

CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS WEEKLY RECAP

A weekly digest to keep you up to speed on the California coronavirus outbreak.

Sept. 8, 2021

Welcome to the 78th issue of the California Coronavirus Weekly Recap newsletter.

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The Economy & Your Finances: PUA ended Sept. 4; state stimulus checks go out; jobless claims lower

Although the federally-funded Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program and the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program have ended, the Employment Development Department (EDD) will continue to accept PUA applications through Oct. 6, as long as they relate to eligibility before Sept. 4. We encourage all claimants to certify as promptly as possible for each benefit week through

Sept. 4. Since the beginning of the pandemic, EDD has [paid out](#) more than \$169 billion in unemployment benefits to Californians.

Last week, the state of California began [sending](#) out \$600 state stimulus checks to taxpayers earning up to \$75,000, part of the Golden State Stimulus plan intended to help residents get back on their feet during the slow economic recovery. A first round of \$600 payments was made in February to taxpayers earning up to \$30,000 annually. This second round was approved in July for taxpayers earning between \$30,000 and \$75,000, and will consist of \$600, or for those with dependents, \$1,100. This round will be sent in batches, the first of which numbered 600,000 and totaled \$345 million. The payments were deposited directly into taxpayers' bank accounts for those who had filed their 2020 state tax returns and provided their bank information. People who have not provided their bank information will receive paper checks in the mail, which should take about three weeks. Residents do not need to do anything beyond filing a 2020 tax return to get a payment. The deadline for filing tax returns for 2020 is Oct. 15, and people who file closer to that date will not get stimulus payments until after they file. The state will send out further batches every two weeks. To check whether you qualify for this stimulus payment, go [here](#).

Initial U.S. jobless claims [sank](#) to 340,000, the lowest since the pandemic began, and 5,000 lower than expected. Continuing claims lowered slightly to 2.75 million, and the unemployment rate dropped to 5.2 percent from 5.4 percent. One statistic that is troubling is that the unemployment rate for Black workers [rose](#) to 8.8 percent from 8.2 percent the prior month, despite the fact that just as many Black people as white people were either working or actively looking for work. AFL-CIO chief economist William Spriggs noted that the unemployment rate among Black workers with associate degrees is higher than that of white high school dropouts, and that when Black workers are struggling while the overall labor market is doing well, the primary explanation is discrimination.

California's initial unemployment claims [declined](#) to 59,755 last week, a decrease of 3,591 from the prior week, while more than 194,000 claims have been [backlogged](#) as of Aug. 21.

Sources: *CNBC, Los Angeles Times, OC Register, EDD, State of California Franchise Tax Board*

The Market & Industry: Surprisingly few jobs created; mortgage rates mostly flat

The U.S. Labor Department's monthly jobs [report](#) for August was disappointing, with [only 235,000 jobs created](#), versus the 750,000 that had been expected. The leisure and hospitality sector has been the slowest to grow, with no new net jobs added and 1.4 million still unfilled. A survey in late August by the American Hotel & Lodging Association found that 67 percent of U.S. business travelers feared planning trips because of the rise in COVID-19 cases, and 57 percent said they were likely to cancel plans. Another factor slowing the recovery is major disruptions in the global supply chain. Vaccinations were expected to loosen that bottleneck, but the rise of delta and other variants has delayed it.

Mortgage rates remained [unchanged](#) from last Friday except for the 30-year rates, which rose to 2.875 percent. Fifteen-year fixed mortgage rates stayed at 2.5 percent.

Sources: *US News, Fox Business, U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics*

Around the State: Two new strains identified in California, but vaccinations seem to be slowing hospitalizations

Two new COVID-19 variant strains are emerging, including the [C.1.2 variant](#) first discovered in South Africa in May 2020, and the [mu variant](#), also called B.1.621, first detected in Colombia in January 2021. Though both have been confirmed among a few cases in California, neither has yet been identified as a "variant of interest" in the U.S. by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), meaning that they do not yet appear either to be driving a surge in cases or clusters of infections; they are not confirmed to have genetic changes that might make them more contagious or more likely to overwhelm vaccinations; nor are they more resistant to treatment.

While cases around California are still rising, the speed of infections and hospitalizations has slowed, probably thanks to the high rates of vaccination across the state. As of 4:27

p.m. on Tuesday, there were [4,497,019 confirmed cases](#) in California, with an average of 12,201 new cases daily, which is an 11.1 percent drop over the last two weeks. Hospitalizations numbered 7,705, down 7.6 percent from the prior week. Statewide, only [19.6 percent of ICU beds](#) are available. California has administered 46,623,660 [doses](#) of the vaccine, and 65.9 percent of residents have received at least one dose. So far, only people with weakened immune systems or other medical causes are eligible for a third, booster shot of the vaccine, but experts await the U.S. FDA's approval to extend that to the general population over the age of 16.

Sources: *San Francisco Chronicle, Los Angeles Times*

Health Check-Up: Earliest COVID-19 death in the U.S. was Jan. 19

Recently, experts moved back the timing of the first person to die from COVID-19 in the United States. For more than a year, a woman in San Jose who died in February 2020 was thought to be the first U.S. mortality. But when several death certificates were revised based on further examination, a 78-year-old woman named [Lovell Brown](#) died of COVID-related symptoms on Jan. 9, 2020, from Leavenworth, Kansas. Her family reports that before she was hospitalized in Kansas City, she lost her senses of taste and smell, had a splitting headache, raspy cough, fever, diarrhea, body aches and other symptoms that would soon become familiar hallmarks.

Sources: *Mercury News*



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