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## Background

Only half of youth with autism will hold a job for pay outside the home between high school and their early 20s.<sup>1</sup> The federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program provides grants to states to help individuals with disabilities find and keep employment. Transition-age youth (TAY) with autism use VR services more than other age groups, but have the worst employment outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Individual-level factors are known to influence employment outcomes. Yet, we know less about the role of where you live in the U.S. This descriptive study explored the degree of variation in individual-level VR services and employment outcomes across states.

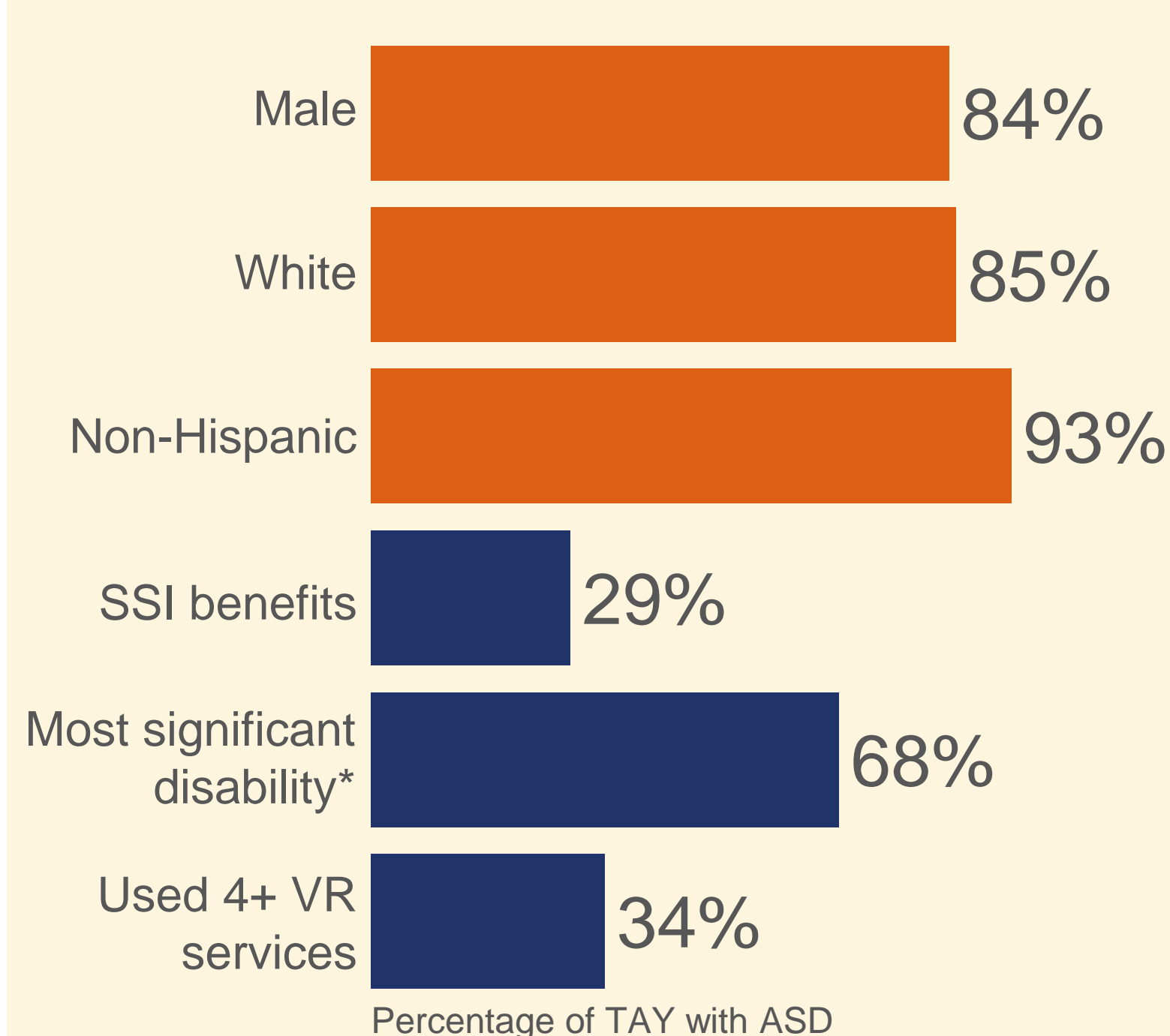
## Data

Data source: Rehabilitation Service Administration Case Service Report (RSA-911). The RSA-911 tallies all individuals who used VR but is not a nationally representative sample of people with autism.

We analyzed VR service utilization and employment outcomes for 9,797 TAY with autism (ages 14-24) who had autism as a primary or secondary cause of job impediment. These youth received VR services and then exited VR in federal fiscal year 2014.

## Characteristics of service users

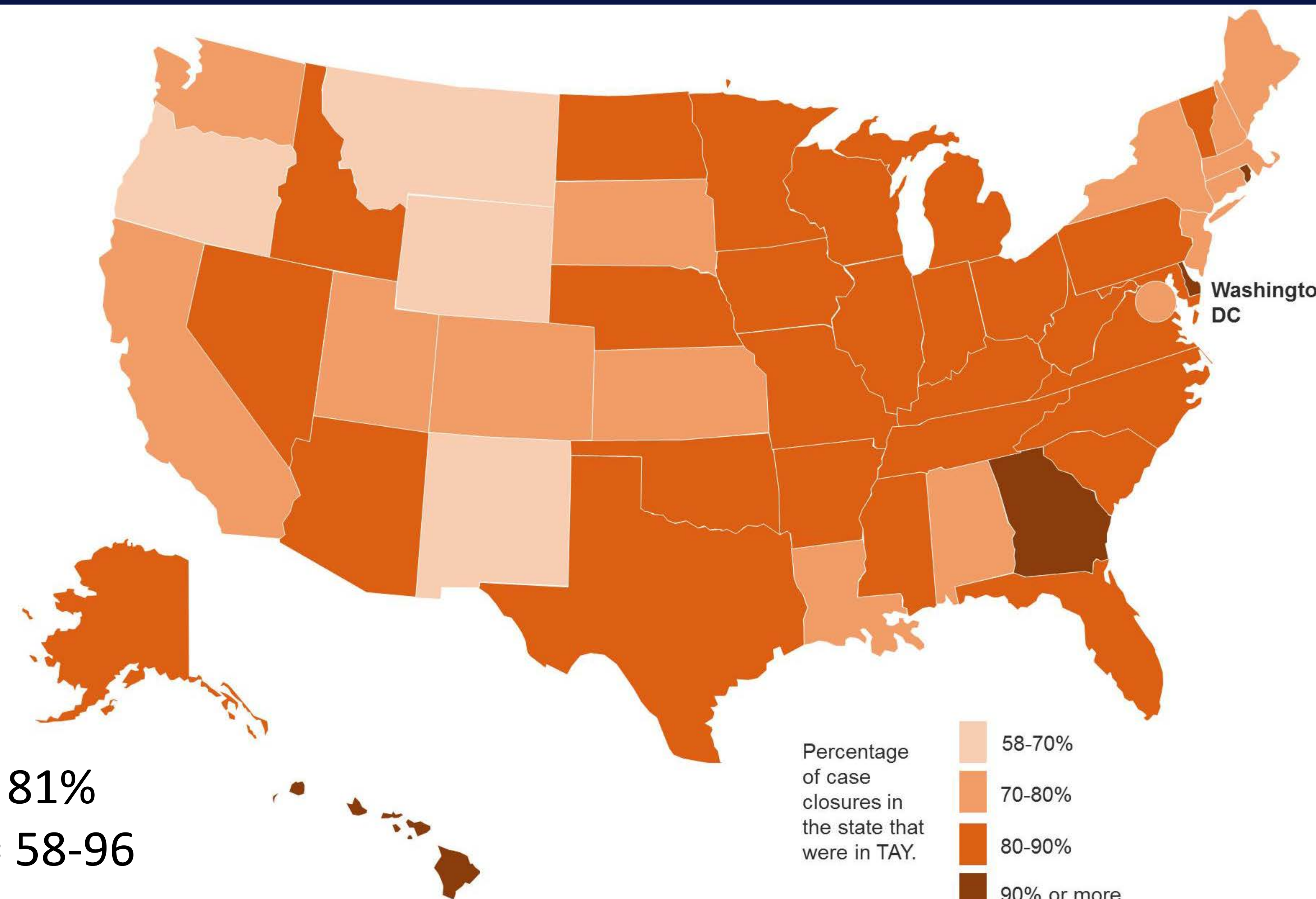
Many met the level of *most significant disability* - indicating need for more intensive supported employment (on-the-job) services.



About **55%** of transition-age VR service users with autism were secondary students with special services or a 504 plan when they applied to VR. Average age was 19 at VR entry.

1. Roux AM, Shattuck PT, Rast JE, Rava JA, & Anderson KA. National autism indicators report: Transition into young adulthood. Philadelphia, PA: Life Course Outcomes Research Program, A.. Drexel Autism Institute, Drexel University, 2015.  
2. Chen JL, Sung C, Pi S. Vocational rehabilitation service patterns and outcomes for individuals with autism of different ages. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*. 2015;45(9):3015-3029.

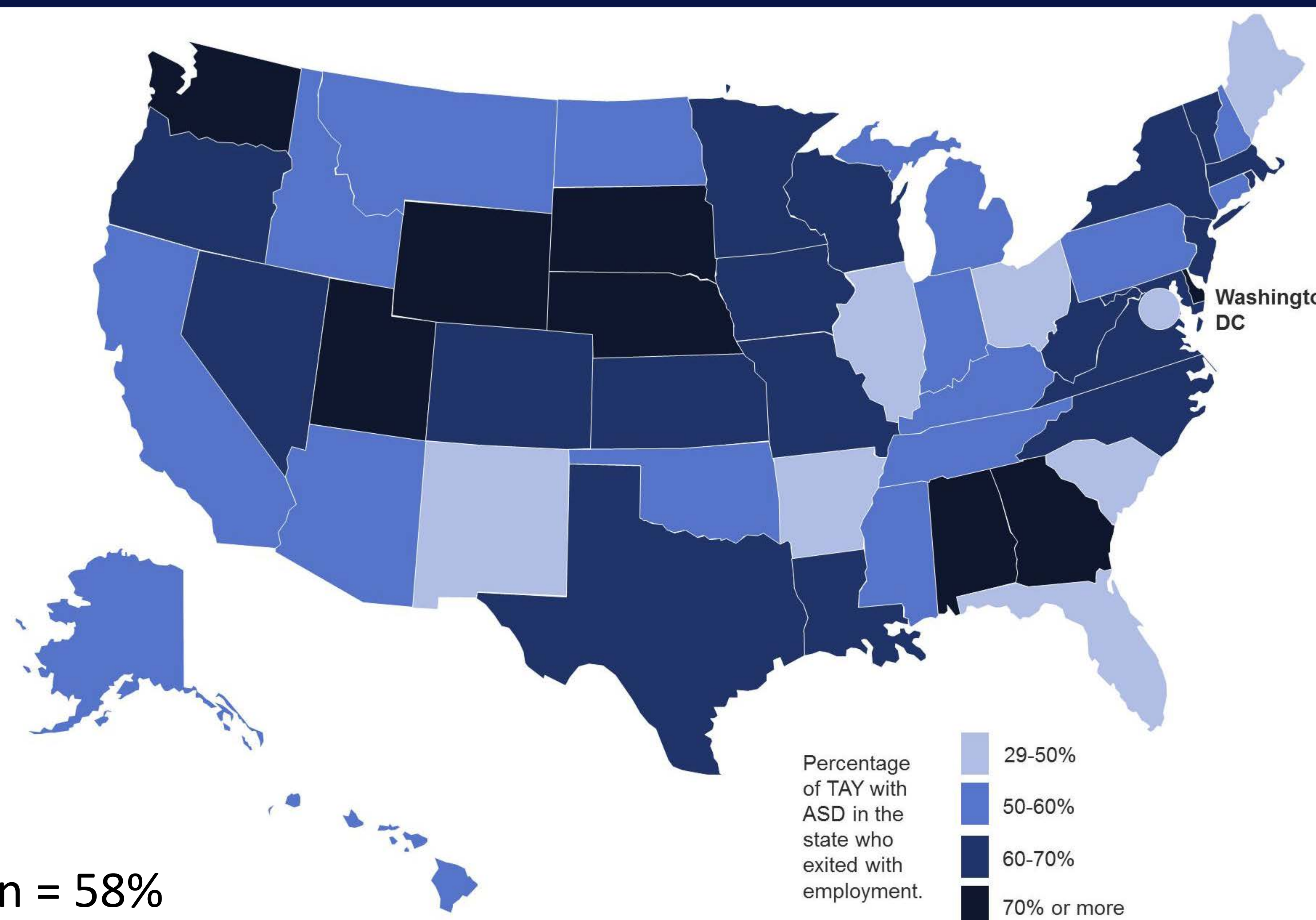
## What percentage of state VR autism cases were transition-age youth?



Mean = 81%  
Range = 58-96

Age of VR service users is recorded at the time of entry into VR. Nationally, 81% of autism cases that closed in 2014 entered as transition-age youth.

## What percentage of TAY with autism exited VR with employment?



Mean = 58%  
Range = 29-81

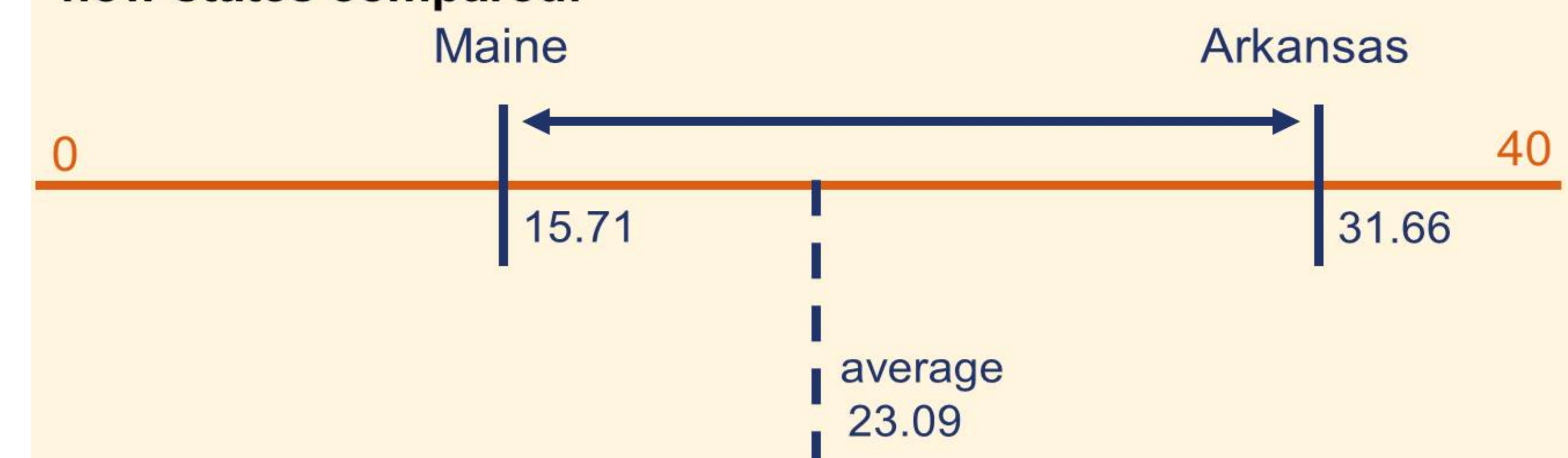
## Median weekly wages for TAY with ASD

Nationally, the median hourly wage for workers with ASD who exited VR with a job was \$8. Here is how states compared:



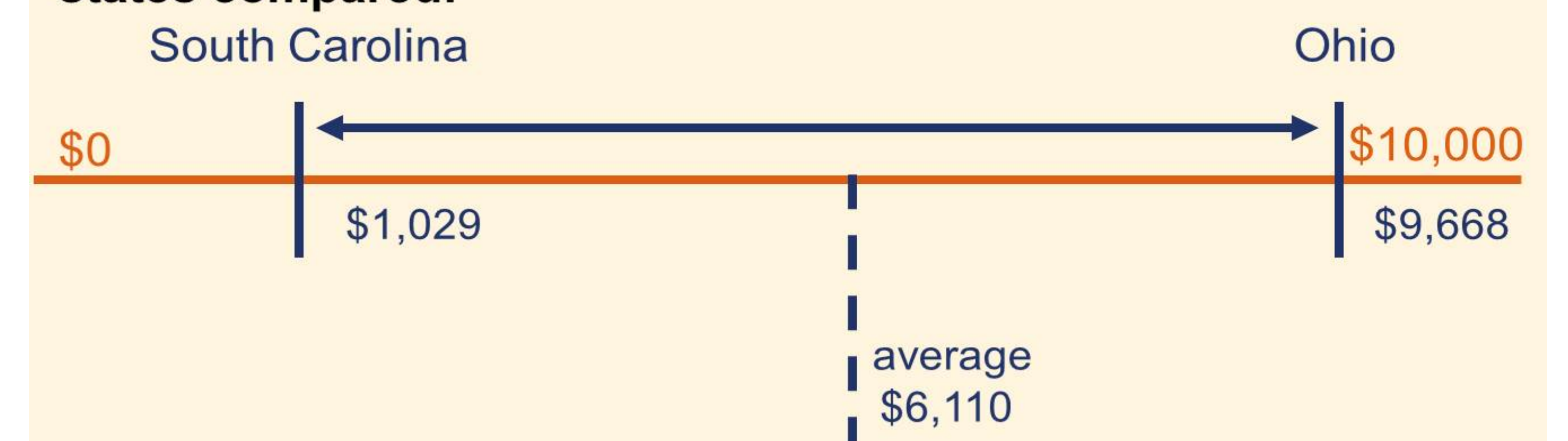
## Median hours per week for TAY with ASD

Nationally, VR service users with ASD who exited with employment worked an average of 23 hours per week. Here is how states compared:



## State spending on services for TAY with ASD

Nationally, the average expenditure on services for those with autism was about \$5900 for all services received. Here is how states compared:



## Recommendations

Significant variation was noted across states in service delivery to TAY with autism and in outcomes. Research should explore:

- Influence of state-level factors on individual outcomes using multilevel modeling methods with a focus on modifiable state factors (OAR 2016 applied research grant).
- Effects of WIOA legislation on outcomes of youth with ASD.
- Direct feedback and insight from VR service users with ASD.