QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO THE STIMULUS PACKAGE- UPDATED

How large will the payments be?

Most adults will get $1,200, although some would get less. For every qualifying child age 16 or under, the payment will be an additional $500.

How many payments will there be?

Just one.

How do I know if I will get the full amount?

It depends on your income. Single adults with Social Security numbers who have an adjusted gross income of $75,000 or less will get the full amount. Married couples with no children earning $150,000 or less will receive a total of $2,400. And taxpayers filing as head of household will get the full payment if they earned $112,500 or less.

Above those income figures, the payment decreases until it stops altogether for single people earning $99,000 or married people who have no children and earn $198,000. According to the Senate Finance Committee, a family with two children will no longer be eligible for any payments if its income surpassed $218,000.

You can't get a payment if someone claims you as a dependent, even if you're an adult. In any given family and in most instances, everyone must have a valid Social Security number in order to be eligible. There is an exception for members of the military.

You can find your adjusted gross income on Line 8b of the 2019 1040 federal tax return.

Do college students get anything?

Not if anyone claims them as a dependent on a tax return. Usually, students under the age of 24 are dependents in the eyes of the taxing authorities if a parent pays for at least half of their expenses.

What year's income should I be looking at?

2019. If you haven't prepared a tax return yet, you can use your 2018 return. If you haven't filed that yet, you can use a 2019 Social Security statement showing your income to see what an employer reported to the I.R.S.
What if my recent income made me ineligible, but I anticipate being eligible because of a loss of income in 2020? Do I get a payment?

The plan does not help people in that circumstance now, but you may benefit once you file your 2020 taxes. That’s because the payment is technically an advance on a tax credit that is available for the entire year. So it will depend on how much you earn.

And there are many other provisions in the legislation. You may be able to file for unemployment or for one of the new loans for small business owners or sole proprietors.

Will I have to apply to receive a payment?

No. If the Internal Revenue Service already has your bank account information from your 2019 or 2018 returns, it will transfer the money to you via direct deposit based on the recent income-tax figures it already has.

When will the payment arrive?

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has said he expected most people to get their payments by April 17. The I.R.S. has not said when those receiving paper checks would get them.

What if I haven’t filed tax returns recently? Will that affect my ability to receive a payment?

It could. “People who typically do not file a tax return will need to file a simple tax return to receive an economic impact payment,” the I.R.S. announced on its website on March 30. Included among those are many low-income taxpayers, veterans and individuals with disabilities.

Will most people who are receiving Social Security retirement and disability payments each month also get a stimulus payment?

Yes.

Will eligible unemployed people get these stimulus payments? Veterans?

Yes and yes.

Will U.S. citizens living abroad get a payment?

Yes, as long as they meet the income requirements and have a Social Security number.
If my payment doesn’t come soon, how can I be sure that it wasn’t misdirected?

According to the bill, you will get a paper notice in the mail no later than a few weeks after your payment has been disbursed. That notice will contain information about where the payment ended up and in what form it was made. If you couldn’t locate the payment at that point, it would be time to contact the I.R.S. using the information on the notice.

Do I have to pay income taxes on the amount of my payment?

No.

If my income tax refunds are currently being garnished because of a student loan default, will this payment be garnished as well?

No. In fact, the bill temporarily suspends nearly all efforts to garnish tax refunds to repay debts, including those to the I.R.S. itself. But this waiver may not apply to people who are behind on child support.

Unemployment Benefits

Who will be covered by the expanded program?

The plan wraps in far more workers than are usually eligible for unemployment benefits, including self-employed people and part-time workers.

The bottom line: Those who are unemployed, are partly unemployed or cannot work for a wide variety of coronavirus-related reasons will be more likely to receive benefits.

How much will I receive?

Under the plan, eligible workers will get an extra $600 per week on top of their state benefit.

States have the option of providing the entire amount in one payment, or sending the extra portion separately. But it must all be done on the same weekly basis.

Are gig workers, freelancers and independent contractors covered?

Yes, self-employed people are newly eligible for unemployment benefits.

Benefit amounts will be calculated based on previous income, using a formula from the Disaster Unemployment Assistance program, according to a congressional aide.
Self-employed workers will also be eligible for the additional $600 weekly benefit provided by the federal government.

**What if I’m a part-time worker who lost my job because of a coronavirus reason, but my state doesn’t cover part-time workers? Am I still eligible?**

Yes. Part-time workers are eligible for benefits, but the benefit amount and how long benefits will last depend on your state. They are also eligible for the additional $600 weekly benefit.

**What if I have Covid-19 or need to care for a family member who has it?**

If you’ve received a diagnosis, are experiencing symptoms or are seeking a diagnosis — and you’re unemployed, partly unemployed or cannot work as a result — you will be covered. The same goes if you must care for a member of your family or household who has received a diagnosis.

**What if my child’s school or day care shut down?**

If you rely on a school, a day care or another facility to care for a child, elderly parent or another household member so that you can work — and that facility has been shut down because of coronavirus — you are eligible.

**What if I’ve been advised by a health care provider to quarantine myself because of exposure to coronavirus? And what about broader orders to stay home?**

People who must self-quarantine are covered. The legislation also says that individuals who are unable to get to work because of a quarantine imposed as a result of the outbreak are eligible.

**I was about to start a new job and now can’t get there because of an outbreak.**

You’re eligible for benefits. You will also be covered if you were immediately laid off from a new job and did not have a sufficient work history to qualify for benefits under normal circumstances.

**My employer shut down my workplace because of coronavirus. Am I eligible?**

Yes. If you are unemployed, partly unemployed or unable to work because your employer closed down, you’re covered under the bill.

**The breadwinner of my household has died as a result of coronavirus. I relied on that person for income, and I’m not working. Is that covered?**
Yes.

**Whom does the bill leave out?**

Workers who are able to work from home, and those receiving paid sick leave or paid family leave are not covered. New entrants to the work force who cannot find jobs are also ineligible.

**How long will the payments last?**

Many states already provide 26 weeks of benefits, though some states have trimmed that back while others provide a sliding scale tied to unemployment levels.

The bill provides all eligible workers with an additional 13 weeks. So participants in states with 26 weeks would be eligible for a total of 39 weeks. The total amount cannot exceed 39 weeks, but it may be shorter in certain states.

The extra $600 payment will last for up to four months, covering weeks of unemployment ending July 31.

**I’m already receiving unemployment benefits. Will I receive any help?**

Yes. Even if you’re already receiving unemployment benefits for reasons unrelated to the coronavirus, your state-level benefits will still be extended by 13 weeks. You will also receive the extra $600 weekly benefit from the federal government.

**My unemployment recently ran out — could I sign up again?**

Yes. If you’ve exhausted your benefits, eligible workers can generally reapply. But how much you get and for how long depends on the state where you worked. Everyone gets at least another 13 weeks, along with the extra $600 payment through July 31.

**The federal government has already waived two months of payments and interest for many federal student loan borrowers. Is there a bigger break now with the new bill?**

Yes. Until Sept. 30, there will be automatic payment suspensions for any student loan held by the federal government, and it’s retroactive to March 13. It is hard to contact many of the loan servicers right now, so check your account online in the coming weeks. Once you are logged in, look for the current amount due. There, you should be able to see if the servicer has reset its billing systems so that you are showing no payment due.
How do I know if my loan is eligible?

If you’ve borrowed money from the federal government — a so-called direct loan — in the past 10 years, you’re definitely eligible. According to the Institute for College Access & Success, 90 percent of loans (in dollar terms) will be eligible.

Older Federal Family Educational Loans (F.F.E.L.) that the U.S. Department of Education does not own are not eligible, nor are Perkins loans that your school owns (ask your financial aid office if you’re not sure), loans from state agencies, or loans from private lenders like Discover, Sallie Mae and Wells Fargo. The holders of all those kinds of loans may be offering their own assistance programs.

Within a few weeks, you are supposed to receive notice indicating what has happened with your federal loans. You can choose to keep paying down your principal if you want, and you should contact your loan servicer if that is the case. Then, after Aug. 1, you should get multiple notices letting you know about the cessation of the suspension period and that you may be eligible to enroll in an income-driven repayment plan.

I’m signed up for automatic payments. Will my servicer turn them off by itself during this period?

Yes, that is how it’s supposed to happen, according to information that the Education Department posted.

What happens if I’ve already made a payment since March 13?

You can ask your loan servicer to refund it to you. But keep in mind that it is taking time for servicers to interpret Education Department guidance so they can change their websites and update their customer service representatives.

Will my loan servicer charge me interest during the six-month period?

The bill says that interest “shall not accrue” on the loan during the suspension period.

After repeated questions, the Education Department said any unpaid interest from before the period began will not be added to your loan’s principal — a process known as capitalization — because of the six-month suspension.

In short: No one is supposed to have a larger balance after the suspension than before.

At the end of the suspension, keep a close eye on what your loan servicer does (or does not do) to put you back into your previous repayment mode. Servicer errors are common.
Will the six-month suspension cost me money, since I’m trying to qualify for the public service loan forgiveness program by making 120 monthly payments?

No. The legislation says that your payment count will still go up by one payment each month during the six-month suspension, even though you will not actually be making any payments. This is true for all forgiveness or loan-rehabilitation programs.

Is wage garnishment that resulted from being behind on my loan payments suspended during this six-month period?

Yes. So is the seizure of tax refunds, the reduction of any other federal benefit payments and other involuntary collection efforts.

How does the aid for small businesses and nonprofits work?

Good news here, as you may be eligible for forgivable loans. Our colleague Emily Flitter covered the details in a separate article. Aides to Senator Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, also wrote a one-page summary of those provisions.

Will there be damage to my credit report if I take advantage of any virus-related payment relief, including the student loan suspension?

No. There is not supposed to be, at least.

The bill states that during the period beginning on Jan. 31 and continuing 120 days after the end of the national emergency declaration, lenders and others should mark your credit file as current, even if you take advantage of payment modifications.

Is there any relief for renters in the bill?

Yes. The bill puts a temporary, nationwide eviction moratorium in place for any renters whose landlords have mortgages backed or owned by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and other federal entities. About 70 percent of all mortgages fall into this category. If you want to figure out whether your landlord has such a mortgage, try plugging the address in to the National Housing Preservation Database.

In addition, the bill stipulates that landlords cannot charge any fees or penalties for nonpayment of rent. The eviction suspension applies only to nonpayment; damaging your place is still grounds for action. This moratorium will last for 120 days after the bill passes.