

Breed's Hill Newsletter

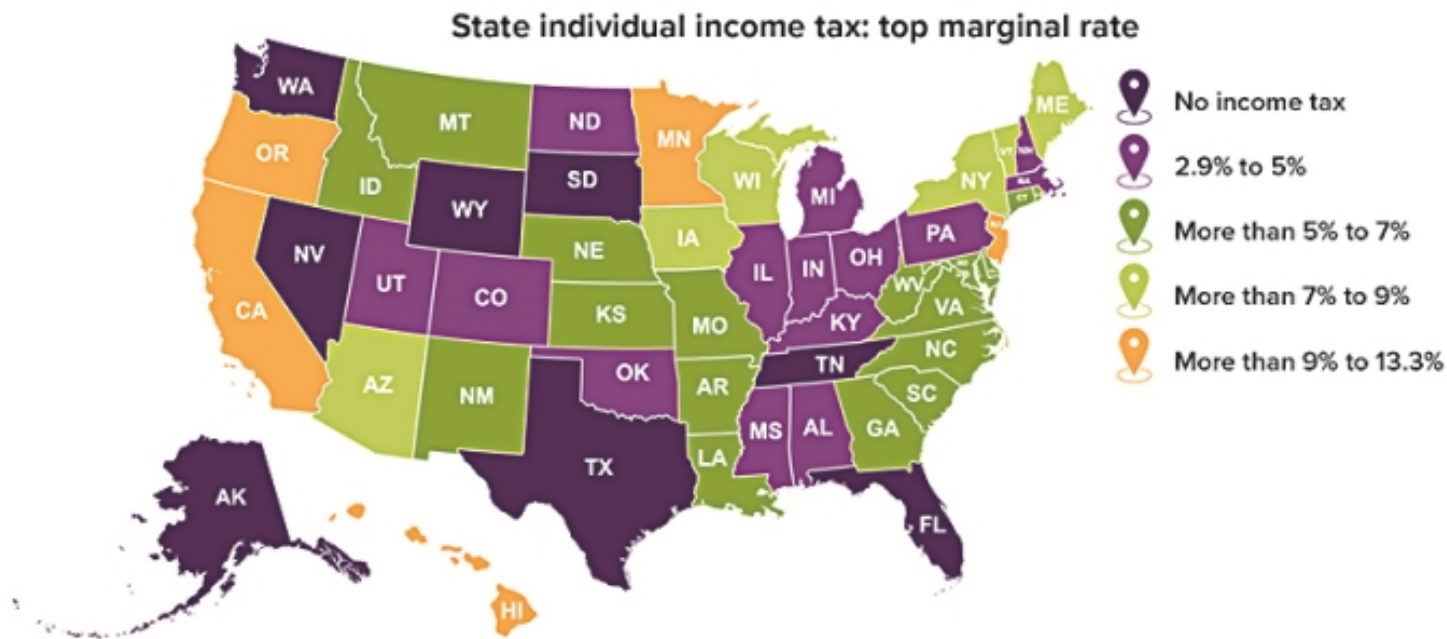
Planning Your Financial Future

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State Income Tax: Depends on Where You Live or Work

Eight states have no state income tax. Of the 42 states with a state income tax (and the District of Columbia), the top marginal income tax rate ranges from 2.9% to 13.3%. Most states (and D.C.) with an income tax have multiple tax brackets with graduated rates; nine states have only a single tax rate.



Source: Tax Foundation, 2021

Four Reasons to Review Your Life Insurance Needs

You may have purchased life insurance years ago and never gave it a second thought. Or perhaps you don't have life insurance at all and now you need it. When your life circumstances change, you have a fresh opportunity to make sure the people you love are protected.

Marriage

When you were single, life insurance might have seemed like an unnecessary expense, but now someone else is depending on your income. If something happens to you, your spouse will likely need to rely on life insurance benefits to meet expenses and pay off debts.

The amount of life insurance coverage you need depends on your income, your debts and assets, your financial goals, and other personal factors. Even if you have some low-cost life insurance through work, this might not be enough. Buying life insurance coverage through a private insurer could help fill the gap.

Parenthood

When children arrive, revisiting your life insurance needs could help you protect your growing family's financial security. Life insurance proceeds might help your family meet both their current obligations, such as a mortgage, child care, or car payments, and future expenses, including a child's college education. Even if you already have life insurance, children are among the most important reasons to review your policy limits and beneficiary designations.

Retirement

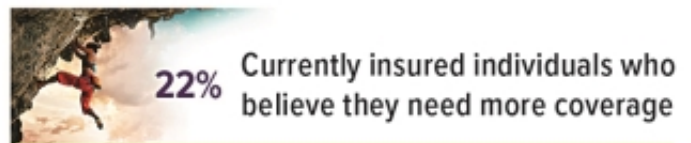
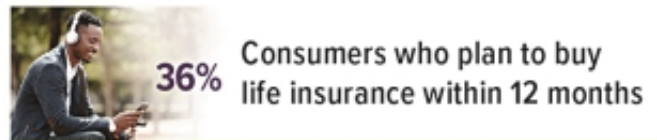
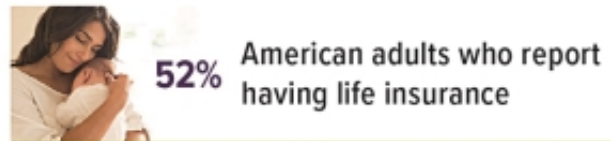
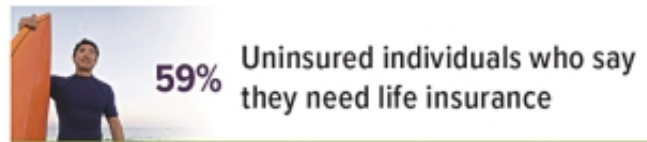
As you prepare to leave the workforce, reevaluate your need for life insurance. You might think that you can do without it if you've paid off all of your debts and feel financially secure. But if you're like some retirees, your financial picture may not be so rosy, especially if you're still saddled with mortgage payments, student loan bills, and other obligations. Life insurance protection could still be important if you haven't accumulated sufficient assets to provide for your family, or you want to replace retirement income lost when you are no longer around.

Life insurance can also be an important tool to help you transfer wealth to the next generation. Or perhaps you're looking for a way to pay your estate tax bill or leave something to charity. You may need to keep some of your life insurance in force or buy a different type of coverage.

Health Changes

A common concern is that life insurance coverage will end if your insurer finds out that your health has declined. But if you've been paying your premiums, changes to your health will not matter.

Consumers Understand the Value of Life Insurance



Source: 2021 Insurance Barometer Study, Life Happens and LIMRA

Some life insurance policies even offer accelerated (living) benefits that you can access in the event of a serious or long-term illness.

You may be able to buy additional life insurance if you need it, especially if you purchase group insurance through your employer during an open enrollment period. Purchasing an individual policy might be more difficult and more expensive, but check with your insurance representative to explore your options.

Of course, it's also possible that your health has improved. For example, perhaps you've stopped smoking or lost a significant amount of weight. If so, you may now qualify for a lower premium.

The cost and availability of life insurance depend on factors such as age, health, and the type and amount of insurance purchased. Before implementing a strategy involving life insurance, it would be prudent to make sure that you are insurable. As with most financial decisions, there are expenses associated with the purchase of life insurance. Policies commonly have mortality and expense charges. Any guarantees are contingent on the financial strength and claims-paying ability of the issuing insurance company. Optional benefits are available for an additional cost and are subject to contractual terms, conditions, and limitations.

Money Market Funds in a Low Rate Environment

After pushing interest rates gradually upward for three years, the Federal Reserve dropped the benchmark federal funds rate to near zero (0%–0.25%) in March 2020 to help mitigate the economic damage caused by COVID-19.¹ The funds rate affects many short-term interest rates, including the rates on money market mutual funds, which were already low to begin with.

The average monthly yield on 30-day taxable money market funds dropped steadily after the Fed's move and was down to 0.03% by the end of 2020, equivalent to an annual percentage rate of about 0.36%.² Considering the rock-bottom rates on some short-term investments, this is higher than might be expected but well below the rate of inflation.³ Even so, investors held about \$4.3 trillion in money market funds.⁴

What's the appeal with such a low return? Stability and liquidity.

Cash Alternatives

Money market funds are mutual funds that invest in cash alternatives, usually short-term debt. They seek to preserve a stable value of \$1 per share and can generally be liquidated fairly easily.

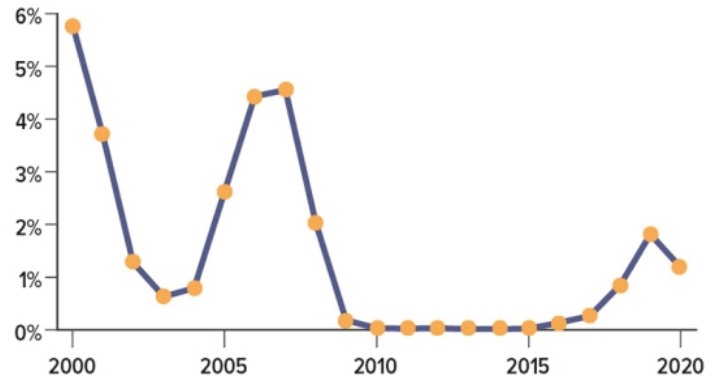
Money market funds are typically used as the "sweep account" for clearing brokerage transactions, and investors often keep cash proceeds in the fund on a temporary basis while looking for another investment. In a volatile market, it's not unusual to see large shifts into money market funds as investors pull out of riskier investments and wait for an opportunity to reinvest.

Short Term vs. Long Term

Money market funds can also be useful to keep emergency funds or other funds that might be needed quickly, such as a down payment on a home. If you are retired or near retirement, it might make sense to use money market funds for near-term expenses and/or to hold funds in a traditional IRA for required minimum distributions, so you do not have to sell more volatile assets.

For a long-term investing strategy, however, money market funds are a questionable choice. You might keep some assets in these funds to balance riskier investments, but low yields over time can expose your assets to inflation risk — the potential loss of purchasing power — along with the lost opportunity to pursue growth through other investments. This could change if interest rates rise, but the Fed projects that the federal funds rate will remain in the 0% to 0.25% range through the end of 2023.⁵

Annual Returns on Money Market Mutual Funds



Source: Refinitiv, 2021, 30-Day Money Market Index — All Taxable, for the period 12/31/1999 to 12/31/2020. The performance of an unmanaged index is not indicative of the performance of any specific security. Individuals cannot invest directly in an index. Past performance is not a guarantee of future results. Actual results will vary.

Money market funds are neither insured nor guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other government agency. Although money market funds seek to preserve the value of your investment at \$1.00 per share, it is possible to lose money by investing in such a fund.

Mutual funds are sold by prospectus. Please consider the investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses carefully before investing. The prospectus, which contains this and other information about the investment company, can be obtained from your financial professional. Be sure to read the prospectus carefully before deciding whether to invest.

1, 5) Federal Reserve, 2020

2) Refinitiv, 30-Day Money Market Index — All Taxable, for the period 12/31/2019 to 12/31/2020

3) U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021

4) Investment Company Institute, 2021 (data as of 12/29/2020)

A Map for Your Family

A will is an essential legal document that describes how your estate should be distributed upon your death. It is the basis for the probate process and can serve as a guide for your heirs.

A letter of instruction — which has no legal status — provides information that can help your loved ones settle your estate and move forward with their lives. You might consider it a map for your family.

Unlike a will, which must follow legal guidelines for your state and may require an attorney, a letter of instruction can be written yourself in any way you choose. Here are some topics you may want to address.

Financial accounts and account numbers, including online user names and passwords. If you prefer not to write down user names or passwords, the executor of your estate should be able to access accounts with the account numbers and your Social Security number.

List of documents and their locations, including (but not limited to) your will, insurance policies, tax returns, bank and investment account documents, real estate deeds and mortgage documents, vehicle titles, Social Security and Medicare cards, marriage and/or divorce papers, and birth certificate.

Contact information for professionals who handle your financial and legal affairs, such as your attorney, financial advisor, insurance agent, and accountant.

Also include others who may be helpful, such as a business partner or trusted friend.

Bills and creditors, including when payments are due and other pertinent information, such as loan terms and balances as of the date of the letter.



A letter of instruction could be just as important as a will to help your heirs settle your estate and move forward with their lives.

Your final wishes for burial or cremation, a funeral or memorial service, organ donation, and charitable contributions in your memory.

You might also include more personal thoughts or life lessons that you want to pass on, or you could write a separate letter. Keep your letter of instruction in a safe, yet accessible place and tell your loved ones where it can be found. It might be wise to give a copy of the letter to the executor of your estate and other trusted friends or advisers.

Be sure to review the letter regularly and update it as appropriate. Your heirs will thank you for taking the time to prepare.

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