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

For the week ending August 22, workers filed 47,842 initial UI claims (NSA) in our three-state region — fewer than the prior week’s 52,928 (revised), and far below the historic peak of 599,446 (revised) for the week ending March 28.

However, workers also filed 47,925 initial Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claims for the week ending August 22 in our three states (Pennsylvania accounted for 36,352 of these PUA claims; see note on the next page).

Initial UI claims plus initial PUA claims were 95,767 for the week ending August 22, 2020. Prior to the pandemic, the 52-week average of initial UI claims was about 24,000 for the week ending March 14.

Compared with the prior week, initial UI claims across our three states:
- fell to 1,527 from 1,927 (revised) in Delaware;
- fell to 19,360 from 25,417 (revised) in New Jersey; and
- rose to 26,955 from 25,584 (revised) in Pennsylvania.

For the week ending August 15, continued UI claims in our three-state region rose to 1,080,197 (NSA) — from the prior week’s 1,048,264 (revised).

Compared with the prior week, continued UI claims across our three states:
- rose to 36,566 from 35,186 (revised) in Delaware;
- fell to 410,349 from 420,062 (revised) in New Jersey; and
- rose to 633,282 from 593,016 (revised) in Pennsylvania.

For the week ending August 8, workers in the three-state region also filed continued claims in these special programs:
- 1,325,989 PUA claims (Pennsylvania accounted for 909,735 of these PUA claims; see note), and
- 96,976 Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) claims. The PEUC program provides additional weeks of benefits for workers whose regular benefits have expired.

Total continued UI claims for the week ending August 8 fell to 2.5 million compared with a 52-week average of about 200,000 for the week ending March 14.
Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claims for the U.S.

For the week ending August 22, workers filed 821,591 initial UI claims (NSA) — fewer than the prior week’s 889,549 (revised). Workers also filed 607,806 initial PUA claims for the week ending August 22 — for a total of 1,429,397 initial claims. The 52-week average of initial UI claims was about 215,000 for the week ending March 14. Initial UI claims set a historic peak of 6,211,399 (revised) for the week ending April 4.

Continued UI claims for the week ending August 15 fell to 13,909,872 (NSA) from the prior week’s 14,182,813 (revised). The 52-week average of continued UI claims was just 1.7 million for the week ending March 14. However, for the week ending August 8, a total of 27.0 million continued claims were filed from all programs, including:

- 11.0 million PUA claims, and
- 1.4 million PEUC claims.

Continued UI claims typically fall slowly from recession peaks. During the Great Recession, continued UI claims peaked at 6.5 million and about five years passed before continued UI claims returned to pre-recession levels.

Note:
PUA claims data for any given week may include backdated claims from prior weeks.

Source:
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 edged up to 75.1 for the week ending August 16. The index has risen in 15 of the past 16 weeks. The index continued to track above the record low levels that spanned much of the latter half of 2009.

The year-over-year change in this index was -21.0 for the week ending August 16. The year-over-year change has slowly narrowed since late June (at -26.6), after rebounding more quickly from a low of about -36.5 in late April through early May. The year-over-year change in this index was -8.0 points for the week ending March 15.

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