

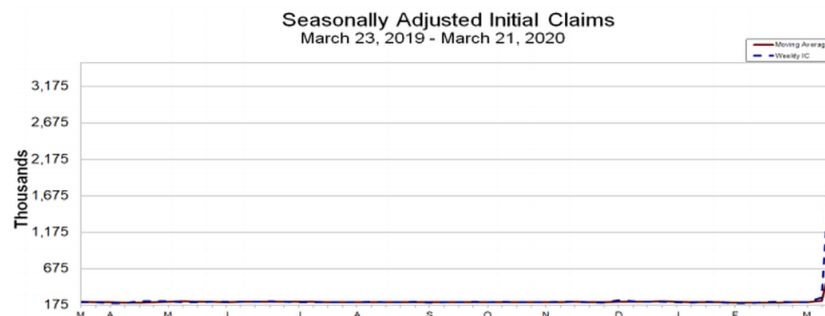
Coronavirus causes biggest unemployment spike in US history

Weekly jobless claims in the US surge to a record 3.28 million.

Americans filed claims for unemployment benefits in records numbers last week as businesses closed and some cities issued stay-at-home orders in an attempt to slow the spread of the coronavirus outbreak. The US Labor Department on Thursday reported that jobless claims surged to 3.28 million for the week ended March 21.



The number of claims is a nearly fivefold increase over the previous high of 695,000 set in 1982. It also tops predictions from Goldman Sachs and Bank of America last week.



COVID-19, the disease caused by a newly identified coronavirus, has rapidly spread across the globe. The World Health Organization on March 11 declared the outbreak a pandemic, saying it expected to see the number of cases and deaths continue climbing. As of Thursday, there were more than 69,000 cases of coronavirus in the US.

The Labor Department pointed to the COVID-19 outbreak for the sharp rise in claims.

"Nearly every state providing comments cited the COVID-19 virus impacts," said the Labor Department. "States continued to cite services industries broadly, particularly accommodation and food services. Additional industries heavily cited for the increases included the health care and social assistance, arts, entertainment and recreation, transportation and warehousing, and manufacturing industries."

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