
Survey Report



JHA IDOC-wide MQPL Survey Results 2022-2023

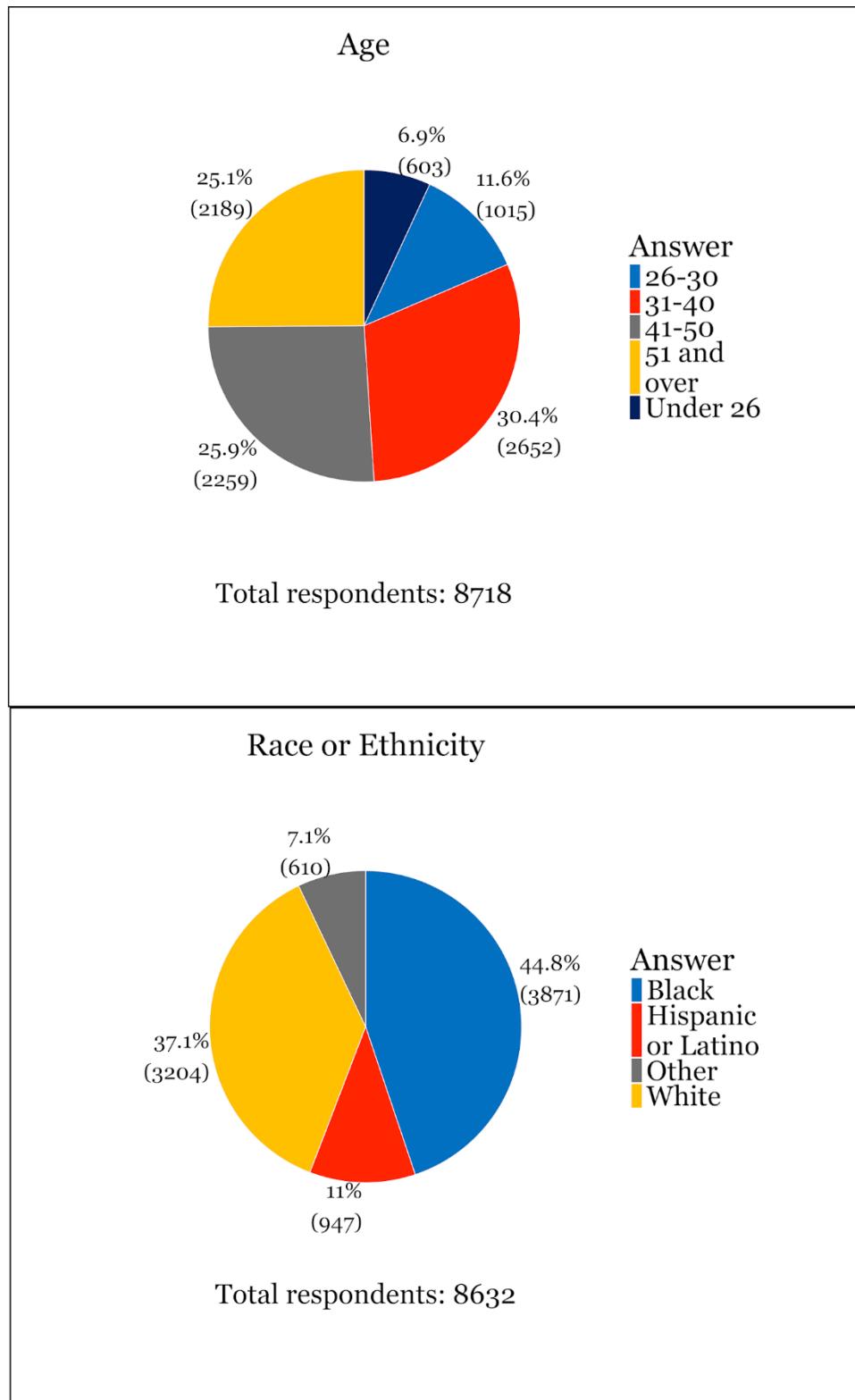
Introduction

In 2022-2023, 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 nearly every person incarcerated in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) had an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. The survey was rolled out over time, primarily between June 2022-June 2023, by prison. Reception and classification center and work release populations were not surveyed, leaving the total IDOC population surveyed at around 27,000 people.

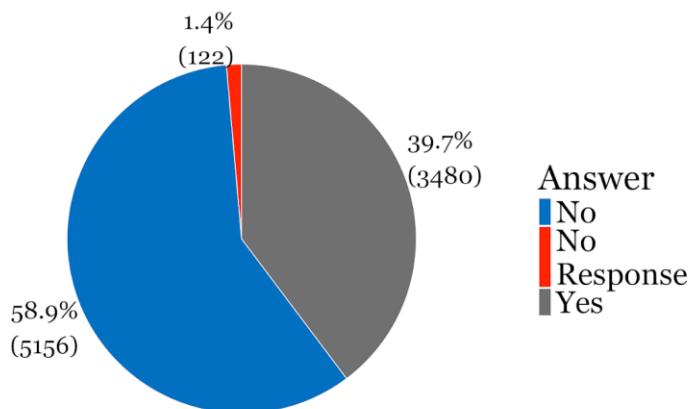
JHA received more than 8,700 responses to the MQPL survey from people incarcerated in IDOC, representing more than 30% of the surveyed static population. Total responses for IDOC are included in this report. The number of responses per question varies. [Individual prison results are also available.](#)

MQPL questions fall under various dimensions: harmony, professionalism, security, and well-being & development. JHA's survey also included questions on demographics of respondents as well as some questions JHA had asked in previous JHA surveys. Results are presented in this report first in chart format, followed by table format.

Charts: Demographic Information of Respondents

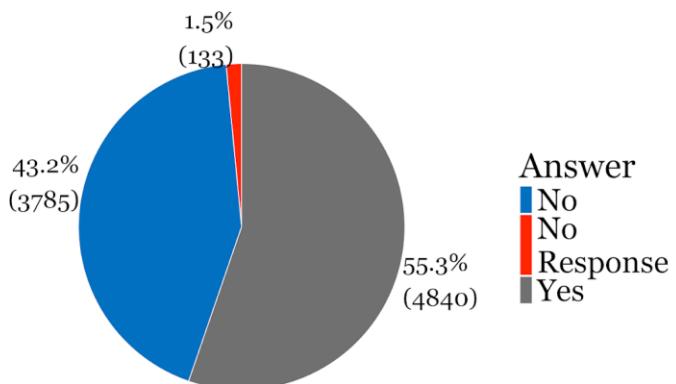


Are you within two years of release?



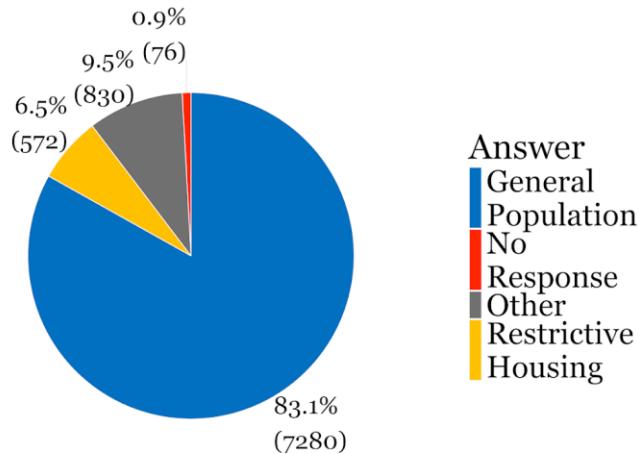
Total respondents: 8758

Were you first incarcerated prior to age 25?



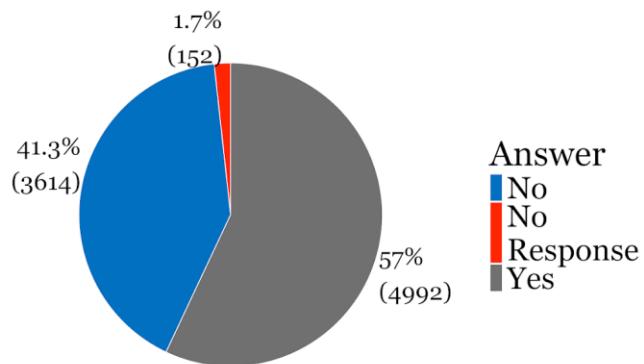
Total respondents: 8625

What housing status are you currently on?



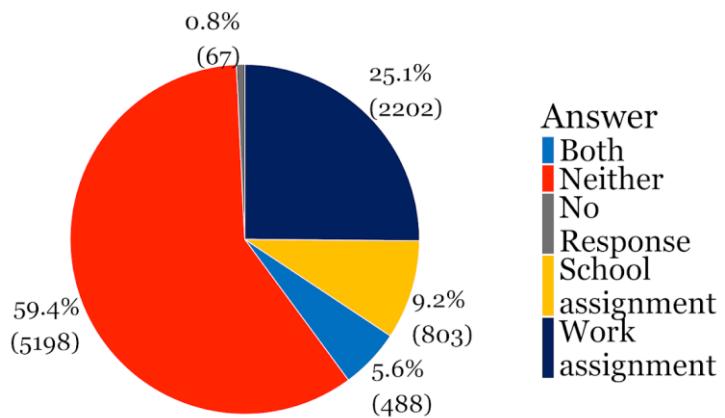
Total respondents: 8682

Are you currently getting at least two hours a day out of your cell or sleeping area?



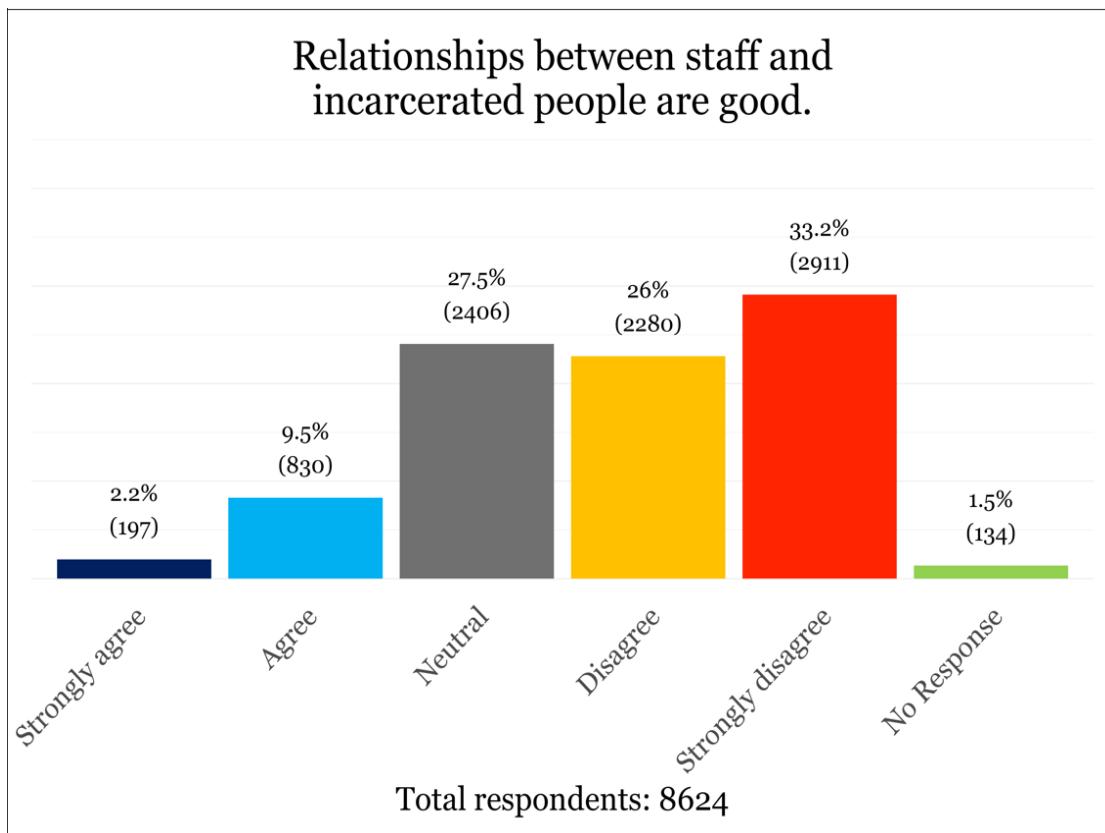
Total respondents: 8606

Do you have a work or school assignment?

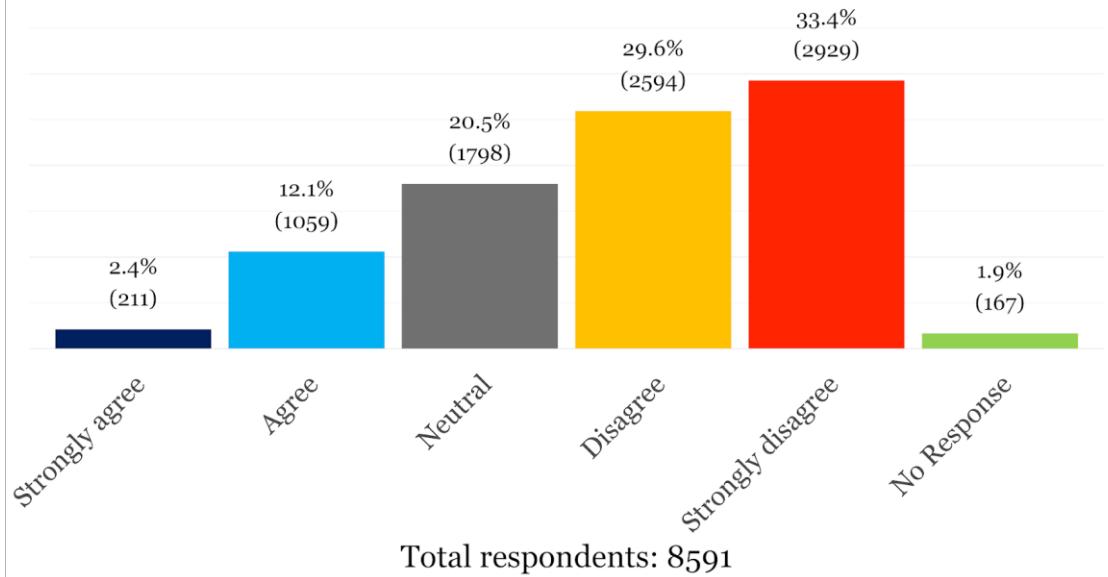


Total respondents: 8691

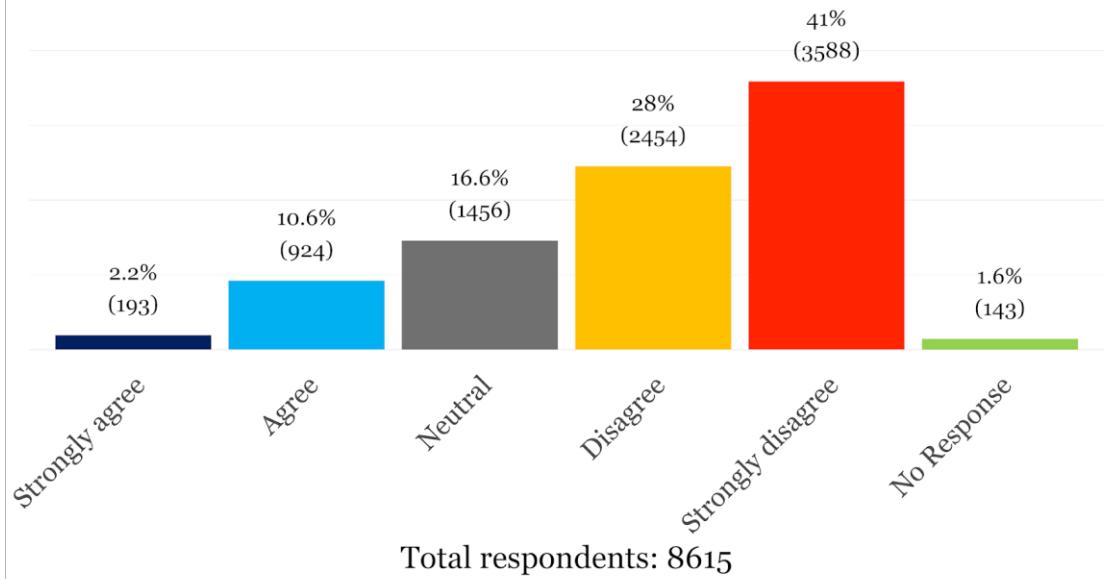
Charts: MQPL Survey Questions



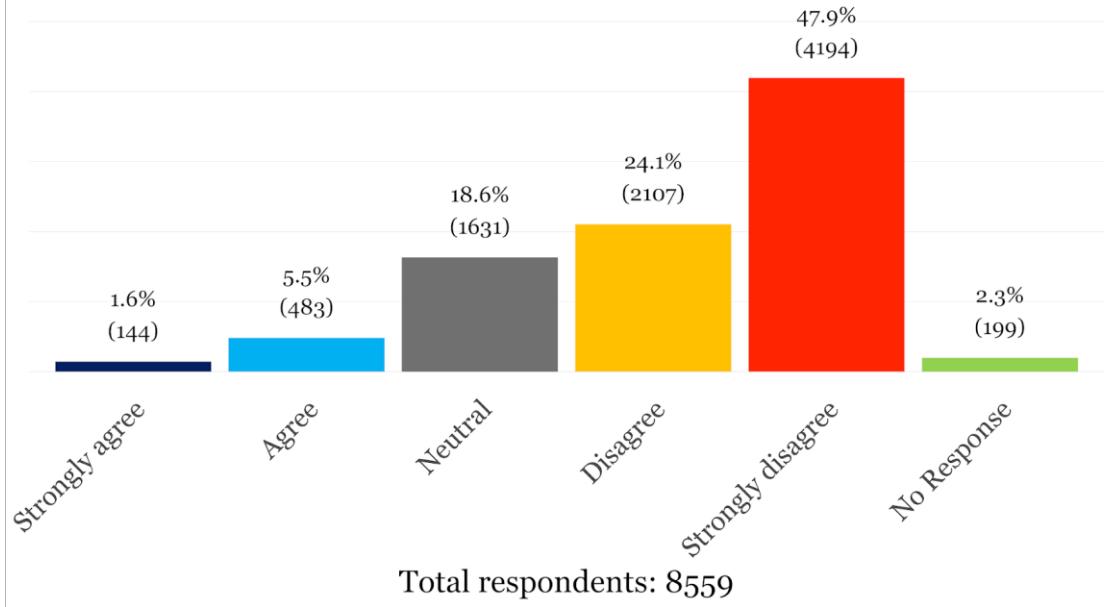
I receive support from staff when I need it.



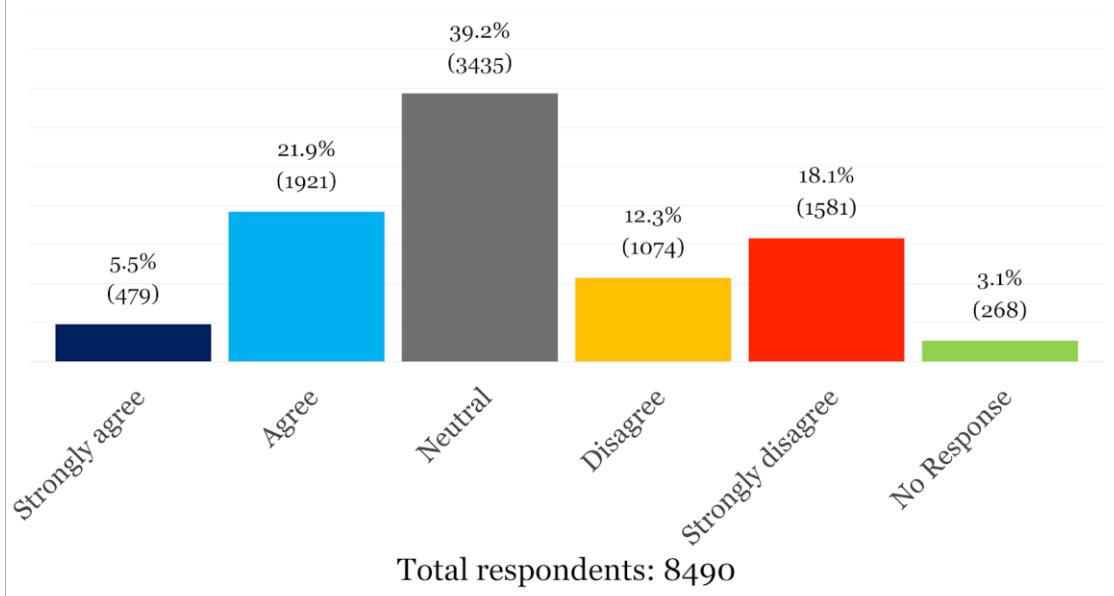
Staff here treat incarcerated people fairly when applying the rules.



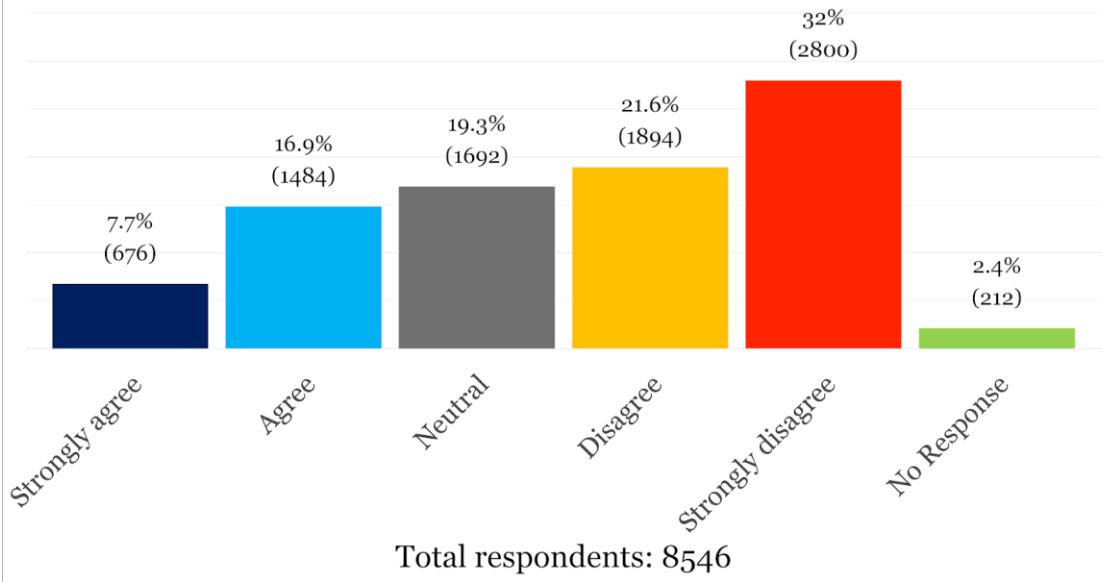
I trust the officers.



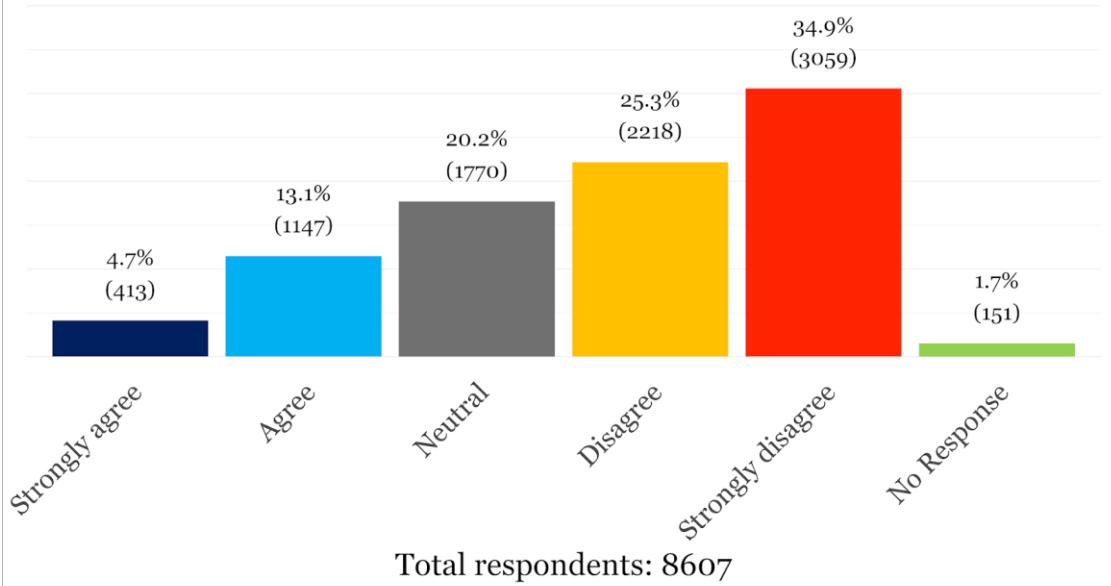
I get along well with the officers on my unit.



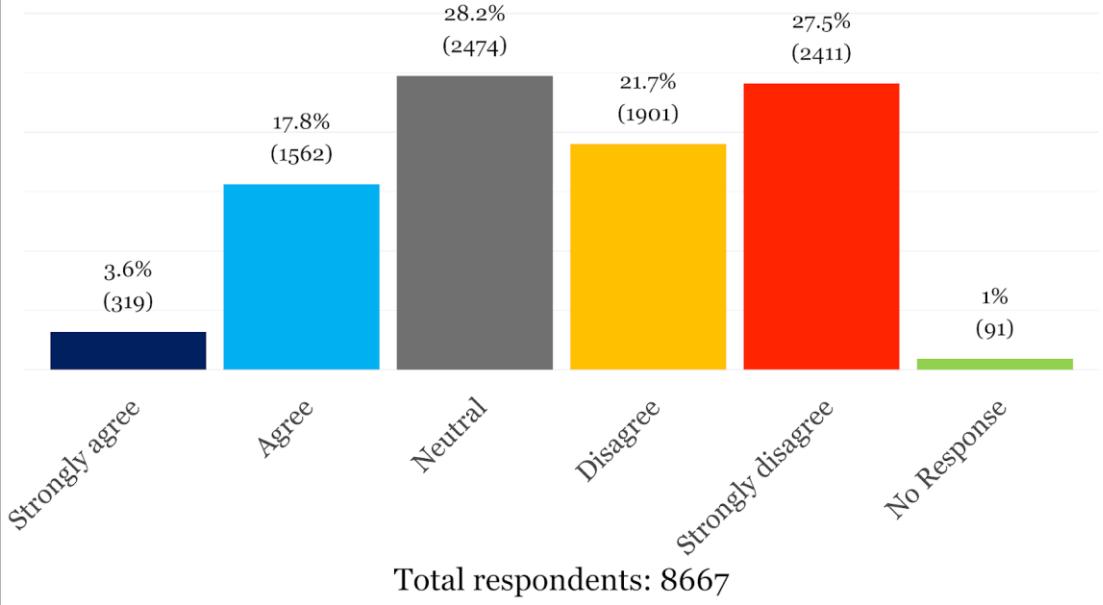
The best way to get things done is to go through official channels.



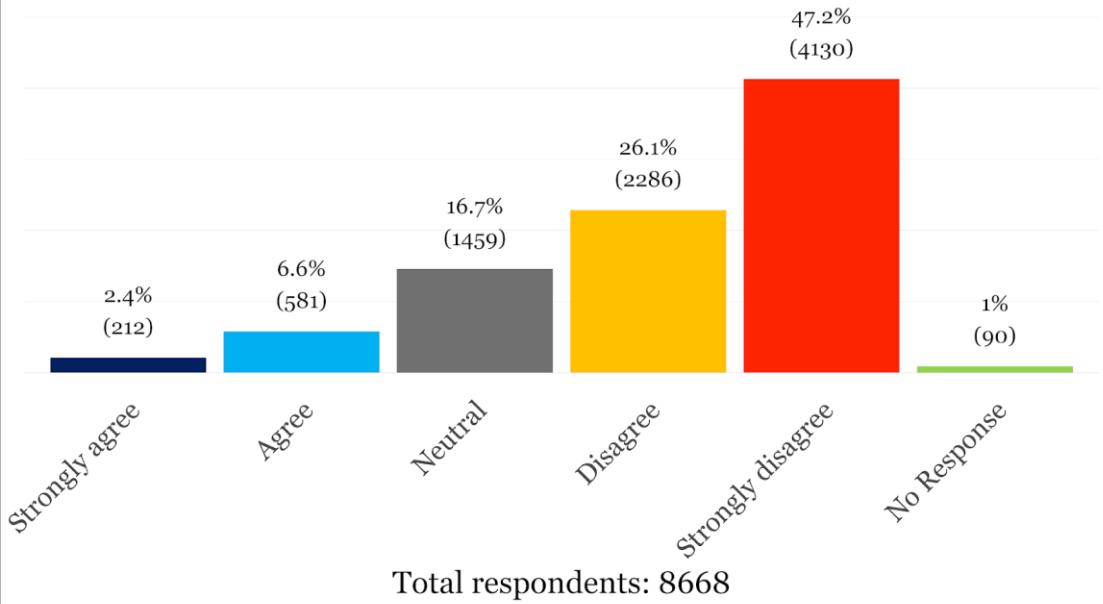
I have been helped significantly by a staff member with a particular problem.



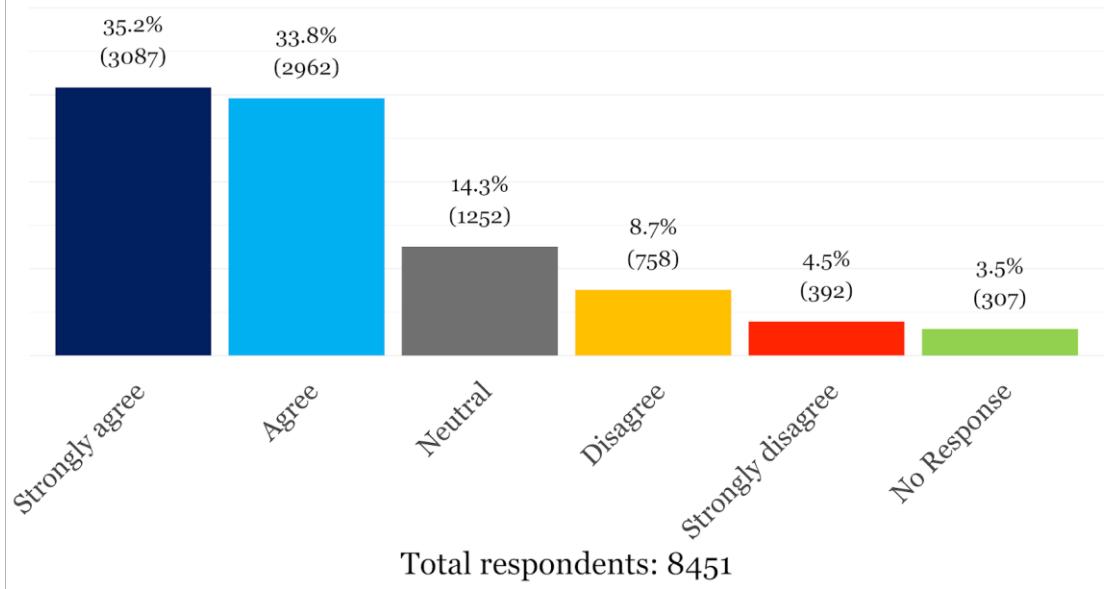
Overall, I am treated fairly by staff.



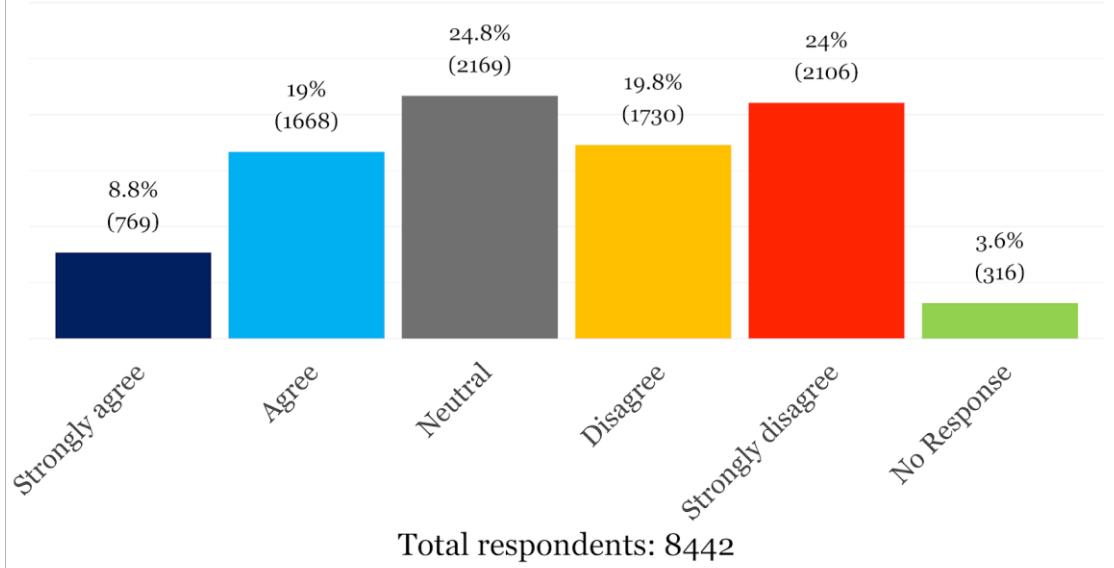
I am treated as a person of value.



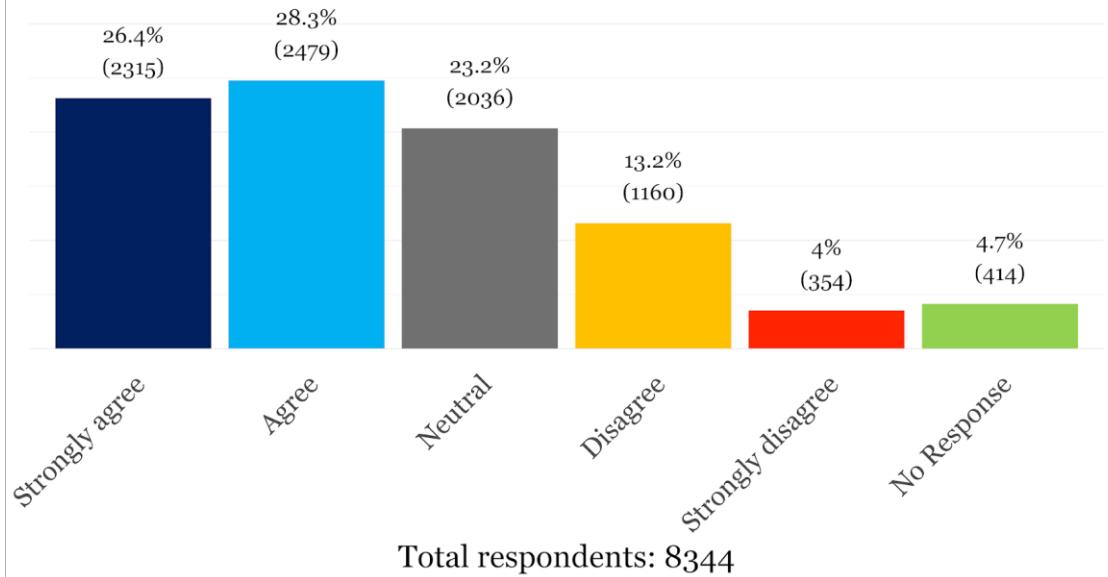
Some of the treatment I receive is degrading.



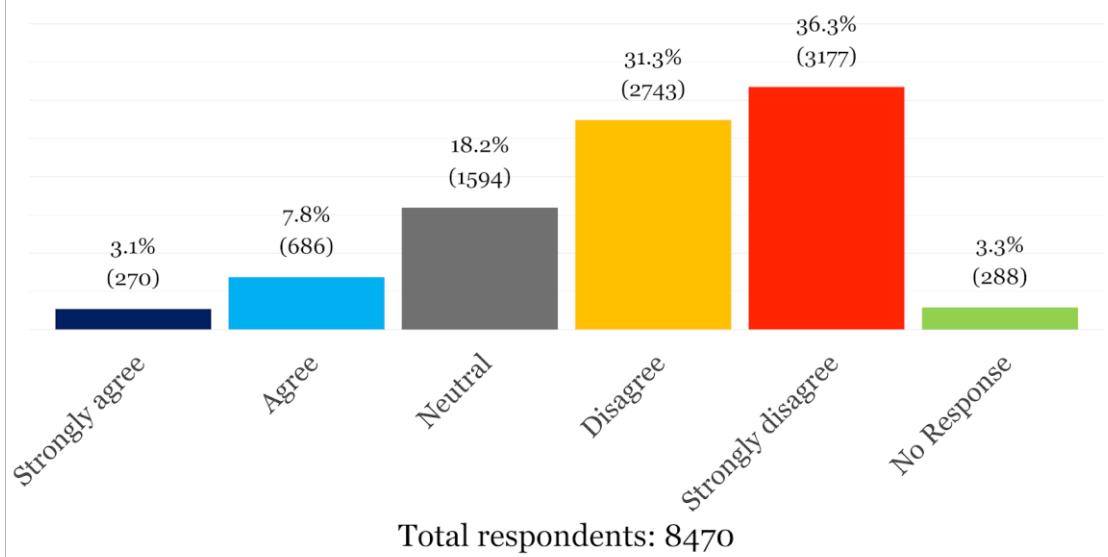
I feel safe from being injured, bullied, or threatened by other incarcerated people.



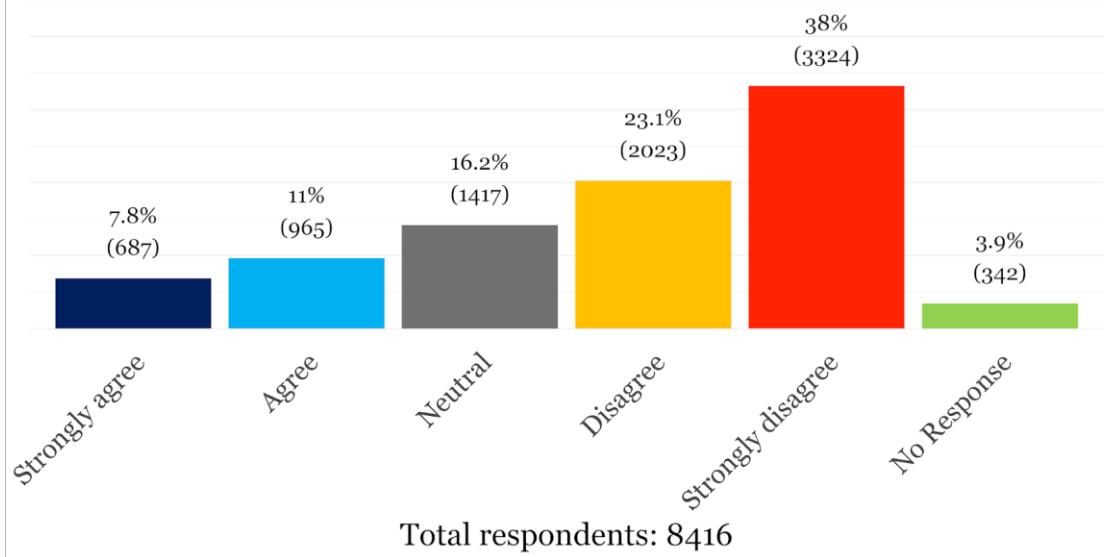
To improve my situation, I have to meet impossible expectations.



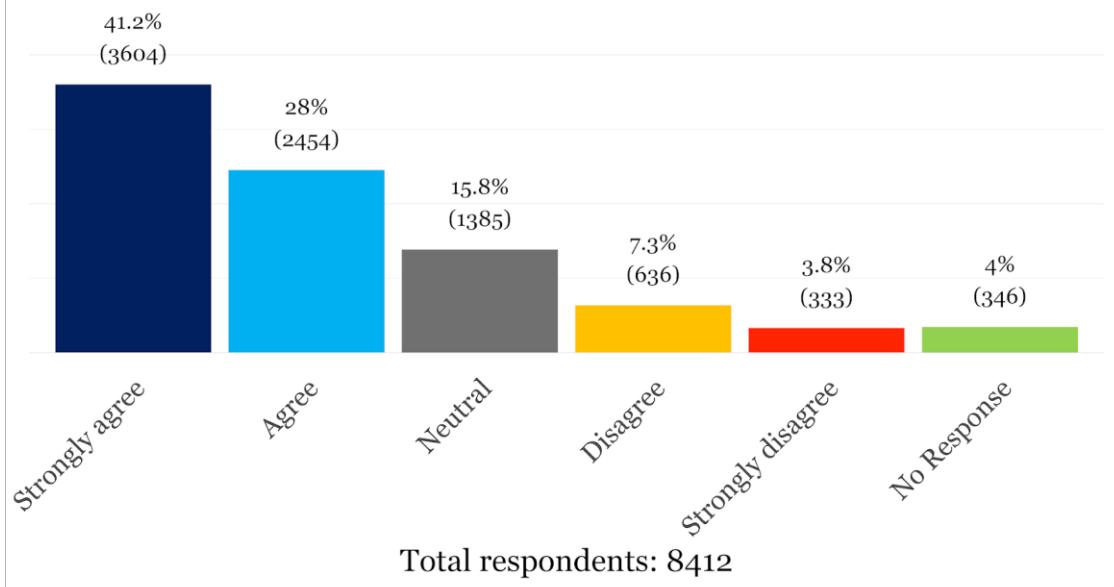
Staff have enough experience and expertise to deal with issues that matter to me.



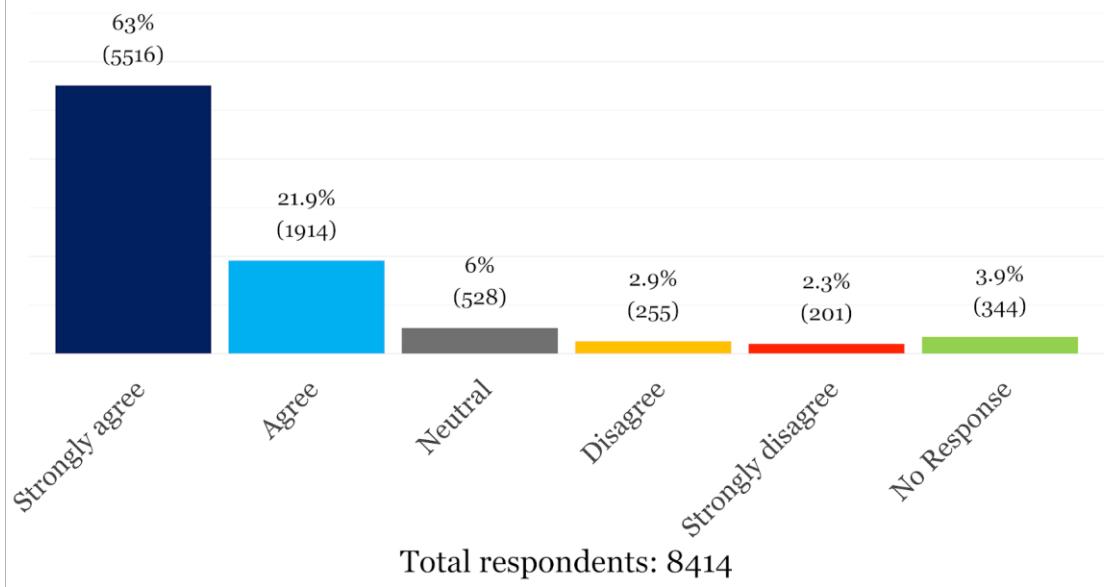
If you do something wrong, staff only use punishments if they have tried other options first.



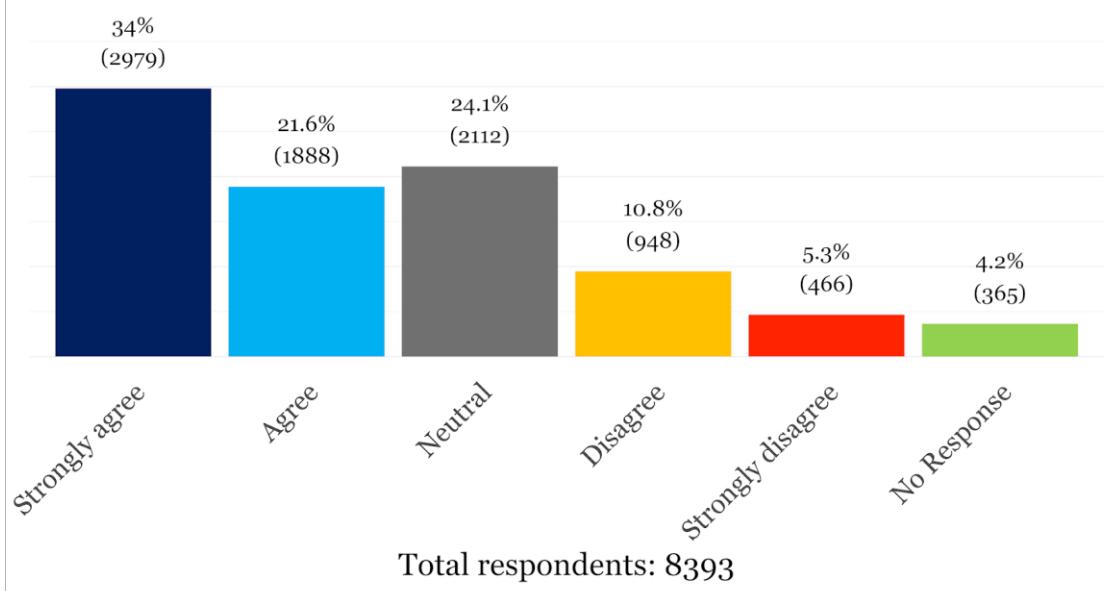
Staff are argumentative towards incarcerated people.



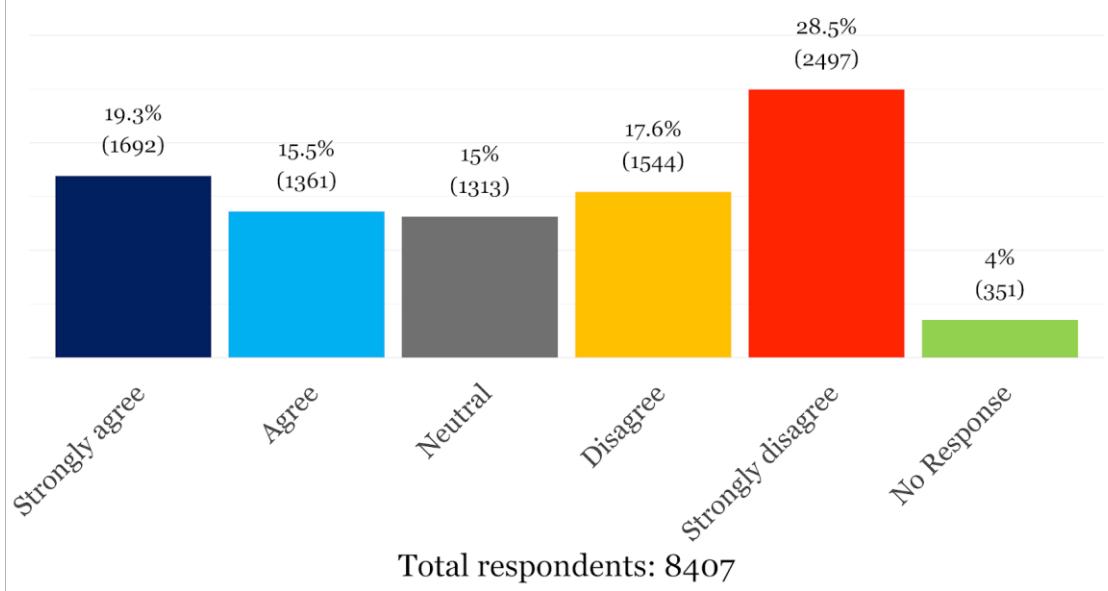
To get things done, you have to ask and ask and ask.



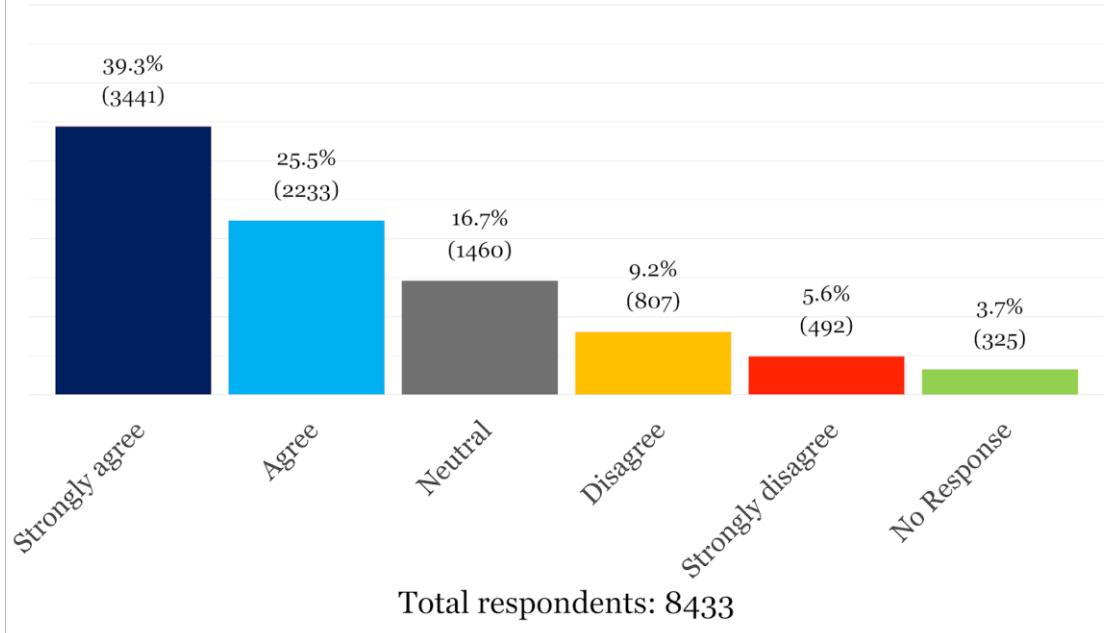
Supervision of incarcerated people is poor.



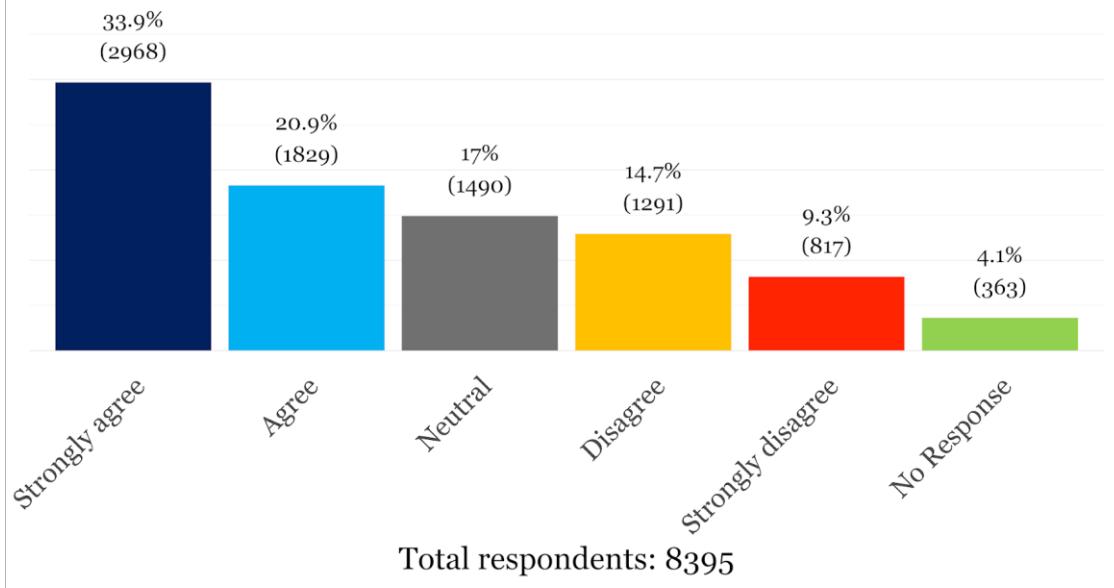
The environment encourages me to think about and plan for my release.



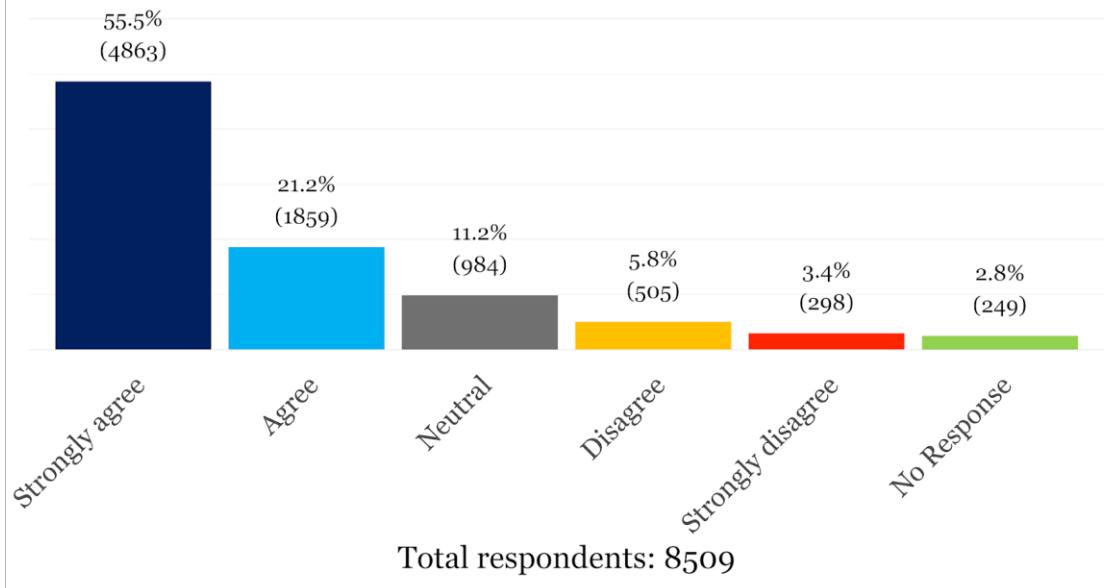
Positive things only happen for a certain type of people.



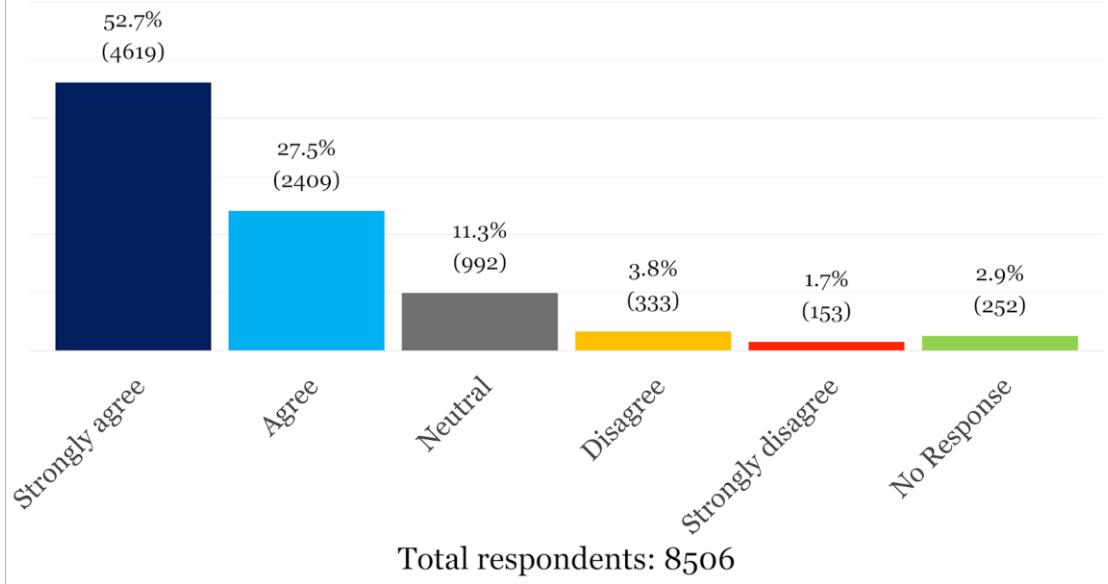
I can't improve my situation through good behavior.



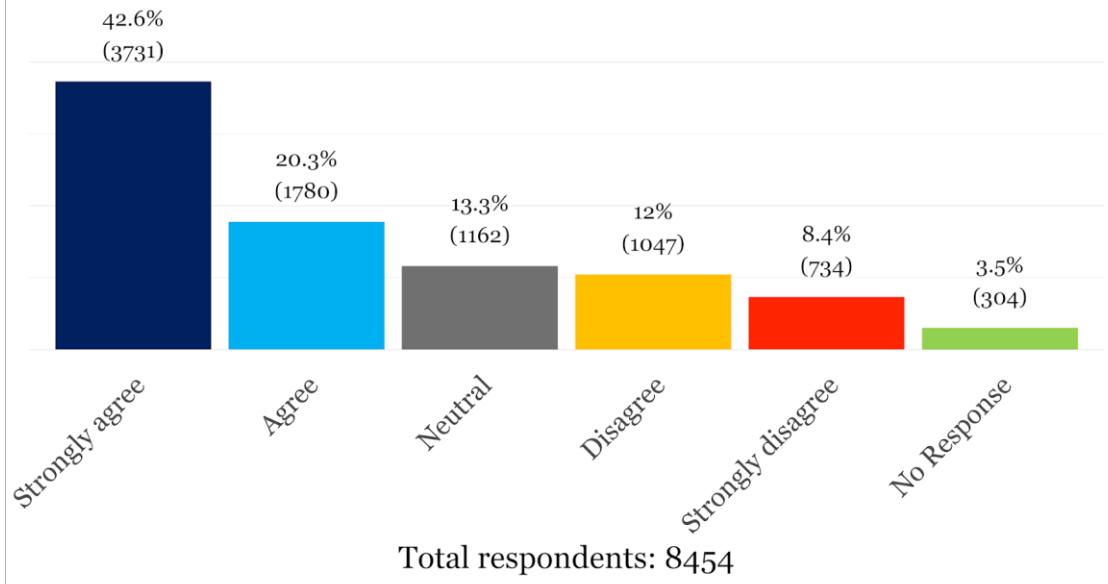
My experience of imprisonment in this particular prison has been stressful.



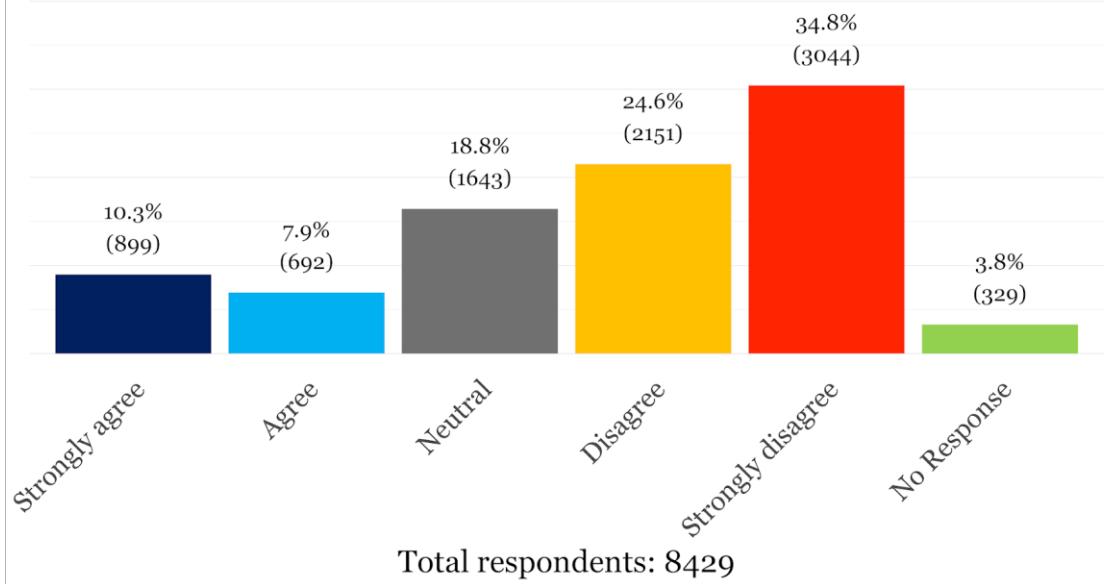
I have to be careful about everything I do, or it can be used against me.



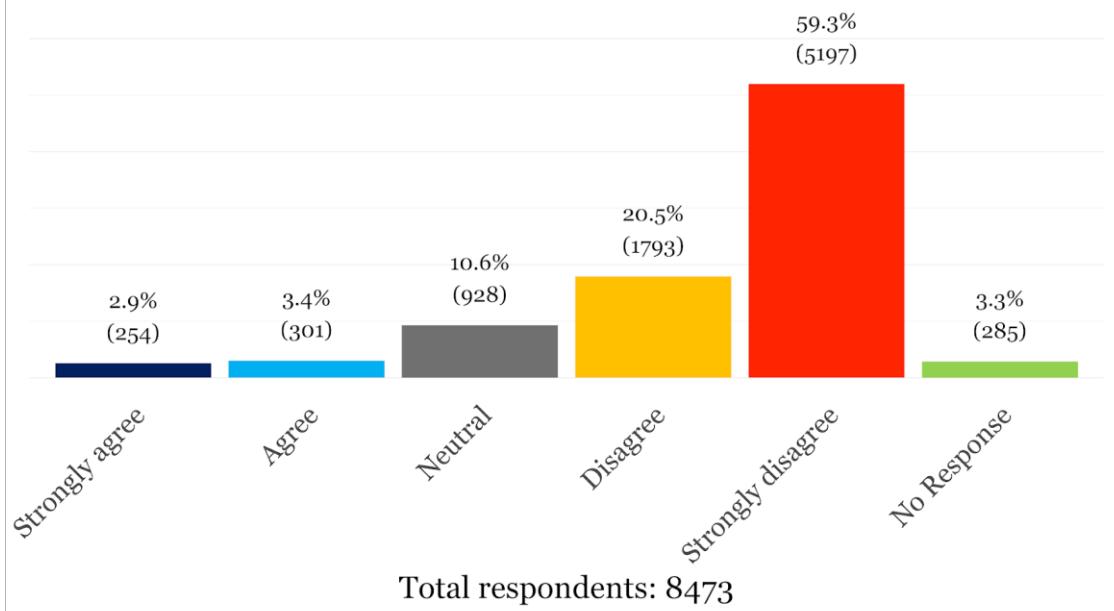
On the whole, I am just doing time rather than using my time.



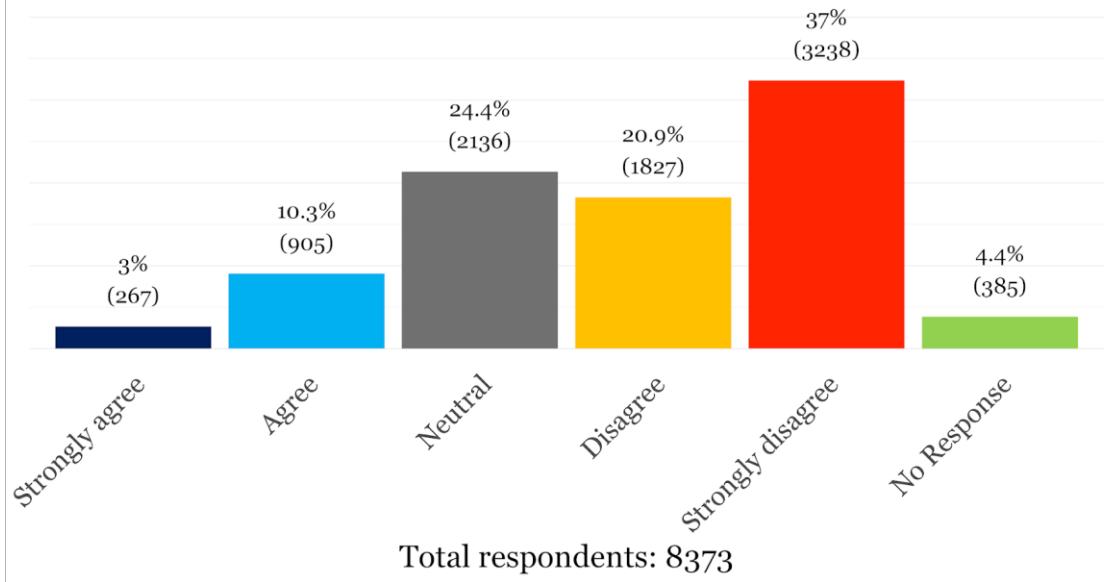
This prison is controlled by incarcerated people rather than staff.



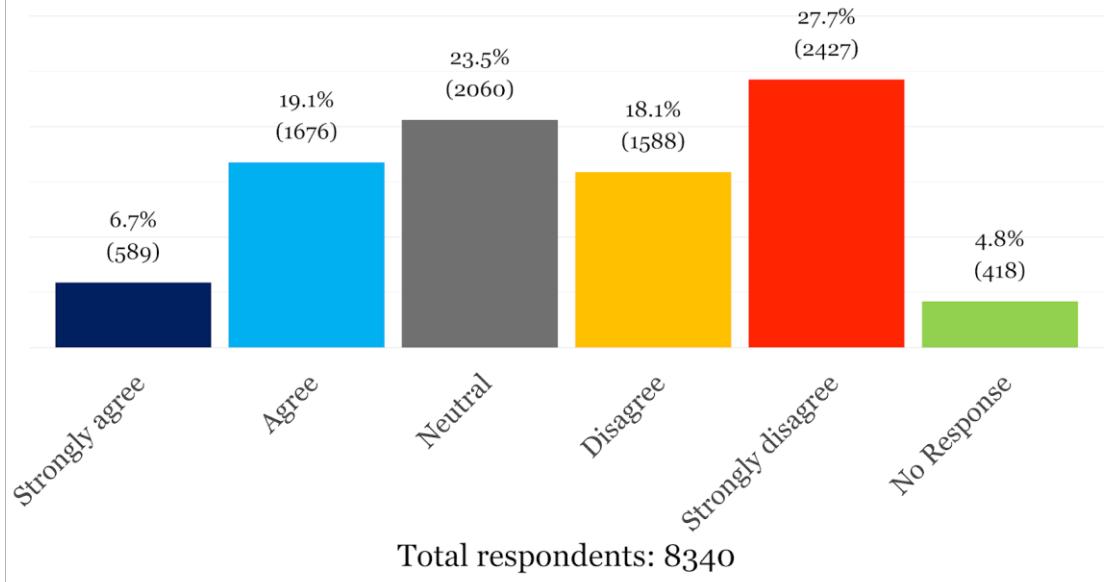
This prison is well organized.



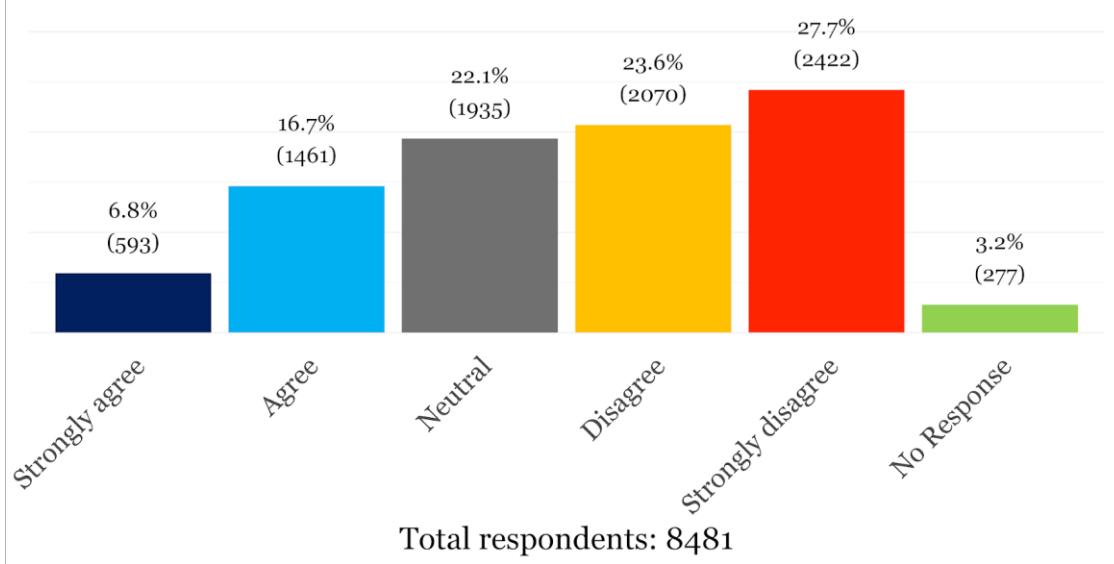
I feel that I am treated with respect by staff.



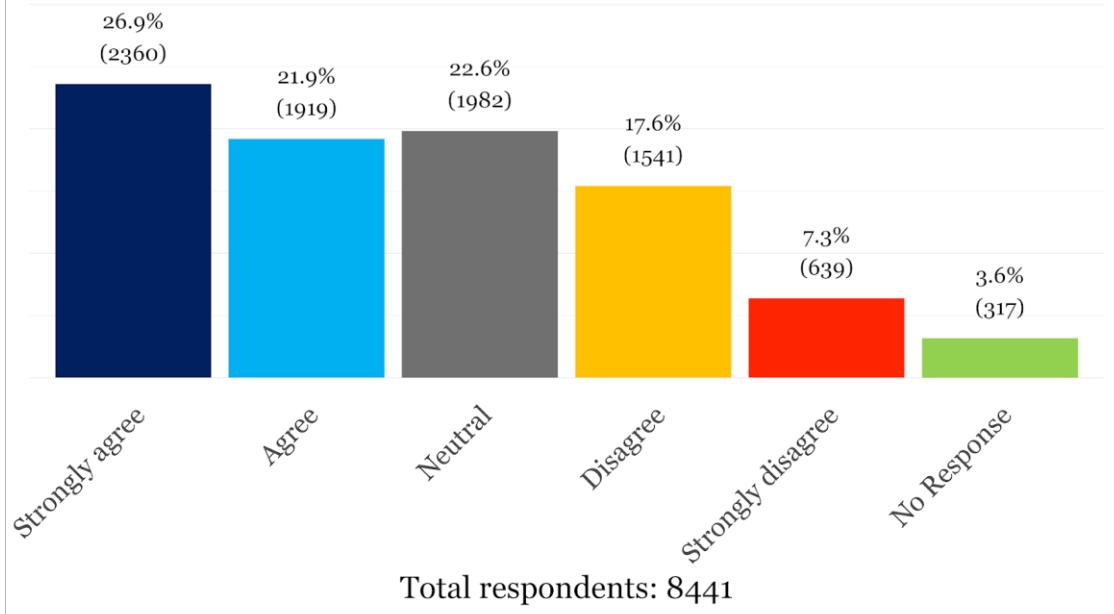
Staff respond promptly to incidents and alarms.



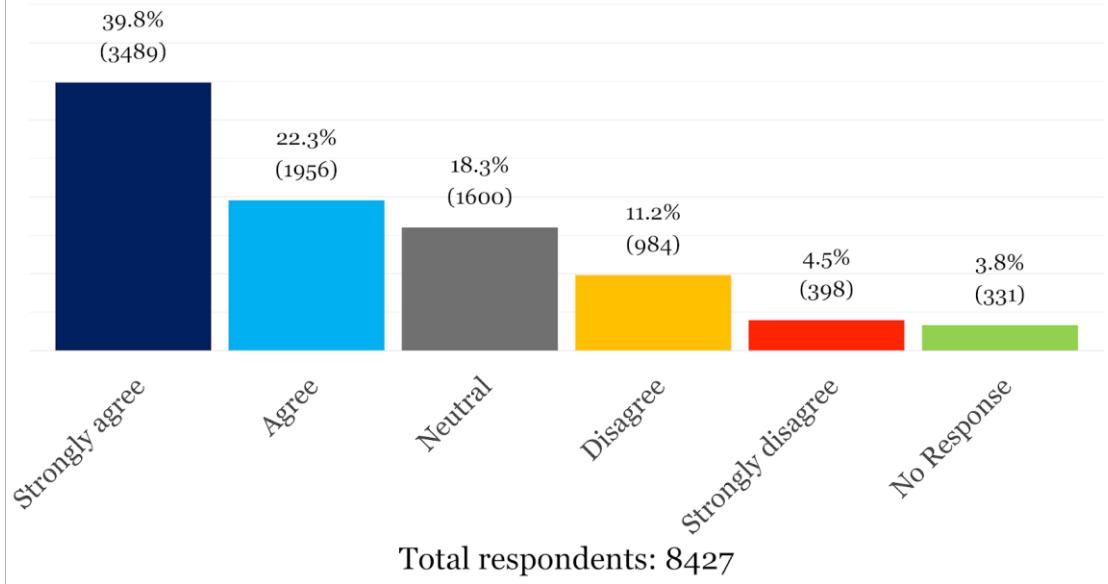
When I need to get something done, I can normally get it done by talking to someone face to face.



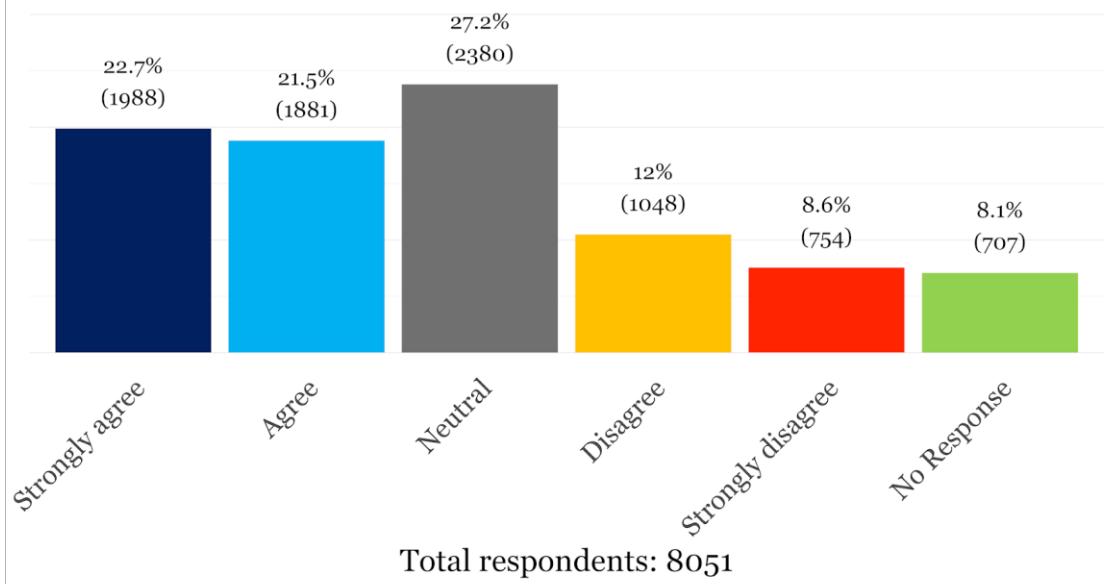
You never know the rules.



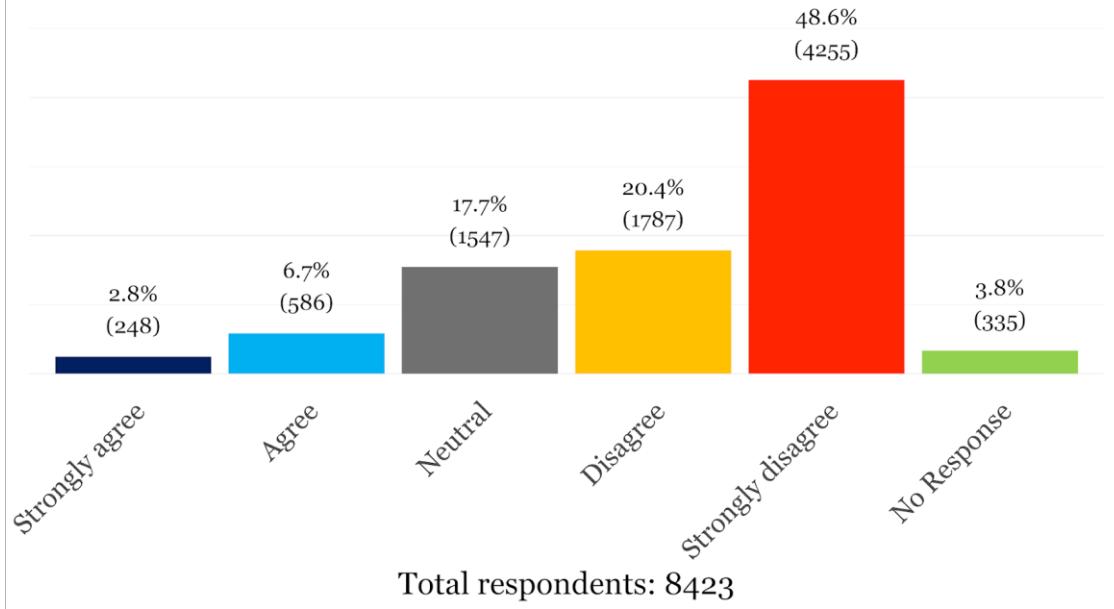
My experience in this prison is painful.



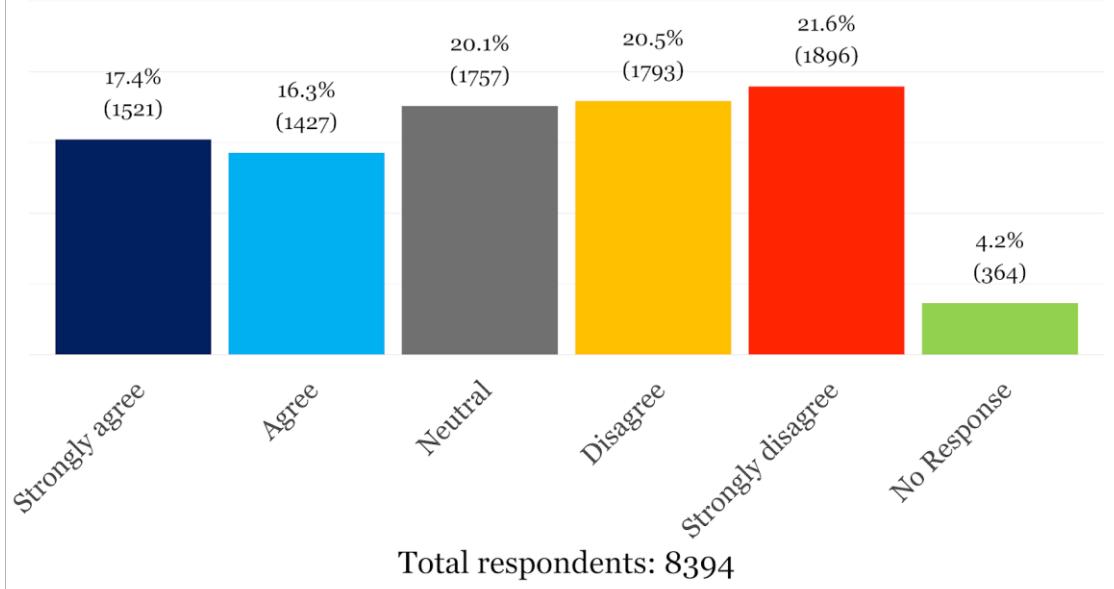
There is a hierarchy among incarcerated people.



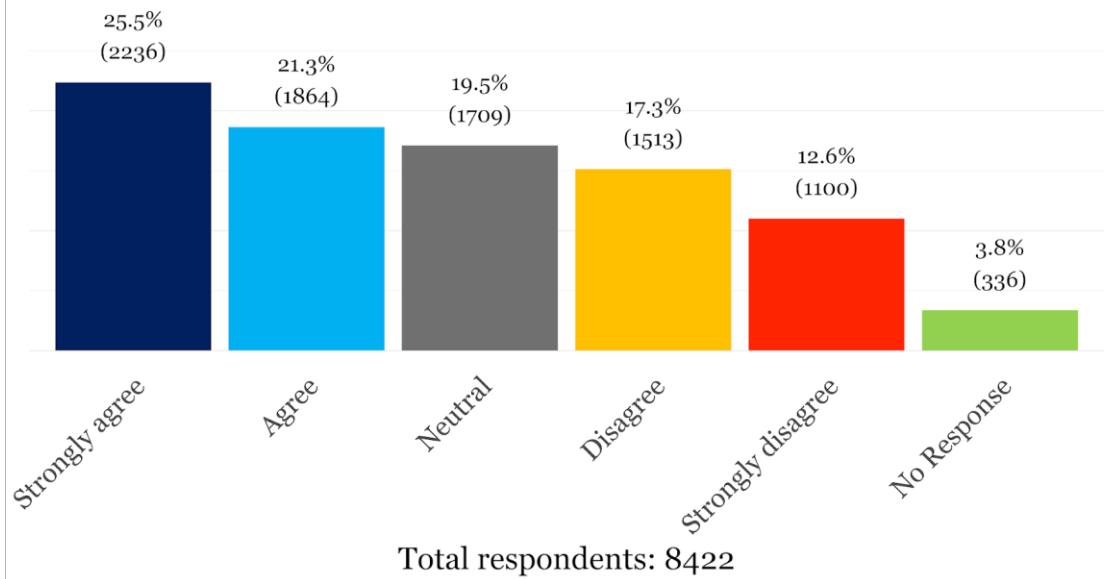
The disciplinary system is fair.



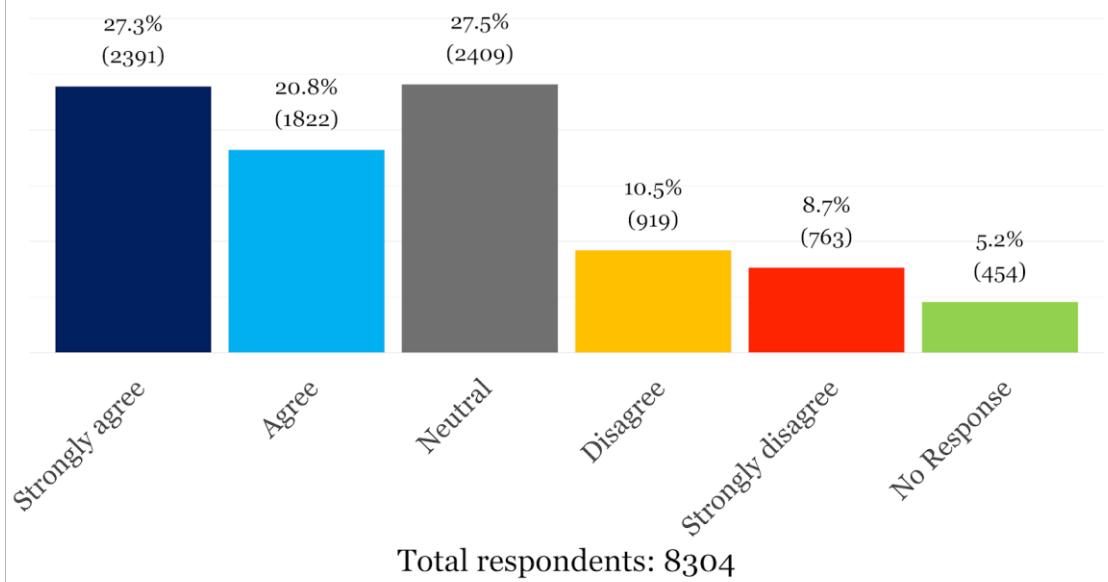
There are a few incarcerated people who run things on this unit.



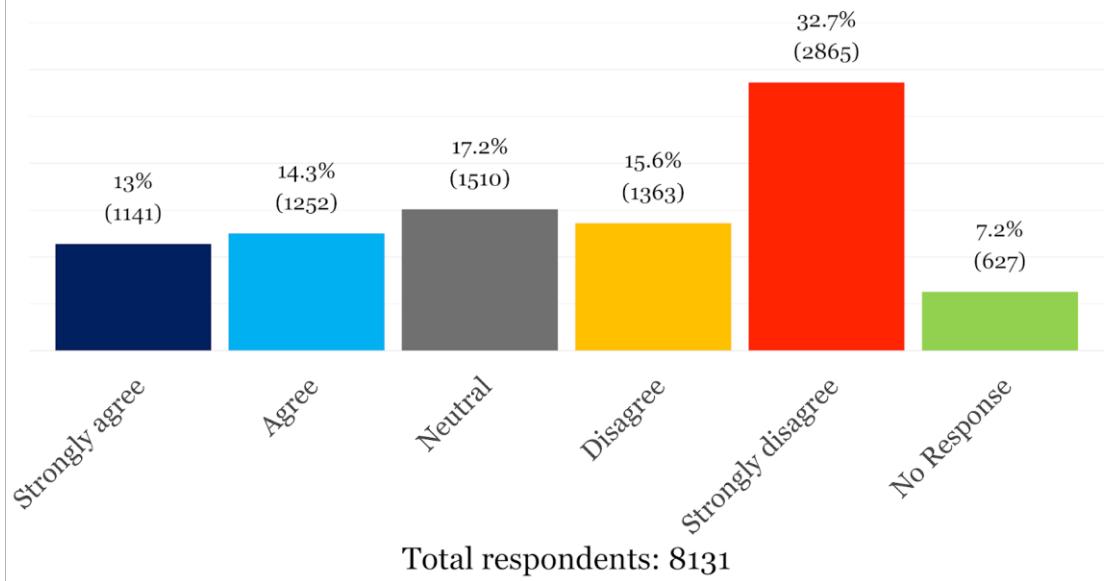
I have to buy and sell things in order to get by.



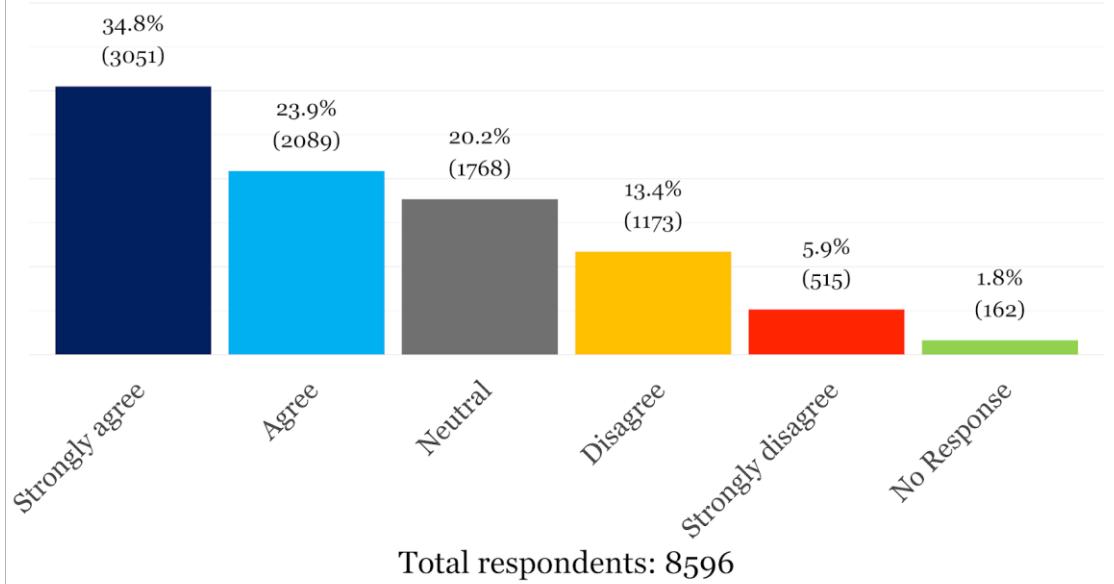
Decisions are dominated by concerns about security.



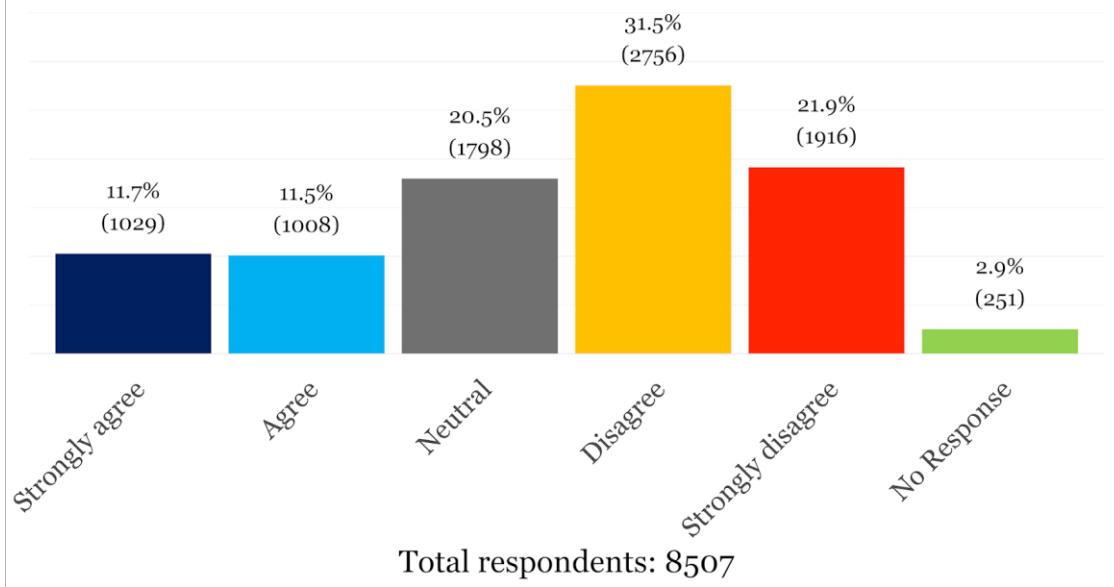
My time here seems like a chance to make positive changes.



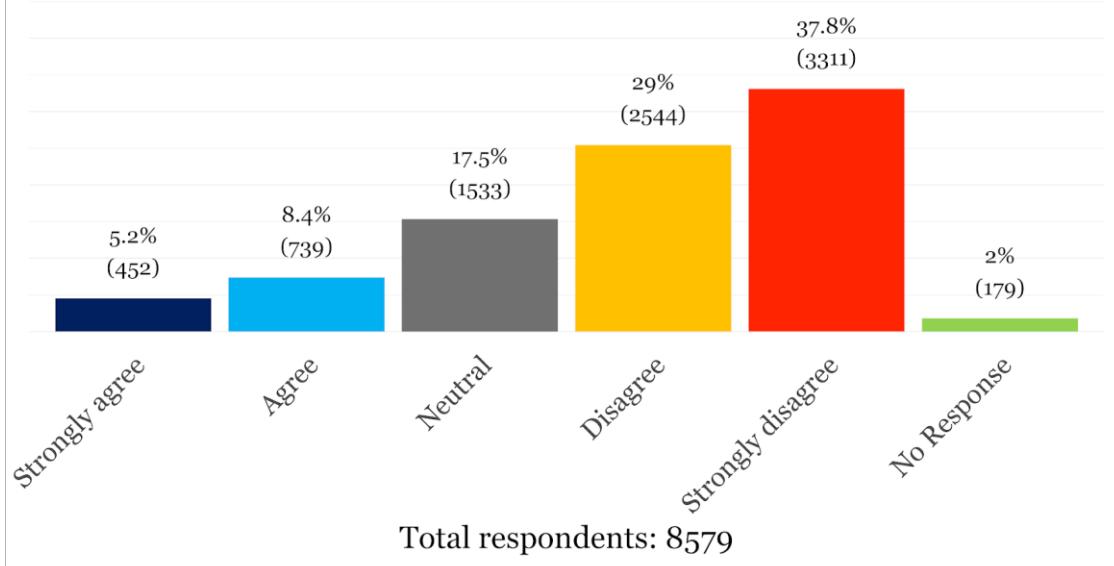
I am not being treated as a human being here.



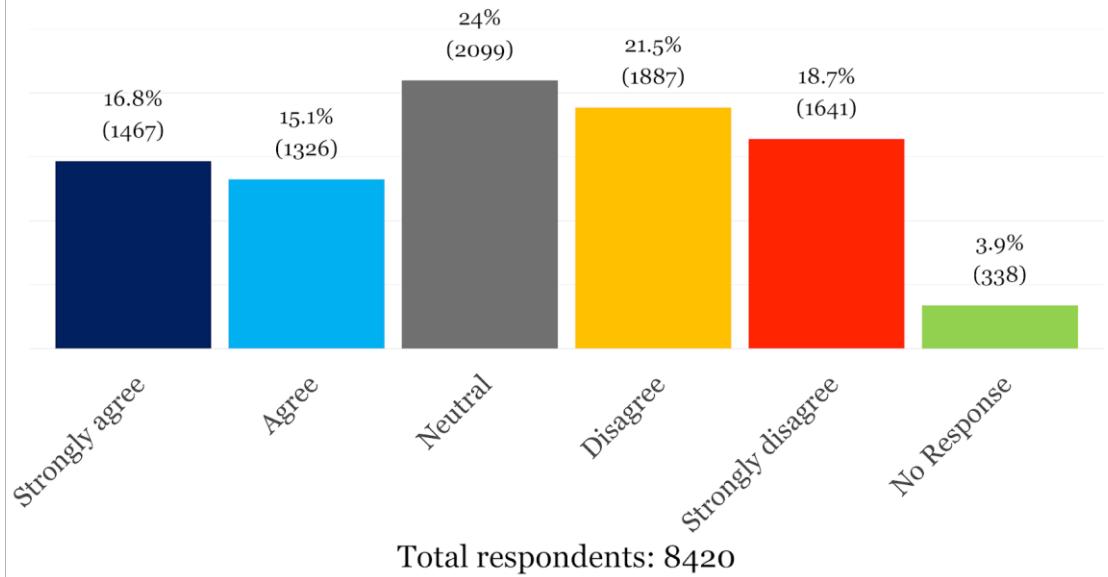
You have to be in a group or gang in order to get by.



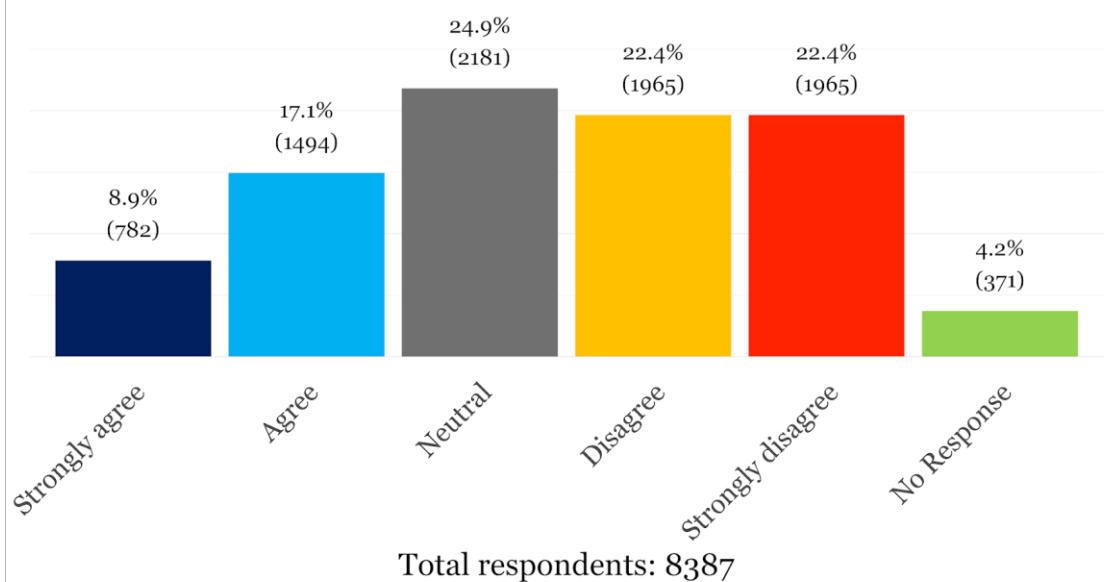
When important decisions are made about me, I am treated as an individual, not a number.



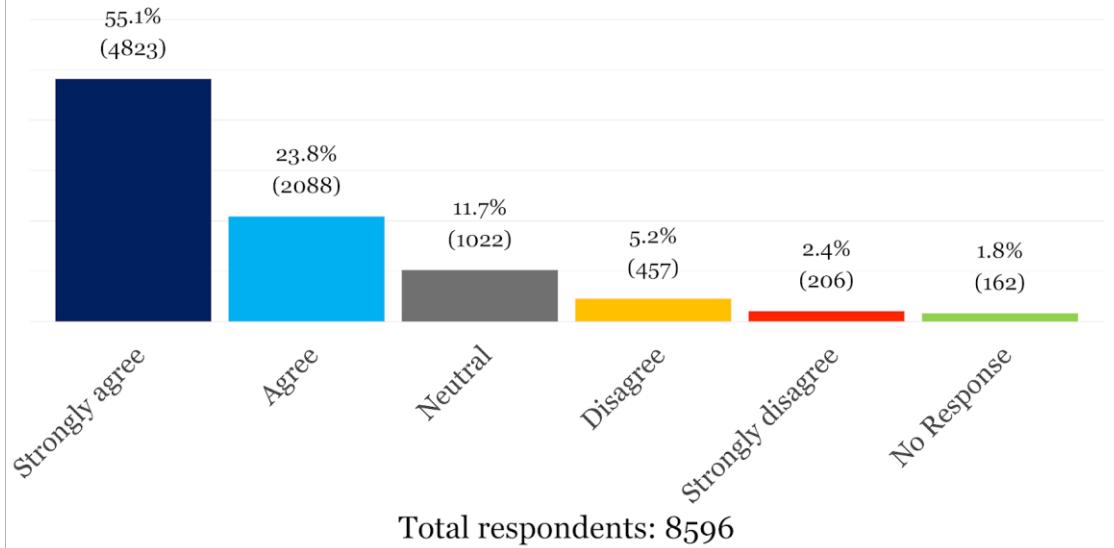
Drugs cause a lot of problems between incarcerated people.



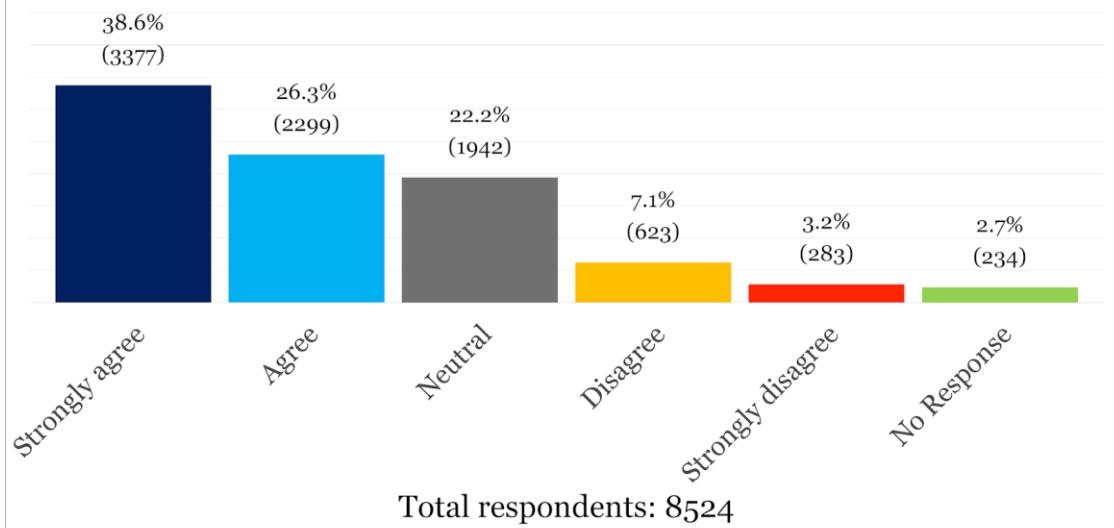
Bullying behavior by incarcerated people is not tolerated.



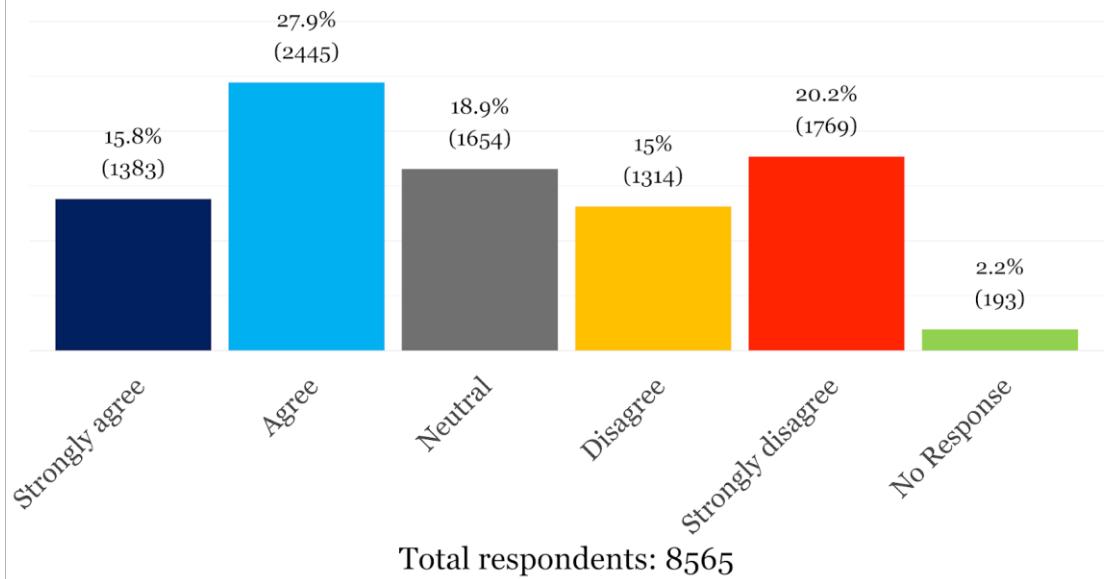
All they care about is my offense and security level, not the person I really am.



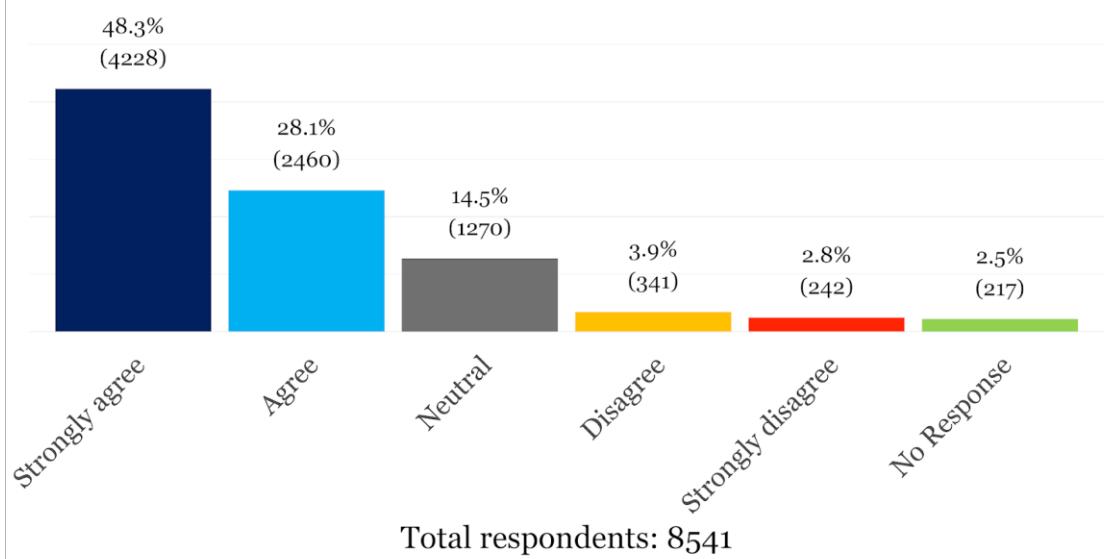
Anyone who harms themselves is considered by staff to be more of an attention seeker than someone who needs help.



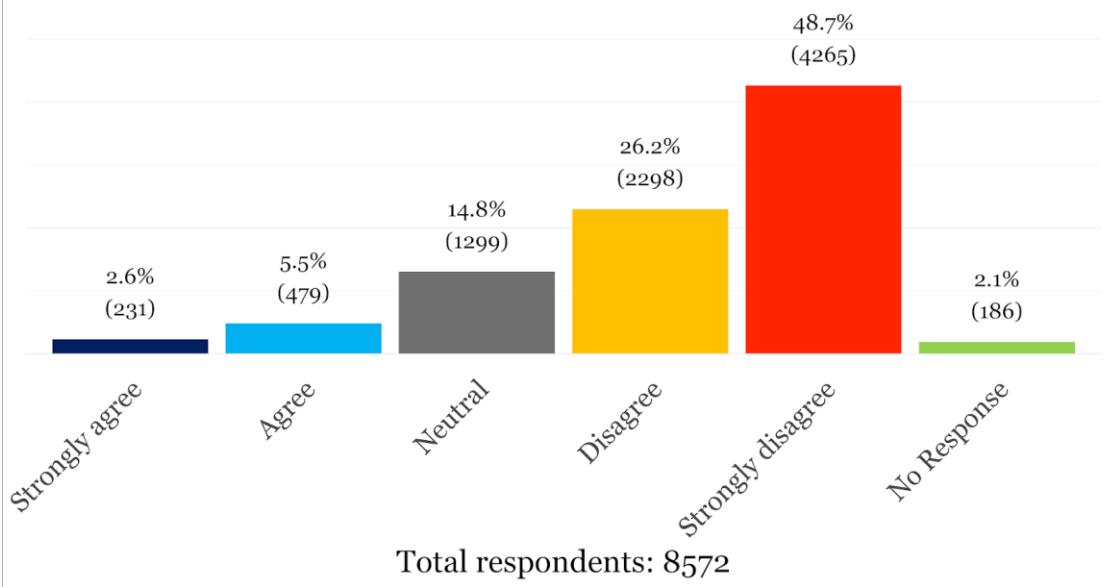
I am able to maintain meaningful contact with my outside supports.



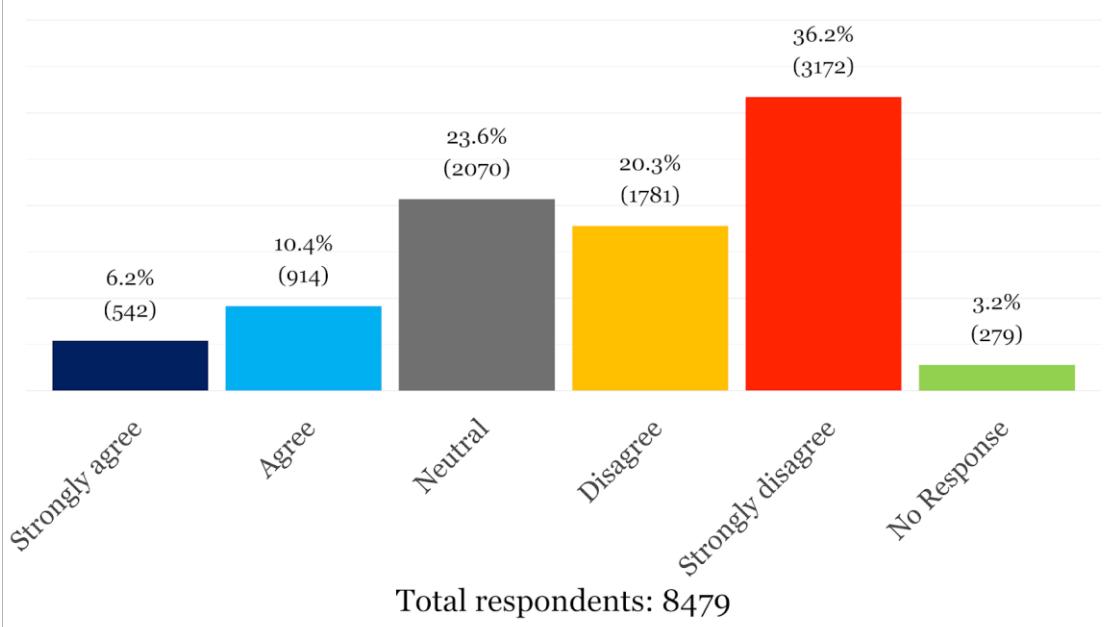
This prison is poor at giving incarcerated people reasons for decisions.



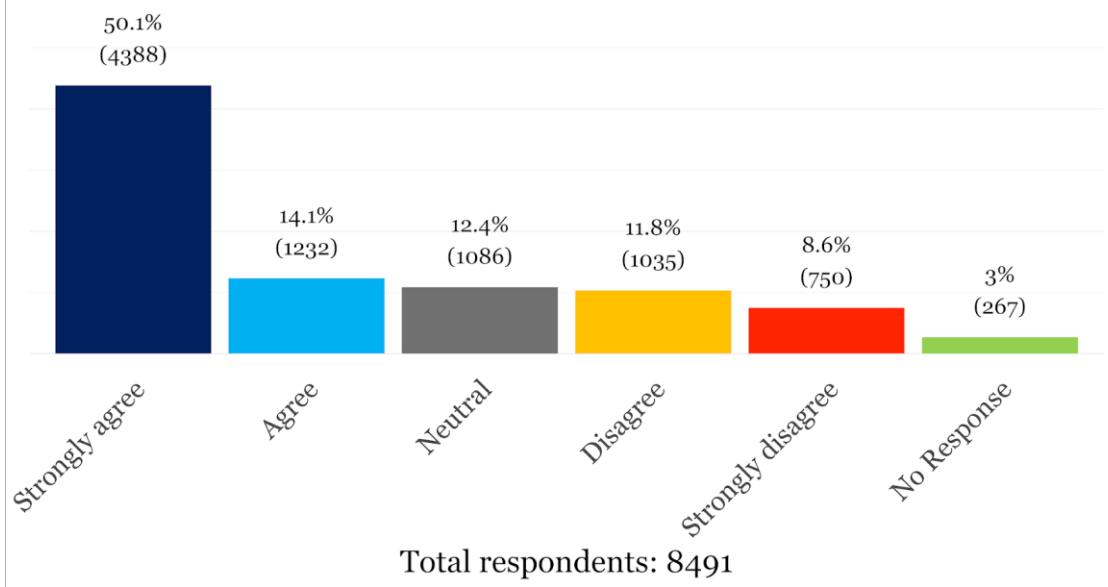
Staff help incarcerated people maintain contact with outside supports.



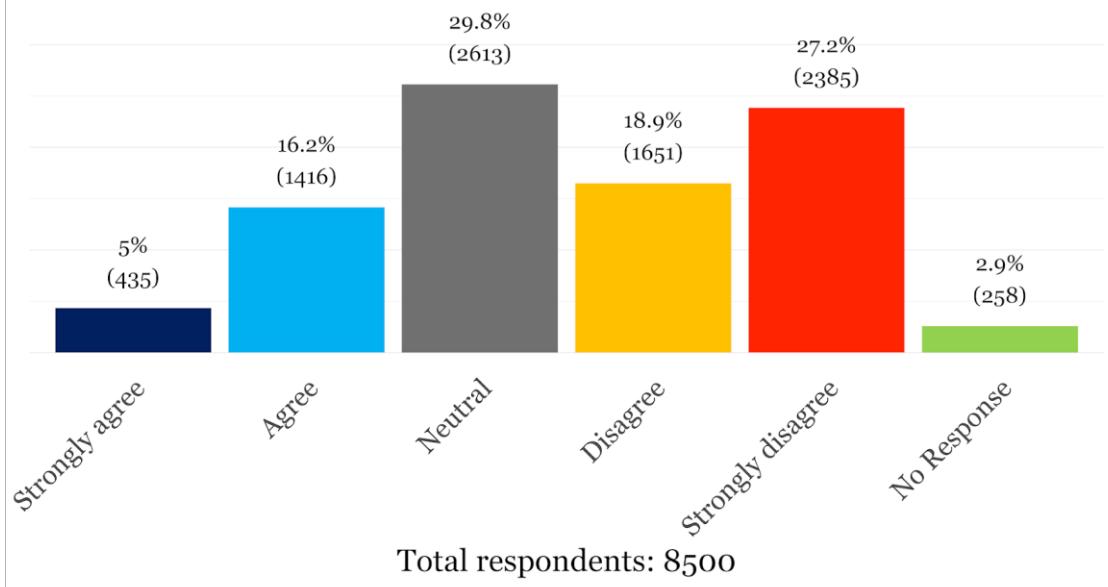
This is a humane prison.



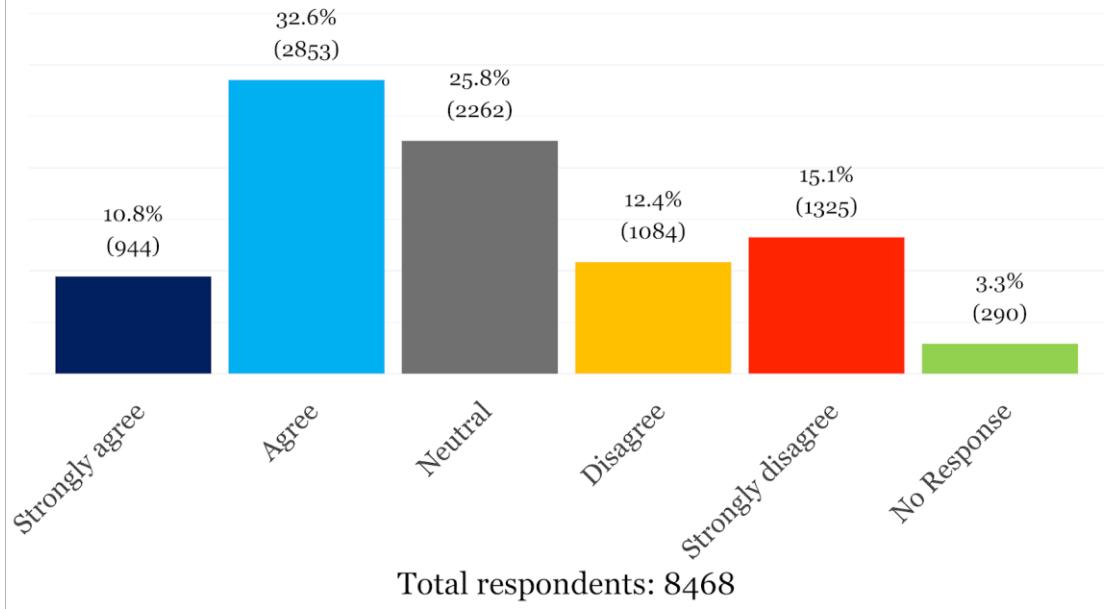
Incarcerated people in this prison
spend too long locked up in cells.



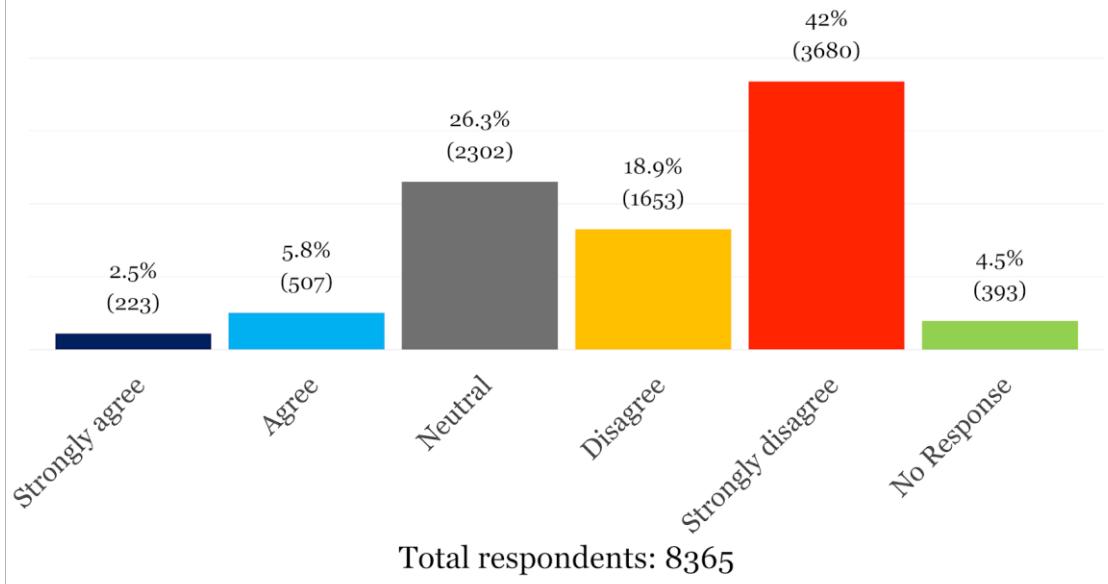
This prison is safe for incarcerated
people.



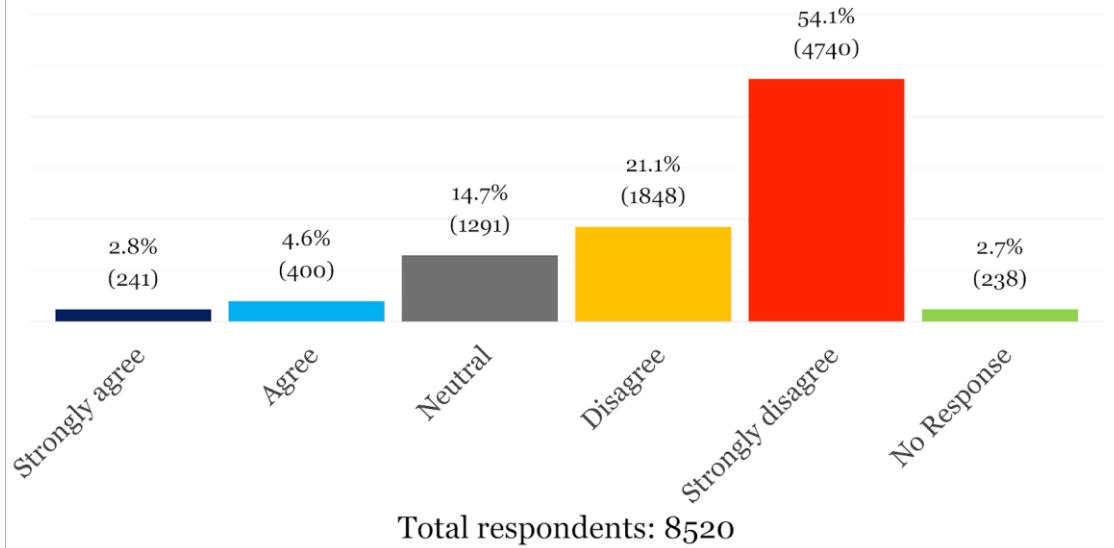
Mental health treatment is available.



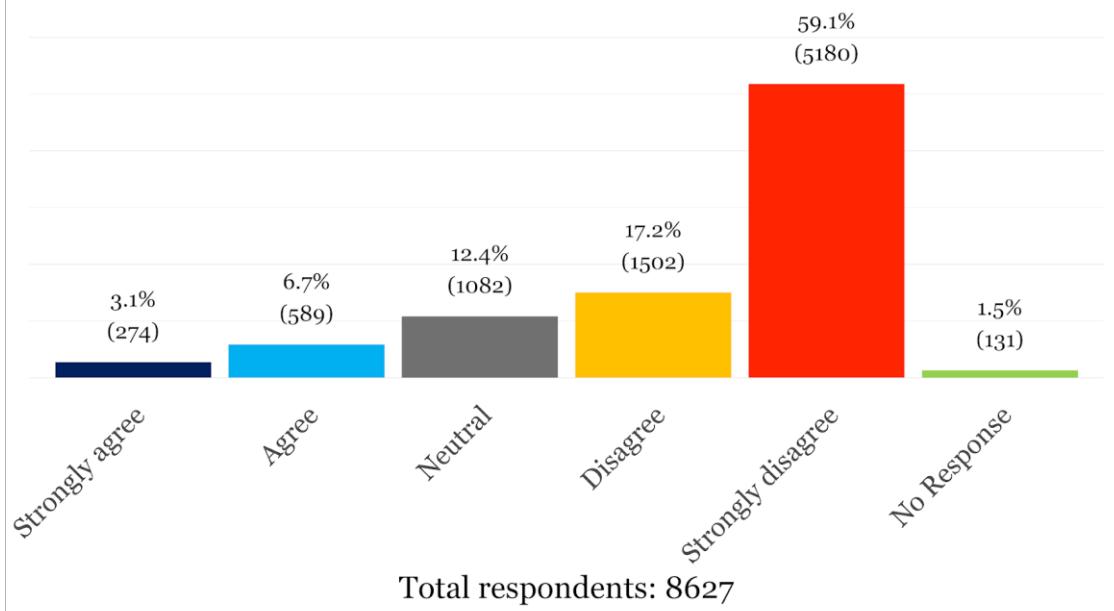
This prison is better now than it was last year.



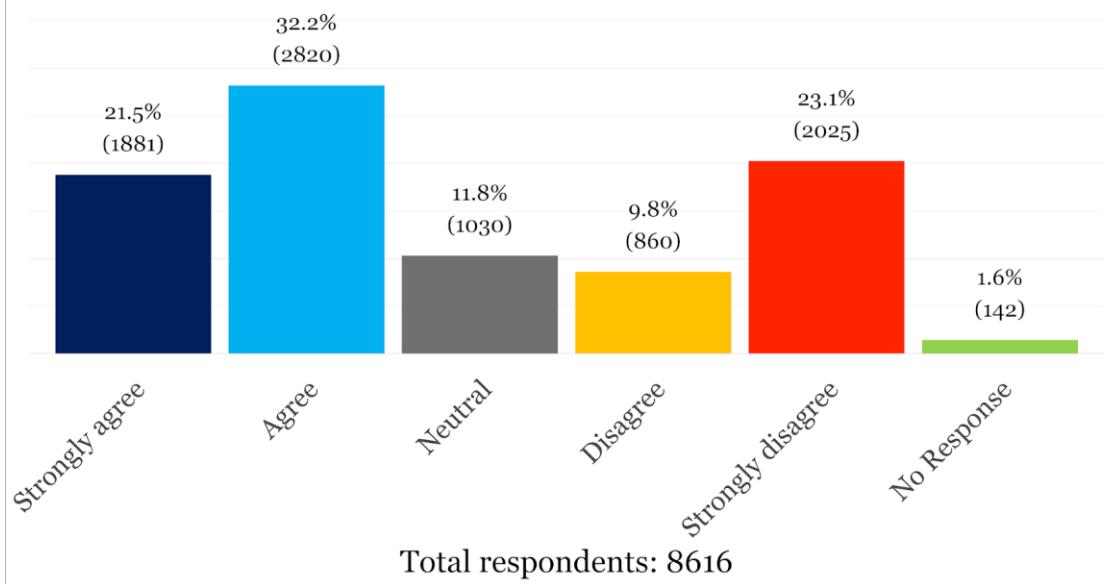
Every effort is made by this prison to help people stop committing offenses on release from custody.



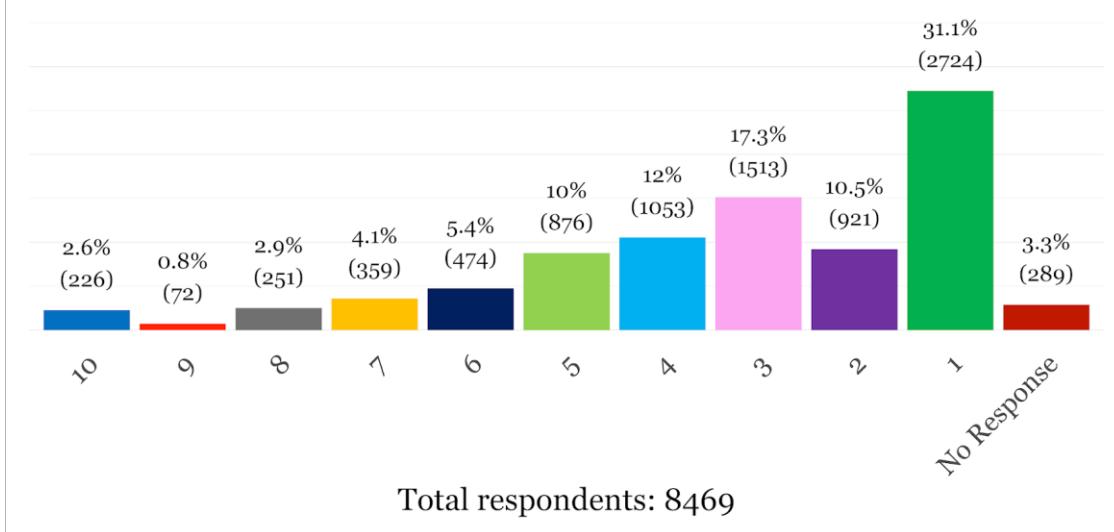
I am satisfied with food from dietary.



I have the opportunity to go to yard at least twice a week.



Overall, on a scale of 1 to 10, mark the box this prison deserves in terms of quality of life/general treatment of the incarcerated people here.



Tables: MQPL Survey Questions

Are you within two years of release?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	3,480	39.7%
No	5,156	58.9%
No Response	122	1.4%

Were you first incarcerated prior to age 25?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	4,840	55.3%
No	3,785	43.2%
No Response	133	1.5%

What housing status are you currently on?

Answer	Count	Percentage
General Population	7,280	83.1%
Restrictive Housing	572	6.5%
Other	830	9.5%
No Response	76	0.9%

Are you currently getting at least two hours a day out of your cell or sleeping area?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	4,992	57.0%
No	3,614	41.3%
No Response	152	1.7%

Do you have a work or school assignment?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Work assignment	2,202	25.1%
School assignment	803	9.2%
Both	488	5.6%
Neither	5,198	59.4%
No Response	67	0.8%

Relationships between staff and incarcerated people are good.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,911	33.2%
Disagree	2,280	26.0%
Neutral	2,406	27.5%
Agree	830	9.5%
Strongly agree	197	2.2%
No Response	134	1.5%

I receive support from staff when I need it.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,929	33.4%
Disagree	2,594	29.6%
Neutral	1,798	20.5%
Agree	1,059	12.1%
Strongly agree	211	2.4%
No Response	167	1.9%

Staff here treat incarcerated people fairly when applying the rules.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,588	41.0%
Disagree	2,454	28.0%
Neutral	1,456	16.6%
Agree	924	10.6%
Strongly agree	193	2.2%
No Response	143	1.6%

I trust the officers.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4,194	47.9%
Disagree	2,107	24.1%
Neutral	1,631	18.6%
Agree	483	5.5%
Strongly agree	144	1.6%
No Response	199	2.3%

I get along well with the officers on my unit.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1,581	18.1%
Disagree	1,074	12.3%
Neutral	3,435	39.2%
Agree	1,921	21.9%
Strongly agree	479	5.5%
No Response	268	3.1%

The best way to get things done is to go through official channels.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,800	32.0%
Disagree	1,894	21.6%
Neutral	1,692	19.3%
Agree	1,484	16.9%
Strongly agree	676	7.7%
No Response	212	2.4%

I have been helped significantly by a staff member with a particular problem.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,059	34.9%
Disagree	2,218	25.3%
Neutral	1,770	20.2%
Agree	1,147	13.1%
Strongly agree	413	4.7%
No Response	151	1.7%

Overall, I am treated fairly by staff.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,411	27.5%
Disagree	1,901	21.7%
Neutral	2,474	28.2%
Agree	1,562	17.8%
Strongly agree	319	3.6%
No Response	91	1.0%

I am treated as a person of value.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4,130	47.2%
Disagree	2,286	26.1%
Neutral	1,459	16.7%
Agree	581	6.6%
Strongly agree	212	2.4%
No Response	90	1.0%

Some of the treatment I receive is degrading.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	392	4.5%
Disagree	758	8.7%
Neutral	1,252	14.3%
Agree	2,962	33.8%
Strongly agree	3,087	35.2%
No Response	307	3.5%

I feel safe from being injured, bullied, or threatened by other incarcerated people.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,106	24.0%
Disagree	1,730	19.8%
Neutral	2,169	24.8%
Agree	1,668	19.0%
Strongly agree	769	8.8%
No Response	316	3.6%

To improve my situation, I have to meet impossible expectations.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	354	4.0%
Disagree	1,160	13.2%
Neutral	2,036	23.2%
Agree	2,479	28.3%
Strongly agree	2,315	26.4%
No Response	414	4.7%

Staff have enough experience and expertise to deal with issues that matter to me.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,177	36.3%
Disagree	2,743	31.3%
Neutral	1,594	18.2%
Agree	686	7.8%
Strongly agree	270	3.1%
No Response	288	3.3%

If you do something wrong, staff only use punishments if they have tried other options first.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,324	38.0%
Disagree	2,023	23.1%
Neutral	1,417	16.2%
Agree	965	11.0%
Strongly agree	687	7.8%
No Response	342	3.9%

Staff are argumentative towards incarcerated people.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	333	3.8%
Disagree	636	7.3%
Neutral	1,385	15.8%
Agree	2,454	28.0%
Strongly agree	3,604	41.2%
No Response	346	4.0%

To get things done, you have to ask and ask and ask.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	201	2.3%
Disagree	255	2.9%
Neutral	528	6.0%
Agree	1,914	21.9%
Strongly agree	5,516	63.0%
No Response	344	3.9%

Supervision of incarcerated people is poor.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	466	5.3%
Disagree	948	10.8%
Neutral	2,112	24.1%
Agree	1,888	21.6%
Strongly agree	2,979	34.0%
No Response	365	4.2%

The environment encourages me to think about and plan for my release.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,497	28.5%
Disagree	1,544	17.6%
Neutral	1,313	15.0%
Agree	1,361	15.5%
Strongly agree	1,692	19.3%
No Response	351	4.0%

Positive things only happen for a certain type of people.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	492	5.6%
Disagree	807	9.2%
Neutral	1,460	16.7%
Agree	2,233	25.5%
Strongly agree	3,441	39.3%
No Response	325	3.7%

I can't improve my situation through good behavior.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	817	9.3%
Disagree	1,291	14.7%
Neutral	1,490	17.0%
Agree	1,829	20.9%
Strongly agree	2,968	33.9%
No Response	363	4.1%

My experience of imprisonment in this particular prison has been stressful.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	298	3.4%
Disagree	505	5.8%
Neutral	984	11.2%
Agree	1,859	21.2%
Strongly agree	4,863	55.5%
No Response	249	2.8%

I have to be careful about everything I do, or it can be used against me.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	153	1.7%
Disagree	333	3.8%
Neutral	992	11.3%
Agree	2,409	27.5%
Strongly agree	4,619	52.7%
No Response	252	2.9%

On the whole, I am just doing time rather than using my time.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	734	8.4%
Disagree	1,047	12.0%
Neutral	1,162	13.3%
Agree	1,780	20.3%
Strongly agree	3,731	42.6%
No Response	304	3.5%

This prison is controlled by incarcerated people rather than staff.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,044	34.8%
Disagree	2,151	24.6%
Neutral	1,643	18.8%
Agree	692	7.9%
Strongly agree	899	10.3%
No Response	329	3.8%

This prison is well organized.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	5,197	59.3%
Disagree	1,793	20.5%
Neutral	928	10.6%
Agree	301	3.4%
Strongly agree	254	2.9%
No Response	285	3.3%

I feel that I am treated with respect by staff.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,238	37.0%
Disagree	1,827	20.9%
Neutral	2,136	24.4%
Agree	905	10.3%
Strongly agree	267	3.0%
No Response	385	4.4%

Staff respond promptly to incidents and alarms.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,427	27.7%
Disagree	1,588	18.1%
Neutral	2,060	23.5%
Agree	1,676	19.1%
Strongly agree	589	6.7%
No Response	418	4.8%

When I need to get something done, I can normally get it done by talking to someone face to face.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,422	27.7%
Disagree	2,070	23.6%
Neutral	1,935	22.1%
Agree	1,461	16.7%
Strongly agree	593	6.8%
No Response	277	3.2%

You never know the rules.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	639	7.3%
Disagree	1,541	17.6%
Neutral	1,982	22.6%
Agree	1,919	21.9%
Strongly agree	2,360	26.9%
No Response	317	3.6%

My experience in this prison is painful.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	398	4.5%
Disagree	984	11.2%
Neutral	1,600	18.3%
Agree	1,956	22.3%
Strongly agree	3,489	39.8%
No Response	331	3.8%

There is a hierarchy among incarcerated people.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	754	8.6%
Disagree	1,048	12.0%
Neutral	2,380	27.2%
Agree	1,881	21.5%
Strongly agree	1,988	22.7%
No Response	707	8.1%

The disciplinary system is fair.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4,255	48.6%
Disagree	1,787	20.4%
Neutral	1,547	17.7%
Agree	586	6.7%
Strongly agree	248	2.8%
No Response	335	3.8%

There are a few incarcerated people who run things on this unit.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1,896	21.6%
Disagree	1,793	20.5%
Neutral	1,757	20.1%
Agree	1,427	16.3%
Strongly agree	1,521	17.4%
No Response	364	4.2%

I have to buy and sell things in order to get by.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1,100	12.6%
Disagree	1,513	17.3%
Neutral	1,709	19.5%
Agree	1,864	21.3%
Strongly agree	2,236	25.5%
No Response	336	3.8%

Decisions are dominated by concerns about security.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	763	8.7%
Disagree	919	10.5%
Neutral	2,409	27.5%
Agree	1,822	20.8%
Strongly agree	2,391	27.3%
No Response	454	5.2%

My time here seems like a chance to make positive changes.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,865	32.7%
Disagree	1,363	15.6%
Neutral	1,510	17.2%
Agree	1,252	14.3%
Strongly agree	1,141	13.0%
No Response	627	7.2%

I am not being treated as a human being here.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	515	5.9%
Disagree	1,173	13.4%
Neutral	1,768	20.2%
Agree	2,089	23.9%
Strongly agree	3,051	34.8%
No Response	162	1.8%

You have to be in a group or gang in order to get by.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1,916	21.9%
Disagree	2,756	31.5%
Neutral	1,798	20.5%
Agree	1,008	11.5%
Strongly agree	1,029	11.7%
No Response	251	2.9%

When important decisions are made about me, I am treated as an individual, not a number.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,311	37.8%
Disagree	2,544	29.0%
Neutral	1,533	17.5%
Agree	739	8.4%
Strongly agree	452	5.2%
No Response	179	2.0%

Drugs cause a lot of problems between incarcerated people.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1,641	18.7%
Disagree	1,887	21.5%
Neutral	2,099	24.0%
Agree	1,326	15.1%
Strongly agree	1,467	16.8%
No Response	338	3.9%

Bullying behavior by incarcerated people is not tolerated.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1,965	22.4%
Disagree	1,965	22.4%
Neutral	2,181	24.9%
Agree	1,494	17.1%
Strongly agree	782	8.9%
No Response	371	4.2%

All they care about is my offense and security level, not the person I really am.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	206	2.4%
Disagree	457	5.2%
Neutral	1,022	11.7%
Agree	2,088	23.8%
Strongly agree	4,823	55.1%
No Response	162	1.8%

Anyone who harms themselves is considered by staff to be more of an attention seeker than someone who needs help.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	283	3.2%
Disagree	623	7.1%
Neutral	1,942	22.2%
Agree	2,299	26.3%
Strongly agree	3,377	38.6%
No Response	234	2.7%

I am able to maintain meaningful contact with my outside supports.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1,769	20.2%
Disagree	1,314	15.0%
Neutral	1,654	18.9%
Agree	2,445	27.9%
Strongly agree	1,383	15.8%
No Response	193	2.2%

This prison is poor at giving incarcerated people reasons for decisions.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	242	2.8%
Disagree	341	3.9%
Neutral	1,270	14.5%
Agree	2,460	28.1%
Strongly agree	4,228	48.3%
No Response	217	2.5%

Staff help incarcerated people maintain contact with outside supports.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4,265	48.7%
Disagree	2,298	26.2%
Neutral	1,299	14.8%
Agree	479	5.5%
Strongly agree	231	2.6%
No Response	186	2.1%

This is a humane prison.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,172	36.2%
Disagree	1,781	20.3%
Neutral	2,070	23.6%
Agree	914	10.4%
Strongly agree	542	6.2%
No Response	279	3.2%

Incarcerated people in this prison spend too long locked up in cells.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	750	8.6%
Disagree	1,035	11.8%
Neutral	1,086	12.4%
Agree	1,232	14.1%
Strongly agree	4,388	50.1%
No Response	267	3.0%

This prison is safe for incarcerated people.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,385	27.2%
Disagree	1,651	18.9%
Neutral	2,613	29.8%
Agree	1,416	16.2%
Strongly agree	435	5.0%
No Response	258	2.9%

Mental health treatment is available.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1,325	15.1%
Disagree	1,084	12.4%
Neutral	2,262	25.8%
Agree	2,853	32.6%
Strongly agree	944	10.8%
No Response	290	3.3%

This prison is better now than it was last year.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3,680	42.0%
Disagree	1,653	18.9%
Neutral	2,302	26.3%
Agree	507	5.8%
Strongly agree	223	2.5%
No Response	393	4.5%

Every effort is made by this prison to help people stop committing offenses on release from custody.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4,740	54.1%
Disagree	1,848	21.1%
Neutral	1,291	14.7%
Agree	400	4.6%
Strongly agree	241	2.8%
No Response	238	2.7%

I am satisfied with food from dietary.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	5,180	59.1%
Disagree	1,502	17.2%
Neutral	1,082	12.4%
Agree	589	6.7%
Strongly agree	274	3.1%
No Response	131	1.5%

I have the opportunity to go to yard at least twice a week.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,025	23.1%
Disagree	860	9.8%
Neutral	1,030	11.8%
Agree	2,820	32.2%
Strongly agree	1,881	21.5%
No Response	142	1.6%

Overall, on a scale of 1 to 10, mark the box this prison deserves in terms of quality of life/general treatment of the incarcerated people here.

Answer	Count	Percentage
1	2,724	31.1%
2	921	10.5%
3	1,513	17.3%
4	1,053	12.0%
5	876	10.0%
6	474	5.4%
7	359	4.1%
8	251	2.9%
9	72	0.8%
10	226	2.6%
No Response	289	3.3%



This report was written by JHA staff. Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz at (312) 291-9183 or 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 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 all the people who graciously shared their experiences and insights with us.

