

To: Vermont Legislature
From: Michael Harrington, Labor Commissioner
Date: July 21, 2020
Subject: Unemployment Insurance Weekly Update

This report includes both new and continuing efforts. New information is in **RED**.

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation

- The Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program that adds an additional \$600 to each weekly benefit amount is scheduled to end this month. Claimants will receive the final FPUC payment for the week ending July 25, which is the final full benefit week in July. At this time, there has not been a supplemental program or extension to the current program signed into law. As a reminder, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) runs until the end of the calendar year.

Unemployment Extended Benefits

- The Department has implemented the high Extended Benefits program which will provide an additional 20 weeks of benefits to eligible UI claimants, but only after regular UI and PEUC benefits are exhausted. This program, while live, is still being reviewed and adjustments are being made as necessary.

UI Annual Determinations

- The UI Annual Determination mainframe updates were implemented. This increased the maximum Weekly Benefit Amount to \$531, beginning for week ending July 11, 2020, for claimants who meet the maximum eligibility criteria.

Claim Issues

- Constituents/Claimants with UI related claim issues should be encouraged to first call the claimant assistance line at 877-214-3332. If their issue is unable to be resolved by phone, claimants can submit an online issue report at <https://vermont.force.com/DOLClaim/s/claimant-inquiry>.

UI Fraud

- The Department is actively investigating fraud as it is reported by individuals and through data analytics. We have seen fraud continue to increase and are working with our State and Federal partners to investigate cases in a timely and effective manner. Individuals who believe a fraudulent claim has been filed using their personal information should notify the Department of Labor at 802-828-4101. This line is exclusively for fraud reports. More information about fraud and the ability to submit online reports is available at: <https://labor.vermont.gov/ui-fraud>.
- Individuals who establish an initial claim for unemployment insurance benefits with the Vermont Department of Labor may receive a phone call to confirm their identity and intent to file. This extra step is being taken to protect Vermonters against fraudulent filers using their personal information. This type of “imposter fraud” has been on the rise across the country. Individuals may ask the Department’s call center representative to provide further information to identify

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themselves, or if they do not feel comfortable providing information to the representative, the claimant can call the trusted Claimant Assistance Line at 877-214-3332 and select 'Identity Confirmation' from the menu options to connect with a call center representative. Claimants who do not validate their identity with the Department of Labor, if contacted, will likely see a delay in the processing and payment for their claim.

Claims Adjudications and Appeals

- As is normal and in line with other states, and as claims follow the natural progression of processing, there is a percentage that eventually wind up in adjudications and appeals. These two phases in the process are more intensive in nature and can include additional fact-finding, sworn testimony by the claimant and employer, the submitting of evidence, and the conducting of formal hearings. Because of this, an in an effort to provide due process, claims in adjudications and appeals take exponentially longer to resolve. States across the country are seeing this as a pinch-point in the process, and like most state, Vermont is expanding its adjudication and appeals capacity. It is important to note that only federally-qualified staff, known as UI merit staff and Administrative Law Judges can adjudicate cases and hold appeal hearings.
- We are continuing to reallocate and train staff to assist with adjudications and appeals to reduce the time it takes to issue a case determination. Even prior to COVID, the volume in each of these units was such that it could take weeks to fully adjudicate a claim. That timeline has obviously been exacerbated due to the COVID crisis.

Reimbursable Employer Charge Relief

- The Department continues to monitor the federal legislation that would allow "reimbursable" employers to only have to pay 50% of their UI contribution amount. Currently, reimbursable employers are required to pay 100% of their UI charges, at which time, they would receive a 50% reimbursement. The revised legislation is currently with the White House for signature. However, until new legislation is signed, reimbursable employers are still required to pay 100% of their UI liability. Included in this population are most non-profits, educational institutions, and municipal governments.

UI Trust Fund

- The Department's Labor Market Information division continues to build a UI Trust Fund model based on various assumptions and trends to forecast how the Fund will perform over the coming weeks, months, and years, as we manage the Pandemic.

(This section intentionally left blank – Appendix below)

APPENDIX

Popular Links:

- [Click here for PUA general information](#)
- [Click here for PUA FAQs](#)
- [Click here for PUA application video demonstration](#)
- [Click here for unemployment general information](#)
- [Click here for frequently asked questions](#)
- [Click here for Return to Work Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Traditional Unemployment Insurance (TUI)

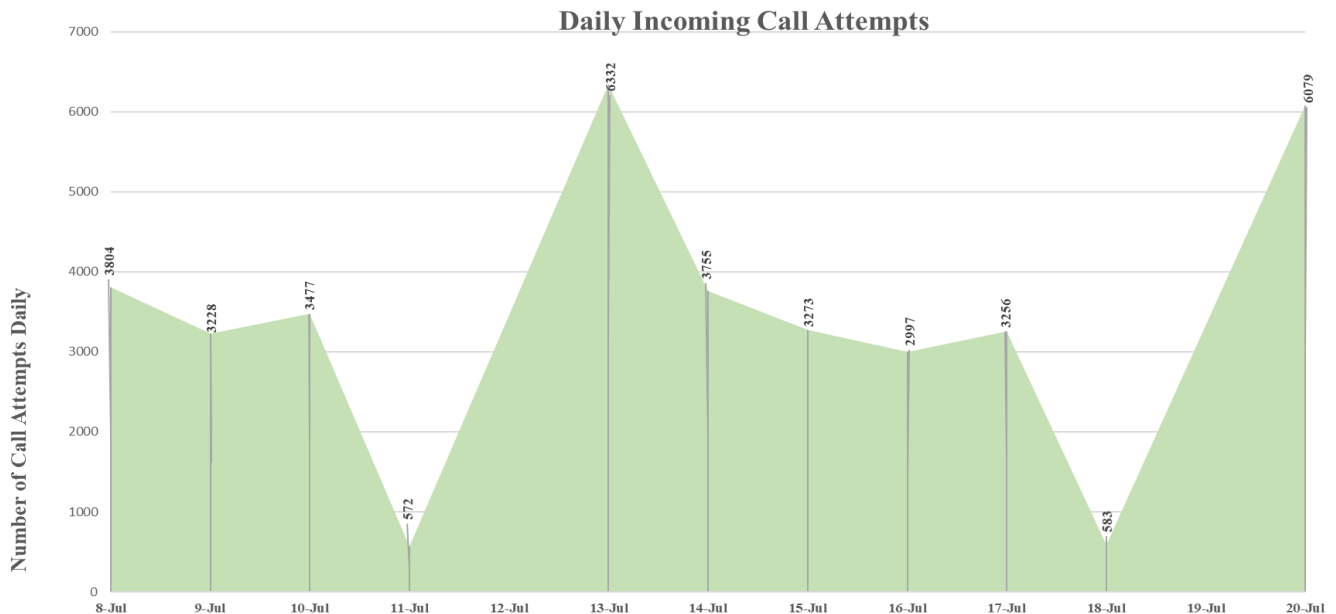
*Numbers as of Tuesday, July 21, 2020		
Total Initial Claimants Filed	113,909	Total Number of Initial Claimants.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI	78,878	Number of claimants eligible for UI.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid	71,587	Number of claimants who are receiving, or have received, UI benefits.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid	7,291	Number of claimants who meet basic eligibility thresholds, and who either have issues on their claim or are no longer filing.
UI Trust Fund Balance	\$299,908,212	Trust Fund balance can fluctuate due to benefit payments, earned interest, employer contributions, and federal reimbursements. (Note: Balance as of 3/1/2020 \$506,157,247)

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

*Numbers as of Tuesday, July 14		
Claimants Potentially PUA Eligible	29,936	Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system
Claimants in PUA – Filed	21,398	# of claimants who have completed the PUA application
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Eligible	20,153	# of eligible claimants
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Ineligible	1,245	# of ineligible claimants
Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid	17,462	# of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.
Claimants in PUA -Filed and Not Paid	2,691	# of claimants that have a payment pending, issue on weekly claim to resolve, or have returned to work and are not filing.
Total PUA Benefits Dispersed	\$166,183,900	Total amount of PUA benefits paid

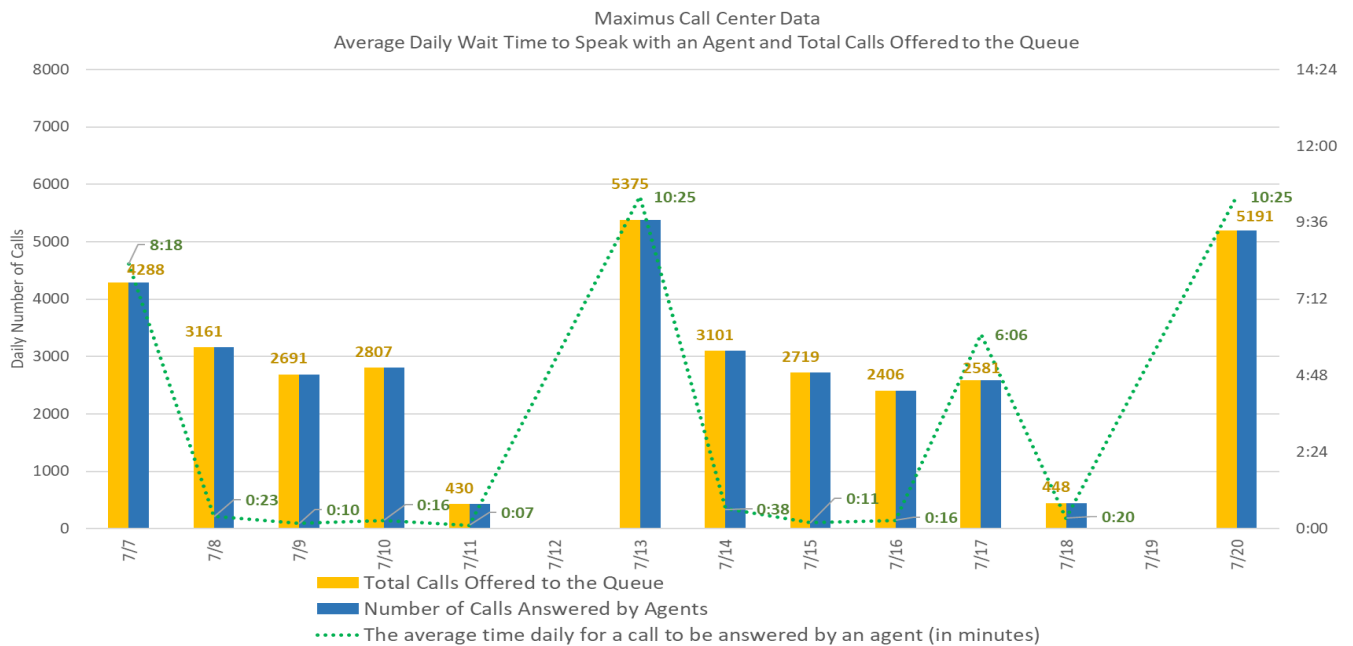
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Figure 1.1



*Counts include both answered and unanswered calls, multiple attempts from the same phone number and calls terminated by caller in the automated interactive voice response system

Figure 1.2



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Figure 2.1

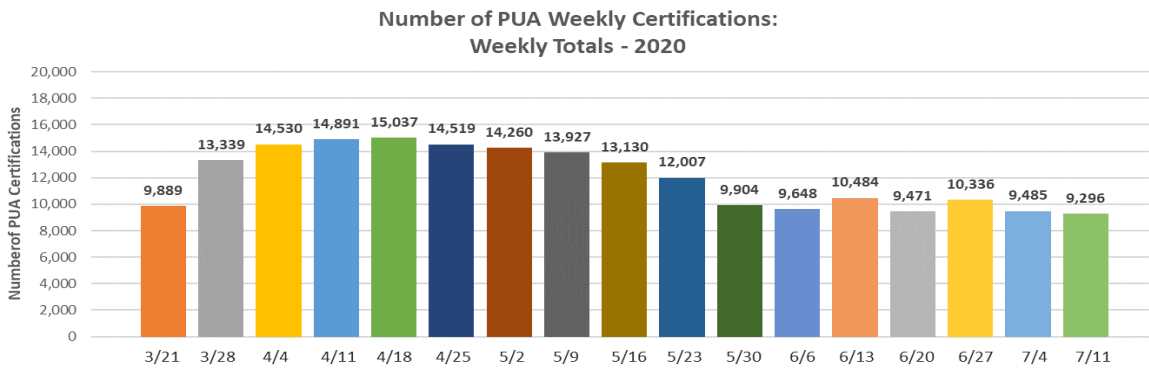
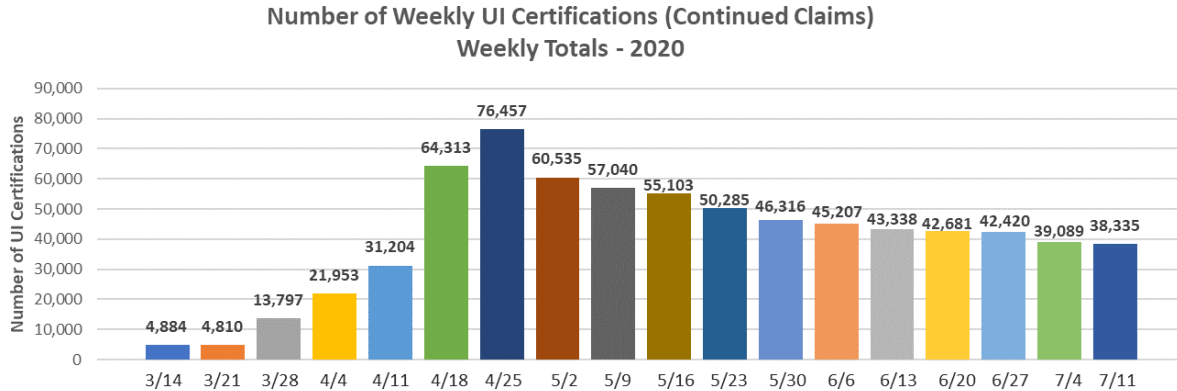
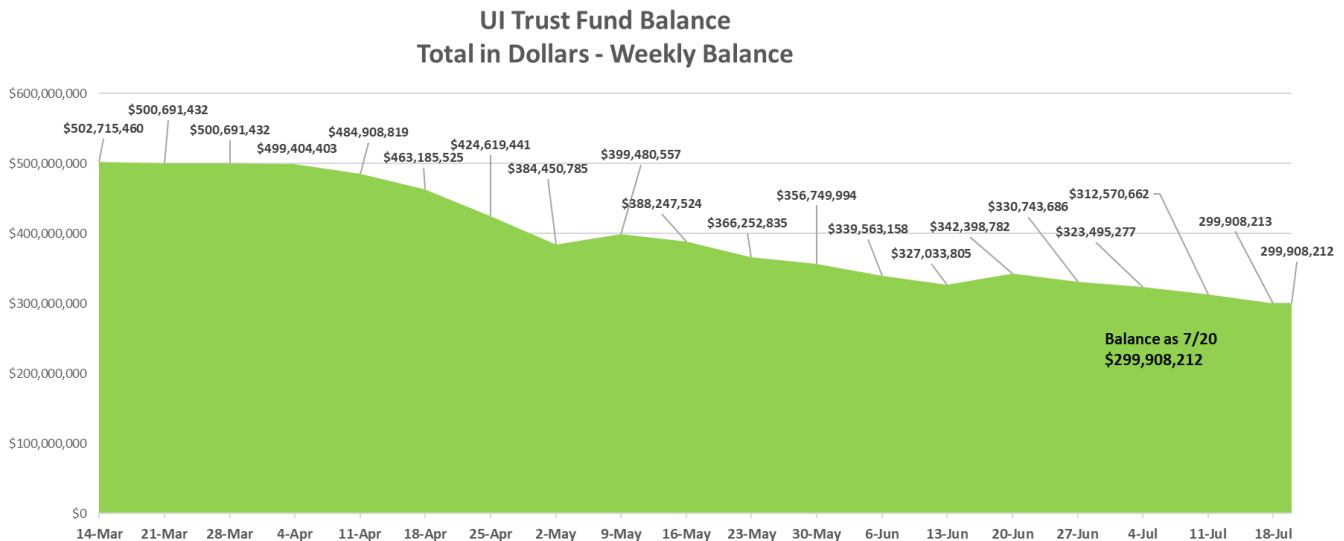


Figure 2.2



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