

# Details on claimants paid in April

## Unemployment benefit payments reached historic levels

By JENNA LUHRS

**M**ore than 48,200 people received a weekly unemployment insurance payment from the state in April. Of that group, 80 percent opened their initial claim during the six-week period that began in early March with the COVID-19-related shutdowns, and the remaining 20 percent first filed before the pandemic reached Alaska.

In the past few years, claims had fallen by an average of 33 percent from March to April as seasonal hiring picked up. This year, April's claims load was four times higher than is typical, and the number of people who received a benefit payment in April alone was about 20,000 more than the number who received a payment during all of 2019.

### Temporary federal add-on increased weekly benefit by \$600

At the beginning of April, most claimants began receiving \$600 per week in federal pandemic relief in addition to the regular benefit from the state, which averaged \$247. This brought the average weekly

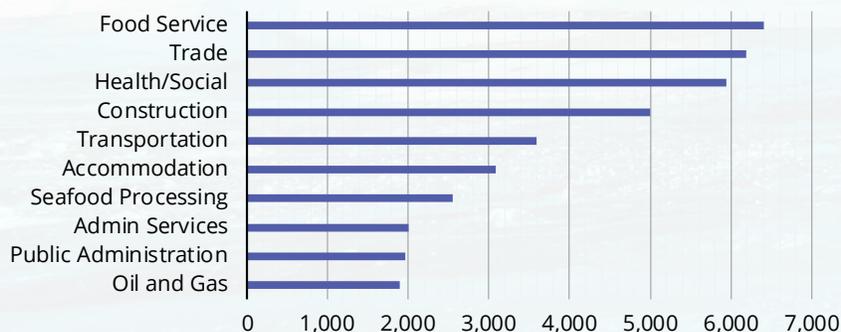
### At a glance

<b>Total April claims</b>	<b>48,238</b> (~7% of the population)
<b>Total amount paid</b>	<b>\$126 million</b>
State benefits	\$36 million
Federal benefits	\$90 million
<b>First-time claimants</b>	<b>25,622 (53%)</b>
<b>Total w/ dependents</b>	<b>13,972 (29%)</b>
<b>Percent of eligible workers filing</b>	<b>5.4%</b>

amount to \$847 in Alaska.

The federal add-on, which will expire at the end of July, also significantly raised the percentage of claimants' qualifying wages that benefits replaced. Most state programs replace between 30 and 50 percent of what workers earn on average, and \$600 is the amount the federal government determined would boost the average American worker to 100 percent wage replacement.

### Industries with the most claims in April



**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

For Alaska, the add-on increased the average replacement rate from 31 percent in March to 71 percent in April. It also raised the amount disbursed statewide in April to \$126 million, which was 18 times the amount distributed in April of last year.

The federal government paid the bulk of regular benefits in April, and although Alaska's system is handling four times the normal claims load, its trust fund remains solvent. The balance was \$465 million at the end of April, down from about \$495 million at the beginning of March.

## Federal extended benefits were triggered in mid-April

From the time they open their claim, filers qualify for up to 26 weeks of regular benefits — but certain economic conditions trigger federally funded programs that extend the allowed duration.

Federal extended benefits kicked in for Alaska the week ending April 18, and filers will be allowed to collect for an additional 13 weeks while the program is in effect.

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received a payment during the month.

Closures and distancing requirements hit in-person service jobs the hardest. Food services, retail, and health and social assistance accounted for the largest number of claims during the month, and one in three claimants worked in those industries.

Out of 6,400 food service claimants, more than 5,000, or 80 percent, had been working in restaurants and other eating places. Claims were lower from eateries able to offer takeout or other limited service, but roughly 30 percent of

the state's restaurant employment was cut because of the pandemic.

Although the number of claims from bars and other drinking places was lower than from restaurants, at 1,300, it represented nearly half of those jobs in Alaska. Bars, gyms and theaters remained closed through May 9, after which they were allowed to open at limited capacity.

About 6,200 retail workers collected benefits in April, and their most common employers were warehouse clubs and supercenters (503 claims), new car dealers (403), and supermarkets and grocery stores (312 claims).

For health care and social assistance, the majority

## A closer look at the 48,238 claimants paid in April

### A third worked in just three industries

The highest number of initial claims were filed between March 14 and 28, after the first measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 took effect. That two-week window included the statewide closures of restaurants, bars, theaters, gyms, bowling alleys, and bingo halls that were announced on March 17.

Over those two weeks, 24,000 people filed a new claim, and by the end of April, about 48,000 had

## Breakdown of businesses in the top three industries for April claims



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

came from dentists' offices (1,273 claims) followed by doctors' offices (682) and hospitals (637).

Tourism-related jobs in food service, transportation, and accommodation were hit by travel restrictions as well as closures in April. Air passenger transportation claims were 20 times higher than last April, accommodation claims were 11 times higher, and scenic and sightseeing transportation claims were up by a factor of nine.

### More young workers, women than usual filed

The largest group of filers is usually between ages 25 and 34, and that held for April's historic claims load. Twenty-nine percent of all filers fell into this age group, followed by 23 percent who were between 35 and 44.

As a percent of overall claims, filers under 21 increased the most over the year, from fewer than 50 to nearly 2,000. The number of claimants who were between 21 and 24 also jumped, from 400 to more than 4,000.

Total claimants in each of the age groups above 34 increased by an average factor of four compared to last April.

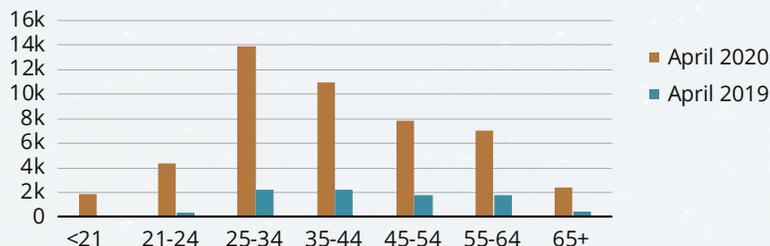
More women than usual filed for benefits during early COVID-19 restrictions. Claimants are typically around 35 percent women, which jumped to 47 percent in April — the highest share since data were first recorded.

Female claimants were the majority from food services, retail, and health care and social assistance — the three industries that had the most claimants overall. For health care and social assistance, women represented 81 percent of claims.

### More than half had never filed before

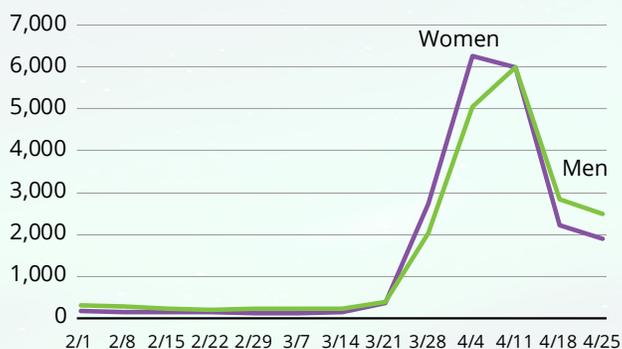
Of the 48,000 who received a payment in April, just over half had never participated in the program before, or at least not since 2008. The 26,000

## Biggest increases among younger filers



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## Larger increase in women collecting benefits in April



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

newcomers weren't concentrated in any particular industries, but 22 percent were younger than 25 compared with just 3 percent of the 23,000 repeat filers.

### Claimants by borough and census area

See the sidebar at right for details on Anchorage's claims in April. Similar data for all of Alaska's boroughs and census areas will be available June 5 on our website, [laborstats.alaska.gov](http://laborstats.alaska.gov).

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# Anchorage unemployment benefit claims in April

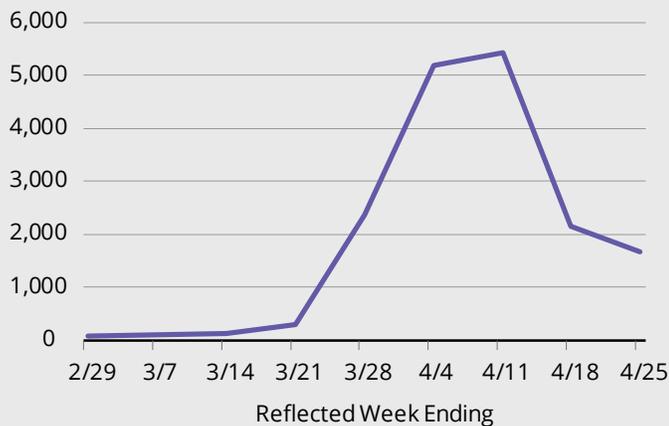
## Claims by industry

Food Service	3,501
Retail and Wholesale Trade	3,207
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,657
Construction	1,498
Accommodation	1,437
Transportation	1,202
Administrative Services	1,067
Professional and Business Svcs	542
Education	536
Arts, Entertainment, and Rec	520

## Anchorage at a glance

Share of state population	39.9%
Share of state claims, April	40.4%
Total April claims	19,499
Increase from April 2019	798%
Average wage replacement	68%
Average weekly payment	\$848
First-time claimants	61%
Share with dependents	28%
Female-male split	52%/48%

## When Anchorage claimants received their first payment



**86% of Anchorage claimants received their first payment on or after 3/28.**

On June 5, claims data for all of Alaska's boroughs and census areas will be available at: [laborstats.alaska.gov](http://laborstats.alaska.gov).

**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## Anchorage claimants by age group

