

# 2020 Taxpayer Survey

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Whether you see it as a civic duty, a necessary evil or cause for a few choice expletives, it's no surprise that most of us dislike tax time. From the expense and hassle of the process to questions of fairness and fears of basic math, there are many reasons for our April angst.

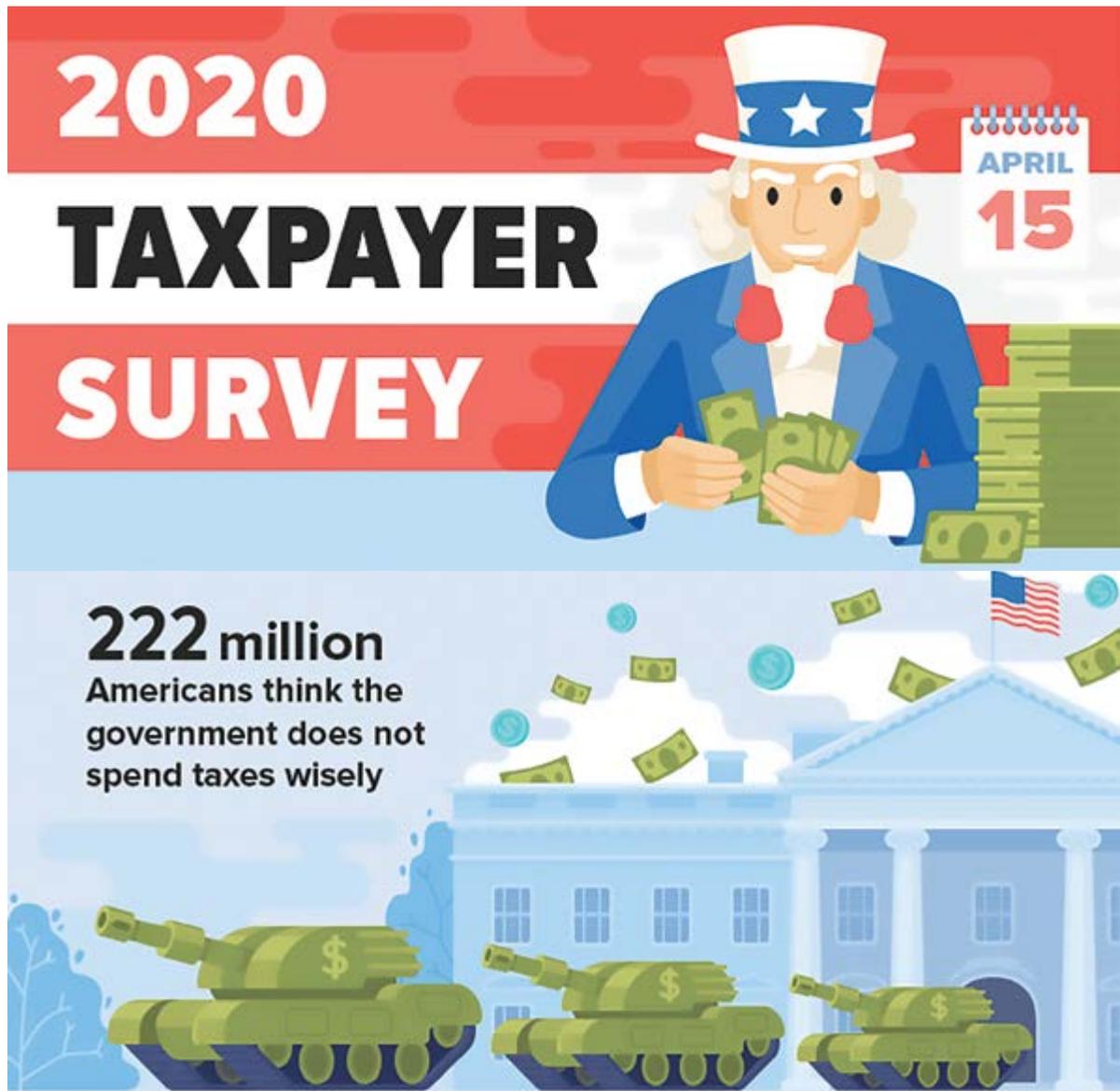
But just how much do we dislike taxes and tax collectors? And what would we do to get out of paying?

In search of answers to those questions and more, [WalletHub](#) conducted a nationally representative survey of over 900 taxpayers.

Here's what we learned:

## Key Stats

- 222 million Americans think the government does not spend taxes wisely.
- 30% of people say making a math mistake as well as not having enough money are their biggest Tax Day fears, edging out identity theft (21%) at the top of the list.
- 37% of people would move to a different country for a tax-free future. 26% would get an "IRS" tattoo and 19% would stop talking for 6 months.
- 34% of people think charities would make the best use of their tax dollars, outnumbering by nearly 2.5 times people that trust the federal government the most with their taxes.





**30%** of people say making a math mistake as well as not having enough money are their biggest Tax Day fears, edging out identity theft (21%) at the top of the list

### Our Biggest Tax Day Fears Are...

Math Mistake	30%
Not Having Enough Money	30%
Identity Theft	21%
Getting Audited	19%

## TAX-FREE AMERICAN DREAMS

### What Would We Do for a Tax Free Future?

	Move to a Different Country	37%
	Get an "IRS" Tattoo	26%
	Stop Talking for 6 Months	19%
	Take a Vow of Celibacy	16%
	Name Your Child "Taxes"	13%
	Clean Prison Toilets for 3 Years	5%

### Things We Like More Than the IRS:

	In-laws	39%
	Cold Showers	22%
	Traffic Jams	21%
	Snakes & Spiders	18%

## PAYING TAX PROS

**1 in 4** people think accountants are overpriced or a scam



### Accountants Are...

Sometimes Helpful	55%
Overpriced	21%
Good Deal	20%
Scam	4%

### Is the IRS Necessary?

There's Lots of Room for Improvement	48%
I Hate It, But We Need It	22%
It Should Be Abolished	13%
They're Doing a Fine Job	13%
They're Doing a Great Job	4%

Internal Revenue Service Building

### What We'd Rather Do Than Our Taxes:

	Jury Duty	50%
	Miss a Connecting Flight	24%
	Talk to Your Kids About Sex	24%
	Swim With Sharks	14%
	Spend the Night In Jail	11%
	Drink Expired Milk	10%

## Who Would Make the Best Use of Your Tax Dollars?

**34%** of people think charities would make the best use of their tax dollars, outnumbering by nearly 2.5 times people that trust the federal government the most with their taxes



**34%**  
Charity



**31%**  
Local  
Government



**21%**  
State  
Government



**14%**  
Federal  
Government

## Which Issue Will Be Most Important to You in the 2020 Elections?



Issue	Percentage	Democrat (Donkey)	Republican (Elephant)
Healthcare	46%	59%	28%
National Security	17%	10%	28%
Taxes	15%	12%	17%
Immigration	14%	9%	21%
Education	8%	10%	6%

## TAX RATE ENVY

**58%** of people think corporations should pay higher rates than consumers



**60%** of people think their current tax rate is too high



PRESENTED BY



Results are based on a nationally representative survey of over 900 respondents conducted by WalletHub from 2/10/20 to 2/14/20.

## Ask the Experts

Once the results of our survey were in, we asked a panel of experts in the fields of public taxes and tax reform to interpret our findings. We asked the following key questions:



**Ronald Marcuson**  
*Director of the MST Program,  
DePaul University*

**WalletHub's survey found that nearly 9 in 10 voting age Americans do not believe the government is currently spending their tax dollars wisely. What do you think are the main reasons for this?**

They do not support various government programs, they see great inefficiency/lack of competence in their dealing with the government on all levels. Their views are skewed because of media coverage, they do not understand all that the government does.

**Nearly 2.5 times more people think charities would spend their tax dollars more wisely than the federal government - are they right?**

Probably in certain areas but not in others. What charity could handle the defense of the country? How would charities collect taxes? How would charities enforce the laws?

**What is the significance of roughly 37% of people saying they would move to a different country for a tax free future?**

They do not understand all the government does. No taxes means no money for government programs. Even countries with no income taxes have to have money to run their operations. They most likely use other types of taxes like the VAT.

**Why do you think making a math mistake is on par with not having enough money atop the list of people's Tax Day fears?**

People don't understand how the IRS operates and their rights. A math mistake is no big deal. Maybe you pay a little interest. People erroneously think the IRS will come and throw them in jail which is absurd.

**What do you think it says about Americans that 50% of people would rather do jury duty than their taxes?**

Economically they are correct. Jury duty - you lose maybe a couple of days pay. Taxes - many people work 1/3 of the year to pay taxes.



**Julie Roin**  
*Seymour Logan Professor of Law,  
The University of Chicago Law  
School*

**WalletHub’s survey found that nearly 9 in 10 voting age Americans do not believe the government is currently spending their tax dollars wisely. What do you think the main reasons for that are?**

The government often isn’t spending their money wisely by anyone’s definition of wisely. Sometimes the response to problems we don’t know how to solve is to throw more money at them and hope something works. Otherwise known as experimentation, and most experiments fail. But sometimes they work.

More often the perceived “unwise spending” is spending on things/services that violate the observers’ political preferences but which fulfill the preferences of others. Let’s just say what some people think is unwise spending others regard as perfectly appropriate and wise.

**Nearly 2.5 times more people think charities would spend their tax dollars more wisely than the federal government - are they right?**



**David M. Schizer**  
*Dean Emeritus & Harvey R.  
Miller Professor of Law, Columbia  
Law School*

**WalletHub’s survey found that nearly 9 in 10 voting age Americans do not believe the government is currently spending their tax dollars wisely. What do you think the main reasons for that are?**

Government officials often spend money to score political points, instead of to maximize the impact and cost effectiveness of programs.

In an ideal world, they would scrap an ineffective or bloated program, but they often won’t do so if influential interest groups support the program. Instead, officials add new programs without repealing old ones, so new layers of bureaucracy grow on older layers like the archeology of an ancient city.

Although costs rise, services do not necessarily improve. For-profit managers have to answer to investors for this sort of waste and nonprofit managers are accountable to donors, but government officials generally are not subject to the same scrutiny from voters.

**Nearly 2.5 times more people think charities would spend their tax dollars more wisely than the federal government - are they right?**

No. If they get to choose the charity, of course, the expenditures will be made more in line with their priorities/beliefs, whether or not accurate, about which problems to solve and how to solve them. But charities are run by people who make mistakes, are ignorant or venal too.

**What is the significance of roughly 37% of people saying they would move to a different country for a tax free future?**

We have a woefully educated population. I doubt any of them would actually enjoy living in Somalia or any other country without an effective government.

**Why do you think making a math mistake is on par with not having enough money atop the list of people’s Tax Day fears?**

Americans have a complicated relationship with math and science. They should use a computerized tax program if they are worried about math errors. The programs are cheap – indeed, free if your income is less than \$60,000.

**What do you think it says about Americans that 50% of people would rather do jury duty than their taxes?**

They haven’t done jury duty lately.

Charities are not subject to the same bureaucratic and political constraints as governments. They have more flexibility to experiment, testing new and even controversial ideas.

Charities are at their best when donors monitor them and push them to show results - a form of pressure that is much harder to exert on government agencies.

**What is the significance of roughly 37% of people saying they would move to a different country for a tax-free future?**

Citizens worry that they are not getting sufficient value for their money when they pay taxes.

**What do you think it says about Americans that 50% of people would rather do jury duty than their taxes?**

With the right tax software, the tax return of many Americans is fairly simple. The tax treatment of wages, dividends, and interest is pretty straightforward, especially for the growing number of Americans who claim the standard deduction.

But Americans who are self-employed, own rental properties, hire nannies or housekeepers or have certain types of pass-through businesses have to navigate intricate rules, fill out daunting paperwork, and parse language that can be mind numbingly complicated. Jury duty is a lot easier.

