

To: Vermont Legislature
From: Michael Harrington, Labor Commissioner
Date: July 28, 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 added an additional \$600 to each weekly benefit amount has ended. However, claimants who are in adjudications or appeals and are determined eligible, even if after July 31, will receive the FPUC benefit for each eligible week in which the program was implemented.
- We continue to monitor federal legislation that may extend additional benefits for UI claimants. Should the program be extended, we will review the necessary program requirements and estimated time to implement so claimants know what to expect. We anticipate there will be a delay in implementation, due to technical changes needed for the various systems, if there are changes to the federal benefit amount and/or calculation.

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>.
- We have seen an uptick in claimants reaching out to the Department through the call center, direct emails to staff, legislators, and other state agencies and departments about issues with their claim. Many of these issues are complex in nature. We are working to implement “tactical teams” with subject matter experts focused on resolving these issues in a timely fashion.

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 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. 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>.

Claims Adjudications and Appeals

- Claimants are seeing an increase in the time it takes for their claims to be heard in the UI adjudications and appeals process. Currently, approximately 5% of all claims end up in the adjudications process. This is down from a pre-COVID amount of roughly 25%; however, because of the high number of claims, this small percentage has created a lag in the processing of claims that are being adjudicated and appealed. The Department is expanding its adjudications and appeals capacity when/where possible, but this remains difficult as only federally qualified staff, known as UI merit staff and Administrative Law Judges can adjudicate cases and hold appeal hearings.

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. This legislation has yet to be signed into law, reimbursable employers are still required to pay 100% of their UI liability. Common reimbursable employers include 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.

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 28, 2020		
Total Initial Claimants Filed	115,100	Total Number of Initial Claimants.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI	79,543	Number of claimants eligible for UI.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid	72,184	Number of claimants who are receiving, or have received, UI benefits.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid	7,359	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	\$293,285,983	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 28, 2020		
Claimants Potentially PUA Eligible	20,678	Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system
Claimants in PUA – Filed	21,962	# of claimants who have completed the PUA application
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Eligible	20,597	# of eligible claimants
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Ineligible	1,365	# of ineligible claimants
Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid	17,607	# of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.
Claimants in PUA -Filed and Not Paid	2,990	# 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	\$175,733,179	Total amount of PUA benefits paid

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.

Figure 1.1

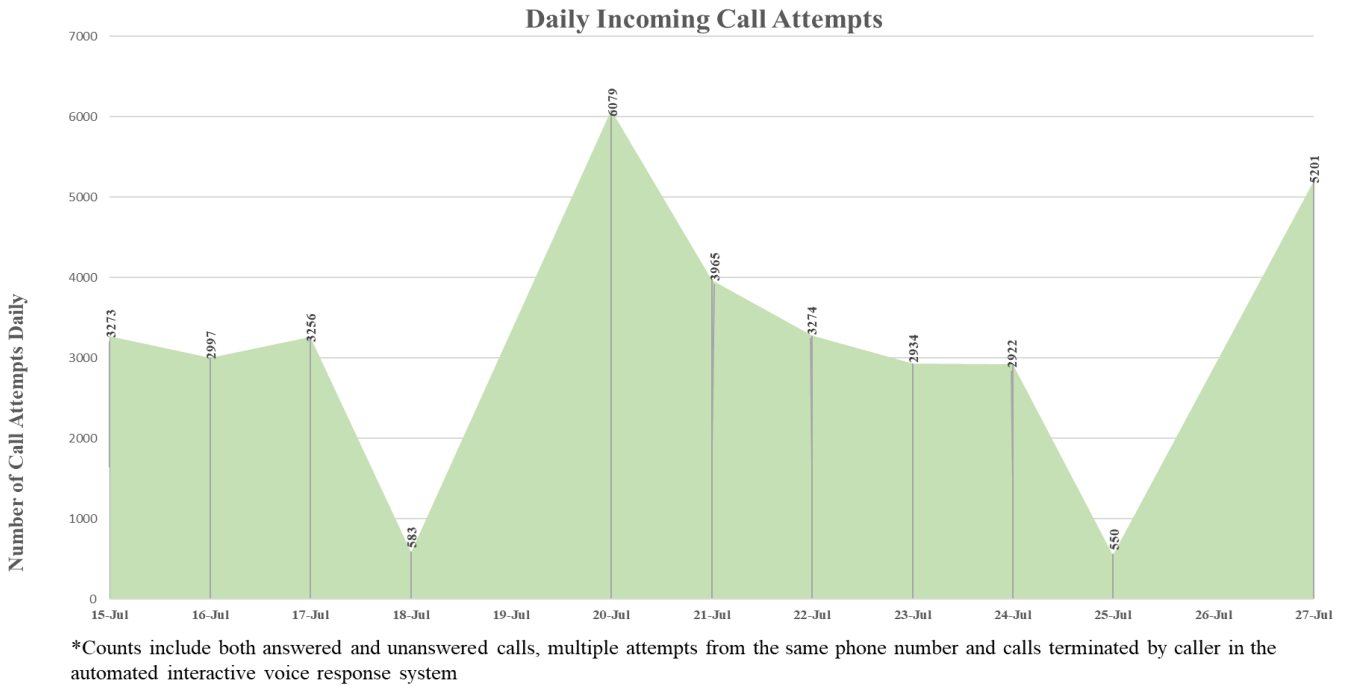
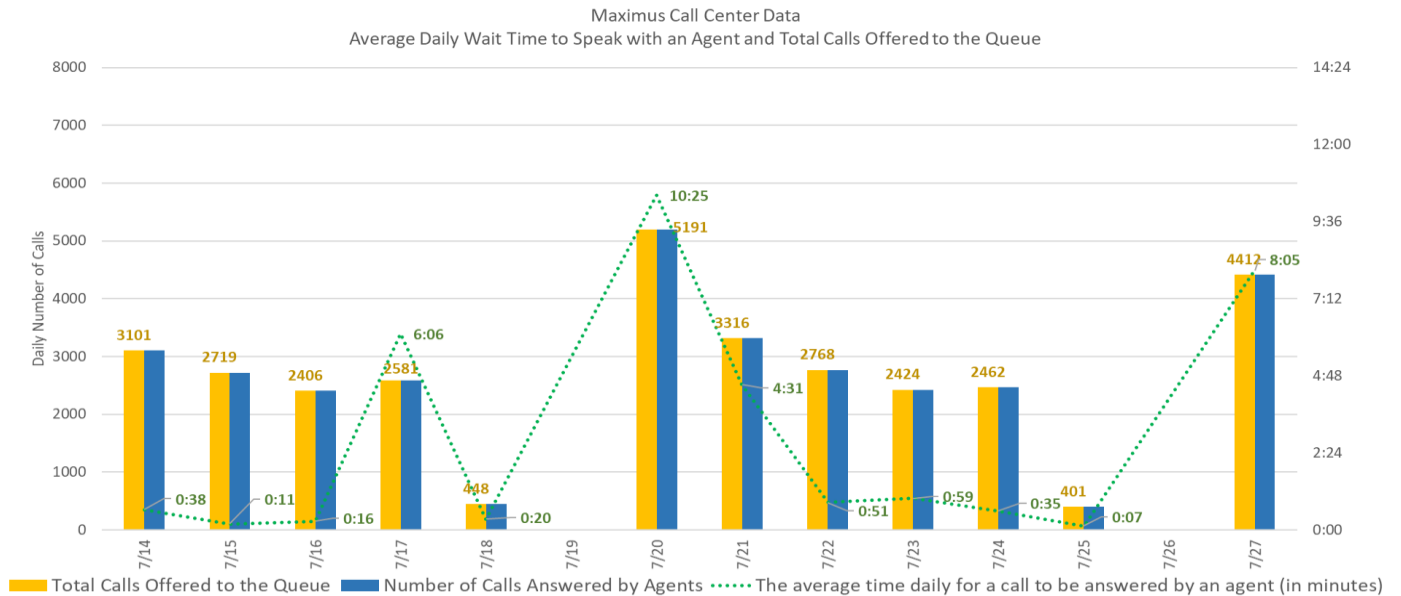


Figure 1.2



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Figure 2.1

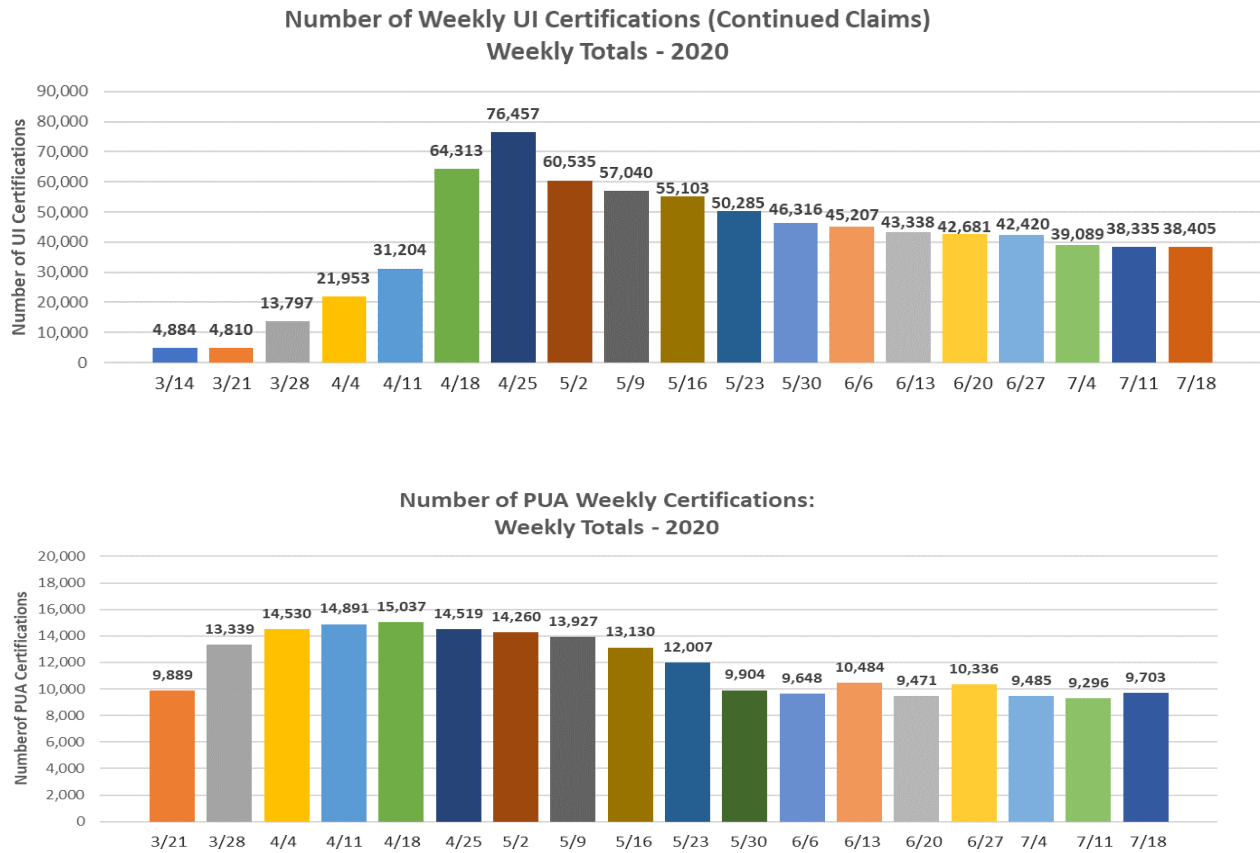
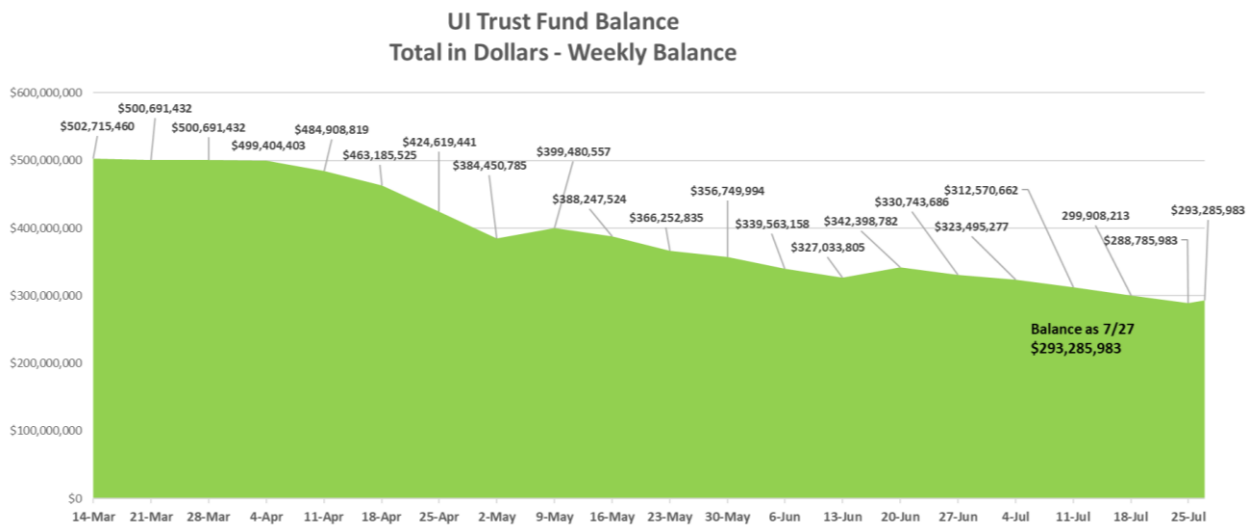


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