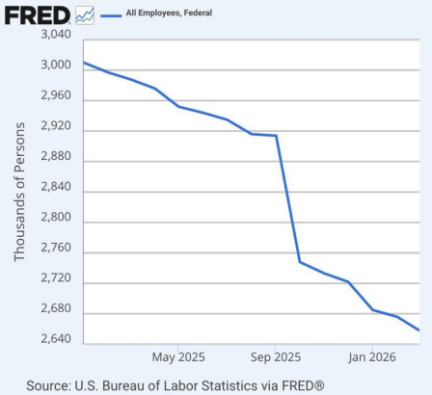


Washington payroll shrinks to a 60-year low under President Trump

The federal workforce has fallen to its lowest level in roughly six decades following a sweeping reduction in government payrolls during President Trump's second term.

Federal employment now stands at about 2.7 million workers, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, down more than 300,000 since Trump returned to the White House in January 2025.

That amounts to a reduction of roughly 11% from the federal workforce Trump inherited, with most of the decline occurring during the first year of his administration. Federal employment has since remained relatively stable throughout 2026.

The figures do not include active-duty military personnel, who number roughly 1.35 million, or an estimated 100,000 employees working for U.S. intelligence agencies.

Federal employment typically spikes during decennial Census years, temporarily pushing the government payroll considerably higher. The workforce reached about 3.4 million in 2010 and nearly 3.2 million in 2020.

Outside those Census-related increases, however, federal employment had climbed above 3 million by January 2025, representing the highest non-Census level in roughly three decades.

Trump made reducing the size and cost of the federal government a central pledge of his 2024 campaign and moved aggressively once back in office to cut positions across the bureaucracy.

Elon Musk played a major role in the early effort through the Department of Government Efficiency, commonly known as DOGE, which was tasked with identifying government spending reductions and eliminating positions the administration considered unnecessary.

The cuts reached across much of the federal government, including significant reductions at the Departments of Education, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development.

The Department of Homeland Security was one major exception. Staffing there has remained comparatively steady while the administration expanded immigration enforcement and border-related operations.

One of the largest waves of departures came at the end of September 2025, when more than 150,000 federal employees left government service through buyout programs.

That departure helped produce what was described as the largest single-year reduction in the civil service in nearly 80 years.