

SPIVA[®] After-Tax Scorecard: The Effect of Taxes on Indices and Active Funds

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Summary

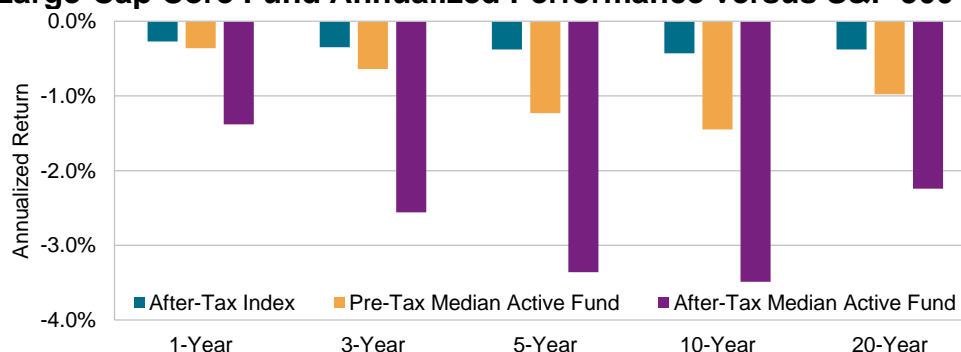
*“Should five per cent appear too small,
be thankful I don't take it all.”*

“Taxman”, George Harrison

Since 2002, S&P Dow Jones Indices has evaluated index versus active fund performance through the SPIVA Scorecards. In this report, we revisit the broad U.S. domestic equity categories with an additional layer of analysis, **comparing the putative after-tax performance of indices and active funds.**

The average cumulative effects of taxes on investor returns are summarized in Exhibit 1 for the Large-Cap Core fund category. After tax, the **median active fund trailed the S&P 500[®] over every time horizon, by up to 3.5% annually** (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: After-Tax Index, Median Pre-Tax, and Median After-Tax Large-Cap Core Fund Annualized Performance versus S&P 500



Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Chart is provided for illustrative purposes.

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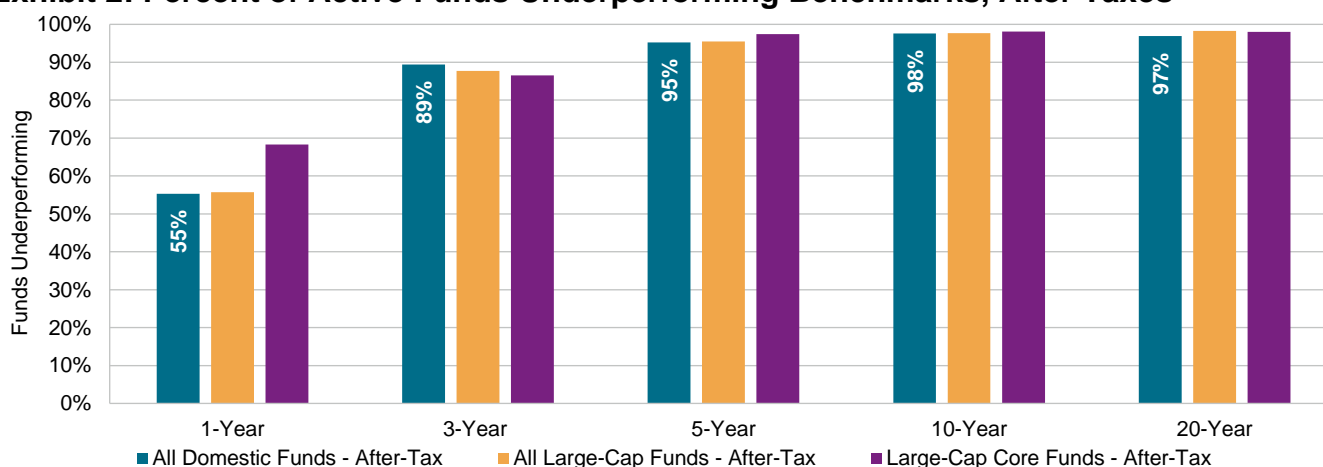
Introduction

A passive, capitalization-weighted approach to equities can require a counterintuitive degree of patience: stocks are never excluded from the S&P 500 just for being too expensive. Instead, stocks with market-beating price increases are—all else remaining equal—provided with increasing weights. This fact is often criticized by proponents of a more active approach, who point to their ability to sell overpriced securities when profit-taking is more prudent than passivity. However, 20 years of S&P Dow Jones Indices' [SPIVA Scorecards](#) collectively attest that the ability to consistently identify the right time to sell in order to “beat the market” is relatively rare.

But the difficulty of successful market timing and stock picking are not the *only* factors in favor of the patience encoded in indices like the S&P 500. Further grounds may be provided by considering that even the sale of long-held profitable positions can invite unwelcome tax consequences, while the gains from short-term trading activity are normally diminished by a yet higher tax rate. Accordingly, it might seem reasonable to conjecture that outperforming broad, capitalization-weighted indices might prove even harder after accounting for the tax consequences of active trading.

The existence of a common standard for reporting after-tax returns in U.S. mutual funds provides a way to test this conjecture and the motivation for this report, which extends the traditional SPIVA Scorecards to include after-tax comparisons for selected categories. Exhibit 2 highlights selected statistics from the later detail, confirming the relatively high long-term *after-tax* underperformance rates for actively managed U.S. domestic equity mutual funds.

Exhibit 2: Percent of Active Funds Underperforming Benchmarks, After Taxes



Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Chart is provided for illustrative purposes.

Methodology

To produce this scorecard, actively managed funds were selected and screened via the same sources and analytical engine underlying S&P Dow Jones Indices' SPIVA U.S. Scorecards, including the selection of fund share classes and assignment into fund categories. Accordingly, the funds represented in this report are precisely those whose aggregate pre-tax statistics were reported in the [SPIVA U.S. Year-End 2022 Scorecard](#), and whose pre-tax and gross-of-fee performances were examined in the [SPIVA Institutional Year-End 2022 Scorecard](#).

After-tax fund performance is calculated on a pre-liquidation basis using the highest historically applicable individual federal marginal income and capital gains tax rates in place at each point in time.¹ We rely on a convention established in 2001, when the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) introduced rules requiring fund managers to annually report after-tax performance using a standardized treatment for dividends, capital gains and other fund distributions.² We apply this methodology by multiplying the taxable distributions issued by actively managed U.S. equity mutual funds by $1-t$ (where t equals the relevant tax rate applicable to the distribution type at the date of distribution) before calculating performance assuming immediate reinvestment of the remaining amounts.

Seeking to make “apples to apples” comparisons, we apply an equivalent calculation to generate a hypothetical after-tax performance for each comparison benchmark. After-tax index performance is calculated using historically applicable qualified dividend tax rates applied to historical index dividends on a daily basis, assuming immediate reinvestment of the remaining amounts. State and local tax liabilities, alternative minimum tax or phaseouts of certain tax credits, exemptions, and other deductions are excluded.

While the traditional SPIVA Scorecard offers analysis on a wide range of fund categories and benchmarks, we strictly limit our analysis here to fund categories whose benchmarks are broad-based and market-capitalization weighted (and thus have a relatively low turnover by design). In particular, we only report statistics for those fund categories benchmarked to the S&P 500 or S&P Composite 1500® in the SPIVA U.S. Scorecard. Taxable distributions made by index funds tracking these benchmarks have not proved typically frequent or material, which allows for viable comparisons between active fund performances and after-tax benchmark returns calculated in this manner.³

¹ The top marginal income tax rate varied between 35.0% and 39.6%, and long-term capital gains rates varied between 15% and 20% over the 20-year period of analysis in this scorecard.

² This document calculates pre-liquidation performance only, in consideration of different individual tax scenarios. For more details on disclosure of after-tax mutual fund returns, see <https://www.sec.gov/rules/2001/09/disclosure-mutual-fund-after-tax-returns>.

³ Admittedly, it has historically proved possible for many index-linked funds and ETFs tracking benchmarks with higher turnover to limit their taxable distributions.

Analysis of After-Tax Returns

“Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”

Benjamin Franklin

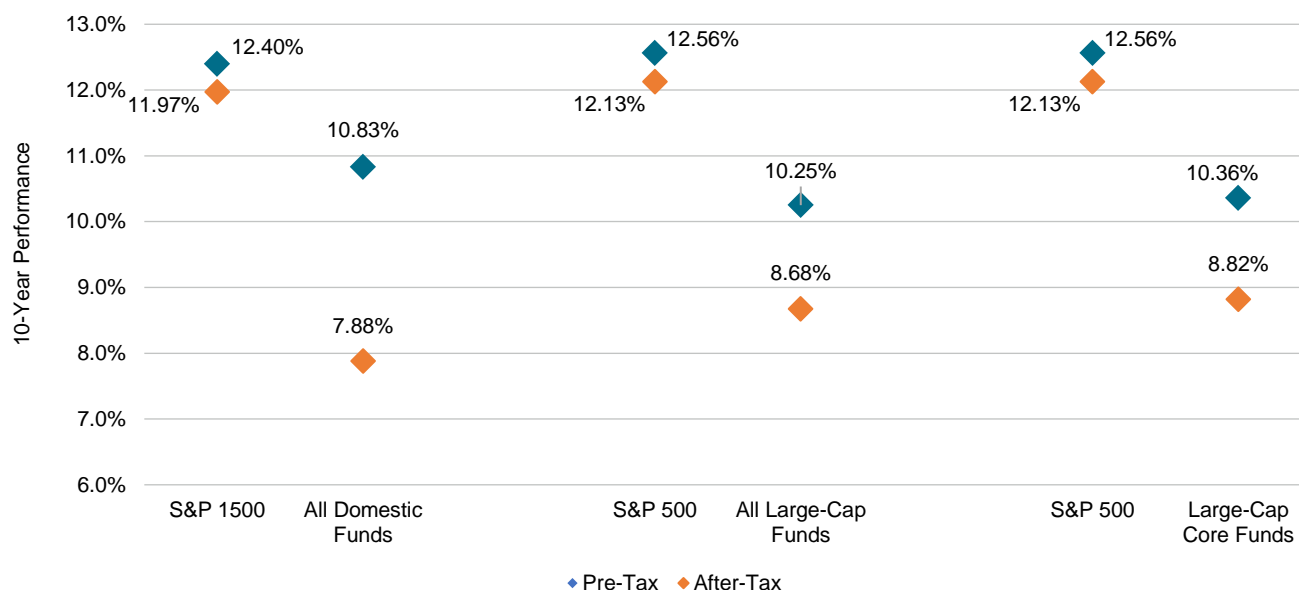
Over the 1-, 3-, 5-, 10-, 15- and 20-year periods studied, the added effect of taxes resulted in higher rates of active fund underperformance on an after-tax versus pre-tax basis. Exhibit 3 details the underperformance rates of actively managed funds, as compared to the pre-tax underperformance rates previously reported in the SPIVA U.S. Year-End 2022 Scorecard.

Exhibit 3: Percentage of Funds Underperforming Benchmarks Before and After Taxes

SPIVA Category	1-Year (%)	3-Year (%)	5-Year (%)	10-Year (%)	15-Year (%)	20-Year (%)
All Domestic Funds	50.29	78.69	88.01	93.14	93.95	92.14
All Domestic Funds - After-Tax	55.31	89.37	95.20	97.55	97.54	96.89
All Large-Cap Funds	51.08	74.27	86.51	91.41	93.40	94.79
All Large-Cap Funds - After-Tax	55.69	87.69	95.50	97.70	97.70	98.30
Large-Cap Core Funds	54.30	68.27	84.01	95.91	95.69	96.38
Large-Cap Core Funds - After-Tax	68.28	86.54	97.40	98.09	98.43	98.05

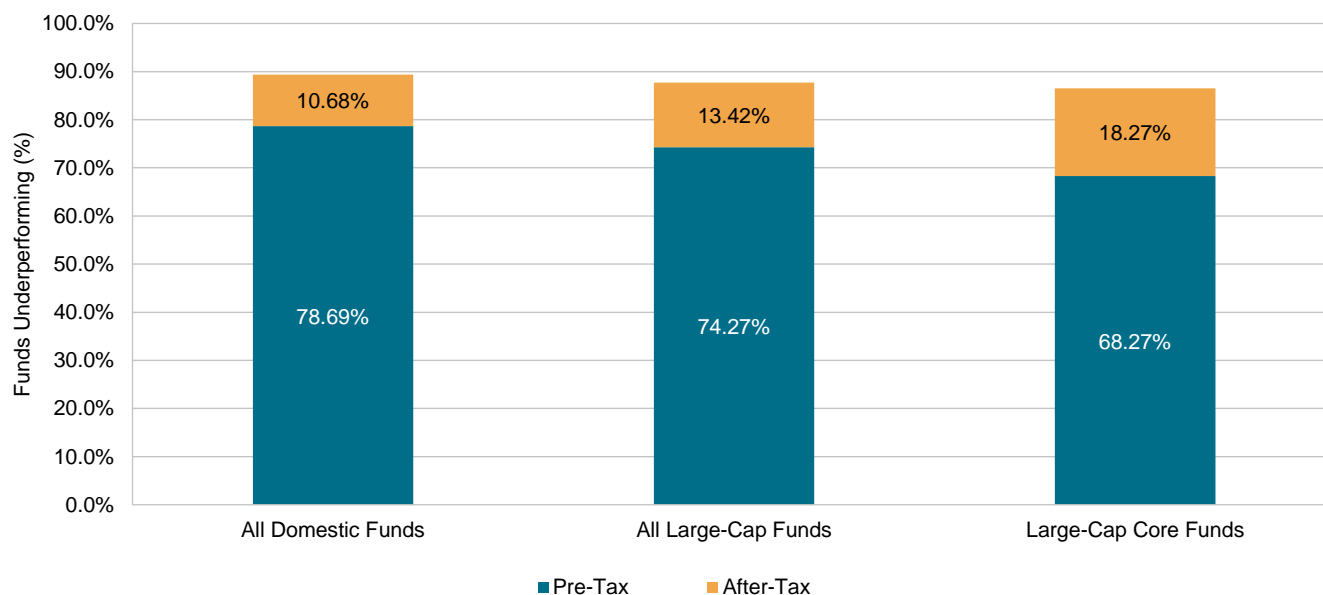
Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Table is provided for illustrative purposes.

There were also material differences in the degree to which adjusting for tax affected the average returns of actively managed funds and their benchmarks, respectively. Adjusting the S&P Composite 1500 and S&P 500 for tax resulted in a less than 0.5% annual impact over all the time periods studied, while, for example, the average after-tax 10-year annualized returns for All Domestic funds, All Large-Cap funds and Large-Cap Core funds lagged pre-tax averages by 2.9%, 1.6% and 1.5%, respectively. These figures are illustrated in Exhibit 4 (note these are *average* returns, whereas Exhibit 1 illustrated *median* excess returns).

Exhibit 4: Average Pre-Tax and After-Tax 10-Year Annualized Performance

Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Chart is provided for illustrative purposes.

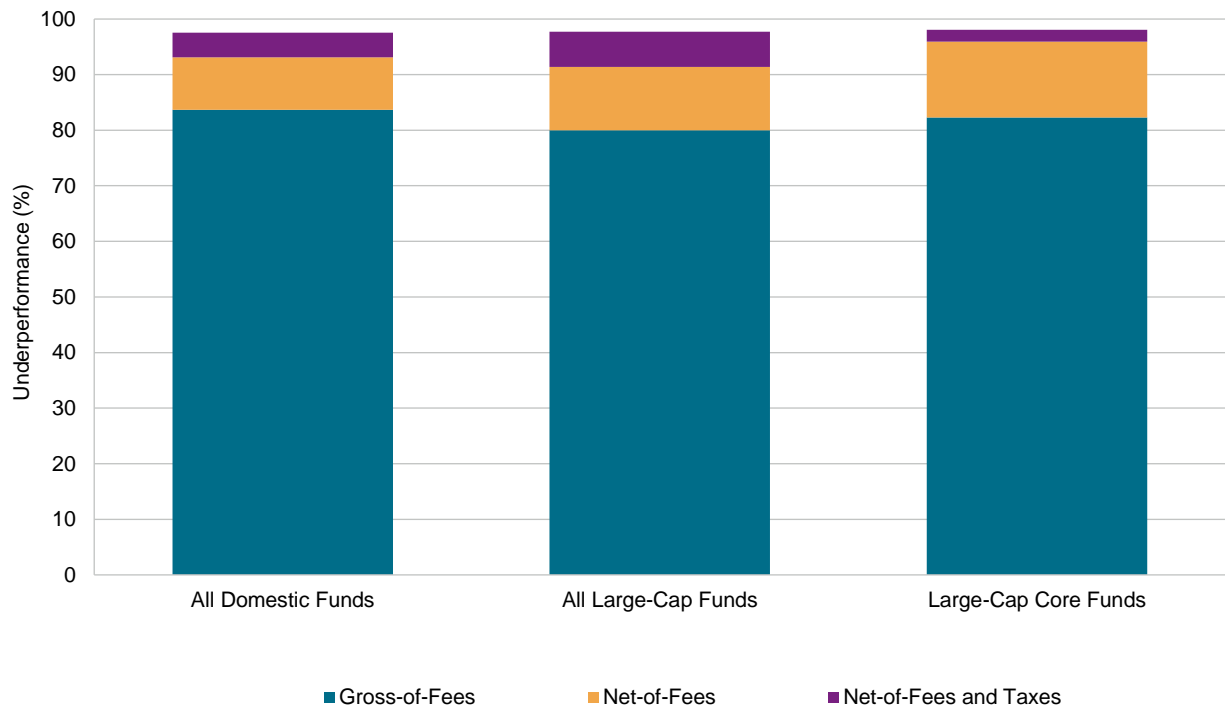
Looking more closely at differences in average pre-tax and after-tax underperformance rates over various periods, we find that the three-year period ending December 2022 exhibited the largest increases in active fund underperformance after adjusting for taxes (see Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5: Tax Impact on Three-Year Active Fund Underperformance Rates

Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Chart is provided for illustrative purposes.

Extending our results comparing pre- and after-tax underperformance rates, Exhibit 6 incorporates additional data from the [SPIVA Institutional Scorecard](#), which compares underperformance rates of actively managed funds both before- and after-fees. For the broad All Domestic equity category (versus the S&P Composite 1500), and the narrower All Large-Cap and Large-Cap Core categories (both versus the S&P 500), **Exhibit 6 summarizes the combined impact of active security selection, fees *and* taxes on the prospects for outperformance over a 10-year horizon.**

Exhibit 6: 10-Year Underperformance Rates



Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Includes data from Report 1, as well as Exhibit 6 in the SPIVA Institutional Year-End 2022 Scorecard. Gross- and net-of-fees underperformance rates as compared to total return indices in USD, net of fees and taxes underperformance calculated versus after-tax index performance. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Chart is provided for illustrative purposes.

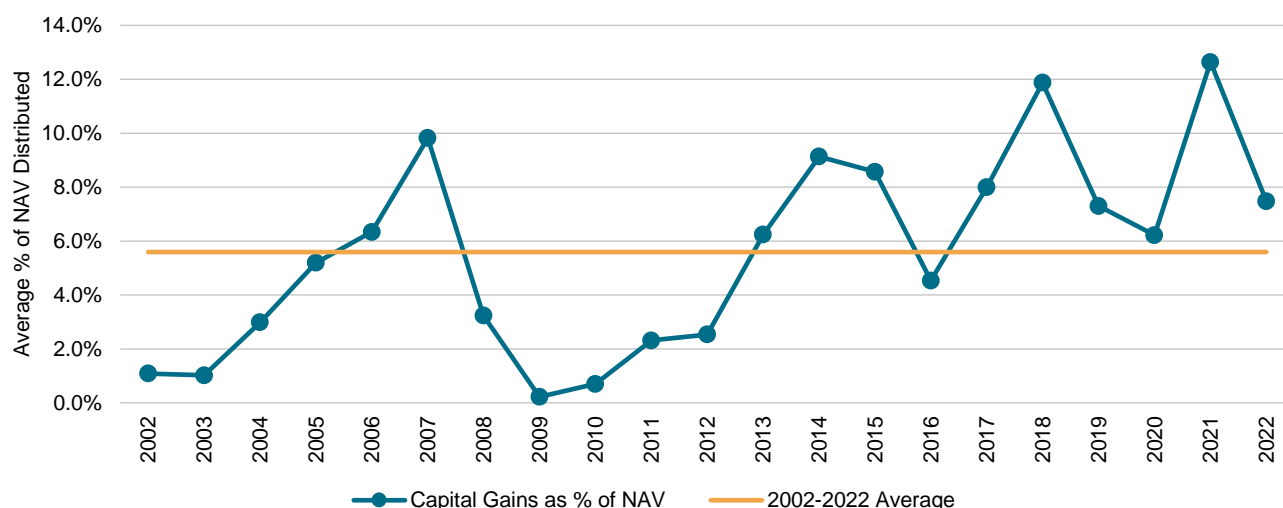
Drivers of After-Tax Performance Differentials

“The only difference between death and taxes is that death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets.”

Will Rogers

The most obvious potential attribution for the variations and differentials between pre-tax and after-tax performance of active funds is provided by the possibility that there were periods when active funds experienced increased turnover and accordingly generated greater taxable capital gains distributions, proportionately diminishing the after-tax returns. To illustrate the variation in capital gains over time, we sum each eligible fund's calendar-year capital gains and divide that total by the fund's average NAV value over the same period, before calculating the cross-sectional annual averages.⁴ The equal-weighted annual average of these distribution rates is shown in Exhibit 7 for funds in the All Domestic Funds category.

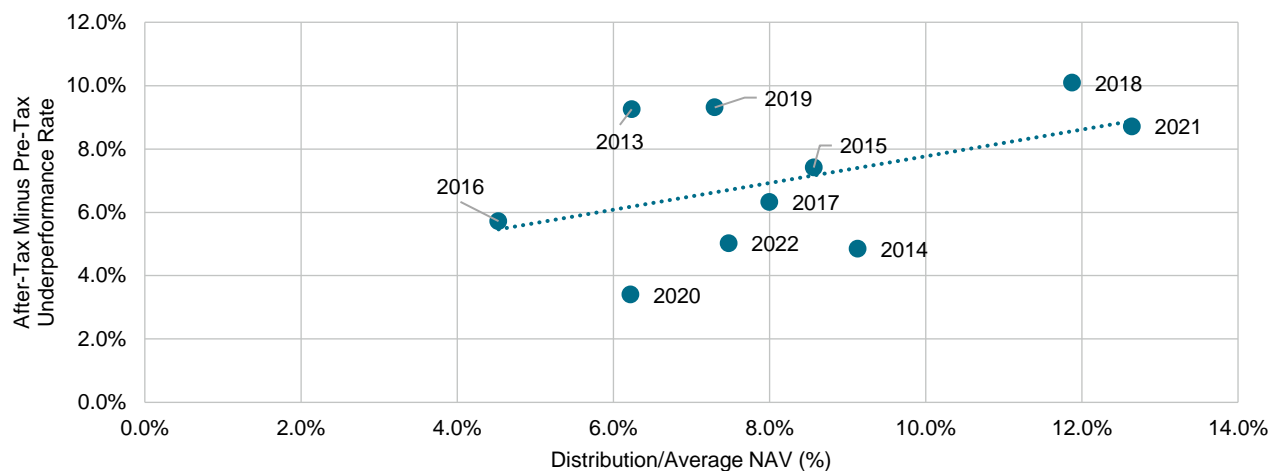
Exhibit 7: Average Ratio of Fund-Level Calendar Year Capital Gains versus NAV



Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Chart is provided for illustrative purposes.

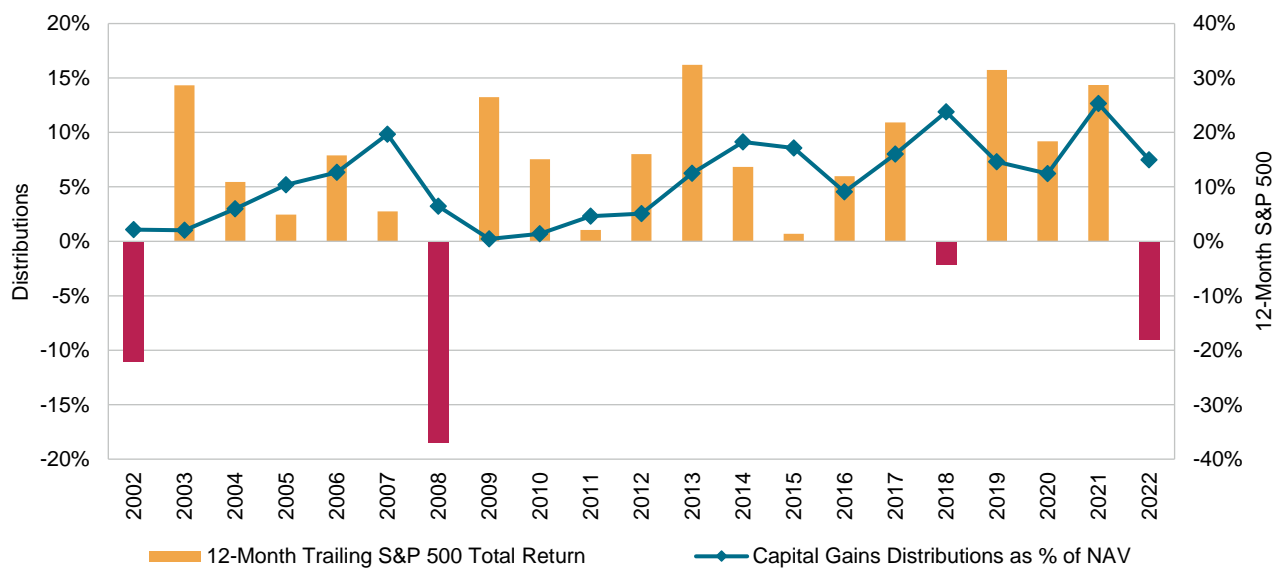
Exhibit 8 illustrates the connection between the rate of capital gains generation and after-tax active outperformance rates, by comparing the series of Exhibit 7 (on the x-axis) to the annual *difference* in before- and after-tax underperformance rates of actively managed funds (as usual, taken in comparison to the standard S&P 1500 and a tax-adjusted version of the index, respectively). The clustering of the series in the upper right quadrant of Exhibit 8 illustrates a **mild, but positive, association between higher fund distribution rates and a greater increase in underperformance rates after accounting for tax.**

⁴ “NAV” or Net Asset Value represents the U.S. dollar value per share of each share in the respective fund. Eligible funds include all active funds in the All Domestic Funds category that made a distribution in any calendar year from 2002 through 2022.

Exhibit 8: Capital Gains % of NAV and After-Tax versus Pre-Tax Underperformance Rates

Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Chart is provided for illustrative purposes.

If the disproportionate effect of tax-drag on active fund relative performance was not challenging enough, the typical *timing* of some capital gains distributions illustrates a particularly gloomy possibility for taxable investors. Over the past 20 years, the combination of falling markets and fund redemptions, often closely related, has **more than once forced active managers to realize gains and trigger tax bills for investors in years when fund owners were already reeling from performance declines**. As Exhibit 9 illustrates, a relatively high proportion of capital gains were distributed in years when the overall market declined.

Exhibit 9: Capital Gains % of NAV and Annual S&P 500 Performance

Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Chart is provided for illustrative purposes.

Conclusions

Over the past two decades, S&P DJI's SPIVA Scorecards have shed light on the chances of selecting outperforming funds both before and after fees. However, in part because individual circumstances differ, data on after-tax returns has been less widely available. The results presented in this new scorecard are a first step toward a more accurate reflection of the experiences of many investors, for whom taxes are an inevitable piece of the puzzle.

Even before taxes are considered, active managers operating in broad U.S. equity categories have found it difficult to match the returns of capitalization-weighted benchmarks like the S&P 500. Some were able to. But, even for an investor who can identify those few managers with market-beating potential,⁵ to participate in that outperformance, they must *also* hope that their eventual performance is not unduly diminished by taxes.

The results of this scorecard highlight that, at least in broad U.S. equities, and at least over the last 20 years, taxes would have made a considerable impact on the average returns of actively managed funds, and that the task of selecting an active fund that outperformed after tax would have been almost (if not completely) impossible.

⁵ Certainly, the endeavor of predicting which active funds will outperform based on past results has proven to be statistically daunting, as evidenced through the S&P DJI Persistence Scorecards. See for example: <https://www.spglobal.com/spdji/en/spiva/article/us-persistence-scorecard/>.

Reports

Report 1: Percentage of U.S. Equity Funds Underperforming Their Benchmarks (Based on Pre-Tax and After-Tax Absolute Return)

SPIVA Category	Comparison Index	1-Year (%)	3-Year (%)	5-Year (%)	10-Year (%)	15-Year (%)	20-Year (%)
All Domestic Funds	S&P Composite 1500	50.29	78.69	88.01	93.14	93.95	92.14
All Domestic Funds - After-Tax	S&P Composite 1500 - After-Tax	55.31	89.37	95.20	97.55	97.54	96.89
All Large-Cap Funds	S&P 500	51.08	74.27	86.51	91.41	93.40	94.79
All Large-Cap Funds - After-Tax	S&P 500 - After-Tax	55.69	87.69	95.50	97.70	97.70	98.30
Large-Cap Core Funds	S&P 500	54.30	68.27	84.01	95.91	95.69	96.38
Large-Cap Core Funds - After-Tax	S&P 500 - After-Tax	68.28	86.54	97.40	98.09	98.43	98.05

Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Table is provided for illustrative purposes.

Report 2: Average U.S. Equity Fund Performance (Equal-Weighted)

Category	1-Year (%)	3-Year (%)	5-Year (%)	10-Year (%)	20-Year (%)
S&P Composite 1500	-17.78	7.59	9.15	12.40	9.92
All Domestic Funds	-19.18	5.32	6.43	10.83	8.92
S&P Composite 1500 - After-Tax	-18.05	7.24	8.77	11.97	9.50
All Domestic Funds - After-Tax	-20.07	3.19	4.35	7.88	7.57
S&P 500	-18.11	7.66	9.42	12.56	9.80
All Large-Cap Funds	-19.59	5.81	7.27	10.25	8.16
S&P 500 - After-Tax	-18.38	7.31	9.04	12.13	9.42
All Large-Cap Funds - After-Tax	-20.29	3.92	5.25	8.68	7.44
S&P 500	-18.11	7.66	9.42	12.56	9.80
Large-Cap Core Funds	-18.01	6.58	7.65	10.36	8.28
S&P 500 - After-Tax	-18.38	7.31	9.04	12.13	9.42
Large-Cap Core Funds - After-Tax	-19.16	4.91	5.67	8.82	7.18

Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Returns shown are annualized for periods greater than one year. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Table is provided for illustrative purposes.

Report 3: Pre-Tax and After-Tax Quartile Breakpoints of U.S. Equity Funds

Fund Category	Third Quartile (%)	Second Quartile (%)	First Quartile (%)
1-Year			
All Domestic Funds Pre-Tax	-26.91	-17.53	-9.74
All Domestic Funds After-Tax	-28.14	-19.02	-11.11
All Large-Cap Funds Pre-Tax	-28.84	-18.20	-7.97
All Large-Cap Funds After-Tax	-30.38	-19.33	-9.34
Large-Cap Core Funds Pre-Tax	-20.13	-18.47	-16.28
Large-Cap-Core Funds After-Tax	-21.41	-19.49	-17.34
3-Year			
All Domestic Funds Pre-Tax	3.35	5.76	7.51
All Domestic Funds After-Tax	1.03	3.65	5.77
All Large-Cap Funds Pre-Tax	4.39	6.46	7.84
All Large-Cap Funds After-Tax	2.10	4.55	6.14
Large-Cap Core Funds Pre-Tax	5.57	7.02	8.36
Large-Cap-Core Funds After-Tax	3.65	5.10	6.76
5-Year			
All Domestic Funds Pre-Tax	4.96	6.90	8.34
All Domestic Funds After-Tax	2.57	4.61	6.46
All Large-Cap Funds Pre-Tax	6.44	7.73	8.88
All Large-Cap Funds After-Tax	3.98	5.61	7.02
Large-Cap Core Funds Pre-Tax	7.02	8.19	9.12
Large-Cap-Core Funds After-Tax	4.69	6.06	7.20
10-Year			
All Domestic Funds Pre-Tax	8.82	10.25	11.47
All Domestic Funds After-Tax	6.52	8.04	9.53
All Large-Cap Funds Pre-Tax	9.88	10.91	11.87
All Large-Cap Funds After-Tax	7.56	8.99	10.06
Large-Cap Core Funds Pre-Tax	10.21	11.11	11.79
Large-Cap-Core Funds After-Tax	7.81	9.07	10.14
20-Year			
All Domestic Funds Pre-Tax	8.27	9.12	9.89
All Domestic Funds After-Tax	6.77	7.67	8.57
All Large-Cap Funds Pre-Tax	8.16	8.82	9.53
All Large-Cap Funds After-Tax	6.78	7.62	8.34
Large-Cap Core Funds Pre-Tax	8.30	8.82	9.45
Large-Cap-Core Funds After-Tax	7.00	7.56	8.24

Sources: S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, CRSP. Data as of Dec. 31, 2022. Returns shown are annualized for periods greater than one year. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Table is provided for illustrative purposes.

Appendix A: Mapping

SPIVA Styles and Fund Classifications

The SPIVA After-Tax Scorecard covers select domestic equity. Fund returns are sourced from the CRSP Survivor-Bias-Free US Mutual Fund Database, a complete database of both active and liquidated or merged mutual funds created in 1995 and containing fund data from December 1961. Institutional-only funds as identified by CRSP are excluded.⁶ Fund classifications are based upon the Lipper fund classification system.

U.S. Equity

The SPIVA After-Tax Scorecard covers major capitalization levels (large-, mid-, small- and multi-cap funds) and investment styles (growth, core and value). S&P Dow Jones Indices relies on the Lipper fund classifications, which determine a fund portfolio's capitalization and investment style assignments.

Lipper assigns a market capitalization to each fund based on the percentages of a fund's three-year weighted equity assets that fall into each of Lipper's three defined market capitalization slices. The market capitalization breakpoints are calculated using all common stocks, excluding all non-U.S. domiciled stocks and ADRs, trading on the NYSE, AMEX and NASDAQ. Funds are assigned to the capitalization level in which they have a 75% or higher weighting. Any fund that has less than 75% of its three-year weighted allocation in any of the three market capitalization ranges is classified as a multi-cap fund.

For investment style selection, the Lipper classification system uses three-year fundamental portfolio characteristics (price/earnings, price/book and three-year sales-per-share growth) and, if necessary, confirms secondary characteristics (price-to-sales and price-to-operating cash flow).

⁶ For an analysis of institutional funds, please refer to the latest [SPIVA Institutional Scorecard](#).

Appendix B: Glossary

Percentage of Funds Underperforming the Index

To correct for survivorship bias, we use the opportunity set available at the beginning of the period as the denominator. We determine the count of funds that have survived and beat the index. We then report the index outperformance percentage.

Equal-Weighted Performance

Equal-weighted returns for a particular style category are determined by calculating a simple average return of all active managers in that category in a particular month.

Quartile Breakpoints

The p^{th} percentile for a set of data is the value that is greater than or equal to $p\%$ of the data but is less than or equal to $(100-p)\%$ of the data. In other words, it is a value that divides the data into two parts: the lower $p\%$ of the values and the upper $(100-p)\%$ of the values. The first quartile is the 75th percentile, the value separating the elements of a population into the lower 75% and the upper 25%. The second quartile is the 50th percentile and the third quartile is the 25th percentile.

Fees

The fund returns used are net of fees, excluding loads.

Indices⁷

A benchmark index provides an investment vehicle against which fund performance can be measured.

U.S. Equity

S&P 500

Widely regarded as the best single gauge of the U.S. equities market, this market-capitalization-weighted index includes a representative sample of 500 leading companies in the foremost industries of the U.S. economy and provides over 80% coverage of U.S. equities.

S&P Composite 1500

This is a broad, market-capitalization-weighted index of 1500 companies formed by combining the S&P 500, S&P MidCap 400 and S&P SmallCap 600. The index represents approximately 90% of U.S. equities.

⁷ For more information on S&P Dow Jones Indices, please visit www.spglobal.com/spdji.

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