

MONTHLY MARKET UPDATE

December 2025



U.S. equities finished the month of December relatively flat but closed 2025 with a third consecutive double-digit return, a rare occurrence. U.S. equity market leadership in December continued the rotation we saw in November where value outperformed growth as AI momentum-oriented stocks gave way to traditional value-oriented sectors and overall market breadth improved. Non-U.S. equities wrapped 2025 in strong fashion with both developed and emerging markets up as solid 3% in December and over 30% on the year. Of note is that while 2025 delivered the widest margin of international stock outperformance relative to U.S. since 1993, excluding currency impacts, the 14% calendar year international stock advantage narrows to less than 3%. Bond markets lost a little ground in December as interest rates edged slightly higher but, like stocks, turned in a strong year with the Aggregate Bond index up 7.3% and Municipal index 4.2%, both aided by declining interest rates and a restart of the Fed easing campaign. Commodity markets wrapped up a crazy 2025 with tariffs, geopolitics, and demand drivers translating to big volatility drivers throughout the year. December saw energy prices fall 9%, but industrial and precious (gold, silver) metals move higher, putting an exclamation mark on impressive annual gains of 21% and 80%, respectively.

Economic data slowly started to flow again following the end of the government shutdown in mid-November, but December was a restart month with lagged data and missed releases leaving some blind spots. Overall, economic data continued to point to a slowing but still resilient expansion. Labor market indicators remained mixed, reflecting a continuation of low hires low fires environment, with no material deterioration evident as unemployment is registering only 4.4%. Inflation is trending at 2.7% reinforcing the disinflation narrative. The year-over-year rate of change has continued to moderate, even as the cumulative impact of inflation since 2022 remains a challenge for lower- and middle-income households.

U.S. GDP growth for the third quarter registered a strong upside surprise at 4.3% with consumer spending and AI investment the key drivers. Spending was concentrated in July/August and has been supported by higher-income cohorts and ongoing wealth effects, while interest-rate-sensitive sectors such as housing remained constrained by affordability pressures tied to elevated prices and mortgage rates. Business surveys presented a mixed picture, with services activity holding steady and manufacturing closer to stall speed.

Monetary policy remained a key focus in December with the FOMC delivering a third consecutive 25bps rate cut after restarting the easing campaign back in September. Fed communications throughout the month underscored internal debate around the appropriate pace of easing, balancing signs of labor market cooling against continued progress on inflation. Ever-present tariff tax policy was also in focus as the year concluded with a growing list of exemptions and exceptions and anticipation of an early January SCOTUS ruling on the constitutional legality of the executive branch's use of IEEP to apply the levies. Fiscal policy was predictably quiet into year-end, though longer-term discussions around deficits, debt sustainability, and the fading impulse from prior fiscal support continued to frame the broader policy backdrop. As we begin the new year, a look back at 2025 reminds investors what markets tend to focus on as they looked right past a redux of 1930's style tariffs, a record long government shutdown, a continuation of significant federal deficit spending, and ample geopolitical flares, instead latching into booming AI momentum, resilient GDP growth, accommodative policies, and robust corporate earnings.

Quote of the Month

"There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen"

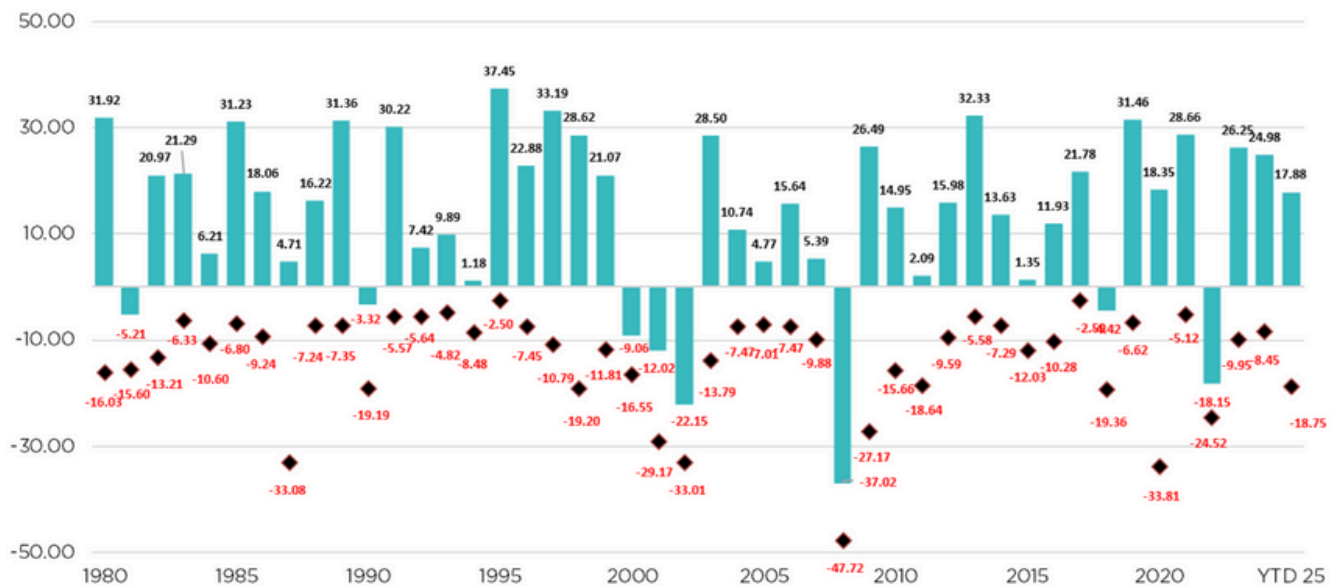
Color Coded Key	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	YTD
Alerian MLP	4.2	7.2	14.6	-14.2	7.9	18.4	14.8	-26.8	26.6	24.4	17.9	34.4
Bloomberg US Agg Bond	1.4	12.0	-6.5	-13.4	8.7	16.8	-2.2	30.9	-7.9	25.0	9.8	31.9
Bloomberg US Treasury US TIPS	0.5	9.9	7.5	-8.9	5.9	-7.9	28.7	-18.1	13.0	18.0	22.9	22.9
Bloomberg Commodity	-4.4	2.6	21.8	-4.4	8.4	20.0	19.0	16.1	13.5	4.3	12.8	17.9
Markit iBoxx USD Levged Loan	-32.6	1.5	1.7	-11.0	5.3	8.3	6.0	-18.0	3.9	11.5	2.7	15.8
FTSE WGBI	1.3	10.1	37.8	-1.8	14.4	18.7	-9.7	-20.4	5.5	9.1	5.0	12.8
FTSE WGBI NonUSD	-1.4	8.5	8.2	-0.8	31.5	6.5	11.8	-11.8	9.1	8.8	34.4	11.1
ICE BofA US High Yield	-1.8	4.7	3.3	-2.5	13.1	6.2	-7.0	-14.0	18.9	8.2	8.5	9.8
Bloomberg EM USD Aggregate	-1.0	21.3	4.2	-4.8	27.3	11.0	-1.7	-1.3	26.3	6.6	15.8	8.5
MSCI ACWI	-4.6	1.6	24.6	-2.3	25.8	7.5	-1.5	-11.2	22.8	8.1	11.1	8.5
MSCI EAFE	-5.5	11.6	10.3	-1.3	6.6	-28.7	27.1	-19.7	16.9	-2.9	7.3	7.5
MSCI EM	-3.6	17.5	3.0	0.0	25.5	2.3	5.4	-13.0	5.2	-5.3	31.9	7.3
Russell 2000	-14.6	1.8	3.5	0.3	7.7	-3.1	5.1	-15.3	10.3	1.3	7.0	7.0
S&P 500	-24.7	18.3	25.6	-12.4	18.9	10.8	40.2	-22.1	16.1	5.4	8.5	5.0
Wilshire US REIT	-0.4	11.8	7.5	-11.2	22.7	10.1	46.2	-18.3	5.8	1.8	7.5	2.7

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	YTD
S&P 500 Communication Services	-4.8	-2.7	-1.3	-14.7	26.3	23.6	24.4	-26.1	-7.1	40.2	33.6	33.6
S&P 500 Sec/Consumer Discretionary	4.7	6.0	-1.0	-0.3	20.8	43.9	34.5	65.7	-1.3	36.6	24.0	24.0
S&P 500 Sec/Consumer Staples	-2.5	22.8	21.8	-8.4	32.7	10.7	18.6	-37.0	26.3	30.6	19.4	19.4
S&P 500 Sec/Energy	6.9	5.4	22.2	0.8	27.9	-1.7	21.6	-10.5	0.5	30.1	17.9	17.9
S&P 500 Sec/Financials	5.9	13.8	21.0	-13.0	50.3	18.4	27.3	-28.2	2.1	25.0	16.0	16.0
S&P 500 Sec/Health Care	-21.1	27.4	22.1	-12.5	11.8	-33.7	54.6	1.6	55.8	23.4	15.0	15.0
S&P 500 Sec/Industrials	6.6	3.4	23.8	6.5	29.0	11.1	28.7	-18.1	18.1	17.5	14.6	14.6
S&P 500 Sec/Information Technology	-8.4	16.3	13.5	-2.2	29.4	20.7	35.0	-5.5	57.8	14.9	10.5	10.5
S&P 500 Sec/Materials	3.4	16.7	10.8	-18.1	24.6	13.4	46.2	-0.6	42.4	5.7	8.7	8.7
S&P 500 Sec/Real Estate	1.4	12.0	38.8	-13.3	27.6	33.3	21.1	-2.0	12.5	5.2	6.0	6.0
S&P 500 Sec/Utilities	10.1	18.9	23.0	4.1	32.1	0.5	17.7	-39.9	12.4	2.6	3.9	3.9
S&P 500	-1.5	23.5	12.1	-4.4	31.5	-2.2	26.1	-12.3	12.1	0.0	3.2	3.2

MARKET TIMING DOESN'T WORK

Intra-year S&P 500 Drawdowns with Annual Returns

Market volatility is normal and can be difficult to time. History shows that staying the course has been a successful investing strategy.



Source: Morningstar Direct, Standard & Poor's. Uses Total Return with daily closing prices.

Return Max Drawdown

MARKET TIMING DOESN'T WORK

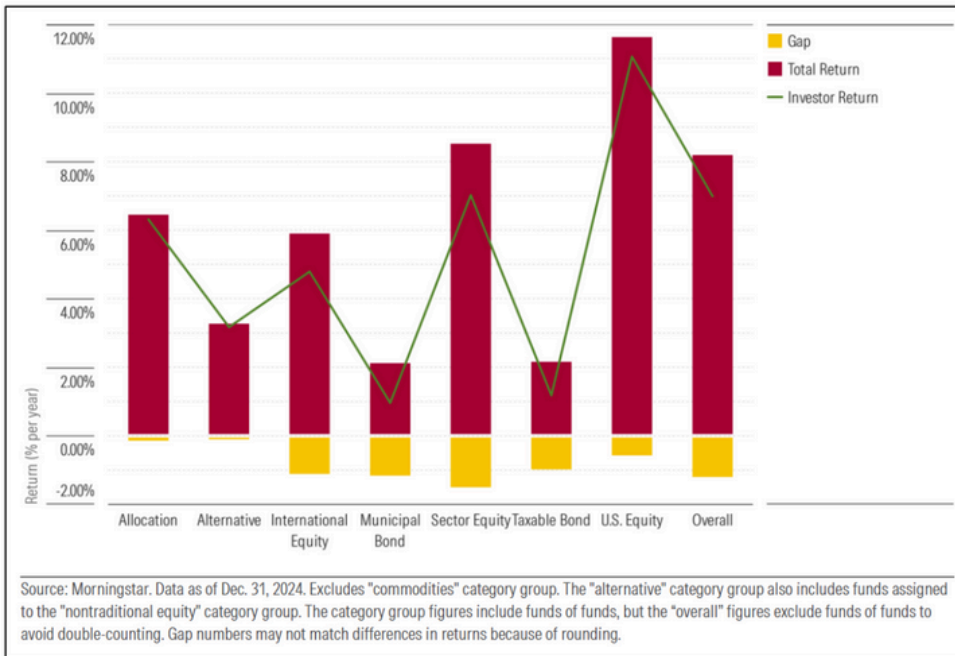


Exhibit 4 Annual Investor Return Gaps by US Category Group (10 Years Ended Dec. 31, 2024)

US Category Group	Investor Return	Total Return	Gap
Allocation	6.3%	6.5%	-0.1%
Alternative	3.2%	3.3%	-0.1%
International Equity	4.8%	5.9%	-1.1%
Municipal Bond	1.0%	2.1%	-1.2%
Sector Equity	7.0%	8.5%	-1.5%
Taxable Bond	1.2%	2.2%	-1.0%
U.S. Equity	11.1%	11.6%	-0.6%
Overall	7.0%	8.2%	-1.2%

Source: Morningstar

ABSENT A SHOCK, ECONOMIC EXPANSIONS TEND TO PERSIST

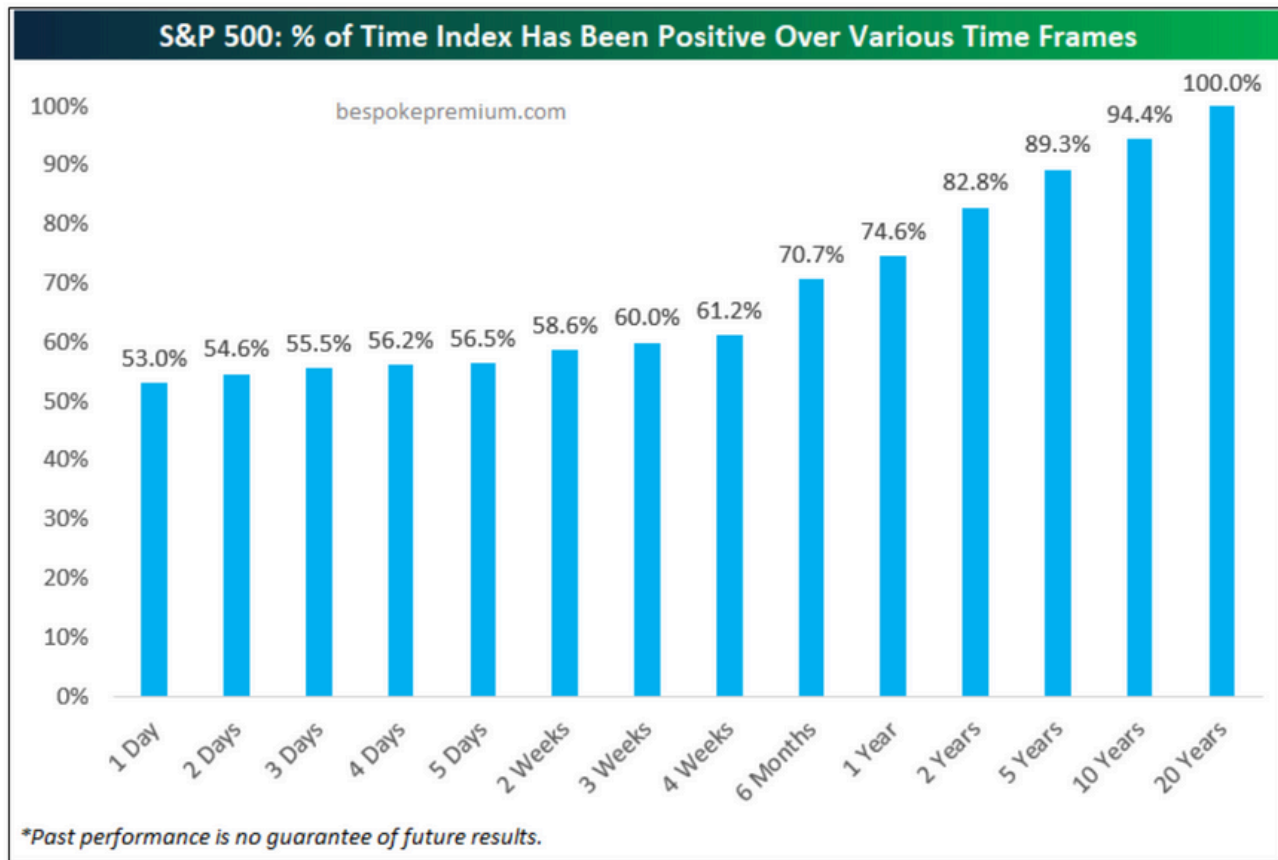
Economic expansions do not die of old age, they are murdered - Rudi Dornbusch

Post WW2 Recessions and Their Triggers

Stock Market Peak	Recession Start	Stock Peak Before Recession	Recession End	"Murder Weapon"
May 28, 1946	Feb 1945	-454	Oct 1945	Dramatic Drop in Military Spending (End of WW2)
Jun 18, 1948	Nov 1948	165	Oct 1949	Demobilization of the WW2 Economy
Jan 09, 1953	Jul 1953	203	May 1954	Dramatic Drop in Military Spending (End of Korean War)
Apr 06, 1956	Aug 1957	511	Apr 1958	Suez Crisis/Sputnik
Jan 08, 1960	Apr 1960	113	Feb 1961	Tight Monetary Policy
Dec 06, 1968	Dec 1969	390	Nov 1970	Vietnam War
Jan 12, 1973	Nov 1973	322	Mar 1975	Arab Oil Embargo
Sep 15, 1978	Jan 1980	503	Jul 1980	Highest Inflation of the Century
May 01, 1981	Jul 1981	91	Nov 1982	Punishing Interest Rates (15% 10-year)
Jul 20, 1990	Jul 1990	11	Mar 1991	Iraq Invades Kuwait (~200% rise in Crude Oil)
Jan 14, 2000	Mar 2001	442	Nov 2001	Tech Bubble Popping/September 11
Oct 09, 2007	Dec 2007	83	Jun 2009	Housing Crash/\$145 Crude (July 2008)
Feb 12, 2020	Feb 2020	17	Apr 2020	COVID-19
Average		184		

Source: Bianco Research

MARKET TIMING DOESN'T WORK



Source: Bespoke



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