

# **The COVID-19 Recession and its Impact on U.S. Workers**

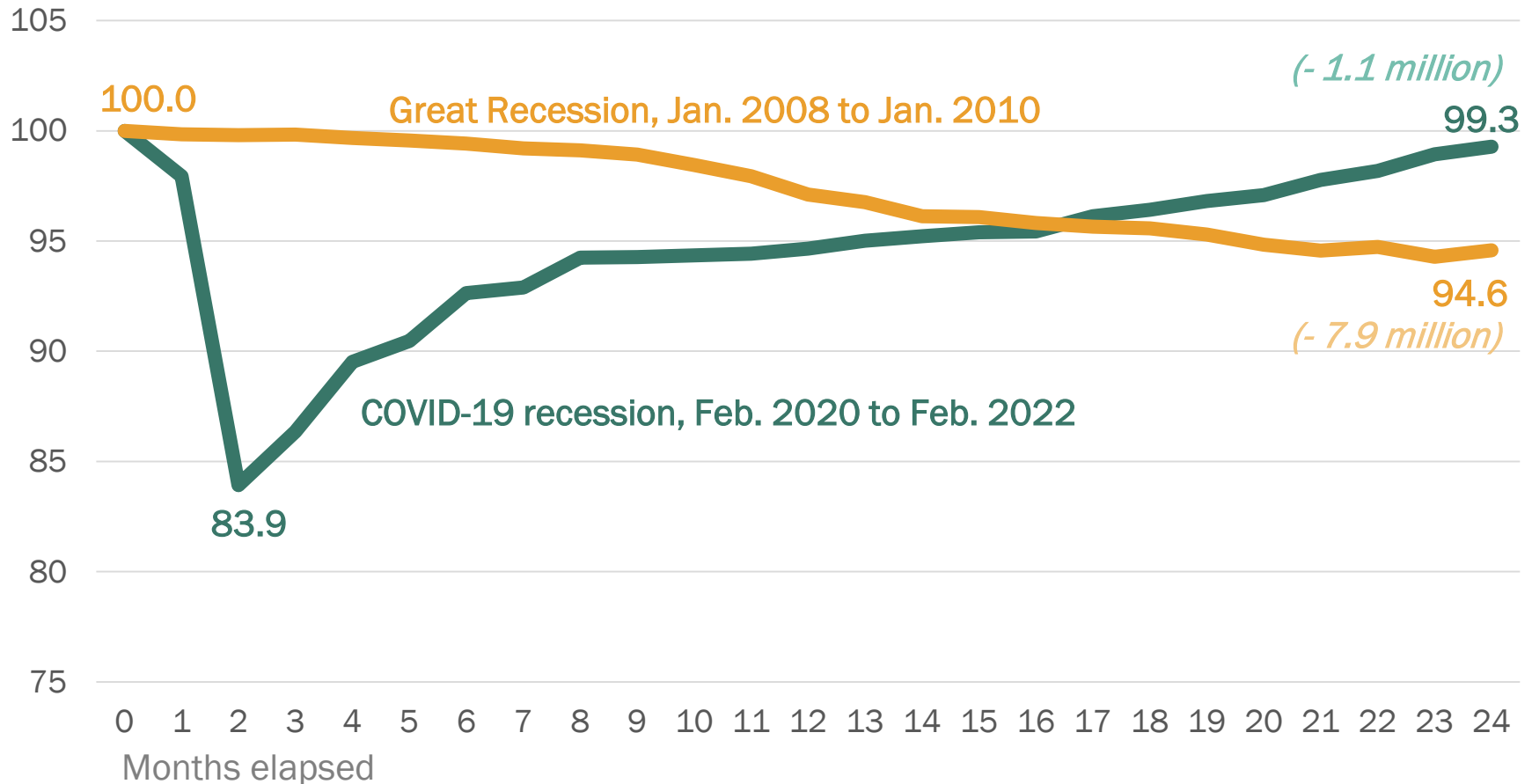
**Rakesh Kochhar**

*Senior Researcher*

# **OVERVIEW OF MAJOR LABOR MARKET TRENDS**

# Employment plunged in the COVID-19 recession but recovered faster than in the Great Recession

*Employment relative to each of two base periods, Jan. 2008 and Feb. 2020*

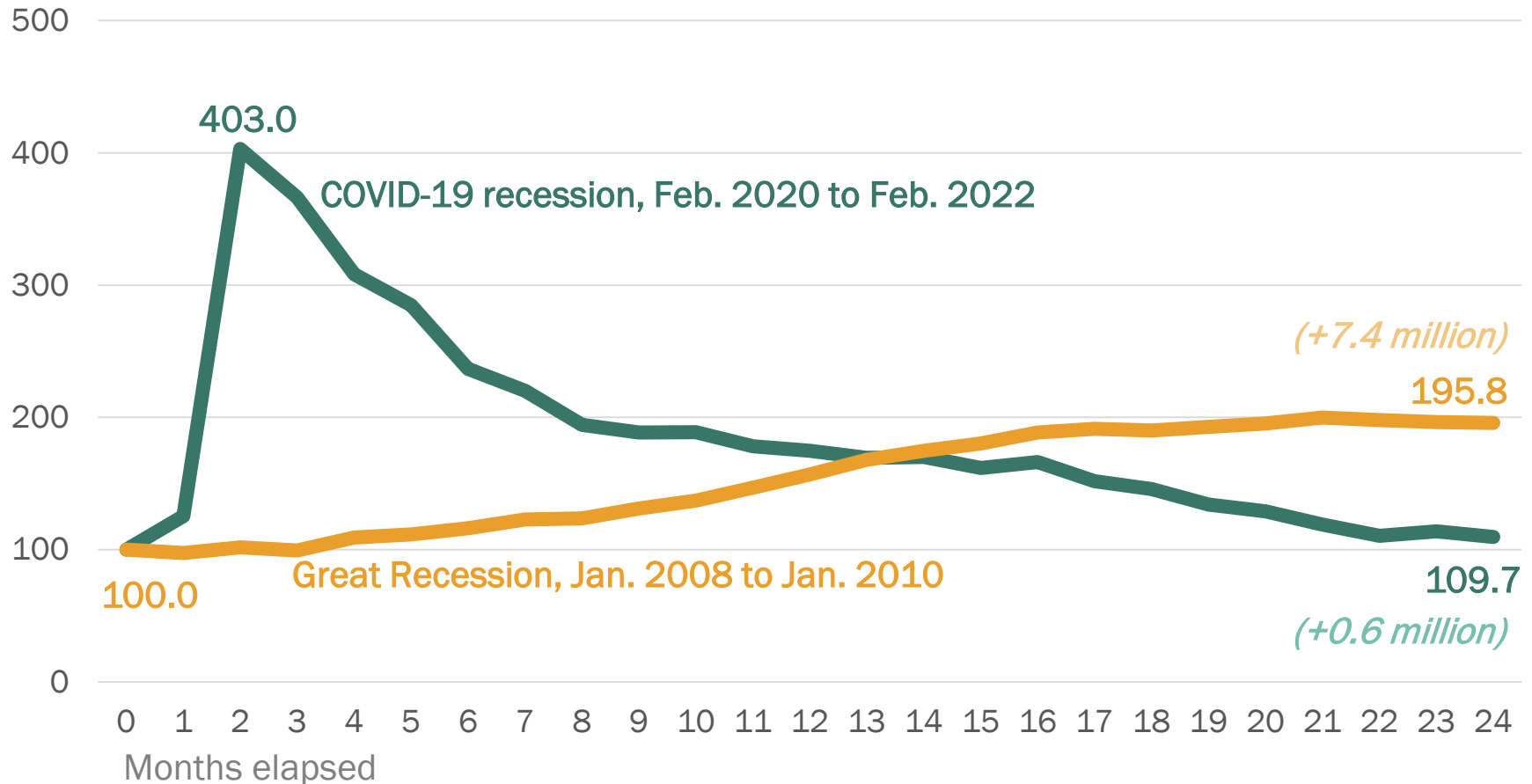


Note: Estimates show U.S. employment in a given month relative to employment in the base period, Feb. 2020 for the COVID-19 recession and Jan. 2008 for the Great Recession. The COVID-19 recession lasted from Feb. 2020 to April 2020 and the Great Recession lasted from Dec. 2007 to June 2009. Estimates refer to people ages 16 and older and are seasonally adjusted.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Unemployment in the COVID-19 recession has also fallen more quickly than in the Great Recession

*Unemployment relative to each of two base periods, Jan. 2008 and Feb. 2020*



Note: Estimates show the U.S. unemployment level in a given month relative to the level in the base period, Feb. 2020 for the COVID-19 recession and Jan. 2008 for the Great Recession. The COVID-19 recession lasted from Feb. 2020 to April 2020 and the Great Recession lasted from Dec. 2007 to June 2009. Estimates refer to people ages 16 and older and are seasonally adjusted.

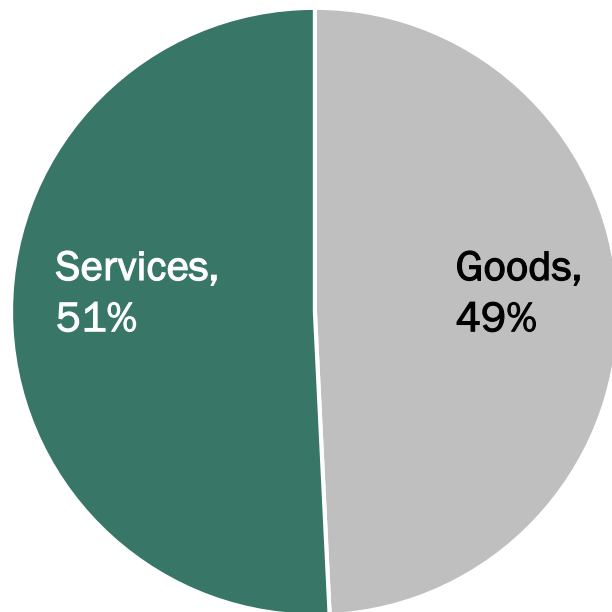
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Unlike past recessions, job losses in the pandemic have been centered in the services sector

*Share of a sector in total loss in employment*

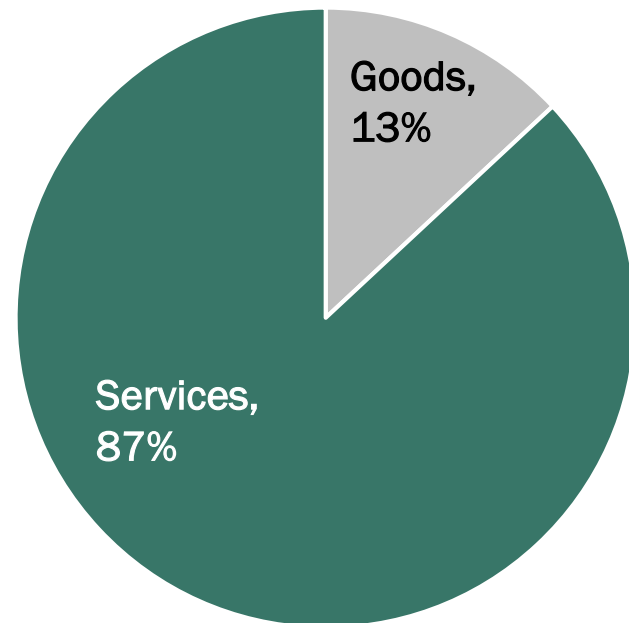
## Great Recession

Jan. 2008 to Jan. 2010



## COVID-19 recession

Feb. 2020 to Feb. 2022

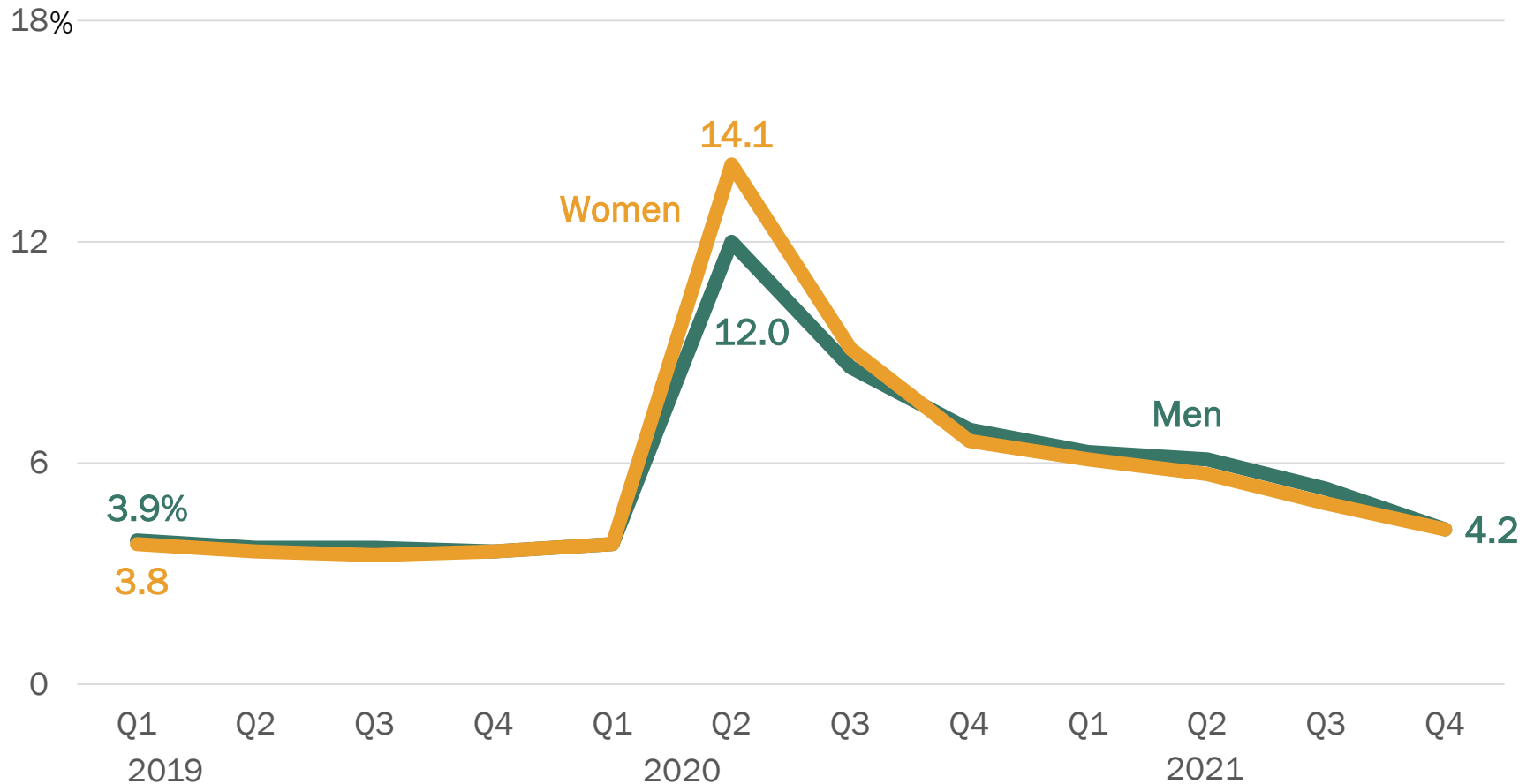


Note: The goods sector includes natural resources and mining, construction and mining. The services sector includes all other industries, except public administration. The COVID-19 recession lasted from Feb. 2020 to April 2020 and the Great Recession lasted from Dec. 2007 to June 2009. Estimates are seasonally adjusted.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## **OUTCOMES BY WORKER DEMOGRAPHICS**

# The unemployment rate peaked higher for women but is back at parity with men

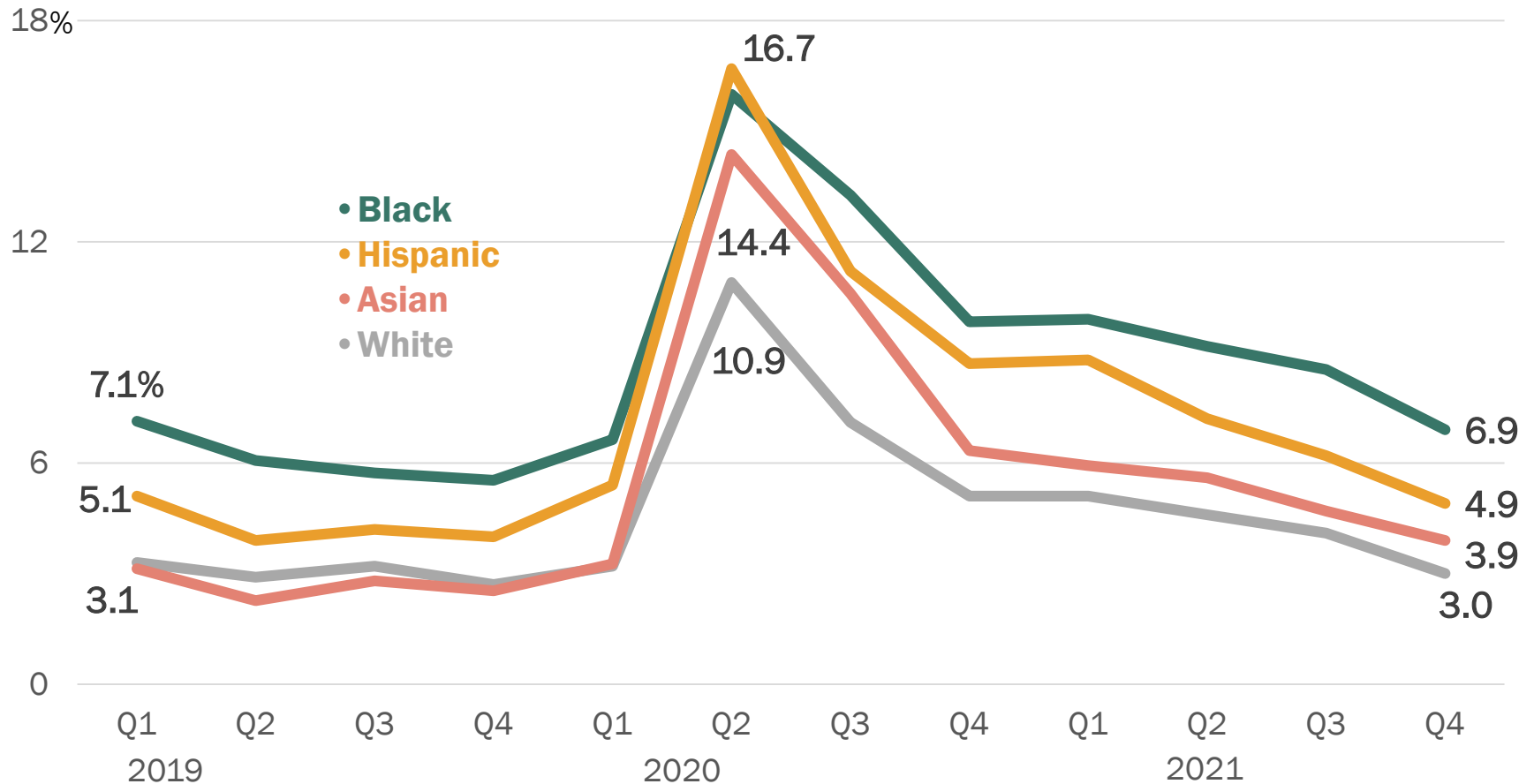


Note: The unemployment rate is the share of workers in the labor force actively looking for work or on temporary layoff. Estimates refer to people ages 16 and older and are seasonally adjusted.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Unemployment rate gaps across racial and ethnic groups have held firm in the pandemic

*Unemployment rate*



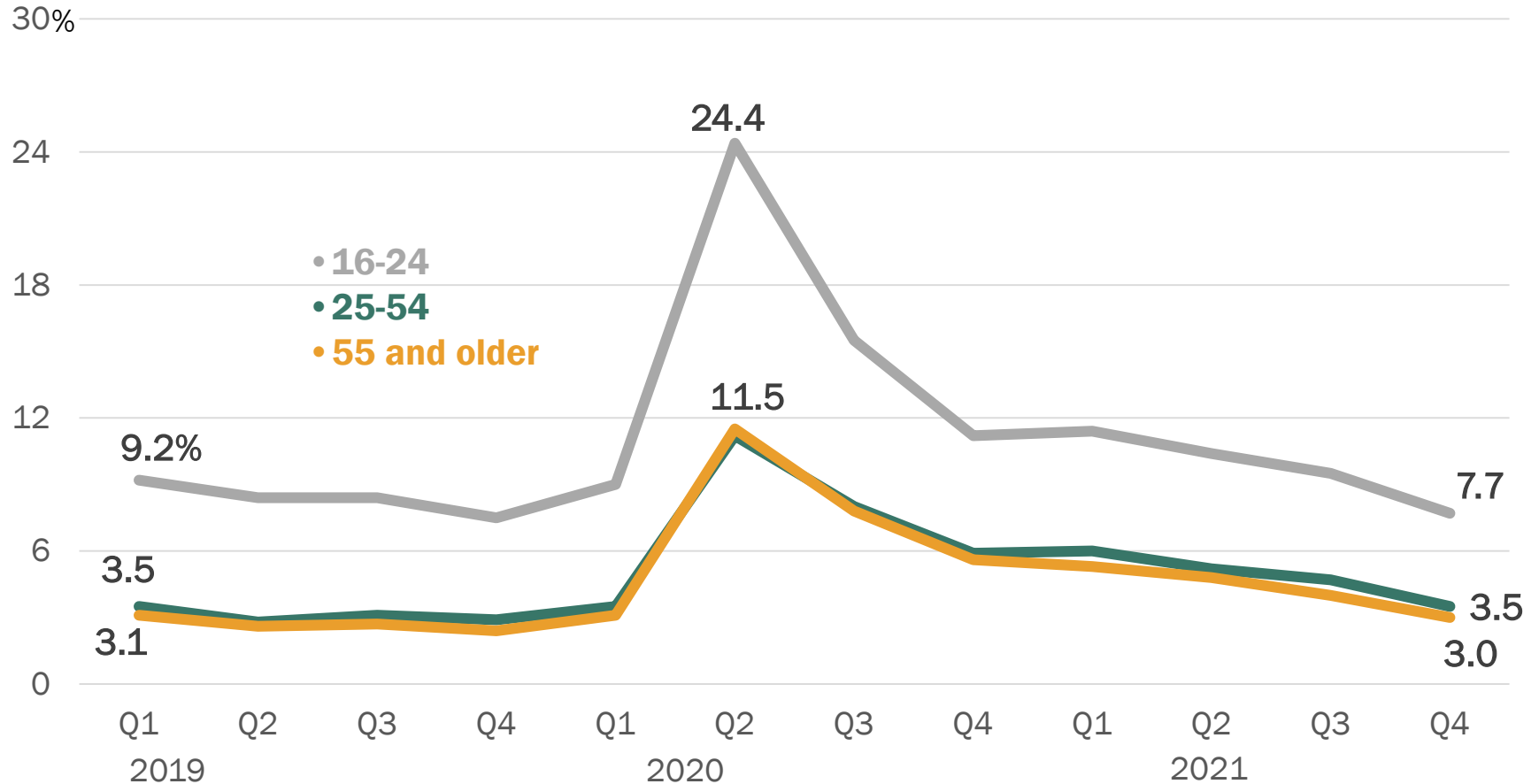
Note: Estimates refer to people 16 and older and are not seasonally adjusted. White, Black and Asian workers include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic workers are of any race.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



# Unemployment rates for prime-age and older workers are nearly back to pre-pandemic levels

*Unemployment rate*

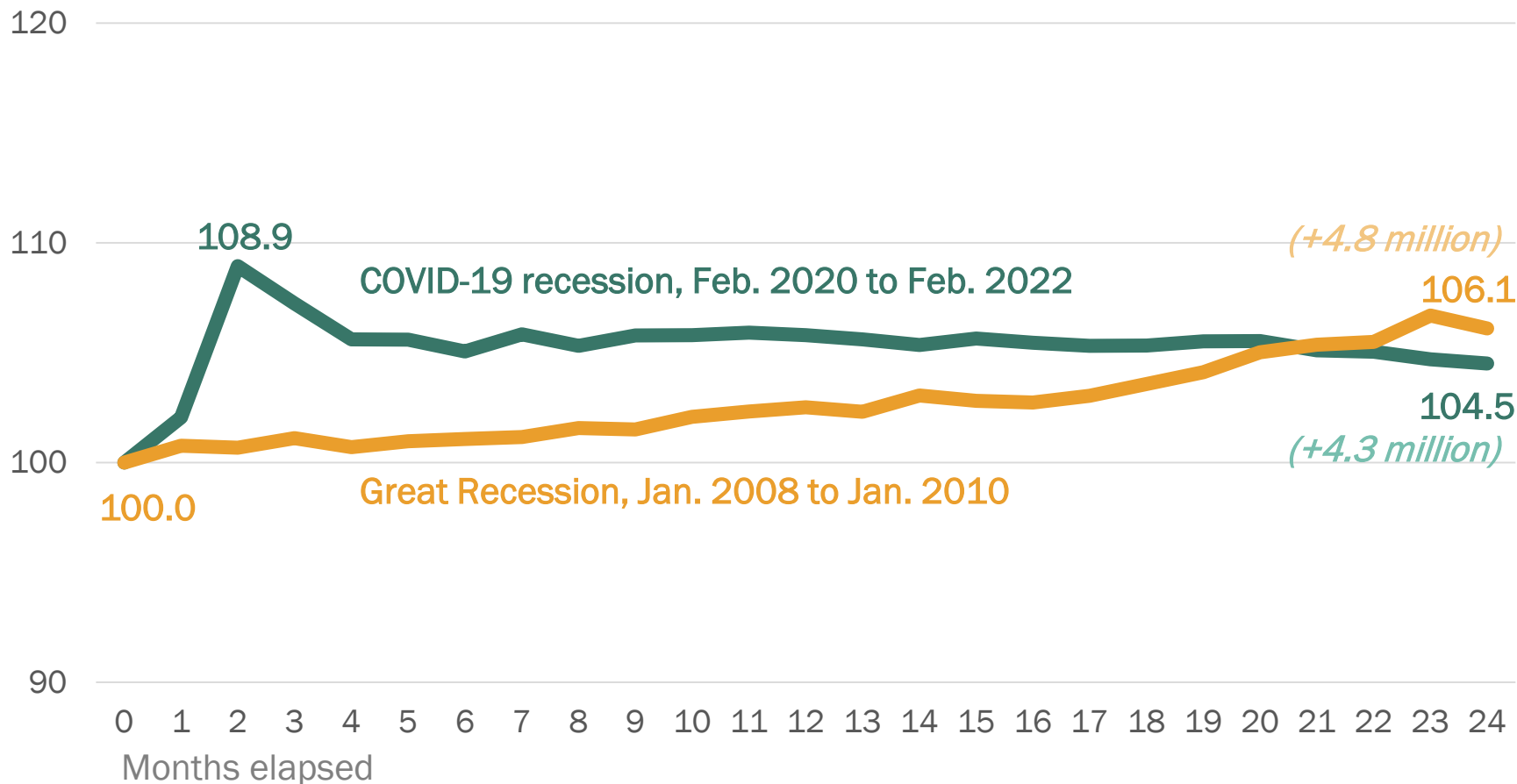


Note: Estimates are not seasonally adjusted.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## **WHO LEFT THE LABOR FORCE**

# Many people remain disengaged from the labor force two years into the pandemic

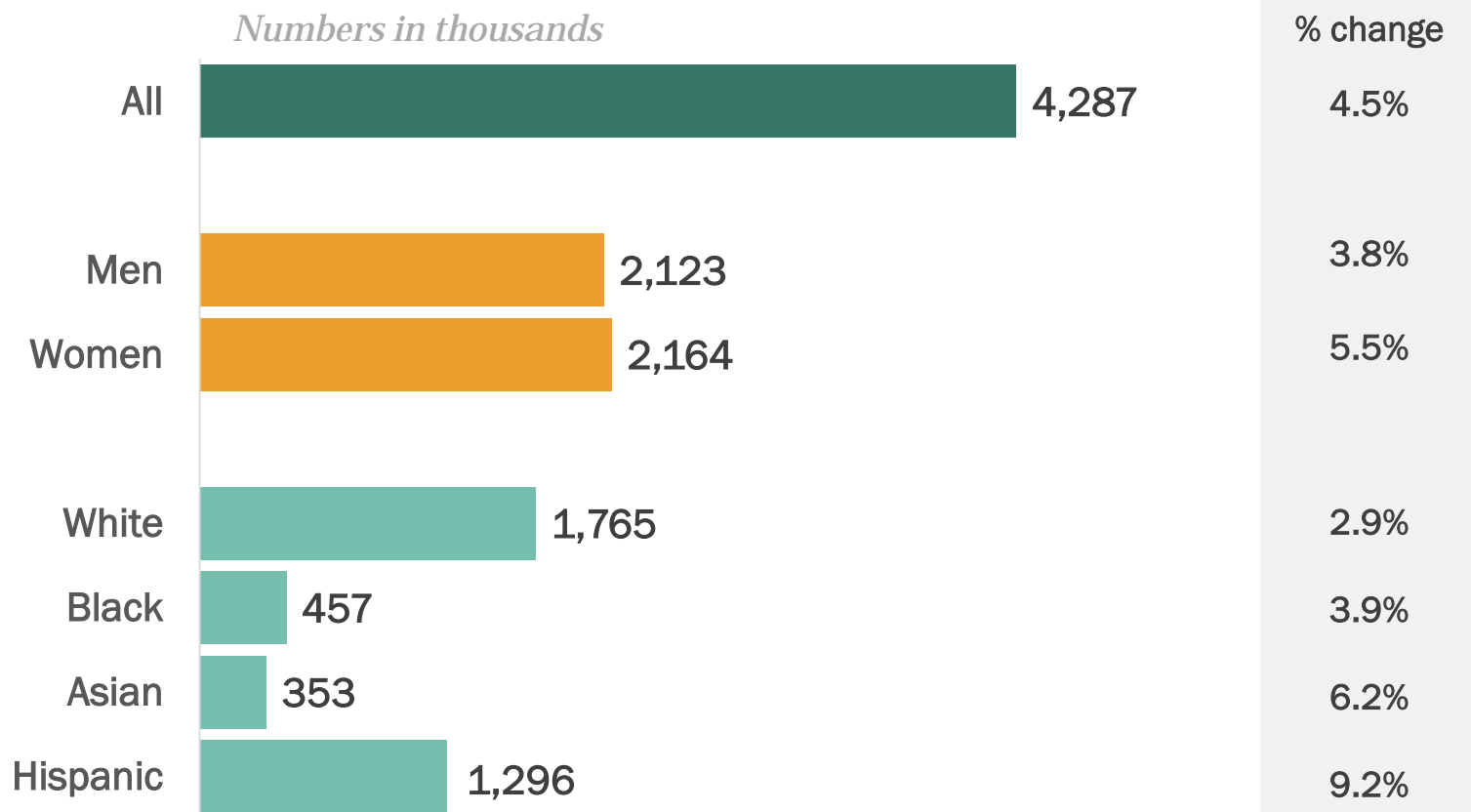


Note: Estimates show the number not in the labor force (NILF) in a given month relative to NILF in the base period, Feb. 2020 for the COVID-19 recession and Jan. 2008 for the Great Recession. The COVID-19 recession lasted from Feb. 2020 to April 2020 and the Great Recession lasted from Dec. 2007 to June 2009. Estimates refer to people ages 16 and older and are seasonally adjusted.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Women, Asian and Hispanic workers have been more likely to leave the labor force in the pandemic

*Change in the number of people not in the labor force from Feb. 2020 to Feb. 2022*

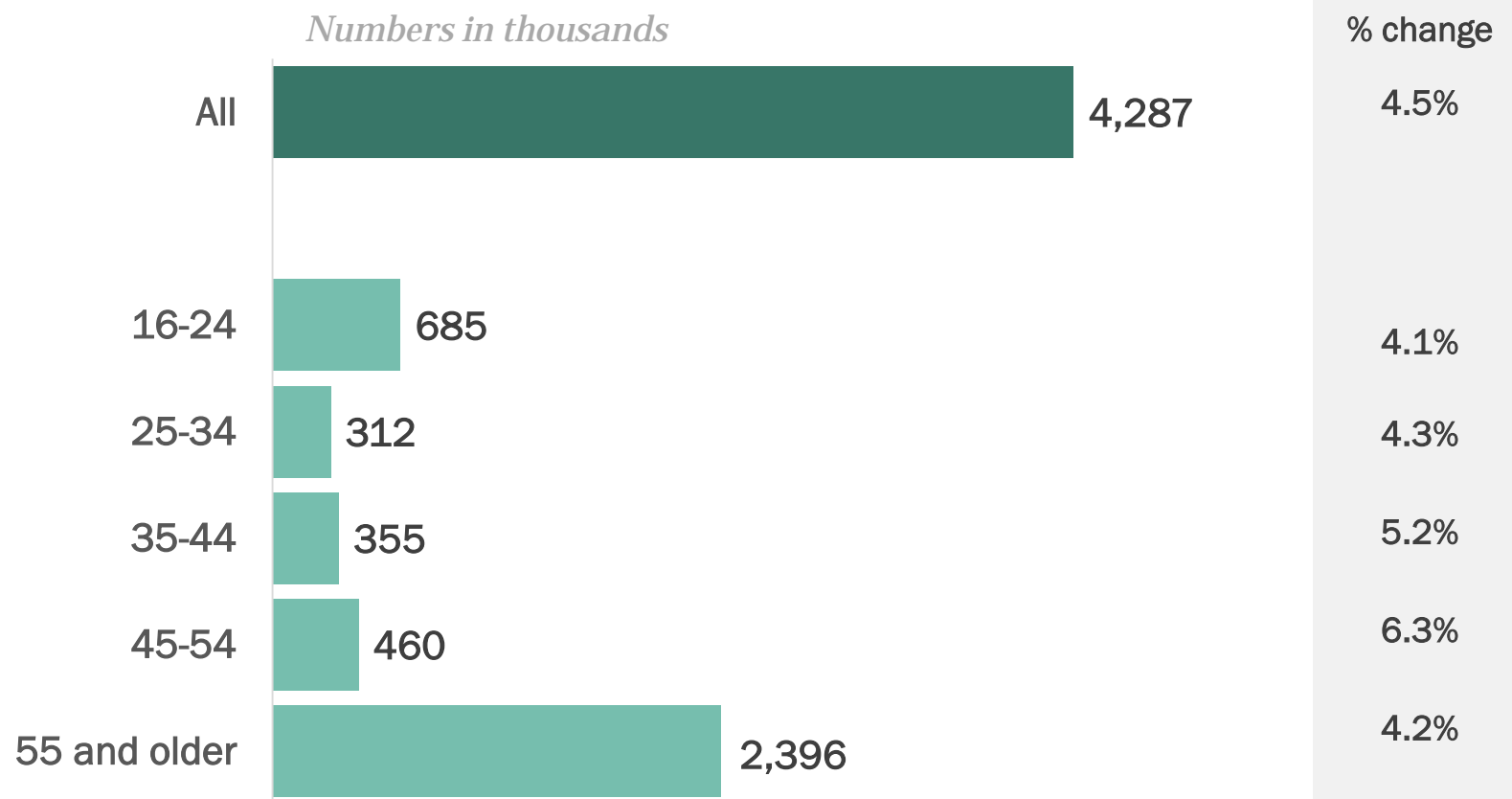


Note: Estimates refer to people 16 and older. White, Black and Asian workers are only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic workers are of any race. Estimates for racial and ethnic groups are not seasonally adjusted.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# More older workers have left the labor force in the pandemic

*Change in the number of people not in the labor force from Feb. 2020 to Feb. 2022*



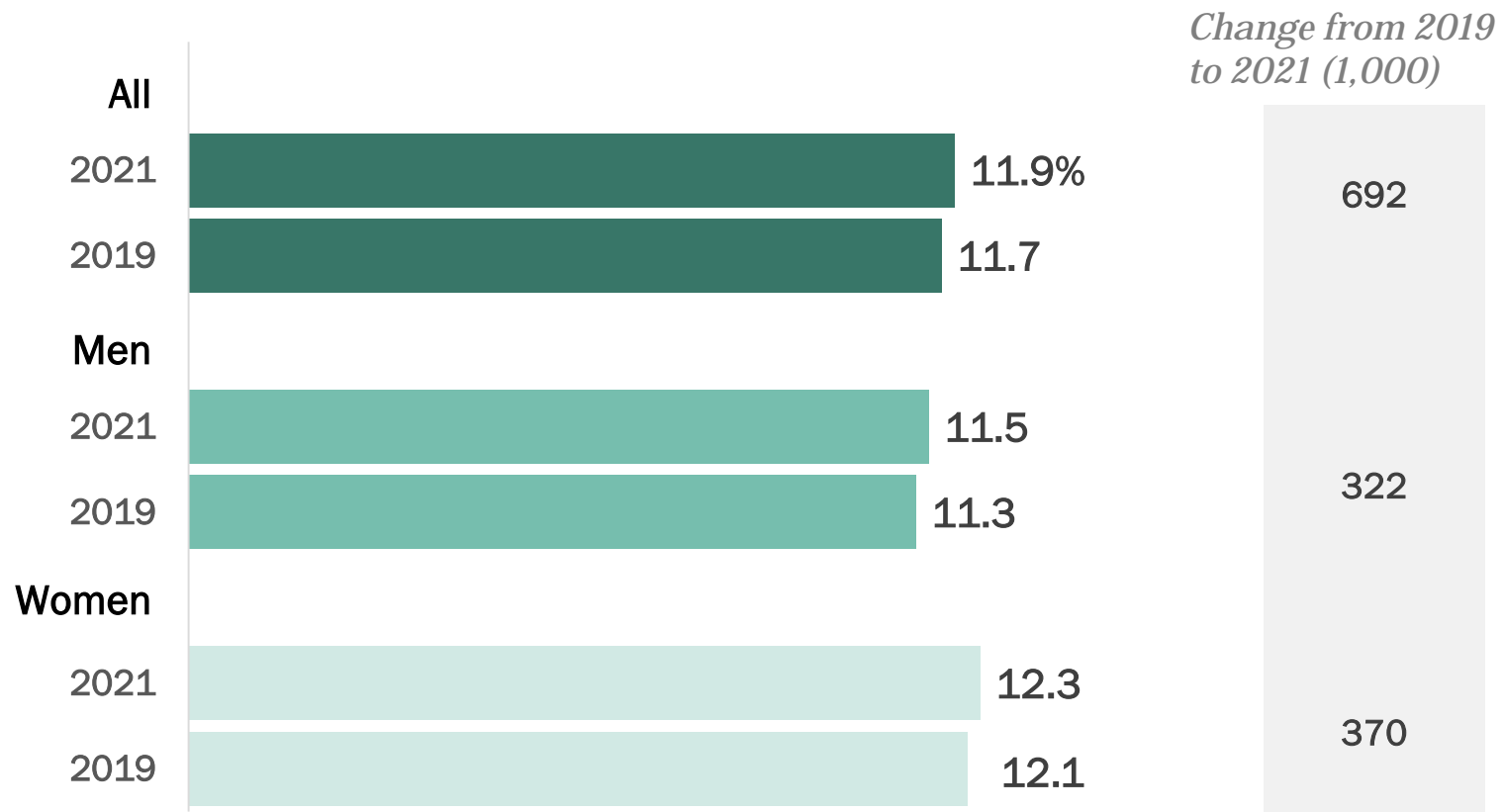
Note: Estimates for age groups are not seasonally adjusted.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## **PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY**

# About one-in-ten adults have a disability and the share edged up in the pandemic

*% of the population 16 and older with a disability*



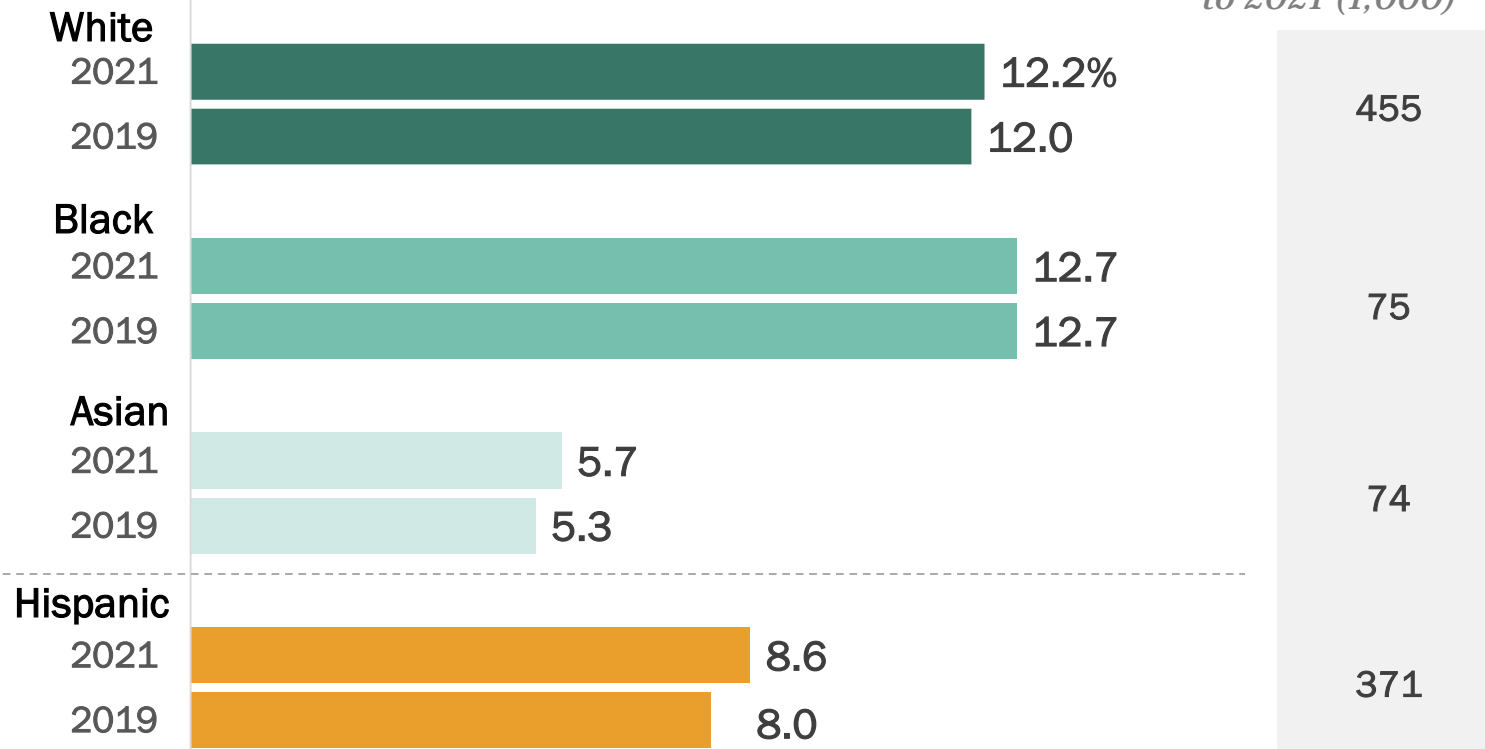
Note: People with a disability reported having at least one of following conditions: deaf or serious difficulty hearing; blind or serious difficulty seeing; difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions; difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; and difficulty doing errands alone.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Hispanic adults account for much of the increase in the number of people with a disability

*% of the population 16 and older with a disability*

*Change from 2019  
to 2021 (1,000)*

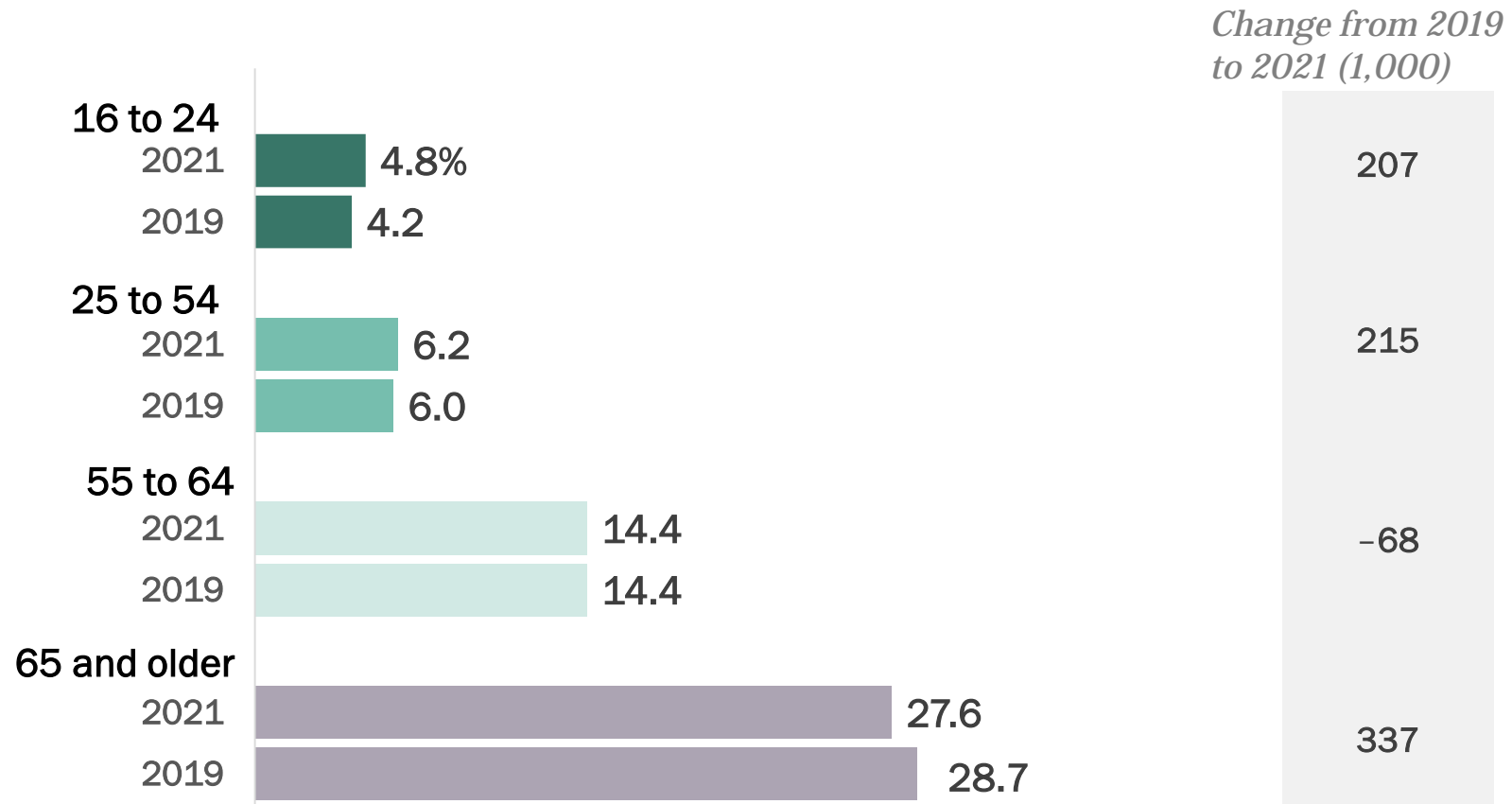


Note: People with a disability reported having at least one of following conditions: deaf or serious difficulty hearing; blind or serious difficulty seeing; difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions; difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; and difficulty doing errands alone. Estimates refer to people 16 and older. White, Black and Asian workers are only those who report being only one race and include Hispanics. Hispanic workers are of any race  
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.



# Aging is raising the number in disability, but there is also an increase among younger workers

*% of the population 16 and older with a disability*

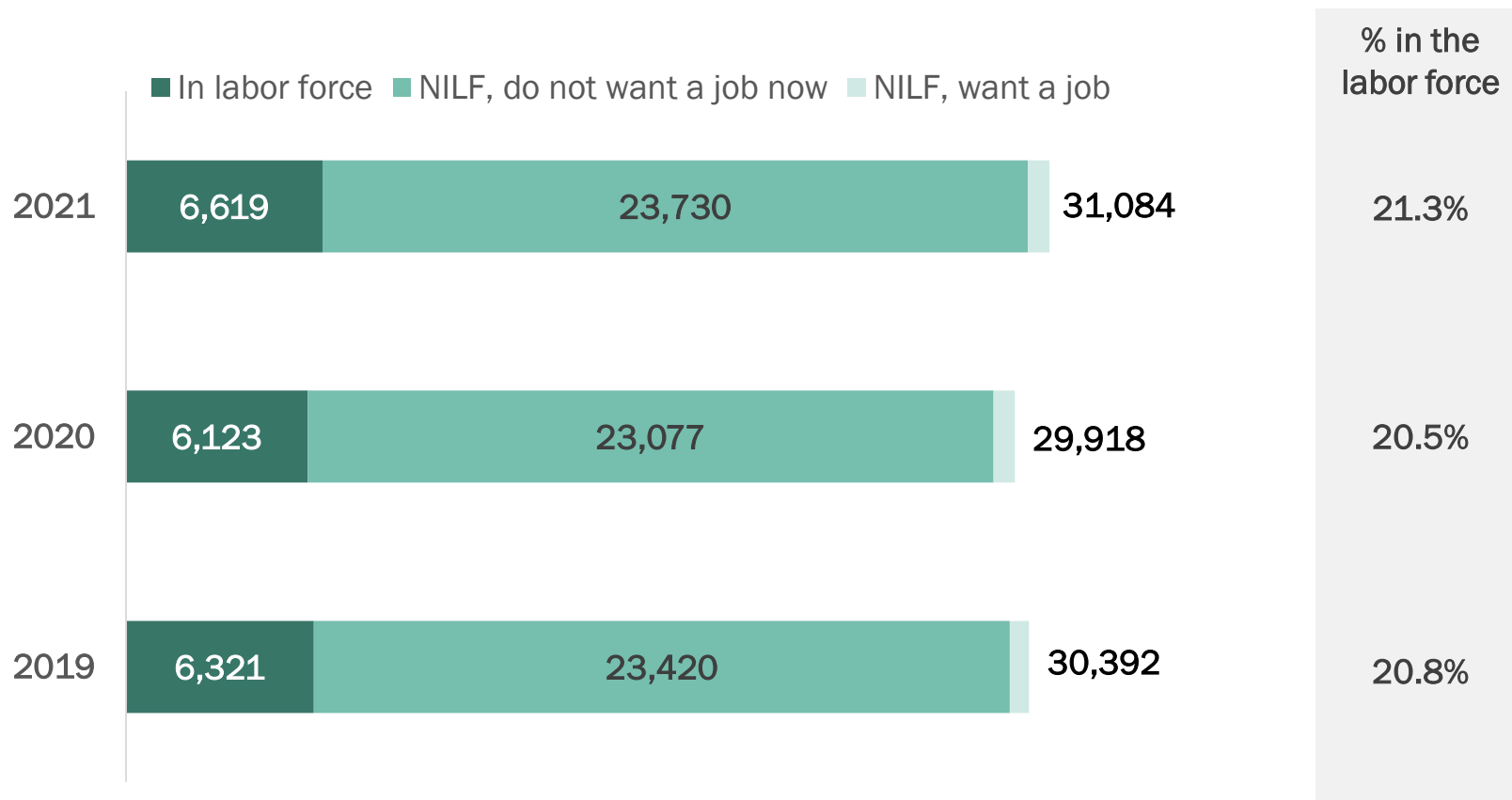


Note: People with a disability reported having at least one of following conditions: deaf or serious difficulty hearing; blind or serious difficulty seeing; difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions; difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; and difficulty doing errands alone.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Most people with a disability are not in the labor force and do not want a job now

*Number of people 16 and older with a disability, in thousands*

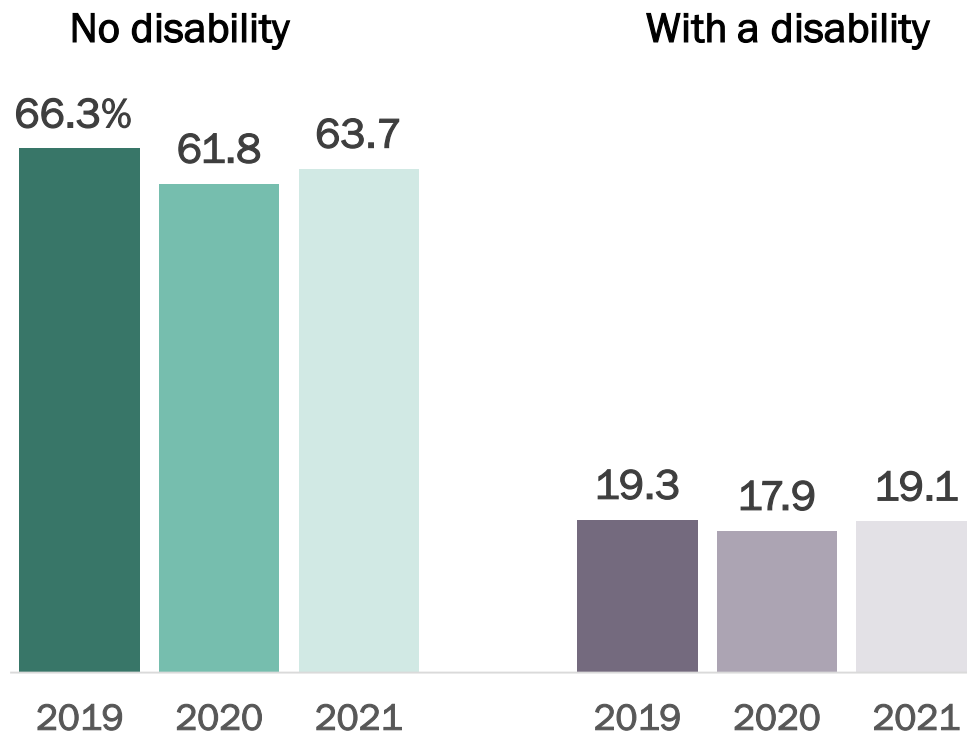


Note: Estimates show the number 16 and older with a disability. People with a disability reported having at least one of following conditions: deaf or serious difficulty hearing; blind or serious difficulty seeing; difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions; difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; and difficulty doing errands alone.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Workers with a disability are less likely to be employed, but their recovery appears more complete

*% of the population 16 and older that is employed*



Note: People with a disability reported having at least one of following conditions: deaf or serious difficulty hearing; blind or serious difficulty seeing; difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions; difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; and difficulty doing errands alone.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Find our work

**[www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)**

@pewresearch

Subscribe to our newsletters at  
**[www.pewresearch.org/follow-us/](http://www.pewresearch.org/follow-us/)**

Follow us on social media



## How do you use our data? Let us know.

**Rakesh Kochhar**

*Senior Researcher*

[rkochhar@pewresearch.org](mailto:rkochhar@pewresearch.org)

**Tanya Ardit**

*Communications manager*

[tarditi@pewresearch.org](mailto:tarditi@pewresearch.org)