Statistics of Income | www.irs.gov/taxstats | www.irs.gov/uac/SOI-Tax-Stats-Estate-Tax-Statistics

Estate Tax Returns Filed for Wealthy Decedents, 2003–2012

The Federal estate tax is a tax on the transfer property at death. It is applied to estates for which at-death gross assets, the "gross estate," exceed the filing threshold. Estate tax returns are due 9 months from the date of death and most are filed in the following calendar year. Charitable bequests and marital transfers can be taken as deductions when calculating estate tax liability.

Highlights of the Data

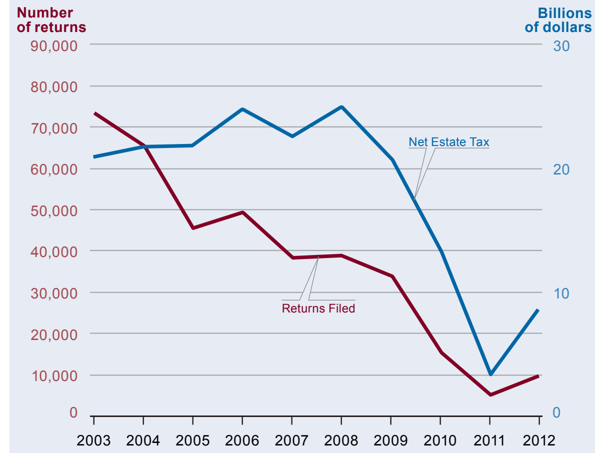
- The number of estate tax returns declined 87 percent from about 73,100 in 2003 to about 9,400 in 2012 primarily due to the gradual increase in the filing threshold.
- The gross estate filing threshold was $5.12 million in 2012, up from $1.0 million in 2003.
- In 2012, the total net estate tax reported on all estate tax returns filed for the year was $8.5 billion.
- California had the highest number of estate tax returns filed in 2012, followed by Florida, New York, Texas, and Illinois.
- Looking at the number of estate tax returns filed as a percentage of the adult population (ages 18 and over), the top five states were the District of Columbia, Connecticut, Florida, California, and New York.
- Stock and real estate made up about half of all estate tax decedents' asset holdings in 2012.
- Estate tax decedents with total assets of $20 million or more held a greater share of their portfolio in stocks (about 40 percent) and lesser shares in real estate and retirement assets than decedents in other total asset categories.

Estate Tax Filing Thresholds, 2003–2012

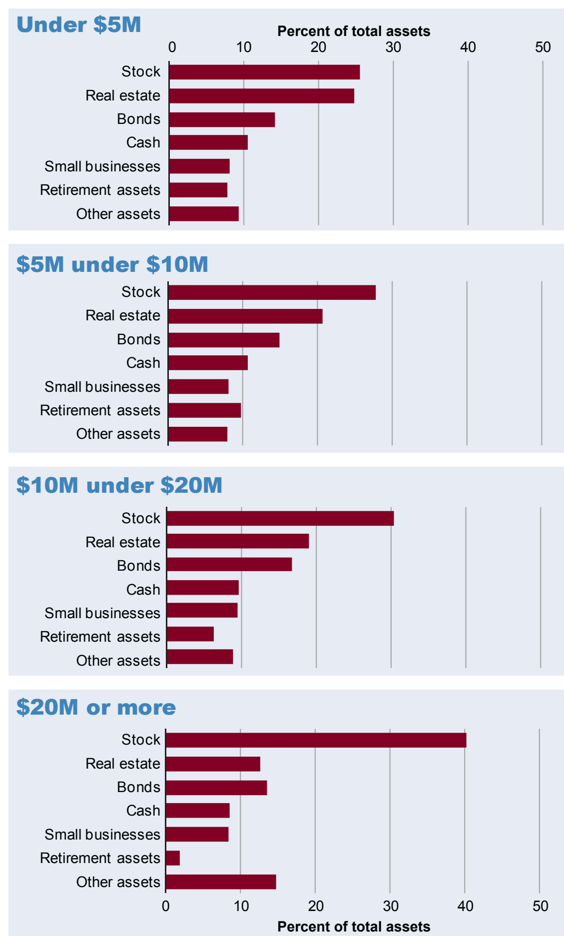
Year of death	Estate tax filing threshold
2003	$1,000,000
2004	$1,500,000
2005	$1,500,000
2006	$2,000,000
2007	$2,000,000
2008	$2,000,000
2009	$3,500,000
2010	$5,000,000*
2011	$5,000,000
2012	$5,120,000

* The estate tax was repealed temporarily for 2010 before being reinstated with the passage of the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act in December 2010. The law, which was retroactive for all 2010 decedents, raised the estate tax exemption level to $5.0 million and also allowed estates to opt out of the estate tax system and instead file Form 8939, *Allocation of Increase in Basis for Property Acquired From a Decedent*.

Source: IRS, Statistics of Income, August 2013



Portfolio Composition of Estates, by Size of Total Assets, 2012



Further information about tax statistics is available on the IRS' website at www.irs.gov/taxstats. Detailed information on the estate tax, including articles and detailed statistical tables are located at http://www.irs.gov/uac/SOI-Tax-Stats-Estate-Tax-Statistics.

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