

Taxation and estate planning — overview and summary

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

Taxation is one of the decisive factors in the attractiveness of a wealth management centre, and one of the most debated. Geneva institutions regard the taxation of individuals as their foremost concern. While international clients compare the tax regimes of the countries in which they might settle, the cantonal authorities weigh tax revenue against attractiveness. This chapter presents the essential features of the Swiss and Geneva tax system that matter for wealth management: the taxation of income and wealth, lump-sum taxation based on expenditure, corporate taxation since the 2020 reform, the taxation of inheritances and gifts, including the debate settled by the popular vote of 30 November 2025, and the instruments of wealth planning. It reflects the state of the law in September 2026 and does not constitute tax advice, since every situation requires an individual examination.

1 In five sentences

1. The Swiss tax system combines a direct federal tax, highly variable cantonal and communal taxes, a general wealth tax and purely cantonal inheritance taxes, levied by twenty-four cantons.
2. Lump-sum taxation based on expenditure survives in Geneva, with the particularity that inheritance and gift taxes there may apply to transfers in the direct line by the persons concerned.
3. The corporate tax reform, in force since 1 January 2020, unified the effective rate at 13.99 per cent in the City of Geneva, raised to around 14.7 per cent with the abolition of the communal business tax.
4. The initiative for a 50 per cent federal tax on inheritances exceeding CHF 50 million was rejected on 30 November 2025 by 78.3 per cent of the votes and in every canton.

5. Wealth planning combines succession law, holding structures, trusts and international successions, within a framework of transparency in which taxation remains a sensitive argument for the financial centre.

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