



Unemployment Claims under COVID-19 by Race, Sex, and Age: Pennsylvania, February through October 10, 2020

COVID-19 has created many economic difficulties for Pennsylvanians in various ways. Millions of workers have faced a loss in income due to reduced hours at work, or loss of their jobs entirely. As a result, the number of unemployment claims has skyrocketed. Though people of all races and sexes have faced unemployment, it is important to understand whether and how unemployment is affecting different groups within Pennsylvania. This report explores unemployment claims by worker race, sex, and age in Pennsylvania during COVID-19, focusing on what occurred during the early phase of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania.

Discussing the demographics of who is claiming unemployment is important when looking to fully understand the economic impact of COVID-19 on Pennsylvanian communities. The racial, sex, and age group members who have higher percentages of unemployment claims may be facing unique challenges and hardships. When seeing the trends of unemployment claims throughout the report, consider why each group may be affected in the way that it is, and what it means for the future.

Data in this Report

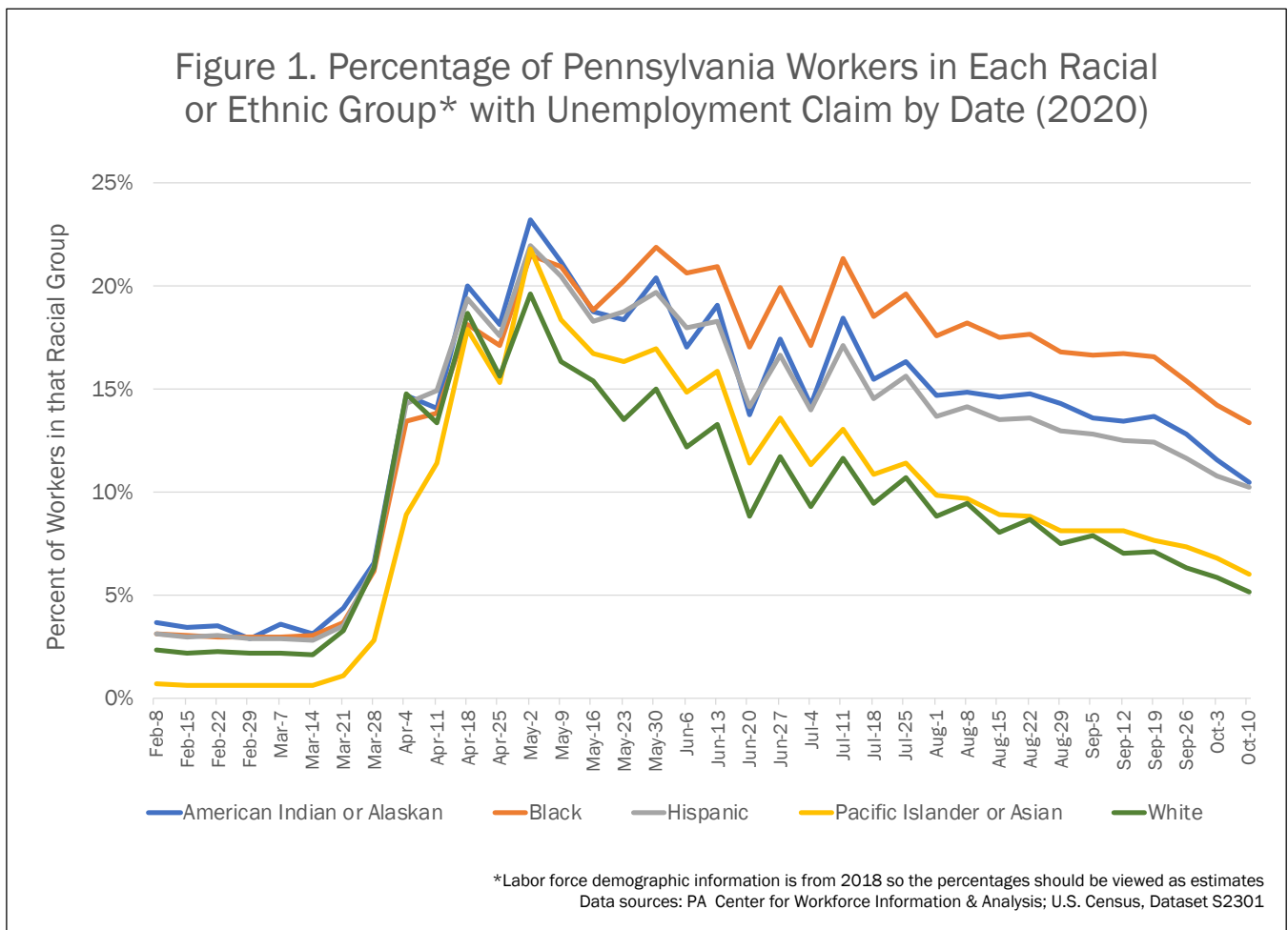
The unemployment claims data in this report is from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) and consists of weekly unemployment claims by race, sex, and sector through October 10, 2020. This data is compared to American Community Survey (ACS) estimates of the number of people in the labor force by race and sex, allowing an estimate of the unemployment claims rates by these groups. The state-level analysis in this report uses the ACS 1-year estimate from 2018, the latest ACS data available. The county-level analysis instead is conducted with the 5-year estimate from 2018 because the 1-year estimate at the county-level has too much undisclosed data in some locations due to the relatively small size of county populations. The analysis in this report focuses on the timeframe of February 8 through October 10, 2020, and provides a snapshot of unemployment during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Unemployment Claims Statewide by Racial or Ethnic Group

Employment in Pennsylvania was strong prior to COVID-19, with less than 5% of workers in each major racial group filing unemployment claims during February, 2020 (see Figure 1).

Unemployment claims started rising in late March and early April as public awareness of COVID-19 increased, and state government, consumers, and businesses started taking actions to reduce exposure. Claims from workers of all races rose at almost the same rate, except Pacific Islander or Asian workers, whose rate lagged due to their very low percentage of claims before the shutdown.



The CWIA data suggests that unemployment has been particularly affecting workers of color in Pennsylvania since the onset of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania. Unemployment claims from Black workers as a percentage of Blacks in the labor force generally were higher than claims from other racial groups even before COVID-19 and have been consistently higher than workers in other racial and ethnic groups since May 16.

American Indian or Alaskan workers have experienced similarly high levels of unemployment claims, exceeding other racial and ethnic groups from April 18 until May 9, and since then being the second or third highest percentage of claims by race or ethnic group.

During the first few weeks of the pandemic in Pennsylvania the unemployment claims rate from White workers was similar to other racial and ethnic groups, and for one week during the initial phases of the pandemic (April 4, 2020) it slightly exceeded the unemployment claims of other groups. The following week the claims rate dropped while rates among Black and Hispanic workers increased, passing it. Since May 2, 2020, White workers have had the lowest unemployment claims rate of any racial or ethnic group.

There are clear differences in how unemployment claims have decreased since the peak on May 2. As of October 10, unemployment claims from White workers decreased by about 74%, compared to decreases of only 38% among Black workers and 53% among Hispanic workers. During the same time period, claims from Pacific Islander or Asian workers decreased by 72%, almost the same as among Whites.

These differences in how unemployment claims have decreased over this time period has exacerbated differences between White and non-White workers; for example, on October 10, the unemployment claims rate among Black workers was about 2.6 times greater than that of White workers (13.4% compared to 5.1%), while the rate among Hispanic workers (10.2%) was about twice as high as among White workers.

These differences in unemployment claims by race likely reflect differences in racial employment patterns across economic sectors, that some economic sectors are being affected by COVID-19 much more than are others, and how easily jobs in each sector can be done remotely. Studies suggest that racial employment patterns are affected by differences in education levels and differences in where people live (see Andolfatto, 2017), which themselves have been affected by past discrimination in housing and employment.

Unemployment Claims at the County Level by Racial or Ethnic Group

The trends by race and ethnic group at the county level are similar to the statewide trends, though there are some differences which reflect the circumstances of each county. For example, in Allegheny County during the week of October 10 unemployment claims from Black workers equaled about 13.4% of the Black workforce in the county, compared to a 6.3% rate among Hispanic workers, 4.1% rate among Pacific Islander or Asian workers, and 5.0% unemployment claims rate by White workers (see Table 1). This county level analysis excludes American Indian or Alaskan workers because the relatively small number of workers from these groups within most Pennsylvania counties makes the calculations too error prone.

More detailed county-level analysis, including claims rates by race and ethnicity over time, is available online at <https://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/publications>.

Table 1. Unemployment Claims on October 10, 2020 as a Percentage of Workforce Participants by Race*, By Pennsylvania County

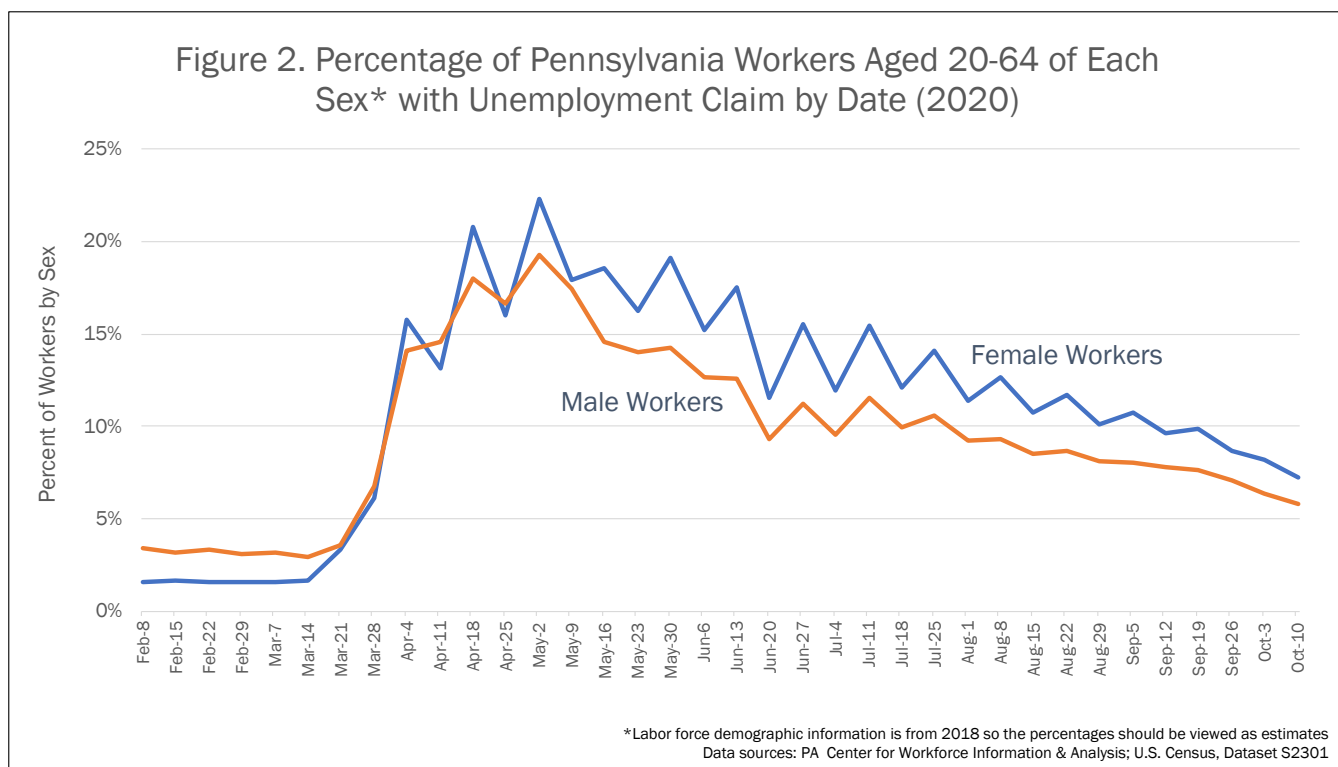
County	Percentage of Workers in Each Racial Group With Unemployment Claim				County	Percentage of Workers in Each Racial Group With Unemployment Claim			
	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Islander or Asian	White		Black	Hispanic	Pacific Islander or Asian	White
Pennsylvania	13.4%	10.2%	6.1%	5.1%	Juniata County	0.9%	8.2%	-	3.4%
Adams County	7.3%	3.3%	7.7%	3.5%	Lackawanna County	21.2%	11.7%	4.7%	5.5%
Allegheny County	13.4%	6.3%	4.1%	5.0%	Lancaster County	10.9%	10.0%	5.3%	3.9%
Armstrong County	7.2%	2.4%	1.2%	6.3%	Lawrence County	14.7%	6.6%	4.6%	5.7%
Beaver County	16.5%	8.2%	6.4%	5.9%	Lebanon County	7.1%	14.7%	5.8%	4.0%
Bedford County	10.9%	11.2%	8.8%	4.6%	Lehigh County	10.4%	12.8%	5.0%	4.7%
Berks County	8.9%	11.5%	5.1%	4.8%	Luzerne County	19.0%	17.3%	3.8%	6.1%
Blair County	18.0%	7.8%	2.7%	5.2%	Lycoming County	16.3%	11.4%	5.7%	5.3%
Bradford County	7.6%	4.2%	2.3%	3.8%	McKean County	3.5%	6.6%	4.8%	3.8%
Bucks County	8.1%	5.9%	5.1%	4.8%	Mercer County	13.6%	1.7%	6.2%	5.5%
Butler County	7.7%	5.0%	3.8%	4.5%	Mifflin County	9.0%	10.1%	10.2%	6.2%
Cambria County	19.4%	6.6%	5.8%	5.1%	Monroe County	7.6%	8.3%	5.8%	5.0%
Cameron County	-	-	-	5.1%	Montgomery County	10.4%	5.5%	5.0%	4.4%
Carbon County	9.8%	12.0%	3.7%	5.2%	Montour County	5.8%	19.3%	0.4%	3.3%
Centre County	4.4%	2.7%	1.5%	2.9%	Northampton County	10.6%	8.9%	5.0%	4.6%
Chester County	8.6%	3.6%	2.9%	3.8%	Northumberland County	21.4%	15.9%	5.1%	5.7%
Clarion County	6.0%	6.8%	1.9%	3.2%	Perry County	15.8%	2.5%	2.8%	3.7%
Clearfield County	6.2%	4.1%	8.0%	5.8%	Philadelphia County	13.5%	8.8%	7.4%	5.3%
Clinton County	4.1%	6.9%	4.0%	5.0%	Pike County	4.5%	4.8%	1.0%	3.4%
Columbia County	28.6%	9.1%	0.8%	4.9%	Potter County	6.5%	1.6%	3.4%	4.6%
Crawford County	11.3%	7.7%	4.8%	4.9%	Schuylkill County	12.6%	15.0%	5.6%	5.8%
Cumberland County	10.2%	7.5%	2.8%	3.8%	Snyder County	7.5%	10.1%	1.3%	3.1%
Dauphin County	10.9%	13.3%	3.4%	4.3%	Somerset County	18.8%	5.9%	8.1%	4.9%
Delaware County	12.9%	8.6%	7.7%	5.0%	Sullivan County	0.0%	1.1%	6.3%	4.0%
Elk County	13.3%	8.0%	6.2%	7.2%	Susquehanna County	5.4%	9.4%	-	3.5%
Erie County	15.8%	12.2%	5.5%	5.7%	Tioga County	15.5%	5.1%	-	4.4%
Fayette County	11.5%	10.2%	10.8%	6.8%	Union County	12.6%	5.6%	2.1%	3.6%
Forest County	-	-	-	9.5%	Venango County	22.9%	5.0%	16.4%	5.2%
Franklin County	11.0%	7.3%	3.6%	3.9%	Warren County	42.5%	3.3%	5.8%	7.8%
Fulton County	4.2%	8.3%	-	5.6%	Washington County	13.2%	4.4%	6.1%	6.1%
Greene County	5.1%	3.7%	-	5.6%	Wayne County	10.7%	6.7%	3.5%	4.0%
Huntingdon County	11.4%	6.7%	2.8%	6.3%	Westmoreland County	15.8%	6.1%	4.4%	5.2%
Indiana County	8.3%	5.2%	2.9%	5.1%	Wyoming County	8.4%	2.5%	-	4.6%
Jefferson County	6.5%	6.5%	6.0%	4.9%	York County	9.9%	13.3%	4.2%	3.8%

*Labor force demographic information is from 2018 so the percentages should be viewed as estimates
Unemployment claims include initial claims and continued claims

Sources: PA Center for Workforce Information & Analysis; U.S. Census, Dataset S2301

Unemployment Claims by Sex

Unemployment through October 10 under COVID-19 was more likely for female workers than for male workers in Pennsylvania. For example, on May 2, the peak of unemployment claims to date, 22.3% of female workers filed unemployment claims, compared to 19.3% of male workers (see Figure 2). Claims from female and male workers has declined since then, but the percentage of female workers filing claims has remained consistently higher than claims from male workers. This likely reflects differences in where females and males are most likely to be employed, such as retail, education, hospitality, manufacturing, and financial services, and particularly how some economic sectors are being affected much more than are others. These differences are driven by dissimilarities in educational achievement by sex, as well as historical discrimination and cultural norms which influence which professions males and females seek. The differences likely also reflect how easily jobs in various economic sectors can be done remotely.



There are some differences across counties in unemployment claims by sex (see Table 2). Female workers in all but twelve Pennsylvania counties (Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Crawford, Greene, Huntingdon, Indiana, McKean, and Mercer, Potter, Susquehanna, and Tioga) were more likely to file unemployment claims than were male workers. The composition of each county's local economy, and particularly the type of jobs there, affect these differences.

Table 2. Unemployment Claims on October 10, 2020 as a Percentage of Workforce Participants by Sex*, By County

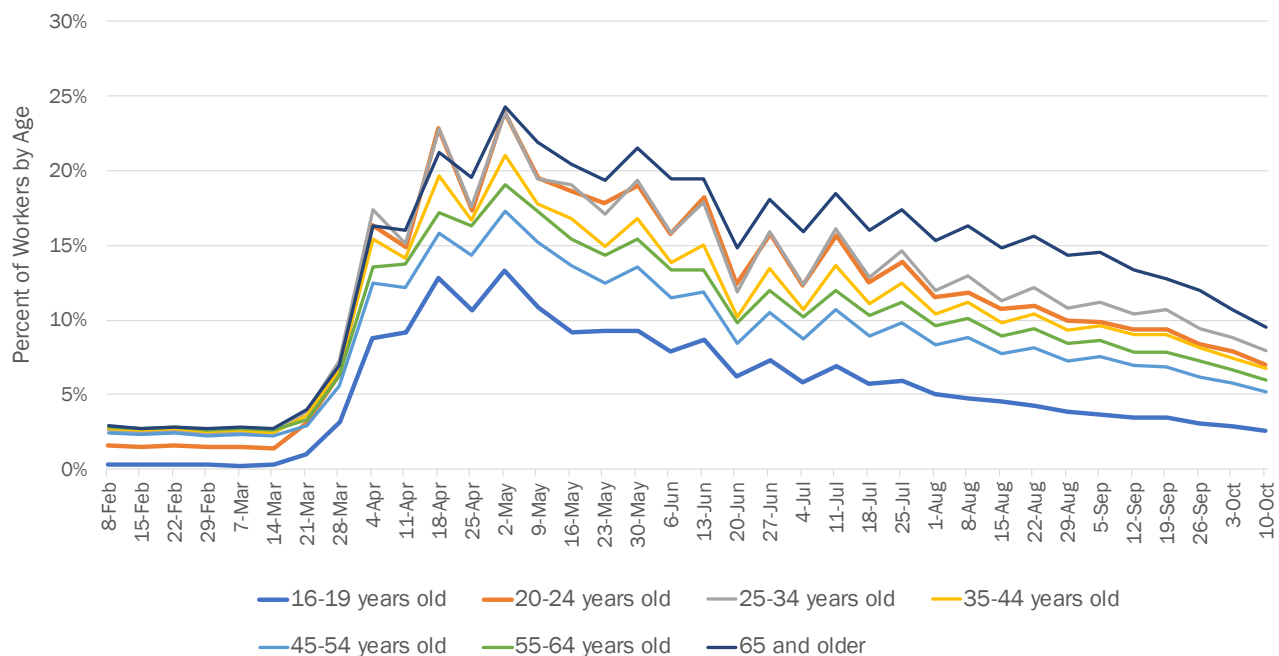
County	Percentage of Workers of Each Sex with Claim		County	Percentage of Workers of Each Sex with Claim		County	Percentage of Workers of Each Sex with Claim	
	Females aged 20-64	Males aged 20-64		Females aged 20-64	Males aged 20-64		Females aged 20-64	Males aged 20-64
Pennsylvania	7.3%	5.8%	Delaware	8.2%	6.0%	Montgomery	6.0%	4.0%
Adams	4.4%	2.6%	Elk	7.7%	7.0%	Montour	3.8%	3.0%
Allegheny	6.4%	5.6%	Erie	7.1%	6.1%	Northampton	6.6%	4.8%
Armstrong	5.8%	6.6%	Fayette	7.2%	6.8%	Northumberland	6.7%	5.7%
Beaver	6.4%	6.7%	Forest	14.3%	8.7%	Perry	4.0%	3.8%
Bedford	4.6%	4.9%	Franklin	5.0%	4.1%	Philadelphia	10.8%	8.6%
Berks	7.4%	5.8%	Fulton	6.0%	5.4%	Pike	4.5%	2.9%
Blair	5.9%	5.1%	Greene	4.6%	6.6%	Potter	3.2%	5.3%
Bradford	4.7%	3.3%	Huntingdon	5.8%	7.4%	Schuylkill	7.1%	5.4%
Bucks	5.9%	3.9%	Indiana	4.9%	5.5%	Snyder	3.9%	2.9%
Butler	4.8%	3.9%	Jefferson	5.4%	4.9%	Somerset	4.9%	4.9%
Cambria	6.1%	5.0%	Juniata	4.2%	3.2%	Sullivan	4.2%	3.7%
Cameron	5.5%	5.4%	Lackawanna	7.1%	5.4%	Susquehanna	3.9%	3.5%
Carbon	6.5%	4.8%	Lancaster	5.8%	4.3%	Tioga	4.4%	4.6%
Centre	3.0%	2.8%	Lawrence	6.0%	5.6%	Union	4.6%	3.4%
Chester	5.0%	3.0%	Lebanon	6.2%	5.1%	Venango	5.7%	5.2%
Clarion	3.9%	2.7%	Lehigh	8.6%	6.1%	Warren	5.1%	5.1%
Clearfield	6.4%	5.5%	Luzerne	9.3%	6.7%	Washington	6.4%	6.3%
Clinton	5.4%	5.0%	Lycoming	6.2%	6.1%	Wayne	4.6%	3.6%
Columbia	6.2%	4.2%	McKean	3.6%	4.2%	Westmoreland	5.8%	5.0%
Crawford	5.0%	5.2%	Mercer	5.3%	6.3%	Wyoming	5.6%	3.7%
Cumberland	4.8%	3.9%	Mifflin	7.2%	6.2%	York	5.6%	4.4%
Dauphin	7.1%	6.0%	Monroe	8.5%	4.6%			

*Labor force demographic information is from 2018 so the percentages should be viewed as estimates
 Unemployment Claims include initial claims and continued claims
 Sources: PA Center for Workforce Information & Analysis; U.S. Census, Dataset S2301

Unemployment Claims by Age

When considering unemployment claims by the age of the worker, it becomes clear that COVID-19 is particularly affecting workers 65 and over, and workers in their 20’s and early 30’s (see Figure 3). 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 ranging from 24.3% of such workers on May 2, to 9.5% on October 10. Workers 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, to 7.0% and 8.0% on October 10. The lowest unemployment claims rates during this time period was among the workforce age 16 to 19, but this likely reflects that many such workers were ineligible to apply for unemployment claims due to the nature of their jobs, their hours, or other factors.

Figure 3. Percentage of Pennsylvania Workers by Age* with Unemployment Claim by Date (2020)



*Labor force demographic information is from 2018 so the percentages should be viewed as estimates
Data sources: PA Center for Workforce Information & Analysis; U.S. Census, Dataset S2301

That unemployment claims from workers age 20 to 34 are higher than from workers at the midpoint or later parts of their career or other workers shouldn't be too surprising. Younger workers are more likely to be laid off before their older counterparts due to their inevitable lack of experience or seniority within an industry. In addition, they make up a large share of the workforce of some of the sectors most affected by COVID-19, such as retail, food service, and accommodations.

The findings for workers age 65 and over are a bit more surprising. Most workers retire before age 65, so it may be that many of the remaining workforce of this age range are not financially well off and feel they have to work to supplement their Social Security or other retirement income. In addition, they may be workers who are working part-time or on a second career, and thus like younger workers are more vulnerable to layoffs than are other workers.

Not surprisingly, unemployment claims rates by age vary across counties (see Table 3). In general, unemployment claims rates from workers 65 and over were higher from urban counties (such as Allegheny, Beaver, Delaware, Erie, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne and Philadelphia, which all had claims rates higher than 10% from such workers) than from more rural counties. The claims rate from the oldest workers in Potter County, for example, were only 2.5%, while they were 3.6% in Montour County, 3.7% in Snyder County, and 4% in Perry County.

Table 3. Unemployment Claims on October 10, 2020 as a Percentage of Workforce Participants by Age, * by County

County	Percentage of Workers in Each Age Group* With Unemployment Claim						County	Percentage of Workers in Each Age Group* With Unemployment Claim							
	16-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64		65 and older	16-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and older
Pennsylvania	2.6%	7.0%	8.0%	6.8%	5.2%	5.9%	9.5%	Juniata County	0.7%	3.7%	3.5%	2.8%	3.3%	5.4%	5.1%
Adams County	1.3%	3.8%	4.1%	3.8%	2.4%	3.6%	8.4%	Lackawanna County	1.7%	6.4%	7.3%	7.3%	4.5%	5.7%	11.3%
Allegheny County	2.9%	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%	4.9%	5.8%	10.2%	Lancaster County	1.7%	5.2%	6.1%	5.6%	3.8%	4.4%	7.5%
Armstrong County	1.2%	6.7%	7.8%	6.1%	5.0%	6.2%	9.1%	Lawrence County	1.8%	4.5%	7.9%	5.9%	4.9%	5.4%	9.0%
Beaver County	1.2%	6.1%	8.0%	7.2%	5.3%	6.3%	10.4%	Lebanon County	2.8%	7.9%	7.3%	5.8%	4.3%	4.0%	7.1%
Bedford County	2.2%	6.7%	5.1%	4.1%	4.2%	5.0%	7.0%	Lehigh County	3.7%	8.4%	9.2%	7.5%	5.3%	6.4%	10.7%
Berks County	1.9%	7.1%	8.8%	6.5%	5.1%	5.7%	8.8%	Luzerne County	3.3%	8.1%	11.0%	8.3%	5.9%	6.4%	10.5%
Blair County	1.8%	4.8%	6.3%	5.7%	4.9%	5.2%	7.3%	Lycoming County	1.8%	5.4%	7.0%	7.2%	5.5%	5.2%	7.5%
Bradford County	1.1%	3.2%	5.4%	4.8%	3.1%	3.2%	4.2%	McKean County	0.1%	2.6%	5.1%	4.2%	3.1%	4.2%	5.8%
Bucks County	2.2%	5.3%	5.7%	4.9%	3.8%	5.2%	9.8%	Mercer County	3.3%	4.7%	7.2%	6.4%	5.0%	5.5%	8.5%
Butler County	1.4%	4.0%	5.0%	4.0%	3.5%	5.0%	9.4%	Mifflin County	0.9%	6.0%	8.8%	6.4%	5.5%	6.6%	7.7%
Cambria County	0.8%	4.2%	7.9%	5.4%	4.7%	4.9%	8.7%	Monroe County	2.7%	8.2%	8.9%	6.4%	4.5%	5.8%	7.9%
Cameron County	0.0%	6.6%	8.8%	5.4%	2.7%	5.4%	4.0%	Montgomery County	1.8%	5.6%	5.7%	5.0%	3.9%	5.2%	9.3%
Carbon County	5.2%	5.8%	7.1%	5.3%	4.5%	5.8%	8.1%	Montour County	0.7%	4.3%	2.9%	4.1%	2.6%	3.8%	3.6%
Centre County	0.7%	2.1%	3.3%	3.3%	2.3%	3.5%	6.4%	Northampton County	2.3%	6.4%	7.0%	5.5%	4.6%	5.3%	9.5%
Chester County	1.0%	3.8%	4.7%	3.6%	3.2%	4.3%	8.2%	Northumberland County	2.3%	5.4%	8.5%	6.4%	4.8%	5.6%	8.1%
Claron County	0.2%	2.3%	3.1%	3.7%	3.3%	3.8%	5.8%	Perry County	2.2%	3.5%	5.5%	3.4%	3.6%	3.4%	4.0%
Clearfield County	1.2%	5.7%	6.2%	6.1%	5.3%	6.2%	7.9%	Philadelphia County	6.0%	12.1%	10.3%	9.8%	8.3%	8.2%	10.8%
Clinton County	0.6%	4.2%	6.2%	5.8%	4.3%	5.3%	8.4%	Pike County	2.5%	5.1%	5.0%	3.7%	2.5%	3.2%	5.9%
Columbia County	0.9%	3.5%	6.8%	4.7%	5.2%	5.1%	9.2%	Potter County	0.9%	4.2%	6.2%	4.9%	2.4%	4.6%	2.5%
Crawford County	1.4%	4.7%	6.6%	5.4%	3.8%	5.1%	7.6%	Schuylkill County	1.8%	6.4%	7.3%	6.0%	5.4%	6.0%	9.6%
Cumberland County	0.6%	3.8%	5.1%	4.6%	3.7%	4.0%	6.8%	Snyder County	1.3%	2.6%	4.3%	3.3%	2.9%	3.4%	3.7%
Dauphin County	2.9%	6.7%	8.4%	6.7%	5.2%	5.6%	9.1%	Somerset County	1.1%	4.8%	5.7%	5.0%	4.4%	4.8%	8.8%
Delaware County	2.7%	7.0%	9.1%	7.4%	5.5%	6.4%	10.1%	Sullivan County	0.0%	2.2%	5.6%	3.7%	3.2%	4.3%	5.3%
Elk County	1.6%	5.4%	8.0%	8.5%	6.2%	7.8%	8.9%	Susquehanna County	1.3%	6.4%	4.1%	4.7%	2.3%	3.0%	4.5%
Erie County	3.4%	6.5%	7.9%	7.3%	5.3%	5.7%	10.6%	Tioga County	1.0%	2.6%	6.0%	4.7%	4.4%	4.0%	4.8%
Fayette County	4.4%	7.3%	8.0%	7.5%	6.2%	6.3%	9.5%	Union County	0.2%	2.6%	4.6%	4.5%	3.3%	4.6%	6.8%
Forest County	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Venango County	1.3%	4.8%	6.6%	6.6%	4.6%	4.5%	6.5%
Franklin County	1.0%	5.6%	5.2%	4.4%	3.5%	4.4%	6.5%	Warren County	1.4%	5.1%	5.7%	5.5%	4.7%	4.8%	7.6%
Fulton County	3.0%	7.7%	5.8%	5.3%	4.6%	6.3%	7.4%	Washington County	2.1%	5.6%	8.0%	6.6%	5.2%	6.3%	9.5%
Greene County	1.0%	4.0%	7.4%	5.6%	6.5%	4.0%	7.9%	Wayne County	0.9%	4.7%	5.2%	4.8%	3.1%	3.3%	7.2%
Huntingdon County	1.4%	5.3%	6.6%	6.7%	6.2%	7.8%	7.7%	Westmoreland County	2.1%	5.6%	6.4%	5.6%	4.5%	5.2%	8.9%
Indiana County	1.1%	3.4%	6.1%	6.8%	4.7%	5.0%	7.2%	Wyoming County	1.1%	3.1%	5.3%	4.3%	3.6%	5.7%	7.5%
Jefferson County	2.3%	4.0%	6.4%	5.0%	4.3%	5.3%	4.7%	York County	1.8%	5.5%	6.8%	5.2%	3.6%	4.3%	7.6%

*Labor force demographic information is from 2018 so the percentages should be viewed as estimates. Forest County was omitted due to the extremely small size of its workforce.

Unemployment Claims include initial claims and continued claims

Sources: PA Center for Workforce Information & Analysis; U.S. Census, Dataset S2301

Unemployment Claims by Age, Race, and Sex

These trends are generally consistent when sex, race and age are considered together, with female workers in most age and racial groups being more likely to file unemployment claims than do males of the same age and race during the week of October 10 (see Table 4). Several exceptions include Black males aged 55 to 64, and 65 and over, who were more likely to file claims than were Black females of similar age, Hispanic males aged 65 and over, and Asian Males 16-24, compared to females of the same race and age.

Age	Black		Hispanic		Asian		White	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
16-19	7.1%	6.1%	4.6%	3.5%	1.8%	2.1%	1.7%	1.4%
20-24	15.7%	12.5%	13.5%	9.2%	6.0%	6.6%	5.2%	4.6%
25-54	14.3%	12.9%	11.7%	7.6%	6.2%	4.1%	5.5%	4.6%
55-64	10.1%	11.5%	9.8%	6.8%	8.2%	7.4%	5.7%	4.6%
65+	13.8%	14.1%	9.7%	12.4%	11.2%	9.4%	9.2%	7.5%
All	13.5%	12.4%	11.2%	7.5%	6.4%	4.9%	5.6%	4.7%

*Labor force demographic information is from 2018 so the percentages should be viewed as estimates
 Unemployment Claims include initial claims and continued claims
 Data sources: PA Center for Workforce Information & Analysis; U.S. Census B23002, 2018

Differences between races appear greatest for younger and middle-aged workers, regardless of sex. For example, about 12.9% of Black males aged 25 to 54 filed claims on October 10, about 2.8 times higher than the 4.6% of White males of that age who did so, while 13.5% of Hispanic females aged 20 to 24 filed claims, about 2.6 times higher than the 5.2% of White females of that age who did so. Notably across all races and ethnic groups, claims rates were highest for workers 65 and over, suggesting that the oldest workers are more likely to file unemployment claims, regardless of their race.

Implications and Conclusions

The data show that COVID-19 is having a dissimilar impact on Pennsylvania workers, and that racial minority groups, females, and younger and older workers are most likely to be filing unemployment claims. Black and Hispanic females face the highest levels of unemployment, even compared to their male counterparts. These effects likely are due to a multitude of factors, including differences in education level, occupation, the economic sector in which they work, and the ability of their job to be done remotely.

The impact on workers losing their job under COVID-19 can be devastating. Job loss can lead to loss of income, which can be particularly challenging in single-earner households, threatening their ability to make rent or mortgage payments and buy food and other necessities. It can also mean the loss of health insurance if the worker received that via their employer. This makes households even more vulnerable in the pandemic when they may most need such insurance.

Unemployment insurance by its nature provides some financial assistance to workers who lose their jobs, helping to reduce the challenges they face. The federal stimulus bill passed by Congress in late March provided eligible unemployed workers an additional \$600 a week in benefits, but those supplemental benefits expired on July 25, 2020.

The unemployment claim numbers in this report reflect what occurred during this time period. There is some political argument over the extent to which Pennsylvania government policies and actions contributed to these unemployment claims rates, or if these policies and actions instead kept claims rates lower than they would have been without any such government response. This study was not designed to answer this question, yet we suspect it likely is somewhere between these two extremes. Other states which did not mandate business closings and other restrictions also experienced major economic disruptions during this same period, so the Commonwealth's economy likely would have suffered major disruptions regardless.

In addition, as of this writing (October 26, 2020), the cumulative incidence rate of COVID-19 cases in Pennsylvania (1,528 cases per 100,000 residents) was much less than the rates in Florida (3,624.5 cases per 100,000 residents), Georgia (3,345 cases per 100,000 residents), and Texas (3,021 cases per 100,000 residents), three of the highest profile examples of states who avoided taking significant government action during March and April (CDC, 2020). This incidence rate information anecdotally would suggest, at a minimum, that the state's actions helped reduce the spread of COVID-19 among residents.

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.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created great economic challenge and pain for Pennsylvanians across the state. It is clear from the unemployment claims data that the impacts are particularly affecting people of color, females, and the youngest and oldest workers.

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More detailed county-level analysis, including claims rates by race and ethnicity over time, is available online at <https://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/publications>.

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