



Takeda cuts send layoffs soaring in May, rising year over year

By Angela Gabriel
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Far fewer companies are letting employees go so far in 2026 compared to 2025, but the number of people affected is trending up, especially this month, according to *BioSpace* tallies.

Takeda's announcement last week that it will axe about 4,500 employees makes May the most brutal month so far for biopharma layoffs in 2026—and the month isn't even over.

The number of people biotech and pharma companies cut or planned to cut as of May 15 was 6,739, surpassing this year's highest monthly total of 3,713 in February, according to *BioSpace* tallies.* Layoffs between May 1–15 are also up from 4,112 for the same period in 2025 and 4,731 for all of May last year.

There's also been a year-over-year increase when reviewing data through the first 4 1/2 months of 2026. Biopharmas let go or expected to let go of 14,167 employees from Jan. 1 to May 15, up from 11,407 in the same period of 2025, a 24% uptick.

Fewer companies, deeper cuts

The increases come despite fewer companies making cuts year over year in 2026 to date: 52 in 2026 compared to 114 in 2025. The highest monthly total so far this year was 18 in March. Last year's highest monthly total, also in March, was 31.

The number of biopharmas letting employees go could rise later this year, according to Ira Leiderman, healthcare managing director at investment banking firm Cassel Salpeter & Co., which primarily handles mergers and acquisitions.

"I think we may see more towards year end, when people kind of have a guess at what next year is going to look like when they have to start budgeting for '27," he told *BioSpace* during an April interview. "26 budgets are being spent right now. They're not being formulated."

As to biopharmas that have made or projected layoffs so far in 2026, three are having deep cuts affecting at least 1,000 employees. Two announced their workforce reductions this month.

- **Takeda:** In an earnings presentation last week, the Japan-based pharma noted it will cut about 4,500 employees in fiscal year 2026 as part of a cost-cutting "transformation program." The layoffs include an estimated 247 people in Massachusetts and 387 in other states, a company spokesperson confirmed to *BioSpace*. Those cuts were previously disclosed in a March Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act notice.
- **BioNTech:** The German biotech in early May announced plans to close multiple manufacturing facilities by the end of next year, affecting about 1,860 employees. The sites include three locations in Germany—in Idar-Oberstein, Marburg and Tübingen—and one in Singapore. The Singapore facility is expected to close by the first quarter of next year.

- **Viatrix:** Following a strategic review and a fire at a manufacturing facility in India, Viatrix in February announced a restructuring that includes laying off up to 10% of its global workforce. The company expects to mostly complete the cuts within the next three years. Viatrix has more than 30,000 employees, according to a November SEC filing, meaning the layoffs could impact up to 3,000 people.

While Takeda is letting go of about 4,500 employees, a company spokesperson emphasized to *BioSpace* that the pharma is also hiring to support upcoming priority launches, its pipeline and new capabilities “to drive Takeda’s future growth.”

“Right now, we have 2,200 open roles globally and we expect to create new jobs throughout the year, which we are prioritizing filling with internal candidates,” the spokesperson said in an emailed response.

Takeda’s layoffs generated some chatter on two *BioSpace* LinkedIn posts last week about the cuts. A. Matt Muslu, a bioinformatics data analyst-genomic cross cutting specialist at Indiana Department of Health, noted confusion about the pharma letting so many people go amidst hiring plans. He asked why the company couldn’t create the new jobs gradually and move people internally into those roles “without losing the good ones.”

Gary F., a global service manager at Resonant Clinical Solutions, noted that the Takeda news hit hard and highlighted the human cost of layoffs.

“Behind every headline like this are people who’ve shown up, contributed, and built their careers with pride — now facing uncertainty they didn’t ask for,” he wrote. “It’s a reminder of how quickly things can shift, even in an industry built on purpose and progress.”

**Layoff numbers exclude contract development and manufacturing organizations, contract research organizations, tools and services businesses and medical device firms. To tally the cuts, BioSpace compiles data for known workforce reductions. The number of employees affected is identified or estimated primarily through information in company press releases, Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act notices, SEC filings and other media outlets' reports or via confirmation from company officials.*

Not all companies disclose downsizing, and some share only the percentage of staff affected. Some biopharmas provide total numbers retrospectively rather than disclosing individual workforce reductions as they happen.