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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS — MAY 21, 2020

**Unemployment Claims Weekly News Release.** The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) releases national and state level unemployment insurance (UI) claims data each Thursday. The [data](#) released on Thursday, May 21, 2020, covers the week ending May 16, 2020, for initial claims and the week ending May 9, 2020, for continued claims. The May 21 report represents the ninth consecutive weekly release in which unemployment claims are significantly impacted by the recent economic turmoil and government response resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The dataset published by the DOL provides two statistics covering the number of unemployment claims each week. The DOL defines the two statistics in the weekly news release as follows:

- **Initial Claims:** An initial claim is a claim filed by an unemployed individual after a separation from an employer. The claimant requests a determination of basic eligibility for the UI program. When an initial claim is filed with a state, certain programmatic activities take place, and these result in activity counts including the count of initial claims. The count of U.S. initial claims for unemployment insurance is a leading economic indicator because it is an indication of emerging labor market conditions in the country. However, these are weekly administrative data which are difficult to seasonally adjust, making the series subject to some volatility.
- **Continued Claims:** A person who has already filed an initial claim and who has experienced a week of unemployment then files a continued claim to claim benefits for that week of unemployment. Continued claims are also referred to as insured unemployment. The count of U.S. continued weeks claimed is also a good indicator of labor market conditions. Continued claims reflect the current number of insured unemployed workers filing for UI benefits in the nation. While continued claims are not a leading indicator (they roughly coincide with economic cycles at their peaks and lag at cycle troughs), they provide confirming evidence of the direction of the U.S. economy.

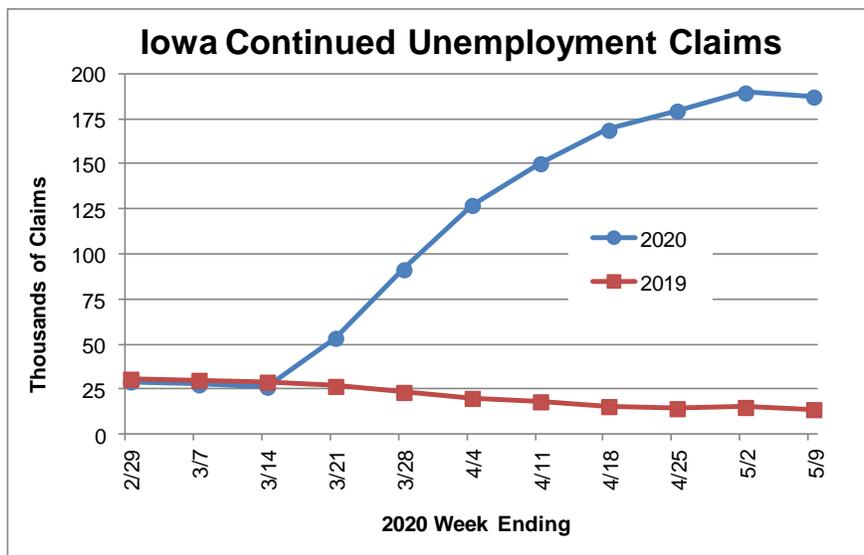
This week's DOL report shows continued unprecedented initial unemployment claim counts at both the State and national level, although both the U.S. year-over-year increase in initial claims (997.1%) and the Iowa increase (512.8%) are lower than last week's increase. As expected, the substantial increase in initial claims reported in recent weeks produced a large increase in continued claims for the week ending May 9, 2020, when compared to the same week last year. National continued claims increased 1,386.4% compared to the same week last year, while Iowa continued claims increased 1,228.9%.

The following table provides U.S. and Iowa initial and continued claims numbers for the most recent report week as well as the previous week and the same week last year. Please note that the claims reported are actual claims numbers and have not been seasonally adjusted.

<b>Weekly Continued Claims</b> This week ending 5/9/2020		<b>Weekly Initial Claims</b> This week ending 5/16/2020	
<u>Time Period</u>	<u>U.S. Continued Claims</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>U.S. Initial Claims</u>
Last Year	1,543,472	Last Year	198,194
Last Week	20,879,551	Last Week	2,356,594
This Week	22,942,103	This Week	2,174,329
<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Iowa Continued Claims</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Iowa Initial Claims</u>
Last Year	14,100	Last Year	2,128
Last Week	189,643	Last Week	15,820
This Week	187,375	This Week	13,040

Claim numbers are not seasonally adjusted.

The following chart displays the number of Iowa continued claims over the past 11 weeks for 2019 and 2020. Although the reduction was small, the number of continued claims declined in Iowa for the first time in eight weeks.



Unemployment claim payments are made to qualified unemployed workers, and the payments are generally made from the State Unemployment Insurance Fund. That Fund is financed through a payroll tax paid by employers. In response to the recent economic decline, the federal government is currently financing a [portion](#) of unemployment insurance payments.

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