Florida Financial Advisors

November Newsletter

Florida Financial Advisors
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F-150

The Ford F-Series, including the F-150® pickup truck, topped the list of best-selling vehicles in the U.S. in both 2003 and 2023. In fact, Ford F-Series trucks have endured for the long haul, leading vehicle sales since 1982.

Source: Ford Motor Company, 2023

Then and Now

In 2003, the U.S. was emerging from the dot-com recession, unemployment rates were peaking during a jobless recovery, and online shopping was becoming more popular. Twenty years have passed, and here's how some things have changed — one pandemic and two recessions later.

	Average mortgage rate (30-year fixed)[1]	Unemployment rate[2]	E-commerce sales (percent of total retail)[3]	Personal saving rate (percent of disposable income)[4]	Average credit card interest rate[5]
2003	6.32%	6.1%	1.7%	6.1%	12.89%
2023	7.18%	3.8%	15.4%	3.5%	22.16%

Sources: 1) Freddie Mac, 2023 (August); 2) U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023 (August); 3) U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 (Q2); 4) U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023 (July); 5) Federal Reserve Board, 2023 (Q2)

Much Ado About RMDs

The SECURE 2.0 Act, passed in late 2022, included numerous provisions affecting retirement savings plans, including some that impact required minimum distributions (RMDs). Here is a summary of several important changes, as well as a quick primer on how to calculate RMDs.

What Are RMDs?

Retirement savings accounts are a great way to grow your nest egg while deferring taxes. However, Uncle Sam generally won't let you avoid taxes indefinitely. RMDs are amounts that the federal government requires you to withdraw annually from most retirement accounts after you reach a certain age. Currently, RMDs are required from traditional IRAs, SEP and SIMPLE IRAs, and work-based plans such as 401(k), 403(b), and 457(b) accounts.

If you're still working when you reach RMD age, you may be able to delay RMDs from your current employer's plan until after you retire (as long as you don't own more than 5% of the company); however, you must still take RMDs from other applicable accounts.

While you can always withdraw more than the required minimum, if you withdraw less, you'll be subject to a federal penalty.

Four Key Changes

1. Perhaps the most notable change resulting from the SECURE 2.0 Act is the age at which RMDs must begin. Prior to 2020, the RMD age was 70½. After passage of the first SECURE Act in 2019, the age rose to 72 for those reaching age 70½ after December 31, 2019. Beginning in 2023, SECURE 2.0 raised the age to 73 for those reaching age 72 after December 31, 2022, and, in 2033, to 75 for those who reach age 73 after December 31, 2032.

When Must RMDs Begin?

Date of Birth	RMD Age
Before July 1, 1949	70½
July 1, 1949, through 1950	72
1951 through 1959	73
1960 or later	75

2. A second important change is the penalty for taking less than the total RMD amount in any given year. Prior to passage of SECURE 2.0, the penalty was 50% of the difference between the amount that should have been distributed and the amount actually withdrawn. The tax is now 25% of the difference and may be reduced further to 10% if the mistake is corrected in a timely manner (as defined by the IRS).

3. A primary benefit of Roth IRAs is that account owners (and typically their spouses) are not required to take RMDs from those accounts during their lifetimes, which can enhance estate-planning strategies. A provision in SECURE 2.0 brings work-based Roth accounts in line with Roth IRAs. Beginning in 2024, employer-sponsored Roth 401(k) accounts will no longer be subject to RMDs during the original account owner's lifetime. (Beneficiaries, however, must generally take RMDs after inheriting accounts.)

4. Similarly, a provision in SECURE 2.0 ensures that surviving spouses who are sole beneficiaries of a work-based account are treated the same as their IRA counterparts beginning in 2024. Specifically, surviving spouses who are sole beneficiaries and inherit a work-based account will be able to treat the account as their own. Spouses will then be able to use the favorable uniform lifetime table, rather than the single life table, to calculate RMDs. Spouses will also be able to delay taking distributions until they reach their RMD age or until the account owner would have reached RMD age.

How to Calculate RMDs

RMDs are calculated by dividing your account balance by a life expectancy factor specified in IRS tables (see IRS Publication 590-B). Generally, you would use the account balance as of the previous December 31 to determine the current year's RMD.

For example, say you reach age 73 in 2024 and have $300,000 in a traditional IRA on December 31, 2023. Using the IRS's Uniform Lifetime Table, your RMD for 2024 would be $11,321 ($300,000 ÷ 26.5).

The IRS allows you to delay your first RMD until April 1 of the year following the year in which it is required. So in the above example, you would be able to delay the $11,321 distribution until as late as April 1, 2025. However, you will not be allowed to delay your second RMD beyond December 31 of that same year — which means you would have to take two RMDs in 2025. This could have significant implications for your income tax obligation, so beware.

An RMD is calculated separately for each IRA you have; however, you can withdraw the total from any one or more IRAs. Similar rules apply to 403(b) accounts. With other work-based plans, an RMD is calculated for and paid from each plan separately.

For more information about RMDs, contact your tax or financial professional. There is no assurance that working with a financial professional will improve investment results.

Year-End 2023 Tax Tips

Here are some things to consider as you weigh potential tax moves before the end of the year.

Set Aside Time to Plan

Effective planning requires that you have a good understanding of your current tax situation, as well as a reasonable estimate of how your circumstances might change next year. There's a real opportunity for tax savings if you'll be paying taxes at a lower rate in one year than in the other. However, the window for most tax-saving moves closes on December 31, so don't procrastinate.

Defer Income to Next Year

Consider opportunities to defer income to 2024, particularly if you think you may be in a lower tax bracket then. For example, you may be able to defer a year-end bonus or delay the collection of business debts, rents, and payments for services in order to postpone payment of tax on the income until next year.

Accelerate Deductions

Look for opportunities to accelerate deductions into the current tax year. If you itemize deductions, making payments for deductible expenses such as qualifying interest, state taxes, and medical expenses before the end of the year (instead of paying them in early 2024) could make a difference on your 2023 return.

Make Deductible Charitable Contributions

If you itemize deductions on your federal income tax return, you can generally deduct charitable contributions, but the deduction is limited to 50% (currently increased to 60% for cash contributions to public charities), 30%, or 20% of your adjusted gross income, depending on the type of property you give and the type of organization to which you contribute. (Excess amounts can be carried over for up to five years.)

Increase Withholding

If it looks as though you're going to owe federal income tax for the year, consider increasing your withholding on Form W-4 for the remainder of the year to cover the shortfall. The biggest advantage in doing so is that withholding is considered as having been paid evenly throughout the year instead of when the dollars are actually taken from your paycheck.

Save More for Retirement

Deductible contributions to a traditional IRA and pre-tax contributions to an employer-sponsored retirement plan such as a 401(k) can help reduce your 2023 taxable income. If you haven't already contributed up to the maximum amount allowed, consider doing so. For 2023, you can contribute up to $22,500 to a 401(k) plan ($30,000 if you're age 50 or older) and up to $6,500 to traditional and Roth IRAs combined ($7,500 if you're age 50 or older). The window to make 2023 contributions to an employer plan generally closes at the end of the year, while you have until April 15, 2024, to make 2023 IRA contributions. (Roth contributions are not deductible, but qualified Roth distributions are not taxable.)

Take Any Required Distributions

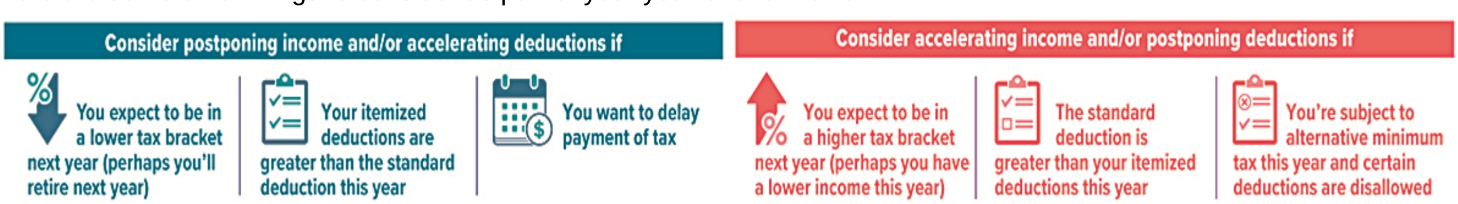
If you are age 73 or older, you generally must take required minimum distributions (RMDs) from your traditional IRAs and employer-sponsored retirement plans (an exception may apply if you're still working for the employer sponsoring the plan). Take any distributions by the date required — the end of the year for most individuals. The penalty for failing to do so is substantial: 25% of any amount that you failed to distribute as required (10% if corrected in a timely manner). Beneficiaries are generally required to take annual distributions from inherited retirement accounts (and under certain circumstances, a distribution of the entire account 10 years after certain events, such as the death of the IRA owner or the beneficiary); there are special rules for spouses.

Weigh Year-End Investment Moves

Though you shouldn't let tax considerations drive your investment decisions, it's worth considering the tax implications of any year-end investment moves. For example, if you have realized net capital gains from selling securities at a profit, you might avoid being taxed on some or all of those gains by selling losing positions. Any losses above the amount of your gains can be used to offset up to $3,000 of ordinary income ($1,500 if your filing status is married filing separately) or carried forward to reduce your taxes in future years.

More to Consider

Here are some other things to consider as part of your year-end tax review.



Medical Debt and Your Credit Report

It's no surprise that consumers are contacted by debt collectors about medical bills more than any other type of debt.[1] After all, the complex world of medical billing and collection practices is extremely difficult to navigate. Many people have trouble understanding what the various billing codes on a medical bill even mean.

Historically, this has led to consumers racking up unpaid medical bills because they were unaware of what they owed or were in the process of disputing what they owed to their health care provider. These unpaid bills were then often reported to credit bureaus, negatively impacting credit reports.

Fortunately, there have been changes to the way medical debt is reported on credit reports. As of July 1, 2022, the three nationwide credit reporting companies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) no longer include medical debt that was paid after it was sent to collections.

The credit reporting companies have also increased the amount of time before medical debt in collections appears on credit reports, extending it from six months to one year. This additional time is meant to give consumers the opportunity to settle any disputed charges or work out a payment plan with their health care providers.

Finally, as of April 11, 2023, the credit reporting companies no longer include medical debt in collections of less than $500 on credit reports. It's estimated that with this last step, roughly half of those with medical debt on their credit reports will have it removed from their credit history.[2]

If you have unpaid medical bills, there are some steps you can take to make sure that they aren't negatively impacting your credit. First, check your credit report. You have the right to request one free copy of it every week from each of the three major consumer reporting companies at AnnualCreditReport.com.

Once you obtain your credit report, make sure that any medical bill that is under $500, less than a year old, or has been paid off no longer appears on your credit report. If you find a medical billing error (or any other error), you have the right to dispute it by contacting both the credit reporting company and the company that provided the erroneous information. You can also file a complaint with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau at consumerfinance.gov.

1-2) Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, May 2023

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Market Month: October 2023

The Markets (as of market close October 31, 2023)

Stocks declined for the third straight month in October, with each of the benchmark indexes listed here ending the month notably lower. The Nasdaq and the S&P 500 endured their worst October since 2018. The S&P 500, down for three straight months, had its worst three-month performance since the period ended June 2022. The Nasdaq also had its worst October since 2018, down about 11.0% over the past three months, marking its poorest three-month performance since the August-October period in 2022. This was not a good month for the Dow, which suffered its worst October since 2020.

The most recent inflation data demonstrated the challenges the Federal Reserve faces in trying to bring down rising prices, with annual core prices for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the personal consumption expenditures price index remaining well above the 2.0% target set by the Fed. Prices for shelter and food climbed higher, while energy prices dipped lower.

Speaking of the Federal Reserve, it did not meet in September: its next meeting concludes on November 1. However, Fed Chair Jerome Powell has indicated on several occasions that inflation has remained elevated, while the economy has shown overall strength and is likely able to withstand higher interest rates for a longer period of time.

The economy has proven resilient despite the threat of a government shutdown, an autoworkers strike, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the Israel-Hamas conflict. Third-quarter gross domestic product expanded at an annualized rate of 4.9%, according to the advance estimate. While subsequent iterations for the third quarter could see a reduction in growth as more complete data is made available, the economy clearly expanded above expectations in the third quarter. Consumer spending, which makes up about 70.0% of the economy, rose, with increased spending in durable goods, nondurable goods, and services. However, that trend may not last, as consumers may have to tighten their purse strings in light of high interest rates, while the resumption of student loan payments and dwindling pandemic-era savings might eat into their budgets.

Job growth was robust in September, with the addition of nearly 340,000 new jobs. Wages continued to rise, increasing 4.2% over the last 12 months. Despite job growth, unemployment claims increased from a year ago (see below).

Third-quarter corporate earnings have been mixed thus far. Roughly 25.0% of companies in the S&P 500 have reported third-quarter results. While nearly 77.0% of those companies have reported earnings better than expected, S&P companies are on target to see profits decline by 0.2% compared to last year's third-quarter earnings.

The secondary housing market retreated for the fourth straight month in September, primarily due to lack of inventory, high prices, and advancing mortgage rates. However, while existing home sales declined, sales of new single-family homes advanced (see below).

Industrial production expanded for the second month in a row in September (see below). According to the latest survey from the S&P Global US Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index™, purchasing managers reported that manufacturing contracted in September. However, the services sector expanded, but at a slower pace than in August.

Each of the market sectors ended September lower, with the exception of utilities, which eked out a 0.4%

Key Dates/Data Releases

11/1: S&P Manufacturing PMI, JOLTS, FOMC meeting statement

11/3: S&P Services PMI, employment situation

11/7: International trade in goods and services

11/10: Treasury statement

11/14: Consumer Price Index

11/15: Producer Price Index, retail sales

11/16: Industrial production, import and export prices

11/17: Housing starts

11/21: Existing home sales

11/22: Durable goods orders

11/27: New home sales

11/29: GDP, international trade in goods

11/30: Personal income and outlays

gain. Energy fell 6.3%, while consumer discretionary dropped over 5.0%. Information technology recouped losses from early in the month, but not enough to avoid slipping 0.6% by the end of October.

Bond prices fell in October, with yields increasing over the previous month. Ten-year Treasury yields rose, while the 2-year Treasury yield fell nearly 10.0 basis points in October. The dollar inched higher against a basket of world currencies. Gold prices ended October on an upswing. Crude oil prices declined in October despite the turmoil in the Middle East. The retail price of regular gasoline was $3.533 per gallon on October 23, $0.345 lower than the price a month earlier and $0.236 lower than a year ago.

Stock Market Indexes

Market/Index	2022 Close	Prior Month	As of October 31	Monthly Change	YTD Change
DJIA	33,147.25	33,507.50	33,052.87	-1.36%	-0.28%
Nasdaq	10,466.48	13,219.32	12,851.24	-2.78%	22.78%
S&P 500	3,839.50	4,288.05	4,193.80	-2.20%	9.23%
Russell 2000	1,761.25	1,785.10	1,662.28	-6.88%	-5.62%
Global Dow	3,702.71	3,982.95	3,852.70	-3.27%	4.05%
Fed. Funds target rate	4.25%-4.50%	5.25%-5.50%	5.25%-5.50%	0 bps	100 bps
10-year Treasuries	3.87%	4.57%	4.87%	30 bps	100 bps
US Dollar-DXY	103.48	106.19	106.70	0.48%	3.11%
Crude Oil-CL=F	$80.41	$90.87	$81.31	-10.52%	1.12%
Gold-GC=F	$1,829.70	$1,864.90	$1,992.80	6.86%	8.91%

Chart reflects price changes, not total return. Because it does not include dividends or splits, it should not be used to benchmark the performance of specific investments.

Latest Economic Reports

- **Employment:** Employment rose by 336,000 in September from August following upwardly revised totals for July (157,000 to 236,000) and August (187,000 to 227,000). Over the last 12 months ended in September, the average monthly job gain was 267,000. Employment trended upward in leisure and hospitality; government; health care; professional, scientific, and technical services; and social assistance. The unemployment rate and the number of unemployed persons were unchanged at 3.8% and 6.4 million, respectively. The employment-population ratio and the labor force participation rate were unchanged at 60.4% and 62.8%, respectively. In September, average hourly earnings increased by $0.07, or 0.2%, to $33.88. Over the 12 months ended in September, average hourly earnings rose by 4.2%. In September, the average workweek was unchanged at 34.4 hours.
- There were 210,000 initial claims for unemployment insurance for the week ended October 21, 2023. The total number of workers receiving unemployment insurance was 1,790,000. By comparison, over the same period last year, there were 201,000 initial claims for unemployment insurance, and the total number of claims paid was 1,391,000.
- **FOMC/interest rates:** The Federal Open Market Committee left the Federal Funds target rate unchanged following its meeting in September. However, the October meeting ended later in the afternoon on November 1, after the publication of this report. However, most expect interest rates to remain unchanged at their current 5.25%-5.50% range.
- **GDP/budget:** The economy accelerated at a notable pace in the third quarter, as gross domestic product increased 4.9%, according to the initial, or advance, estimate. GDP increased 2.1% in the second quarter. The increase in third-quarter GDP compared to the previous quarter primarily reflected a rise in consumer spending, private inventory investment, exports, federal, state, and local government spending, and residential fixed investment. Nonresidential fixed investment declined, while imports, which are a negative in the calculation of GDP, increased. Consumer spending, as measured by personal consumption expenditures, rose 4.0% in the third quarter, compared to a 0.8% increase in the second quarter. The increase in personal consumption expenditures reflected increases in goods (4.8%) and services (3.6%). The increase in fixed investment (0.8%) included a 3.9% advance in residential fixed investment (-2.2% in the second quarter). Nonresidential fixed investment ticked down 0.1% after increasing 7.4% in the previous quarter. Exports increased 6.2% in the third quarter after falling 9.3% in the second quarter. Imports increased 5.7% in the third quarter, significantly higher than the 7.6%

decrease in the second quarter. Consumer prices increased 2.9% in the third quarter compared to a 2.5% advance in the second quarter. Excluding food and energy, consumer prices advanced 2.4% in the third quarter (3.7% in the second quarter).

- The federal budget had a deficit of $171.0 billion in September, the last month of fiscal year 2023. The total deficit for the fiscal year was $1.695 billion, comprised of $6.134 billion of total outlays and $4.439 billion of total receipts. By comparison, the FY23 total deficit was more than 23.0% greater than the total deficit for FY22 ($1.375 billion). For FY23, individual income tax receipts totaled $2.176 billion, well below the $2.632 billion collected in the prior fiscal year. Corporate income tax receipts were also lower in FY23, at $420.0 billion, compared to $425.0 billion collected in FY22.
- **Inflation/consumer spending:** According to the latest Personal Income and Outlays report, consumer spending increased 0.7% in September, up from 0.4% in August. Personal income and disposable personal income rose 0.3% in September. Consumer prices rose 0.4% in September, the same increase as in the previous month. Consumer prices excluding food and energy (core prices), the preferred inflation indicator used by the Federal Reserve, increased 0.3% in September, up from the August increase of 0.1%. Over the 12 months ended in September, consumer prices increased 3.4%, the same increase as for the 12 months ended in August. Core prices rose 3.7% for the year ended in September, down from 3.8% for the 12 months ended in August. Over the last 12 months, prices for goods increased 0.9% and prices for services increased 4.7%. Food prices increased 2.7%, and energy prices decreased by less than 0.1%.
- The Consumer Price Index rose 0.4% in September compared to a 0.6% advance in August. Over the 12 months ended in September, the CPI advanced 3.7%, unchanged from the annual rate for the period ended in August. Core prices, excluding food and energy, rose 0.3% in September and 4.1% over the last 12 months. Prices for shelter were the largest contributors to the monthly all items increase, accounting for over half of the September gain. An increase in gasoline prices was also a major contributor to the all items monthly rise. While the major energy components were mixed in September, energy prices rose 1.5% over the month. Food prices increased 0.2% in September, as they did in the previous two months. For the 12 months ended in September, food prices rose 3.7%; shelter prices increased 7.2%; energy prices dipped 0.5%; gasoline prices rose 3.0%; new vehicle prices advanced 2.5%; and used vehicle prices fell 8.0%.
- Prices that producers received for goods and services increased 0.5% in September after rising 0.7% in August. Producer prices increased 2.2% for the 12 months ended in September, the largest increase since moving up 2.3% for the 12 months ended in April. Prices for goods rose 0.9% in September, the third consecutive monthly increase. Nearly three-quarters of the broad-based September advance in prices for goods was attributable to a 3.3% rise in prices for energy, with gasoline prices increasing 5.4%. Prices for foods increased 0.9% in September and 1.2% for the year. In September, prices for services advanced 0.3%, and 2.9% since September 2022.
- **Housing:** Sales of existing homes decreased 2.0% in September, marking the fourth consecutive month of declines. Since September 2022, existing-home sales dropped 15.4%. According to the report from the National Association of Realtors®, limited inventory and housing affordability continued to hamper home sales. In September, total existing-home inventory sat at a 3.4-month supply at the current sales pace, up from 3.3 months in August. The median existing-home price was $394,300 in September, down from the August price of $404,100 but well above the September 2022 price of $383,500. Sales of existing single-family homes dropped 1.9% in September and 15.8% from a year ago. The median existing single-family home price was $399,200 in September, down from the August price of $410,200 but above the September 2022 price of $389,600.
- New single-family home sales jumped higher in September, climbing 12.3% above the August estimate. Overall, single-family home sales were up 33.9% from a year earlier. The median sales price of new single-family houses sold in September was $418,800 ($433,100 in August). The September average sales price was $503,900 ($522,700 in August). The inventory of new single-family homes for sale in September decreased to 6.9 months, down from 7.7 months in August.
- **Manufacturing:** Industrial production advanced 0.3% in September after advancing 0.4% in August. Manufacturing output rose 0.4% in September but was 0.8% below its year-earlier level. The output of motor vehicles and parts moved up only 0.3%, as motor vehicle assemblies were held down by the strike against three automakers. In September, mining increased 0.4%, while utilities decreased 0.3%. Total industrial production in September was 0.1% above its year-earlier level.
- New orders for durable goods rose 4.7% in September after declining in each of the previous two months. Excluding defense, new orders increased 5.8%. Excluding transportation, new orders increased 0.5%. Orders for transportation equipment increased 12.7% following a 1.1% decline in August. Core capital goods orders, excluding defense and aircraft, advanced 0.6% in September following a 1.1% advance in August.

- **Imports and exports:** September saw both import and export prices increase for the third straight month. Import prices ticked up 0.1% following a 0.6% increase in August. Higher fuel prices drove the September increase. Despite the recent increases, prices for imports declined 1.7% for the year ended in September. Import fuel prices advanced 4.4% in September after rising 8.8% in August. Import fuel prices have not recorded a one-month decline since May 2023. Prices for nonfuel imports decreased 0.2% for the second consecutive month in September. Export prices rose 0.7% in September after advancing 1.1% in August. Higher prices for nonagricultural exports in September more than offset lower agricultural prices. Despite the recent advances, prices for exports decreased 4.1% over the past year. The 12-month drop in September was the smallest over-the-year decline since February 2023.
- According to the advance report, the international trade in goods deficit increased $1.1 billion, or 1.3%, in September. Exports of goods increased 2.9% from August, while imports of goods rose 2.4%.
- The latest information on international trade in goods and services, released October 5, was for August and revealed that the goods and services trade deficit decreased $6.4 billion, or 9.9%, from July. Exports for August rose 1.6% from the previous month. Imports decreased 0.7%. Year to date, the goods and services deficit decreased $137.6 billion, or 20.7%, from the same period in 2022. Exports increased 1.1%, while imports decreased 4.3%.
- **International markets:** The war in Ukraine has weighed on European economies. The combined gross domestic product for the eurozone's 20 member countries fell 0.4% in the third quarter. The Russia-Ukraine war pushed energy and food prices higher at the outset of Russia's invasion, weakening household spending. On the other hand, consumer prices eased in October, with core prices (excluding food and energy) dipping from 4.5% in September to 4.2% in October. In addition, prices rose 2.9% for the year ended in October, the lowest 12-month rate of inflation since the period ended July 2021. All of which prompted the European Central Bank to maintain interest rates at their current levels for the first time in the last 11 meetings. China's economy showed new signs of slowing as factory orders declined and construction activity waned. A slowdown in growth overseas and a decline in real estate has hampered Chinese economic growth. For October, the STOXX Europe 600 Index decreased 1.8%; the United Kingdom's FTSE 100 fell 1.90%; Japan's Nikkei 225 Index dropped 1.2%; and China's Shanghai Composite Index lost 3.0%.
- **Consumer confidence:** Consumer confidence declined for the third straight month in October. The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index® decreased to 102.6, down from 104.3 in September (revised). The Present Situation Index, based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions, declined to 143.1 in October, down from 146.2 in the previous month. The Expectations Index, based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions, fell slightly to 75.6 in October from 76.4 in September.

Eye on the Month Ahead

The Federal Open Market Committee concludes its two-day meeting on November 1. Another interest-rate increase will likely come out of that meeting or when they next meet in December. The markets will look to rebound from three consecutive monthly downturns.

Data sources: Economic: Based on data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (unemployment, inflation); U.S. Department of Commerce (GDP, corporate profits, retail sales, housing); S&P/Case-Shiller 20-City Composite Index (home prices); Institute for Supply Management (manufacturing/services). Performance: Based on data reported in WSJ Market Data Center (indexes); U.S. Treasury (Treasury yields); U.S. Energy Information Administration/Bloomberg.com Market Data (oil spot price, WTI, Cushing, OK); www.goldprice.org (spot gold/silver); Oanda/FX Street (currency exchange rates). News items are based on reports from multiple commonly available international news sources (i.e., wire services) and are independently verified when necessary with secondary sources such as government agencies, corporate press releases, or trade organizations. All information is based on sources deemed reliable, but no warranty or guarantee is made as to its accuracy or completeness. Neither the information nor any opinion expressed herein constitutes a solicitation for the purchase or sale of any securities, and should not be relied on as financial advice. Forecasts are based on current conditions, subject to change, and may not come to pass. U.S. Treasury securities are guaranteed by the federal government as to the timely payment of principal and interest. The principal value of Treasury securities and other bonds fluctuates with market conditions. Bonds are subject to inflation, interest-rate, and credit risks. As interest rates rise, bond prices typically fall. A bond sold or redeemed prior to maturity may be subject to loss. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. All investing involves risk, including the potential loss of principal, and there can be no guarantee that any investing strategy will be successful.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) is a price-weighted index composed of 30 widely traded blue-chip U.S. common stocks. The S&P 500 is a market-cap weighted index composed of the common stocks of 500 largest, publicly traded companies in leading industries of the U.S. economy. The NASDAQ Composite Index is a market-value weighted index of all common stocks listed on the NASDAQ stock *exchange. The Russell 2000 is a market-cap weighted index composed of 2,000 U.S. small-cap common stocks. The Global Dow is an equally weighted index of 150 widely traded blue-chip common stocks worldwide. The U.S. Dollar Index is a geometrically weighted index of the value of the U.S. dollar relative to six foreign currencies. Market indexes listed are unmanaged and are not available for direct investment.*

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