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## What recession? Fed workers rake it in

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The old saying that the best job to have during a recession is in government turns out to be the truth -- as long it's the federal government.

The number of federal employees earning \$100,000 or more a year jumped from 14 to 19 percent of the federal payroll during the recession, according to a report in USA Today.

During that same period, the private sector was shedding 7.3 million jobs. Defense Department civilian employees earning \$150,000 or more shot up from 1,868 in December 2007 to 10,100 in June 2009.

Before the recession, the Transportation Department reported only a single employee pulling in \$170,000 or more. Now that agency has 1,690 workers at that lofty level.

The average federal salary zoomed 6.6 percent to \$71,206, compared to the \$54,101 paid by state and local governments, a 3.9 percent increase. The private-sector average is \$40,331.

"It's astounding," said Chris Edwards, who studies federal salaries at the Cato Institute.

"When average families are losing their jobs or having their wages cut or frozen during the recession, the federal government has become this elite island of highly paid workers."

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