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Department of Labor
Office of the Commissioner

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To: Vermont General Assembly
From: Commissioner's Office, Department of Labor
Date: December 29, 2020
Subject: Unemployment Insurance Weekly Update

GENERAL

- The Department is reviewing the new federal CARES Act which extends programs created under the original CARES Act. We are currently working to implement these programmatic changes.
- The new CARES Act legislation extends PUA and PEUC benefits by 11 weeks for eligible claimants. Claimants will be able to receive these extended benefits through the benefit week ending April 10, 2021; however, no new PEUC or PUA claims will be accepted after March 14, 2021. Individuals who had previously exhausted their benefits under either the PEUC program or the Extended Benefits program, and are still unemployed, can log back into their UI claimant portal and resume filing beginning January 3, 2021.
- The FPUC program was also reinstated with the passage of this Act and claimants do not need to take any additional action in order to receive the new FPUC benefit of \$300 per week.
- This legislation also created what is called the Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC) program, which affords claimants filing in regular UI or PEUC, but who also have earned more than \$5,000 in self-employed wages for the previous tax year, to be eligible for an additional \$100 weekly benefit. This additional benefit is on top of both the base benefit and the \$300 FPUC payment. While this program is optional for states, Vermont has chosen to enroll in this benefit program for Vermonters.
- USDOL has also announced that States will be able to pay benefits for the week ending 1/2/21. This means that there will be no "lost week" or lapse in benefits for PUA or PEUC individuals who were still in filing status for the benefit week ending 12/26/20. With that, the Department is working to implement the changes to both its legacy mainframe system as well as its PUA system. Eligible claimants may see a delay in their ability to file, but they will be able to receive benefits for the week of 12/27/20 – 1/2/21.

- If an active claimant in the PUA program is unable to file for the benefit week ending (BWE) 12/26/20, it is likely because they have received the maximum number of weeks of the program under the original CARES Act. The CARES Act extension begins this week and eligible PUA claimants who have exhausted their original benefits will be able to file for the BWE 01/02/21 once the program has been updated with the federal changes. The new CARES Act extension does not cover the BWE 12/26/20 for PUA claimants who have already exhausted their benefits.
- Claimants who are able to do so, should be actively looking for work while collecting UI benefits. Vermont's official work search is currently suspended, it is likely to be reinstated in the coming weeks. Employers across the state are reporting job availability in a number of sectors and industries and are actively hiring for a variety of positions. Prior to the Pandemic, UI claimants were required to conduct three official work inquiries each week in order to be eligible for benefits.
- Our Workforce Development team is actively providing outreach and services to unemployed Vermonters to assist with re-employment. More information about the Department's employment and re-employment efforts can be found online at www.labor.vermont.gov/jobs.

CLAIMS

- Our weekly numbers continue to show an increase in the number of initial claims be filed. This is believed to be part of the seasonal shift in employment. Traditionally, the week of Thanksgiving is the Department's busiest week of the year for the UI Division.
- Claimants filing for unemployment continue to receive a weekly jobs newsletter with highlighted job opportunities available across Vermont. **December 21st Jobs Newsletter:** <https://conta.cc/37SPt3O>

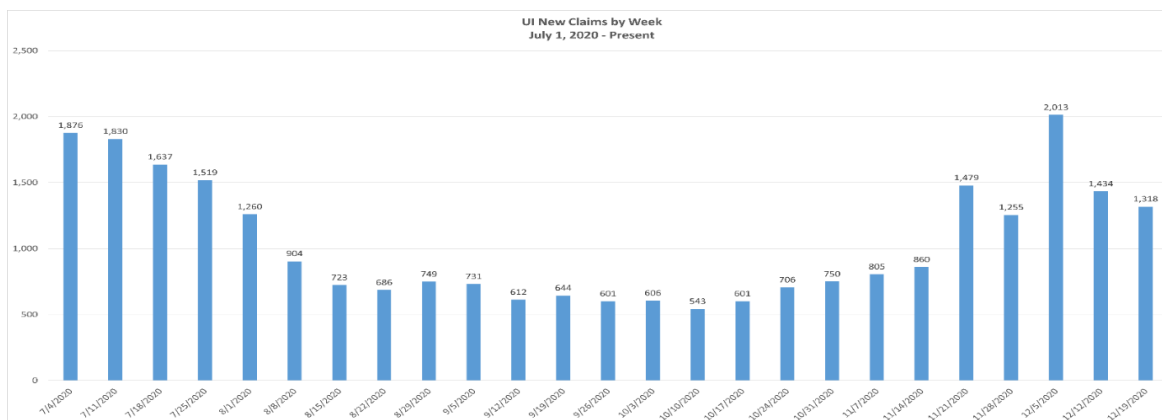


Figure 1

The data presented in this publication represents unofficial information collected from a variety of sources, and is being provided in order to ensure transparency, the freedom of information, and a well-informed public. While it is accurate to the extent ascertainable by the Department at the time of publication, it has not been subject to inspection or validation, and does not constitute verified employment data for the purposes of required reporting and formal release. This data is for the sole purpose of informing the public and shall not be recreated or reposted in any way, without this disclaimer. The information provided herein is not related in any way to the certified data provided to the U.S. Department of Labor.

| Continued Claims Filed | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Week Ending | 11/14 | 11/21 | 11/28 | 12/5 | 12/12 | 12/19 |
| Regular UI | 10,825 | 11,150 | 10,082 | 11,983 | 11,909 | 11,913 |
| PEUC | 9,158 | 9,598 | 8,963 | 9,825 | 9,833 | 9,724 |
| EB | 701 | 754 | 704 | 885 | 977 | 1,116 |
| PUA | 8,255 | 8,503 | 8,451 | 8,694 | 8,675 | 8,577 |
| Total | 28,939 | 30,005 | 28,200 | 31,342 | 31,394 | 31,330 |

Figure 2

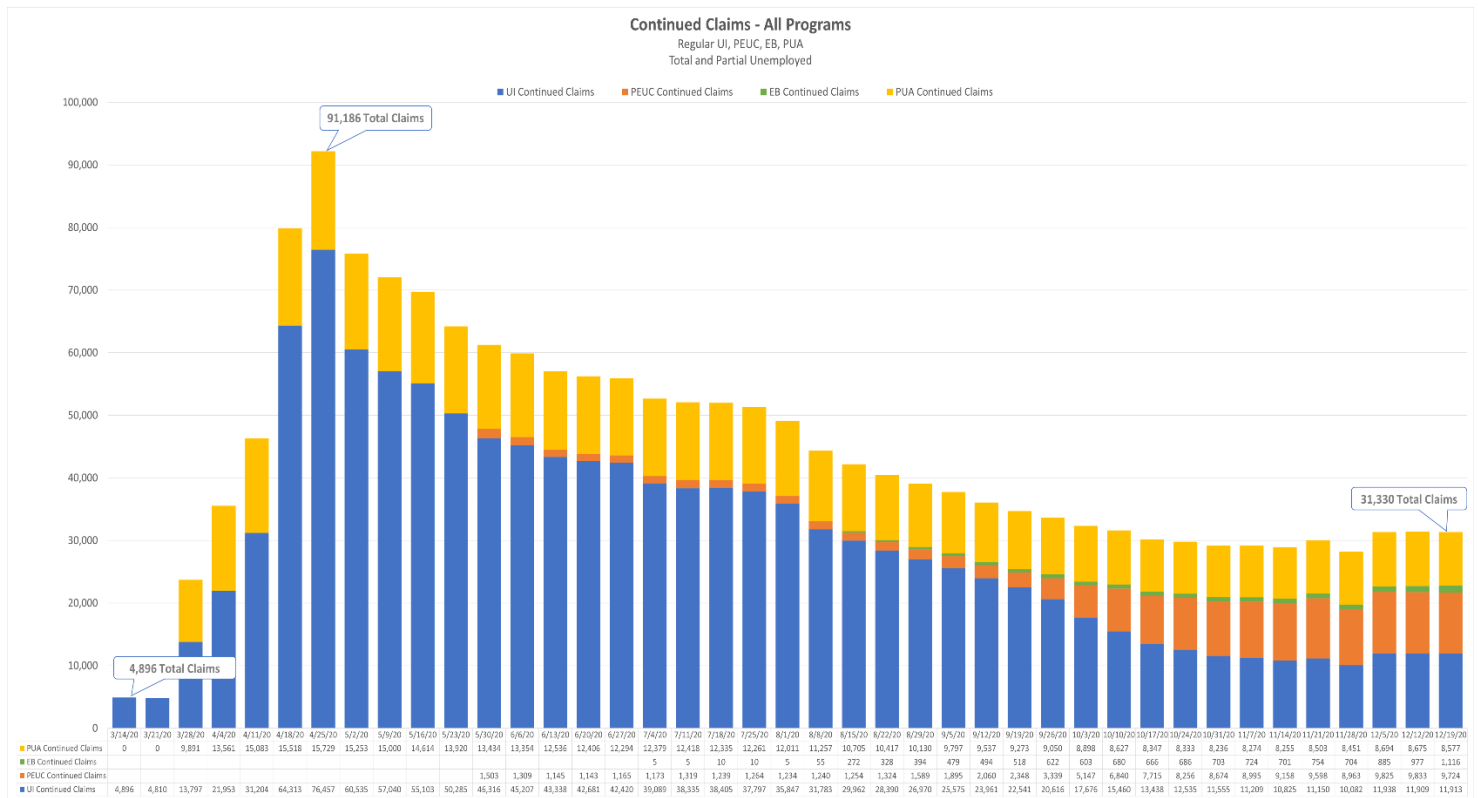


Figure 3

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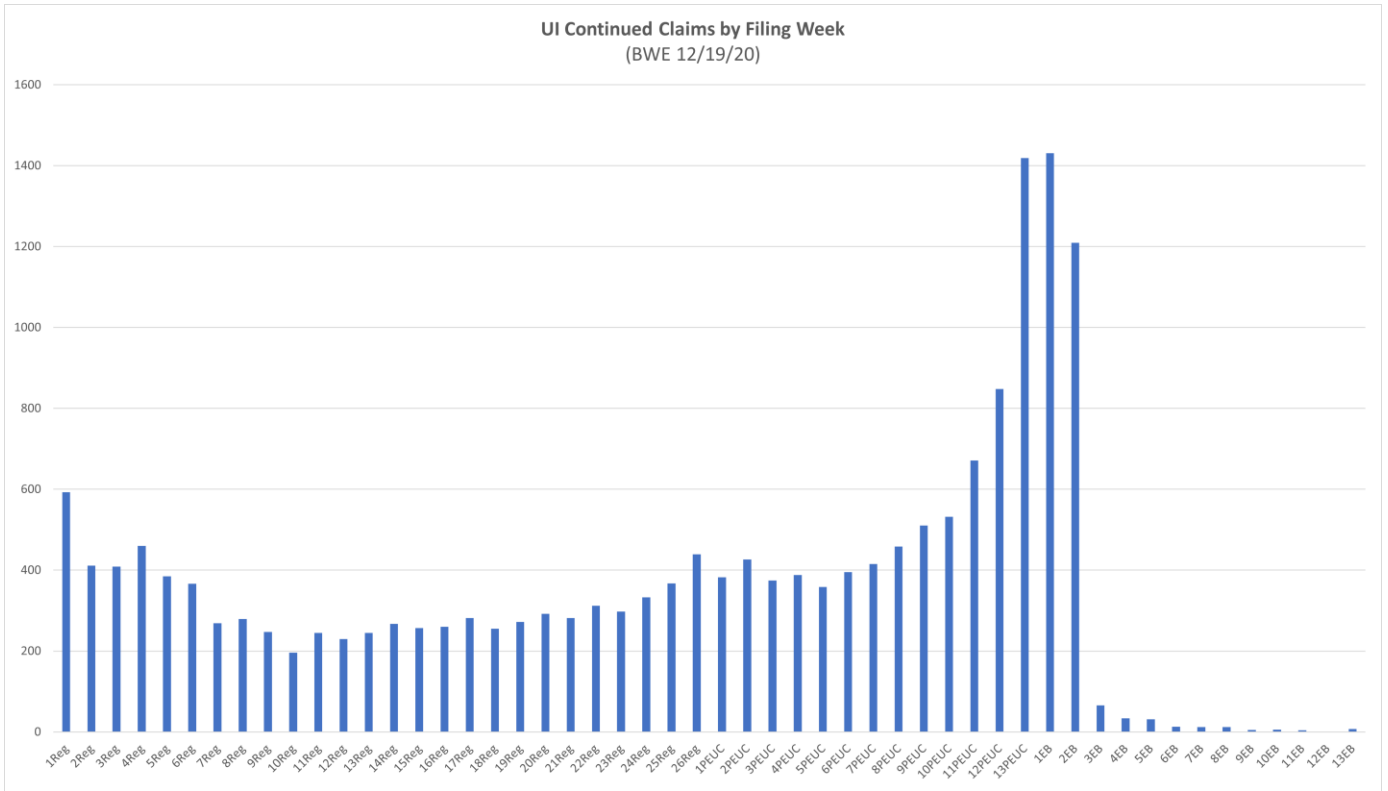


Figure 4

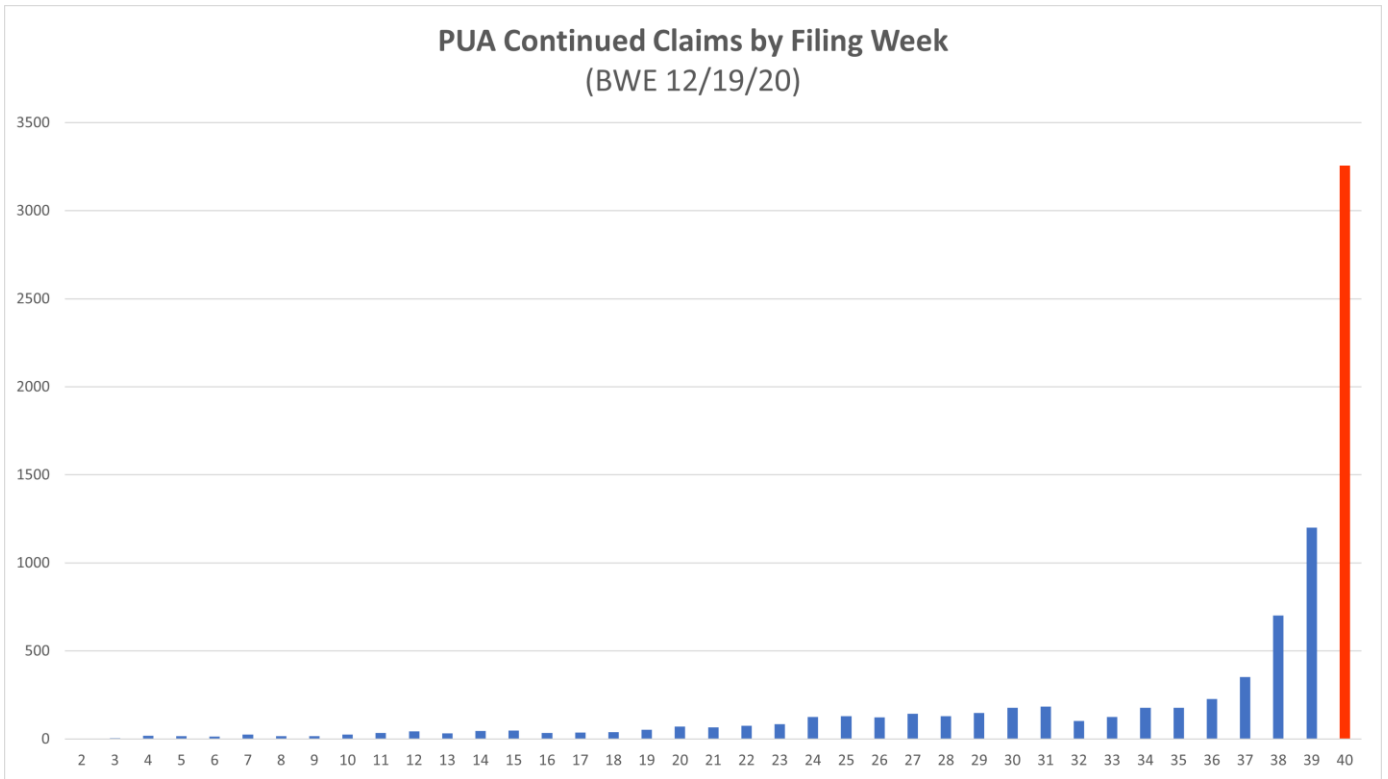


Figure 5

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PAYMENTS

- The Vermont Short Term Supplemental (VSTS) benefit was paid out to all eligible claimants. In total, there were 33,509 claimants receiving the benefit for a total payment amount of \$14,606,500.
- We continue to process LWA payments as claimants certify and/or become eligible on a regular basis. Claimants who have not completed their certification or need to recertify may do so by contacting our UI Claimant Assistance Center. **As of December 29, 2020, the LWA program has paid out \$55,900,000 with approximately \$13.3 million remaining.**
- Regular UI is funded by state trust fund dollars, PEUC is fully-federally funded, and EB is currently fully-federally funded. Normally, EB is a 50/50 split between the trust fund and federal dollars. Additionally, the PUA program is fully-federally funded. The UI trust fund is funded through employer contributions.

| Claims Payment Processing | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Week Ending | All UI Claims Paid | All UI Payments | PUA Claims Paid | PUA Payments | Total Payments Issued | Trust Fund Balance |
| November 14 | 19,933 | \$6,436,674 | 8,023 | \$2,506,616 | \$8,943,290 | \$258,433,413 |
| November 21 | 20,441 | \$6,803,665 | 8,005 | \$2,537,754 | \$9,341,419 | \$255,487,068 |
| November 28 | 18,745 | \$6,138,744 | 8,387 | \$2,782,380 | \$8,921,124 | \$252,170,953 |
| December 5 | 21,870 | \$7,451,856 | 8,211 | \$2,638,931 | \$10,295,096 | \$249,016,877 |
| December 12 | 21,160 | \$7,206,483 | 8,126 | \$2,367,865 | \$9,574,348 | \$247,023,458 |
| December 19 | 21,019 | \$7,072,397 | 8,264 | \$2,691,133 | \$9,763,530 | \$245,080,698 |

Figure 6

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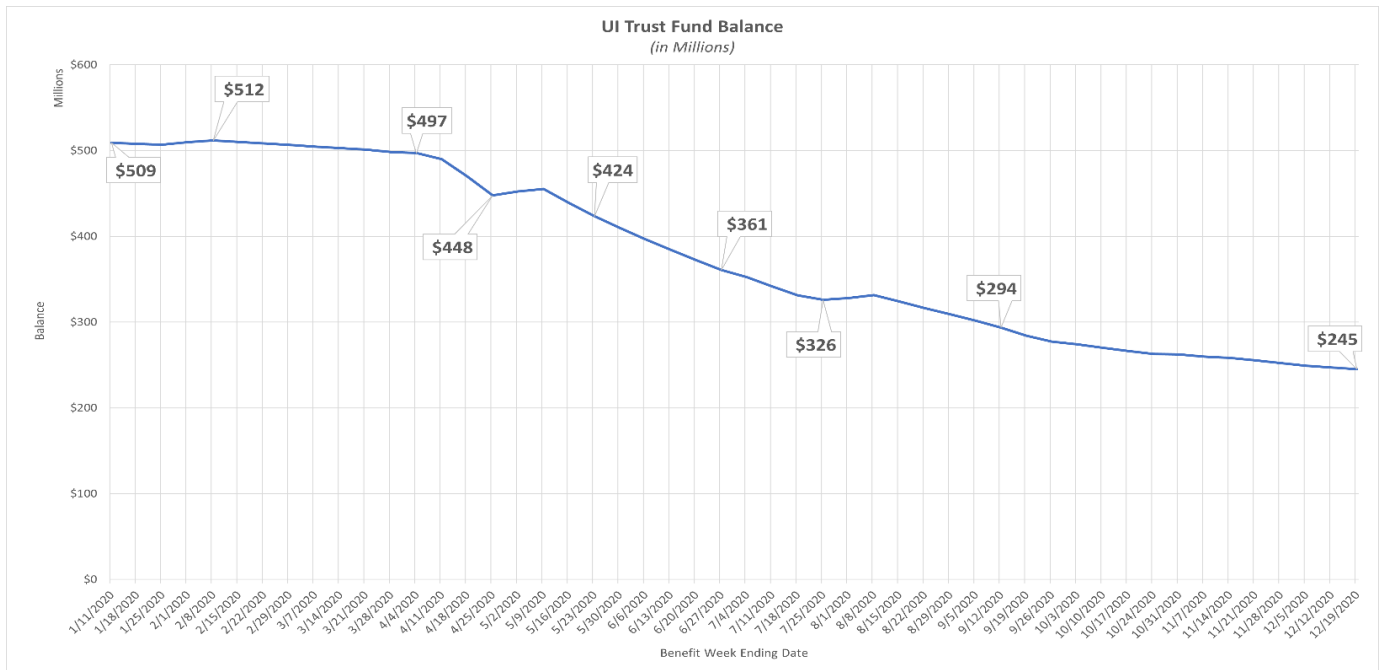


Figure 7

CLAIMANT ASSISTANCE CENTER

- We continue to see high call volume and wait times on Mondays and most mornings. Claimants are encouraged to call later in the day on Monday or later in the week whenever possible.

| Call Volume Summary | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Average Agents | Average Calls Per Day | Average Length of Call | Average Hold Time |
| 134 | 3,901 | 9:26 | 11:52 |

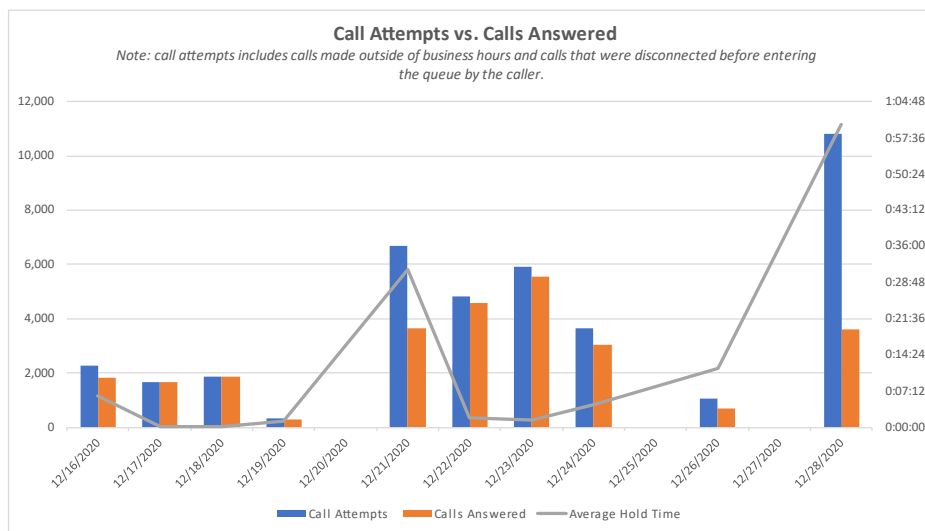


Figure 8

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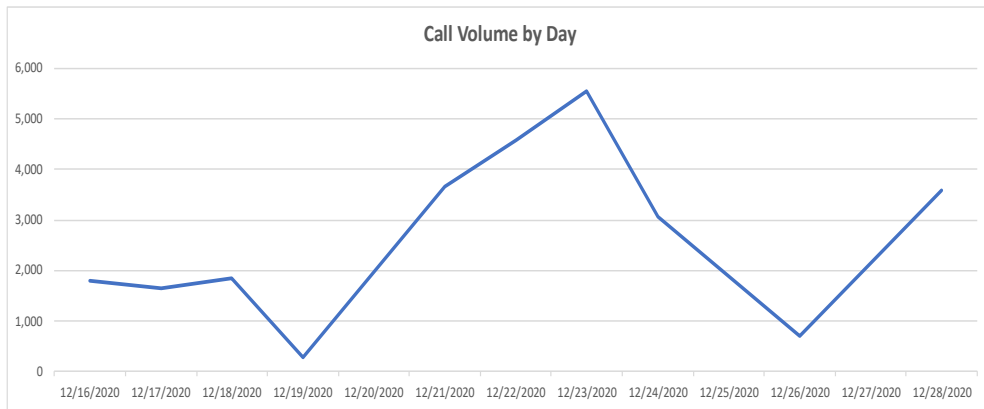


Figure 9

OTHER RESOURCES

- [UI "How-To" video library](#)
- [Live Chat with UI Claimant Assistance Center](#)
- [Weekly Virtual Town Hall events for employers](#)
- [Job seeker inquiry form for individuals seeking re-employment services](#)
- [Seasonal layoff information for employers and claimants](#)
- [External resources for individuals who have exhausted benefits](#)

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