

**To:** Vermont Legislature  
**From:** Michael Harrington, Labor Commissioner  
**Date:** October 27, 2020  
**Subject:** Unemployment Insurance Weekly Update

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

#### General

- 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, October 26, 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.
- The Department's Labor Market Information Division has revised the UI Trust Fund balance data. This information will be updated weekly; however, because of the validation process, information for the week ending 10/24 will not be made available until next week's report.

#### 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. At this time, the Department expects the benefit to be available to claimants for four weeks and will extend if excess funding is available. This benefit will apply to the weeks ending October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and potentially 31<sup>st</sup>. There is no action required by claimants to receive this benefit, and there is no minimum weekly benefit threshold claimants must meet in order to be eligible. Payments will be distributed via check, in one payment, once all filing data is validated.

#### 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 first three weeks at this time. The first batch of payments for the latter three weeks was processed October 19, and claimants will likely receive payment within 5 to 7 business days. 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. More information about the LWA program can be found online at: <https://labor.vermont.gov/unemployment-insurance/lost-wage-assistance-program>.

*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.*

- 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. Claimants should be aware that this program will only be able to provide the benefit until funding is exhausted. The UI Claimant Assistance Center is unable to provide information on payment eligibility and/or payment status at this time. 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>.

### **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 26<sup>th</sup> 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.
- We will be hosting two live events for employers to review seasonal layoff information and changes in the mass-layoff process as a result of our application shifting online and higher than normal claims volume. The sessions will be from 2pm – 3pm on October 29 and November 5. Additional information, including how to join these webinars can be found on our website: <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)



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)

<b>*Numbers as of Tuesday, October 27, 2020</b>		
Total Initial Claimants Filed	<b>122,464</b>	Total Number of Initial Claimants.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI	<b>83,328</b>	Number of claimants eligible for UI.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid	<b>76,062</b>	Number of claimants who are receiving, or have received, UI benefits.
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid	<b>7,266</b>	Number of claimants who meet basic eligibility thresholds, and who either have issues on their claim or <b>are no longer filing.</b>
UI Trust Fund Balance	<b>\$242,830,465</b>	Trust Fund balance can fluctuate due to benefit payments, earned interest, employer contributions, and federal reimbursements. (Note: Balance as of 3/1/2020 <b>\$506,157,247</b> )

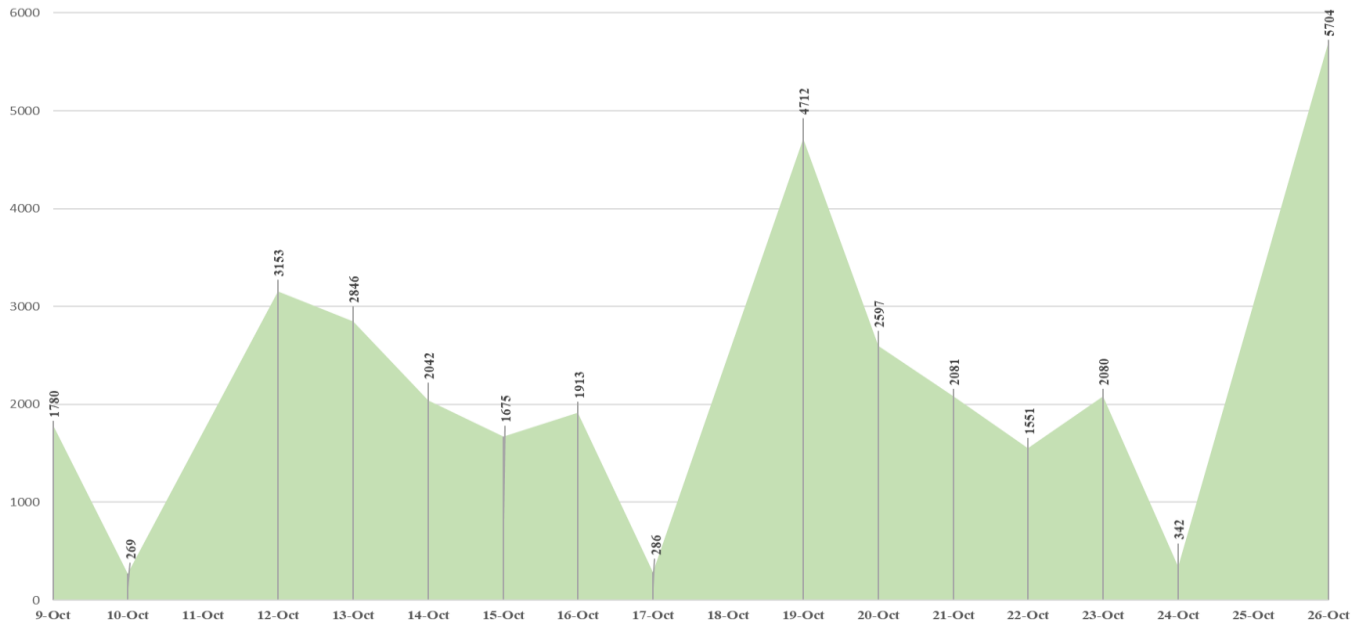
Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

<b>*Numbers as of Tuesday, October 27, 2020</b>		
Claimants Potentially PUA Eligible	<b>32,393</b>	Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system
Claimants in PUA – Filed	<b>23,683</b>	# of claimants who have completed the PUA application
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Eligible	<b>19,377</b>	# of eligible claimants
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Ineligible	<b>4,170</b>	# of ineligible claimants
Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid	<b>18,628</b>	# of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.
Claimants in PUA -Filed and Not Paid	<b>749</b>	# 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	<b>\$209,630,240</b>	Total amount of PUA benefits paid

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**Figure 1.1**

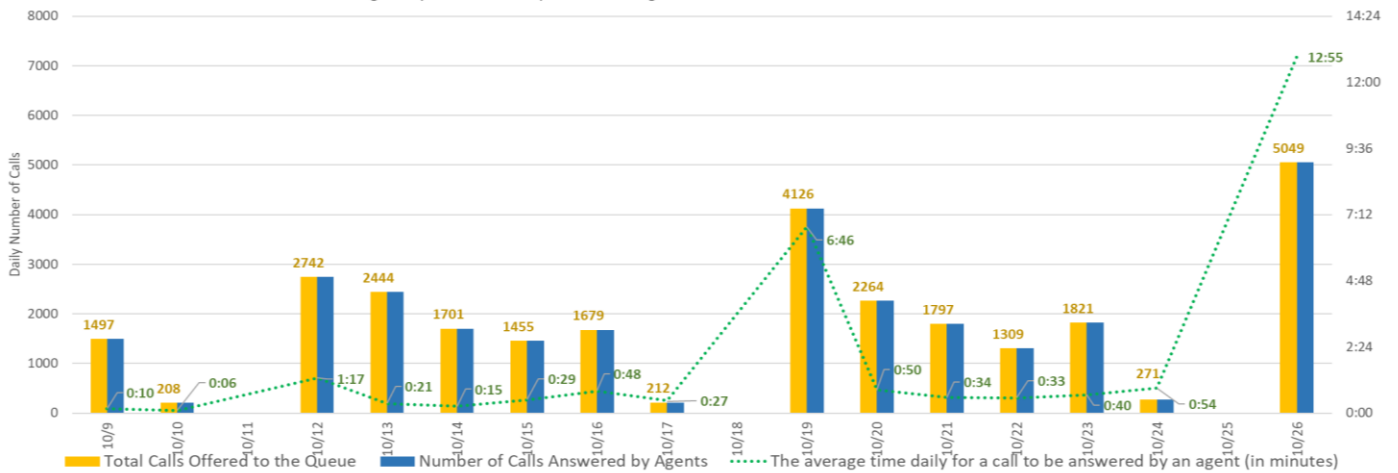
**Daily Incoming Call Attempts**



\*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

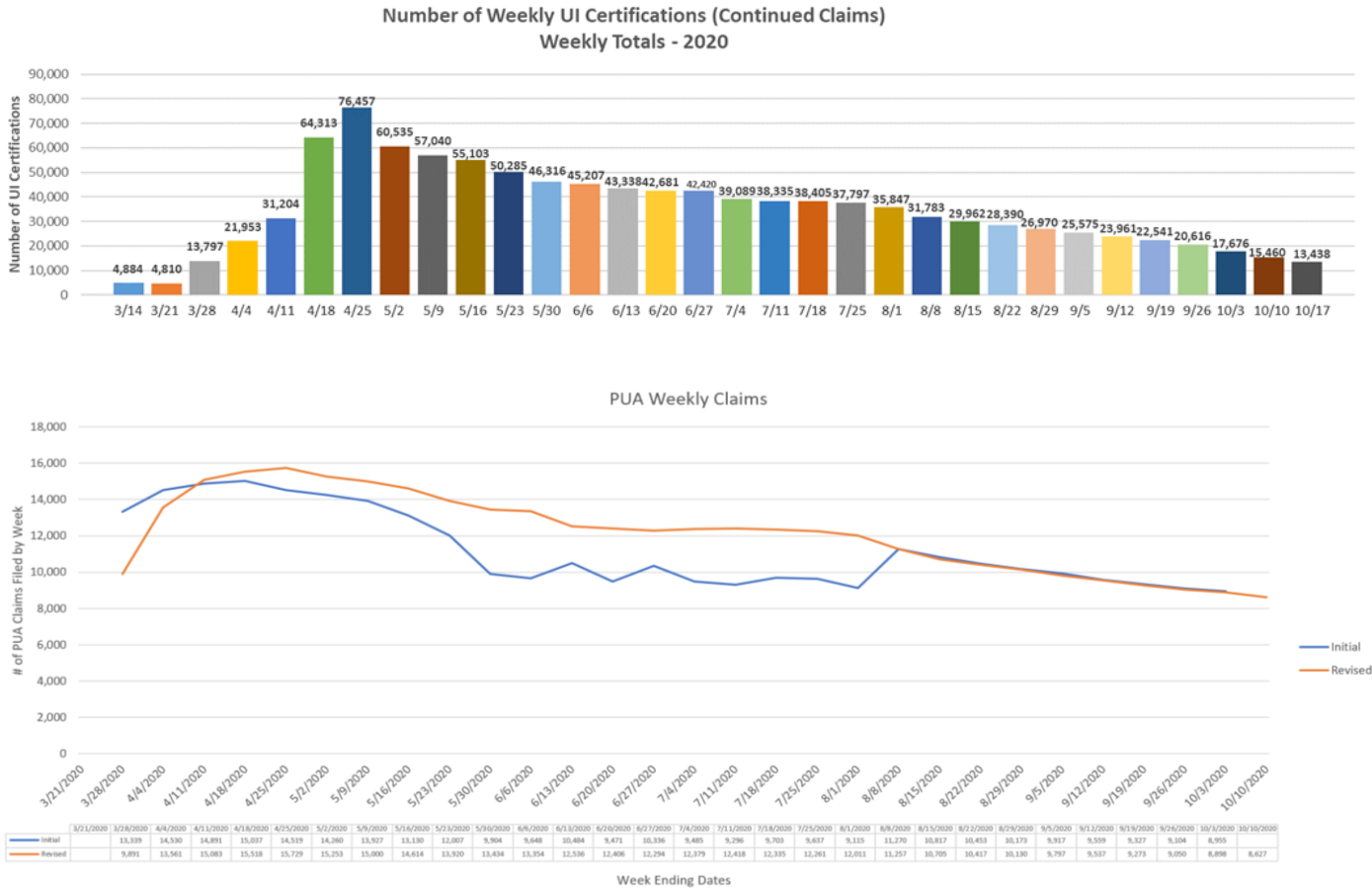
**Figure 1.2**

**Maximus Call Center Data  
Average Daily Wait Time to Speak with an Agent and Total Calls Offered to the Queue**

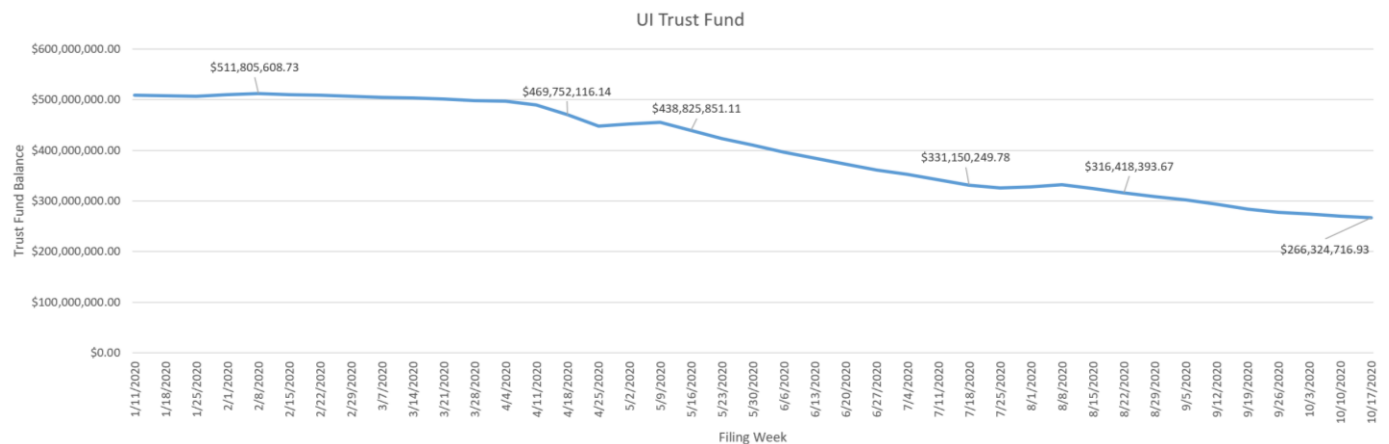


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**Figure 2.1**



**Figure 2.2**



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