

Risky asset allocation

How alternatives might fit into a portfolio

For professional/institutional/adviser use only

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An alternative investment is a financial asset that does not fit into the mainstream equity (corporate stocks), income (debt issued by corporations or governments) or cash (low-risk deposits) investment categories. In this paper, we examine the characteristics of alternatives to see what differentiates them from traditional assets, and importantly, consider how they could be integrated into portfolios for long-term investors.

To synthesise this topic we focus on two crucial questions:

1. Are alternative investments uncorrelated, low-beta strategies that dampen portfolio volatility and improve risk-adjusted returns¹?
2. Why consider alternatives given how well equities and bonds have been performing?

Characteristics of alternative investments

Alternative investments cover a broad spectrum of assets.

Generalising, we would say they are characterised by:

- Low correlation, and beta¹, to traditional investments such as equities and bonds. This can be due to non-traditional cash flows and funding profiles.
- Often complex investment structures and risk-return profiles that don't lend themselves to mean-variance analytical modelling¹.
- Typically, high minimum investment requirements and capacity constraints.
- Unique risk profile, including more esoteric assets that ideally require specialist knowledge and understanding before investing.
- Often illiquid or with a limited liquidity profile, reducing the ability to rebalance and manage the portfolio to a strategic asset allocation².
- Information asymmetry exists due to a small number of well-informed individuals or corporations and information can be limited before being broadly available.
- Trading impediments can exist including high transaction costs, taxes and non-standardised settlement.

Art (collectibles) case study

Collectibles, art in particular, is a relatively small and unregulated market where value is generally correlated with scarcity. Art as an investment is illiquid, lacks transparency and can have significant deviations in supply and demand. Accordingly, valuing art is an imprecise exercise and includes a significant level of subjectivity. Even experts can disagree on the authenticity of some of the most valuable items³ – this is the basis of an interesting 2021 movie *'The Lost Leonardo'*.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, storing collectibles can involve meaningful costs in addition to the transaction costs, commissions, auction premiums, expert advice and authentication. Art therefore tends not to be held directly within institutional portfolios, which require a custodian to ensure the safekeeping of assets.

Investors who may benefit from alternative investments

As a result of alternative investments' unique risk-return profiles, liquidity considerations and other complex investment characteristics, they are often most suitable for institutional investors. That said, given the aforementioned characteristics, it is important to consider the investment objectives – particularly the investment time-horizon and liquidity needs.

1. Please refer to the glossary for the definition.

2. Please refer to the appendix for an overview of the benefits and disadvantages of illiquid versus liquid assets.

3. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-16/is-the-450-million-salvator-mundi-leonardo-da-vinci-painting-a-fake>

Educational endowments are one investment group that tends to have significant alternative investment allocations. These institutions have long-term investment horizons and lower liquidity requirements. The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) shows that large endowments have almost 60% in alternatives, which has remained stable since the late 2000s⁴.

In 2020 the global equity market’s capitalisation was US\$106 trillion, while the global bond market was valued at US\$124 trillion; combining for an investable US\$230 trillion⁵. While the value of the alternatives industry set a new high, at US\$10 trillion⁶ it remains small compared to traditional investment markets.

As practitioners, we often consider alternative investments for portfolios

Alternative investments allow us to broaden the investment universe, increase diversification benefits, and thus maximise risk-adjusted returns⁷. These allocations are often illiquid, however, which changes the portfolio’s liquidity structure and may deter open-ended funds⁷ that require daily liquidity. Liquidity risk is one of the most critical, but least quantified, risk dimensions in portfolio construction⁸.

“In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice, while in practice, there is.”

Benjamin Brewster, industrialist and financier -
The Yale Literary Magazine

For this reason, we constrain this document to an examination of seven alternative asset categories that are broadly assessable and lend themselves to analytical modelling. These categories are described in the table below and the indices are available in the appendix.

| Asset class | Description and considerations |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Cryptocurrency | New decentralised, independent, digital currencies – including Bitcoin – with no institution controlling the network, which carries security and regulatory risks. For the purpose of this paper, we will use Bitcoin as a proxy for cryptocurrency to carry out our analysis. |
| Freight | Difficult to track as an investment and needs to have proxy exposure via listed companies, commodity producers, or commodities. |
| Timber and forestry | Provides environmental benefits, fuel source and used in construction, and can be accessed through listed companies. |
| Frontier equities | Frontier markets can have political instability, poor liquidity, inadequate regulation, substandard financial reporting and large currency fluctuations. |
| Distressed opportunities | Trade at discounts due to difficulties in assessing their value, lack of research coverage, or inability of traditional investors to continue holding them. |
| Fine wine | Has limited and falling supply and appreciates with age. Due to custody requirements, the investment would be in the listed wine and beverage industry. |
| Catastrophe bonds | Issued to provide capital capacity in the event of a natural catastrophe, which is difficult to predict and unrelated to economic cycles. |

For illustrative purposes only. Reference to the names of each asset mentioned in this communication is merely for explaining the investment strategy and First Sentier Investors does not necessarily maintain positions in such assets. Any asset mentioned in this presentation does not constitute any offer or inducement to enter into any investment activity nor is it a recommendation to purchase or sell any security.

4. <https://www.nacubo.org/Research/2021/Historic-Endowment-Study-Data> as at 31 January 2022.

5. <https://www.sifma.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CM-Fact-Book-2021-SIFMA.pdf> as at 31 January 2022.

6. <https://docs.preqin.com/reports/Preqin-Alternatives-in-2020-Report.pdf> as at 31 January 2022.

7. Please refer to glossary for the definition.

8. As Edwin Schooling Letter of the FCA stated “Where an open-ended fund offers daily redemptions, but a significant proportion of the assets in which the fund invests cannot be liquidated within a day without material loss of value, there is an asset-liability mismatch.” And “This asset-liability mismatch in the fund’s structure, and the first mover incentive, introduces a source of instability in the fund.” <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/speeches/open-ended-funds-investing-less-liquid-assets>

Historical return characteristics

The table below presents the historical returns, volatilities and correlation coefficients for several asset classes based on monthly returns since January 2013.

| Asset classes | Historical return | Historical volatility | Correlations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| | | | US Equities | World (ex US) Equities | MSCI World Small Cap | Emerging Markets Equities | Global Bonds | US TIPS | US High Yield | USD Cash | Bitcoin | Freight | Timber and Forestry | Frontier Equities | Distressed opportunities | Wine | Catastrophe Bonds |
| US Equities | 16.1% | 15.6% | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| World (ex US) Equities | 7.4% | 14.9% | 0.86 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MSCI World Small Cap | 12.0% | 17.8% | 0.92 | 0.89 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Emerging Markets Equities | 5.5% | 16.9% | 0.69 | 0.80 | 0.74 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Global Bonds | 3.2% | 2.9% | 0.09 | 0.08 | 0.06 | 0.14 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| US TIPS | 2.6% | 4.4% | 0.24 | 0.29 | 0.23 | 0.35 | 0.79 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | |
| US High Yield | 5.4% | 7.2% | 0.74 | 0.78 | 0.82 | 0.72 | 0.29 | 0.41 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| USD Cash | 0.9% | 0.3% | -0.08 | -0.08 | -0.11 | -0.02 | 0.16 | 0.09 | -0.03 | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| Bitcoin | 341.7% | 1305.0% | 0.09 | 0.07 | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0.07 | -0.05 | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| Freight | 67.1% | 178.2% | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.09 | 0.11 | -0.08 | 0.01 | 0.07 | -0.04 | 0.00 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| Timber and Forestry | 8.8% | 20.9% | 0.80 | 0.80 | 0.86 | 0.70 | 0.03 | 0.24 | 0.69 | -0.12 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 1.00 | | | | |
| Frontier Equities | 6.9% | 16.9% | 0.66 | 0.74 | 0.72 | 0.69 | 0.07 | 0.19 | 0.72 | -0.10 | 0.09 | 0.07 | 0.57 | 1.00 | | | |
| Distressed opportunities | 4.7% | 5.9% | 0.66 | 0.73 | 0.76 | 0.57 | -0.04 | 0.09 | 0.72 | -0.18 | 0.12 | 0.06 | 0.58 | 0.67 | 1.00 | | |
| Wine | 2.8% | 4.7% | 0.07 | 0.07 | 0.11 | 0.14 | 0.03 | 0.15 | 0.26 | -0.12 | -0.06 | 0.12 | 0.15 | 0.08 | 0.12 | 1.00 | |
| Catastrophe Bonds | 5.0% | 3.1% | 0.16 | 0.14 | 0.16 | 0.19 | 0.15 | 0.10 | 0.24 | -0.13 | 0.04 | 0.00 | 0.19 | 0.15 | 0.18 | 0.15 | 1.00 |

Source: First Sentier Investors, Bloomberg, Datastream. To be consistent across the historical data, we restrict data to the shortest history of the alternative assets, being Bitcoin, which is from 31 January 2013 to 31 January 2022.

Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

Over this period, freight and Bitcoin have had significantly higher returns than traditional assets, albeit with exceptionally high volatility. While these assets tend to have low correlations to traditional assets, the significant volatility means that they would only be appropriate as a small allocation within a portfolio.

Also noteworthy, fine wine typically has a low correlation with traditional assets. Although when compared with global bonds, it has higher volatility and a lower return. This underlines the benefit of global bonds as a particularly useful diversifier for

equity risk due to its low correlation, moderate return and low volatility.

To extend the picture for alternatives, we can examine their betas with traditional asset classes, such as US equities. Beta is a useful measure, as it explains the sensitivity to systematic market risks. The significant Bitcoin beta shows that it is strongly influenced by US equity risk, but the low correlation indicates that idiosyncratic factors are driving the returns.

The beta of alternative asset classes with US Equities⁹

| Asset class | Beta |
|--------------------------|------|
| Bitcoin | 7.74 |
| Freight | 0.72 |
| Timber and Forestry | 1.07 |
| Frontier Equities | 0.72 |
| Distressed opportunities | 0.25 |
| Wine | 0.02 |
| Catastrophe Bonds | 0.03 |

Source: First Sentier Investors, Bloomberg, Datastream as at 31 January 2022

The table also illustrates that timber and forestry, and frontier equities, which have betas closer to one and high correlations with equities, are largely driven by systematic risks and would be expected to deliver similar performance outcomes to US equities. They do not appear to be uncorrelated, low-beta strategies that can dampen portfolio volatility and improve risk-adjusted returns.

Expected asset class characteristics

To determine the expected asset class characteristics, we derive long-term statistical characteristics for the asset categories and the economic environment as a whole¹⁰. This modelling of expected characteristics lends itself more to traditional assets due to their economic linkages, whilst the modelling of alternative assets is less certain and contains a larger margin of error. Nonetheless, we use the same analytical tools and processes to determine their portfolio applicability.

To derive the expected returns for alternative assets we utilise the expected returns for traditional assets, such as US equities and global bonds, in combination with their historical characteristics¹¹. The expected returns for alternative assets are modelled through the historical beta with a traditional asset. This assumes that idiosyncratic factors will persist going forward and provides a framework to capture changes in market risk premiums using asset categories that we have a greater capacity to model.

We note that historical returns and volatilities for freight and Bitcoin are based on spot indices that cannot be implemented. Since the introduction of Bitcoin futures in December 2017, the pricing difference and roll costs have meant investors using the futures to gain exposure received a return 43% lower than the spot index¹². This is common in markets that experience contango¹³. As such we need to be cautious when looking at historical characteristics, and apply realistic reductions to ensure that the return capture is realistic¹⁴.

| Asset classes | Expected return | Expected volatility | Historical return | Historical volatility |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| US Equities | 4.8% | 15.6% | 16.1% | 15.6% |
| World (ex US) Equities | 4.5% | 14.9% | 7.4% | 14.9% |
| MSCI World Small Cap | 5.0% | 17.8% | 12.0% | 17.8% |
| Emerging Markets Equities | 4.0% | 16.9% | 5.5% | 16.9% |
| Global Bonds | 0.9% | 2.9% | 3.2% | 2.9% |
| US TIPS | 1.0% | 4.4% | 2.6% | 4.4% |
| US High Yield | 2.5% | 7.2% | 5.4% | 7.2% |
| USD Cash | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.9% | 0.3% |
| Bitcoin | 152.8% | 1305.0% | 341.7% | 1305.0% |
| Freight | 39.3% | 178.2% | 67.1% | 178.2% |
| Timber and Forestry | 1.8% | 20.9% | 8.8% | 20.9% |
| Frontier Equities | 4.5% | 16.9% | 6.9% | 16.9% |
| Distressed opportunities | 2.9% | 5.9% | 4.7% | 5.9% |
| Wine | 2.3% | 4.7% | 2.8% | 4.7% |
| Catastrophe Bonds | 4.7% | 3.1% | 5.0% | 3.1% |

Source: First Sentier Investors, Bloomberg, Datastream, Internal Proprietary Models. Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

9. The historical beta for an alternative asset a ($a=1, \dots, n$) and traditional asset t ($t=1, \dots, n$) is $\beta_{at} = \rho_{at} (\sigma_a / \sigma_t)$ where ρ_{at} is the correlation of the two returns, and σ_a and σ_t are the respective volatilities.
 10. For further information on the Long-Term Asset Return Model see First Sentier Investors. (2013). Strategic Asset Allocation.
 11. We use a one-factor regression: $\mu_a^e = \mu_a^h + \beta_{at}^e (\mu_t^e - \mu_t^h)$ where subscript a denotes an alternative asset ($a=1, \dots, n$), t for a traditional asset ($t=1, \dots, n$) while the superscript e denotes expected returns and h for historical returns. The traditional asset t is determined based on having the highest historical correlation with alternative asset a .
 12. Bitcoin futures were introduced in December 2017. The Bitcoin futures return is calculated using the Bloomberg futures roll methodology at expiry to minimise the amount of contango in the futures curve, thus maximising the return.
 13. Longer-dated futures or forwards have higher prices than the spot index.
 14. A reduction in the return of 40% is applied to the spot index for Bitcoin and freight to account for implementation slippage.

Portfolio optimisation and implied investment returns

We can also examine how alternatives would fit into an efficient mean-variance portfolio¹⁵ based on having a 60% allocation to growth assets. The portfolio included allocations to Bitcoin, freight, fine wine and catastrophe bonds, all of which have low correlations with equity market risk. The table also displays the corresponding risk weights, which shows each asset class’ contribution to the portfolio volatility.

| Risk weight distribution – 60% Growth | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Asset classes | Risk weights | Asset weights |
| US Equities | 30.7% | 34.4% |
| World (ex US) Equities | 16.9% | 20.6% |
| MSCI World Small Cap | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Emerging Markets Equities | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Global Bonds | 0.2% | 9.9% |
| US TIPS | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| US High Yield | 7.3% | 20.1% |
| USD Cash | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Bitcoin | 9.9% | 0.3% |
| Freight | 34.6% | 4.2% |
| Timber and Forestry | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Frontier Equities | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Distressed opportunities | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Wine | 0.0% | 0.5% |
| Catastrophe Bonds | 0.4% | 10.0% |

Implied Correlation: 0.17

Source: First Sentier Investors, Internal Proprietary Models as at 31 January 2022.

We can also take a reverse look at the asset allocation and determine the implied investment returns. With some simplifying assumptions¹⁶ we can determine what investors require in expected returns to hold a percentage of their portfolio in an asset category. Having 5% of the portfolio in Bitcoin, for example, funded from the US equities allocation, would imply a return above 515% and a return for US equities of less than 2%. If the numbers seem too high then the implication is that the allocation to the asset class is also too high. Conversely, if the implied expected returns are too low, it implies that the allocation to the asset class is too low as well.

| Implied Return Profile – 60% Growth (5% Bitcoin) | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Asset classes | Implied returns | Asset weights |
| US Equities | 1.9% | 24.7% |
| World (ex US) Equities | 1.7% | 20.6% |
| MSCI World Small Cap | 1.9% | 0.0% |
| Emerging Markets Equities | 1.6% | 0.0% |
| Global Bonds | 0.7% | 9.9% |
| US TIPS | 0.8% | 0.0% |
| US High Yield | 1.2% | 20.1% |
| USD Cash | 0.7% | 0.0% |
| Bitcoin | 515.3% | 5.0% |
| Freight | 9.2% | 4.2% |
| Timber and Forestry | 1.7% | 0.0% |
| Frontier Equities | 1.8% | 0.0% |
| Distressed opportunities | 1.1% | 0.0% |
| Wine | 0.7% | 0.5% |
| Catastrophe Bonds | 0.8% | 10.0% |

Total Implied Return: 27.3%

Source: First Sentier Investors, Internal Proprietary Models as at 31 January 2022.

Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

Key findings

We aimed to evaluate two questions:

1. Are alternative investments uncorrelated, low-beta strategies that dampen portfolio volatility and improve risk-adjusted returns?
2. Why consider alternatives given how well equities and bonds have been performing?

So far we have seen that there is a wide variation in the correlation and beta measures of the alternatives examined. Some alternative asset categories have high correlations and a high beta to the traditional growth asset of equities, thus providing little diversification and limited appeal for portfolios.

Asset classes with payoff profiles that differ from traditional assets such as Bitcoin, freight, fine wine and catastrophe bonds may be attractive for possible inclusion in an institutional portfolio, due to their ability to improve risk-adjusted performance outcomes through a combination of return engagement and/or diversification benefits.

15. We constrain the maximum asset weight of any single alternative investment to be 10% of the portfolio and the total allocation in alternatives to a maximum of 15%. Please refer to glossary for the definition.

16. Using an assumed Sharpe Ratio of 0.40 and risk-free rate of 0.70%. Please refer to glossary for the definition.

The performance of equities and bonds over long periods has been very attractive¹⁷ – equities and bonds have provided positive real returns, and bonds have diversified equity risk during large drawdowns. Going forward, however, with a lower expected return outlook and real bond yields in many countries being negative, buying sovereign fixed income and holding to maturity may result in negative real returns.

This has led investors to search for institutional-quality assets outside the traditional categories. There can be significant early adopter benefits, whereby the first institutions to find attractive investment opportunities should derive the greatest benefits, either in return or portfolio diversification. By the time alternative investments become mainstream, their return characteristics may be commensurate with traditional assets.

Bitcoin case study

There are now more than 16,000 cryptocurrencies worth more than US\$2 trillion in circulation¹⁸ and that number is rapidly growing. Bitcoin has become synonymous with cryptocurrency more broadly, being the first successful vehicle. Nonetheless, Bitcoin remains in its infancy compared to the traditional asset classes of shares, bonds, property and gold, and further lacks real-world demand and supply. As such, it remains difficult to draw any strong conclusions, but we explore some of the key areas below.

Cryptocurrencies have displayed significant volatility, they are not backed by a sovereign entity, and their value is not tied to any fundamental source, such as a stream of cash flows. Therefore, their appeal to investors may be due to the perceived lottery preference, possibly in combination with the potential for diversification.

Institutional acceptance of Bitcoin as an asset class is likely to be slowed by regulatory concerns, cybersecurity risks, immature investment and custody infrastructure, and substantial volatility. A further wrinkle is the depth of liquidity and ability to transact.

One of the recent advents for investors that desire exposure to Bitcoin has been the Chicago Mercantile Exchange creating Bitcoin futures in December 2017. These are based on the reference rate calculated from major Bitcoin exchanges. Bitcoin futures experience significant contango, which results in lower returns for investors, likely due to investors' desire to avoid managing security, storage and custody of Bitcoin. The futures contracts are currently the only manner¹⁹ for institutional investors to achieve access to the asset class, although liquidity and volume remain a concern.

"Few assets in financial history have been more fragile than Bitcoin."

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, mathematical, former option trader, and author - *Bitcoin, Currencies, and Fragility*.

Summary and conclusion

The holy grail of asset allocation is to find positively compounding real return assets that are negatively correlated. Historically, the pre-eminent asset classes to provide this outcome were equities and bonds. Going forward, achieving that outcome is likely to be a more difficult task. As the return outlook is uninspiring, we have explored a possible framework for the addition of alternative investments to portfolios.

Given the diversity of alternative investment strategies, it is not possible to unequivocally determine whether they may be suitable for a portfolio without a robust understanding of investors' return requirements, investment horizon, risk tolerance and liquidity needs. Nonetheless, it is clear based on the analysis of alternative assets in this paper that adding alternative assets to a portfolio of traditional assets could provide meaningful benefits in overall risk-return portfolio characteristics. We acknowledge these investments have idiosyncratic risks and operational requirements due to their highly bespoke nature and underlying illiquidity. Implementation considerations in achieving and managing an optimal exposure should therefore not be underestimated.

"The road less traveled will not be smooth."

– Megan McCafferty, author - *Second Helpings*.

17. See First Sentier Investors. (2022). Why Multi-Asset?

18. CoinMarketCap. "Cryptocurrencies." Accessed Jan. 14, 2022.

19. In October 2021 the SEC approved ProShares to offer the first Bitcoin futures ETF (BITO). No spot ETFs have been approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission at the time of writing.

Appendix

Comparing the benefits and disadvantages of liquid and illiquid asset categories

| | Benefits | Disadvantages |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Illiquid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control over the asset Lower volatility than comparable listed market investments Potential for higher levels of gearing Low correlation with equity markets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial minimum investment requirements Concentration risk of a single asset or limited number of assets that can be housed in a typical portfolio Illiquid nature of the investment Difficulty in determining an appropriate benchmark |
| Liquid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher liquidity than direct funds/direct investment Greater accessibility due to the lower minimum investment amount The ability to easily achieve diversified exposure to different regions, subsectors, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relatively high volatility of listed investments Higher correlation with equity markets |

Source: First Sentier Investors

Historical monthly characteristics

| Historical characteristics 108 monthly observations, Feb 2013 - Jan 2022 | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Asset classes | # months where r < -5% | # months where r < -2.5% | # months where r > 2.5% | # months where r > 5% | minimum monthly return | 5% worst monthly return | median monthly return | 5% best monthly return | maximum monthly return |
| US Equities | 7 | 16 | 37 | 13 | -12.4% | -6.2% | 1.9% | 7.0% | 12.8% |
| World (ex US) Equities | 7 | 20 | 38 | 12 | -14.0% | -5.1% | 0.9% | 6.6% | 15.4% |
| MSCI World Small Cap | 9 | 17 | 33 | 15 | -20.7% | -7.2% | 1.3% | 7.1% | 15.4% |
| Emerging Markets Equities | 11 | 28 | 34 | 16 | -15.4% | -6.8% | 0.7% | 8.1% | 13.3% |
| Global Bonds | | | | | -1.7% | -1.3% | 0.3% | 1.6% | 2.3% |
| US TIPS | | 2 | 3 | | -4.4% | -1.7% | 0.3% | 2.1% | 3.1% |
| US High Yield | 1 | 4 | 9 | | -12.3% | -2.2% | 0.5% | 3.8% | 4.7% |
| USD Cash | | | | | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| Bitcoin | 37 | 46 | 56 | 52 | -37.6% | -28.9% | 3.3% | 63.1% | 451.0% |
| Freight | 40 | 48 | 52 | 47 | -59.6% | -36.1% | 0.8% | 49.3% | 97.9% |
| Timber and Forestry | 11 | 28 | 38 | 18 | -16.5% | -8.6% | 1.2% | 10.0% | 15.5% |
| Frontier Equities | 9 | 22 | 36 | 13 | -21.0% | -6.7% | 1.1% | 6.4% | 14.0% |
| Distressed opportunities | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | -10.1% | -1.5% | 0.6% | 2.3% | 6.9% |
| Wine | | 1 | 7 | 1 | -3.2% | -1.7% | 0.3% | 2.7% | 5.4% |
| Catastrophe Bonds | 1 | 1 | | | -6.3% | -0.5% | 0.5% | 1.3% | 1.8% |

r = returns

Source: First Sentier Investors, Bloomberg, Datastream. To be consistent across the historical data, we restrict data to the shortest history of the alternative assets, being Bitcoin, which is from 31 January 2013 to 31 January 2022.

| Data sources | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Name | Description | Data Source | Identifier |
| Price Inflation US | US CPI, not seasonally adjusted | Refinitiv Datastream | USCP...F |
| GDP US | GDP US constant prices, seasonally adjusted | Refinitiv Datastream | USGDP...D |
| US Equities | S&P 500 Composite | Refinitiv Datastream | S&PCOMP(RI) |
| World (ex US) Equities | MSCI World ex US | Refinitiv Datastream | MSWXUS\$(MSRI) |
| MSCI World Small Cap | MSCI World Small Cap | Refinitiv Datastream | MSSWLD\$(RI) |
| Emerging Markets Equities | MSCI Emerging Markets | Refinitiv Datastream | MSEMKF\$(MSRI) |
| Global Bonds | Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index | Bloomberg | LEGATRUH Index |
| US TIPS | Bloomberg US Treasury Inflation Linked Securities | Refinitiv Datastream | 100+LHGRUST(IN) |
| US High Yield | CS High Yield Index II | Bloomberg | DLJHVAL Index |
| USD Cash | Barclays 3 month USD LIBOR | Bloomberg | BXIIU3MC Index |
| Bitcoin | Bitcoin in USD | Bloomberg | XBTUSD BGNL Curncy |
| Freight | Baltic Exchange Panamax Index | Refinitiv Datastream | BIFFEXI |
| Timber and Forestry | S&P Global Timber & Forestry | Refinitiv Datastream | SPGTAF\$ |
| Frontier Equities | S&P Frontier Broad Market Index (BMI) ex GCC | Refinitiv Datastream | IFFMFC\$(RI) |
| Distressed opportunities | Credit Suisse Hedge Distressed Index | Refinitiv Datastream | CSTDISH |
| Wine | Liv-ex Fine Wine 50 Index | Bloomberg | LXFW50 Index |
| Catastrophe Bonds | Swiss Re Global Catastrophe Bond Index | Bloomberg | SRGLTRR Index |

Source: First Sentier Investors

Glossary

Beta

Beta is a measure of how an asset moves, on average, when the overall market increases or decreases.

Volatility

Volatility refers to the standard deviation of the change in the value of a financial instrument. It is typically used as a metric to quantify risk.

Risk-adjusted returns

Risk-adjusted returns are a ratio that accounts for the level of risk associated with the return. An example of a risk-adjusted return is the Sharpe ratio.

Mean-variance analytical modelling

A mathematical framework for assembling a portfolio of assets such that the expected return is maximised for a given level of risk. The 'mean' refers to returns and 'variance' is used as a proxy for risk.

Open-ended funds

A fund of pooled investor money where units in the fund are created on application and cancelled on redemption. These units are priced based on their net asset value.

Efficient mean-variance portfolio

A portfolio is considered 'efficient' regarding mean-variance when the allocation to each asset maximises the expected return for a given level of risk.

Sharpe ratio

The Sharpe ratio gauges performance by measuring the excess return per unit of risk, characterising how well the portfolio's return compensates its investors for the risk taken. The higher a portfolio's Sharpe ratio, the better its risk-adjusted return. The ratio is calculated as: $SR = (\text{Expected portfolio return} - \text{Risk-free rate}) / \text{Portfolio standard deviation}$.

Important information

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