



N E W S R E L E A S E

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Unemployment benefits top \$86 billion over course of COVID-19 pandemic

Updates available on Lost Wages Assistance benefits and fraud claims

Sacramento – Unemployment benefits supporting California workers, their families and local communities struggling through this historic COVID-19 pandemic now total more than \$86 billion. Since mid-March, the critical benefits stem from more than 13-million claims processed by the California Employment Development Department between the regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and extension claims, as well as the separate Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. The number of claims processed over the last six months are more than triple the worst full year of the Great Recession when 3.8 million claims were processed in 2010.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard				
		<i>Current Week</i>	<i>Prior Weeks</i>	<i>Total</i>
		September 12, 2020	WE 3/14 -9/05/20	WE 3/14 -9/12/20
Total Applications Submitted <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers) ¹</i>	Reg. UI	46,062	5,539,137	5,585,199
	PUA	145,790	4,089,349	4,235,139
	PEUC ²	59,582	688,115	747,697
	FED-ED ³	6,324	123,513	129,837
	Total	257,758	10,440,114	10,697,872
Total Claims Processed <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims) ⁴</i>	Reg. UI	230,225	8,464,570	8,694,796
	PUA	204,690	3,296,135	3,500,825
	PEUC ²	65,458	753,850	819,308
	FED-ED ³	6,712	87,248	93,960
	Total	507,085	12,601,803	13,108,889
Total Benefits Paid <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments) ⁵</i>	Reg. UI	\$1.6 billion	\$47.1 billion	\$48.7 billion
	PUA	\$1.3 billion	\$31.5 billion	\$32.8 billion
	PEUC ²	\$137 million	\$2.9 billion	\$3.0 billion
	FED-ED ³	\$34.4 million	\$224 million	\$258 million
	LWA ¹⁰	\$1.3 billion	\$150 million	\$1.4 billion
Total	\$4.4 billion	\$81.8 billion	\$86.2 billion	
Individuals Paid Benefits ^{6,7} <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i>	Reg. UI	3,357,000	3,382,000	
	PUA	1,768,000	1,767,000	
	Total	5,125,000⁸	5,149,000⁹	

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1. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was implemented in California on April 28, 2020. This data includes new initial claims only.

2. The Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) was implemented in California on May 27, 2020. PEUC claims are an extension of a regular UI claim. For the week ending September 5, 2020, (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 369,443.

3. FED-ED was implemented in California on July 1, 2020. FED-ED claims are an extension of a regular UI claim.

4. Claims processed through UI Online, along with about 5% of claims that arrive via paper of phone. This accounts for claims received in the current week as well as past weeks. The data also includes additional claims or claims that are re-opened when there is a break in certifying for benefits, for example when the claimant may return to work but then later come back to collect benefits on their initial claim. The total claims processed from 3/14 - 9/12/20 may include multiple claims from the same applicant.

5. Includes \$600 federal stimulus payments EDD adds to each week of regular UI, PUA, PEUC, and FED-ED benefits. Regular UI benefits are paid out of California's UI Trust Fund with contributions from employers, PUA, PEUC, FED-ED and the \$600 federal stimulus payments are paid for by the federal government. The Total Benefits Paid may not add up due to the rounding data.

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

7. 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.

8. Four-week rolling total between week-ending August 22nd and week-ending September 12th, 2020.

9. Four-week rolling total between week-ending August 15th and week-ending September 5th, 2020.

10. The Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program was implemented in California on September 5th, 2020 to provide eligible claimants with a Lost

Further developments in issuing \$300 a week Lost Wages Assistance payments

The EDD plans to complete by early next week the first phase of issuing additional \$300 a week payments under the federal Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program for the weeks falling between July 26 and August 15. It's estimated a total of 3.2 million claimants in California are receiving a total of \$2.7 billion in LWA payments through this phase.

Phase two is also underway impacting claimants who have not yet received a LWA payment but who meet the eligibility requirements and need to supply a self-attestation to the EDD that their full or partial unemployment is related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EDD has identified these individuals in our system and is posting messages in their UI Online accounts, as well as sending them emails, texts, and/or mailed notices about what information EDD needs from them to process their LWA payments. Claimants need to simply follow the instructions they are provided to complete their self-attestation.

In addition to the self-attestation, in order to be eligible for the extra \$300 a week LWA payments, claimants must also meet these requirements:

- Already certified their eligibility for benefits and received payments for any weeks of full or partial unemployment between July 26 and August 15.
- Have a minimum weekly benefit award of \$100 or more on their initial claim, even if they received a lower payment during this time period because they reported wages.

Claimants who were not paid initial benefits for one or two weeks of this three week period due to excessive earnings, fully employed, or disqualified will only receive LWA payments for weeks they received benefits. It's likely that if claimants are eligible for all three weeks of LWA payments, most will receive the total of \$900 in two separate payments issued within a few days of each other.

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The payments will either be posted to an EDD Debit Card or arrive in mailed checks, depending on the method claimants have used for prior payments.

California has received federal approval to issue two more weeks of LWA payments for those who already received regular UI or PUA benefits for the weeks ending August 22 and 29, 2020. Details on the plan for these LWA payments will be issued soon. The EDD is also awaiting word from the federal government as to whether funding will be available and approved for a final sixth week of LWA payments in California for those who received a benefit payment for the week ending September 5th.

Anti-fraud efforts and developments

Aggressive efforts to fight fraud are yielding results in curbing the recent uptick in suspicious Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claims in California. Between mid-August and the first week of September, PUA applications doubled to more than 524,000 – far surpassing the PUA claim levels when the new federal program first launched in California back in April. The EDD took action to shut down automatic backdating in the PUA program to prevent suspected scammers from capitalizing on earlier months of additional stimulus payments. Following that, **PUA applications dropped sharply to 145,790 last week – a decline of more than 72%.**

At the same time, EDD's investigators are engaged in multiple formal criminal investigations. In some cases, they are partnering with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General and working in coordination with other states to aggressively fight the occurrence of fraud across the country. In other cases, they are investigating alongside local partners to expose perpetrators and file charges. The EDD investigations team has contributed to at least 34 arrests in the state since the beginning of August. That's in addition to other local cases in which investigators are coordinating with authorities to provide information, including a case that broke yesterday in Beverly Hills. More arrests related to fraudulent benefits in the state are expected.

In other action, the EDD has suspended or cancelled multiple claims filed using the same address that follow a particular pattern. It's suspected that scammers are using a complex profile of stolen personal identifying information most likely obtained from national and global data breaches, and they aim to intercept mailed items on fraudulent claims. Fortunately, the EDD has found that most of the multiple mail items are notices related to the EDD's Identity Verification process and many will not be returned with required identity documents, preventing the fraudulent claim from being paid.

Additionally, the Bank of America is working with EDD to support the department's efforts to combat fraud and close the associated EDD Debit Cards.

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The EDD is very grateful for the public's partnership in fighting fraud and protecting the UI program for California workers in need. To fortify anti-fraud efforts, the EDD encourages individuals who receive mailings not pertaining to them to either:

- Send the mail items directly to EDD investigators through EDD PO Box 826880, MIC 43, Sacramento, CA 94280-0225.
- Write "Return to Sender" on the envelope and provide it directly to your mail carrier instead of leaving it in the mailbox. Envelopes that may contain debit cards that have yet to be activated can also be returned to sender. The cards are sent on behalf of the Bank of America from an address in Tennessee.
- Or at the very least, destroy the items instead of throwing them away to help us ensure they don't fall into the wrong hands.

You can learn more about fraud and how to report suspicious activity on the [Fraud and Penalties: What you Need to Know page](#) of the EDD website.

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