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Bill de Blasio Adds More Than 3,000 City Employees in First Year: Data

There were 274,447 full-time municipal employees as of Sept. 30, up from 271,296 on Dec. 31, or a 1.16% increase, according to records. The city's workforce has steadily grown under each of the last five mayors.

By Erin Durkin

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Mayor de Blasio's administration has added more than 3,000 people to the city's workforce since he took office in January.

Thanks to a surge in tax revenues and a boost in state funding, Mayor de Blasio has added more than 3,000 people to the municipal workforce since taking office in January, new records show.

There were 274,447 full-time municipal employees as of Sept. 30, up from 271,296 on Dec. 31, a 1.16% increase.

Two-thirds of the new workers — about 2,000 — were hired for the mayor's universal pre-kindergarten program, plus new special education teachers, both funded by the state, officials said.

De Blasio has also added about 200 civilian employees to the NYPD in an effort to shift cops in desk jobs to the street, and he's added traffic enforcement agents for his Vision Zero push to cut pedestrian deaths. The Department of Transportation's staff has also grown by more than 140 for the Vision Zero effort, and the Health Department has added more than 230 workers to inspect pre-K classrooms, provide health programs for new moms and their kids, and combat rats.

While many companies in the private sector face relentless pressure to slash jobs, the trend in city government has been steadily upward — the workforce has grown under each of the last five mayors, increasing when tax revenues rise and falling only in tough economic times.

The city has added nearly 80,000 workers since 1980, an increase of more than 40%, according to data reviewed by the Daily News.

"Government grows over time, as we expect government to take on more. New administrations come in and have new priorities," said Maria Doulis of the Citizens Budget Commission. "What doesn't happen is reviewing departments that are no longer necessary."

"You usually only see decreases in headcount where there are recessions," she said.

De Blasio spokeswoman Amy Spitalnick defended this year's hiring surge.



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Government employees have grown under de Blasio — mostly in education.

"New positions created under the de Blasio administration move forward key initiatives that will go a long way for New Yorkers — high quality full day universal pre-K and Vision Zero to dramatically reduce traffic injuries and fatalities — while protecting the City's long-term fiscal health," she said.

"The change in headcount is fully in line with historical trends and largely funded by the state, thanks to one of the highest-ever levels of school aid."

The number of full-time employees grew by some 20,000 under former Mayor Michael Bloomberg. A big chunk of that amounted to a paperwork change — 15,000 Department of Education paraprofessionals were reclassified as full-time instead of part-time staffers, and many parks workers made the same shift, according to the Independent Budget Office.

But jobs were also added in the Health and Buildings departments.

By 2008, the payroll hit an all-time high of 280,649, just before the Great Recession.

Bloomberg began cutting when the economy tanked. By 2012, the payroll had shed 12,000 positions, but then it started to grow again.

Recent jumps pale in comparison with the growth of the city workforce in the 1980s, when the city added more than 50,000 workers over the course of the decade, records show.

But mayors of both parties have continued adding to the workforce when times are good.

"The risk is when there's a downturn, you're stuck with long-term employees," said Fred Siegel of the fiscally conservative Manhattan Institute. "It's very hard to adapt in hard times."