

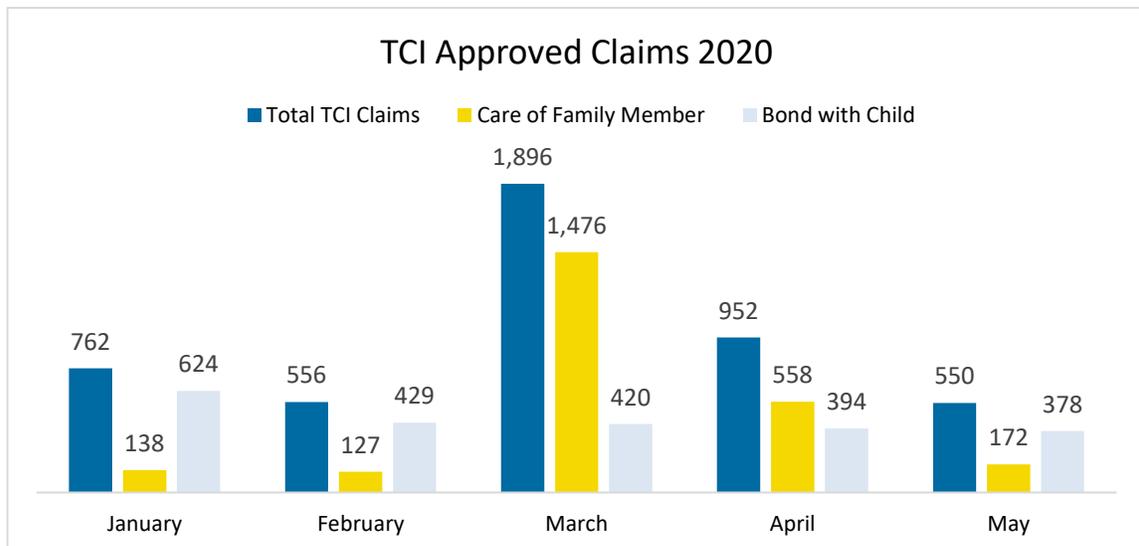


Rhode Island’s Paid Leave Program: A Crucial Support for Workers during COVID-19

Rhode Island’s Paid Leave Program, Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI), allows Rhode Island workers to take up to four weeks of paid time off from their jobs to care for a seriously ill family member or bond with a child. Importantly, TCI aided RI workers navigate complex caregiving and employment needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, as in 2020, 8,803 workers used TCI, an increase of 18% from 2019, to either take time from work to bond with a new child (59.5% of claimants) or provide care for a seriously ill family member/child out of school or child care due COVID-19 closures (40.5% of claimants).

TCI became an especially important support for Rhode Islanders during March and April of 2020 when federal paid sick and family leave was not yet fully established nationwide¹.

- In February 2020, RI approved 556 TCI claims, 23% of which were to care for a family member and 77% were to bond with a new child.
- In March 2020, RI approved an unprecedented 1,896 TCI claims, 78% of which were to care for a family member and 22% were to bond with a new child- a complete reversal of the claim trends to date.
- This spike in claims during March followed Governor Raimondo’s executive action to allow TCI to be used by parents who needed time off from work to care for children due to school and childcare closures. The data are clear that Rhode Island parents needed this option, as in March 2020, claims to specifically care for a family member, including children home from school or childcare, increased by over 1000 percent². These numbers fell in April, as parents began to receive unemployment benefits as earnings replacement. However, enrollment in TCI remained elevated in comparison to pre-pandemic months³.



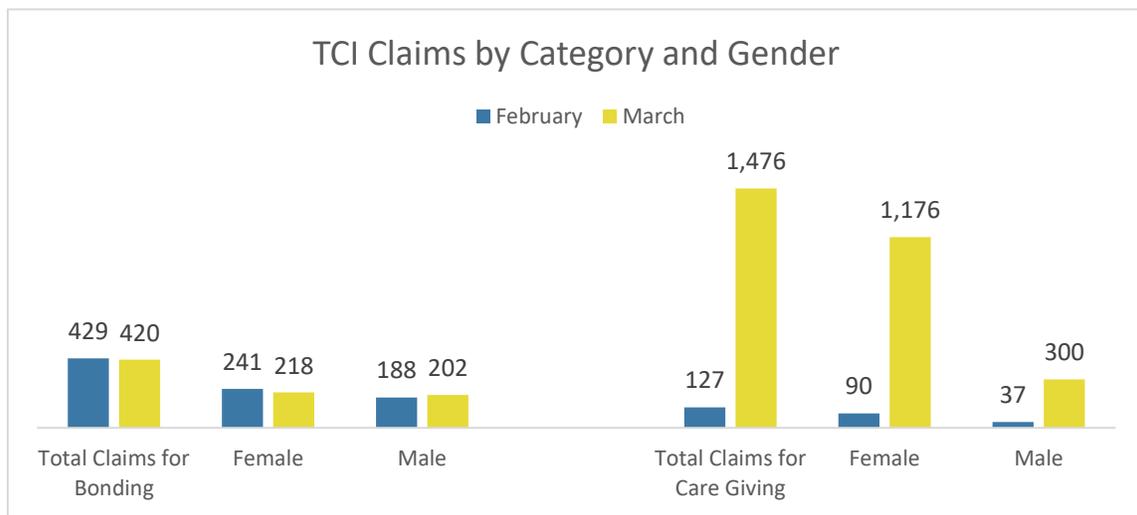
¹ Chantel Boyens, “State Paid Family and Medical Leave Programs Helped a Surge of Workers Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic”, Urban Institute, June 2020.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

While pre-pandemic TCI data demonstrate women disproportionately take on caregiving duties, 2020 data highlights that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated women’s overrepresentation in family caregiving roles.

- Between February and March 2020, TCI claims to bond with a new child remained about the same, as did the percent of females filing these claims (56% in February and 52% in March). However, there was a significant increase in TCI claims to care for a family member, from only 127 in February and to 1,476 in March. Importantly, the percentage of females filing these claims increased from 71% in February to 80% in March.
- These increases evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused more disruptions to women’s paid employment than men’s, as women make up the overwhelming majority of those taking time from work to care for loved ones.



Overall, TCI 2020 data highlight the ways in which having an established, well-funded, and well-managed paid family leave program in place allowed Rhode Islanders, especially women, to quickly access benefits during a time of crises. To learn more about efforts to preserve, improve, and expand TCI, please see [EPI’s 2021 “Expanding Access to Paid Leave” Fact Sheet.](#)