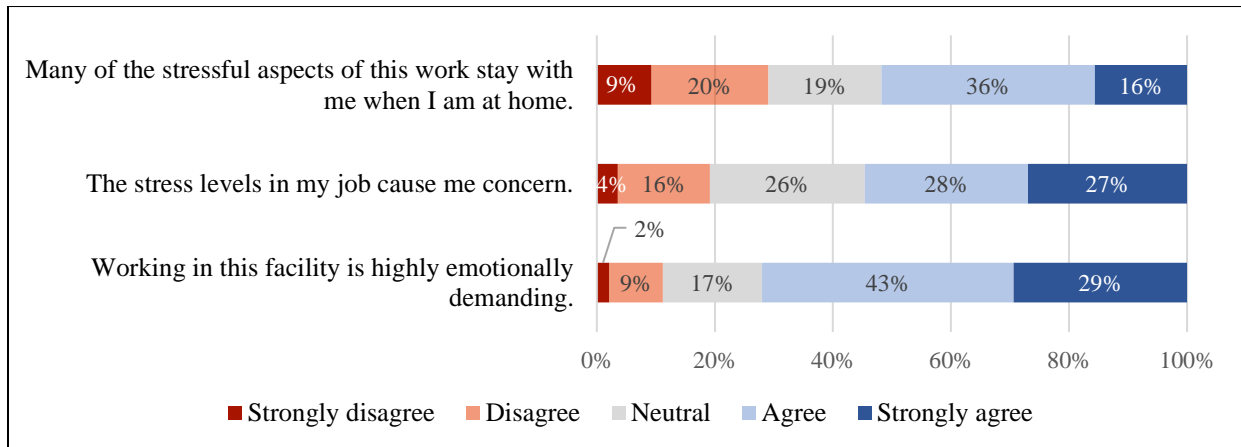
### Dimension 7: Recognition and personal efficacy (n=143)



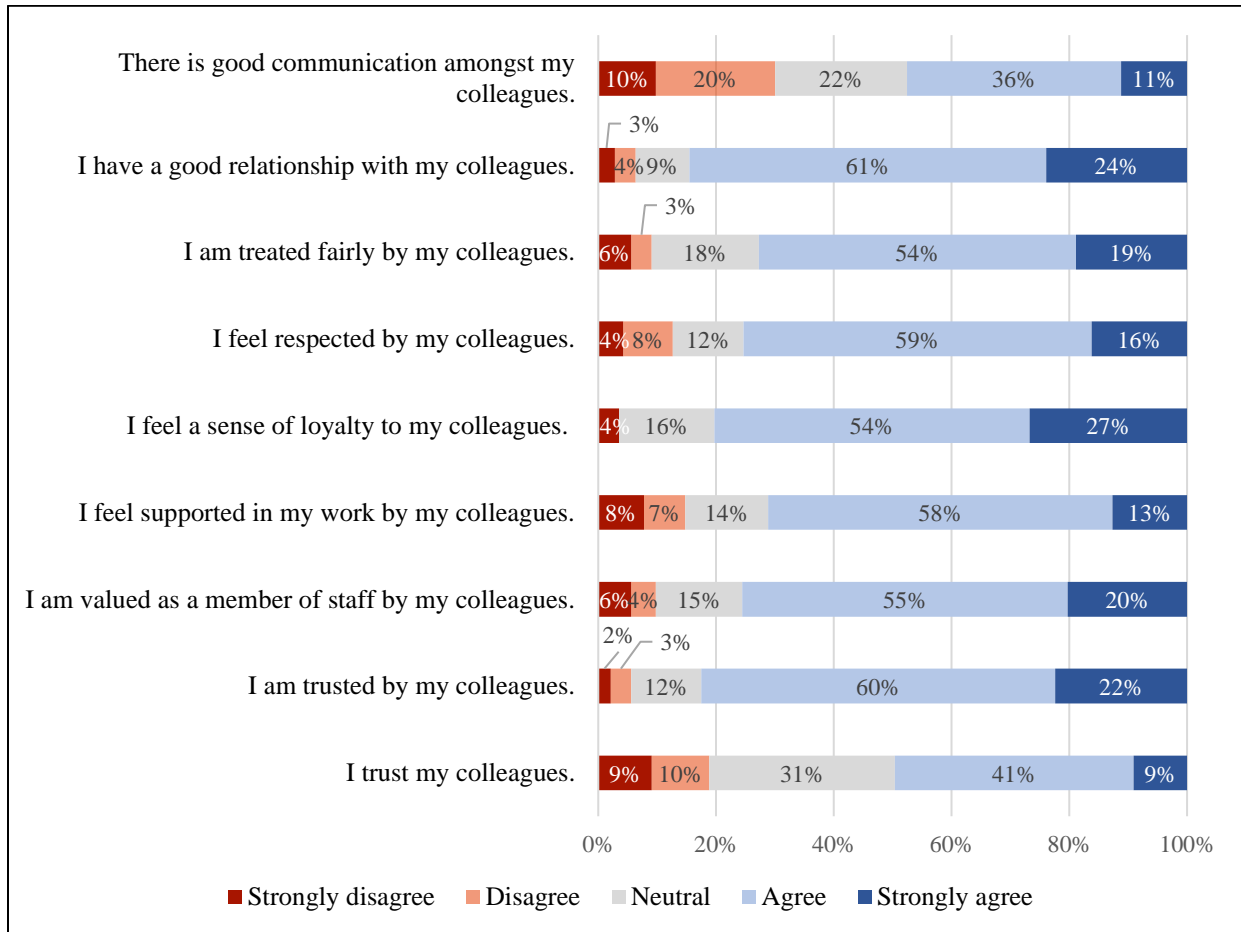
### Dimension 8: Involvement and motivation (n=143)



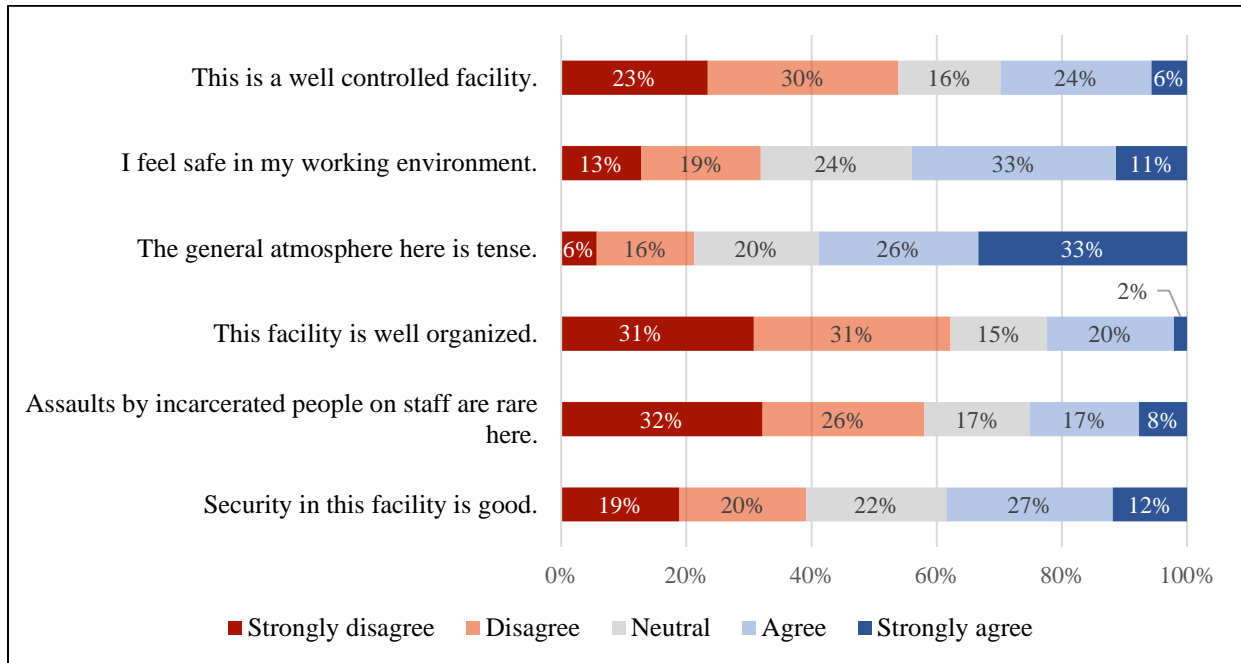
### Dimension 9: Stress (n=143)



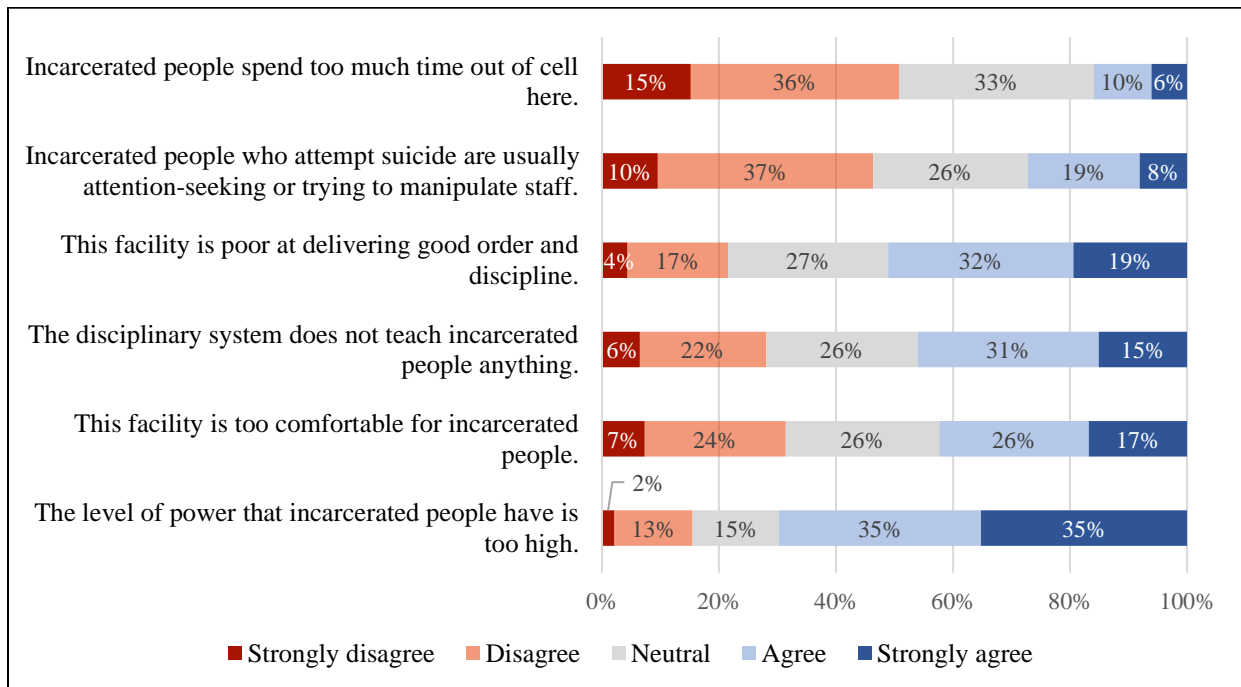
### Dimension 10: Relationships with colleagues (n=143)



### Dimension 11: Safety, control, and security (n=143)

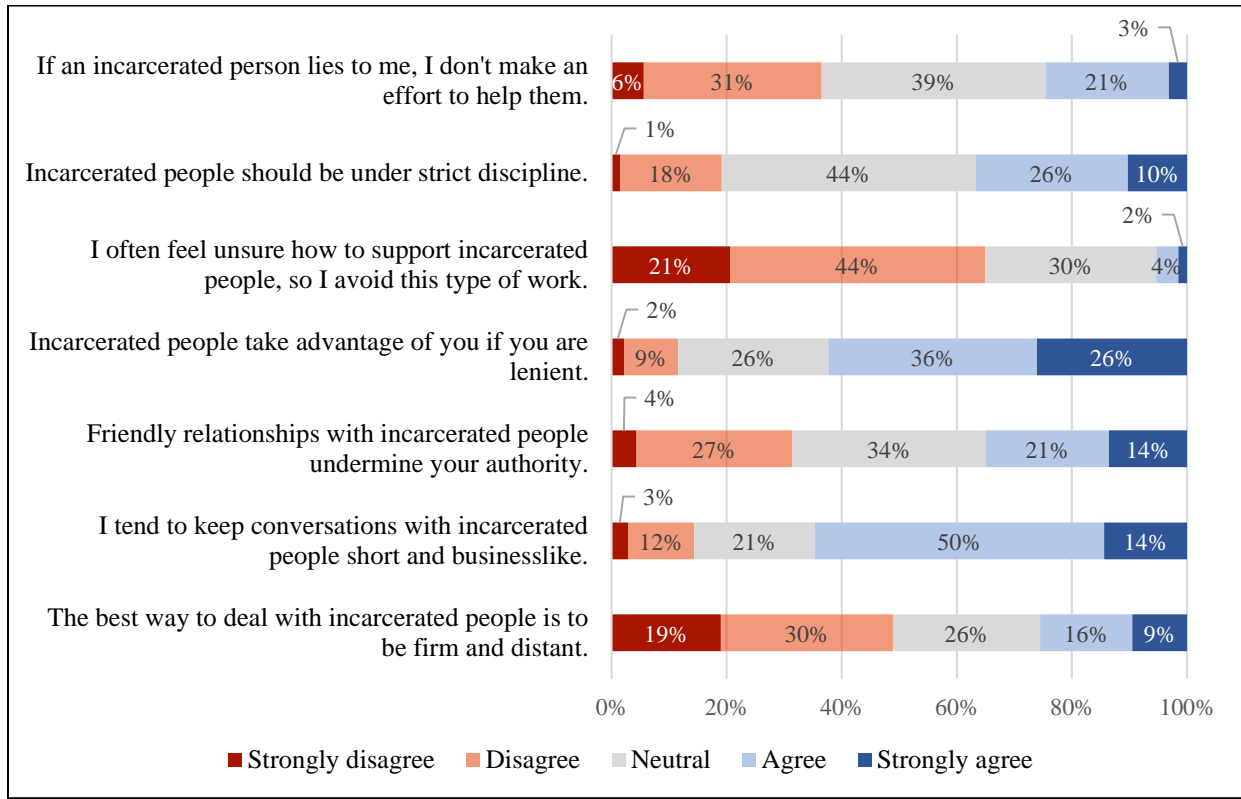


### Dimension 12: Punishment and discipline (n=142)

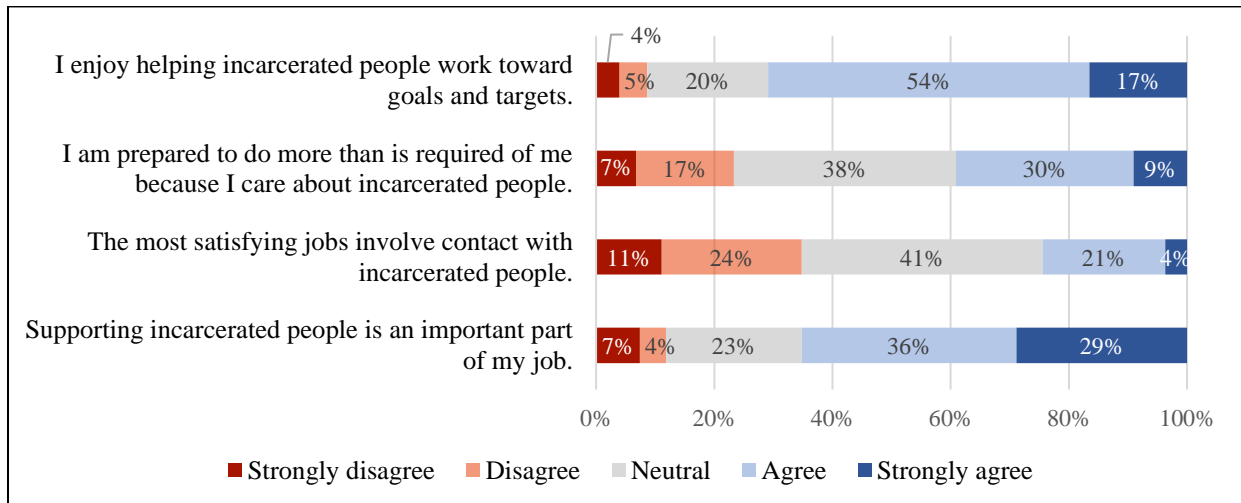




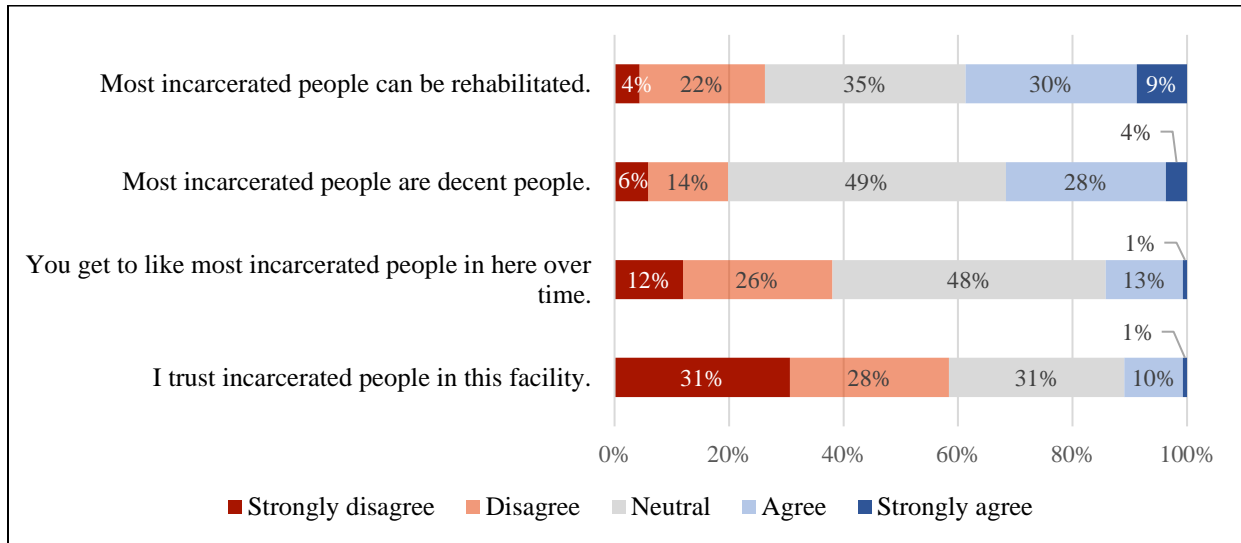
### Dimension 13: Dynamic authority (n=140)



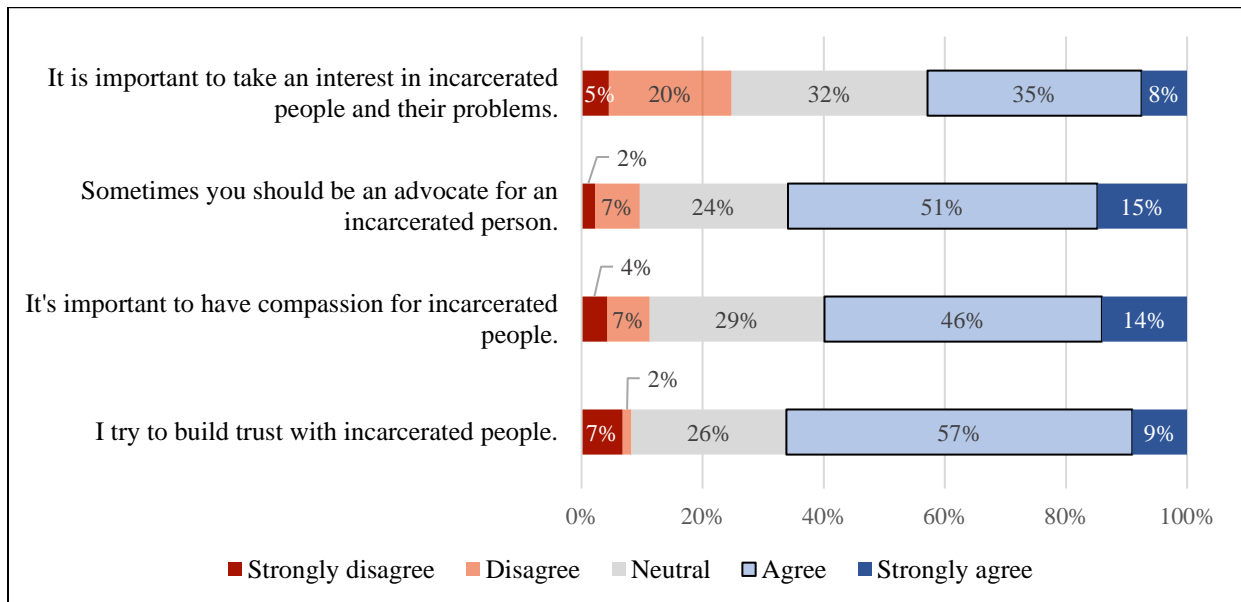
### Dimension 14: Professional support for incarcerated people (n=135)



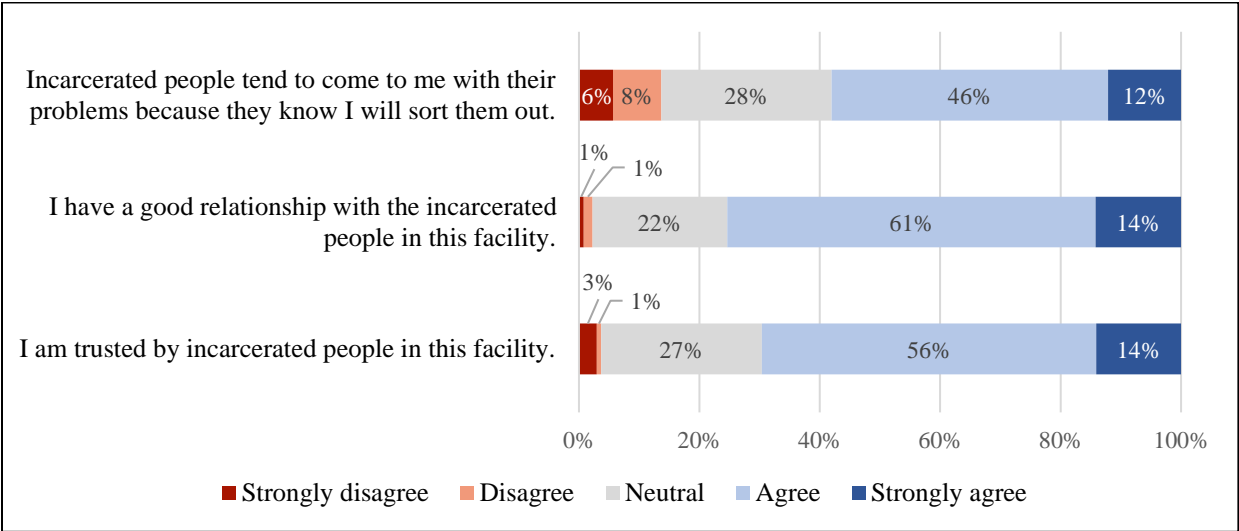
**Dimension 15: Positive attitudes towards incarcerated people (n=137)**



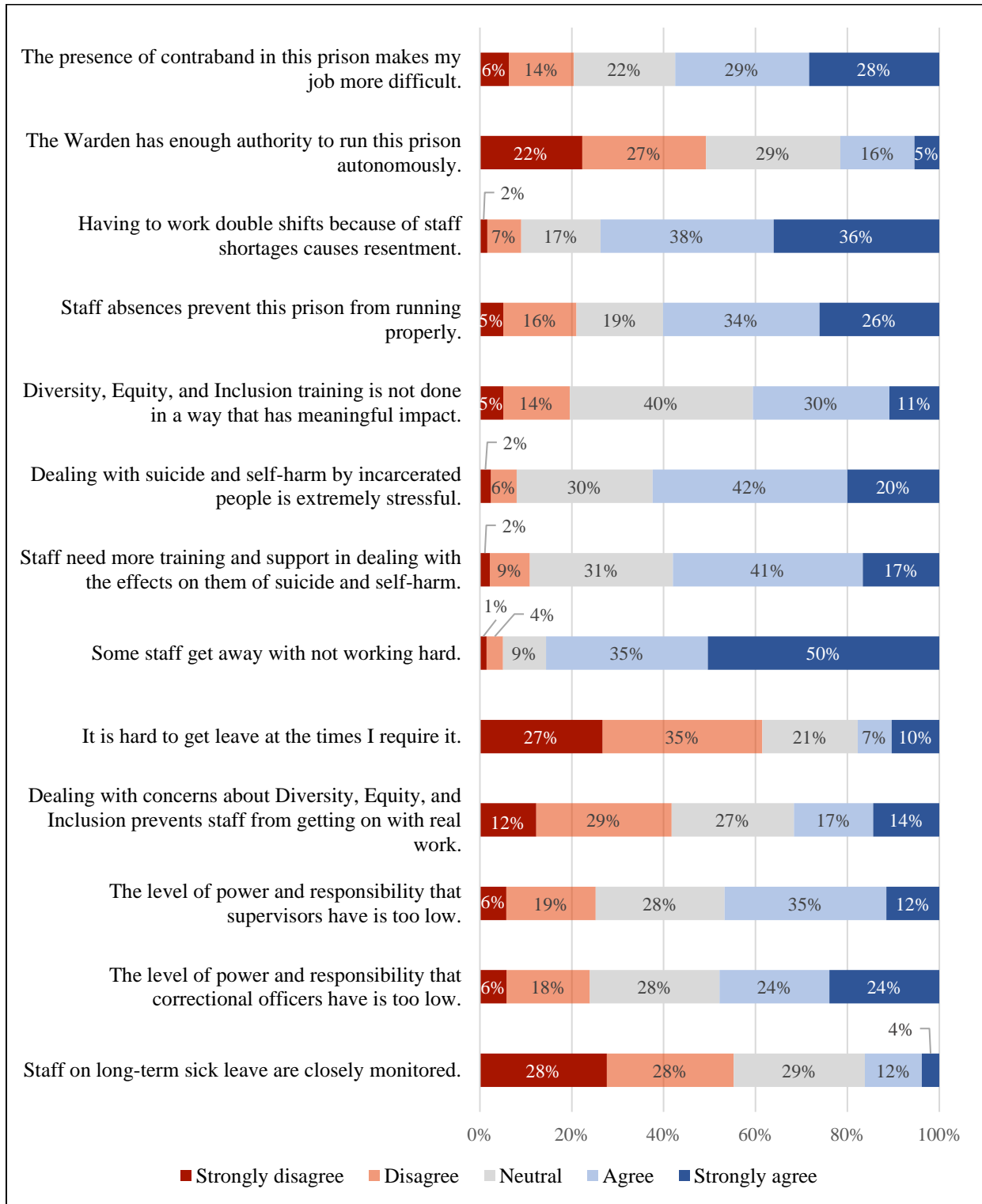
**Dimension 16: Trust, compassion, and commitment towards incarcerated people (n=142)**



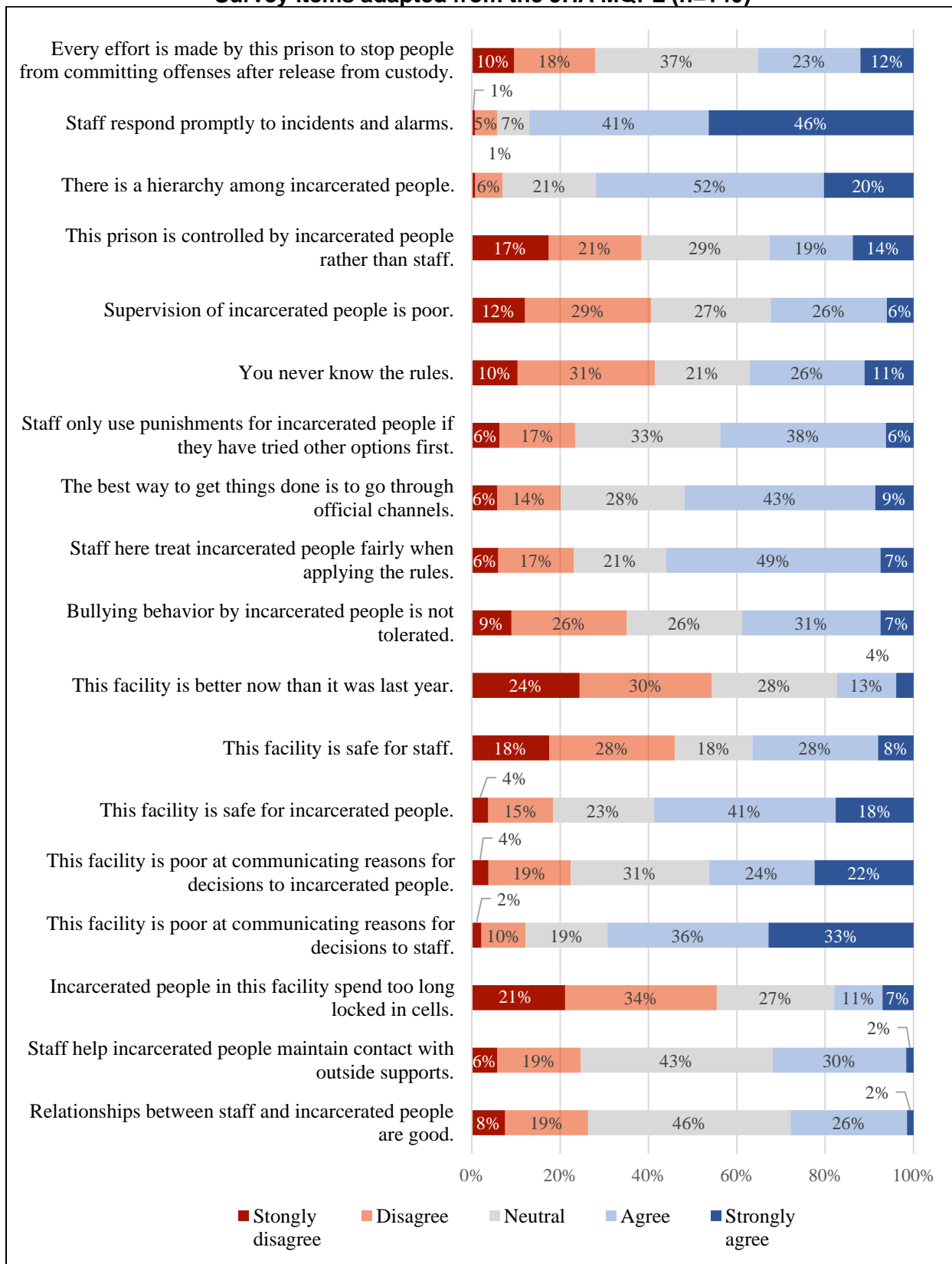
**Dimension 17: Relationships with incarcerated people (n=135)**



### Other Standalone Items (n=139)



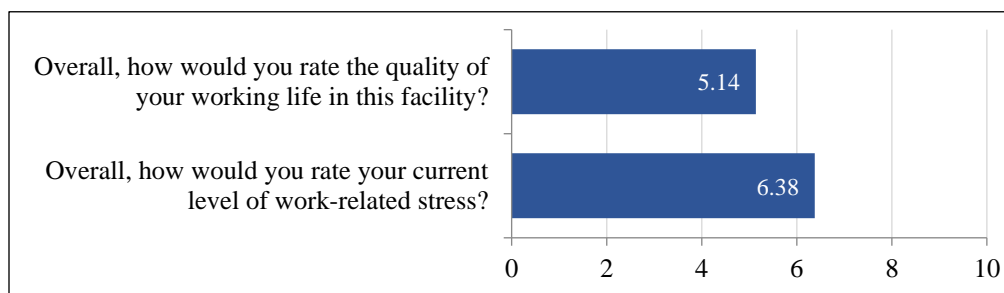
### Survey items adapted from the JHA MQPL (n=140)



# Overall Feedback

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to rate their overall quality of working life in the facility where they work and their current level of work-related stress on a 10-point scale with 1 being the lowest score and 10 the highest.

**Respondents' Overall Ratings (n=141)**





This report was compiled by JHA staff. Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz at (312) 291-9183 or [jvollen@thejha.org](mailto:jvollen@thejha.org)

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.

