



Weekly Unemployment Claims: Down 41K, Lowest in Almost 45 Years

January 18, 2018

by Jill Mislinski
of Advisor Perspectives

Here is the opening statement from the Department of Labor:

In the week ending January 13, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 220,000, a decrease of 41,000 from the previous week's unrevised level of 261,000. This is the lowest level for initial claims since February 24, 1973 when it was 218,000. The 4-week moving average was 244,500, a decrease of 6,250 from the previous week's unrevised average of 250,750.

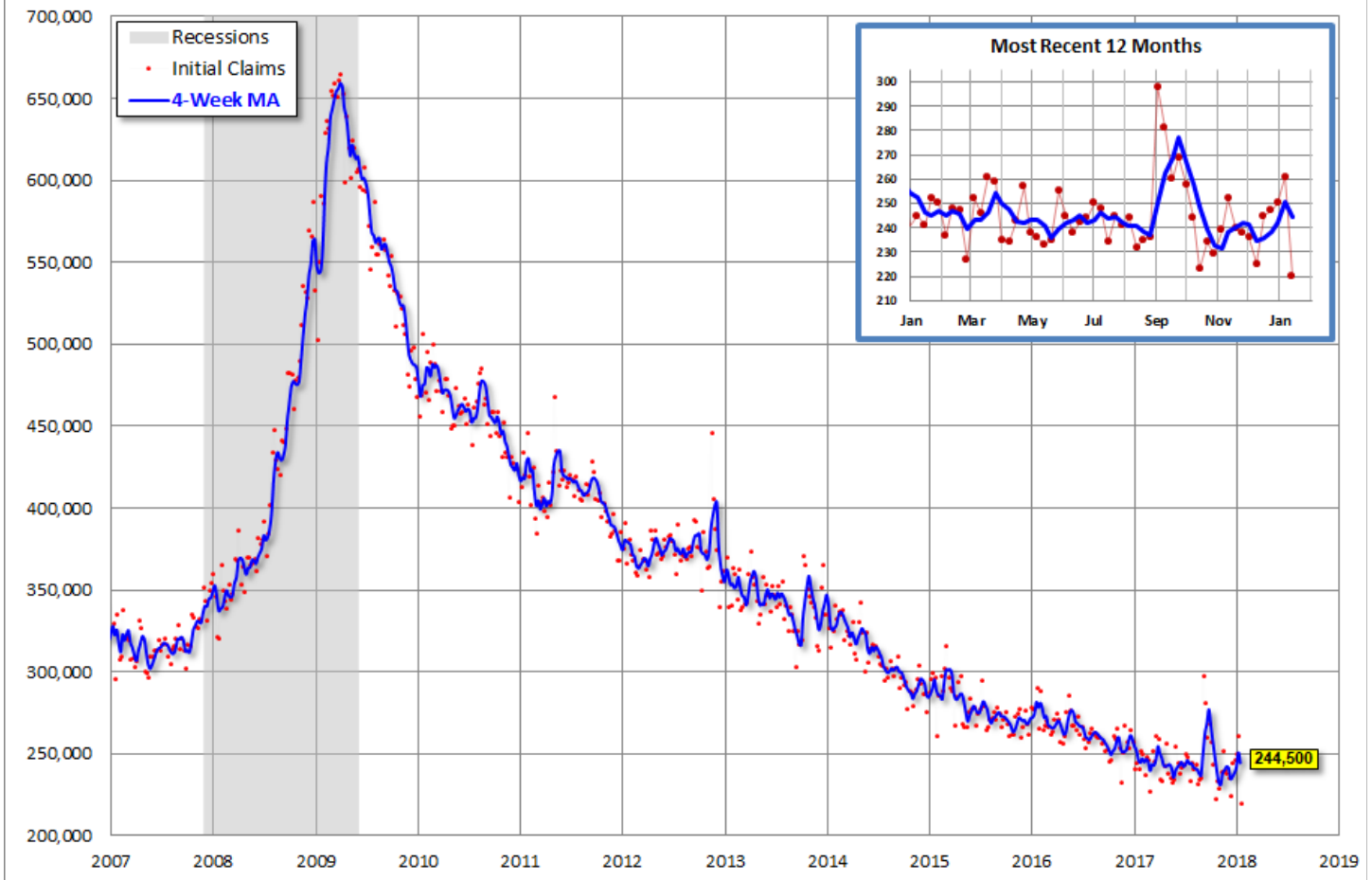
Claims taking procedures continue to be disrupted in the Virgin Islands. The claims taking process in Puerto Rico has still not returned to normal. [See full report]

Today's seasonally adjusted 220K new claims, down 41K from last week, was much better than the Investing.com forecast of 250K and its lowest in almost 45 years.

Here is a close look at the data over the decade (with a callout for the past year), which gives a clearer sense of the overall trend in relation to the last recession.

Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report

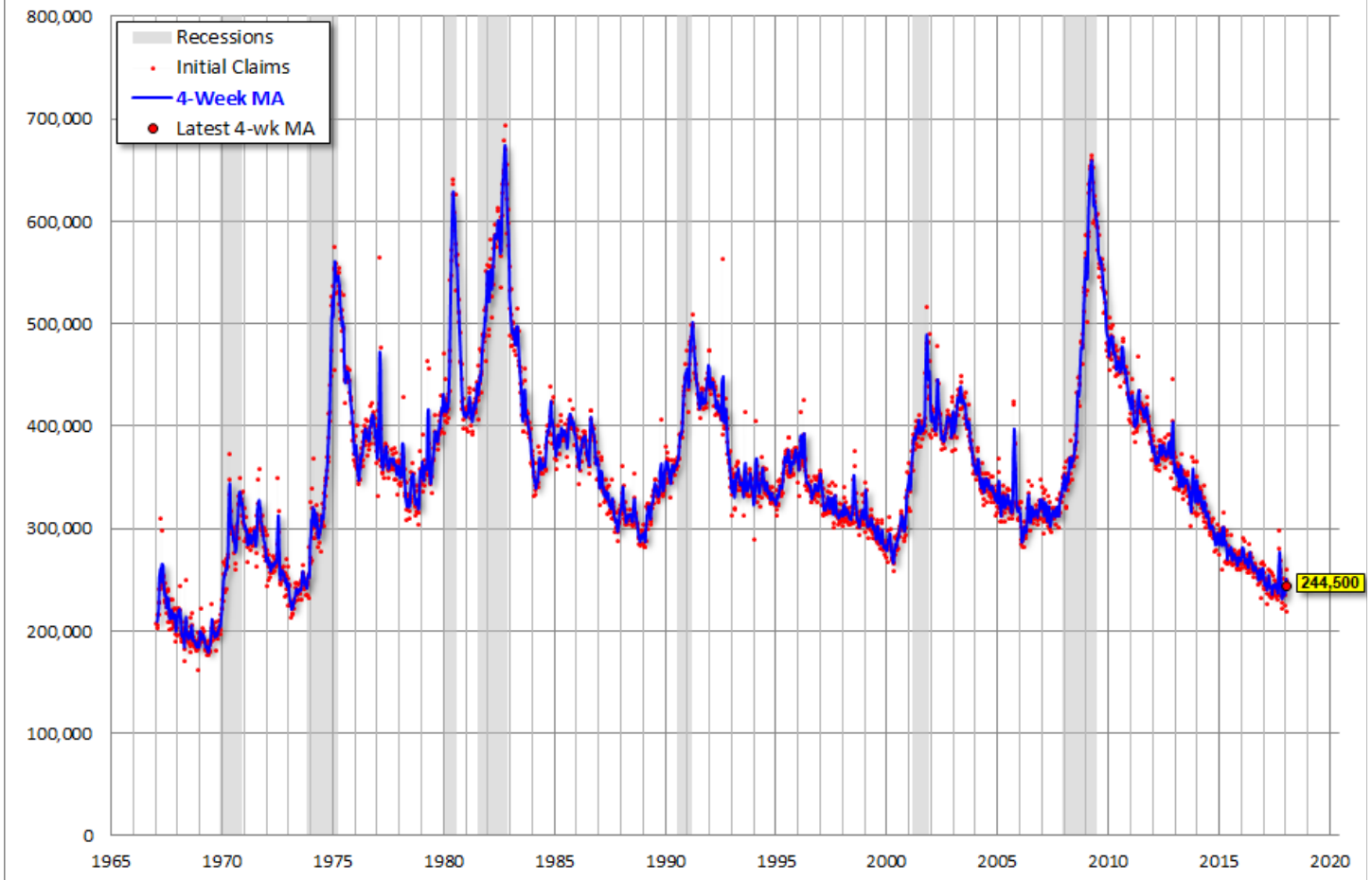
Seasonally Adjusted with the Four-Week Moving Average



As we can see, there's a good bit of volatility in this indicator, which is why the 4-week moving average (the highlighted number) is a more useful number than the weekly data. Here is the complete data series.

Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report

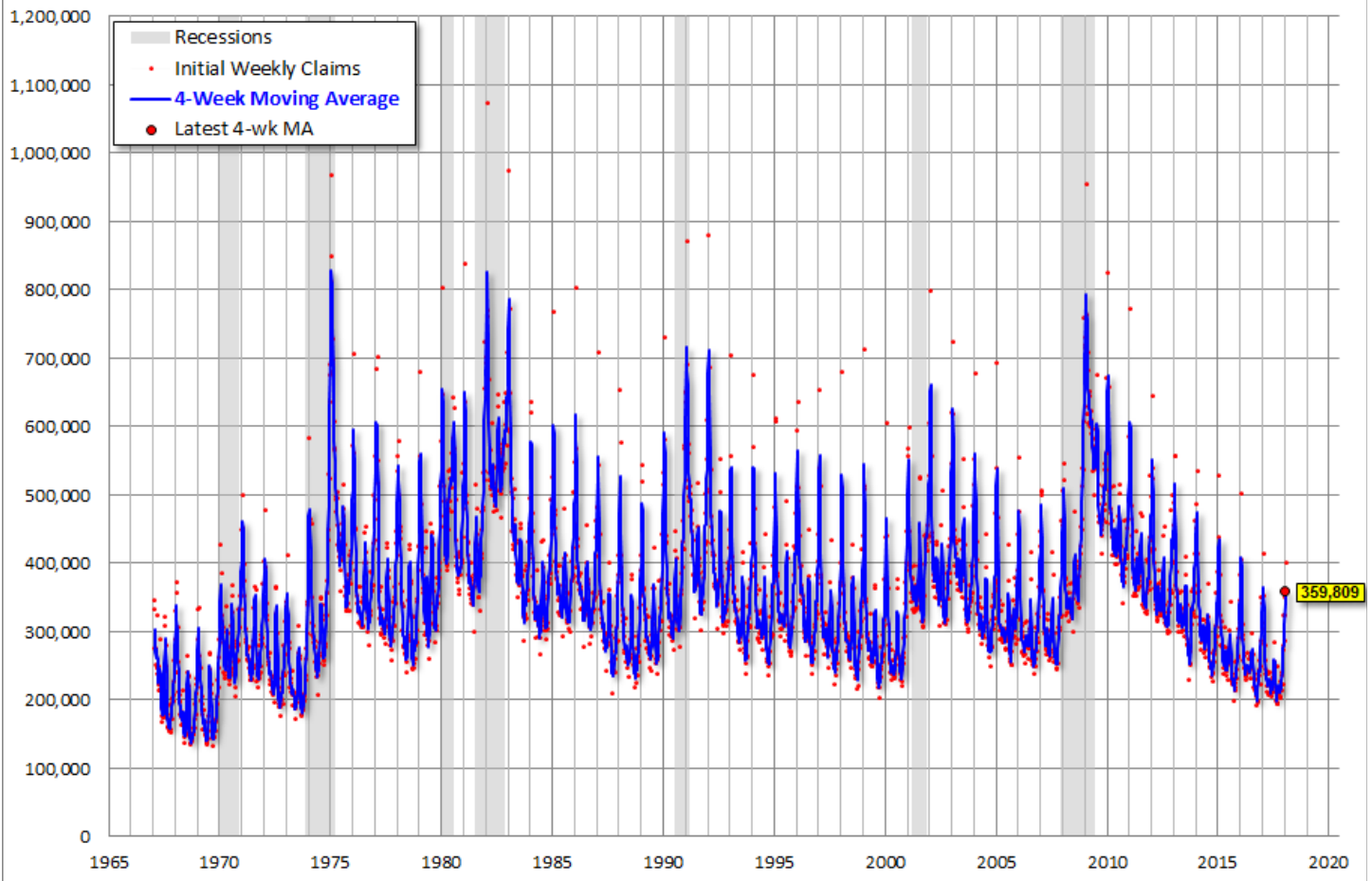
Seasonally Adjusted with the Four-Week Moving Average



The headline Unemployment Insurance data is seasonally adjusted. What does the non-seasonally adjusted data look like? See the chart below, which clearly shows the extreme volatility of the non-adjusted data (the red dots). The 4-week MA gives an indication of the recurring pattern of seasonal change (note, for example, those regular January spikes).

Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report

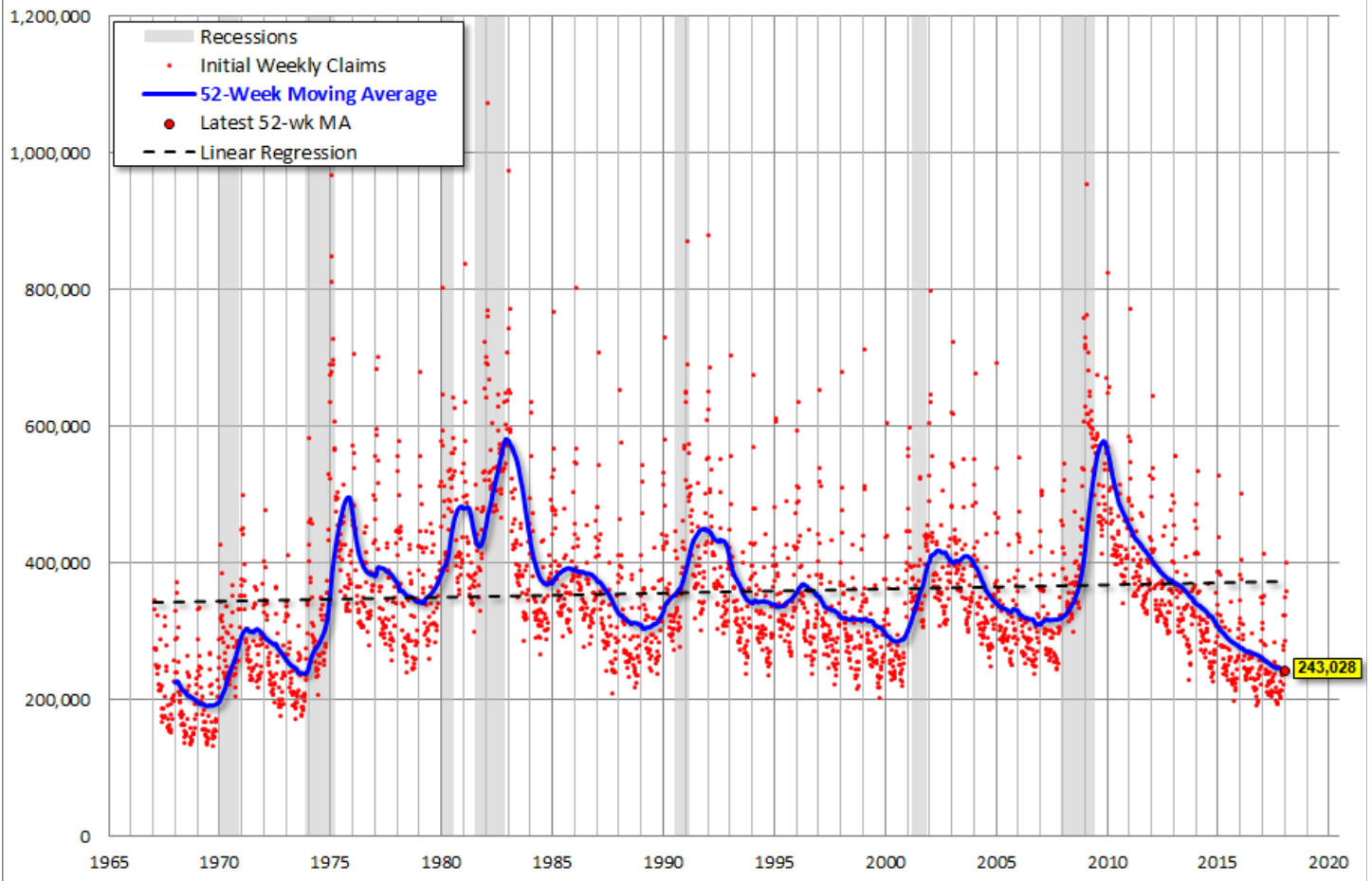
Not Seasonally Adjusted with the Four-Week Moving Average



Because of the extreme volatility of the non-adjusted weekly data, we can add a 52-week moving average to give a better sense of the secular trends. The chart below also has a linear regression through the data. We can see that this metric continues to fall below the long-term trend stretching back to 1968.

Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims Report

Not Seasonally Adjusted with the 52-Week Moving Average

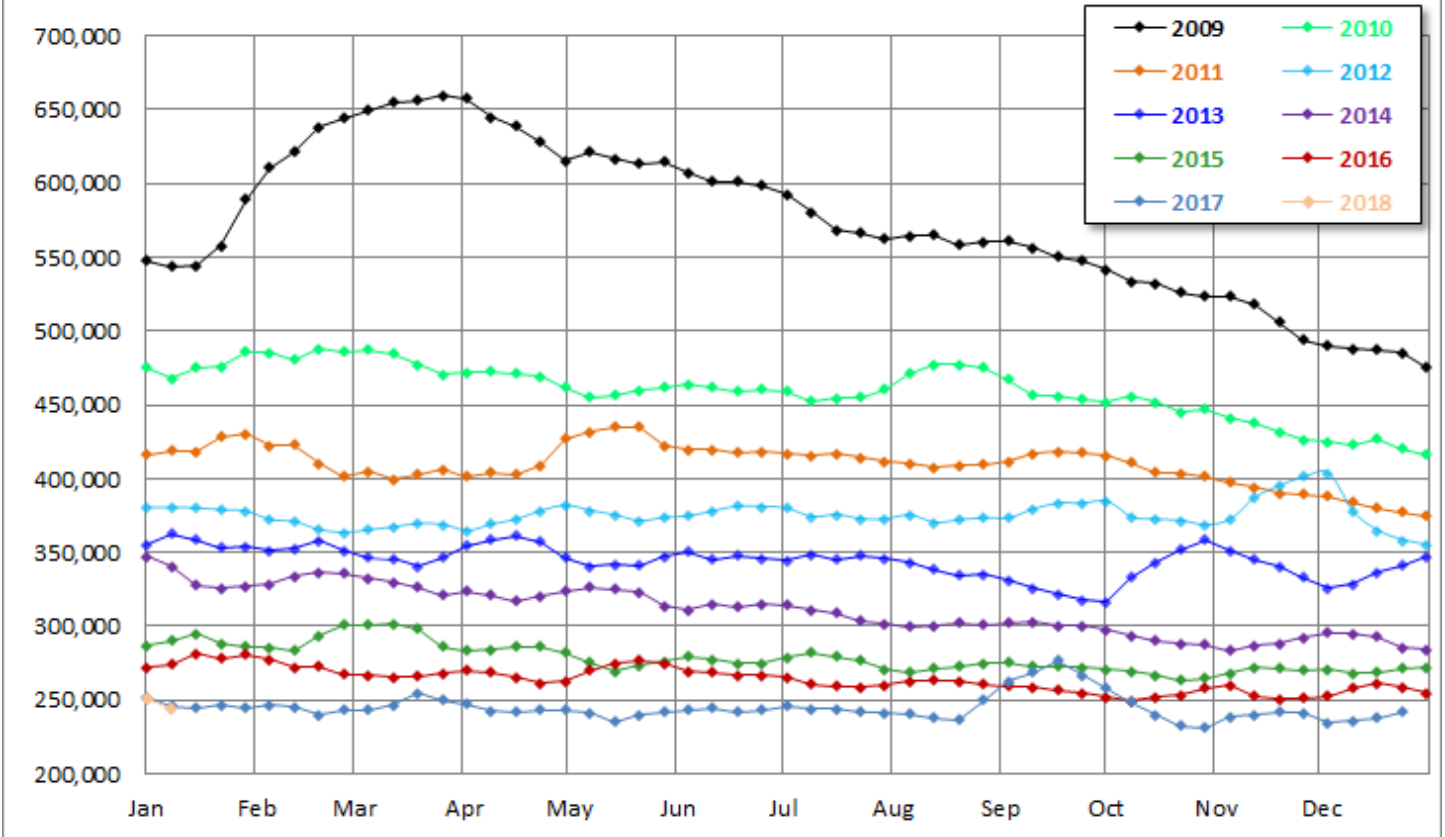


Annual Comparisons

Here is a calendar-year overlay since 2009 using the 4-week moving average. The purpose is to compare the annual slopes since the peak in the spring of 2009, near the end of the Great Recession.

Weekly Unemployment Claims Yearly Comparisons

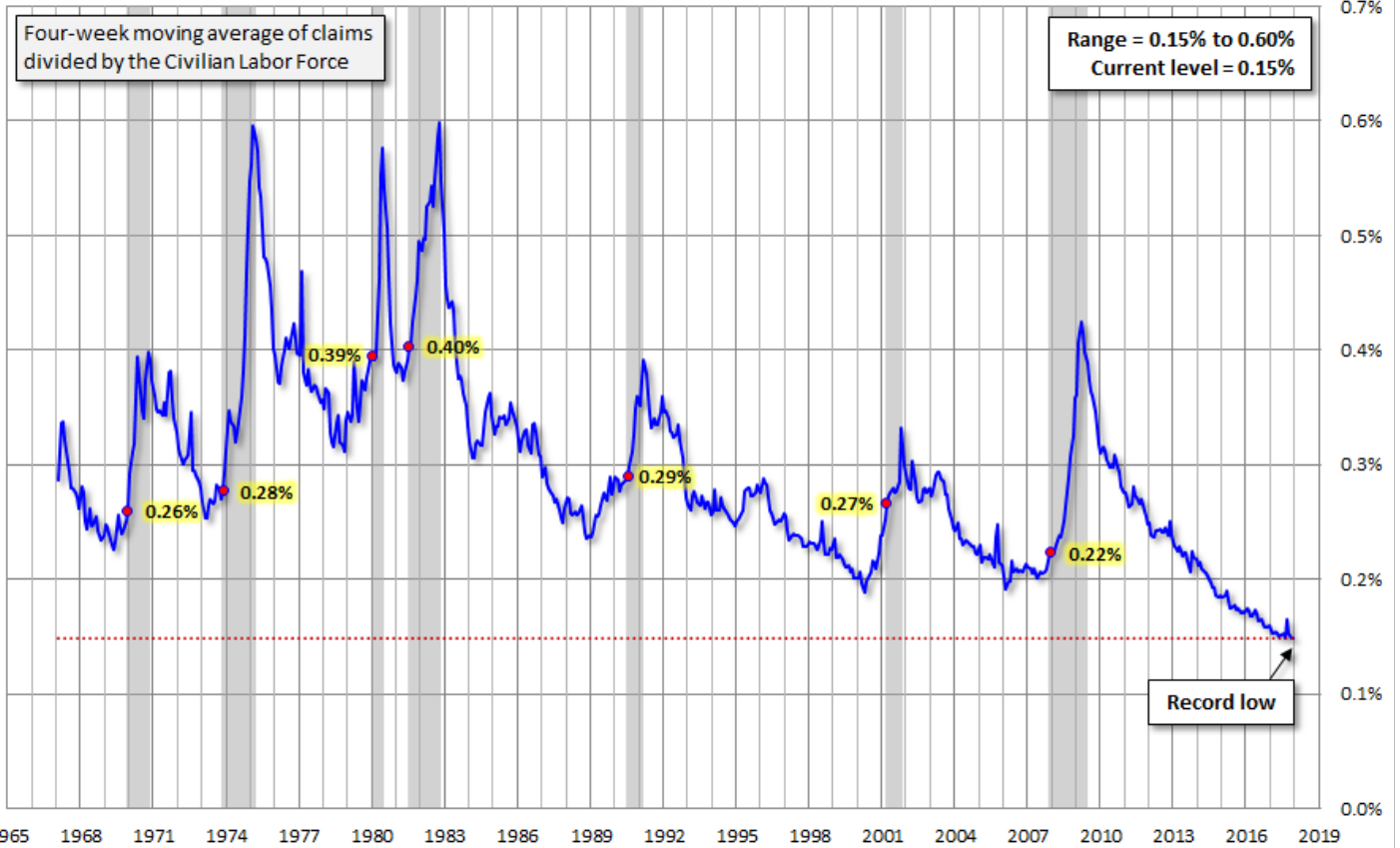
Seasonally Adjusted Four-Week Moving Average



For an analysis of unemployment claims as a percent of the labor force, see regularly updated piece [The Civilian Labor Force, Unemployment Claims and the Business Cycle](#) Here is a snapshot from that analysis.

Percent Ratio of Initial Unemployment Claims to the Civilian Labor Force

Recessions Recession Starts Current Level



Here's our complete list of monthly employment updates:

[ADP Employment Report](#)

[Employment Situation Summary](#)

[Labor Market Conditions Index](#)

[Long-Term Trends by Age Group](#)

[Aging Work Force](#)

[Ratio of Part-Time and Full-Time Employment](#)

[Multiple Jobholders](#)

Workforce Recovery Since the Recession

Civilian Labor Force, Unemployment Claims, and the Business Cycle