

To: Vermont Legislature
From: Michael Harrington, Labor Commissioner
Date: November 10, 2020
Subject: Unemployment Insurance Weekly Update

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

General

- The UI Claimant Assistance Center will be closed on Wednesday, November 11th in observance of Veterans Day. Additionally, all Department of Labor services will be closed. Regular business hours will resume on Thursday, November 12th. As a result of the holiday closure, claimants may experience a minor delay in payment processing.
- The Unemployment Insurance Division has begun sending a Jobs newsletter to all claimants filing for benefits. These newsletters highlight employers with available jobs from across the state. Below are the last three newsletters.
 - [Monday November 9, 2020](#)
- The UI Division continues to prepare for the annual trend of layoffs due to the impending winter season. This predominantly impacts the construction and other outdoor industries, as well as others. More information about how to filing as part of a regular seasonal layoff can be found at <https://labor.vermont.gov/unemployment-insurance/seasonal>.
- A revised link to the Claimant Inquiry Tool has been sent to all legislators. Please be aware that the first link shared was incorrect due to a case-sensitive issue. The corrected link was shared with legislators on October 27, 2020 in a direct email from the Department.

PUA Claims Data

- The Department's Labor Market Information (LMI) Division has reviewed all PUA claims data dating back to March 2020. The LMI team has revised the filing information for each week, which is presented in the Appendix below. The initial data presented was real-time data and had not been reviewed and validated prior to release. Going forward, the LMI Division will provide preliminary validated data for this report.

Vermont Short-Term Supplemental Benefit (VSTS)

- The Vermont Short-Term Supplemental (VSTS) Benefit provides eligible claimants with an additional \$100 per week for up to five weeks. The Department has determined that there will be enough funding to fund all five weeks for eligible claimants. This benefit will apply to the weeks ending October 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, and 31st. There is no action required by claimants to receive this benefit. Additionally, there is no minimum weekly benefit claimants must meet to be eligible. Payments will again be distributed via check in a single payment. **Payments will be processed and mailed to claimants by this Friday, November 14th. Additionally, claimants will receive direct communication from the Department when their payment has been mailed.**

Lost Wage Assistance Program (LWA)

- The Lost Wage Assistance Program provided eligible claimants with an additional \$300 per week benefit for the weeks ending August 1, August 8, August 15, August 22, August 29 and September 5. Most eligible claimants have received payment for the six weeks at this time. Claimants will continue to receive email communication from the Department when their payment has been processed. There was not an additional certification required by claimants to receive payment for the final three weeks of the program.

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More information about the LWA program can be found online at:

<https://labor.vermont.gov/unemployment-insurance/lost-wage-assistance-program>.

- If claimants have not completed their LWA certification yet, they may do so by contacting our UI Claimant Assistance Center at 1-877-214-3332. Additional information regarding payment processing and when claimants can expect their LWA payment has been posted on our website and will continue to be updated to reflect payment processing going forward: <https://labor.vermont.gov/news/lost-wage-assistance-program-payment-update>.
- **At this time, there is still approximately \$14 million available through the Lost Wage Assistance Program. We will continue to pay out the benefit as claimants become eligible and complete their LWA certification. This will continue until the funding is exhausted or the program ends.**

Unemployment Extended Benefits

- Vermont has officially triggered off High Extended Benefits (effective the benefit week ending October 10). At this time, claimants receiving traditional UI are eligible to receive 26 weeks of regular UI benefits, 13 weeks of Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (CARES Act Program) and 13 weeks of Extended Benefits. Once all 52 weeks of benefits have been exhausted, claimants are likely not eligible to continue to file for benefits. Additionally, PUA claimants are able to receive benefits through the end of the calendar year. Any PUA benefits beyond the week ending December 26th will require congressional approval.
- The Department has begun notifying claimants of their filing status via email (in addition to mailing a notice) providing them with information on reemployment services offered by the Department.

Claim Issues

- Claimants that contact the Claimant Assistance Center with an issue that cannot be resolved within 24-hours will be moved to the Inquiry Tool and a specialist will be assigned to their case for expedited resolution. The Claimant Assistance Center can be reached at 877-214-3332.
- The Department has updated information regarding seasonal layoffs to assist both employers and claimants with filing claims: <https://labor.vermont.gov/unemployment-insurance/seasonal>

UI Fraud

- 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

- The Department has seen early indications that the number of claims coming into the adjudications unit has slowed slightly and that the number of claims being resolved each week has increased with the process improvement work and additional staff that have been onboarded. The ultimate goal of the adjudications process is to prevent what the federal government identifies as ‘improper payments.’ Improper payments result in an expedited depletion of the Trust Fund, incorrect taxing of employers, and the requiring of claimants to return overpaid benefits. Under the federal requirements of the unemployment insurance program, each state must first determine a claimant’s eligibility prior to issuing any payment of benefits. Without the complete and accurate adjudicating of claims, the number of improper payments increases, resulting in the overpayment and repayment of benefits.

(Appendix Below)

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

APPENDIX

Helpful Links:

- [Click here for general LWA information](#)
- [Click here for LWA payment information](#)
- [Click here for Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance information](#)
- [Seasonal Layoff Claim Filing Guidance](#)

Traditional Unemployment Insurance (TUI)

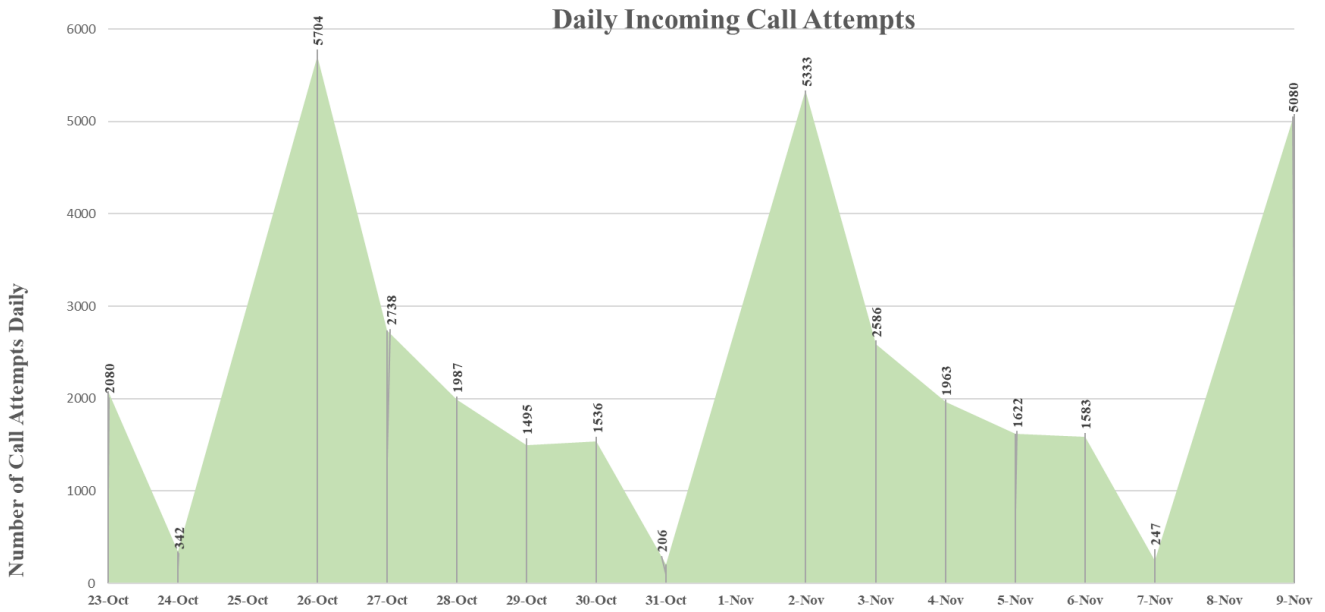
*Numbers as of Tuesday, November 10, 2020		
Total Initial Claimants Filed	123,271	Total Number of Initial Claimants.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI	83,952	Number of claimants eligible for UI.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid	76,568	Number of claimants who are receiving, or have received, UI benefits.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid	7,384	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	\$262,290,343	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, November 10, 2020		
Claimants Potentially PUA Eligible	32,491	Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system
Claimants in PUA – Filed	23,779	# of claimants who have completed the PUA application
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Eligible	19,350	# of eligible claimants
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Ineligible	4,277	# of ineligible claimants
Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid	18,687	# of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.
Claimants in PUA -Filed and Not Paid	663	# 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	\$213,864,068	Total amount of PUA benefits paid

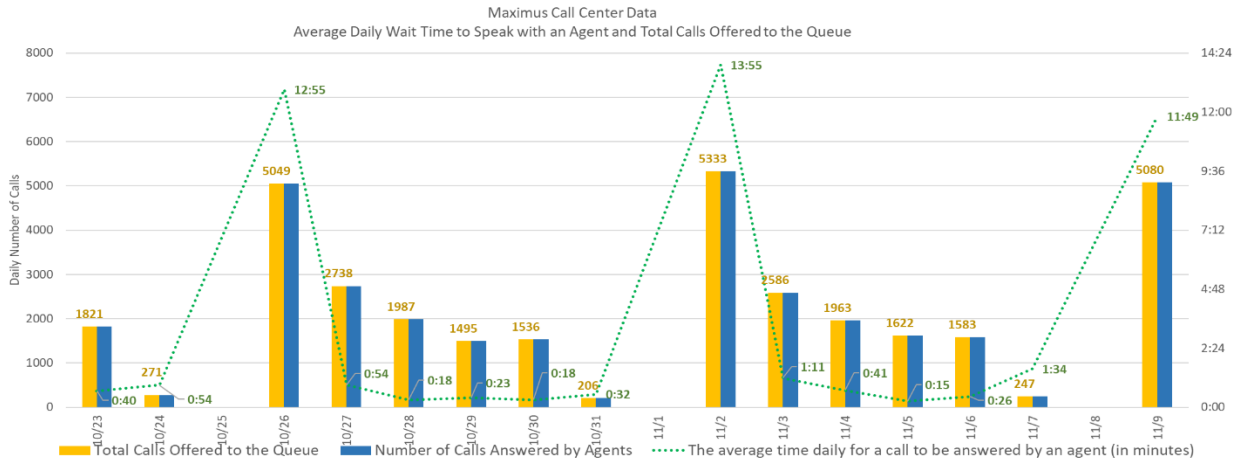
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Figure 1.1



*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

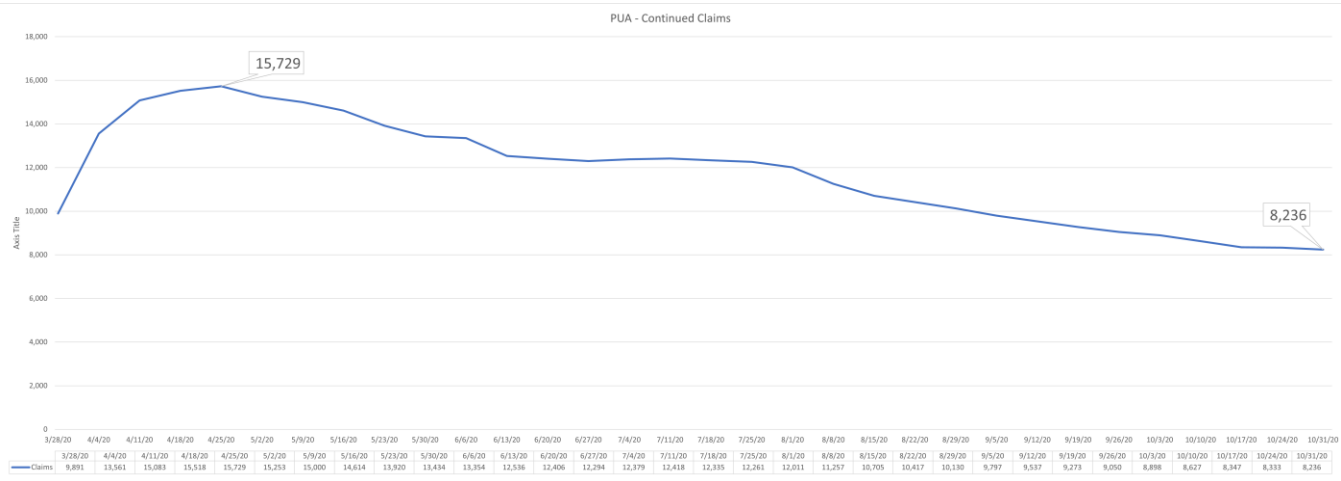
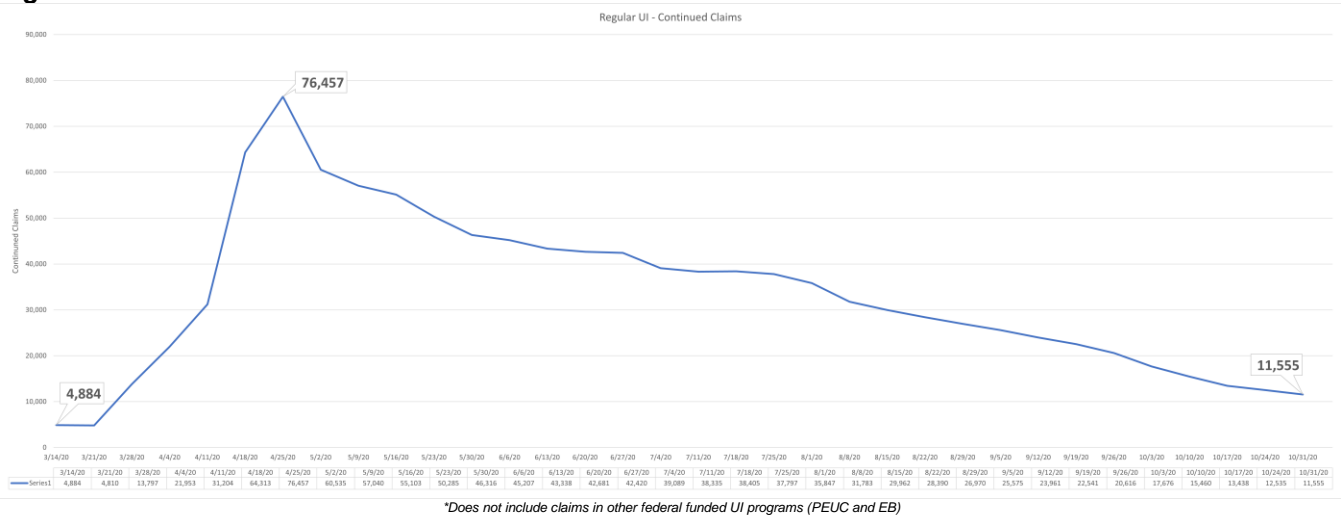
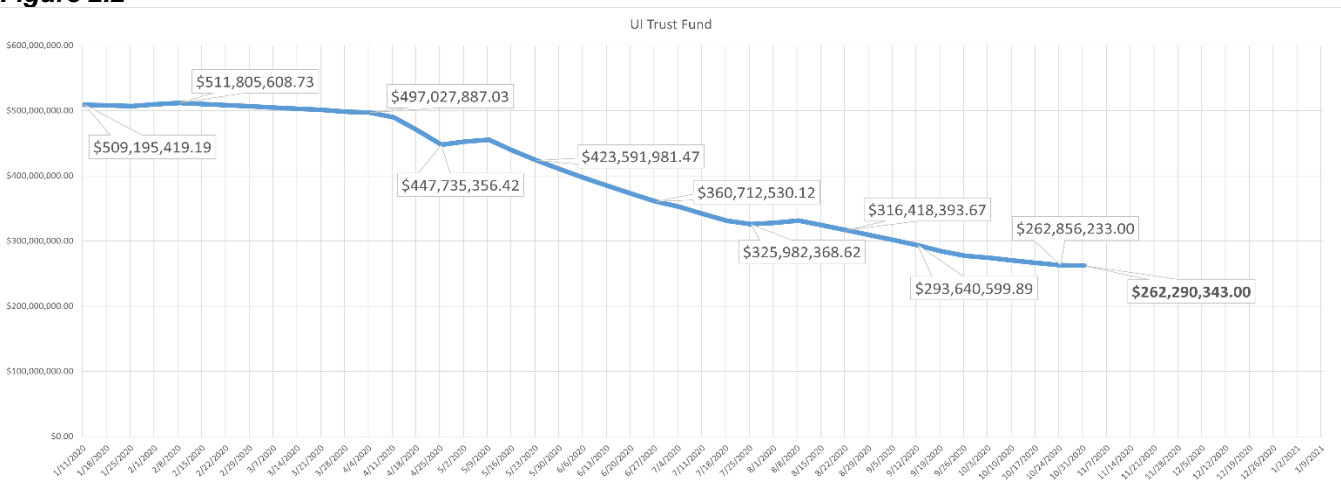


Figure 2.2



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