

7 FRESH WAYS TO PLAY THE AI BOOM • PAGE 11

BARRON'S

VOL. CIV NO. 25

JUNE 17, 2024 \$5.00

HEALTH AT A HIGH COST

HCA's
business
is thriving.
Its hospitals
are paying
a price.

PAGE 16



Molly Zenker
Nurse at Mission
Hospital in
Asheville, N.C.





Santorini, Greece

—up to—

**4 CATEGORY
UPGRADE
SALE**

—plus—

simply **MORE™**

- 2 for 1** Cruise Fares
- FREE** Roundtrip Airfare
- FREE** Airport Transfers
- FREE** Shore Excursions
- FREE** Champagne, Wine & More
- FREE** Gourmet Specialty Dining
- FREE** Unlimited WiFi



Scan this QR code with your smartphone camera to view our **Upgrade Sale** sailings.

SMALL SHIP LUXURY *for less*

For a limited time, receive more luxury for less with up to a 4 Category Upgrade on select 2024-2025 sailings and enjoy an elevated suite or stateroom experience. Plan now and discover the epitome of refined living and seagoing luxury that defines the Oceania Cruises small ship experience.

LAST CHANCE TO BOOK. OFFER EXPIRES JUNE 30, 2024.
CALL **855-OCEANIA (855-623-2642)** | VISIT **OCEANIACRUISES.COM** | CONTACT YOUR TRAVEL ADVISOR

Terms, conditions, restrictions, and capacity controls apply. Promotion may be withdrawn at any time without prior notice. Please visit OceaniaCruises.com for complete Terms & Conditions.



THE FINEST CUISINE AT SEA®
CURATED TRAVEL EXPERIENCES
SMALL SHIP LUXURY

P. 16
As HCA Thrives, Its Hospitals Pay a Price
Cover Story: Critics say that growth at the nation's largest for-profit hospital company is coming at the expense of patient care.
By CATHERINE DUNN

P. 10
Innovation Will Help Starbucks Perk Up
The coffee chain's stock has taken a spill—but it won't stay weak for long, as new products and more efficient procedures bear fruit.
By EVIE LIU

P. 13
The Price Is Right for RIAs to Sell Out
Private-equity firms are spending billions to snap up registered investment advisory firms. Here's what it means for clients.
By IAN SALISBURY

P. 15
Like Lincoln, Biden Embraces Tariffs
The Back Story: The U.S. has a long history of imposing tariffs on foreign goods as a way to protect American workers and industries.
By KENNETH G. PRINGLE

P. 21
It's Time to Retire the 'Magnificent' Moniker
Sloan's View: With the exception of Nvidia and Microsoft, last year's Magnificent Seven stocks no longer deserve the exaltation.
By ALLAN SLOAN

P. 26
BofA Sees Large-Cap Value Taking the Lead
Q&A: BofA's Savita Subramanian likes companies that can enjoy the benefits of the tech revolution while becoming more "labor light."
By PAUL R. LA MONICA

P. 11
Look Abroad for AI Bargains
Taiwan Semi, Samsung, SK Hynix, and others are key players in artificial intelligence—yet trade for far less than their U.S. counterparts. **By RESHMA KAPADIA**



HD Hyundai Electric's transformer smart factory, above, can help feed AI's power demands.



Photograph by Mike Bellemé

© 2024 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Our newspapers are 100% sourced from sustainable certified mills.

BARRON'S (USPS 044-700) (ISSN 1077-8039) Published every Monday. Editorial and Publication Headquarters: 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036. Periodicals postage paid at Chicopee, MA and other mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Barron's, 200 Burnett Rd., Chicopee, MA 01020

P. 6
Up & Down Wall Street: All Politics Is Local
U.S. markets stayed insulated from the impact of elections in France and elsewhere. Plus, the new barbell trade: cash and moonshots.
By RANDALL W. FORSYTH

P. 8
Streetwise: Move In on Home Builder Stocks
D.R. Horton, Toll Brothers, and Lennar are still solid housing bets. Plus, Hims & Hers is riding the coattails of the obesity-drug craze.
By JACK HOUGH

P. 22
Funds: The Benefits of Currency-Hedged ETFs
By DEBBIE CARLSON

P. 23
Tech Trader: Corning Is Ready to Break Out
By ERIC J. SAVITZ

P. 24
Retirement: A Crisis for Long-Term Care
How one couple is coping with an unexpected change to their policy.
By ELIZABETH O'BRIEN

P. 25
Income: How to Invest Your Hoarded Cash
By AMEY STONE

P. 25
Economy: We're Not Out of the Woods Yet
Forecasters might be overly optimistic about a soft landing.
By MARTIN FRIDSON

P. 28
Trader: Stocks Rise, No Fed Help Needed
By JACOB SONENSHINE

P. 31
International: Shake-Ups in Mexico, India
Election surprises prompt a re-evaluation among investors.
By RESHMA KAPADIA

P. 32
Striking Price: Lessons for Better Investing
By STEVEN M. SEARS

P. 54
What Gen Z Thinks It Knows About Money
Other Voices: Attitudes about risk and investing among people now in their teens and 20s could prove problematic down the road.
By PAUL ANDREWS

Barron's Roundtable on Fox Business
Watch Fridays at 7:30 p.m. ET, and Saturdays and Sundays at 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. ET. This week, what's next for Elon Musk after his payday win. Plus, bond market guru Rick Rieder on inflation and the Fed's next move.

Index	P. 5	Winners & Losers	P. 35
Review & Preview	P. 9	Research Reports	P. 36
Inside Scoop	P. 33	Market Data	P. 37
Charting the Market	P. 34	Mailbag	P. 55

UP & DOWN WALL STREET

While Politics Rattle France, U.S. Markets Keep Rolling On

While most investors were firmly focused on the U.S. markets, with the Federal Reserve's interest-rate decision, the latest inflation readings, and the steady, tech-led march to new highs in equities, a rumbling from France this past week went mostly unnoticed on this side of the Atlantic. French stocks suffered their worst week in almost two years, while yields on French government bonds rose sharply relative to their German counterparts, the benchmark for European debt markets. This followed French President Emmanuel Macron's surprise call for early elections after big gains by the far-right National Rally in European Parliament elections.

Leaving the politics aside, markets are concerned that a government led by either the populist right or a possible left-wing coalition would move to greater protectionism, government intervention, and immigration curbs, resulting in a widening budget deficit and reduced European integration. Neither side is dedicated to free-market principles, fiscal responsibility, or even the euro, write Macquarie strategists. "And neither is seen as particularly good at governance," they add. As a result, the yield spread of French 10-year government bonds over German Bunds rose 30 basis points, to 80 basis points. It was the sharpest increase since the euro zone crisis of 2011-23, writes Capital Economics economist Hubert de Barochez in a



BY RANDALL W. FORSYTH

research note. (Bond prices and yields move inversely. A basis point is a hundredth of a percentage point.) As for equities, the French benchmark CAC 40 had its worst week in over two years, falling 6.23%. The sell-off accelerated at week's end, with the index dropping 4.60% in the final two sessions and 2.66% on Friday alone. That put it near correction territory, off 8.94% since its recent peak on May 15. Financials and utilities were hardest hit, adds de Barochez, presumably due to their sensitivity to the economy and concerns about growth under a far-right government. The **iShares MSCI France** exchange-traded fund was down an even sharper 7.22% on the week, despite being tilted away from those sectors. The largest component is **LVMH**



Advances by France's right-wing populist National Rally party have shaken markets. Here, party leaders Marine Le Pen, center, and Jordan Bardella, right, in suit.

Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, with a 10.86% weighting, controlled by Bernard Arnault, until recently the world's richest man. The drop in the global luxury conglomerate's market cap trimmed Arnault's wealth to \$204 billion in the Bloomberg Billionaires Index as of Thursday. That put him at No. 3 behind **Tesla**'s Elon Musk, who vaulted back to No. 1 at \$207 billion on his victory on his pay package this past week, and **Amazon.com** founder Jeff Bezos, at \$206 billion.

Other big components in the French ETF include more purveyors of global luxury brands, including **L'Oréal** and **Hermès International**, whose businesses are less affected by the domestic economy than big spenders around the globe. Ditto **Airbus**, half of the global duopoly in commercial aircraft with **Boeing**.

While election politics have roiled France's markets, as well as those in India and Mexico (see International Trader on page 31), their impact has been notably absent so far in the U.S. Stocks had another winning week, as the tech-led rally rolled on with the Nasdaq Composite closing at a record each day and the S&P 500 index nearly ending the week at a fresh high.

Treasuries also rallied, with the benchmark 10-year yield down 21.6 basis points, the biggest one-week decline of the year, to 4.212%, the lowest

since March 28, according to Dow Jones Market Data. That followed better-than-expected readings on May consumer and producer prices this past week, which markets see paving the way for two 25-basis-point cuts by the Fed by year end, according to the CME FedWatch Tool.

The new Summary of Economic Projections released by the Federal Open Market Committee on Wednesday showed a median of just one such cut by year end, to 5.1%, from the current range of 5.25% to 5.50%. That compared with a median projection at the March meeting of 4.6% by the end of 2024. But the current so-called dot plot of projections for 2024 showed seven guesses for a single cut and four projections for none at all.

Interest-rate markets' moves this past week imply more reductions than the FOMC median projection. Strategas' economics team, led by Don Rissmiller, wonders if the Fed's policy-makers might have tilted less hawkishly if they had data that was released after their confab, including an uptick in weekly unemployment claims, lower import goods prices, and weakness in the latest University of Michigan consumer survey.

Then again, it still seems incongruous that easier money is needed while tech stocks are flying high.

High interest rates are supposed to discourage speculation, right? Or could they actually be encouraging risk-taking?

Once again, the shibboleths are being turned on their heads. The supposedly huge increase of 5.25 percentage points in short-term interest rates by the Fed was widely expected to kill the stock market and send the economy into recession. But the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite are sitting at records while the economy continues to expand with full employment.

Could investors' ability to pocket high (by recent standards) yields on risk-free money markets actually encourage them to roll the dice on speculative stocks? That seems to be part of the zeitgeist, observes Bank of America's strategist team, led by Michael

French stocks suffered their worst week in almost two years, while yields on French bonds rose sharply relative to German counterparts.

Hartnett, in a June 7 note. Folks, they write, are saying: "70% of portfolio I'm clipping 5% cash, the rest I'm just all-in on YOLO AI."

It's hard to argue with the tack. Indeed, it might be a sane sort of diversification, a 2024 update of the classic 60/40 stock-bond balanced portfolio. Follow the lead of **Berkshire Hathaway**'s Warren Buffett and put the bulk of your money in three-month Treasury bills yielding 5.38%. Then, put the rest in technology stocks powered by the promise of artificial intelligence, which have accounted for the lion's share of the stock market's returns. As Doug Kass, head of Seabreeze Partners Management, points out, just five stocks—**Nvidia**, **Meta Platforms**, **Alphabet**, **Microsoft**, and **Amazon**—have accounted for 61% of the S&P 500's return this year.

This is a strange sort of insouciance on the part of investors, sticking to risk-free (but still rewarding) cash for a big chunk of portfolio and staking the rest on what has proved to be the runaway winners.

After living in an interest "desert" for many years, 5% risk-free yields have definitely been a game changer for investors, says Peter Atwater, adjunct professor of economics at the College of William & Mary and president of Financial Insights, an institutional consultancy. The extra income they're earning not only provides more fuel for spending but also makes them feel they can take more risk elsewhere.

"Investors are gleefully barbell. They're happy holding cash for its yield and happy holding FOMO stocks because of their return," he writes in an email.

Other observers see investors weighting their barbells to the negative "tail" of the bell-shaped distribution of potential outcomes. Hartnett's BofA equity and quant colleagues led by Savita Subramanian write that "black swans are the rule." They see investors conditioned by past shocks from the 2008-09 financial crisis, Covid, trade wars, and conventional wars to take "ultra-defensive" stances in "secular growth stocks and other technical oddities."

By contrast, Evercore ISI's equity and derivatives strategy team, led by Julian Emanuel, sees investors leaning to bullish expectations. That could lead them to bid stocks up to exalted valuations, as in the late 1990s or 2021. "In this respect, 2024 is Not Different This Time," Emanuel et al. declare, with capital letters for emphasis. If trailing 12-month price/earnings ratios were to climb to 28 times, as in past bubbles, the S&P 500 would hit 6500, nearly 20% over this past week's index.

"Investors now have the best of both worlds," Atwater observes. Those who don't have to match a benchmark such as

the S&P 500 can emulate Buffett and reap rich T-bill yields for a big chunk of their assets, and let fly with the rest of their portfolio.

"That doesn't seem sustainable," he avers. "Typically, investors love one and not the other. I can't remember a time where they loved owning both. Candidly, investors seem too certain at both ends of the risk spectrum."

Another sign of that unsustainability is the recent divergence between the S&P 500 and the good old Dow Jones Industrial Average. While the Dow still commands the attention of the public and the nonfinancial media, it long ago ceded primacy to the S&P as the benchmark of the U.S. market. Nevertheless, the two have tended to move in tandem more often than not. When they don't, something tends to be afoot.

After Wednesday's good inflation news and the Fed's policy announcement, the two market measures went in opposite directions. Kass points out that the Dow dropped 0.09% that day, while the S&P 500 rose 0.85%, a difference of 0.94 percentage points. According to data from Walter Murphy, a technical analysis consultant to Rosenberg Research, a daily divergence between the two of more than 0.90 percentage point has happened only 71 times since the beginning of 1982, a span of 10,700 trading days. And 20 of those times were in 2000, at the peak of the dot-com bubble.

"That is a major 'yikes!' " remarks David Rosenberg, the firm's eponym. "We are living in a world of 1-in-150 events. The fact that the last time we saw such massive divergence was back in 2000 surely is cause for pause." So, too, is that just three stocks, Nvidia, Microsoft, and **Apple**, account for about 20% of the S&P 500's market cap.

This extreme concentration has been much commented on as a sign of the current market's vulnerability. To which the classic trader's retort might be, "You want to be right or you want to make money?"

For now, the fact that investors may be keeping a big chunk in high-yielding cash equivalents suggests they aren't fully committed to the tech highfliers, viewing them, Atwater says, as Powerball tickets.

The danger, he says, is that lottery-ticket holders don't care how money is made—it can be by something going up or going down. When the crowd sees the AI-powered stocks topping and turning lower, Atwater predicts that they will then buy Powerball tickets that pay off if a stock plunges, such as put options. At the same time, they have most of their stash safe in cash, so they aren't committed to the market going higher, just to making money. ■

email: randall.forsyth@barrons.com

SCHAFFER | CULLEN
CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

"Investing with a valuation focus is playing both offense and defense. Value stocks with catalysts benefit from rising earnings and valuation multiples and offer strong down market protection."

Jennifer Chang
Portfolio Manager,
Executive Director

Schafer Cullen has become synonymous with offering trusted Value solutions to meet our clients' needs.

High Dividend Equity

Enhanced Equity Income

Value Equity

Small Cap Value

International High Dividend

Emerging Markets High Dividend

Water Impact

www.cullenfunds.com

212.644.1800

info@cullenfunds.com



Cullen Capital Management, LLC. (CCM) is an independent investment advisor registered under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 and is doing business as Schafer Cullen Capital Management, Inc. (SCCM). The Cullen Funds Trust (CFT), SCCM and CCM are affiliates. This information should not be used as the primary basis for any investment decision nor should it be considered as advice to meet your particular investment needs.

Investing involves risks, including loss of principal and may not be suitable for all investors.

STREETWISE

Nationwide, home inventory is up but very low. On average since 1982, there have been **2.36 million homes for sale**, **55% more than the latest count.**

A Housing Crisis? Why Home Builders Will Rise Again.

More U.S. houses are coming up for sale, builder stocks are dipping, and one Wall Street firm sees a buying opportunity. Meanwhile, a discreet peddler of erectile dysfunction pills has gotten into knock-off obesity meds, and its shares are jumping—careful there. These two items are unrelated as far as I know, although I'm not a trained carpenter-urologist. Let's start with housing.

Shares of many of the big home builders are up nicely in recent years but have sagged since March. **Toll Brothers** is down 8%, **Lennar**, 10%, and **D.R. Horton**, 14%, while the S&P 500 is up 3%. Mortgage rates don't explain it; the 30-year climbed since March, then eased, and now isn't much changed, at just under 7%. Mixed economic signals don't seem to explain the builder selloff, either. UBS blames an uptick in home inventory. The latest readings from the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Association of Realtors show 1.52 million single-family homes for sale in April, including 474,000 new and 1.05 million existing. That's a 15% increase from a year ago.

That raises two concerns for investors. A housing shortage has kept selling prices high, and profits for builders fat. Also, publicly traded companies, which have the resources to keep land and labor in supply, have taken market share. If a rush to sell homes is taking hold, big builders could give up more gains. There are worrisome signs here and there. In



BY JACK HOUGH

Tampa, Fla., inventory is up more than 60%. In Austin, Texas, and Portland, Ore., prices are falling.

But there's reason to believe that builders can continue their bull run. Nationwide, inventory is up but still exceptionally low. On average since 1982, there have been 2.36 million single-family units for sale, or 55% more than the latest count. UBS reports that houses for sale skew old and expensive. Redfin, an online broker, finds three in five home listings are stale—more than 30 days old and not in contract. Two in five are older than 60 days. Some homeowners, it seems, have heard about tight supply and lavish sales prices, and are shooting for the stars.

Mortgage holders with low locked rates remain reluctant to move into higher ones. Some 61% of outstanding loans are fixed below 4%, and 77% are below 5%. UBS notes that rising house listings in Florida, Texas, and Arizona represent 41% of the national increase, and are a normalization from low levels. Parts of Florida have been hit by lingering damage from 2022's Hurricane Ian, rising insurance costs,

and angst over what is projected to be a record year for named storms.

In a report this past week, Ned Davis Research estimates that nationwide, the U.S. remains short by 2.2 million housing units. There is a record number of multifamily units under construction. But the number of permits is sliding, suggesting that the boom won't last.

UBS takes all of this to mean that builders **Lennar** and **KB Home**, which report quarterly financial results next week, will pleasantly surprise Wall Street. It views the shares as attractively priced, with Lennar at 10 times forward earnings estimates and KB at nine times. More broadly, it argues that the home-builder group has undergone a "vast transformation" for the better since the global financial crisis, and deserves a higher valuation.

Abrupt topic change: Not many stocks this year have kept up with **Nvidia's** 162% gain on runaway demand for artificial intelligence chips. One of them is a telemedicine company called **Hims & Hers Health**. It has long specialized in the sort of conditions that patients might not want to disclose to their family doctor's front-office staff, or the nine people behind them in line at the CVS drug counter: impotence, herpes, balding, anxiety, and pimples, for example. Also on offer are recreational contraptions and over-the-counter concoctions like "delay spray," which, judging by the description, is like Federal Reserve interest-rate hikes, only for bedroom stuff.

More than 90% of Hims revenue is

recurring, and the gross margins would make Apple blush. But the stock wasn't particularly exciting until management announced last month that it will sell obesity drugs that rival those of **Eli Lilly** and **Novo Nordisk**, only at more than 80% off sticker price. Shares jumped 28% in a day.

Hims hasn't made a laboratory breakthrough on GLP-1 agonists, as the new crop of miracle weight-loss drugs are called. It simply hired a compounding pharmacy to make the stuff. Compounders typically come in handy when a patient, say, is allergic to one nonessential ingredient in a pill. But some compounders can manufacture drugs in bulk, including during shortages. The Food and Drug Administration includes a semaglutide injection, sold under the brand name Wegovy, on its shortage list. It generally doesn't review compounded versions of branded drugs.

Hims isn't the first to sell compounded obesity drugs. A year ago in this space, I mentioned a TikTok doctor who was doing so. In January, a company called Ro, which treats the same sort of awkward ailments as Hims, announced a GLP-1 program. Earlier this month, Keybank Capital Markets initiated coverage of a small, similar company called **LifeMD** at Overweight, with a price target implying nearly 50% upside from recent levels. It has an obesity program that can provide either branded drugs or compounded ones. Key expects obesity to be the main driver of revenue growth this year and next.

Unlucky Jefferies downgraded Hims back in April, before the GLP-1 jump, writing that it had done a "stellar" job of selling in "stigmatized" categories, but that growth was slowing, and there wasn't an obvious new "unicorn" category. Shares were worth only \$15, it reckoned. They're \$24 and change now. If the FDA continues looking the other way on the obesity pile-on, and the likes of Lilly and Novo can't catch up with demand, more easy gains are likely. But once conditions normalize, not even delay spray will prolong the fun. **B**



BARRONS.COM/PODCASTS

Barron's Streetwise

In a weekly podcast by *Barron's*, columnist Jack Hough looks at the companies, people, and trends you should be watching. This is Wall Street like you've never heard before. Subscribe to Barron's Streetwise on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or your favorite listening app.

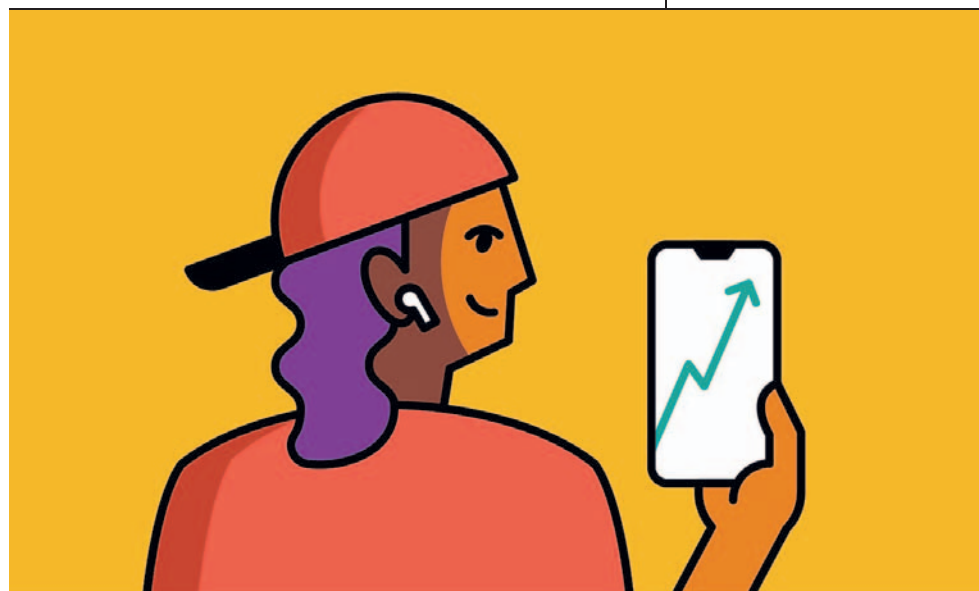
email: jack.hough@barrons.com

REVIEW & PREVIEW

38,589.16
Dow Industrials: **-209.83**

599.90
Dow Global Index: **+1.71**

Sign up for the Review & Preview daily newsletter at barrons.com/reviewpreview.



Gen Z's Early Start

Younger Americans are investing earlier. On average, Gen Z—generally described as those born from 1997 to 2012—began saving and investing at 19 years old. Baby boomers—born from 1946 to 1964—didn't start until 35, on average.

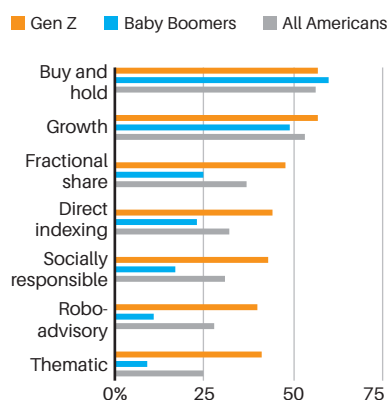
The source of this insight is the latest Charles Schwab Modern Wealth Survey, which sampled 1,000 Americans ages 21 to 75, plus an additional 200 Gen Z members, on their investing tendencies. Despite their early start, Gen Zers, not surprisingly, had the smallest percentage of investors, at 45%, compared with 54% of millennials (born from 1981 to 1996), 58% of Generation X (1965 to 1980), and 63% of baby boomers.

The survey showed rising optimism about investing: 60% of respondents said they feel they're in a better position to achieve financial goals than generations before them. Gen Zers credited easier access to investing and having more ways to invest for their confidence. "This is a multidecade evolution where more and more...individual investors have access to capital markets, to stocks, bonds, cash to build wealth," says Rob Williams, Schwab's managing director of financial planning.

That access doesn't extend to using social media influencers for advice, which 76% of all respondents rejected. "Finances are a complex place, and when you're reacting to social media and working to try to cut through the noise, that can be very difficult," says Williams. —**Amethyst Martinez**

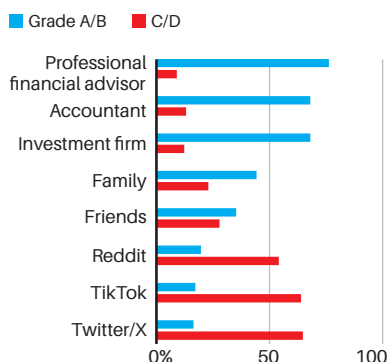
The Age Effect

The Schwab survey found that strategy preferences differed between the youngest and oldest investors.



Who Do You Trust?

Schwab asked respondents how they would grade sources of investment advice.



Source: Charles Schwab

LAST WEEK

Markets: French President Macron called for a snap election after right-wing victories in European Union elections; French bonds and bank stocks sold off. The International Energy Agency predicted big oil surpluses by 2030. Stocks rose before Wednesday's twofer: May inflation data and a Federal Reserve rate call. Inflation cooled to 3.3%; the Fed held rates steady. Stocks, except tech, finished mixed. On the week, the Dow industrials lost 0.54%, the S&P 500 rose 1.58%, and the Nasdaq Composite was up 3.24%.

Companies: At its developers conference, **Apple** revealed a deal with OpenAI to integrate ChatGPT into its devices. Elon Musk threatened to ban Apple at his companies as a security risk and dropped his lawsuit against OpenAI for abandoning its original mission; **Tesla** shareholders approved his roughly \$48 billion pay package. **Oracle** had so-so results but announced AI deals with Google, **Microsoft**, and OpenAI. The EU boosted Chinese EV duties; China promised retaliation. **KKR**, **CrowdStrike**, and **GoDaddy** will join the S&P 500.

Deals: National Amusements' Shari Redstone ended talks with Skydance Media over a deal for **Paramount Global**. The stock sank. Possibly next up, reported The Wall Street Journal: Edgar Bronfman, backed by Bain Capital, and Hollywood producer Steven Paul, who was lining up financing for a bid...Elliott Management, with a \$2 billion stake in **Southwest Airlines**, said it wanted to replace the airline's leadership and strategy,

THIS WEEK

Tuesday 6/18

The Census Bureau reports retail sales data for May. Consensus estimate is for a 0.3% month over month rise to \$707 billion. Retail sales were flat in April compared to March. Excluding autos, retail sales are expected to increase 0.2%, even with the April figure.

Wednesday 6/19

Equity and fixed-income markets are closed in observance of June-teenth National Independence Day.

Thursday 6/20

The Census Bureau reports new residential construction statistics for May. Economists forecast a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.4 million privately owned housing starts, 40,000 more than in April.

Friday 6/21

S&P Global releases both its Manufacturing and Services Purchasing Managers' Indexes for June. The consensus call is for a 51 reading for the Manufacturing PMI and a 54.6 for the Services PMI. This compares with 51.3 and 54.8, respectively, in May.

The National Association of Realtors reports existing-home sales for May. Expectations are for a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.1 million homes sold, roughly even the April data.

THE NUMBERS

1.3%

Percentage of 68 million U.S. white-collar workers promoted in the first quarter, lowest in five years.

\$40 T

Total U.S. retirement assets in the first quarter, up 4.3% from the prior quarter, and above 2021.

\$17.5 T

Cash Americans have in commercial bank accounts, with the average savings account getting just 0.45%.

\$4.5 B

Amount crypto firm Terraform Labs agreed to pay to the SEC, one of the largest civil-fraud penalties ever.

Get Your Starbucks Fix On the Cheap

Starbucks continues to expand, and has taken steps to become more efficient and attract new customers.

BY EVIE LIU

Starbucks is brewing plans for a turnaround after surprisingly weak second-quarter earnings.

Same-store sales at the world's largest coffee chain declined 3% in North America and 6% in international markets, the result of soft demand and more competition in China.

The stock, which has slumped almost 17% this year, now looks oversold. Starbucks is still growing at a rapid pace and continues to adapt through smaller stores, greater efficiency, and diverse products to attract new customers. If those measures are successful, the stock could see a big bounce.

Americans are also drinking coffee more than ever. The National Coffee Association reports that two out of three adults in the U.S. this year had coffee in the past day. The share of consumers who bought from coffee shops in the past day nearly doubled to 15% in 2024 from 8% the year before.

The U.S. coffee shop market grew 8% over the past year to nearly \$50 billion, now standing 4% above pre-pandemic levels, according to the Project Café USA 2024, an industry report from coffee consulting firm World Coffee Portal. And Starbucks, with more than 16,000 outlets in the U.S., remains the leader, with a 40% market share.

"It's tough to keep growing the same-store sales, but Starbucks remains a formidable brand that's operating at an unprecedented scale in the global coffee market," says Jeffrey Young, CEO of Allegra Group, the parent company of World Coffee Portal.

But Starbucks is facing some headwinds. Inflation has curtailed consumers' willingness to spend. Boycotts stemming from its position on the Israel-Hamas war, and workers' unionization efforts are taking a toll. Boutique coffee shops and smaller chains like Dutch Bros and Scooter's Coffee are growing quickly, elbowing in on Starbucks' business.

Instead of getting a cheaper item on the menu, consumers often stop buying from Starbucks entirely and get their fix at convenience stores or at home. And, Starbucks doesn't get the trade-down business from higher-end brands because it's already the premium player in the coffee market.

"The casual drinker who might stop by for an afternoon cold brew or weekend Frappuccino has fallen off the map," says Morningstar analyst Sean Dunlop.

Still, Starbucks continues to grow. In the past four quarters, it added nearly 600 new stores in North America and 1,700 overseas. In emerging markets like India, Southeast Asia, and Latin America penetration is still low, presenting room for growth. This could help buffer any short-term weakness in the domestic market. Despite the expanding footprint, there is little sign of cannibalizing. Average annual sales for company-owned stores continue to rise, reaching \$2.3 million in fiscal 2023.

"They are the dominant player of an addictive product. You really can't get a better business model than that," said Burns McKinney, a portfolio manager at NFJ Investment Group, which owns the stock.

Beyond the unparalleled scale,

Starbucks has added nearly 600 new stores in North America recently.

what has kept Starbucks ahead is its ability to continuously innovate its business model and products.

The company has done a major shift toward cold beverages in the past decade; those now accounts for over 60% of its drink orders. Many are customized with flavored syrups and extra espresso shots, which not only differentiate the brand from competitors but also are more expensive.

And Starbucks continues to roll out new products to attract younger customers, who are increasingly looking for interesting flavors and textures. Lavender-flavored drinks, which made their debut this spring, have been hits, according to the firm.

While Starbucks prides itself as a "third place" outside of work and home for social gatherings, it's quickly turning into a convenience-focused brand. Many of its new stores in the past few years came with drive-through lanes, and mobile orders now

make up 31% of total transactions.

The ballooning number of orders and special customer requests have brought some operational challenges. In the latest earnings call, management noted that a midteens percentage of mobile orders weren't completed, probably due to long waiting time.

The company is taking steps to become more efficient, adopting, for instance, a compact workstation that eliminates the need for baristas to move back and forth when making a cold drink. It's also rolling out machines to brew coffee more quickly and keep food warm and ready for pickup. "As consumers start to feel better, Starbucks will get a transaction lift from some of these investments they're making now," says Morningstar's Dunlop.

"Our team is working hard to reaccelerate growth and momentum in our U.S. business," Starbucks told *Barron's*.

A social-media boycott, which stems from Starbucks' dispute with the Workers United union, hurt sales, according to the company, which maintains that misinformation was a cause of the boycott. But management has been negotiating a contract with the union since April, and thawing relations could help quell some negative media sentiment about the company.

"It looks like Starbucks and the union have come to an agreement not to drag each other through the mud in public," says BTIG analyst Peter Saleh. "Instead, they'll negotiate privately, which is probably a good thing for sales in the near term."

The stock is down to about \$80, 29% below its recent peak in April 2023. Shares are now trading at 20 times next fiscal year earnings, much lower than the five-year average of 28 times. It's a rare opportunity for investors to buy now.

Among analysts polled by FactSet, the average target price is \$88, indicating a 9% gain. But the upside can be much larger: Earnings are estimated to grow 13% year over year to \$4.07 per share in fiscal 2025. If the valuation recovers to the five-year average, the stock could breach \$114.

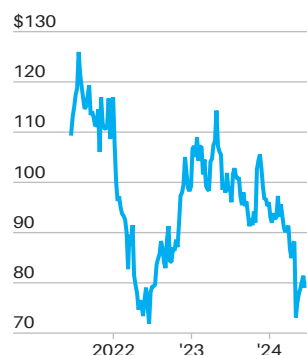
The headwinds probably won't disappear in one or two quarters. Flat sales and elevated capital expenditure could squeeze earnings and cash flow in the short term, but the issues seem more transitory than structural.

"You have to be patient, but if you can, you're getting a premium brand name at a discount," says NFJ Investment's McKinney. **B**



Starbucks

(SBUX / Nasdaq)



Note: Fiscal year ends in September; EPS=earnings per share; E=estimate
Sources: Bloomberg, FactSet

Headquarters: Seattle

Recent Price: \$79.89

YTD Change: -16.8%

Market Value (billion): \$90.0

2025E Sales (billion): \$39.7

2025E Net Income (billion): \$4.6

2025E EPS: \$4.07

2025E P/E: 19.6

Dividend Yield: 2.9%

Go Abroad For Bargains In Artificial Intelligence

Companies in emerging markets are important players in AI—and they are cheaper than many U.S. counterparts.

BY RESHMA KAPADIA

Nvidia and a handful of other U.S. stocks have become almost synonymous with artificial intelligence. But investors willing to venture into emerging markets can find companies that are also critical for making AI a reality—at bargain prices compared with many stateside options.

Companies cashing in on AI include those in Taiwan, South Korea, and parts of southeast Asia. “If you are looking for AI, emerging markets is the place to look,” says Anthony Sassine, senior investment strategist for Krane Funds Advisors. He says that some of these companies have significant competitive advantages in the design, manufacturing, and packaging of chips. They are also a lot cheaper, with some trading at roughly half that of companies like Nvidia, **Advanced Micro Devices**, and **ASML Holding**.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing, which is responsible for about 90% of the world’s super-advanced semiconductors, is among the most well known and widely owned AI plays outside the U.S. At 23 times next 12-month earnings, it trades at about a 33% discount to Nvidia.

The stock is “tremendously cheap for an enabler of all the AI enthusiasm,” says Ben Durrant, an investment manager on Baillie Gifford’s emerging markets equity team, which



has long held the stock. Part of that discount comes from the geopolitical cloud that looms over Taiwan, as the island nation remains a hot-button issue in the U.S.-China rivalry.

Many of the companies critical for transitioning the world to use AI go through Asia—and demand has already been a boon to supply chains through the region. For those who

HD Hyundai Electric power transformer. Artificial intelligence greatly increases the demand for power.

want to stick with megacap companies, two South Korean giants offer a way into AI. **SK Hynix** is a leader in the high-bandwidth memory required by the latest processors from Nvidia and peers to power AI.

After inventory-related concerns last year, the memory company’s shares are up about 50% this year as demand for its AI-related chips be-

gins to show up in its financials. While no longer a bargain at 1.8 to two times book value, it is still cheaper than some U.S. peers, and fund managers still see upside. The reason: AI-related products account for just 5% of last year’s sales, but SK Hynix says that could hit 60% by 2028. Rondure Global Advisors founder Laura Geritz has a more conservative expectation for AI sales but still sees further opportunity for the stock as AI—and high-bandwidth memory—powers a new leg of earnings growth for years to come.

For those looking for a better-known option, SK Hynix rival **Samsung Electronics** is one of the cheapest AI-related plays in Asia, says Hiren Dasani, Singapore-based co-head of global emerging markets equity at Goldman Sachs Asset Management. Samsung trades at 1.2 times book value, about 30% cheaper than SK Hynix. Samsung comes with some baggage—including weakness

7 Stocks That Benefit From Artificial Intelligence

Investors can turn to emerging markets for companies critical to making AI a reality, often for less than in the U.S.

Company / Ticker	Recent Price	Market Value (billion)	2025E P/E
Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing / TSM	\$175.16	\$747.7	23.3
Samsung Electronics / 005930.Korea	KRW76,500	331.9	10.3
SK Hynix / 000660.Korea	215,000	113.7	6.9
YTL Power International / YTL.P.Malaysia	MYR5.03	8.7	12.6
Asia Vital Components / 3017.Taiwan	TWD688.00	8.1	24.0
HD Hyundai Electric / 267260.Korea	KRW263,500	6.9	19.4
Alchip Technologies / 3661.Taiwan	TWD2,740	6.7	26.8

Note: E=estimate

Source: Bloomberg

TAP INTO
100
years of experience

ANSWER
5
simple questions

ACHIEVE
1
simple goal

Helping you find the right financial advisor.



Find your advisor
for free at
[Barrons.com/advisorfinder](https://www.barrons.com/advisorfinder)

BARRON'S
ADVISOR

in the other facets of its business, including smartphones, and lingering criticism that the founding family prioritizes control over shareholder returns. Samsung is also lagging behind SK Hynix on high-bandwidth memory. Dasani sees a potential catalyst as the company tries to become qualified to be part of Nvidia's supply chain over the next few months. If it succeeds, Dasani says it could change the market's perception of Samsung into an AI play as it catches up to SK Hynix.

Korean companies have another potential catalyst as South Korea embarks on efforts to nudge companies to boost shareholder returns. Korea stocks have long been stuck because of governance-related issues, due in part to its history of family-controlled business groups, or *chaebols*.

Those concerns could recede as the government looks for reforms and a governance makeover similar to the one that Japan implemented over the past decade, says Phillip Wool, global head of research for quantitative asset manager Rayliant Global Advisors.

MSCI Taiwan, an index that tracks Taiwan stocks, trades at about 19 times forward earnings, well below the 30 times earnings the Nasdaq fetches. The MSCI Korea is far cheaper, at 10 times. Rayliant's Wool attributes the gap to the Korea discount for complex corporate structures, messy governance with family-owned *chaebols* dominating the market, and a dismal record for shareholder rights. Details are still sparse, and it could take a while, but a reduction in the Korea discount offers another catalyst to stocks like Samsung.

There's also opportunity in smaller companies integral to the overall AI supply chain or the buildout of infrastructure needed to support it. That includes companies such as **Alchip Technologies**, which makes specific use of application specific integrated circuits, or ASICs, for the likes of **Amazon.com**, **Intel**, and **Li Auto**.

These chips are smaller, more efficient, and less energy intensive than generalist central processing unit, or CPUs, and graphics processing unit, or GPUs, which makes them more attractive as the AI revolution increases energy demand. As a more direct bet on chips, Alchip is pricier than less pure-play AI opportunities. But at 27 times forward earnings,

Wool notes that it is still cheaper than market darlings like Nvidia and ASML. One backdoor into AI is through companies engaged in cooling servers as the increased computer power for AI increases the need for liquid cooling rather than traditional air, which is several times more expensive.

As Nvidia launches its new GB200 chip and server architecture, Todd McClone, a manager on William Blair's emerging markets equities strategies, says it could draw more than double the electricity compared with current leading-edge products. Server cooling could become a \$10 billion market in two years, growing at a 30% compounded annual growth rate, according to McClone.

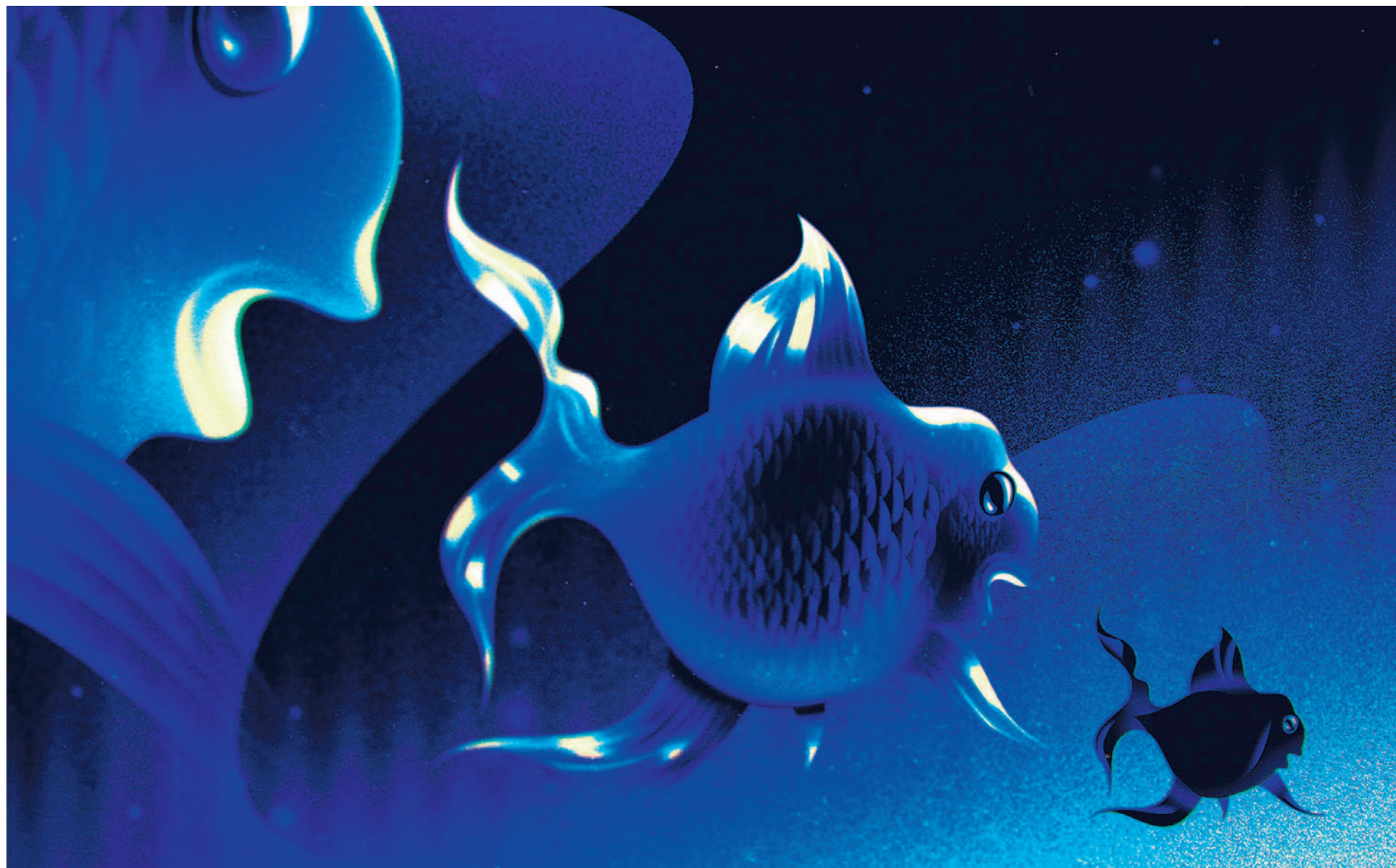
One way in is through **Asia Vital Components**, which provides these cooling technologies. While the shares have soared, with the stock valuation hitting mid-20s, McClone still sees opportunity, noting that the market is still underestimating the earnings potential and the speed of adoption of its solutions.

McClone and others are also looking at power-related stocks as another way to play AI, given the surging energy demands. Data centers could contribute to 7% of global power demand by 2035 as they try to support AI, a reason that some companies are investing aggressively in electrification and energy-efficient technology.

That benefits the likes of **HD Hyundai Electric** in Korea, which in the first quarter made up almost 40% of its full-year sales forecast. Given the strong growth, McClone says he expects further double-digit increases in sales and earnings, which justifies its current valuations. Plus, the stock trades at about a 14% discount to other global grid equipment options. The stock trades for under 20 times 2025 earnings.

Rajiv Jain, chief investment officer at global asset manager GQG Partners, owns Malaysia's **YTL Power International**. The company stands to benefit from a host of reforms in Malaysia of its power sector as it sees a data center boom and the country tries to become a regional hub, exporting power to Singapore and other parts of southeast Asia.

At 12.6 times next year's earnings, valuations in Malaysia are still relatively attractive. "No one is paying attention to the sleepy market," Jain says. **B**



Your 'Independent' Advisor Now Works For Private Equity

Registered investment advisors have built lucrative practices that are attracting big private-equity firms. What it could mean for your portfolio.

BY IAN SALISBURY

Investment advisors pride themselves on having a personal relationship with customers, but private-equity firms are gobbling them up to form wealth-advisor leviathans.

One of the largest private-equity firms, **Carlyle Group**, has acquired stakes in registered investment advisors Captrust, with more than 80 offices mostly in the Northeast, and MAI Capital Management, with more than 25 in the Midwest and elsewhere.

Financial advisor firms are attractive businesses, says Jim Burr, co-head of global financial services at the Carlyle Group. They are highly profitable, with steady cash flows and growth. The industry is also fragmented, with thousands of small businesses, making it relatively easy

to add value by streamlining operations. "It very much fits the playbook," Burr says.

Carlyle has company in buying up these firms, known as RIAs. Other private-equity heavyweights like Thomas H. Lee and Clayton Dubilier & Rice have poured billions into creating national RIAs, which are then using the capital to acquire smaller firms. Last year, Fidelity counted more than 175 RIA mergers backed by private equity.

Private-equity firms aren't long-term investors. They traditionally aim to make businesses more profitable quickly, then flip them to new owners, often in a few years. When it comes to RIAs, private equity hasn't yet found a winning exit strategy. Some recent attempts by private-equity firms to cash out of RIA investments haven't

gone smoothly.

The other big question mark is what happens to the advisors—and their clients. The private-equity firms say they improve RIAs by investing in technology and consolidating back-office operations.

Private equity frequently promises advisors that they can continue to run businesses as they see fit after the purchase, but disagreements crop up, particularly in key areas like picking investments.

"It's like Ford's mantra from the 1930s—you can have any color you want just as long as it's black," says Frank Esposito, who sold a stake in his Carmel, Ind.-based wealth advisor practice to RIA platform Sanctuary Wealth in 2022, but attempted to buy it back after he found that he could no longer tailor portfolios to customers'

needs like before and Sanctuary was subject to a Financial Industry Regulatory Authority sanction related to marketing alternative assets to investors. That sparked a legal dispute over the terms. "Clients deserve customization," he adds. "They are paying for it."

Sanctuary says its partner-advisors are free to make whatever investments they think best serve clients' needs, as long as the investments are approved by compliance. The company also said it disputed claims Esposito made regarding the value of his business and what it called "false accusations about regulatory matters."

There are more than 15,000 investment advisor firms registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission or state regulators, allowing them to manage money for clients—hence the moniker RIA.

Many were founded by advisors who established their reputations and client lists at big Wall Street firms like Merrill Lynch or **Morgan Stanley**, then broke away to provide more-personal advice and avoid pressure to sell products. "They are essentially hanging out their own shingle," says Bing Waldert, managing director of research firm Cerulli Associates.

Despite the small sizes of RIAs—the median firm has fewer than 100 clients—they can be attractive businesses. While other corners of the investing industry, such as mutual funds, have seen fees decline in recent years, it's still common for investment managers to annually charge 1% of assets under management.

Once clients find an advisor they like and trust, they rarely switch. Investment advisors often enjoy retention rates in the "high 90s" while also steadily growing their rosters, says the Carlyle Group's Burr. Their income is relatively predictable. "We love that in any business," he says.

Even for proudly independent financial advisors, there are benefits to being part of a larger firm, especially if they can keep a degree of autonomy. Take a look at Chicago-based Hightower Advisors, one of the nation's largest RIAs; it oversees more than \$150 billion for nearly 50,000 clients. Part-owned by Thomas H. Lee Partners, it's one of the RIA business' serial acquirers, buying nine firms in 2023, according to Fidelity.

Hightower offers services that smaller firms would have difficulty matching. These include help with back-office tasks such as billing and

compliance. But there's also an estate-planning team and an in-house trust company. And there is Chief Investment Strategist Stephanie Link, a frequent presence on television, who leads a dozen-strong investment team, giving advisors research and marketing firepower they couldn't deliver on their own.

"We're giving you the benefits of being part of a bigger firm," says CEO Bob Oros, but at the same time, "we give you the ability to continue to serve your clients in their best interest in the way you want to."

The RIAs are also selling out to bigger firms because the price is right. RIAs are going for nine times earnings before interest, taxes, and depreciation, or Ebitda, according to Fidelity Vice President of Practice Management and Consulting Laura Delaney—up from about seven times four years ago. Assuming the firm charges clients average annual fees of 0.8% and oversees assets of \$550 million—close to the median—that could lead to a price of nearly \$10 million, Delaney estimates. And some RIAs can be much larger. One in 10 firms oversees more than \$6 billion, according to trade group figures.

The upshot is that some advisors are getting stars in their eyes, according to Brian Hamburger, a lawyer who helps RIA founders evaluate offers. While many deals make sense, not everyone who signs has carefully considered the downsides. Offers "dangle a heck of a lot of money in front of advisors," he says. "Some of them lose their minds just a little bit."

The Endgame

RIAs' pitch to clients is long-term investing, with wealth patiently accumulating over years or decades. That's not the case for private-equity firms, which typically sell investments after just a few years. Exit plans for RIAs aren't always clear.

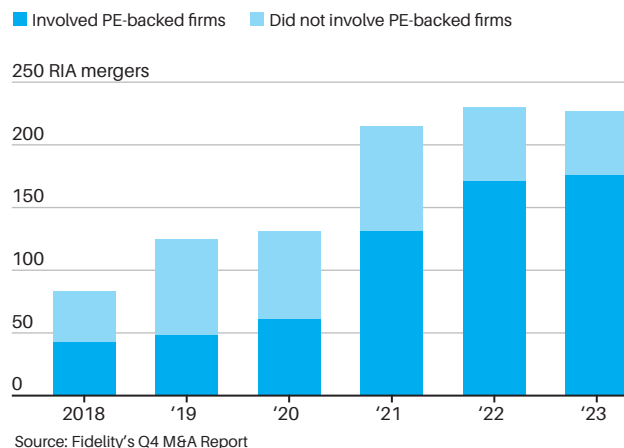
Last year, Thomas H. Lee reportedly put part of its stake in Hightower up for sale, only to pull the deal weeks later when offers from other private-equity firms weren't high enough.

Thomas H. Lee declined to comment. Oros said some discussions had taken place, but noted that the firms had a "fantastic partnership."

Another potential exit route for private equity is to take an RIA public. This was the approach taken by Focus Financial Partners, another industry giant that consists of 90 different

RIA Feeding Frenzy

Private-equity-backed deals are driving an increase in mergers.



"partner" RIAs. At one time backed by **KKR**, the company raised more than \$530 million during an initial public offering in 2018.

For the next few years, however, Focus' stock price stagnated. And last year, it was taken private again by a new private-equity investor, Clayton Dubilier & Rice.

Focus' CEO Rudy Adolf departed, and the firm announced a new strategy that could erode some advisors' independence.

Known as the "hub" plan, it involves rolling up dozens of the small firms that Focus acquired over the years into a handful of national brands that will have centralized tax, trust, and insurance operations, as well as offering help in picking investments.

Still, Focus stresses that the rollups are voluntary. "We are meeting the advisors where they are," says Dan Glaser, Focus' executive chairman and a partner at Clayton Dubilier & Rice. "This is a coalition of the willing."

What About the Clients?

Big firms like to emphasize that advisors get to choose how much or little they integrate with their parent's business. But as the recent example of Focus shows, time and financial pressure can prompt firms to rethink their approach.

One area where big firms are also likely to press for more control is picking investments. While plenty of independent RIAs see themselves as portfolio managers, it makes little sense for them to spend their days poring over market data when there's a centralized team doing it full time.

"When you have 50 different RIAs with 50 different portfolio manage-

ment styles, there are challenges," says Stephen Caruso, senior analyst at Cerulli. "Firms want to put the portfolio in the capable hands of someone who can spend all their time doing research."

Another potential problem comes when private-equity firms see an RIA's clients as a source of investment dollars for their own funds. One recent report on private equity by consulting firm Bain called individual investors a "vast, untapped market."

That kind of product pushing has long been a profit engine for big Wall Street firms. But RIAs are supposed to adhere to the fiduciary standard, which suggests that advisors should always act in clients' best interest, without any of the conflicts that can arise from peddling in-house investments. While some RIAs that *Barron's* spoke with said flat out that they wouldn't promote a parent's fund, others aim to avoid these conflicts by disclosing them to investors.

For Esposito, who is in the process of unwinding his relationship with Sanctuary Wealth, which is backed by private-credit firm Kennedy Lewis, cross-selling efforts were also a concern. The potential conflict is disclosed in Sanctuary's Form ADV Part II, the regulatory document designed to give a plain-English explanation of an advisors' business. It must be handed out to all clients.

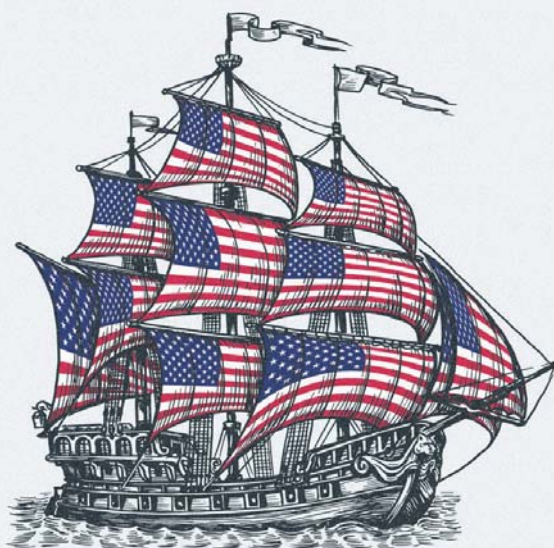
"We provide the same level of information and support to our partner firms about Kennedy Lewis investments as we do for the 47 world-class alternative investment solutions on our platform, each of which has passed an incredibly rigorous due diligence process," said a spokesman for Sanctuary Wealth in an email. Kennedy Lewis didn't return a call seeking comment.

The arrangement not only irks Esposito but also some of his clients. One of them, Stephen LaVersa of Greenwich, Conn., understands fund distribution more than most—he himself used to help asset-management firms raise investment dollars from advisors. When he saw a trade publication article about Sanctuary marketing its parents' funds earlier this year, he fired off an email to Esposito commending it for exiting the relationship.

"I want my investment advisor to be paid exclusively by me, and I want him to do everything with an eye toward benefiting my portfolio," says LaVersa. **B**

Biden's Tariffs Are Nothing New for U.S.

Before World War II, countries around the world, including the U.S., frequently used tariffs to protect local manufacturers and farmers.



BY KENNETH G. PRINGLE

President Joe Biden followed a time-honored U.S. trading strategy in raising tariffs on Chinese imports to protect American workers and industries.

Only it wasn't the strategy—free trade—he spent his career supporting, the one administrations from Eisenhower to Obama pursued since the end of World War II.

That's over.

In slapping tariffs of 100% on Chinese electric vehicles, and 25% to 50% on products from semiconductors to surgical masks, Biden expands a trade war started by predecessor and self-proclaimed “Tariff Man” Donald Trump. The U.S. wants Europe to join, and China is threatening retaliation.

Biden is actually following a much

older trading strategy, one favored by George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Herbert Hoover—and Queen Elizabeth I.

From the 16th to 19th centuries, trade was a national competition to protect industry, improve world standing, and pursue politics by other means. A zero-sum game, with winners and losers.

War, colonialism, great wealth, and poverty were the consequences. Adam Smith dubbed it the mercantile system, or mercantilism.

Now Biden, who once championed China's entry into the World Trade Organization, is using punitive tariffs against China to “make sure American workers and American business and corporations can compete and win in the industries of the future.”

Welcome to Mercantilism 2.0.

Mercantilism 1.0 was founded on a

simple concept. “[W]e must always take heed that we buy [buy] no more from strangers than we sell them, for so we should empower [impo-]verish [impo-]verish] our selves and enrich them,” wrote the author of *A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of England* in 1549.

The first Queen Elizabeth used that advice—keeping a favorable trade balance—to turn England into a world power. The island nation joined Spain, France, and others in a race for empire.

Colonialism's ultimate expression was the trans-Atlantic “triangular” trade. Raw materials went from the Americas to Europe, finished goods from Europe to Africa, and enslaved Black people from Africa to the New World, perpetuating the cycle.

Another result was the American Revolution. The American colonies long chafed at Britain's trading rules, and the 1773 Tea Act that forced the colonies to buy high-duty British tea turned anger into action.

“This Destruction of the Tea is so bold, so daring...I can't but consider it as an Epocha in History,” John Adams wrote of the Boston Tea Party on Dec. 16, 1773. But Adams feared retribution. Striking at Britain's financial control pierced the colonial relationship to the core.

Britain's response, the Intolerable Acts, which closed the Boston port and undercut Massachusetts' right of self-government, incited revolution and brought forth an idealistic new nation.

“A vision of open markets, freer trade and economic interdependence inspired the first generation of American leaders, as it would leaders after World War II,” wrote historian Alfred E. Eckes in *Opening America's Market: U.S. Foreign Trade Policy Since 1776*.

Free trade always had adherents. The French philosopher Montesquieu wrote that “the spirit of commerce unites nations.” Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) was the bible for free traders, including Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton.

But aspiration met reality. European nations still violated the U.S.'s “neutral rights, seizing American commerce and impressing sailors,” wrote Eckes. Plus, a new streak of nationalism gripped America, including its first president.

“A free people ought not only to be armed,” Washington wrote in his first message to Congress. “[T]heir

safety and interest require, that they should promote such manufactories.”

By “promote,” Washington meant to discourage competition. Higher tariffs followed, 5% in 1789 and reaching 48% by 1828.

Lincoln, too, was a tariff man.

A tariff, he wrote in 1843, “so adjusted as to protect American industry, [is] indispensably necessary to the prosperity of the American People.”

Lincoln backed the Morrill Tariff of 1861, targeting British imports, which split the American people in two.

The South, with a slave economy and little industry, opposed tariffs. Without cheap British goods, Southerners would be forced to pay up for products of the North. They chose secession instead.

The South lost the Civil War and the tariff debate, with U.S. import duties remaining among the world's highest into the 20th century. Meantime, the American economy grew into a powerhouse.

Mercantilism's last gasp was the Hoover-backed Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930. Other countries retaliated, the depression deepened, the march to war accelerated.

From the ruins of World War II, the ideas of Montesquieu and Smith re-emerged. “Trade equals peace” became the West's postwar mantra. The European Union was founded on this premise, deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement, or Nafta, symbolized it.

The age of free trade culminated with the entry into the WTO of the West's Cold War rivals, China in 2001 and Russia in 2012.

How's that working out?

Even before invading Ukraine, Russia was “raising trade barriers, closing its market to imports, strengthening its control over its economy,” according to a 2022 U.S. trade report. The Russian government says it has started the process of unilaterally withdrawing from the WTO and other international organizations.

China has been subsidizing key industries, according to Biden, “and then dumping the excess products onto the market at unfairly low prices.” That's what the new tariffs are meant to counter. China denies the charges, and filed its own complaint at the WTO over Biden's Inflation Reduction Act. **B**



KERRI WILSON, NURSE



DR. MARTIN PALMERI, ONCOLOGIST



JESSICA CLEMENTS, PATIENT



MOLLY ZENKER, NURSE

AS HCA THRIVES, ITS HOSPITALS PAY A PRICE

BY CATHERINE DUNN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE BELLEME

Federal data show a pattern of staffing cuts at hospitals acquired by HCA. At Mission Hospital in Asheville, N.C., direct patient

care fell 36% in two years. The company disputes the analysis but declined to provide its own numbers.

When HCA Healthcare inked an agreement to buy the main hospital in Asheville, N.C., late in the summer of 2018, the stock popped 2%.

But when nurse Molly Zenker first heard news of the possible sale, her heart sank.

Zenker had worked for HCA once before, at a hospital in Florida, one of the company's largest markets. She says a stressful experience with bare-bones staffing made her question whether she could remain a nurse. "I was really just trying to put fires out all day," she says. The picture looked brighter when she switched to a hospital where nurses were unionized, and later when she moved to Asheville in 2017 and found a job she loved at nonprofit Mission Hospital, close to her family. The work felt sustainable and focused on patient care.

Mission, a well-regarded hospital network in the Blue Ridge Mountains, also appealed to HCA. The company completed the deal for \$1.5 billion—one of its biggest-ever acquisitions—in February 2019. HCA's share price has marched upward since, increasing more than 140% in five years and easily outperforming the S&P 500 index.

Nashville-based HCA is the country's largest for-profit hospital operator, with 179 hospitals in 19 states. Across its territory, the company has honed a business model that delivers industry-leading profit margins. The stock has benefited as it acquired more hospitals around the country. At the same time, those acquisitions often brought significant staffing reductions at the hospitals, a *Barron's* investigation shows.

At Mission, Zenker and other unionized nurses have publicly decried low staffing and stretched workloads. Dozens of physicians signed an open letter this past fall saying Mission's quality was suffering under new ownership. The state attorney general filed a lawsuit in North Carolina Superior Court in December, accusing HCA of breaching patient care commitments agreed to during the sale.

The company is fighting the suit. "We are meeting, and in many cases exceeding, our obligations in the purchase agreement," Harlow Sumerford, HCA's director of media relations, told



Barron's in an email.

Late last year, inspectors linked four patient deaths to Mission's failures, in their assessment of hospital conditions. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued a finding of "immediate jeopardy" that placed Mission's federal funding at risk.

Regulators have accepted the hospital's plans to correct problems, and state inspectors, on behalf of Medicare, revisited Mission in May.

HCA says the issues have been resolved. "Mission Health continues to be recognized as one of the top hospitals in the country in third-party quality and patient safety ratings, including Healthgrades, which named Mission Hospital one of America's 50 Best Hospitals," Sumerford said.

Mission is the second-largest hospital in the HCA system by net patient revenue, generating nearly \$1.3 billion in 2022, according to federal data.

It's one of more than a dozen hospitals that HCA acquired between 2017 and 2021. *Barron's* examined 12 HCA acquisitions for which data are available, and found staffing decreased at two-thirds of the hospitals between

HCA acquired Mission Hospital in 2019. It generated nearly \$1.3 billion in net patient revenue in 2022.

the year of purchase and 2022.

Within two years of HCA's purchase, direct patient care staffing at Mission fell 36%, according to data from the National Academy for State Health Policy, a nonpartisan think tank. Hospitals that saw other steep staffing declines soon after HCA bought them include facilities in Rochester, N.H. (a 26% drop), Waycross, Ga. (a 22% drop), and Springfield, Tenn. (an 18% drop).

HCA's staffing decreases contrast with state trends during the same period, according to *Barron's* analysis. In New Hampshire and Tennessee, median staffing remained relatively flat, while in Georgia and North Carolina, median patient care staffing rose through 2022, the latest year for which data are available.

Hospitals are still dealing with the pandemic legacy of staff turnover and higher labor costs—and nurse staffing is at the crux of the matter. Mission nurses are among thousands unionized with National Nurses United affiliates who are now in contract negotiations with 17 HCA hospitals across six states.

While hospitals say there aren't enough nurses to go around, unions

maintain that deteriorating working conditions are keeping nurses away.

There's little debate about the importance of nurses. Studies show that higher staffing levels are associated with better patient outcomes, including lower mortality rates and fewer injuries from falls during hospital stays. Still, regulations on nurse-to-patient ratios are few. California and Oregon are the only states that require minimum ratios throughout a hospital; just a handful of states set ratios in specific medical units like the ICU.

For this article, *Barron's* used a hospital-cost tool managed by the National Academy for State Health Policy. The group pulls in federal Medicare data from hospitals to analyze staffing levels relative to patient volume. Its measure includes labor time for employees and contracted staff involved in patient care, such as physicians, nurses, and pharmacists. Such hospital reporting on staff and contract labor informs Medicare reimbursement rates.

HCA raised several objections to using the data to compare hospital staffing over time, or to other health

The Business of Hospital Care

►HCA owns 179 hospitals across 19 states. Mission, acquired in 2019, is now its second-largest hospital by revenue.

HCA Top 10 Hospitals by Net Patient Revenue, FY 2022

Hospital	Location	Net Patient Revenue
Methodist Hospital	San Antonio, Texas	\$2.2B
Mission Hospital	Asheville, N.C.	\$1.3B
Medical City Dallas	Dallas, Texas	\$1.3B
Tristar Centennial Medical Center	Nashville, Tenn.	\$991.8M
CJW Medical Center	Richmond, Va.	\$898.6M
St. David's Medical Center	Austin, Texas	\$870.9M
Medical City Plano	Plano, Texas	\$844.1M
Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center	Las Vegas, Nev.	\$799.8M
HCA Houston Healthcare Kingwood	Kingwood, Texas	\$733.8M
Memorial Health University Medical Center	Savannah, Ga.	\$708.4M

Note: Data for fiscal year 2022; calendar dates vary by hospital
Source: Hospital Tool Cost Dataset, National Academy for State Health Policy

►HCA's stock is up 358% over the past seven years, a period in which the company has expanded its national footprint through multiple acquisitions.



Source: FactSet

►HCA is the nation's largest for-profit hospital company. It also has industry-leading profit margins.

Company/Ticker	Market Value (billion)	2023 Revenue (billion)	2023 Ebitda (billion)	2023 Ebitda Margin
HCA Healthcare/HCA	\$88.6	\$65.0	\$12.7	19.6%
Tenet Healthcare/THC	13.7	20.5	3.5	17.2
Universal Health Services/UHS	12.5	14.3	1.7	12.2

Note: Ebitda is earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization.
Source: Bloomberg

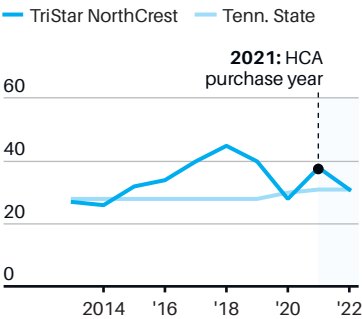
►Patient care staffing has generally fallen at hospitals following their acquisition by HCA. Here's a look at 12 hospitals acquired by HCA since 2017 for which staffing data are available.

HCA Hospital	Year of Purchase	Change in staffing through 2022
Mission Hospital, N.C.	2019	-43%
Frisbie Memorial, N.H.	2020	-37%
TriStar NorthCrest, Tenn.	2021	-18%
HCA Florida Highlands, Fla.	2017	-15%
Memorial Health University Medical Center, Ga.	2018	-12%
Methodist Hospital Atascosa, Texas	2017	-12%
Memorial Satilla Health, Ga.	2017	-11%
Medical City Weatherford, Texas	2017	-8%
HCA Houston Healthcare Tomball, Texas	2017	3%
HCA Houston Healthcare Northwest, Texas	2017	9%
HCA Houston Healthcare Medical Center, Texas	2017	27%
Mission Hospital McDowell, N.C.	2019	100%

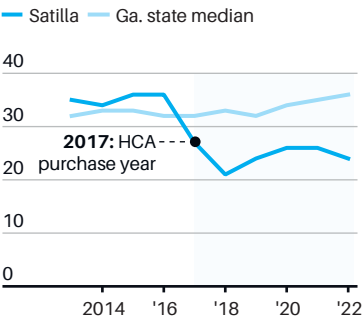
Note: Staffing defined as direct patient care full-time equivalent per 1,000 adjusted patient discharges; data available through 2022
Source: National Academy for State Health Policy

►These four hospitals saw steep reductions in patient care staffing in the years following their acquisition by HCA.

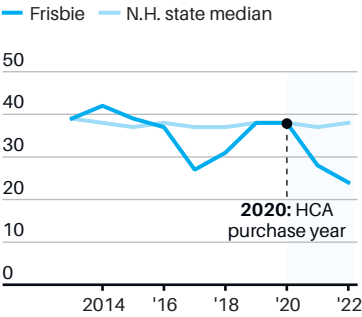
TriStar NorthCrest Medical Center
Springfield, Tenn.



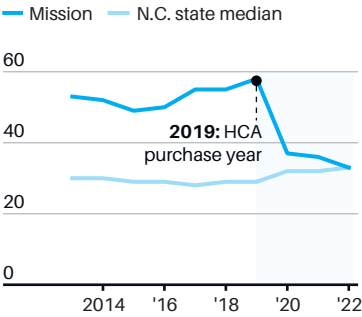
Memorial Satilla Health
Waycross, Ga.



Frisbie Memorial
Rochester, N.H.



Mission Hospital
Asheville, N.C.



systems. Sumerford, for instance, noted that Mission Hospital changed how it reported some contract labor in 2022.

“Medicare cost reports are not intended to be used for in-depth staffing analysis, so it is nearly impossible to do an apples to apples comparison between different years or different hospitals,” he said in an email.

“Despite the labor challenges all hospitals are facing, staffing at HCA Healthcare’s hospitals is safe, appropriate, in line with other community hospitals, and in compliance with applicable regulations,” Sumerford told *Barron’s*.

The company didn’t respond to questions about how it makes personnel decisions and whether it tracks its own hospital staffing levels.

NASHP says the Medicare data are vital for policymakers, given that the largest portion of U.S. healthcare spending goes to hospitals.

“NASHP uses Medicare Cost Reports because they are publicly accessible, comprehensive annual reports completed and attested to by hospitals to provide factual cost information to the federal government,” says Maureen Hensley-Quinn, a senior director for the group. “We recognize the complexity across hospitals, but all Medicare Cost Reports are completed based on the same instructions, and data from these reports can offer insights into individual hospitals that are not easily accessible or available otherwise.”

While problems in Asheville have made the spotlight, federal regulators have flagged staffing problems and patient safety concerns at HCA facilities in several other states.

The Georgia hospital that HCA acquired in 2017—Memorial Satilla Health—came under scrutiny during a 2022 inspection in which regulators determined the facility “failed to ensure an adequate number of nursing staff” to provide care, records show. One nurse described staffing levels in the intensive care unit as “truly unsafe” given the demands of monitoring patients on ventilators or IV insulin drips, according to federal records. She told regulators that her complaint was “swept under the rug.”

Since 2022, two other HCA hospitals, one in Salem, Va., and one in Panama City, Fla., have also been flagged by Medicare officials for inadequate staffing, according to federal reports.

HCA says the issues at all three hospitals have been resolved.

Maximizing Profits

Tensions over for-profit medicine go back decades. But as the Covid-19 crisis mode recedes, healthcare ownership is attracting new scrutiny, particularly as players like HCA get bigger, while other ventures run into financial trouble. Steward Health Care System, an owner of 30 hospitals, recently filed for bankruptcy protection, a saga closely followed by The Wall Street Journal.

While HCA has produced strong returns for investors—*Barron's* recommended the stock in December—a chorus of advocates say the company's business model isn't compatible with prioritizing patient care.

State Sen. Julie Mayfield, a Democrat whose district encompasses Asheville, told *Barron's* that her office regularly fields complaints from HCA patients. She's at the forefront of a community push for improvements at Mission. Their fight has a larger resonance, she says: "We are the poster child for the corporatization of medicine."

Kerri Wilson, a nurse at Mission in Asheville, says the work nurses do to keep patients safe doesn't necessarily translate as billable. "I think that's why nursing gets kind of pushed aside," she says. "It's not a billable task for us to be able to take you to the bathroom."

HCA was founded as Hospital Corporation of America in 1968 by investor Jack Massey and doctors Thomas Frist Sr. and Thomas Frist Jr., father and brother to former U.S. Senate Majority Leader William Frist.

HCA has twice gone private, most recently in 2006 through a leveraged buyout led by Bain Capital and KKR, among others. When the company relisted on the New York Stock Exchange in 2011, shares opened at \$30 a piece. They now trade around \$320.

In November, HCA held its first investor day in two decades. During the event on a Nashville stage, CEO Sam Hazen said the company had a "sacred responsibility" to patients, alongside accountability to shareholders: "And we believe that we can harmonize both objectives and accountabilities and ultimately produce value for both."

The presentations touted the company's clinical capabilities, including treating strokes, complex heart attacks, and burns. They also told a

story of standout financial performance. One analyst in the audience, Kevin Fischbeck at BofA Securities, noted that HCA forecasts margins that are "consistently above what we think about peers being able to generate."

Indeed, HCA tops industry competitors. Last year, HCA delivered a 19.6% Ebitda margin, compared with 17.2% for **Tenet Healthcare** and 12.2% for **Universal Health Services**. Ebitda, or earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization, is a commonly watched metric to track ongoing cash flows at a business.

On a more traditional accounting basis, HCA also outperforms. Its net income margin, profit divided by revenue, was 8.1% last year, more than double that of Tenet.

At the investor day, company executives highlighted several drivers for HCA's leading margins: scale that lowers administrative and fixed costs; management systems that help lower costs per patient day; and patient offerings that also enhance returns, whether that's a specialized cardiac procedure or treatment for burn survivors.

HCA's hospitals aren't merely competing against other health systems; they are competing internally against one another. In November, the company showed analysts a systemwide dashboard to track more than 160 key performance indicators at each of its hospitals, which totaled 183 at the time.

Mike Marks, an HCA veteran who recently became the company's chief financial officer, said that leaders at every one of its hospitals can check these metrics—in areas including labor management, human resources, and physician costs—to identify their hospital's performance gaps. Marks put it this way during the investor day: "No one really wants to be 183, right?"

The company declined to provide *Barron's* with a full list of the indicators used for the dashboard.

Trouble in Asheville

For nearly two decades, Mission Health operated as a state-sanctioned monopoly. A North Carolina law allowed Asheville's two main hospitals to merge under one nonprofit owner in 1998. Over the years, Mission acquired several rural hospitals, as well. In exchange for this antitrust immunity, Mission was subject to state oversight and limits on margin growth. Then, in 2015, state legislators voted



A rally organized by an affiliate of the National Nurses United union outside Mission Hospital on April 18.

to repeal those supervisory measures. Three years later, HCA stepped in with an offer.

Many in and around Asheville would like to move on from HCA. In Brevard, N.C., home to a small rural hospital that's part of Mission's network, local leaders began documenting concerns about staffing levels and physician departures in 2020, a year after the sale.

Mayor Maureen Copelof, a former Navy captain, met with HCA's chief executive in May 2022 and asked if the city could buy the hospital back; Hazen declined, she says. But the CEO offered to work more closely with the community, according to a letter memorializing the meeting, which Copelof shared with *Barron's*. The agreement fell apart, she says, after Brevard sued HCA in a pending case that alleges HCA has abused its market position to charge predatory prices.

HCA has denied allegations of anti-competitive behavior. A federal judge denied the company's motion to dismiss the suit in February.

Calls for change intensified this past fall, when dozens of doctors throughout the community signed an open letter stating that Mission's quality of care deteriorated after the HCA acquisition.

"I haven't seen this degree of physician discontent, community discontent, to my knowledge, in any area of

North Carolina," says Dr. Martin Palmeri, an oncologist at Messino Cancer Centers. In 2019, following HCA's purchase, he and his colleagues decided not to renew their physician service agreements with Mission and moved to new offices outside the hospital; physicians in the group continued to provide certain treatments at Mission until this past fall.

The practice determined it could no longer treat patients with complex blood cancers at Mission because of safety concerns related to insufficient nursing and pharmacy support.

One of the patients at Palmeri's practice, Jessica Clements, worries about her healthcare options in the future. She was diagnosed with a type of leukemia in 2021 and initially received good treatment at Mission. But over time, she says she observed nurses in the cancer unit take on increased workloads. Now in remission, Clements fears a relapse because she'd have to drive hours to seek treatment elsewhere.

HCA's dominance in the Asheville area leaves would-be patients with few choices for care. "If you're having a heart attack or a stroke or a trauma issue, you have to go to Mission whether you like it or not," says Karen Sanders, an RN patient advocate in private practice. She recommends that any patient who goes to Mission bring a friend or family member and document the experience.

The findings in the Medicare inspection report—made public in February by the Asheville Watchdog, a local news outlet—were "absolutely shocking," Sanders says. One critically ill patient, a 48-year-old man diagnosed with bacterial meningitis, went into cardiac arrest after he was left unmonitored and his IV medication ran dry, regulators found.

"The hospital's leadership failed to ensure a medical provider was responsible for monitoring and ensuring the delivery of care to patients presenting to the emergency department," the report said.

Molly Zenker left Mission in 2021 after she said a patient fell to the floor because of inadequate staffing. She returned to the hospital last year. She is raising her children in Asheville, she told *Barron's*, and she's committed to making the hospital a better place for her friends and neighbors. "It needs to be a good hospital," she says. "That was really what brought me back." **B**

SLOAN'S VIEW

Nvidia contributed **32.26%** of the S&P 500 index's total return through May 31, 2024.

Magnificent 7? There's Only the Magnificent 1.

One of the more amusing aspects of the stock market these days is all the attention being paid to the Magnificent

Seven tech companies and their stocks.

The term was coined as a throw-away line in a May 2023 report by Michael Hartnett, chief investment strategist of BofA Securities. Hartnett, you see, is a fan of *The Magnificent Seven*, the classic 1960 gunslinging Western starring Yul Brynner and Steve McQueen. The term took off.

In 2023, all seven were, in fact, magnificent. Each had a starring role in the market. But so far this year, **Nvidia** is the Magnificent One, and the rest range from mediocre to terrible. But the term Magnificent Seven is still being used. Roundhill Investments has even issued an exchange-traded fund, **Roundhill Magnificent Seven** (ticker: MAGS), linked to the group.

Let me take you through the numbers to explain why, in terms of market reality, the term Magnificent Seven is obsolete and should really be retired.

Last year, the most magnificent of the seven, Nvidia, had a total return of 239%, while the other six—**Amazon.com**, **Alphabet** (formerly Google), **Apple**, **Microsoft**, **Meta Platforms** (formerly Facebook) and **Tesla**—each returned from 49% to 194%.

Because the S&P 500 index is based on companies' stock market values (unlike the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which is based on companies' stock prices), Nvidia's influence on the S&P 500 ranks behind that of Microsoft and Apple, even though it had a far better performance than either of them (see

BY ALLAN SLOAN

nearby chart).

Last year's amazing performances meant that the seven accounted for 62.2% of the S&P 500's 26.3% return, according to Howard Silverblatt, the senior index analyst at S&P Dow Jones Indices, whose numbers I'm using throughout this column.

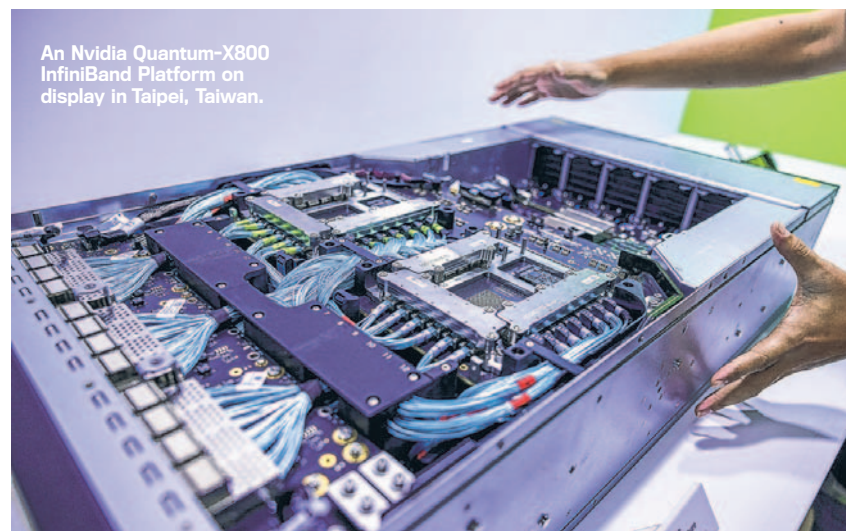
Subtract the seven, Silverblatt says, and last year the less-than-magnificent 493 would have returned 9.94%.

But this year, with Tesla tanking—it was down 28.3% through May 31, compared with last year's rise of 101.7%—the term Magnificent Seven no longer seems to make any sense. At least, not to me.

However, the term lives on—as many things tend to do on Wall Street, even when they're past their sell-by date.

On the surface, even with Tesla tanking, the seven are still reasonably magnificent if you look at the big picture rather than parsing the detailed 2024 numbers that you can find below.

According to Silverblatt, the seven



accounted for 53.2% of the S&P 500's total return of 11.3% through May 31, so they're still punching above their weight. Subtract the seven, and the S&P return would be 6.01%, he says.

However, if you look closely at the numbers, you will see something very strange.

To wit, Nvidia's contribution of 32.26% of the S&P 500's total return through May 31 exceeds the 21.01% total contribution of the other six. Even if we ignore the loss to the S&P 500 from Tesla, which we shouldn't, Nvidia's contribution still exceeds the 25.64% total of the six companies whose stocks posted positive returns.

Nvidia's dominance is simply stun-

ning. Its contribution to the S&P 500's return is 4.6 times that of Microsoft, the second biggest contributor. And except for Nvidia and Microsoft, the other five each returned less than the collective 6.01% that the not so magnificent 493 returned.

Apple has so far had a tremendous June. Will that streak continue? Who knows?

I don't expect any of what I'm showing you here to make any difference in how often the Magnificent Seven name is used in talking and writing about the market. But I think you ought to see what's really going on, as opposed to just tossing around the name that BofA's Hartnett created in passing and that took on a life of its own.

There have been endless articles and analyses of Nvidia's performance and prospects for its stock, and there's no point in going over familiar ground. Besides, I know that I don't know where Nvidia will go from here—though I sure wish I did.

What I do know, though, is that in the movie, the seven hired gunmen hired by a Mexican village suffer serious casualties but save the villagers from having to turn over the food and supplies the bad guys were after.

Will the Magnificent Seven stocks be as helpful to investors as their movie namesakes were to the villagers? There's no way to tell. But it'll sure be interesting to watch. Just don't take the name seriously. **E**

The 7 Were Magnificent in 2023

The Magnificent Seven tech companies each had strong performances last year.

	Total Return	Contribution to S&P Total Return
Microsoft	58.19%	13.28%
Apple	49%	12.34%
Nvidia	239.02%	11.04%
Amazon	80.88%	7.69%
Meta	184.13%	6.52%
Tesla	101.72%	4.16%
Alphabet A	58.32%	3.78%
Alphabet C	58.83%	3.36%

Source: S&P Dow Jones Indices

In 2024, It's Really the Magnificent 1

Nvidia's performance in 2024 has been dominant.

	Total Return	Contribution to S&P Total Return
Nvidia	121.39%	32.26%
Microsoft	10.79%	6.94%
Meta	32.03%	5.87%
Amazon	16.12%	5.15%
Alphabet A	23.49%	4.14%
Alphabet C	23.44%	3.49%
Apple	0.12%	0.05%
Tesla	-28.33%	-4.63%

Note: data through May 31, 2024

FUNDS

A Strong Dollar Lifts
Currency-Hedged Funds

BY DEBBIE CARLSON

Currency risk is inherent when owning international funds. When the dollar is strong, as it is now, it weighs on corporate returns because foreign revenue will translate into fewer dollars.

Currency-hedged exchange-traded funds, which neutralize foreign-exchange impacts, have been outperforming similar unhedged funds. The biggest one by assets, the \$6.4 billion **iShares Currency Hedged MSCI EAFE** ETF (ticker: HEFA) is up 13.9% year to date, versus the 7.8% return of the unhedged \$54.4 billion **iShares MSCI EAFE** ETF (EFA).

The \$268 million **WisdomTree Dynamic Currency Hedged International Equity** ETF (DDWM) is up 9.3% in 2024, and its unhedged cousin, the \$570 million **WisdomTree International Equity** ETF (DWM) is up 6.7%. The two funds have a 95% overlap, making them a good pair to judge currency impacts. WisdomTree also offers single-currency hedged ETFs, such as the \$5.1 billion **WisdomTree Japan Hedged Equity** (DXJ), which is up 26.6%. Most unhedged Japanese ETFs, like the \$16.1 billion **iShares MSCI Japan** (EWJ), are up 8%.

The strategy is proving popular with investors. Across WisdomTree's nine currency-hedged funds, year-to-date total inflows are \$2.1 billion, nearly double 2023's inflows, says Jeremy Schwartz, the firm's global chief investment officer. It was one of the first fund issuers to offer currency-hedged ETFs about 15 years ago and has \$10 billion in assets under management in the strategy.

To hedge, issuers generally use currency forward contracts to lock in a predetermined future exchange rate, says Dan Sotiroff, a senior manager research analyst at Morningstar. The issuers enter into the contracts on a monthly basis based on the amount of assets in the fund.

Eliminating the foreign-exchange risk

lowers the volatility of international funds for U.S. investors in both stocks and bonds, he says. Over about 10 years, hedging can reduce volatility by about 10% to 15% compared with similar unhedged funds. Most index-based international bond funds are currency-hedged for that reason, he adds.

Currency-hedged ETFs come with a potential surprise: a tax bill. The process that keeps ETFs tax-efficient doesn't cover the currency transactions, so profitable hedges will incur capital-gains taxes. To mitigate this, Sotiroff recommends using these ETFs in a tax-advantaged vehicle like an individual retirement account.

Nick Codola, senior portfolio manager at Brinker Capital Investments, has used these funds tactically in the past during times when the dollar is stronger, although he isn't currently. He prefers owning currency-hedged ETFs where there's only one currency to consider, such as for Japan or the euro zone, rather than an ETF that covers several countries and several currencies.

"There might be some individual currencies that are doing well and some that are not doing well. That might add a whole other wrinkle," Codola says.

Schwartz realizes that many investors use these ETFs tactically, but he notes they are meant for longer-term holdings to get the benefit of reduced volatility.

The funds also increase the dollar exposure in an overall portfolio, since the hedges neutralize the currency risk. But Sotiroff says that shouldn't skew overall returns much since the underlying holdings still drive most of the performance.

Currency-hedged ETFs have some merit, he says, and concurs with Schwartz they should be a strategic choice. Investors need to remember that when the dollar is weaker, these funds will underperform unhedged foreign ETFs. "There will be periods when it's at an advantage and disadvantage, and you just have to be willing to stick it out," he says. **B**

Scoreboard: Totally Tech

U.S. stocks continued to rise, with the S&P 500 up 1.51% , driven, as usual, by tech stocks, up 3.05%. Precious metals, however, flagged, off 6.80% on continuing concerns about growth.

	One Week	Year-to-Date
U.S. STOCK FUNDS	0.40%	8.39%
TOP SECTOR / Science & Technology Funds	3.05	19.94
BOTTOM SECTOR / Precious Metals Equity Funds	- 6.80	7.28
S&P 500	1.51	13.92
U.S. BOND FUNDS	0.26	1.55
Bloomberg Barclays AGG Bond	0.38	- 0.13

The Week's Top 25

Fund Investment	Objective	One Week	Year-to-Date
Kinetics SO & CR Inst / LSHUX	GL Sm/Mid-Cap	19.02%	32.8%
Kinetics Paradigm NL / WWNPX	Mid-Cap Growth	15.65%	32.7%
Kinetics SC Oppty NL / KSCOX	GL Sm/Mid-Cap	13.20	24.5
Kinetics Mkt Opps NL / KMKNX	Flexible Portfolio	10.88	34.2
Schwartz Inv Val Focused / RCMFX	Multi-Cap Growth	7.80	12.9
Quantified STF Inv / QSTFX	Flexible Portfolio	5.83	25.7
Berkshire Focus / BFOCX	Multi-Cap Growth	5.24	31.2
Fidelity Adv Semicnd A / FELAX	Science & Tech	5.21	50.1
Rydex Electronics Inv / RYSIX	Science & Tech	5.15	33.3
Fidelity Sel Semicnd / FSELX	Science & Tech	5.14	50.0
Quantified Tact Sect Inv / QTS SX	Specialty Dvsfd Eq	5.14	10.9
PGIM Jenn Technology Z / PGKZX	Science & Tech	4.88	30.0
T Rowe Price Sci&Tch / PRSCX	Science & Tech	4.83	28.5
Fidelity Sel Technlgy / FSPTX	Science & Tech	4.63	25.3
BlackRock Tech Oppt Inst / BGSIX	GL Science/Tech	4.61	26.5
Fidelity Adv Tech A / FADTX	Science & Tech	4.60	25.7
Putnam Gl Technology A / PGTAX	GL Science/Tech	4.36	25.7
Columbia Gl Tech Gr I / CMTFX	Science & Tech	4.31	25.2
Delaware Ivy Sci&Tech A / WSTAX	Science & Tech	4.20	25.5
Hartfd Growth Opps A / HGOAX	Multi-Cap Growth	4.18	27.4
Wireless Fund / WIREX	Telecommunication	4.16	34.8
HCM Tactical Growth A / HCMGX	Multi-Cap Growth	4.16	22.0
Fidelity Focused Stk / FTQGX	Large-Cap Growth	3.93	32.6
Baron Technology Inst / BTECX	GL Science/Tech	3.91	22.5
Upright Growth Fund / UPUPX	Global Multi-Cap Core	3.88	16.6

The Week's Bottom 10

Fund Investment	Objective	One Week	Year-to-Date
Midas / MIDSX	Precious Metals Eq	- 8.26	0.9
OCM Gold Atl / OCMAX	Precious Metals Eq	- 7.80%	12.9%
Rydex Precious Metls Inv / RYPMX	Precious Metals Eq	- 7.73	8.2
Amer Cent Gl Gold Inv / BGEIX	Precious Metals Eq	- 7.49	8.9
Allspring Prec Met A / EKWAX	Precious Metals Eq	- 7.27	7.0
Victory Prc Met&Min Fund / USAGX	Precious Metals Eq	- 7.18	4.9
VanEck Intl Gold Y / IINIYX	Precious Metals Eq	- 7.17	5.4
Gabelli Gold I / GLDIX	Precious Metals Eq	- 7.06	6.1
Fidelity Sel Gold / FSAGX	Precious Metals Eq	- 6.90	6.8
Invesco Gold & SM A / OPGSX	Precious Metals Eq	- 6.67	6.4

The Largest 25

Fund Investment	Assets (billions)	Objective	3-Year* Return	1-Week Return	YTD Return
American Funds Gro A / AGTHX	\$131.9	Large-Cap Growth	6.9%	1.51%	15.8%
Fidelity Contrafund / FCNTX	\$118.3	Large-Cap Core	12.0%	1.72%	25.1%
Fidelity SA US Tot Stk / FCTDX	109.6	Multi-Cap Core	9.1	1.14	14.6
American Funds Bal A / ABALX	100.6	Mix Tgt All Gro	4.9	1.50	8.6
Vanguard Wellington Adm / VWENX	94.9	Mix Tgt All Gro	5.1	0.84	8.4
Vanguard Tgt Ret2035 Inv / VTTHX	93.2	Mixed-Asset Target 2035	2.8	0.21	6.9
Vanguard Tgt Ret2030 Inv / VTHRX	89.9	Mix-Asst Targ 2030	2.2	0.21	6.1
PIMCO Income Inst / PIMIX	87.6	Multi-Sector Inc	1.2	0.22	2.3
American Funds ICA A / AIVSX	83.0	Large-Cap Core	10.9	1.29	13.7
Vanguard Tgt Ret2040 Inv / VFORX	82.5	Mixed-Asset Target 2040	3.4	0.21	7.6
American Funds Wash A / AWSHX	80.8	Large-Cap Value	9.7	1.56	10.9
Vanguard Tgt Ret2045 Inv / VTIVX	80.1	Mixed-Asset Target 2045	3.9	0.21	8.3
Vanguard Tgt Ret2025 Inv / VTTVX	74.6	Mixed-Asset Target 2025	1.7	0.21	5.2
American Funds Inc A / AMECX	74.0	Mix Tgt All Mod	3.1	- 0.41	4.0
American Funds Flnv A / ANCFX	68.9	Large-Cap Core	9.2	1.67	14.6
Vanguard PRIMECAP Adm / VPMAX	67.9	Large-Cap Core	8.9	1.53	13.8
Vanguard Tgt Ret2050 Inv / VFIFX	67.2	Mix-Asst Targ 2050	4.3	0.19	8.8
American Funds EuPc R6 / RERGX	65.8	Intl Large-Cap Growth	- 2.4	- 1.79	7.6
Fidelity SA Core Inc / FIWGX	65.0	General Bond	- 2.1	0.41	0.6
Dodge & Cox Stck I / DODGX	63.9	Multi-Cap Value	6.5	- 0.84	7.0
Dodge & Cox Income I / DODIX	62.8	Core Bond	- 1.1	0.40	0.9
Fidelity Str Adv LgCp / FALCX	59.8	Large-Cap Core	10.4	1.35	15.4
American Funds CIB A / CAIBX	59.7	Global Equity Income	3.1	- 0.27	4.3
American Funds NPer A / ANWPX	57.3	Global Large-Cap Growth	3.7	0.14	11.5
American Funds CWGI A / CWGIX	55.2	Global Large-Cap Core	4.7	0.02	10.2

*Annualized 06/09/2021 to 06/13/2024. Through Thursday.

Source: Lipper

TECH TRADER

It was another big week for artificial intelligence—and not just because of Apple. **Oracle**, **Broadcom**, and **Adobe** each reported AI-juiced earnings.

Corning Is Getting an AI Boost. The Secret Is Almost Out.

Finding fresh opportunities to invest in artificial intelligence is daunting, which explains why investors just keep pouring money into a handful of the same ideas. **Nvidia** has rallied 43% over the past month. In the same span, **Arm Holdings** has jumped 35%, **C3.ai** is up 22%, and **Taiwan Semiconductor** has gained 14%. AI plays, all.

Wall Street has recently started to fret about AI's profit potential outside of Nvidia, but this past week emboldened the bulls. It started with **Apple's** long-awaited unveiling of its AI strategy at the company's Worldwide Developers Conference. Apple stock rallied 11% on the news, with investors seemingly convinced a new iPhone upgrade cycle is coming. The Apple news was followed by AI-juiced earnings reports from **Oracle**, **Broadcom**, and **Adobe**, sparking double-digit stock rallies for all three and spurring a renewed hunt for AI ideas.

I've got one for you: specialty glass-maker **Corning**. Founded in 1851, Corning makes highly engineered glass for a host of applications: Glass for TVs, PCs, and mobile phones. Glass for automotive displays and pollution control systems. Glass for vaccine vials and solar panels. And glass in the form of fiberoptic cable, which is used, among other places, in AI data centers.

Corning's recent financial results have been ugly. Revenue has been down year over year for six straight quarters, and the June quarter will



BY ERIC J. SAVITZ

likely extend the string to seven. Declines in multiple key markets—smartphones, TVs, autos, and telecommunications—have battered the business.

But CEO Wendell Weeks thinks a turnaround is at hand, thanks to improvements in the underlying businesses along with underappreciated new opportunities. Like AI.

Weeks sees a “springboard” coming. He predicts Corning can boost annual revenue by at least \$3 billion by 2026—and potentially as much as \$5 billion—on top of the \$13.6 billion in revenue the company reported in 2023.

“Material science is really slow, until it gets fast,” Weeks told me this past week. “You work in an area, and you work, and it takes a long time. We’re talking about the composition of matter. And then a catalyzing customer application comes along and all of a sudden you have a big secular trend take off.” That trend? Well, you know.

Before we get to the details, it's worth noting a few other things play-

ing in Corning's favor.

“The springboard framework is all about this combination of cyclical and secular growth coming together,” Weeks says. “We have this \$3 billion-plus sales opportunity over the next three years in which we have high confidence. And because we already have the capacity in place to execute on that, the margins in the incremental revenue should be outstanding.” That's an important point: Corning doesn't need to spend a fortune here to build infrastructure.

On the cyclical side, Corning sees growth ahead in the automotive sector, for curved glass displays inside electric and autonomous vehicles, and from increased use of its gas particulate filters, widely used overseas and about to get adopted in the U.S. thanks to new Environmental Protection Agency emissions rules.

Weeks also sees a rebound coming in non-AI fiberoptic cable. That business has been down double-digits over the past year, including a 17% drop in the March quarter. But, Weeks says, it has averaged 7% growth over the long haul, and should rebound as telcos work down inventory.

Meanwhile, Weeks expects Corning to start seeing increased fiber demand next year from the rollout of a \$42.5 billion federal government program known as BEAD—Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment—to make high-speed connectivity available in underserved areas. He also sees a boost to display glass volumes from a gradual increase in average TV screen sizes.

But the big opportunity comes from AI. As Weeks notes, fiberoptic cable is

crucial to every cloud data center, linking processors to each other. That is even more important for AI, where the computing power comes from the interconnection of thousands and someday millions of graphics processing units, or GPUs, made by Nvidia and others. “I have been doing this a long time,” Weeks says. “And we have a pretty unprecedented opportunity right now.”

Weeks says systems that rely on Nvidia's popular Hopper H100 GPUs require 10 times the fiber used in a conventional server rack.

Corning formed a dedicated team four years ago to solve the problem, Weeks notes. The company invented thinner fiber, new cabling, new connectors, and a new system to tie them together. Weeks says the new approach offers 60% higher density and 70% less labor for installation. The new system starts shipping this quarter.

The math should steadily improve for Corning as systems get even denser over time. When Nvidia launches its powerful new Blackwell chips later this year, the number of GPUs per rack more than doubles, to 74 from 32. That means more connections, and more fiber. When that happens, Weeks says, Corning's revenue per rack should double.

Corning shares have rallied 25% this year, but they still trade at a relatively modest 2.3 times expected 2024 sales, and about 20 times adjusted earnings. With growth set to explode and its AI business still emerging, the undiscovered Corning story might not stay that way for long. **B**



“I have been doing this a long time,” Corning CEO Wendell Weeks says. “And we have a pretty unprecedented opportunity right now.”

RETIREMENT

The Hackers want the unlimited lifetime benefit they purchased. But today, that kind of coverage doesn't exist on the market.

A Couple Faces Soaring Long-Term Care Insurance Costs

Michael and Brenda Hacker have spent more than \$66,000 on insurance to make sure that Brenda would be cared for in old age. Now in their 80s and 60s, respectively, the Loudonville, N.Y., couple is looking at even higher costs as their insurer, **Genworth Financial**, seeks a rate increase of up to 143%.

The Hackers are among thousands of people caught in a long-term care crisis. Insurers for years mispriced policies based on incorrect assumptions about claim costs and policy retention. A surge in healthcare costs compounded the problem. Many carriers have exited the business. The remaining ones have requested steep premium hikes from state regulators to compensate for the miscalculations.

The idea of long-term care insurance is to fill a void for families who might otherwise exhaust their assets paying for a nursing home, assisted-living facility, or services at home. Medicare doesn't pay for routine assistance with activities of daily living like bathing and dressing. Medicaid does, but middle-class people practically have to impoverish themselves to qualify, due to the program's income and asset limits.

The Hackers figured that their insurance would cover it, after years of paying the premiums, but they are now looking at higher costs and/or lower coverage.

They started paying \$2,487 a year in premiums for Brenda's policy in 2010 and currently pay \$8,924—



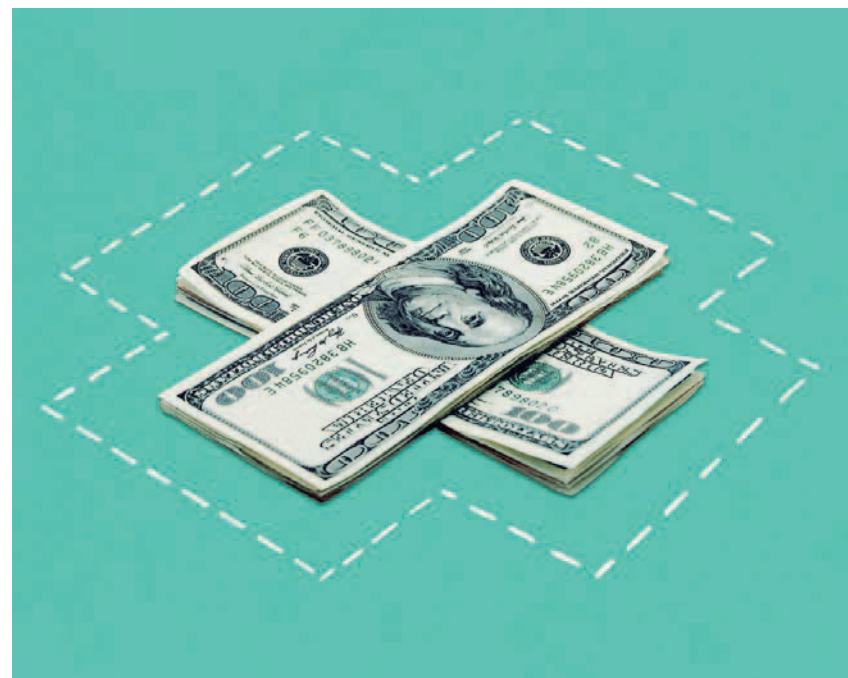
BY
**ELIZABETH
O'BRIEN**

bringing their total to \$66,460. A March 29 letter from Genworth, viewed by *Barron's*, outlined options that would either cut coverage or saddle them with a large increase in premiums.

Genworth said the company planned to request a cumulative 143% rate increase from New York state regulators. To avoid more premium payments, Genworth offered the couple a paid-up policy that would cap lifetime benefits at \$108,831, or \$62,554 plus a one-time cash payment of \$10,000. The Hackers also were offered the option to lower premiums and benefits or retain their current coverage with a potential 143% rate increase.

The Hackers are part of a class-action settlement with Genworth over its communications about its policies. Their modified offer was part of the settlement. Genworth has denied any wrongdoing.

"They signed up for coverage, and we signed up to meet that coverage," said Nick Sheahon, long-term care Inforce leader at Genworth. "The reality is, unfortunately, we need to



make adjustments to honor our deal."

The increases that Genworth is seeking will pay for claims and won't go toward company profits or dividends, Sheahon added. He said the 143% rate hike was Genworth's best estimate of what the company would need for claims in the remainder of time their policy would be in force, assuming "current expectations for claims do not change."

The Hackers don't want scaled-back coverage. They want the unlimited lifetime benefit they purchased.

Today, that kind of coverage doesn't exist on the market. The Hackers' policy also comes with a 5% inflation rider, increasing their benefit that much every year. It was just the kind of protection they felt they needed as a couple with a 21-year age gap.

Michael is 81 and Brenda is 60. He has a child from a previous marriage, but Brenda has no children of her own. "It's not like she has five daughters in the neighborhood who can take care of her," Michael says. The prospect of losing their safety net is frightening.

Bryson Roof, a Certified Financial Planner with Fort Pitt Capital Group

in Harrisburg, Pa., counsels clients to think carefully before dropping older, generous long-term care policies. He has one client who is paying \$18,000 a month for memory care in a good facility in the area. Another client, a widow in her early 80s, recently was notified of a 30% premium increase to her long-term care insurance policy, and Roof is helping her budget for the additional amount.

The Hackers decided to keep their coverage and take their chances on Genworth's rate hike request—awaiting a decision by regulators that could take up to two years, according to the company. The couple worry that it won't be the last time they're asked to pay more. The New York State Department of Financial Services said the agency can't comment on pending rate applications.

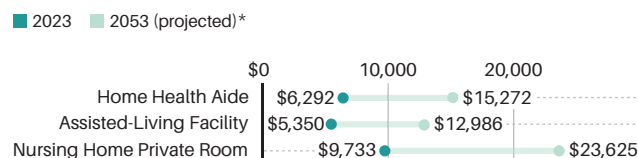
Hacker says he's resigned for now to the prospect of paying more, since the alternative—losing crucial insurance benefits and suffering stiffer financial consequences—would be worse. "We don't yet have all the information, but enough now to know that it wouldn't be advisable to cancel the policy," he says. **B**

email: elizabeth.obrien@barrons.com

Paying More for Long-Term Care

Costs are expected to rise sharply over the next 30 years for a range of services.

National monthly median costs



*Assumes annual inflation rate of 3%

Source: Genworth Cost of Care Survey 2023

INCOME INVESTING

Earn Higher Yields Than Cash and Limit Your Risks

BY AMEY STONE

This past week's flood of economic news, combined with the Federal Reserve's newly issued "dot plot," have made one thing clear: Interest rates are coming down. Reports on consumer and wholesale prices show inflation is gradually easing, giving the Fed room to cut without fear of stoking economic flames. And on Wednesday, the Fed affirmed its plans to cut rates once or twice later this year and several more times next year.

For investors hoarding cash in high-yielding money-market funds and savings accounts, this is a good time to consider next moves. Already, in just the past five days, the two-year Treasury note, which closely tracks Fed moves, has fallen from 4.9% to 4.7%. There are ways to step out a bit further on the risk spectrum and earn more than 5% by looking beyond plain-vanilla bonds.

One fixed-income sector attracting interest from investors in the know is collateralized loan obligations, or CLOs. These are pools of bank loans that are sliced into securities where you can buy just the riskiest or least-risky portions, or tranches. Importantly, CLOs' rates are floating, and the highest-rated tranches have never defaulted, even during the 2008-09 financial crisis. A-rated CLOs are priced to yield about 1.5 percentage points over the benchmark Secured Overnight Financing Rate, or SOFR, which is currently at 5.32%. That's pretty close to 7%.

"With AAA-rated CLOs, the return per unit of risk equation is hard to beat," says Cliff Corso, chief investment officer of Advisors Asset Management.

There are a few stand-alone CLO funds. The **Janus Henderson AAA CLO** exchange-traded fund (ticker: JAAA), the Goliath of the bunch, just crossed \$10 billion in assets. It yields 6.7%. As its name suggests, the actively

managed ETF buys only highly rated CLOs. It has returned 9% in the past year versus 6% for the average ultrashort bond fund, according to Morningstar.

"We don't think 9% will be repeated," says JAAA portfolio manager John Kerschner, explaining that yields on CLOs will dip if rates fall and spreads over SOFR tighten this year. But CLOs should still yield a lot more than cash without much additional risk. "Most people don't need the safety of true cash," he says.

CLOs are included in a lot of diversified bond funds. One standout is **Leader Capital High Quality Income** (LCATX). Morningstar dings it for high expenses, but it is up 13% in the past year—when it was about 92% in high-quality CLOs—compared with 4% for other intermediate core-plus bond funds. "The CLO market can be a little tricky," says portfolio manager John Lekas. "But once you get to A or better, it gets a lot simpler."

Lekas isn't wedded to CLOs. He recently moved about 15% of assets into Treasuries, which will rise in value if interest rates fall. "We need to participate in that," he says. He's also lately bought some high-quality floating-rate commercial real estate paper. He believes the beleaguered sector is near a bottom.

"With fixed income, you have to read the tea leaves right," says Lekas. "I've been doing this a long time, and experience does count for something."

Gene Goldman, the chief investment officer at wealth-management firm Cetera, says his approach to changing interest rates is to focus on mutual funds that have a lot of flexibility.

"We like portfolio managers that can maneuver and have done well historically," says Goldman. One example is **Lord Abbett Short Duration Income** (LALDX), which yields over 5%. It owns securities with an average credit rating of A and about a third of assets are in securitized debt, including—not surprisingly—some CLOs. **B**

THE ECONOMY

Economists' Bullish View At Odds With Yield Curve

BY MARTIN FRIDSON

Is the U.S. economy heading for a hard or soft landing? Three sources offer some feel for the probability that the Federal Reserve interest-rate hikes that began in March 2022 will ultimately trigger a recession: 1) current economic data, 2) market indicators, and 3) opinions of economic forecasters. Until recently, all three sources were closely aligned, but no longer.

The Conference Board's Leading Economic Index, or LEI, combines 10 statistical series that usually turn downward before recessions and rise prior to recoveries. This index has a strong, 73% correlation with Bloomberg-surveyed forecasters' median estimate of the probability of recession within 12 months.

Using regression analysis, I've calculated what economists' median forecast is expected to be, based on where the LEI stands. In January 2024, the forecasters, who then saw a 45% probability of recession, almost exactly matched the level that the LEI pointed them to—44.6%.

Since then, the economists have lowered their estimated recession probability to 30%. A modest LEI improvement through the latest update on May 17 implied that the forecasters' estimate should be 40.6%, producing a 10.6 percentage-point disparity.

Turning to market-based indicators, consider the Treasury yield curve, the difference between long- and short-maturity interest rates. Past recessions were invariably preceded by an "inverted" yield curve, when, as is currently—and atypically—the case, the three-month Treasury bill rate exceeds the yield on 10-year Treasury notes.

At the end of 2023, the economists' 50% estimated probability of recession closely approximated the 47.8% implied by the historical relationship with the yield curve. On June 13, on the other hand, the forecasters' estimate was fully

16.7 percentage points lower than the 46.7% level that would be consistent with the bond market indicator.

Are the forecasters on to something that neither the Leading Economic Index nor the yield curve is picking up yet? One eminent economist, who isn't among the contributors to Bloomberg's survey, Gary Shilling, president of A. Gary Shilling & Co., says of those two data series that "I haven't found any better forerunners of business downturns."

There are usually long lags, however, between the two series' peaks and troughs and the business cycle's tops and bottoms. Indeed, the LEI reached its low in April 2023, as did the yield curve one month later, yet there still is no recession.

Rosenberg Research & Associates President David Rosenberg argues that, in this cycle, the massive 2023 fiscal stimulus prolonged the lag between Fed tightening and a business contraction. Consequently, he maintains, "the consensus got fed up with waiting around for the recession to come and threw in the towel."

That isn't to suggest that forecasters now see no chance of a recession. Of the 60 surveyed by Bloomberg, 10 place the 12-month probability right at the group's 30% median, and 24 put it even higher. They're wise to hedge their bets. The present yield-curve inversion has persisted for an exceptionally long 19 months, but past recessions began only after the curve ceased to be inverted.

Economic statistics suggest that prospects for a soft landing have improved this year. Forecasters have moved further in that direction, however, than either business activity or the bond market appears to justify. **B**

Martin Fridson is chief investment officer at Lehmann Livian Fridson Advisors.

Q&A

Large-Cap Value Stocks Will Power the Rally

BY PAUL R. LA MONICA

The S&P 500 index has gained almost 14% this year, and the Nasdaq 100, 16%, mostly due to monster rallies in a handful of megacap tech stocks. All the more reason for investors to increase their exposure

to value stocks in cyclical industries, says Savita Subramanian, head of U.S. equity and quantitative strategies at BofA Securities. The biggest stocks have run up so much, she says, that it could be increasingly difficult for them to meet, or exceed, investors' expectations.

Subramanian has been following markets for more than two decades, and has earned a reputation for prescient investment calls. Her work marries quantitative research with fundamental analysis, and draws on the precepts of behavioral finance. A dual major in mathematics and philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, she joined Merrill Lynch in 2001 after a stint at Scudder Kemper Investments, now owned by Deutsche Bank.

Subramanian moved to BofA in 2008 when Bank of America bought Merrill in the teeth of the financial crisis. She was named head of U.S. equity strategy in 2011.

In March, she raised her S&P 500 year-end price target to 5400 from 5000, then one of the most bullish

calls on Wall Street. The index topped that level on June 12 after the release of the consumer price index for May, which indicated that inflation had cooled, but she isn't planning to change her target now. "There are parts of the S&P where we're more constructive but our directional conviction is lower given that market sentiment has moved from bearish to more neutral," she says.

Barron's spoke with Subramanian on June 9, and via email on June 12, about her favorite market segments, her concerns about tech stocks, and her career. An edited version of the conversation follows.

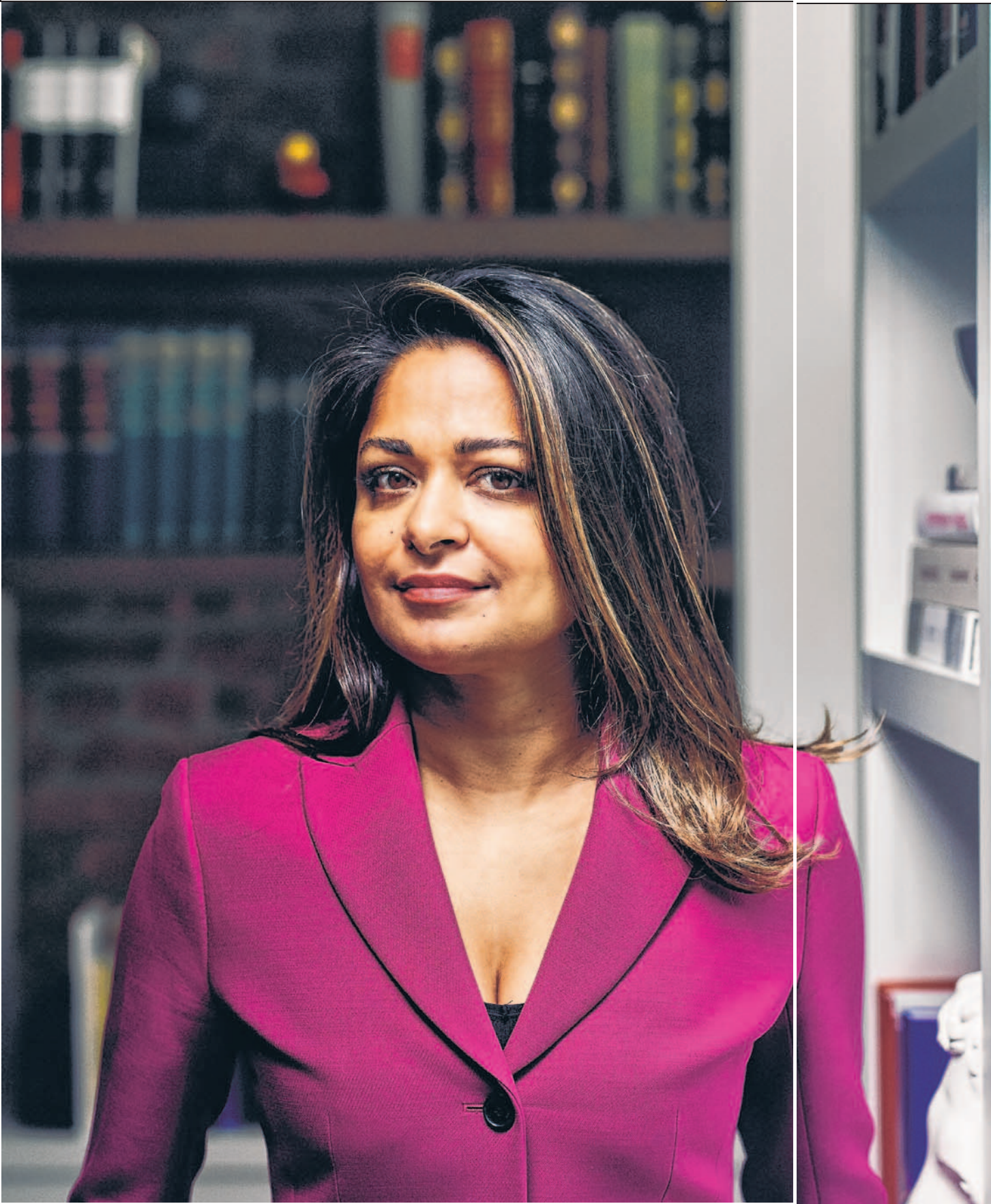
***Barron's:* The S&P 500 rose 24% last year, and is up again this year. Can stocks keep climbing from recent levels?**

Savita Subramanian: If I were going to buy one kind of investment for the next 12 to 24 months, it would be large-cap value. That's where you're going to get the most bang for your buck. That's what will lead over the next few years, given the macro environment.

What worries me about the market is that at the beginning of the year, there was tremendous skepticism around the longevity of the rally. Today, there is far more bullish sentiment. At the beginning of the year, it was much easier to be bullish because

Photograph by
JUSTIN KANEPS

An Interview With Savita Subramanian Strategist, BofA Securities



“We’re seeing economic data normalize from very hot levels after the Covid pandemic and all the fiscal stimulus to levels that are good for equities.”

there were a lot more bears. And at this point, I feel like a lot of the bears have capitulated.

Do you blame them? Valuations seem lofty, with the market trading at 22 times next year’s expected earnings.

I’m not worried about equities from a valuation perspective because these multiples are sustainable. We’re moving from a period of uncertainty. Prior to the Federal Reserve hiking interest rates by more than five percentage points, nobody knew how we were going to escape zero rates. Today, interest rates are well above that. The Fed has done a lot of the hard work already.

Inflation volatility has subsided. This is where clients probably disagree with me the most, but I feel that what the Fed does now is less important because it has already done the extreme process of hiking.

How many rate cuts do you expect this year?

We could see one cut in December. But the risk is, if the Fed doesn’t cut, what happens? There is a high probability that the Fed holds rates steady for the rest of the year. And if inflation comes back with a vengeance, the Fed could be forced to hike. What happens in that scenario?

Until we get to that moment where the Fed says we’re at peak rates, inflation is coming down, and we can be more accommodative, you want to hold inflation-protected sectors such as energy, materials, and financials. These are more cyclical than defensive sectors.

Is inflation still the biggest concern for investors and the Fed, or is it secondary to fears about the economy and job market?

The monthly and weekly economic data are noisy. Over a three- or four-month time period, they look worrisome because they’re all softening. But when you look at them from a longer-term time horizon, they look fantastic.

When we were in more of an inflationary environment, we wrote about

how the best environment for equities was 2% to 4% inflation. That’s where we are right now. The best environment for equities is when real wage growth is positive and nominal sales growth is at reasonable levels.

There is the potential for a cyclical recovery. Even though the recent ISM manufacturing data wobbled a bit, the numbers aren’t as low as a couple of months ago. We are looking at things through the wrong end of the telescope. Every week there is cause for recession or stagflation concerns. But in the grander scheme of things, we’re seeing economic data normalize from very hot levels after the Covid pandemic and all the fiscal stimulus to levels that are good for equities, especially cyclical companies.

We keep hearing that this rally will broaden out. Meanwhile, Microsoft, Apple, and Nvidia account for 20% of the market valuation of the S&P 500. Are you concerned about that concentration?

I’m not concerned because it isn’t a negative signal. But I am surprised by how narrow the market has become. I would have expected a broadening out to have happened earlier.

The earnings of the megacap tech cohort are so high that we are more likely to see a deceleration than an acceleration. Another reason to expect a broadening out is that we got positive guidance across the board, and not just from tech companies, during first-quarter earnings season. The other major market sectors were all posting more positive than negative guidance.

A couple of years ago, you mentioned in an interview that you liked big, old, boring U.S. companies. Is that still the case?

I don’t know if I would say I still like big, old, boring companies. I like a mix of companies that are generating strong free cash flow and enjoying the benefits of this tech revolution, but also companies that are potentially becoming more labor light. If you think about the areas that could benefit from generative artificial intelligence, it’s banks, legal services, and IT

[information technology] services.

And if you think about cash flow, it isn’t just tech but also utilities, power, infrastructure, and energy companies that are generating substantial amounts of cash. Some are exciting, and some are boring. But they are mostly big. That’s where I differ from a lot of other bulls. I don’t think you want to buy all small-caps, because while some of them are economically sensitive and will benefit from better gross-domestic-product growth in the U.S., others are morphing into smaller-cap companies because they used to be large.

I also like companies like **Alphabet** and **Meta Platforms** that have decided to start paying dividends. These are stocks that will probably show up in value benchmarks in a year. What I don’t like are companies that don’t make any money and might not be able to hack a higher-for-longer rate environment.

How nervous should investors be about the U.S. elections in November?

In the U.S., elections are less important than they might be in other regions of the world. We’ve seen contentious races, and the outcome has been somewhat of a nonevent. Former President Donald Trump’s win in 2016 was OK for stocks and the economy even though we initially thought there could be big changes.

The differences between Trump and President Joe Biden are around things like healthcare spending, immigration policy, and maybe the regulatory landscape. We aren’t going to see massive corporate regulations levied, especially at techs or banks, because these are the two sectors that are critically important for the U.S. to retain its position of primacy. You can’t choke off all the lending at the banks with regulations, because the economy would come to a halt. The regulatory backdrop is potentially less punitive than it might have been in prior election cycles.

The fact that both candidates agree that they want to bring back manufacturing from China and other regions of the world to the U.S. has created

more jobs. While these policies are protectionist and inflationary, they are also pro-growth.

You’ve been at BofA and its predecessor company, Merrill Lynch, for more than 20 years. What has it been like to work in one place that long, both personally and from the standpoint of an investment strategist?

It has helped me become a better investment strategist. At some level, I find it easier to forecast things that I’ve lived through.

The credit crisis taught us that leverage can be evil. Short-term debt can be evil. But in a weird way, that created an environment much more suited to managing higher rates. We all took our lumps during the financial crisis, and now big corporations don’t have massive leverage risk. The lessons learned in 2008 prepared the economy for what is happening now. It is good to live through different types of shocks and see how companies and consumers adapted to those crises.

What has surprised you most about how the investment world has changed during your tenure?

Time horizons have gotten faster. Technology has gotten better. But it might not be an easier or a harder time to be a strategist. It’s easier because there is more data, but it’s harder because you have to filter out more irrelevant information.

Right now is the most interesting time to be a market strategist, in my opinion. We’re back to a more rational market. When we were in a zero-interest-rate, massive-stimulus-driven market, it was hard to forecast what would happen next. Events were in the hands of central bankers.

Today, inflation volatility has subsided. It is interesting to see how companies are recalibrating, and what the lay of the land is in each region of the world and each sector. The outlook depends less on central bankers, and more on corporations and consumers.

Thanks, Savita. ■

MARKET WEEK



June 10 through June 14, 2024

International Trader	P. 31
Striking Price	P. 32
Inside Scoop	P. 33
13D Filings	P. 33

Charting the Market	P. 34
Winners & Losers	P. 35
Research Reports	P. 36
Statistics	P. 37

MARKET PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

Dow Jones Industrials

38,589.16

52-wk: +12.51% YTD: +2.39% Wkly: -0.54%

S&P 500

5431.60

52-wk: +23.18% YTD: +13.87% Wkly: +1.58%

Nasdaq Composite

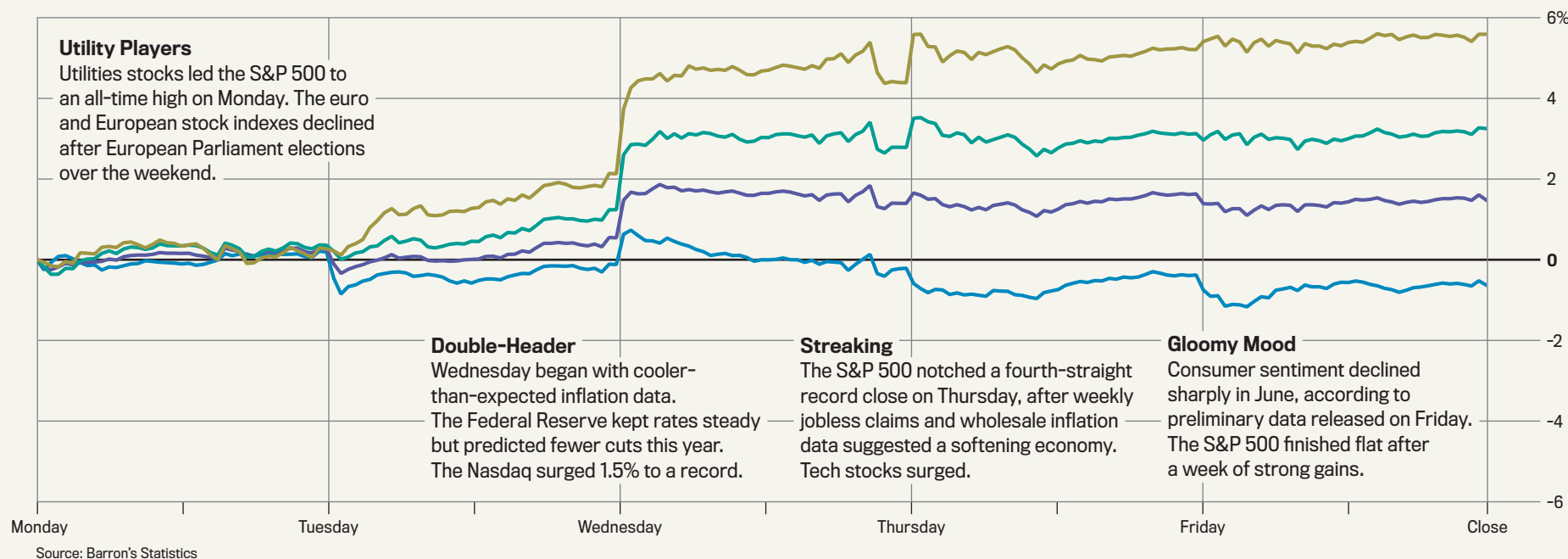
17,688.88

52-wk: +29.21% YTD: +17.84% Wkly: +3.24%

Technology Select Sector SPDR ETF

\$227.67

52-wk: 31.46% YTD: +18.28% Wkly: +5.60%



THE TRADER

The Stock Market Doesn't Need Your Rate Cuts

The Federal Reserve refuses to concede victory in its battle against inflation—but the stock market has other reasons to feel good about the future.

The S&P 500 index hit four new closing highs to a 1.6% gain this past week, while the Nasdaq Composite advanced 3.2%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.5%, continuing its laggard ways.

The market found a lot to like. **Apple** announced that new iPhones will contain artificial-intelligence capabilities, spurring hopes that consumers will pay the price to upgrade to the iPhone 16 when it arrives, sending that



BY JACOB
SONENSHINE

stock up 7.9% for the week and helping the **Technology Select Sector SPDR** exchange-traded fund (ticker: XLK) register a 5.6% gain.

Inflation data, too, provided reason for optimism. The consumer price index rose 3.3% year over year in May, below the 3.4% forecast and down from April's 3.4%. The reading, which arrived on Wednesday morning, caused the S&P 500 to jump 0.9% out of the gate, gains it held on to at the close, even though some wondered at the extent of that strength. "It does seem a little perverse that you get a 3.3 instead of a 3.4, and the market is worth a trillion dollars more," says Adam Parker, founder of Trivariate Research, referring to the S&P 500.

The Fed also seemed unmoved by

the inflation data. At its Wednesday meeting—its statement came at 2 p.m., 5½ hours after the CPI's release—it emphasized that inflation still isn't close enough to its 2% target to begin cutting rates. Its "dot plot" showed one rate cut later this year, down from three at the previous meeting.

Investors, though, remain confident that the Fed will cut eventually, allowing the economy to continue to grow. They know that the Fed is done hiking rates, and it's just a matter of time before it starts cutting them. "I'm not sure I really care about whether it's a July or September cut," says Citigroup strategist Scott Chronert. "What I care about is that a cut is coming and that the Fed has to be less restrictive."

It's also necessary for the stock mar-

ket to support what is still a lofty valuation. The S&P 500 trades at 21 times expected earnings for the coming year, at the high end of the range since the Fed began lifting rates in early 2022. But that's no reason to bail on stocks. "Expensive markets can stay expensive for extended periods," writes Evercore ISI strategist Julian Emanuel. In 1998 and 2020, the index traded at over 20 times earnings and went on to gain for hundreds of days before finally peaking and suffering major declines, his data show.

Even recent weakness in certain areas of the market—namely consumer, manufacturing, and bank stocks—isn't worrisome enough to walk away, says Leuthold Group Chief Investment Officer Doug Ramsey, who notes that most sector indexes are seeing enough buying support to keep him optimistic on the market. "The case for holding stocks remains a 'lopsided' one," he writes.

With or without the Fed.

GARP for the Gain

Growth stocks have become pretty expensive, but some are trading at reasonable prices. Searching them out seems like a sensible strategy in a pricey stock market. These days, everyone seems to be a fan of "growth," a style of investing that focuses on companies with the potential to increase earnings faster than their peers. And no index is growthier than the tech-heavy Nasdaq 100, which is up 17% this year. The index has earned its gains, if only because tech companies have surpassed analysts' earnings forecasts for the first quarter and their expected profits keep increasing.

They're also expensive. The Nasdaq 100's multiple of expected earnings for the coming 12 months has remained stable this year, at just over 26 times. That's at the higher end of its range since the start of 2022, when the Fed began lifting interest rates, and well above the S&P 500's 20 times.

While growth normally trades at a premium, the entire market is expensive,

putting all stocks at risk. That's why Jefferies strategists screened for "growth at a reasonable price," or GARP, stocks. With these, investors can enjoy strong profit growth while avoiding nosebleed valuations, giving themselves less downside risk than with the priciest names.

The strategists looked for companies with market capitalizations of at least \$2 billion and higher-than-average expected earnings growth of more than 10% annually for the next two years. They also had to have had their earnings estimates revised higher in the past three months and a PEG ratio—a price/earnings multiple divided by expected earnings growth—of 1.5 or lower, below the S&P 500's roughly two times. That means GARP investors pay less for every percentage point of earnings growth.

The screen uncovered a few examples of the usual suspects, including **Nvidia**, **Alphabet**, **Meta Platforms**, and **Netflix**. Nontech names on the list included **Pro****gressive** and **Texas Roadhouse**. It also turned up **Broadcom**. The chip maker subsequently posted better-than-expected second-quarter earnings and announced a 10-for-1 stock split late on Wednesday. Its stock has since shot up 16%.

Pinterest, a web platform that helps shoppers find clothes, decorations, and household items, also made the list. Analysts expect earnings to increase 28% annually over this year and next, and have revised this year's profit estimates up 6%. They forecast sales growth of 19% annually, to \$4.3 billion, by 2026. The platform has about 500 million users worldwide, and while that will grow in the mid-single digits, Pinterest's ability to get them to spend more will drive growth, with average revenue per user growing aggressively.

As people find reasons to transact, advertisers will pay more to be on the site, especially because the company's revenue per user is still a fraction of Meta's. Earnings should grow about 25% annually

Vital Signs

	Friday's Close	Week's Change	Week's % Chg.
DJ Industrials	38589.16	-209.83	-0.54
DJ Transportation	14807.47	-215.38	-1.43
DJ Utilities	916.73	-3.39	-0.37
DJ 65 Stocks	12258.35	-91.63	-0.74
DJ US Market	1317.03	+18.67	+1.44
NYSE Comp.	17817.26	-168.37	-0.94
NYSE Amer Comp.	4602.46	-39.23	-0.85
S&P 500	5431.60	+84.61	+1.58
S&P MidCap	2895.31	-25.39	-0.87
S&P SmallCap	1272.44	-23.99	-1.85
Nasdaq	17688.88	+555.76	+3.24
Value Line (arith.)	10041.74	-145.04	-1.42
Russell 2000	2006.16	-20.39	-1.01
DJ US TSM Float	53555.74	+701.83	+1.33

	Friday's Close	Week's Change	Week's % Chg.
Barron's Future Focus	1082.38	-3.85	-0.35
Barron's Next 50	3223.96	-28.22	-0.87
Barron's 400	1117.90	-7.58	-0.67
	Last Week	Week Earlier	
NYSE Advances	1,017	1,115	
Declines	1,883	1,777	
Unchanged	32	42	
New Highs	240	264	
New Lows	158	114	
Av Daily Vol (mil)	3,624.4	3,729.8	
Dollar (Finex spot index)	105.52	104.89	
T-Bond (CBT nearby futures)	120-14	117-17	
Crude Oil (NYM light sweet crude)	78.45	75.53	
Inflation KR-CRB (Futures Price Index)	294.03	289.86	
Gold (CMX nearby futures)	2331.40	2305.20	



Trade US Stocks
and Options
Around the Clock

React immediately to market-moving news and trade over 10,000 US stocks and ETFs, plus US equity index options, when it's convenient for you.

The best-informed investors choose Interactive Brokers



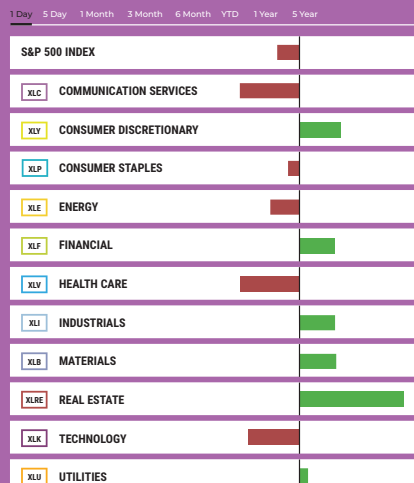
ibkr.com/aroundtheclock



Member - NYSE, FINRA, SIPC – Supporting documentation for any claims and statistical information will be provided upon request. Any discussion or mention of a stock or ETF is not to be construed as recommendation, promotion or solicitation. All investors should review and consider associated investment risks, charges and expenses of the investment company or fund prior to investing. Before acting on this material, you should consider whether it is suitable for your particular circumstances and as necessary, seek professional advice. Options involve risk. For more info see ibkr.com/occ

WHAT'S MOVING THE MARKET?

FIND OUT WITH OUR SECTOR TRACKER



Visit www.sectorspdrs.com or call 1-866-SECTOR-ETF

SELECT SECTOR
SPDRs

An investor should consider investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses carefully before investing. To obtain a prospectus, which contains this and other information, call 1-866-SECTOR-ETF or visit www.sectorspdrs.com. Read the prospectus carefully before investing.

All ETFs are subject to risk, including possible loss of principal. Sector ETF products are also subject to sector risks and non-diversification risks, which generally results in greater price fluctuations than the overall stock market. Ordinary brokerage commissions apply.

The S&P 500 is an index of 500 common stocks that is generally considered representative of the U.S. stock market. You cannot invest directly in an index.

ALPS Portfolio Solutions Distributor, Inc., a registered broker-dealer, is distributor for the Select Sector SPDR Trust.



MANSION GLOBAL Boutique



iStock.com/Katarzynabialasiewicz © 2024 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All rights reserved. Z6176

We curate. You Shop.

Discover your unique style with high-end home goods picked regularly by our team.

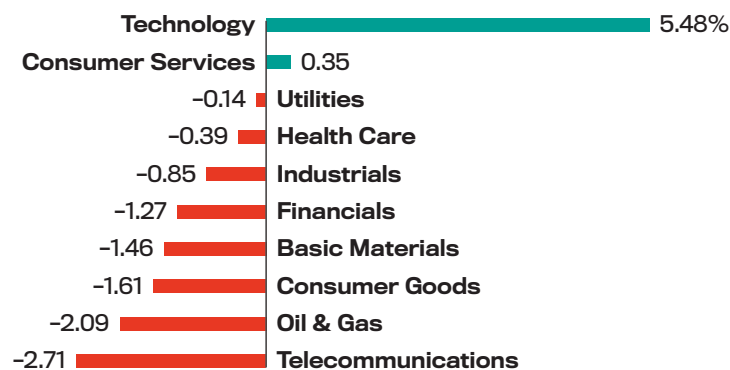
mansionglobal.com/boutique



SCAN TO SHOP

Industry Action

Performance of the Dow Jones U.S. Industrials, ranked by weekly percent change.*



Source: S&P Dow Jones Indices

through 2025. The stock trades at about 28 times earnings, for a PEG ratio of roughly one. And that seems mighty reasonable.

A Battered Utility Powers Up

PG&E, one of California's main utility providers, is on the long road to recovery. The stock could have more upside from here.

Shares of PG&E aren't for the faint-hearted. The utility company better known as Pacific Gas & Electric lost much of its value when it filed for bankruptcy in 2019 after being held responsible for wildfires that struck Northern California. As part of a settlement, it agreed to pay \$30 billion to victims, the state of California, and insurance companies, over many years. That settlement means it is expected to have negative free cash flow over the next two years, even as earnings per share increase.

Since then, the stock has staged a partial recovery. It has gained about 150%, to just over \$18, since bottoming out in 2019, still well below its record high of \$70 reached in 2017. Its current market cap of \$39 billion has returned to near peak levels because the company has sold more than 100 million shares in the years since its bankruptcy. And shares are likely to keep gaining.

The bull case starts with PG&E's deal with California. While it requires big payments, it also includes a provision that will allow the utility to receive cash from the state for every \$1 billion in damages it settles from a \$21 billion fund set up for that purpose. While the risk is that PG&E doesn't comply with the safety regulations, that seems unlikely. It also benefits from having clear guidelines set out for it in a way that other Western-state utilities don't, according to J.P. Morgan analyst Richard Sunderland, who upgraded the stock to Overweight from Neutral this past Monday.

"We see the financial protections under which PG&E operates as best-in-class,

given [the funding bill] elements that include wildfire fund liquidity," he writes. Sunderland has a \$22 price target on the stock, up 21% from Friday's close.

PG&E's investor day presentation on Thursday seemed to confirm that the company is heading in the right direction. Management reaffirmed its plans for investing in safety, financing, and its demand outlook for the coming several years.

PG&E still has financing needs. Cash from operations, which shows the amount that PG&E generates after making—and recovering—settlement payments, should accumulate to \$50 billion from this year through 2028, according to management. After that, capital expenditure will total just over \$60 billion, but the company plans to refinance debt that comes due and to raise an additional \$14 billion of long-term debt. It will also raise \$3 billion in new stock without adding many more shares to the current pie that stockholders own.

PG&E is still adding plants to meet the state's clean-energy goals, and the value of those assets should grow through 2028 to \$90 billion, according to FactSet. Assuming the state allows it to keep rates fairly steady and to continue to earn a constant return on the equity of those assets, earnings can grow to over \$1.90 per share by 2028.

PG&E's stock seems priced for the risk. It trades at just 13 times 12-month forward earnings, below the PHLX Utility Sector Index's 17 times. The gap is due to wildfire risks, which investors are still pricing into the stock. But if PG&E shows in coming earnings reports that safety investments are adequate, the market should bid the stock upward. It could even earn a multiple similar to other utilities, says Guggenheim analyst Shahriar Pourreza.

And just maybe, investors will talk of something besides wildfires when they talk about PG&E. **B**

INTERNATIONAL TRADER

The market reaction to surprise election results in Mexico and India highlights investors' preference for **divided government, not supermajorities.**

Election Results Hurt Mexico, Help India. Here's What's Next.

Elections don't matter to investors—until they do. Recent upsets in Mexico and India delivered a reminder that polls can be wrong—and politics can rattle markets, especially those that have seen hefty gains.

Claudia Sheinbaum's landslide victory to become Mexico's first female president—with the bonus of a supermajority in the lower house for the incumbent Morena party—sparked concerns that radical changes could be ahead that might jeopardize checks and balances on the government. The MSCI Mexico index fell 21% from its peak in mid-May ahead of the election, and the peso suffered its biggest beating since the pandemic.

India saw an almost opposite outcome. Contrary to exit polls predicting a landslide victory, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to rely on a coalition to eke out a third term as prime minister, and his incumbent Bharat Janata Party lost its majority. The opposition's strong showing allayed concerns that the world's largest democracy was in jeopardy.

Modi's ability to stay in power allowed stocks to rebound after an initial tumble on the upset. The **iShares MSCI India** exchange-traded fund is up 29% in the past 12 months, sitting near a high of \$54.67.

The market's take: Supermajorities are scary, especially in the hands of left-leaning leaders. Divided government tends to be a win for investors. As a result, investors are pulling back from Mexico after the win by Shein-

baum, a protégée of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, or AMLO. But they are staying put in India.

Mexican stocks had doubled since 2020 until the latest pullback, as the country benefited from a strong U.S. economy that boosted remittances and travel and rising U.S.-China tensions that made Mexico a preferred destination for companies looking to nearshore, or diversify, their supply chains. Domestically, Mexico's fiscal health improved under AMLO, contrary to investors' initial expectations for the leftist leader.

The concern now is that Sheinbaum, with a supermajority, will do what AMLO was unable to do without one. While she has tried to allay concerns by vowing to retain the existing finance minister and keep the deficit in check, investors fear increased spending to bolster state pensions and minimum wages and constitutional changes that could chip away at judicial independence and government oversight.

"The landslide is very concerning," says Rajiv Jain, chief investment officer of GQG Partners, who reduced his stake in Mexican companies pre-election and worries about what business-unfriendly changes a leftist government could implement with such a strong mandate. "This isn't a buying opportunity." Banks could be early targets for increased taxes or caps on fees to raise funding for social programs. But Sheinbaum is expected to continue supporting Mexico's industrial boom, which creates a favorable backdrop for industrial real estate investment trusts like **Prolo-**

gis Property Mexico that are operating near full capacity and have a line of interested companies looking to build production hubs.

But even in the U.S., politics—with the November presidential election—could bring volatility if there is a second Trump administration and it comes with renewed trade tensions, pushback on immigration, and rhetoric that strains relationships with neighboring nations.

As investors reassess the bullish case for Mexico, fund managers are sticking with their long-term rosy view of India, since a weaker Modi neither suggests a change in the direction of policy nor upends expectations for India to grow at 6%-plus.

Indeed, Modi's new allies appear supportive of the one trend investors are most excited about: increased spending on infrastructure as India tries to become a supply-chain alternative to China. That is fueling investor interest in companies that will help address India's increasing

power and energy demands, such as **ABB India** and **Siemens India**.

While Indian stocks trading at 21 times 2025 earnings aren't cheap, the market is vast enough for value investors like Paul Espinosa, who manages the **Seafarer Overseas Value** fund and **Seafarer Growth and Income** fund, to find attractive opportunities. Among them: **Petronet LNG**, a natural-gas importing, storage, and distribution company that benefits from increasing gas consumption and pays a 3.3% dividend.

One potential area of concern is that Modi responds to the electorate's discontent over unemployment with increased spending on social programs that ding India's fiscal health and fuel inflation—two issues that could damp investor sentiment.

The next election critical for the outlook for emerging markets—especially those in Mexico and China—will be the one in the U.S. If this year has taught us anything so far, it's to brace for surprises. **B**



BY RESHMA KAPADIA



Mexico's Claudia Sheinbaum

THE STRIKING PRICE

Don't Bet on Fed Rate Cuts. Do This Instead.

BY STEVEN M. SEARS

Small-capitalization stocks are more sensitive to interest rates than their large-cap peers. When the Federal Reserve lowers rates, or even hints at it, lackluster small-cap names should surge, as lower interest expenses tend to goose their profits more than other stocks.

But rather than embracing small-cap stocks—an idea we suggested earlier this year—we have a different intent this time: highlighting the win-or-lose nature of trading macro-market events that captivate investors like the mythological sirens whose beautiful songs led many sailors to an early death.

We suggested buying bullish June \$207 call options on the small-cap **iShares Russell 2000** exchange-traded fund in March to play what was expected to be the first of many rate cuts. The trade has failed. Inflation has been stickier than expected and the Fed has put off making any cuts. The ETF is now trading at \$198.78.

Rather than admit defeat in April, when it was clear the Fed would postpone cutting rates, we suggested buying bearish **SPDR S&P 500** June \$500 put options for \$5.43 when the ETF was at \$518.84. The S&P 500 is now at record highs as artificial-intelligence stocks have skyrocketed higher to carry the market.

We could update the failed trades, but the better action is taking a pause to reflect on why the trades didn't work. Over the years, readers have asked for the lessons gleaned from our mistakes. Here are some:

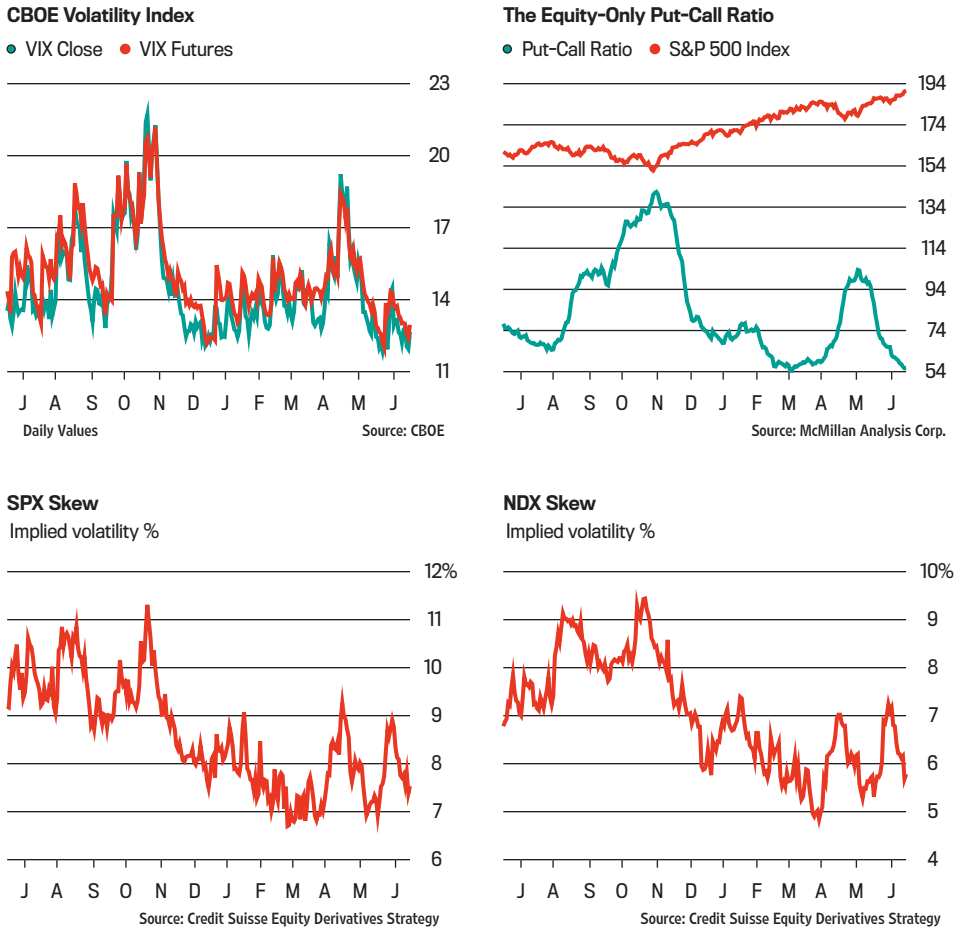
- Macro market events are easier to discuss than to trade, but the odds are often like a coin toss. Instead, you're better off buying and selling stocks directly—and using options to fortify your positions. Develop an extreme skepticism of fancy talk.
- When you lose money, understand why. The two ETF trades outlined above were win-big-or-not bets based on small-

caps surging or large-caps sinking. The thesis was plausible, and it monetized prevailing market sentiment. But making money beats sounding cool.

- Losses are unavoidable. Have a sell discipline so you never take a big hit or risk too much on one position. If you can't learn from your mistakes, or aren't interested in developing such a discipline, you're better off sticking with index funds.
- Event-driven trading, including earnings reports and Fed decisions, seems like the ultimate expression of investment acumen. But it is often much like trying to monetize financial gossip. If the trade is successful, investors gain a false sense of confidence from their wins.
- Develop an investment style that works for your needs. Most investors can prosper with long-cycle themes and blue-chip stocks that ideally pay dividends and are held for at least three to five years.
- The stock market might seem orderly, but it is chaos wrapped in indexes and ETFs. Understand trends and risks and get to know a handful of stocks with the care you reserve for your spouse and children.
- Think thematically, invest strategically. We have repeatedly recommended **KKR**. When the stock's price was falling, we reset the trade to take advantage of the decline, and some readers were pointedly skeptical. Our conviction never wavered. Private markets are increasingly important, and KKR knows how to invest. The conviction paid off. KKR was just added to the S&P 500 index, and the stock is trading around an all-time high.
- Investing is about good judgment and decision-making. You win or lose based on the quality of your thoughts and actions. It is hard for most investors to have an edge when trading macro events. It is easier to prosper with a good theme with a long-term investment period that can be curated with puts and calls. Get the options market to pay you to be a long-term stock investor, and you will have learned something of real value. **B**

Most investors will prosper with long-cycle themes and blue-chip stocks that pay dividends and are held for at least three to five years.

Equity Options



Skew indicates whether the options market expects a stock-market advance or decline. It measures the difference between the implied volatility of puts and calls that are 10% out of the money and expire in three months. Higher readings are bearish.

Week's Most Active

Company	Symbol	Tot Vol	Calls	Puts	Avg Tot Vol	IV %ile	Ratio
Airship AI	AISP	12565	11637	928	176	100	71.4
Target Hospitality	TH	14859	9934	4925	576	59	25.8
Everi	EVRI	7225	7165	60	616	100	11.7
Calavo Growers	CVGW	3471	2206	1265	336	44	10.3
Dave & Buster's Entertainment	PLAY	58193	32196	25997	5660	9	10.3
Reintokil Initial	RTO	2159	731	1428	224	18	9.6
Unogen Pharma	URGN	4321	2012	2309	484	90	8.9
Celebrity DI	CLBT	2617	2520	97	308	2	8.5
Avidity Biosciences	RNA	12861	10195	2666	1516	57	8.5
Casey's General Stores	CASY	11221	5961	5260	1420	8	7.9
Rubrik	RBRK	21454	16926	4528	2908	54	7.4
Affirmed	AFMD	10221	7947	2274	1512	40	6.8
Verona Pharma	VRNA	5059	3823	1236	792	100	6.4
Biomeo Fusion	BMEA	14317	11646	2671	2260	77	6.3
Academy Sports & Outdoors	ASO	54011	22588	31423	9364	0	5.8
Perion Network	PERI	20130	12123	8007	3892	61	5.2
Mobileye Global	MBLY	299799	272257	27542	59068	99	5.1
Incyte	INCY	34800	15387	19413	6904	9	5.0
Corecivic	CXW	20426	15301	5125	4152	94	4.9
Qorvo	QRVO	16338	13070	3268	3500	21	4.7

This table of the most active options this week, as compared to average weekly activity – not just raw volume. The idea is that the unusually heavy trading in these options might be a predictor of corporate activity – takeovers, earnings surprises, earnings pre-announcements, biotech FDA hearings or drug trial result announcements, and so forth. Dividend arbitrage has been eliminated. In short, this list attempts to identify where heavy speculation is taking place. These options are likely to be expensive in comparison to their usual pricing levels. Furthermore, many of these situations may be rumor-driven. Most rumors do not prove to be true, so one should be aware of these increased risks if trading in these names

INSIDE SCOOP

Ford Motor Director Scooped Up Stock

BY ED LIN

Ford Motor stock has been essentially flat in 2024, and one longtime director bought shares of the car maker on the open market for the first time in years.

The year started with an upbeat outlook from Ford, based on strength in the commercial-truck business. CEO Jim Farley offered some nuance earlier this month on electric-vehicle demand when he told us that “mainstream customers are not willing to pay a premium for EVs. They don’t know how to handicap the charging.” Ford’s incoming chief financial officer held the same post at EV maker **Lucid Group**.

Ford director John L. Thornton paid \$300,000 on June 6 for 24,790 shares, an average price of \$12.08 each. Thornton now owns 389,576 Ford shares, according to a form he filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Thornton, chairman of **Barrick Gold**, joined Ford’s board in 1996.

Ford and Barrick didn’t respond to requests to make Thornton available for comment on his stock purchase.

Thornton is the first Ford insider to buy stock on the open market this year. The most recent purchase by a company insider was December 2023, when Ford’s chief electric vehicle, digital, and design officer, Doug Field, paid just over \$2 million for 182,000 shares, an average price of \$11.05 each. **B**

Giant Fund Bought Up Apple, Tesla, NIO Stock. It Sold Ford and GM.

Canada Pension Plan nearly tripled an investment in **Apple**, nearly doubled down on **Tesla** stock, more than doubled an investment in Chinese electric-vehicle maker **NIO**, and slashed positions in **Ford Motor** and **General Motors** in the first quarter. Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, known as CPP Investments, which manages the pension, disclosed the stock trades, among others, in a form it filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

CPP Investments declined to comment on the investment changes. As of March 31, the fund had assets of \$462.51 billion.

CPP Investments bought 7.1 million more Apple shares to lift its stake in

the iPhone maker to 11.5 million shares at the end of the first quarter.

Apple stock dropped 11% in the first quarter, compared with a 10% rise in the S&P 500 index. So far in the second quarter, shares are up 15% while the index is up 1.8%.

Tesla stock fell 29% in the first quarter, and so far in the second shares are up 1%.

The pension manager bought 454,500 more Tesla shares in the first quarter to lift its stake to 979,800 shares.

CPP Investments bought 1.7 million more American depositary receipts of NIO in the first quarter to end the period with 3.1 million ADRs. NIO ADRs dropped 50% in the first quarter, and so far in the second they are up 7.3%.

The pension manager chopped its stakes in Ford and GM to 1.3 million shares and 691,600 shares, respectively, from 5.8 million shares and 1.0 million shares, respectively. **B**

Ford Motor stock is flat so far in 2024. Director John L. Thornton just bought up \$300,000 of the auto maker's shares on the open market.

Original Filings

TruBridge

Rorema Beheer disclosed a new position in the provider of health-care information-technology solutions of 760,456 shares. Rorema Beheer purchased those shares from May 9 through June 3 at per share prices ranging from \$8.12 to \$9.25. Following the purchases, Rorema Beheer now owns an initial 5.1% stake of TruBridge’s outstanding stock, above the 5% threshold that requires it to publicly disclose further purchases or sales. Shares of TruBridge have lost roughly 3.8% so far this year.

Increases in Holdings

Evans Bancorp

PL Capital Advisors increased its stake in the regional bank to 604,979 shares. PL Capital Advisors did so through the purchase of 66,542 Evans Bancorp shares from April 16 through June 4 at prices ranging from \$25.65 to \$27.75 each. Following the purchases, PL Capital now owns 11% of Evans Bancorp’s outstanding stock. Shares of Evans have lost roughly 18% year to date.

Xperi

Rubric Capital Management increased its stake in the consumer and entertainment technology company to 4,143,744 shares. Rubric Capital did so through the purchase of 100,000 Xperi shares on June 10 at prices ranging from \$7.55 to \$8.05 each. Following the purchases, Rubric Capital continues to own 9.2% of Xperi’s outstanding stock. Shares of Xperi have lost roughly 30.4% year to date.

Citi Trends

Fund 1 Investments increased its

stake in the apparel retailer to 2,234,281 shares. Fund 1 purchased 115,262 Citi Trends shares from May 31 through June 7 at prices ranging from \$22.58 to \$25.55 each. Following the latest purchases, Fund 1 now owns 26.2% of Citi Trends’ outstanding stock. Shares of Citi Trends have lost roughly 21.5% so far this year.

Decreases in Holdings

Janux Therapeutics

Avalon Ventures XI reduced its stake in the clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company to 7,304,490 shares. Avalon Ventures and its affiliates sold 1,500,000 Janux shares in a series of block trades on June 3 at prices ranging from \$54.75 to \$55.07. Following the sales, Avalon Ventures continues to own roughly 14.1% of Janux Therapeutics’ outstanding stock. Shares of Janux Therapeutics have nearly tripled in price so far this year.

Olema Pharmaceuticals

Logos Global Management lowered its stake in the clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company to 3,233,875 shares. Logos Global sold 1,175,000 Olema Pharmaceuticals shares through two affiliates on June 4 at a price of \$14.85 each. Following the sales, Logos Global continues to own approximately 5.8% of Olema Pharmaceuticals’ outstanding stock. Shares of Olema have lost roughly 1.2% so far this year.

These disclosures are from 13Ds filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. 13Ds are filed within 10 days of an entity’s attaining more than 5% in any class of a company’s securities. Subsequent changes in holdings or intentions must be reported in amended filings. This material is from June 6 through June 12, 2024. Source: **VerityData** (verityplatform.com)

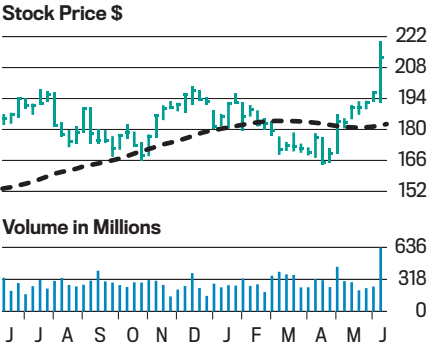
CHARTING THE MARKET

A graphic look at selected stock activity
for the week ended June 14, 2024
Edited by Bill Alpert

Apple

AAPL (NASDAQ) • \$212.49 • 15.60

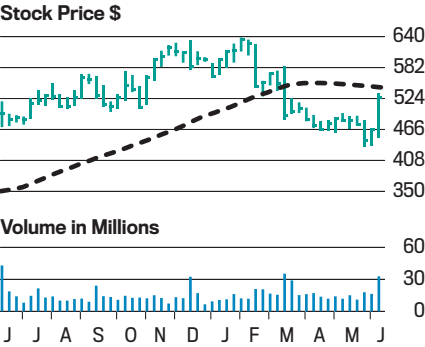
Apple countered the AI plans of rivals Microsoft and Google by promising to embed OpenAI's ChatGPT in iPhones, iPads, and Macs later this year.



Adobe

ADBE (NASDAQ) • \$525.31 • 59.88

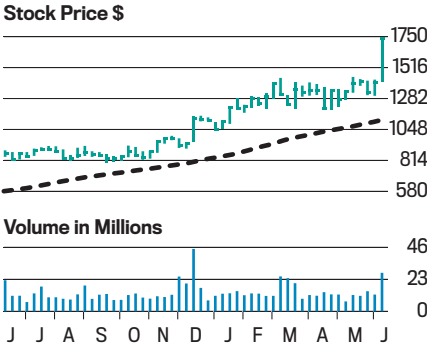
Revenue grew 11% in the creativity software firm's May quarter, with \$4.48 a share cash profit. AI-driven subscriptions hit a \$500 million a year rate.



Broadcom

AVGO (NASDAQ) • \$1735.04 • 328.40

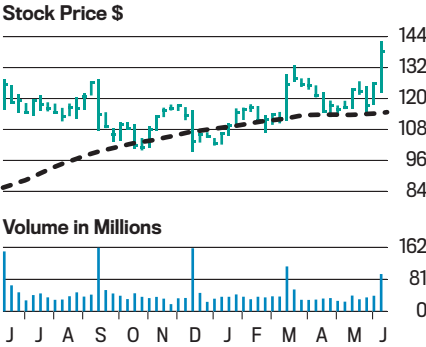
A 43% jump in April-quarter sales was spurred by AI revenue that could exceed \$11 billion this year, said the chip vendor. The stock will split 10-for-1.



Oracle

ORCL (NYSE) • \$138.13 • 12.21

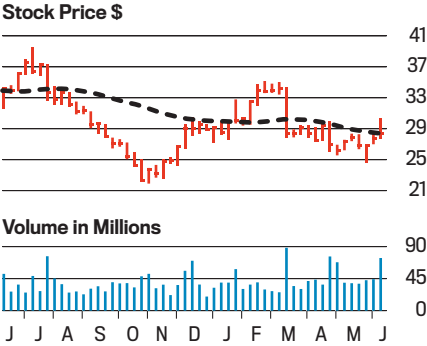
While just meeting forecasts, with a 4% rise in total May-quarter revenue, the software giant grew cloud hosting by 42%, lifted by \$12.5 billion in AI deals.



Southwest Airlines

LUV (NYSE) • \$28.38 • 0.63

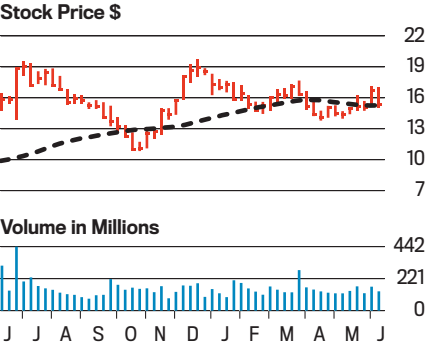
The activist firm Elliott Management urged the airline to jettison its CEO, and consider the revenue-boosting add-on fees charged by other carriers.



Carnival

CCL (NYSE) • \$15.34 • -1.36

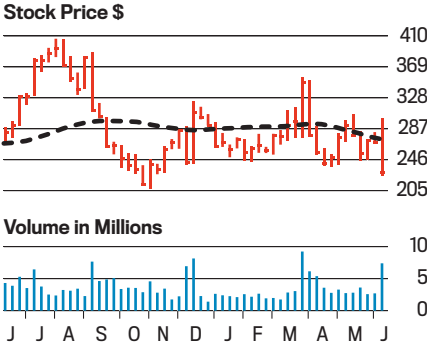
Bank of America warned that cruise industry prices had dropped, from May to June. Carnival, Norwegian Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean sank.



RH

RH (NYSE) • \$229.73 • -38.78

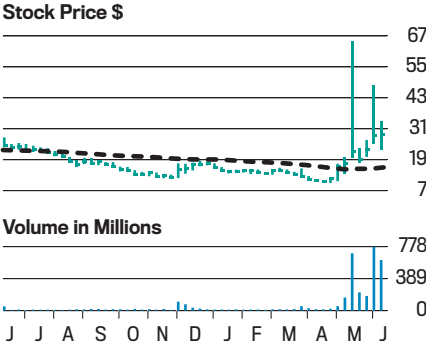
Sales fell 2%, to \$727 million, at the luxury furniture chain, leaving a larger-than-expected cash loss of 40 cents a share.



GameStop

GME (NYSE) • \$28.70 • 0.48

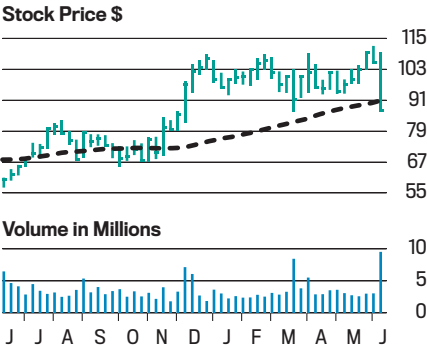
Reddit folk hero Keith "Roaring Kitty" Gill said he held \$260 million worth of the videogame retailer, whose annual meeting's streaming broadcast crashed.



Signet Jewelers

SIG (NYSE) • \$87.18 • -18.55

Despite topping April-earnings estimates by 30%, with \$1.11 a share, the jeweler's same-store sales fell 9%. Price competition dimmed guidance for July.



Dave & Buster's Entertainment

PLAY (NASDAQ) • \$43.77 • -5.12

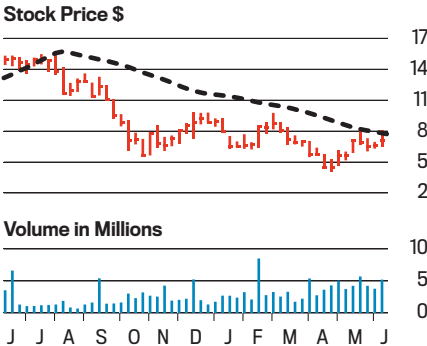
Same-store sales fell 5.6% in the chain of arcade eateries. Earnings sank 30%, to 99 cents a share. Analysts had forecast \$1.73 a share.



Prime Medicine

PRME (NASDAQ) • \$7.11 • 0.54

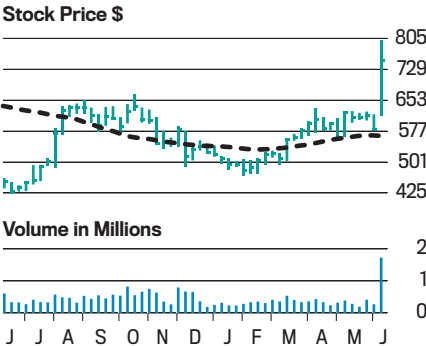
Improvements in "prime editing" by the Broad Institute scientists that launched the developer of gene-editing therapies, will allow insertion of entire genes.



Texas Pacific Land

TPL (NYSE) • \$750.00 • 167.93

The owner of 870,000 acres in Texas's Permian Basin declared a \$10 a share special dividend. It will pay out any cash above a \$700 million balance.



The charts record the net change in share price, the high, low and closing trades, and share volume for companies with noteworthy stock activity last week. In addition, the graphs depict last week's daily price activity in detail. The dotted line on some graphs denotes the stock's 200-day moving average; lack of a moving average means the shares have traded for less than that time period. If the close from the current week is lower than a year ago the graph will be presented in red. If the close from the current week is higher than a year ago then the graph will be presented in green.

RESEARCH REPORTS

For a look back at more analyst research and reports, go online to barrons.com/researchreports

How Analysts Size Up Companies

These reports, excerpted and edited by *Barron's*, were issued recently by investment and research firms. The reports are a sampling of analysts' thinking; they should not be considered the views or recommendations of *Barron's*. Some of the reports' issuers have provided, or hope to provide, investment-banking or other services to the companies being analyzed.

Tesla • TSLA-Nasdaq

Outperform • Price \$177.29
by Wedbush

It is a pop-the-Champagne moment for Elon Musk and Tesla shareholders, based on Musk's X post that both the hot button 2018 comp package and incorporation in Texas have been overwhelmingly approved. This removes a \$20 to \$25 overhang on the shares that has weighed on them since the head-scratching Delaware ruling set this *Twilight Zone* soap opera in motion earlier this year.

We believe that an overwhelming retail presence voting to greenlight both proposals was key to approval, despite some large shareholders voting no. In addition, based on all of our discussions over the past month, large shareholders at the end of the day knew that voting no would risk Musk potentially eventually leaving as CEO; that risk far outweighed the reward in voting no on this proposal, despite some obvious frustration with Musk. We have been perplexed this week when some sell-side peers said this package wouldn't pass, as the groundswell momentum to get this done was crystal clear among retail and institutional investors. We maintain our Outperform rating and \$275 price target.

First Solar • FSLR-Nasdaq

Overweight • Price \$279.80 on June 12
by Oppenheimer

We hosted First Solar Chief Financial Officer Alex Bradley on an investor call with commentary pointing to pricing support and incremental demand growth. Management noted price stability in response to clarity on domestic content guidelines and in response to the initial ruling on its International Trade Commission case. We believe that the company is also seeing incremental demand from customers working with hyperscalers and pre-existing corporate customers looking to source domestic solar equipment. As the company continues to execute on its manufacturing scale-up, we see potential for First Solar to realize better-than-anticipated pricing/margin driven by

higher blending on non-U.S. modules in U.S. projects, improved conversion efficiency, and higher underlying power prices. We raise our price target to \$325 as we see significant potential for incremental operating leverage.

Warner Bros. Discovery • WBD-Nasdaq

Buy • Price \$8.04 on June 12
by Benchmark

We maintain our Buy rating and \$20 price target for Warner Bros. Discovery, with a marginal positive being TNT Sports' announcement yesterday that it has secured decadelong French Open Tennis rights. The \$650 million bid (according to The Athletic) surprisingly displaces NBCUniversal, with coverage led by TNT complemented by TBS and truTV carrying weekday matches.

Early-round matches will also be shown on Max alongside continued Eurosport coverage. TNT Sports Chair and CEO Luis Silberwasser cited the network's breadth of content, including the National Hockey League, U.S. soccer, Nascar, and now Roland Garros and College Football Playoff games (sublicensed from ESPN). Tennis is the most year-round sport and Warner Bros. Discovery's Bleacher Report and other digital properties should be well positioned to elicit fan enthusiast interest. High volume coverage of all four tennis Grand Slams on Venue is also a distinct positive for the new JV streaming service operated by Warner Bros. Discovery, Fox, and Walt Disney.

General Motors • GM-NYSE

Buy • Price \$47.57 on June 11
by UBS

General Motors announced a new, \$6 billion share repurchase authorization (11% of current market cap). We believe that a new buyback program was generally expected around this level. Still, we view this as a positive event, as it shows confidence in GM's ability to generate free cash flow and deliver on its commitment to return cash to shareholders. We

Insider Transactions

Purchases

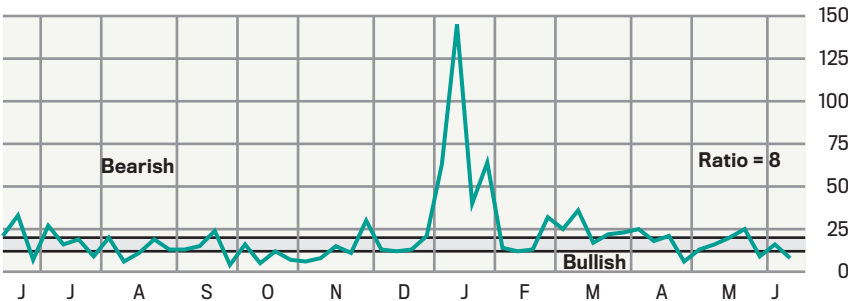
Company	Symbol	Insiders	Shares	\$ Val (000's)
Golub Capital Bdc	GBDC	2	935,786	15,004
United Homes Group	UHG	4	2,580,646	12,903
Snowflake	SNOW	1	76,200	9,989
Kronos Bio	KRON	1	3,005,122	3,119
Reservoir Media	RSVR	1	350,000	2,805
Shift4 Payments	FOUR	1	29,669	2,054
Boston Omaha	BOC	5	101,670	1,429
Telos	TLS	1	283,566	1,136
Afc Gamma	AFCG	1	88,835	1,067
Vf	VFC	1	75,200	997
Synovus Financial	SNV	1	24,500	916
Hawkins	HWKN	1	9,200	804
Genelux	GNLX	9	268,000	750
National Storage Affiliates Trust	NSA	1	18,405	695
Pebblebrook Hotel Trust	PEB	1	45,000	611
Douglas Emmett	DEI	1	45,000	592
Nerdy	NRDY	1	353,000	561
Cogent Communications	CCOI	1	10,000	526
Fox Factory	FOXF	1	11,250	498
Maxcyte	MXCT	1	100,000	489

Sales

Company	Symbol	Insiders	Shares	\$ Val (000's)
Vertex	VRTX	1	1,500,000	49,395
Elf Beauty	ELF	7	198,828	36,695
Moderna	MRNA	2	223,010	33,123
General Motors	GM	2	676,305	32,182
Doordash	DASH	3	243,678	27,307
Advanced Micro Devices	AMD	2	162,730	26,786
Acy Auctions	ACVA	3	1,333,289	24,994
Coinbase Global	COIN	2	85,173	21,300
Palo Alto Networks	PANW	3	63,285	18,506
Airbnb	ABNB	2	121,385	17,872
Ies	IESC	2	134,296	17,831
Krystal Biotech	KRYS	2	100,000	17,576
Olema Pharmaceuticals	OLMA	1	1,175,000	17,449
Monster Beverage	MNST	2	302,502	15,798
Appfolio	APPF	1	61,730	14,312
Sweetgreen	SG	3	450,000	13,725
Flex	FLEX	7	409,080	13,265
Trane Technologies	TT	3	36,460	11,705
Roblox	RBLX	3	315,635	11,091
Hims & Hers Health	HIMS	3	493,385	10,816

An insider is any officer, director or owner of 10% or more of a class of a company's securities. In most cases, an insider must report any trade to the SEC within two business days. The tables highlight companies that filed with the SEC through last Wednesday. The tables do not include pension-plan or employee stock-option activity, trades by beneficial owners of 10% or more, trades under \$2 per share or trades under 100 shares. The "Purchases" column includes only open-market and private purchases; the "Sales" column includes only open-market and private sales, and excludes trades preceded by option exercise in the 12 months prior to the reported event. Source: Thomson Reuters

Insider Transactions Ratio



Ratio of Insiders Sales to Buys. Readings under 121 are Bullish. Those over 201 are Bearish. The total top 20 sales and buys are 431,727,556 and 56,946,853 respectively; Source: Thomson Reuters

believe that GM will continue to utilize a significant portion of FCF generation to return to shareholders for the foreseeable future. Recall that in November 2023, GM announced a \$10 billion accelerated share repurchase, or ASR. Given current cash balance and expected free cash flow, we had expected that GM would be able to announce another share buyback but didn't expect an ASR, given GM's desire to not go below \$18 billion to \$20 billion in cash. This program isn't an ASR, and the authorization will be executed opportunistically.

GM also announced they expect the remaining \$1.1 billion of a prior \$1.4 billion authorization to be completed by end of second-quarter 2024. So, using this new authorization can likely begin in third-quarter 2024. Price target: \$58.

Casey's General Store • CASY-Nasdaq

Market Perform • Price \$462.01 on June 13
by BMO Research

Casey's fourth-quarter 2024 and fiscal-year 2025 guidance highlighted the resilience of Casey's model, especially in light of weakening data points across the convenience-store industry. Management's decisions around pricing through the cycle, store simplification, and innovation of prepared foods are clearly helping to bolster Casey's competitive advantages. We raise our target to \$400, now 26 to 27 times price/earnings or 13 times enterprise value to Ebitda. But we remain Market Perform despite impressive trends, as our higher target price is primarily driven by higher [fuel] margin estimates, where we still see risk of volatility, and multiples now solidly above pre-Covid levels.

BARRONS.COM/DATA

-52-Week-		Tick	Sym	Yld	P/E	Last	Chg.	Div Amt.	-52-Week-		Tick	Sym	Yld	P/E	Last	Chg.	Div Amt.	-52-Week-		Tick	Sym	Yld	P/E	Last	Chg.	Div Amt.	-52-Week-		Tick	Sym	Yld	P/E	Last	Chg.	Div Amt.	-52-Week-		Tick	Sym	Yld	P/E	Last	Chg.	Div Amt.
High	Low	Name							High	Low	Name							High	Low	Name							High	Low	Name						High	Low	Name							
118.89	93.07	CGLA	GIB	...	19	99.73	-1.59	...	86.58	60.38	CivitasRscs	CIVI	3.1	8	64.72	-3.03	1.00	71.60	34.83	DarlingIngre	DAR	...	11	35.52	-1.53	...	21.80	10.06	EmpresDisCom	EDN	...	dd	17.08	+0.73	...	33.33	24.16	FlexLNG	FLNG11.6	10	25.85	-2.20	.75	
7.20	3.34	C&T	CINT	...	26	4.89	-0.03	...	10.03	5.27	Clarivate	CLMT	0	dd	54.41	-0.28	...	147.93	71.51	DaVita	DVA	...	16	141.16	-2.02	...	38.37	31.03	Enbridge	ENB	7.8	18	35.12	-0.46	67.31	135.67	26.30	FloridDecor	FND	...	57	118.20	+1.25	...
63.76	49.87	CMS Energy	CMS	3.5	18	59.65	-0.98	.515	15.25	6.80	ClarosMtg	CMGTG13.8	dd	8.09	-0.11	.25	75.93	48.77	Dayforce	DAY	...	cc	50.49	-1.04	...	87.94	57.55	EmcompassHealth	EHC	7	23	84.30	-0.55	.15	5.70	7.64	FleetIndustries	FTK	...	89	4.45	-0.52	...	
47.37	37.54	CNA Fin	CNA	4.1	9	43.33	-1.31	.44	223.53	132.92	ClearChannelOutr	CLH	...	32	220.97	+7.07	...	110.69	484.02	DeckersOutdoor	DECK	...	35	1023.07	-20.56	...	81.06	25.14	Endava	DAVA	...	28	25.46	-0.78	...	26.33	19.64	FlowersFood	FLO	4.3	38	22.33	-0.47	.24
15.74	9.77	CNH Indl	CNI	4.5	6	10.40	+0.09	.47	2.06	1.04	ClearChannelOrib	CCO	...	dd	1.37	-0.01	...	450.00	353.15	Deere	DE	1.6	11	378.00	+492.14	...	27.01	17.65	Endeavor	EDR	...	9	26.87	...	.06	50.49	35.23	Flowserve	FLS	1.8	26	46.59	-0.69	.21
29.09	22.06	CNO Financial	CNO	2.4	8	26.59	-1.02	.16	27.75	15.28	ClearSecure	YOU	2.2	32	17.88	-0.42	...	58.81	36.50	DelekLogistics	DKL	10.7	14	39.83	+109.10	...	4.20	1.42	EndeavourSilver	EKK	...	dd	3.57	-0.07	...	45.60	27.95	Fluor	FLR	...	27	64.46	+0.41	...
26.57	16.62	CNC Resources	CNX	...	4	24.56	-0.82	...	21.89	15.28	ClearwaterAnalytic	CWAN	...	dd	19.29	-0.82	...	33.60	21.68	DelekUX	DK	4.2	dd	24.07	-1.21	.25	3.90	2.68	EnelChile	ENIC	7.6	5	2.73	+0.14	2022	226.40	148.00	FlutEnter	FLUT	...	...	177.96	-13.59	...
114.30	61.72	CONSOL Energy	CEIX	...	6	97.39	-0.84	...	53.77	29.22	ClearwaterPaper	CLW	...	8	50.73	+0.46	...	179.70	48.74	DellTechC	DELL	...	28	134.98	+5.01	...	8.36	3.94	Enerflex	EFXT	1.5	dd	4.86	-0.08	0.084	143.43	99.24	FomentoEconMex	FMX	1.5	32	106.24	-2.11	4657
26.60	22.20	CPDDefenseProp	CRP	...	dd	24.38	+0.15	.295	39.41	14.77	ClearwayEnergyCA	CWEIA	5.3	37	24.25	-0.32	41.02	53.86	30.60	DeltaAir	DAL	...	8	48.72	-1.72	...	37.32	26.92	Energenizer	ENR	4.2	24	18.26	-0.16	.30	35.60	14.84	FootLocker	FL	0	dd	24.11	-1.57	.40
88.00	51.59	CRH	CRH	1.8	...	76.55	-1.27	.35	20.35	18.59	ClearwayEnergyC	CWEN	5.7	40	26.60	-0.34	74.00	15.09	Delux	DLX	5.6	28	21.52	-0.28	.30	16.40	12.46	EnergyTransfer																

3.66	27.26	NACCO Inds	NC	3.0	dd	30.62	-1.99	2275
4.95	11.50	N-able	NABL	...	96	14.08	-0.09	...
1.98	18.00	NCR Atleos	NATL	...	dd	28.38	+1.27	...
9.01	10.99	NCR Voyix	VYX	...	dd	12.53	-0.25	...
6.62	7.55	NetPower	NPRW	...	dd	10.33	+0.33	...
5.20	3.68	NGL Energy	NGL	...	dd	5.18	-0.29	...
6.18	3.61	NIO	NIO	...	dd	4.33	-0.50	...
9.93	4.46	NL Industries	NL	4.8	dd	6.70	-0.34	.08
1.87	34.38	NNN REIT	NNN	5.4	19	42.12	+0.09	56.55
1.91	14.85	NOV	NOV	1.3	7	17.50	+0.18	075
7.58	32.94	NRG Energy	NRG	2.1	11	78.64	+0.75	4075
1.40	620.49	NVR	NVR	...	16	76023	+046	...
1.147	50.35	NaborsIndustries	NBR	...	dd	60.89	-5.98	...
1.71	28.32	NatBankHoldings	NBHC	3.1	10	36.14	-0.52	...
6.80	45.32	NationalFuelGas	NFG	3.8	11	54.44	-1.66	<u>218</u>
4.40	55.13	National Grid	NG	6.5	16	56.55	+0.55	4999
8.14	48.31	NatlHealthInv	NHI	5.4	22	66.44	+0.85	90.9
6.08	70.24	NatPrestolnds	NPK	1.3	16	74.23	+0.09	350
5.24	27.86	NatlStorage	NSA	5.5	22	40.85	+0.24	56
5.24	9.55	NaturalGasSvcs	NGS	...	25	19.82	-1.17	...
1.95	14.4	NaturalGrocers	NGVC	2.0	16	20.51	-0.35	10
1.20	47.01	NaturalResPtRs	NRP	3.4	7	89.50	+0.40	75
3.60	4.90	Natuzzi	NTZ	...	dd	5.09	-0.17	...
4.48	4.30	NatWest	NWG	...	7	7.94	-0.22	...
0.78	12.33	Navigator	NVGS	1.3	14	15.88	-0.61	.05
0.70	70.70	Nelnet	NNI	1.1	27	97.81	-2.88	28
3.57	1.47	NerdArY	NRDY	...	dd	1.88	+0.41	...
1.00	9.50	NetLeaseOffice	NLOP	1.4	dd	24.85	+0.22	34
8.97	13.49	Netstreit	NTST	4.8	cc	17.15	+0.41	205
1.00	4.94	NeuHealth	NEUE	...	dd	5.09	-0.16	...
6.63	8.93	Nevro	NVRO	...	dd	9.33	-0.24	...
3.28	38.92	NewJerseyRscs	NJR	4.0	17	42.08	-1.21	42
1.20	36.22	NewOrientalEd	EDU	...	40	75.18	-2.35	...
1.22	1.70	NY CmntyBcp	NYCB	1.3	dd	3.05	-0.07	0.1
9.98	36.92	NYTimes A	NYT	1.0	33	69.69	-0.59	13
1.00	396.07	NewMarket	NEU	1.9	13	52.70	-11.55	250
6.92	49.22	Newmont	NEM	2.4	dd	40.82	+0.46	25
8.65	4.41	NewparkResources	NR	...	42	7.76	-0.39	...
3.09	4.14	NexResGeners	NEXA	...	dd	7.82	+0.10	...
3.88	4.38	NexGenEnergy	NXE	...	cc	7.04	+0.14	...
9.84	26.23	NexPointRealEst	NRPFI50	dd	33.04	-0.79	56.44	...
8.87	12.61	NexPointResident	NXRT50	13	17.38	+0.72	47.52	...
4.42	1.32	Nextdoor	KIND	...	dd	2.53	-0.32	...
4.47	4.15	NxtEraEnergy	NEE	2.8	20	73.06	-2.33	515
5.86	63.58	NikeBankshares	NIC	1.3	12	77.51	-1.13	28
3.39	18.66	Nike	NKE	1.6	27	93.39	-1.36	37
5.59	1.37	NineEnergy	NINE	...	dd	1.48	-0.07	...
4.44	22.86	NI Source	NI	3.8	18	28.17	+0.11	265
6.65	9.90	NoahHoldings	NOAH013	1	10.10	+0.01	0.1269	...
5.34	36.20	Noble	NE	4.6	13	43.02	-0.42	<u>50</u>
6.26	2.94	Nokia	NOK	3.5	23	46.32	-0.29	326
10.03	13.56	NomadFoods	NMFD	3.6	16	56.60	-1.00	15
6.62	6.33	Nomura	NMOR	2.2	16	58.44	-0.34	082
4.83	3.45	NordicAmTankers	NAT	11.1	12	3.89	-0.15	12
12.54	12.88	Nordstrom	JWN	3.6	12	0.105	-0.45	.19
13.66	183.09	NorfolkSouthern	NSC	2.5	35	219.90	-4.17	135

BARRONS.COM/DATA

52-Week													52-Week													52-Week													52-Week																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																		
Low			Name			Tick			Sym			Yld			P/E			Last			Chg.			Div			Amt.			High			Low			Name			Tick			Sym			Yld			P/E			Last			Chg.			Div			Amt.			High			Low			Name			Tick			Sym			Yld			P/E			Last			Chg.			Div			Amt.																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																												
36.02			17.33			BaldwinInsurance			BWIN			---			dd			33.32			-0.87			---			---			29.94			12.65			CPI Card			PMTS			---			17			26.57			-1.08			---			---			73.25			37.67			ClimbGbl			CLMB			1.2			22			56.08			+0.02			.17			---			---			2.65			1.27			DawsonGeophys			DWSN			---			dd			2.00			+0.01			---			---			25.69			5.36			EverQuote			EVER			---			dd			19.18			-3.27			---			---			10.50			5.65			EverpinTech			MRAM			---			16			6.00			+0.10			---			---			5.95			1.54			Evgo			EVGO			---			dd			2.04			---			---			15.49			4.07			Evolus			EOLS			---			dd			11.33			-0.36			---			---			13.43			4.44			Evyotec			EVO			---			dd			4.55			-0.23			---			---			3.32			1.30			Exagen			XGN			---			dd			1.96			-0.06			---			---			11.10			10.38			ExelFinAcqN			XFIN			---			dd			11.08			+0.08			---			---			24.34			18.64			Exelixis			EXEL			---			34			21.74			-0.14			---			---			43.53			33.35			Exelon			EXC			4.3			15			35.54			-0.63			.38			---			33.40			25.17			ExlService			EXLS			---			27			19.19			+0.01			---			---			25.39			9.1			ExpWorld			EXPI			1.9			dd			10.65			-0.40			.05			---			160.05			82.48			Expedia			EXPE			---			23			124.61			+1.55			---			---			8.25			1.24			Expensify			EXFY			---			dd			1.40			-0.05			---			---			102.72			64.61			Exponent			EXPO			1.2			48			95.15			+1.67			.28			---			---			9.12			3.86			Exscientia			EXAI			---			dd			5.03			-0.35			---			---			32.73			10.50			ExtremeNetworks			EXTR			---			dd			12.17			+0.59			---			---			30.99			5.67			EyePointPharm			EYPT			---			dd			9.38			+0.28			---			---			11.52			7.70			Ezcorp			EZPW			---			dd			10.03			-0.45			---			---																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																					
F													F													F													F																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																		
24.80													12.34													FARO Tech													FARO													---													dd													16.82													-0.68													---													---													19.99													14.26													F5													FFIV													---													20													167.58													+2.01													---													---													32.50													26.60													FRP Holdings													FRPH													---													92													29.22													-0.65													---													---													11.05													10.34													FTACEmeraldA													EMLD													---													cc													10.78													-0.03													---													---													88.64													27.94													FTAI Aviation													FTAI													---													39													84.56													+2.61													---													---													9.25													2.84													FTAI Infra													FBYD													1.5													dd													7.89													+0.20													.03													---													44.00													7.02													Falcon'sBeyondGibi													FBYD													---													dd													11.70													+2.07													---													---													8.58													2.74													Fanhua													FANH													---													4													2.76													-0.26													---													---													4.04													1.80													FarmerBros													FARM													---													dd													2.80													-1.00													---													---													79.04													53.83													Fastenal													FAST													2.5													31													63.05													-0.84													.39													---													---													8.83													1.63													FateTherap													FATE													---													dd													3.61													-0.07													---													---													48.29													29.50													Ferrovial												

Week’s
New Highs and
Lows

NYSE	
240 New Highs	158 New Lows
Nasdaq	
315 New Highs	409 New Lows
NYSE American	
17 New Highs	32 New Lows
Only includes COMMON and REIT stocks	

NYSE American

NEW HIGHS

CanFiteBioPharm
CatchalnvTA
Cohen
GranTierraEner
LegatoMergerIII
NanoViricides

NEW LOWS

Amcon
AltaGlobal
AltisourceAsset
Azitra
CamberEnergy
ChinaPharma
Comstock
DDC Enterprise
DeltaApparel
EVI Industries
1847Holdings
Enservco
FoxoTech
GEE Group
HoustonAmEner
i-80Gold
IssuerDirect
LoopMedia
MastechDigital
Network1Techs
Northann
NovaBayPharm
OceanPwrTech
PerfectMoment
PineappleFinl
SachemCapital
Senseonics
SplashBeverage
Volato

Nasdaq

NEW HIGHS

AddusHomeCare
AeroVironment
Affimed
AimeiiHlthTech
Alphabet A
Alphabet C
AltairEngg
AmerSupercond
AmnealPharm
Apple
ApplMaterials
APxAcqnl A
Arm
AryaSciencesIV
ASML
AST Space
AvidityBio
BarfreshFood
BeliteBio

Bioventus
BlueBird
Broadcom
Camtek
CardiolTherap
CarGurus
CaseysGenStores
CellebriteDI
CirrusLogic
CocaColaCon
ContextTherap
ContineumTherap
CorbusPharm
CoreScientific
CornerGrowthAcqn
Costco
CreativeRealities
CredoTech
Crocs
CrowdStrike
CSW Industrials
D-MarketElec
Dogness
Elutia
EvergreenA
FeutuneLightA
FirstSolar
FTAI Aviation
Gaia
GeneDx
Geron
GlbPtrII A
GlobalStarA
GolarLNG
HashiCorp
Hawkins
HealthEquity
HeronTherap
Hibbett
Honeywell
HorizonSpacel
HudsonAcqnl
ICC
Immersion
Innodata
InsightAcqnA
Insmed
Intelligencecheck
IntuitiveSurgical
INvestcorpIndiaA
iPower
IrisEnergy
Karoo0000
KLA
KrystalBiotech
LakelandInds
LamResearch
Life360
Limbach
Lipocine
LM Funding
Mama’sCreations

MarblegateAcqn
MartinMidstream
MereoBioPharma
MicronTech
Microsoft
MKS Instrum
MolecularPtrs
MonolithicPower
MontereyCapA
Mountainl A
Napco Security
Natera
NetApp
Netflix
NewProvidencell A
Nexttracker
PepGen
ProficientAuto
ProtagonistTherap
Qualcomm
QXO
RadNet
RapportTherap
RebornCoffee
RedViolet
RegenPharm
Repay
RF Acqn
Robinhood
Seagate
SenmiaoTech
SilverSpikelnvt
CirrusLogic
SkywardSpecIns
SoundFinBancorp
SowGood
SpringValleyII A
SteelConnect
StepStone
StokeTherap
TatTechnologies
TayshaGene
TempusAI
Teradyne
TeraWulf
TMT Acqn
TransMedics
TwistBiosci
TyraBiosciences
U-BX Tech
UltraClean
UnitedTherap
UnivDisplay
VeecoInstr
VeriskAnalytics
Vertex
VircoMfg
VirtuFinancial
Vivakor
VSE
Waystar
WesternDigital
Wingstop
XOMA

NEW LOWS

10xGenomics
22ndCentury
2U
8x8
AbCelleraBio
Abits
AcadiaPharm
Accolade
AdamasOne
Aditxt
AdlaiNortye
Agriforce
Akanda
AligosTherap
AllarityTherap
Allbirds
Life360
Allient
AllogeneTherap
AltamiraTherap
Altolngred
Amarin

Amdocs
AmerBatteryTech
AmericanRscs
Amerisafe
Ammo
Amplitude
AmylyxPharm
AN2 Therap
APA
ApollomicsA
Appian
AppliedDNA
AptoseBiosci
ARBIOT
ArtWayMfg
AspiraWomenHlth
Nova
NVIDIA
NXP Semicon
OdysseyMarine
Onfolio
OxbridgeRe
PepGen
ProficientAuto
ProtagonistTherap
Qualcomm
QXO
RadNet
RapportTherap
RebornCoffee
RedViolet
RegenPharm
Repay
RF Acqn
Robinhood
Seagate
SenmiaoTech
SilverSpikelnvt
CirrusLogic
SkywardSpecIns
SoundFinBancorp
SowGood
SpringValleyII A
SteelConnect
StepStone
StokeTherap
TatTechnologies
TayshaGene
TempusAI
Teradyne
TeraWulf
TMT Acqn
TransMedics
TwistBiosci
TyraBiosciences
U-BX Tech
UltraClean
UnitedTherap
UnivDisplay
VeecoInstr
VeriskAnalytics
Vertex
VircoMfg
VirtuFinancial
Vivakor
VSE
Waystar
WesternDigital
Wingstop
XOMA

FeutuneLightA
FGI Industries
FirstLongIsland
FirstNWBNcp
Five9
FluxPower
Fly-E
ForresterRes
Fortrea
ForwardIndustries
ForzaX1
FractylHealth
FreightTech
Freshworks
FSD Pharma
FulgentGenetics
FundamentalGlbI
FutureFinTech
GainTherap
Galapagos
GameSquare
Gauzy
Genelux
Genmab
GeoVaxLabs
GlenBurnieBncp
GlobalGas
GoldenHeaven
GoPro
GorillaTech
GreenPlains
GreenwaveTech
GRI Bio
GromSocialEnts
GT Biopharma
HarvardBioSci
HealthcrTriangle
HeliusMedical
Hempacco
HepionPharm
HertzGlobal
HoldcoNuvo
HookerFurnishings
HothTherap
HuadilntI
Hurco
IC200MA
Identiv
Immucell
Immuneeing
Immunocore
Infobird
InglesMarkets
InspireVeterinary
IntelligentBio
InteractStrength
InterlinkElec
InterParfums
Intrusion
Inventiva
IronwoodPharm
IvedaSolutions
J-Long
JBHunt
Jet.AI
JIADE
JianzhiEduc
JohnsonOutdoors
Jjoy
KandiTech
KLX Energy
KY FirstFedBncp
KyvernaTherap
LaRosa
Lazydays
LeddardTech
LegalZoom
LiAuto
LibertySirius A
LibertySirius B
LibertySirius C
Life360
LightwaveLogic
LionGroup
LipellaPharm
LiqTechIntI
LKQ
LogicMark
Longeveron
LucasGC
LuxUrban

LyraTherap
MarketAxxess
MarketWise
MaxeonSolar
Metagenomi
MGP Ingredients
MicroVision
MMTEC
Mobilicom
MoleculinBiotech
MongoDB
MoolecScience
MotorcarParts
MSP Recovery
MuralOncology
MustangBio
MVB Financial
MySize
N2OFF
NaaSTechnology
Nanobiotix
NationalVision
NatliResearch
NatureWood
Navient
Neo-Concept
Netcapital
NetScout
NewFortressEner
Nikola
NioCorpDevs
NLS Pharm
NorthfieldBanc
NotableLabs
NuCana
NWTN
ODP
OmegaFlex
OncologyInst
OpalFuels
OpenText
OraSureTechs
PainReform
Paternalnvt
Patterson
PAVmed
PaycorHCM
PerionNetwork
PetrosPharm
Pharming
PliantTherap
PolestarAuto
Premier
PrestigeWealth
ProficientAuto
Pulmonx
Quanterix
QuantumComp
QuidelOrtho
QuinceTherap
RadiusRecycling
RailVision
RaptTherap
RedRiverBcshs
RelianceGlobal
RemitlyGlobal
ResourcesConnect
RevanceTherap
Roadzen
RockyMtnChoc
Roku
RomaGreenFin
RushEnt B
SagaComm
SageTherap
SalariusPharm
Schrodinger
ScinailImmun
ScrippsEW
SeaStarMedical
SeelosTherap
SelectiveIns
ServiceProperties
SharpLink
ShiftPixy
SI-BONE
SidusSpace
SifyTech
SigmaAdditive
SiriusXM
SiyataMobile

SMX
SocietyPass
SolarEdgeTech
Soligenix
SoundGroup
SouthernCalBncp
SpartanNash
SportsmansWrhs
SpruceBio
Stratasys
SunriseNewEner
SunshineBio
SuperHilntI
SuperLeagueEnt
T Stamp
Taitron
TargetHosp
TelesisBio
TempusAI
TenaxTherap
TH IntI
Tharimmune
ThermoGenesis
TitanMachinery
TonixPharm
TraconPharm
TTEC
Uniti
UrbanOne D
UTStarcom
ValleyNatI Bncp
VastaPlatform
VCIGlobal
Verastem
ViaSat
VicinityMotor
VintageWineEstates
Visteon
Volcon
VorBiopharma
VS Media
Wag!
WarnerBrosA
WeBuyGlobal
Wendy’s
WheelerREIT
WillametteValley
WindtreeTherap
Workhorse
WrapTech
WW IntI
Xometry
XortxTherap
XP
XTI Aerospace
YY Group
ZapataComputing
ZappEV
ZentalisPharm
Zhongchao
Zoomcar
ZoomVideo

NYSE

NEW HIGHS

ADT
Alcon
AmerHlthcrREIT
AptIncmREIT
ApolloGlbIMgmt
Aramark
Argan
AristaNetworks
Ashland
Avalonbay
AvaltaCoating
Bark
BJ’sWholesale
BRC
BankNY Mellon
Birkenstock
BootBarn
BostonSci
Brink’s
Cango
CedarFairRec
Centuri
Chipotle
CleanHarbors
Coherent
Corning

DT Midstream
DutchBros
EastmanChem
Ecolab
ElancoAnimal
AllurionTech
ElementSolns
EquitransMdstm
EssentialProp
EssexProp
Fluor
Gallagher
Gannett
GeneralMotors
GenesisEnergy
Gildan
Azul
Glaucos
GlobalPtrs
GoDaddy
Guidewire
HCA Healthcare
Hagerty
HewlettPackard
Hims&HersHealth
InFinTAcqna
IronMountain
J.Jill
JumiaTech
KKR
KimberlyClark
KinderMorgan
KornFerry
LennoxIntI
ELiLilly
Loar
LouisianaPacific
MOGU
Mytheresa
MayvilleEngg
McKesson
MotorolaSol
MurphyUSA
NCR Atleos
NewparkResources
NovoNordisk
OnHolding
OneLiberty
Oppenheimer A
Oracle
OverseasShip
PembinaPipeline
Pinterest
PrimoWater
PropertyGuru
PureStorage
PyrophyteAcqn
RB Global
RELEX
RayonierAdvMatls
Redwire
RocketCos.
Rollins
RoyalCaribbean
RushStreetInt
SITE Centers
SLGreenRealty
Sea
SensientTech
SilaRealty
SixFlags
SkechersUSA
Sylvamo
TJX
TaiwanSemi
TargaResources
TenetHealthcare
TevaPharm
TexasPacLand
Torrid
TristarAcqnl
UWM
Unilever
UnitedMicro
ValensSemicon
Viking
VistaOutdoor
WesternMidstrm
Wiley A
Wiley B

NEW LOWS

AGCO
AMN Healthcare

AMTD IDEA
Adecoagro
Amarcus
Albemarle
AllurionTech
Ambev
AmericanWell
Ampco-Pitt
AmpriusTech
AnywhereRealEst
AppleHospREIT
ArcadiumLithium
Asana
AshfordHosp
Azul
BILL
GlobalPtrs
GoDaddy
Guidewire
HCA Healthcare
Hagerty
HewlettPackard
Hims&HersHealth
InFinTAcqna
IronMountain
J.Jill
JumiaTech
KKR
KimberlyClark
KinderMorgan
KornFerry
LennoxIntI
ELiLilly
Loar
LouisianaPacific
MOGU
Mytheresa
MayvilleEngg
McKesson
MotorolaSol
MurphyUSA
NCR Atleos
NewparkResources
NovoNordisk
OnHolding
OneLiberty
Oppenheimer A
Oracle
OverseasShip
PembinaPipeline
Pinterest
PrimoWater
PropertyGuru
PureStorage
PyrophyteAcqn
RB Global
RELEX
RayonierAdvMatls
Redwire
RocketCos.
Rollins
RoyalCaribbean
RushStreetInt
SITE Centers
SLGreenRealty
Sea
SensientTech
SilaRealty
SixFlags
SkechersUSA
Sylvamo
TJX
TaiwanSemi
TargaResources
TenetHealthcare
TevaPharm
TexasPacLand
Torrid
TristarAcqnl
UWM
Unilever
UnitedMicro
ValensSemicon
Viking
VistaOutdoor
WesternMidstrm
Wiley A
Wiley B

MagnaIntI
Manitowoc
Marcus
Medifast
MetaData
MethodeElec
MolsonCoorsB
MolsonCoorsA
Mosaic
MultiPlan
MyersIndustries
NaborsIndustries
NationalGrid
Natuzzi
NineEnergy
O-I Glass
ON24
OilStatesIntI
Orange
Paragon28
ParkAerospace
PaycomSoftware
PeakstoneRealty
PediatrixMedical
Polaris
ProvidentFinSvcs
Quadian
RPC
Rafael
RobertHalf
Rockwell
RyersonHolding
SJW Group
SOS
Schlumberger
SeritageGrowth
Snowflake
Solventum
StandardMotor
Stem
Stevanato
SurfAirMobility
Tegna
TalosEnergy
TeladocHealth
TelefonicaBras
TelekmIndonesia
Tilly’s
TitanIntI
TorontoDomBk
TrueBlue
UiPath
Unifirst
UPS B
UnitySoftware
Vale
Velo3D
VirginGalactic
W&T Offshore
Winnebago
Workiva
Xperi
Yext
Zeekr
ZKH
ZeppHealth
ZeviaPBC
Zhihu

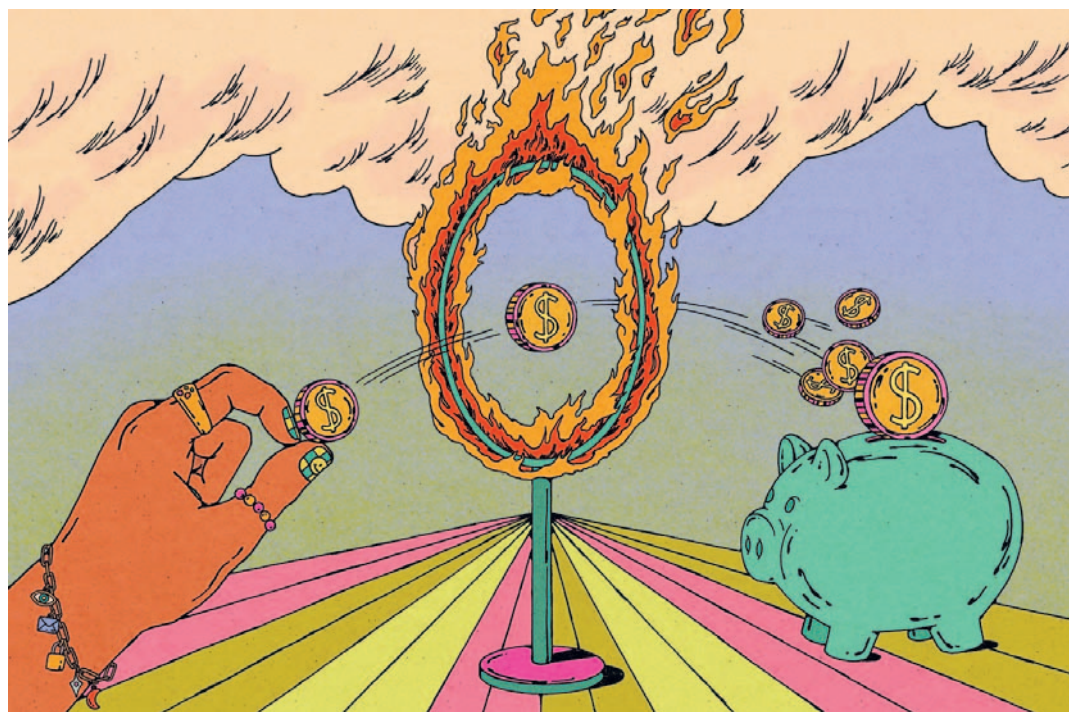
Barron’s 50-Stock Average

This index is a weighted average of 50 leading issues. Useful in security valuation. Source: Barron’s Stats

	Jun 13 2024	Jun 6 2024	May 2023	Yr-to-Yr % Chg
S&P 500 Index	5433.74	5352.96	4343.82	25.09
Barron’s 50 Index	13243.49	13273.23	11478.82	15.37
Projected quarterly earn	124.04	124.04	162.87	-23.84
Annualized projected earn	496.15	496.15	651.47	-23.84
Annualized projected P/E	26.69	26.75	17.6	51.49
Five-year average earn	523.78	523.78	486.93	7.57
Five-year average P/E	25.28	25.34	23.6	7.26
Year-end earn	606.93	606.93	619.08	-1.96
Year-end P/E	21.82	21.87	18.5	17.68
Year-end earns yield, %	4.58	4.57	5.4	-15.06
Best grade bond yields, %	3.86	3.86	4.47	-13.57
Bond yields/stock ylds, %	0.84	0.84	0.83	1.63
Actual year-end divs	259.44	259.36	245.47	5.69
Actual yr-end divs yld, %	1.96	1.95	2.14	-8.43

OTHER VOICES

Gen Z's investing attitudes were **forged in the fire** of the Covid lockdowns from 2020 to 2022.



The Risk-Loving Generation Is Coming of Age

In just 10 short years, America's 70 million Gen Zers are expected to be the country's biggest age cohort. Gen Z's overall relationship to money and wealth is turning out to be very different from previous generations. Shaped by difficult experiences with Covid lockdowns and hammered by existential climate narratives, they've adopted short investment horizons, high risk tolerance, and a potentially problematic "FOMO" (fear of missing out) approach toward investing.

You might call it a form of generational financial PTSD, and the circum-

BY PAUL ANDREWS

The writer is managing director of research, advocacy, and standards at CFA Institute.

stances of our tech-soaked times could be combining to cause problems for companies seeking to capture Gen Zers as customers.

Finance and investing have some real constants. Warren Buffett practices timeless principles that people of his generation and the baby boomers after him learned from birth: Invest for the long term, stay highly informed about your investments via reputable sources, focus on quality, watch your downside, and reinvest free cash flow to compound your returns.

However, a recent survey conducted by CFA Institute found a very different mind-set among Gen Z inves-

tors. Those attitudes were forged in the fire of the Covid lockdowns from 2020 to 2022. Today they are shooting through our financial system, creating pressures that could cause problems down the road.

Our survey found that Gen Z is comfortable taking substantially more financial risk than previous generations were. In fact, they believe it's necessary, with fully half of them saying they were comfortable taking significant financial risks to achieve their wealth goals. They told us that taking those risks is necessary because they believe the economic conditions they face are more challenging than at any other time in history.

That doesn't strike my boomer ear as historically correct, but the reality almost doesn't matter. It's their perception, and it's shaping their behavior.

Gen Z also has a surprising degree of confidence in its financial knowledge. Almost half said they knew more about investments than their parents, and about a third said they were very or extremely confident in their ability to make financial decisions.

But at the time of the survey, Gen Z's No. 1 investment product was cryptocurrency. You'd think perhaps the remarkable risk inherent in that asset class, combined with the significant valuation beating it took, would have dented the Gen Z financial mind-set. But with crypto's remarkable rebound, apparently little has changed.

The "FIRE" mind-set—short for "financial independence, retire early"—is prevalent among Gen Z investors. It's certainly an admirable goal, but they're willing to take lots of financial risk to achieve it.

It appears, again, that the loss of freedom from the Covid-era lockdowns—and perhaps the repeated cries of existential threats due to climate change, war, and political strife—has shaped a generation that now sees traditional market investments as less predictable and less trustworthy than previous generations did. The best-laid plans can still run into a pandemic or climate catastrophe, as many apparently see it.

The downfall of traditional media sources and the rise of the internet,

social media, and "influencers" are also making these views more pronounced. Whereas books, magazines, and newspapers once provided a steady stream of well-vetted data and comprehensive markets coverage for investors, a very large proportion of Gen Z investors turn to TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for financial news. They carry minimal, if any, ethical codes or standards.

Too many of the information sources Gen Zers turn to are openly paid for by third parties that induce influencers to share financial "advice." That in turn may be creating a trust problem for the long-term health of the financial services industry.

For companies seeking to serve Gen Z investors, the path ahead could carry substantial business risk. Gen Zers prefer transacting via the web versus phone or face-to-face conversations with a broker, advisor, or wealth manager. There's less chance for certified individuals to influence customers.

For an earlier generation of investors, a banker or broker would generally know the customer's background, and they'd often have a fiduciary responsibility to them—a duty of loyalty and care. These intermediaries would have regulatory responsibilities and be overseen by regulatory bodies that watch for signs of misconduct.

But apps don't have duties of loyalty and care to investors.

What, if anything, should be done about it? Regulators may need to impose some kind of conduct standards on unregulated finance apps, and advertising masquerading as social media content may need better disclosure rules. Financial service companies need better customer education and communication, while acknowledging the reality that customers' delivery preferences have changed. And the overall education system needs a hard look for ways to improve financial and media literacy.

There are no magic solutions for a time of high disruption and lowered trust. But a concerted effort by regulators, educators, financial services companies, and investors themselves could help stave off further market distortions and future crises. **E**

MAILBAG

A Tale of Two Titans: Ackman vs. Buffett

To the Editor:

While reading "Bill Ackman Wants Your Money. Should You Buy Pershing Square USA?" (June 7), I couldn't help but think about the differences between investing alongside Bill Ackman at Pershing Square Capital Management versus Warren Buffett at Berkshire Hathaway. With Buffett, you invest in Berkshire Hathaway stock, and your investment results at the end of the year are the same as Buffett's. If you invest in one of Ackman's various investment vehicles, because of the management fees that he charges his investors, Ackman comes out much better off at the end of the year versus his investors.

For now, I'll stick with Buffett while wishing Ackman and his investors the best of luck going forward.

Thomas J. Kloepfer
Buffalo Grove, Ill.

When to Claim Benefits

To the Editor:

Elizabeth O'Brien's article about claiming Social Security early discusses the break-even age, which is the age you must reach to make claiming at 70 years of age the better option compared with claiming at 62 ("The Best Reason to Claim Social Security Early," Retirement, June 5). Most online break-even calculators show the break-even age to be about 79 for someone born in 1960. A scenario not discussed in detail is if claiming at 62 allows you to not withdraw from your retirement portfolio an amount equal to your Social Security benefit. The amount left in your portfolio increases in value over time and, added to your benefits received, increases your break-even age. If you have an average return of 7% on your portfolio, this will increase your break-even age to about 85.

Joseph Kelly
Grapevine, Texas

Weeks of Due Diligence

To the Editor:

Thanks for the great article, and so nice, for a change, to see *Barron's* pointing out problems with annuities rather than pushing them ("Annuities Are Soaring in Popularity. They're Not All as Safe as They Seem," June 7).

I have two annuities, and they have been very good investments. However, no one should invest in an annuity without weeks of study and examination. Annuities can provide specific solutions to specific problems. They aren't the Golden Fleece, unless you like getting fleeced.

Ernest Montague
On Barrons.com

Contract Renegotiations

To the Editor:

Regarding "Investing in Sports Has Arrived. Here's the State of Play" (June 7), I'm reminded of what San Diego Chargers owner Eugene Klein once opined when asked which sport he liked most. Without hesitation, the owner of top-class racehorses answered, "That's easy—horse racing." When asked why, he responded, "I've never had a horse come into my office and want to renegotiate its contract!"

Bill Greenstein
On Barrons.com

Send letters to Mail@Barrons.com.

To be considered for publication, correspondence must bear the writer's name, address, and phone number. Letters are subject to editing.

The Barron's Daily is our morning briefing for what you need to know for the day. Sign up at barrons.com/newsletters.



MANSION GLOBAL SELECT LISTINGS

ALL-NEW NEWSLETTER

Awe-inspiring
homes delivered
to your inbox

Subscribe today at
Mansionglobal.com/newsletters



 | DOW JONES **SMART MONEY**

Get smarter with your money.

Be ready for every step of your money
journey with knowledge and insights from
our collection of Dow Jones publications.

Curated by experts. Made for you.



Learn more at
www.dowjones.com/SmartMoney

