

Coronavirus unemployment: Everything you need to know about payments, applying and more

If you've never lost a job or been furloughed, the COVID-19 outbreak might have changed that for you.

More than 3 million Americans filed for unemployment the week ending March 21. But that number doesn't reflect the magnitude of people who are financially suffering right now. Normally, filing for unemployment doesn't account for those who are self-employed, part-time workers or independent contractors.



The \$2.2 trillion emergency relief bill that recently passed is changing who qualifies for unemployment and for how much. Here's a breakdown of what to expect.

What is unemployment insurance?

When you get laid off from your job, you can file for unemployment insurance. Every state's requirements and benefits are different. For instance, I live in Florida, where qualifying residents can claim up to 12 weeks of unemployment benefits at up to \$275 a week. See what it's like where you live.

Before the stimulus package passed, unemployment benefits were meant to temporarily help cover your needs -- like housing costs, food and utility bills -- until you can find new work. If you're self-employed and lost clients or business due to the coronavirus pandemic, you would've otherwise not qualified for regular unemployment insurance.

Who does the new stimulus package cover?

Aside from full-time workers, you're eligible to receive benefits as a part-time or self-employed worker, as well as if you're already unemployed or can't work because of COVID-19. Others that are included:

1. You were set to start a new job and can't because of the outbreak.
1. You collect veteran or Social Security benefits.
1. Your job closed due to the coronavirus (for instance, restaurants or businesses deemed "non-essential").
1. You're not working because you have to care for children or other family members who would otherwise attend school or another facility.

How much money will I receive?

The plan will give you an extra \$600 a week on top of whatever you get through your state's current unemployment insurance package. It will cover you for an extra 13 weeks. That means in my state of Florida -- which usually covers 12 weeks -- residents will be covered for 25 weeks. Most states have unemployment benefits that are upwards of 26 weeks. The extension would mean they're covered through 39 weeks. Even if you've already exhausted all your unemployment benefits, you could reapply for the additional 13 weeks.

Weekly payouts vary by state, but many could see their unemployment benefits more than double. For instance, California residents get \$450 per week. The extra \$600 would put their weekly benefits at more than \$1,000. Median weekly earnings nationwide were \$936 in the fourth quarter of 2019.

Read more: How to spend your \$1,200 stimulus check

What if I was furloughed?

While a layoff means a job was closed, a furlough is a temporary leave of absence, usually with an end date. Being furloughed is more beneficial, in general, since some employers continue to provide benefits and there is some form of job security. For instance, Macy's put a majority of its employees on furlough, but is providing benefits to employees enrolled in healthcare "at least through May."

Usually, unemployment benefits for furloughed employees vary from state to state, but, with the stimulus bill, anyone who was furloughed due to the coronavirus outbreak qualifies for unemployment insurance. Unlike filing due to a layoff, furloughed employees do not have to prove they lost their jobs.

Is there anything it doesn't cover?

If you're able to work from home or currently receive paid leave, you won't qualify for the updated unemployment benefits.

In some situations, if you quit your job, you might not be eligible to receive the new unemployment insurance. For instance, if you quit because you're worried you'll contract COVID-19, yet your place of employment is still open, you might not qualify. However, if you have to self-quarantine due to potential exposure, you'd be eligible.

The language on this is a little fuzzy. The bill is meant to cover those who quit their jobs as a direct result of the coronavirus, but it's up to individual states to determine if you're eligible to receive benefits. Although most states are beyond maximum capacity and having trouble handling the high volume of applicants, the only way to know if you'll get accepted is to apply.

When can I apply?

Immediately. Before the stimulus package was passed, you had to wait at least a week to receive benefits. But the new bill gets you money right away. That means if you lost your job this week, you can apply right now to receive payments.

With millions of people applying for unemployment -- and many more expected to file in the coming weeks -- most workers will benefit from this package. If you have no other way to work from home or take paid time off to care for yourself or your family, filing for unemployment might be the only way you can have enough cash to survive. In your time of need, don't be afraid to exhaust every resource you can find.

The program is retroactively set to Jan. 27, 2020 and goes through Dec. 31, 2020.

How to apply for unemployment insurance

There's no federal system for unemployment benefits, which means you'll need to apply through your state's individual system. Find your state's program, but be mindful that each state operates differently. This means the latest coronavirus information might not be updated yet. File according to your state's requirements but it's a good idea to be patient, given the circumstances.

Read more: You lost your job because of coronavirus. These resources can help

You finished reading the article "**Coronavirus unemployment: Everything you need to know about payments, applying and more**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.