

# Newsletter

Winter 2026



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## Looking back; looking forward

For Canadian baseball fans, the autumn offered both unity and nostalgia. Three decades after Joe Carter's iconic home run, many hoped for a repeat of that 1993 magic, but we'll have to wait a little longer. Still, it's worth reflecting on how much the world has changed since then. In some ways, it's a "Back to the Future" moment: what if we could travel back 30 years and shape what was to come?

For many, it's hard to imagine life without a smartphone or internet access. Yet in 1993, the digital age was just beginning. The "World Wide Web" was unknown to most, with only 3 percent of the population ever online. Devices like the PalmPilot and software such as Windows 95 (without an internet browser!) were years away from release.<sup>1</sup> Just months later, in 1994, a young entrepreneur, Jeff Bezos, left his stable job to start Cadabra, an online bookstore run from his garage—a venture that would eventually become Amazon. Could anyone have imagined its trajectory then? In hindsight, it may seem obvious. At the time? Not at all.

The economic backdrop of that era carries echoes of today. In 1993, U.S. economic growth was steady and inflation relatively contained. Canada, however, faced steeper challenges: unemployment rose above 10 percent, and the Bank of Canada cut rates to stimulate activity. *The Wall Street Journal* derisively called our dollar the "northern peso," and branded Canada an "honorary member of the Third World."<sup>2</sup>

Fast-forward to today, and despite another strong year for equity markets in 2025, familiar challenges persist: lagging productivity, ongoing trade tensions and sluggish growth. While markets have advanced—in part, driven by a bifurcated "K-shaped" economy in which higher-income households supported overall activity—questions remain about what lies ahead. Yet history reminds us that progress is rarely linear. Markets and economies move in cycles, shaped by volatility and surprises; meaningful progress is often measured over decades, not years.

History also shows how unexpected shifts can be transformational. Canada's remarkable fiscal turnaround that began in 1995 bears repeating: Under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, debt shrank from 68 percent of GDP in 1995/96 to 29 percent by 2008/09, with 11 straight years of budget surpluses. Our fiscal standing in the G7 climbed from second worst to first, ushering in what was known as a "payoff decade" of investment, job creation and growth.<sup>2</sup>

Notably, after Carter's home run in 1993, the S&P/TSX Composite Index opened at 4,155.7—a time marked by considerable economic uncertainty. In 2025, it surpassed 30,000. While few would have had the foresight to join Bezos in his garage, an investor who placed \$200,000 in the market back then would see it grow to over \$1.4 million today, without reinvested dividends. It's a reminder that broad opportunities often exist alongside bold ideas.

Indeed, we don't need a time machine to make sound choices. As in the past, future success is likely to favour those who recognize the opportunities, stay disciplined and continue to participate. While no one can predict what the next 30 years will bring, the only way to miss out on the progress is to stay on the sidelines. Here's to a new year ahead filled with resilience, participation, prosperity—and the next 33 years to come!

<sup>1</sup> <https://fastcompany.com/3053055/1995-the-year-everything-changed>

<sup>2</sup> <https://financialpost.com/uncategorized/lessons-from-canadas-basket-case-moment>

# You asked: Questions about lesser-known RRSP opportunities

Overall Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) participation has fallen since the start of the millennium, from 29.1 percent of taxpayers to 21.7 percent in 2022. The good news? Higher-income earners remain engaged: In 2023, 66 percent of taxpayers earning \$200,000 to \$500,000 contributed, often fully maximizing contribution room.

Many people understand the basics of RRSPs, but here are three questions that highlight some lesser-known RRSP opportunities:

## 1. Can I hold the RRSP and the RRIF at the same time?

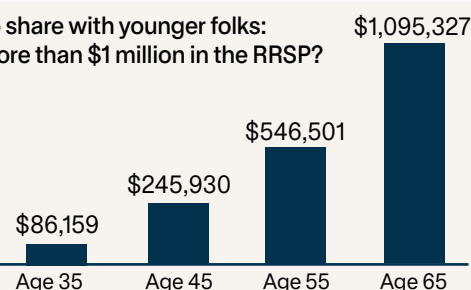
Yes. Investors typically convert funds to a Registered Retirement Income Fund (RRIF) on a tax-deferred basis once the RRSP needs to be wound down at age 71. However, there may be situations in which holding both makes sense. For example, if you want to generate pension income to take advantage of the federal pension income tax credit, you might open a small RRIF at age 65, while continuing to hold your RRSP until the end of the year in which you turn 71 to capture ongoing tax deductions.

## 2. What is the “forgotten” RRSP contribution at age 71?

In the year you turn 71, you must collapse your RRSP by December 31, after which no further contributions are allowed. Since contribution room is based on the previous year's earned income, working during the year may create additional room. Contributions made before year-end will create a temporary overcontribution, which may be offset by potential tax savings. For example, a \$20,000 overcontribution made in December will incur a 1 percent per month penalty, or \$200, but in January, it is no longer considered an overcontribution. At a 40 percent marginal tax rate, it could potentially provide \$8,000 in tax savings. **Don't forget: A lifetime \$2,000 overcontribution is permitted without penalty.**

**RRSP perspectives to share with younger folks:**  
**Can you retire with more than \$1 million in the RRSP?**

Consider the benefits of starting early: At age 25, Chris begins annual RRSP contributions of \$5,000.\* Here's how Chris' RRSP grows at a 5.5 percent annual rate of return.



\*Assumes RRSP contributions increase by 2.5% annually, in line with average inflation.

## 3. I plan to work past age 71. Should I consider a spousal RRSP?

If you have a spouse/common-law partner, a spousal RRSP allows you to contribute on behalf of your spouse while receiving a tax deduction based on your own RRSP limit. The spouse is the annuitant, so withdrawals are taxed as their income. This provides income-splitting opportunities if your spouse is in a lower tax bracket. If your spouse is younger and you work past 71, you can contribute until the end of the year they turn 71, allowing you to continue receiving tax deductions.

### 2026 Reminders: Tax-advantaged accounts

**RRSP deadline** — The deadline for RRSP contributions for the 2025 tax year is Monday, March 2, 2026.

**2026 TFSA dollar limit** — \$7,000, making the eligible lifetime contribution room \$109,000.

# Wealth perspectives: Canadians have never been wealthier

Recent statistics show that Canadians are wealthier than ever, with average household net worth reaching \$1.047 million in Q2 2025. Since 2019, average household net worth has grown by over 30 percent, with Millennials (\$634,435) and Gen X (\$1.33 million) seeing increases of over 10 percent since the start of 2024.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this, many of us don't feel wealthy. Wealth can be a slippery benchmark—it often feels like it's never quite enough. Rising living costs strain many, while constant connectivity makes some feel like they're falling behind the Joneses. Yet, it's worth remembering: being a millionaire puts you in the top 1.6 percent of global wealth holders.<sup>2</sup>

With that in mind, here are some perspectives on wealth creation:

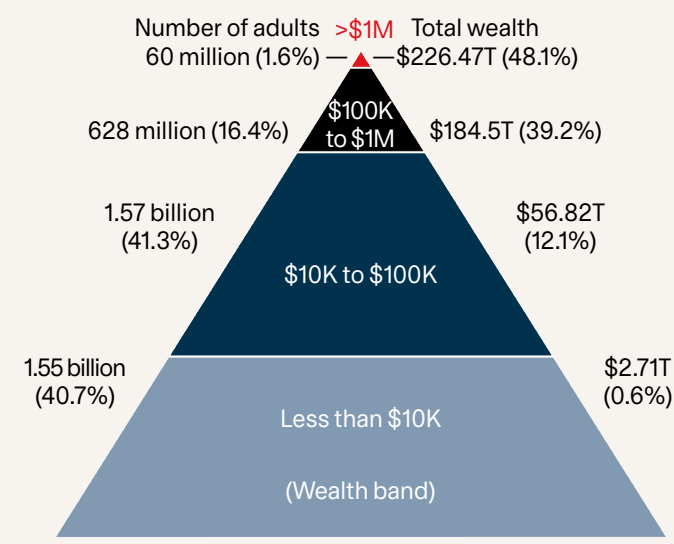
**Building wealth has less to do with income and more to do with savings.** Wealth is simply the accumulated difference between what you earn and what you spend. You don't need a high income to build wealth, but without a high savings rate, your chances are slim.

**Wealth is relative to your needs.** People require vastly different amounts to get by each month. A dollar saved means something very different depending on one's location, lifestyle and priorities.

**Time is a great ally.** Starting early can make a meaningful difference. Consider two investors earning an annual return of five percent. A 25-year-old who invests \$500 per month for 20 years (\$120,000 total) and then stops contributions could see their savings grow to roughly \$550,000 by age 65. A 45-year-old would need to invest \$1,350 per month—\$324,000 total, or 2.7 times more—to achieve a similar outcome by 65.

One of the lessons we've learned from our time in the industry is that the principles of successful wealth creation are timeless. Wealth comes from choices, not chances: choosing to save wisely and pay yourself first, living within your means and having a plan focused on quality, diversification and discipline—with the patience to let it work for you over the long run.

## The global wealth pyramid (in USD)<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610066001>

<sup>2</sup> In USD. <https://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealthmanagement/insights/global-wealth-report.html>



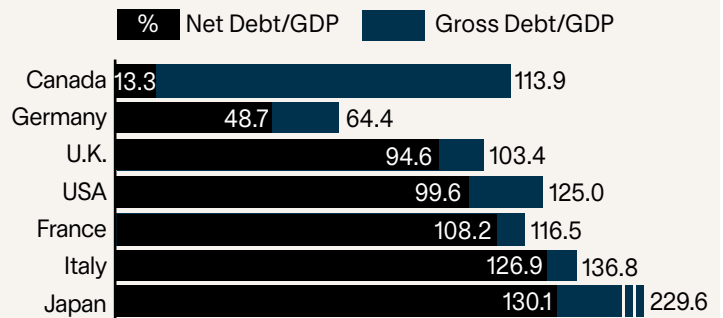
## In brief: Highlights from the 2025 federal budget

Delivered in November instead of the spring, this year's federal budget, described as "generational," projects a \$78.3 billion deficit in 2025-26, falling to \$57.9 billion by 2028-29, and adding \$322 billion of debt over the period. The increase comes from \$450 billion in new spending, directed toward infrastructure, competitiveness and defense. Public debt charges are expected to rise by \$22.7 billion. By 2030, Canada will spend an estimated \$1.46 billion per week on interest payments.<sup>1</sup>

No changes were made to federal personal or corporate tax rates. The budget confirms the middle-class tax cut, reducing the lowest personal income tax rate from 15 percent to 14.5 percent in 2025, and 14 percent thereafter. Here are notable proposed personal income tax measures:

- **Top-up tax credit.** This effectively maintains the 15 percent rate for non-refundable tax credits claimed on amounts in excess of the first tax bracket threshold to prevent taxpayers from facing higher tax liability under the lower bracket rate for 2025 to 2030 tax years.
- **Personal support worker (PSW) tax credit.** Introduces a temporary five-year refundable tax credit for eligible PSWs working in approved facilities equal to 5 percent of eligible earnings, up to \$1,100 annually (not including workers in BC, NWT, NFLD, as separate bilateral agreements exist).
- **Trusts & 21-year rule.** Broadens anti-avoidance provisions for certain transactions involving trusts that aim to sidestep the 21-year deemed disposition rules.
- **Bare trust reporting deferral.** Defers bare trust reporting requirements to taxation years ending after December 30, 2026.

### G7: General Government Net & Gross Debt-to-GDP Ratio, 2025



The budget highlighted Canada as having the lowest net-debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Gross debt tells a different story. Net debt subtracts government assets like cash reserves, foreign exchange funds and the Canada/Quebec Pension Plans, with assets over \$700 billion, though assets belong to contributors, not the government.

- **Canadian entrepreneurs' incentive: Cancelled.** Confirms that this incentive, announced as part of Budget 2024, will not proceed.
- **Luxury tax changes.** Eliminates the luxury tax on aircraft and boats after November 4, 2025, but retains the tax on automobiles.
- **Underused housing tax: Repealed.** Effective calendar year 2025.
- **Registered plans: Small business investments.** Starting in 2027, extends certain investments in specified small businesses to RDSPs; investments in shares of eligible corporations and interests in small business investment limited partnerships/investment trusts will no longer be qualified investments for registered plans.

For more information, please see: <https://budget.canada.ca/>

<sup>1</sup> <https://financialpost.com/news/good-bad-and-ugly-canada-budget-2025> - Please note: At the time of writing, these measures have not been enacted into law.



# The K-shaped economy: Where are markets headed in 2026?

Welcome to the K-shaped economy, defined by a bifurcation in economic sentiment and outcomes. The letter “K” captures the divergence: the upward-sloping arm represents higher-income households, supported by rising income and wealth, while the downward-sloping arm reflects low- and middle-income households facing stagnant wages, rising living costs and heavy debt burdens. In this two-speed economy, consumer segments and the businesses (or business lines) serving them are growing at different rates.

In the U.S., where consumer spending makes up over two-thirds of GDP, this bifurcation has implications. Higher-income households now drive much of the activity: in Q2 2025, the top 10 percent accounted for nearly half of all consumer spending. Economic resilience has grown more concentrated among the wealthy, who have benefited most from asset price gains. As a result, softer labour-market data in 2025 drew less concern, as the weakness was felt mainly by lower-income households, who had a limited impact on aggregate consumption.

Canada’s picture is more nuanced. Household spending remained resilient in 2025 but was challenged by heightened trade uncertainty, slower population growth and a cooling labour market. While U.S. tariffs have weighed on exports and jobs in affected industries, substantial new spending announced in the Federal Budget is expected to offset some of these pressures.

## What lies ahead for economies and the markets?

Looking to 2026, questions remain about the trajectory of economies and markets. In 2025, artificial intelligence (AI) was a key catalyst for market optimism. Debate persists around whether massive capital investments will deliver meaningful productivity gains, though some suggest expectations are already partly reflected in equity valuations. If consumer spending endures and investments begin to show real returns, markets are likely to continue discounting labour-market weakness, looking past the lower arm of the K.

At the same time, monetary stimulus from interest rate cuts in both Canada and the U.S., combined with tariff renegotiations and potential U.S. tax refunds, could help stabilize labour markets and support more exposed sectors. However, some argue that this same stimulus has further widened wealth inequality.

As equity markets reached new highs in 2025, many investors have asked: Are stock prices running ahead of fundamentals, or is there still room to grow?

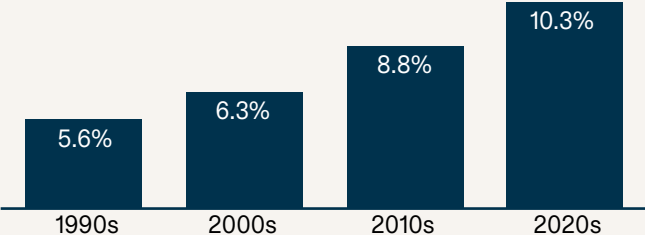
Market performance is influenced by many forces—government policies, geopolitical events, economic growth, inflation, interest

## S&P 500: Key drivers of stock market performance

Decade	Dividends	Earnings growth	P/E change	Annual returns
1970s	3.5%	9.9%	-7.5%	5.9%
1980s	5.2%	4.4%	7.7%	17.3%
1990s	3.2%	7.4%	7.2%	17.8%
2000s	1.2%	0.8%	-3.2%	-1.2%
2010s	2.0%	10.6%	1.0%	13.6%
2020s	1.5%	9.0%	3.9%	14.4%

Legendary investor John Bogle once suggested the key drivers of equity returns are dividend yield, earnings growth and speculative return or changes in valuations (the price/earnings (P/E) change). Source: “Don’t Count on It,” J. Bogle; <https://awealthofcommonsense.com/2025/10/animal-spirits-why-retail-is-outperforming/>

## S&P 500 average net income margin by decade



Source: <https://awealthofcommonsense.com/2025/09/why-is-the-stock-market-up-so-much-in-the-2020s/>

rates and even the headlines. But over the long run, corporate earnings remain a significant driver. Here, the story has been strong. U.S. corporate margins have risen, with the average S&P 500 net income margin now above 10 percent this decade, roughly double that of the 1990s. Canada has followed a similar trajectory, though aggregate corporate profits have been more sensitive to commodity prices.

Several tailwinds suggest that growth can continue: technological innovation, productivity improvements and resilient consumer demand all support sustained profitability. Still, history offers caution. In the 1970s, despite a decade of solid earnings growth (9.9%, chart), persistently high inflation and global energy shocks kept equity markets subdued. Even so, today’s strength in earnings remains a key foundation of market performance that shouldn’t be overlooked.

As advisors, we continue to navigate the evolving landscape. The K-shaped economy reinforces the value of time-tested principles—diversification, a focus on quality and disciplined risk management—as key to successful long-term wealth management in an increasingly uneven economic environment.



# Equity market perspectives: Will AI be different?

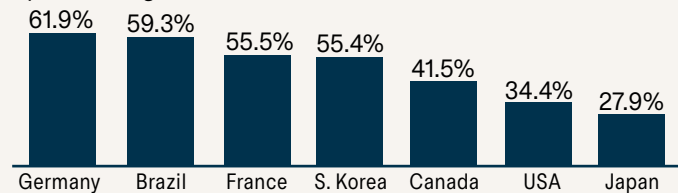
Mega-cap tech companies led the market higher in 2025, fuelled by significant capital expenditures—reportedly over \$1.2 trillion by S&P 500 companies.<sup>1</sup> Nvidia became the first company to reach a \$5 trillion market capitalization—worth more than the GDP of every country except the U.S. and China, according to World Bank data. This has prompted many to ask: “Can AI deliver on its potential?”

The current enthusiasm reflects AI’s potential to boost efficiency and productivity across industries. History shows how transformative technology can be: over the past 35 years, advances in computing, the internet, mobile devices, apps and software have driven productivity gains. The chart (top) compares revenue per employee for select sectors in 1991 and today (inflation-adjusted). AI is also viewed as a platform for innovation. Unlike earlier technologies that improved efficiency in isolated areas, AI is enabling new ways to create, design and drive advances across many sectors.

While the mega-tech firms now account for more than one-third of total S&P 500 market capitalization, this concentration has left some investors nervous. Yet, equity market concentration is not unusual; it’s been a recurring feature throughout time. Globally,

## Comparing concentration risk around the globe

Top 10 holdings’ share as % of the Index

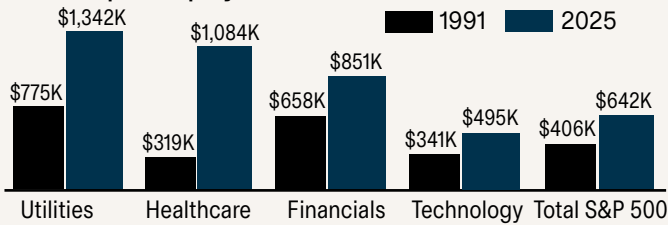


FactSet & MSCI indices (USD), 5/8/25; [www.bny.com/investments/fi/en/institutional/news-and-insights/chart-of-the-week/comparing-concentration-risk-around-the-globe.html](https://www.bny.com/investments/fi/en/institutional/news-and-insights/chart-of-the-week/comparing-concentration-risk-around-the-globe.html)

the largest companies command a significant share of the index, and the U.S. is no exception. In fact, markets worldwide—including Canada—show an even higher concentration of top 10 holdings than the U.S.

Some have compared the current tech rally to the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s. However, it’s worth remembering that today’s

## Revenue per employee, 1991 & 2025, select S&P 500 Sectors<sup>2</sup>



large tech firms are very different from the internet darlings of that era. They continue to deliver substantial earnings growth, generate significant cash flow and are well diversified, having acquired more than 800 companies while expanding across multiple industries. In many ways, they function as modern conglomerates of advanced technology—growing organically but supported by multiple engines of innovation.

As Bloomberg suggested: “They go by the Magnificent Seven, but act more like the Magnificent Seventy. Viewed this way, as dozens of companies within each, concerns about their record weighting in the S&P 500 miss the point: the index may still be as diversified as ever.”<sup>3</sup>

What does this mean for equity markets going forward? Taken together, the investment, innovation potential and diversification of today’s mega-caps may help put into perspective their elevated concentration—and the investor enthusiasm they continue to attract.

## Select magnificent seven companies’ acquisitions<sup>3</sup>

	IPO Year	# Acquisitions	Select Acquisitions
Amazon	1997	105	Whole Foods, MGM
Google	2004	270	YouTube, Wiz
Microsoft	1986	250	Activision, LinkedIn
Apple	1980	100	Siri, Beats
Meta	2012	95	Instagram, WhatsApp
Nvidia	1999	20	Mellanox, Bright Computing
Tesla	2010	6	Maxwell, Perbix

1 <https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/buybacks-take-backseat-ai-drives-record-us-capex-spending-2025-10-27/>

2 <https://ritholtz.com/2025/08/the-magnificent-493/>

3 <https://blinks.bloomberg.com/news/stories/ToMDB8GQ1YPV>





# New year’s investing resolutions: Focus on the long view

“There is no elevator to success—you have to take the stairs.”  
—Zig Ziglar

Success—whether in life or investing—rarely happens overnight. Some of the universe’s most impressive creations, from towering sequoias to majestic mountains, have resulted from gradual, patient growth. Investing follows a similar principle: discipline and consistency over an extended period can often produce meaningful results.

As we enter a new year, it’s worth reflecting on the quiet power of compounding. By maintaining a longer-term perspective and avoiding the distractions of short-term market noise or fluctuations, investors may be better positioned to navigate uncertainty.

Even modest returns, compounded over longer periods, can create impressive outcomes. Consider a one-time investment of \$100,000 left untouched:

Impact of time & rate of return on a \$100,000 investment			
	4.5%	5.0%	6.0%
30 Years	\$374,532	\$432,194	\$574,349
40 Years	\$581,636	\$703,999	\$1,028,572
50 Years	\$903,264	\$1,146,740	\$1,842,015

Time can have a powerful impact. Extending an investment horizon from 30 to 50 years can more than double and even triple the outcome at the same rate of return. Even a small increase in annual returns—just one percent—can make a substantial difference over decades.

## Building substantial wealth takes time

Accumulating significant wealth often takes a lifetime. This was the observation from *Forbes’ 2025 Annual Billionaires List*: “The numbers speak for themselves: Nearly three-quarters of the world’s billionaires are between the ages of 50 and 79. Just 12 percent are under 50.”<sup>1</sup>

The same long-term growth story applies to companies. Some of the world’s largest publicly-traded firms have achieved extraordinary valuations through growth over decades. Only 10 U.S. companies have surpassed a trillion-dollar market capitalization (defined as *share price X shares outstanding*), and none did so overnight.

Trillion dollar valuation: How many years did it take after IPO?				
U.S. public company	Year of origin <sup>1</sup>	IPO <sup>2</sup> year	Year \$1T reached	# Years after IPO
Meta (Facebook)	2004	2012	2021	9
Tesla	2003	2010	2021	11
Alphabet (Google)	1998	2004	2020	15
Amazon	1994	1997	2018	21
Nvidia	1993	1999	2023	24
Microsoft	1975	1986	2019	33
Apple	1976	1980	2018	38
Berkshire Hathaway	1955	1980	2024	44

1. Wikipedia  
2. Initial Public Offering date; [www.visualcapitalist.com/berkshire-hathaway-1-trillion-club-how-long/](http://www.visualcapitalist.com/berkshire-hathaway-1-trillion-club-how-long/)

Berkshire Hathaway exemplifies the power of patience. Warren Buffett first took control in 1965 when Berkshire was a struggling textile mill valued at around \$22 million. The company went public 15 years later, in 1980, but it took another 44 years to reach trillion-dollar status. Buffett attributes much of this long-term success to the power of compounding—profits were reinvested steadily, allowing Berkshire’s value to grow over decades.



## Looking ahead to 2026: A focus on the long view

After solid gains in equity markets over recent years, many investors have been asking where the equity markets are headed in 2026. Rather than worrying about short-term market moves, longer-term investors should not become overly preoccupied with what might happen tomorrow or even in the months ahead. A more prudent perspective is measured in years, or even decades.

As we turn the page into 2026, why not resolve to think with a longer-term view? Even retirees can plan with an approach spanning a decade or more, given our increasing longevity. Significant growth can occur during that time, and one of the best ways for investors to continue benefiting is to stay invested. Look ahead with confidence, and here’s to the growth yet to come. Happy New Year!

Note: This article is not intended to provide investment recommendations. It highlights the power of compounding and the patience needed to achieve meaningful growth.

# The end of an era: Final thoughts from CEO Warren Buffett

How do you want to be remembered? It's a question that runs through Warren Buffett's final letter as CEO of Berkshire Hathaway. In November, Buffett penned a farewell message that leaned more personal than financial—a reflective note marking the end of an incredible era.

He recounts the story of Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite and namesake of the Nobel Prizes. Nobel reportedly read his own obituary, mistakenly published after his brother's death. The headline referred to him as "the merchant of death," a man who had made it possible to kill more people faster than ever before. Horrified by how he was portrayed, Nobel resolved to change his legacy, using his wealth to create prizes that now honour the best of humanity.

Now, as Buffett "goes quiet—sort of,"<sup>1</sup> he leaves us with an invitation to pause and reflect on the same question: "Decide what you would like your obituary to say, and live the life to deserve it."

## Lessons in stewardship

As we begin a new year, Buffett's parting reflections may serve as useful reminders in wealth management—and in life. His final message centres on stewardship: planning so that what we have can endure, grow and benefit others.

**On time: It's finite.** At 95, Buffett acknowledges what many of us prefer not to contemplate—that time is limited: "Father Time now finds me more interesting as I age. And he is undefeated: for him, everyone ends up on his score card as 'wins.'" Still, he shares this reflection with characteristic optimism: "I'm happy to say I feel better about the second half of my life than the first. My advice? Don't beat yourself up over past mistakes—learn at least a little from them and move on. It's never too late to improve."

**On succession: Take the long view.** Like investing, succession planning involves patience, foresight and preparation. Buffett's transition has been years in the making. Greg Abel, a Berkshire veteran of almost three decades, was named his successor in 2021 after serving as Vice Chairman since 2018. In an interesting move, even after the transition, Buffett plans to retain a "significant amount" of his shares until shareholders gain confidence in Abel's leadership. It's a reminder that good succession planning isn't a moment—it's a process built on time, preparation and trust.

**On estate planning: Revisit, revise, repeat.** Buffett's own estate plans have evolved with time. While he pledged in 2006 to give away 99 percent of his wealth, he admits that both circumstances and objectives have shifted. His "unexpected longevity has had unavoidable consequences" for his family and philanthropic goals. With his three children now 72, 70 and 67—beyond the traditional retirement age—Buffett is accelerating lifetime gifts to their foundations so they can fulfill his philanthropic vision while they are still able. He reminds us that estate planning isn't static—it's a process that adjusts to time, family and purpose.

**On success: Defining a life well lived.** Indeed, the scale of Buffett's financial accomplishments cannot be overlooked. Over 60 years at Berkshire's helm, he transformed the company from a struggling textile mill into a global conglomerate holding company. He grew its value from around \$19 per share in 1965 to an extraordinary \$745,000 today—a gain of nearly 4,000,000 percent. In 2024, Berkshire surpassed a trillion-dollar market capitalization—the first U.S. non-tech firm to do so. Yet, Buffett distills success into something far simpler: "Greatness does not come about through accumulating great amounts of money, great amounts of publicity or great power in government. When you help someone in any thousands of ways, you help the world. Kindness is costless, but also priceless."

## A parting thought

As Buffett steps back from the spotlight, he closes this incredible era with a simple, human reminder:

**"Choose your heroes very carefully and then emulate them. You'll never be perfect, but you can always be better."**

To read Buffett's last letter as CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, please see: <https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/news/nov1025.pdf>

This material is copyrighted and used with permission by Warren Buffett. We are grateful for his support over many years in allowing us to publish his work.

<sup>1</sup> He will no longer write Berkshire's annual letter or speak at the annual meeting, but has promised to share his thoughts in an annual Thanksgiving message.

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