

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

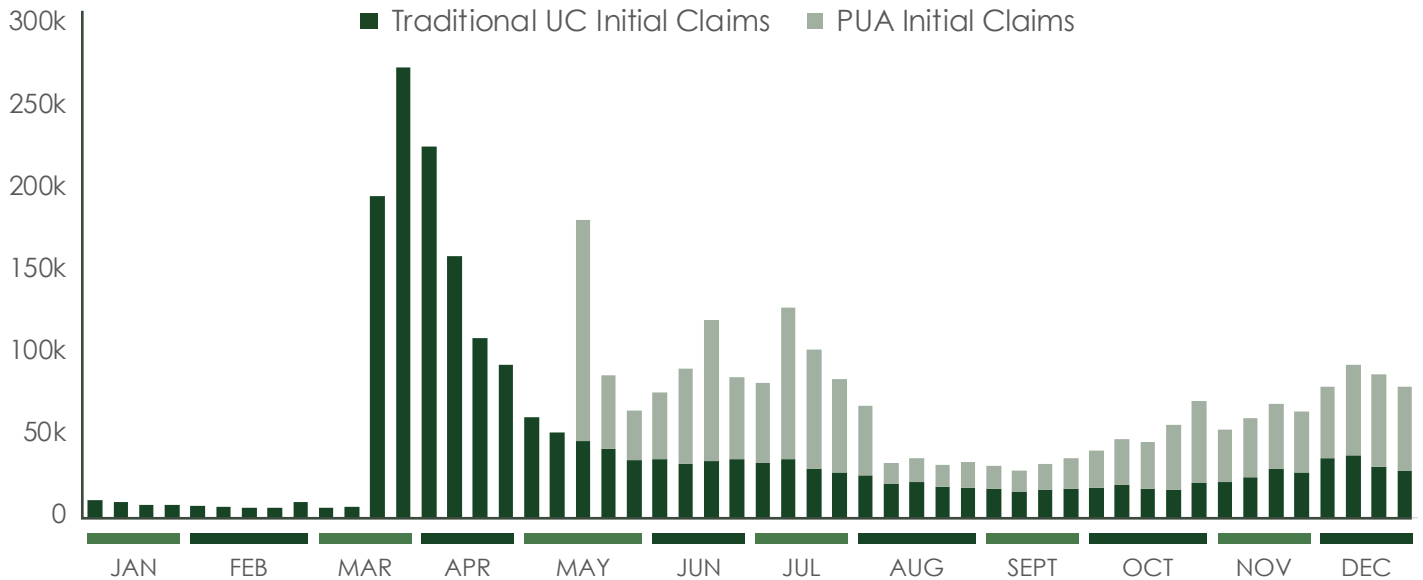
A Look into Ohio's Unemployment System



A performance audit of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) was required by the Ohio General Assembly in response to reported customer service failures brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Legislators asked that the performance audit review administrative funding, claims processing, staffing, customer service, technology systems and a compiled list of 18 questions that they wanted answered.

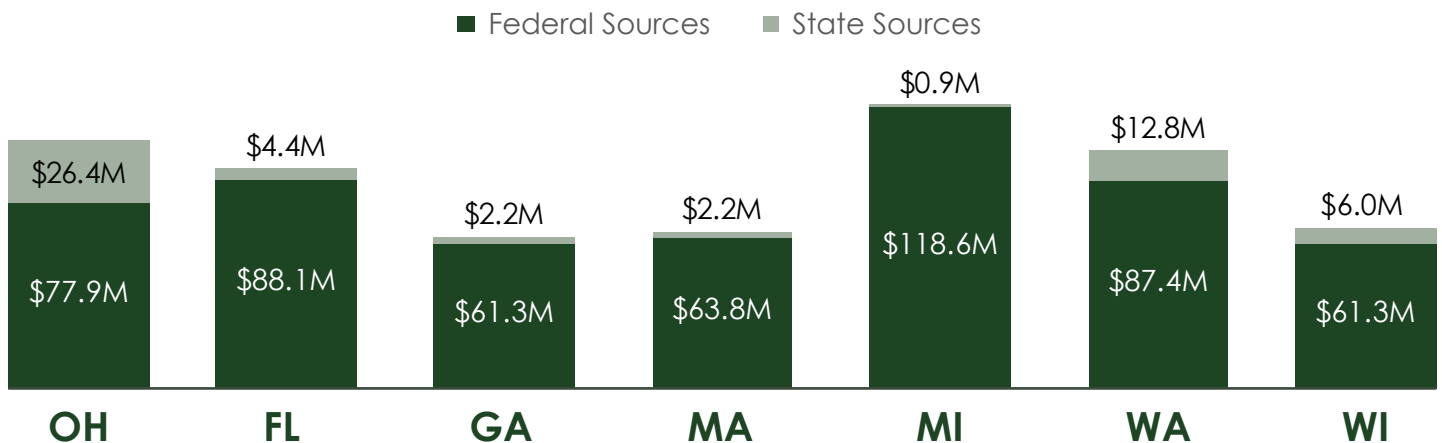
2020 Unemployment Activity

The number of new claims filed for **Traditional Unemployment** benefits spiked sharply in March and remained elevated throughout 2020 and 2021. In May 2020, ODJFS began processing **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)** claims.



FFY 2017-19 Administrative Funding

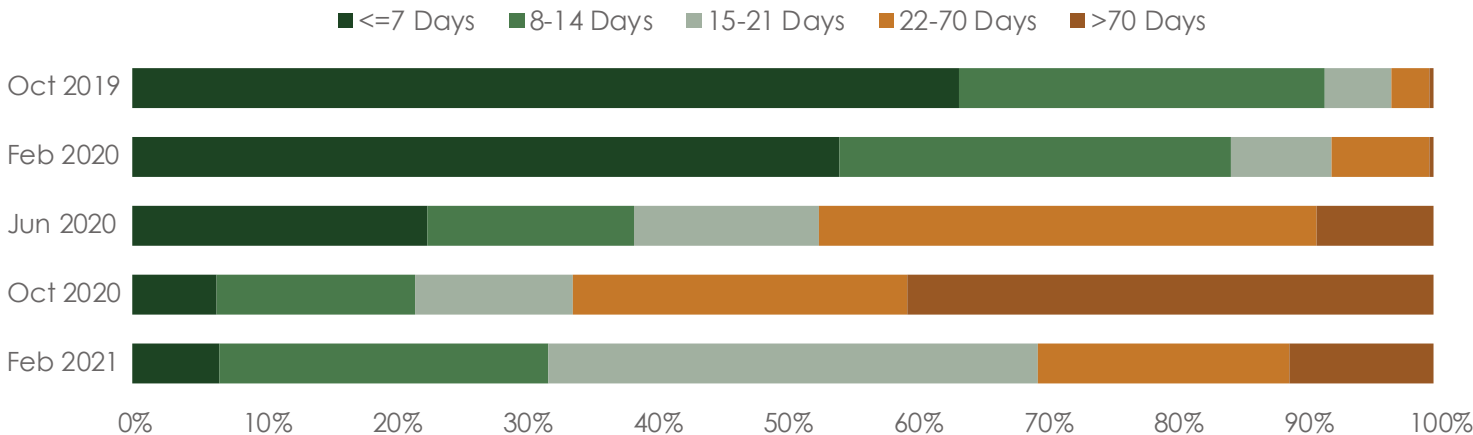
Ohio spent more state dollars than its peers on the administration of UC claims.



Claims Processing

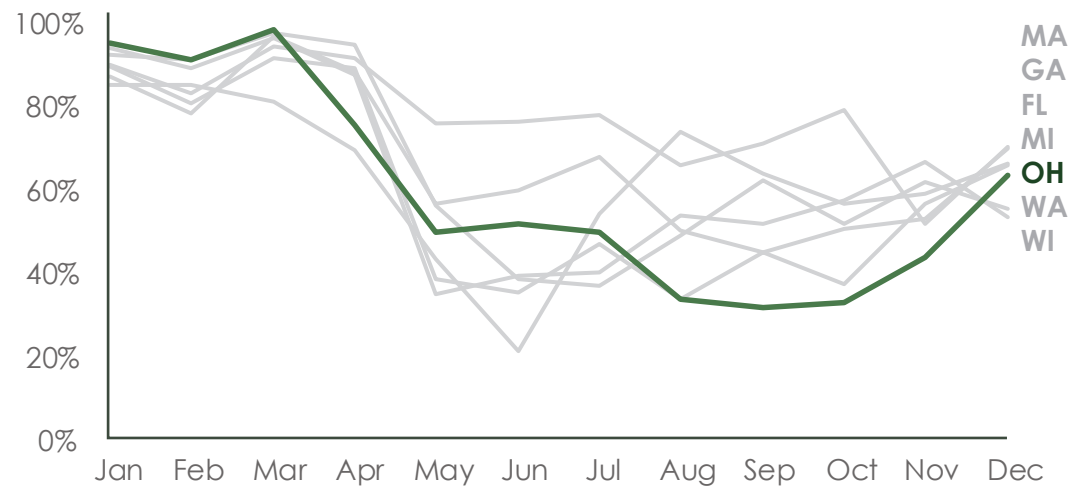
Prior to the March 2020 pandemic, Ohio was in line with the 87% federal benchmark of processing first payments within two weeks.

Starting in April 2020, processing times started to spike as demand outpaced ODJFS's ability to handle claims. By October 2020, approximately 40% of first payments made in that month had taken more than 70 days to process.



2020 First Payment Timeliness Compared to Peers

Beginning in March 2020, all states saw a significant drop in the percentage of payments made within 21 days. However, while most peer states began to bottom out or recover in June and July, Ohio's average continued to drop until September.



Customer Service

The Department's customer service channels are disconnected from each other and were difficult to navigate during the pandemic due to unprecedented workload.

Adding an integrated customer relationship management system could potentially reduce duplicative workload by tracking customer contacts to their caseload - allowing for more efficient handling of customer service inquiries with better customer outcomes.

Technology Systems

To enhance data-driven management within UC, ODJFS should build additional business intelligence functionality into its new claims system. This BI should help the Department:

- Measure the performance of claims adjudicators; and,
- Diagnose the root-causes of claim processing delays and errors.