

# GAO database on rules and major rules

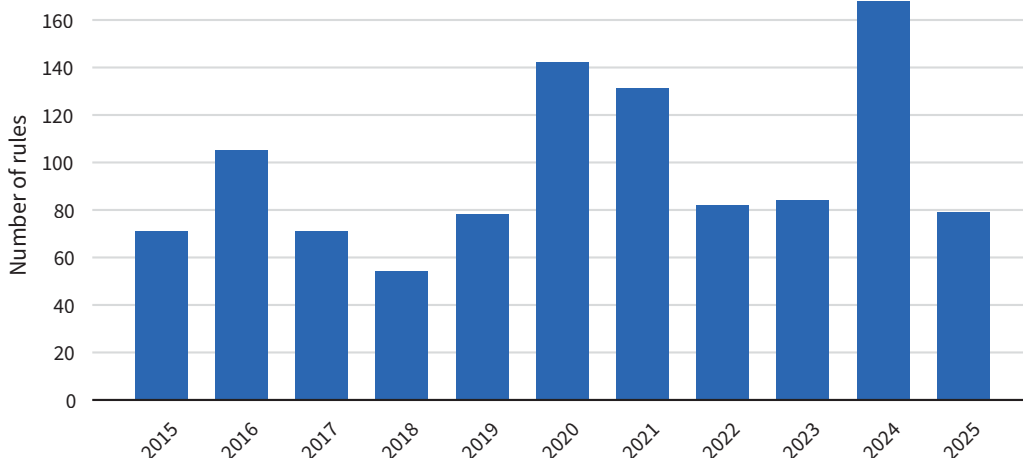
The federal government’s regulatory reports and databases serve different but intertwined purposes. The *Federal Register* presents all proposed and final rules, along with numerous presidential documents and notices, on a daily and calendar-year basis. The *Unified Agenda* presents agency priorities with details about a subset of rules at various stages in the production pipeline and their economic significance twice yearly on an irregular, semi-fiscal-year basis.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) compiles regulatory information as well. The 1996 Congressional Review Act (CRA) requires agencies to submit rules to both houses of Congress and the GAO. The GAO is tasked with preparing reports to Congress on major rules, typically those with annual estimated effects of \$100 million or more.

Major rules can add or reduce burdens, delay policy implementation, or set rates and standards for large government programs like Medicaid. Major guidance documents are also subject to the CRA but are rarely presented to the GAO or Congress in a readily trackable way. Until 2024, the submission form provided to agencies made no note of them apart from a checkbox labeled “Other.”<sup>90</sup>

The CRA provides Congress a window of 60 legislative days to review a submitted rule and pass a resolution of disapproval.<sup>91</sup> Despite the issuance of thousands of rules since the CRA’s passage, it was invoked only once before the Trump administration, against a Clinton-era ergonomics rule. Even today, fewer than two dozen regulations have been overturned through CRA resolutions, the bulk of them during the two Trump administrations.

**Figure 25. Major Rules in the GAO Database**



Source: Government Accountability Office.

Thanks to the CRA, one can monitor the thousands of final rules archived at the GAO each year, as well as track reports on those classified as major. GAO’s database contained 92,249 rules through January 20, 2026.<sup>92</sup> For comparison, recall that the *Federal Register* and National Archives repository identified 107,650 rules since the CRA’s passage through year-end 2025 (Appendix E). The GAO database is incomplete, though, as not all regulations are reported despite CRA requirements.<sup>93</sup>

For 2025, the GAO database contains 543 rules (major and non-major) received from departments and agencies. Due to reporting lag, rules entering GAO’s database after this report’s compilation will add to the ultimate total. For example, GAO reports 1,971 in 2024 and 2,168 for 2023. All of these counts lag behind the *Federal Register* tallies covered earlier.

Figure 25 depicts the number of major rules between 2016 and 2025 that policymakers might compare with final economically significant rules, with the caveat that totals in recent years fluctuate in the GAO report before converging on a stable cardinal number. Paralleling the decline in significant and economically significant rules, the 79 major rules recorded in 2025 represent a 53 percent drop from 2024’s 168. Appendix L presents agency details on these major rules back to 2003.

With transition overlap in mind, totals and calendar-year averages of the number of major rules during recent administrations follow:

- ▶ George W. Bush (eight years): 492 major rules, average 62 rules per year.
- ▶ Barack Obama (eight years): 675 major rules, average 84 rules per year.

- ▶ Donald Trump first term (four years): 345 major rules, average 86 rules per year (including deregulatory).
- ▶ Joe Biden (four years): 464 major rules, average 116 rules per year.