



BY THE NUMBERS:

COAL POWER FADES

The pandemic-related economic shutdown cut electricity demand.

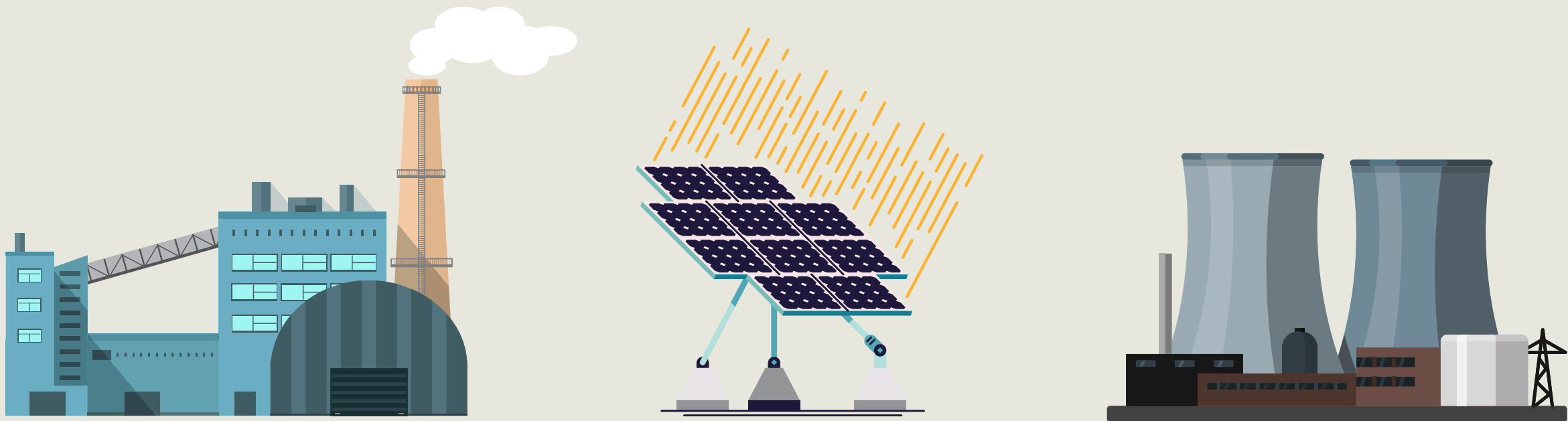
BY JEFFREY WINTERS

In response, utilities turned off their coal plants.

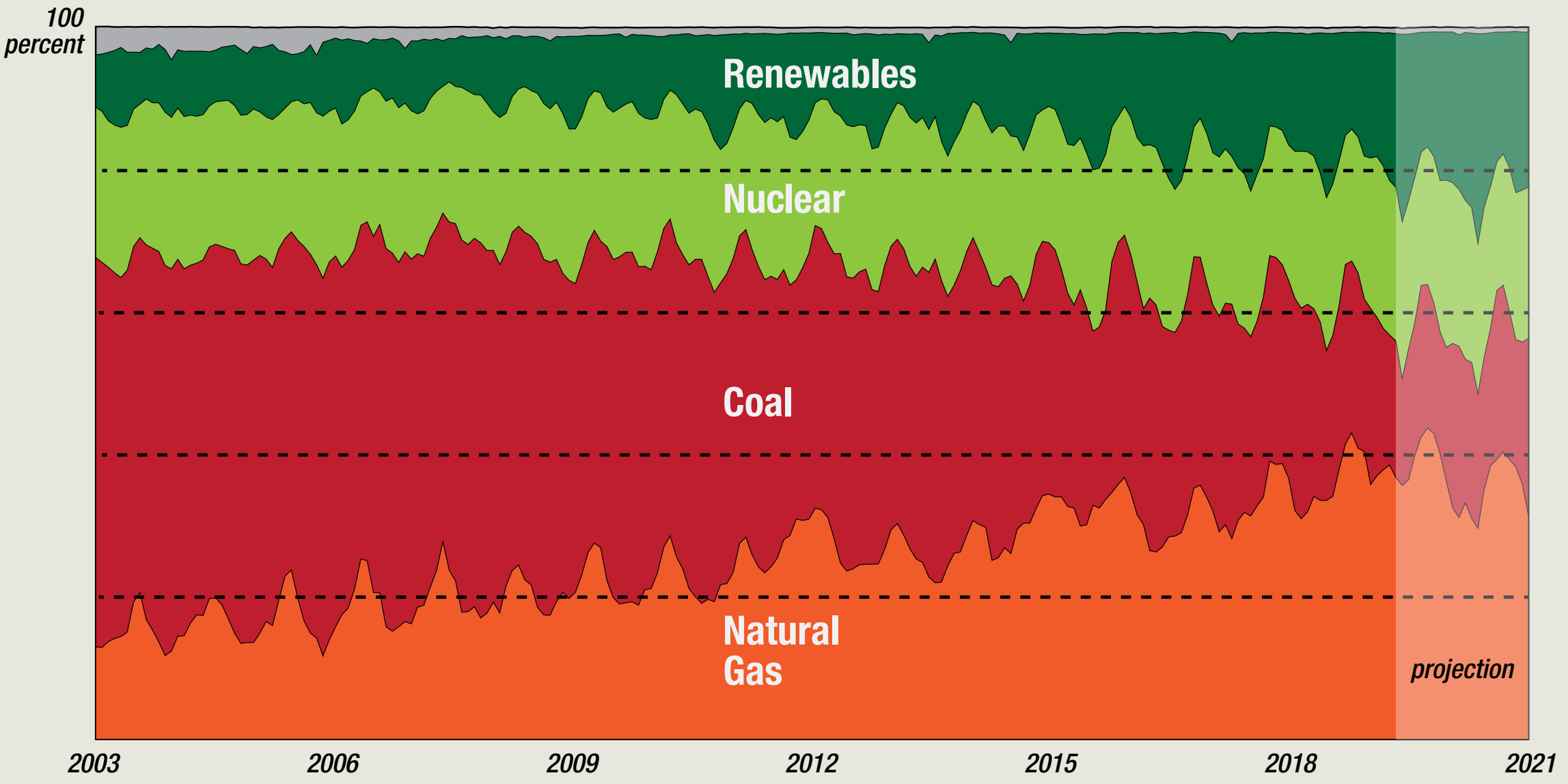
According to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the share of electricity generated by coal power has dropped precipitously during the first months of widespread stay-at-home orders, and coal generation was projected to fall to just 40.3 billion kWh in April 2020, below that of natural gas, nuclear, and renewable power.

That coal projection – 15 percent of electricity generation – was based on preliminary data from utilities. The reported data from February 2020 was scarcely better, with coal earning an 18 percent share of the electricity market and still finishing fourth if one lumps solar, wind, and hydropower together in one category. For the year, the EIA expects coal generation will fall by 25 percent.

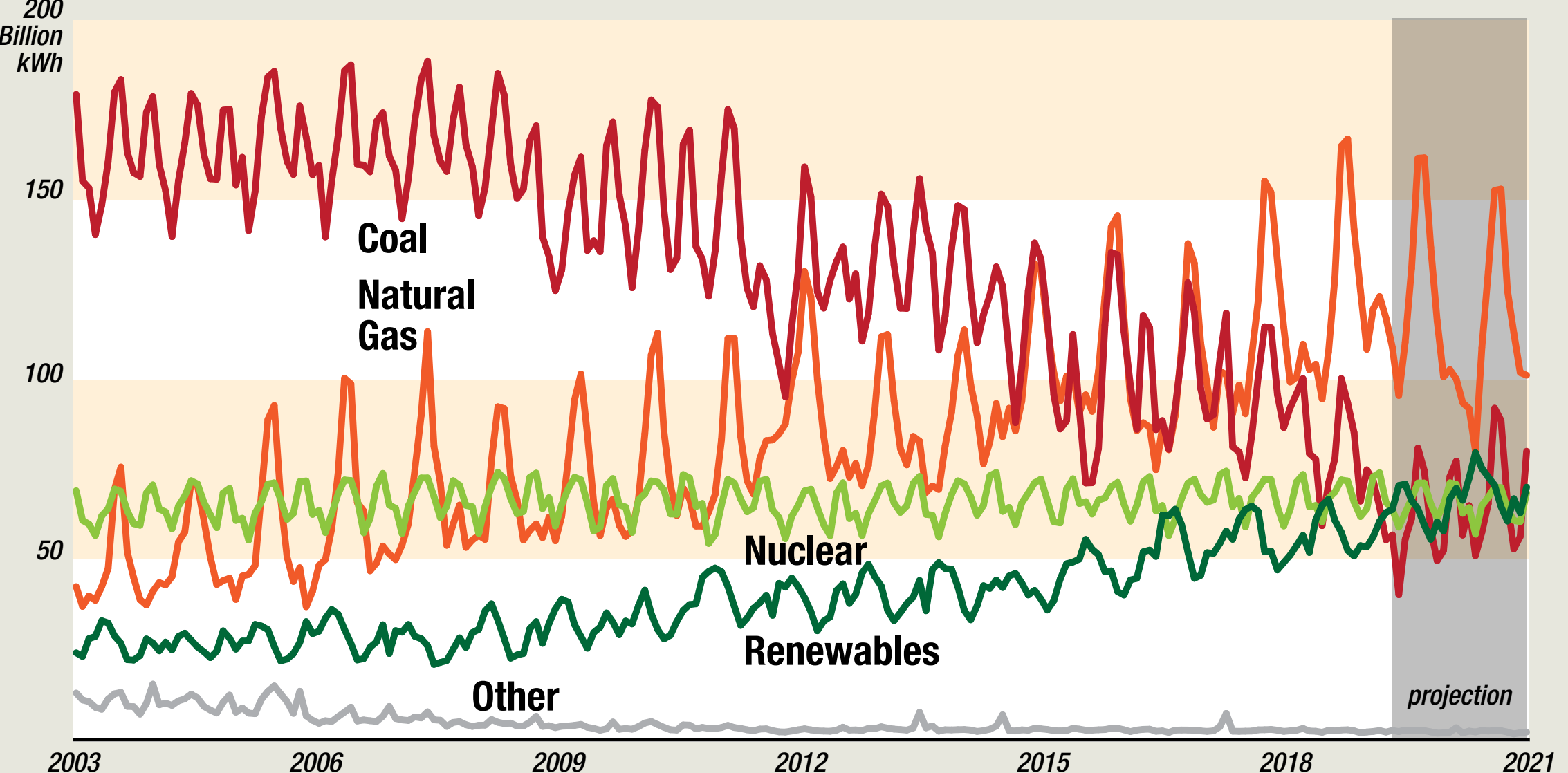
The EIA report has an even bigger shock tucked away in its data tables. In April 2021, according to the forecast, renewables may surpass gas as the top source of electric power in the U.S., at least for that month. That’s a situation that would have been inconceivable just a few years ago.



SHARE OF U.S. MONTHLY ELECTRICITY GENERATION
2003 to present (and projected to 2021)



U.S. MONTHLY ELECTRICITY GENERATION BY SOURCE
2003 to present (and projected to 2021)



Data source: Energy Information Administration