



Joe Ciaramitaro - Winter 2020

Coaching Your Financial Future

Raymond James & Associates, Inc.

Joe Ciaramitaro, CFP®, AIF®
Sr VP, Investments, Managing Director
325 N Old Woodward
Suite 320
Birmingham, MI 48009
248-901-3938
800-544-8754 ex 3938
www.joethefinancialcoach.com

Joe Ciaramitaro/Farmington Office

36520 Grand River Ave.
Suite 106
Farmington, MI 48335
Joseph.Ciaramitaro@raymondjames.com

NOTE NEW FARMINGTON ADDRESS

Winter 2020

Key Retirement and Tax Numbers for 2020

Take This Quiz: The Social Security Retirement Earnings Test

Protecting Yourself Against Identity Theft

How Consumers Spend Their Money

Federal Income Tax: How Did We Get Here?



April 16, 2019 was an important day for many of us. But do you know why? It was Tax Freedom Day — the day when the average American theoretically earned enough to pay his or her tax obligations for the

year. According to the Tax Foundation, Americans will pay \$3.4 trillion in federal taxes in 2019, more than they spend on food, clothing, and housing combined.* But it wasn't always this way. In fact, income taxes are a fairly new development in the overall history of America. So how did we get to this point?

In the beginning...

The United States was founded, in part, on the premise that colonists didn't want to pay taxes without representation, which led to the famous tossing of tea into the Boston Harbor and the American Revolution. However, not long after the colonies gained their freedom from England, Congress passed the Stamp Act of 1797, which essentially was our nation's first estate tax. Otherwise, from the early 1790s to 1802, the U.S. government was supported by taxes on such items as spirits (alcohol, not the ghostly kind), sugar, tobacco, and corporate bonds.

Wars played a big part in the history of taxation in this country. To fund the War of 1812, Congress taxed sales of gold, silverware, jewelry, and watches. In 1817, tariffs on imported goods provided the main source of revenue to run the government.

With the onset of the Civil War, Congress enacted the nation's first income tax law, the Revenue Act of 1861, which included a flat tax of 3% on annual incomes exceeding \$800 to help pay for the costs of the war. That tax law was repealed and replaced by the Revenue Act of 1862, which established the Office of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue (forerunner to the Internal Revenue Service), levied excise taxes on most goods and services, and replaced the flat tax with a progressive tax.

The 16th Amendment

However, it was not until 1913 with the adoption of the 16th Amendment to the Constitution, that the income tax became a permanent fixture in the American tax system. Congress now had the authority to tax income of both individuals and corporations. It didn't take the IRS long to start inundating us with forms, beginning in 1914 with the introduction of the first income tax form, the dreaded Form 1040. Enactment of the Revenue Act of 1916 introduced tax rates and income scales.

Tax rates

Here's a sobering fact: In 1913, the top federal income tax bracket was 7% on all income over \$500,000, and the lowest tax bracket was 1%. During the Great Depression, Congress raised the highest tax bracket to 63%. Wars can be expensive, as evidenced by the jump in the highest tax rate to 94% during World War II. In 2018, the highest income tax rate was lowered to 37%.

Trying to get it right

Over the years, there have been frequent attempts to reform the tax law in some manner. We've seen the adoption of the alternative minimum tax, Social Security tax, taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, gasoline taxes, aviation taxes, property taxes, telecommunication taxes, not to mention state and local taxes. To quote Will Rogers, "The difference between death and taxes is death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets."

Tax laws are always changing and will likely remain a political hot potato. Only time will tell what changes are ahead, but there is no doubt that through taxation, what the government giveth, it inevitably taketh back again.

*Tax Freedom Day 2019 was April 16, as calculated by the Tax Foundation, taxfoundation.org.



Key Retirement and Tax Numbers for 2020



Every year, the Internal Revenue Service announces cost-of-living adjustments that affect contribution limits for retirement plans and various tax deduction, exclusion, exemption, and threshold amounts. Here are a few of the key adjustments for 2020.

Employer retirement plans

- Employees who participate in 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 plans can defer up to \$19,500 in compensation in 2020 (up from \$19,000 in 2019); employees age 50 and older can defer up to an additional \$6,500 in 2020 (up from \$6,000 in 2019).
- Employees participating in a SIMPLE retirement plan can defer up to \$13,500 in 2020 (up from \$13,000 in 2019), and employees age 50 and older can defer up to an additional \$3,000 in 2020 (the same as in 2019).

IRAs

The combined annual limit on contributions to traditional and Roth IRAs is \$6,000 in 2020 (the same as in 2019), with individuals age 50 and older able to contribute an additional \$1,000. For individuals who are covered by a workplace retirement plan, the deduction for contributions to a traditional IRA phases out for the following modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) ranges:

| | 2019 | 2020 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Single/head of household (HOH) | \$64,000 - \$74,000 | \$65,000 - \$75,000 |
| Married filing jointly (MFJ) | \$103,000 - \$123,000 | \$104,000 - \$124,000 |
| Married filing separately (MFS) | \$0 - \$10,000 | \$0 - \$10,000 |

Note: The 2020 phaseout range is \$196,000 - \$206,000 (up from \$193,000 - \$203,000 in 2019) when the individual making the IRA contribution is not covered by a workplace retirement plan but is filing jointly with a spouse who is covered.

The modified adjusted gross income phaseout ranges for individuals to make contributions to a Roth IRA are:

| | 2019 | 2020 |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Single/HOH | \$122,000 - \$137,000 | \$124,000 - \$139,000 |
| MFJ | \$193,000 - \$203,000 | \$196,000 - \$206,000 |
| MFS | \$0 - \$10,000 | \$0 - \$10,000 |

Estate and gift tax

- The annual gift tax exclusion for 2020 is \$15,000, the same as in 2019.
- The gift and estate tax basic exclusion amount for 2020 is \$11,580,000, up from \$11,400,000 in 2019.

Standard deduction

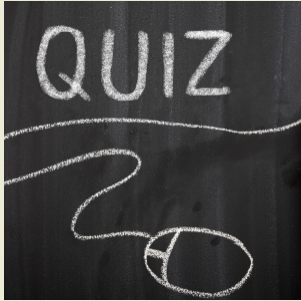
| | 2019 | 2020 |
|---------------|----------|----------|
| Single | \$12,200 | \$12,400 |
| HOH | \$18,350 | \$18,650 |
| MFJ | \$24,400 | \$24,800 |
| MFS | \$12,200 | \$12,400 |

Note: The additional standard deduction amount for the blind or aged (age 65 or older) in 2020 is \$1,650 (the same as in 2019) for single/HOH or \$1,300 (the same as in 2019) for all other filing statuses. Special rules apply if you can be claimed as a dependent by another taxpayer.

Alternative minimum tax (AMT)

| | 2019 | 2020 |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Maximum AMT exemption amount | | |
| Single/HOH | \$71,700 | \$72,900 |
| MFJ | \$111,700 | \$113,400 |
| MFS | \$55,850 | \$56,700 |
| Exemption phaseout threshold | | |
| Single/HOH | \$510,300 | \$518,400 |
| MFJ | \$1,020,600 | \$1,036,800 |
| MFS | \$510,300 | \$518,400 |
| 26% rate on AMTI* up to this amount, 28% rate on AMTI above this amount | | |
| MFS | \$97,400 | \$98,950 |
| All others | \$194,800 | \$197,900 |

*Alternative minimum taxable income



This quiz covers only some basic rules. For more information about other retirement earnings test rules, visit the Social Security Administration website, ssa.gov.

Take This Quiz: The Social Security Retirement Earnings Test

Can you work and receive Social Security retirement benefits at the same time? Yes, but the Social Security Administration (SSA) will apply an earnings test. Part or all of your monthly benefit may be withheld if you earn too much.

To help avoid surprises, take this quiz to find out what you know — and don't know — about Social Security earnings test rules.

Questions

1. The retirement earnings test applies only if you are receiving Social Security benefits and are...

- a. Under age 62
- b. Under full retirement age
- c. Full retirement age or older
- d. Age 70 or older

2. Which of the following types of income count toward the earnings test?

- a. Wages earned as an employee and net self-employment income
- b. Pension and retirement plan income
- c. Interest and dividends
- d. Both a and b
- e. All of the above

3. Benefits that are withheld are lost forever.

- a. True
- b. False

4. The earnings test may affect family members who are receiving which types of benefits?

- a. Disability benefits
- b. Spousal benefits
- c. Dependent benefits
- d. Both b and c

5. What special rule applies to earnings for one year, usually the first year you claim Social Security retirement benefits?

- a. A monthly earnings limit applies to any earnings after you claim retirement benefits.
- b. Earnings during the first year after you claim retirement benefits can't be counted if you retired after 40 years of continuous employment.
- c. Earnings during the first year after you claim retirement benefits will not reduce your Social Security benefit if you retired from a government job.

Answers

1. b. If you have not yet reached full retirement age (66 to 67, depending on your year of birth), your Social Security retirement benefit may be reduced if you earn more than a certain annual amount.

In 2020, \$1 in benefits will be deducted for every \$2 you earn above \$18,240. In the calendar year in which you reach your full retirement age, a higher limit applies. In 2020, \$1 in benefits will be deducted for every \$3 you earn above \$48,600. Once you reach full retirement age, your earnings will not affect your Social Security benefit.

The SSA may withhold benefits as soon as it determines that your earnings are on track to surpass the annual limit. The estimated amount will typically be deducted from your monthly benefit in full, so you might not receive benefits for one or more months before they resume.

2. a. Only earned income, such as wages from an employer and net self-employment income, count toward the earnings limit. Unearned income — such as other government benefits, investment earnings, interest, pension and retirement plan distributions, annuities, and capital gains — doesn't count.

3. b. Benefits that are withheld are not really lost. Your benefit will be recalculated at full retirement age to account for the months benefits were withheld. You'll receive the higher benefit for the rest of your life, so assuming you live long enough, you'll eventually recoup the total amount you previously "lost."

4. d. Benefits paid to family members (such as your spouse or dependent children) based on your earnings record may also be reduced if you're subject to the earnings test. The earnings test does not apply to disability insurance benefits.

5. a. Many people retire mid-year and have already earned more than the earnings limit. So in the first year you claim retirement benefits, a monthly earnings test may apply, regardless of your annual earnings.

For example, let's say that you claim benefits at age 62 on September 30, 2020 and have already earned more than the 2020 earnings limit of \$18,240. Then, you take a part-time job that pays you \$1,000 per month for the rest of the year. You'll still receive a Social Security benefit for October, November, and December because your earnings are less than \$1,520, the monthly limit that applies in 2020.

Raymond James & Associates, Inc.

Joe Ciaramitaro, CFP®, AIF®
 Sr VP, Investments, Managing Director
 325 N Old Woodward
 Suite 320
 Birmingham, MI 48009
 248-901-3938
 800-544-8754 ex 3938
 www.joethefinancialcoach.com

Raymond James & Associates, Inc., member New York Stock Exchange/SIPC

This information, developed by an independent third party, has been obtained from sources considered to be reliable, but Raymond James does not guarantee that the foregoing material is accurate or complete. This information is not a complete summary or statement of all available data necessary for making an investment decision and does not constitute a recommendation. The information contained in this report does not purport to be a complete description of the securities, markets, or developments referred to in this material. This information is not intended as a solicitation or an offer to buy or sell any security referred to herein. Investments mentioned may not be suitable for all investors. The material is general in nature. Past performance may not be indicative of future results. Raymond James does not provide advice on tax, legal or mortgage issues. These matters should be discussed with the appropriate professional.

PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST IDENTITY THEFT



Be Vigilant

- Check your credit report at least once a year for errors
- Periodically review your bank and debit/credit card accounts for suspicious charges/activity



Consider a Fraud Alert or Credit Freeze If Necessary

- A fraud alert requires creditors to take extra steps to verify your identity before extending any existing credit or issuing new credit in your name
- A credit freeze prevents new credit and accounts from being opened in your name



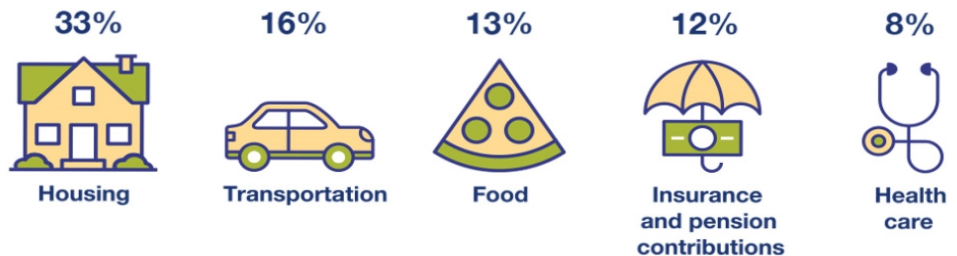
Stay One Step Ahead

- Maintain strong passwords or consider using a password manager
- Consider using two-step authentication when available
- Minimize information sharing and be wary of requests for personal information, whether received in an email, letter, or phone call
- Beware of scam websites and only use secure connections when shopping online

How Consumers Spend Their Money

Each year, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports on consumer spending patterns. According to the 2019 report, consumers spent an average of \$61,224 in 2018.*

Share of total spending for the top five categories



*Average annual expenditures per consumer unit. Consumer units include families, single persons living alone or sharing a household with others but who are financially independent, and two or more persons living together who share major expenses.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditures 2018, released September 2019