



## Workforce System COVID-19 Response for Clark, Cowlitz & Wahkiakum Counties April 30, 2020

I hope all of you are continuing to stay home, safe and healthy. All of us at WSW are doing the same while also staying incredibly busy on the front lines of this pandemic, working hard to keep businesses open, people employed, and for those that may have lost their job, connecting them to work, resources, and information as fast as we can.

We've also updated our website, expanding on a wide variety of resources available for businesses and individuals: <https://workforcesw.org/covid-19>. We will continue to distill information through this portion of our site as new resources become available. Please share far and wide!

As always, please reach out with any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Kevin Perkey  
Chief Executive Officer

### Response to Businesses

**Layoff Aversion** – March 16 was the date our phones lit up with calls from local businesses requesting assistance in choosing the best options for their workforce through unemployment insurance programming.

As we closed out week six on April 17, the calls had drastically reduced. No new companies reached out for assistance last week, but we were able to help many repeat business customers and their employees. The immediate challenges seem to be transitioning from businesses to their employees. As many of our business partners have chosen their path forward, now their employees struggle to navigate unemployment insurance programs. Our local Employment Security Department (ESD) staff have been immensely helpful in solving unemployment issues for residents of SW Washington who cannot get through to the unemployment claims center.

**Hiring** – The business team identified 31 companies in essential industries, including grocery, delivery and warehousing, that are hiring due to COVID-19. Open positions are advertised on our [local WorkSource website](#). Job seekers are being directed to this site via WorkSource and social media to get directly connected to these opportunities.

The analogy we've been using since the onset of COVID-19 is "the house is on fire" to describe the sentiment of our business community. Over the past few weeks, we've been working with companies to help put the fire out – and it appears to be out. Now, we will be working to rebuild in the coming weeks and months. Here are some of the ways we are supporting the business community as they rebuild, and some of the ways that we need their help to inform our strategies:

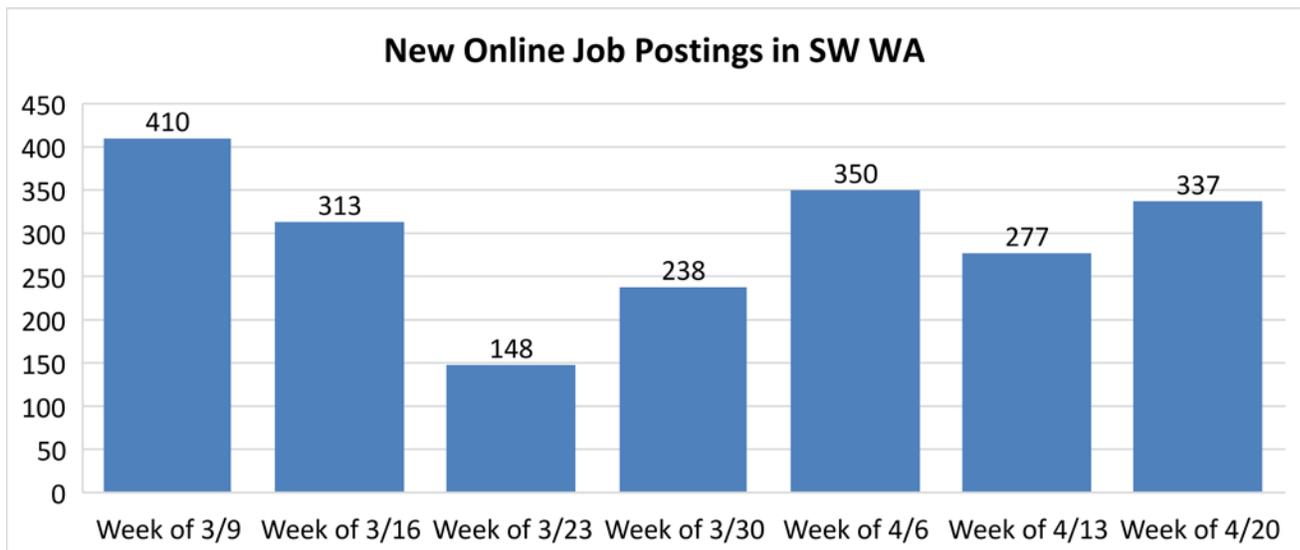
- Friday, May 1, WSW participated in a virtual meeting for the Southwest Washington Contractors Association (SWCA) members to help them get back to work as they implement Governor



Inslee’s Phase 1 Construction Restart COVID-19 Job Site Requirements. WSW provided guidance on what it means to bring back temporarily laid off workers and some of the associated challenges.

- WSW distributed a [survey](#) this week to gather information from the business community to help inform our investments and strategies going forward. Early survey results indicate that most companies believe our On-the-Job Training program could help them rehire more workers faster. Please share your organization’s experience by completing the brief survey.
- On May 5 WSW is launching a Workforce Development Recovery + Resiliency virtual conversation. The first one is to ensure the voice of business is prioritized as we coordinate our regional workforce development response.

SW WA online job ads for the week starting April 20 increased to 337 from 277 last week. Order Fillers, Wholesale Retailers and Retail Sales were the top occupations being sought. Companies hiring in Southwest Washington include Amazon, Safeway, United Parcel Service and PeaceHealth.



## Assistance for People

WorkSource and Next continue to provide services virtually to adults and youth and are assisting customers by phone, email and video meetings.

**WorkSource** – Our local WorkSource offices continue to be inundated with requests for information and assistance with unemployment insurance. Staff are working evenings and weekends to meet the demand and assist as many individuals as possible.

Other partners in the WorkSource centers are shifting their staff assignments to help create capacity and provide additional assistance for unemployment calls and workshops. It been gratifying to see the cooperation from all parties and the genuine caring and desire to help people facing unemployment get the assistance they need.



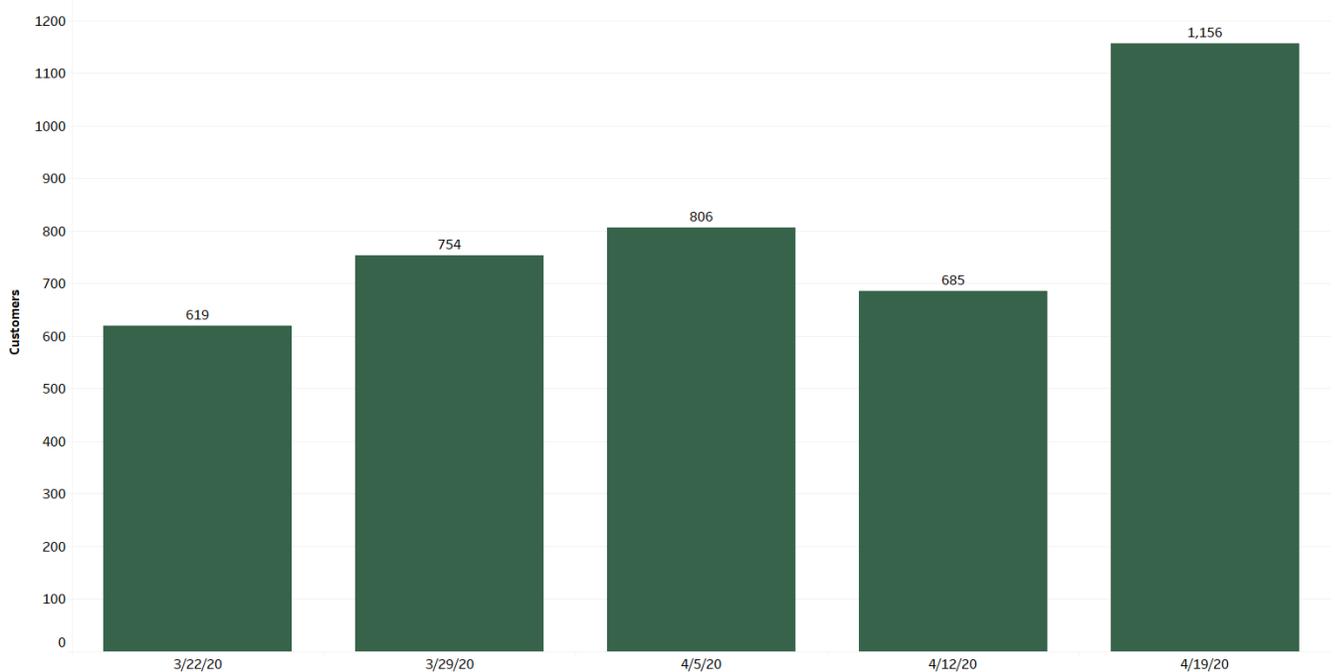
Washington was the first state in the nation to launch all three of the major Unemployment Benefits provisions of the CARES Act for expanded eligibility, increased weekly benefits, and extended time for unemployment assistance.

The Employment Security Department (ESD) updated its systems Saturday, April 18 to accommodate the new provisions. Throughout this crisis, ESD's website volume has been about 1-1.2M hits per day. On April 19, they saw that volume every two hours.

To help people avoid making mistakes when filing for unemployment, ESD launched a new help page on its website with tips and suggestions: <https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment/help>. WSW has compiled an [Unemployment FAQ](#) to answer some of the most frequent inquiries.

The Customer Appointments chart shows the number of people requesting services from WorkSource. The Services chart below that shows why they are reaching out.

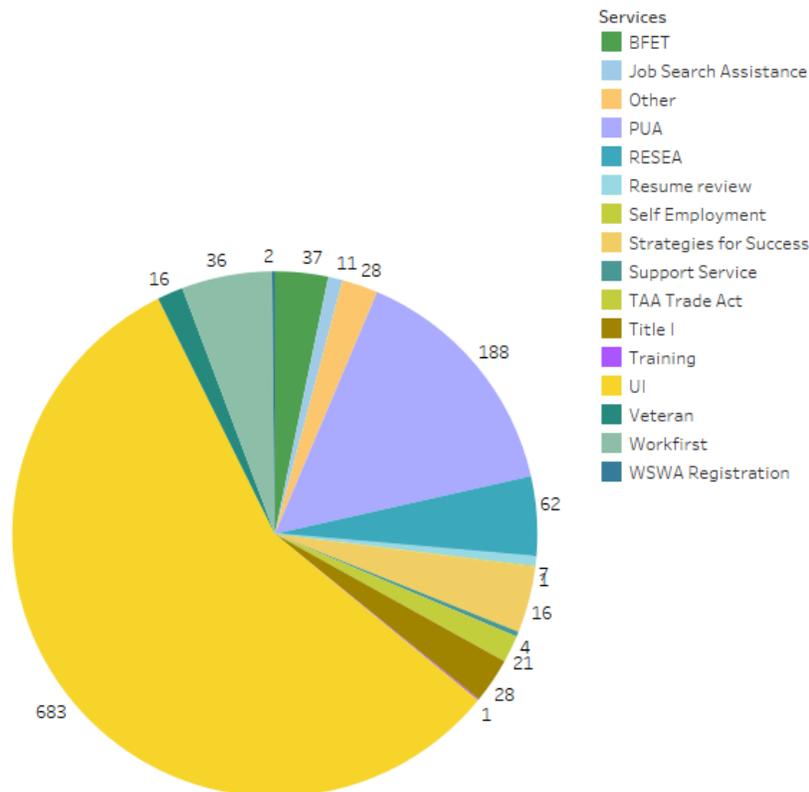
Weekly Customer Appointments



Unemployment Insurance (UI) continues to be the largest source of customer questions and requests at more than half of all inquiries. Request for UI assistance have nearly doubled from last week.



Services 4/20-4/24/2020



**Workshops** – “Interviewing” and “employment and training orientation” workshops showed slight increases in the number of participants over last week. However, “resume and cover letter preparation” fell by more than half from 56 last week to 19 this week and “marketing your skills and abilities” also saw a decrease in participants. Showing that people are being cautious and some might be in a holding pattern around pursuing job opportunities or training as they wait to hear from the government about reopening parts of the economy.

**Next Youth Center** – Staff continue to find creative ways to engage with and serve our community’s youth through social media, interactive and educational videos, and digital communications.

- Staff is engaging the youth and talking about goals to keep them focused on the future.
- Staff have created a new social media outreach plan and will be using quizzes and challenges as activities to keep the youth engaged.
- Some youth are using this time to build skills (one is learning French).
- The team is increasing outreach to youth to ensure their needs are being met after discovering some are hesitant to proactively reach out and seek assistance, even when they’re in need.
- A handful of youth requested information about the new Immigration order that went into effect April 23 and will last for 60 days.
- Staff will outreach to school counselors to ensure they are aware Next is operating and serving youth.



## System priorities

- WSW is launching a Recovery + Resiliency series of conversations to identify and prioritize needs as we coordinate our regional workforce development response. We will share economic data, our strategic response, and look for feedback to guide our efforts. Zoom calls will be held:
  - Business – May 5 [Click here to register](#).
  - Municipal Leadership – May 12 RSVP to [mhalliday@workforcesw.org](mailto:mhalliday@workforcesw.org).
  - Community Organization Leadership – May 19 RSVP to [ndaniyelyan@workforcesw.org](mailto:ndaniyelyan@workforcesw.org).
  - Higher Education – May 26 RSVP to [ndaniyelyan@workforcesw.org](mailto:ndaniyelyan@workforcesw.org).
- While many services have been moved online and training, learning and meeting are taking place virtually, not everyone has access to computers and the internet. To improve access and equity for our community, WSW is:
  - Partnering with Comcast Essentials and the Community Foundation for SW WA to provide six months of free internet access to 200 families.
  - Partnering with Edge Networks to give 30 Chromebooks to families in need in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. We are partnering with WSUV extension, Wahkiakum High School, and WorkSource to identify the families.

## Unemployment Insurance Claims

According to the WA State Employment Security Department (ESD), during the week of April 19-25, 1,455,908 total claims for unemployment benefits were filed.

<b>Unemployment claims for the week of April 19-25</b>	
Regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) initial claims	137,605
Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) initial claims	190,948
Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) initial claims	168,165
Continued/ongoing weekly claims	959,190
<b>Total claims</b>	<b>1,455,908</b>

Initial claims for regular unemployment benefits increased by 67 percent, and total initial claims increased by 453.3 percent over the previous week. An average of 1.5 initial claims were filed per person for Unemployment (UI), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC). This was the first week that initial PUA claims could be filed by individuals such as self-employed workers and independent contractors, and initial PEUC claims for extended benefits were able to be filed.

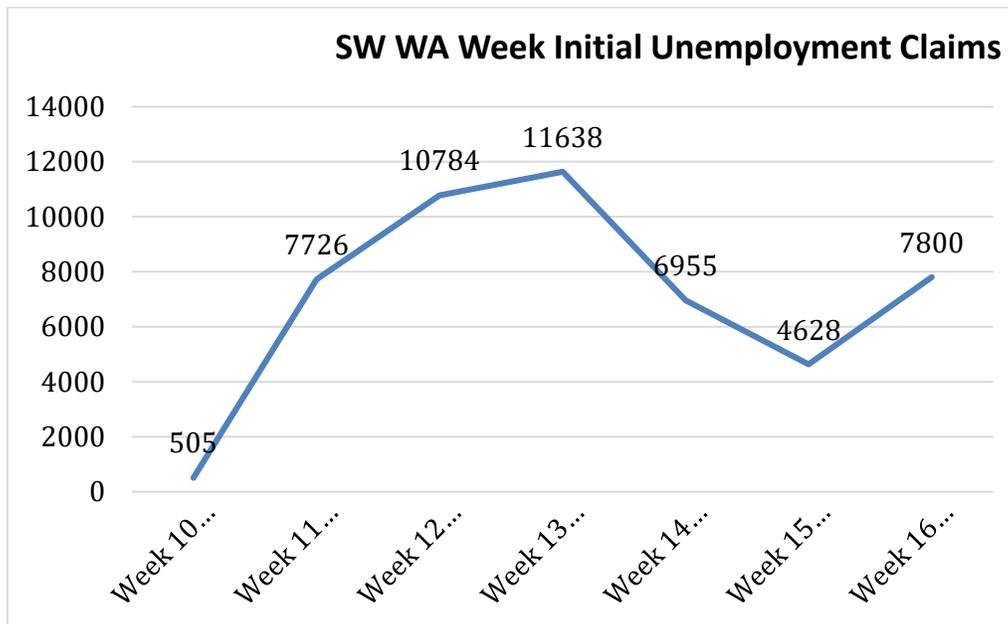
**Eight-week summary of statewide initial claims filed since the start of the COVID-19 crisis**  
(provided by the WA State Employment Security Department)



For the week ending on:	Total number of unemployment claims paid	Number of initial unemployment claims**	Increase/decrease of initial unemployment claims over previous week	Increase of initial unemployment claims over same week in 2019
7-Mar	46,528	6,548	18.6%	1.0%
14-Mar	45,436	14,154	116.0%	182.0%
21-Mar	48,180	128,962*	811.0%	2568.0%
28-Mar	99,843	181,975	41.0%	3513.0%
4-Apr	182,315	170,063	-6.5%	2627.0%
11-Apr	265,798	143,241	-15.7%	1979.0%
18-Apr	352,909	82,435	-42.5%	1343.9%
25-Apr	504,407	137,605	66.9%	2501.0%

\*This number was revised downward from 133,464 to 128,962 by the U.S. Department of Labor. \*\* Initial claims include claims that are still being reviewed for eligibility. Counts for initial claims are not indicative of the number of claims that will result in monetary compensation

Since the week ending March 14, our three SW WA counties have seen 50,036 total initial claims for unemployment insurance (UI).

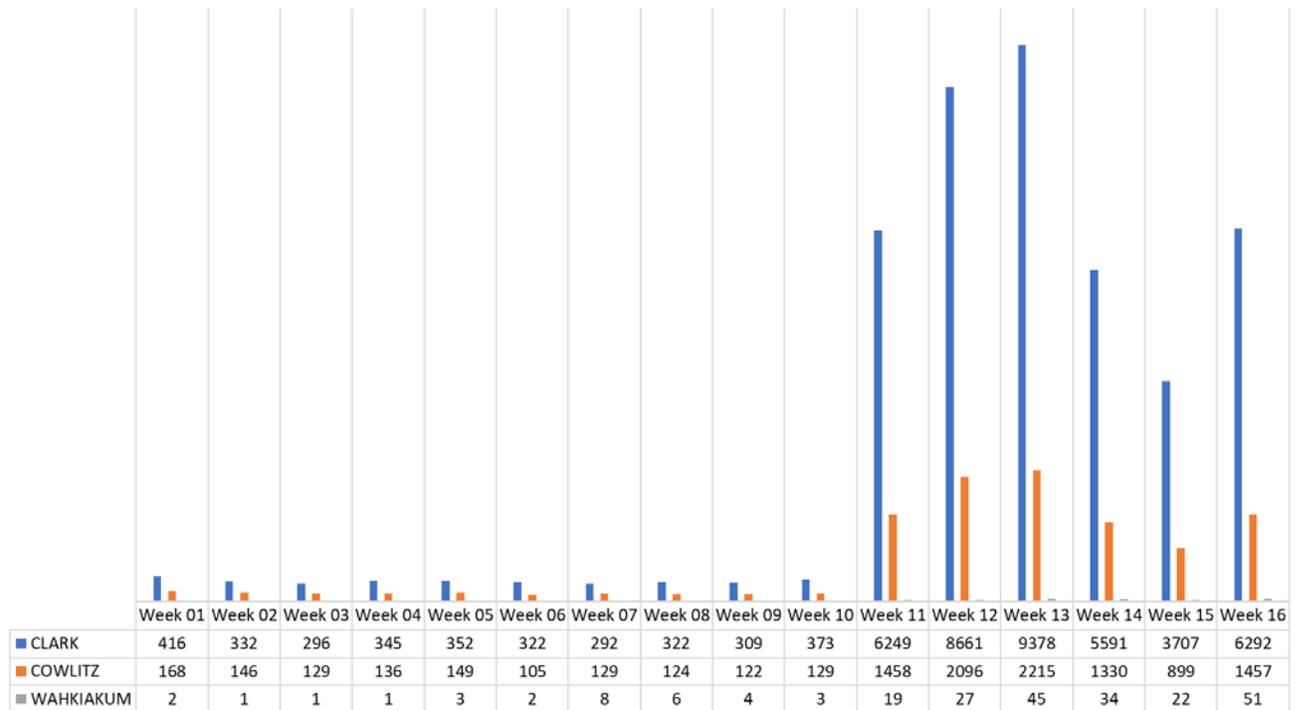


During the week of April 19-25:

- Clark County: Initial claims filed increased from 3,707 to 6,292 up 70 percent from the week before.
- Cowlitz County: Initial claims increased 62 percent to 1,457 up from 899 the prior week
- Wahkiakum County: Initial claims increased 131 percent to 51 claims up from 22 last week



SW WA WEEKLY INITIAL CLAIMS



SW WA Claimants by Industry March 9 – April 25

**Clark County:** top claimants by industry include healthcare, retail trade, accommodation and food services, and construction

Clark County Weekly Initial Claims by Industry, Six Week Total for March 9 Through April 25

	Sum of Week 10, e..	Sum of Week 11, e..	Sum of Week 12, e..	Sum of Week 13, e..	Sum of Week 14, e..	Week 15, ending Apr..	Week 16, ending Apr..	Clark County We..
Total, All Industries	453	6,252	8,709	9,378	5,591	3,707	6,292	40,382
Not disclosed	104	0	1,084	1,891	1,017	1,009	3,019	8,124
Health care and social assistance	36	1,016	1,174	1,223	753	399	465	5,066
Accommodation and food services	47	1,888	1,068	867	502	346	429	5,147
Retail trade	21	413	953	923	616	381	407	3,714
Construction	70	215	1,199	1,092	700	308	305	3,889
Administrative and waste services	24	200	515	470	286	183	239	1,917
Educational services	48	427	278	217	173	129	222	1,494
Manufacturing	32	228	624	510	364	162	209	2,129
Wholesale trade	27	77	260	421	249	170	174	1,378
Professional and technical services	15	128	234	254	164	119	171	1,085
Transportation and warehousing	19	111	124	128	120	53	83	638
Information	10	84	64	77	57	62	71	425



**Cowlitz County:** top claimants by industry were healthcare, accommodation and food services, construction

### Cowlitz County Table

Industry	Week 10, ending Mar..	Week 11, ending Mar..	Week 12, ending Mar..	Week 13, ending Apr..	Week 14, ending Apr..	Week 15, ending Apr..	Week 16, ending Apr..	Week 10-16
Total, All Industries	144	1,462	2,112	2,215	1,330	899	1,457	9,619
Not disclosed	22	57	173	337	206	189	621	1,605
Health care and social assistance	10	246	291	373	190	91	130	1,331
Retail trade		114	310	219	155	91	125	1,014
Manufacturing	15	84	170	166	102	57	109	703
Accommodation and food services	9	446	244	218	125	83	86	1,211
Construction	42	69	335	267	188	113	80	1,094
Administrative and waste services	11	50	123	114	66	69	65	498
Other services, except public admini..	11	117	124	94	63	31	48	488
Wholesale trade	8	25	58	63	35	32	39	260
Educational services	9	55	53	34	29	19	39	238
Arts, entertainment, and recreation		94	57	152	47	22	25	397
Transportation and warehousing	7	26	36	38	34	22	22	185
Professional and technical services		35	57	45	23	20	19	199
Government	0	5	22	22	18	16	15	98
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hu..		7	11	17	14	11	15	75
Real estate and rental and leasing	0	11	22	28	10	17	9	97
Information		13	7	12	4	7	6	49
Finance and insurance	0	8	12	12	10	9	4	55
Utilities	0	0	0	0			0	0
Management of companies and ent..	0					0	0	0
Unknown								0
Mining			7	4	11			22

**Wahkiakum County:** claimants by industry were not disclosed

### Wahkiakum Table

Industry	Week 10, ending March 14, 2020	Week 11, ending March 21, 2020	Week 12, ending March 28, 2020	Week 13, ending April 4, 2020	Week 14, ending April 11, 2020	Week 15, ending April 18, 2020	Week 16, ending April 25, 2020	Wahkiakum Week 10 - Week 16 Claims
Total, All Industries	3.0	19.0	27.0	45.0	34.0	22.0	51.0	201.0
Not disclosed	3.0	19.0	27.0	30.0	34.0	22.0	44.0	179.0
Unknown								
Grand Total	6.0	38.0	54.0	75.0	68.0	44.0	95.0	380.0

### Washington State Claimants by Industry

Industry sectors experiencing the highest number of initial claims during April 19-25 were:

- Healthcare and social assistance: 11,061 initial claims, up 1,927 initial claims from the previous week
- Retail trade: 10,397 initial claims, up 912 initial claims from previous week
- Accommodation and food services: 10,049 initial claims, up 2,381 initial claims from previous week
- Construction: 6,047 initial claims, down 695 initial claims from the previous week
- Manufacturing: 6,045 initial claims, down 2,290 initial claims from the previous week



### **SW WA UI demographic data**

Demographics of residents in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties filing claims for unemployment during March 8 through April 4 shows:

- Gender – Each of our three counties has a higher percentage of females out of work than males. However, the state total has more males unemployed than females.
- Age – the largest percentage of unemployed individuals in our three counties and in the state are ages 25-34 at 23 percent, followed by ages 35-44 at 17 percent.
- Education – In Southwest Washington, 70.8 percent of the unemployed do not hold a college degree. Most (34.6 percent) have a high school diploma or GED and 28.7 percent have some college. In comparison, the percentage of those with a college degree that are unemployed is 26.6 percent. The higher percentage of unemployed not having a college degree is mirrored in the state's totals.