

Market risk and reward



It's important to have realistic expectations about the trade-offs between risk and reward. A balanced, diversified portfolio can help reduce portfolio volatility. This table shows long-term average annual returns for various asset allocations between U.S. stocks and bonds, and the performance of those allocations during select equity bear and bull markets.

Asset allocation	Average annual return (1926–2024)	Inflation- adjusted average annual return (1926–2024)	Number of years with a loss (1926–2024)	Cumulative return 1973–1974	Cumulative return 3/31/2000– 9/30/2002	Cumulative return 9/30/2002– 12/31/2007	Cumulative return 12/31/2007– 3/31/2009	Cumulative return 3/31/2009– 12/31/2024
100% bonds	5.04%	2.04%	17 of 99	-4.82%	28.56%	26.12%	5.36%	51.19%
10% stocks and 90% bonds	5.75%	2.72%	13 of 99	-8.37%	19.35%	32.94%	-0.52%	85.87%
20% stocks and 80% bonds	6.42%	3.38%	14 of 99	-11.85%	10.61%	40.04%	-6.18%	127.48%
30% stocks and 70% bonds	7.05%	4.00%	16 of 99	-15.25%	2.32%	47.41%	-11.60%	177.15%
40% stocks and 60% bonds	7.66%	4.58%	18 of 99	-18.58%	-5.52%	55.06%	-16.81%	236.14%
50% stocks and 50% bonds	8.22%	5.13%	19 of 99	-21.84%	-12.93%	63.00%	-21.81%	305.83%
60% stocks and 40% bonds	8.75%	5.64%	23 of 99	-25.04%	-19.92%	71.23%	-26.59%	387.75%
70% stocks and 30% bonds	9.24%	6.12%	24 of 99	-28.16%	-26.50%	79.76%	-31.18%	483.53%
80% stocks and 20% bonds	9.69%	6.55%	25 of 99	-31.21%	-32.69%	88.60%	-35.57%	594.90%
90% stocks and 10% bonds	10.10%	6.99%	25 of 99	-34.20%	-38.49%	97.74%	-39.76%	723.68%
100% stocks	10.47%	7.31%	27 of 99	-37.12%	-43.92%	107.20%	-43.77%	871.74%
100% cash	3.34%	0.39%	1 of 99	15.49%	10.25%	16.08%	1.84%	19.99%

Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2024.

Past performance is no guarantee of future returns. The performance of an index is not an exact representation of any particular investment, as you cannot invest directly in an index.

There is no guarantee that any particular asset allocation or mix of funds will meet your investment objectives or provide you with a given level of income.

When determining which index to use and for what period, we selected the index that we deemed to be a fair representation of the characteristics of the referenced market, given the information currently available. For U.S. stock market returns, we used the Standard & Poor's 90 Index from 1926 to March 3, 1957; the Standard & Poor's 500 Index from March 4, 1957, through 1974; the Wilshire 5000 Index from 1975 through April 22, 2005; the MSCI US Broad Market Index from April 23, 2005, through June 2, 2013; and the CRSP US Total Market Index thereafter. For U.S. bond market returns, we used the Standard & Poor's High Grade Corporate Index from 1926 to 1968, the Citigroup High Grade Index from 1969 to 1972, the Lehman Brothers U.S. Long Credit AA Index from 1973 to 1975, the Barclays Capital U.S. Aggregate Bond Index from 1976 to 2009, and the Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Float Adjusted Index thereafter. For U.S. cash reserve returns, we used the Ibbotson 1-Month Treasury Bill Index from 1926 through 1977, and the Citigroup 3-Month Treasury Bill Index thereafter.

All investing is subject to risk, including the possible loss of the money you invest.

Diversification does not ensure a profit or protect against a loss.

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FAWLRISK 042025