

## What's News

### Business & Finance

◆ **A combination of** the highest bond yields in a generation and a desire to cut risk elsewhere in their portfolios has investors pouring record amounts of money into both indexed and actively managed bond funds. **A1**

◆ **Major U.S. stock indexes** ended mixed, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq both advancing 0.1%, while the Dow industrials fell 0.1%. **B11**

◆ **A decade after** Amazon.com paid nearly \$1 billion to acquire live-video startup Twitch Interactive, the retail giant has received little financial return from one of its bigger acquisitions. **B1**

◆ **Lenders are seizing** distressed commercial properties at the highest rate in nearly a decade, a sign the sector's punishing downturn is entering its next phase and approaching a bottom. **B1**

◆ **Shares of EV maker** China Evergrande New Energy Vehicle fell sharply after creditors of two of the company's units asked a court to begin bankruptcy proceedings. **B2**

◆ **Shares in Heineken** fell 10% after the Dutch brewer reported weaker-than-expected earnings and wrote down the value of a big investment in China. **B3**

◆ **Royal Philips's earnings** exceeded expectations and the company's order intake turned positive for the first time in two years, lifting shares 14.6% in Amsterdam. **B3**

◆ **The U.K. government** dropped plans by its predecessor for a retail sale of its remaining stake in NatWest, the bank it rescued during the 2008-09 financial crisis. **B3**

### World-Wide

◆ **Thousands of Venezuelans** marched toward the presidential palace to protest Maduro's claim that he had won the presidential election, as opposition leaders said they had evidence of fraud and it was being shared with foreign governments. **A1**

◆ **Biden called for** a constitutional amendment overturning the Supreme Court's recent decision awarding former presidents immunity for crimes they commit while in office, and endorsed proposals for a mandatory ethics code and 18-year term limit for justices. **A4**

◆ **The gunman who tried** to assassinate Trump began making dozens of gun-related purchases and acquiring bomb-making materials more than a year ago, FBI officials said. **A3**

◆ **France's interior minister** said he suspected far-left saboteurs were behind the burning of rail lines that paralyzed the country's high-speed train network as the Summer Olympics began. **A5**

◆ **Iran is seeking to harm** Trump's presidential campaign in covert online influence operations, fearing a return to power by the Republican nominee would inflame relations with Washington, U.S. intelligence officials said. **A4**

◆ **A teenage boy with a knife** attacked a children's dance and yoga class in northwest England, killing two children and wounding 11 other people, police and witnesses said. **A5**

◆ **Firefighters were helped** by improving weather in the battle against wildfires covering large areas and leaving a trail of damage in the western U.S. **A3**

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## U.S. Men's Team Raises Bar, Medals After 16 Years



**SWING SHIFT:** Brody Malone took his turn on the parallel bars on Monday during the artistic gymnastics men's team final at the Paris Games. The U.S. took the bronze, its first medal in the event since 2008. More Olympics coverage, **A11-A12**

## Venezuelan Strongman's Claim Of Win in Vote Sparks Protests

BY RYAN DUBÉ AND KEJAL VYAS

CARACAS, Venezuela—Thousands of Venezuelans marched Monday evening toward the presidential palace to protest strongman Nicolás Maduro's claim that he had won Sunday's presidential election, while opposition leaders said they had evidence of fraud and that the information was being shared with foreign governments.

"Our triumph is historic," opposition candidate Edmundo González told reporters late Monday. "We've won in places where the democratic forces had never won in the last 25 years."

Though the National Electoral Council said the government controls said Maduro took 51.2% of the vote, the opposition said its election monitors had acquired 73% of ballot tabulation sheets from polling stations and would soon make them public on a website.

Those sheets show that González received 6.3 million votes, not the 4.4 million that electoral officials said he garnered, compared with 2.8 million for Maduro, according to the opposition.

Opposition leader María Corina Machado, who had been banned from running in the election but rallied support behind González, said that the opposition's network of volunteer election monitors had created a database by scanning and digi-

tizing physical tally sheets that the opposition obtained. Voters will be permitted to use their IDs to see if the way their votes were cast correspond.

Foreign governments, she added, have been scrutinizing the platform.

"We won it all," Machado said, challenging the government to make its results public. She said the margin of votes favoring the opposition was so great that Maduro had no way

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## Election Triggers Battle of the Sexes

Men and women under 30 grow far apart in their view of which party should govern

BY AARON ZITNER AND ANDREW RESTUCCIA

Collin Mertz, a 23-year-old farmer in North Dakota, believes American men like himself have been targeted by liberals in the push for diversity.

"It would seem the white male is the enemy of the left," said Mertz, who voted for former President Donald Trump in 2020 and plans to do so again in November.

Lauren Starrett, a 28-year-old engi-

neer in Cincinnati, feels a personal threat from conservatives seeking to scale back access to abortion and other rights. "It's kind of terrifying, really," said Starrett, who backs Vice President Kamala Harris.

The forces of American culture and politics are pushing men and women under age 30 into opposing camps, creating a new fault line in the electorate and adding an unexpected wild card into the 2024 presidential election.

Voters under 30 have been a pillar of the Democratic coalition since Ronald Reagan left office in 1989. That pillar is showing cracks, with young men defecting from the party.

Young men now favor Republican control of Congress and Trump for president after backing President Biden and Democratic lawmakers in 2020.

Women under 30 remain strongly behind Democrats for Congress and the

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## Bond Funds Draw In Record Amounts

Investors poised for rate cuts, retirees looking to lower risk drive ETF inflow

BY JACK PITCHER

The stock market may be roaring, but 2024 has been Wall Street's year of the bond fund.

Bonds are paying the highest yields in a generation, and interest rates are poised to come down. Meanwhile, a record number of retirees are looking to cut risk in their portfolios. That combination has investors pouring money into both indexed and actively managed funds. Wall Street is seeing dollar signs.

U.S.-listed fixed-income exchange-traded funds have taken in nearly \$150 billion through late July, a record through this point in a year. When looking at mutual funds and ETFs together, taxable bond funds were responsible for nearly 90% of net U.S. fund inflows in the first half, according to Morningstar.

After more than a decade of paltry bond yields, and just two years removed from the worst year for bonds on record, the combination of high rates and falling inflation offers investors a rare opportunity for investment income. Rick Rieder, who oversees more than \$2 trillion as BlackRock's chief investment officer for fixed income, is calling the current period "the golden age of fixed income."

A crucial factor shifting bond prices is investors' expectations for short-term interest rates. When the Federal

*Please turn to page A2*

Yield on the Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate bond index



Source: FactSet

## Utilities Scramble To Bolster Power Grid

BY PHRED DVORAK

Extreme weather is putting power supplies around the U.S. to the test. Energy companies are racing to find answers.

Hurricane Beryl knocked out power for millions in Houston and surrounding areas this month. CenterPoint Energy, the city's main utility, took nearly two weeks to get power completely restored.

This year, floodwaters washed away an electric substation in Minnesota, while central states experienced at least four major tornado and windstorm outbreaks that left hundreds of thousands of customers without power.

Energy companies are working to adapt to record-setting temperatures, floods and windstorms, as climate models forecast the weather will keep getting wilder. But researchers caution that the effects of global warming and

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## INSIDE



**PERSONAL JOURNAL** Summer stresses can cause you to lose that lovin' feelin'. How to recapture the mood. **A9**



**BUSINESS & FINANCE** McDonald's says sales sputtered as diners cut back on fast-food spending. **B3**

## When Two CFOs Get Married, Who Does the Taxes?

Family finances can be tricky when chiefs share the same household

BY MARK MAURER

Andrew and Saori Casey helped their son move into a New York City apartment in June as he prepared to start a job after graduating from the University of Chicago. From the perspective of two chief financial officers, the milestone

in part represented a cost savings right on target: a person coming off their payroll.

"We paid for his school. Now we're looking for the ROI," Saori says with a smile.

Family finances can be tricky when two chief financial officers share the same

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## Hezbollah Backing For Gazans Boosts Clout in Lebanon

BY OMAR ABDEL-BAQUI AND ADAM CHAMSEDDINE

BEIRUT—Ahed Bahar grew up loathing the Shiite Muslim militant groups that killed his father during Lebanon's civil war. A Sunni Muslim who lives in a Palestinian refugee enclave on Beirut's outskirts, Bahar now hangs the banner of the most powerful Shiite militants, Hezbollah, and its main state backer, Iran.

The reason: Hezbollah's battle with Israel in what it bills as solidarity with Palestinians during the war in Gaza.

"Shiites are fighting for the Palestinian cause, while Sunni leaders across the Middle East are doing nothing," Bahar said.

For years, Hezbollah built up political and military power in Lebanon over the objections of many of the country's Sunni Muslims, Christians, Druze and other religious groups. Now, after Lebanon's financial collapse ushered in years of political instability, the U.S.-designated terrorist group is garnering

support for its confrontational posture toward Israel—even as the fighting risks an all-out war that every major faction in the fractured country says it desperately wants to avoid.

The weekend rocket strike on a Druze-majority town in the Israel-controlled Golan Heights that killed 12 children shows how easily the country could be pulled closer toward all-out war. The killings set off a firestorm in Israel and domestic demands for a heavy retaliation, as diplomats led by the U.S. rushed to head off a new spiral of conflict.

Israel and the U.S. have accused Hezbollah of carrying out Saturday's strike. Hezbollah said it had nothing to do with the deaths but had bragged about conducting a dozen attacks on Israeli military targets that day, including in that area.

Hezbollah has the world's best-armed nonstate militia

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# U.S. NEWS

## Utilities To Bolster Power Grid

Continued from Page One  
current extreme-heat conditions still aren't well understood, making solutions hard to come by.

New York utility Consolidated Edison is trying to stay ahead of weather risks by working with New York state and Columbia University to predict what effect climate change could have on its operations and systems. In mid-July, a heat wave and surge in air-conditioning use caused some of the company's underground power cables to fail in Harlem.

Con Edison's latest climate-risk study, released last year, said all types of severe weather—from flooding to heat waves—are expected to increase in intensity or severity. Temperatures are likely to rise faster than it projected four years before, with levels that were expected in 2040 now coming a decade earlier, the study said.

Con Edison's engineers took those predictions and applied them to its electric systems to model its potential increase in equipment-failure rates, which go up as the temperature rises, says Christopher Jones, chief engineer for the company's electric distribution system. To help protect the system, Con Edison is planning to add switches to its underground network that would limit the spread of any failures.

The company is also proposing to counter increased flooding by replacing hundreds of underground transformers and circuit breakers with units that work underwater. It is stringing tough underground electric cables in place of about 100 miles of overhead power lines to reduce damage caused by storms blowing down trees and poles.

"Everything that you're doing has to be built for the future climate," says Nelson Yip, Con Edison's director of climate resilience.

### Unclear science

Bad weather is hitting more frequently across the country and costing a lot more now than in previous years, according to the U.S. government.

Over the past five years, the U.S. has seen an average of 20 weather-related disasters a year with a price tag of \$1 billion or more, adjusted for inflation, compared with a 43-year average of 8.5, according to data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. There have already been 15 such disasters this year



Utility crews worked to restore electricity in Houston earlier this month after Hurricane Beryl knocked out power for millions in the city and surrounding areas.

through June.

Severe weather is the No. 1 cause of power outages nationally, and a major factor in grid problems of all kinds.

Researchers say it will get worse. Although the exact effects of climate change on today's weather aren't clear, many scientists say it has made some weather events—such as heavy precipitation, droughts and heat waves—more severe and more frequent.

If greenhouse-gas emissions continue to increase at a high rate and global warming progresses, residents of Houston could experience a 72% rise in the number of major power outages toward the end of the century compared with now, according to a recent study by the Electric Power Research Institute and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

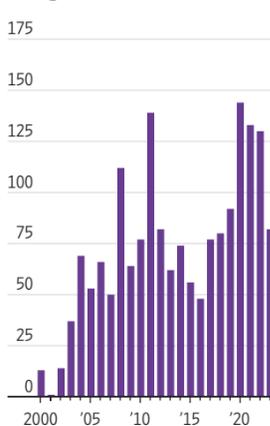
"If companies don't adapt to better withstand hurricanes, we will see worsening outages," says Andrea Staid, a researcher at EPRI.

### Heat and storms

Last year was declared the hottest year since global records began, and many forecasters are saying this year could surpass it.

While heat doesn't tend to knock out power like storms do, it stresses nearly every part of an electric-supply chain. It lowers the performance of everything from gas-

Weather-related major power outages in the U.S.



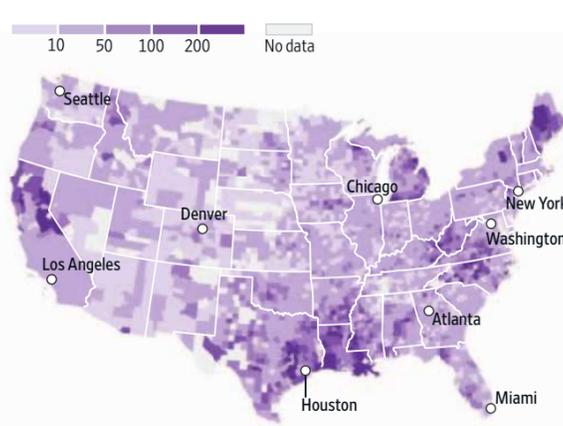
\*Reported outages are for every 15-minute period. Customers per county as of 2022. Sources: Climate Central (major outages); Oak Ridge National Laboratory (outages per customer)

fired generators and wind farms (their turbines won't spin as freely) to nuclear plants (their cooling systems won't work as well) to electric wires (they could overheat and sag too much).

Utilities deal with those risks in part by building extra capacity into their systems so they can meet demand at the highest expected temperatures.

Some companies in especially-hot areas such as Arizona are asking vendors to make sure new components can operate at an average daily temperature of as much as 122 degrees Fahrenheit, rather than the current industry standard of around 104, says Andrew Phillips,

Average annual reported power outages per customer, 2019-23\*



\*Reported outages are for every 15-minute period. Customers per county as of 2022. Sources: Climate Central (major outages); Oak Ridge National Laboratory (outages per customer)

EPRI's vice president of transmission and distribution infrastructure.

Storms are another big problem because they are expected to increase in severity and frequency. That means utilities, grid operators and power-plant owners will have to spend a lot more on things such as strengthening electric poles, transmission towers and other infrastructure, says Ed Hirs, an energy economist and fellow at the University of Houston.

A lot of Hurricane Beryl's damage to Houston's power lines likely came from trees and shrubs that were hurled by powerful winds; CenterPoint said it had removed more than 18,600 trees as it

struggled to restore power. Vegetation causes roughly 30% of power outages in the U.S., estimates Josh Wepman, who advises on energy-industry challenges at Leidos, a defense and technology company.

Figuring out which trees are a threat to power lines and removing them is tough and expensive, he says, particularly because there are so many of them over a large area. Many outages are caused by trees that are outside of the areas where utilities have the right to cut, says Wepman.

Meanwhile, hailstorms have become a big source of damage for solar farms during the past few years, causing hundreds of millions of dol-

lars in losses for insurers. As a result, renewables insurer GCube and others have increased rates and lowered caps on hail claims.

Two years ago, a hailstorm hit the huge Prospero solar farm in West Texas. The plant's solar panels were rocked by gale-force winds and baseball-size hail, with some areas clocking as many as 9,000 strikes.

Prospero suffered more than \$30 million in damage and lost about 16% of its power capacity, even though it was using new technology to protect panels from hail.

Now Longroad Energy is building a solar plant near its Prospero project with more advanced and expensive hail protection. The new plant will be one of the first to mount its solar panels on Nextracker racking that can tilt 75 degrees rather than the current 60.

That steeper angle will hopefully limit damage from hailstones even bigger than the ones that hit Prospero, although nobody will know for sure until the next big storm hits, says Michael Alvarez, Longroad's chief operating officer.

"At almost every project, we get some sort of record that has broken—it's the most rain, the most snowfall, the most whatever," says Donny Gallagher, vice president of engineering at Solv Energy, which built the Prospero project for Longroad.

## Bond Funds Thrive

Continued from Page One  
Reserve began to raise rates in 2022, investors flocked to cashlike investments. Now, as Wall Street bets that rate cuts this year are all but certain, investors are looking toward bonds instead, grabbing for yields that have already started to descend as bond prices rise.

"We're seeing people move out of cash and into bonds," Rieder said. "Cash has been flipping a lot of yield, but now there's a sense that the Fed is going to start lowering rates and that opportunity won't be there anymore."

Bond funds have been a bright spot for a money-management industry that has struggled to contend with the growth of passive investing and a steep fall in management fees. While investors have largely begun to shun actively managed stock funds, bond pickers are thriving.

Of nearly 1,700 actively managed bond funds tracked by Morningstar, 74% beat their

benchmark indexes during the past year. Active bond ETFs are already at an annual inflow record with five months to go. And money managers are trying to cash in with a host of new active fund offerings. Average ETF fees—long on the decline—actually rose in 2023, according to Morningstar, because so many active funds with higher fees were launched.

Investors big and small are buying a variety of fund categories, some riskier than others. Index-tracking Treasury ETFs have become a favorite tool for Wall Street traders to make interest-rate bets. Investors betting that rate cuts will

soon boost bond prices plowed \$6 billion into long-term Treasury ETFs in June alone, representing 7% of their assets at the start of the month.

Actively managed funds investing in junk-rated corporate debt with high yields have also raked in money. The most popular active fixed-income ETF this year, Janus Henderson's **AAA CLO ETF**, invests in collateralized loan obligations—securities made of bundles of low-rated corporate loans.

Many investors are also buying plain-vanilla funds focused on total returns from the highest-rated debt, welcoming the fact that even the safest returns finally feel meaningful.

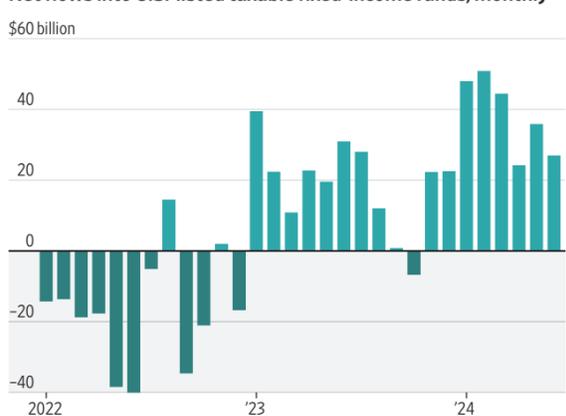
Todd McConachie, a 62-year-old retired corporate-risk analyst in Portland, Ore., said he has moved a substantial portion of his stock-heavy retirement portfolio into bond funds over the past year and a half.

He now owns funds that buy highly rated corporate bonds and higher-yielding junk bonds, along with U.S. Treasuries bought directly through the government's Treasury-Direct platform.

"When rates were so low, I held some total-bond-market index funds and didn't pay much attention, happy to clip coupons and get 3%," McConachie said. "Now it's like, 'Whoa, some of these funds are 7.5% payouts and I can double my cash flow from interest payments.'"

All the enthusiasm marks quite the reversal from 2022.

Net flows into U.S.-listed taxable fixed-income funds, monthly



Source: Morningstar Direct

Rising interest rates crushed bond funds, sending the Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate bond index down a record 13%. Stocks fell, too, stinging investors who had expected bonds to cushion their portfolio during market turbulence. The classic 60% stocks, 40% bonds portfolio had its worst year since the Great Depression.

Wall Street thinks that is all done with, and analysts argue that now is the time to get back in before benchmark rates come down again, and with them the payouts on bonds. Derivatives traders are now pricing in a roughly 100% chance the Fed will cut rates in September, and the benchmark 10-year Treasury yield has dropped more than three-quarters of a percentage point since peaking at around 5% in October.

"The interest this year has been quite broad-based," said Matthew Bartolini, head of Americas research for State Street's ETF business. "Flows have been so large and to so many different products. They're coming from institutions, wealth managers and retail traders."

Another simple explanation for this year's big bond-fund numbers: The bull market that has generated windfall gains in people's stock portfolios, pushing investors to shift some money into bonds to balance out their risks.

"Just because the stock market has been beating up on bonds for so long, people are needing to buy more bond funds when they go to rebalance," said Ryan Jackson, senior manager research analyst at Morningstar.

## CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

**The personal-consumption** expenditures core price index rose 2.6% in June. A U.S. News article on Saturday about the data said that core PCE inflation, rather than the index, rose 2.6%.

**In a photo** with an Off Duty article on Saturday about well-worn caps, South African cricketer Dean Elgar wore a cricket cap. The caption incorrectly called it a baggy green, which is the name of the caps Australian cricketers wear.

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## U.S. NEWS

# Trump Shooter Got Guns Over A Year Ago

BY SADIE GURMAN  
AND C. RYAN BARBER

WASHINGTON—The gunman who tried to assassinate Donald Trump began making dozens of gun-related purchases and stocking up on bomb-making materials more than a year ago, FBI officials said Monday, the strongest indication yet that he had long planned the attack.

Thomas Matthew Crooks made 25 different gun-related buys online between spring 2023 and the first half of this year, and bought material used in explosives six times, officials said, offering new glimpses into their far-ranging investigation into the July 13 shooting at a campaign rally in western Pennsylvania.

FBI officials said Crooks, 20 years old, searched online for information about power plants, mass-shooting events, improvised explosive devices and the May assassination attempt on Slovakia's prime minister, said Kevin Rojek, the FBI special agent in charge in Pittsburgh.

"While the FBI's investigation may not have yet determined a motive, we believe the subject made significant efforts to conceal his activities," Rojek said. "Additionally, we believe his actions can also show careful planning ahead of the campaign rally."

Crooks made the purchases online using an alias and collected the chemicals and gun equipment in the home he shared with his parents in Bethel Park, Pa., about an hour south of the rally site. But they weren't alarmed because he had long been interested in science and experiments, Rojek said.

"The parents have said in their interviews that they had no advanced knowledge of any of this," Rojek said, adding that Crooks's parents have been credible and cooperative.

Multiple investigations are ongoing into how Crooks was able to open fire with an AR-15 rifle from the roof of a building roughly 400 feet away from where Trump spoke, killing one spectator, critically injuring two others and leaving the former president with a graze wound to the ear. A Secret Service sniper team shot back, killing him.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has interviewed more than 450 people, including dozens of Crooks's co-workers, family members and former classmates.

On Monday, Rojek said Trump had agreed to be interviewed as part of the shooting probe. "We want to get his perspective on what he observed, just like any other witness to the crime," Rojek said. "It is a standard victim interview like we would do for any other victim of crime."

In studying Crooks, the FBI has been able to piece together a picture of a highly intelligent loner who attended college and held down steady work at a nursing home and whose primary social circle was limited to his immediate family. But his motive remains murky.

The FBI has requested information from 86 companies as it examines online accounts associated with Crooks, but he appears to have had few interactions with others, officials said.

Crooks's interest in shooting began as a hobby and progressed to formal firearms training courses.

He registered to attend Trump's rally in Butler, Pa., on July 6, three days after the former president's campaign announced the event. The same day, he searched online for details about the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, querying, "How far away was Oswald from Kennedy?"

Crooks went to the rally site the next day and spent about 20 minutes in the area, including around the American Glass Research building, to conduct what law-enforcement officials believe was early surveillance. On the day of the shooting, he gained access to his rooftop firing position by scaling HVAC equipment and a pipe.

# Aging Employees Keep Rural Towns Afloat

Cash-strapped and lacking young labor, small governments face worker crunch

By JON KAMP

ASHLAND, Maine—This tiny town in northern Maine gets by these days because of people like Lendell Tarr.

Tarr, the recreation director, runs the town's sports programs and drives Little Leaguers to away games. He also cleans the town office, takes seniors out for meals, mows the cemetery lawn and can pitch in driving ambulances and school buses.

The challenge for Ashland, population about 1,200: Tarr is 65 and says that "fishing is calling me." Town manager Cyr Martin can't imagine finding enough people, or money, to fill the void.

"He just can't retire," Martin said. "There's no way I could have another Lendell doing the lawns, the bus driving."

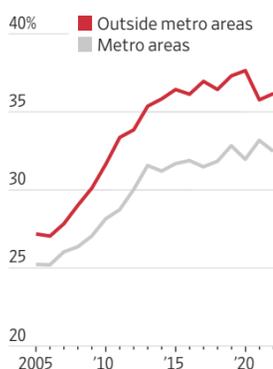
The challenge of both finding and affording workers faces small governments around the U.S., and often leaves those still there to pick up the slack. Jessica Jimmo, 32, who grew up in Ashland, is the town's deputy clerk, assistant librarian and a volunteer

firefighter for the Ashland Fire Department, where she serves with family including her mother and sisters. Several other multitasking workers are at least a generation older, including Tarr and David Milligan, 56, who is both a police officer and Ashland's town code enforcer.

Martin, 59, has pulled double-duty as Ashland's police chief for years. He also served as chief in nearby Washburn before stepping down this year. Stymied by hiring struggles, that town voted in June to disband its police department and rely on county and state law enforcement.

In Texas, roughly two-thirds of cities with 3,000 to 5,000 residents are missing a finance director, according to the Texas Municipal League. And nearly all of the hundreds of Texas cities with fewer than 3,000 people are missing one, too.

## Share of local-government workers who are age 55-74



Note: Excludes teachers in kindergarten through 12th grade.  
Sources: Census Bureau; IPUMS/University of Minnesota

Other city employees who might not have financial-management experience often end up filling in, said Bennett Sandlin, the league's executive director. One consequence is cities that go without audits, raising the chances of uncorrected bookkeeping errors, he said. The league is working on a remote bookkeeping program that would aim to have retired finance officers manage a handful of cities remotely.

Federal data show the public-sector workforce outside metro areas skews older, which increases the pressure to replace retiring workers. Local officials and government associations in many states say they face a persistent challenge to find qualified employees who want to work in a small town's office.

Rural areas have long struggled to hang onto—or recruit—young residents launching their careers. Small-town officials say they face particular hurdles when it comes to offering competitive salaries to compete for workers.

"They're not as interested in starting in a small Texas town like Muleshoe," Sandlin said, referring to the city of about 5,000 people near the New Mexico border.

Boosting salaries is one way state and local governments that can afford such moves

## Rural areas have long struggled to hang onto young residents.

have eased some hiring strains, the firm MissionSquare Research Institute found. There are also signs of a cooling job market, which might ease some private-sector competition.

More strain looms ahead: The new survey data found 54% of respondents expect their largest number of potential retirements among baby boomer-age workers in the next few years. Also, 37% of respondents said they had hired back their already-retired employees.

"We're going to have to get aggressive about attracting the next generation of workers to our towns," said Cara Woodson Welch, chief executive of the Public Sector HR Association, whose members are among those surveyed.

The research firm has found that hiring challenges span big cities and small towns alike. But such shortages can be especially visible in small towns while chipping away at the hands-on services that residents rely on. Small government offices are places where locals can pay taxes, get dog licenses or complain about potholes in person, often to a neighbor standing behind the counter.

"People love their local control," said Ryan Pelletier, the administrator for Maine's Aroostook County, which includes Ashland and features a vast expanse of rolling hills, potato farms and dense forest abutting Canada. The county, which is bigger than Connecticut and Rhode Island, yet home to fewer than 70,000 people, is checked with communities that have strug-



Ned LaBelle Jr., left, who serves as assistant fire chief and a paramedic in Ashland, Maine, shown this month with son-in-law Corey DeBoth, who is a firefighter and EMT.



Jessica Jimmo is an assistant librarian, deputy clerk and volunteer firefighter in Ashland.



David Milligan is both a police officer and a code enforcer in Ashland.

gled to find employees.

"As you can't fill positions, you're going to see more regionalization of services, whether by choice or by force," Pelletier said.

Maine is the state with the nation's oldest population, with a median age of about 45. Several rural counties, including Aroostook, have significantly older populations.

Limestone, a town abutting Canada's border, is still smarting from an Air Force base closure decades ago. More recently, Limestone has struggled with retaining town managers and has lost services.

The town closed its ambulance service years ago, contracting it out to nearby Car-

bou for less money. Last year, the police department closed, and the town redirected funding toward roadwork.

Losing those services has hurt, but they were expensive, and the town couldn't find qualified officers to provide round-the-clock coverage, interim town manager Alan Mulherin said. He said that, without police regularly nearby, there is more speeding and drug activity, but also less confusion about whom to call now that state and county officials are officially in charge.

The 67-year-old—a retired U.S. Customs and Border Protection agent—joined the town council last year. Within months, he was thrust into the manager role to fill yet-an-

other opening. He said he's trying to help repair what he described as bookkeeping issues that stemmed from government instability.

Martin, the police chief and manager, is worried about whether Ashland can maintain its tiny force. He has lost officers to higher-paying towns, sometimes after paying for training. More immediately, he has to try to replace Ashland's retiring highway foreman.

For now, at least, town workers are plugging the holes, said Sherri Calhoun, a teacher and town councillor.

"It's keeping us afloat," she said.

—Adolfo Flores  
and Paul Overberg  
contributed to this article



# Some Progress Is Made Fighting Massive Fires

Firefighters were helped by improving weather in their battle against wildfires that have left a trail of damage in the western U.S. Further evacuations, nonetheless, were necessary as thousands of personnel tackle the flames.

The Park Fire, the largest wildfire in California this year and the sixth largest in the state's recorded history, was one of more than 100 large, active wildfires burning in the U.S. on Monday. More than 27,000 wildland firefighters and support personnel are assigned to the wildfires, which have burned more than 3,200 square miles nationwide, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Some of the fires were sparked by the weather, with climate change increasing the frequency of lightning strikes as the western U.S. endures blistering heat and bone-dry conditions.

The Park Fire, which spanned more than 575 square miles of inland North-

ern California, had scorched an area greater than the size of the city of Los Angeles, destroying more than 100 structures and threatening 4,200 more, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Winds and temperatures were expected to increase slightly amid a drop in humidity, officials said Monday. Air-quality alerts were issued in the northwestern U.S. and western Canada.

Firefighters, such as the one pictured, set a backfire on the eastern front of the Park Fire, near Chico, Calif.

A man arrested on suspicion of starting the Park Fire by pushing a burning car into a gully appeared in court Monday and was charged with felony arson of an inhabited structure or property.

The National Weather Service issued "red flag" warnings for swaths of Idaho, Montana, Utah and Wyoming, in addition to parts of California.

—Associated Press

U.S. NEWS

# Biden Pitches Supreme Court Overhaul

### Measures would set ethics code, term limit for justices, overturn presidential immunity

By Jess Bravin

President Biden called Monday for a constitutional amendment overturning the Supreme Court's recent decision awarding former presidents immunity for crimes they commit while in office—and endorsed proposals for a mandatory ethics code and 18-year term limit for justices.

"In recent years, extreme opinions that the Supreme Court has handed down have undermined long-established civil rights principles and protections," Biden said, speaking at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas. He cited decisions that the court's right-leaning majority views as landmark achievements, including rulings that limited federal voting-rights protections, overturned *Roe v. Wade* and ended affirmative action in college admissions.

"Most recently and most shockingly," Biden said, July's 6-3 decision in *Trump v. U.S.* "almost certainly means that a president can violate their oath, flout our laws, and face no consequences."

Former President Donald Trump appointed three of the six justices who voted to provide him immunity from at least some of the charges brought by special counsel Jack Smith over Trump's alleged attempt to overturn the 2020 election.

"The court asserted it was making a ruling for the ages," Biden said, protecting all future presidents from the risk of post-



President Biden made his proposals at the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, Texas, on Monday.

retirement retribution from their political opponents. To the contrary, "the court made a ruling for one," Biden said, without naming his predecessor.

"No other president in our history has asked for this kind of immunity for criminal actions," he said.

Biden is a latecomer to the court-reform cause, having for years resisted calls from progressives for action to rein in a deeply conservative court that has thwarted Democratic initiatives from fighting climate change to providing debt relief for student borrowers.

Trump told Fox News: "There's no way he would write off immunity for a president...it's going nowhere."

Bills for term limits and an ethics code on the court have been pending for months, if not years. Last week, Rep. Joe Morelle (D, N.Y.) and other House

Democrats introduced a proposed constitutional amendment denying criminal immunity to federal elected officials.

Monday's speech encapsulated progressive frustrations over the court that have been boiling since 2016, when Senate Republicans refused to let President Barack Obama fill the seat vacated by the death of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia. Biden cited that event, and accused Republicans of hypocrisy when they expedited the confirmation of Trump nominee Amy Coney Barrett after liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died in 2020.

"I have great respect for our institutions and the separation of powers laid out in our Constitution, but what's happening now is not consistent with that," Biden said. "Extremism is undermining public confidence in the

court's decisions," he said.

There is little chance Biden's measures will advance before the November elections, but with public approval of the court at historic lows, Democrats believe the proposals will resonate with voters. Vice President Kamala Harris, the likely Democratic nominee for president, issued a statement backing Biden's proposals.

Republicans have dismissed criticism of the court as resentment from Democrats unhappy with its decisions.

"This proposal is the logical conclusion to the Biden-Harris Administration and Congressional Democrats' ongoing efforts to delegitimize the Supreme Court," House Speaker Mike Johnson (R., La.) said on social media. He called Biden's plan "dead on arrival in the House."

The Senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.),

said: "Why is the Biden-Harris administration so willing to put the crown jewel of our system of government—the independent judiciary—to the torch? Because it stands in their way."

Biden, a former chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has criticized specific court decisions, but had been reluctant to attack the institution even as it veered sharply to the right after Trump replaced liberal and more moderate justices with staunch conservatives. In his first year in office, Biden appointed a commission to study questions about the court's structure but took no action after it filed a lengthy but little-read report.

Biden also cited reports raising questions about some justices' ethics, including vacations a wealthy benefactor provided to Justice Clarence Thomas.

"The court is mired in a crisis of ethics," Biden said, calling for a binding code of conduct.

Because the Constitution provides life tenure to justices, it is unclear whether Congress could devise a way to impose term limits on the Supreme Court. And while justices have complied with financial disclosure laws, some members of the court have questioned whether Congress can impose rules on a coequal branch of government.

Absent from Biden's plans was a clearly constitutional option: Increasing the number of justices so that the court's ideological majority could be diluted, as some progressives wish.

Amendments to the Constitution must be passed by two-thirds votes of each house of Congress, or by a convention called by two-thirds of state legislatures, then ratified by three-fourths of the states.

## U.S. WATCH

### ELECTION 2024

#### Officials See Iran Undercutting Trump

Iran is seeking to harm Donald Trump's presidential campaign in covert online influence operations, fearing a return to power by the Republican nominee would inflame relations with Washington, U.S. intelligence officials said Monday.

U.S. spy agencies have "observed Tehran working to influence the presidential election, probably because Iranian leaders want to avoid" increased tensions with the U.S., an official with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence said in a press briefing.

The assessment of Iran's election preferences marked a shift from a view shared by American intelligence agencies just a few weeks ago, when they said that Tehran was chiefly focused on acting as a "chaos agent" in the election.

The officials didn't assert directly that Tehran was seeking to undermine Trump, but said that its current operations aligned with its goals before the 2020 election, when it sought to harm Trump's candidacy.

"Iran does not engage in any objectives or activities intended to influence the U.S. election," a spokesman for the Iranian mission to the United Nations in New York said.

—Dustin Volz

### IOWA

#### Abortion Ban After 6 Weeks in Effect

Iowa's strict abortion law went into effect Monday, immediately prohibiting most abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant.

Iowa's Republican leaders have been seeking the law for years and gained momentum after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. The Iowa Supreme Court also issued a ruling that year saying there was no constitutional right to abortion in the state. "There is no right more sacred than life," Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds said in June. "I'm glad that the Iowa Supreme Court has upheld the will of the people of Iowa."

Across the country, four states now ban abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy, and 14 states have near-total bans at all stages of pregnancy.

Iowa's abortion providers have said they would continue to operate in Iowa in compliance with the new law. Sarah Traxler, Planned Parenthood North Central States' chief medical officer, called it a "devastating and dark" moment in state history.

—Associated Press

### WISCONSIN

#### Absentee Ballot Challenge Rejected

A Wisconsin judge dismissed a lawsuit Monday that challenged absentee voting procedures, preventing administrative headaches for local election clerks and hundreds of thousands of voters in the politically volatile swing state ahead of fall elections.

The ruling stems from a suit Thomas Oldenberg, a voter from Amberg, Wis., filed in February. Oldenberg argued the state Elections Commission hasn't been following a state law that requires voters who electronically request absentee ballots to place a physical copy of the request in the ballot return envelope. Absentee ballots without the request copy shouldn't count, he maintained. Commission attorneys countered in May that language on the envelope that voters sign indicating they requested the ballot serves as a copy of the request.

—Associated Press

### MINNESOTA

#### Wild Mushroom Poisoning Calls Rise

The warm, soggy summer across much of the Midwest has produced a bumper crop of wild mushrooms—and a surge in calls to poison control centers.

At the Minnesota Regional Poison Center, calls from April through July more than tripled over the same period last year, said Samantha Lee, the center's director. The center took 90 calls for potential exposures over that period, compared with 26 calls for the same months in 2023.

—Associated Press



Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, left, with Vice President Kamala Harris in Philadelphia. He is among a handful of people being vetted to be her running mate.

# Shapiro, Eyed for Ticket, Backs School Vouchers

By Matt Barnum and Andrew Restuccia

For a prominent Democratic governor, Pennsylvania's Josh Shapiro has staked out an unusual position that has broken with decades of party orthodoxy and put him at loggerheads with teachers unions: supporting private-school vouchers.

"It's important that we lift up all God's children, and we give special attention to those who are poor kids in struggling school districts," Shapiro told *The Wall Street Journal* in a December 2023 interview, explaining his decision to endorse a proposal that would have provided public money to parents for private educational costs.

Now, as one of a handful of candidates being vetted to be Vice President Kamala Harris's running mate, his history of advocating for school choice is getting a closer look, with some public-education advocates arguing that it disqualifies him.

Democratic strategists said Shapiro's independent streak could resonate with Republican and moderate voters. And local union leaders are standing behind him.

A Fox News poll released Friday of Pennsylvania, a key swing state, found 61% of voters there had a favorable view of Shapiro, the highest of any politician in the survey.

Last week, more than two dozen small pro-public education groups sent a letter to Harris urging her not to

**Governor Sought Program in Pennsylvania, Then Vetoed It**

Gov. Josh Shapiro hasn't been able to get his favored school choice scholarship program done in Pennsylvania.

After working alongside Pennsylvania Republicans on the \$100 million voucher program, he ultimately vetoed it last summer because Democrats widely opposed it and the issue threatened to complicate passage of the state's budget.

Shapiro has said he continues to favor the proposed program, which would be earmarked for students zoned to attend schools with low test scores, but it wasn't included in this year's budget either.

Some Republican critics

choose Shapiro as a running mate.

"He is far too supportive of school privatization to be the vice president," said Beth Lewis, a public-school activist in Arizona, who helped organize the letter.

Meanwhile, national teachers unions have avoided publicly criticizing Shapiro as Harris weighs whether to tap him as her No. 2.

A senior labor leader, granted anonymity to speak candidly, said if Shapiro is selected, he would be expected to toe the Democratic Party platform on vouchers. A draft of the 2024 party platform viewed by the *Journal* explicitly opposes private-school vouchers.

Shapiro's party-bucking stance on schools could offer political benefits to Harris. "Any time you break from your party, regardless of the issue, voters tend to be receptive to that," said Pennsylvania Demo-

cratic consultant Mike Mikus. Manuel Bonder, Shapiro's spokesman, said the governor secured \$1.1 billion in new public education funding in the recently passed state budget. "Josh Shapiro has been a champion for public education and delivered real results," Bonder said.

Union leaders and other public-education advocates in Pennsylvania have risen to Shapiro's defense. In a letter released Friday to "our Democratic Brothers and Sisters," dozens of local unions praised Shapiro as having "the backs of working people."

The two statewide teachers unions signed onto the letter, despite strongly opposing the governor's voucher proposal. Shapiro, in his 2023 interview with the *Journal*, bristled at the commonly used term for publicly funded private-school choice. "It's not a voucher; it's a scholarship," he said. Although the terms are often

used synonymously, some choice advocates prefer to use the word "scholarship" because it tends to poll better than vouchers.

Shapiro said his initiative isn't a voucher because public schools would see an increase in funding under his plan.

Nikhil Goyal, a Democratic National Convention delegate from Vermont and former education adviser to Sen. Bernie Sanders, said he would have "grave concerns" about Harris picking Shapiro "when we have a great desire to win over educators and school staff and Americans who support public education."

Shapiro's view on schools sets him apart from some other contenders for the vice presidential nomination. Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear has vetoed private and charter school choice bills. North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper declared a metaphorical "state of emergency for public education" in

a clash with the Republican legislature over expanding vouchers.

Recently, several Republican-led states have created or vastly expanded programs that use public funding to subsidize private schooling. The number of K-12 students using a voucherlike program has soared to close to one million, nearly doubling in just a few years, according to an analysis by EdChoice. Public school enrollment stands at roughly 50 million children.

Advocates say vouchers extend choice to families to leave public schools that are ineffective or that teach left-wing ideas about race and gender.

Democrats have traditionally opposed vouchers as draining money from the public school system, entangling church and state, and subsidizing discrimination. Some in the party have been more supportive of charter schools as an alternative way to expand choice in education.

Harris herself has said relatively little about school choice issues during her career, but in a 2017 speech on the U.S. Senate floor, she criticized a Trump education proposal that she described as a "voucherlike system." The Biden administration has opposed vouchers while seeking to cut funding for a federal charter school startup program.

Donald Trump has vowed to create "universal school choice," though he hasn't specified how he would do so.

—Scott Calvert contributed to this article.

# WORLD NEWS

## French Far-Left Suspected in Rail Sabotage

More vandalism hits nation's fiber-optic and train networks following initial act

By NOEMIE BISSEBEE

PARIS—France's top cop said Monday he suspects far-left saboteurs were behind the burning of rail lines last week that paralyzed the country's high-speed train network as the Summer Olympics began.

"We have identified a number of profiles of people who could have committed these very deliberate and targeted sabotages," France's Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin told French radio. The

saboteurs cut and burned signaling cables at three sites around the country's rail network in a coordinated and targeted attack that caused chaos on high-speed lines just hours before the opening ceremony of the Games.

"This is the traditional mode of action of the ultra-left," Darmanin added.

Darmanin spoke after France was hit overnight by what French officials described as another act of vandalism against core infrastructure. Police said fiber-optic networks of at least three telecommunications operators were vandalized Sunday night in several regions across the country, disrupting landline and cellular services.

A spokeswoman for the Paris prosecutor's office said it was considering combining the investigations into the acts of sabotage. She declined to comment on whether far-left groups could be behind either of the acts. It is unknown whether the two incidents are connected.

The spree of vandalism marks a rocky start for the Games in France, where authorities have rolled out the largest peacetime security operation in the country's history, with more than 70,000 police, soldiers and

security guards to shield the country from myriad threats ranging from Islamist terrorist groups to sabotage by far-left activists or adversaries such as Russia.

### The spree of vandalism marks a rocky start for the Olympic Games.

Moscow has been a particular concern for French security officials. The International Olympic Committee has banned Russia from sending to Paris a team under its name and flag because of the invasion of Ukraine.

Tensions between France and Russia have increased in recent months as President

Emmanuel Macron emerged as one of the West's leading hawks against Moscow.

Authorities haven't detained anyone as part of the railroad investigation. Whoever committed the sabotage, Darmanin said, their motives remain unclear.

"The question is whether these people have been manipulated by others, or whether it's for their own benefit," he added.

On Sunday, police detained a man suspected of planning another act of sabotage against the rail network, after a train conductor alerted authorities. Police said they found in the suspect's vehicle a hammer, a screwdriver and a set of wrenches that can open the technical premises

of the rail operator. A spokeswoman for the authorities said there was no evidence the incident was related to last week's acts of sabotage.

Authorities said the rail sabotage didn't affect the opening ceremony or the Games, which began on July 24 and will end on Aug. 11.

Tens of thousands of vacationers, however, were stranded over the weekend because of disruption on the high-speed lines connecting to Paris from the north, southwest and east.

Many were Parisians who were encouraged to leave the city to make room for the millions of fans visiting the capital for the Olympics. Railroad traffic was back to normal Monday.

## Teen Kills Two Children and Wounds 11 Other People in U.K. Knife Attack



Bloodied children ran screaming from a dance and yoga class "like a scene from a horror movie" to escape a teenager's savage knife attack that killed two children and wounded 11 other people Monday in northwest England, police and witnesses said.

A 17-year-old boy was arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder in the stabbing in Southport, a seaside town near Liverpool, Merseyside Police said. Police said detectives weren't treating the attack as terrorism-related.

Nine children were wounded—six of them in critical condition—in the latest headline-grabbing attack amid a recent rise in knife crime that has stoked anxieties and led to calls for the government to do more to clamp down on bladed weapons.

Two wounded adults who tried to shield the pupils were in critical condition, police said. "We believe the adults who were injured were bravely trying to protect the children

who were being attacked," Merseyside Police Chief Constable Serena Kennedy said.

The Taylor Swift-themed workshop was held on the first week of school vacation for children ages about 6 to 11. The session was led by two women—a yoga instructor and a dance instructor—according to an online listing.

The suspect, who hasn't been identified, lived about 5 miles from the site of the attack, police said. He was originally from Cardiff, Wales.

Ryan Carney, who lives with his mother in the street, said his mother saw emergency workers carrying children "covered in red, covered in blood. She said she could see the stab wounds in the backs of the children."

Britain's worst attack on children occurred in 1996, when a man shot 16 kindergarten pupils and their teacher dead in Dunblane, Scotland. The U.K. subsequently banned the private ownership of almost all handguns.

—Associated Press



## Bringing Communities of Support to Students

At Communities In Schools, we place knowledgeable and caring adults inside schools. These site coordinators surround students with a community of support to ensure they have access to everything they need to engage in learning, graduate, and succeed in life. We are there for them fostering life skills, providing mentor support, academic enrichment and resources like school supplies, meals, and access to technology.

See how we go all in for kids at [CommunitiesInSchools.org](https://www.CommunitiesInSchools.org)

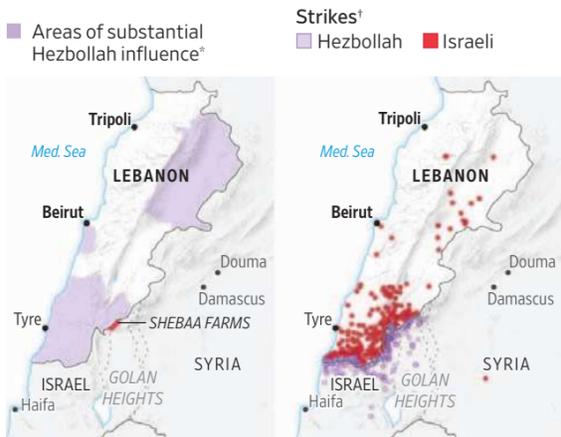


# WORLD NEWS



Pictures of Hezbollah militants who were killed in Lebanon by Israeli forces after Oct. 7 are displayed in a Beirut suburb.

Border clashes between Israel and Hezbollah are intensifying.



Hezbollah has significantly increased its military capabilities in the last two decades.

Hezbollah and Israel have engaged in a restrained level of fighting since October that risks spiraling into all-out war.

\*As of 2021. †From Oct. 8, 2023, to July 25. Sources: RANE (Hezbollah influence); The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (strikes)

EMMA BROWN / WSJ

## Hezbollah Gains Clout In Lebanon

Continued from Page One and is by far the most powerful force in Lebanon, larger and more experienced than the country's U.S.-funded army. It holds seats in the country's Parliament and controls swaths of Lebanese territory, where it is effectively in charge of security and social services. And Hezbollah now has fewer domestic political constraints, as many Lebanese turn their ire toward Israel and its war in Gaza.

"There is now no real opposition to the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon," said Fares Souaid, former head of the March 14 Alliance, a defunct

political coalition that included several Christian and Sunni parties opposed to the group.

Lebanese are constantly aware of the risk of another war in their small country, which has seen frequent fighting over the past 50 years. Bullet holes scar buildings in Beirut, a reminder of Lebanon's past conflicts. Israeli military jets surging overhead warn of a new clash that could break out at any moment.

Support for Hezbollah's confrontational approach could dissolve in a war. Most Lebanese Christians and Sunni Muslims don't fully trust the group or think its involvement in regional politics is good for the Arab world, according to a survey conducted between February and April by research center Arab Barometer. A more destructive conflict with Israel would likely deepen those divisions and could leave many Shiites angry with Hezbollah for dragging them into war.



A pool in Shatila, an enclave of Palestinian refugees in Beirut, where Hezbollah recently has been gaining support.

Israel and Hezbollah both say they want to avoid a war. Even so, it is a constant risk with their daily exchanges of fire, as each side pulls off more-provocative attacks and as Israel comes under heavy internal pressure to eliminate threats to its northern towns.

Hezbollah began lobbing rockets across the border after the Hamas-led Oct. 7 attacks on Israel—which left around 1,200 people dead and took 250 people hostage, according to Israeli authorities—saying it was helping to defend Palestinians in Gaza. That position is popular in Lebanon, even among Sunni Muslims who would otherwise be at odds with Hezbollah's Shiites.

Most Palestinians are Sunni Muslims, and Hamas, a militant group aligned with Hezbollah and backed by Iran, is a Sunni Islamist group.

Hezbollah officials say their military operations are intended to pressure Israel into a

cease-fire deal in the Gaza Strip, where health authorities say more than 39,000 people have been killed, mostly civilians, without saying how many were combatants. The group also wants to deter Israel from operating in Lebanon and to win the return of land captured by Israel in previous conflicts that it says belongs to Lebanon.

The group's back-and-forth strikes with Israel have followed a broad logic. Most fire is exchanged within a narrow band of targets on either side of the border. When Israel kills an important member of the group—it has killed more than 300 Hezbollah operatives since Oct. 7—Hezbollah responds with deeper strikes, bigger missiles or new technologies, such as a drone that fires missiles. It has also taunted Israel by publicly releasing drone-surveillance footage of military bases and cities in northern Israel.

Two Hezbollah field commanders said that for months

the militant group pulled many rank-and-file troops from Lebanon's southern border, and rotated in specialized forces trained for more-surgical operations. The idea was to conduct strikes without setting off a full-scale war, the commanders said.

With the exception of the strike on the soccer field, both sides have avoided heavy targeting of population centers and creating large numbers of civilian casualties. Israel hasn't hit Hezbollah's most senior leadership. The risk is that one side or the other could miscalculate and set off a bigger conflagration.

"We are not in favor of an all-out war for many reasons," said Ibrahim Mousawi, a member of Lebanese Parliament representing Hezbollah. "But if the Israelis do something that does necessitate a response, Hezbollah has made all the preparations needed for such a war."

A war between Israel and Hezbollah would create levels of damage and civilian casualties in both countries, said Jonathan Conriscus, a former Israeli officer who was a combat commander in Lebanon and, earlier in this war, a spokesman for the military.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who advocated attacking Hezbollah early in the war, told The Wall Street Journal that if necessary, the military could "copy-paste" the destruction it has wrought in Gaza to Beirut.

Much of southern Lebanon already feels like a war zone. Near-daily Israeli strikes have displaced about 100,000 Lebanese, caused severe damage to homes and infrastructure, and killed about 465 people including at least 100 civilians, according to the United Nations.

Mahmoud Reslan has been staying in a shelter after he and his children fled their home in Odaiseh, a village on the Lebanon-Israel border. He left in December as the area was bombarded and returned just once to check on his home.

"My house was destroyed, and the village was completely empty of the people and life that everyone there cherished and misses," said Reslan, 51. "It will take me months to save up and rebuild my home whenever the war does end."

Tens of thousands of Israelis have also been displaced from northern Israel as a result of the fighting, which has destroyed some towns. At least 20 Israeli soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed as of July 22, according to Alma Research and Education Center, a non-profit.

Hezbollah emerged in the 1980s during the Lebanese civil war and an Israeli invasion that led to a multiyear occupation. The group has called for the destruction of Israel and has fought the state since its founding. Domestically, Hezbollah has advocated for historically marginalized Shiites and has provided social services.

## Israel Detains Reservists On Abuse Allegations

By ANAT PELED AND FELIX SOLOMON

SDE TEIMAN MILITARY BASE, Israel—The military raided one of its own prisons in southern Israel on Monday, detaining nine Israeli reservists on allegations they abused a Palestinian prisoner who had been held at the facility.

The Monday raid sent shock waves through Israel and spurred right-wing protesters and politicians to descend on the site and breach the gates of the facility, furious that Israel was holding its own forces in the middle of a war. Protesters also stormed a separate military facility where the reservists from Sde Teiman were taken for questioning.

The Israeli military said the reservists were taken into custody as part of an investigation into "substantial abuse of a detainee," without providing details. The Palestinian Authority alleged, without providing evidence, that the abuse was sexual in nature. The Israeli military declined to comment further about the probe.

The military has used the Sde Teiman facility to hold Palestinians captured after the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attacks. But amid allegations of abuse that have been building for months, the government has said it would return the facility to its original purpose of initial screening of detainees and send prisoners to other facilities. It significantly has reduced the prison population, but hasn't fully implemented the plan.

Human-rights groups allege that Palestinian detainees at Sde Teiman are denied due process and subject to abuse.

The Israeli military said in May that it rejected allegations of systematic abuse at the detention facility. The Israeli military said earlier this year that the military police opened criminal probes into the deaths of 36 detainees that took place in the facility.

Sde Teiman is a military base that was partially converted into a detention center after Oct. 7 for detainees from Gaza. Hundreds of Palestinians are known to have been held there in the past nine months, according to the Association for Civil Rights, an Israeli nonprofit that spearheaded a petition to shut down the site.

The facility is run by the military, not the prison service, which typically oversees detention centers.

## Venezuela Vote Sparks An Outcry

Continued from Page One to bridge the gap.

Caracas residents cheered and banged pots after the opposition's claims, with many shouting "Freedom!" from their apartment windows. The development increased pressure on the regime to allow public scrutiny of the election results.

The U.S., European Union and Latin American nations have pressured the Venezuelan government to address widespread accusations of fraud after polls showed Maduro would suffer a defeat of more than 25 percentage points against González.

"I haven't stopped crying," said Coromoto Blanco, a 70-year-old in Caracas who joined the protests. "We have a new president. We can't allow Maduro to continue because he just wants to."

Many of the protesters came from the poor barrios here that were once strongholds of Maduro's movement, contrasting with previous protests that were driven by the middle-class. People took to the streets to block roads with burning tires and trash. Many chanted, "This government is going to fall!"

Luis Cuello, a 36-year-old protester, said the tide was unstoppable. "The barrios have risen up. Let's see what they are going to do now."

Senior U.S. administration officials expressed "serious concern" that the announced results didn't reflect the true vote count, but declined to say precisely what the U.S. would do in response.

They demanded that Maduro release more-detailed vote tallies and said the U.S. pressure, along with concern of its allies and neighbors of Venezuela in Latin America, would have to be taken seriously by Maduro.

The Biden administration has "serious concerns that the result announced doesn't reflect the will or the votes of the Venezuelan people," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. "The international community is watching this closely and will respond accordingly."

Allegations of vote fraud threaten to upend more than two years of rapprochement efforts between the Maduro government and the U.S. and its allies, and cast the oil-rich South American nation back into financial and diplomatic isolation.

In the U.S., both Democratic and Republican lawmakers expressed alarm.

"We're deeply concerned by Maduro's declaration that he won the presidential election in Venezuela despite evidence to the contrary," Sen. Tim Kaine (D., Va.) and Rep. Joaquín Castro (D., Texas) said.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R., Fla.), said the election was a stain on the Biden administration's efforts to encourage Maduro to hold a democratic election by easing economic sanctions. "It was a complete fraud," Rubio said of the vote.

Nine Latin American na-



Demonstrators protested the vote count Monday in Caracas.

tions, including Argentina, Ecuador and Peru, issued a joint statement on Monday demanding an audit of Venezuela's election results with the presence of independent observers.

They said they would request an urgent meeting at the Organization of American States, a regional body made up of 34 countries in the Western Hemisphere and based in Washington, to discuss a response to fraud allegations.

"The Maduro regime should understand that the published results are difficult to believe," said Chilean President Gabriel Boric, a leftist who has been critical of Maduro. "Chile won't recognize any results that can't be verified."

Venezuela broke off diplomatic ties with seven of the Latin American nations that had called for transparency with the vote result. The Foreign Ministry said it was expelling diplomats from Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Panama, Uru-

guay and the Dominican Republic, and calling its diplomats in those nations back from those countries. The Foreign Ministry accused those nations of being "subservient to Washington."

The European Union's foreign-policy chief, Josep Borrell, also called for Venezuela to grant access to voting records, saying there are "credible reports" of irregularities.

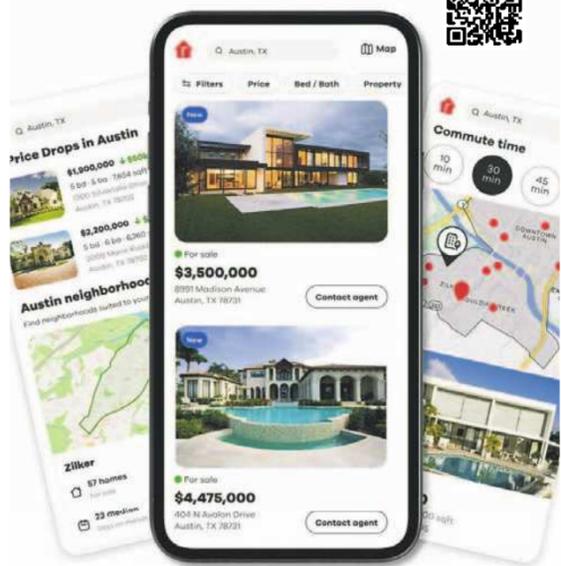
Some leading governments that share Venezuela's ideological position avoided criticizing Maduro. Bolivian President Luis Arce and Honduran President Xiomara Castro accepted the results. Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said he was waiting to see voting data before commenting.

### Watch a Video

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FROM PAGE ONE

# Households With Two CFOs

*Continued from Page One*  
household. Some CFO power couples avoid talking about their personal finances and, after long days at the office, prefer to outsource it, akin to chefs who order a pizza when they get home. Others, armed with their finance backgrounds, get more involved. Saori Casey became the second CFO in her marriage in January when wireless-speaker maker Sonos appointed her to the role after more than a decade as a finance executive at Apple. Her

husband, Andrew Casey, already held the title at cloud-security company Lacework, his second CFO job. But at home, they are far from masters of their finances. The Caseys initially tried to manage their investments themselves until they realized they hadn't checked their 401(k)s or rebalanced their portfolio in roughly a year. About a decade ago, they hired an investment adviser. "Because we're focused on our work, we have concluded we're terrible at personal finances," Saori says, referring to investments. Andrew interjected: "Maybe not terrible." "At home, I'm in the minutiae and at work I'm a little higher level," Brad says. "At work, Kelly's more in the minutiae and at home...she's not involved." Brad Sikorski, CFO at Walton Enterprises, the investment vehicle for the family behind Walmart, and his wife, Kelly Sikorski, CFO at the Bar-

code Group, a marketing agency, have an agreement about the home finances: Brad does all of it. Brad handles the bills, taxes, stocks and other investments such as the couple's stake in a property-management business in Costa Rica. He enjoys it, and she doesn't. "If left to my own devices, all of our money would just be sitting in mutual funds, and I would just never pay attention to it," Kelly says. "I don't even know how much I get paid every two weeks." "At home, I'm in the minutiae and at work I'm a little higher level," Brad says. "At work, Kelly's more in the minutiae and at home...she's not involved." The Sikorskis, who live in Bentonville, Ark., met in business school at Northwestern University and worked to-

gether at Walmart for years. They have been married for nearly 20 years and have three children in high school. With budgetary autonomy comes high-end taste: Brad likes to expand his collection of Buffalo Trace bourbons and California Cabernet Sauvignon wines, both of which Kelly says they could stand to cut back on. "It's gotten a little bit to the point where we have too much expensive wine and not enough cheap wine," Kelly says, adding running shoes are her biggest vice. (She's accumulated nearly 30 pairs.) "I don't want to open a \$150 bottle of wine on a Wednesday, right?" Jess Merten, CFO of insurance giant Allstate, and Amanda Merten, CFO of food service at packaging maker Pactiv Evergreen, take an ac-

tive approach to personal finances. Jess and Amanda maintain separate accounts and each pay certain bills, but from a pool of joint money. Amanda handles cellphone payments, and Jess is in charge of water, in part stemming from accounts they had before they were married. They pay for the mortgage on their Lake Bluff, Ill., home, together. "I think of it as tracked separately but managed collectively. It just works for us," says Amanda, of the couple who have been married 11 years. Jess used to handle the family's taxes, but about three years ago, hit a breaking point when making calculations around converting a house into a rental property as well as their respective stock-based compensation. The work grew too complicated and time-con-

suming and the couple, both certified public accountants, had to turn to a fellow CPA to take over. The Merten household includes three children, two in college and one in high school, but the accounting bug didn't catch on. "That's a hard no," Jess says. That doesn't mean their kids are free from hearing them tell accounting jokes, on topics including the LIFO/FIFO methods of reporting inventory. "You can turn anything into a LIFO/FIFO joke that Amanda and I probably would be rolling on the floor about, that our kids and friends don't understand at all," Jess says. "I told Jess a funny joke that my son was giving me a hard time about: Why did the CPA quit accounting?" Amanda says. "Because it's an accrual world."

# Election Pits Men Vs. Women

*Continued from Page One*  
White House. They are also far more likely to call themselves liberal than two decades ago. Before Biden ended his candidacy this month, Trump was winning support from a majority of men under age 30, according to a merger of Wall Street Journal polls in February and July. If that holds until Election Day, Republicans would win young men for the first time in more than two decades, voter exit polls show. Young men backed Trump over Biden by 14 points in the merged Journal polls this year, a substantial swing from 2020. In that election, they supported Biden by 15 points, according to AP VoteCast, a voter survey. Young women in the Journal surveys backed Biden by 30 points and Democratic control of Congress by 34 points, essentially unchanged from 2020.

The gender gap extends to opposing views of abortion, student-loan forgiveness and other issues affecting the lives of young adults. The question now is whether Harris, the expected Democratic nominee, will recapture the support of young men or push more of them away. Harris's candidacy removes Biden's age, 81, as a voter concern and instead spotlights social, economic and policy issues driving young men and women apart. Trump, 78, now facing a 59-year-old female opponent, has long tailored much of his campaign to appeal to younger men with shows of virility.

**Tough talk**  
Days after an attempted assassination, Trump headlined the Republican National Convention, which featured an on-stage appearance by celebrity wrestler Hulk Hogan. "I've been in the ring with some of the biggest, some of the baddest dudes on the planet," Hogan told the cheering crowd. "Trump is the toughest of them all." Ultimate Fighting Championship Chief Executive Dana White introduced Trump ahead of his nomination acceptance speech. The testosterone-fueled lineup, coming on the heels of Trump's fist-pumping response to bullets flying past him, "positions Trump as an anti-hero that millions of young men—specifically, young, first-time voters—connect with and even aspire to," said John Della Volpe, director of the Harvard Youth Poll.

Mertz, the North Dakota farmer, said he was more excited to vote for Trump, in part because of the way the former president handled the assassination attempt, captured in photos of Trump after the shooting. "The American flag is in the background, and there's blood on his face," Mertz said, "I mean, it just looks pretty badass." Following Trump's decision to tap Sen. JD Vance (R., Ohio) as his running mate, a 2021 video of Vance resurfaced online in which he appeared to dismiss Harris and other Democrats who don't have biological children as "a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives." The video went viral, showing a wide gap between the candidates about the status of



Clockwise from top left: Maggie Kelso, 30 years old, at her home in Sharpville, Pa.; Lauren Starrett, 28, in Cincinnati; Collin Mertz, 23, on the Mertz Farm north of Hurdsfield, N.D.; Harrison Wells, 22, at his family home in Menlo Park, Calif.



Clockwise from top left: Stephanie Strasburg for WSJ; Maddie McGarvey for WSJ; Lewis Arelinger for WSJ; Ian Bates for WSJ

women and further galvanizing support for Harris, according to her supporters. Harris, the expected Democratic nominee, is pressing her party's argument that the wave of new state abortion restrictions strips fundamental rights from women. The issue is far more salient issue for women than for men, Journal polls found. The gender divisions reflect the increasingly different experiences of American women and men in their 20s, as well as campaign messages. Women now make up a record 60% of college students and carry 66% of all student-loan debt. They support the Biden administration's push to forgive student loans more than young men do, Journal polling found. In recent years, women coming into adulthood lived through events many saw as an affront: Trump's crude remarks about women aired during the 2016 campaign, the Senate confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court amid sexual-assault allegations against him, and the high court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade. "What we're worried about is our rights being taken away," said Maggie Kelso, a 30-year-old resident of Sharpville, Pa. "If I had to guess why a lot of women are leaning very strongly toward more liberal issues, it's that we're afraid."

Kelso said she feels a mix of optimism about Harris's candidacy and fears that a Black woman of South Asian descent will fail to break the status quo. "If Americans re-elect Trump, it would say that this country would rather be afraid of change, afraid of taking a step forward," said Kelso, a horseback-riding instructor and children's entertainer. Polling last week by the Journal found Harris leading

Trump among young voters by about 10 percentage points, less support than Biden drew from the group in 2020. The sample size was too small to measure how voter preferences differ by gender among those under 30.

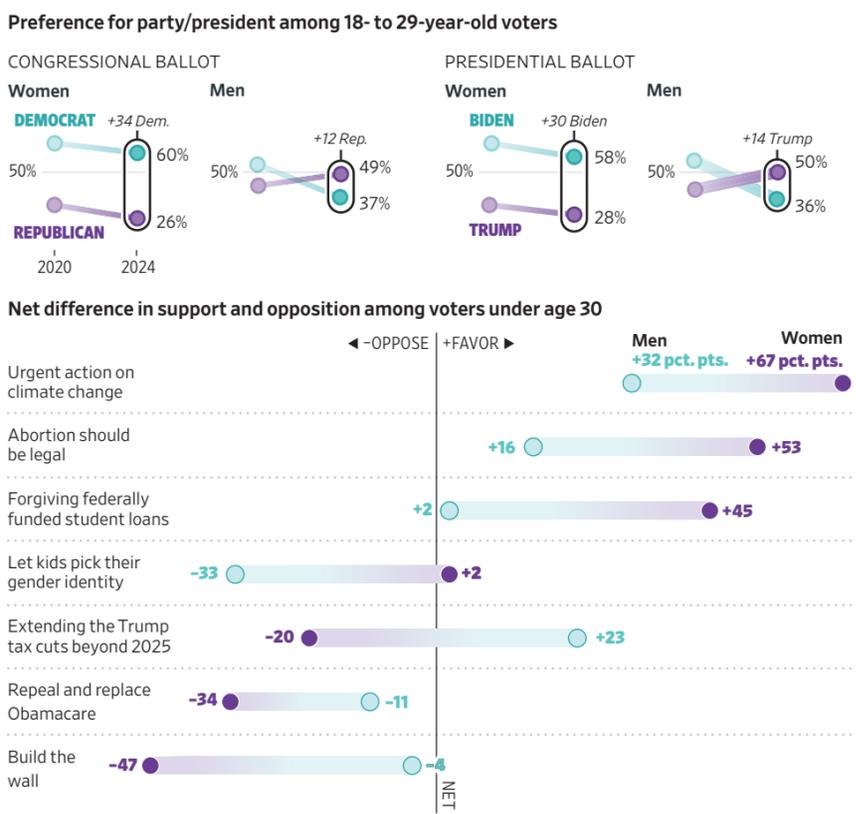
### Falling behind

Some men say they have lost economic, cultural and political influence to women. In certain U.S. cities, young women are outpacing young men in median annual income and are more likely than young men to live apart from their parents. A larger share of women under 30 are reaching financial independence compared with young women

in 1980, according to the Pew Research Center, while fewer young men are reaching that milestone compared with four decades ago. The Democratic push for diversity is making them more likely to vote for Republicans, some men said. An April survey by the Pew Research Center found that 23% of men—and 33% of men who backed Trump—believed the advancement of women has come at their expense. Biden successfully pressed for trillions of dollars in federal spending on infrastructure construction, semiconductor manufacturing and other sectors that traditionally employ men. Yet young men maintain an overwhelm-

ingly negative view of him, Journal surveys found. Vincent Lester, a 19-year-old landscaper in northeast Ohio, said liberals have failed young men like him by imposing what he called purity tests that alienate people with differing views. "A lot of young men are leaning toward the right," said Lester. The shift toward Trump includes Black and Latino men. Young Black men had backed Biden over Trump by about 70 percentage points in 2020, and Latino men backed Biden by more than 40 points, according to AP VoteCast. Journal polls found support for Biden shrank this year before the president withdrew from the race, leaving him

with a narrow lead, as small as in the single digits, among nonwhite men. Young white men have leaned Republican in the past and showed signs of shifting in greater numbers to the GOP this year. Some men interviewed said they were fearful of criticism by women and expressed their resentments only in private and with other men. Several said they hide their conservative views because women they know have said they won't date right-leaning men. Other men say they are drawn to the so-called manosphere, a loose collection of male influencers who espouse macho, "anti-woke" views. The hyper-masculinity of the right, many of them said, is at the core of its appeal, not policies or party politics. "Young men just want freedom, recklessness, adrenaline," said Lester, who kickboxes in his spare time. In February, Trump showed up at a sneaker convention in Philadelphia, where he hawked his own brand of \$399 "Never Surrender" high-tops. In June, he strode into an Ultimate Fighting Championship event in New Jersey. On Trump's TikTok account recently, the former president posted a mock face-off with Logan Paul, the widely followed social-media-personality-turned-boxer. Many young people said their political views hardened years before they could vote. "Even back in 2016, when I was a 12-year-old trying to make sense of my place in the world and one of the candidates for president was making crude remarks toward women about their body parts—even at that age I felt it wasn't right," Isabelle Ems, a 19-year-old at Penn State said of Trump. Harrison Wells, 22, said Trump's 2016 campaign initiated his shift to the political right. He recalled being confused by the apoplectic reaction from teachers and students to Trump's victory. His high school canceled classes and held listening sessions with students. "People were crying, upset," he said. "Everyone was hysterical." The experience crystallized growing skepticism of his private Catholic high school outside Menlo Park, Calif., which organized lectures about the importance of access to abortion and contraceptives and celebrated transgender visibility. "I felt as though there was a narrative and certain school of thought that was being pushed on us aggressively," said Wells. "That was what made me think and start learning more about politics." He led a chapter of a conservative group, Young Americans for Freedom, at the University of Wisconsin and voted for Trump in 2020. He sides with the former president on the economy, taxes and immigration. Journal polling found that young men are open to Trump policy proposals that young women reject. That includes Trump's idea to deploy troops to the U.S.-Mexico border and to deport millions of undocumented immigrants. Ems, the Penn State student, cited widely viewed TikTok videos showing women being asked if they would rather be stuck in the woods with a man or a bear. Most women picked the bear, reasoning that a man might be more dangerous. Ems wasn't sure which she would pick—though the bear, she said, could well be the safer bet.





**WORK & LIFE**  
**RACHEL FEINTZEIG**

Sick of managing people? Maybe you should stop. So many of us stumble into being the boss, or raise our hands because it feels like the only way to get ahead. We're attracted to the cachet of the title, the promise of more money or the comfort of having a ladder to ascend.

Then come the performance reviews to write, the team drama to adjudicate, the meetings to attend. The job keeps getting harder. Managers oversee nearly three times as many people today as they did in 2017, according to data from research and advisory firm Gartner. Nearly one in five managers says that, given a choice, they'd prefer not to oversee people.

"That's what we call buyer's remorse," says Swagatam Basu, a senior director in Gartner's human-resources practice.

You can switch back. And your company might be amenable. More are "unbossing" their workplaces by shrinking middle-management layers.

The trick is figuring out a way to maintain your pay and influence. In some companies, the number of people you manage is a proxy for your power. Others now use special individual-contributor tracks, meant to ensure that technical experts have a set path to climb.

You might have to give something up. Making the shift could still feel like a relief.

"It was like, oh, I don't have to deal with the people issues," says Suzet McKinney, an executive at Sterling Bay, a Chicago real-estate company. She'd served in leadership positions before. When she started her current role in 2021—no pay cut required—she figured she'd eventually hire direct reports and build out a team. Then she realized she didn't miss it.

"Managing people would be more of a distraction," she says.

### Making the ask

Dennis Henry, an engineering director overseeing about 45 staffers, was hungry to move to the next managerial rung at software company Okta last year. Then his supervisor explained that would mean even less time to do the technical work he loved. It made the 38-year-old wonder: Did he want to be a boss at all? "What would hurt more?"



## Hate Managing People? It's Time to Give It Up

How to shed the headache of supervising without losing pay and power

Henry asked himself. Giving up managing or giving up coding? The latter felt unfathomable.

He pondered what he'd want if he left management entirely and became an individual contributor, ranking priorities. Maintaining his base salary—just shy of \$300,000—was tops. He told his boss that he was happy to stay in his current role if a new opportunity didn't pan out.

"You have to be ready to hear 'no,'" the Orlando, Fla., resident says.

He got a yes: The company created a new job for him and preserved his pay. After 15 years as a manager, carving out a new kind

of authority has been a transition.

As a boss, "I could just say, 'Do this,'" he says. Now he spends more time amassing evidence for his ideas, making his case.

"It is so much harder to convince people that something is the best option," he says.

### The stress of managing

Jenny Blake's mental health took a dive after she was promoted to team lead at Google at age 24. She felt stressed and emotionally drained, deeply responsible for her team but beholden to decisions from above, like a department reorganization ordered up by executives.

A 2024 survey from SHRM, a lobby for human-resources professionals, found that 40% of respondents said their mental health declined when they took on a managerial or leadership role.

Blake switched to an individual contributor job, spending several years rolling out new programs she felt had a much bigger impact than her management. Now an author and speaker focused on careers and business, she recommends broaching the transition conversation by laying out your unique strengths and how they can better serve the company in a new role. Don't dwell on your distaste for managing people.

Want to ensure the shift isn't a demotion? Make sure you're staying close to parts of the business that are directly tied to revenue, she says. Build your reputation externally, speaking at conferences and publishing papers.

"Become an industry expert," she says.

### The reality of switching

Just because a company touts opportunities for individual contributors to grow doesn't mean you'll be able to rise to the top unimpeded. A former consultant at a professional-services firm told me that partners who didn't have their own teams were treated like second-class citizens.

At Launch Potato, a digital-media company based in Delray Beach, Fla., the individual-contributor track tops out several levels below the executive level. Even on the lower rungs, managers have the opportunity to make higher salaries and bonuses than commensurate individual contributors, says Kristopher Osborne, the company's senior vice president of talent.

"You are getting paid a premium to deal with a lot more issues and challenges," he says of managers. "People have to be realistic."

He recommends ambitious individual contributors show they're bringing leadership to the company in different ways. Can you run strategy initiatives, coach teammates or get swaths of the organization on board with new initiatives?

### Letting go

In a previous job, Sheri Byrne-Haber liked managing people and being a "one-stop shop" for her 20-person digital-accessibility department, even as the workload ballooned. So when her boss suggested splitting her role in two, she initially said no.

She reconsidered when performance-review season arrived. She had to write 19.

The company hired a new counterpart for her, charged with managing, and Byrne-Haber focused on strategy. Letting go was harder than she expected. It took her three months to unsubscribe from all the manager-only Slack channels, email lists and meetings she had been looped in on. When colleagues reached out with questions, she'd pause to determine whether the queries were still related to her responsibilities. If not, she forced herself to forward them to the new manager, even when she knew the answer.

"It felt awkward," says Byrne-Haber, now at work on her own startup. "But that's not my job anymore."

## Happy Couples Find A Financial Formula

By DALVIN BROW

Couples say they have found the financial formula for a happy marriage with a spreadsheet. The breakdown isn't always a 50-50 split.

Most U.S. couples keep some of their finances apart, research shows. A Bankrate survey conducted late last year found that 62% of married adults and those living with a partner kept some or all of their finances separate.

Those who keep their money separate say they have found it is best to divide the mortgage, car payment, Netflix and other bills based on each person's income and whether both use it. Couples who do this say it's liberating and prevents fights over money.

Ana Orellana, an engineer in the oil-and-gas sector, enters their \$2,827 mortgage payment, daycare, insurance and other bills into Excel to calculate how to divide household costs with her husband, Ross Reichert. In June, she paid 56% of the shared expenses and Reichert the remaining 44%, based on the ratio of their salaries. Each keeps whatever money is left.

"He's riskier with money," Orellana, 39 years old, said. "If I want to buy a dress, it's my money. If he wants to buy fishing gear, it doesn't impact me."

The setup preserves their independence, while they still work toward shared goals, like saving for retirement, she said. In nearly six years of marriage, they tweaked the formula about eight times to reflect changing salaries.

"We have something tangible we can both look at. There's a lot of accountability," Reichert, 37, said. "We can't argue with the math."

Not everyone finds marital bliss from monthly audits. Couples who

keep their money separate tend to be less happy in their relationships than those who merge their finances, several studies over the past five years suggest. Joint accounts help partners feel they have shared financial goals, researchers found, while not knowing how a spouse spends money can cause distrust and insecurity.

Those committed to maintaining their financial freedom say they can overcome those risks through transparency, communication and the use of spreadsheets and apps.

On expense-splitting platform Splitwise, the default setting is to split every bill in half, and 97% of couples stick with that. The number of couples using a 60-40 split, the most popular alternative, doubled since last year.

### Track changes

Most people don't make the same amount as their partner, so splitting bills with a ratio that reflects their different incomes is a better choice than straight down the middle, said Rachel Lawrence, who leads advice and planning at the budgeting app Monarch.



◀ Trell Hill persuaded his wife, Tiffany Hill, to pool their money.



◀ Ana Orellana uses Excel to calculate how to divide household costs with her husband, Ross Reichert.

Donald Bruce Ross III, a 36-year-old associate professor who directs the family financial counseling program at the University of Kentucky, evaluates how to divide the bills at least twice a year with his fiancée, a bookkeeper.

Last year, he contributed 53.3% to their shared costs, while she covered 46.7%. When his 32-year-old fiancée received a raise and he didn't, their split shifted to 60%-40%.

Large costs require discussion of whether they are personal expenses or shared ones that both should contribute to, he said.

"She's not paying for my bourbon budget," Ross said. "But if it's a family expense, or there's a family need, it becomes more nuanced."

They share the cost of tuition for her master's degree, since it benefits the family, he said. They're still discussing how to handle her upcoming car purchase.

### Women in the workforce

Financial planners say female clients are often pushing for a conversation about contributions to the family budget. Part of that reflects the broader changes in the workforce and pay.

Women are marrying later in life and entering relationships having managed their own money, according to Bank of America research. While men still earn more, in 29% of opposite-sex marriages, husbands and wives now earn roughly the same amount, up from 11% in 1972, according to a 2023 survey of more than 5,000 U.S. adults from Pew Research Center.

In 2023, 55% of people who downloaded Honeydue, a bill-management app for couples, were women, according to founder Eugene Park. Women entered new expenses to divide with their partner 12% more often than men did and used the app to start conversations about finances 8% more often.

Orellana, the engineer who relies on Excel for budgeting, said seeing her mother's financial difficulties after her parents' divorce shaped her desire for control over her own finances.

how a spouse spends money can make people feel less secure.

Still, keeping finances separate can provide autonomy, let spouses share responsibility for managing money and leave room for both to gain financial knowledge, said Hristina Nikolova, associate professor at Northeastern University, who studies relationship finances. She said transparency is the key: Don't use a personal account to hide what you're spending.

When Trell Hill, 45, and his wife, Tiffany Hill, 48, got married in 2008, she made \$20,000 a year more than him as a physical therapist. They kept their accounts separate as they settled into being newlyweds. She also wanted to maintain her financial independence after growing up in a single-parent household.

A year in, he persuaded her to pool their money.

"I never want to have conversations about who paid for groceries," said the cybersecurity auditor from Arlington, Texas, who now earns more than his wife.

"I don't live in half the house, so why think about splitting it half and half?"

PERSONAL JOURNAL.

# You've Lost That Summer Lovin' Feelin'

Kids home from school, a trying presidential race and the stress of juggling work with vacations are powerful mood killers



ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN

**D**anielle Savory and her husband were naked in bed one recent afternoon when they heard the unsexiest of sounds: a Harry Potter audiobook being played at peak volume by their 10-year-old daughter.

The couple turned up the air conditioner to try to drown it out. When that didn't work, they added a white noise machine. Then they got back to the business at hand—and missed hearing their older daughter, age 13, enter the room.

"I just wanted to ask you if it's OK to bake macaroons," Savory says her daughter asked. She and her husband dove under the covers.

Ever feel as if sex is everywhere in the summer but in your bedroom?

We're wearing skimpier clothes, drinking stronger cocktails, getting some sun and delighting in a seductive breeze on our shoulders. And everywhere we look there seems to be an advertisement featuring beers, beaches and bikinis.

No wonder there's a spike in interest in sexual activity in the summer, seen in everything from condom sales to online searches related to pornography and dating, research shows.

Yet summer can be cruel. (Just ask Taylor Swift!) Kids home from school and the stress of juggling work with vacations are powerful mood killers. Never mind the sticky, gross weather that makes us desperate to move to the guest room. And this summer we've got a new source of stress: the whiplash of a turbulent presidential race.

"It's hard to feel sexy when your nervous system is in a constant state of panic," says Candice Hargons, a counseling psychologist and associate professor at Emory University's school of public health, whose work focuses on sexual wellness.

Making matters worse: We're sure everyone is having more—and better—sex than we are!

People reported having sex an average 5.6 times a month, or just more than once a week, according to a soon-to-be-published, nationally representative study of 1,500 Americans ages 18 to 88 from the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University. Yet there is a great deal of variation among individuals: About a third of people surveyed



▲ Danielle Savory, of Portland, Ore., says that having her daughters home for the summer makes sex with her husband a little more challenging.

said they don't have sex in a typical month; 30% said they have sex between one and four times; and 29% said they have sex between five and 16 times. The final 8% reported having sex more than 17 times a month.

The study also found that almost half of sexually active Ameri-

cans are dissatisfied with the amount of sex they're having. Most of those people said they'd like to have more.

"A lot of people feel pressure to be having more sex," says Justin Lehmiller, a social psychologist and research fellow at Kinsey, who conducted the research.

If you'd like to boost your sex life this summer, here's some advice.

**Shift your focus**

Doom scrolling isn't sexy, especially these days. It keeps your nervous system in a constant state of fight or flight.

Find something sensual to watch or listen to instead, such as your favorite turn-me-on music, a podcast about sex or an erotic audiobook. You can do this regularly throughout the day, while you're taking a walk or making dinner. "You're priming yourself to feel sexy," says Emory's Hargons.

And, for heaven's sake, put away your phone when you're in the bedroom. Give your partner your full attention.

**Dress up**

When you feel good, you're more likely to get in the mood. Dress up, as you would for a date. Bare a little skin. The feel of a summer

breeze on your shoulder can be an erotic trigger.

"Dress for the sex life you want to have," says Kinsey's Lehmiller.

**Do something new**

Research shows that novelty activates the brain's reward system, flooding it with neurochemicals related to pleasure and bonding. And our enthusiasm about the activity often transfers to the person we're doing it with. "Strong emotions can amplify sexual arousal," Lehmiller says.

You don't have to zip line across a gorge or ride the Iron Menace roller coaster. (Although the more excitement, the bigger the boost, Lehmiller says.) Consider a bike ride in a different neighborhood or a picnic in the park.

**Get some sun**

It makes you feel good. And it helps our bodies produce vitamin D, which might help improve our sexual functioning, says Sari Cooper, a certified sex therapist in New York. Low vitamin D may cause lower testosterone levels in men and lower sexual desire and satisfaction in women.

So put on some sunscreen and get outside. And get active while you're at it. Exercise gets your blood flowing and boosts your

self-esteem, Cooper says.

Savory, of the Harry Potter mishap, has thought a lot about how to keep the spark alive in the summer. She's a sex coach for women who also hosts a podcast on the subject. To spice up her own life, she likes to wear sundresses that make her feel sensual and read steamy novels to get in the mood.

She and her husband, who have been married 15 years and both work from home, plan ahead for sex, scheduling "important meetings" at least once a week, typically in the afternoon. "The kids stay up later in the summer, and I'm too tired at night," says Savory, 42, who lives in Portland, Ore.

Beforehand, they tell their daughters: "Mom and dad need to take a nap. Please don't disturb us." (The girls have powered through "Anne of Green Gables," "Little Women" and several audiobook series this summer!)

The couple have a few summer rules: No phones in the bedroom. No alcohol; if they have plans to meet friends for dinner, they'll have sex before they go. And no pressure.

"If we get interrupted or it doesn't work out, we can use the sexual tension to build our desire for the next time," she says.

## Black Death Is the Star In Netflix's 'Decameron'

By ELLEN GAMERMAN

**C**ovid isn't funny, but do you know what is? The bubonic plague.

The new Netflix limited series "The Decameron" offers a saucy romp through the Black Death. The show, set in 1348 as beautiful nobles and their servants quarantine themselves on the grounds of a rural Italian villa, gave itself the task of finding dark humor in the chaos wrought by a long-ago pandemic.

The eight-episode show is also, of course, a commentary on the pandemic that the world recently experienced. As such, it is one of the first Covid-inspired comedy series to hit a major streaming platform since the outbreak. The series, out last week, was conceived during lockdowns and finds satire in the social rifts caused by the pandemic, when the gulf between the haves and have nots was particularly exposed. (Remember celebrities staying strong from personal basketball courts and lush green lawns?)

"The humor is not derived from making light of suffering—the humor in the show is much more derived from the ridiculousness of social stature and the differences between classes," says series creator Kathleen Jordan. "Rather than leaning out of the darkness, we are leaning into it."

Art about the pandemic has been tricky to execute. Some audiences don't want to revisit a period they'd rather forget. Pandemic-themed projects run the risk of speaking to such a specific moment that they're more like entries in a time capsule than popular entertainment. The pandemic was a formative moment in world history, but when it comes to film and TV about the experience, so far there's not much to see.

A smattering of pandemic-themed screen projects so far include "Staged," a BBC series starting in 2020, where actors David Tennant and Michael Sheen play fictionalized versions of themselves trying to rehearse a play by video call. "The Bubble," a 2022 Netflix comedy movie from Judd Apatow, featured the cast of an action movie stuck together in a fancy hotel to prevent the spread of Covid on set. "Stress Positions," a 2024 film starring comedian John Early, tells the story of a germaphobe who must care for his injured nephew while quarantining in Brooklyn.

"The Decameron," starring Zosia Mamet and Tony Hale, uses the Black Death as a proxy, delivering its social satire about the 21st-cen-



▲ Zosia Mamet, left, and Saoirse-Monica Jackson in 'The Decameron,' a Netflix series in which nobles quarantine in an Italian villa to escape the bubonic plague.

tury pandemic by going back nearly 700 years to the Middle Ages. The series bears little resemblance to medieval scribe Giovanni Boccaccio's "The Decameron" beyond its narrative structure and some smaller details.

Mamet, whose knowledge of the Black Death prior to this project was largely limited to a "Monty Python" skit, sees comedy as a balm for post-pandemic stress. "You can take an experience that was so horrifying," she says, "and when you couch it in something slightly absurdist, it allows people to process what they went through and also laugh at it, hopefully, which I think inevitably is helpful in moving through a traumatic experience."

oism, while a downtrodden servant finds salvation by pretending to be the rich gentlewoman who tormented her.

"We had a guiding philosophy in the writers' room, which was that if you don't change and you don't adapt, you die," says Jordan, whose last project was the 2020 Netflix series "Teenage Bounty Hunters" about Christian high school girls. "That was the biggest virtue you can bring to a situation like the pandemic, the ability to look at and within yourself and decide which parts of yourself you wish to change and which parts you wish to throw away."

"The Decameron" finds humor in the false remedies that pop up during a pandemic, like the 14th-century practice of filling a mask with flowers to guard against infection from plague victims.

For Tanya Reynolds, who plays the servant Licisca, the set at times felt all too real. "There's a scene where she's in the street and they're pouring a truckload of dead bodies off the bridge into the water," she says. "It really felt like I was in the 1300s in Florence."

The show is the brainchild of Jordan, who had been fascinated by the Black Death since childhood. In fourth grade, when her teacher asked students to explore a subject of their choice, Jordan stood out by picking the bubonic plague.

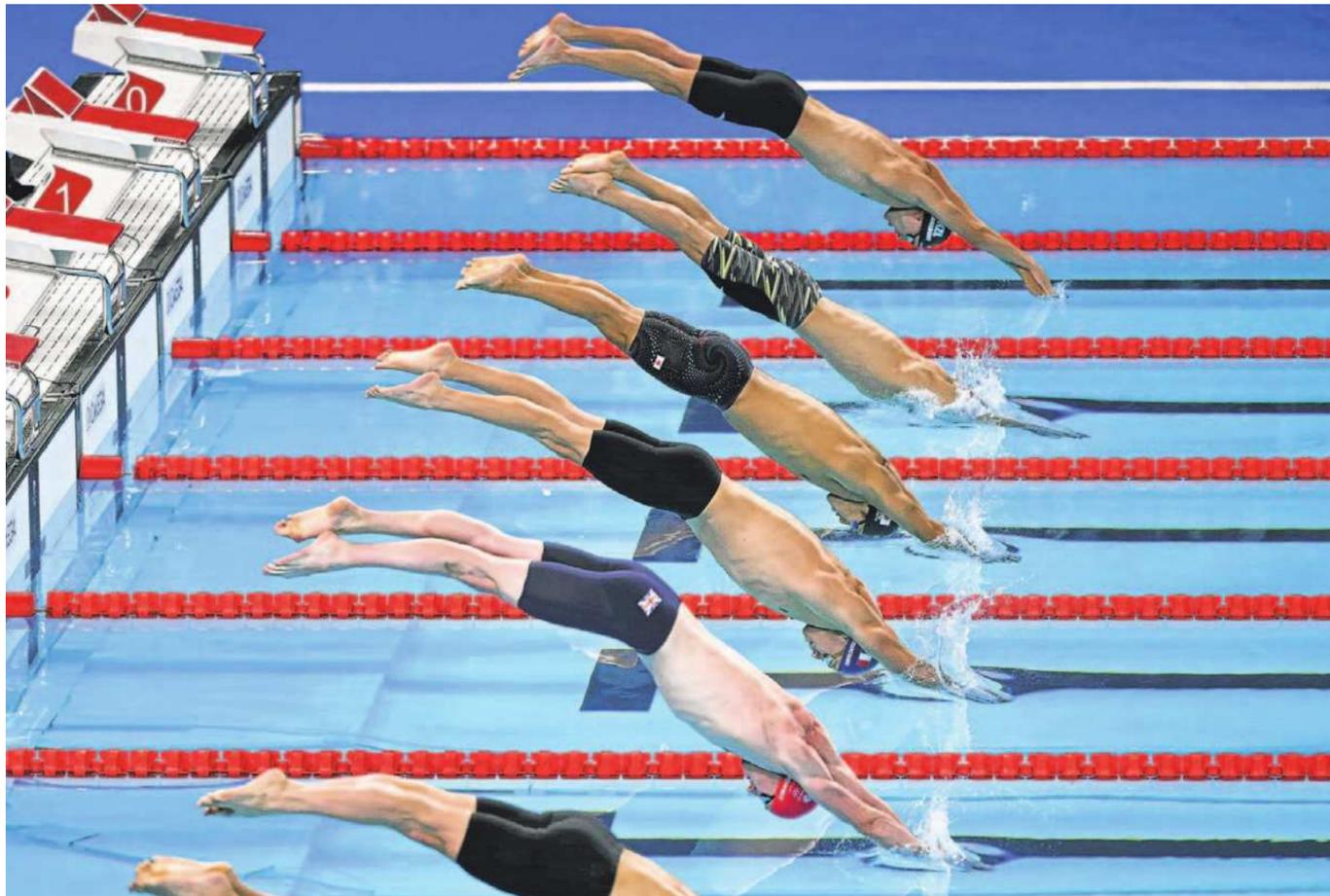
Is now the moment when the pandemic crosses from crisis into content?

"I don't think we'll ever in our lifetimes understand even the reach of the impact of this time," says Jordan. "It's good to start talking about it through art."

GUILIA PARMIGIANI/NETFLIX



# PARIS 2024



No world records had fallen through the first two days of swimming at the Paris Games.

Jud Ready, a Georgia Tech engineering professor, said the effect of the pool depth is particularly pronounced at the end of laps, as the flip turn causes large disruptions to the water.

"Certainly the shallower it is, the more energy that is returned," Ready said.

Ditto for the dive. In shallow pools, swimmers that jump out from the blocks farthest may earn a minuscule advantage—their entry will put them ahead of most of the waves.

There may be a psychological component at work, too. Ready said he would expect swimmers to feel as if they're swimming faster than they actually are in a shallower pool, as they are accustomed to seeing the bottom zip by from 3 meters up—but in reality, they're barely 2 meters above the ground.

He compared this phenomenon to being on an airplane and how it seems fastest when it's closest to the ground. After claiming a bronze medal in a race Saturday, Ledecky said her swim "felt a little faster" than the stopwatch ultimately indicated.

Ireland pushed back against the notion that the pool his company designed has slowed down swimmers. He insisted that while the difference between a 1-meter and 2-meter pool is considerable, the difference between a 2-meter and 3-meter pool is much less dramatic.

"The international standard has been created because there is a negligible impact to swimmers' performance after 2 meters," Ireland said. "There's also a perception that deeper is better. They're not wrong, but there are other factors."

Those other factors, he said, include the temperature of the water, the air quality in the venue and the design of the gutters at the edges of the pool.

Whether it's just one of those elements or a combination, the results from the Olympic pool suggest that something is definitely up. Times in many of the races have been slower than expected, and while a few new Olympic records have been set, no world records had fallen through the first two days of swimming.

That includes perhaps the signature race of the entire Games: the women's 400-meter freestyle final, a showdown between Titmus, of Australia, Ledecky, and Canadian phenom Summer McIntosh.

Titmus won, but was a full 2 seconds slower than she swam at Australia's Olympic trials last month. Ledecky didn't even manage to break 4 minutes—her time of 4:00.86 in the 400 was the 40th fastest of her career.

## Higher, Stronger...Slower? The Paris Pool Has a Problem

The pool constructed at La Défense Arena may be too shallow for elite swimmers

By JARED DIAMOND AND LAINE HIGGINS

Nanterre, France

Several days into an Olympic swim meet that has featured uncharacteristically sluggish times and a decided lack of world records, a potential problem has emerged: The water might be too shallow.

The pool constructed on the customary site of a rugby pitch measures 2.2 meters deep, or roughly 7-foot-2, which means French basketball star Victor Wembanyama could comfortably stand in it. At recent Olympics, the pool has always been around 3 meters deep—a difference of nearly 3 feet.

It might sound strange to anyone who lacks the amphibious qualities of an elite swimmer to hear that such a small amount could possibly matter. But in a sport where contests are settled by as little as a hundredth of a

second, even the tiniest variation in pool specs can determine whether records fall—typically a hallmark of Olympic swimming.

So far, the world records have stayed stubbornly intact, even those that seemed primed to crumble due to the collection of talent gathered here. Not even swimming's biggest stars, like France's Léon Marchand and Australia's Ariarne Titmus, have managed to conquer the waters of Paris La Défense Arena. But it turns out it might not be the athletes who are to blame—but the pool itself.

"The Olympics are all about racing, it's all about getting your hand to the wall," said seven-time gold medalist Katie Ledecky. The problem for the Paris Games is those hands are touching the wall a little slower than normal.

"Paris 2024 has received no reports of athlete complaints over the depth of the pool," a Paris

2024 spokeswoman said.

With capacity for 40,000 spectators—massive for an indoor arena—La Défense Arena has a cavernous interior. That's perfect for its usual tenants. French rugby club Racing 92 calls the arena home. Taylor Swift recently had a four-night stand here.

But what made the venue ideal for the Eras Tour presented an issue when trying to convert it into a natatorium.

"To go deeper, they would have had to do significant modifications, and structurally, there are some concerns," said John Ireland, the chief technical officer at Myrtha Pools, the Italian company that designed the pool for the last five Olympics.

To understand why that matters, it's important to remember that swimming isn't just a dynamic exercise. It's also an exercise in fluid dynamics. Every movement swimmers make with

their hands and feet creates small waves that rebound off the bottom of the pool.

No movement has more potential for waves than swimmers' initial dive into the water. The shallower the pool, the more those waves ricochet back to the swimmers on the surface, creating a more turbulent environment that isn't conducive to top speeds.

In the future, pools as shallow as the one at these Games won't be allowed. World Aquatics enacted a minimum depth of 2.5 meters for swimming and water polo in January 2023. When Paris had its bid accepted for the Olympics in 2017 and the swimming facility was approved, regulations allowed for a pool of 2.2 meters. The pool that will be used for artistic swimming, which is located in a newly constructed building in nearby Seine-Saint-Denis, is 3 meters, a World Aquatics spokeswoman said.

JASON GAY

## The U.S. Is Ready To Be a Powerhouse In Mountain Biking



Élancourt, France

There are silvers and there are silvers. This one was a mega deal for the United States—and a signal of what's to come.

Haley Batten didn't win the gold medal in mountain biking at the Summer Olympics, but the silver she earned Sunday was momentous. It was the best Olympic finish by a U.S. mountain biker ever—pulled off by a 25-year-old from Park City, Utah, who'd been targeting this day since she was 12.

Batten still remembers it—she was a lights-out junior, watching a pair of U.S. stars, Georgia Gould and Lea Davison, named to the Olympic team for London 2012.

*Mountain biking in the Olympics?*

Batten didn't even know it was a thing. She was in.

"I wanted to be an Olympian," she told me.

She got there early, in 2021, in the Covid Summer Games in Tokyo, surprising the field with an impressive ninth-place finish. But 2024 was always the focus.

Batten is coached by the U.S. Olympic legend Kristin Armstrong, a three-time gold medalist on the road in the individual time trial. Armstrong may not be known primarily for mountain biking, but she gave Batten a Jedi's blueprint on how to dial into the Games, how to prepare her body and peak at the right time.

"You break down the event and say, 'What are the demands?'"

Armstrong said. "What are the demands of a mountain bike race, a road race, a cyclocross race? You take that, and you can coach anything."

Batten entered this season on a tear—she won a short-track and cross-country World Cup race on the same weekend in Brazil, and she stayed hot into the European swing. She was ready to make some noise.

Now let us interrupt this Haley Batten story to say a little bit about the U.S. and mountain biking: Team USA is coming.

This is a sport born in the United States—Tom Ritchey, Gary Fisher and other assorted NorCal dreamers modifying klunker bikes to bomb down Mt. Tamalpais, creating a new machine and passion. Then the Europeans said *thanks* and dragged the discipline across the Atlantic, whizzing around Alpine single track, cultivating the sport and dominating its competitive circuit for generations.

There have been fabulous U.S. riders—Kate Courtney, raised in the shadow of Mt. Tam, won a World Championship and overall World Cup title not long ago—but the Olympics have been a dust-bowl. Susan DeMatte won bronze at the inaugural mountain bike race at Atlanta 1996. Gould won bronze in London. That was *it*, for men and women.

Until Sunday. Batten never had a crack at gold—that prize was wrapped up early by France's phenomenal Pauline Ferrand-Prevot, who got away from a small group on the second lap and *au revoir*.



Haley Batten of the U.S. took silver in the women's mountain bike event.

Nobody saw her the rest of the day. Ferrand-Prevot is a multi-time world champion who had this hometown race circled from the day it was announced, and that was that. She wound up winning by almost 3 minutes.

The rest of the podium was thoroughly up for grabs, however. Batten hung in. Mountain biking requires enormous power, technical skill and a not-insignificant amount of luck—you need to avoid punctures, crashes and other as-

sorted catastrophes to remain upright and moving. Batten wrecked a wheel, but stayed calm as she got a replacement and worked her way back.

"My mind was right in the place it needed to be," she said.

She found a zone, and finally, a two-rider duel through the woods for silver and bronze with Sweden's Jenny Rissveds, a gold-medal winner at Rio 2016. Batten and Rissveds took turns at the front until Batten surged into the final

lap, creating space before a downhill stretch. By the finish, she had a 5-second gap. There was a brief kerfuffle over whether or not Batten should have been penalized for passing through the final feed zone without taking a bottle or any food. She wound up getting a fine. Her silver stood. Savilia Blunk of Inverness, Ca. wound up 12th—another strong U.S. result.

Batten was jubilant at the finish, wrapping colleagues and competitors in bear hugs. Her family—absent in Tokyo because of the pandemic restrictions—was in the rowdy crowd, too.

"They're my everything," she said. "They make this all possible."

Not far from the finish, USA Cycling boss Brendan Quirk hailed Batten's unprecedented Olympic performance.

"Haley's a continuation of a lot of inspired, amazing women mountain bikers in the U.S.," Quirk said. "We're really, really lucky to have her."

The future appears upbeat. In Monday's men's race, the U.S. will be represented by a pair of dynamos from Durango, Colo.: 26-year-old Christopher Blevins, who won a World Cup race a couple of years ago, and Riley Amos, a 22-year-old who has been dominating the Under-23 circuit.

More young talent continues to funnel through the National Inter-scholastic Cycling Association (NICA). NorCal and the Rockies remain MTB hubs, and Bentonville, Ark., and its network of world-class trails is becoming a destination for training and competition.

"The energy is really, really high," Kristin Armstrong said.

At the front, medal winner Haley Batten remains hungry.

"I don't want to be behind France and Switzerland anymore," she said. "I'm sick of that. I'm ready for the USA to win some relay races, to win world championships, to win Olympic medals. We're just getting started. We're going to get so much better."

# The Olympics' Most Terrifying Venue

Teahupo'o is one of the world's deadliest waves. Winning gold means pushing its boundaries.

By Stacy Meichtry  
and Joshua Robinson

Before Olympic surfers actually see the Teahupo'o wave arrive, in those final pristine moments of calm before all hell breaks loose, they will hear it coming.

Cries rise from the flotilla of boats carrying spectators and rescue teams as they spot the mountain of water rolling towards them roughly 500 yards off the coast of Tahiti. When it arrives, a thick slab of ocean will suddenly surge into the air and fold over on itself. Then it claps down in a movement so powerful that it sounds like a bomb going off.

"It's not the time to be like, 'Oh, God...I don't know if this is going to work out for me,'" says Jessi Miley-Dyer, a pro surfer and Commissioner for the World Surf League. "You've got to paddle into it, then pull your head down and go, 'Okay, I'm going to make this, and this is going to be the ride of my life.'"

To the uninitiated, the idea of holding the surfing competition of the Paris Olympics 9,800 miles from the French capital might sound odd. There's no shortage of respectable waves on the Atlantic coast of France. But none of those surfing spots can generate the mix of exhilaration and primal fear that gave Teahupo'o its name in Tahitian: the place of skulls.

Teahupo'o swell originates from winter storms at the southwestern edge of the Pacific Ocean, near New Zealand.

It then travels virtually unimpeded for days across deep waters, gathering momentum and energy, before slamming into Tahiti. The pitch of this collision is amplified by the unique underwater topography of the island's coastline, which is bordered by an extremely shallow reef that suddenly drops off into the ocean abyss.

Daring to surf Teahupo'o requires a willingness to place yourself at the intersection of an unstoppable force and an immovable object.

As the wave curls along the reef, surfers have a window of a few seconds to shoot the gap as Teahupo'o collapses behind them, generating a massive ball of foam that spits them out of the barrel.

"It wasn't even thought to be surfable, really. In the late '80s, early '90s, everyone was like, 'Can we really do this?'" said Joe Turpel, the NBC commentator known as the voice of international surfing competitions.

Some have paid the ultimate price in their encounters with Teahupo'o. In 2000, Tahitian surfer



Teahupo'o has become a rite of passage for the world's best surfers and a regular stop for surfing competitions. Above: France's Kauli Vaast.

Brice Taerea attempted to dodge the wave by dipping beneath it with his board—a maneuver known as a "duck dive." The wave was so powerful, however, that it still sucked Taerea in, sending him into the reef and causing neck and spinal injuries that ultimately killed him.

Keala Kennelly, known as the Queen of Teahupo'o for her pioneering rides on the wave, got caught in a relatively small but punishing barrel in 2011 that spun her straight into the razor-sharp reef, carving up the side of her face. She was hospitalized with dozens of stitches.

"Looked like such a fun ride," Kennelly wrote on Facebook at the time, "until it ended badly."

The choice by the Paris organizers to rope in such a remote overseas territory was one of the biggest surprises of this Olympics.

The sport is only making its second appearance in the Games, after debuting in Tokyo in 2021, and is turning the event into a virtual tour of the world's most breathtaking surf meccas.

Los Angeles in 2028 will have the entire California shoreline to choose from and Brisbane 2032



has the surfing paradise of Australia's Gold Coast in its backyard.

But France looked a little further afield, all the way in Polynesia.

The last time an event took place so far from the host city was 1956, when the equestrian events for Melbourne Games were held 9,700 miles away in Stockholm—the reason was Australia's long quarantine restrictions for horses. Teahupo'o is around 100 miles further from the French Capital. Needless to say, none of the surfers made the 48-hour round trip to Friday night's Opening Ceremony.

"Surfing in Tahiti: people didn't expect that," Paris 2024 CEO Tony Estanguet says. "I knew it would get the public talking. But it comes with so many advantages. At this time of year, the most gorgeous wave in the world is right there."

For the surfers who still remember a time when most considered Teahupo'o to be a wave too far, the question of how someone might tackle it became one of the sport's most tantalizing puzzles.

Not only is it considered the "heaviest wave in the world" for the sheer tonnage of water that

briefly hangs in the air as its barrel forms, Teahupo'o is also incredibly fast.

When Laird Hamilton, the legendary big wave surfer, traveled to Tahiti in 2000 to face Teahupo'o for the first time, he relied on a colleague piloting a jet ski to tow him into the wave, matching its velocity.

The session, which was captured by a photographer and published on the cover of Surfer magazine under the headline "Oh my God," was a clarion call. Teahupo'o had arrived on the stage of international surfing. The sport would never be the same.

Teahupo'o became a rite of passage for the world's best surfers and a regular stop for surfing competitions. In 2006, it was pulled from the women's circuit, in part because the wave was deemed too dangerous for women.

Miley-Dyer, who was among the last women to competitively surf it during that era, pushed to get Teahupo'o reinstated in 2022. For the Olympics, both women and men are paddling into the wave, and posting dazzling scores won't involve the aerial tricks that surfers use to score points on other, safer waves.

"There is an element of go hard or go home," Miley-Dyer said. "That's how you're going to win Olympic gold."

## Surfing is only making its second appearance in the Games.

By Ben Cohen and Joshua Robinson

Paris

AS SHE UNZIPPED her jacket, adjusted her knee strap and began stretching for her first table-tennis match of this Olympics, an odd sensation came over the most unlikely player on the floor.

Suddenly, Ni Xia Lian felt nervous.

It was strange because Ni, a former world champion, had seen this all before: the bright lights of international competition, the Olympic rings painted on the net, the raucous crowd ready to erupt for her. But this time, she felt the full weight of a nation on her shoulders. She knew that she would need to summon all of her experience to settle into the match.

As it turns out, she had more of that than anyone in the building. That's because Ni, the grand duchess of Luxembourg table tennis, is 61 years old.

There are other sexagenarians at the Paris Games, but the only athletes older than Ni compete in equestrian, which means she's the oldest Olympian here who doesn't ride a horse. When she made her international debut in 1979, almost nobody in this year's Olympic field was born. Ni won her first world championship in 1983, and her first-round opponent here was born in 1993—which makes her younger than Ni's son.

"I'm a table-tennis grandma," says Ni, who is also a six-time Olympian. "I'm not a grandma—yet. I'm waiting."

She retired and unretired before Michael Jordan. Then she did it again. In fact, she was in her prime before table tennis was even an Olympic sport.

These days, Olympians half her age say they can't quite believe that Ni is still here.

# This Olympian Is 61 Years Old—And Destroying Her Competition



Ni Xia Lian, right, was Luxembourg flag bearer for the Opening Ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympics.

"It's absolutely mind-boggling," says American table-tennis star Lily Zhang.

But to Ni, it makes perfect sense. "I have double the age," she says, "and double the experience."

Born on the Fourth of July in 1963, Ni began playing table tennis in China when she was 7 years old—before the days of ping-pong diplomacy. She was tapped for the Chinese national team as a teenager. If table tennis had been an Olympic sport in 1984, Ni almost certainly would have medaled. Instead, by the time table tennis

made its debut in 1988, she was well into her first retirement.

Ni thought she had checked off everything she hoped to accomplish in her sport and was ready to move on. She wanted to resume her studies and eventually become a doctor. "I didn't want to waste time on table tennis," the woman who has now played table tennis for a half-century once said. Feeling pressure to leave China as it opened up to the world, she moved to Germany and then Luxembourg, figuring she would stay for one year.

"But one year becomes two, two years become three, and now she's been here 35 years," said Tommy Danielsson, who became her coach and then her husband. "It was not my plan," Ni said, "but Luxembourg is too nice."

Now one of the most beloved athletes in her adoptive nation, Ni has collected almost every honor the tiny nation can offer, from Sportswoman of the Year (twice, more than 20 years apart) to carrying the flag in last week's Opening Ceremony, when she led the landlocked country's delegation

down the River Seine. She was a natural pick.

"Everybody knows her," said the president of Luxembourg's Olympic Committee, André Hoffmann.

Which might qualify as the biggest turnaround of Ni's career. When she moved to Europe, she knew precisely nothing about this tiny nation squeezed between Germany, Belgium and France.

"Coming from China, you don't know what Luxembourg is," Danielsson said. "Is it a country? Is it something you eat?"

What she eats has actually played a major role in her longevity. Ni is just as disciplined about her diet as Novak Djokovic. He famously doesn't eat gluten. She fanatically eats in moderation.

"A little meat, a little fish, a little vegetables, a little nuts," she said. "Don't drink—only water. This is the healthy lifestyle. It's followed me many, many years."

As for her future beyond Paris, Ni doubted she would be back in four years. "You're joking," she said. "I don't think so." But her coach and husband won't rule out a trip to Los Angeles in 2028, when Ni would be 65 years old: "She's quite fit for her age, I must say."

## Medal Count

Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Japan	6	2	4	12
China	5	5	2	12
Australia	5	4	0	9
Korea	5	3	1	9
France	4	7	3	14
U.S.	3	8	9	20
Great Britain	2	5	3	10
Italy	2	2	3	7
Canada	2	1	2	5
Germany	2	0	0	2

\*As of 4 p.m. ET on Monday. For updates, go to WSJ.com/Sports

FROM TOP: BEN THOUARD/REUTERS; SEAN M. HAFEEZ/GETTY IMAGES; JUNG YEON-JE/REUTERS IMAGES

# OPINION

## Kamala's Chicago Moment



**MAIN STREET**  
By William McGurn

In an election already roiled by a disastrous presidential debate, an attempted assassination, and the withdrawal of a major party's candidate, the new presumptive Democratic nominee—Kamala Harris—faces two other potential game-changers just ahead.

One is debating Donald Trump. Before that comes August's Democratic National Convention, where delegates and protesters alike will descend on Chicago. The protesters' goal is simple: to ruin the convention. But that also presents the vice president with an opportunity for a Sister Souljah moment à la Bill Clinton. In the 1992 campaign, after the hip-hop artist had made some incendiary remarks about race, Mr. Clinton likened her to the white supremacist David Duke—impressing voters by standing up to extremists in his own coalition.

Today's opportunity is being teed up by a coalition of hard-left organizations called March on the DNC 2024. They are determined to bring their demands to the Chicago convention. They don't like "Genocide Joe" because they consider him the war's enabler.

But here's the kicker. They don't see Ms. Harris as any different. In a statement headlined, "We're still marching for Palestine at the DNC," organizers explain their position:

"Genocide Joe Biden has stepped down from running for President as the Democratic Party nominee. His decision doesn't change the policies of Democratic Party leadership, specifically their support of the genocide in Palestine, so our movement must continue to apply pressure . . .

"Democratic Party leadership switching out their presidential nominee does not wash the blood of over 50,000 Palestinians off their hands. Biden's entire administration, together with high ranking members of the Democratic

### Hard-left protesters denounce 'Genocide Joe.' They revile the vice president too.

Party from all over the country, spent the last ten months wholeheartedly supporting the genocide in Gaza with our tax dollars."

On Monday Newsweek quoted Walter Smolarek, a spokesman for the Answer Coalition (an acronym for Act Now to Stop War and End Racism), who likewise condemned Ms. Harris. "For over nine months," he said, "Harris has served as the No. 2 official in an administration that has actively facilitated horrific war crimes."

Last week Ms. Harris offered something for both sides. On Thursday, after a meeting with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the vice president declared that although Israel

has a right to defend itself, she would "not be silent" about "the death of far too many innocent civilians."

Those are tough words. But if they're meant to mollify the protesters, it won't work. It won't work because they don't want to be mollified. No matter how far Ms. Harris goes, it will never be far enough.

More surprising, she unequivocally denounced American-flag-burning protesters at Washington's Union Station, criticized "dangerous hate fueled rhetoric," and labeled Hamas a "brutal terrorist organization." That's a good start. The question: Will she repeat that on the larger stage of Chicago, including explicit support for police, when the whole nation is tuned in?

Commentators have likened the potential for chaos today to the disastrous 1968 Chicago convention. Then, a Democratic Party divided over Vietnam met inside the city's International Amphitheatre to nominate Hubert Humphrey—himself torn between his natural dovish instincts about Vietnam and his public support for the war as Lyndon Johnson's vice president. America watched police battling protesters on the nightly news.

This year's protests could be a make-or-break moment for Ms. Harris. But she might also recognize it as an opportunity to show she means it when she condemns criminal behavior. No doubt she knows that many of the protesters will never vote for her. By opposing them to increase her appeal to moderate Dem-

ocratic and independent voters, she would boost her chances in the swing states like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin that she needs to defeat Mr. Trump. It would further help if she backed up her words with actions—such as choosing the relatively moderate Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro as her running mate.

The unrulier the protesters, moreover, the greater the opportunity to burnish her credentials as a no-nonsense leader who supports law and order. It isn't without its risk: A tough line might alienate Muslim voters in Michigan, another swing state. But the alternative—trying to appease both sides—is probably a loser.

There is another reason for her to take on Chicago's protesters. Though organizers talk about a family-friendly demonstration, they also make clear they are going to march where they want even if they don't get permits. A court filing in July reckoned there may be as many as 100,000 protesters in Chicago. Given what we saw with the protests last week over Mr. Netanyahu's visit, Chicago will likely feature the usual brew of vandalism, lawlessness and inconveniencing of ordinary citizens trying to go about their business.

The public is tired of it. Chicago offers Ms. Harris an opportunity to walk back her earlier sympathy for the defund-the-police movement and show that she meant what she said about the ugliness at Union Station.

Write to [mcgurn@wsj.com](mailto:mcgurn@wsj.com).

**BOOKSHELF** | By Richard Reeves

## When Can Boys Be Boys?

### BoyMom

By Ruth Whippman  
*Harmony, 320 pages, \$28*

### Rebels With a Cause

By Niobe Way  
*Dutton, 336 pages, \$30*

Who wants to raise a boy? Not so many, according to the data. Couples whose first child is a daughter are less likely to have more children than those whose firstborn is a son. Adoptive parents are willing to pay about \$20,000 more for a girl than a boy, according to one U.S. study.

Mothers of sons are often treated as if they have contracted a chronic disease, as Ruth Whippman reports in "BoyMom." When she told a friend that her third child, conceived through in vitro fertilization, was going to be her third son, the response was: "I could understand it for a girl, but why go through all that just for another boy?"

Like Ms. Whippman, I have three sons. So as a BoyDad, I can confirm that this is indeed a challenging time to help boys become men. Caught between a progressive left excoriating their "toxic masculinity" and a reactionary right telling them to "man up" and resist the "feminization" of society, many boys and young men are struggling to find a place in the world where they can feel good about themselves as they are.

Male college enrollment is plummeting. Suicide rates among young men are soaring. Fifteen percent of young men say they do not have a single close friend; two thirds say that "nobody really knows me."

This is the world that Ms. Whippman is trying to understand. Her book is honest, truth-seeking and balanced. She confronts evidence that challenges her own liberal priors and changes her mind on a number of issues.

Niobe Way is a professor of psychology at New York University and an expert on adolescent development. Her "Rebels With a Cause" has a similar mission: to understand and address the challenges of boys, especially those in their teens. It, too, contains insights, but it is weighed down by jargon and a strong ideological bias.

Ms. Way ascribes all the problems of boys to the enduring grip of what she calls, following William Pollack, the "Boy Code." This code consists in the privileging of certain masculine attributes, including "stoicism, independence, assertiveness, thinking, and crunching numbers," and the devaluation of "soft" capacities, such as "vulnerability, dependency, sensitivity, feeling, and the analyses of words and language." She also indicts the Boy Code for a range of other social and economic pathologies. " 'Boy' culture is rooted in ideologies that intersect with one another," she writes, "including but not limited to patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy, homophobia, and transphobia." Ms. Way laments the "masculine bias that undergirds neoliberalism" and claims that "because 'boy' culture is in bed with capitalism, money is valued over love."

It is unfortunate that Ms. Way felt the need to signal her progressivism in this way, since the bulk of the book is taken up with in-depth interviews with teenage boys speaking thoughtfully about their challenges and hopes, as well as descriptions of her inspiring work building "relational intelligence" in adolescents. After one session of what Ms. Way calls "listening with curiosity," one young boy, with some emotion, says: "It makes me feel that the person really cares about me."

### The left excoriates 'toxic masculinity.' The right warns against the 'feminization' of society. Many boys wonder who they are.

But according to Ms. Way, our culture is force-fitting boys into a narrow mold consisting only of retrograde masculine attributes. This not only damages their mental health, she believes, but also encourages violence toward women. The problem with this framing is not so much that it's wrong as that it's out of date. Ms. Way writes as if boys are being raised and educated today in the same way they were in the 1950s, as if no progress has been made.

There is no role here for biology; Ms. Way makes no mention of testosterone. Scholars who ascribe any role to natural sex differences (including this reviewer) are dismissed for making "natural what is cultural." Like the American Psychological Association, which she advises, Ms. Way takes a wholly tabula rasa view of human behavior.

Nobody thinks that biology determines behavior. But it is deeply unhelpful, not least to those raising boys, to claim that nature is entirely irrelevant; that the only cause of any differences between boys and girls is the result of nurture. The fact that there are some natural differences between boys and girls doesn't make culture less important; it makes it more so. As Ms. Whippman writes in "BoyMom": "For too long we have seen the biological differences that do exist between young boys and girls as evidence that as parents there is nothing we can do. But instead, we should be seeing these differences as a reason to do more."

Boys are trying to navigate a world in which the role of men is much less clear than it was in previous generations, in no small part because of the welcome economic and social rise of women. Many struggle to make sense of themselves as boys.

One area where this is proving difficult is the challenge of modern dating, especially with regard to sex and consent. Ms. Whippman dives into the difficult waters of the Title IX rules governing sexual-assault claims on college campuses and comes to believe that they result in some "arbitrary and draconian" outcomes. She also gives the most balanced and well-researched assessment of the role of pornography I have read. (Short version: Don't panic.)

Boys do not become good men automatically. It takes work. Amid vastly expanded gender equality, and a roiling debate about masculinity, that work is more important than ever. A world of floundering men is unlikely to be one of flourishing women.

Mr. Reeves is the author of "Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do About It."

## Kamala Harris's Gift to Hamas

By Amit Segal

*Jerusalem*  
The war in the Gaza Strip is more about losing time than capturing territory. Time works in Israel's favor because it is a half-trillion-dollar economy contending with a few thousand terrorists who lack supply routes, hospitals for treating the wounded and camps for training fighters. But time also works in Hamas's favor because international acceptance of action in densely populated Gaza is eroding, along with Israel's economy and its army's weapons.

Who will run out of time first?

In the spring, it seemed Israel would. President Biden turned a cold shoulder to the Jewish state as support for destroying Hamas morphed into a call to end the war and a warning against entering Rafah. Strategic weapons shipments were delayed in American ports. The International Court of Justice is seeking arrest warrants for the Israeli prime minister and defense minister, effectively equating them with Hamas leaders. No wonder Hamas refused any deal offered, however generous. If the U.S. president seeks to end the war and the world will soon force the Israel Defense Forces to stop, why give up Israeli hostages?

Sometime last month, the hourglass turned. It happened because Israel didn't yield to Mr. Biden and in May entered Rafah, cutting off Hamas's last lifeline to the world. Mr. Biden found himself facing troubles of his own at home, while his presidential rival, whose only complaint against Israel was that it wasn't destroying Hamas fast enough, began climbing in the polls. Suddenly, Hamas showed it could be flexible. It begged to restart negotiations even as Israel dropped 9 tons of precision bombs on its chief of staff, and agreed not to end the war.

Then Mr. Biden withdrew from the presidential race. Vice President Kamala Harris became the de facto nominee and gave Hamas an important gift. Never mind her childish boycott of Benjamin Netanyahu's address to Congress last Wednesday. Why was it necessary to side with the Palestinian narrative that places the blame for the war on Israel? "We cannot look away in the face of these tragedies," she said the next day, after meeting with Mr. Netanyahu. "We cannot allow ourselves to become numb to the suffering. And I will not be silent." This is a direct threat to Israel if it continues the war, a war the Biden-Harris administration itself supported and called "just."

Ms. Harris, who in a recent

interview said she was "hearing stories" about people in Gaza "eating animal feed, grass," is apparently unaware that food prices there are significantly lower than in Israel. In any other war in the past century, has one side regularly supplied food and goods to the enemy's civilians—and still been attacked by the White House?

### She relieves pressure on the terror group to agree to release Israeli hostages.

By adopting the anti-Israel narrative, Ms. Harris is giving Hamas's leader, Yahya Sinwar, every reason in the world to refuse a hostage deal. Why give Israel the hostages without ending the war if there is a possibility the 47th president will force Israel to end it anyway? "Let's get the deal done so we can get a ceasefire to end the war," Ms. Harris said Thursday, distancing the deal with her words.

This is more than diplomatic incompetence. Ms. Harris's worldview is troubling in its immorality. Campus protesters "are showing exactly what the human emotion should be as a response to Gaza," she said recently. "There are things some of the

protesters are saying that I absolutely reject, so I don't mean to wholesale endorse their points. But we have to navigate it." The state of the Democratic Party is such that its presumptive presidential nominee claims that a war between a pro-Iranian murder organization and a democratic state "is not a binary issue."

The administration is taking a similar stance on the Lebanese front. The Iranian proxy Hezbollah has been firing at Israel for months, destroying villages and slaughtering innocent children playing soccer. There is no "siege" and no "occupation," yet the Biden administration is mediating between Hezbollah and Israel like a real-estate broker. Instead of sending Iran an unequivocal, threatening message, it is sending adviser Amos Hochstein to plead with Hezbollah to halt the rocket fire and offer Israeli territorial concessions.

If Israel fights back and the White House again calls for an end to the violence, we can expect another nonbinary war.

Mr. Segal is chief political commentator on Israel's Channel 12 News and author of "The Story of Israeli Politics."

Walter Russell Mead is away.

## British and French Election Lessons for U.S.

By Matthew O. Skrod

American liberals cheered when the British Conservative Party and the French National Rally lost elections this month. Conservatives might cheer for a different reason: British and French election procedures demonstrated the efficiency, consistency and clarity that ours sorely lack.

Like most European countries, neither the U.K. nor France allows early in-person voting in general elections. Polling stations are open only on election day. In the U.S., 47 states permit no-excuse early in-person voting, starting an average of 27 days before the election, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Pennsylvania opens such voting 50 days in advance, meaning its elections last longer than this year's official campaign periods in Britain and France, which were 43 and 28 days, respectively.

Mail voting infamously de-

layed several states' results in 2020. France, like most European countries, has no mail-in voting. The U.K. allows it but requires voters to apply for a mail ballot and submit identification, and officials don't count ballots that arrive after polls close on election day.

All U.S. states allow citizens to vote by mail in some form, and eight automatically send mail ballots to everyone on the rolls. Eighteen states accept mail ballots that arrive after Election Day—often several days later, and in Illinois's case two weeks later—so long as they were postmarked on time. That's one reason votes in America are counted so slowly.

Another is that 48 states use "provisional ballots," which they hold aside until validation of voters' eligibility arrives. States typically allow several business days for these ballots to be adjudicated and counted. Washington state allows up to 21 days. Twenty-four states don't start scanning ballots into electronic

tabulators until Election Day, a practice that, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center, is conducive to tabulation delays and errors and thereby "can stoke the flames of mis- and disinformation."

The U.K. and France avoid such problems by maintaining strict voter rolls and requiring

### They require ID and conduct most voting on election day.

voter ID at polling stations, as do virtually all countries in Europe (although France excuses small towns from this provision). Both countries also use paper ballots that are counted by hand at the local level, which makes for a straightforward process in both voting and counting. It preventively avoids issues that might attend complex machines, computers, punch cards and the like. Both Britain and France

have long retained this streamlined analog procedure to allay concerns over election security should they change it.

Since neither country has mail or "provisional" ballots outstanding when polls close, tabulation advances quickly. Full results are usually known early the next day.

Both countries notably avoid reporting vote tallies in progress. Officials hold results until all votes in a constituency have been counted, so candidates aren't moving ahead and falling behind publicly in real time. As we saw in 2020, that can be disconcerting and misleading for candidates and voters, and it encourages some to cry foul.

American lawmakers and election officials should pay heed to the lack of election drama in the U.K., France and elsewhere. Their procedures offer an example that U.S. states could follow.

Mr. Skrod is a Robert L. Bartley Fellow at the Journal.

## OPINION

## REVIEW &amp; OUTLOOK

## Biden's Assault on the Supreme Court

President Biden on Monday announced his plan to "reform" the Supreme Court, and it's important to understand how radical this political moment is. The President is putting the full weight of the Democratic Party behind an assault on judicial independence and the constitutional order. You might call it an attack on democracy.

"I have overseen more Supreme Court nominations as senator, vice president and president than anyone living today. I have great respect for our institutions and the separation of powers," Mr. Biden said in an essay in the Washington Post justifying his assault. "What is happening now is not normal, and it undermines the public's confidence in the court's decisions, including those impacting personal freedoms. We now stand in a breach."

Never mind the spectacle of a man in public life for 50 years demanding term limits. The "breach" is his. As a Senator in 1987, he helped to defeat the superbly qualified Robert Bork for the Court because Bork endorsed judicial originalism. But the originalists have prevailed in the long run and now have great influence on the Court. This is what infuriates him and his fellow Democrats. So they are now willing to destroy the Court to supposedly save it.

"Destroy" is not too strong a word. Mr. Biden is proposing to subject the Court to an ethics regime "enforceable" by someone other than the Court itself. His conceit is that this merely means the Justices would have to abide by the Code of Conduct of the Judicial Conference of the United States.

But the Justices already have a code of conduct they enforce that is nearly the same as that judicial code. The difference is the demand for outside enforcement. Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee want lower-court judges to investigate charges of ethics violations and then rule on the Justices' behavior.

This is an invitation for partisans to besiege the Court with complaints, however trivial. If you want to know how that would go, consider that last month the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals stopped accepting duplicative complaints about Judge Aileen Cannon, who is sitting on the Donald Trump documents case. The circuit court received more than 1,000 complaints in a week as part of what it called an "orchestrated campaign."

Mr. Biden says his reform will "restore trust and accountability to the court and our democracy," but it would do the opposite. The deluge of ethics complaints, amplified by the press and partisans, would leave the public with the impression of routine corruption. This would further undermine respect for the Court's decisions.

That's even more true of Mr. Biden's proposal to make it easier to disqualify Justices from hearing certain cases. The decision—often the duty—to sit on a case is at the heart of the judicial enterprise.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse's ethics bill, which has passed the Senate Judiciary Com-

**His destructive plan would make the Justices servants of the politics of the day.**

mittee, would let litigants at the Court file motions for recusal by Justices, whose colleagues could boot them off cases. This would make the Court an adjunct of whatever political atmosphere exists at a given time. The Justices targeted most would be those who issue unpopular opinions, however correct they are on the law or Constitution.

The President's claim that the Court is currently "mired in a crisis of ethics" is simply false. Justice Thomas failed to disclose that he flew on a friend's private aircraft before the Judicial Conference changed its rules to require that judges disclose such flights. He violated no judicial rules. No one has come up with any evidence that the Court's rulings, or any Justice, has been influenced by gifts or other outside influence.

If Mr. Biden and Democrats were really concerned about ethics in government, they'd impose a total ban on Congress of all gifts, trips to conferences at fancy resorts, speaking fees, or anything else that provides even the appearance of a conflict of interest. But they won't because the Members enjoy those perks and their anger at the Court has nothing to do with ethics. They are using ethics as a political ruse to gain more influence over the Court and its decisions.

Mr. Biden also endorsed an 18-year term limit for Justices, though the Constitution gives them life tenure. The idea is that Congress can create a "Senior Justice" position akin to the "senior status" that judges take on the circuit courts. But those lower-court judges take that status voluntarily, and Mr. Biden wants to forcibly retire Justices to duties akin to watching paint dry.

Adam White, who served on Mr. Biden's judicial commission in 2021, makes the useful point that term limits would tie Supreme Court vacancies and appointments even more to presidential elections. He says this would further erode the appearance of judicial independence and make "the Court a spoil not just of politics, but of presidential politics exclusively."

Mr. Biden also proposed a constitutional amendment to overturn the Court's recent decision on presidential immunity, but we'll leave that for another day. Suffice to say that it's impossible to overestimate how pernicious Mr. Biden's reform plan is. It doesn't matter that its chances of passing are nil at the moment.

The President is giving this proposal an official Democratic Party imprimatur, and Vice President Kamala Harris was quick to endorse the plan on Monday. Its most damaging parts are a threat to pass the next time Democrats control all of the government.

And what about Republicans? Do they realize the Court's future is on the ballot this year? Mr. Trump has spoken up in his fashion, but will Senators start explaining what is truly at stake? Maybe J.D. Vance could stop talking about cat ladies and start talking about the threat the Biden scheme poses to the Court and our constitutional republic.

## Trump Becomes a Crypto Convert

Donald Trump wowed the crowds Saturday at the Bitcoin Conference by promising to make the U.S. the "crypto capital of the planet." But he has some work to do to iron out the contradiction in his cryptocurrency policy.

"The moment I'm sworn in, the persecution stops and the weaponization ends against your industry," the former President told 3,000 or so cheering crypto enthusiasts in Nashville. If nothing else, he recruited many more campaign donors, which was no doubt part of the plan.

Mr. Trump is right that Biden regulators have targeted the industry, often unfairly. Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Gary Gensler has sued crypto companies for violating securities laws that don't offer clear guidance on crypto investing. Regulators have sought to deter banks from providing services to crypto companies, in part by warning about their risks to "safety and soundness."

During the 2023 regional bank turmoil, regulators seized Signature Bank, which had a market niche serving crypto companies, though its executives thought it could withstand a run on deposits. Former Rep. Barney Frank, who had served on Signature's board, alleged that regulators were trying "to send a message to get people away from crypto."

Mr. Trump on Saturday vowed to end what he called this government "Operation Chokepoint 2.0" against the crypto industry. Chokepoint refers to the stealth campaign by Obama-era regulators to coerce banks to stop serving payday lenders and gun retailers. Mr. Trump promised to replace Mr. Gensler, which is an easy call, though not only because of his crusade against crypto.

Mr. Gensler's overarching sin is shifting the SEC from its core mission of protecting investors to advance the priorities of Sen. Elizabeth Warren. This includes sweeping regulations on corporate climate disclosure, short-selling, private investment funds, stock buybacks and more. Courts have blocked many of his actions.

Mr. Trump is a convert to crypto enthusiasm. Five years ago he called bitcoin a "scam," claiming its "value is highly volatile and based on thin

**He's right to replace Gary Gensler, but why a national bitcoin reserve?**

air." He had a point about the latter, as its price has often moved sharply. But now he says "bitcoin stands for freedom, sovereignty and independence from government coercion and control."

But freedom from government isn't what he's proposing. He wants all future bitcoin to be made in America, which is a limit on freedom and would require a much bigger electric grid since bitcoin mining is energy intensive. He also floated establishing a "strategic national bitcoin stockpile," which appears to be based on a proposal by Sen. Cynthia Lummis, a Wyoming Republican.

Ms. Lummis wants the U.S. Treasury to buy one million bitcoins—about \$68 billion at current prices—over five years. This would presumably be a national strategic reserve, like the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. "Bitcoin is a great store of value. Over the last four years or so it has increased about 55% per year," she says. But bitcoin's value plunged in 2022 as the Federal Reserve tightened money.

She says the government could reduce the national debt by investing in bitcoin. Not if its price craters, or politicians raid the reserve to pay for spending or to bail out businesses if there's a crypto crash. That's what politicians always do—see the misuse of the petroleum reserve by several Presidents. The Treasury would also have to borrow to buy bitcoins for the reserve in the first place. Crypto investors may find that getting in bed with the government is risky business.

If crypto currencies really are a libertarian vehicle to invest free from political vagaries, then they should trade on their own without government help. Regulators can protect investors from scammers and lay out transparent rules. But Mr. Trump's sketchy plan reflects the contradictions of much of his MAGA platform, which advocates deregulation but at the same time more government industrial policy.

If Mr. Trump wants to strike a contrast with Kamala Harris, he might instead call for government getting out of the business of picking winners and losers—crypto and bitcoin included. It never ends well.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## A Good Education Does Not Come So Easily

Prof. Kumble Subbaswamy takes issue with Tunku Varadarajan's op-ed "J.D. Vance and the Indian American Dream" (July 17) on grounds that most Indian migrants to the U.S. owe their success to the higher education with which they arrived (Letters, July 25), as opposed to "those African-Americans who were born into poverty, educated at subpar schools and discriminated against at every turn in the job market."

Most Indian migrants to the U.S. have come from middle-class families with relatively limited financial means. Their parents made huge sacrifices in their own lives to give their children the kind of education that would provide them better opportunities. This education was obtained by tough parenting at home and by securing scarce openings in top-

rated Indian schools and universities through rigorous selection processes at every step and competitive entrance exams.

As such, the gift of education to the Indian migrants wasn't bestowed on them by privilege and wealth but by their own dedication and hard work, as well as that of their parents, who knew the value of such education. Those who don't seize the benefits of education, and shun the hard work necessary to obtain it, can't complain that they were later passed over in the job market for the lack of it.

Education is the only leveler in life for those who aren't born into privilege and wealth. A good education, though, is hard to procure without toil and trouble.

ANIL BHALLA  
New York

## A Presidential Transition Is Now Guaranteed

One new development unmentioned in Robert Zoellick's excellent op-ed "For a Vice President, It's Hard to Succeed" (July 25) is that no matter who wins the 2024 election, a presidential transition will occur. A situation in which we have a presidential transition either way doesn't happen in every election, and it wasn't the case in 2024 until days ago.

Congress passed the Pre-Election Presidential Transitions Act in 2010, which called for nonincumbent campaigns to get funding and begin transition efforts before the conventions. In 2012 the Romney campaign was the first to get this funding—Amb. Zoellick and I both served on that effort. Since that law, 2016 was the only previous time that both campaigns were eligible for this funding.

There were some significant hiccups in that cycle. The General Ser-

vices Administration placed both the Clinton and Trump transition operations in the same building, which led to awkward elevator moments and concerns about secrecy and security.

Unfortunately, the Harris campaign is already behind in this regard. Candidates were supposed to name their transition heads nearly three months ago. Additionally, current administration staffers shouldn't assume they will stay if Vice President Kamala Harris wins. This assumption was made by Reagan's staff in 1988, who were met with an unwelcome surprise when former Vice President George H.W. Bush cleared house. We could see a similar dynamic if Ms. Harris wins in November.

TEVI TROY  
Bipartisan Policy Center  
Silver Spring, Md.

Mr. Troy is author of "The Power and the Money."

## How Americans Are Thinking About Children

"More Americans Opt Not to Have Children" (U.S. News, July 22) insightfully addresses the decline in U.S. birthrates. It overlooks, however, a critical distinction between being "childless" and "child-free."

Childless individuals want children but don't have them due to factors out of their control, such as infertility, illness or affordability. By contrast, child-free people choose not to have children as a proactive decision. The former term highlights a lack or loss of choice, while the latter denotes a deliberate, unwavering and permanent lifestyle choice.

Many assume that a life without children lacks fulfillment or purpose, but child-free people often engage deeply in caregiving and community-building. Fulfillment, legacy and impact aren't confined to parenthood.

JUDY LAGROU  
New York

While America's historically low birthrate is in part due to the rising number of Americans who don't want children, there is a critical missing demographic: the increasing number of "maybe someday" parents. Consider that the average ideal family size for the modern American is now 2.6—the highest it has been since 1971. Adults under 30 are also more likely than any other age group to believe three or more kids is preferable, and women's desired number of children has remained relatively stable over the years. So, what's driving the gap between our ideal and our reality? According to research, it's the economy.

Many Americans in their prime childbearing years find it hard to achieve their family-size goals because of financial and social concerns. Younger demographics are more likely to feel they haven't achieved stability or big life milestones that we traditionally associate with being prerequisites for having children. Birthrates also predictably fall during periods of economic hardship.

## Trump's Plan for Ukraine

"A Trump Peace Plan for Ukraine" (op-ed, July 26) by David Urban and Mike Pompeo presents some hopeful and constructive ideas for a Ukrainian victory. Unfortunately, they ask me to assume that their suggestions are something like what former President Donald Trump and Sen. J.D. Vance would do in the White House, despite what the two have said.

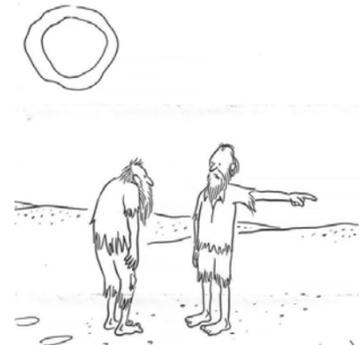
Until Mr. Trump gives me more information about his 24-hour plan to solve the problems created by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, I am left wondering if Messrs. Urban and Pompeo are asking me to buy the classic "pig in a poke."

THE REV. SCOTT CUSTEAD  
Hollidaysburg, Pa.

Letters intended for publication should be emailed to [wsj.letters@wsj.com](mailto:wsj.letters@wsj.com). Please include your city, state and telephone number. All letters are subject to editing, and unpublished letters cannot be acknowledged.

## Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"If you pass the third enormous expanse of windswept sand, you've gone too far."

## OPINION

## The Case Against Low Interest Rates

By John Michaelson

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said recently that the Fed is convinced inflation is headed back to 2%—which means the central bank is likely to cut interest rates soon. This would be a mistake. The most inappropriate thing imaginable for the central bank to do would be cutting its rates now.

By obvious measurements, the economy is all right. Even with short-term rates stuck at roughly 5%, where they approximate something like a historical norm, America is essentially at full employment. The economy is growing, but not so fast as to raise further inflation alarms. The stock market is setting records. The dollar is strong. Inflation is down.

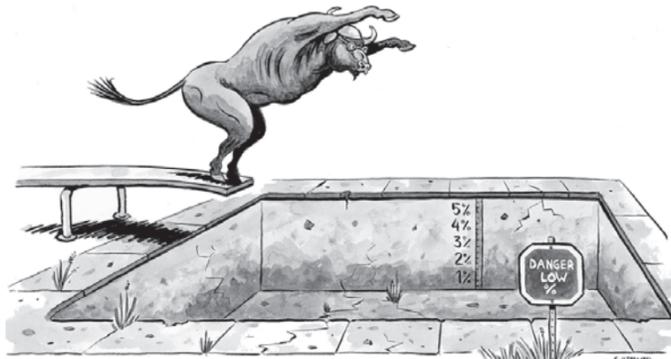
With deeper measurements, things are even better. The growth of home prices has been moderating, but there has been no crash. Small savers are finding that delayed gratification is again rewarded without the need to

**The dollar is strong, inflation is down, and the average American isn't calling for cheap money.**

take on undue risk. Pension funds have a better shot at meeting their obligations now that their bonds are yielding decently. Higher rates, if they persist, may even force governments to rein in their profligacy.

None of this would improve if the Fed cut interest rates. Instead, such a move might reinstate some of the worst economic and social trends of recent years. Artificially low interest rates were a disaster that distorted lives and incentives.

Cheap money was supposed to fuel economic growth, but—like most model-driven panaceas, unconnected



DAVID GOTHARD

to empirical reality—it didn't deliver. Artificially low interest rates retarded the growth they were intended to accelerate. They enabled corporate giants to fend off or buy out challengers, eased the pressure to innovate, diminished incentives to improve productivity, and enabled poorly performing enterprises (and executives) to linger long after they should have been put out to pasture.

The financial crises of 1929 and 1974 were followed by periods of innovation and the slaughter of complacent incumbents. Our attempt to treat a financial crisis by saving the banking system with prolonged low rates unquestionably saved the wealth of investment-firm partners. But it did so at the expense of the middle class, and it perpetuated economic somnolence.

One of the least-recognized consequences of the low-rate regime is the way it undermined social cohesion by facilitating what may well be the largest wealth transfer in history, from the middle class to the highly affluent who own stocks, bonds and real estate. Low rates might have made mortgages more affordable, but supply constraints translated cheap borrowing into higher home prices, punishing the aspiring young.

Years of cheap money also encouraged the foolish borrowing that

drove enormous profits to the financial sector. At the level of the federal government, it unleashed the borrowing-driven inflation that nearly always results from printing lots of money. Worse yet, this debt-driven house of cards inevitably creates pressure to perpetuate the artificially low rates that were the cause of it, since how else will borrowers and governments pay it back?

Artificially low interest rates may have had some initial efficacy. But ignoring evidence from Japan and other countries over the past five decades, we allowed it to morph into an addiction. Now real interest rates are solidly positive. Inflation is diminished but still above the 2% level that the Fed considers wholesome. So why cut rates?

Advocates of easy money often seem to believe that low rates are good for the proverbial little guy, but the opposite is more often the case. Consider two retired acquaintances of mine. One, already wealthy from a career on Wall Street, watched his investment portfolio swell during the era of artificially low rates. He piled up far more additional wealth than he could ever spend.

Things were different for another acquaintance, a comfortable but not wealthy widow who lived for some years on Social Security, the yield on

FDIC-insured savings and the middle-class staple of annuities. When aggressive Fed rate-cutting slashed her interest income and the yield on new annuities almost to nothing, she found herself worrying that she would run out of money—denying herself all but the most basic expenses as her capital dwindled and inflation made trips to the supermarket painful. She still finds prices high but now gets nearly 5% on her savings, restoring her peace of mind and even allowing for a modest restaurant lunch now and then.

America's central bankers have done enough for the rich. Keeping rates at current reasonable levels will enable the middle class and those with the values of prudence and thrift to thrive. It will increase the competitiveness of American business.

The time has come to wind down the grossly inflated financial sector. Many on Wall Street have built their careers and wealth on business models dependent on cheap money. A normal 5% return on safe debt and a real cost to leverage mean an end, for the most part, to the business models used by many in private equity, venture capital, trading and other leverage-based asset classes.

Pension funds and endowments aren't calling for low rates. They are finally seeing a return on assets and aren't being forced to invest in speculative financial products to earn a reasonable return.

The average American isn't calling for cheap money. Most have paid off student loans, have a lot of equity in their houses, directly and indirectly have savings and retirement plans that benefit from higher rates, and they aren't looking for a cheap mortgage.

Apart from giving a gift to Wall Street, the Fed will do only damage to the nation's economy by cutting rates now.

*Mr. Michaelson is a partner at Michaelson Capital.*

## A 'Varsity Blues' Injustice

By Harvey Silverglate

I've practiced criminal law for more than half a century, but I'm still capable of shock at how easy it is for an innocent person to be falsely charged and convicted. Practicing in the Boston area, I followed the federal college-admissions prosecutions known as Operation Varsity Blues. These cases centered on several Hollywood celebrities and dozens of wealthy parents who confessed to scheming with admitted con man Rick Singer to get their unqualified children into top colleges by cheating on tests and bribing coaches to label the applicants as athletic recruits.

Most pleaded guilty because they had committed the crimes and to avoid the pernicious prosecutorial practice of recommending higher sentences for those who choose to fight rather than take a plea bargain—a practice that itself should qualify as the crime of extortion. But the only defendant who lived near Boston chose to fight.

**Prosecutors targeted John Wilson, although his children were legitimately accomplished athletes.**

John Wilson's facts were different from the others'. His children were highly qualified on their athletic and academic merits. His twin daughters got top scores on the ACT. His son scored in the top 93% and played on multiple nationally ranked water polo teams. His son's nationally recognized high-school coach testified that he called the University of Southern California to recommend the boy. Unlike any other Varsity Blues family, his son played on the USC team.

Mr. Wilson's donations went to USC's Trojan Athletic Fund and Mr. Singer's IRS-certified foundation, not to individuals. USC gave Mr. Wilson a receipt and kept his money. Giving donor families, legacies, political VIPs, faculty children and others preference in admissions is a long-standing practice that may seem unfair but has never been illegal.

Less than 2% of Mr. Singer's 1,750 clients were charged; most were innocent victims of his con. Mr. Wilson was innocent, yet prosecutors charged him and smeared his children. Former Boston prosecutor David G. Lazarus wrote in a Law360 article titled "Life After 'Varsity Blues'" that the Boston U.S. attorney's office "positions itself to get those cases and win any turf battles to keep them."

The prosecutors used high-pressure tactics, pushing Mr. Singer to cooperate and move beyond "singing" to "composing," as criminal lawyers say. To maximize media attention, they alleged a conspiracy across unrelated parents and charged everyone with "honest services fraud"—actions that the First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals later deemed improper. They shared misleading sound bites and email fragments with the media to fuel sensational headlines.

The trial judge overruled more than 600 defense motions. He held that the Wilsons' perfect and near-perfect ACT scores were inadmissible. He also excluded the son's world-record and certified swim times that proved he was one of the fastest players on USC's team.

The right to a fair trial is the bedrock of our legal system. The judge excluded almost all of the defendant's proffered evidence. The prosecutors were improperly allowed to inundate the jury with the unethical acts of other, unrelated parents. Eleven former U.S. attorneys from across the country, appointed by Democratic and Republican presidents, wrote a supporting appeals brief stating "John Wilson did not receive a fair trial." A three-judge panel of the First Circuit agreed and unanimously reversed almost all of Mr. Wilson's convictions. Prosecutors dropped those charges rather than retry the case.

Mr. Wilson was left with a single conviction—for making a false statement on a tax return. This false statement was for deducting his donations to USC using the invoice from Mr. Singer's company instead of the receipt he had received from USC. The difference in taxes owed was \$1,425. Mr. Wilson overpaid his taxes that year by far more than that.

The Wilsons went through five years of hell. Mr. Wilson spent his life savings on legal costs and lost his job and reputation. He remains radioactive to employers. Ensnaring someone with a felony conviction for a \$1,425 error on a tax return is the type of abuse that should cease.

*Mr. Silverglate is a criminal defense and civil liberties lawyer and author of "Three Felonies a Day: How the Feds Target the Innocent."*

## Kamala Harris Made Progress on the Border Crisis

By Katie Tobin

Whether Kamala Harris was the "border czar" is beside the point. The vice president made historic progress on the complex issue of Central American migration. Many Republicans distort the facts that I saw up close during my time in the White House.

I vividly remember March 24, 2021, the day President Biden asked the vice president to lead the administration's efforts to tackle migration's root causes in Central America. I had just started at the National Security Council, covering migration and refugee policy. A few minutes after the announcement, I received a call from Juan Gonzalez, a colleague who had worked on the issue in the Obama administration. Knowing the challenging assignment before us, he told me to buckle up.

Starting that day, we were both part of a small group from the White House and State Department that joined a daily 8 p.m. call with Ms. Harris's staff. She charged us with advancing her ambitious vision for Central America—and quickly.

Our first task was to clean up Donald Trump's mess. His foreign policy in Central America exacerbated the textbook drivers of migration: poverty, violence and corruption.

Mr. Trump in March 2019 stripped U.S. humanitarian and development assistance from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala—three of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere—with the goal of pressuring those countries to curb the flow of migrants. Instead, border crossings by nationals of those three countries remained elevated in the summer of 2019, and without U.S. funding many aid groups in northern Central America had to close their doors.

In 2020 Covid hit Latin America harder than any other region. Yet that year Mr. Trump suspended funding for several months from the Pan-American Health Organization, which played a critical role in the Covid response in Latin America. The

Trump administration alleged that PAHO participated in the human trafficking of Cuban doctors. PAHO is currently fighting accusations by medical professionals in U.S. federal court and doesn't appear to have publicly commented on the case. Mr. Trump's decision forced the organization to the edge of financial collapse. The administration continued to push for funding cuts to PAHO in yearly budgets as the pandemic raged on.

Worse yet, Mr. Trump failed to back one of the most important anticorruption organizations in the region—the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala.

By the time Ms. Harris received her assignment, northern Central America was also experiencing a hunger crisis. Within weeks of being charged with the issue, the vice president mobilized more than \$300 million in emergency humanitarian assistance. This was critical in the early days to save lives and prevent a mass migration spurred by the damage from Mr. Trump's policies as well as natural disasters such as hurricanes Eta and Iota.

From there, Ms. Harris personally convinced CEOs of numerous companies and organizations to invest in Central America. At her urging, U.S. entities committed over \$5 billion from May 2021 to June 2024. Alongside this private capital, the vice president's Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America directed the U.S. International Development Finance Corp., the U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department to provide loans and initiate projects that helped create more than 250,000 jobs in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala in the past three years.

Drawing from her experience as a prosecutor, the vice president's strategy also had a strong law enforcement focus. In June 2021 the Justice, State and Homeland Security departments launched Joint Task Force Alpha. Through this task force, the agencies worked in close concert and with foreign partners in the region on coun-

tersmuggling operations. Ms. Harris herself spoke frequently with leaders in northern Central America about the importance of respecting the rule of law. I was struck on these calls by her ability to be both gracious and firm.

**Under her leadership, the administration tackled migration's root causes in northern Central America.**

The vice president also took on corruption. The administration won a major victory for democracy last year when Guatemalans elected an anticorruption candidate, Bernardo Arévalo, as president. Both the Biden and Harris national-security teams—particularly the vice president's adviser Phil Gordon—led a U.S. effort to hold corrupt political actors accountable, namely by restricting the visas of nearly 300 Guatemalan lawmakers and private citizens whom the administration accused of undermining democracy and the rule of law.

## Destigmatizing Drug Abuse Is a Dopey Idea

By Naomi Schaefer Riley

I wanted to talk to an expert about the effects of drug abuse on children and families, but the National Institute on Drug Abuse demurred. "We do not have someone available for an interview," press officer Katie Clark wrote. Then things got weird. She wrote:

"I also noticed that in the questions you sent below, you used the term 'substance abuse,' and wanted to flag that NIDA recommends saying 'substance use' or 'substance misuse' instead. For more information on this guidance, please see NIDA's resource on Preferred Language for Talking About Addiction. Often unintentionally, many people still talk about addiction in ways that are stigmatizing—which may prevent people who have a substance use disorder from seeking treatment."

Ms. Clark concluded with this admonition: "Making simple changes in language can help reduce or avoid harmful stigma and negativity around substance use disorders, especially in news stories and reporting on addiction."

According to its website, the mission of the National Institute on Drug Abuse is "to advance science on drug use and addiction and to apply that knowledge to improve individual and public health." Neither Ms. Clark nor the Preferred Language page cited any empirical

evidence that journalists' using the term "drug abuse" discourages people from seeking treatment. The idea seems implausible: The number of annual overdose deaths is four times as high as it was 20 years ago, when nobody thought to object to the term "drug abuse."

A colleague told me she attended a recent conference on domestic violence and was told to avoid the words "perpetrators" and "batterers." Those people are now called "intimate partner violence users," and their victims are said to "experience intimate partner violence." It isn't a joke: A JAMA Network paper published in October is titled "Screening for Intimate Partner Violence Experience and Use in the Veterans Health Administration."

Keith Humphreys, who served as a senior adviser on drug policy to President Obama, wrote recently in the Atlantic that "efforts to destigmatize drug use may . . . draw out the epidemic, invite new cohorts to try hard drugs, and create more addicted people." The counterpoint is that stigma discourages drug abusers from seeking help. But if there's nothing wrong with what you're doing, why would you ask for help?

*Ms. Riley is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and author of "No Way to Treat a Child: How the Foster Care System, Family Courts and Racial Activists Are Wrecking Young Lives."*

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## WORLD NEWS

# Russians Find a Haven in South America

Immigrants, seeking refuge from the war, are moving to Argentina and Brazil

By RYAN DUBÉ  
AND SAMANTHA PEARSON

BUENOS AIRES—At Bucarest Gastro Bar, the waiters speak Russian as customers forgo the local rib-eye for skewered meat called *shashlik*. Russians who left their homeland since their country invaded Ukraine rock out to a Russian band. Others drink vodka and smoke tobacco in a hookah, popular in Russia.

"Here, my children are free. I'm free," said the bar's co-owner, Dmitrii Priyanikov, in halting Spanish. The 42-year-old has an all too familiar tale to tell: He arrived in Argentina two years ago with his wife and children from a Russian region that borders Ukraine—and is frequently hit by drone attacks.

With Russia's economy isolated and Vladimir Putin's authoritarian regime seeking conscripts, hundreds of thousands of Russians have fled since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. They first went to Armenia, Turkey and nearby countries.

Now, many of those immigrants are taking advantage of relaxed entry rules and beneficial immigration laws and settling in Argentina and Brazil, mostly in the Argentine capital and the Brazilian coastal city of Florianópolis, an idyllic collec-



Anna Mikhailov with her son in Florianópolis, Brazil. She and her husband fled Russia because of the war in Ukraine.

tion of islands covered in lush forest in the far south. Both cities long have been magnets for European immigrants fleeing conflict and poverty.

In Argentina, the center of the new Little Russia community is spread across Palermo, Belgrano and other neighborhoods of Buenos Aires known for their hip restaurants and youthful residents. The newcomers have opened Russian-speaking beauty salons, restaurants and daycare centers.

Others are digital nomads, working in Russian and paid in foreign currencies or crypto.

Florianópolis is partly made up of a large island featuring *caipirinha*-soaked lounges and beach restaurants. Brazil's neutral stance on the Ukraine invasion, coupled with Brazilians' noticeable lack of interest in the war, has made it easier to fit in.

About 60,000 Russians entered Brazil between the early March 2022 and late 2023, government data show. They in-

vested more than \$300 million, mainly in property, according to estimates based on official data by Hayman-Woodward, a global-advisory firm on immigration.

Some 36,000 Ukrainians also have entered Brazil during the same period.

The new arrivals from Russia say they are attracted to the city's cooler climes and a crime rate lower than that of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Brazil's southern states are home to descendants of the

many Russian Jews and those with German heritage who immigrated after the past century's two world wars.

The first wave of Russians included pregnant women attracted to Argentina because it provides immediate citizenship to newborns and temporary residency and work permits for their parents, putting them on a fast track to citizenship. Brazil also provides perks for new parents, allowing immigrants to apply for citizenship after giv-

ing birth in the country, providing them with a passport that permits them to bypass growing travel restrictions on Russians.

The European Union has restricted Russian citizens from visiting the 27-nation bloc by toughening visa requirements. But Argentines and Brazilians enter Europe visa-free.

The ease of obtaining citizenship in the South American countries has caught the attention of Western officials after Russian fake identities in Argentina to conduct espionage in Europe. Brazil's Justice Ministry said the right to citizenship in these cases was guaranteed by the constitution. Argentina's Foreign Ministry didn't respond to a request for comment.

In Argentina, more than 75,000 Russians have entered since the war began, government migration data shows. During the same period, about 11,000 Ukrainians have entered Argentina, which has a large Ukrainian community.

Grigori Mikhailov learned his wife was pregnant two days before hostilities. "We knew we had to leave Russia. I was afraid I would be called up or would end up in prison," he said.

He said the couple grabbed their Welsh corgi and fled to Thailand to stay with friends. After struggling to get authorization to live there, a friend in Florianópolis tipped them off about Brazil's generous immigration laws. They were soon on a plane to Latin America.

—Silvina Frydlewsky contributed to this article.

## Beijing Reaches Back In Time to Challenge West

By SHA HUA

CHINOR, UZBEKISTAN—China's leader, Xi Jinping, says he is striving to make sure Chinese civilization yields global influence far into the future. One little-noticed part of that vision: An effort to expand its reach into the very distant past.

After decades of digging in their own backyard, Chinese archaeologists are fanning out across the world, trying to unearth connections between Chinese civilization and pivotal moments in global history.

On the plains of southern Uzbekistan, a team of Chinese scientists is working to excavate burial sites they discovered in 2019. The tombs offer potential clues about the fate of a mysterious nomadic tribe with roots in what is now considered China that could rewrite the history of the Silk Road, the network of trade routes that connected the East and West over two millennia.

Chinese researchers have traveled to Kenya and Saudi Arabia seeking traces of Chinese seafarers from the 15th century. In the South China Sea, others are scouring centuries-old Chinese shipwrecks that could help bolster Beijing's disputed claims over maritime territory.

The expanding scope of China's work is challenging long-held beliefs. Some scholars say it has the potential to change the field of archaeology itself, along with China's place in the sweep of human history.

For years, Xi has pressed China's scholars, artists and journalists to do a better job telling the nation's story on the global stage. One problem, Xi said in a 2022 speech, is that too few in the West understand the significance and nature of China's ancient civilization. "This makes it hard for them to truly grasp China's past, present and future," he said.

China is participating in more than three dozen overseas

culture project Xi launched in 2013 to revive the influence Chinese empires once wielded through the Silk Road. The program is part of Beijing's effort to build up its "geocultural power" and assert the reach of Chinese civilization beyond the country's borders, said Tim Winter, a senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore who has studied China's use of heritage to promote the Belt and Road.

Because the evidence it deals with is fragmentary, archaeology offers wide room for interpretation. That ambiguity opens a window for Chinese researchers to push the field in new directions, some archaeologists say.

One of their flagship efforts is unfolding in Central Asia, a region where empires clashed and intersected for centuries, and where Western archaeologists have long dominated.

In May, Chinese and Uzbek researchers gathered around a 10-foot-deep trench dug into a terrace overlooking the village of Chinor, along Uzbekistan's Surxondaryo River.

Inside the trench, a young Chinese archaeologist examined soil extracted with a tube-shaped spade as his Uzbek counterpart explained the work to the village mayor. Scattered around them were 24 other dig sites, all ancient graves containing artifacts that challenged long-held assumptions about the region's history.

The site, called Chinortepa,



Chinese archaeologists work with Uzbek researchers along Uzbekistan's Surxondaryo River.

was discovered by a team under the direction of Wang Jianxin, an archaeologist based at Northwest University in the central Chinese city of Xi'an. He has long argued that the international understanding of the Silk Road was dominated by Western scholars who tended to focus on exploring how the West influenced other cultures along the route. "I want to add China's voice to the field," he said.

The scholar has spent two decades studying the Yuezhi, nomadic herders who roamed the grasslands of present-day northwestern China during the first millennium B.C. After a major defeat at the hands of another nomadic tribe in the second century B.C., they fled west, settling in Central Asia, historical records show.

Wang long wondered what happened to the Yuezhi after they left China, and he

started exploring excavation possibilities in Central Asia as early as 2009. In 2013, three months after Xi announced the Belt and Road Initiative, Wang made a deal with Amridin Berdimurodov, then director of the Institute of Archaeology at Uzbekistan's Academy of Sciences in Samarkand, to launch a joint study of ancient nomadic cultures in Central Asia. Over the next decade, Wang's team uncovered dozens of formerly unknown nomadic settlements in Uzbekistan, stunning other archaeologists.

Though Wang is immersed in the ancient past, his discoveries in Uzbekistan align well with Beijing's present-day efforts to portray China as a benevolent player in the region.

China's influence has become a topic of interest among locals in recent years as Beijing

has ramped up its investment in Uzbekistan as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. Many Uzbeks welcome it as a force to help their country integrate into the global economy, but there are concerns that China will impose itself on the region.

Asked whether Beijing could use the Yuezhi to make territorial claims, Wang said the notion is absurd because the nomads are a historical people and no one serious would put forth that argument.

While his research is academic, Wang says the results "match up with the needs of China and Uzbekistan." Being able to trace the origins of the Kushan Empire to local people, rather than outsiders, feeds a tale of national resurgence after a period of foreign dominance that lines up favorably with Uzbekistan's post-Soviet effort to write its own history.



An archaeological find unearthed in Uzbekistan.

archaeological digs, up from barely any before 2010, said China's National Cultural Heritage Administration. The same period also saw a more than tripling of articles written by China-based archaeologists in foreign journals on topics outside China.

One particular focus is the history along the Belt and Road Initiative, the infrastruc-

### WORLD WATCH



LICKS OF FLAME: An artist dressed as Hindu deity Mahakali performed during a procession to mark the Bonalu festival at Akkanna Madanna temple in Hyderabad, India, on Monday.

#### SOUTH AFRICA

##### ANC Party Expels Ex-President Zuma

Former South African President Jacob Zuma was expelled by his former African National Congress party on Monday after he formed a new political party that contested the country's recent elections.

Zuma's uMkhonto we Sizwe Party, also known as the MK Party, received nearly 15% of the national vote and became the third largest party in the country. That contributed significantly to the ANC losing its parliamentary majority for the first time since it came into power in 1994.

The ANC has since formed a unity government with several parties, including its biggest rival, the Democratic Alliance.

Despite denouncing the ANC and leading the MK, which is now South Africa's official opposition party, Zuma has insisted that he remains a member of the ANC.

—Associated Press

#### SUDAN

##### Civil War Militia Accused of Rapes

Human Rights Watch accused the paramilitary group fighting against the military in Sudan's civil war of rampant sexual violence against women, including gang rape and forced marriages of girls. The international rights group also accused the military of sexual violence.

The group, in a report released Monday, called for the United Nations and the African Union to establish a joint mission to protect civilians in Sudan as more than 15 months of fighting between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces show no signs of abating.

Sudan plunged into chaos in April 2023. The fighting has killed more than 14,000 people and wounded 33,000 others, according to the U.N., but rights activists say the true toll could be much higher.

—Associated Press

#### GREECE

##### 'Goat Plague' Hits Livestock Industry

Authorities in Greece ordered nationwide restrictions for goat and sheep Monday to combat a deadly viral outbreak that is a fresh blow to the domestic livestock industry.

Costas Tsiaras, the minister of agriculture and rural development, announced the ban on the commercial slaughter of goats and sheep as well as movement for reproduction—expanding measures already in effect in parts of central Greece where the outbreak was first reported.

Also known as the "goat plague," the PPR virus is a highly contagious disease affecting goats and sheep, causing severe illness and death. It has no adverse effect on human health, according to Greek officials. Some 7,000 animals in herds where the disease has been identified have been culled.

—Associated Press

## Still No Profit for Amazon's Twitch

Live-video startup's user growth is slowing and more layoffs are expected

Amazon.com paid nearly \$1 billion to acquire the live-video startup Twitch Interactive in 2014. A decade later, the retail giant has received little financial return from one of its bigger acquisitions.

By Salvador Rodriguez, Sarah E. Needleman and Sebastian Herrera

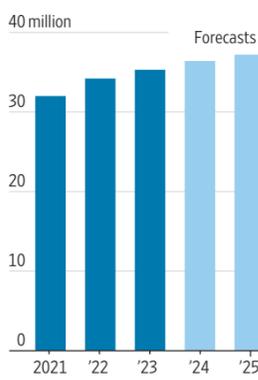
Known for hourslong broadcasts of videogame play, Twitch remains unprofitable despite periods of explosive popularity, according to current and former employees knowledgeable about

its finances. Documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal show Twitch's biggest-paying users are opening their wallets less, and third-party data reflect that growth in new users and engagement has slowed.

Following two rounds of layoffs in the past year, staffers are concerned that a third round could come this fall following an annual operational review, according to people familiar with the matter. Amazon Chief Executive Andy Jassy, who took over in 2021, has led a profitability review at the company and shown little tolerance for unprofitable businesses.

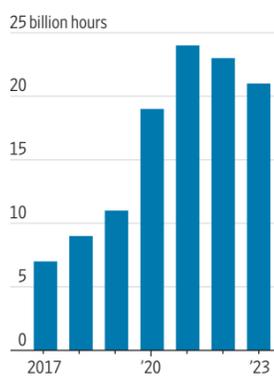
Insiders said they worry Twitch is at risk of becoming what they called a "zombie brand" at Amazon—internal projects or acquisitions that

Number of U.S. Twitch users



Sources: Emarketer (users); StreamElements (hours)

Number of hours spent on Twitch, globally



have been sidelined because they haven't lived up to expectations. These staffers pointed to book-review app Goodreads, online task finder

Mechanical Turk and discount website Woot.

A spokeswoman for Amazon said it has always taken a long-term view of Twitch

and noted its ability to attract harder-to-reach audiences. The company said it remains confident in Twitch's potential.

Amazon's journey with Twitch underscores the challenge companies face as they seek to grow through acquisitions, especially when they bet on trendy startups that aren't making money.

Twitch, which remains a tiny part of Amazon, continues to get millions of visitors a day. However, its business model is challenging. Enabling tens of thousands of simultaneous livestreams is expensive, and the company has had to invest in tools to moderate the content. Insiders said the content itself poses challenges, as long-form live video doesn't align well with selling

## Property Market Signals Bottom Is Near

By Peter Grant

Banks and other lenders are seizing control of distressed commercial properties at the highest rate in nearly a decade, a sign that the sector's punishing downturn is entering its next phase and approaching a bottom.

In the second quarter, portfolios of foreclosed and seized office buildings, apartments and other commercial property reached \$20.5 billion, according to data provider MSCI. That is a 13% increase from the first quarter and the highest quarterly figure since 2015.

Defaults and other kinds of distress have been steadily building in the commercial-property market to near historic levels because of high interest rates and the slow return of workers to office buildings. Until recently, though, many lenders have been reluctant to take over properties in hopes of a recovery and to avoid the expense and losses of foreclosure actions.

"Lenders will do everything in their power to avoid that," said Jade Rahmani, an analyst at Keefe, Bruyette & Woods.

But distress is working its way through the financial system after more lenders conclude that obsolete office buildings won't recover their former value, even when interest rates decline.

That is leading to sales of foreclosed properties and distressed mortgages. It is also bringing an increase in short sales, where lenders and borrowers work together to unload troubled property for whatever they can get.

It is possible that commercial-property values could deteriorate even further if the U.S. economy falls into recession and companies start laying off workers and want less office space.

But in previous downturns, comparable surges in foreclosure activity has signaled the

## A Cruel Summer Hammers Big Tech Stocks

By Hardika Singh

Big tech stocks are having a rough month.

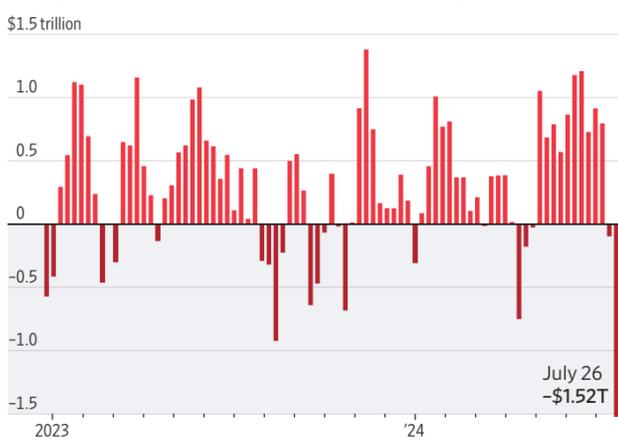
The Magnificent Seven group of tech titans has shed \$1.52 trillion in market value in the past three weeks, the biggest drop over such a stretch on record. That reflects an 8.1% slide in Tesla shares and a 6% decline for Alphabet last week, after their earnings reports sparked a huge stock-market selloff and doubts about the artificial-intelligence frenzy that has powered stocks to new heights.

Already, traders had been skittish about their bets on big tech.

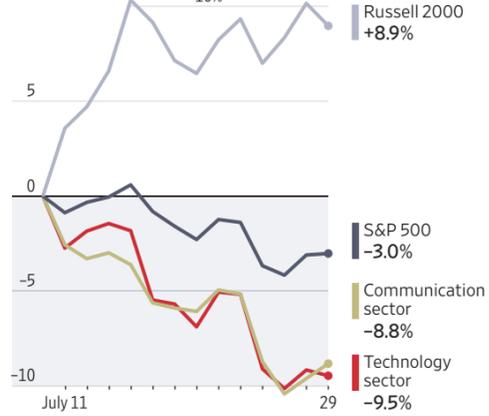
"It's still a little bit of a messaging of 'taking it on faith,'" said Yung-Yu Ma, chief investment officer at BMO Wealth Management. "And right now, the market doesn't seem especially inclined to take it on faith, given how much has been priced in."

Tech shares have been stumbling since earlier this month, when a cool inflation report boosted traders' confidence that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates in September. That prompted investors to trim their wagers on this year's market leaders and rush into shares of smaller

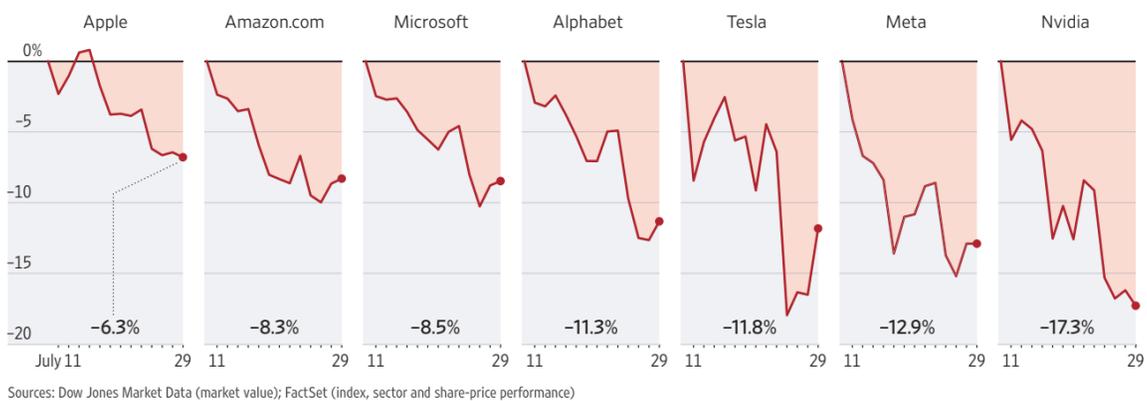
Rolling three-week market value change for the Magnificent Seven



Index and sector performance since the inflation report



Share-price performance since the inflation report



Sources: Dow Jones Market Data (market value); FactSet (index, sector and share-price performance)

### INSIDE



#### BUSINESS NEWS

Heineken posts weaker-than-expected earnings and writes down an investment. **B3**



#### HEARD ON THE STREET

In a troubled box office, premium still sells. **B12**

## America's Post-Covid Factory Boom Cools Off

By Bob Tita

More U.S. manufacturers are rethinking their plans as they brace for an extended slump in demand.

Higher interest rates, rising operating costs, a strengthening U.S. dollar and lower selling prices for commodities are damping activity at factories across the country.

Executives for the makers of long-lasting items such as cars, crop-harvesting combines and washing machines are projecting challenging business conditions for the remainder of the year.

Deere & Co., the world's largest manufacturer of farm equipment by sales, has shed about 2,100 production workers since November, or 15% of its hourly workforce. Rival

equipment maker Agco said in June it would cut 6% of its salaried workforce worldwide, or about 800 people, by the end of the year.

Recreational vehicle maker Polaris last week said it would adjust production to cut back on shipments to dealers. The disclosure came as it reported a 49% drop in quarterly income and noted that sales of its motorcycles, boats and off-road vehicles all dropped as consumers pulled back on discretionary purchases.

"Retail has proven weaker than anyone expected," Chief Executive Michael Speetzen told analysts.

The cloudy picture in manufacturing comes as dozens of companies in the S&P 500 index make quarterly financial

## A U.S. Maker of a Critical Antibiotic Struggles to Survive in Tough Industry

By Liz Essley Whyte

A cavernous factory in northeastern Tennessee is one of the last in the country that makes a vitally important medicine.

Each day the USAntibiotics plant churns out a million doses of the crucial antibiotic amoxicillin that promise to cure Americans of everything from earaches to pneumonia—and ease a pressing shortage for children. But the plant's prospects are dim. It can't charge enough to cover overhead, because competitors sell their wares at bargain prices. USAntibiotics isn't close to breaking even.

"It's not for lack of trying," said Rick Jackson, a health-staffing businessman who rescued the factory from near bankruptcy two years ago and has poured more than \$38 million into purchasing and refurbishing it.

The generic drug business has become a hostile environment for U.S. companies. Prices for the medicines have dropped so low that it has become difficult for U.S. manufacturers to compete with companies overseas.

One after another, generic-drug makers have gone bankrupt or moved their operations overseas or cut the number of products they offer. The number of facilities making generic drugs in their final form in the U.S. has dropped by roughly 20% since 2018, to 243, according to federal data.



The USAntibiotics plant in Bristol, Tenn., faces dim prospects as makers of cheaper drugs abroad crowd U.S. rivals out of the market.

drugs they need if there is one hiccup in a pinched supply chain or a quality problem shuts down a manufacturing line.

Doctors, patients and policymakers, including President Biden and former President Donald Trump, have decried the shortages and called for fixes. Among the prescriptions is reinvigorating American manufacturing. But little has been done.

Please turn to page B2

Drug shortages have become common. Today, 300 medicines are in short supply, according to the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Regularly now, hospitals and patients must scramble to find doses of the

of Health-System Pharmacists. Regularly now, hospitals and patients must scramble to find doses of the



BUSINESS NEWS

# McDonald's Sales Cool as Diners Pull Back

Fast-food company acknowledges meals have become less affordable

By HEATHER HADDON

McDonald's said its sales last quarter sputtered as the burger giant grappled with consumers reining in their spending, sounding a warning for the restaurant sector.

Chief Executive Chris Kempczinski said lower-income consumers began reducing their visits last year, but the slowdown has deepened and broadened across the U.S. and other major markets.

Consumers have been buying fewer items per visit or selecting cheaper ones, he said. Many people are opting to dine at home because grocery prices have become less expensive than dining at restaurants.

The fast-food giant said U.S. same-store sales in the June quarter were down nearly 1%, the first such decline since 2020. Analysts had expected the metric reflecting sales at stores open at least 13 months to be flat. The company also reported declines globally, with conflict in the Middle East and a weaker performance in France.

The weak trends are continuing in the current quarter, according to the company.

"The consumer across a number of these markets is being very discriminating, and I would point out consumer sentiment in most of our major markets remains low," Kempczinski said in an earnings call Monday.

Chicago-based McDonald's kicked off a string of quarterly reports from U.S. restaurant chains this week. Restaurant stocks have slid in recent months as consumers' discretionary spending comes under pressure, and Wall Street analysts expect some chains to fall short of earnings expectations.

Investors have allowed little room for error from restaurants that have recently posted their quarterly results. Domino's Pizza and Chipotle Mexican Grill both reported growth in profits, but investors sent their shares lower after both companies gave a tepid outlook for the year.

The Domino's Pizza chain said it would open fewer stores globally than it originally expected, while Chipotle said its sales growth was cooling.

Still, McDonald's maintained its overall guidance for new stores, capital expenditures and operating margins for the year. Shares rose 3.7% in Monday trading.

The company's stock is down around 11% in the past 12 months. An S&P 500 restaurant subindex declined 8.7% during the same period.

McDonald's is putting emphasis on its new meal bundle and the opportunity to capture customers seeking deals. The chain's U.S. restaurants in June started selling a bundle of four items—a McDouble or McChicken sandwich, small fries, small soft drink and a four-piece Chicken McNuggets—for \$5.

Sales of the \$5 bundle were performing well, and lower-income consumers, in particular, were buying it, said Joe Erlinger, the company's U.S. presi-

dent. The average check was around \$10 for those who purchased the meal as they added on other food. The promotion was scheduled to last a month, but 93% of franchisees were continuing to offer it into August, Erlinger said.

Kempczinski said the company's edge on affordability had shrunk as its operators have raised prices in recent years in response to steep inflation. The company had work to do to prove it was still a good value to its customers and would improve its affordability options, he said. "This won't happen overnight. But it will happen," Kempczinski said.

While higher prices in the U.S. helped offset weaker sales volumes, the company said further increases would be muted this year.

To keep customers interested in the brand, McDonald's is working to boost offerings of chicken and its loyalty program. It was also testing a new bigger burger with two beef patties in international markets.

Overall, McDonald's reported net income in the June quarter of \$2.02 billion, down more than 12% from a year earlier. Earnings per share were \$2.80, as analysts polled by FactSet had expected \$3.08.

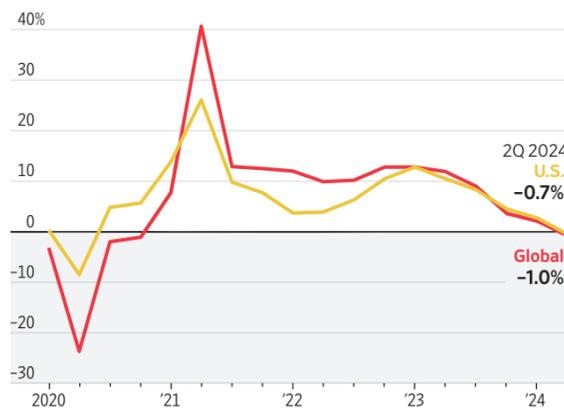
Revenue was flat at \$6.49 billion, coming in below analysts' expectations of \$6.62 billion. Last year, McDonald's got a big sales bump from a Grimace-themed shake.

McDonald's said it was also booking a pretax charge of \$97 million for the quarter, mostly related to a coming sale of its South Korean business this year.



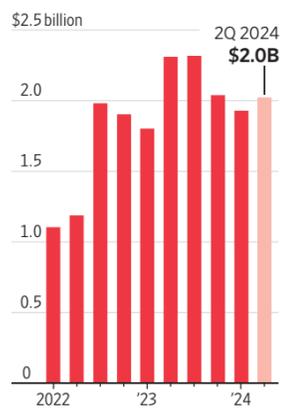
The chain said consumers have been buying fewer items per visit or selecting cheaper ones.

McDonald's same-store sales, change from a year earlier



Sources: the company (sales); S&P Capital IQ (profit)

Quarterly net profit



## Royal Philips Beats Forecasts as Orders Recover



Royal Philips's earnings surpassed expectations, helped by insurance payments related to its sleep apnea devices, while order intake turned positive for the first time in two years, lifting shares in Amsterdam.

The Dutch health-technology company said on Monday that its sales in the second quarter fell to 4.46 billion euros, equivalent to \$4.84 billion, compared with \$4.47 billion for the same period last year, but rose 2% on a comparable basis.

Adjusted earnings before interest, taxes and amortization rose to €495 million,

compared with €453 million the year before, driven in particular by its diagnosis & treatment business. Its adjusted Ebita margin rose to 11.1% from 10.1% across all segments, boosted by its productivity program and cost savings, it said.

Analysts expected adjusted Ebita at €433 million on sales of €4.45 billion, according to a company-compiled consensus.

Second-quarter net profit rose to €451 million, compared with €72 million the prior-year period, beating consensus expectations of €438 million, driven by higher

earnings and insurance income related to its sleep apnea device liability claims, partly offset by higher tax expenses.

The better-than-expected results sent shares of Philips 14.6% higher to €27.21 on Monday. The stock has gained 33.5% year to date, hitting a peak of €28.14 on April 29 after the company reached a \$1.1 billion deal related to its allegedly faulty respirators ventilators in the U.S.

"Philips has room to regain share, but may take years due to reputational damage, an uncertain pricing strategy and fiercer competition," Jef-

feries analysts said in a note to clients. Jefferies analysts estimate a resumption of sleep device sales in early 2026.

Philips' second-quarter comparable order intake grew 9% on year, primarily driven by North America, which offset still-subdued demand in China.

The company reiterated its full-year guidance, expecting comparable sales growth of between 3% and 5%, with an adjusted Ebita margin in the 11% to 11.5% range and free cash flow of €0.9 billion to €1.1 billion.

—Helena Smolak

## Heineken Shares Sink As China Impairment Charge Hits Earnings

By MICHAEL SUSIN

Shares in Heineken fell 10% after the Dutch brewer reported weaker-than-expected earnings and wrote down the value of a big investment in China.

Heineken said Monday that it would book an impairment of 874 million euros, equivalent to \$948.9 million, on its stake in China Resources Beer, saying its value had declined amid concerns about China's economic environment and consumer demand. That dragged Heineken to a first-half net loss of €95 million, down from a €1.16 billion profit a year earlier. The stock declined €9.20, or 10.1%, to €81.50 on Monday in Amsterdam.

The write-down is the latest sign of how economic uncertainty in China is impacting Western companies, with lux-

ury-goods brands and automakers warning of a tough time there in recent weeks.

Heineken said its own business in China continued its strong growth trajectory in the premium segment of the market, with volumes of its name-sake brand rising by a double-digit percentage.

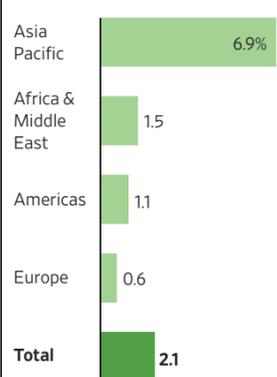
Overall, Heineken said consolidated beer volumes—which includes more than 300 beer brands such as Amstel, Red Stripe, Sol and Desperados—rose 2.1% on an organic basis in the first half. That missed market expectations of a 3.2% increase.

After reporting forecast-beating growth in beer volumes during the first quarter, Heineken said the second quarter was hampered by the timing of Easter, intensified competition in the lower-priced beer in Brazil and poor June weather in Europe.

Heineken's updated guidance also disappointed investors. The company said it now expects adjusted operating profit to grow organically between 4% and 8% this year, compared with previous guidance of low- to high-single-digit percentage growth. That is below current market expectations for 8.2% growth.

"Consumer confidence and economic sentiment in developed markets remain below their historical average," Heineken said, adding that the benefit of lower commodity and energy costs would be more than offset by currency and inflation concerns in Africa and Middle East.

Heineken's beer volume organic growth in the first half of 2024\*



\*Change from a year earlier Source: the company

## U.K. Government Cancels Retail Sale of Its 20% Stake in NatWest Group



The U.K. bailed out the lender during the financial crisis and has been trimming its stake to return it to private ownership.

By CRISTINA GALLARDO

The U.K. government dropped plans set out by the previous administration for a retail sale of its remaining stake in NatWest Group, the bank it rescued at the height of the 2008-09 financial crisis.

U.K. Treasury chief Rachel Reeves told the House of Commons on Tuesday that the new Labour government had decided to cancel the retail sale of its nearly 20% stake in NatWest. Instead, it will sell it privately in 2025, she said.

The government bailed out the lender during the financial crisis and has been trimming its

stake as part of a plan to return the bank to private ownership in the coming years. Reeves said the government still intends to exit its shareholding by 2026.

Reeves justified the change of plans by saying the government needed to take a series of measures to address an overspend of £22 billion, or about \$28.31 billion, inherited from the previous Conservative government.

A retail share would have meant offering the public discounts valued at hundreds of millions of pounds, she said.

"It would therefore not represent value for money, and it will not go ahead," Reeves said. The share sale had been due

to launch in the summer under the former Treasury chief, Jeremy Hunt, but the announcement of the snap U.K. general election on July 4 put it on hold.

NatWest booked a £24 million charge in its accounts attributed to the planned retail share sale.

A spokesperson for NatWest said the lender was "pleased with the continued reduction of the government's stake," which has almost halved this year and was at 19.97% as of July 15.

"We welcome the Chancellor's commitment to returning NatWest Group to full private ownership. This is a shared ambition that we believe is in the best interests of both the bank

and all our shareholders," the spokesperson said.

The government has three main options to reduce its stake further: a trading plan, selling shares to institutional investors or a directed buyback. NatWest has already bought back 4.5% this year and has permission from shareholders to increase this up to 15%.

In her statement to members of Parliament, Reeves said the Treasury aims to save £5.5 billion this year and £8.1 billion next year to tackle the overspend. Full fiscal plans will be set alongside the government's spending review at the budget on Oct. 30, she said.

## TECHNOLOGY

WSJ.com/Tech

## No Profit For Twitch At Amazon

Continued from page B1  
ads.

"I'll be blunt: We aren't profitable at this point," Twitch CEO Dan Clancy said on the platform in January, shortly after the company laid off around 500 workers. More recently, Twitch closed its operations in South Korea, disbanded its Safety Advisory Council and raised prices on its subscription offerings for the first time.

Broader trends aren't in Twitch's favor. Spending on videogames has slowed, and consumer preferences have generally shifted to short, concise videos spanning a range of topics.

Still, Twitch has little competition for livestreaming of videogame play, and the company said it is seeing success beyond videogames with its "Just Chatting" category, where creators discuss a variety of topics with viewers, and that its sports, travel and music sections are growing.

The company said a livestream in June featuring creator Kai Cenat and comedians Kevin Hart and Druski broke the company's North American record for most viewers when it reached 712,600 concurrent viewers. It surpassed a 2018 record set by musician Drake and Ninja, a videogame creator.

Twitch said its creators' connections with their audiences can be beneficial for advertisers. The company's users have also included former President Donald Trump, rapper Post Malone and pro race car driver Charles Leclerc.

### Early profit woes

In 2011, Twitch was spun out of livestreaming platform Justin.tv, with a focus on videogames. About a year later, Amazon took up game publishing and saw Twitch as a vehicle for promoting its titles.

The company also sought to convert Twitch's mostly young, male users into customers of Amazon's other businesses and further leverage the site's live-video strengths, analysts said.

For many early Twitch employees, working on the livestreaming service was a passion project, with little focus



The streaming platform has had two rounds of layoffs in the past year. A June Twitch event in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

on profitability or accountability built into the company's culture, according to people familiar with the matter. Some employees didn't take their jobs seriously after the acquisition, they added, an attitude colloquially referred to in Silicon Valley as "rest and vest."

Producing profit was a problem from the beginning. Twitch executives presented a three-year profitability plan during one of Amazon's annual reviews, only to reintroduce the same plan in subsequent reviews, according to people familiar with the matter.

The tech giant has taken a mostly hands-off approach, current and former staff members said, as it focused on the company's bigger projects and businesses. In 2021, Amazon began integrating Twitch's ad sales team into its own, aiming to drive better results.

Amazon doesn't break out Twitch revenue figures. In 2023, the livestreaming service generated about \$667 million in ad revenue and \$1.3 billion in commerce revenue, according to internal docu-

ments reviewed by the Journal. That amount accounted for less than 0.5% of Amazon's total 2023 revenue.

Amazon is expected to report its second-quarter results on Thursday.

### Exclusive contracts

Twitch grew rapidly when its popularity soared from the success of the game "Fortnite" in 2018 and again during the pandemic's lockdowns, but its expenses rose too.

The company spent more than \$100 million on exclusive contracts for top broadcast talent and for the rights to stream major esports events, people familiar with the matter

said. It invested in new products that it ended up abandoning or deprioritizing, such as a communications platform, a karaoke offering and watch parties.

"If you can't be profitable when you have a surge in demand, you have something structurally wrong," said Mike Hickey, a digital-entertainment analyst at Benchmark.

In recent years, Twitch's biggest payers, who are cru-

cial to its revenue, have been spending less on the platform's subscriptions and donations to creators, according to documents reviewed by the Journal. Twitch takes a cut of those payments, and internal projections forecast that if that trend continues, the platform could shed nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in revenue by the end of 2025.

The company said overall commerce revenue is continuing to grow year over year.

Twitch's advertising sales have plateaued since the pandemic ended, according to the documents and people familiar with the matter.

Overall, the platform is the 18th largest source of U.S. web traffic, down from fourth in 2014 when Amazon bought it, according to network analytics and security firm Nokia Deepfield. Web traffic is a measure of bandwidth used by the site.

Last year, Twitch's longtime CEO and co-founder Emmett Shear left the company and was succeeded by Clancy, formerly an executive at Google and Nextdoor. Clancy joined Twitch as president in 2019 before taking the reins from Shear.

In a "State of Twitch" memo issued to employees in May, Clancy listed improving the platform's mobile experience to drive shorter and

more frequent user sessions as a critical goal

### A fresh look

Reflective of that plan, Twitch introduced a different look to its mobile app to a small subset of creators in May with new features, including a discovery feed that is filled with short snippets from creator livestreams. The company said it plans to release its new app, its first redesign since 2019, to all users this year.

Employees have criticized Clancy for his work trips to meet Twitch creators around the world and host livestreams from various locations as the company is laying off employees and saying it remains unprofitable.

In a June email to employees viewed by the Journal, Clancy defended his actions and included the itinerary of his Europe trip with stops in France, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Each one included "medium sized dinners" with creators, he wrote.

"If I was running a manufacturing company I would be meeting with the companies that provided us raw materials as well as the companies that we sold our widgets to," Clancy wrote in the email. "Our streamers serve a similar role to Twitch."

## Trends aren't in Twitch's favor. Spending on videogames has slowed.

## BlackBerry Appoints Insider To Lead Finance

By ADRIANO MARCHESI

BlackBerry has appointed Tim Foote as its new chief financial officer, effective immediately.

Foote succeeds Steve Rai, who has resigned from the role.

Foote brings with him over 20 years of experience in financial roles to the Waterloo, Ontario-based cybersecurity company.

He joined BlackBerry almost a decade ago following the company's acquisition of Good Technology in 2015, and has served in a number of roles, including managing the company's international finance operations, vice president of investor relations and most recently as CFO of the cybersecurity division.

Foote takes over the role from Rai, who has decided to pursue other opportunities outside of BlackBerry, after more than 10 years with the company, nearly five of those as CFO.

Rai will stay on board until September to ensure a smooth transition, BlackBerry said.



Tim Foote joined BlackBerry almost a decade ago.

## BUSINESS NEWS

## U.S. Boom In Factories Cools Off

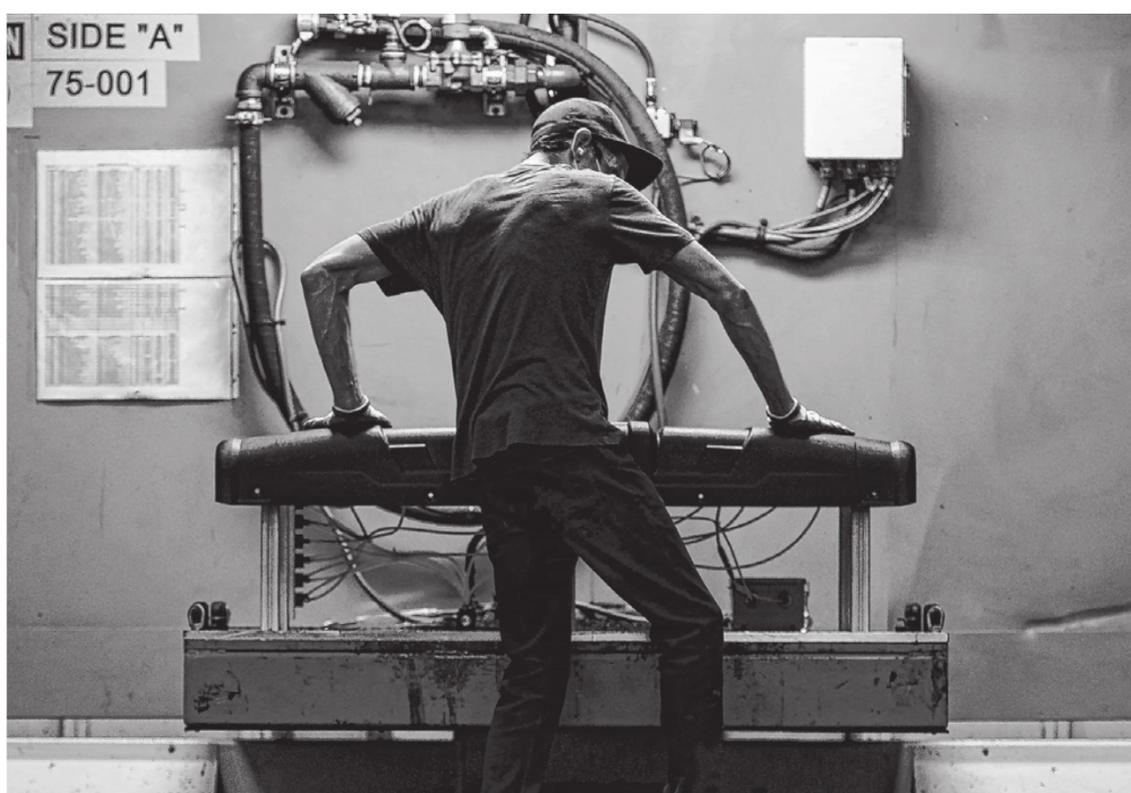
Continued from page B1 disclosures. Their results will be closely monitored as inflation moderates and the Federal Reserve considers cutting interest rates.

Whirlpool said a soft housing market is holding down demand for its refrigerators, dish washers and other household appliances. MSC Industrial Direct, a distributor of tools and industrial supplies to manufacturers, said its average daily sales during its recently completed quarter decreased by 7% compared with a year earlier.

The deceleration follows years of robust growth in sales and profits that started during the depths of the Covid-19 pandemic. Homebound consumers unable to spend money on restaurants, concerts and vacations opened their wallets for new dishwashers, pickup trucks and home remodeling.

Supply-chain bottlenecks made it hard to get manufactured goods when consumers stepped up their spending. Companies ordered more to compensate for goods or materials that were hard to obtain. That stoked inflation. But higher prices eventually reduced consumers' enthusiasm for buying.

Government spending programs to support big new plants for making semiconductors, electric-vehicle batteries and power-generating infrastructure are offsetting some of the industry weakness.



A Minnesota Polaris factory. The RV maker last week said it would adjust production to cut back on shipments to dealers.

Some defense companies making weapons and other gear as conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza roll on are operating at robust levels.

Economic data also present a mixed picture. Higher spending on durable goods helped the nation's economy grow at a faster pace than expected in the second quarter, the government said. Factory output grew in June but at a slower pace than in the month prior.

Jeremy Flack, CEO of Phoenix-based steel and aluminum distributor Flack Global Metals, said steel buyers are keeping their purchases small on the expectation that prices

will continue to fall.

"We're seeing significantly less demand this year than last," Flack said. "After three years of breaking every record, we're settling back into the old steel business."

Weak demand for steel has kept prices on a monthslong slide this year. The current spot-market price of \$655 a ton is down 22% from a year ago and off 40% from the be-

# 49%

The decline in quarterly income reported by Polaris last week

ginning of the year, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights.

After years of elevated equipment sales, farmers' buying power this year is being diminished by lower prices for corn, soybeans and other commodities that the Agriculture Department predicts will reduce farm income by about 25%.

Retail sales of high-horsepower farm tractors in the

U.S. and Canada were down 12% in June from the same month last year, while sales of harvesters dropped 29%, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers said.

Illinois-based Deere said it decided to make deep cuts in production in hopes of avoiding large inventories of unsold equipment at dealers, a condition that can hold down factory production when farmers are ready to step up purchases.

"We're trying to be more proactive in how we manage production and inventories," Chief Financial Officer Josh Jepsen said.

The production volume for automotive customers at Minneapolis-based metal stamper Dayton Rogers Manufacturing is down by one-third from the volume before the pandemic, said Mike Ingalls, director of operations.

"I don't see automotive getting better," he said.

A number of domestic automakers have slowed production of electric vehicles, stung by factors including weaker-than-expected demand from buyers.

As a result, some companies are pulling back investments in new production or have retooled factories to churn out more models with internal combustion engines. The shifts are also rippling through automotive supply chains.

Sluggish economies elsewhere in the world, including China, also are weighing on U.S. companies. Otis Worldwide, maker of elevators and escalators, slightly raised its profit outlook for the year but pared its sales forecast because of falling demand in China.

The rising value of the U.S. dollar relative to other countries' currencies makes foreign-made goods cheaper to import, putting U.S. companies at a disadvantage against foreign competitors.

Sohel Sareshwala, president of Accu-Swiss, a California-based manufacturer of small precision parts for the semiconductor, biomedical and food industries, said U.S. tariffs drive inflation and keep domestic prices for stainless steel and other materials he uses higher than his foreign competitors' material costs.

"The strong dollar, it does make a difference. Their cost for raw material also is significantly lower," he said.

# MARKETS DIGEST

## EQUITIES

### Dow Jones Industrial Average

**40539.93** ▼49.41, or 0.12%  
 High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.  
 Last: 40539.93, Year ago: 39100.00  
 Trailing P/E ratio: 25.33, P/E estimate: 19.53, Dividend yield: 2.10, All-time high: 41198.08, 07/17/24



Current divisor 0.15221633137872  
 Bars measure the point change from session's open  
 \*Weekly P/E data based on as-reported earnings from Birinyi Associates Inc.; †Based on Nasdaq-100 Index

### S&P 500 Index

**5463.54** ▲4.44, or 0.08%  
 High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.  
 Last: 5463.54, Year ago: 4900.00  
 Trailing P/E ratio: 23.60, P/E estimate: 22.10, Dividend yield: 1.36, All-time high: 5667.20, 07/16/24



### Nasdaq Composite Index

**17370.20** ▲12.32, or 0.07%  
 High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.  
 Last: 17370.20, Year ago: 16200.00  
 Trailing P/E ratio: 30.91, P/E estimate: 28.25, Dividend yield: 0.84, All-time high: 18647.45, 07/10/24



### Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

Index	High	Low	Latest Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg YTD	% chg 3-yr. ann.
<b>Dow Jones</b>									
Industrial Average	40682.49	40388.83	<b>40539.93</b>	-49.41	-0.12	41198.08	32417.59	14.0	7.6
Transportation Avg	16054.46	15864.48	<b>15895.24</b>	-24.35	-0.15	16616.42	13556.07	-4.3	-0.02
Utility Average	979.30	966.71	<b>976.30</b>	4.89	0.50	976.30	783.08	4.8	10.7
Total Stock Market	54580.93	54124.65	<b>54301.97</b>	3.72	0.01	56206.02	40847.04	18.1	13.6
Barron's 400	1207.90	1196.03	<b>1198.22</b>	-5.25	-0.44	1212.12	907.97	15.5	11.7
<b>Nasdaq Stock Market</b>									
Nasdaq Composite	17535.32	17299.83	<b>17370.20</b>	12.32	0.07	18647.45	12595.61	21.1	15.7
Nasdaq-100	19224.59	18974.51	<b>19059.49</b>	35.83	0.19	20675.38	14109.57	21.0	13.3
<b>S&amp;P</b>									
500 Index	5487.74	5444.44	<b>5463.54</b>	4.44	0.08	5667.20	4117.37	19.1	14.5
MidCap 400	3090.37	3061.84	<b>3069.72</b>	-5.24	-0.17	3115.02	2326.82	12.5	10.4
SmallCap 600	1436.32	1414.48	<b>1419.57</b>	-9.78	-0.68	1429.35	1068.80	10.7	7.7
<b>Other Indexes</b>									
Russell 2000	2269.16	2228.17	<b>2235.33</b>	-24.74	-1.09	2263.67	1636.94	11.6	10.3
NYSE Composite	18588.42	18479.62	<b>18539.37</b>	-25.11	-0.14	18781.22	14675.78	12.9	10.0
Value Line	n.a.	n.a.	<b>n.a.</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
NYSE Arca Biotech	5710.25	5657.20	<b>5693.16</b>	-1.76	-0.03	5694.92	4544.40	6.9	5.1
NYSE Arca Pharma	1065.96	1055.20	<b>1055.96</b>	0.33	0.03	1089.62	845.32	20.6	16.0
KBW Bank	115.62	114.07	<b>114.17</b>	-1.12	-0.97	115.30	71.71	27.8	18.9
PHLX <sup>§</sup> Gold/Silver	147.99	145.43	<b>147.82</b>	1.04	0.71	157.70	102.94	16.3	17.6
PHLX <sup>§</sup> Oil Service	91.67	89.09	<b>89.68</b>	-1.43	-1.57	98.76	76.90	-4.1	6.9
PHLX <sup>§</sup> Semiconductor	5226.38	5074.30	<b>5087.62</b>	-15.51	-0.30	5904.54	3185.18	31.7	21.8
Cboe Volatility	17.21	16.23	<b>16.60</b>	0.21	1.28	21.71	11.86	21.8	33.3

§Nasdaq PHLX Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

### Late Trading

Most-active and biggest movers among NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE Amer. and Nasdaq issues from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. ET as reported by electronic trading services, securities dealers and regional exchanges. Minimum share price of \$2 and minimum after-hours volume of 50,000 shares.

#### Most-active issues in late trading

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	Last	Net chg	After-Hours % chg	High	Low
NVIDIA	NVDA	10,247.7	111.70	0.11	<b>0.10</b>	113.29	105.57
Grayscale Ethereum Mini	ETH	8,851.5	3.13	0.01	<b>0.32</b>	3.14	3.12
Tilray Brands	TLRY	8,146.2	2.02	0.19	<b>10.38</b>	2.07	1.82
Smurfit WestRock	SW	6,683.4	47.55	...	<b>unch.</b>	47.55	47.55
SPDR S&P 500 ETF Trust	SPY	6,681.2	544.88	0.12	<b>0.02</b>	545.05	537.13
AT&T	T	4,254.1	19.00	0.10	<b>0.53</b>	19.00	18.90
iShares Russell 2000 ETF	IWM	4,162.1	221.79	0.06	<b>0.03</b>	222.24	221.62
Uber Technologies	UBER	4,132.0	63.95	0.19	<b>0.30</b>	64.14	63.73

#### Percentage gainers...

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	Last	Net chg	% chg	High	Low
Airship AI Holdings	AISP	473.3	4.29	0.72	<b>20.17</b>	4.49	3.54
Sprouts Farmers Market	SFM	883.2	96.51	11.85	<b>14.00</b>	97.25	84.66
F5	FFIV	268.9	202.00	24.41	<b>13.75</b>	208.26	177.06
Harmonic	HLIT	668.6	13.21	1.46	<b>12.43</b>	13.21	11.75
Tilray Brands	TLRY	8,146.2	2.02	0.19	<b>10.38</b>	2.07	1.82

#### ...And losers

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	Last	Net chg	% chg	High	Low
Symotic	SYM	726.3	29.15	-6.48	<b>-18.19</b>	35.66	28.49
Lattice Semiconductor	LSCC	300.3	48.20	-6.76	<b>-12.30</b>	54.96	48.00
Rambus	RMBS	105.3	50.78	-5.05	<b>-9.05</b>	56.39	49.00
ZU	TWOU	845.2	2.42	-0.23	<b>-8.68</b>	2.75	2.31
Meta Data ADR	AIU	151.0	4.17	-0.39	<b>-8.55</b>	4.79	4.06

### Trading Diary

#### Volume, Advancers, Decliners

	NYSE	NYSE Amer.
Total volume*	844,647,638	11,207,025
Adv. volume*	328,892,542	3,021,389
Decl. volume*	502,403,412	7,578,084
Issues traded	2,874	300
Advances	1,158	110
Declines	1,633	172
Unchanged	83	18
New highs	180	5
New lows	14	7
Closing Arms <sup>†</sup>	1.07	0.89
Block trades*	3,956	136

\*Total volume\*4,897,232,164 252,279,164  
 Adv. volume\*2,284,637,503 111,816,232  
 Decl. volume\*2,557,993,856 130,498,229

Index	High	Low	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg
Total volume*	4,897,232,164	252,279,164				
Adv. volume*	2,284,637,503	111,816,232				
Decl. volume*	2,557,993,856	130,498,229				
Issues traded	4,356	1,971				
Advances	1,480	893				
Declines	2,734	1,040				
Unchanged	142	38				
New highs	168	112				
New lows	92	14				
Closing Arms <sup>†</sup>	0.61	0.96				
Block trades*	27,962	1,517				

\*Primary market NYSE, NYSE American NYSE Arca only.  
 †(TRIN) A comparison of the number of advancing and declining issues with the volume of shares rising and falling. An Arms of less than 1 indicates buying demand; above 1 indicates selling pressure.

### International Stock Indexes

Region/Country	Index	Close	Net chg	Latest % chg	YTD % chg
<b>World</b>	<b>MSCI ACWI</b>	<b>804.35</b>	0.87	<b>0.11</b>	10.6
	MSCI ACWI ex-USA	331.58	0.59	<b>0.18</b>	4.7
	MSCI World	3526.51	2.43	<b>0.07</b>	11.3
	MSCI Emerging Markets	1077.27	4.99	<b>0.47</b>	5.2
<b>Americas</b>	<b>MSCI AC Americas</b>	<b>2053.65</b>	1.03	<b>0.05</b>	13.2
Canada	S&P/TSX Comp	22779.57	-35.24	<b>-0.15</b>	8.7
Latin Amer.	MSCI EM Latin America	2179.36	-17.26	<b>-0.79</b>	-18.2
Brazil	Ibovespa	126953.86	-538.63	<b>-0.42</b>	-5.4
Chile	S&P IPSA	3516.41	29.29	<b>0.84</b>	1.4
Mexico	S&P/BMV IPC	52515.78	-303.80	<b>-0.58</b>	-8.5
<b>EMEA</b>	<b>STOXX Europe 600</b>	<b>511.79</b>	-1.04	<b>-0.20</b>	6.8
Eurozone	Euro STOXX	498.43	-3.24	<b>-0.65</b>	5.1
Belgium	Bel-20	4116.86	28.66	<b>0.70</b>	11.0
Denmark	OMX Copenhagen 20	2680.35	23.70	<b>0.89</b>	17.4
France	CAC 40	7443.84	-73.84	<b>-0.98</b>	-1.3
Germany	DAX	18320.67	-96.88	<b>-0.53</b>	9.4
Israel	Tel Aviv	2021.05	17.12	<b>0.85</b>	8.3
Italy	FTSE MIB	33640.83	-171.61	<b>-0.51</b>	10.8
Netherlands	AEX	904.12	-2.52	<b>-0.28</b>	14.9
Norway	Oslo Bors All-Share	1667.60	12.49	<b>0.75</b>	9.8
South Africa	FTSE/JSE All-Share	81011.65	-108.86	<b>-0.13</b>	5.4
Spain	IBEX 35	11117.80	-48.10	<b>-0.43</b>	10.1
Sweden	OMX Stockholm	993.99	0.11	<b>0.01</b>	10.1
Switzerland	Swiss Market	12214.90	-26.59	<b>-0.22</b>	9.7
Turkey	BIST 100	10733.75	-157.67	<b>-1.45</b>	43.7
U.K.	FTSE 100	8292.35	6.64	<b>0.08</b>	7.2
U.K.	FTSE 250	21252.07	-104.23	<b>-0.49</b>	7.9
<b>Asia-Pacific</b>	<b>MSCI AC Asia Pacific</b>	<b>180.63</b>	1.85	<b>1.04</b>	6.6
Australia	S&P/ASX 200	7989.60	68.33	<b>0.86</b>	5.3
China	Shanghai Composite	2891.85	0.95	<b>0.03</b>	-2.8
Hong Kong	Hang Seng	17238.34	217.03	<b>1.28</b>	1.1
India	BSE Sensex	81355.84	23.12	<b>0.03</b>	12.6
Japan	NIKKEI 225	38468.63	801.22	<b>2.13</b>	15.0
Singapore	Straits Times	3444.18	17.70	<b>0.52</b>	6.3
South Korea	KOSPI	2765.53	33.63	<b>1.23</b>	4.2
Taiwan	TAIEX	22164.49	45.28	<b>0.20</b>	23.6
Thailand	SET	1307.21	...	<b>Closed</b>	-7.7

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

### Percentage Gainers...

Company	Symbol	Close	Net chg	% chg	High	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg
Meta Data ADR	AIU	4.56	2.13	<b>87.65</b>	8.70	1.55	-12.1	
NIP Group ADR	NIPG	16.50	7.48	<b>82.93</b>	16.75	8.04	...	
Inspirato	ISPO	5.24	1.76	<b>50.57</b>	25.00	3.15	-73.5	
Serve Robotics	SERV	19.39	6.17	<b>46.67</b>	37.00	1.77	...	
Planet Image Intl	YIBO	3.97	1.06	<b>36.19</b>	7.83	1.80	...	
VSee Health	VSEE	3.69	0.87	<b>30.62</b>	33.08	2.47	-68.3	
Vaccinex	VCNX	8.56	1.84	<b>27.38</b>	64.89	4.43	-85.9	
Cassava Sciences	SAVA	18.02	3.10	<b>20.78</b>	32.10	8.79	-18.0	
Connexa Sports Techs	YYAI	14.16	2.22	<b>18.59</b>	214.00	2.89	-86.7	
Nuwellis	NUWE	2.84	0.44	<b>18.33</b>	92.75	2.19	-96.8	
Shyft Group	SHYF	16.30	2.51	<b>18.20</b>	16.49	9.81	13.0	
Cepton	CPTN	2.98	0.45	<b>17.79</b>	8.90	2.38	-58.7	
Salaris Pharmaceuticals	SLRX	3.73	0.54	<b>16.93</b>	7.92	1		

Futures Contracts

Metal & Petroleum Futures						
	Open	High	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
<b>Copper-High (CMX)</b> -25,000 lbs.; \$ per lb.	4,065.0	4,065.0	4,049.5	4,062.0	-0.0425	408
<b>Gold (CMX)</b> -100 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.	4,115	4,150.0	4,061.0	4,084.5	-0.0395	121,161
<b>Palladium (NYM)</b> -50 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.	1019.00	1040.50	▲ 1011.00	885.80	0.90	3
<b>Platinum (NYM)</b> -50 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.	941.20	941.20	941.20	949.00	14.90	1
<b>Silver (CMX)</b> -5,000 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.	28.050	28.050	27.750	27.703	-0.157	25
<b>Crude Oil, Light Sweet (NYM)</b> -1,000 bbls.; \$ per bbl.	77.30	77.69	75.35	75.81	-1.35	378,947
<b>NY Harbor ULSD (NYM)</b> -42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.	2.4300	2.4401	2.3664	2.3750	-0.047	18,514
<b>Gasoline-NY RB0B (NYM)</b> -42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.	2.4565	2.4716	2.4125	2.4153	-0.0452	23,701
<b>Natural Gas (NYM)</b> -10,000 MMBtu.; \$ per MMBtu.	2.016	2.056	▼ 1.856	1.907	-0.099	2,216
<b>Corn (CBT)</b> -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	392.75	397.00	390.00	396.25	1.75	570,595
<b>Oats (CBT)</b> -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	322.75	325.50	313.25	323.25	1.00	1,083
<b>Soybeans (CBT)</b> -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	1073.75	1073.75	▼ 1030.75	1054.75	-22.75	28,037
<b>Soybean Meal (CBT)</b> -100 tons; \$ per ton.	350.90	357.00	347.20	355.50	2.20	29,748
<b>Soybean Oil (CBT)</b> -60,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	43.70	43.80	▼ 41.75	42.84	-8.2	21,858
<b>Rough Rice (CBT)</b> -2,000 cwt.; \$ per cwt.	15.10	15.26	15.01	15.21	-0.2	8,184
<b>Wheat (CBT)</b> -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	523.50	532.75	▼ 514.25	531.00	7.50	206,281
<b>Wheat (K)</b> -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	546.00	555.25	▼ 540.75	553.50	8.00	127,900
<b>Cattle-Feeder (CME)</b> -50,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	259.850	260.550	255.500	256.425	-3.275	10,591

	Open	High	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
<b>Cattle-Live (CME)</b> -40,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	188.750	189.075	186.400	186.975	-1.600	38,573
<b>Hogs-Lean (CME)</b> -40,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	93.050	93.050	90.625	91.450	-2.025	30,534
<b>Lumber (CME)</b> -27,500 bd. ft.; \$ per 1,000 bd. ft.	512.50	514.00	492.00	493.00	-21.00	8,582
<b>Milk (CME)</b> -200,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	19.85	19.85	19.82	19.83	...	3,580
<b>Cocoa (ICE-US)</b> -10 metric tons; \$ per ton.	8,001	8,001	7,640	7,716	-322	43,378
<b>Coffee (ICE-US)</b> -37,500 lbs.; cents per lb.	230.35	233.60	228.10	230.40	.15	109,969
<b>Sugar-World (ICE-US)</b> -112,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	18.50	19.05	18.47	19.01	.59	344,616
<b>Treasury Notes (CBT)</b> -100,000; pts 32nds of 100%	111-210	111-290	111-195	111-250	5.5	8,505
<b>Treasury Bonds (CBT)</b> -100,000; pts 32nds of 100%	119-120	120-050	119-100	119-210	10.0	1,674,667
<b>5 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT)</b> -100,000; pts 32nds of 100%	107-192	107-240	107-175	107-197	1.5	6,543,113
<b>2 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT)</b> -200,000; pts 32nds of 100%	102-197	102-210	102-181	102-190	-1.4	4,396,188
<b>30 Day Federal Funds (CBT)</b> -55,000,000; 100 - daily avg.	4.6700	4.6725	▼ 4.6700	4.6700	404.627	
<b>Three-Month SOFR (CME)</b> -100,000,000 - daily avg.	94.6325	94.6325	94.6300	94.6300	1.134,967	

Interest Rate Futures						
<b>Ultra Treasury Bonds (CBT)</b> -100,000; pts 32nds of 100%	126-030	127-080	126-000	126-170	16.0	1,641,889
<b>Treasury Bonds (CBT)</b> -100,000; pts 32nds of 100%	119-120	120-050	119-100	119-210	10.0	1,674,667
<b>Treasury Notes (CBT)</b> -100,000; pts 32nds of 100%	111-075	111-165	111-065	111-110	4.5	4,690,274
<b>5 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT)</b> -100,000; pts 32nds of 100%	107-192	107-240	107-175	107-197	1.5	6,543,113
<b>2 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT)</b> -200,000; pts 32nds of 100%	102-197	102-210	102-181	102-190	-1.4	4,396,188
<b>30 Day Federal Funds (CBT)</b> -55,000,000; 100 - daily avg.	4.6700	4.6725	▼ 4.6700	4.6700	404.627	
<b>Three-Month SOFR (CME)</b> -100,000,000 - daily avg.	94.6325	94.6325	94.6300	94.6300	1.134,967	

Currency Futures						
<b>Japanese Yen (CME)</b> -¥12,500,000; \$ per 100¥	65.05	65.55	65.00	65.15	-0.012	444
<b>Canadian Dollar (CME)</b> -CAD 100,000; \$ per CAD	72.36	72.42	▼ 72.18	72.24	-0.008	291
<b>British Pound (CME)</b> -£62,500; \$ per £	1.2885	1.2890	1.2809	1.2867	-0.008	346
<b>Swiss Franc (CME)</b> -CHF 125,000; \$ per CHF	1.1383	1.1404	1.1338	1.1349	-0.006	85,062
<b>Australian Dollar (CME)</b> -AUD 100,000; \$ per AUD	65.57	65.72	65.28	65.50	-0.007	663
<b>Mexican Peso (CME)</b> -MXN 500,000; \$ per MXN	0.5418	0.5418	0.5330	0.5351	-0.0041	31

Agriculture Futures						
<b>Corn (CBT)</b> -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	392.75	397.00	390.00	396.25	1.75	570,595
<b>Oats (CBT)</b> -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	322.75	325.50	313.25	323.25	1.00	1,083
<b>Soybeans (CBT)</b> -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	1073.75	1073.75	▼ 1030.75	1054.75	-22.75	28,037
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<b>Cattle-Feeder (CME)</b> -50,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	259.850	260.550	255.500	256.425	-3.275	10,591

Cash Prices | wsj.com/market-data/commodities

Monday, July 29, 2024

These prices reflect buying and selling of a variety of actual or "physical" commodities in the marketplace—separate from the futures price on an exchange, which reflects what the commodity might be worth in future months.

Energy		Metals		Food		Fats and Oils	
Coal,C.Aplc.12500Btu.125O2-rw	75.000	Aluminum,LME,\$ per metric ton	2229.00	Wheat,No.2 soft red,St.Louis-u	5.0850	Beef,carcass equiv. index choice 1-3,600-900 lbs.-u	299.62
Coal,PwdrRvrBsn.8800Btu.085O2-r,w	14.000	Copper,Comex spot	4.0620	Wheat - Hard - KC (USDA) \$ per bu-u	5.8350	select 1-3,600-900 lbs.-u	283.61
		Iron Ore,62% Fe CFR China-s	102.00	Wheat,No.1soft white,Portld.OR-u	5.7500	Broilers,National comp wtd. avg.-u	1.2981
		Steel,HRC USA, FOB Midwest Mill-s	655.00			Butter,AA Chicago-d	3.0875
		<b>Battery/EV metals</b>				Cheddar cheese,bbk,Chicago-d	1.9750
		BMI Lithium Carbonate, EXW China, =99.2%-v,w	11825			Cheddar cheese,blk,Chicago-d	1.9500
		BMI Lithium Hydroxide, EXW China, =56.5%-v,w	11050			Milk,Nonfat dry,Chicago lb.-d	124.00
		BMI Cobalt sulphate, EXW China, >20.5%-v,w	3864			Coffee,Brazilian,Comp-y	2.3248
		BMI Nickel Sulphate, EXW China, >22%-v,m	3933			Coffee,Colombian, NY-y	2.5190
		BMI Flake Graphite, FOB China, >100 Mesh, 94.95%-v,m	485			Eggs,large white,Chicago-y	2.6750
		<b>Fibers and Textiles</b>				Flour,hard winter KC-p	16.45
		Burlap,10-oz,40-inch NY yd-n,w	0.8200			Hams,17-20 lbs,Mid-US fob-u	n.a.
		Cotton,1 1/16 std lw-mdMphs-u	0.6251			Hogs,lowa-so. Minnesota-u	90.63
		Cotlook 'A' Index-t	79.30			Pork bellies,12-14 lb MidUS-u	n.a.
		Hides,hvy native steers piece fob-u	n.a.			Pork loins,13-19 lb MidUS-u	1.2666
		Wool,64s, staple, Terr del-u,w	n.a.			Steers,Tex.-Okla. Choice-u	190.00
		<b>Grains and Feeds</b>				Steers,feeder,Okla. City-u,w	304.75
		Bran,wheat middlings, KC-u,w	81				
		Corn,No. 2 yellow, Cent IL-bp,u	3.8100				
		Corn gluten feed, Midwest-u,w	110.4				
		Corn gluten meal, Midwest-u,w	429.4				
		Cottonseed meal-u,w	n.a.				
		Hominy feed, Cent IL-u,w	108				
		Meat-bonemeal, 50% pro Mnpls-u,w	335				
		Oats, No. 2 milling, Mnpls-u	3.9825				
		Rice, Long Grain Milled, No. 2 AR-u,w	n.a.				
		Soybean Meal, Cent IL,rail,ton48%-u,w	374.30				
		Soybeans, No. 1 yllw IL-bp,u	10.7200				
		Wheat, Spring 14%, FOB Mnpls-u	7.4650				

KEY TO CODES: A=ask; B=bid; BP=country elevator bids to producers; C=corrected; D=CME; E=Manfra, Tordella & Brookes; H=American Commodities Brokerage Co; K=bi-weekly; M=monthly; N=nominal; n.a.=not quoted or not available; P=Souland Publishing; R=SNL Energy; S=Platts-TSI; T=Cotlook Limited; U=USDA; V=Benchmark Mineral Intelligence; W=weekly; Y=International Coffee Organization; Z=not quoted. \*Data as of 7/26

Source: Dow Jones Market Data

Borrowing Benchmarks | wsj.com/market-data/bonds/benchmarks

Money Rates

July 29, 2024

Key annual interest rates paid to borrow or lend money in U.S. and international markets. Rates below are a guide to general levels but don't always represent actual transactions.

Inflation					Policy Rates				
	June index level	Chg From (%)	May '24	June '23		Latest	Week ago	-52-Week-High	-52-Week-Low
<b>U.S. consumer price index</b>	314.175	0.03	3.0		<b>Euro zone</b>	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.00
All items	314.175	0.03	3.0		<b>Switzerland</b>	1.75	1.75	2.25	1.75
Core	319.003	0.12	3.3		<b>Britain</b>	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00
					<b>Australia</b>	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.10
<b>International rates</b>					<b>Overnight repurchase</b>				
					U.S.	5.42	5.40	5.48	5.25
<b>Prime rates</b>					<b>U.S. government rates</b>				
U.S.	8.50	8.50	8.50	8.50	<b>Discount</b>				
Canada	6.95	6.95	7.20	6.95		5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50

Key Interest Rates

Data are annualized on a 360-day basis. Treasury yields are per annum, on actively traded noninflation and inflation-indexed issues that are adjusted to constant maturities. Data are from weekly Federal Reserve release H.15.

	Week Ended	-52-Week-High	-52-Week-Low	
	Jul 26	Jul 19	High	Low
<b>Federal funds (effective)</b>	5.33	5.33	5.33	5.08
<b>Commercial paper</b>				
Nonfinancial				
1-month	5.29	5.30	5.34	5.23
2-month	5.27	5.30	5.37	5.26
3-month	5.26	5.24	5.40	5.24
<b>Financial</b>				
1-month	n.a.	5.33	5.43	5.28
2-month	n.a.	5.28	5.51	5.28
3-month	5.31	n.a.	5.53	5.22
<b>Discount window primary credit</b>	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50
<b>Treasury yields at constant maturities</b>				
1-month	5.49	5.48	5.60	5.42
3-month	5.40	5.43	5.62	5.40
<b>TIPS</b>				
5-year	1.98	1.92	2.55	1.71
7-year	1.97	1.91	2.47	1.69
10-year	1.97	1.92	2.45	1.54
20-year	2.10	2.03	2.49	1.57
Long-term avg	2.21	2.13	2.59	1.74

Notes on data: **Federal funds rate** is an average for the seven days ended Wednesday, weighted according to rates on broker trades. **Commercial paper rates** are discounted offer rates interpolated from sales by discounted averages of dealer bid rates on nationally traded certificates of deposit. **Discount window primary credit rate** is charged for discounts made and advances extended under the Federal Reserve's primary credit discount window program; **rate** is average for seven days ended Wednesday. **Inflation-indexed long-term TIPS** average is indexed and is based on the unweighted average bid yields for all TIPS with remaining terms to maturity of 10 years or more; Sources: Federal Reserve; for additional information on these rate data and their derivation, please see, https://www.federalreserve.gov/datadownload/Build.aspx?rel=H15

COMMODITIES

	Open	High	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
<b>Sept</b>	0.5381	0.5388	0.5298	0.5328	-0.0040	194,300
<b>Euro (CME)</b> -€125,000; \$ per €	1.0868	1.0880	1.0814	1.0833	-0.0035	1,978
<b>Sept</b>	1.0882	1.0895	1.0828	1.0847	-0.0036	655,762



MARKETS

Earnings, Fed Loom Over Stock Market

Energy shares were worst performers in S&P 500 following decline in U.S. crude

BY SAM GOLDFARB

The S&P 500 inched higher to kick off a busy week packed with corporate earnings reports, a Federal Reserve interest-rate decision and key economic data.

Indexes were choppy throughout the trading session before ending the day mixed. After declining last week, the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite gained 0.1%.

MONDAY'S MARKETS

The S&P 500 also rose 0.1%, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.1%.

The big question for investors in coming days is whether a succession of potentially market-moving events could extend a recent rotation of stock-market winners and losers that has punished large tech stocks and boosted shares

of smaller companies.

"There's just a lot going on," said Keith Lerner, co-chief investment officer at Truist Advisory Services. "It's hard to make a big call ahead of all of this."

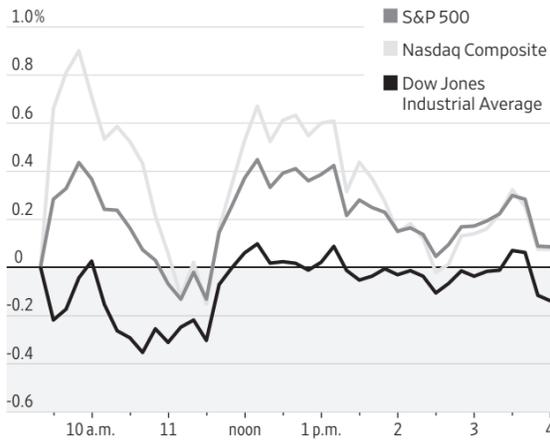
One reason why investors have dumped shares of tech giants in recent weeks is that many have grown concerned that their huge rally in the first half of the year means they need to post unrealistically large profits to justify their share prices.

Those declines have dragged the S&P 500 lower for the past two weeks, cutting the index's gains for the year to 15%.

The moves also have lowered the bar slightly for Microsoft, Meta Platforms, Amazon.com and Apple, which will report their earnings over three days starting Tuesday. Still, analysts said that there will be intense focus on their results for any signs of weakness that could justify another round of selling.

Meanwhile, signals from the Fed and economic data could be critical for the other half of

Index performance on Monday



Source: FactSet

the recent market rotation.

Stocks of smaller companies jumped earlier this month when a cool inflation report boosted traders' confidence that the Fed will cut interest rates in September.

Lower rates could be especially helpful to modestly sized businesses that are more sensi-

tive to the strength of the economy and more likely to have floating-rate debt.

The Fed on Wednesday is widely expected to keep rates unchanged. But investors will be watching closely for what the central bank signals about its future plans. On Friday, rate bets could get another jolt



Amazon reports Wednesday.

maintained its guidance for new stores, capital expenditures and operating margins for the year.

Energy was the worst performing sector in the S&P 500, as U.S. crude fell 1.7%. The bond market was quiet, with the yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury note ticking down to 4.176% from 4.199% on Friday.

The Stoxx Europe 600 fell 0.2%. At midday Tuesday, Japan's Nikkei 225 was down 1%, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index was down 1.2%. S&P 500 futures were down 0.3%.

AUCTION RESULTS

Here are the results of Monday's Treasury auctions. All bids are awarded at a single price at the market-clearing yield. Rates are determined by the difference between that price and the face value.

Table with columns for 13-Week and 26-Week Treasury auctions, including Applications, Accepted bids, and Auction price (rate).

Both issues are dated Aug. 1, 2024. The 13-week bills mature on Oct. 31, 2024; the 26-week bills mature on Jan. 30, 2025.

Tech Titans Face Cruel Summer

Continued from page B1 companies that are likely to benefit more from lower borrowing costs.

The S&P 500's information-technology sector, home to Apple and Nvidia has declined 9.5% since the inflation report. The communication-services sector, which includes Meta Platforms and Alphabet, edged up Monday but remains down 8.8% since the report.

The small-caps-heavy Russell 2000, meanwhile, has gained 8.9%, while the S&P 500 has edged down 3%.

Tech stocks will face their next test in the coming days, when other members of the Magnificent Seven report earnings. Microsoft is scheduled to report Tuesday afternoon, followed the next day by Meta.

Amazon.com and Apple will be in focus Thursday. Chip maker Nvidia, the biggest driver of the S&P 500's gains this year, is scheduled to report later in August.

So far, investors have been underwhelmed by the first batch of tech results. Alphabet said sales growth slowed in the second quarter, as the parent company of Google and YouTube kept pouring billions of dollars into building out generative-AI capabilities. Its shares fell 5% the next day. Tesla's



Rick Osterloh, a Google senior vice president, speaks during a product launch event in 2023.

profitability took a big hit from lower revenue, with buyers paying less for its core models. Its stock dropped 12% in the following session.

Netflix, which isn't a member of the Magnificent Seven, reported on July 18 that it continued to add new customers. But it said it doesn't expect advertising to be a primary driver of future revenue growth and warned that subscriber growth in the third quarter will be slower than last year.

Not all tech companies have disappointed investors. Shares of International Business Machines rallied 4.3% Thursday, their best day since late January, after the book of business for its Watsonx generative-AI platform topped \$2 billion, up from more than \$1 billion in

the first quarter. Given their sky-high valuations, however, some analysts worry it will get harder for tech companies to impress investors in the year's second half. Additionally, there are already signs that earnings growth is broadening out, which some investors see as a positive development.

"The Magnificent Seven is no longer the only game in town where earnings growth can occur," said Jeffrey Schulz, head of economic and market strategy at ClearBridge Investments.

Earnings among the companies in the S&P 500 are expected to record a rise of 9.8% in the second quarter, data from FactSet show. Without the Magnificent Seven, profits for the other companies in the

index are expected to climb 5.9%, according to John Butters, senior earnings analyst at FactSet.

Despite the recent selloff, tech stocks still look pricey. Tesla shares rose Monday and trade at 82.8 times their projected earnings over the next 12 months, according to FactSet, while Nvidia trades at 34.9 times. The S&P 500 trades at 20.9 times. Those high valuations could make smaller companies increasingly appealing.

"Mega-caps are a little more expensive than the rest of the universe," said Ivana Delevska, founder and chief investment officer of Spear Invest. "They really drove the first move up, and they're going to have a hard time keeping up with the smaller caps for the second half of the year."

Amulet Capital's Fund Exceeds Target

BY MARIA ARMENTAL

Healthcare specialist investment firm Amulet Capital Partners has replenished its pool of investible capital with \$1.2 billion from investors, citing a wealth of opportunities driven by the growing and aging U.S. population as well as technological change.

The Greenwich, Conn., firm has closed Amulet Capital Fund III about 20% above its target after a little over a year in the market. The total makes the pool nearly twice as large as a predecessor vehicle, which the firm wrapped up in 2021 with \$650 million.

A slowdown in sales involving billions of dollars of earlier investments has hampered fundraising, with private-fund managers globally on pace this year to collect 20% less than last year, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence and Preqin data. But in this year's first half, U.S. private-equity firms raised about \$155 billion for 129 funds, slightly ahead of last year's rate, according to research provider PitchBook Data.

Middle-market funds in the U.S.—those that raise \$100 million to \$5 billion—accounted for about 52.1% of the money raised in 2024 as investors gravitated to funds focusing on smaller, more manageable deals, given valuations and borrowing costs, PitchBook said.

Amulet has already completed two deals through its new fund, backing brand development and marketing agency Minds + Assembly and clinical research site platform Alliance Clinical Network.

A third deal is expected to close by the end of September, Amulet co-founders Ramsey Frank and Jay Rose said. The managing partners worked together at JLL Partners before starting Amulet in 2015. The

firm now manages around \$2.7 billion.

Ultimately, Amulet expects to make about 10 deals of \$50 million to \$150 million each from its new fund, the executives said.

Healthcare is traditionally one of the largest private-equity deal sectors behind technology. But high interest rates have depressed activity by raising the cost of debt-fueled acquisitions while regulators have increased scrutiny of healthcare deals.

Announced deals in the U.S. healthcare sector accounted for about 10% of the total value of dealmaking across the nation involving private equity during the second quarter, below the 15% five-year quarterly average, according to PitchBook.

The researcher said large, so-called platform deals in the sector could take some time to pick up. It also cited heightened regulatory and headline risks around healthcare deals, as events such as hospital operations

Steward Health Care's bankruptcy can unnerve markets.

That uncertainty plays to the strengths of healthcare specialists like Amulet, according to Frank. "If you're not living healthcare day in and day out, you can be swayed by perception, you know, noise, as opposed to reality," he said.

Amulet targets deals ranging from traditional buyouts to recapitalizations and restructurings. Financially overstretched companies can create investing opportunities for the firm, Frank said.

For example, in 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on healthcare systems, Amulet joined forces as a minority investor alongside medical specialists to form US Fertility, a physician practice management company.

Private-fund managers are on pace to collect 20% less than last year.

Sixth Street Leads \$5.1 Billion Enstar Deal

BY COLIN KELLAHER

Private-credit firm Sixth Street Partners has agreed to take private insurer Enstar Group in a deal that values the company at about \$5.1 billion, joined by private-equity firms including former U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's Liberty Strategic Capital and J.C. Flowers.

Shareholders of Enstar would receive \$338 a share in cash in the transaction, about 3% below Friday's closing price

of \$348.31 for the Hamilton, Bermuda, company. The stock declined 6.1% on Monday to close at \$327.17.

Enstar noted that the consideration represents an 8.5% premium to the 90-day volume-weighted average price of its shares and a 6.9% premium to the 60-day average, adding that the deal includes a 35-day "go-shop" period under which it can seek better offers.

The company said it would return about \$500 million from its balance sheet to its share-

holders as part of the total consideration. Enstar said the transaction is slated to close next year.

Private-equity firms have been backing insurers with increasing frequency since Apollo Global Management first supported the creation of Bermuda-based Athene Holding at the end of 2008, eventually acquiring the annuity provider completely at the start of 2022.

By 2022, private-equity firms held stakes in 137 U.S. insurers with assets of \$534 bil-

lion, according to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, an industry self-regulatory organization. Just a few years earlier, in 2018, buyout shops held 90 carriers with assets of \$314 billion, NAIC data show.

Focused on buying legacy assets from property and casualty insurers, Enstar provides the sellers with liquidity while picking up existing business. The company has made more than 115 acquisitions since its inception.

Mutual Funds

Data provided by LIPPER

Top 250 mutual-funds listings for Nasdaq-published share classes by net assets. e-Ex-distribution. f-Previous day's quotation. g-Footnotes x and s apply. j-Footnotes e and s apply. k-Recalculated by Lipper, using updated data. p-Distribution costs apply. l2b-1. r-Redemption charge may apply. s-Stock split or dividend. t-Footnotes p and r apply. v-Footnotes x and e apply. x-Ex-dividend. z-Footnote x, e and s apply. NA-Not available due to incomplete price, performance or cost data. NE-Not released by Lipper; data under review. NN-Fund not tracked. NS-Fund didn't exist at start of period.

Table of mutual fund performance for Monday, July 29, 2024, listing funds like AB Funds, American Century, and others with NAV, YTD Chg, and % Ret.

Table of mutual fund performance for Monday, July 29, 2024, listing funds like CoreBond, EQINC, and others with NAV, YTD Chg, and % Ret.

Table of mutual fund performance for Monday, July 29, 2024, listing funds like Vanguard, Fidelity, and others with NAV, YTD Chg, and % Ret.

# HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

## Pharmaceutical Rally Moves Past Obesity

A rotation into laggard drugmakers' stocks is being helped by optimism over regulations

A market rotation is playing out across large pharmaceutical companies, with industry laggards such as **Bristol Myers Squibb** soaring in recent weeks and richly valued obesity plays **Eli Lilly** and **Novo Nordisk** sinking. But these moves are about more than just momentum: It also helps that the industry seems to be weathering regulatory storms well. One of the biggest concerns for pharmaceutical companies in recent years has been drug-pricing pressure stemming from the Inflation Reduction Act, which for the first time empowered Medicare to directly negotiate how much it pays for some high-price therapies.

Last year, the U.S. government named the first 10 drugs that will be subject to the negotiations. But what has been unclear is just how steep a discount the government would seek.

Management teams will continue to bemoan the law's alleged impact on innovation. But a close reading of industry earnings calls this month suggests executives are telegraphing to investors that the impact won't be so bad. While negotiations are taking place privately

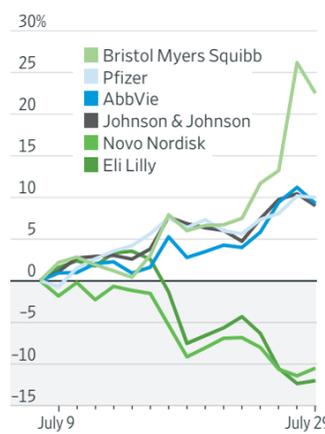
and discounted prices won't be announced until Sept. 1, companies whose drugs have been selected for the first round have received final offers. That means executives have more information to share with Wall Street.

And the message, says David Risinger, an analyst at Leerink Partners, is that their growth outlook is relatively intact, at least for now. "They are saying it's not causing serious issues for their financials in the coming years," he says.

**Johnson & Johnson**, so far the pharmaceutical company most exposed to the law given that three of its top-selling drugs—psoriasis drug Stelara, Imbruvica for blood cancer (in partnership with **AbbVie**) and blood thinner Xarelto—were selected for negotiations, kicked off earnings season earlier this month. Executives told analysts that despite the "net unfavorable impact" from the law in 2025, the company expects revenue to grow over 3% next year and then 5% to 7% through 2030.

"We have received the final numbers from the government," J&J Executive Vice President Jenni-

Big Pharma stock performance over past three weeks



Source: FactSet

fer Taubert told analysts. "And while we are not in alignment with the IRA...those numbers have been included in the guidance that we provided last year...that still looks very good to us today."

Bristol Myers, for its part, sounded upbeat about the impact

on its top-selling blood thinner, Eliquis. "Now that we've seen the final price, we're increasingly confident in our ability to navigate the impact of IRA on Eliquis," Chief Executive Chris Boerner told analysts during their earnings call on Friday. And **AstraZeneca** said the impact on its diabetes drug Farxiga will be very limited.

Besides allowing Medicare to negotiate prices, another provision limiting what people on Part D plans pay out of pocket for medications at \$2,000 annually starting in 2025 is also expected to negatively affect some manufacturers, because it forces them to offer more discounts once patient spending reaches a certain threshold. But AbbVie management sounded bullish in a note last week, telling analysts it expects robust revenue growth despite the headwinds from the Part D redesign.

The cautious optimism isn't just about the IRA. Several large drug companies, most notably AbbVie and Bristol Myers, have delivered strong earnings beats, feeding into the momentum from the stock-market rotation to value. Since July 8,

shares of Bristol Myers are up more than 20%, while AbbVie, **Pfizer** and **J&J** are each up 9% or more. Meanwhile, Lilly and Novo Nordisk, whose stocks have skyrocketed in recent years because of the GLP-1 craze, are each down more than 10%.

To Jared Holz, a healthcare-equity strategist at Mizuho, the current rotation is reminiscent of the last time pharma broadly worked well for investors. That was during the second half of 2022, when anxiety over inflation and interest rates sent investors searching for value and away from growth stocks.

The rotation could have more room to run. Even after recent gains, most pharma companies are trading well below the S&P 500's price-to-2025-earnings multiple of nearly 20, according to FactSet. After the rally, for instance, Bristol Myers trades at less than eight times 2025 earnings. The exceptions, of course, are the obesity winners: Lilly's ratio is over 40.

Obesity hype aside, Big Pharma once again looks like good value for your money.

—David Wainer

## In a Troubled Box Office, Premium Still Sells

If it seemed to you like no one was going to the movies during the second quarter, you wouldn't have been far off. You also probably haven't stepped into an **IMAX** theater lately.

The second quarter was a dismal one for the U.S. box office. Sales of \$1.95 billion were down 27% from the same period last year. Excluding 2020, when the pandemic closed theaters, that is the biggest drop for that period since 1976, according to data from Box Office Mojo.

This year's domestic box office is tracking about 19% below the same point last year, according to Box Office Mojo. Chad Beynon of Macquarie Equity Research expects the domestic box office to end the year around \$8.1 billion—down 9% from last year and 28% short of 2019, the last pre-Covid year.

That slump is painful for exhibitors; **AMC Entertainment** already preannounced second-quarter revenue was down 24%. Oddly enough, though, the box-office downturn is proving to be another flex for IMAX. The purveyor of large-format exhibition technology reported last Thursday that second-quarter revenue fell only 9% to about \$89 million. That proved to be 21% higher than Wall Street's forecast for the period, and was helped by the company's original "Blue Angels" documentary and the sale of the streaming rights of that film to Amazon. IMAX shares have jumped 13% since that report.

The company was coming off a strong year. Revenue jumped 25% in 2023 thanks in large part to the runaway success of "Oppenheimer." That put IMAX's annual revenue just



In contrast to AMC Entertainment, which preannounced a 24% fall in second-quarter revenue, IMAX's fell only 9%.

5% below its pre-Covid level even as the overall domestic box office ended the year 22% short of that mark.

The eventual Best Picture winner also turned out to be valuable advertising for the format, as director Christopher Nolan shot the movie on 70mm IMAX cameras. IMAX theaters showing the film in that format were still selling out more than a month after the movie's initial release.

Other filmmakers want in on that action. The company says a record 14 movies coming out next year were "Filmed for IMAX"—meaning shot on IMAX film or with IMAX-certified cameras.

It is easy to see why. IMAX tickets sell for a premium over those

for regular showings, and growing preference for the format among moviegoers can even help a film that is struggling in the wider theatrical circuit. The "Mad Max" sequel "Furiosa" launched in late May to decent critic and audience scores but had a disappointing run, racking up less than half the global box office of its predecessor.

But IMAX Chief Executive Richard Gelfond noted in the company's recent earnings call that "Furiosa" was the third-best title for IMAX in the second quarter. That compares with its ninth-place ranking in the overall domestic market for the period, according to Box Office Mojo. Overall, IMAX says its theaters ended up accounting for 5.2% of the

total domestic box office in the first half of this year; the company's market share in 2019 was 3.2%.

The new Deadpool will help that trend further, even as it is also doing very well in the broader circuit.

IMAX said Sunday that **Walt Disney's** "Deadpool & Wolverine" grossed \$36.5 million across its global network—its highest July opening ever. Macquarie's Beynon expects global box-office revenue for IMAX films this year to be down only 5% from 2019 compared with a 28% drop for the overall domestic box office.

Fewer people may be going to the movies these days, but those who do clearly are willing to pay up for a better experience.

—Dan Gallagher

## Royal Philips Is Returning to Health

Three months ago **Royal Philips** got a huge boost when it finally drew a line under the bulk of its U.S. legal woes. Now it is showing signs of business improvement too.

Shares in the Dutch healthcare-technology company jumped 14.6% Monday, topping the Stoxx Europe 600 index of large-cap European companies.

That followed strong numbers for the second quarter, including better-than-expected profitability. Earnings before interest, taxes and amortization came in at 11.1% of revenue, well above expectations of 9.7%.

The company didn't upgrade its full-year margin guidance, but there are now better chances that it does, said Citi, which has the equivalent of a hold rating on the stock.

The shares are up 33.5% year to date, vindicating bets—including from European investment company Exor and our Heard on the Street team—that the company would eventually recover from the crisis triggered by a mass recall of its sleep-apnea machines.

At 17 times earnings, it still trades more cheaply than peers GE Healthcare and Siemens Healthineers.

Philips has slimmed down under a new chief executive, Roy Jakobs. Out of 10,000 planned job cuts, 9,000 have now taken effect, ahead of schedule. That helps explain the margin gains, which spanned all its divisions.

But the recovery isn't just about cost-cutting: Order intake in the quarter rose 9% from a year earlier, with a strong performance in North America compensating for a weak turnout in China.

Jakobs said U.S. hospital groups are looking for technology investments to help them become more productive. Earlier this month, Philips signed a 10-year partnership with **Bon Secours Mercy Health**, which runs 49 hospitals across the U.S., focused on patient monitoring.

—Stephen Wilmot



Note: 10 euros = \$10.86; Amsterdam-listed stock Source: FactSet

## Jet Engine Manufacturers Are Raking In Cash

Few industries do well when their products are forever being returned for early repairs. Jet-engine makers are currently an exception—and this is raising eyebrows.

Shares in **RTX Corporation** hit a record high last week after the aerospace conglomerate significantly beat second-quarter earnings forecasts. Excluding one-time effects, operating profit in its Pratt & Whitney engine-making division rose 23%. **GE Aerospace** also reported a surge in demand for spare parts for commercial engines, and its stock closed at a 16-year high last Tuesday. In Europe, jet-engine manufacturers **Rolls-Royce** and **Safran** are expected to post robust results when they report this week.

For many in the industry, it is hard to square such prosperity with problem-ridden engines that are causing huge headaches.

Pratt & Whitney's geared turbofan, or GTF, and the LEAP built by CFM—a joint venture between GE and Safran—are the two main state-of-the-art engine families in today's narrow-body commercial jets. Both are suffering from durability issues that are pushing up maintenance costs. The GTF's powder-metal defects have grounded hundreds of **Airbus A320neo** planes for inspec-

tions and engine removals.

Shop visits have got longer, in part because the engine companies shed too many experienced employees during the pandemic. This problem has been compounded by a dearth of spare parts, which has diverted resources away from the manufacture of new engines. During the second quarter, GE delivered 297 units of the LEAP, which includes models for both the **A320neo** and the **Boeing 737 MAX**, compared with 419 in the same period of 2023.

Slow engine production is in turn slowing plane assembly and even orders. At the Farnborough International Airshow, which took place near London last week, **Boeing** and **Airbus** received orders and commitments for 282 jets in total, compared with 309 in 2022 and 1,143 in 2018.

The engine bottleneck has put the spotlight on how manufacturers make money. Usually, turboprops are sold at a loss, with profit clawed back over years in the so-called aftermarket of maintenance, repairs

and overhauls. That means a situation in which shop visits are more frequent, fewer new engines are made and old planes are flown for longer is advantageous for manufacturers. It also makes them reluctant to accelerate the development of new, more fuel-efficient generations of engines that might shorten the lifespan of existing models.

This doesn't mean new engines are made to break down, as conspiracy theorists would have it. For one, widespread groundings often involve compensation, which Pratt & Whitney has now had to offer to many affected airlines, including **Spirit Airlines**, **Turkish Airlines** and **IndiGo**.

Nor is it surprising that development cycles are getting longer: Extracting a 15% increase in efficiency from every new generation—the historical norm—is getting harder.

And there is a reason for relying on the aftermarket: The colossal upfront cash requirements of new engine programs is best offset with a steady stream of revenues. Even so,

297

The number of LEAP engines GE delivered during the second quarter

—Jon Sindreu

A special report by *Barron's* magazine, a Dow Jones publication

# BARRON'S

WEALTH & ASSET MANAGEMENT GROUP

JULY 30, 2024

TOP  
**100**  
WOMEN  
ADVISORS



# More Women Are Reaching the C-Suite

Women are stepping into top executive jobs at wealth management companies as the percentage of female financial advisors continues to grow.

BY STEVE GARMHAUSEN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETRA ERIKSSON

## TOP 100 WOMEN ADVISORS 2024



In the past two decades, women have slowly but surely gained a solid foothold in the financial advisor industry, which has long been dominated by men. A growing number of those women are now taking the natural next step—into the C-suite of wealth management businesses. “We are clearly seeing some progress, which is heartening,” says Penny Pennington, head of Edward Jones, a nationwide brokerage firm with nearly 19,500 advisors overseeing \$2 trillion in assets for more than eight million customers.

Other women have recently joined Pennington among the industry’s upper ranks. Lindsay Hans was named co-head of Merrill Lynch Wealth Management in early 2023, the first woman to run the storied firm. In April, Susie Cranston became president and chief operating officer of fast-growing family office firm Cresset, and Dani Fava was hired as chief strategy officer of Carson Group, *Barron’s* 12th-ranked registered investment advisory firm. Earlier this month, \$5 billion-asset RFG Advisory, in Birmingham, Ala., promoted Shannon Spotswood to CEO from president, while also hiring industry veteran Abby Salameh as chief growth officer. The list, especially in the RIA space, could go on and on.

The year Pennington was named to her post—2019—saw two other notable promotions when Kristin Lemkau, J.P. Morgan Wealth Management’s CEO, and Stephanie Birrell Luedke, the head of Neuberger Berman’s private wealth division, were tapped for their posts.

Despite such prominent appointments, the industry’s C-suites remain disproportionately male. “Until we get to 50% of leadership positions held by women, it won’t be enough,” says Lemkau.

Meanwhile, the number of women advisors continues to grow, creating more potential candidates for future leadership opportunities. And there’s no shortage of talented women in the industry, as *Barron’s* 2024 Top 100 Women Financial Advisors ranking attests.

There were 1,094 nominees for our 100 spots, and total assets managed by the advisors’ teams were \$1 trillion, up from about \$600 billion last year. (Karen McDonald of Morgan Stanley Wealth Management just retired after her team, which serves employees of corporate clients, added more than \$200 billion in assets over the past year. Read more about her on page S7.) Our ranking’s top 100 people, which typically comprise about 14 teams, serve an average of 1,367 households.

This year’s Top Women ranking includes 19 advisors who didn’t make the list last year. Michelle Hermann with CIBC Private Wealth

checks in at No. 19, while Tamara Lowenberg with Creative Planning ranks 29th. Jennifer Marcontell, a past member of this list, rejoined at No. 58 after moving to Ameriprise Financial Services from Edward Jones.

Some of the Top Women advisors made big jumps up the list from last year. Ameriprise’s Susan Kim climbed 34 spots, to 43. Mariner’s Jana Shoulders rose to No. 49 from No. 90. And Catherine Evans of J.P. Morgan Wealth Management rose 62 spots, to 24.

Women leaders say that much more progress is needed if the industry hopes to seize a looming opportunity: By 2030, women in the U.S. will control an estimated \$30 trillion due to wealth transfers, according to McKinsey & Co.

Wealth management firms are smart to have more women in decision-making positions, because women are “where the wealth is going,” says Fava. In addition, notes Hans, women are increasingly wealth creators, starting businesses and leading companies: “We need the talent to face off against that growing opportunity.”

### Slow Progress

Women are breaking through to the C-suite after years of slowly gaining ground across the industry. At year-end 2016, less than 16% of financial advisors were female, according to research firm Cerulli; six years later, women accounted for 18.5%. In another measure, they made up 24% of all Certified Financial Planners last year, but among candidates who passed the CFP exam in 2023, 28% were female. The CFP is a respected, but not required, industry credential. “I think it’s reflective of the progress women are making broadly that they’re also getting into more-senior management positions,” says Cresset’s Cranston.

Continuing to grow the ranks of female advisors is important because, for one thing, female clients often prefer to work with them. The reasons are varied, says Cranston. Successful businesswomen who have had to prove doubters wrong often look to support other women by giving them their business, she says. Also, clients tend to gravitate to advisors they can best relate to, and for women, that is often another woman.

But many men also seek out female advisors. Those who are successful in business, for instance, might feel embarrassed asking about investing or financial planning. “For whatever reason, clients tend to feel more comfortable asking questions they’re worried might be perceived as stupid when the advisor is a woman,” Cranston says.

Why has it taken so long for women to gain traction in the leadership ranks of wealth

management businesses? One reason is that men controlled almost all of the country’s wealth when the industry was born decades ago, says Merrill Lynch’s Hans. “So, naturally, back then, talent looking in from the outside saw clients that looked just like them, and it felt like a fit,” she says. Women now control a growing portion of the country’s wealth, but the industry’s demographics are still catching up, she says.

### Finding Male Allies

Many of today’s female leaders say they faced obstacles to get to where they are. “Any woman who’s made it to a senior role has her share of stories of walking into the room and having somebody assume she was the junior person there to take notes or serve coffee,” says Cranston.

In terms of a disparity in C-suite promotions, similarity bias—the tendency to favor people who seem the most like ourselves—has been part of the problem, according to more than one female executive interviewed for this article. “People like to mentor and spend time with people who look like them,” says Fava. “Those relationships are usually required to break into the C-suite, and the C-suite has historically been male-dominated.”

As a Hispanic woman who is a member of the LGBTQ community, Fava found she couldn’t benefit from similarity bias and had to forge a new path to the top levels of management. Finding “the men who are confident enough and who are open enough to bring me into the pod” has helped her to break through. Burt White, the CEO of Carson Group, “is probably the biggest ally that I’ve ever met in terms of being inclusive,” says Fava. “And we’re starting to see more men who fit that criteria in the C-suite, which is also bringing women up into it.”

### Leadership Styles

Do women lead differently than men? Neuberger Berman’s Luedke says it’s true in her case. Early in her career, she focused on blending in with the boys, she recently told *Barron’s* Advisor. When she joined Citi in

2012, leading the unit that would become Citi Investment Management, she says she “made a conscious decision to be myself, to be more open about who I was, and to embrace the fact that I was a female leader.”

That involves more listening, collaboration, and seeking multiple points of view, and then communicating the reasoning for her decisions to help her people buy in, Luedke explains. She has also sought to give employees flexibility as working parents and to talk openly about the challenges of balancing professional and parental roles. “I think I have attracted talent because I’ve been able to say, ‘This is how I do it. You be you; I’m being me. I think we can all be successful,’” she says.

There’s broad acknowledgment that the industry still has work to do when it comes to C-suite gender diversity. Hans thinks representation is the key to making progress. “Women coming up the ranks need to see other women in C-suite jobs,” she says. “Otherwise, they think it’s all rhetoric and not actually possible to earn a seat at the table.”

Cranston says industry leaders need to acknowledge similarity bias to move past it. “It’s part of our ancestral DNA, and it doesn’t mean you’re a bad person,” she says. Once acknowledged, similarity bias can be better neutralized in the promotion process, she says: “If we can make sure that the decision-making bodies are diverse, that will translate into diverse outcomes in the organization because you will have removed as much of that subjective bias as you can.”

Women in the industry who want to lead shouldn’t be shy about it, says Edward Jones’ Pennington. “Keep raising your hand,” she says, even if you don’t feel fully ready. Qualities like leadership, empathy, problem-solving skills, and the ability to deal with ambiguity are applicable in any role, and technical aspects of new roles can be learned on the job.

That’s a point that Lemkau, who was JPMorgan Chase’s chief marketing officer before becoming head of its wealth management unit, can relate to. “Often the biggest obstacle [to moving up] was myself and the limiting beliefs I held on to,” she says. “And yes, I think I’ve overcome it.” **B**

“I think it’s reflective of the progress women are making broadly that they’re also getting into more-senior management positions.”

Susie Cranston, president and chief operating officer of Cresset

## TOP 100 WOMEN ADVISORS 2024

## METHODOLOGY

# How We Identified Our Top 100 Women Advisors

BY MATT BARTHEL



*Barron's* Top 100 Women Advisors ranking focuses on female team leaders using the same rigorous methodology we employ for all our rankings, which entails analyzing assets, revenue, and measures of quality.

In total, *Barron's* publishes four individual advisor rankings each year: Top 100 Advisors, Top 100 Women Advisors, Top 100 Independent Advisors, and Top 1,200 Advisors. We also publish two team rankings and a firm ranking: Top Private Wealth Management Teams, Top Institutional Consulting Teams, and Top RIA Firms.

The goal is to shine a spotlight on the nation's best financial advisors, with an eye toward raising standards in the industry. The rankings serve two distinct

types of *Barron's* readers. For wealth management professionals, they act as an industry score card, indicating which firms have the people and the processes in place to attract clients and gather the most assets. For investors, the rankings are a tool that can help them find a financial advisor who is right for them. We recommend selecting from advisors who have a typical account size close to your own portfolio to ensure you find an advisor set up to meet your needs.

Advisors who wish to be ranked must first pass a prequalification process aimed at ensuring that those in the mix are experienced and sophisticated advisors. Those who meet the criteria then fill out a survey with more than 100 questions about their practices. For this year's Top 100 Women Advisors ranking, 1,094 advisors submitted data.

We verify that data with the advisors' firms and with regulatory databases, then we apply our rankings formula to the data to generate a ranking. The formula features three major categories of calculations: 1) assets, 2) revenue, and 3) quality of practice.

In each of those categories, we do multiple subcalculations. For instance, we take into account not just the amount of assets an advisor manages, but also the type of assets—are they private wealth assets or institutional? If they're institutional, are they for a foundation or an endowment, or are they corporate assets? We measure the growth of advisors' practices and their client retention. We also consider a wide range of qualitative factors, including the advisors' experience; their advanced degrees and industry designations; the size, shape, and diversity of their teams; their charitable and philanthropic work; and, of course, their compliance records.

The rankings are meant as a starting point for clients looking for an advisor—a first-pass vetting that can help investors narrow a search. Each advisor will have his or her own approach to investing, financial planning, and other services. Clients are encouraged to approach a search for an advisor the way they would a search for a doctor—interviewing multiple professionals and getting opinions from multiple third parties. ■

Email: [advisor.editors@barrons.com](mailto:advisor.editors@barrons.com)

# Wen Nottebohm

This next-generation advisor is on the rise.

BY STEVE GARMHAUSEN

PHOTOGRAPH BY KENDRICK BRINSON



When Wen Nottebohm looks at the wealth management industry, she sees an increasingly welcoming place for women. "The industry as a whole is putting a lot more emphasis on recruiting and retaining women," says Nottebohm, a Cresset wealth advisor in Atlanta.

Nottebohm, 35, is a prime example of how some younger women are making great strides in the industry. She started out at Morgan Stanley and joined an independent firm in 2015, which merged with Cresset in 2021. The next-generation advisor's team now manages \$5.7 billion of assets, and she is No. 47 on our Top 100 Women Advisors ranking this year.

Speaking with *Barron's*, Nottebohm explains the keys to her success, which include seeking out mentorship. Surveying the investment landscape, she says stocks aren't worth overweighting right now but sees one asset class that is very attractive. She also explains why her clients aren't overly concerned about the coming presidential election.

***Barron's:* Where are you from, and how did you get into the wealth management industry?**

**Wen Nottebohm:** I grew up in St. Louis and spent most of my life in the Midwest until college. I got involved in wealth management purely by luck. I studied economics and management science at MIT. I knew I wanted to go into finance, but I didn't really

understand the various parts of finance, especially as an undergrad.

Through some on-campus coffee chats, I learned a lot more about wealth management, and it was really eye-opening for me. As a pretty social person, I really enjoy the relationship and people aspect of wealth management. Combine that with the analytical, financial, and market aspects, and that's what really drew me in. I was fortunate to have a few job offers at the end of senior year. I could have

gone into investment banking or could have gone into consulting. But I decided to go into wealth management, and started out at Morgan Stanley in New York.

**How did you get your first few clients?**

I was really fortunate. When I worked at Morgan Stanley, I was in the home office supporting financial advisors. But when I moved down to Atlanta, I was lucky enough to join Berman Capital Advisors and have founder Justin Berman, now co-chairman at Cresset, as my mentor—which he still is to this day.

I was pretty young, in my late 20s. Justin brought me in on a lot of different prospects and client relationships where I got to learn from one of the best how he did it. I was able to add value and demonstrate my knowledge, and I inherited those relationships.

**Are your clients concerned about the coming presidential election?**

We construct client portfolios in two "buckets." One is your lifetime capital needs, and the other is your wealth surplus. For every client, we do a financial plan to determine what goes into each bucket. Clients know that their lifetime capital-needs bucket is made up of much more cash-flow-generating, less-volatile assets.

They can withstand the volatility of the markets in their wealth-surplus bucket, which is going to be made up much more of growth-oriented assets, which they can hold for the longer term. Even if the client is 100% in equities in that bucket, equities over long periods have historically gone up, so they're never in a position where they'll be a forced seller. That reduces a lot of the pressure in terms of both the day-to-day of the market and the election.

**You're a next-gen woman in a field that has historically been overwhelmingly male. What's your take on gender diversity?**

I certainly think there are a lot more opportunities for women these days. There's also a lot more focus on women's organizations and support groups within firms. At Cresset, for example, we have Women@Cresset, which is an internal employee resource group for women to connect, learn, and share experiences. Anyone is welcome to participate in the events to support and empower women within the organization.

**Where do you see the market heading in the next several months, and where do you see opportunity?**

Markets are really expensive, but they can continue to be expensive, especially in an election year. Markets are hard to predict, especially in the short run. We are telling clients to stay invested according to our asset allocation and not be overweight in equities.

Where we are seeing opportunities is in private credit. Private credit is pretty broad, but it's basically privately negotiated loans. They can be loans to companies, to individuals, for real estate, etc. And you're seeing yields that are north of 10%. We tend to like the middle-market space; it's first lien senior secured [so, lenders are among the first to get paid back if the company runs into problems]. Especially in this lending environment, covenants are much tighter, as well [which means investors have stronger protections in place if there are credit problems]. So, just from a risk-adjusted perspective, we really like this area relative to other asset classes.

Thanks, Wen. ■

KEY STATS

**\$5.7**  
BILLION  
in team assets

**\$50**  
MILLION  
typical account size

**\$75**  
MILLION  
typical net worth

TOP 100 WOMEN ADVISORS 2024

# Debra Brede

A veteran advisor reflects on how the industry has changed for women.

BY ROSS SNEL

PHOTOGRAPH BY CASSANDRA KLOS

**D**ebra Brede, head of D.K. Brede Investment Management at The Colony Group, didn't intend to become a financial advisor. As a child, she dreamed of becoming a physician. An interim job at a brokerage firm in 1980, however, shifted her career trajectory.

Brede, whose Needham, Mass., team manages \$1.7 billion in assets, isn't worried about today's market, observing that stocks usually climb in an election year and noting the transformative influence of artificial intelligence. "I still think tech can run for a while—even though it's going to be volatile—because I think we're in a good trend," she says.

Brede ranks No. 25 on *Barron's* 2024 Top Women Financial Advisors list and is also a *Barron's* Hall of Fame advisor, having appeared in a *Barron's* Top 100 ranking for over 10 years. She recounts her journey from Wall Street broker to launching an independent firm, and shares the concern that led her to merge her practice with a Focus Financial Partners firm.

**Barron's: How did you get into wealth management?**

**Debra Brede:** I never planned on becoming a wealth manager. From the time I was a kid, my goal was to become a doctor. I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania, and I graduated from college with plans to go to med school in Pennsylvania. But right out of school, I married my husband, who was accepted at Tufts dental school in Boston, so I decided to move to Boston with him and then apply to med school here. During that break, I went to work in a brokerage firm to learn as much as I could about investments, but I had no intention of doing what I'm doing right now.

**Which brokerage did you join?**

I went to work at Shearson in 1980, starting out as a sales assistant. Then I was promoted to an operations manager within three or four months, after the operations manager was in an accident and they needed to replace him right away. They didn't even have a manual. We used to have to book securities by hand and actually take in cash and bearer muni bonds. I created a manual and changed a lot of the procedures. I said to my husband, "You know, I want to wait another year before going

to med school. I just love it." I ended up doing the broker training at Shearson.

**Why did you leave Shearson?**

Shearson was merging with E.F. Hutton, and a lot of people were leaving. Mergers can be really hard, and that one I found difficult. I went to another big firm for a few years and absolutely hated it. It was really the same place, just different actors. A friend had done research on firms, and he liked Commonwealth Financial Network, and I went there. I spent most of my career there as an independent, and they were fantastic. It is the best decision I ever made because I really didn't like the wirehouses, because as a woman, I felt like an outcast.

**How has the industry changed for women since then?**

It's huge. Our broker training class ended in '85, and it was 10% women and 90% guys, so it felt like a boys club. You definitely see more women in the industry now, and I think the opportunity is phenomenal for women who really care about the well-being of others.

**You moved from Commonwealth and merged your firm with GW & Wade, which recently merged with The Colony Group, another Focus Financial Partners firm. What prompted that change?**

During Covid, very healthy people were dying, and I thought to myself, "What happens to my clients' investments, and even my family's, if something happens to me?" It just so happened that a person called trying to recruit me to GW & Wade, which is only about five minutes from my offices in Needham. They're in Wellesley, and have a really great reputation. They had a person in their office who needed an organ transplant, and the advisors took care of him and his clients while he was going through that ordeal. I felt we were on the same page. And I felt that if something happened to me, they could help my team and make sure the clients and my family were taken care of.

**What's your forecast for markets?**

I'm bullish on the economy and on the stock markets in the near term. We're going into earnings season right now, so it'll be interesting



KEY STATS	<b>\$1.7 BILLION</b> in team assets	<b>\$3 MILLION</b> typical account size	<b>\$4 MILLION</b> typical net worth
-----------	----------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------

to see what happens with a lot of tech stocks, but I believe that we're still in the early innings of the AI revolution. AI is going to increase productivity, and I'm really excited about its implications in medicine. And during a presidential election year, markets tend to do well. So, I'm fully invested at this point.

**What are your expectations for interest rates?**

When I look at the current inflation numbers, I'm just not expecting a rate cut this year.

Based on that, I'm still buying lower-duration bonds, and I'm also more heavily weighted in large-cap U.S. stocks.

**Are there any specific sectors you're bullish on?**

I'm still bullish on tech. But I'm also buying consumer defensives, healthcare, financial services, and consumer cyclical stocks. I think there are a lot of bargains out there.

Thanks, Debra. ■

# Kelly Westmoreland

How a 25-person team serves small businesses.

BY ANDREW WELSCH

PHOTOGRAPH BY AMANDA GREENE



KEY STATS	<b>\$5.1 BILLION</b> in team assets	<b>\$25 MILLION</b> typical account size	<b>\$60 MILLION</b> typical net worth
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**W**hen prospective clients hire Kelly Westmoreland as their financial advisor, they not only get access to her expertise—they also get access to the other 24 members on her Atlanta-based team.

Westmoreland, a private wealth advisor with Merrill Private Wealth Management, says each member has a defined role within the group: "We have specialists on the team who can provide clients with all the different services of the firm, whether that be tax-management strategies or trust and estate planning."

Westmoreland, No. 5 on our Top 100 Women Advisors list, discusses how she, her husband Rod Westmoreland, and their platoon-size team help small-business owners manage their wealth—and the money generated from selling all or part of a business.

**Barron's: How did you get into wealth management?**

**Kelly Westmoreland:** I had a family friend who worked at Merrill, and since I was graduating early from college, she thought I could get a leg up on those graduating in May. I graduated with a degree in math, with a concentration in finance. So, I met with the manager and hit it off beautifully, and he introduced me to Rod Westmoreland, and the rest is history. I graduated the following Friday and started with Merrill on Monday. And I've been here for 30 years.

**Tell me about your practice.**

I was the fifth member of the team when I joined. We have built a multigenerational team. We are currently at 25 team members, and we are hiring for a 26th. Rod, my husband, and I are the owners of the team. Each team member has a defined role. We have a wealth strategist with a certified public accountant and law background. We have eight senior client managers, who are really the quarterback for our clients. They each work with anywhere from 15 to 20 families and get deeply entrenched with those families, getting to know their wants, their needs, and their goals.

**That is a big team. How do you remain cohesive?**

We don't allow remote working; we are all in the office. We think that's important for maintaining and building our culture. We all sit in one big area, which is wonderful. It fosters open communication. And we have an open-door policy, so we are constantly having conversations. We have formal meetings, too, and we like to get the team members together.

For instance, we buy lunch for the team on Fridays, and we host events for the team outside the office. Open communication is really important to us.

**What are clients' top concerns?**

We find a lot of clients right now are focused on building a legacy and preserving wealth across multiple generations in their family. We focus heavily on education for clients and their extended families.

They have a comfort factor with us and know that we can help them take care of their investments and cash-flow needs. And during Covid, people had a lot of time to think about their families and their legacies. We offer trust and estate-planning services, plus philanthropic services, so we can bring in specialists as needed for them. If a client is charitably inclined, we can help them with that goal, as well.

**What is the most important service you provide clients?**

We give them peace of mind. We provide them with a dedicated group of individuals to serve their families. We can hold clients' hands through good times and bad.

We work with first- and second-generation wealth creators, and they typically have an investment time horizon of 10 years or longer. They're often investing not only for themselves, but also for their legacy and for future generations. I'd say 90% of our business comes from \$10 million-plus households, and our median client has \$25 million to \$30 million.

We have a focus on small-business owners and specialize in liquidity events. If you are a business owner and you have the opportunity to sell your business, we want to be the first person you call.

**What's a typical client meeting like?**

When we get in front of a prospective client, the first thing is to get to know them. We want to know their time horizon, their cash flow needs, and their goals. Once they decide to become a client, we introduce them to one of the senior client managers, who is responsible for bringing all the services of the team to the client.

After that, our client managers speak to clients on at least a monthly basis. And we have client appreciation events throughout the year. These are often centered around wine, though not always. My husband and I collect wine, and we have found that breaking bread is a great way to get to know one another outside the office. A lot of clients end up becoming friends.

Thanks, Kelly. ■

## BARRON'S SPECIAL REPORT

# Karen McDonald Leads Our List—Again

The Morgan Stanley team that McDonald led—until her recent retirement—oversees \$436 billion in assets, and she has ranked at the top of our best women advisors list for nine out of the past 11 years.

BY AMEY STONE

PHOTOGRAPH BY MEGAN JELINGER



**M**organ Stanley financial advisor Karen McDonald, who retired earlier this year, is leaving on a high note.

She has sat atop *Barron's* Top 100 Women Advisors ranking for the past four years in a row, and for a total of nine years out of the past 11. This year, her team boasts \$436 billion in assets, far exceeding any other advisor on this list.

McDonald's ability to gather that much in assets has everything to do with her specialty—helping corporate clients tap financial services on behalf of their employees. That includes advising head honchos on timing their sales of restricted stock, helping new employees invest their 401(k) plans, and setting up “financial wellness” programs to teach personal-finance skills.

And when executives need help managing their private wealth, her team refers them to Morgan Stanley financial advisors. “The ulti-

mate goal is to get the employees to then work with our financial advisors,” she says.

This feeder from corporate services to private wealth management is an important source of growth at Morgan Stanley. “The goodwill we get from being a credible one-stop shop for all these corporate service needs is helping us capture wallet share,” Morgan Stanley Wealth Management chief Jed Finn told *Barron's* Advisor in March.

## Building a Career

McDonald started in financial services straight out of college in 1980—not long after the industry did away with fixed commissions in 1975, an event known as May Day. An art history major, she took a job as a receptionist at a discount brokerage. “That’s how many women did it in those days,” she says.

Her hope that she had landed in a growth industry with opportunities for young women to get ahead was quickly borne out.

She moved into operations, her firm was acquired by Fidelity Investments, and she moved to San Francisco for a management position.

In 1987, she was hired by the Bank of San Francisco in the nascent stock-plan business. Her role was to facilitate loans for executives so they could purchase stock options they’d been granted. “That’s how this business started,” she says.

When the bank ran into real estate problems, one of her clients introduced her to Mark Curtis, who recruited her to join him at Shearson. In 1993, they started their 30-year partnership. “A lot of my big clients came with me, and we built the business from there,” she says.

Several bank reorganizations later, they found themselves working for Morgan Stanley. “Since 1987, I haven’t varied much,” she jokes. More seriously, she adds, “We were very flexible, we listened to clients, and built what they wanted. That’s why we became a leader in this field.”

McDonald spent most of her career based in Palo Alto and now splits her time between homes in Florida and Kentucky, where one of her two daughters resides in a special-needs boarding school.

“She was a fierce advocate for clients and a true pioneer in the industry,” says Curtis Peterson, Morgan Stanley’s Western regional director. “Her legacy of leadership,

innovation, and compassion will forever inspire us.”

## Now, Retirement

A little over a year ago, McDonald, 66, announced she was retiring and began transitioning clients to members of her team. “I could not be more pleased with my career,” she says. “I feel like I did great things for clients. But our team has a very deep bench, and I felt it was time to give others a chance.”

She hasn’t taken the familiar retirement advice to choose an engaging second act to fill her time after exiting her job.

“I specifically had no plan,” she says. “I had two short maternity leaves. I have a lot of neglected projects and lots of family and friends. I’m very much relishing the idea of not knowing what I’m going to do each day.” A self-described exercise fanatic, she is considering training to be a yoga teacher. “I’m able to step away, and I think it’s because I’m satisfied with what I’ve done.”

However, McDonald does have one parting wish for the industry—that more women will follow in her footsteps. “Many women have the skills that are exactly what it takes to be a really good financial advisor,” she says. “They’re good listeners, they’re credible, they’re smart, and I really hope that more women get into this business.” ■

“We were very flexible, we listened to clients, and built what they wanted. That’s why we became a leader in this field.”

Karen McDonald, who started her career as a receptionist at a discount brokerage

## TOP 100 WOMEN ADVISORS 2024

# Top 100 Women Financial Advisors 2024

Here are America's Top Women Financial Advisors, as identified by *Barron's*. The ranking reflects the volume of assets overseen by the advisors and their teams, revenue generated for their firms, and the quality of the advisors' practices. An "N" indicates that the advisor wasn't ranked in that year.

## 1. Karen McDonald

Morgan Stanley Wealth Management  
Palo Alto

2023 Rank: 1  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$435,699  
Typical Account (mil): \$3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$10

## 2. Stephanie J. Stiefel

Neuberger Berman  
New York

2023 Rank: 3  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,641  
Typical Account (mil): \$15  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$45

## 3. Holly Newman Kroft

Neuberger Berman  
New York

2023 Rank: 4  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$4,214  
Typical Account (mil): \$16  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

## 4. Johanna Walters

Merrill Wealth Management  
Blue Bell, Pa.

2023 Rank: 6  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$6,841  
Typical Account (mil): \$12.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$15

## 5. Kelly Westmoreland

Merrill Private Wealth Management  
Atlanta

2023 Rank: 22  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$5,120  
Typical Account (mil): \$25  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$60

## 6. Elaine Meyers

J.P. Morgan Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: 14  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$5,674  
Typical Account (mil): \$45  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 7. Colleen O'Callaghan

J.P. Morgan Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 10  
Client Type: UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$5,925  
Typical Account (mil): \$35  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

## 8. Deborah Montaperto

Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management  
Palm Beach, Fla.

2023 Rank: 5  
Client Type: UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$44,223  
Typical Account (mil): \$125  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$250

## 9. Susan Kaplan

Kaplan Financial Services  
Newton, Mass.

2023 Rank: 7  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,982  
Typical Account (mil): \$5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$15

## 10. Brenna Saunders

Creative Planning  
Overland Park, Kan.

2023 Rank: 9  
Client Type: UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,160  
Typical Account (mil): \$30.9  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

## 11. Lisa Detanna

Raymond James  
Beverly Hills, Calif.

2023 Rank: 12  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$5,866  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

## 12. Jessica Culpepper

Creative Planning  
Overland Park, Kan.

2023 Rank: 19  
Client Type: UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,042  
Typical Account (mil): \$38.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

## 13. Laila Pence

Pence Wealth Management  
Newport Beach, Calif.

2023 Rank: 15  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,151  
Typical Account (mil): \$2.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

## 14. Patti Brennan

Key Financial  
West Chester, Pa.

2023 Rank: 18  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,177  
Typical Account (mil): \$2  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$4

## 15. Tracey Gluck

J.P. Morgan Wealth Management  
Los Angeles

2023 Rank: 25  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,099  
Typical Account (mil): \$12  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

## 16. Molly Rothove

Creative Planning  
Overland Park, Kan.

2023 Rank: 21  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,012  
Typical Account (mil): \$27.9  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

## 17. Michelle Mayer

Merrill Private Wealth Management  
Naples, Fla.

2023 Rank: 27  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,719  
Typical Account (mil): \$40  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 18. Cheryl L. Young

Rockefeller Capital Management  
Los Gatos, Calif.

2023 Rank: 23  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,809  
Typical Account (mil): \$7.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$18

## 19. Michelle Hermann

CIBC Private Wealth  
Chicago

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail, HNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,600  
Typical Account (mil): \$0.8  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$2.8

## 20. Geri Eisenman Pell

Ameriprise Financial  
Rye Brook, N.Y.

2023 Rank: 49  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,285  
Typical Account (mil): \$2.4  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$6.9

## 21. Gillian Yu

Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: 16  
Client Type: UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$9,540  
Typical Account (mil): \$50  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 22. Alexandra Fuhrmann

CIBC Private Wealth  
New York

2023 Rank: 26  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,370  
Typical Account (mil): \$23.2  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

## 23. Kimberlee Orth

Ameriprise Financial  
Wilmington, Del.

2023 Rank: 11  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,062  
Typical Account (mil): \$8  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$19.1

## 24. Catherine Evans

J.P. Morgan Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: 86  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Endowments  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,269  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

## 25. Debra Brede

D.K. Brede Investment Management | The Colony Group  
Needham, Mass.

2023 Rank: 35  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,688  
Typical Account (mil): \$3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$4

## 26. Louise Lane

William Blair  
Chicago

2023 Rank: 24  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,896  
Typical Account (mil): \$5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$10

## 27. Elizabeth Weikens

J.P. Morgan Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 34  
Client Types: UHNW, Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$6,530  
Typical Account (mil): \$25  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

## 28. Debbie Jorgensen

Merrill Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: 32  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,642  
Typical Account (mil): \$25  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$55

## 29. Tamara Lowenberg

Creative Planning  
Overland Park, Kan.

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,315  
Typical Account (mil): \$1.6  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$6

## 30. Charla McIntyre Fields

Ameriprise Financial  
Hurst, Texas

2023 Rank: 29  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,343  
Typical Account (mil): \$1.8  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$3.5

## 31. Diane Compardo

Moneta Group  
Clayton, Mo.

2023 Rank: 59  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,068  
Typical Account (mil): \$15  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

## 32. Margaret Starnier

Raymond James  
Coral Gables, Fla.

2023 Rank: 38  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,884  
Typical Account (mil): \$7  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$10

## 33. Inna Kelly

Morgan Stanley  
Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: 41  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,983  
Typical Account (mil): \$20  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

## 34. Judy Fredrickson

UBS Private Wealth Management  
Wayzata, Minn.

2023 Rank: 31  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$4,740  
Typical Account (mil): \$30  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 35. Valerie Garcia Houts

Merrill Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: 30  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$53,588  
Typical Account (mil): \$70  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$250

## 36. Mary Mullin

Merrill Wealth Management  
Boston

2023 Rank: 40  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,681  
Typical Account (mil): \$7  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$15

## 37. Dalal Salomon

Salomon & Ludwin  
Richmond, Va.

2023 Rank: 60  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,093  
Typical Account (mil): \$3.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

## 38. Courtney Moore

Merrill Private Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 36  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$10,544  
Typical Account (mil): \$75  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 39. Emily Van Hoorickx

UBS Wealth Management  
San Jose, Calif.

2023 Rank: 39  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$16,769  
Typical Account (mil): \$5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

## 40. Lisa Reed

Neuberger Berman  
Los Angeles

2023 Rank: 37  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,214  
Typical Account (mil): \$7.8  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$10

## 41. Carolyn Taylor

Weatherly Asset Management  
Del Mar, Calif.

2023 Rank: 61  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,340  
Typical Account (mil): \$3.7  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$7.5

## 42. Emily Rubin

UBS Private Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 44  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,688  
Typical Account (mil): \$25  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

## 43. Susan Kim

Ameriprise Financial  
Vienna, Va.

2023 Rank: 77  
Client Types: Retail, HNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,996  
Typical Account (mil): \$1.8  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$4

## 44. Sharon Oberlander

Merrill Wealth Management  
Chicago

2023 Rank: 56  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,245  
Typical Account (mil): \$5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$12

## 45. Melissa Corrado-Harrison

UBS Private Wealth Management  
Denver

2023 Rank: 42  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,635  
Typical Account (mil): \$50  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

## 46. Michelle Young

Ameriprise Financial  
Edina, Minn.

2023 Rank: 47  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,585  
Typical Account (mil): \$1.9  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$3.7

## 47. Wen Nottebohm

Cresset  
Atlanta

2023 Rank: 52  
Client Type: UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$5,663  
Typical Account (mil): \$50  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

## 48. Louise Gunderson

UBS Private Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 51  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$6,370  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

## 49. Jana Shoulders

Mariner Wealth Advisors  
Tulsa, Okla.

2023 Rank: 90  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,721  
Typical Account (mil): \$3.4  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$9

## 50. Kristina Van Liew

Morgan Stanley | Graystone Consulting  
Chicago

2023 Rank: 45  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments  
Team Assets (mil): \$8,420  
Typical Account (mil): \$150  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 51. Linda Stephans

Morgan Stanley | Graystone Consulting  
Palm Beach, Fla.

2023 Rank: 48  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments  
Team Assets (mil): \$8,420  
Typical Account (mil): \$150  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 52. Melissa Spickler

Merrill Wealth Management  
Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

2023 Rank: 65  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,896  
Typical Account (mil): \$2  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

## 53. Donna Di Ianni

Merrill Wealth Management  
Aspen, Colo.

2023 Rank: 62  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,185  
Typical Account (mil): \$25  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

## 54. Hillary Cullen

UBS Private Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 76  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$4,731  
Typical Account (mil): \$20  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$40

## 55. Alyssa Moeder

Merrill Private Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 58  
Client Types: UHNW, Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$5,853  
Typical Account (mil): \$35  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$150

## 56. Joanne Zhong

UBS Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: 43  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,271  
Typical Account (mil): \$50  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 57. Julie Parisio Roy

Badgley Phelps Wealth Managers  
Seattle

2023 Rank: 67  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,408  
Typical Account (mil): \$3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$6

## 58. Jennifer Marcontell

Ameriprise Financial  
Mont Belvieu, Texas

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,619  
Typical Account (mil): \$2.3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$3.1

## 59. Gail Reid

Ameriprise Financial  
Glendale, Calif.

2023 Rank: 54  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, Foundations, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,237  
Typical Account (mil): \$3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

## 60. Lori Van Dusen

LWV Advisors  
Pittsford, N.Y.

2023 Rank: 63  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,211  
Typical Account (mil): \$15  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$35

## 61. Louise Armour

J.P. Morgan Wealth Management  
Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

2023 Rank: 68  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,359  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

## 62. Corina Davis

Merrill Wealth Management  
Seattle

2023 Rank: 70  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,254  
Typical Account (mil): \$3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$7

## 63. Linda Modico

UBS Private Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: UHNW, Foundations, Endowments, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$7,250  
Typical Account (mil): \$50  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

## 64. Donna Joyner

Merrill Wealth Management  
Alpharetta, Ga.

2023 Rank: 57  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,306  
Typical Account (mil): \$15  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

## 65. Eleni Mavromati

Merrill Private Wealth Management  
Los Angeles

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: UHNW, Foundations, Endowments  
Team Assets (mil): \$29,365  
Typical Account (mil): \$50  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

## 66. Nancy Daoud

Ameriprise Financial  
Oxford, Conn.

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,622  
Typical Account (mil): \$1.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$7

## 67. Megan Bailey

Merrill Wealth Management  
Blue Bell, Pa.

2023 Rank: 66  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$6,841  
Typical Account (mil): \$7.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$10

## 68. Wendy Holmes

UBS Private Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 83  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,789  
Typical Account (mil): \$30  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$80

## 69. Renee Fourcade

UBS Private Wealth Management  
Los Angeles

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$12,476  
Typical Account (mil): \$25  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

## 70. Emily Fletcher

Merrill Wealth Management  
Atlanta

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$120,935  
Typical Account (mil): \$3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

## 71. Mary Guza

Morgan Stanley  
Wealth Management  
Morristown, N.J.

2023 Rank: 72  
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$5,923  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$15

## 72. Joni Abalos

Merrill Wealth Management  
Houston

2023 Rank: 91  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,902  
Typical Account (mil): \$3.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

N=not ranked  
HNW=high net worth  
UHNW=ultrahigh net worth

## BARRON'S SPECIAL REPORT

## Top 100 Women Financial Advisors 2024

**73. Susan Kingsolver**  
Morgan Stanley Private  
Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 75  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,945  
Typical Account (mil): \$20  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

**74. Emmeline Swanson**  
Merrill Wealth  
Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 64  
Client Types: Retail, HNW,  
UHNW, Foundations,  
Endowments, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$53,588  
Typical Account (mil): \$70  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$250

**75. W Janet Dougherty**  
Cresset  
Chicago

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,132  
Typical Account (mil): \$25  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

**76. Marie Vanerian**  
Merrill Wealth  
Management  
Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

2023 Rank: 69  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW,  
Endowments, Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,909  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

**77. Kathleen Roeser**  
Morgan Stanley  
Wealth Management  
Deerfield, Ill.

2023 Rank: 92  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW,  
Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,237  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

**78. Krystal Julius**  
Merrill Wealth  
Management  
Wayzata, Minn.

2023 Rank: 50  
Client Types: Retail,  
HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,323  
Typical Account (mil): \$3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

**79. Catherine Chen**  
RBC Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: 84  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW,  
Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,609  
Typical Account (mil): \$20  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

**80. Jacqueline Moss**  
William Blair  
Chicago

2023 Rank: 97  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,307  
Typical Account (mil): \$30  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$40

**81. Jacqueline Willens**  
UBS Private Wealth  
Management  
New York

2023 Rank: 80  
Client Types: Retail,  
HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,251  
Typical Account (mil): \$5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$10

**82. Ann Marie Etergino**  
RBC Wealth Management  
Chevy Chase, Md.

2023 Rank: 93  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW,  
Foundations, Endowments,  
Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,872  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

**83. Trudy Haussmann**  
Haussmann Financial  
Lake Forest, Calif.

2023 Rank: 94  
Client Types: Retail, HNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$988  
Typical Account (mil): \$0.8  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$2.5

**84. Carolyn Frager**  
Creative Planning  
Overland Park, Kan.

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail,  
HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,172  
Typical Account (mil): \$4.3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

**85. Nazie Saffari-Moini**  
Merrill Wealth  
Management  
Beverly Hills, Calif.

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,042  
Typical Account (mil): \$2  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

**86. Cheryl Holland**  
Abacus Planning Group  
Columbia, S.C.

2023 Rank: 82  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,801  
Typical Account (mil): \$5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$12

**87. Kathleen Grasmeyer**  
Morgan Stanley  
Wealth Management  
Glens Falls, N.Y.

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail,  
HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,701  
Typical Account (mil): \$1  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$3.5

**88. Sarah Mercurio**  
William Blair  
Chicago

2023 Rank: 98  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$5,561  
Typical Account (mil): \$18  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$28

**89. Diane Hart**  
UBS Wealth Management  
Pasadena, Calif.

2023 Rank: N  
Client Type: UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,023  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

**90. Jennifer Garcia**  
Wells Fargo Advisors  
Encino, Calif.

2023 Rank: 73  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,594  
Typical Account (mil): \$20  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

**91. Melinda Johnston**  
Merrill Wealth Management  
Fort Worth, Texas

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,413  
Typical Account (mil): \$3  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

**92. Pauline Chu**  
UBS Wealth Management  
San Francisco

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail,  
HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$3,615  
Typical Account (mil): \$5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

**93. Kathleen Malone**  
Wells Fargo Advisors  
Charlotte, N.C.

2023 Rank: 55  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,800  
Typical Account (mil): \$6.5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$15

**94. Crystal Ho**  
Morgan Stanley Private  
Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$9,498  
Typical Account (mil): \$25  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

**95. Catherine Fang**  
Morgan Stanley Private  
Wealth Management  
Menlo Park, Calif.

2023 Rank: 78  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,600  
Typical Account (mil): \$50  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

**96. Teresa Jacobsen**  
UBS Private Wealth  
Management  
Stamford, Conn.

2023 Rank: 96  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW,  
Institutional  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,572  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

**97. Laura Linger**  
William Blair  
Chicago

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW,  
Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,118  
Typical Account (mil): \$10  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

**98. Anouchka Balog**  
Morgan Stanley Wealth  
Management  
Laguna Niguel, Calif.

2023 Rank: N  
Client Types: Retail,  
HNW, UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$1,156  
Typical Account (mil): \$5  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$15

**99. Anna Winderbaum**  
Morgan Stanley Private  
Wealth Management  
New York

2023 Rank: N  
Client Type: UHNW  
Team Assets (mil): \$2,678  
Typical Account (mil): \$50  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

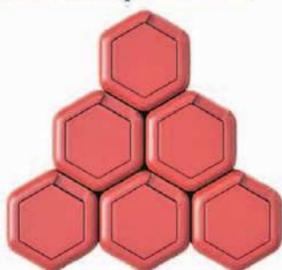
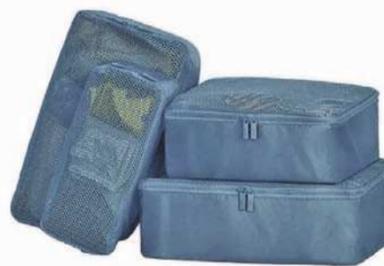
**100. Lindsey Holton**  
William Blair  
Chicago

2023 Rank: 85  
Client Types: HNW, UHNW,  
Foundations  
Team Assets (mil): \$7,372  
Typical Account (mil): \$15  
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

N=not ranked  
HNW=high net worth  
UHNW=ultrahigh net worth

# Pro Picks for a Stress-Free Trip

Make every journey easier with these tried-and-tested recommendations.



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