

# **VOCATIONAL SURVEY OF ADULTS WITH ASD IN ARIZONA**

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# **BACKGROUND**

**In summer 2015 Governor Ducey created an ASD Task Force on AHCCCS services**

**Sub-committee on Adult Services includes Prof. Adams, who developed vocational survey**

**Survey completed by 172 ASD families in fall 2015**

**Results shared with DDD, RSA, and submitted to Governor**

# **GOALS**

- **Determine vocational status of adults with ASD**
- **Determine barriers to employment**
- **Develop recommendations on how to improve employment**

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## Demographic of Participants

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### Response Type

Parent/Guardian of an adult with ASD	73%
Adults with ASD	25%
Adult with ASD and their Parents/Guardian	2%

### Participant Age

18-24	56%
25-44	31%
45+	13%

### Highest Level of Education

Still in high school	9%
Dropped out of high school	1%
Completed high school	41%
Currently in vocational program	6%
Completed vocational program	2%
Currently a college student	12%
Completed several college courses	11%
Completed Associate's degree	5%
Completed Bachelor's degree	8%
Completed graduate degree	6%

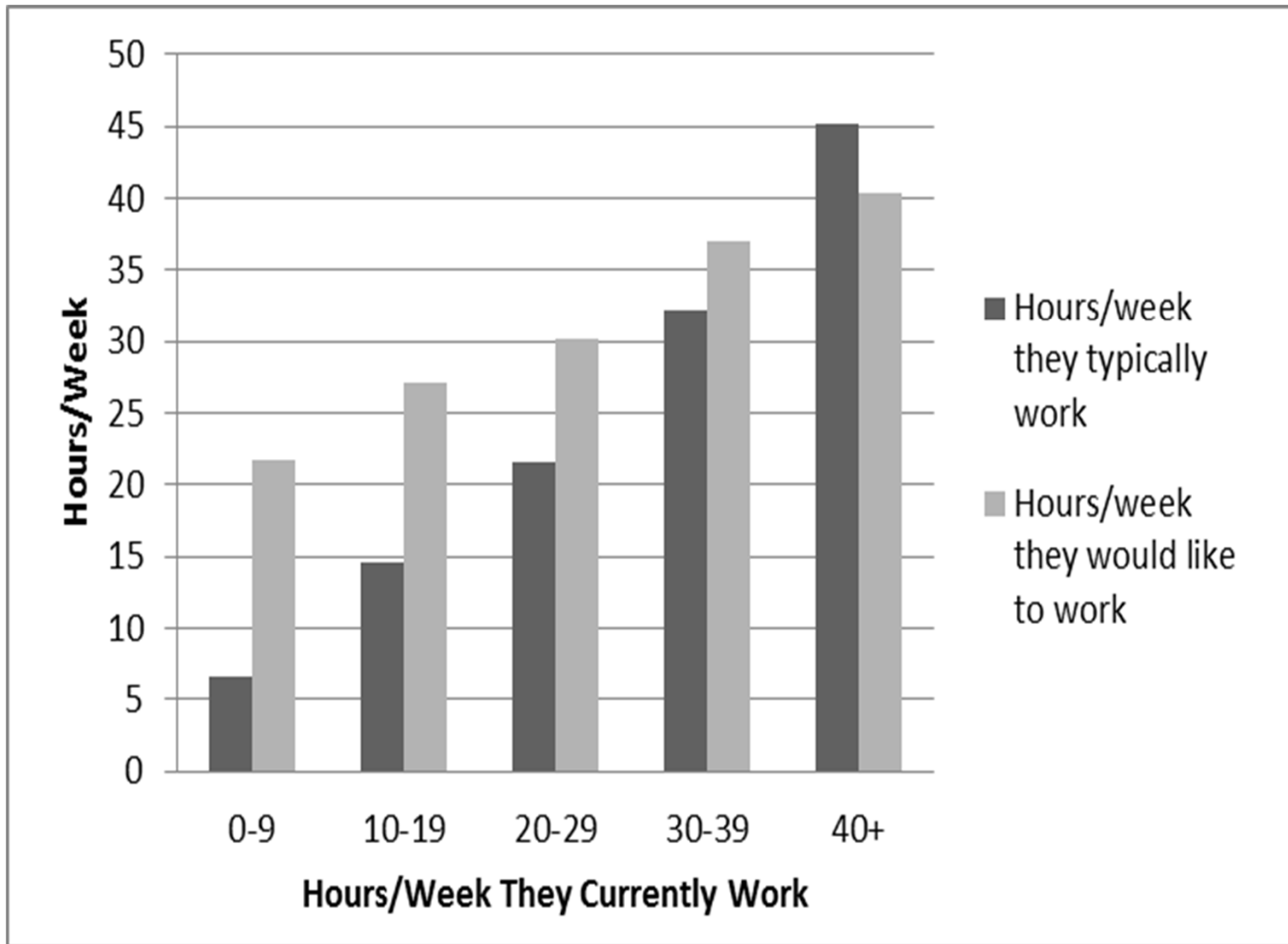
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# JOB STATISTICS

## Current Job Situation

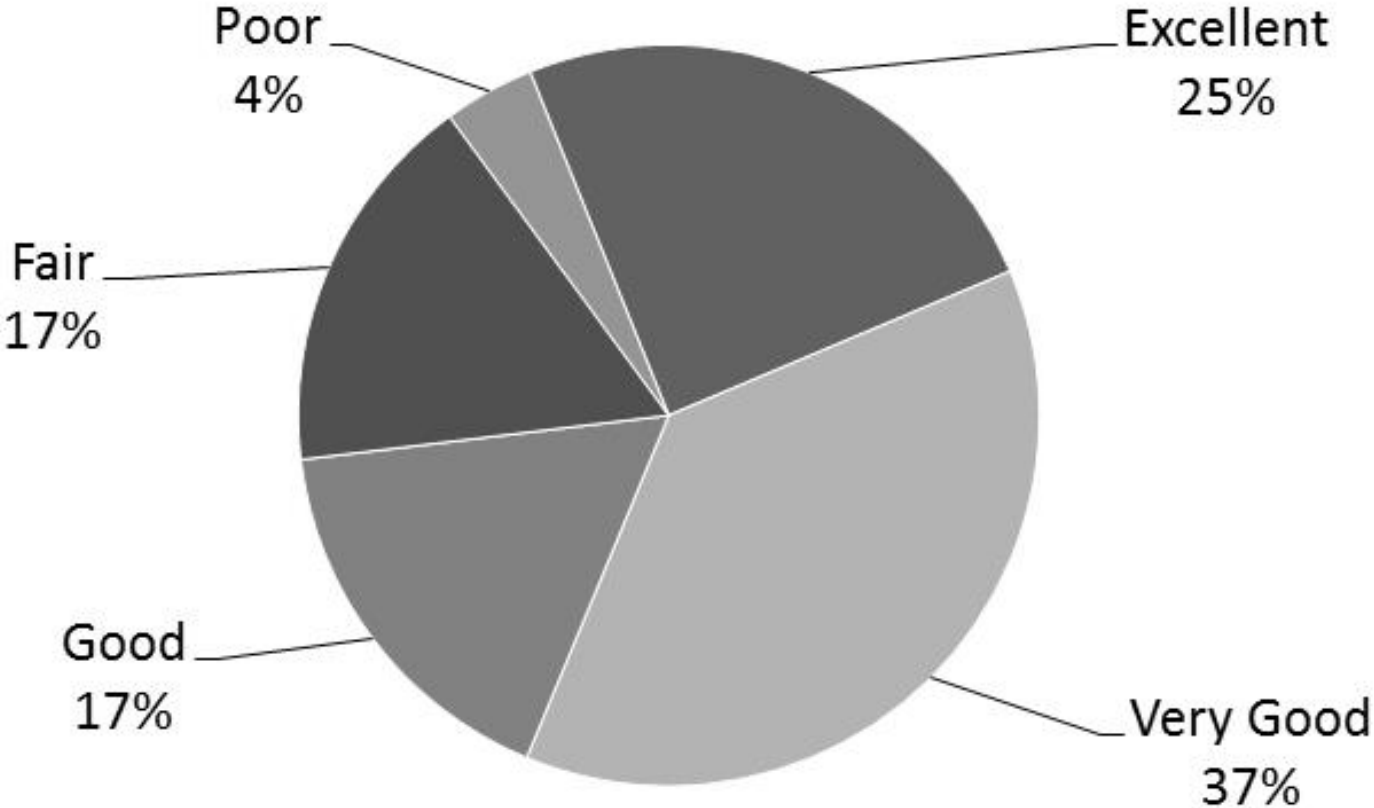
Student in high school	9%
Student in vocational program	3%
Student in college	4%
Center-based employment	4%
Group-based employment	5%
Regular employment with supports	9%
Regular employment without support	28%
Self-employed	1%
Unemployed, looking for work	27%
Unemployed, not looking for work, not a student	13%

<b>Job Types</b>	
Entry Level Job	82%
Professional Level Job	18%
<b>Typical Hourly Wage</b>	
Average Hourly Wage	\$12.50/hour
Median Hourly Wage	\$9/hour
Percent under \$8/hour	19%
<b>Hourly Wage Based on Type of Employment</b>	
Center-based employment	\$3/ hour
Group-based employment	\$3/ hour
Regular employment with supports	\$9/ hour
Regular employment without supports	\$16/ hour
<b>Average Hours per Week</b>	
Typically worked	25 hours/week
Would like to work	33 hours/week



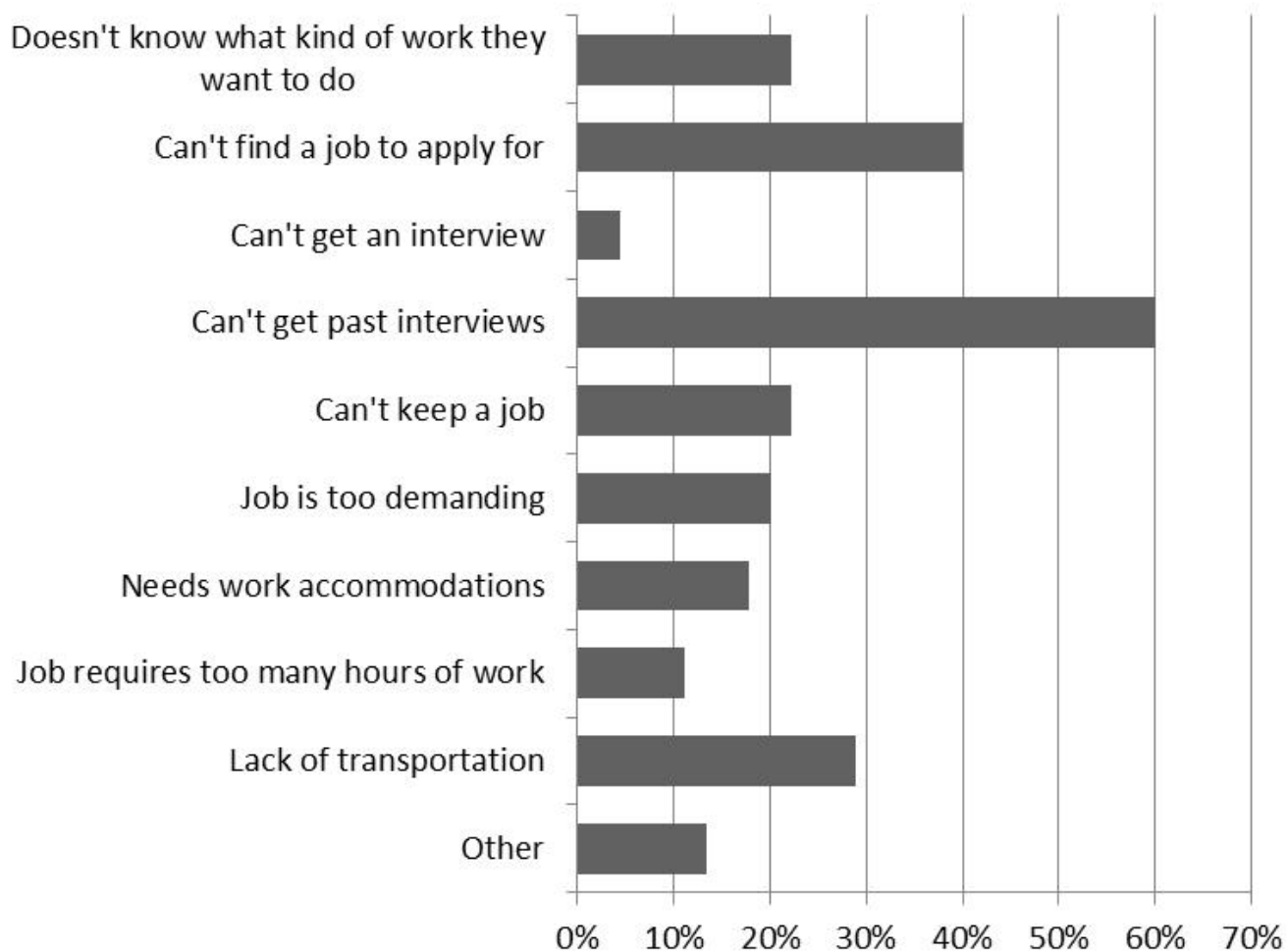
Those working few hours would like to work more, those at 40+ hours would like to work less

# JOB SATISFACTION





# BARRIERS TO FINDING EMPLOYMENT



Respondents were able to select more than one option and percentages are out of number of respondents who answered the question

### **Challenges to Finding/Keeping a Job**

Autism Symptoms Inhibiting Job Acquisition	30%
Need Job Coaching/ Job Training	24%
Problems Getting or Getting Past Interviews	17%
Lack of support from DDD/VR agencies	11%
Employer's lack of understanding of ASD	9%

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### **What Help is Most Needed to Find/Keep a Job**

Job Coaching/ Job Training	43%
Teaching employers about how to work with individuals with ASD	24%
Teaching Interview Skills/ Application Skills	22%
Transportation	9%

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**VOCATIONAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR EMPLOYERS**



# **RAISE EXPECTATIONS**

People with ASD are often under-employed at tasks below their ability, resulting in lower salaries and lower job satisfaction. Recognize that some individuals with ASD have average or above average intellectual capabilities, and may have specific areas of vocational strengths.

# **FADE SUPPORTS**

Train staff to fade supports and to work on increasing independence of clients so they can transition to more independent work.

# **VISUAL SUPPORTS**

Break complex tasks into simple steps, with visuals or written instructions

# **CAREER EXPLORATION AND JOB SEARCH**

Most jobs are found by social networking, but adults with ASD have a very limited social network.

So, they need extra assistance with career exploration and with finding possible jobs

# **PRE-INTERVIEWS & JOB SHADOWING**

Job coaches need to help with finding a job, and to do a pre-interview with employers to explain ASD and their client's strengths and disability.

Provide job shadowing prior to starting employment, to ensure that job is a good match for client's interest and ability, and to identify potential problems including sensory problems.

# **WORKSITE PEER MENTORS TO PARTIALLY REPLACE JOB COACHES**

Ask each employer to assign a worksite peer mentor to spend 5-10% of their time to assist the ASD client with both work skills and social skills.

Worksite peer mentors should provide regular feedback to the ASD client about problems so that they can improve and stay employed.

Give the worksite mentor and the employer basic training about ASD, and brief explanation to co-workers if appropriate.



# **WORKSITE PEER MENTORS**

## **CONTINUED**

The worksite peer mentor has several advantages over a traditional job coach:

- Always present at the job, so immediately available whenever a problem arise;
- Knowledgeable about work requirements and social interactions/environment;
- No time wasted driving from one client to another.

# **INCREASED COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS/CAREGIVERS**

Worksite peer mentors should communicate with parents/caregivers on a frequent basis, such as 1x/week.

It is highly recommended that, if parents/caregivers are involved with the client that they also are informed of problems at work so that they can help work with the client to deal with those problems before they escalate.

# INDIVIDUAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Many adults with ASD may need individual accommodations, including possibly:

- Limited hours
- Increased time to learn tasks
- Occasional extra break time if stressed
- Explanation of social norms (hygiene, conversation)
- Evaluation of sensory challenges
- Visual cues/instructions
- Assistance with transportation
- Longer oversight period by job coaches
- Worksite Peer Mentor
- Medical issues – seizures, special diet

# **COMMON ADVANTAGES OF HIRING ADULTS WITH ASD**

- Strong work ethic (less time socializing)
- Low absenteeism, on-time
- Trustworthy
- Willing to do highly-repetitive tasks
- Attention to detail
- Different perspective/way of thinking
- Loyal to company -> low turn-over

# **SUMMARY**

Some adults with ASD are employed, but many are unemployed or underemployed

Many barriers to employment, including primarily interviewing and lack of understanding of ASD

Several recommendations have been made to significantly improve job placement and job retention

# **FORMAT OF JOB FAIR**

**If there is a parent or job coach, we suggest they talk to the employer first for 2-3 minutes**

**Next, the adult with ASD can talk to the employer for a few minutes**

**Everyone else should wait for their turn.**