

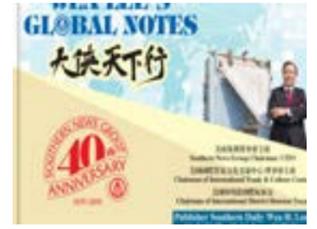


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U.S. weekly jobless claims fall, labor market struggling as COVID-19 epidemic



FILE PHOTO: People who lost their jobs wait in line to file for unemployment benefits, following an outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), at Arkansas Workforce Center in Fort Smith, Arkansas, U.S. April 6, 2020. REUTERS/Nick Oxford/File Photo

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The number of Americans seeking jobless benefits fell last week, but a staggering 31.3 million people were receiving unemployment checks in mid-July, suggesting the labor market was stalling as the country battles a resurgence in new COVID-19 cases that is threatening a budding economic recovery.

Other data on Thursday showed a 54% surge in job cuts announced by employers in July. The reports followed on the heels of news this week of a sharp step-down in private payrolls in July and continued declines in employment at manufacturing and services industries.

"Repeated shutdowns for virus containment remain a threat to the labor market, which is already weak," said Rubela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics in White Plains, New York. "Without effective virus containment the recovery remains at risk from ongoing job losses that could further restrain incomes and spending."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits fell 249,000 to a seasonally adjusted 1.186 million for the week ended Aug. 1, the Labor Department said. That was the lowest since mid-March. Claims remain well above the peak of 695,000 during the 2007-2009 Great Recession.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 1.415 million applications in the latest week.

Coronavirus cases soared across the country last month, forcing authorities in some of the hard-hit areas in the West and South to either shut down businesses again or pause reopenings, sending workers back home. Though infections have eased about 5% nationally, they jumped last week in Oklahoma, Montana, Missouri and 17 other states.

The public health crisis is hurting demand for goods and services, broadening layoffs to sectors of the economy that were not initially impacted when nonessential businesses like restaurants and bars were shuttered in mid-March to slow the spread of the respiratory illness.

Businesses are also cautious about hiring. Claims topped out at a record 6.867 million in late March. Some economists attributed last week's drop in claims to the end of a \$600 weekly unemployment benefits supplement last Friday. They expected further declines in the weeks ahead. Industry groups had complained the supplement was discouraging furloughed and unemployed workers from returning to their jobs.

"The expiration of these benefits last week may have discouraged some job losers from applying, clouding the signal from the claims data," said Bill Adams, senior economist at PNC Financial in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Last week, 655,707 applications were filed under the government-funded Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program for gig workers and the self-employed among others, who do not qualify for regular state unemployment insurance. That was down 253,093

from the prior week.

Other economists, however, expected claims to remain elevated because of weak demand and the expiration of the U.S. government's Paycheck Protection Program that gave businesses loans that can be partially forgiven if used for employee pay.

Stocks on Wall Street dipped as investors awaited the government's new stimulus package to prop up the economy. The dollar was steady against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices rose.

MILLIONS UNEMPLOYED

Thursday's claims report also showed the number of people receiving benefits after an initial week of aid totaled 16.107 million in the week ending July 25, from 16.951 million in the prior week. A total 31.3 million people were receiving unemployment benefits under all programs in the week ending July 18, up 492,816 from the prior week.

Economists said the tens of millions of unemployed workers underscored the need for another aid package. The White House and Republicans and Democrats in the U.S. Congress are working on the next wave of relief.

"Today's jobless claims are an ominous sign that many Americans are unable to get back to work after the coronavirus lockdown of the economy earlier this year," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFG in New York. "There aren't enough dollars flowing through the economy to help keep it growing if the government stops its support."

The claims report has no bearing on July's employment report, which is scheduled for release on Friday, as it falls outside the period during which the government surveyed businesses and households for the nonfarm payrolls tally and unemployment rate.

According to a Reuters survey of economists, nonfarm payrolls likely increased by 1.58 million in July, down sharply from the record 4.8 million jobs created in June. The jobless rate is forecast to fall to 10.5% from 11.1% in June.



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

08/07/2020

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

A Cheater In Our Society

A Houston man is accused of bilking the government of \$1.6 million allocated for coronavirus relief. He spent the money on expensive cars, watches and strip clubs.

29-year old Lee Price has been in trouble with the law since he was 17 years old. In the past, he has been charged and convicted as an adult for forgery of a government instrument. In 2009, he was convicted of theft and spent time in jail. Other past records include driving while intoxicated and robbery with threat in 2011. Most recently, Price was charged for wire

fraud and bank fraud while being out on bond and in possession of a weapon and tampering with a government record charge.

Price's case really represents a lot of crooks who are using this pandemic to cheat the federal government. They become criminals and do whatever they can to cheat the average people too.

It is very sad in the case of Price who at an early age didn't use his talent to do the right thing. A lot of kids like him are from broken families and never got an education.



• \$1.6M IN COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS

• BOUGHT LAMBORGHINI, FORD F-350, ROLEX & MORE

• SPENT THOUSANDS AT NIGHT CLUBS



This is a real problem in our society. Many young people are like Lee Price. If they don't go to school, they never get any skills to look for a job in order to survive. Following that path, they will eventually join organized crime and

continue to steal and rob and become a social liability.

Price's case is more than his just being a criminal. He is also stealing money and benefits from those people who are really suffering in the pandemic.

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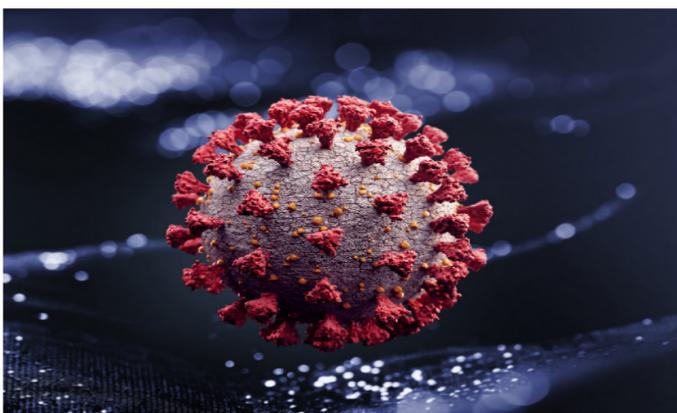
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BUSINESS

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OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH CATASTROPHE

Why The Novel Coronavirus Had The Power To Launch A Pandemic



A computer rendering of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. (Photo/Radoslav Zilinsky/Getty Images)

By Guest Writer Pien Huang

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

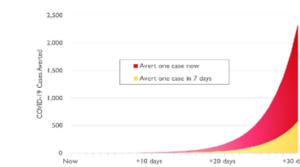
On January 30, the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus — then unnamed — to be a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern.” The virus, first reported in China in late 2019, had started to spread beyond its borders, causing 98 cases in 18 countries in addition to some 7,700 cases in China at the time.

Six months later, the tiny coronavirus has spread around the world, infecting more than 16 million people worldwide and killing more than 650,000. It is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. in 2020.

“This is the sixth time a global health emergency has been declared under the International Health Regulations, but it is easily the most severe,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO’s director-general, on Monday.

What was it about this coronavirus — later named SARS-CoV-2 — that made it the one to spark a global pandemic? Virologists point to several key traits that this virus possesses. Any one of them might be problematic. When combined in

one microscopic virus, the result is what coronavirus researcher Andrea Puijssers of Vanderbilt University calls a “perfect storm” — a one-in-a-million virus capable of triggering a worldwide health crisis.



It's a super-fast spreader ...

One of the novel coronavirus’s biggest advantages is how easily it spreads from human to human, says Dr. Megan Freeman, a virologist at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, who conducted her doctoral research on coronaviruses.

The coronavirus causes COVID-19, a respiratory disease that infects the sinuses, throat, lungs — all parts of the body involved with breathing. As a result, the virus can be readily passed onward through breath and spittle expelled from the nose and mouth. Unlike Ebola, where direct contact with blood and other bodily flu-

ids is the main route of infection, you don’t have to touch someone to be infected with SARS-CoV-2 — all it takes is getting close enough to an infected person and breathing in respiratory droplets they exhale.

And because it’s transmitted rapidly through the respiratory route, “it’s a virus that [also] has the capacity to spread across the globe fairly easily,” Puijssers says. All it takes to introduce the illness to a new continent is a single person who travels there while infectious.

... but not so fast that it'll knock itself out

When a virus spreads too quickly, enough people in a community may catch it to create “herd immunity.” With fewer people to infect, the virus’s rapid spread can ensure its own demise, says Malik Peiris, a virologist at the University of Hong Kong. “It’s a balance,” he says, pointing out that other viruses such as dengue fever and chikungunya have surged and then died down in certain locations.



It's transmittable even with no symptoms

Even before symptoms develop, infected people can spread this virus by speaking, singing, coughing and breathing out virus-laden droplets in close proximity to others. “For SARS-CoV-2, a lot of the transmission is from asymptomatic, [pre-

symptomatic] or mildly symptomatic people,” Puijssers says.

By contrast, SARS-CoV-1, a related coronavirus that caused an epidemic in Asia in 2003, was most infectious when people were symptomatic. So as soon as someone showed symptoms, they were quarantined — which effectively stopped that virus from transmitting, Peiris says. The SARS epidemic officially ended in 2004 after sickening 8,098 people; there have been no known cases reported since.

The severity of symptoms puts a strain on health systems

Even though some people who are infected have no symptoms or mild symptoms, the novel coronavirus can inflict serious damage. “This coronavirus has the capacity to cause really debilitating respiratory disease and even death” for a higher proportion of infected people compared with, say, the flu, Freeman says.

Because COVID-19 can make people sick enough to require hospitalization, high rates of spread have strained hospital systems, making it difficult to provide optimal care for patients, as is happening in California and Texas. When hospitals run low on staff and supplies, the result can be care rationing and excess deaths. Since its emergence, in late 2019 in China, the novel coronavirus has killed more than 600,000 globally.



Then there's the pet theory ...

Not only did the novel coronavirus come from animals, it also appears to have the ability to jump from humans to animals, including their pets — and possibly back again.

The virus likely originated in bats and spilled over to humans because of some unlucky coincidence, where a person

was “in the wrong place at the wrong time” and came in contact with a bat or an intermediary animal that happened to be infected with this particular virus, says Carlos Zambrana-Torrel, an ecologist with the nonprofit organization EcoHealth Alliance.

Now, researchers have found humans have occasionally infected their pet dogs and cats as well as lions and tigers at the Bronx Zoo. There’s no evidence yet of dogs and cats passing it to people, but sick minks on Dutch fur farms are thought to have given the coronavirus back to humans.

This could mean that if the virus starts circulating regularly among animals that we handle or live with, it may be really hard to get rid of it, Freeman says. “[If] there’s an animal reservoir, there’s always that possibility that the virus could come back in a spillover event,” she says. In other words, a community could be virus-free only to have it reintroduced by a visiting animal.



... and this virus has the element of surprise

The world has never dealt with a pandemic caused by a highly dangerous coronavirus before. This means everyone in the world is likely susceptible to it and also that, in the beginning “we knew nothing about it — it was a brand new virus,” Puijssers says. And that lack of knowledge about treatments and control has contributed to the virus’s ability to spread.

Unlike flu, which has been known to researchers for centuries, this novel coronavirus has required researchers to figure out everything from scratch — how it spreads, who’s most likely to get sick from it and how to combat it with drugs and vaccines.

There’s still a lot we don’t know, Puijssers says, and we’re learning fast. But not fast enough to have stopped this pandemic from happening. (Courtesy npr.org)

Editor's Choice



A United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket carrying NASA's Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover vehicle lifts off from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Cape Canaveral, Florida, July 30, 2020. The next-generation robotic rover - a car-sized six-wheeled vehicle carrying seven scientific instruments - will search for traces of potential past life on Earth's planetary neighbor, and is also scheduled to deploy a mini helicopter on Mars and try out equipment for future human treks. Its arrival at Mars is planned for Feb. 18 at the site of an ancient river delta. REUTERS/Joe



Firefighters spray water at a fire after an explosion was heard in Beirut, Lebanon August 4, 2020. Dozens are still missing after Tuesday's explosion at the port that killed at least 154 people, injured 5,000 and left up to 250,000 without habitable homes, hammering a nation already staggering from economic meltdown and a surge in coronavirus cases. REUTERS/Mohamed Azakir



Scottish ballet dancers Sophie Martin, Barnaby Rook Bishop and Thomas Edwards perform at the Edinburgh Festival theatre after the Edinburgh International Festival was cancelled and turned into a digital event due to the coronavirus outbreak, in Edinburgh, Britain August 3, 2020. REUTERS/Russell Cheyne



An injured man is pictured under a vehicle following an explosion in Beirut's port area, Lebanon August 4, 2020. When Reuters photographer Mohamed Azakir saw a man pinned under a vehicle, covered in a thick film of rubble and blood, he thought the man was dead. But then the man opened his eyes and began waving his arms and asking for help. Azakir called over some rescuers who were nearby. In a series of photographs, he recorded the rescue of the man, while also helping the rescuers move the car to free him. REUTERS/Mohamed Azakir MORE



Rescued migrants look on from onboard an Armed Forces of Malta vessel upon their arrival in Senglea, in Valletta's Grand Harbour in Malta August 3, 2020. REUTERS/Darrin Zammit Lupi



Giuseppe Paterno, 96, Italy's oldest student, wears a traditional laurel wreath awarded to Italian students when they graduate, as he attends his graduation day after completing his undergraduate degree in history and philosophy at the University of Palermo, in Palermo, Italy July 29, 2020. "I



Senegalese Muslims carry a freshly slaughtered animal after a sacrificial ritual for the Eid al-Adha festival in Dakar, Senegal July 31, 2020. REUTERS/Zohra Bensemra



People enjoy the sunny weather at the Bournemouth Beach, amid the coronavirus outbreak, in Bournemouth, Britain July 31, 2020. REUTERS/Toby Melville

Census To Stop Counting Americans A Month Early Amid Growing Fears Of An Undercount

Census Cuts All Counting Efforts Back By One Month



Census Bureau move has raised fears among civil rights groups, researchers and other experts who fear that a significant portion of the population could be left out of the count.

By Guest Writer Hansi Lo Wang

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The Census Bureau is halting its field operations to count the population a month ahead of schedule, the agency's director announced in a statement Monday night, raising fears of a national undercount.



Census worker Ken Leonard wears a mask as he mans a U.S. Census walk up counting site set up for Hunt County in Greenville, Texas, on July 31, 2020. The bureau is ending all counting efforts for the 2020 census on Sept. 30, a month sooner than previously announced, the bureau's director confirmed Monday. LM Otero/AP

The move has raised fears among various civil rights groups, researchers and other experts who fear that a significant portion of the population, such as minorities and immigrants, could be left out of the tally.

are part of efforts to "accelerate the completion of data collection and apportionment counts by our statutory deadline of December 31, 2020, as required by law and directed by the Secretary of Commerce" who oversees the bureau, Director Steven Dillingham said in the written statement posted on the bureau's website.

These last-minute changes to the constitutionally mandated count of every person living in the U.S. threaten the accuracy of population numbers used to determine the distribution of political representation and federal funding for the next decade.



With roughly 4 out of 10 households nationwide yet to be counted, and already delayed by the coronavirus pandemic, the bureau now has less than two months left to try to reach people of color, immigrants, renters, rural residents and other members of historically undercounted groups who are not likely to fill out a census form on their own.

It also comes after President Donald Trump signed a memo last month that aims to bar undocumented immigrants living in the country from being included in the census for purposes of deciding how many members of Congress are apportioned to each state.



"The Trump Administration has tried to manipulate the 2020 Census for the last four years and is continuing those attempts with the changes announced last night," Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee, said in a statement on Tuesday.

The census results are used to determine the number of seats in the House each state is allocated, the redrawing of congressional districts and it affects the dispersal of billions of federal dollars, which typically fund hospitals, roads, schools, and other community resources.

extend its timeline, including pushing back the end of counting to Oct. 31.



But during a hearing last week before the House Oversight and Reform Committee, Dillingham signaled a shift in plans by telling members of Congress that "the Census Bureau and others really want us to proceed as rapidly as possible."

The bureau also asked Congress to push back by four months the legal deadline of Dec. 31 for reporting the latest state population counts to the president. Delaying that deadline would allow the bureau to keep counting through Oct. 31 to "ensure the completeness and accuracy of the 2020 Census," Dillingham and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said in a statement released in April.

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