

# BULLETIN

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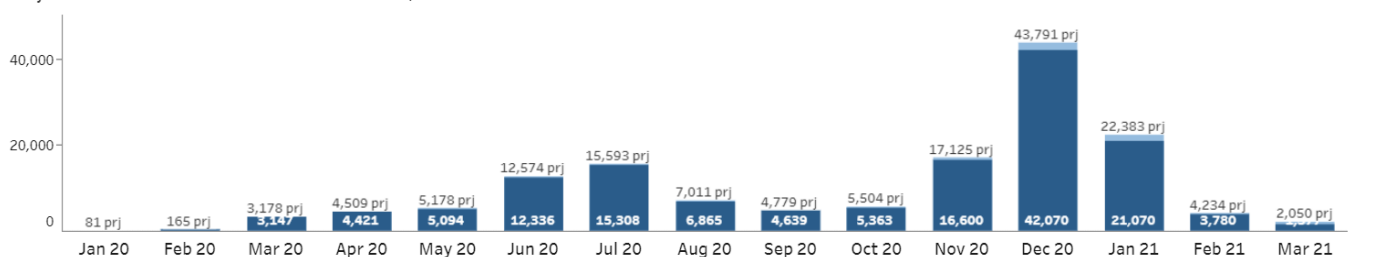
After surging to a record high at the end of 2020, California workers' compensation COVID-19 claim volume has fallen dramatically in the first quarter of this year, with the April 19 tally showing that the DWC recorded only 1,577 job-related COVID-19 claims with March injury dates, the lowest monthly total in over a year. The addition of the March claims brought the total COVID-19 claim count for the 15 months since the pandemic began to 142,513 cases, while the total number of death claims reported as of April 19 is 883.

The most recent update to CWCI's COVID-19/Non-COVID-19 Interactive Claim Application includes data on California work injury claims from both the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods, encompassing 1,368,565 claims with dates of injury from January 1, 2019 through March 31, 2021 reported thus far to the DWC's Workers' Compensation Information System. The latest figures show that after peaking at 42,070 COVID-19 claims in December, the number of COVID-19 cases plummeted, with the monthly total falling to 21,070 in January; 3,780 in February; and 1,577 in March. Additional claims from those months are still being reported, but CWCI projections that control for late reporting also show the steep drop in the first quarter of this year, with the latest estimates showing that the ultimate COVID-19 claim count will be 22,383 claims for January; 4,234 for February, and 2,050 for March. If the March projection holds up, the number of COVID-19 claims in California workers' compensation will have hit the lowest point since February 2020 – a month before Governor Newsom declared the pandemic emergency and ordered non-essential businesses to shut down in an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus. As shown in the chart below, in the year that followed, COVID-19 claim volume has been a roller coaster ride, increasing steadily from March through July, falling sharply at the end of the summer, then climbing to unprecedented levels in the fourth quarter before plunging over the last three months. The latest projections show COVID-19 claims accounted for 21.6% of all California workers' compensation claims from March to December 2020 and 17.9% of the total for the first quarter of 2021, but with the huge drop off over the past two months, they represented only 9.2% of the projected claims for February of this year and 3.9% of the projected claims for March.

## COVID Claims by Month of Injury

Reported Jan 2020 - Mar 2021 claims: 142,513

Projected Ultimate Jan 2020 - Mar 2021 claims: 148,153



Given the impact of the governor's March 2020 stay-at-home order on the state's economy and employment, total workers' compensation claim volume during the first several months of the pandemic was down considerably compared to the prior year (pre-pandemic) figures. The year-end surge in COVID-19 claims, however, offset much of the decline from earlier in the year, so the total number of workers' compensation claims projected for the most recent 12 months of the pandemic period (April 2020 – March 2021) is 662,425, down only 4.0% from the 690,094 claims projected for the comparable pre-pandemic baseline period.

CWCI's Interactive Claim App allows users to view COVID-19 and non-COVID claim results for a specific timeframe within the pandemic period starting in March of AY 2020 (the first month of AY 2020 for which a significant number of COVID-19 claims were filed) through the most recent report. This feature can be used to view projected and reported claim volume for all claims, for non-COVID claims, or for COVID vs. non-COVID claims within a chosen period, and to break out results for a dozen different metrics, including industry, insured vs. self-insured claims, region, cause of injury, and denial status. Pre-pandemic baseline data on multiple metrics is also available so users can compare results for non-COVID claims or all claims within a selected pandemic period to results for similar pre-pandemic claims from one year earlier (i.e., if the selected pandemic month range is October to December 2020, then the application will automatically display baseline results for a comparable claim population from October to December 2019). Using this tool to monitor changes in the regional distribution of all claims during the December 2020 surge in claims helps identify the year-end hot spots, showing that Los Angeles County accounted for 27.2% of all claims from that month versus 25.4% of the claims a year earlier, while the Inland Empire/Orange County's share of the December 2020 claims was 25.3%, which was up from 20.5% in December 2019, prior to the pandemic. Comparing December 2020 pandemic results to year earlier results for the rest of the state shows virtually no change in the proportion of claims coming from the Central Valley (17.3% vs. 17.2%); while the Bay Area's share of all claims fell from 18.8% to 14.8%; San Diego's share fell from 7.9% to 6.8%; and the percentage of claims coming from the Central Coast; North Counties/Sierras; and out-of-state all fell less than 1%.

Looking at the COVID-19 claim distributions by industry over the last year reveals some notable shifts. Overall, healthcare workers have accounted for 31.3% of all COVID-19 claims since last April, followed by public safety/government workers (17.1%); retail workers (10.4%); manufacturing workers (7.7%); and transportation workers (6.5%). But, as noted below, breaking out the results by quarter shows the changes in the mix of COVID claims by industry as the pandemic progressed, with health care workers accounting for a declining share of the COVID claims, while government/public safety workers saw the biggest percentage point increase, most of which occurred in the fourth quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of this year.

#### Changes in the Distribution of COVID-19 Claims Among Major Industry Sectors, Q2 20 - Q1 2021

| Industry Sector          | Q2 2020 | Q3 2020 | Q4 2020 | Q1 2021 | Q2 20 – Q1 21<br>%-age Point Change | Q2 20 – Q1 21<br>Relative Change |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Health Care              | 37.9%   | 34.7%   | 29.6%   | 26.5%   | - 11.4                              | - 30.1%                          |
| Government/Public Safety | 14.2%   | 14.6%   | 17.7%   | 20.8%   | + 6.6                               | + 46.5%                          |
| Retail                   | 8.5%    | 7.7%    | 11.5%   | 12.2%   | + 3.7                               | + 43.5%                          |
| Manufacturing            | 8.5%    | 8.9%    | 7.3%    | 6.5%    | - 2.0                               | - 23.5%                          |
| Transportation           | 3.8%    | 5.7%    | 7.3%    | 7.6%    | + 3.8                               | + 100.0%                         |
| All Other Sectors        | 27.1%   | 28.4%   | 26.6%   | 26.4%   | - 0.7                               | - 2.6%                           |
| Reported COVID-19 Claims | 21,851  | 26,812  | 64,033  | 26,427  |                                     |                                  |

The 11.4 percentage point decline in health care workers' share of the COVID claims since the second quarter of last year translates to a relative decline of 30.1%, while the 6.6 percentage point increase in the government/public safety sector's share is a relative increase of 46.5%. The retail sector saw a relative increase of 43.5% in its share of the COVID claims, while transportation workers registered the largest relative increase (+100%) as their share of the COVID claims doubled from 3.8% to 7.6%.

CWCI continues to update its COVID-19/Non-COVID-19 app on a biweekly basis. The application is available to the public, so anyone who wishes to monitor and compare COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 claim experience over time can access the app from the CWCI website by clicking [here](#).

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