

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Unemployment benefits top \$30 billion for workers impacted by pandemic

Guidance on benefit eligibility as businesses start to reopen in California

Sacramento – Applications for unemployment benefits ticked down slightly as total benefits paid since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic soar past \$30 billion, according to the latest weekly statistics released by the California Employment Development Department (EDD) today. The EDD processed another 312,791 claims last week alone between regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) programs totaling now more than 6.3 million claims since the sudden surge of the pandemic began in the week ending March 14, 2020.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard				
		<i>Current Week</i>	<i>Prior Weeks</i>	<i>Total</i>
		June 13, 2020	WE 3/14-6/06/20	WE 3/14-6/13/20
Total Applications Submitted <small>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)¹</small>	Reg. UI	93,198	4,398,150	4,491,348
	PUA	82,465	963,531	1,045,996
	Total	175,663	5,361,681	5,537,344
Total Claims Processed <small>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD)²</small>	Reg. UI	243,344	5,230,438	5,473,782
	PUA	69,447	783,570	853,017
	Total	312,791	6,014,008	6,326,799
Total Benefits Paid <small>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)³</small>	Reg. UI	\$2.6 billion	\$21.5 billion	\$24.0 billion
	PUA	\$978 million	\$4.2 billion	\$5.2 billion
	PEUC⁴	\$288 million	\$509 million	\$797 million
	Total	\$3.8 billion	\$26.2 billion	\$30.0 billion
Individuals Paid Benefits^{5,6} <small>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</small>	Reg. UI	3,253,000	3,421,000	
	PUA	647,000	623,000	
	Total	3,900,000 ⁷	4,044,000 ⁸	

1. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was implemented in California on April 28, 2020.

2. Claims processed through UI Online, along with about 5% of claims that arrive via paper or phone. This accounts for claims received in the current week as well as past weeks.

3. Includes \$600 federal stimulus payments EDD adds to each week of regular UI/PUA/PEUC benefits. Regular UI benefits are paid out of California's UI Trust Fund with contributions from employers, PUA, PEUC and the \$600 federal stimulus payments are paid for by the federal government.

4. For the week ending June 6, 2020, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 425,056. PEUC claims are an extension of a regular UI claim.

5. Counts include individuals claiming regular UI or PEUC benefits. If an individual claims a regular UI benefit and a PEUC benefit in a four-week rolling time period, they are only counted once.

6. Four-week rolling totals accommodate for numerous variables that dictate what claimants receive benefits in any given bi-weekly period. Data excludes claimants who were fully employed, disqualified or had excessive earnings that would disqualify them for a week of benefits.

7. Four-week rolling total between week-ending May 23 and week-ending June 13, 2020.

8. Four-week rolling total between week-ending May 16 and week-ending June 6, 2020.

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Guidance for workers and employers as businesses start to reopen

As businesses start to reopen in California under the state government guidelines, the EDD has developed a series of [FAQs](#) on our COVID-19 webpages to assist workers and employers in understanding impacts on the eligibility for UI benefits. If individuals collecting UI benefits are offered the chance to return to their jobs and refuse that opportunity, they will need to report this information on their [bi-weekly certification form](#) in answer to question #4, "Did you refuse any work?" A refusal to work legally requires an EDD representative to review the case and follow up for more information from the claimant as well as the employer before determining whether the claimant can continue to receive unemployment benefits.

- **Good cause provisions for UI eligibility** – The EDD will need to make a case-by-case determination on whether or not the information provided by claimants about refusing work meets what are called "good cause" reasons for UI eligibility. Such reasons include the [higher risk factors](#) identified by the California Department of Public Health such as the worker being over the age of 65, immunocompromised, or having certain serious health conditions.
- **Reduced work hours and UI eligibility** – Workers may still be eligible for partial UI benefits if they are only able to work reduced hours due to the impacts of the pandemic. But they must report that income earned in response to question #6 on their bi-weekly certification form for ongoing benefit payments. The first \$25 or 25 percent of wages, whichever is the greater amount, is not counted as wages earned and will not be deducted from the UI weekly benefit amount.
 - For example, if you earned \$100 in a week, the Department would not count \$25 as wages and would only deduct \$75 from your weekly benefit amount. For someone who has a weekly benefit amount of \$450, they would be paid a reduced amount of \$375.
 - If someone with the same weekly benefit amount of \$450 but earned at least \$600 in the week, the full \$450 would be deducted leaving \$0 left for any unemployment benefits that week.
 - An individual has a year-long benefit period on their claim to collect the up to 26 weeks of benefits available. Claimants can start collecting benefits, stop for a while when they return to work, and then re-open their claim later if they once again find themselves unemployed or working reduced hours.
- **School employees and UI eligibility** – Federal and state law do not permit school employees to be eligible for regular UI benefits during a school recess period, including the summer break.

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That's as long as these employees base their claim on their school wages and they are scheduled or likely to return to their usual or similar job when the break is over. Despite schools closing early this year due to the pandemic, the US Department of Labor is requiring all states to treat this year as any other. Therefore, the EDD must determine on a case-by-case basis whether employees have reasonable assurance that they will be returning to work in the fall and if so, deny eligibility for benefits this summer.

- An exception to this is if workers have enough wages during their base period that were earned from non-school employment to support an alternate weekly benefit amount they can be paid on their UI claim.
- **Video tutorials to help workers in certifying for benefits** – Many workers may not realize that once it is determined that they have enough in earnings over the last 12- 18 months to initiate a UI claim or a PUA claim, they must answer basic questions every two weeks on their continued claim certification form online or via mail in order to receive the next bi-weekly benefit payment. The EDD provides [video tutorials in four different languages](#) to assist workers with this legally required step to determine ongoing eligibility for benefits.

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