



Research

Two Americas: Public vs. Private Sector

MARCH 6, 2010

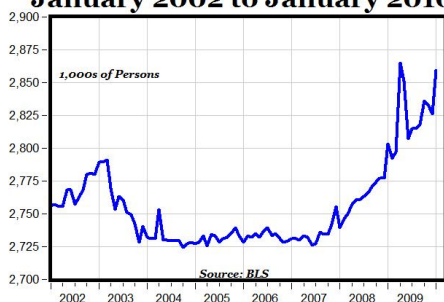
From [Carpe Diem](#)

By: Mark Perry

1. The number of federal employees exceeded 2.8 million for the first time in January 2009, and federal jobs have increased by 82,000 employees since December 2008 (click image to enlarge

).

**Federal Government Employees
January 2002 to January 2010**



2. Average federal salaries exceed average private-sector pay in more than eight out of 10 occupations of comparable occupations. From [USA Today](#), a sampling of average annual salaries in 2008 are displayed below, the most recent data (click to enlarge):

Job comparison

Average federal salaries exceed average private-sector pay in 83% of comparable occupations.

A sampling of average annual salaries in 2008, the most recent data:

Job	Federal	Private	Difference
Airline pilot, copilot, flight engineer	\$93,690	\$120,012	-\$26,322
Broadcast technician	\$90,310	\$46,265	\$44,045
Budget analyst	\$73,140	\$65,532	\$7,608
Chemist	\$98,060	\$72,120	\$25,940
Civil engineer	\$85,970	\$76,184	\$9,786
Clergy	\$70,460	\$39,247	\$31,213
Computer, information systems manager	\$122,020	\$115,705	\$6,315
Computer support specialist	\$45,830	\$54,875	-\$9,045
Cook	\$30,400	\$23,279	\$7,121
Crane, tower operator	\$54,900	\$44,044	\$10,856
Dental assistant	\$36,170	\$32,069	\$4,101
Economist	\$101,020	\$91,065	\$9,955
Editors	\$42,210	\$54,803	-\$12,593
Electrical engineer	\$86,400	\$84,653	\$1,747
Financial analysts	\$87,400	\$81,232	\$6,168
Graphic designer	\$70,820	\$46,565	\$24,255
Highway maintenance worker	\$42,720	\$31,376	\$11,344
Janitor	\$30,110	\$24,188	\$5,922
Landscape architects	\$90,830	\$56,390	\$34,440
Laundry, dry-cleaning worker	\$33,100	\$19,945	\$13,155
Lawyer	\$123,080	\$128,763	-\$5,683
Librarian	\$76,110	\$63,284	\$12,826
Locomotive engineer	\$48,440	\$63,125	-\$14,685
Machinist	\$51,530	\$44,315	\$7,215
Mechanical engineer	\$88,690	\$77,554	\$11,136
Office clerk	\$34,260	\$29,863	\$4,397
Optometrist	\$61,530	\$106,665	-\$45,135
Paralegals	\$60,340	\$46,890	\$13,450
Pest control worker	\$48,670	\$33,675	\$14,995
Physicians, surgeons	\$176,050	\$177,102	-\$1,052
Physician assistant	\$77,770	\$87,763	-\$10,013
Procurement clerk	\$40,640	\$34,082	\$6,558
Public relations manager	\$132,410	\$88,241	\$44,169
Recreation worker	\$43,630	\$21,671	\$21,959
Registered nurse	\$74,460	\$63,780	\$10,680
Respiratory therapist	\$46,740	\$50,443	-\$3,703
Secretary	\$44,500	\$33,829	\$10,671
Sheet metal worker	\$49,700	\$43,725	\$5,975
Statistician	\$88,520	\$78,065	\$10,455
Surveyor	\$78,710	\$67,338	\$11,374

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, USA TODAY analysis

3. Also from [USA Today](#), the typical federal worker is paid \$11,091 more per year (20% higher salary) than private-sector workers in the same occupation, based on median annual salaries.

Federal Employees: \$66,591

Private-Sector Employees: \$55,500

4. According to USA Today, average annual benefits (health, pension, etc.) in 2008 for federal employees was more than 4 times greater than benefits for private workers, a difference of almost \$31,000 per year:

Federal employees: \$40,875

Private sector worker: \$9,882

Other key findings from [USA Today](#):

- Federal. The federal pay premium cut across all job categories — white-collar, blue-collar, management, professional, technical and low-skill. In all, 180 jobs paid better average salaries in the federal government (83%); 36 paid better in the private sector (17%).
- Private. The private sector paid more on average in a select group of high-skill occupations, including lawyers, veterinarians and airline pilots. The government's 5,200 computer research scientists made an average of \$95,190, about \$10,000 less than the average in the corporate world.
- State and local. State government employees had an average salary of \$47,231 in 2008, about 5% less than comparable jobs in the private sector. City and county workers earned an average of \$43,589, about 2% more than private workers in similar jobs. State and local workers have higher total compensation than private workers when the value of benefits is included.

See related previous **CD** post on [Two Americas](#).