

BULLETIN

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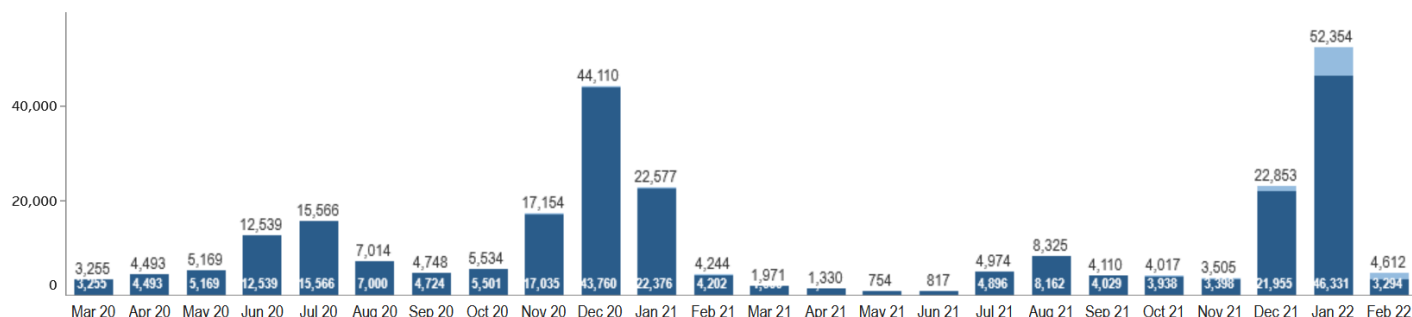
Wild fluctuations in California workers' compensation COVID-19 claim volume continued into early 2022 with the COVID claim count soaring to an all-time high in January as the Omicron variant spread throughout the state then plummeting more than 90% in February as the latest coronavirus wave receded.

The latest update to CWCI's COVID-19/Non-COVID-19 Interactive Claim Application, contains data on California workers' comp claims from pre- and post-pandemic periods, encompassing more than 2.14 million COVID and non-COVID claims with dates of injury from January 1, 2019 through February 28, 2022 reported to the state as of March 7. The new monthly tallies show that as the Omicron variant spread at the end of last year and the beginning of this year, the COVID-19 claim count increased more than six-fold between November and December, then doubled from 21,955 cases in December to 46,331 cases in January before plunging back down to 3,294 cases in February. Those figures will increase as claims are still being reported for those months, but CWCI projections that control for late reporting show the same pattern, with sharp increases in December and January followed by a huge drop off in February. The latest projections estimate that the ultimate COVID claim count will be 3,505 claims for November, 22,853 claims for December; 52,354 claims for January, and 4,612 claims for February.

COVID Claims by Month of Injury - Reported (246,436) and Projected (256,025)

Mar 2020 - Feb 2022

■ COVID Claims Reported
■ COVID Claims Projected



While the February total is a significant month-to-month improvement, both the reported and projected COVID claim totals for January were the highest monthly COVID-19 claim counts since the first COVID claims were reported more than two years ago. The current COVID claim count reported for January exceeded the previous high-water mark from December 2020 by 2,571 claims, and the projected number of COVID claims for January is 8,244 more claims than the projected total from December 2020. The latest update also shows that since the pandemic began, COVID claims have accounted for 18.3 percent of all reported California workers' compensation claims, but the recent results underscore the volatility and unpredictability of COVID claims within the system, which jumped from 33.9 percent of all claims in December to 55.2 percent of all claims in January, then fell to 10 percent of all claims in February. These huge fluctuations have required employers to remain vigilant in monitoring and reporting COVID cases as Cal-OSHA's [COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards](#) require employers to report three or more coronavirus cases detected within a 14-day period.

The December to January surge in COVID claims was broad-based, but a comparison to the COVID claims data from the prior three months (September through November) shows the extent to which claim activity varied by region and industry. Although the December through February data is the least developed data in the Institute's app, an unprecedented increase of 42,933 reported COVID claims from the November low to the January peak is already evident and stands in sharp contrast to the steady downtrend that occurred last fall, after the Delta wave crested in August. The following tables reveal where the Omicron surge in COVID claims was most pronounced by tracking the changes in claim volume by region and industry between the post-Delta decline (September through November of 2021) and the Omicron surge (December 2021 through January 2022).

Volume & Distribution of COVID Claims by Region, Sept–Nov AY 2021 vs Dec 2021–Jan 2022*

Region	Sept - Nov AY 2021		Dec AY 2021 – Jan AY 2022		Sept-Nov to Dec-Jan Change	
	# of Claims	% of COVID Claims	# of Claims	% of COVID Claims	# of Claims	% Increase
Central Valley	3,265	29.1%	14,127	21.0%	+ 10,862	333%
Inland Emp./O.C.	2,539	22.6%	14,888	22.1%	+ 12,349	486%
L.A. County	2,058	18.3%	15,968	23.7%	+ 13,910	676%
Bay Area	1,307	11.6%	10,813	16.1%	+ 9,506	727%
San Diego	809	7.2%	5,496	8.2%	+ 4,687	579%
N. Counties/Sierra	778	6.9%	2,291	3.4%	+ 1,513	194%
Central Coast	388	3.5%	3,313	4.9%	+ 2,925	754%
Out of State	79	0.7%	403	0.6%	+ 324	410%
All	11,223	100%	67,299	100%	+ 56,076	500%

*Counts and proportions exclude unknown values

As Delta variant infections were receding last fall, the Central Valley had the largest share of COVID claims in the state (29.1%), followed by the Inland Empire/Orange County (22.6%), while the state's major population centers (Los Angeles County, the Bay Area, and San Diego) all had smaller shares. But when the Omicron wave hit in December and January, COVID claim volume statewide increased to 67,299 claims – 6 times what it had been in the prior 3 months, and even though the number of COVID claims in the Central Valley quadrupled, that was less than the increases in most other regions, leading to a shift in the COVID claim distribution toward the state's metropolitan job centers. L.A. County surpassed every other region of the state as its COVID claim count rose by 13,910 claims during the Omicron surge, up 676% over its total from September through November, which pushed its share of the COVID claims from 18.3 % to 23.7%. The Inland Empire/Orange County continued to have the second highest volume of COVID claims in the state, as its COVID claim total rose from 2,539 to 14,888 claims, but that was slightly less than the statewide growth rate, so its share of the state's COVID claims dipped from 22.6% to 22.1%. Despite recording 10,862 more COVID claims in December and January than in the prior 3 months, the Central Valley's share of the COVID claims fell from 29.1% to 21.0%, but it still ranked ahead of the Bay Area, where COVID claim volume soared from 1,307 to 10,813 claims, a 727% increase that drove its share of the state's COVID claims up from 11.6% to 16.1%.

Public safety/government workers continue to report far more COVID claims than any other sector, accounting for more than a third of all claims both prior to and after the Omicron surge as their COVID claim count rose to 21,719 claims in the December 2021 to January 2022 period, 18,153 more than in the prior 3 months. The health care sector saw the biggest increase in its share of the COVID claims, as it went from 1,848 claims in the September through November period to 14,995 claims in December and January, a 7-fold increase. Over the same period, the retail and manufacturing sectors both experienced sharp increases in COVID claims (568% and 611% respectively), so both saw their share of the COVID claims edge up, while the increases noted for workers in the transportation, education, food service and administration/waste sectors were all triple-digit, but less than the 518% increase noted across all industries, so these sectors all saw their share of the COVID claims decline during the Omicron wave.

Volume & Distribution of COVID Claims by Industry, Sept–Nov 2021 vs Dec. 2021–Jan 2022

Industry	Sept - Nov AY 2021		Dec AY 2021 – Jan AY 2022		Sept-Nov to Dec-Jan Change	
	# of Claims	% of COVID Claims	# of Claims	% of COVID Claims	# of Claims	% Increase
Public Safety/Govt	3,566	34.8%	21,719	34.3%	18,153	509%
Health Care	1,848	18.0%	14,955	23.6%	13,107	709%
Retail	904	8.8%	6,036	9.5%	5,132	568%
Transportation	897	8.8%	4,473	7.1%	3,576	399%
Education	568	5.5%	1,875	3.0%	1,307	230%
Food Service	483	4.7%	2,044	3.2%	1,561	323%
Manufacturing	404	3.9%	2,876	4.5%	2,469	611%
Admin/Waste	310	3.0%	1,564	2.5%	1,254	405%
All Other *	1,265	12.5%	7,766	12.3%	6,501	514%
All	10,245	100.0%	63,305	100.0%	53,060	518%

*"All Other" includes industries not in the top 8 for COVID claims in Sept – Nov 2021 or Dec 2021 – Jan 2022 and excludes claims where the industry is unknown.

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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