

To: Vermont Legislature
From: Michael Harrington, Labor Commissioner
Date: November 17, 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 Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. The UI Claimant Assistance Center will resume its regular business hours on Saturday, November 28. As a result of the holiday, claimants may see a delay in payment and claim processing.
- The Department has begun hosting weekly Virtual Town Hall events for employers and answer questions related to unemployment. The full schedule can be found here: <https://labor.vermont.gov/event-types/unemployment-insurance> .
- 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.
 - [Monday November 16, 2020](#)
- 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-sensitivity 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 paid out this benefit at this time. Due to the payment volume, it was necessary to process payments in two batches. The first group of payments was processed and mailed on Friday, November 13 and the second group were mailed on Monday, November 16. Claimants received an email informing them when their payment was processed. Claimants should receive payment within 5 to 7 business days. More than 30,000 claimants received this benefit.

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. 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. 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 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)

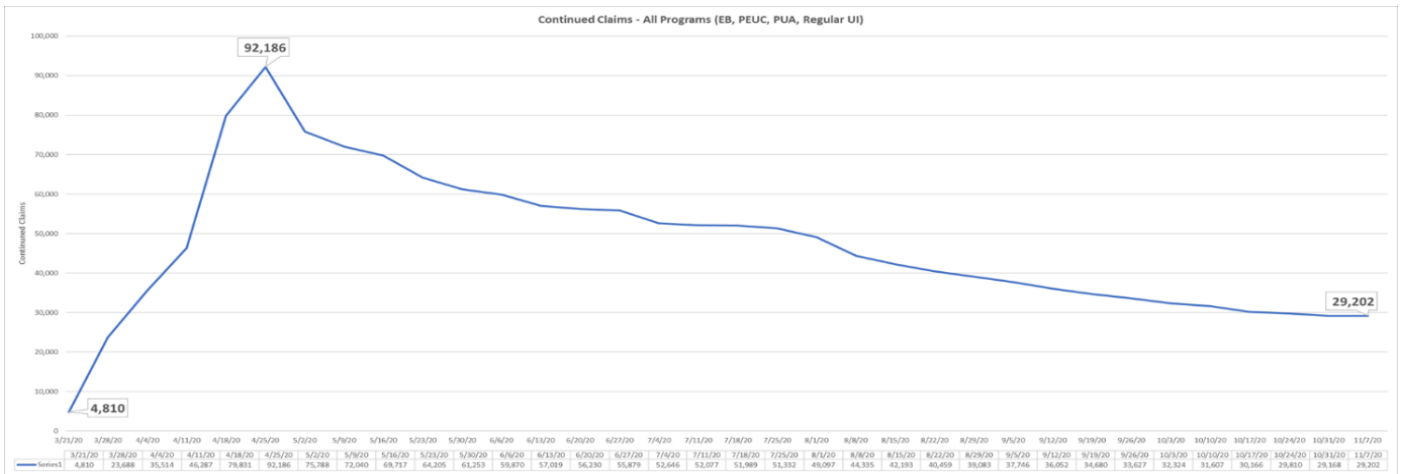
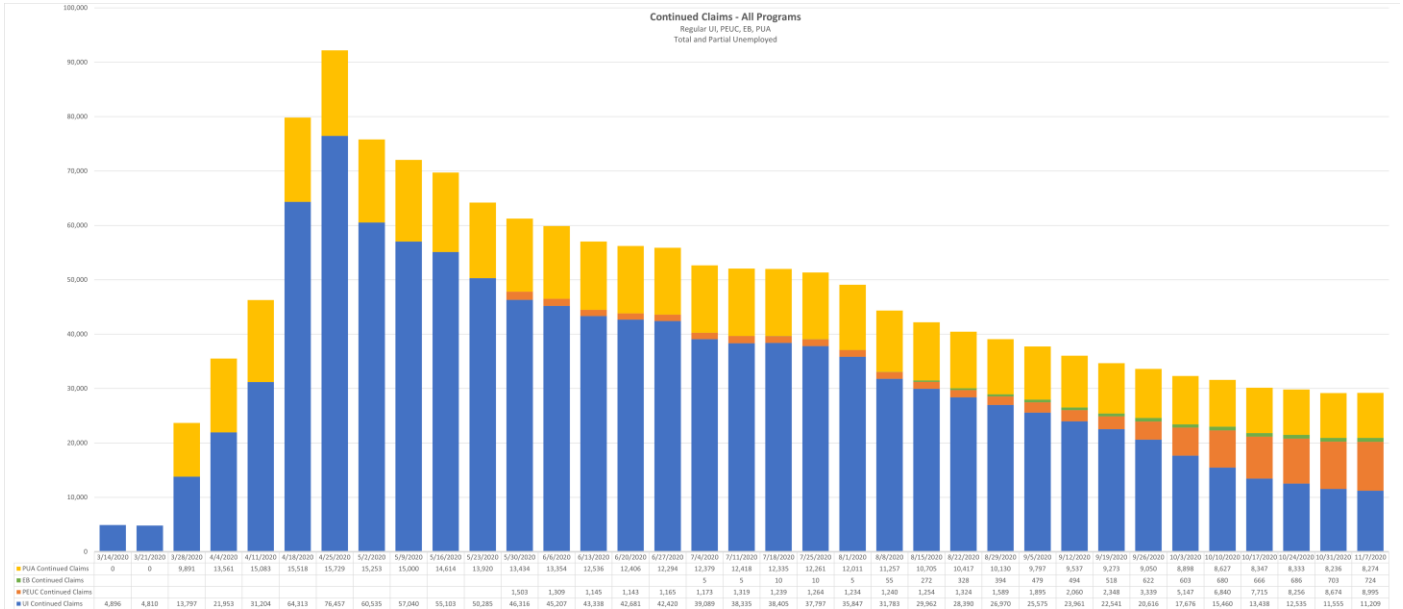


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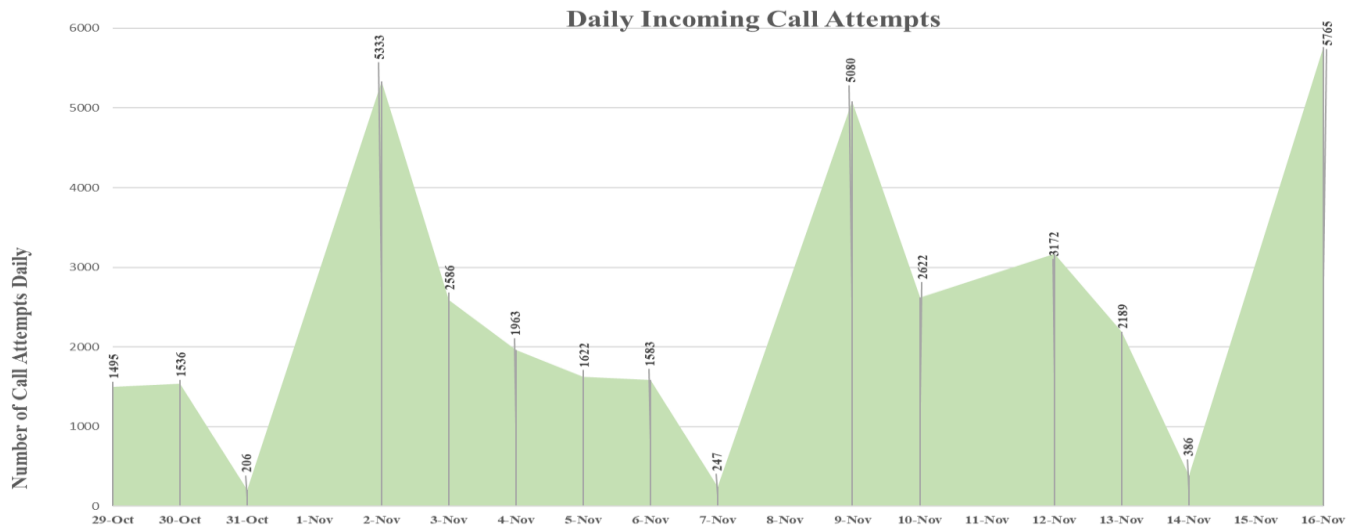
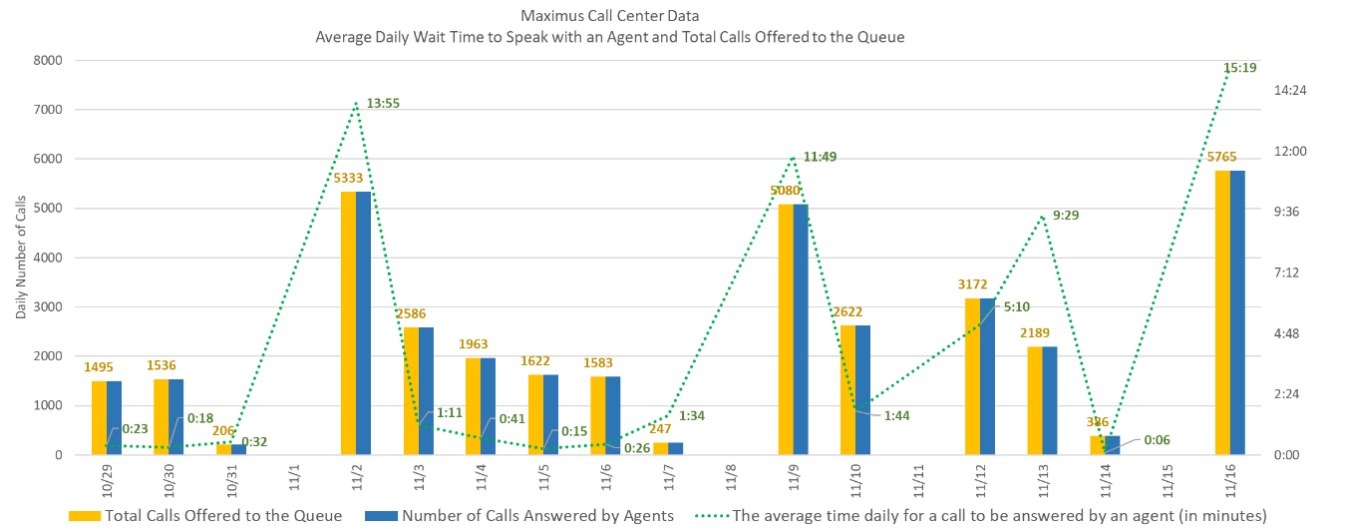
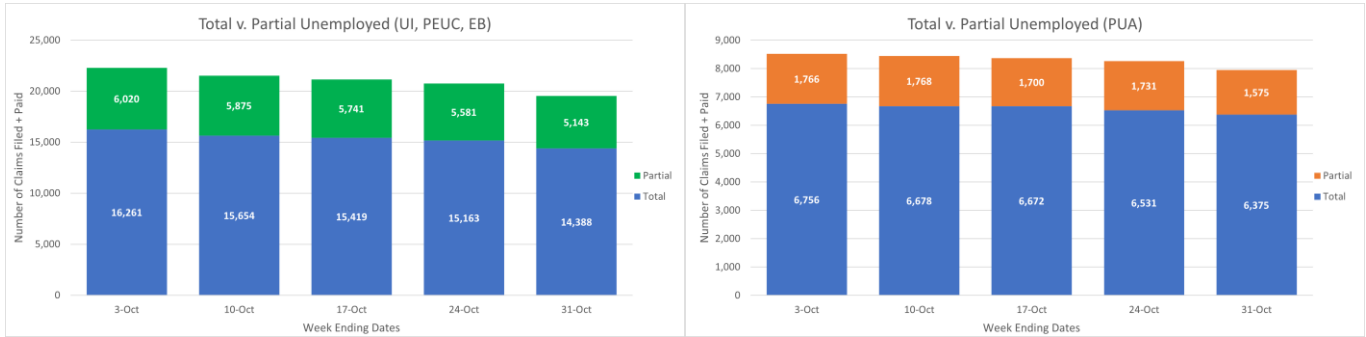
APPENDIX

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](#)



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*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

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