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John F. Robbins, MBA, CFP®

FORECASTS/PREDICTIONS FOR 2018

According to the experts, stocks have a 95% probability of returning somewhere between -22% and +35% in 2018. The same probability applies to bonds returning between -4% and +9%. There is a 5% chance the returns could be better or worse! We often tell our clients to turn off the television and the radio. *Why?* The market expert and forecaster opinions are no better than your neighbor's on any given day. When someone is very confident about what will happen in the markets, get a second and third opinion. Most of the experts provide numbers and dates, but rarely at the same time. They will brag about their winners, but never mention their losers. The best investors in the world are rarely right more than 60% of the time. The experts love to appeal to your emotions. Usually because they are selling you something. They love to look at the past claiming they knew what was going to happen. They claim to be outperforming the market, but don't provide any evidence. They like to use the term "contrarian" when describing their approach.

(Source: Advisor Perspectives, Wall Street Journal, Wealth Logic)

WHAT ABOUT THE NEW TAX LAWS?

Don't spend your 2018 refund just yet! For most the "savings" will be insignificant. For a few, your taxes will go up. The best option, if we're not already preparing your taxes, is to have us review your taxes and calculate a 2018 estimate. For those of you in high state and local income tax states, losing the deductions may have a negative impact on your Federal return. For many, the increased standard deduction will reduce your taxes and simplify the preparation of your return. Has your employer reworked your withholding? The W-4 you filled out years ago may need to be updated. Like the old days, bunching your deductions in one year may get you over the standard deduction. Home Equity (HELOC) loan interest may not be deductible if the money was used for something other than home improvement. There are also new limits on deductibility based on how much mortgage and HELOC debt you have. Money in college savings plans may now be used for K-12 expenses in some situations. IRA distribution planning needs to be revisited for those who do not need the money. Whether to convert money to a Roth, take money from an IRA before 70½, etc. These strategies need to be recalculated with the new tax brackets. Lastly, just breathe! The changes for most of us, including businesses, are insignificant.

If Congress can do whatever in their discretion can be done by money, and will promote the General Welfare, the Government is no longer a limited one, possessing enumerated powers, but an indefinite one, subject to particular exceptions.

JAMES MADISON (1792)

LIFE INSURANCE INSIGHTS

Coverage often costs less than most realize. If you are 50 or younger, and in good health, then the cost per \$1,000 of coverage can be very inexpensive. You can have more than one policy. If you're wanting to leave money behind to your church, charity or alma mater, then funding a separate policy can be an excellent way to do so. Yes, money can be left to someone other than family. Time is money! The longer you wait to get coverage, the more expensive it becomes. Also, your health can change, making it harder or impossible to get coverage. (Source: Kiplingers)

WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER...

We don't know when our time will be up, but the numbers don't lie. If you make it to age 35, then the life expectancy tables apply to you. To keep it simple, 78 for males and 82 for females. If you make it to 65, then the odds of making it past 80 go up.

DEMENTIA, ALZHEIMER'S, ETC.

As our life expectancies increase, the odds of our minds going before our bodies increase; making us more vulnerable to financial exploitation. The first line of defense are the children, but sometimes they can be the threat. Keep your eyes open around all the elders in your life. As in nature, when a predator goes after a vulnerable adult, the normal routine is isolation and closely monitoring everything they do; including all the people they communicate with. Predators will also isolate the target from their natural supports; family, friends, neighbors, etc. and take steps to cause the elder to lose trust in others. The next step is to hide information about the elder from others. The trigger for these situations is often the loss of a spouse. When we lose our most trusted friend and partner, we become more vulnerable to manipulation by others. Family dynamics can play a key role. If the siblings have unresolved problems, then the predator can often be one of the children. If the predator does gain an advantage, then it is common for them to replace long trusted advisors with their own team; making it easier for them to control and manipulate the vulnerable one. If there is a child or family member overly dependent for financial help, then the amounts being requested often grows as the vulnerable one loses their ability to manage their finances. Another warning sign is when an elder becomes overly concerned with protecting their assets. Popular strategies for estate planning, Medicaid planning and veterans assistance involve transferring assets to others. It is rarely in one's best interests to give money away to others. (Source: Estate and Trusts)

LIFE EXPECTANCY PROBABILITIES

If you're 65 today, the probability of living to a specific age or beyond

Plan for longevity. Average life expectancy continues to increase and is a mid-point, not an end-point. You may need to plan on the probability of living much longer — perhaps 30+ years in retirement — and invest a portion of your portfolio for growth to maintain your purchasing power over time.

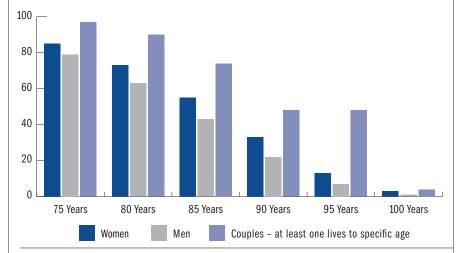


Chart: Social Security Administration, period Life Table, 2013 (published in 2016), J.P. Morgan Asset Management.

Table: Social Security Administration 2016 OASDI Trustees Report.

Probability at least one member of the same-sex female couple lives to age 90 is 55% and a same-sex male couple is 39%.

THE WIDOW'S MITE

"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put in more than all the others." — *Jesus.* All gifts are not created equal. The tax code rewards charitable giving. Whether you are giving like the widow Jesus observed, or to be recognized, let us help! We love to see the IRS pay for some or all of your charitable goals! If it only costs \$70 to give away \$100, then why not take advantage? Add a little time to the mix, and the cost can drop to zero. For those facing estate taxes and/or large income tax bills, charitable planning can be a way to avoid both. Charitable planning provides a way to still leave everything behind to your children. The Bible refers to these charitable principles as stewardship. And there are rewards for being a good steward! As Americans, we are squeezed by the pressure to spend money to "be somebody" today and to save money to avoid "being a nobody" tomorrow. And then we meet someone like SS Kresge, the founder of Kmart. His goal was to make products available to people for affordable prices. He also would give away more money as his income grew. Before he died, he was giving away 90% of his income. Very few live this way, but those I know, or knew, are happy and have more money than they need. Want to be a good steward? Or a better steward? Come and see me. (Source CBO, IRS, Financial Advisor Magazine).

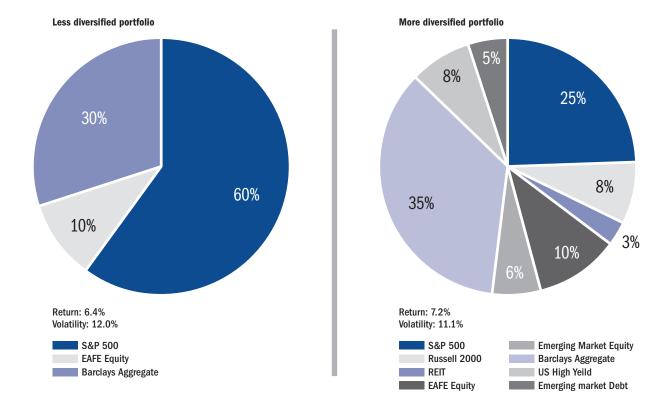
GIVING MONEY AWAY & GIFT TAXES

Washington, in their infinite wisdom, has raised the annual gift tax exclusion for next year, 2018, to \$15,000. This is a per person limit. If you're married, then you each can gift \$15,000 to the same person. If you're wanting to help a married child, then a married couple could gift \$30,000 to the child and \$30,000 to his spouse. So, if you married with 3 married children, and 7 grandchildren, then you could gift a total of \$390,000 to family members in 2018 without any gift tax consequences. Questions? Give us a call. We see it all here! (Source: Kiplinger, IRS)

DIVERSIFICATION

Maximizing the power of diversification (2001-2016)

Mixing it up wisely. Diversification may provide better returns with less risk.



Source: J.P. Morgan asset Management.

Charts are shown for illustrative purposes only. Percentages may not sum due to rounding. Past returns are no guarantee of future results. Diversification does not guarantee investment returns and does not eliminate risk of loss. Data as December 30, 2016.

DIVIDE YOUR PORTIONS...

JFR has been using multi-asset allocation strategies for years. Every now and then we get penalized, but over time they work as revealed in the chart above. There are no guarantees the past will repeat itself, but as Einstein said it should "rhyme." The markets are due for some tough sailing, but for the moment it's still sunny with calm winds and seas.

CHARITABLE GIVING

Helping widows and orphans is hard to beat, but giving away money tax free and/or efficiently is right up there too! As we approach the end of the year, our mail boxes and in boxes are filled with requests from charities we've never heard of. Need help sorting it all out? Take advantage of my 50+ years of experience giving away time and money. I enjoy keeping up with how charitable money is being spent and managed. Depending on your goals, there are some strategies to help reduce your taxes and increase how much goes to charity. Next time you're in, tell me why you give money away. Tell me if you prefer giving locally to help with immediate needs or solving a global problem. Do you want to donate money, time, or both? Do you want to be recognized or remain anonymous? Do you want your family or other involved? Or do you want to work alone? Jesus said,

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Take advantage of our 50+ years of experience giving away time and money!

SOCIAL SECURITY

When created in 1930, the life expectancy for American men was 58 and American women 60. Today, the average 65 year old man can expect to live to 84 SOCIALSEGURIT and the average 65 year old woman can expect to live to 87. (Source: Social Security Administration)

FEDERAL PRESERVE NOTE 100 7 67 65 3MARCH 2018

GIVE A POOR MAN A FISH OR TEACH HIM...

The "experts" have searched forever for the magic formula to end world poverty. More recently, "microfinance" was popular. It is nothing more than giving a businessman in a poor country a small amount of money to improve his/her business. The economist who "invented" the idea received a Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. Billions of dollars flowed until they realized it didn't work. In most cases the recipients simply spent the money buying whatever they wanted. Surprise! Some doubled down on the gift by borrowing against it and went broke! In Africa, when financial aid was the highest from 1970-1998, poverty increased from 11% to 66%. The good news is the global economy is improving dramatically. More and more aid is in the form of tangible improvements; roads, dams, hospitals, etc. History teaches that free markets improve standard of living. The bible calls it "labor" and that there is "profit" in it. Today, the official poverty line is \$1.90 per day. In 1981, 44% of the world's population was living in poverty. Today the number is 11%. In 1820, the global poverty rate was 94%. What has happened since 1820? The Industrial Revolution; aka working *for a living!* Two billion people have been pushed above the poverty line since 1981. This doesn't mean they are living large, but it's a start. The keys to improving economies are stability, *property rights and free markets.* China and India are the major players behind the growth. South Korea and Vietnam as well. Those struggling are unstable, dictatorships, communistic, religious theocracies, etc. American politics is unstable, but it hasn't slowed down the economy. Not yet anyway! For the moment, global growth is closer to 4% than 3%. American economic growth is improving. Yes, we are overdue for a market correction, but that does not mean the end of economic growth. The global economy increasingly moves together and at the moment we are on the upswing. Global trade is becoming more interdependent. The old saying "All for one and one for all" certainly applies to economics. (Sources: World Bank, Stansberry, Fidelity, AAII, AIER, CBO)

IDENTITY THEFT

The latest scare, Equifax, is causing a great deal of panic. In addition to monitoring your credit report, there is also a company www.ChexSystems.com where you can request a free report once a year to see if there is anything fishy going on with bank accounts. Another company is www. earlywarning.com. At this point it is safe to assume that most of us has had their personal information stolen. It is important to review your credit once a year at www. annualcreditreport.com. Contact your "representatives" and ask them to make it illegal for companies to obtain your credit information without your permission. When you check your credit, look for anything you don't recognize. If you think something is wrong, then call the Identity Theft Resource Center at 1-888-400-5530. Equifax is offering a free service called "Trusted ID Premier." Another option is www.CreditKarma.com. I have personally used LifeLock's basic service for several years. If you're not going to borrow money in the near future, putting a freeze

on your credit can be accomplished by contacting Equifax, Transunion and Experian. **MOST IMPORTANT!** Simplify your affairs and review your statements. The best defense is a good offense! (*Source: Kiplingers*)

"GUARANTEED" INCOME

A recent white paper from TIAA concluded that Americans should retire with the same level of financial security and is looking to Washington to get us there. There are some good points in the research. One is that Americans today can expect to live 20-30 years in retirement. For married couples, the odds of one or both living 30 years in retirement is 40%. What professionals refer to as "longevity risk" is real and needs to be planned for. The primary retirement problems in America are not enough access to retirement plans where we work and, more importantly, not saving enough. TIAA concluded that the removal of the traditional pension (defined benefit plans) from corporate America is the main culprit. Another finding was the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) provides a good blueprint for income in retirement. Take less in your 70s to ensure there is a good balance remaining in your 80s and 90s. As we see with our own clients, the fundamental of "Spend<Earn" applies. For those withdrawing more than 5% in their 60s, on any given day how long the money will last is open for debate. For those who can't budget well, a lifetime income annuity may be best. The return on these investments is low given the record low interest rates, but they do offer a way to ensure someone continues to get a check if they live into their 90s, or 100s. Another possible reason for annuities is what experts refer to as the "new old," where baby boomers and other retirees are redefining senior living. The report recommends planning for longevity in your 50s and 60s, when the cost for the different forms of insurance are less. (Source: TIAA, Jackson National, Investment Advisor).

DEATH TAXES (AKA ESTATE TAXES)

The IRS says the estate tax is "a tax on your right to transfer property at your death." And your rights can be taxed as high as 40%. Thankfully, few Americans are subject to estate taxes today given the exemption of \$5.49 million. For couples, \$10.98 million if holdings are titled properly. Let's consider a married couple worth \$9 million, with everything jointly owned. In this instance the assets go to the surviving spouse without any estate taxes, *BUT!* When the second spouse dies, there would be a taxable estate of \$3.51 million and a tax bill of more than \$1 million. The good news is the surviving spouse can file IRS Form 706 within 9 months of the first death to qualify for the "porta*bility election*" on the dead spouses estate tax exemption. Given these are new provisions, the IRS is allowing surviving spouses going back to 2010 to file IRS Form 706. BUT! You must submit same prior to January 2nd. Just write "Filed Pursuant to Rev. Proc. 2017-34 to Elect Portability *Under Section \$2010(c)(5)(A)*" at the top of the first page. Eighteen states still have an estate tax, so its important to check into these as well.

The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

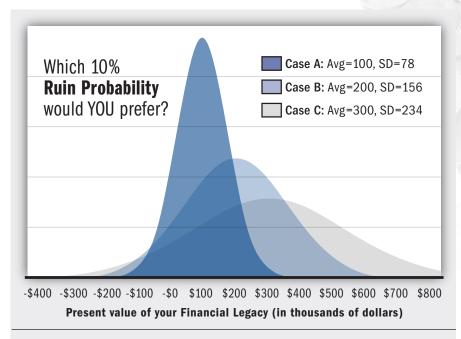


Figure 1. Three Ruin Probabilities

Source: "It's Time to Retire Ruin (Probabilities)," M.A. Milevsky, Financial Analysts Journal, March/April 2016. The chart is reprinted with permission.

QUALIFIED LONGEVITY ANNUITY (QLAC)

These contracts are getting more attention as people become more concerned with outliving their money. The payouts can be very high depending on how long the money is invested. For example, according to New York Life, a man investing \$130,000 at age 65 could receive as much as \$60,902 per year for life beginning at age 85. If he wanted to make sure his family received at least \$130,000, then his check would be \$43,690 in return for a cash refund if he died before the principal had been returned. QLACs allow a 401k or IRA holder to invest as much as \$130,000 or 25% of his/her account, whichever is less. Few 401ks offer QLACs today, but more are adding the option. Worried about living too long? Come and see us! We are discussing the topic with clients every day. (Source: Financial Advisor, New York Life).

END OF LIFE PLANNING

We have discussed the importance of the basic estate planning documents repeatedly over the years. There are additional options that may be of interest to you. Living Wills cover your do and do not wishes for medical treatments. It can also cover your remembrances and memorial wishes.

- **POLST** (*Physician orders for life sustaining treatment*) This document covers your goals for care when you have been diagnosed with something serious and/or life threatening.
- **DNR/DNI** (*Do not resuscitate or intubate*) While this is likely redundant paperwork, in today's world it may be helpful.
- **Personal Property** We recently had some daughters fighting over the furniture in their mom's house. Both claiming mom had promised this or that to them. Writing out who gets what can help reduce or eliminate these arguments after you're gone.

WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY?

As we do more estate planning, a common question/concern is preserving the wealth clients worked so hard to create. And for good reason. Most inheritances are squandered. And very quickly. Like our "representatives" in Washington, spending someone else's money is much easier than spending our own. The typical beneficiary treats an inheritance as "free" money. There is little to no respect for the sacrifices you made. As a result, most of the money is spent quickly and virtually none of it lasts more than a year. What to do? One popular strategy today is "incentive trusts." A trust that rewards good behavior and punishes bad. I'm a firm believer in the concept, but incentives and penalties within trusts are difficult to implement and manage. The current "wisdom" is to think long and hard before taking this route. If you do, then use broad language, choose your trustee wisely and give him/her the most flexibility possible. The common reason for an incentive trust is to manage the money for a beneficiary with problems; addiction, gambling, divorce, etc. A good reason to not have incentives and/ or simplify your estate plan is that money is rarely the cause or solution to someone's problems. Another reason for simplicity is it's virtually impossible to anticipate all the things that could happen after you're gone. For example, one popular provision today is for beneficiaries to have a good job in order to receive their inheritance. What happens if your daughter decides to stay at home with young children? Is there an alternative? Some clients are putting their desires and intentions for the trust in a separate letter, which is not legally binding.

NURSE: Doctor, the man you just gave a clean bill of health to dropped dead leaving the office!

DOCTOR: Turn him around, make it look like he was walking in.

HENNY YOUNGMAN



WELCOME FIDELITY!

Some of you can remember the days when investing money was one piece of paper and a signature. We are far removed from the good ole days! Like health care, government regulation continues to increase for financial services. The biggest elephant in the room today is probably the definition of "fiduciary:" Someone who puts your needs ahead of his own. What I enjoy referring to as the "Race to Zero," helping people for free may be satisfying, but it doesn't help make payroll. JFR's fees are well below (perhaps too far below) average, which makes us better prepared than many of our competitors. Like most government work, the good intentions of helping/saving the poor does nothing more than throw them under the bus. The good news is the fiduciary standard has resulted in our adding Fidelity as a second custodian option for JFR Financial clients! We are very excited and will be addressing the possibilities with each of you individually and in future newsletters. If you would like more information before your next review, please give us a call. We will continue to address the industry trends as they unfold (Robo Advisors, Free Financial Planning, "Algorithums," No-Cost Investing), but the end result will be more Americans losing access to experienced advice when they need it most. There are tremendous resources available for free and/or very little cost on the Internet, but without "wisdom," few will be able to create, implement and review their financial plan successfully. On paper it should all work, but in reality most people can't handle the stormy seas. The best news is the increasing competition, combined with technology improvements, is making JFR stronger than ever.

(Sources: LPL, Fidelity, DOL, FINRA, Financial Planning, Financial Advisor.)

DISABILITY INSURANCE

Long-term financial planning is based on people's ability to earn an income until they retire. But what happens if you are forced to stop working because of a disability? Advances in medicine and technology are helping people to live longer, healthier lives than our ancestors enjoyed. Many people live an active and healthy life well into their nineties. This is not news. But have you stopped to consider these same advances are also lengthening lives of people suffering from prolonged illnesses and catastrophic accidents? Here are some staggering statistics!

- Three in ten workers entering the work force today will become disabled before retiring (Source: Social Security Administration)
- One in seven workers can expect to be disabled for five years or more before retirement. (Source: Commissioners Disability Table, Health Insurance Association Of America)
- Disability causes nearly 50% of all mortgage foreclosures, 2% are caused by death. (Source: Health Affairs, The Policy Journal Of Health Sphere)
- Only 32.16% of the 2.5 million workers who applied for Social Security Disability Benefits in 2014 were approved. (Source: Social Security Administration)
- Unexpected illnesses and injuries cause 350,000 personal bankruptcies each year. (Source: Health Affairs)
- The average long-term disability absence lasts 2.5 years. (Source: Commissioner's Individual Disability)

A long-term disability could bring your financial plan to a standstill. Worse than that; it could result in financial ruin for you and your family. Disability insurance protects your ability to earn an income.

DO YOU NEED IT?

It depends. If you lose the ability to earn an income do you have available resources that will replace it through retirement?

HOW DO I GET IT?

Many employers provide short and long-term disability insurance options to their employees. Often it is paid for with salary reduction/contributions. If you are contributing to such a plan, it will show up as a reduction/draw on your paystub. If you are not participating, ask your Human Resource representative if there is a plan you are eligible for. Often, this is the most cost-effective way to obtain disability insurance coverage.

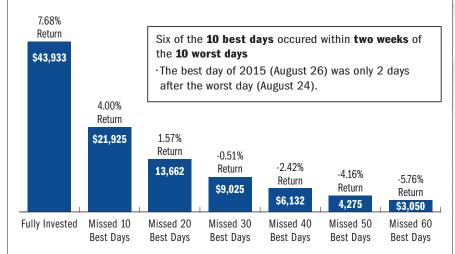
WHAT IF MY EMPLOYER DOES NOT OFFER THIS OPTION?

Call us. We can review your situation and help you determine your needs. We are also able to go into the insurance market and help you choose a policy that best suits your needs. We've seen examples of complete financial ruin because there was no insurance to protect a family's income. This family exhausted their retirement funds, savings and were forced to sell their home. We've also helped folks process their claims and move into life permanently disabled without causing a change in their financial plan and/or financial lifestyle.

IMPACTS OF BEING OUT OF THE MARKET

Returns of the S&P 500

Plan to stay invested. Trying to time the market is extremely difficult to do. Market lows often result in emotional decision making. Investing for the long-term while managing volitility can result in a better retirement outcome.



Source: J.P. Morgan Asset Management.

This chart is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the performace of any investment or group of investments.

Source: J.P. Morgan asset Management analysis using data from Bloomberg.

SAVING FOR RETIREMENT

Getting a 25 year old to set aside \$50 per month for tomorrow is a real challenge, but they need to! And if you're 50 years old and saving just 5% of your salary instead of 10-20%, then you need to save more too! There are many motivators to help save for tomorrow. As always, the key is to get started. More and more employers are automatically signing new employees up. If you work for a company that doesn't have a retirement plan, then let us know. The cost for retirement plans are dropping dramatically and statistics reveal employee turnover is much lower when there is a company retirement plan. 25% of Americans have less than \$1,000 in a retirement plan. That's not good. The key is to get started. The key is to save as much as possible. Pay attention to fees. The costs are coming way down. If your plan at work hasn't been changed in several years, then it is likely there are much less expensive plans available. DON'T! Do not use your retirement plan as a source of money. It is for retirement and the most expensive source for emergency money since withdrawals are taxable and subject to penalties.

TIME TO GET OUT? Along with calls to take more risk, many of you are also asking if it's time to get out. The honest answer is, "*No one knows!*" The chart above reveals that it is very expensive to be out of the market over time. And it's hard to make two accurate moves. Getting out at the right time and then getting back in at the right time is very difficult looking forward. It's very easy looking back. That's why we're in the boat with you! Together, we should do a much better job.

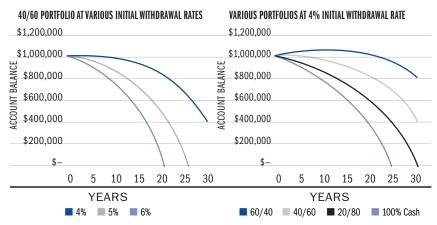
WILL I RUN OUT OF MONEY?

The honest answer is "it depends." While all the "experts" crunch numbers and create formulas to follow, the reality is there are several variables that no one controls. Other than death and taxes, there are few guarantees in life. The illustration below reveals that it is possible to dye broke no matter how you invest your money. What it doesn't reveal is the assumptions it makes on investment return, inflation, life expectancy, withdrawal rate, etc. As always, the key to not outliving your money is to "Spend less than you earn." This principle, followed one year at a time, works. Try to tinker with the principle and you'll probably get in trouble. Case A is a conservative investment strategy. Case B is balanced and Case C is aggressive. In all three situations there is a high probability of leaving money behind. This study works for a 10% chance of running out of money. If you want to "guarantee" that you will never be broke, then you have to tinker with the assumptions and/ or change investment strategies.

EFFECTS OF WITHDRAWAL RATES AND PORTFOLIO APPLICATIONS

Years of sustainable withdrawals for a portfolio for typical markets (Projected nominal outcomes, 50th percentile)

One size does not fit all. Higher initial withdrawal rates or overly conservative portfolios can put your retirement at risk. However, setting your retirement spending too low and not adjusting along the way may require unnecessary lifestyle sacrifices in retirement. You may want to consider a dynamic approach that adjusts over time to more effectively use your retirement savings.



Source: J.P. Morgan Asset Management. 50th percentile means that 50% of the time you'll have better outcomes. Based on the higher percentage of outcomes that tend to be clustered near the median, this may be considered the most likely potential outcome. For the 40/60 portfolio at a 4% withdrawal rate, the real portfolio value at period 30 is \$212,029 vs. \$413,328 nominal.



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MARCH 2018

HOW JFR FINANCIAL SERVICES CAN HELP YOU.

We are in business to serve you! More specifically, we are in business to help you work toward your lifelong financial goals. Services available through JFR Financial Services include:

| Financial Planning and Consulting | Estate Planning |
|---|---|
| Retirement Planning | Public Speaking and Educational Seminars |
| Personal Coaching | Insurance: Life, Health, Disability, Long-Term Care |
| Business Planning and Development | College Funding Programs |
| Real Estate Investment Trusts | Management Training Classes and Consulting |
| Mutual Funds* | Fee-Only Investment Consulting and Asset Management |
| Stocks*, Bonds*, Brokered CD's*, Money Markets* | Employee Sponsored Retirement Savings Plans |
| Asset Management | Retirement Plans: IRA, SEP, 401k, Keogh, 403b |
| Annuities, Fixed and Variable* | Full-Service Brokerage Accounts* |

We have the knowledge, tools and experience to help. Call us today at 800/315-2945 or 734/692-1421.

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- All indices are unmanaged and may not be invested into directly. *Stock investing involves risk including loss of principal.
- Bonds are subject to market and interest rate risk if sold prior to maturity. Bonds values will decline as interest rates rise and bonds are subject to availability and change in price.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual. All performance referenced is historical and is no guarantee of future results.

This information is not intended to be a substitute for specific individualized tax or legal advice. We suggest that you discuss your specific situation with a qualified tax or legal advisor. Investing in mutual funds involves risk, including possible loss of principal.

Variable Annuities are suitable for long-term investing, such as retirement investing. Withdrawals prior to age 59½ may be subject to tax penalties and surrender charges may apply. Variable annuities are subject to market risk and may lose value.

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