

Populations with Barriers to Employment

Opportunity Youth and Older Jobseekers

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Poll (select all that apply): Which populations do you serve?



- Young people (age 16-24)
- Older individuals (age 55+)

We want YOUR feedback!



- **Questions** for the presenters
- What **challenges** are you seeing among the populations you serve?
- What are some **promising strategies** for addressing these challenges?

Data sources used in this presentation

Current Population Survey

US Census Bureau

American Community Survey

US Census Bureau



NORTH CAROLINA

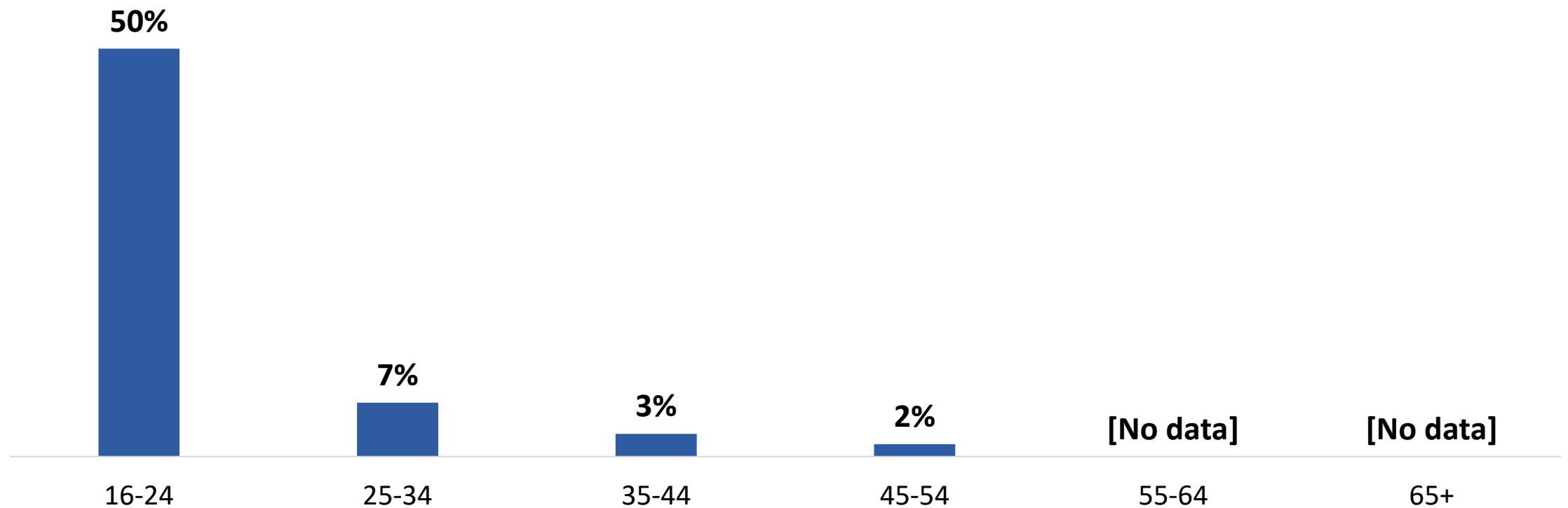
COMMON FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM

Stages of Life



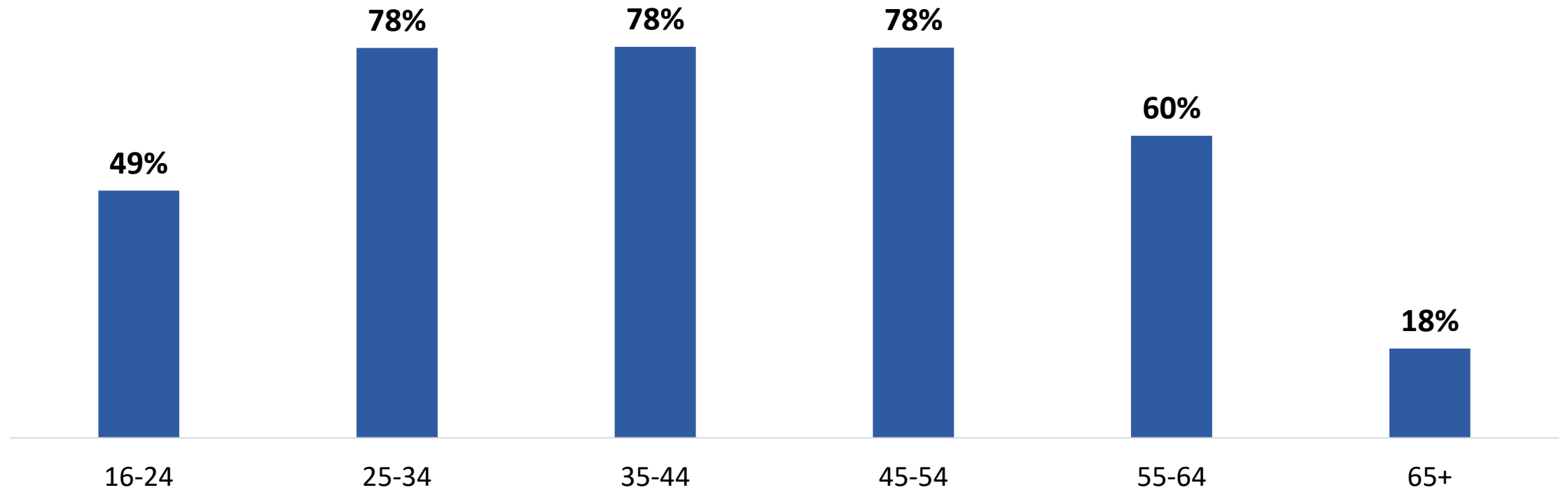
First comes school...

% of North Carolina population enrolled in school, by age group
(2019-2023 average)



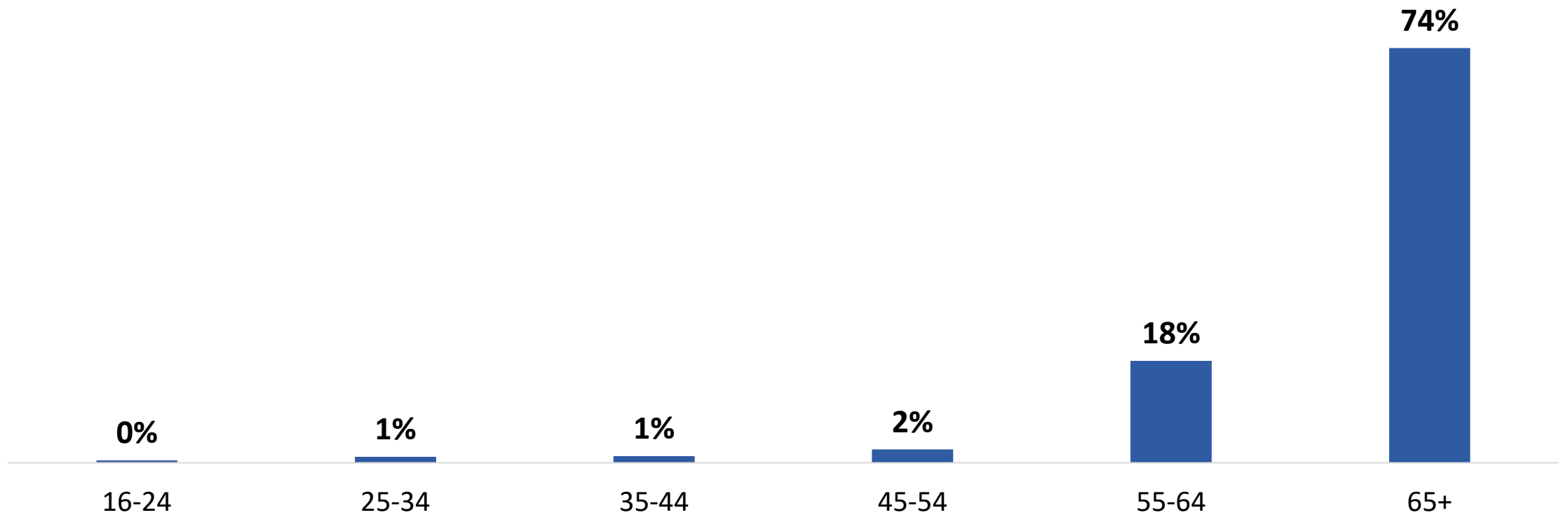
...then employment...

% of North Carolina population employed, by age group
(2019-2023 average)



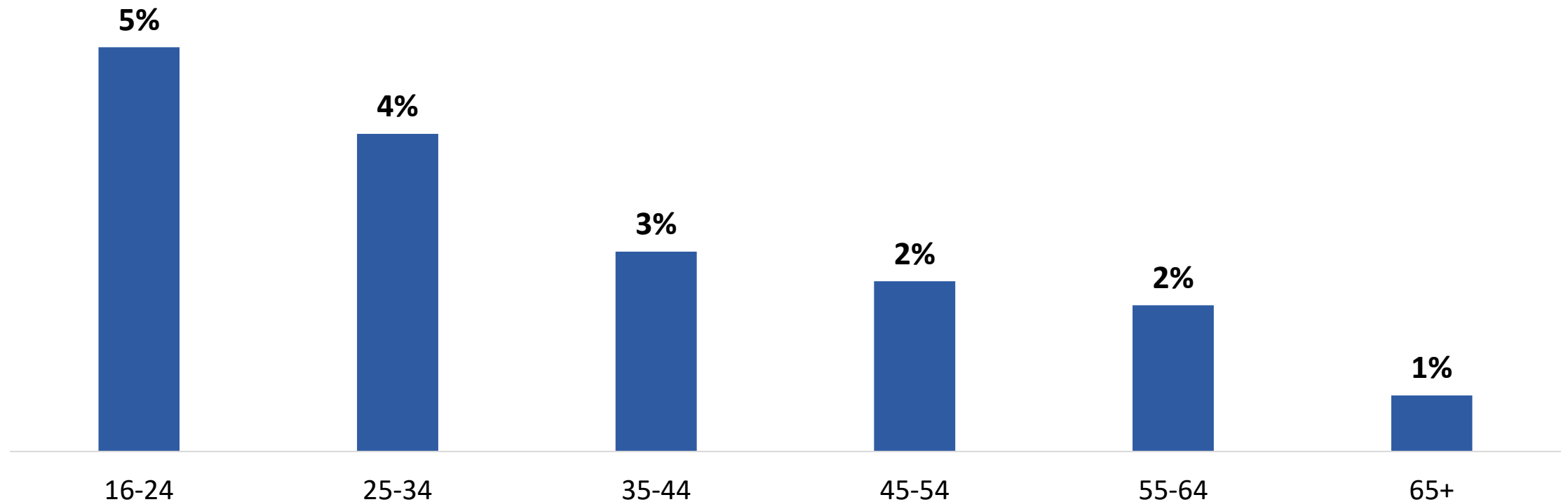
...then retirement.

% of North Carolina population retired, by age group
(2019-2023 average)



Involuntary joblessness is uncommon among older individuals

% of North Carolina population unemployed, by age group
(2019-2023 average)



Populations that are “at risk”

Opportunity Youth (also known as Disconnected Youth)

- Age 16-24
- Neither in school nor working

Older Jobseekers

- Age 55+
- Unemployed and actively seeking work (not retired)

These populations face **unique barriers** and often have **poor outcomes...**

...but the **workforce system** can help!

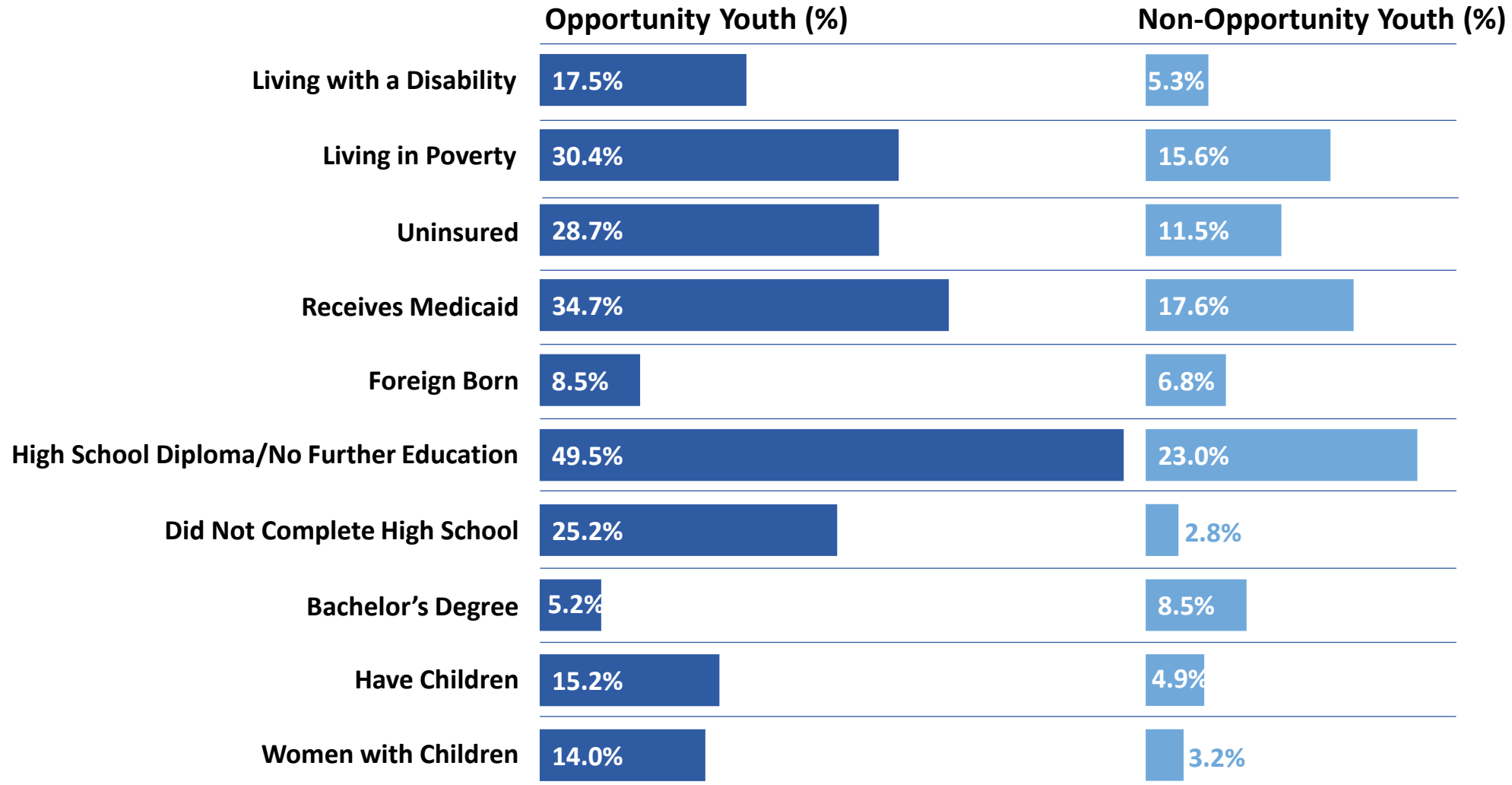
Opportunity Youth

Who Are Opportunity Youth?

Teens and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are neither in **school** nor **working**

“**Opportunity youth** often face hardships, but they also report having feelings of responsibility for their futures, having educational and career goals, and being optimistic about achieving their goals.”

– *Youth.Gov*



Future Risks for Opportunity Youth

- Lower earnings roughly 14 years after experiencing disconnection from school and work.¹
- Less likely to be employed and to eventually own a home.¹
- Higher risk for long-term mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and incarceration.²

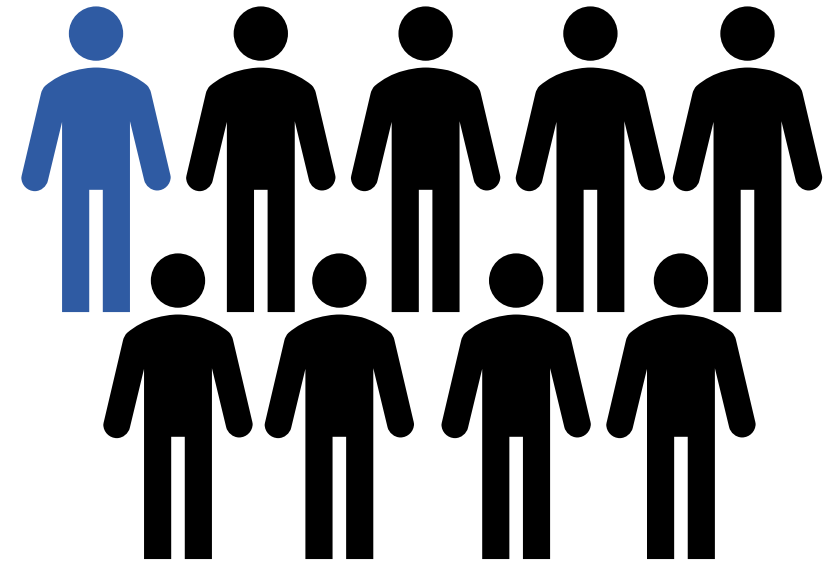
1. Lewis, Kristen, and Rebecca Gluskin. Two Futures: The Economic Case for Keeping Youth on Track. New York: Measure of America, Social Science Research Council, 2018. https://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/PSID2018_FINAL.pdf
2. Mendelson, T., Mmari, K., Blum, R. W., Catalano, R. F., & Brindis, C. D. (2018). *Opportunity youth: Insights and opportunities for a public health approach to reengage disconnected teenagers and young adults*. Public health reports (Washington, D.C). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6243446/>

141,800

NC 16–24-year-olds neither in school nor working in 2022

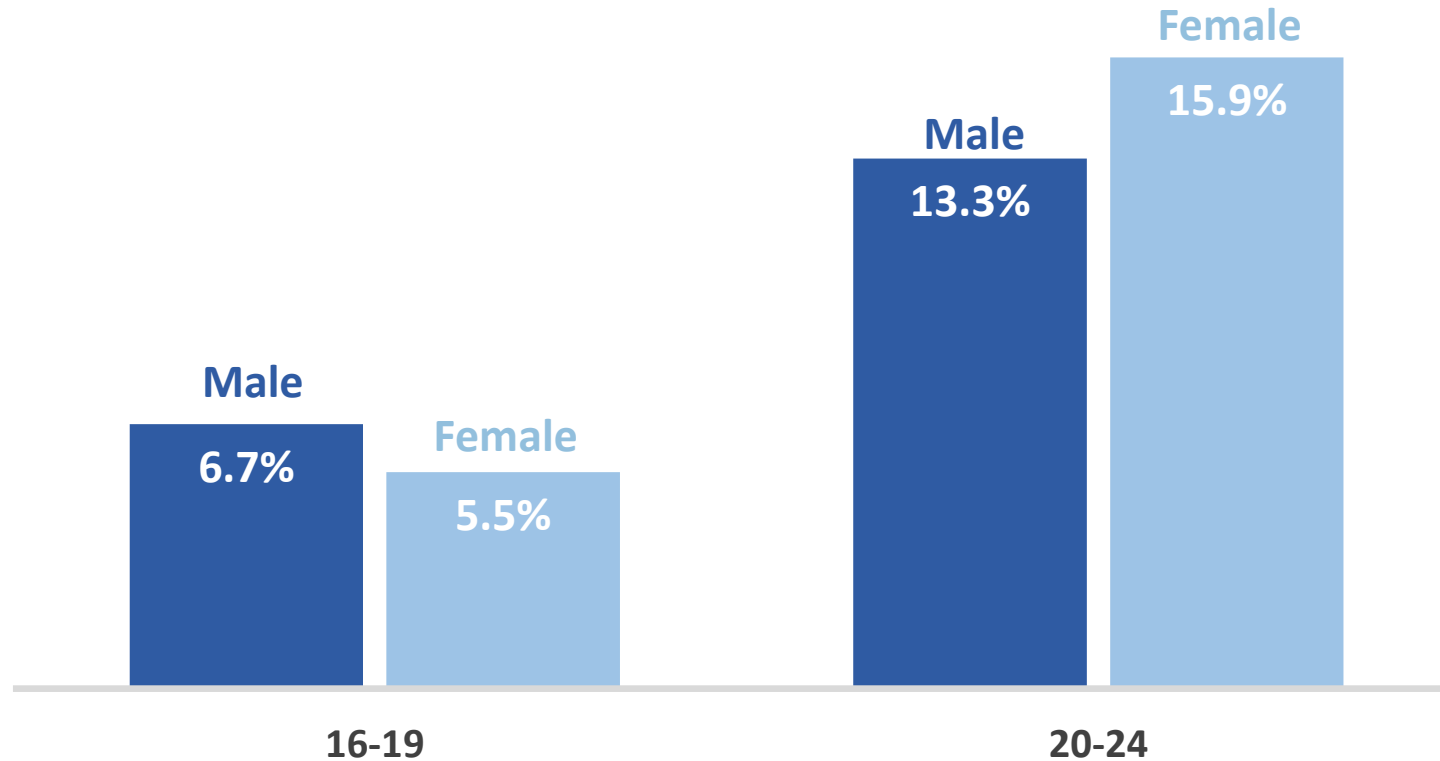
1 in 9

NC youth



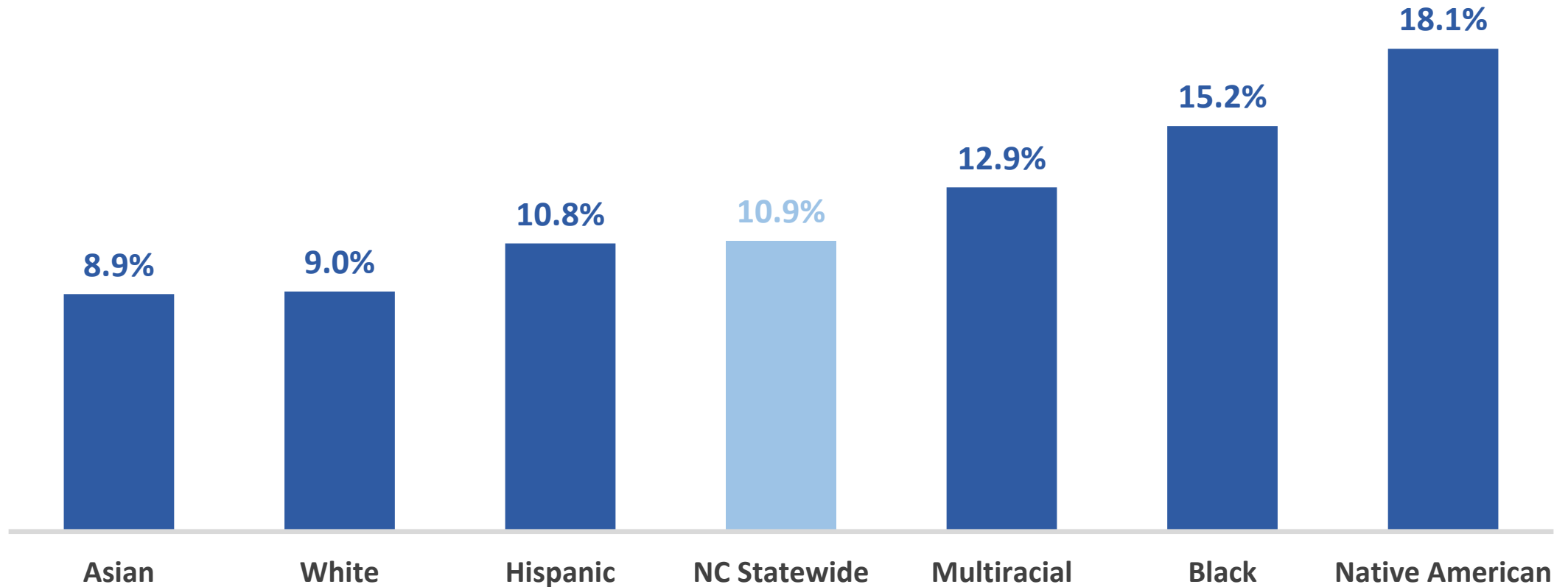
Youth in the 20-24 age group are more likely to be neither in school nor working

% of North Carolina opportunity youth, by age group and sex (2022)

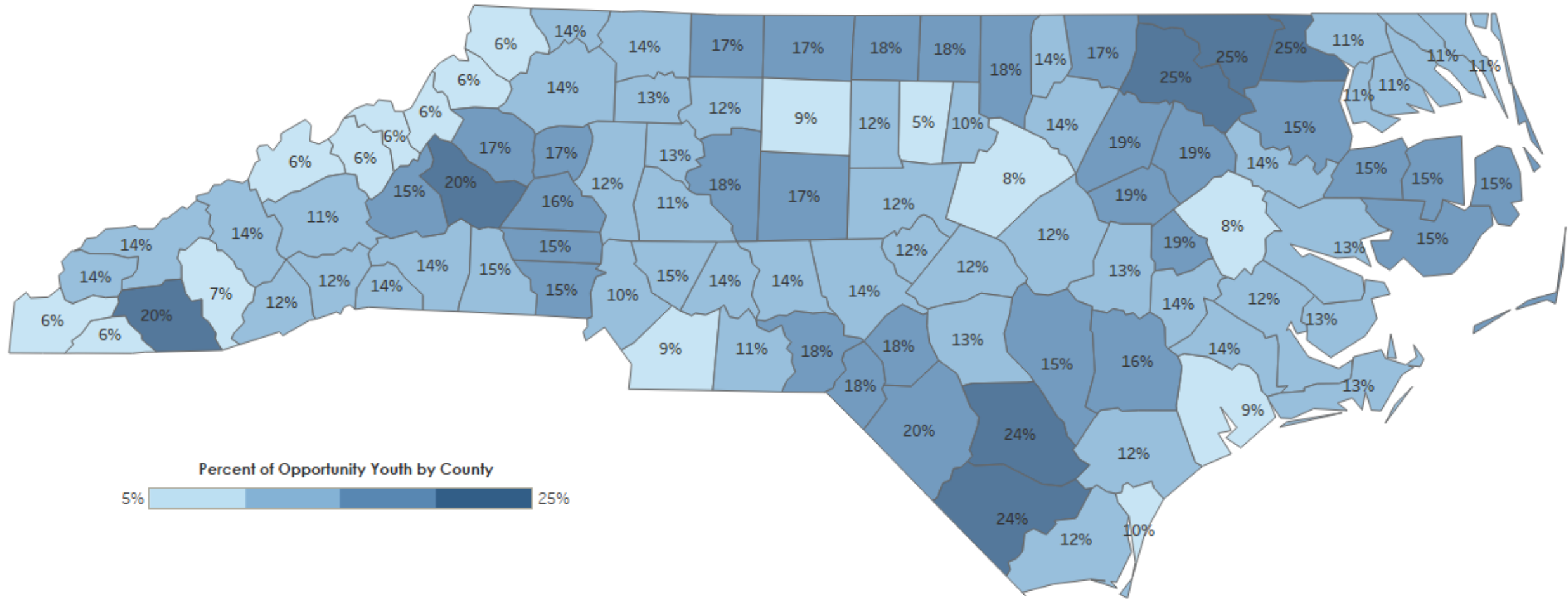


Black and Native American youth see higher prevalence of disconnection

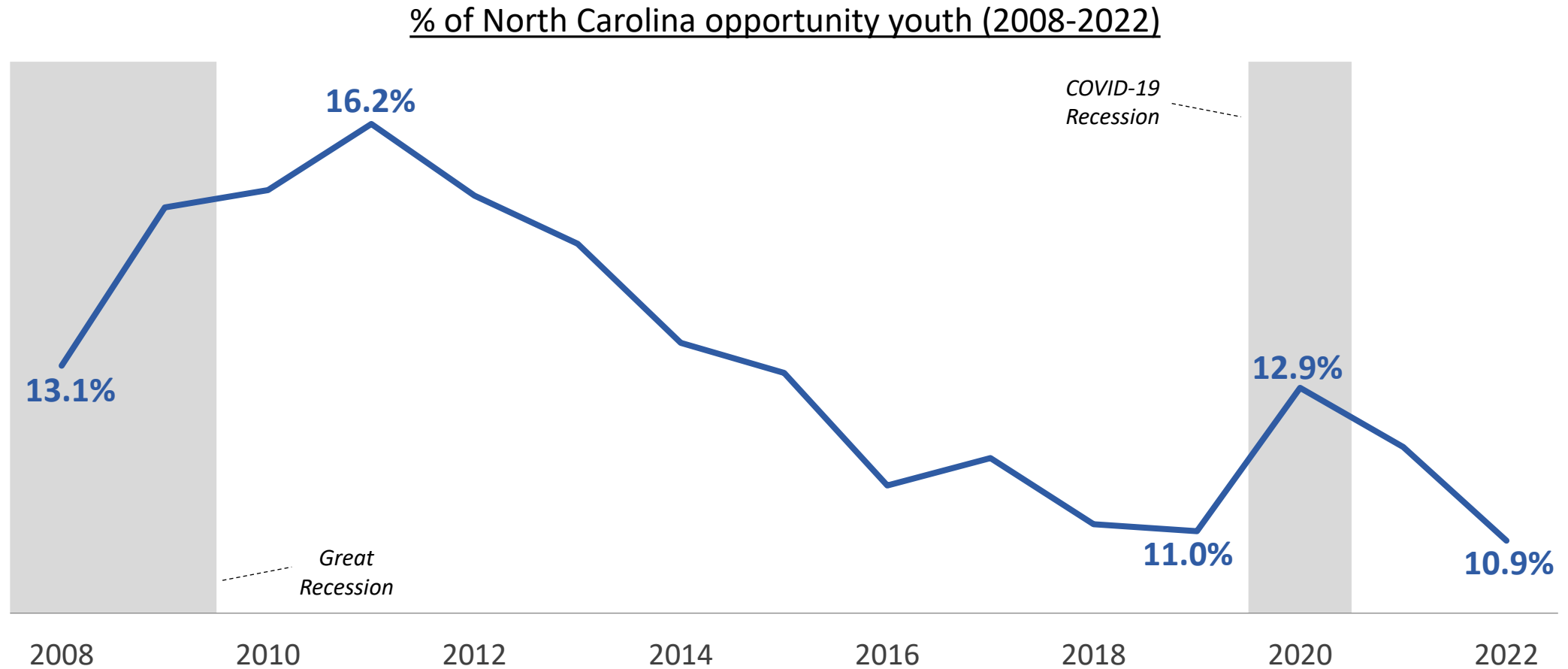
% of North Carolina opportunity youth, by race and ethnicity (2022)



% of opportunity youth, by North Carolina county (2021)

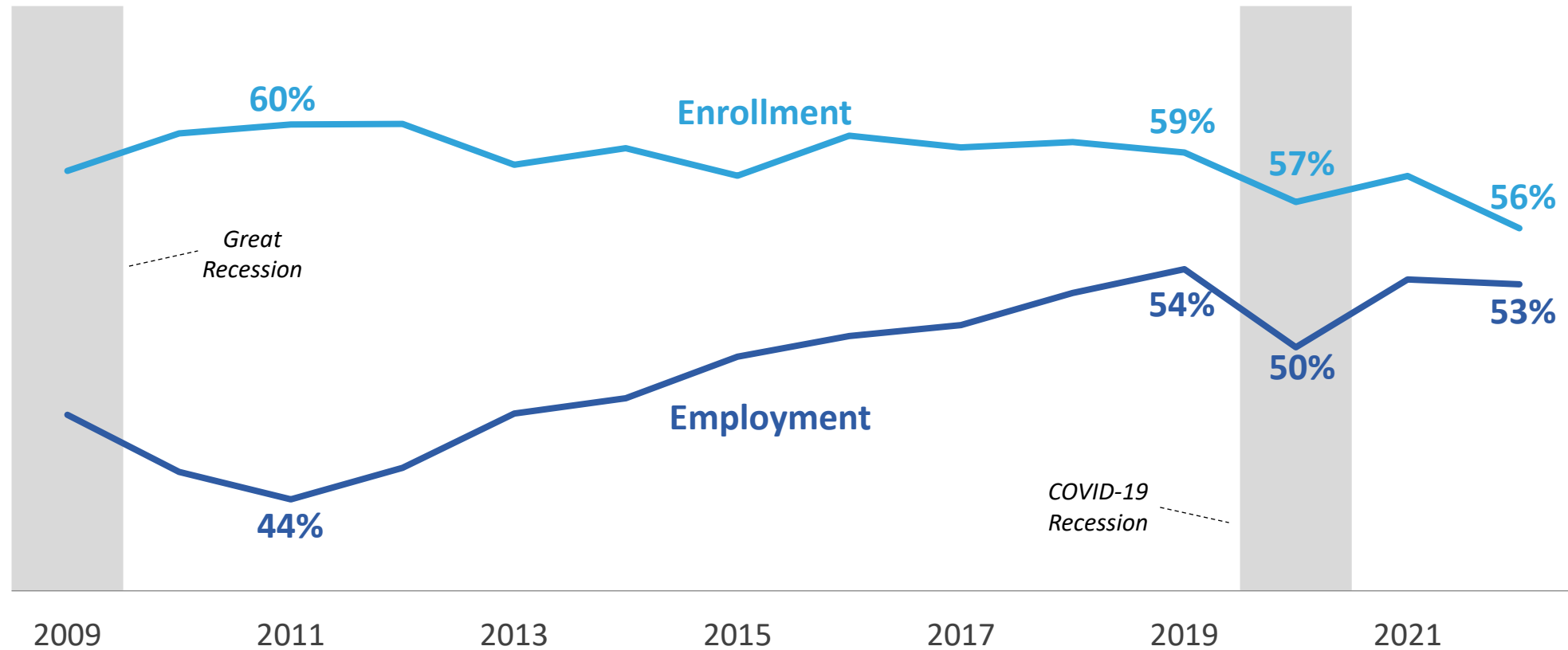


Prior to COVID-19, there was a decade of progress in reducing disengagement



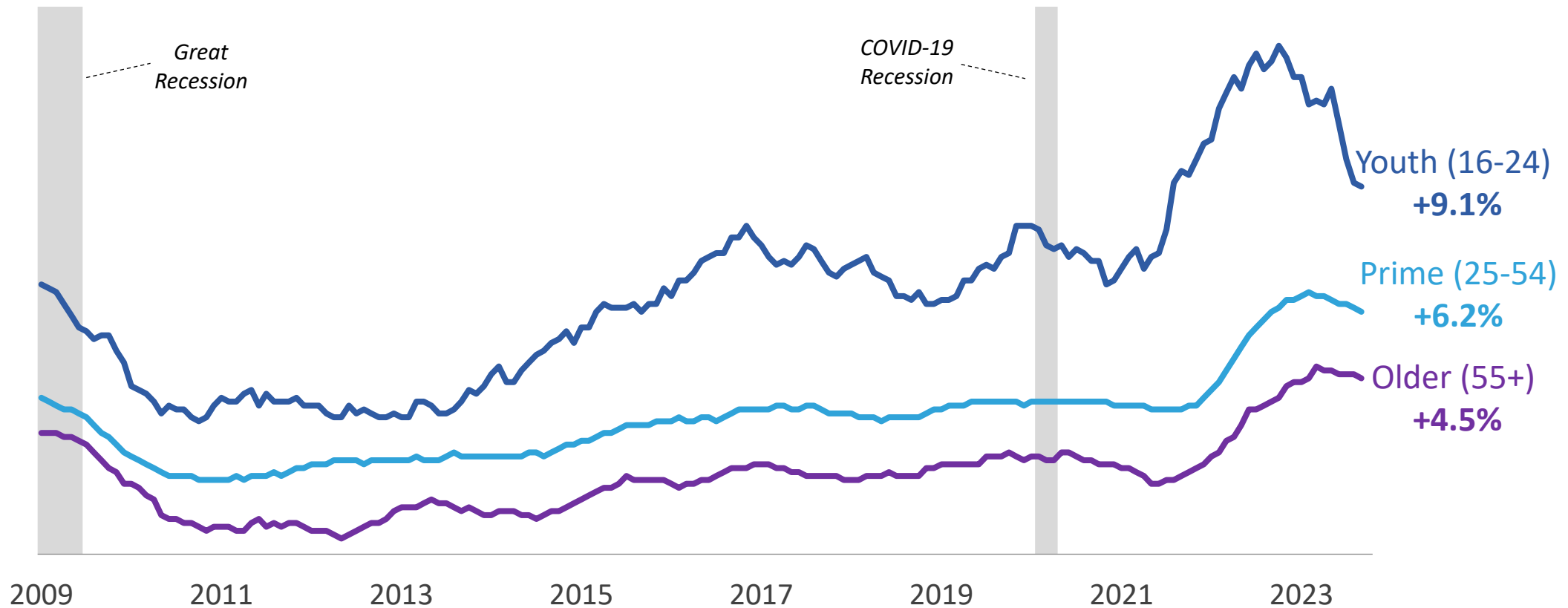
Increasing employment rates explains most of the decline in youth disconnection

% of North Carolina youth enrolled or employed (2009-2022)



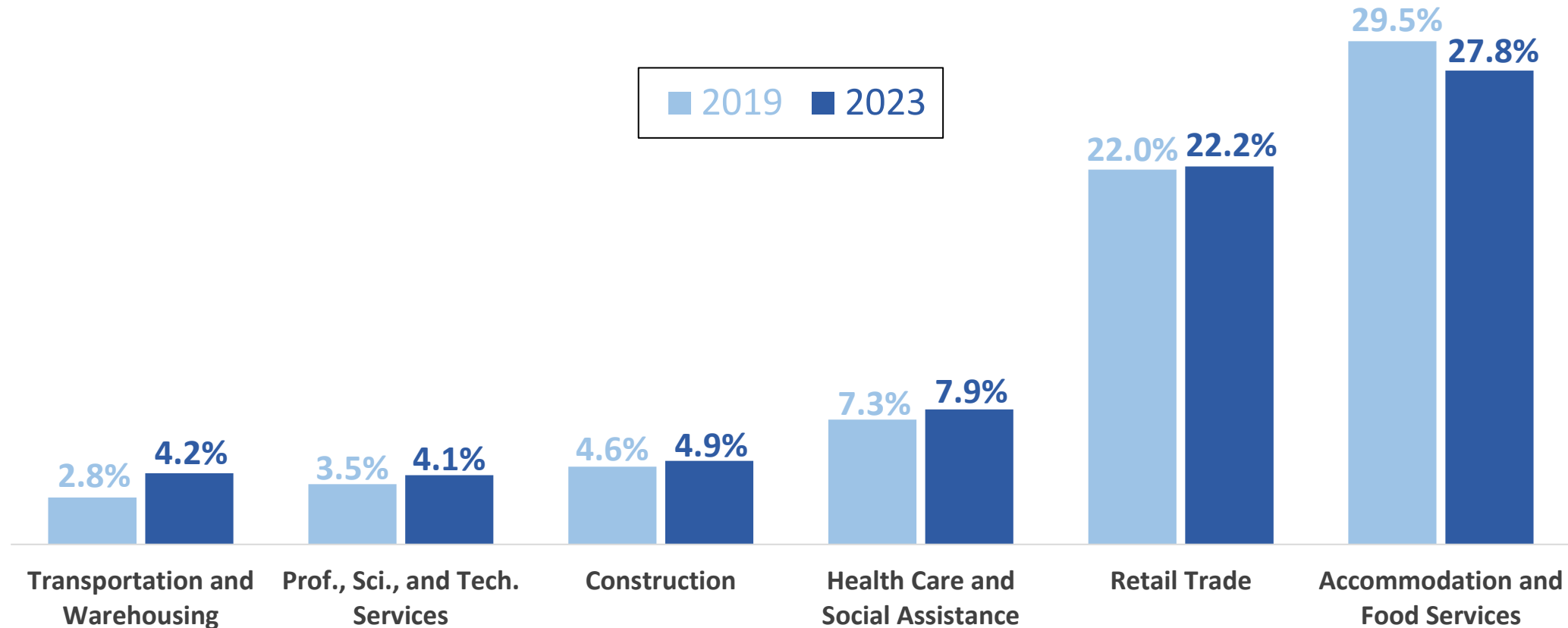
Youth workers have seen rapid wage gains in recent years

12-month moving average of median wage growth in the US, by age group (2009-2023)



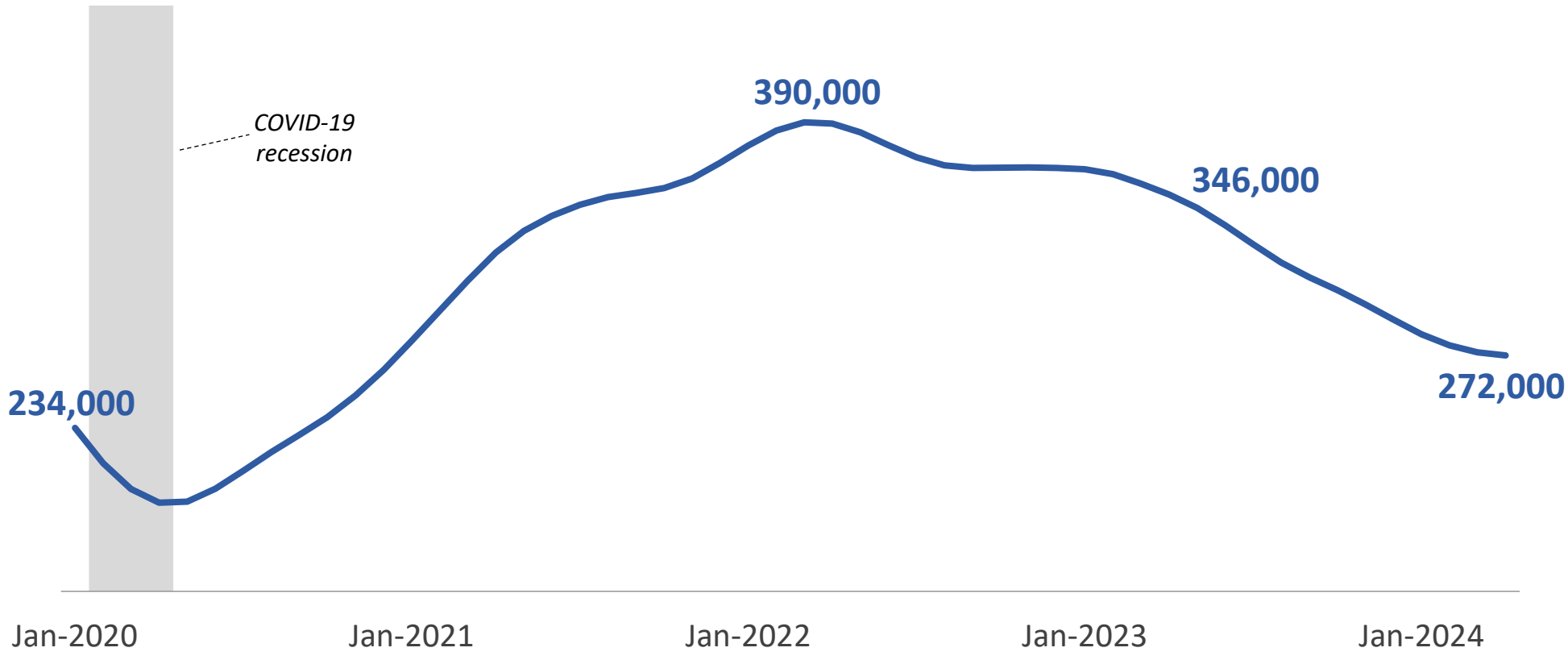
Retail Trade and Food Services are top sectors for youth, but others are growing too

% of employed 14-24 workers in North Carolina, by industry sector



A slowing labor market may stall further progress in engaging youth

Job openings in North Carolina (Jan. 2020 – May 2024)



Re-Engaging Opportunity Youth

“How can I help?”

Help youth to **connect with employment and training** opportunities

- NextGen services: available to eligible youth who face numerous barriers to employment
- NCcareers: free online resource with high quality job and career information

Listen to those with **lived experiences** and be attuned to **economic realities**

- Opportunity youth often face unique circumstances; their direct input can shape solutions
- Understand that some youth may opt for immediate work rather than longer-term training

Consider what **additional supports** may improve engagement to work/school

- Transportation challenges are often a huge impediment to accessing job opportunities
- Mentorship programs can offer additional encouragement and guidance to youth

Opportunity Youth Summary

North Carolina has seen **persistent progress** in reducing youth disengagement

- After the Great Recession, youth disconnection fell from 16% to 11% between 2011 and 2019
- The COVID-19 pandemic was a massive shock, but the spike in disconnection reversed by 2022

Youth **employment opportunities** have been robust in recent years

- Industries that typically employ youth workers have seen tremendous wage growth
- However, a recent labor market cooldown may stall further progress

The **workforce system** can serve an important role in supporting youth

- Improving access to employment and educational opportunities, along with providing other supportive services, can help spur more engagement

Feedback / Questions



Older Jobseekers

Recap: Older Jobseekers

Why should we be concerned?

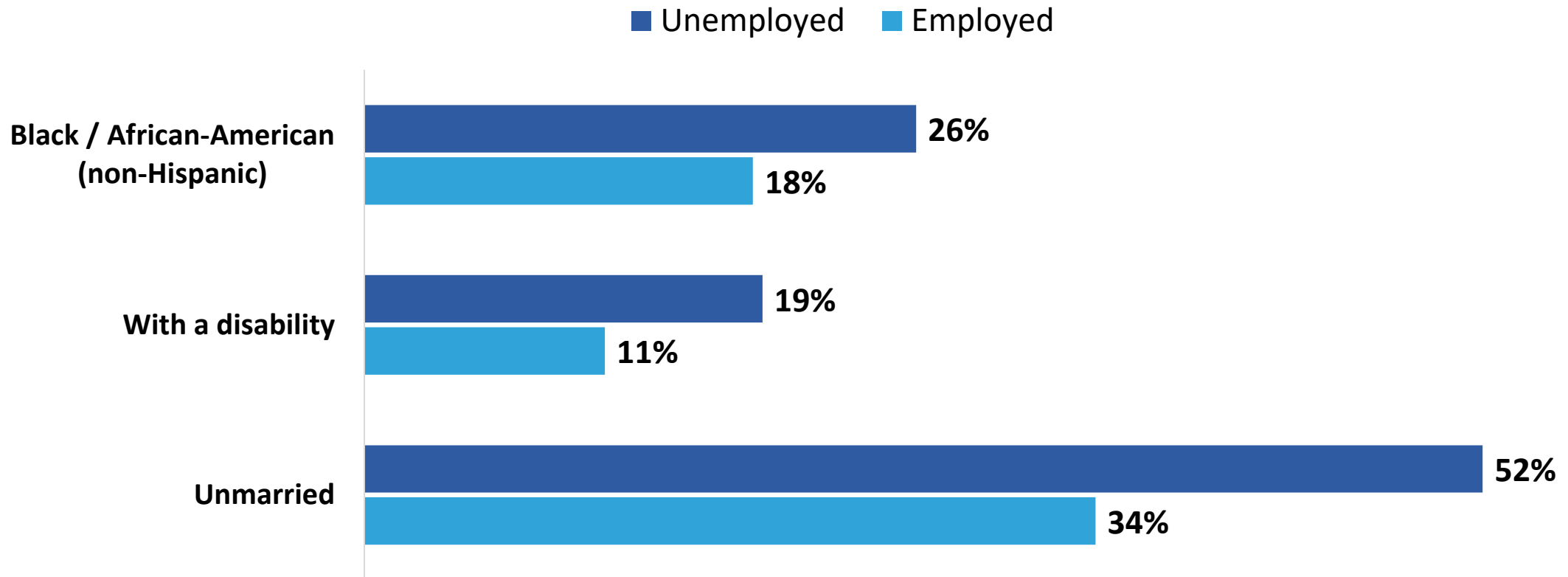
The vast majority of individuals aged 55+ are either **employed** or **retired**

Involuntary joblessness (**unemployment**) is **uncommon** among older individuals

Older individuals experiencing involuntary joblessness face **unique barriers** and often have **poor outcomes**

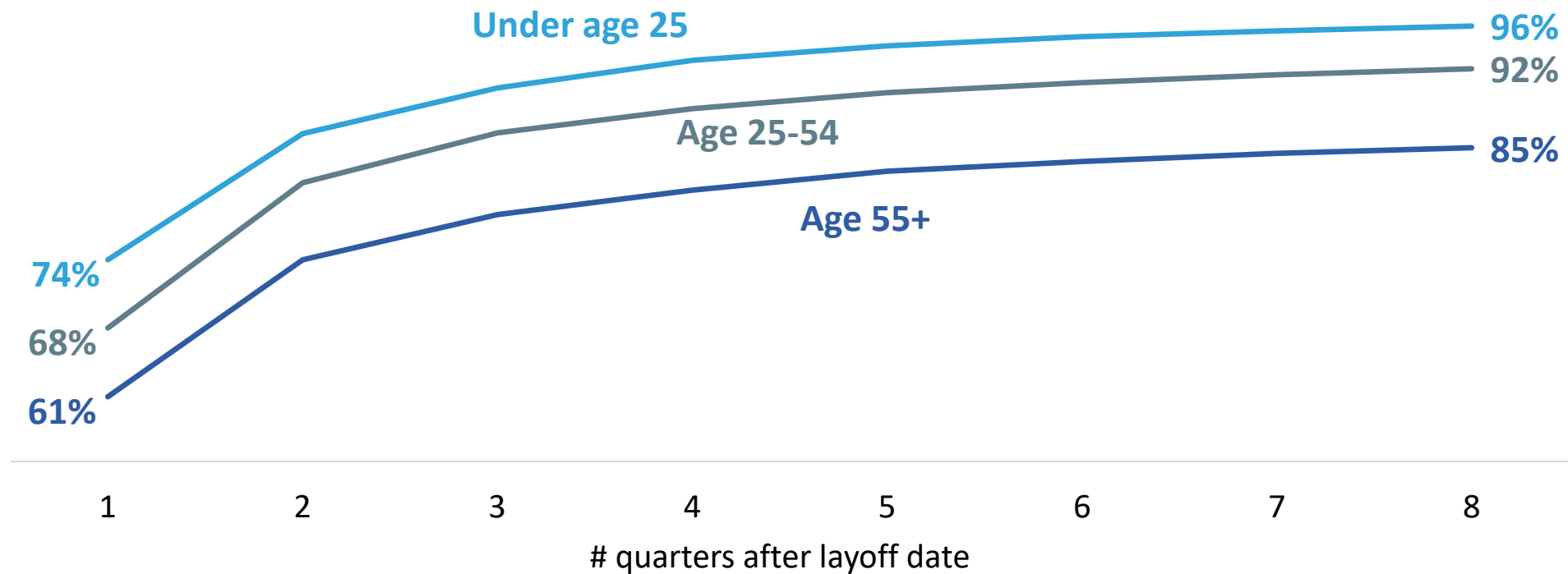
Older jobseekers are more likely to be black, disabled, and unmarried

% of North Carolina population aged 55+, by employment status



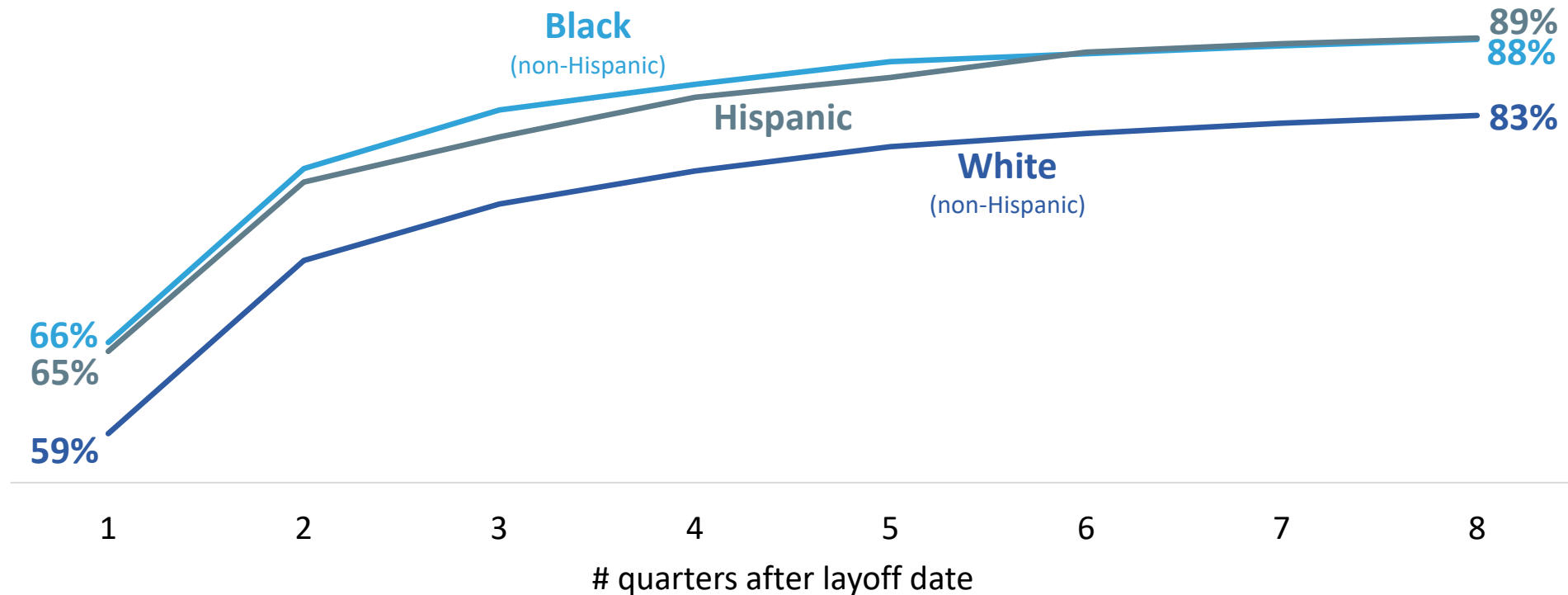
Older workers who lose their job have lower rates of re-employment than younger workers

% of North Carolina UI recipients finding employment, by age group
(cumulative rate of re-employment, 2017 average)



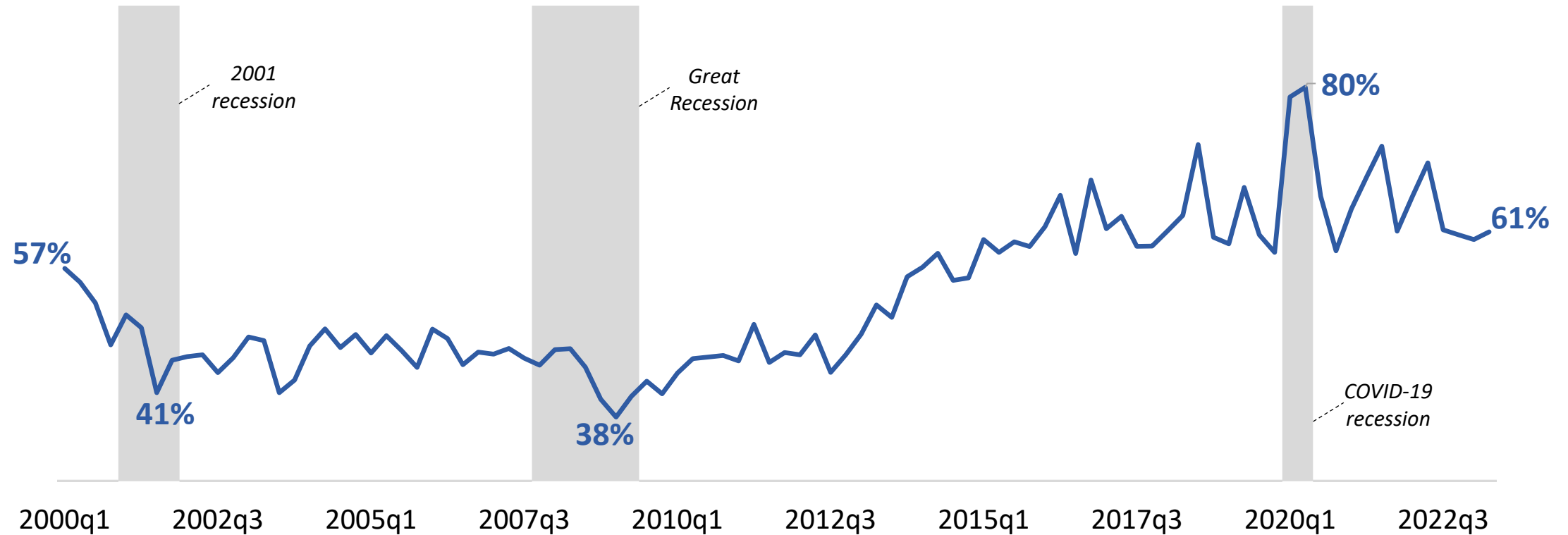
White older jobseekers have the lowest rates of re-employment

% of North Carolina UI recipients age 55+ finding employment, by race/ethnicity
(cumulative rate of re-employment, 2017 average)



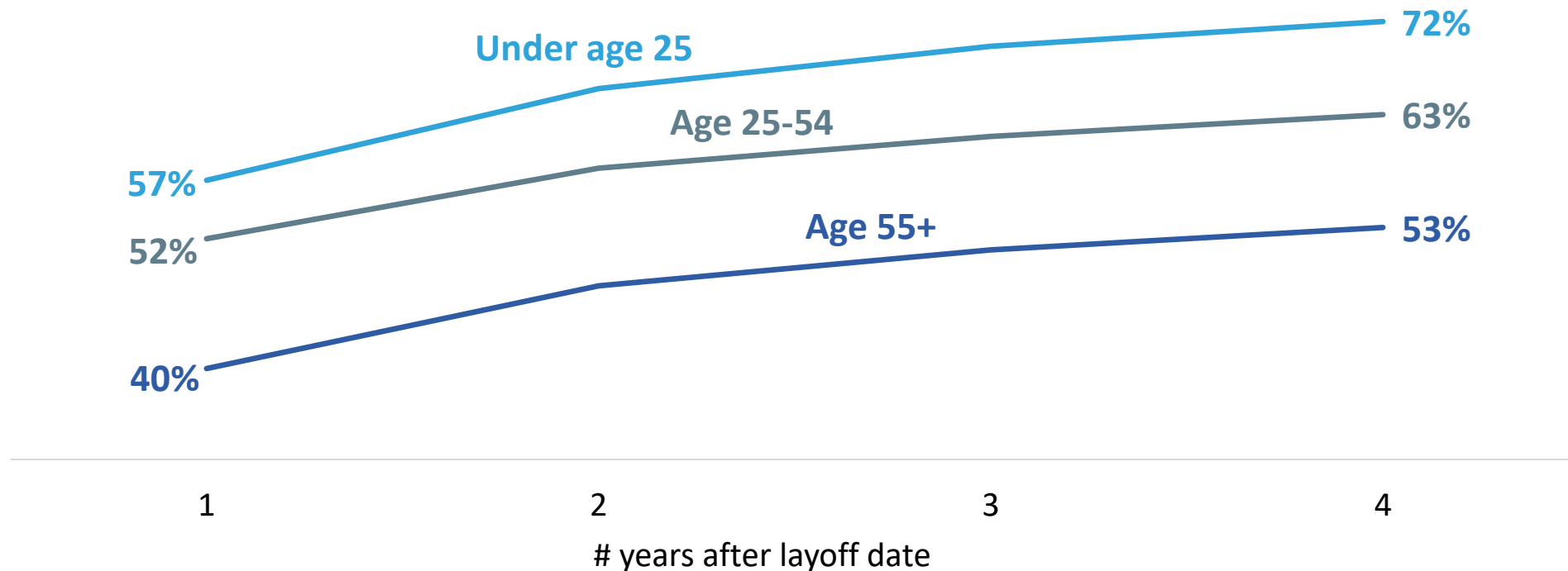
Last year, re-employment rates were lower than in 2020, but similar to pre-COVID rates

% of North Carolina UI recipients age 55+ finding employment
(cumulative rate of re-employment within one quarter after layoff date, 2000q1-2023q2)



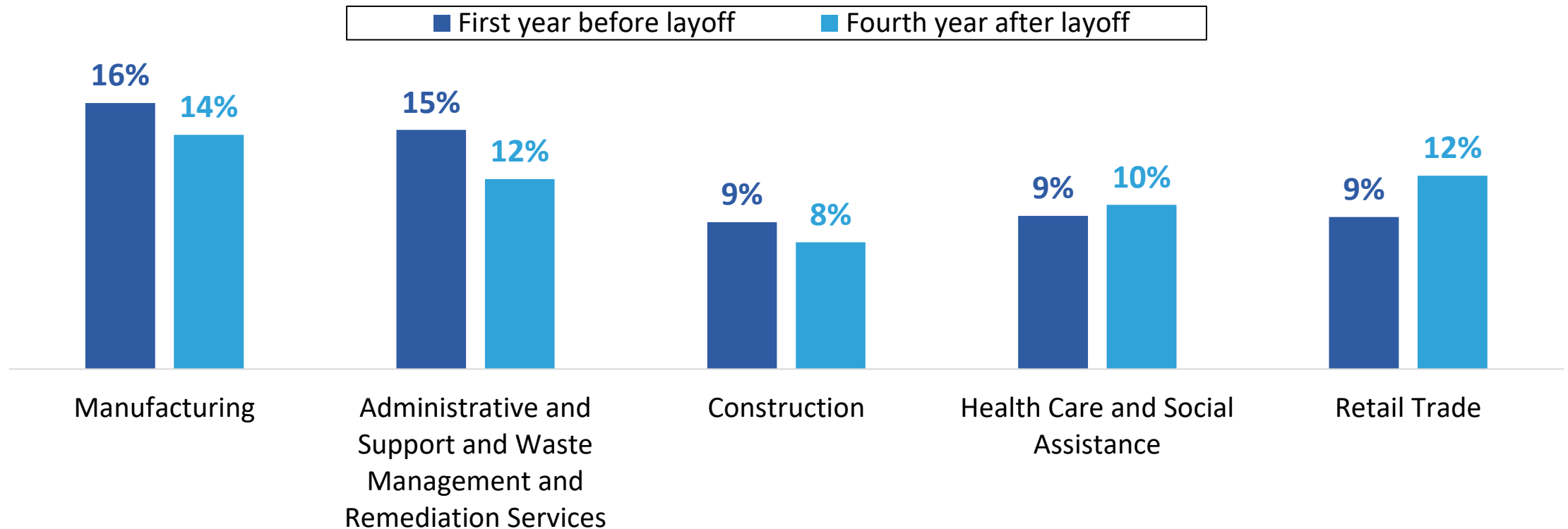
Older jobseekers are less likely to shift to a different industry sector

% of re-employed UI recipients in North Carolina changing industry sector, by age group
(cumulative rate of industry switching, 2015 average)



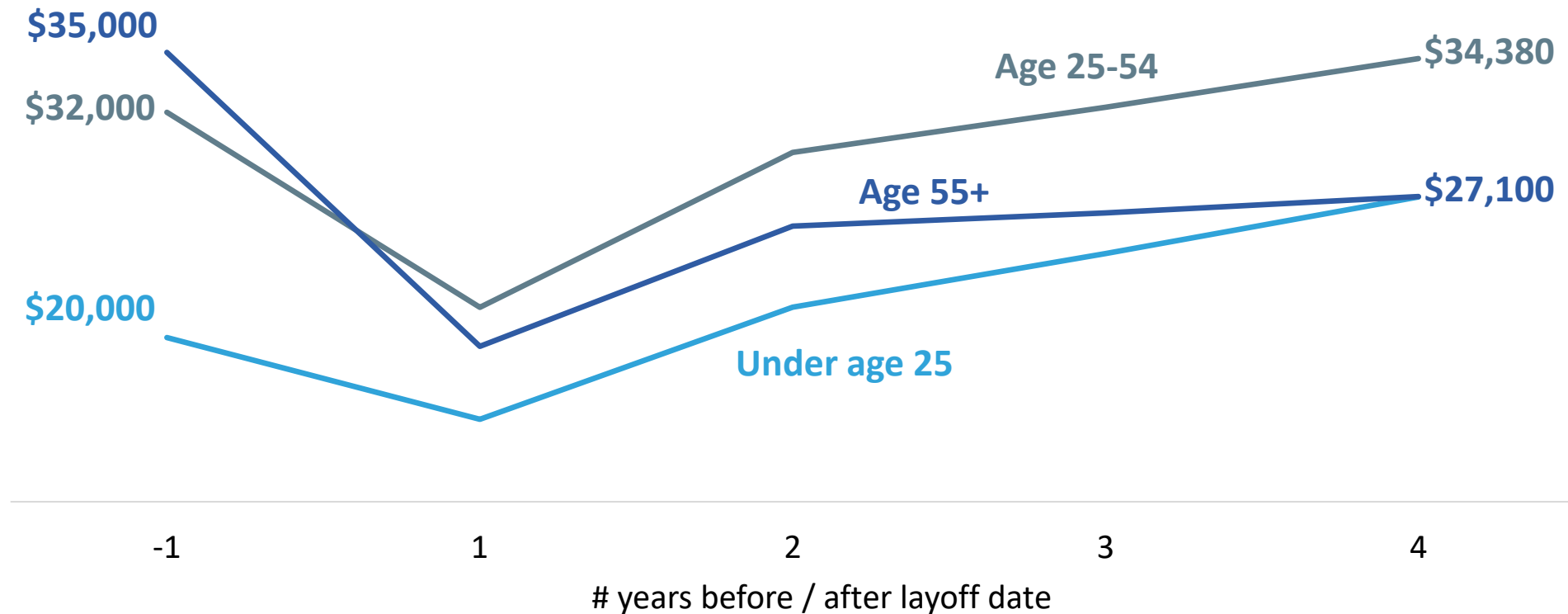
Some older jobseekers shift from goods-producing to service-providing

% of UI recipients age 55+ employed in North Carolina, by industry sector
(2015 average)



Older jobseekers take a large pay cut after being laid off

Real median wage of UI recipients re-employed in North Carolina, by age group
(2015 average)



Older Jobseekers

What are the barriers?

Older jobseekers have **low rates of re-employment** after they lose their job

- Older jobseekers are more likely to be black, disabled, and unmarried than their employed peers
- **Age discrimination**, changing **skill requirements**, and **wage mismatches** might also play a role

Older jobseekers have **poor wage outcomes** and are **unlikely to change industry**

- Older workers tend to have more **job tenure** than younger workers and, as a result, are more likely to suffer a loss of company-specific know-how when they lose their job
- Older workers **know what they like** and **know what they're good at**; they tend to remain attached to the same industry they worked in before losing their job

Older Jobseekers

“How can I help?”

Help older jobseekers stay up-to-date on **industry-specific skills**

- Older jobseekers may need **training** and **assistance** in navigating employers’ ever-evolving skill demands, especially those who have been off the job market for a long time

Help older jobseekers prepare for an “**encore career**”

- Some older jobseekers might be ready to **transition** from labor-intensive sectors like Manufacturing and Construction to service-providing sectors like Retail Trade

Help **employers** understand the **value of older workers**

- Adopt strategies to combat **age discrimination** and promote the re-employment of older jobseekers

Read more here:



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Opportunity Youth:

- [Youth Disconnection Falls to Pre-Pandemic Lows in North Carolina According to Recent Data](#) (November 2023)
- [Employment and Higher Education Enrollment of High School Graduates in the COVID-19 Era](#) (January 2023)
- [From Disconnection to Opportunity: Youth Labor Force Engagement in North Carolina](#) (August 2022)

Older Jobseekers:

- [Where Do Older Jobseekers Find Work?](#) (May 2024)
- [Older Workers in North Carolina's Labor Market](#) (January 2024)

Feedback / Questions



“Thank you!”

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