



Calendar year 2019 was replete with multiple financial concerns, most of which never came to pass: a distracting trade war with China; a Federal Reserve that flipped from rate-tightening to rate-easing; a global economic slowdown that could have been a drag on U.S. multinational firms. Instead, the S&P 500 soared, gaining +31.5% for 2019 (total return), its best year since 2013, and the 13th year in the last 25 years when the index produced at least a +15% gain (total return). The S&P 500 is up +10.6% per year over the last half century (1970-2019), having been positive in 15 of the last 17 years and in 40 of the last 50 years (source: BTN Research).

Taxable bonds were also up (using the Bloomberg Barclays U.S. Aggregate Bond Index as a proxy), gaining +8.7% for the year, its best result since 2002. Taxable bonds have gained an average of +5.9% annually for the last 30 years but significantly have only suffered down-years in 3 of the last 44 years, or just 7% of the time (source: Bloomberg).

The spread between “the number of births” and the “number of deaths” in America each year is getting smaller (now less than 1 million) as the number of babies born in the U.S. continues to fall. Between 7/01/18 and 7/01/19, the Census Bureau estimated that the US population grew from 326.7 million to 328.2 million, an increase of just +0.48%, i.e., less than ½ of 1% growth rate between 2018-2019. That’s the lowest year-over-year growth rate in the United States since 1918 or 101 years earlier (source: Census Bureau).

Notable Numbers for the Week:

1. **UP vs. DOWN** - The split between “up” and “down” trading days for the S&P 500 over the **last 50 years** (i.e., 1970-2019, encompassing a total of 12,613 trading days) is **53% “up” and 47% “down.”** The split during calendar year 2019 (there were 252 trading days last year) was **60/40** (source: BTN Research).
2. **TIME IN THE MARKET** - Since 1950 (i.e., 1950-2019), the **S&P 500 index** has been up **54%** of 17,613 trading days, **60%** of 840 months, **66%** of 280 quarters and **73%** of 70 years (source: BTN Research).
3. **LIVING LONG** - The **life expectancy at birth** of an American baby in 1970, i.e., 50 years ago, was **70.8 years**. The **life expectancy at birth** of an American baby today is **78.6 years**. Thus, life expectancy in the United States has **increased 7.8 years** over the last half century, i.e., American life expectancy at birth is increasing at the rate of **1 ½ years every decade** (source: Center for Disease Control).
4. **OIL PRICES** - The **price of oil** ended 2019 at **\$61.06 a barrel**, up +34% from its 2018 close of \$45.41 a barrel. Oil was **\$26.21 a barrel** as of 2/11/16 and was **\$147.27 a barrel** as of 7/11/08 (source: CME Group).

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