



Federal employee pay has been a target in cost-cutting efforts by the President and Congress, aided by a public perception of feds as overpaid "fat cats." Claims about public vs. private pay have swung widely - from the Federal Salary Council's data that shows feds are paid 24 percent less than the private sector, to a Cato Institute report that says feds are paid double the private sector. What's the reality? Federal News Radio brings you interviews and analysis on the federal pay debate.

Feds work a month less per year than private sector, Heritage report finds

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Federal employees work about a month less per year than private sector workers, according to a report by conservative think tank Heritage Foundation.

The report found federal employees work on average of 38.7 hours a week, compared with 41.4 hours per week in the private sector. That difference adds up to 3.8 fewer weeks per year that feds work compared with private sector workers.

"From a budgetary perspective, shorter work hours in the public sector may cause governments to be less efficient in converting tax dollars into public services. More broadly, the perception that government employees do not work as hard as private-sector employees runs counter to the spirit of public service," according to the report.

Heritage found state and local government employees work even fewer hours — 38.1 hours per week or 4.7 weeks less per year than private sector workers.

Heritage used data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey to reach its findings. Heritage notes the survey only measures work time and not work effort or work effectiveness.

One federal union called Heritage's findings "utterly misleading."

"Private sector averages are low because so many private, non-union employers provide absolutely no paid time off. No sick leave, no vacation, no holidays. That

is the disgrace, not the fact that public sector employers recognize that all workers need some paid time off," said Jacqueline Simon, public policy director for the American Federation of Government Employees, in an emailed statement.

The Heritage report adds fuel to the ongoing debate over private vs. public sector compensation. A report this year by the Congressional Budget Office found feds are paid 16 percent more in total compensation than the private sector, but difference depended on educational levels. In fact, federal workers with professional or doctorate degrees earned about 23 percent less than their private sector counterparts. Meanwhile, a Bureau of Labor Statistics study last year found feds are paid 26 percent less than the private sector.

The debate comes as feds are in the middle of a two-year pay freeze that Congress is expected to extend another six months as part of a short-term spending measure. Federal benefits have been a target of budget cuts. (See a list of bills that affect federal employees' pay and benefits.)