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ODU's Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy: Labor Markets Improve; Surge in COVID-19 Cases Adds Uncertainty

25,293 Virginians file initial unemployment claims; continued claims fall for the fourth week to 375,579.

Norfolk, VA – (June 26, 2020) – Newly released nonseasonally adjusted data from the Virginia Employment Commission shows that 25,293 Virginians filed an initial unemployment claim for the week ending June 20, a decline of 1,893 from the previous week. Continued claims decreased by 11,314 claims to 375,579.

“Virginia’s labor market continues to show strong signs of improvement. Initial claims for unemployment benefits declined to their lowest levels since the crisis began in mid-March. The number of Virginians receiving unemployment benefits declined by more than 11,000 from the previous week,” said Dominique Johnson, research associate at the Dragas Center. “The economic pain, however, is far from over. Initial claims filed for the comparable week in 2019 totaled 2,450, a sign that a return to pre-pandemic levels will take time.”

For the United States, 1.5 million Americans filed an unemployment claim through state programs for the week ending June 20. Another 728,120 claims were filed through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, which covers workers typically ineligible for state unemployment insurance benefits. In Virginia, 8,545 initial claims were filed through the PUA program.

“Another 2.2 million Americans filed an initial claim for unemployment insurance last week, matching the number claims filed in the previous week. This is an indication that the steady decline in initial claims over the last several weeks has somewhat stalled,” Professor Vinod Agarwal of the Dragas Center said. “As the number of COVID-19 cases surges in several states and the country sets a new record in daily cases reported, we see how unpredictable the recovery will be. With the number of jobless claims remaining at historically high levels, the extension of the PUA benefits that are due to expire in a month is critical.”

Note 1: Advance claims are not directly comparable to claims reported in prior weeks. Advance claims are reported by the state liable for paying the unemployment

compensation, whereas previous weeks' reported claims reflect claimants by state of residence. In addition, claims reported as "workshare equivalent" in the previous week are added to the advance claims as a proxy for the current week's "workshare equivalent" activity.

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About the Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy:

The Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy in the Strome College of Business at Old Dominion University undertakes a wide range of economic, demographic, transportation and defense-oriented studies. For two decades, the Center and its predecessors have produced the highly regarded State of the Region Report for Hampton Roads and economic forecasts for the region. If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Agarwal can be reached at 757-287-5619 or by email at vagarwal@odu.edu or Dominique Johnson at 757-506-1565 or by email at d1johnson@odu.edu

About Old Dominion University:

Old Dominion University is Virginia's entrepreneurial-minded doctoral research university with more than 24,000 students, rigorous academics, an energetic residential community and initiatives that contribute \$2.6 billion annually to the Commonwealth's economy.

Table 1
Estimated Headline Unemployment Rates (U3)
March 2020, April 2020, and May 2020*
US, Virginia, Virginia Cities and Counties

	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020*
U.S.	4.4%	14.7%	13.3%
Virginia	3.3%	10.6%	9.4%
Accomack	4.8%	9.8%	14.5%
Albemarle	2.8%	9.1%	12.8%
Alleghany	4.4%	11.5%	13.3%
Amelia	3.6%	9.8%	13.5%
Amherst	3.8%	9.6%	13.5%
Appomattox	4.3%	9.4%	12.7%
Arlington	2.2%	7.0%	9.4%
Augusta	2.9%	8.4%	10.6%
Bath	3.1%	20.5%	22.8%
Bedford	3.5%	9.9%	13.3%
Bland	4.0%	11.5%	14.7%
Botetourt	3.0%	8.6%	12.1%
Brunswick	5.3%	10.4%	15.6%
Buchanan	8.1%	14.1%	17.2%
Buckingham	5.2%	10.3%	14.2%
Campbell	3.8%	10.2%	13.2%
Caroline	3.7%	11.0%	15.4%
Carroll	5.8%	16.1%	20.6%
Charles City	3.9%	10.2%	14.6%
Charlotte	4.6%	8.3%	11.9%
Chesterfield	3.1%	10.7%	15.0%
Clarke	2.8%	8.2%	11.6%
Craig	3.4%	10.1%	13.5%
Culpeper	3.2%	9.1%	13.8%
Cumberland	3.4%	9.2%	11.9%
Dickenson	7.3%	12.0%	14.9%
Dinwiddie	3.8%	9.6%	11.8%
Essex	4.5%	11.1%	15.7%
Fairfax	2.6%	10.2%	14.4%
Fauquier	2.8%	8.8%	11.8%
Floyd	3.5%	11.1%	14.3%
Fluvanna	2.8%	9.2%	13.5%
Franklin	3.6%	9.5%	13.5%
Frederick	2.8%	9.5%	12.5%

Giles	4.5%	13.0%	16.1%
Gloucester	3.0%	10.2%	13.9%
Goochland	3.0%	8.9%	11.9%
Grayson	5.1%	10.8%	13.1%
Greene	2.6%	9.6%	13.5%
Greensville	3.9%	8.4%	19.5%
Halifax	4.9%	10.7%	14.2%
Hanover	2.8%	9.0%	12.4%
Henrico	3.2%	11.1%	15.5%
Henry	4.0%	12.8%	20.7%
Highland	3.8%	6.3%	8.6%
Isle of Wight	3.2%	8.5%	11.8%
James City County	3.2%	13.7%	19.4%
King and Queen	3.1%	7.7%	11.3%
King George	3.2%	7.6%	10.1%
King William	3.3%	9.7%	13.7%
Lancaster	7.0%	11.3%	14.4%
Lee	5.0%	10.9%	13.1%
Loudoun	2.6%	9.9%	13.8%
Louisa	3.1%	8.9%	12.4%
Lunenburg	3.4%	7.6%	10.4%
Madison	2.5%	7.1%	9.6%
Mathews	3.5%	8.9%	11.8%
Mecklenburg	4.8%	10.9%	15.1%
Middlesex	3.3%	9.0%	12.9%
Montgomery	3.4%	9.3%	12.5%
Nelson	3.2%	9.8%	14.8%
New Kent	2.6%	8.9%	12.8%
Northampton	5.7%	11.6%	18.3%
Northumberland	7.0%	9.7%	14.1%
Nottoway	3.2%	7.5%	10.7%
Orange	3.3%	9.8%	15.0%
Page	5.8%	14.0%	18.4%
Patrick	4.6%	14.1%	17.1%
Pittsylvania	4.3%	12.7%	15.7%
Powhatan	3.0%	9.6%	12.7%
Prince Edward	4.6%	9.5%	14.0%
Prince George	3.8%	10.0%	13.9%
Prince William	3.0%	11.3%	16.7%
Pulaski	5.9%	17.1%	20.4%
Rappahannock	2.9%	8.3%	10.5%

Richmond	3.6%	7.3%	11.7%
Roanoke	3.1%	9.8%	14.0%
Rockbridge	3.2%	9.4%	14.4%
Rockingham	2.8%	9.7%	12.1%
Russell	5.7%	10.8%	13.5%
Scott	4.0%	9.8%	12.0%
Shenandoah	3.1%	9.5%	13.3%
Smyth	4.7%	10.7%	15.2%
Southampton	3.3%	6.9%	9.2%
Spotsylvania	3.3%	11.1%	15.5%
Stafford	3.1%	9.9%	14.2%
Surry	3.9%	9.3%	12.3%
Sussex	5.2%	10.3%	17.0%
Tazewell	5.6%	12.5%	16.1%
Warren	3.2%	11.1%	14.9%
Washington	3.9%	10.8%	14.0%
Westmoreland	4.5%	8.6%	12.4%
Wise	6.0%	11.9%	15.4%
Wythe	5.2%	17.2%	21.3%
York	3.0%	10.4%	13.1%
Alexandria city	2.5%	9.9%	13.9%
Bristol city	4.4%	15.3%	18.8%
Buena Vista city	2.9%	8.7%	16.4%
Charlottesville city	2.6%	10.8%	17.2%
Chesapeake city	3.3%	10.2%	15.3%
Colonial Heights city	3.4%	11.5%	19.4%
Covington city	6.3%	16.0%	25.2%
Danville city	6.3%	16.0%	24.0%
Emporia city	5.1%	13.0%	15.4%
Fairfax city	2.5%	10.1%	10.9%
Falls Church city	2.3%	5.8%	9.5%
Franklin city	4.2%	9.6%	19.8%
Fredericksburg city	3.7%	12.1%	18.4%
Galax city	6.3%	17.3%	17.8%
Hampton city	4.4%	13.4%	20.5%
Harrisonburg city	3.6%	11.2%	18.4%
Hopewell city	4.9%	14.7%	25.0%
Lexington city	4.9%	10.3%	11.1%
Lynchburg city	4.3%	12.1%	18.7%
Manassas city	3.0%	10.9%	16.7%
Manassas Park city	2.9%	11.6%	11.8%

Martinsville city	5.0%	16.9%	18.9%
Newport News city	4.2%	13.9%	21.1%
Norfolk city	4.0%	13.3%	20.1%
Norton city	5.4%	12.4%	18.4%
Petersburg city	6.6%	16.7%	35.5%
Poquoson city	2.9%	8.0%	10.7%
Portsmouth city	4.4%	12.8%	20.9%
Radford city	4.5%	11.5%	17.9%
Richmond city	3.8%	14.2%	21.8%
Roanoke city	3.7%	12.8%	19.9%
Salem city	3.4%	10.8%	16.9%
Staunton city	3.1%	11.3%	17.5%
Suffolk city	3.5%	9.7%	15.5%
Virginia Beach city	3.1%	12.2%	17.0%
Waynesboro city	3.3%	11.2%	18.0%
Williamsburg city	4.7%	15.0%	16.5%
Winchester city	3.3%	11.2%	15.7%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy.

*Estimates for May for Virginia localities in the Commonwealth assume the size of the labor has not significantly changed since the previous month. Adds initial claims for May (May 2nd – May 30th) to the number of unemployed individuals in April, divided by the size of the labor force in April 2020. We also assume, given the contraction in many industries, that most of the individuals filing for unemployment have not found new employment. Actual data for the United States and Virginia for May.