

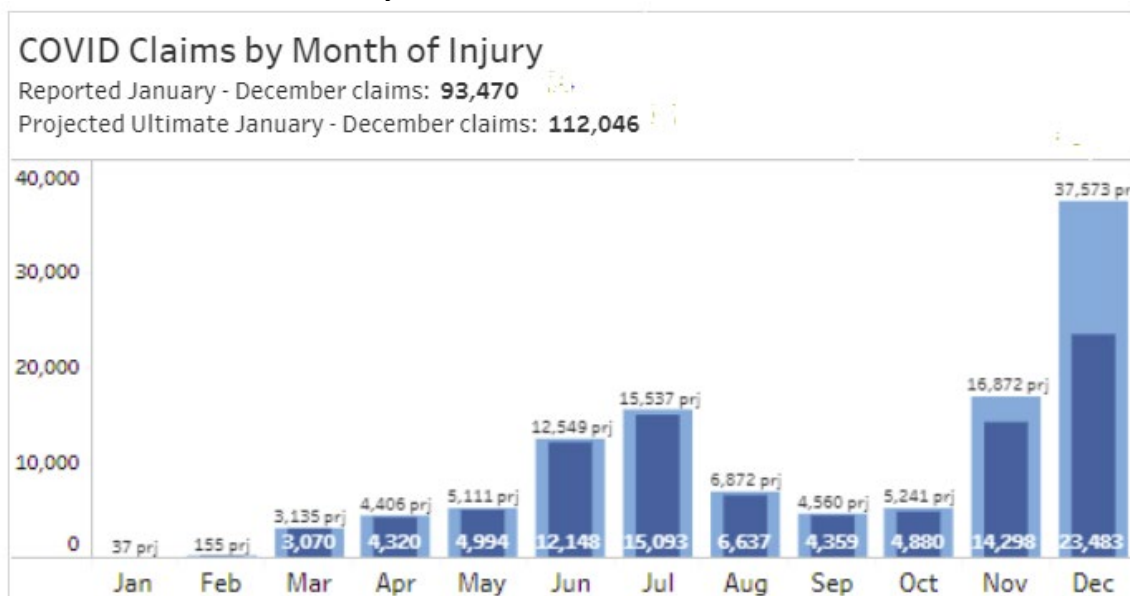
# BULLETIN

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The number of COVID-19 claims in the California workers' compensation system more than tripled between October and November, then jumped another 64.2% to a record 23,483 claims last month, with projections showing that the December total could eventually climb to 37,573 cases as claims that are still being filed or investigated are added to the tally.

The latest update to CWCI's COVID-19/Non-COVID-19 Interactive Claim Application, which provides detailed data on California workers' comp claims from comparable periods of 2019 and 2020, shows that as of January 11, there were 1,262,782 claims from accident years (AY) 2019 and 2020 reported to the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC). After falling to a 6-month low in September, monthly COVID-19 claim counts have been trending up as the fall wave of coronavirus cases hit the state, and even though the November and December totals are relatively green as additional claims are still being reported, the early numbers show that so far there have been 14,298 COVID-19 claims with November injury dates, and a record 23,483 COVID-19 claims from December. The year-end surge has pushed the total number of COVID-19 claims reported to the DWC for AY 2020 to 93,470, or 15.7% of all claims with 2020 injury dates reported to the state, though with the post-holiday spike, that proportion rose to 28.7% of all work injury claims in November and 47.4% of all claims in December. The AY 2020 COVID-19 claim count included 464 death claims, which was up 21.7% from the 381 death claims reported just two weeks earlier on December 28, which means COVID-19 death claims have accounted for almost half (48.0%) of the 966 work-related death claims recorded by the state for AY 2020.



The California economy was booming in 2019, but in 2020 the pandemic cost the state hundreds of thousands of jobs and resulted in large numbers of Californians working from home, which in turn led to a sharp reduction in the total number of workers' comp claims in AY 2020. As of the January 11 tally, the state had recorded 594,840 work injury claims for the 12 months ending December 31. Despite the addition of 93,470 COVID-19 claims, that total was down 13.5% from the 667,942 claims reported for AY 2019, though the year-over-year decline in claim volume is only 6.5% if CWCI's updated projection of the ultimate claim count for AY 2020 is used. That projection, based on historical claim development factors that includes the delayed reporting of COVID-19 claims, estimates that there will ultimately be 112,046 COVID-19 claims from AY 2020, with the 37,573 claims projected for December representing the high point for the year, though with the ongoing post-holiday spike in COVID-19 diagnoses and hospitalizations, the surge in workers' comp COVID-19 claim volume appears likely to continue into January if not longer.

The distribution of AY 2020 COVID-19 claims by industry shows the claims became more broadly dispersed throughout the economy as the year progressed. The health care sector has consistently had more California COVID-19 workers' comp claims than any other sector, though health care workers' share has fallen from 44.7% of the COVID-19 claims in the 1st quarter to only 28.8% of the claims in the 4th quarter, so overall, these workers accounted for one out of three COVID-19 claims in AY 2020. Public safety and government workers started the year accounting for more than one in five COVID-19 claims, but after the 1st quarter that share dropped to about 1 in 7 claims and held steady for the rest of the year. Retail workers have filed 10.0% of the AY 2020 COVID-19 claims, but their share grew significantly between the beginning and end of the year, climbing from 3.1% of the 1st quarter claims to 12.5% of the claims in the 4th quarter. The manufacturing sector accounted for only 4.6% of the 1st quarter claims, but that share jumped sharply by the 2nd quarter, then was relatively stable for the balance of the year, so manufacturing workers ranked fourth among all sectors for AY 2020, with 8.4% of the COVID-19 claims. Meanwhile, transportation workers saw their share of COVID-19 claims nearly double from 4.7% in the 1st quarter to 9.2% in the 4th quarter, so for the full year they accounted for 6.9% of all California COVID-19 claims. Other sectors that saw significant fluctuations in their share of the COVID-19 claims during the year included food service, which jumped from 1.7% of the 1st quarter claims to 5.3% of the claims in the 3rd quarter and ended up with 4.6% of all AY 2020 claims; construction which went from 0.6% to 2.9% of the COVID-19 claims between the 1st quarter and the second half of the year, ending with 2.9% of all COVID-19 claims reported for the year; and agriculture, which increased from 0.3% of all COVID-19 claims in the 1st quarter to 4.5% in the 2nd quarter before tailing off to 2.4% in the 3rd quarter and 0.8% of the 4th quarter claims, so for the full year agriculture workers accounted for 2.2% of the COVID-19 claims.

**Distribution of Calif. WC COVID-19 Claims by Industry – Q1 – Q4 AY 2020 and AY 2020 Total**

Industry Sector	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	AY 2020 Total
Health Care	44.7%	38.2%	35.2%	28.8%	33.4%
Public Safety/Government	21.2%	13.9%	14.3%	14.9%	14.7%
Retail	3.1%	8.6%	7.8%	12.5%	10.0%
Manufacturing	4.6%	8.6%	9.0%	7.9%	8.3%
Transportation	4.7%	3.9%	6.0%	9.2%	6.9%
Food Services	1.7%	4.4%	5.3%	4.5%	4.6%
Administration/Waste	3.4%	4.1%	3.4%	4.2%	3.9%
Construction	0.6%	2.6%	2.9%	2.9%	2.8%
Wholesale	2.7%	2.2%	2.4%	1.9%	2.2%
Finance	3.8%	2.1%	1.8%	2.3%	2.2%
Agriculture	0.3%	4.5%	2.4%	0.8%	2.1%
Other Services	1.7%	1.2%	2.1%	2.1%	1.9%
Professional/Technical	1.6%	1.2%	1.5%	1.8%	1.5%
Accommodation	0.6%	0.7%	1.3%	2.0%	1.5%
Education	2.2%	1.2%	1.7%	1.4%	1.5%
All Other	3.1%	2.6%	2.9%	2.8%	2.5%

Demographic data shows just over half (51.2%) of AY 2020 COVID-19 claimants were males, though by the year end that proportion had grown, with males accounting for 53.7% of the COVID-19 claims in the 4th quarter. Workers under the age of 30 continue to account for a growing share of the COVID-19 claims, as their proportion jumped from 18.7% of the 1st quarter COVID-19 cases to 28.2% in the 4th quarter, which translates to 27.6% of the claims for the year, compared to workers aged 30-39 who accounted for 26.5% of the AY 2020 claims; workers aged 40-49 who accounted for 21.5%; workers aged 50-59 who accounted for 16.9% and workers aged 60 or older who accounted for 7.7%. Denial data for November and December claims is still too green to be reliable, but the denial rate for October COVID-19 claims was notable, as it rose to 36.9%, the highest level since March when there were far fewer claims. Denial rates again varied by industry, with October claim denial rates ranging from 12.8% for utility workers to 66.8% for transportation workers.

CWCI continues to update its COVID-19/Non-COVID-19 app on a biweekly basis. Those who wish to monitor and compare COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 claim experience can access the app from the CWCI website by clicking [here](#).

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