

NATIONAL ABLE NETWORK, INC.

# WORKFORCE EQUITY & DIGITAL ACCESS : 2022

NATIONAL ABLE NETWORK, INC. CLIENT SURVEY RESULTS



# WORLD CHANGES ≠ CAREER CHANGES

For the better part of the past decade, National Able Network has guided its mission through the lens of equity, seeking to disrupt workforce practices that have historically impeded the career prospects and earnings of underrepresented job seeker populations including people of color, women, older workers, non-native English speakers, and the working poor.

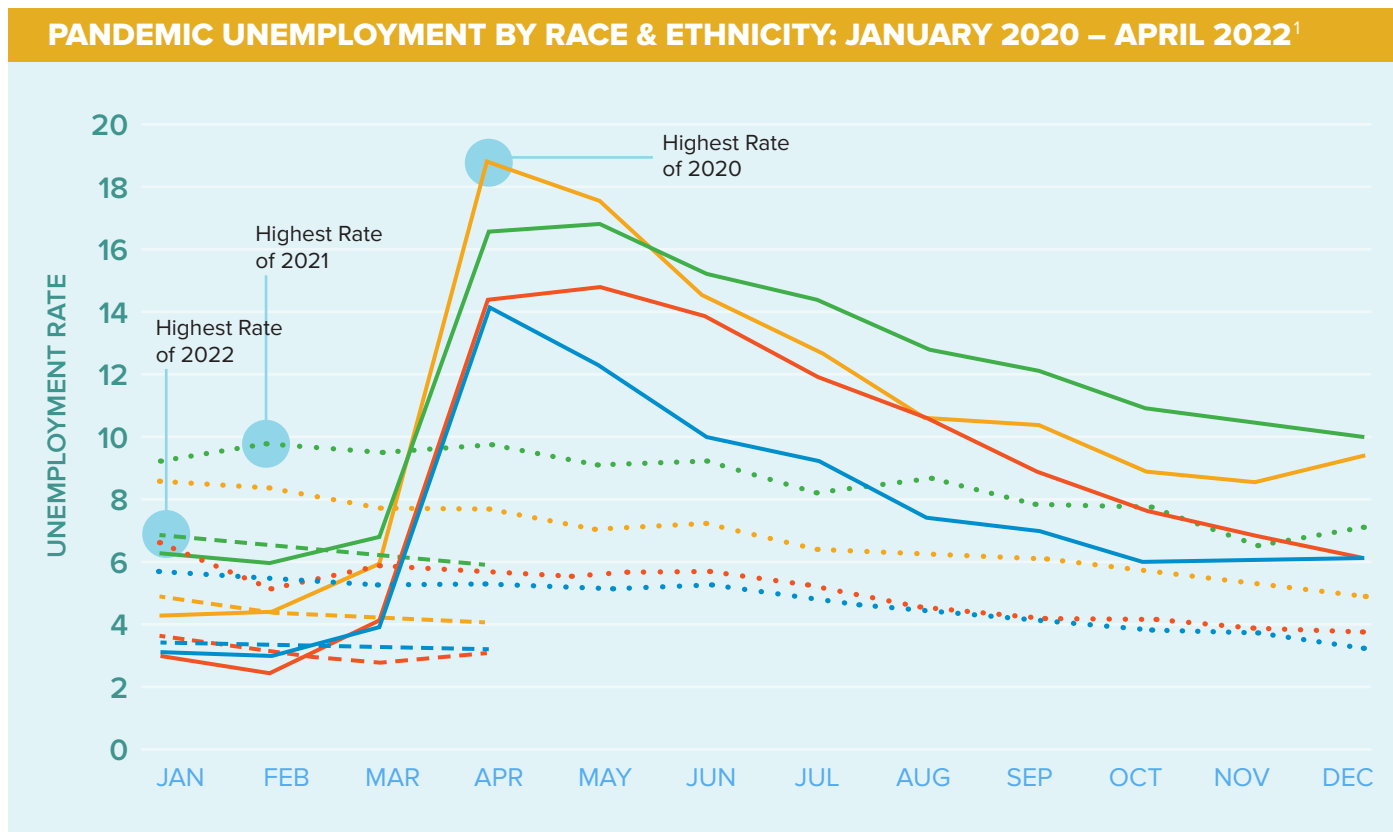
Working with federal, state, and local policymakers, National Able Network has spent the past several years identifying and aiming to adjust and reimagine policies that perpetuate inaccessibility to career services available through the public workforce system. Through these efforts, National Able Network gives voice to job seekers by sharing survey results, personal success stories, and recommendations about how to create policies that promote inclusivity and, frankly, the type of world we want to see through the advancement of our mission.

In our previous survey, we were able to measure how the pandemic amplified economic and workforce disparities among people of color, women, older workers, non-native English speakers. Our assumptions about how the pandemic response inequitably favored the transition of middle-class, blue-collar workers were confirmed, and we found that the unemployed, low-wage workers, workers of color, and women were three to four times more likely to have experienced challenges in accessing the most basic of human needs: housing, food, internet, and employment resources.



# WORLD CHANGES ≠ CAREER CHANGES CONTINUED

More than two years after the onset of the pandemic, we learned that the challenges most-in-need job seekers face persist despite economic conditions that show consistently low unemployment and near-record job openings. But Black and Latino workers have had the unenviable experience of posting the highest levels of unemployment throughout the pandemic, with **Latino unemployment peaking at 18.8% in April 2020** and **Black unemployment peaking at 9.8% in 2021** and remaining at 6.9% in January 2022, with just the first four months of 2022 unemployment data available at the time of this report.



**WHITE**  
 — White UE 2020  
 ..... White UE 2021  
 - - - White UE 2022

**ASIAN**  
 — White UE 2020  
 ..... White UE 2021  
 - - - White UE 2022

**BLACK**  
 — White UE 2020  
 ..... White UE 2021  
 - - - White UE 2022

**LATINO**  
 — White UE 2020  
 ..... White UE 2021  
 - - - White UE 2022

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

# WORLD CHANGES ≠ CAREER CHANGES CONTINUED

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**Job openings hit a record-high 11.55 million in March 2022.**<sup>2</sup> While it would seem that these figures alone should cancel out one another, an average of 1.4 million workers remained only marginally attached to the workforce each month between January 2022 and April 2022. Further, thousands of workers are not currently in the labor force but report their desire for employment, *now*. Many of these individuals are captured in the number of discouraged workers, which has remained consistently high throughout the pandemic with only 29% improvement between 2020 and the first quarter of 2022.<sup>2</sup> We asked job seekers to characterize their most recent job search, and **half of respondents** said that they were either **looking for work in a new occupation or industry**, or that they **weren't sure about their future career trajectory**.

## DISCOURAGED WORKERS (WORKERS DISCOURAGED OVER JOB PROSPECTS)<sup>3</sup>



<sup>2,3</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

# TWO YEARS AND COUNTING: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT

The pandemic continues to shape the living situations and employment prospects of National Able Network clients in profound ways, most of which have both short-term and long-term implications. The pandemic fractured the U.S. workforce, but that break was uneven. The pandemic created job insecurity and lowered overall health and mental well-being disproportionately among younger workers, workers with limited education, immigrants, ethnic minorities, and those who were employed in low-wage occupations.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT ON ECONOMIC AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING<sup>4</sup>

**1 in 3**

Lost their job because of the pandemic

**1 in 3**

Found a job during the pandemic

**2/3**

Feel hopeful about their job search during the pandemic

**1 in 3**

Are facing challenges with securing food for their household

**28%**

Are facing challenges with secure housing

National Able Network is one of the nation's premier workforce development organizations, administering a host of federally supported workforce programs that serve older workers (age 55+), helping workers whose jobs have been lost due to international trade retool for new careers, operating American Job Centers, and creating opportunities for military veterans to transition into the civilian workplace. These workforce programs are designed, in part, to address barriers to computer and technology access, build digital literacy, and develop a pipeline of talent for employer partners.

Despite the challenges that the pandemic placed on service delivery, National Able Network carefully navigated the balance between providing quality and accessibility for the greatest number of job seekers and businesses.

Of the services provided to job seekers, the highest rated were:

- 1 One-on-One Career Coaching (Virtual and/or In-person)**
- 2 Job Search Training (Resume development, interviewing, and more)**
- 3 Receiving training funds or scholarships**
- 4 Earning a professional certification or credential**
- 5 Attending job fairs, hiring events, or resource fairs**

<sup>4</sup> Identification reported by National Able Network, Inc. 2022 survey respondents.

# TECH EFFECTS: COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Throughout the pandemic, the world has relied heavily on technology for education, employment, and personal connections. Students around the globe transitioned to in-home learning, and countless families had no choice but to adapt...with or without the appropriate technology and internet access. The workplace has changed too. Most U.S. workers (60%) *don't* have jobs that can be done from home, and 60% of workers with jobs that can be done from home say when the coronavirus outbreak is over, if they have the choice, they'd like to work from home all or most of the time.<sup>5</sup> National Able Network advocates for critical investments in federal workforce programs that support digital literacy. Infrastructure investments that make technology resources and internet accessible to those who face barriers to employment is more critical than ever.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC JOB SEARCH AND IN-HOME TECHNOLOGY ACCESS<sup>6</sup>

**1 in 3**

Do not have a home computer or tablet

**1 in 5**

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

**< 50%**

Have participated in virtual job interviews

**3 in 4**

Do not have reliable in-home internet access

**3 in 4**

Are not using online resources to find job leads

National Able Network's training team provides job readiness training for thousands of individuals across the U.S. annually. For the past two years, a project that extended digital literacy training to low-income seniors was piloted, and the program developed their digital literacy exponentially. To help measure the interest in additional digital training and resources, survey respondents were asked to rate their interest in future programs and services.

The top five future programs and services of interest were:

- 1 Microsoft Training**
- 2 In-Person Job Training**
- 3 Virtual Career Coaching**
- 4 Monthly email newsletter**
- 5 Text messages with job leads**

This year, the team will launch a new web-based, self-paced learning environment with 24/7 access and a dynamic resume builder tool. In addition, job seekers of all learning levels will have access to Microsoft training courses and, upon completion, will receive digital certificates validating their achievement.

<sup>5</sup> Pew Research Center, COVID-19 Pandemic Continues to Reshape Work In America, February 16, 2022

<sup>6</sup> Identification reported by National Able Network, Inc. 2022 survey respondents.

# WORKPLACE EQUITY: OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE TODAY

National Able Network's vision and mission are grounded in action steps that help address historic inequities in the workforce. Our programs and services help job seekers build the skills needed to compete for career pathways that provide opportunities for economic advancement. Our network of business partners share a common vision for creating lasting solutions across occupational groups and sectors that eliminate wage disparities and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Of those who responded to the survey, **a third say that they have experienced discrimination in the workplace and/or while looking for a job**. National Able Network's staff reflects the communities in which we work, and we advocate fiercely for workers who experience discrimination in the job market and workplace.

## WHO WE SERVE<sup>7</sup>

**7%**

Identify as LGBTQ+

**13%**

Reported a disability

**13%**

Identify as an immigrant or refugee

**8%**

Are Military Veterans

**46%**

Are senior citizens (55 years of age or better)

**3-4X**

Higher unemployment rate for those who identify as LGBTQ+

**10.1%**

Unemployment rate of workers with a disability<sup>8</sup>

**5.6%**

Unemployment rate of immigrant workers<sup>8</sup>

**4.4%**

Unemployment rate of Military Veterans<sup>8</sup>

**50%**

Of job seekers age 55+ are long-term unemployed<sup>8</sup>

## WHAT THEY EXPERIENCE IN THE JOB MARKET

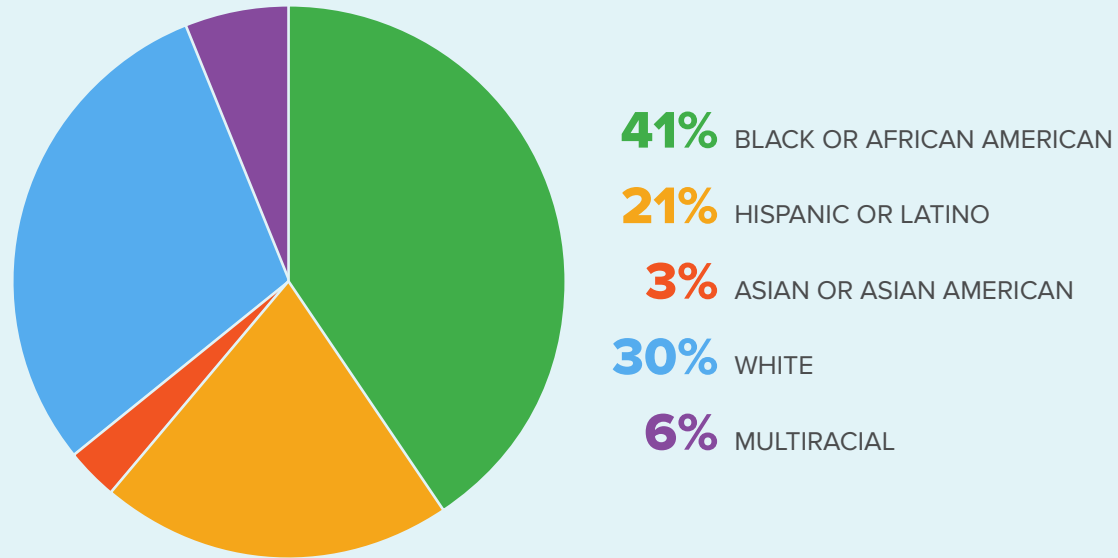
<sup>7</sup> Identification reported by National Able Network, Inc. 2022 survey respondents.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021

# WORKPLACE EQUITY: OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE TODAY

To create better futures for all workers, National Able Network engages in active and evolving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices each day. Our work and service to communities is strengthened by the value of diverse cultures, lived experience, and economic prosperity. As we continue our journey toward creating a more equitable future, we invite you to join us in building our resources, continually growing our base of knowledge, and pursuing the change that we want to see in our world.

**NATIONAL ABLE NETWORK WIOA CLIENTS BY RACE & ETHNICITY<sup>9</sup>**



## NATIONAL ABLE NETWORK SERVES:

SENIORS

CAREER  
CHANGERS

VETERANS

LGBTQ+

REFUGEES

**YOU!**

<sup>9</sup> Race and ethnicity reported by National Able Network, Inc. 2022 survey respondents.



# RECOMMENDATIONS: THE PATH FORWARD

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## EQUITY

- ✓ Create legislation that preserves the rights and dignity of populations that have experienced historic inequities in the workplace
  - ✓ Work to ensure that businesses have the tools needed to support workplace diversity
  - ✓ Foster opportunities for learning and investment in workers who have been sequestered into industries and occupations that do not support economic mobility
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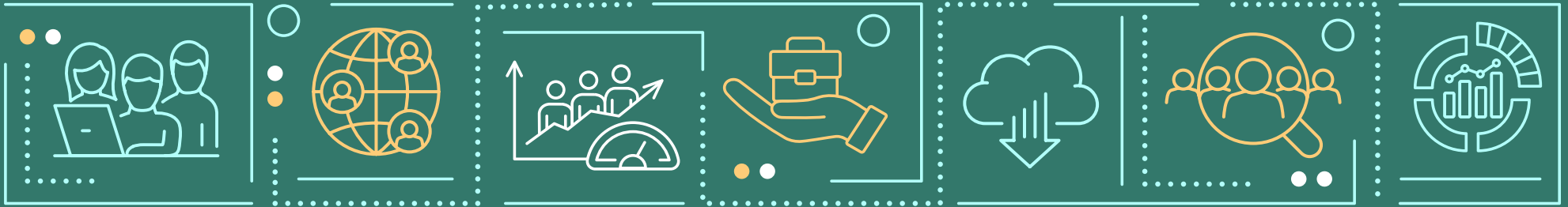
## DIGITAL TOOLS FOR THE WORKPLACE

- ✓ Invest in digital literacy resources and make them widely accessible across the U.S.
  - ✓ Make digital tools available for in-home use to low-income workers and families
  - ✓ Create high-speed Internet hubs in America's most vulnerable communities
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## ADVOCACY

- ✓ Preserve the future of legislation that supports critical public workforce resources
- ✓ Ensure that workforce issues remain a top priority
- ✓ Secure continued investments in American workers so that we remain competitive in the global economy



## OUR PROMISE STATEMENT



We will continue to advocate for communities in need across the U.S. We will continue to be a reassuring voice for every job seeker who has ever felt that they couldn't achieve their goals. We celebrate workplace diversity as an invaluable asset and we need to see more of it. We appreciate employer partners who share these values and demonstrate a commitment to fostering economic opportunity for our clients.

National Able Network's annual equity and technology survey was conducted in January 2022.

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