

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Unemployment benefits top \$98 billion as new claims get new ID verification boost

Updates on fighting fraud, issuing Lost Wages Assistance payments, and extensions

Sacramento – Unemployment benefits provided to support California workers impacted by this historic COVID-19 pandemic now total \$98 billion, including \$5 billion so far in federal Lost Wages Assistance benefits. At the same time, new applicants for benefits are now using a new ID.me identity verification tool at the beginning of the application process which officially launched on Monday. The enhanced UI Online system is designed to help the California Employment Development Department (EDD) process claims faster while effectively preventing scammers at the onset of a claim.

Since March, the EDD has processed approximately 14.7 million claims between the regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and extension claims, as well as the separate Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. That includes recent claim estimates based on the week ending September 19 to account for the EDD's two-week reset period which ended Monday. The new ID.me tool implemented during that time will also help EDD drive down the manual workload that has caused delayed payments in the past. These dashboards reflect the latest efforts to drive down those backlogs, which were reduced by 250,000 claims since the start of the reset period:

- The [Unemployment Initial Claims Backlog Dashboard](#) refers to a subset of all applications for benefits that take more than 21 days to issue a **first** payment or to disqualify the individual, regardless of if the claimant or EDD need to take some kind of action.
- The [Unemployment Continued Claims Backlog Dashboard](#) refers to a subset of all individuals who received at least one payment and are now waiting more than 21 days for further processing of payment or disqualification.

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Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard				
		Current Week	Prior Weeks	Total
		October 3, 2020	WE 3/7 -9/26/20	WE 3/7 -10/3/20
Total Applications Submitted** <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)¹</i>	Reg. UI	14,036	5,648,373	5,662,409
	PUA	5,481	4,330,285	4,335,766
	PEUC²	184,624	1,142,795	1,327,419
	FED-ED³	5,819	143,518	149,337
	Total	209,960	11,264,971	11,474,931
Total Claims Processed** <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims)⁴</i>	Reg. UI	226,176	9,195,292	9,421,468
	PUA	99,824	3,700,473	3,800,297
	PEUC²	193,839	1,227,857	1,421,696
	FED-ED³	6,270	108,353	114,623
	Total	526,109	14,231,975	14,758,084
Total Benefits Paid <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)⁵</i>	Reg. UI	\$1.4 billion	\$51.7 billion	\$53.1 billion
	PUA	\$1.0 billion	\$34.7 billion	\$35.7 billion
	PEUC²	\$304 million	\$3.5 billion	\$3.8 billion
	FED-ED³	\$42.1 million	\$355 million	\$397 million
	LWA¹⁰	\$1.5 billion	\$3.6 billion	\$5.1 billion
	Total	\$4.2 billion	\$93.8 billion	\$98.0 billion
Individuals Paid Benefits^{6,7} <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i>	Reg. UI	3,246,000	3,293,000	
	PUA	1,436,000	1,558,000	
	Total	4,682,000 ⁸	4,851,000 ⁹	

****California has announced a two week pause in its processing of new online initial claims for unemployment insurance benefits. Recognizing that the pause will likely result in significant week to week swings in initial claims for California and the nation unrelated to any changes in economic conditions, California's initial claims and continued claims for the regular UI program and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program published in the UI Claims News Release will reflect the level reported during the last week prior to the pause (WE 9/19).**

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 26, 2020, (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 471,016.
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 3/7- 10/3/20 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 were who fully employed, disqualified or had excessive earnings that would disqualify them for a week of benefits.
8. Four-week rolling total between week-ending September 12th and week-ending October 3rd, 2020.
9. Four-week rolling total between week-ending September 5th and week-ending September 26th, 2020.
10. The Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program was implemented in California on September 5th, 2020 to provide eligible claimants with a Lost Wage Assistance payment of \$300 per week in addition to their weekly benefit amount beginning with weeks ending on or after August 1, 2020.

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Updated UI Claims Trend Data

In addition to the overview UI Data Dashboard above that the EDD updates every week, the department also offers this [UI claims trend data](#) for each major data category beginning with data over the last several weeks. Look for more extensive trend data to come in the next few weeks.

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

The EDD is wrapping up payments for weeks #4 and #5 of the federal Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program in California and plans to start issuing payments for a sixth and final week of payments early next week. This LWA program provides a supplemental \$300 for each week of regular UI, extension benefits, or federal PUA benefits eligible Californians already received for the weeks between July 26 and September 5. These additional \$300 payments can only be issued to those meeting these eligibility requirements:

- 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.
- Attested that their unemployment is caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The self-attestation is collected as a quick and easy yes or no question. As stated on the self-attestation form, if a claimant answers no, the EDD is required to disqualify the claimant from receiving LWA payments.

Anti-fraud efforts and developments

Identity scammers with extensive stolen information have been attacking benefit programs across the country, particularly the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program each state administers. Working with banking partner Bank of America in an aggressive effort to fight fraud, EDD has identified cases of an unusually high volume of claims associated with single addresses. The EDD's priority is to continue paying benefits to legitimate claimants as we weed out the fraudulent ones and shut them down.

The EDD is working to expedite the validation of identities associated with these claims. That includes sending emails, texts, notices through the mail, and conducting follow up phone calls encouraging claimants to provide documents verifying identity through our Document Upload option on UI Online. Any claims that cannot be verified triggers notices of disqualification as part of the shutdown process. The EDD continues to ask the public to be on the look-out for any mail that may not belong to you, mark it return to sender, and hand it to your mail carrier if possible.

Moving forward, the EDD believes the implementation of our new ID.me identity verification technology, which launched on Monday at the front end of our application process, will allow us to more quickly authenticate legitimate claimants and help EDD process their claims faster. It will also mitigate such fraud activity from reoccurring in the future.

The EDD is very grateful for the public's partnership in fighting fraud and protecting the UI program for California workers in need. 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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Extension benefits available

Many claimants ended up out of work when the pandemic hit in March and April, and are now running out of their up to 26 weeks of regular UI benefits if they didn't return to work at all over that period. The EDD has heard from thousands of claimants through our call centers, visiting our chat bot feature on the website, and on social media asking what extension benefits are available and how to receive them. To help clarify these concerns, the following rules apply to workers who have reached the end of the regular state UI.

- If claimants are **still within their benefit year** of 52 weeks from the start of their claim, the EDD will automatically file a [Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation \(PEUC\)](#) claim for them. Claimants will receive a text message and a notice and can monitor their UI Online account for updates. The PEUC includes up to 13 weeks of benefits and is set to expire at the end of the year.
- If the claimant's **benefit year has expired**, the EDD will notify the claimant that they have to file for a new claim first. The EDD is required to check if the individual has enough in intervening wages to establish a new regular UI claim. If not, the individual will receive a \$0 award notice in the mail for that new claim, but get another notice a few days later showing the EDD automatically filed a PEUC extension on the prior claim.
- If a claimant **runs out of their PEUC extension**, the EDD will automatically file a [FED-ED extension](#) providing another up to 20 weeks of benefits if the individual meets the eligibility requirements. The claimant should receive a text message verifying the extension filed and a notice in the mail with more information.
- If a claimant is **not eligible for a FED-ED extension**, the EDD will mail a notice within 5-7 days explaining why along with information on how the determination can be appealed. The department will also automatically open a PUA claim for the claimant, or re-open a prior PUA claim and confirm with a notice.

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