

The Current Yield

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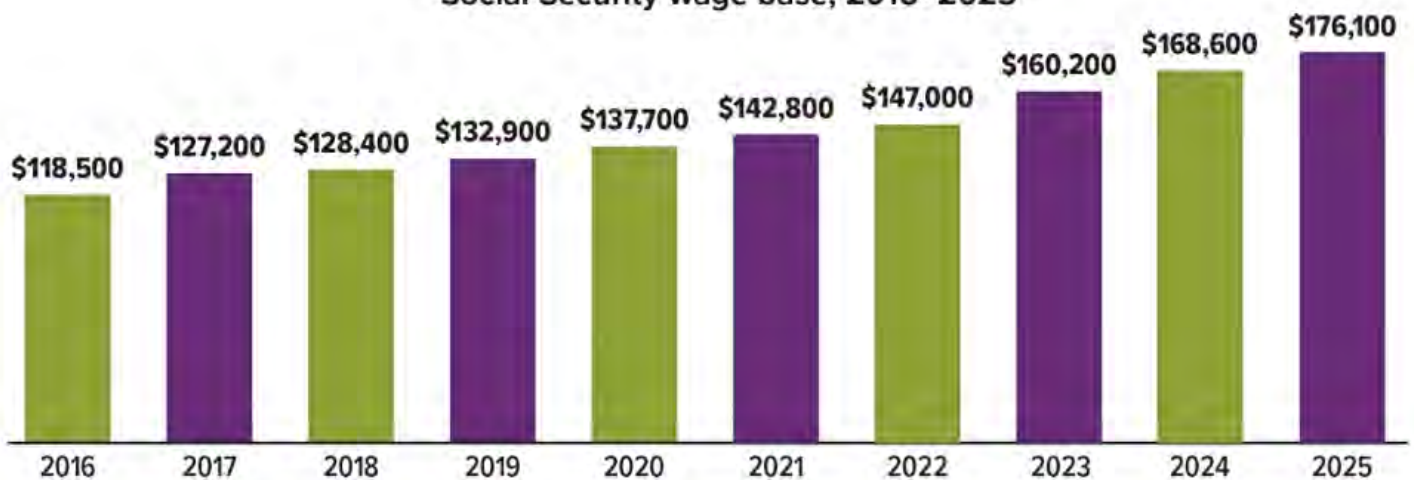


Social Security Wage Base for 2025 Is Highest Yet

The Social Security wage base (also called the "contribution and benefit base" or the "taxable maximum") is the amount of earnings subject to Social Security tax in a given year. The Social Security Administration sets the wage base each year according to changes in the national average wage index. In 2025, the wage base is \$176,100, a 4.4% increase over 2024, and a 48.6% increase over the last decade.

The wage base limit is only for Social Security tax. There is no wage base limit for Medicare tax.

Social Security wage base, 2016–2025



Source: Social Security Administration, 2025

Fine-Tuning with Sector Funds

As its name suggests, the S&P 500 Index contains about 500 stocks. These represent the largest U.S. companies across a broad range of industries, and the index as a whole is generally considered representative of the U.S. stock market. But though index ups and downs may suggest uniform market movements, performance of individual companies and business sectors varies widely.

Stocks in the S&P 500 are classified by 11 sectors, each of which responds differently to market conditions. In 2024, a banner year for the index, the strongest performing sectors were communication services, information technology, financials, and consumer discretionary (see chart). These sectors tend to perform well when the economy is strong and can drop as quickly as they rise when conditions change. Other sectors — such as health care, consumer staples, and utilities — are considered "defensive" and may be good to hold through a bear market or recession because businesses in these sectors tend to remain strong regardless of economic conditions.

Index weighting

Many broad-based indexes, including the S&P 500, are weighted based on market capitalization — the total value of a company's outstanding stocks. Sectors have different sizes and weighting to begin with, and weight can change significantly due to growth of companies within the sector. For example, the information technology sector, which includes some of America's largest companies, rose from 20.1% of S&P 500 capitalization at the end of 2018 to 29.6% in March 2025, increasing its impact on the index. The health care sector dropped from 15.5% to 11.2% over the same period, decreasing its impact on the index.¹⁻²

This means that even if you invest primarily in broad-based index funds, you may be more heavily invested (overweight) or less invested (underweight) in a given sector than you realize. If you own individual stocks or funds with a more specific focus, your portfolio could be even more overweighted or underweighted. The appropriate sector weighting for your stock portfolio depends on your goals, risk tolerance, and economic outlook.

Sector funds

One way to shift sector weight in your portfolio is by adding one or more sector funds — mutual funds or exchange-traded funds (ETFs) that focus on stocks of companies in a particular industry or sector of the economy. These funds are available for many indexes, including those that focus on smaller companies. Because sector funds are less diversified, they typically carry a higher level of volatility and risk than broad-based funds and should be considered as a complement to a core portfolio of diversified funds rather than a replacement.

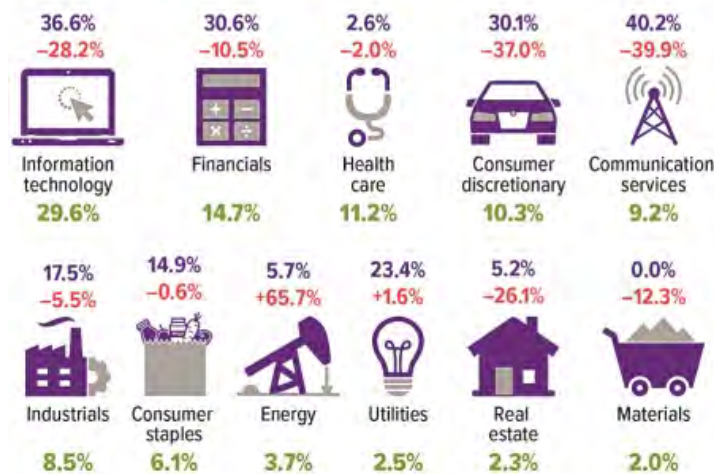
Varied Weight and Performance

This chart shows the total return for S&P 500 sectors in an up-market year (2024) and a down year (2022), with sector weighting below the icons.

2024 (S&P 500 25.0%)

2022 (S&P 500 -18.1%)

% of market capitalization (March 2025)



Source: S&P Dow Jones Indices, 2025. The S&P 500 is an unmanaged group of securities. The performance of an unmanaged index is not indicative of the performance of any specific investment. Individuals cannot invest directly in an index. Past performance is not a guarantee of future results. Actual results will vary.

Although sector funds offer flexibility in fine-tuning your portfolio, it's important to resist the temptation to chase performance and move assets into "hot" sectors without a more comprehensive strategy. Sector performance is cyclical, and last year's hot sector can easily turn cold. Also keep in mind that every business cycle is different, and unexpected events can disrupt regular trends.

The return and principal value of all investments, including sector funds, fluctuate with changes in market conditions. Shares, when sold, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Asset allocation and diversification are methods used to help manage investment risk; they do not guarantee a profit or protect against investment loss.

Mutual funds and ETFs 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) S&P Dow Jones Indices, 2025

2) Sibilis Research, 2022 (historical data)

Will You Pay a Medicare Surcharge?

Medicare is a federal program that provides health insurance to retired individuals, regardless of their medical condition, and certain younger people with disabilities or end-stage renal disease. Medicare has several parts, many of which include a premium cost based on your tax filing status and income. If your income is high, in some cases you may be subject to a premium surcharge called the income-related monthly adjustment amount (IRMAA).

What does Medicare cover?

Medicare coverage consists of two main parts: Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) and Medicare Part B (medical insurance). These parts together are known as Original Medicare. A third part, Medicare Part C (Medicare Advantage), covers all Part A and Part B services and may provide additional services. A fourth part, Medicare Part D, offers prescription drug coverage that can help you handle the rising costs of prescriptions.

What does Medicare cost?

Most people age 65 or older who are citizens or permanent residents of the United States are eligible for Medicare Part A without paying a monthly premium. Although Medicare Part B is optional, most people sign up for it. If you want to join a Medicare Advantage plan, you'll need to enroll in both Parts A and B. And Medicare Part B is never free — you'll pay a monthly premium for it, even if you are eligible for premium-free Medicare Part A. If you delay starting Part B or Part D after age 65, you may also be subject to a surcharge unless you continue to work and are covered by a workplace health plan.

The standard Part B premium is \$185.00 in 2025. However, premiums for Part B and Part D can vary based on income levels. If your modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) as reported on your federal income tax return from two years ago is above a certain amount, you'll pay the standard premium plus the IRMAA surcharge. You'll receive a notice from the Social Security Administration if you're subject to IRMAA.

The table shows what you'll pay per month in 2025 based on your tax filing status and income:

MAGI for single filers	MAGI for joint filers	Part B premium	Part D premium
\$106,000 or less	\$212,000 or less	\$185.00	Your plan premium
\$106,001 – \$133,000	\$212,001 – \$266,000	\$259.00	\$13.70 + plan premium
\$133,001 – \$167,000	\$266,001 – \$334,000	\$370.00	\$35.30 + plan premium
\$167,001 – \$200,000	\$334,001 – \$400,000	\$480.90	\$57.00 + plan premium
\$200,001 – \$499,999	\$400,001 – \$749,999	\$591.90	\$78.60 + plan premium
\$500,000 or above	\$750,000 or above	\$628.90	\$85.80 + plan premium

Premiums for 2025 are based on MAGI for the 2023 tax year. Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2024

What can you do to lower your income?

Most people may see a decline in their income once they retire. However, high-income Medicare recipients may want to lower their income to help reduce the potential premium surcharges. Here are some ideas:

- Put off transactions that could increase income, such as the sale of real estate or stocks.
- Defer distributions from tax-qualified accounts such as IRAs and 401(k)s as long as possible.
- Rethink the timing of converting IRA funds to a Roth IRA to avoid increased taxable income.

Since your income is based on information from two years ago, it may subsequently change, or you may experience a life-changing event (as defined by the SSA) that causes a reduction in your income. Report income changes to the SSA as soon as possible. You'll need to provide documentation verifying the event and your reduction in income. Visit <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits> for more information.

Get help

Navigating Medicare programs and their costs can be tricky. You might consider consulting with an appropriately qualified professional for help.

Golf Is Back, but Good Luck Getting a Tee Time

Interest in the game was waning before the pandemic, until the focus on safer outdoor activities led 3.0 million new golfers to take up the sport in 2020, followed by 3.2 million in 2021. In 2023, a record 3.4 million people played on a golf course for the first time.¹ Overall, 26.6 million Americans played golf in 2023, up from 25.6 million in 2022. Easier access to instruction (via social media and the internet), new golf entertainment venues (with refreshments and high-tech simulators), and even less-stodgy golf fashions have helped attract the next generation of golfers.²

The golf industry is flourishing even though gearing up to play can be costly. A newly purchased golf bag and a full set of clubs could set you back \$1,500 or more, though you might be able to find some decent used clubs online or at a garage sale for a fraction of that cost. You may also need to buy a pair of golf shoes, a box of balls, a glove, and possibly some introductory lessons before you set out to play your first 18 holes.

Congestion pricing

Green fees are often higher on busier days and during peak times of the year, which vary by location and the weather. Since 2006, the number of golf courses has contracted by 12%, which has reduced the ranks of public, value-priced courses (less than \$40 per round).³ In some markets, an influx of eager golfers is colliding with a supply crunch, driving up green fees and making it harder to score coveted tee times at affordable municipal courses. While it often costs \$500

and up to play a round at many prestigious courses, green fees at public, non-resort courses averaged about \$37 in 2023, up from \$32 in 2020.⁴

Percentage of private club golfers, by age group



*This age group includes adult children of members.

Source: *The Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2024

The number of golfers at private clubs has increased by about 25% since 2019 to 1.9 million members. The average initiation fee has increased 50% to 70% since 2021, and many clubs have lengthy waiting lists. The annual dues for private golf course memberships depend on the location and amenities, and the initiation fees vary widely — from \$10,000 (or less) to \$250,000 (and up) for the most exclusive clubs.⁵

1, 3, 4) National Golf Foundation, 2022-2024;

2, 5) *The Wall Street Journal*, April 10, 2024, and April 18, 2024

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