

CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS WEEKLY RECAP

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

Oct. 27, 2021

Welcome to the 85th issue of the California Coronavirus Weekly Recap newsletter.

In This Issue:

- [The Economy & Your Finances: U.S. jobless claims drop; California unemployment jumps](#)
- [The Market & Industry: U.S. home sales rebounded last month; mortgage rates rising; Fed will begin tapering in November](#)
- [Around the State: COVID-19 cases plummet; many vaccinated state employees are not being tested](#)
- [Health Check-Up: FDA advisors recommend Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11; Moderna's trial shows its vaccine safe for children ages 6 to 11](#)

The Economy & Your Finances: U.S. jobless claims drop; California unemployment jumps

Initial jobless claims across the U.S. [fell last week to 290,000](#), down 6,000 from the week prior and below predictions. This was the second week in a row with claims below

300,000. Continuing claims also dropped to a new pandemic low, to 2.48 million, and the total of all active claims receded to 3.279 million. By comparison, one year ago there were 23.8 million people receiving unemployment benefits due to massive pandemic-related layoffs. Though unemployment is now below 5 percent (it had risen to 14.8 percent in April 2020), there are still 5 million fewer people working than before the pandemic.

Although California boasts some of the lowest COVID-19 transmission rates and highest vaccination rates in the nation, it also saw another dramatic surge in initial jobless claims, to [80,700 – the highest rate in six months](#). This was 17,600 claims higher than the 63,000 initial claims filed the week prior. Experts are frankly stumped. Analysts had expected that unemployment rates in California would begin a downward trend in September, but the opposite has happened. Former director of the state Employment Development Dept. (EDD) Michael Bernick said, “The explanations previously given for California lagging behind the national economy are no longer convincing. California’s COVID rates are below other states, schools have reopened and childcare is coming back.” Currently, California accounts for 31.5 percent of all unemployment claims nationwide, despite holding just 11.7 percent of the nation’s workforce.

Sources: *CNBC, Mercury News*

The Market & Industry: Market still strong, stabilizing; Freddie Mac & Fannie Mae predict home prices will continue growing; mortgage rates rise slightly

U.S. home sales [rebounded in September](#), with existing home sales increasing 7 percent. Sales recorded a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6.29 million in September, a decrease of 2.3 percent from a year ago. Total housing inventory continued to fall, with listings down 0.8 percent from August, and 13 percent compared to a year ago. Tight housing supply pushed up prices, so that the U.S. median home price rose 13.3 percent from the year prior, to \$352,800.

Mortgage rates climbed to their [highest since early April](#). The average 30-year fixed rate

mortgage released by Freddie Mac increased to 3.09 percent for last week, and Tuesday's rate was [3.26 percent](#). The 15-year fixed rate mortgage stayed flat at 2.52 percent. The 5/1 ARM rose to 2.76 percent.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell [said last week](#) that the U.S. central bank will likely begin tapering in November but will keep its benchmark interest rate untouched for now. Powell mentioned that the Fed may need to raise rates in the future to prevent inflation from spiraling, but that is not happening at the moment. Powell said that “supply constraints and elevated inflation are likely to last longer than previously expected and well into next year, and the same is true for pressure on wages.”

Sources: *Forbes, Reuters, C.A.R. Market Minute*

Around the State: COVID-19 cases plummet; many unvaccinated state employees are not being tested

As of 8:31 a.m. on [Tuesday](#), there were 4,826,113 reported cases of COVID-19 in the state, for a daily average of 2,699. This is a decrease of almost 54 percent from two weeks prior. Hospitalizations have also plummeted almost 70 percent over the last two weeks, to [3,673](#). Statewide, [23.8 percent of ICU beds](#) are available. California has administered [51,224,638 doses](#) of the vaccine, and 68.3 percent of residents have received at least one dose. Among all Californians, 62 percent are fully vaccinated.

Despite Governor Newsom's [mandate](#) requiring California state-employed workers to be fully vaccinated by Aug. 2 or undergo weekly COVID-19 testing, most state-run workplaces [have not been testing](#) unvaccinated employees. According to the California Department of Human Resources, roughly half of 59,000 unvaccinated state employees were tested during the first week of October. About 66 percent of state employees provided proof of vaccination, but most of the rest who have not have faced no consequences. Employees who work remotely full time are not required to provide proof of vaccination, because the proof is intended to protect both employees who work directly with the public and the public they serve. At the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 6,700 employees have declined to provide proof of vaccination, but just

75 employees are being tested. Cal Fire was only offering testing at the department's headquarters, however, and plans are in the works to add six more testing sites early next month. The demands of the active wildfire season slowed the process of implementing testing. At the Department of Motor Vehicles, 59 percent are fully vaccinated, but of 3,600 unvaccinated staff who should be tested weekly, only 411 are. So far, it seems that the drive to vaccinate healthcare workers has been more successful. Some counties are reporting 90 percent compliance.

Sources: *Los Angeles Times*, *Office of Governor Gavin Newsom*

Health Check-Up: FDA advisors recommend Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11; Moderna's trial shows its vaccine safe for children ages 6 to 11

A panel of 18 experts convened by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) voted unanimously (with one person abstaining) to [recommend the children's dosage](#) of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. The FDA is not required to accept the panel's recommendation, and it will likely decide within a few days. If the FDA chooses to authorize the children's dosages, which are one-third the amount of an adult's dose, then the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will be the next to decide whether to recommend the shots and for which ages. Although young children are at lower risk of severe COVID-19 than older people, still more than 8,300 have been hospitalized, about a third of those requiring intensive care, and around 100 have died. Pfizer studied the reduced-size shots in 2,268 elementary school children and found that they were nearly 91% effective at preventing symptomatic infections with COVID-19. Vaccinated children produced virus-fighting antibodies just as strong as those in teens and young adults who had received the full dose. The study was done during August and September, when the Delta variant was the primary strain in the U.S. At the FDA's request, Pfizer added another 2,300 children to the study. So far, no serious, adverse health effects have shown up, although the sample size is still small.

Moderna announced that [results of their trial](#) of low-dose [COVID-19 vaccines for children aged 6 to 11](#) showed strong immune responses with minimal side effects. The children's

dose was two shots of 50 micrograms each, which is about half the dose used for adults. One month after the second dose, children in the study had antibodies that were 1.5 times higher than those in young adults. The study recruited more than 4,700 children and was conducted with the National Institutes of Health. Some children felt mild side effects such as fatigue, headaches, fever or pain at the injection site, as has been the case for all COVID-19 vaccinations. An independent committee will review the data and monitor trial participants for a year, as is standard. Moderna will submit the results to the FDA for review.

Both the Moderna and Pfizer adult-dose vaccines have been linked to a rare form of [myocarditis](#), which is inflammation of the heart muscle, in young men. This is linked to the immune response. Most patients who developed myocarditis responded quickly to treatment. However, the risk of myocarditis for most people is still far lower than the risk of long-term side effects of COVID-19 infection. Some children have developed “[multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children](#)” (MIS-C) as a result of COVID-19 infection. MIS-C can be serious or even deadly, but most have gotten better with care.

Sources: *Los Angeles Times, Smithsonian Magazine, the CDC, Moderna Clinical Trials*



This message was sent to ericksonr@car.org. Visit your [subscription management page](#) to unsubscribe or modify your email communication preferences. To update the email address to which this newsletter is sent, please contact your local association.

Copyright © 2021, All rights reserved.