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BULLETIN

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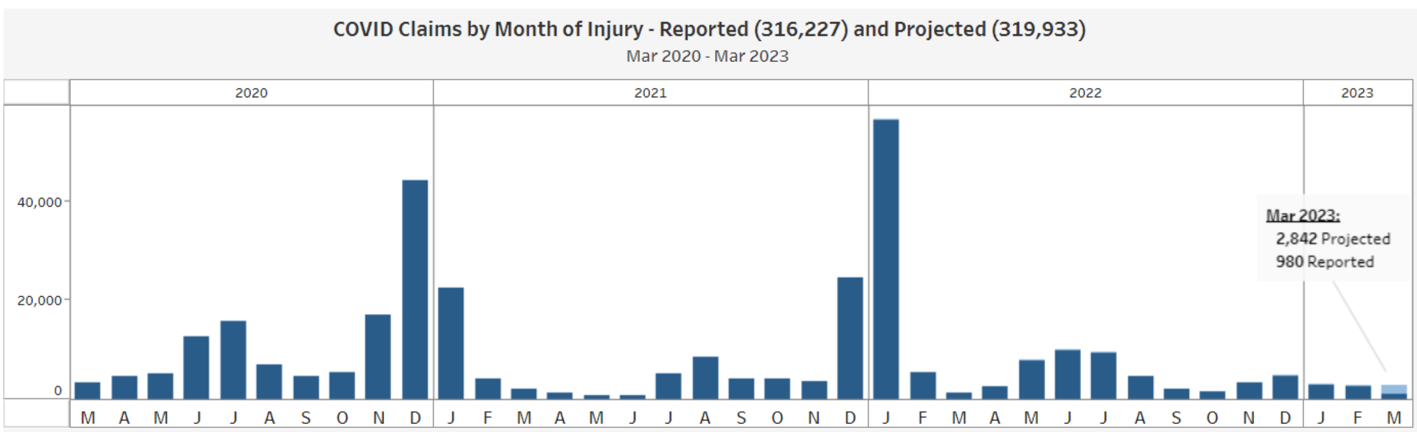
The April 3 update to CWCI's COVID-19/Non-COVID 19 Claim Application shows the number of COVID-19 claims reported to the DWC surged this winter, though the increase paled in comparison to the prior two years, and since New Year's the number of COVID claims – with the exception of claims from the education sector – has been declining.

CWCI's Application contains data on 2.1 million California workers' compensation claims from March 2020 through March 2023, of which 316,227 (15%) are COVID claims, including 1,605 COVID death claims. A review of reported COVID claim counts for the most recent six-month period (through March 2023) shows that after falling to 1,553 claims in October (the second lowest total for all of 2022), the COVID claim volume more than doubled to 3,354 in November, then peaked at 4,680 in December, when COVID accounted for 9.8 percent of reported claims. COVID claim volume began to decline after New Year's, with the latest data showing 2,859 reported cases for January (3,126 projected), 2,538 reported cases for February (2,850 projected), and 980 reported claims for March (2,842 projected).



A few claims from the end of 2022 are still coming in, but CWCI projects the ultimate December COVID claim count will hit 4,774 cases, which is a fraction of the year-earlier total, when there were 24,334 COVID claims reported, and the January 2022 total, when the Omicron variant drove the COVID claim count to a record 56,003 claims (55.5 percent of all workers' comp claims that month). The December COVID claim total was also far below the figure from two years earlier, when employers reported 44,002 COVID claims – the high point for the first year of the pandemic.

While not fully developed, regional data from the two most recent quarters show the hardest hit areas during the recent winter surge and the extent of the subsequent decline in different parts of the state.

Volume and Distribution of COVID-19 Claims by Region, Q4 AY 2022 vs. Q1 AY 2023

Region	Q4 AY 2022		Q1 AY 2023		Q4 2022 to Q1 2023 Change	
	# of Claims	% of COVID Claims	# of Claims	% of COVID Claims	# of Claims	% Change
L.A. County	2,399	25.0%	1,356	21.3%	- 1,043	- 43.5%
Bay Area	1,976	20.6%	1,262	19.8%	- 714	- 36.1%
Central Valley	1,955	20.4%	1,431	22.4%	- 524	- 26.8%
Inland Emp./O.C.	1,829	19.1%	1,139	17.9%	- 690	- 37.7%
San Diego	659	6.9%	525	8.2%	- 134	- 20.3%
Central Coast	429	4.5%	407	6.4%	- 22	- 5.1%
N. Counties/Sierra	178	1.9%	181	2.8%	+ 3	+1.7%
Out of State	62	0.6%	37	0.6%	- 25	- 40.3%
Unknown	100	1.0%	39	0.6%	- 61	- 61.0%
All	9,587	100%	6,377	100%	-3,210	-33.5%

In the fourth quarter of 2022, Los Angeles County had a quarter of the reported COVID claims in the state, which is about in line with its share of the state's work force, followed by the Bay Area (20.6 percent), the Central Valley (20.4 percent), and the Inland Empire/Orange County (19.1 percent). With the decline in COVID claim volume in the first quarter of this year, however, the mix of COVID claims within the state shifted, with Los Angeles County registering the biggest decline (43.5 percent), taking its share of the COVID claims down to 21.3 percent, while the Inland Empire/Orange County (-37.7 percent); the Bay Area (-36.1 percent); and out-of-state claims (-40.3 percent) also registered declines that exceeded the statewide average, so they too represented a declining share of the state's COVID claims. In contrast, the first-quarter decline in COVID claims was below the statewide average in San Diego (-20.3 percent) and in the more rural and agricultural Central Valley (-26.8 percent) and Central Coast (-5.1 percent), while COVID claim volume rose slightly in the sparsely populated Northern Counties and Sierras, so all four of these areas saw their percentage of the state's COVID claims increase in the first three months of the year.

The mix of COVID claims by industry sector also shifted between the last quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. Health care and public safety/government workers, many of whom have a presumption of compensability for COVID, continued to have more COVID claims than workers in other sectors. Although COVID claim volume for these two sectors declined by 23.1 percent and 20.3 percent respectively in the first quarter, those declines were well below the statewide decline of 33.5 precent, so they both saw their share of the COVID claims increase, and together represented 53.2 percent of the COVID claims in the first three months of the year, up from 45.3 percent the prior quarter.

Volume and Distribution of COVID-19 Claims by Industry, Q4 AY 2022 vs. Q1 AY 2023

	Q4 AY 2022		Q1 AY 2023		Q4 2022 to Q1 2023 Change	
Industry	**# of Claims**	**% of COVID Claims**	**# of Claims**	**% of COVID Claims**	**# of Claims**	**% Change**
Health Care	2,333	24.3%	1,795	28.1%	- 538	- 23.1%
Public Safety/Govt	2,009	21.0%	1,601	25.1%	- 408	- 20.3%
Retail	794	8.3%	438	6.9%	- 356	- 44.8%
Manufacturing	552	5.8%	337	5.3%	- 215	- 38.9%
Admin/Waste	390	4.1%	178	2.8%	- 212	- 54.4%
Finance	262	2.7%	136	2.1%	- 126	- 48.1%
Education	240	2.5%	442	6.9%	+ 202	+84.2%
Food Service	214	2.2%	68	1.1%	- 146	- 68.2%
Other Services	187	2.0%	96	1.5%	- 91	- 48.7%
Transportation	169	1.8%	67	1.1%	- 102	- 60.4%
Professional/Tech	168	1.8%	87	1.4%	- 81	- 48.2%
Arts & Recreation	149	1.6%	62	1.0%	- 87	-58.4%
Accommodation	104	1.1%	52	0.8%	- 52	- 50.0%
Wholesale	82	0.9%	73	1.1%	- 9	- 11.0%
All Other*	1,934	20.2%	945	14.8%	-989	-51.1%
All	9,587	100%	6,377	100%	- 3,210	-33.5%

*The "All Other" category includes industries not among the top 14 for COVID claims in Q4 2022 or Q1 2023 and unknowns.

The education sector was the only major sector that saw an increase in COVID claim volume in the first quarter, as the COVID claim count for education workers soared from 240 claims to 442 claims (+84.2 percent), which drove the education sector's share of the COVID claims up from 2.5 percent to 6.9 percent, making it the number 3 sector for COVID claims as it surpassed retail, manufacturing, administration/waste, and finance. Among the major sectors, the biggest percentage decline in COVID claims was in the food service sector (-68.2 percent), though sharp first-quarter declines were also noted in the transportation sector (-60.4 percent); arts and recreation (-58.4 percent); administration/waste (-54.4 percent); and the accommodation sector (-50.0 percent).

The CDC reports that a new Omicron subvariant (XBB.1.16) is increasing in the U.S., but in February it relaxed its quarantine and screening recommendations for COVID, and on February 28 Gov. Newsom terminated California's COVID-19 State of Emergency. CWCI continues to monitor COVID-19 claim activity and posts updates on its COVID-19/Non-COVID-19 Interactive Application. The app will be revised with data through April 17 later this week. The latest app can be viewed by clicking here.

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