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Background on employment

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) and Employment First philosophy guide policy for people with disabilities in the U.S. and focus on increasing opportunities to experience community-based jobs with wages at or above minimum wage. However, we know little about the employment settings that adults with ASD experience, particularly as they age further into adulthood.

Supports and services for employment may be paid for through state Developmental Disabilities (DD) agencies. Using a combination of federal and state dollars, including Medicaid waivers, state DD agencies are the primary funder of LTSS for people with IDD including those with ASD.¹ State DD agencies provide or fund services that allow individuals with IDD to maximize their integration and participation in the community. People with ASD who do not also have an ID may not qualify for DD services in some states. Other states have long wait lists which preclude access to DD services. State DD agencies do not provide or fund vocational services that are appointed under WIOA.

Work occurs in two main settings: community-based and facility-based. A community-based setting is a place where most people do not have disabilities. This includes any paid job in the community, or a job as part of a work crew (people with disabilities working together in a community-based setting, such as a group that stocks shelves in the grocery store). A facility-based setting is a place where most people have disabilities. Facility-based work services are also referred to as sheltered work, work activity services, or extended employment programs.²

Objectives

- 1) To describe the paid employment experiences of adults ages 18 to 64 years with ASD who receive services through a state DD agency.
- 2) To explore factors associated with paid community-based employment and paid facility-based positions.

Sample and methods

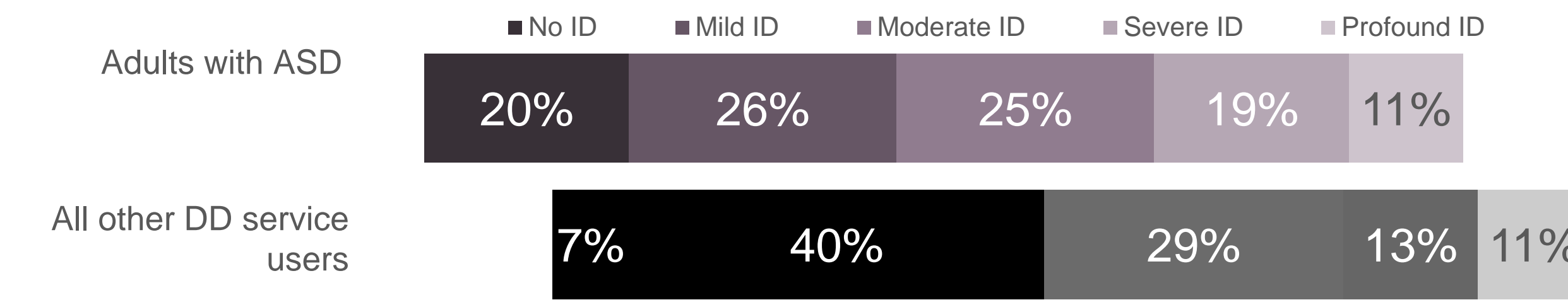
Source: National Core Indicators Adult Consumer Survey 2014-15. National Core Indicators (NCI) is a project of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) and the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI). The Adult Consumer Survey (ACS) is a survey performed annually by a subset of NCI states who choose to participate. In survey year 2014-15, 31 states, one regional council, and Washington DC participated.

Participants: Adults who received at least one service from a state DD agency in addition to case management. Each state targeted a random sample of service users. The final sample consisted of 25,520 adults, age 18 and over, who received DD services between July 2014 and June 2015. This study includes the 3520 working age adults (age 18-64) with ASD who participated in the ACS and were no longer in public school, and received at least one service from a state DD agency in addition to case management.

Employment measurement: Information about employment was gathered from state records. The ACS asked surveyors whether participants engaged in paid work in community-based or facility-based settings within the last two weeks.

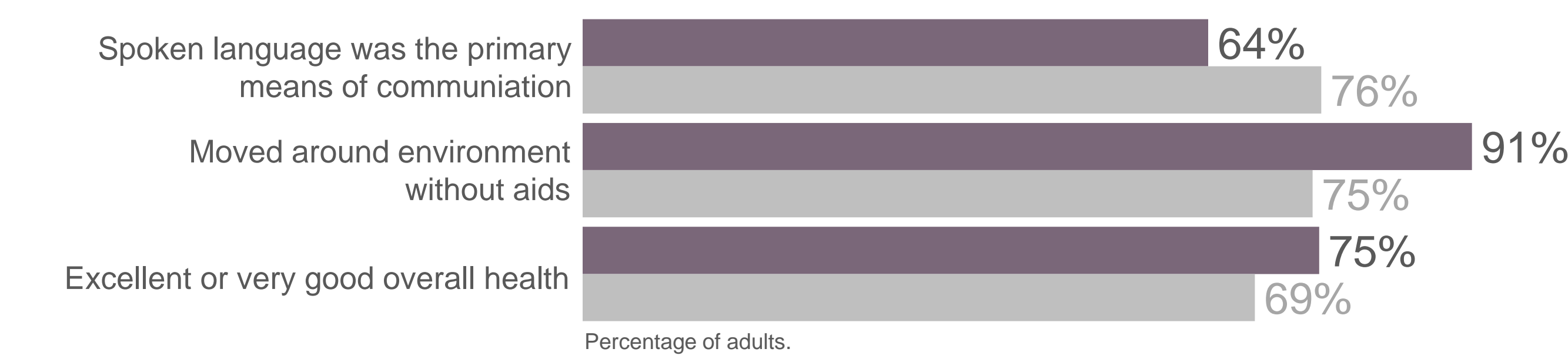
ASD compared to all DD service users

Adults with ASD were less likely to have ID than other DD service users, but those who did were more severe.



Source: NCI Adult Consumer Survey 2014-15

Adults with ASD less often used spoken language, had better overall health, and moved around their environment more independently than all other DD service users.



Source: NCI Adult Consumer Survey 2014-15

Results

Adults with ASD were younger than all other service users (mean=34 years), were more likely to be male (74%), and less likely to be of Hispanic ethnicity (12%). More adults with ASD had no ID (21%) than all other adult DD service users (7%), but fewer had mild ID (26%) than other adult DD service users (40%). About a quarter (27%) of adults with ASD had community employment as a goal in their service plan, not significantly different than the percent of all other DD service users. Twenty six percent of adults with ASD received services to help find, maintain, or change jobs, significantly lower than the 29% of all other DD service users who received this service.

Fourteen percent of adults with ASD had a paid job in the community in the two weeks prior to participating in the ACS; 15% had a paid job in a facility based setting; and 27% of adults with ASD had either type of paid employment, significantly lower than the 35% of all other adult DD service users.

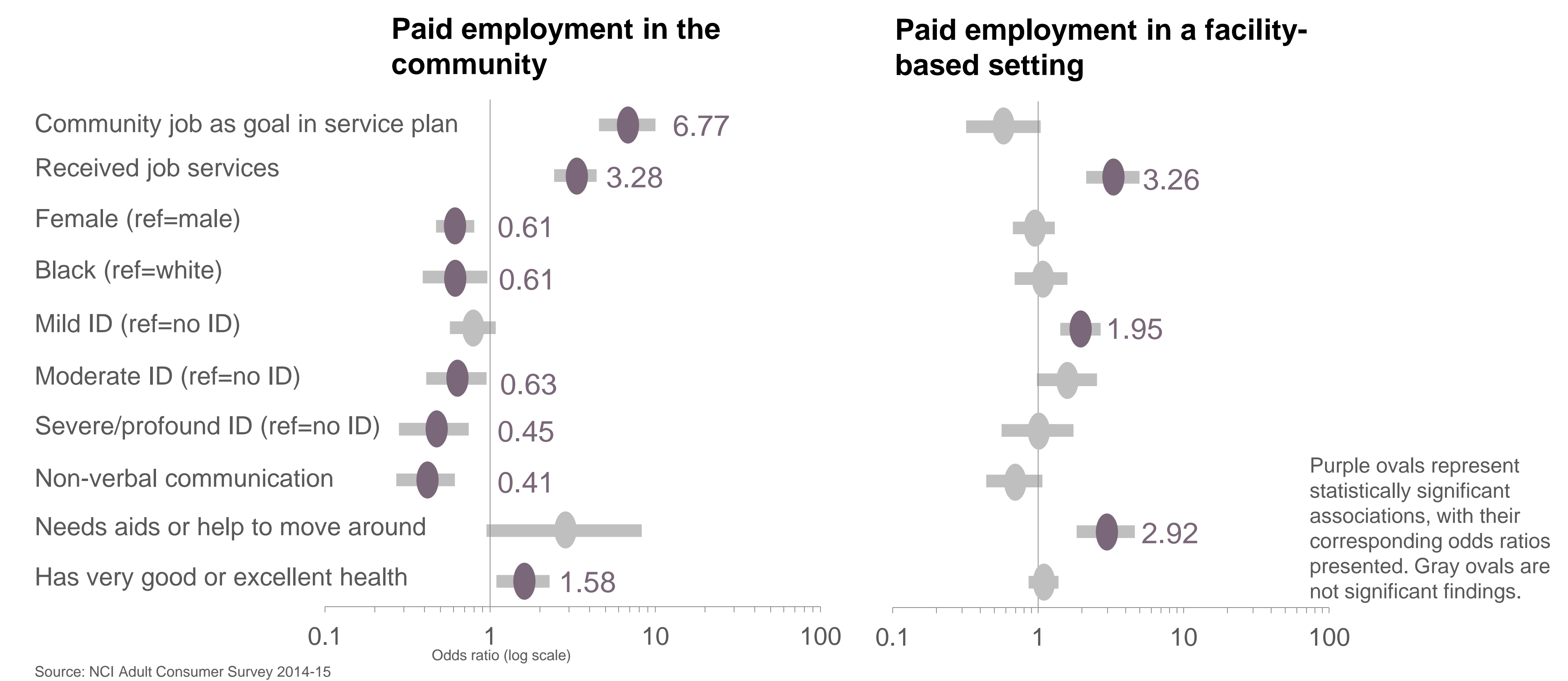
The only variable that had a positive significant association with both community and facility-based employment is receipt of job services. Job services was defined as, "assistance finding, maintaining, or changing jobs," in the ACS.

Conclusions

This study describes the low employment rates for community and facility-based paid employment for a sample of adults with ASD in a large state-based survey. While paid employment is an ideal outcome, finding and keeping a job is hard for many people with ASD. Navigating employment tasks and expectations may be challenging. Matching a job to a person's skills and creating career trajectories are important considerations that are influenced both by the individual and whether jobs are available in one's community. Future study might explore how services and supports facilitate employment in either setting, and how blending services across different agencies that provide or pay for services for adults with ASD may influence outcomes.

Correlates of paid employment

Correlates of paid employment vary by type of employment in adults with ASD.



Source: NCI Adult Consumer Survey 2014-15

Work by the numbers

Adults with ASD

Had a paid job in the community in the two weeks prior to the ACS (n=453). **14%**

30 mean hours worked

\$194 median wage

62% received publically funded supports or services

34% in a job done primarily by people with disabilities

84% had worked in this job 10 of the previous 12 months

23% got paid vacation or sick time

5 mean number of years in that job

Had a paid job in a facility-based position in the two weeks prior to the ACS (n=502). **15%**

33 mean hours worked

\$37 median wage

All other DD service users

Had a paid job in the community in the two weeks prior to the ACS (n=2838). **16%****

31 mean hours worked

\$175 median wage

61% received publically funded supports or services

38% in a job done primarily by people with disabilities

84% had worked in this job 10 of the previous 12 months

28% got paid vacation or sick time

6 mean number of years in that job

Had a paid job in a facility-based position in the two weeks prior to the ACS (n=3667). **21%*****

35 mean hours worked

\$42 median wage

Values represent activity in the two weeks prior to participating in the ACS. *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

1. Butterworth, J., Smith, F. A., Hall, A. C., Migliore, A., Winsor, J., & Domin, D. (2014). StateData: The national report on employment services and outcomes. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

2. Winsor, J. E., & Migliore, A. (2011). Decline in the provision of facility-based work services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Data Note Series, Data Note 35. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

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