



AGC
THE CONSTRUCTION
ASSOCIATION

February 2024

US Construction Outlook: Torrid or Tepid?

Ken Simonson

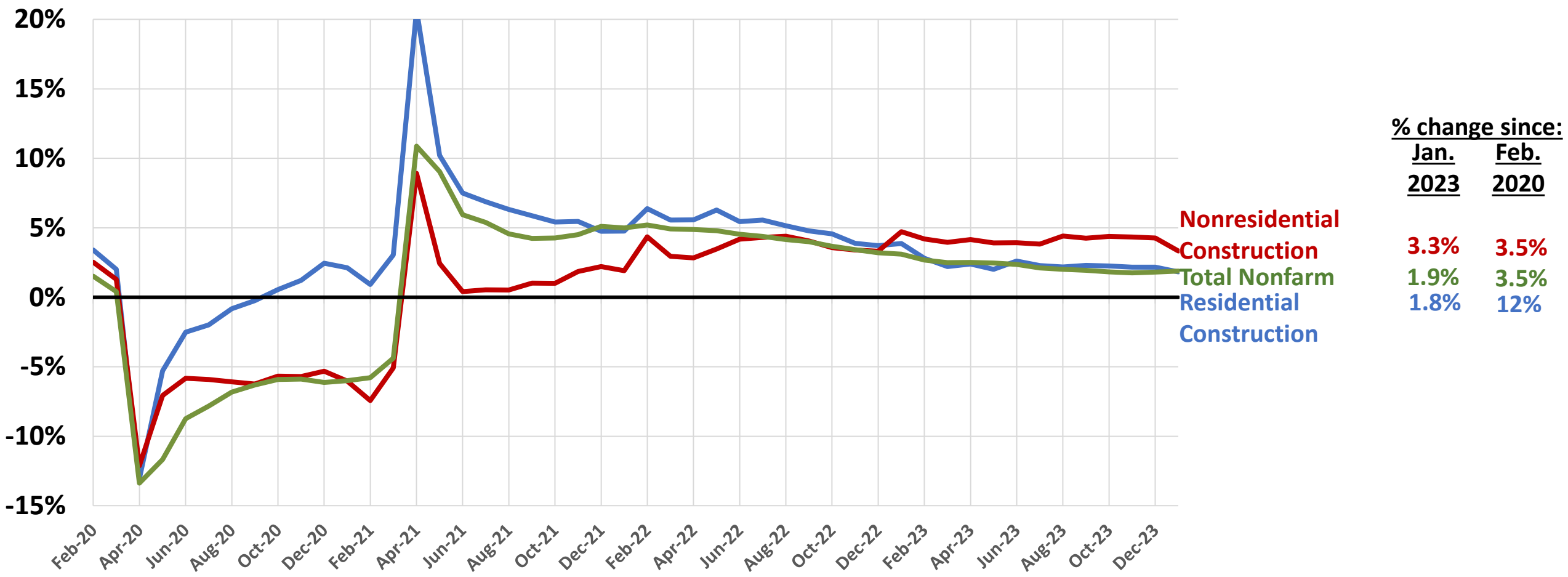
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Total nonfarm & construction employment, Feb. 2020–Jan. 2024

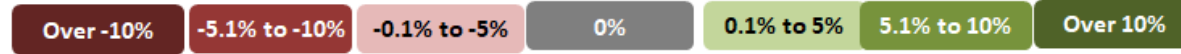
Year-over-year change, seasonally adjusted



Source: BLS current employment statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/ces/>

Construction employment change by state, Dec. 2022-Dec. 2023 (U.S.: 3.4%)

35 states **up** & 14 states & DC **down** & 1 states unchanged

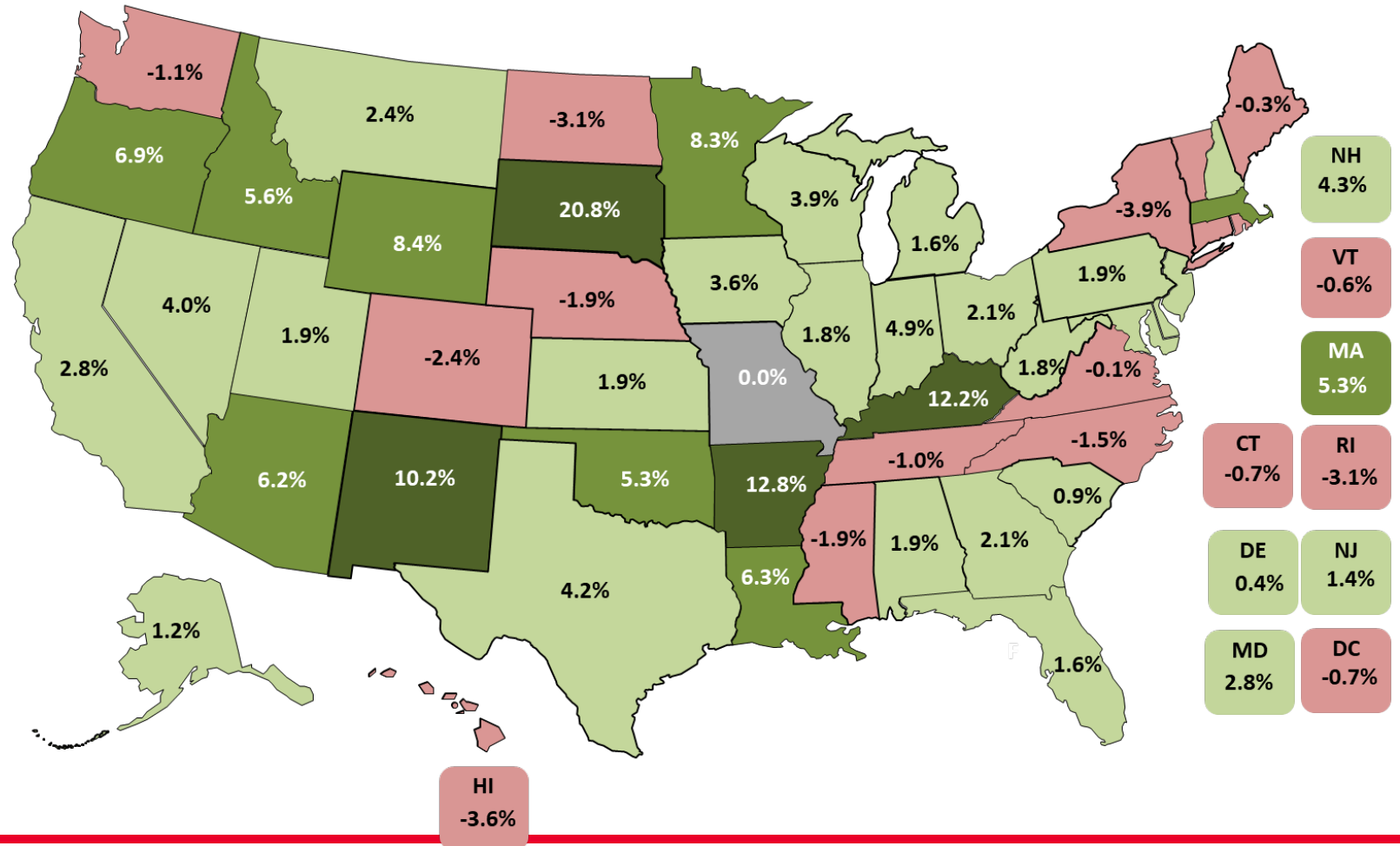


Top 5

SD	20.8%
AR	12.8%
KY	12.2%
NM	10.2%
WY	8.4%

Bottom 5

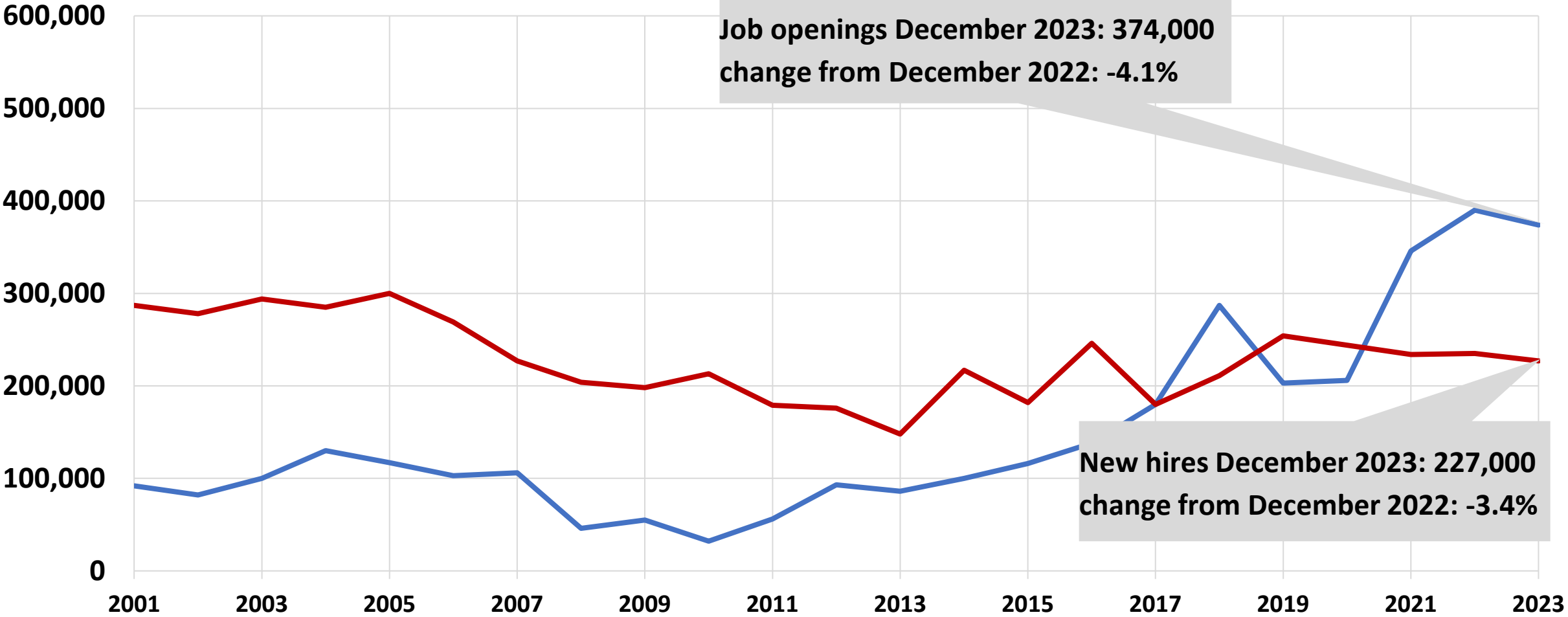
NY	-3.9%
HI	-3.6%
ND	-3.1%
RI	-3.1%
CO	-2.4%



Construction job openings & new hires



Job openings and hires, December 2001-December 2023, not seasonally adjusted

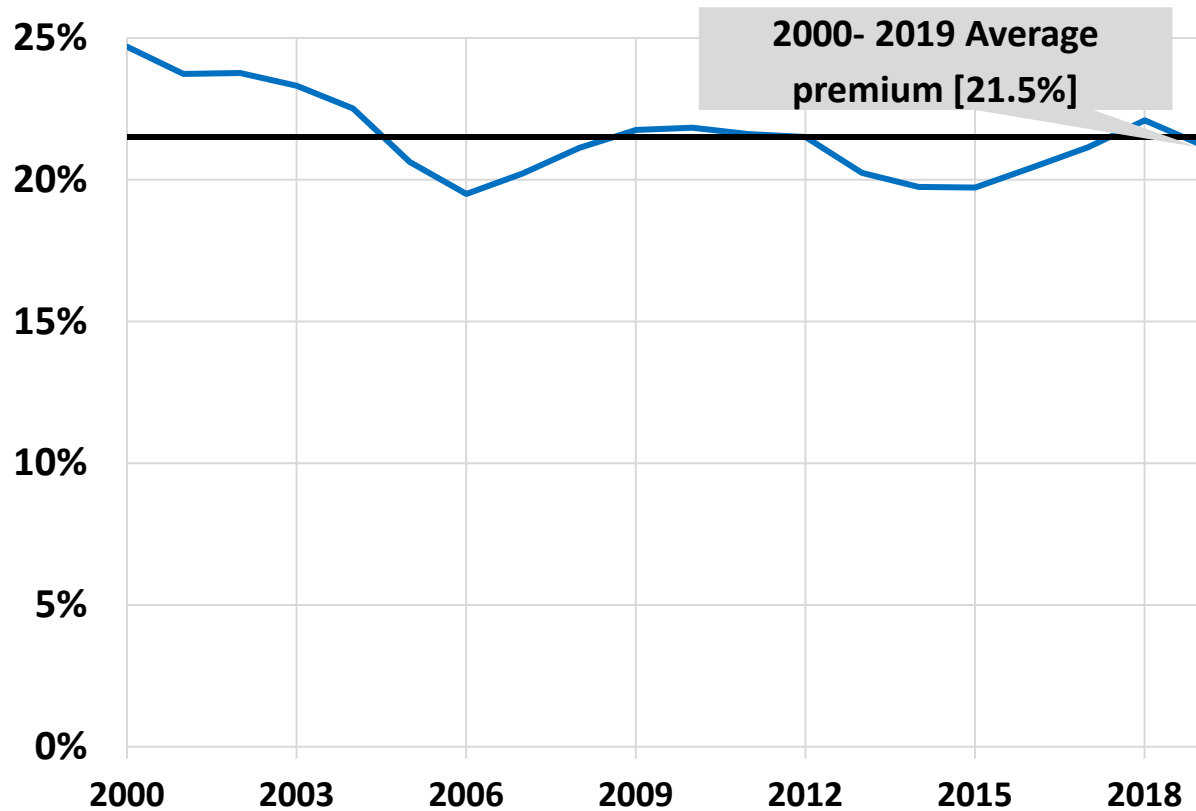


Construction wage “premium” vs. total private sector

Excess of average hourly earnings (AHE) for production and nonsupervisory employees in construction vs. private sector

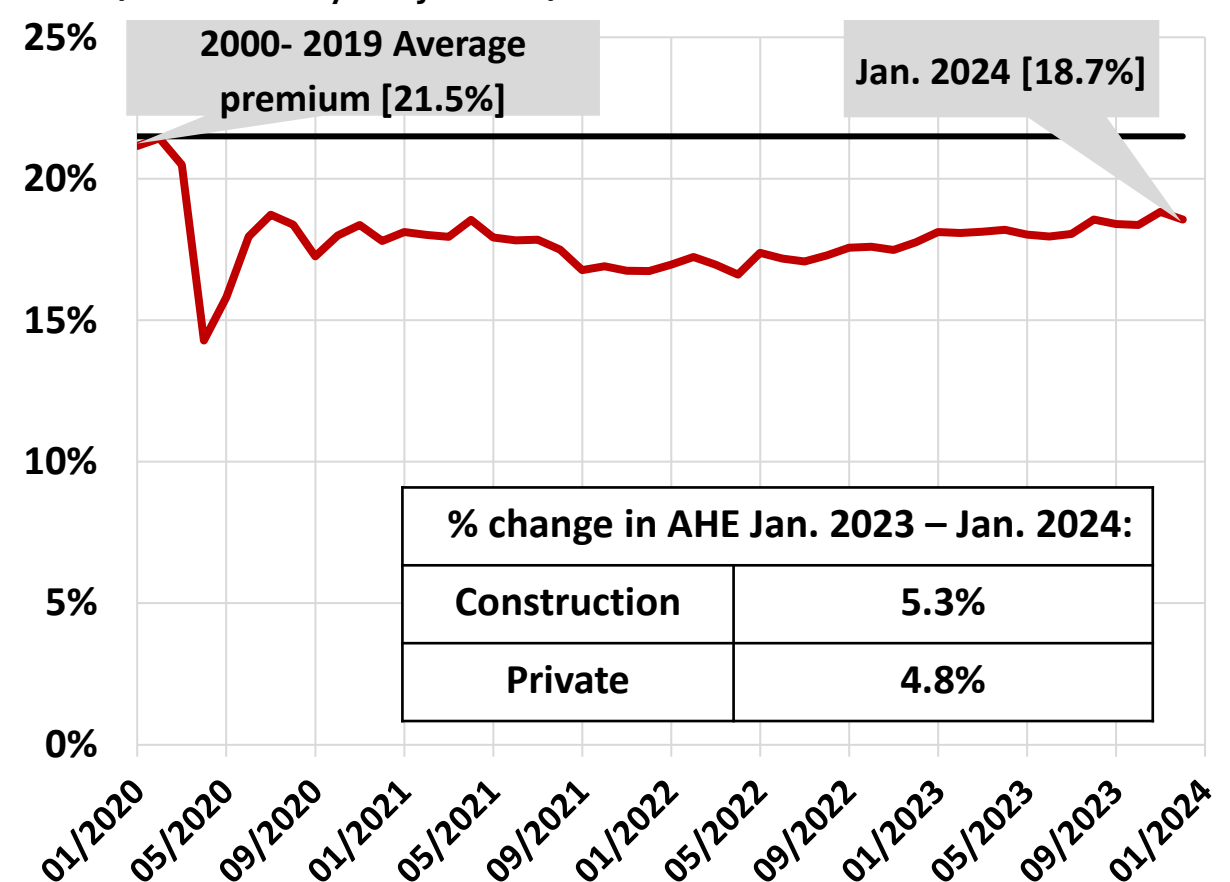


Annual premium, 2000–2019



Monthly premium, Jan. 2020–Jan. 2024

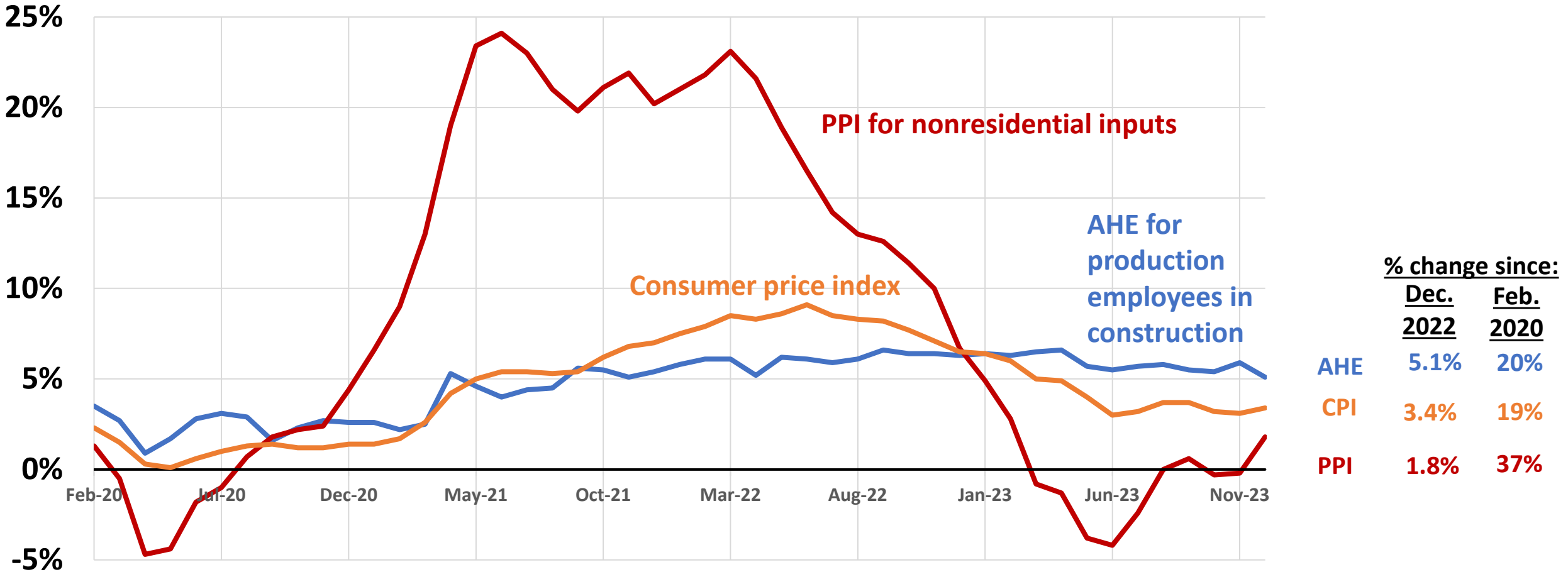
(seasonally adjusted)



Construction materials & labor costs top consumer inflation



Year-over-year change in producer price index (PPI) for nonresidential inputs, average hourly earnings (AHE) for production employees in construction, and consumer price index (CPI), Feb. 2020 – Dec. 2023



Some construction costs remain volatile

producer price indexes, 1- & 12-mo. change (not seasonally adjusted)



December 2023 change from:

Nov. 2023 Dec. 2022
(1 month) (12 months)

Cement		0%	8%
Ready-mix concrete		-0.4%	8%
Diesel fuel		-13%	-19%

Subcontractor price indexes, nonresidential building work

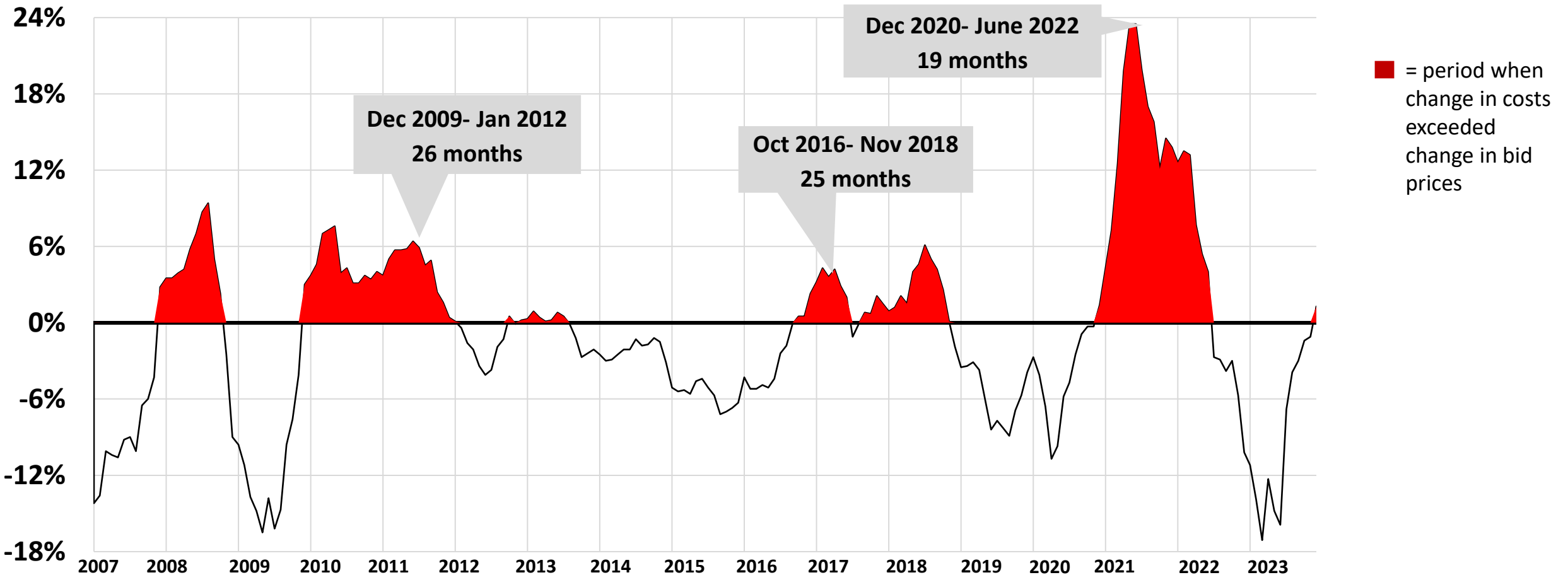
Roofing contractors		-0.1%	9%
Plumbing contractors		0.1%	3%
Electrical contractors		0%	2%
Concrete contractors		0.3%	-1%

Cost squeeze on contractors can reappear suddenly, last 2+ years

Difference between year-over-year change in materials costs vs. bid prices, Jan 2007-Dec 2023

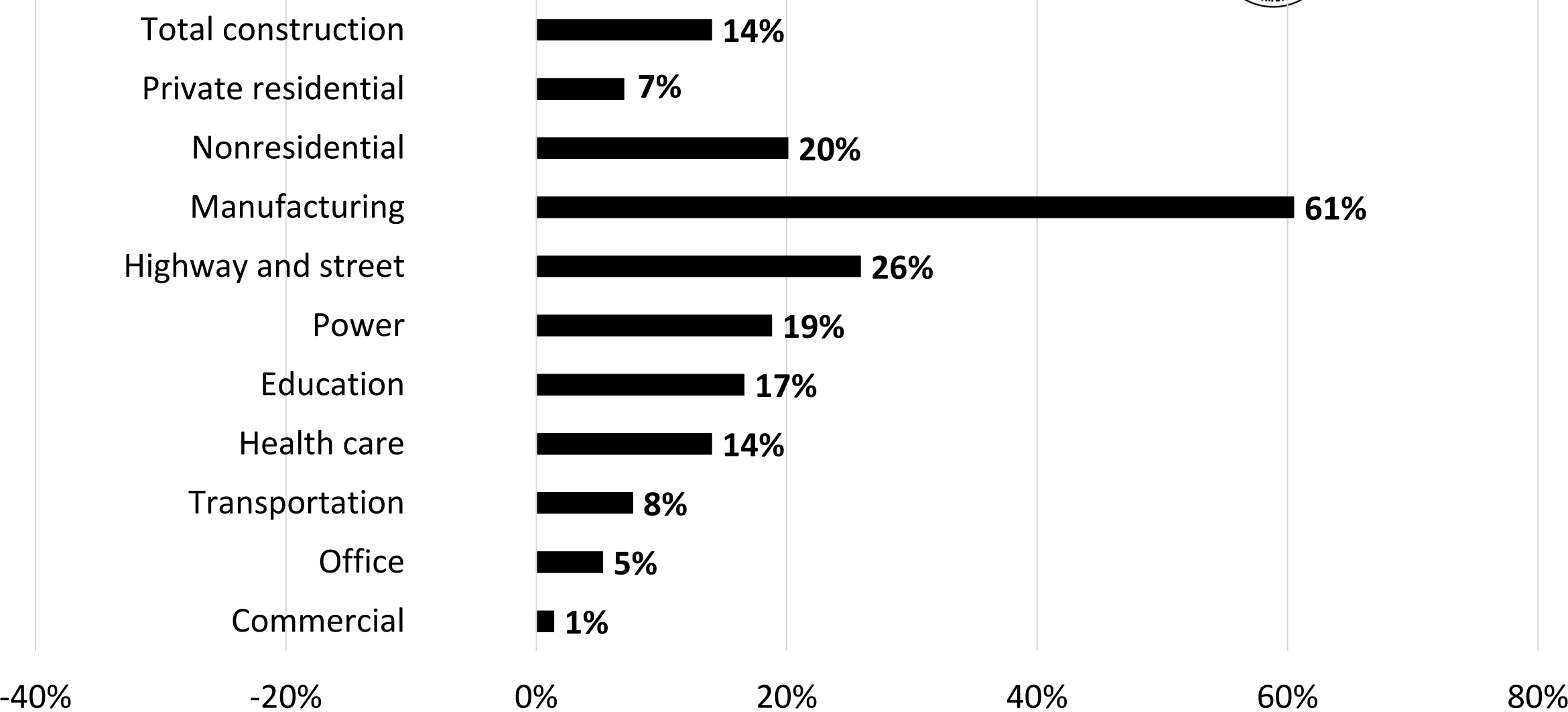


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Change in construction spending: December 2023 vs. December 2022

Year-over-year % change in current (not inflation-adjusted) dollars, seasonally adjusted



Change in construction spending: December 2023 vs. December 2022



current (not inflation-adjusted) dollars, seasonally adjusted

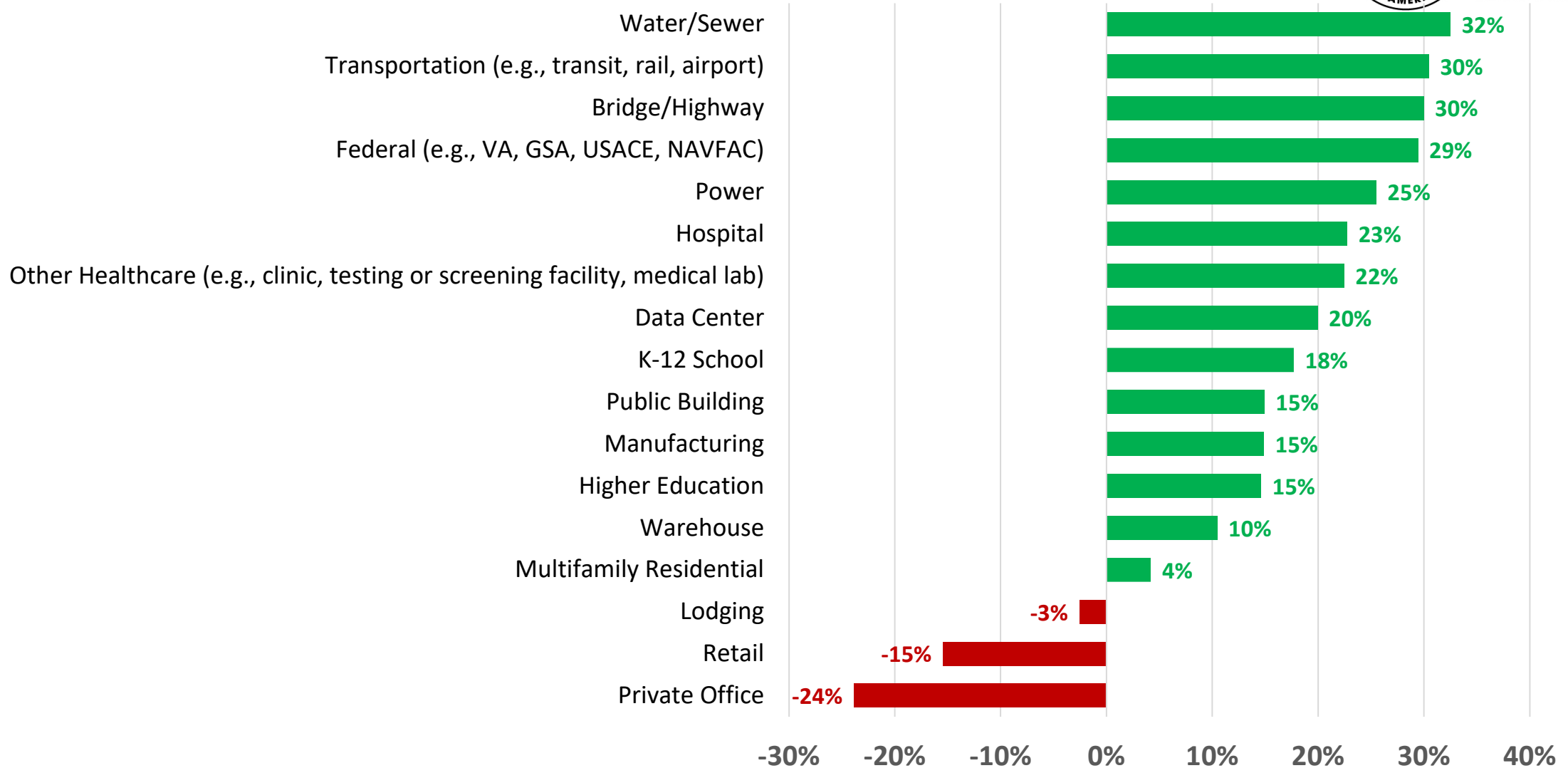
Total 14%: Private residential 7% (single-family 10%; multi 12%; improvements 1%); public residential 11%
Nonresidential 20% (private 19%, public 22%)

Nonresidential segments (in descending order of Dec. 2023 spending; combined new & renovation spending)

- Mfg. 61% (computer/electronic 130%; chemical 4%; **food/beverage/tobacco -2%**; transportation equipment 21%)
- Highway and street 26%
- Commercial 1% (**warehouse -0.5%**; **retail -0.6%**; farm 21%)
- Power 19% (electric 24%; **oil/gas fields & pipelines -7%**)
- Education 17% (primary/secondary 17%; higher ed 15%)
- Office (including data centers) 5%
- Transportation 8% (air 8%; private rail/truck 9%; **transit -9%**)
- Health care 14% (hospital 13%; medical building 19%; special care 2%)
- Other: Sewage/waste 26%; Amuse/recreation 11%; Water supply 21%; Communication 2%; Lodging 5%; Conservation/development 22%

AGC Outlook Survey: Net* % who expect 2024 value of projects to be higher/lower than 2023

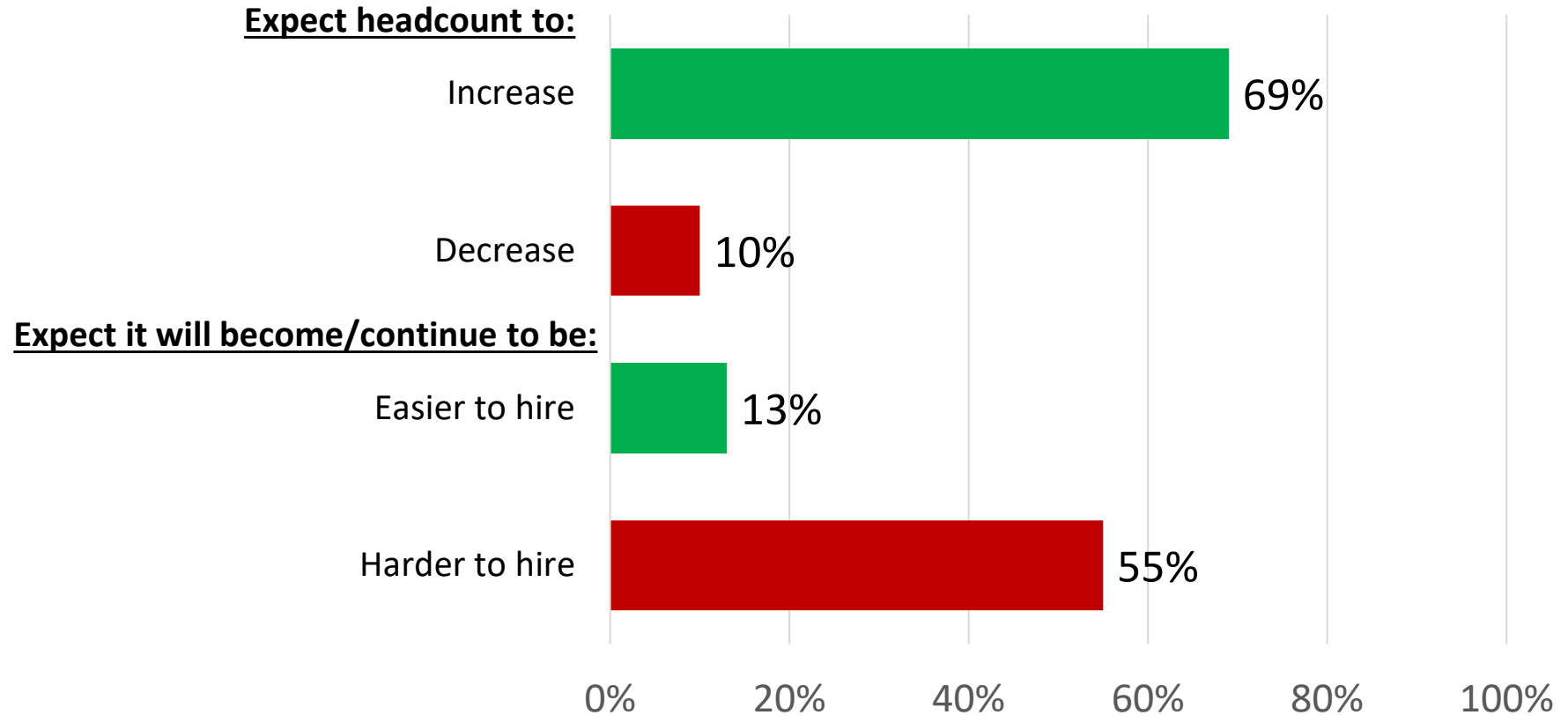
* Net = % expecting higher value - % expecting lower value than in 2023



AGC Outlook Survey: Firms' expectations regarding their headcount and hiring over next 12 months



% of respondents who:



Medium-term outlook for construction



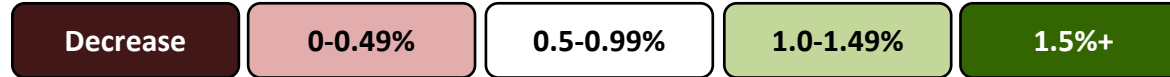
- Economic recovery should continue but risk of recession remains
- Single-family homebuilding should continue recovering
- Multifamily, warehouse, retail, office, lodging: slowdown likely due to rising rates
- Data center and manufacturing construction should remain hot
- Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act, “Chips” Act, Inflation Reduction Act will give major boost to infrastructure, manufacturing, and power construction. BUT
 - money will be slow to turn into construction awards and spending
 - Buy America(n), labor, environmental strings may tie up project starts for years
- Materials costs, lead times: mostly better except electrical gear, some electronics
- Labor availability has resumed being the #1 challenge for many contractors

Long-run construction outlook



- Finding workers will be a challenge for much longer than materials costs or supply
- Slower population growth → fewer workers but also slower demand growth
- Slowing demand for K-12, decline for higher ed construction
- Permanent shift from retail to e-commerce/distribution structures
- More specialized and online healthcare facilities; fewer hospitals, nursing homes
- More wind, solar, battery storage and charging facilities, and related manufacturing
- Not clear if offices will decentralize or remain in less demand
- Not clear if recent urban/rural or state-to-state migration will remain or reverse

Population change by state, July 2022–July 2023 (U.S.: 0.49%)

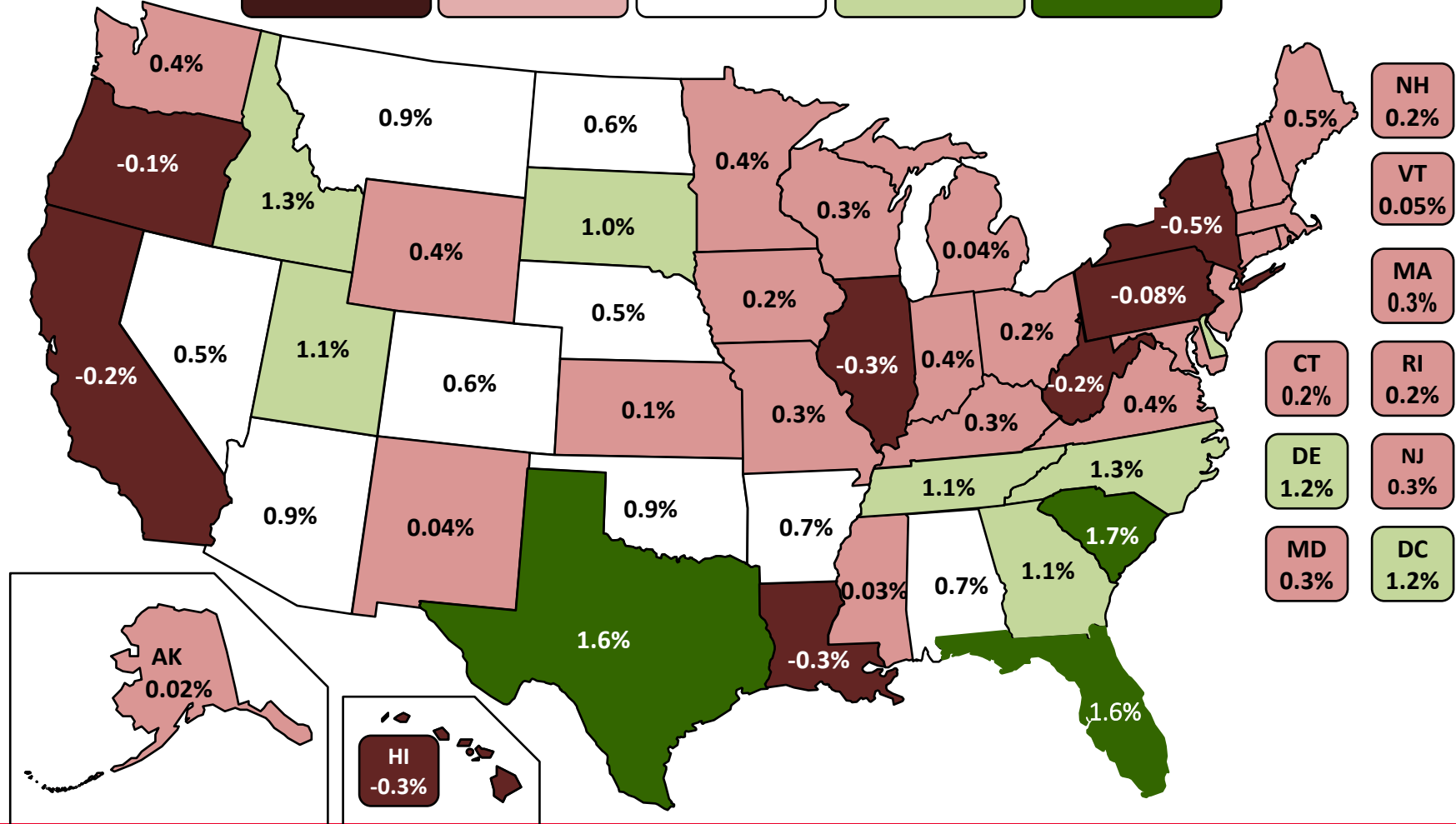


Top 5

SC	1.7%
FL	1.6%
TX	1.6%
ID	1.3%
NC	1.3%

Bottom 5

NY	-0.5%
LA	-0.3%
HI	-0.3%
IL	-0.3%
WV	-0.2%



AGC economic resources

(email ken.simonson@agc.org)

- *Data DIGest*: weekly email summary of construction economic news ([subscribe](#) at <https://marketplace.agc.org/Store/ItemDetail?iProductCode=4401>)
- Surveys (2024 [Outlook Survey](#): <https://www.agc.org/2024-construction-hiring-and-business-outlook>)
- State and metro data, [fact sheets](#): www.agc.org/learn/construction-data
- Monthly [press releases](#): construction spending; producer price indexes; national, state, metro employment with rankings: <https://www.agc.org/newsroom>
- Construction impact model: <https://www.agc.org/agc-construction-impact-model>
- ConsensusDocs Price Escalation Resource [Center](#): <https://www.consensusdocs.org/price-escalation-clause/>



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PPI for inputs rises in April but dips over 12 months; pay in construction tops U.S. median by 18%

Prices show mixed trends in April

The producer price index (PPI) for material and service inputs to new nonresidential construction rose 0.5% from March to April but declined 1.1% year-over-year (y/y), according to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data posted on Thursday.

[Read more](#)

Construction pay tops U.S. median by 18%

"Half of payroll workers in construction earn more than \$4,540," 18% more than the U.S. median wage of \$46,310, "and the top 25% make at least \$77,030," 4.9% higher than the U.S. top quartile base of \$73,480, the National Association of Home Builders reported on Tuesday, based on its analysis of May 2022 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics posted by BLS...

[Read more](#)

Child counts decline in 35 states

In a trend with implications for school and other construction, "Thirty-five states have fewer children than they did five years ago, a situation caused by declining birth rates nationwide, but also by young families migrating across state borders in search of cheaper housing," Stateline reported on Thursday...

[Read more](#)

Results from RICS-AACE construction survey

Firms reporting declining profit margins outnumbered firms reporting rising margins by 27 percentage points (a net balance reading of -27%) in the first quarter (Q1) 2023 RICS-AACE USA Construction Monitor, covering 60 responses between March 8 and April 21 and posted by RICS on Monday...

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AGC Highway safety survey closes tonight

Highway contractors are invited to complete AGC's annual highway work zone safety survey by tonight, May 12. Responses will be kept confidential.

[Read more](#)

Census of Construction reminder

The Census Bureau reminded firms in all industries, "The due date for responding to the 2022 Economic Census has passed, but it's not too late to respond..."

[Read more](#)

