Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claims for the Three-State Region

For the week ending April 4, initial UI claims in our three-state region exceeded a half million for the third consecutive week. Although still at historically high levels, workers filed fewer initial claims this week — 516,478 (NSA), which was less than the prior week’s 630,067 (revised).

Compared with the prior week, initial UI claims across our three states:

- edged down to 18,863 from 19,137 in Delaware;
- edged up to 213,897 from 206,253 in New Jersey; and
- fell to 283,718 from 404,677 in Pennsylvania.

For the week ending March 28, continued UI claims in our three-state region began to capture the rise of the prior weeks’ initial claims. Continued claims surged to a record-high 873,374 (NSA) from the prior week’s 303,395 (revised). From data extending back through 1987, the prior maximum for continued claims in the three-state region was 636,134 for the week of March 14, 2009 — 15 months into the Great Recession.

All three states hit record-high levels of continued UI claims. Compared with the prior week, continued UI claims across our three states:

- rose to 23,881 from 11,506 in Delaware;
- rose to 277,761 from 156,181 in New Jersey; and
- surged to 571,732 from 135,708 in Pennsylvania.
Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claims for the U.S.

As more states shut down business activity, initial UI claims exceeded 6 million nationwide for a second consecutive week. For the week ending April 4, workers filed 6,203,359 initial UI claims (NSA) — higher than the prior week’s 6,015,821 (revised) and a new record high for the nation.

Continued UI claims for the week ending March 28 rose to 8,177,965 (NSA) from the prior week’s 3,416,593 (revised). Also, a new record high, this week’s continued claims estimate surpasses the prior peaks from all recessions back through 1967. Prior recession peaks of continued UI claims include:

- 6,451,690 for the week ending March 28, 2009, during the Great Recession;
- 5,112,000 for the week ending January 1, 1983, during the double-dip recession; and
- 5,229,000 for the week ending February 22, 1975, during the 1973–1975 recession.

These three prior peaks all occurred near the end of, or shortly after, their respective recession period.

Sources:

Initial and continued (UI) claims are gathered by individual states and are typically released on Thursday mornings at 8:30 a.m. by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor.

https://www.dol.gov/ui/data.pdf

Useful Resource:

Rinz, Kevin. Understanding Unemployment Insurance Claims and Other Labor Market Data During the COVID-19 Pandemic
https://kevinrinz.github.io/covid19_labordata.pdf
ASA Weekly Staffing Index

The ASA Weekly Staffing Index fell to 70.4 for the week ending March 29. On this particular week of the year, the index has only been lower once — near the trough of the Great Recession in 2009. The all-time low for this index is 64.0 on the week ending January 3, 2010.

Since the week ending March 15, the spread in this index has grown from 8.0 points below its prior-year level to 24.3 points below. During the Great Recession, nearly an entire year had passed before a spread this large had emerged.

Note: This index is highly seasonal (see below). To aid visual comparisons, the upper chart depicts 52 weeks for key years.

Sources:
The ASA Staffing Index tracks weekly changes in temporary and contract employment and is typically released on Tuesday mornings. The index is generated from a survey of U.S. staffing firms by the American Staffing Association.

americanstaffing.net/staffing-index
americanstaffing.net/index