

Job Search Surge Among DC-Area Federal Employees

Key Findings

- **More DC-area government workers are now searching for work**
Among DC-area government workers on LinkedIn, the number of government workers applying to new jobs was 143% higher at the end of March as compared to a typical day in September 2024, nearly 3x greater than the corresponding increase in job search activity among non-government workers. Most of this job search surge occurred post-inauguration.
- **This government-worker job search surge peaked in late February**
At its height relative to September 2024 levels, the number of daily government-worker applicants peaked at more than 200% in late February before subsiding through the end of March.
- **The early 2025 spike in DC-area applicants is atypically large**
As compared to trend growth from 2019 to 2024, the recent increase in DC-area job seekers on LinkedIn is unusually large for both government and non-government workers. Among government workers, the number of unique weekly applicants was 100% above trend in March; among non-government workers, the number of weekly applicants was 42% above trend.
- **The majority of this rise is concentrated among federal agencies**
Among the top 200 government agencies/departments—including state & local—comprising the post-inauguration spike in applicant activity in the DC-area, more than 80% of applicants originate from federal agencies or departments. For the majority of the federal agencies we identify, the post-inauguration jump in federal employee job seekers was greater than 85% through the end of March.

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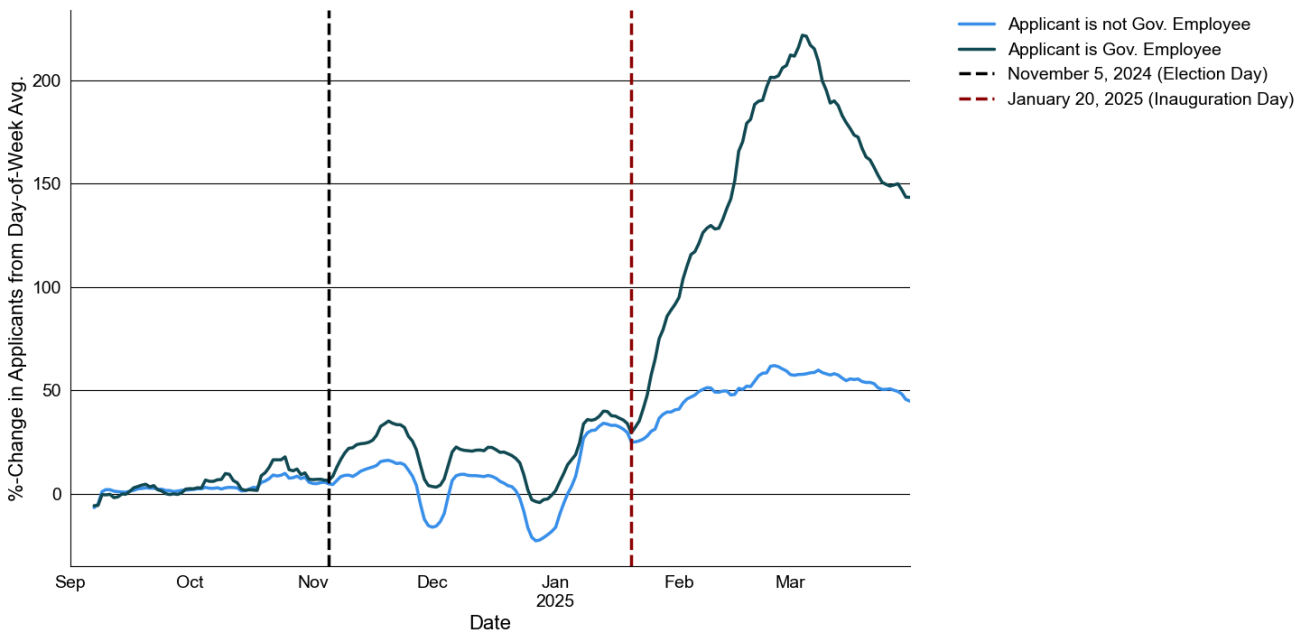
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DC-area applicant surge, mostly from government

This note documents a notable surge in the number of government employees in the DC-Baltimore metro area applying to new roles following the 2024 presidential election and most predominantly in the weeks after the inauguration on January 20, 2025.¹ Since September, the number of government workers in the DC-area applying daily to new jobs on LinkedIn rose by more than 200% through the end of February before subsiding to 143% above September levels by the end of March. By comparison, the number of non-government workers applying to new jobs peaked at more than 60% in February before stabilizing close to 50% by the end of March (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Increase in unique daily applicants among DC-area workers since September 2024, government vs. non-government



Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph. This chart calculates the growth in the average daily applicant count among government and non-government employees in the DC-area. Government versus non-government status is determined based on the employment status of the member as of September 1, 2024. Applications are measured as an on-site application or an offsite apply-click. Daily values are normalized to the average day-of-week values in September. The chart shows 7-day moving averages.

At a national level, it is unlikely that federal layoffs alone could destabilize the broader labor market as the federal government represents less than 2% of nonfarm payroll employment in the U.S. But this surge in job search activity by government workers may represent a more material headwind to the extent that it reflects anticipated reductions in government spending and agency funding.

¹ Throughout this note workers in the DC-area refers to LinkedIn members who we are able to identify as working or living in the Washington, DC-Baltimore metro area. Throughout this note government workers are those whose primary employer is a government entity within LinkedIn’s company taxonomy.

Job Search Surge Among DC-Area Federal Employees

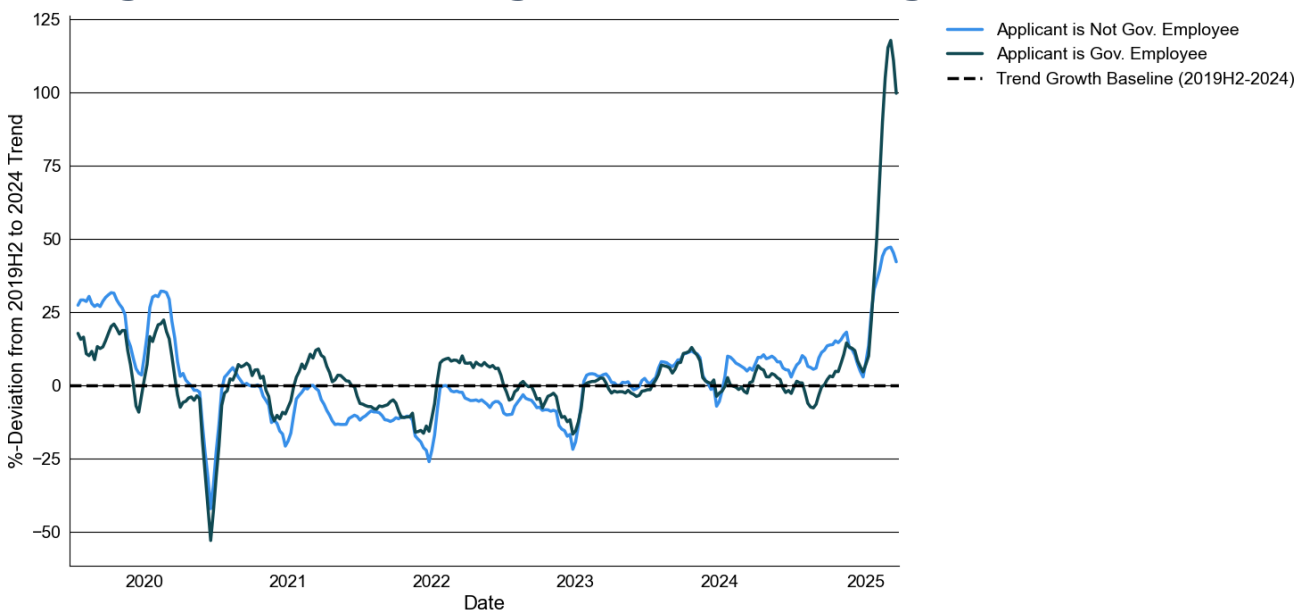
In other words, while overall federal expenditures so far this year have [largely tracked prior year spending](#), the sharp uptick in job seeking activity among government workers in the DC-area suggests that many federal employees foresee some employment risk in the future.

The recent surge compared to prior years

The increase in job seeking activity in the DC-area reflects a combination of factors, including typical seasonal patterns in the labor market at the start of the year as well as longer-run trend growth in the number of job seekers on LinkedIn. In this section we document that even after accounting for these two factors this recent surge in job seekers in the DC-area is atypically large.

First, we measure unique weekly applicants from among government and non-government workers on LinkedIn from July 2019 to the present. We then estimate a simple time-trend component in each of these series from the start of our sample through the end of 2024. Figure 2 reports the percent deviations from these estimated trends over our sample, smoothed by taking 4-week moving averages.

Figure 2: Deviations from trend in unique weekly applicants among DC-area workers, government vs. non-government



Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph. This chart calculates the deviation in unique weekly applicants among government and non-government employees in the DC area. Government versus non-government status is determined based on the employment status of the member as of the date of the application. Applications are measured as an on-site application or an offsite apply-click. Weekly values are deviations from trend growth for log weekly values estimated with data from 2019H2 to 2024. The chart shows 4-week moving averages.

The surge in job seeking activity in recent months among workers in the DC-area is atypically large. Over our entire sample, the largest increase in job seekers relative to trend occurred in February 2025 for both government and non-government workers. Through the end of March, the number of unique weekly

Job Search Surge Among DC-Area Federal Employees

applicants among government workers in the DC-area was 100% above its recent historical trend; for non-government workers, the number of weekly applicants was 42% higher.

If anticipated funding cuts are playing a role in driving up job search activity in the public sector, it seems plausible that workers at firms and organizations that do business with the federal government are similarly searching for work—also at historically elevated levels—as a precaution against future job loss. Uncertainty emanating from the public sector may already be having an effect on the broader DC-area labor market.

Preemptive job search by government and non-government workers in the DC-Area so far this year implies a more competitive local labor market for job seekers. At the same time, firms uncertain about revenue due to possible funding cuts in the future may likewise exercise caution by delaying or entirely forestalling hiring—at least until such uncertainty is resolved. All else being equal, an increase in the number of job seekers and weaker labor demand from firms implies lower job finding rates for unemployed workers and the prospect of a rise in the area unemployment rate.

Most government job seekers are federal workers

We next address the fact that LinkedIn's company taxonomy does not explicitly distinguish between federal agencies and other government entities, state and local for example. To do so, we manually confirm that among the top 200 agencies/departments comprising the post-inauguration spike in applicant activity, more than 80% of applicants originate from Federal agencies or departments.

Figure 3 gives a sense for how broad-based the increase in job search is across federal agencies. For the majority of federal agencies we identify, the increase in average weekly applicants post-inauguration was greater than 85% through the end of March. For one out of every five of these federal agencies, the number of weekly job seekers increased more than two-fold since January 20, 2025, as compared to pre-election norms.

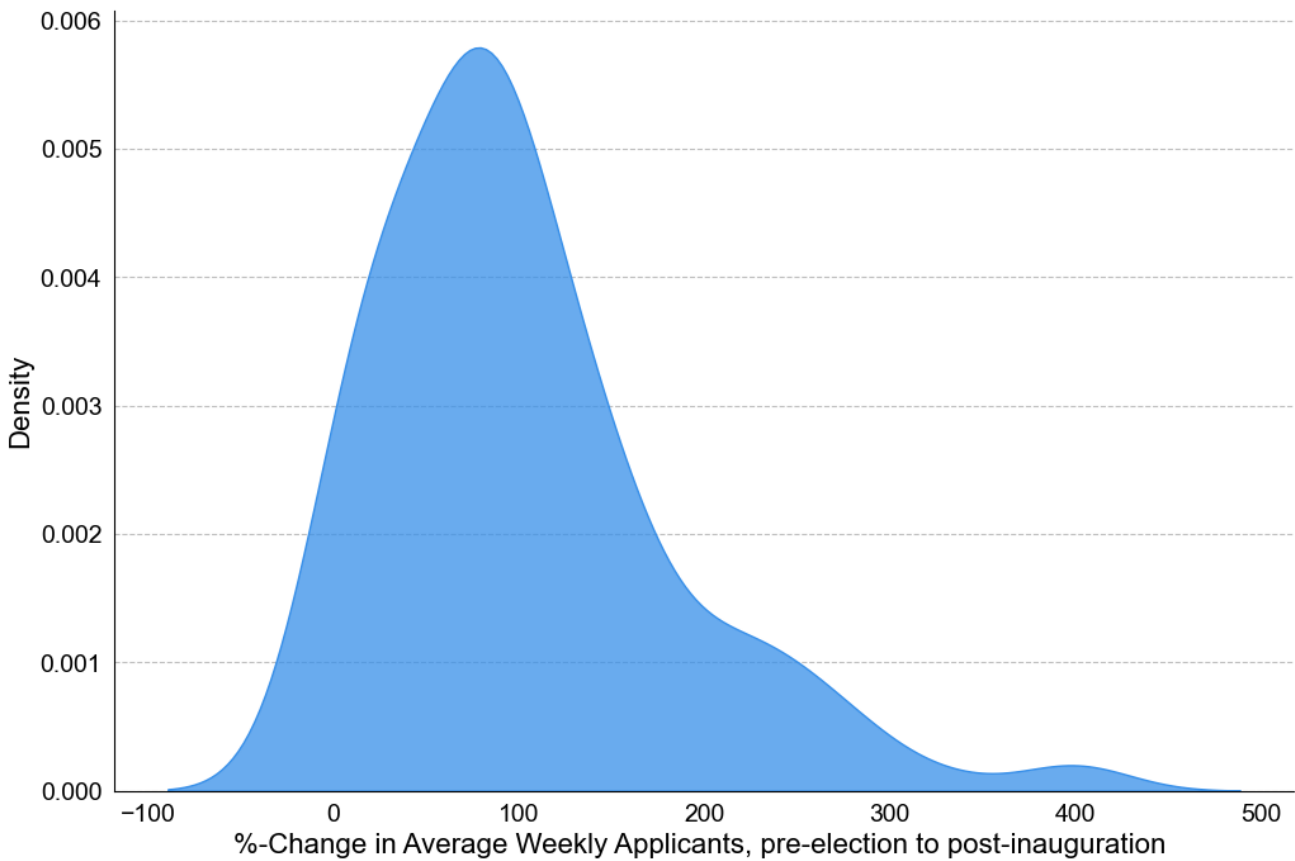
Conclusion

The more than two-fold increase in the number of government workers applying to new roles is exceptional as compared to recent historical patterns. Given the timing of when this job search surge began and the breadth across federal agencies, it seems unlikely that that such job seekers are responding to having already lost their job.

Instead, the surge in job search activity by government workers may reflect broader uncertainty among federal employees about future agency funding, job security or recently changed workplace policies (e.g., return-to-office), among other factors. The increase in non-government job seekers in the DC-area—also large by recent historical norms—indicates that uncertainty emanating from the federal government may already be affecting labor market outcomes in the DC-area economy.

Job Search Surge Among DC-Area Federal Employees

Figure 3: Density plot of growth in average weekly applicants across federal agencies, pre-election to post-inauguration



Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph. This chart shows the distribution of the percentage increase in average weekly applicants post-inauguration from among federal agencies we identify. Federal agencies were manually identified from among the top 200 “companies” that contributed to the post-inauguration applicant surge from the public sector. Average weekly applicants in each period is defined as the number of distinct applicants pre-election (September and October) or post-inauguration divided by the number of weeks in the sample. For the majority of federal agencies we identify, the increase in average weekly applicants post-inauguration was greater than 85%. For one out of every five of these federal agencies, the number of weekly job seekers increased more than two-fold since January 20 through the end of March, as compared to pre-election levels.

Appendix

Methodology

Data and Privacy:

This body of work represents the world seen through LinkedIn data, drawn from the anonymized and aggregated profile information of LinkedIn's 1+ billion members around the world. As such, it is influenced by how members choose to use the platform, which can vary based on professional, social, and regional culture, as well as overall site availability and accessibility. In publishing these insights from LinkedIn's Economic Graph, we want to provide accurate statistics while ensuring our members' privacy. As a result, all data show aggregated information for the corresponding period following strict data quality thresholds that prevent disclosing any information about specific individuals.