10 Things You Should Know About Stock Market Volatility

Volatility is part of the investment experience, but the longer an investor holds stocks, the greater the potential for an overall positive return.

1 **Put points in perspective** – Headlines sometimes bear news of the Dow Jones Industrial Average (Dow) dropping, inciting market fear. But it's all relative. A 1% swing at year-end 2024 levels was equal to 425 points. When the Dow was at 10,000 points, a 1% swing was only 100 points. Volatility is a matter of perspective.

2 **There's an index for that –** The Cboe VIX Index (VIX), or "fear index," measures the market's expectations for volatilty over the next 30 days. The VIX tends to have an inverse correlation to the S&P 500 Index: When the market is down, fear is up, and vice versa. A score below 20 generally indicates investor contentment; a score above 30 suggests anxiety.

3 **The only thing to fear is extreme fear itself –** A VIX score of 40 or higher indicates extreme fear among investors. This doesn't happen often. In fact, since 2010, the VIX has only spiked so high on 51 trading days.[1]

4 **Don't let bad days blind you to good days –** Since the VIX's inception in 1990, 61% of the days of extreme fear occurred in 2008 and 2009, during the Global Financial Crisis. Most years—26 since 1990, to be exact—didn't see a single day when the VIX hit over 40. Historically, extreme fear has been the exception, not the rule.

5 **Volatility in 2024 was much lower than usual –** With a backdrop of moderating inflation and several pauses in interest-rate hikes by the Federal Reserve, volatility in the S&P 500 Index in 2024 was less than the 10-year historical average from 2014-2023. Only 19% of trading days in 2024 had swings of +/-1%.[2]

6 **Patience is a virtue? –** While investing in the stock market has its ups and downs, the longer an investor stays invested, the less significant those bumps in the road appear. As represented by the S&P 500 Index, stocks have tended to be up more often for investors who held on for longer (see charts on page 2).

7 **No one said it would be easy –** From 1985 to 2024, the S&P 500 Index returned an average of 11.78% per year, and investors may have expected similar 11% returns in any individual year. However, there were only three years in which the Index returned between 9% and 12% during this period. Volatility is much easier to tolerate when you expect it.

8 **Want to minimize volatility? –** If market volatility makes you uncomfortable, you can work with a financial professional to include investments in your portfolio that specifically seek to help minimize volatility—without abandoning growth-oriented investments.

9 **Or embrace volatility? –** If you're able to put aside the day-to-day discomfort of market volatility, it could provide the opportunity for higher returns. While trying to time the market is ill-advised, investing during down markets is exactly in line with the old financial adage "buy low, sell high."

10 **Remember, the glass has been more than half full, historically –** If you're swept up in volatility, remember that markets have been positive more often than not. In fact, stocks have turned in a positive return 67 out of the last 88 calendar years, which means they've been on the rise 76% of the time (see chart on page 2).[3]

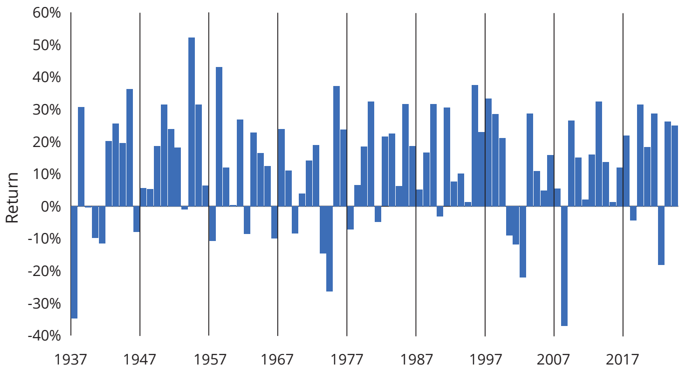
Past performance does not guarantee future results. Indices are unmanaged and not available for direct investment. **Dow Jones Industrial Average** is an unmanaged, price-weighted index of 30 of the largest, most widely held stocks traded on the NYSE. **Cboe Volatility Index (VIX)** is a key measure of market expectations of near-term volatility conveyed by S&P 500 Index option prices. **S&P 500 Index** is a market capitalization-weighted price index composed of 500 widely held common stocks.

[1] Data Sources: FactSet and Hartford Funds, 2/25. [2] Data Sources: Morningstar and Hartford Funds, 2/25. [3] Data Sources: Ned Davis Research and Hartford Funds, 2/25.

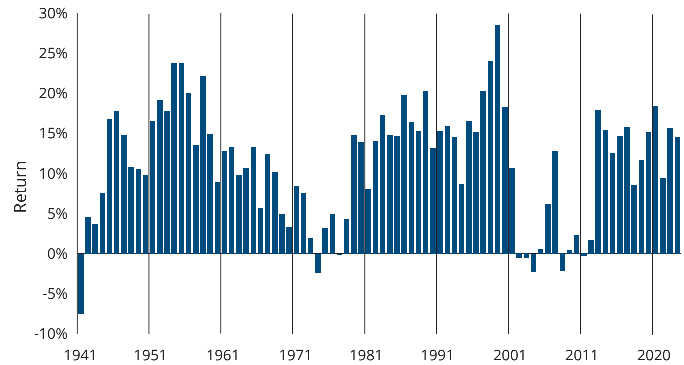
Long-Term Investors Have Historically Seen Less Volatility

Each of the charts below shows the investment results for the S&P 500 Index for different lengths of time. Historically, the longer an investor has held stocks, the greater the potential for an overall positive return.

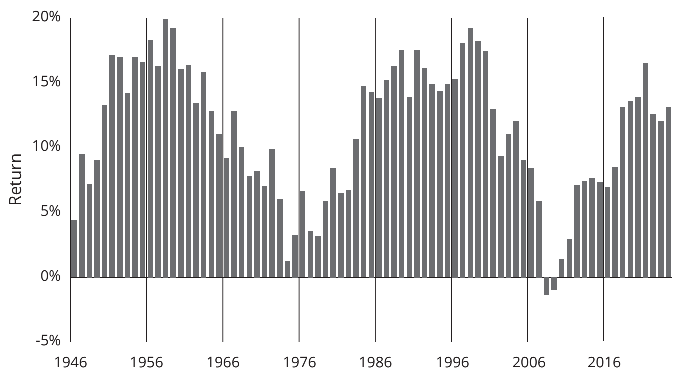
One-year holding periods (Jan. 1, 1937–Dec. 31, 2024)
Stocks were up 76% of the time—67 up periods, 21 down



Five-year holding periods (Jan. 1, 1937–Dec. 31, 2024)
Stocks were up 90% of the time—76 up periods, 8 down



Ten-year holding periods (Jan. 1, 1937–Dec. 31, 2024)
Stocks were up 97% of the time—77 up periods, 2 down



Past performance does not guarantee future results. Equities are represented by the S&P 500 Index. Data Sources: Morningstar and Hartford Funds, 2/25.

Although volatility is an inevitable part of investing, a financial professional can help you stay focused on your long-term goals.