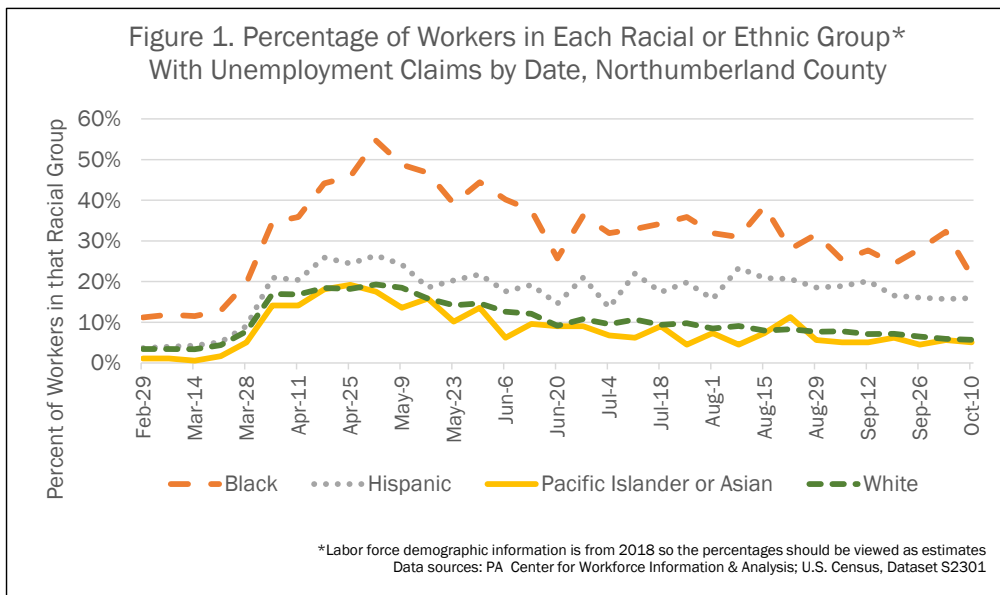


Unemployment Claims by Race, Sex, and Age in Northumberland County Under COVID-19: *February - October 10, 2020*

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many economic difficulties for Pennsylvanians across the state. The number of unemployment claims has skyrocketed due to reduced work hours or a loss of employment entirely. Though people within all demographics have experienced job loss, some sex, racial, and age groups have made more unemployment claims. This report shows the percentage of workers within each racial, sex, and age group with unemployment claims by date for Northumberland County.

Unemployment Claims by Race & Ethnicity

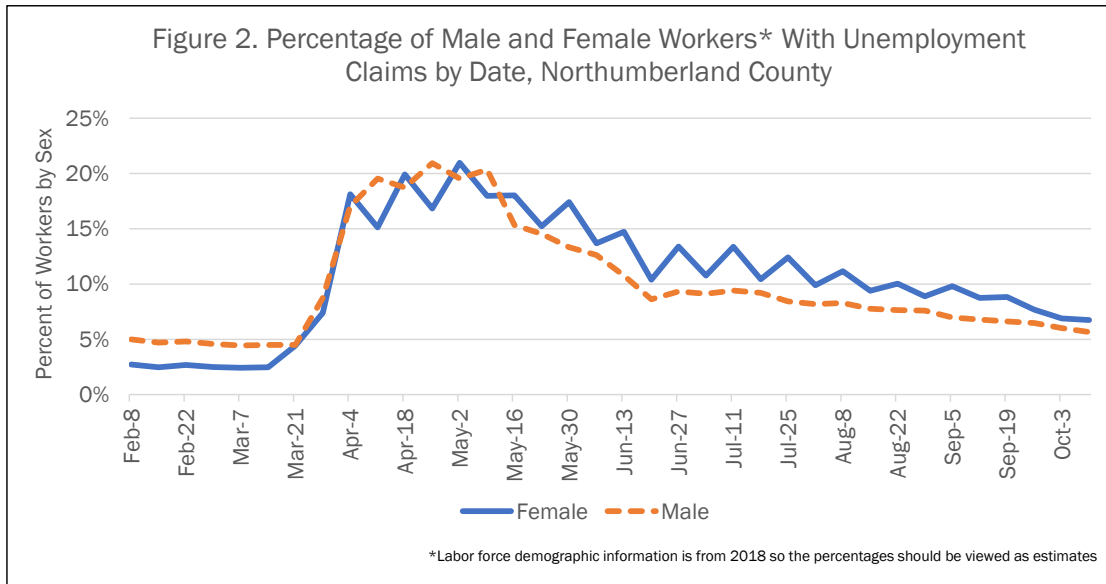
Immediately before the onset of COVID-19, unemployment claims rates statewide were near or below 10% for all racial groups. This changed dramatically in most Pennsylvania counties in late March and early April as public awareness of COVID-19 increased, and state and local governments, consumers, and businesses started taking actions to reduce exposure. Statewide, Black residents in the labor force had the highest rate of unemployment claims from May through October, followed by American Indian or Alaskan residents. In Northumberland County, unemployment among Black residents on March 12, before COVID-19, was 11.5%, but it rose to a peak of 54.7% on May 2, 2020 (see Figure 1).



Statewide as of October 10, White workers were the least likely racial or ethnic group to make unemployment claims. Unemployment among Northumberland County White residents in the labor force on March 12th, before COVID-19, was 3.4%, but it rose to a peak of 19.3% on May 2, 2020. In many counties, these statistics identify disparities in how unemployment under COVID-19 is affecting different racial and ethnic groups. Some counties may have very large differences, whereas others may have similar percentages of unemployment between all groups. As of October 10, 2020, in Northumberland County, Black residents had the highest percentage of unemployment claims (21.4%), and Pacific Islander or Asian residents had the lowest percentage of unemployment claims (5.1%) in Northumberland County.

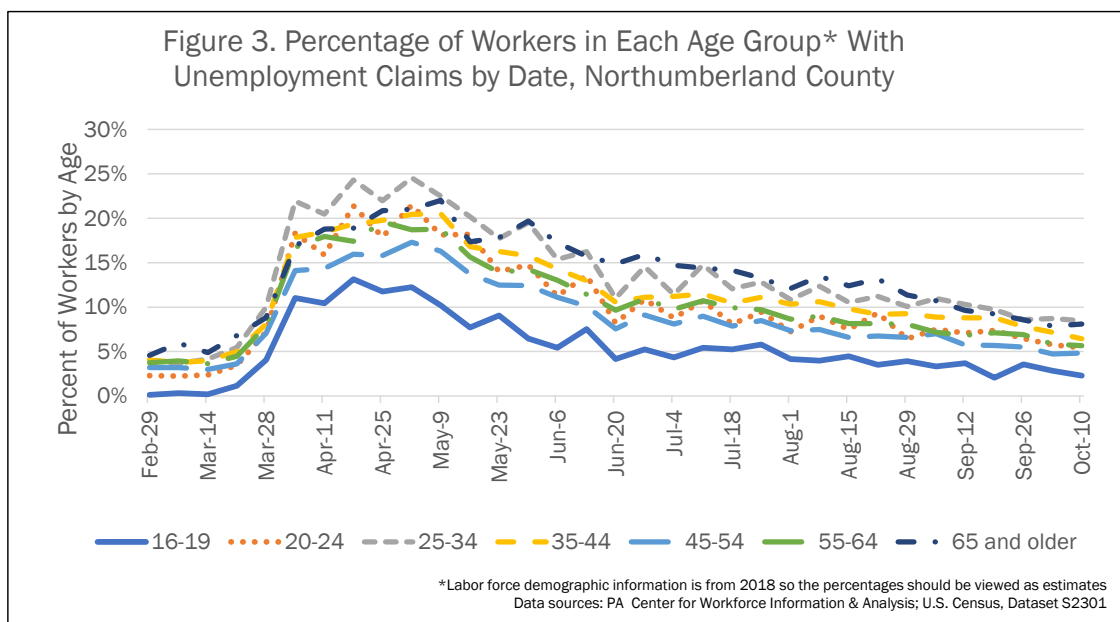
Unemployment Claims by Sex

Unemployment claims by females in Northumberland County peaked at 21.0% on May 2, 2020, a 8.5-fold increase from March 14 (see Figure 2). Claims from males in the county peaked on April 25, 2020 at 20.9%, a 4.7-fold increase from March 14. As of October 10, 2020, the unemployment claims rate from female workers had fallen to 6.7% and claims from male workers had fallen to 5.7%. Though they've declined from their peak, these rates are still 2.7 and 1.3 times higher for females and males, respectively, than what the rates were on March 14, prior to COVID-19's initial disruptions to the economy.



Unemployment Claims by Age

Across Pennsylvania, the youngest and oldest workers appear to have been the most likely to have been affected by unemployment associated with COVID-19. Since April 25, workers aged 65 or over have been more likely to file unemployment claims than have workers in any other age group, with claims statewide ranging from 24.3% of such workers on May 2, to 9.5% on October 10. In Northumberland County, unemployment claims among workers 65 or older on March 12th, before COVID-19, was 4.9%, but it rose to a peak of 22.0% on May 9, 2020 (see Figure 3).



Workers statewide between 20 and 34 years old similarly have experienced higher unemployment claims rates than other age groups, with claims of 23.9% (workers 20 to 24) and 23.8% (workers 25 to 34) on May 2, which fell to 7% and 8%, respectively, on October 10. On March 12 in Northumberland County, only 2.4% of workers aged 20 to 24 filed unemployment claims, but this rose to a peak of 21.5% on May 2, 2020, a 9.1-fold increase. Unemployment claims from workers age 25 to 34 rose about 6-fold from 4.2% on March 12 to a peak of 24.6% on May 2, 2020.

Since these peaks, unemployment claim rates have dropped slowly in Northumberland County. About 5.4% workers aged 20 to 24 filed unemployment claims on October 10, a 75% decrease from the peak. During this same time period, claims from workers aged 25 to 34 dropped to 8.5%, a 66% decline, and claims from workers 65 or older fell by 63% to 8.1%. As of October 10, workers aged 25-34 years old had the highest rate of unemployment claims in the county, at 8.5%.

Implications

The disparities of unemployment claims among different groups can have many implications on Pennsylvanians and their communities. Racial, sex, and age groups who see a much higher percentage of unemployment claims will have more difficulties recovering economically from the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent studies have shown that people of color have been more likely to contract COVID-19, possibly as a result in poor access to affordable health care. Additionally, many people of color work life-sustaining jobs, which has put them more at risk to encountering a COVID-19 carrier, rather than working safely from home. Historic and ongoing discrimination in housing, employment, income, voting, education, healthcare, and incarceration create conditions that make people of color disproportionately vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic (Ray; Perry et al). For example, as a result of inequitable healthcare and food access, Black Americans continue to experience higher rates of many of the underlying medical conditions that make people vulnerable to COVID-19. As a result of racial and ethnic discrimination, many people of color across America also have less economic stability than their White counterparts (McIntosh et al).

The COVID-19 pandemic has created great economic challenge and pain for Pennsylvanians across the Commonwealth. It is clear from the unemployment claims data that statewide the impacts are particularly affecting people of color, women, and the youngest and oldest workers. The unemployment claims trends in Northumberland County likely foreshadows who within the county is likely to face economic hardships as the pandemic continues.

Note About the Data Analysis

The unemployment claims data in this report is from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) and consists of weekly unemployment claims by race, sex, and age through October 10, 2020. This data is compared to American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates of the number of people in the labor force by race, sex, and age, allowing an estimate of the unemployment claims by these groups. The CWIA website notes that their data "should be used as a gauge of the unemployment situation in an area and/or industry and should not be considered an exact real-time count of individuals/claims." The findings in this report thus need to be viewed in the same manner. In addition, since the data is based upon official unemployment claims filed with the state, workers ineligible to apply for unemployment are not included in these numbers. Such workers include people driving for Uber or otherwise within the gig economy and self-employed workers. The CWIA data and thus these estimates omit the impacts on those workers, so the impacts on unemployment likely are larger than what is reported here. In addition, hourly wage workers whose work hours were reduced or who otherwise experienced cuts in pay may not have made unemployment claims. The data thus likely also undercounts the impact of COVID-19 on wages and salaries. Furthermore, the CWIA data does not differentiate between full-time and part-time workers, but rather just identifies unemployment claims regardless of whether the position was full- or part-time.

References

- McIntosh, K., Moss, E., Nunn, R., & Shambaugh, J. (2020, February 27). Examining the Black-white wealth gap [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap>
- Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis. "Weekly UC Claims Dashboard." Department of Labor and Industry.
- Perry, A. M., Harshbarger, D., & Romer, C. (2020, April 16). Mapping racial inequity amid COVID-19 underscores policy discriminations against Black Americans [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/04/16/mapping-racial-inequity-amid-the-spread-of-covid-19/>
- Ray, R. (2020, April 9). Why are Blacks dying at higher rates from COVID-19? [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/04/09/why-are-blacks-dying-at-higher-rates-from-covid-19/>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year Microdata Samples. Table S2301. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=s2301&g=0400000US42.050000&tid=ACST5Y2018.S2301>

This report is part of a series called "COVID-19 and Pennsylvania's Economy." Additional county reports and a statewide analysis of unemployment claims by race, sex, and age over time is available online at <https://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/publications>.

The report was prepared by Timothy W. Kelsey, Kayla Gordon, Janelle Guidarelli, Alyssa Gurklis, Cristy Halzer Schmidt, and William Stone. For questions about this report, please contact Timothy Kelsey at tkelsey@psu.edu.

Penn State's **Center for Economic and Community Development** is an applied research center dedicated to strengthening local and regional development in Pennsylvania and beyond. The Center connects residents and local leaders with information about the issues facing our communities. Our research outputs include short reports, economic impact analyses, report series, and more. The Center team includes faculty, staff, and students.

The Center for Economic and Community Development is housed in the Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education, and is supported by the Department, Penn State Extension, grants and contracts, and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Hatch Appropriations under Project #PEN04633 and Accession #1014522.. Visit us online: aese.psu.edu/cecd

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

The University is committed to equal access to programs, facilities, admission and employment for all persons. It is the policy of the University to maintain an environment free of harassment and free of discrimination against any person because of age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, genetic information or political ideas. Discriminatory conduct and harassment, as well as sexual misconduct and relationship violence, violates the dignity of individuals, impedes the realization of the University's educational mission, and will not be tolerated. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Office, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5901, Email: aao@psu.edu, Tel (814) 863-0471.

© The Pennsylvania State University 2020