

The background of the entire page is a light yellow color. It is populated with numerous stylized, flat-design illustrations of people of various ages, ethnicities, and abilities. Many of these figures are wearing white face masks. Some are holding smartphones, some are using a walker, and one is in a wheelchair. The figures are scattered across the page, framing a central white rectangular area.

NATIONAL ABLE NETWORK, INC.  
**ADVANCING EQUITY IN  
WORKFORCE PROGRAMS**



# INTRODUCTION

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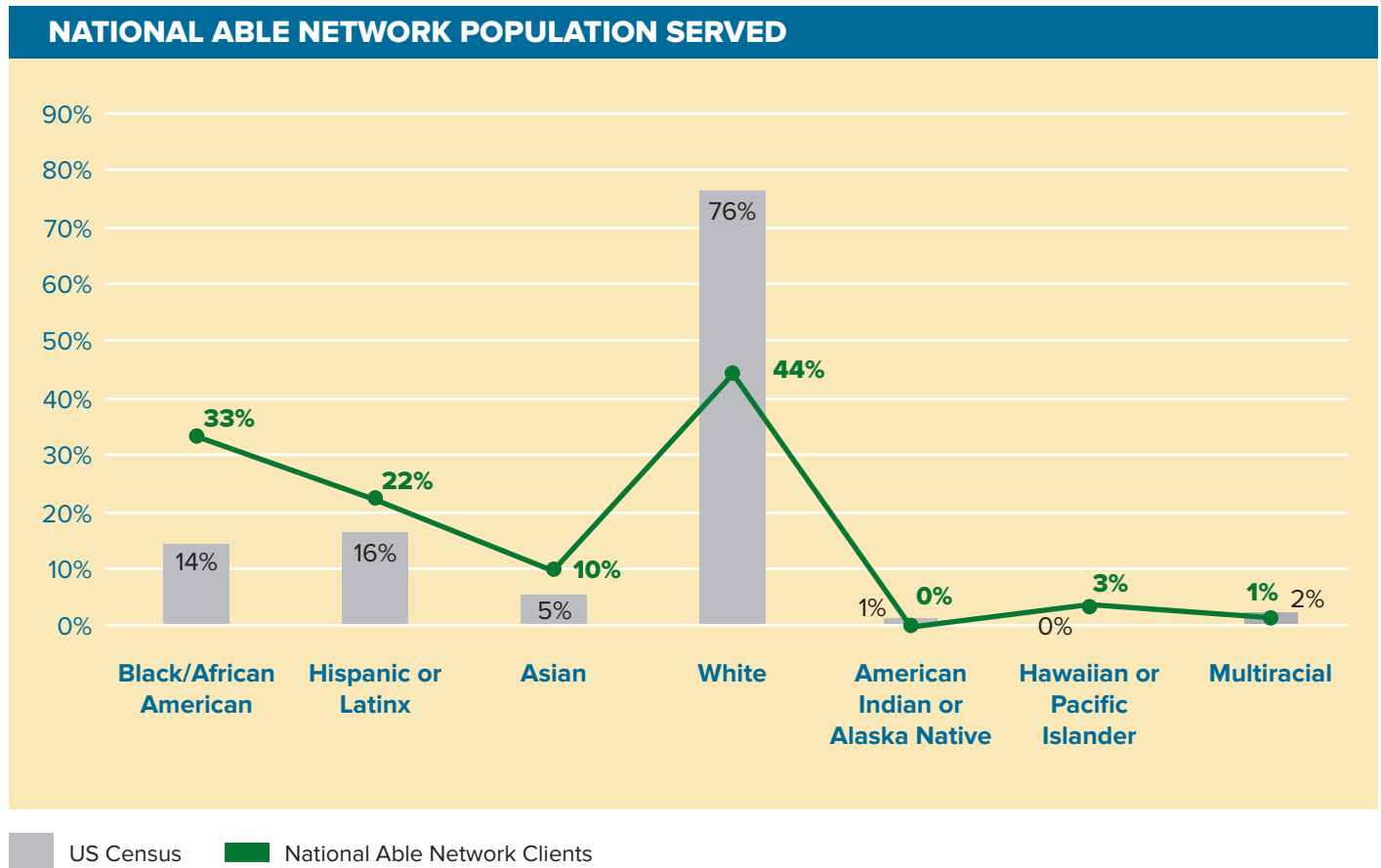
8 OUR IMPACT

National Able Network, Inc. is a leading non-profit organization whose mission is focused on building equity through employment. Each year, more than 50,000 individuals across the Midwest receive access to our career programs and services. We serve those whose journey to economic self-sufficiency has been challenging. Many want to give up. But National Able Network is there to help and restore hope.

Social equity is broadly defined as fairness or justice in the way people are treated. Over the past several years, National Able Network has guided its mission through the lens of equity. In that time, we have worked to develop a theory of change which helps advance racial, social, and economic equity in our work and in the workplace. National Able Network's programs reach populations that experience persistently high unemployment rates, and we work in communities that are veritable opportunity deserts. 2020 was a year like no other. We saw already challenged clients sink deeper into duress because of the economic ripple effects of a global pandemic. To help measure our progress, we surveyed our clients about the employment impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to meet the needs of our clients.

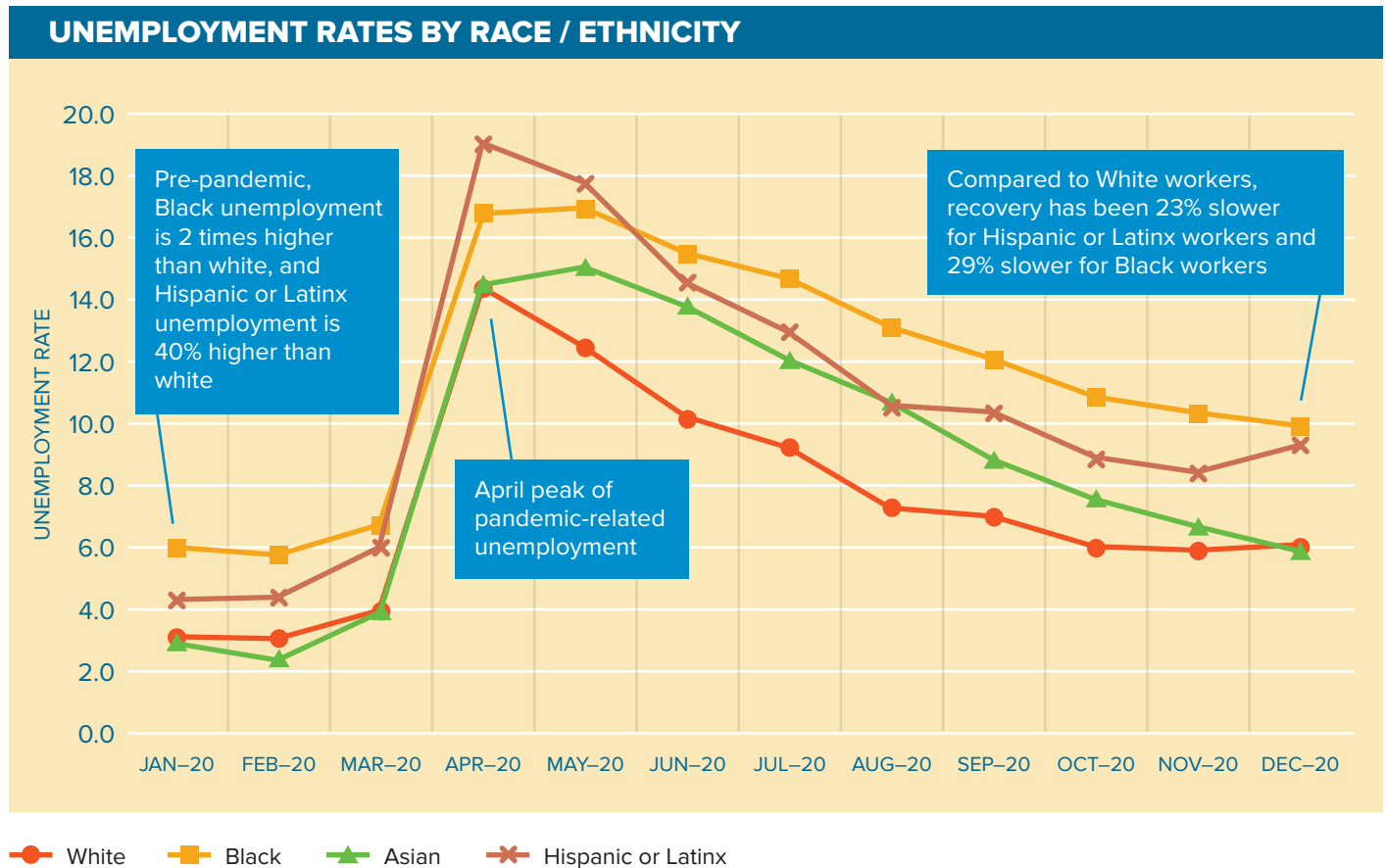
# EQUITY IN WORKFORCE

National Able Network employs strategies that help break down systemic injustices and support equity in the workplace by working in communities that need us most and with employer partners who share our values. The economic impact of the pandemic is far-reaching, and the hardest hit and slowest to recover are people of color and low-wage workers. This isn't surprising considering the starting points: **unemployment among Black workers was twice the rate of white workers** even before the onset of the pandemic, and the **poverty rate among Hispanics or Latinx workers was more than twice that of whites**. Further, 2020 unemployment rates, which peaked in April, have not recovered as quickly for people of color.



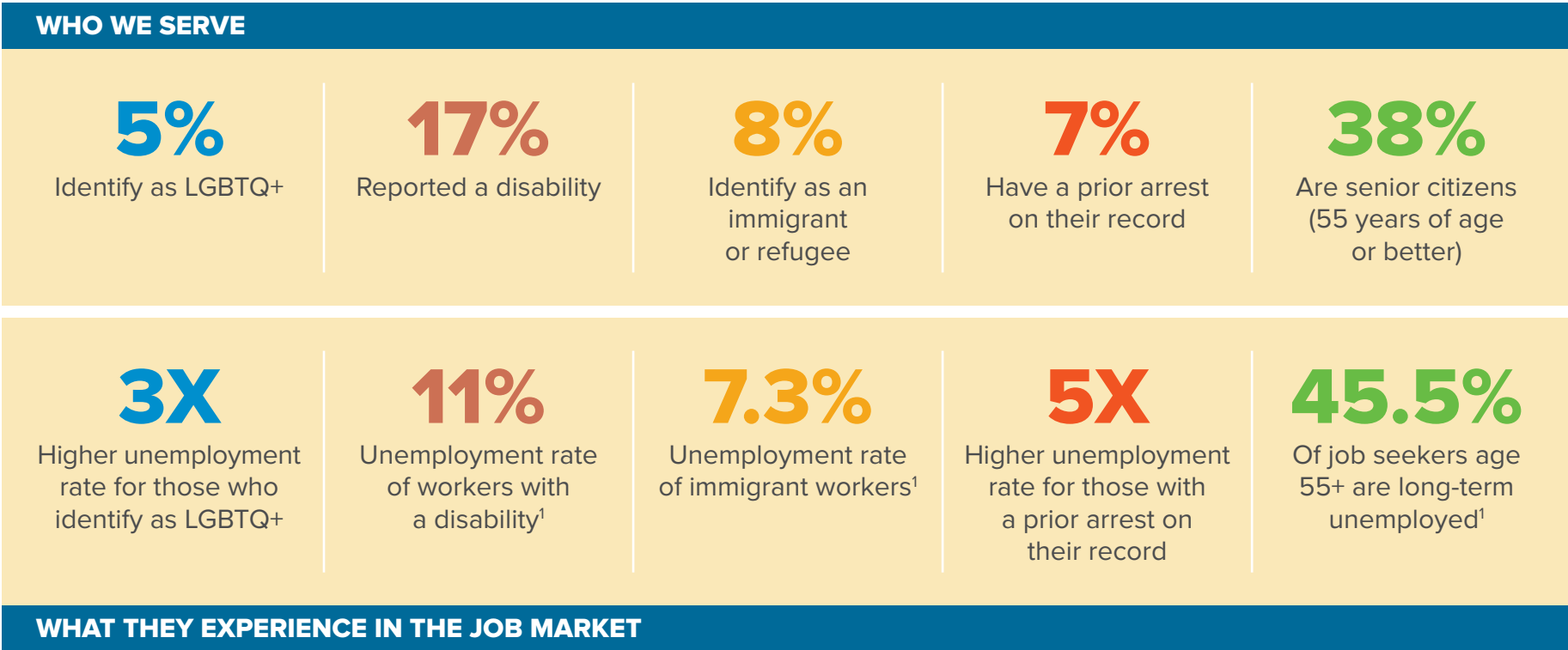
# EQUITY IN WORKFORCE CONTINUED

Of the clients surveyed, 9 out of 10 were living at or above the federal poverty rate when they began working with National Able Network. Despite falling unemployment rates, poverty steadily climbed each month, with a total of 7.8 million Americans descending into poverty in 2020. Compared to white workers, unemployment recovery has been 23% slower for Hispanic or Latinx workers and 29% slower for Black workers.



# EQUITY IN WORKFORCE CONTINUED

Far too many job seekers face barriers to obtaining quality jobs because of their individual circumstances, whether that is race, gender, age, or others. Even worse, **nearly a third of clients recently surveyed said that they experienced employment discrimination**. Of the clients surveyed, we asked if they identified with demographics that typically experience greater challenges to employment.



<sup>1</sup> Source: BLS, December 2020

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected our client's lives in many ways — housing, food access, and other lifeline resources — the loss of a job impacts nearly every aspect of life. What has helped people remain connected — *technology* — was out of reach for many of our clients. For others, we are proud to share their remarkable resiliency and ability to find hope and opportunity with virtual job interviews amid extraordinarily challenging circumstances.

Despite almost **a third of clients losing their jobs because of the pandemic**, nearly **half feel hopeful about their job search** even during the pandemic. **1 in 4 struggle to secure adequate food** for their household, and **1 in 5 are facing challenges with secure housing**. At the time of the survey, only 18% had found a job during the pandemic.

## HOW HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTED YOU?

**29%**

Lost their job because of the pandemic

**18%**

Found a job during the pandemic

**48%**

Feel hopeful about their job search during the pandemic

**1 in 4**

Are facing challenges with securing food for their household

**1 in 5**

Are facing challenges with secure housing

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC CONTINUED

By the time National Able Network's offices closed in mid-March 2020, we had already deployed the vast majority of our career services using virtual resources. While thousands of clients continued to access career training, coaching, and job search resources, far too many clients found themselves on the wrong side of the digital divide. **Nearly a third of clients do not have a computer or tablet in their home, which are necessary tools for job searching, resume writing, submitting job applications, and adapting to the "new normal" of virtual job interviews.** Further, 1 in 5 clients do not have in-home internet access, and not surprisingly, the same number do not use online resources to find job leads. We revamped our interview preparation workshops to help clients navigate virtual job interviews, just in time for 37% of clients to participate.

## HOW HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTED YOUR JOB SEARCH?

**30%**

Do not have a home computer or tablet

**1 in 5**

Have school-age dependents participating in e-learning at home

**37%**

Have participated in virtual job interviews

**1 in 5**

Do not have reliable in-home internet access

**1 in 5**

Are not using online resources to find job leads

# OUR IMPACT

National Able Network's programs help job seekers restore their confidence and pursue career pathways that offer economic opportunity. Of those surveyed, **5 out of 7 job seekers seek help from National Able Network because they wanted to explore a new career path.** While each job seeker's journey is unique, **National Able Network's suite of proven-effective employment and career transition resources help job seekers navigate through the complex job market.** Job seekers receive access to job leads from our network of trusted employer partners, work with a dedicated career coach to charter a path to achieve their training and career goals, and access job training and nationally-recognized career transition workshops.

Your organization has a great staff. They are very considerate and compassionate about the work they do and it shows when dealing with people in search of the dream job!

- Illinois Client

## NATIONAL ABLE NETWORK'S MOST REQUESTED CAREER RESOURCES

1

Receive job leads

2

Wanted the advice of a career coach

3

Attend National Able Network hiring events

4

Participate in career workshops

5

Needed a new resume



