Can Individual Investors Time Bubbles?

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Abstract

We document significant persistence in the ability of individual investors to time the stock market, including during periods that people describe as bubbles. Using data on all trades by individual Finnish investors over more than 14 years, we show that investors who successfully time the market in the first half of the sample are more likely to successfully time in the second half. We further show that investors who time the market during the run-up and crash around 2000 are more likely to time the run-up and crash around 2008. Our evidence suggests that it is possible to use the trading patterns of these smart investors to anticipate market movements, lending some credibility to the view that market bubbles are identifiable in real time.

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Introduction

We have learned a great deal about the behavior of individual investors over the past decade. We know they make lots of mistakes: trading too much, holding onto losers too long, buying stocks that appear in the news, trading with stale limit orders, and many other suboptimal behaviors.[1] However, we also know they learn with experience, that some individual investors can consistently pick stocks that outperform the market even after adjusting for risk, and that smarter investors have better performance.[2] In examining individual investor performance, the literature has focused on "stock picking" ability, while "market timing" has been largely ignored.[3] This is surprising given the large effects the ability to time the market can have on portfolio performance and the implications it has for the predictability of market returns. In this paper, we conduct a thorough examination of individual investors' market timing ability. We test whether some individuals are able to consistently time aggregate stock market movements, focusing on recent market crashes.

In both 2000 and 2008 stock markets declined substantially after experiencing several years of unusually high returns. Researchers debate whether these price movements are asset price bubbles.[4] A point of contention is whether or not the experienced crashes were predictable ex-ante. We look for evidence of performance persistence in the ability of individual investors to time the stock market in general and bubble periods in particular around these two crashes. Using Finnish data covering a fourteen and a half year period from 1995 to mid 2009, we find that individuals who time the market successfully in the first half of the sample are particularly likely to time successfully in the second half. We also find that individuals who successfully sell

[1] See Barber and Odean (2000), Odean (1998), Barber and Odean (2008), and Linnainmaa (2010).

[2] See, for example, Seru, Shumway and Stoffman (2010), Coval, Hirshleifer and Shumway (2012), Che Norli and Priestly (2009) and Grinblatt, Keloharju and Linnainmaa (2012).

[3] A number of recent papers test whether individuals as a group have any ability to forecast prices, finding evidence both for and against smart individual investors. See, for example, Dorn, Huberman and Sengmueller (2008), Hvidkjaer (2008), Kaniel, Saar and Titman (2008), Barber, Odean and Zhu (2009), Kaniel, Liu, Saar and Titman (2011) and Kelly and Tetlock (2013).

[4] See, for example, Brunnermeier and Nagel (2004), Hong and Stein (2007), Zeira (1999) and Pastor and Veronesi (2003).

before the 2000 crash are more likely than others to sell before the 2008 crash, and that those with particularly poor timing around the 2000 crash also time the 2008 crash poorly.

Successful market timing means taking more market risk when the market is going to rise. Timing is a very different investing strategy than stock picking, which means taking more stock-specific risk in stocks that are going to outperform the market. One reason to study whether individuals can time the market is to determine how much predictability there is in market returns. There is a large literature about market predictability (e.g. Goyal and Welch, 2008), but researchers still disagree about whether or not returns are truly predictable. If some individuals time the market consistently, there is clearly predictability in market returns. If all individuals fail to time the market successfully, it may be that the market is unpredictable, or it may be that the time-varying risk involved in timing strategies is a sufficient deterrent to individual investors. Whether there is substantial predictability during periods that appear to be asset price bubbles is of particular interest. If some individual investors can successfully time bubbles then recognizing and exploiting bubbles in real time cannot be extremely difficult.

Knowing whether some investors can time the market can also help us learn about whether the variation in investor ability documented in other studies is due to differences in skill or information. Consistently good stock picking performance might indicate investing skill, but it may also indicate access to superior information like local news, friends in the industry, or personal expertise. Successfully timing the market requires either skill or private information to predict the future of the macroeconomy. Since almost all information relevant to the macroeconomy is publicly available news, it is difficult to believe that a subset of investors has superior access to it. Showing that some investors are successful market timers implies that skill in interpreting public signals is an important determinant of active investing success.

Our approach is to measure timing performance in the first and second halves of the sample, and then to test whether timing performance has persistence, or whether performance is correlated across the sample halves. One important challenge in this exercise is identifying good measures of timing performance. This challenge is particularly daunting for us since we do not observe investors' entire wealth. To deal with this challenge we measure performance by correlating monthly flows into and out of investor stock portfolios with monthly cash returns on a Finnish stock index. Since correlations are restricted to vary from -1 to 1, calculating the correlations of an individuals′ flows with future market returns essentially adjusts each individual's monthly flows by the standard deviation of their flows, which is a proxy for their total wealth.

We find both economically and statistically significant persistence in market timing ability. We document timing performance persistence both during bubble periods and during periods of normal returns. The persistence we document is displayed broadly across different portions of the distribution of timing performance. It is also displayed by both successful timers and unsuccessful timers. Unsuccessful timers in the first half of the sample are quite likely to be unsuccessful in the second half. Successful timers in the first half are more likely to be successful timers in the second half. We find evidence for persistent timing in both monthly and quarterly measures, suggesting that the ability to persistently time the market is robust. The estimated persistence in market timing is similar to the amount of persistence in stock picking ability in our sample.

We next examine if the observed performance persistence is explained by investors using a simple strategy to time the market (e.g, buying into the market when past market returns are high and selling out when past market returns are low). We report the results of two sets of analyses. First, we sort investors into quintiles based on their first-half (1995-2002) timing performance and examine the correlation between quintile group flows and other market return predictors (dividend yield, earnings-price ratio and concurrent market returns) in the second half of our sample (2002-2009). In general, investor flows appear to be contrarian. The flows of good (top 20%) and bad (bottom 20%) timers are both positively correlated with valuation ratios and negatively correlated with concurrent market returns. We also examine the difference between the top and bottom timers' flows to capture the variation in flows due to timing ability. This difference is positively correlated with concurrent market returns and the earnings-price ratio, and negatively correlated with the dividend yield.

Second, we report the results of monthly market return predictability regressions which test if information in investor flows can significantly predict future market returns. We sort investors into quintiles based on their first period performance and examine return predictability in the second-half of our sample. We find that the standardized difference in group flows between the top and bottom 20% of investors can significantly predict future market returns. The success of the flow-based measure stands in stark contrast to the prediction power of the other variables. Only past market returns can significantly predict future market returns at the 10% level during this time period, while the valuation ratios are negatively and insignificantly related to future market returns. The magnitude and significance of the flow-based measure's coefficient is unaffected by controlling for the dividend yield, earnings-price ratio and past market returns. These results suggest that investor flows have more information about future market returns than commonly used economic variables.

We assess the economic significance of the observed market timing persistence by sorting investors into quintiles based on their first-half timing measure and examining performance across quintiles in the second-half of our sample period. First, we examine the average return of an investment strategy that invests the standardized group flow measure in each month t and earns the market return over the month t+1. The strategy based on the flow difference between the top 20% and bottom 20% earns an average annualized return of 17.74% compared to an average market return of 1.02% during this period. To adjust for total risk, we take the ratio of the strategy's average return to standard deviation. The ratio for the strategy based on the difference in flows between the top and bottom 20% is 0.85 compared to 0.05 for the market. These results are not necessarily surprising given the ability of group flows to forecast future returns. The persistent dispersion in market timing ability appears to be economically significant.

We examine what types of investors are better at market timing. We find that investors that trade in options, a proxy for sophistication, are better market timers. Middle-aged investors (from 46 to 64 years old) are also better timers. However, investors that live in a highly-educated zip code, those that trade more and those with greater average flow size are more likely to be worse timers. Consistent with investors capitalizing on their skill, we find that successful market timers invest in a larger number of different securities, they invest in securities with higher betas and they are less likely to trade in Nokia. We find little evidence that stock picking and market timing skills are correlated when measured during the same time period. In general, market timers seem more sophisticated than non-timers and they trade in a way to take advantage of their ability.

Shiller (2000) and Campbell and Viceira (2002) argue that individuals should be able to time the market. Dichev (2007) examines aggregate flows and finds that the dollar-weighted returns to investors are lower than buy-and-hold returns indicating that investors on average are poor market timers. We find supporting evidence that the average individual investor cannot time the market. Our main goal is to examine the cross-section of timing ability, not the average. Most analysis of the cross-section of market timing ability has examined returns on professionally managed funds. The overwhelming majority of these studies find little evidence of market timing.[5] However, Bollen and Busse (2001) and Mamaysky, Spiegel, and Zhang (2008) find some timing by professionals. Using holdings data Elton, Gruber, and Blake (2011) find evidence that fund managers' attempts to time usually result in low returns. Kacperczyk, Van Nieuwerburgh and Veldkamp (2013), however, examine the holdings of fund managers and find that managers have some ability to time the market, especially in recessions. In contemporaneous work, Che, Norli and Priestly (2012) use Norwegian data to show that more individuals successfully time the market than would rise by pure chance, but they do not look for persistence in timing ability. Unlike us, they are able to observe almost all of the domestic asset holdings of their investors.

[5]See Jagannathan and Korajczyk (2014) for a review of the returns-based measurement of market timing literature. Studies that find little evidence of timing include Henriksson (1984), Ferson and Schadt (1996), Becker, Ferson, Myers, and Schill (1999), and Goetzmann, Ingersoll and Ivković (2000). Kacperczyk and Seru (2007) find little evidence using returns and holdings data. Daniel, Grinblatt, Titman, and Wermers (1997) using returns, and Wermers (2000) using holdings and returns, find little evidence of characteristic timing ability.

However, they do not have data over two bubble periods like we do. Nor do they construct a measure to examine the amount of return predictability.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section we describe our data in detail and we discuss our timing performance measures. In Section 2 we present and discuss the results of our tests, and in Section 3 we conclude.

1 Data

Our main data set combines data on individual investor transactions with data on market returns. The original transaction data contains all transactions in Finnish stocks during the sample period and comes from the Nordic Central Securities Depository (NCSD). We extend the datasets used in Seru, Shumway and Stoffman (2010), Grinblatt and Keloharju (2000, 2001a, 2001b) and Kaustia and Knüpfer (2012) to cover 14.5 years of trading from January 1, 1995 to June 30, 2009. For each transaction, we are provided the number of shares transacted, the transaction price, a security identifier, an investor identifier code and information about the investor.[6] We focus on the subset of transactions by individual investors. Individual transactions are aggregated at the individual, not account, level. This level of aggregation eases concerns that investors are not actively moving money into and out of the market, but are moving money between accounts. The dataset only provides information on investor's direct stock holdings. Investments through an intermediary are attributed to the intermediary's account. Thus, mutual funds will have their own accounts and will not be included in our analysis. Grinblatt and Keloharju (2000) find that less than 1% of the Finnish population were invested in mutual funds in the beginning of 1997. Although this proportion is likely to have grown, there is no obvious reason why excluding flows to mutual funds would affect our results.

We limit our analysis to the 1,386,540 individual investors that had a net absolute monthly

[6]The data set contains information on the investor's zip code, gender, firm sector code, firm legal form, firm postal code, firm country, language code, and registration date in shareholder register. The data set also contains information on the type of transaction and the transaction registration basis.

flow greater than zero during the first half of our sample period and, for most of our analyses, we drop transactions made by institutions.[7] We limit our sample to individual investors for two reasons: (1) individuals are not regulated or restricted in their investment set and (2) individuals are likely investing for themselves, which eliminates any agency concerns. Further, individual investors are traditionally thought of as the least informed or skilled investor group, so finding timing ability among this sub-group of investors is particularly surprising. We use the trading records of institutions to look for evidence of timing in one test but the test results in no evidence of timing. Given the relatively small number of institutions in the data, we do not find the lack of evidence for institutions surprising.

To proxy for the relevant market return, we use returns on the HEX 25 Index (currently, the OMX Helsinki 25), which we obtain from Bloomberg. The HEX 25 is a value-weighted index of the 25 largest companies listed on the Helsinki Stock Exchange.[8] The cumulative return of the HEX 25 index over our sample period appears in Figure 1 and monthly returns are presented in Figure 2. As the figures clearly show, the sample period can be characterized by two episodes in which there was a market run-up and subsequent crash in prices. This remarkable pattern facilitates our test of timing around market bubbles.

Since our interest lies in investors′ ability to time the market, we aggregate investor flows at the investor-month level instead of analyzing trades in individual stocks. Summary statistics on trades and flows are presented in Table 1. To calculate flows, we sum the euro value of all transactions by an individual within each month. We treat an individual's first trade in our sample as their first trade in the market. Once an investor makes their first trade, they remain in our sample and receive a monthly flow equal to zero in all months they do not trade. As can be seen in Column 3 of Table 1, the number of flows increases each year since accounts can enter but not exit the sample.[9] As a robustness check we also conduct our main tests assuming that

[7] 1,386,540 people is approximately 27% of the Finnish population in the year 2002. http://http://www.stat.fi

[8] From November 1, 1995 to August 1, 2001 the index capped the weight of any individual stock at 20%. After August 1, 2001 the index caps the weight of any individual stock at 10%. The number of stocks capped varies over time. As an example, on November 3, 2003 there were 4 stocks capped at 10%.

[9] The number of flows in 2009 is smaller than 2008 because our sample ends in June 2009.

all investors begin trading before the sample begins, and we find very similar results.

In Column 7, we provide the yearly percentage of monthly investor flows equal to zero euros. An investor is assigned a monthly flow of zero if the investor was inactive or if the investor bought and sold exactly the same value of securities during the month. The overwhelming majority of monthly flows are equal to zero. The year 1999 had the lowest percentage of flows equal to zero at 88.46%, and the year 2008 had the highest percentage of zero flows at 96.48%. The percentage of outflows hits a low of 1.00% in 2008 and a high of 4.81% in 2000. The percentage of inflows ranges between 1.78% in 1996 and 7.63% in 1999. In 11 out of the 15 years, a greater percentage of investor flows were inflows than outflows. This does not necessarily mean that the average flow size in euros was positive in these years. In Column 4, we present the mean flow size, which is negative in 7 out of 15 years.

In some of our robustness tests, we use returns on individual securities to calculate active changes in portfolio betas, stock picking ability and to control for any effects due to the dominance of Nokia during our sample period. For these analyses we need the time series of individual securities prices, which we obtain from Bloomberg for the 1,000 most traded securities in our sample.[10]

1.1 Timing Measures

A number of authors have considered the best way to measure market timing (see Jagannathan and Korajczyk, 2014 for a review of the returns-based measurement literature). Most of the

[10]There are over 8,285 securities in our sample, of which 155 are stocks (identified by their existence in the Compustat Global database). Stocks account for 61.44% of the trades and 75.70% of the absolute flows. The rest of the securities are derivative instruments, bonds and ETFs. Only a fraction of the derivatives are traded in any given period since derivatives with different expiration dates have different identifiers. As a robustness check, we run our main analysis using only equities and, as expected, the results are similar to those with all securities. The correlation between the first and second half monthly timing measures is 0.0134, which is significant at the 1% level with a p-value of 0.001. In an online appendix we report our analysis using only the most traded stock, Nokia, and the results are again very similar to the analysis with all securities. We also run the analysis with beta-adjusted flows. Results are presented in the robustness section and are almost identical to those using the non-adjusted flows. The reason we include all the securities in our main analysis is that investors could use derivative securities or corporate bonds in their market timing strategy. In sum, the results are not sensitive to the subset of securities used.

methods proposed by these authors involve explicit market forecasts or time-varying portfolio betas (Treynor and Mazuy, 1966, Merton, 1981, and Henricksson and Merton, 1981), and most appear to be optimized for data generated by professional asset managers. While there are many different strategies to time the market, the simplest timing strategy is to place money in the market before relatively high returns and to withdraw money from the market before relatively low returns. In other words, a market timer's flows into and out of the market are correlated with future market returns. Therefore, we use simple correlations between investor flows in one period and market returns in the next as measures of an investor's market timing ability.

Using the correlation between market flows and future returns makes particular sense for our data for two reasons. First, while the best possible measure of timing we might construct would utilize the fraction of each person's wealth that they allocate to risky assets, we do not observe the total wealth of the individuals in our data. Since correlations are restricted to vary from -1 to 1, calculating the correlations of an individual's flows with future market returns essentially adjusts each individual's monthly flows by the standard deviation of their flows, which is a proxy for their total wealth. Second, while we observe all the individual stock transactions made by each individual, we do not observe their transactions in bonds or mutual funds. When individuals sell stocks, they are likely to either leave the proceeds in their investment accounts or to invest some of the proceeds in other assets. To the extent that individuals sell stocks and then use the proceeds to buy stock mutual funds, our timing measures will be imperfect. The correlation of flows into and out of stocks with future market returns is the best timing measure we can think of given the nature of our data.

The main market timing measure for each investor is calculated as follows:

$$MarketTiming_i = Correlation(Flow_{it}, MonthReturn_{t+1}), \tag{1}$$

where $Flow_{it}$ is the monthly flow for investor i in month t and $MonthReturn_{t+1}$ is the cash return on the HEX 25 in month $t+1$.[11] We use cash returns so that both the flows and returns are in euros. We compare investors′ timing measures in two equal length sub-periods: January 1995 to March 2002 and April 2002 to June 2009. There are 87 months in each sub-period.

We calculate two additional timing measures that capture an investor's ability to time market bubbles. The first bubble timing measure calculates a flow-return correlation (equation 1) only during the two bubble periods in our sample. Bubble periods are defined around the two market peaks. The peak months on the HEX 25 were January 2000 and October 2007. We treat these two months as the beginning of a market crash and calculate whether an investor performed well in the 12 months before and 12 months after the market peak. Therefore, we have 25 months of data for each bubble period.[12] The second bubble timing measure calculates the significant outflows of each investor around the market peak month. Specifically, we compare average flows during the six months ending in the market peak month to the average flows over the entire sample half. We define the measure more carefully in Section 2.

In Table 2, we present summary statistics for the Entire Period and Bubble Period timing measures for each half of the sample. From the original 1,386,540 investors in our sample, 1,087,387 investors have enough non-zero flows to calculate a correlation in the first period, while 877,762 investors have at least two non-zero flows (and hence a correlation) in the second period. In the last column of Table 2, we give the number of frequent traders in our sample of interest. The cut-off for being a frequent trader depends on the market timing measure of interest. For the entire period timing measure, an investor must have an absolute flow greater than 0 in at least 15 of the 87 months in the first period.[13] For the bubble period timing measure,

[11]For robustness, we have re-run our main analysis using a quarterly timing measure. This measure correlates monthly flows with the cash return on the HEX 25 over the 3 months beginning in month $t+1$ and ending in month $t+3$. These results are presented in an online appendix and are very similar to the results using the monthly market timing measure.

[12]We have also examined timing in the months outside of the bubble periods, which we label "Normal Times." Normal times are defined as the 62 months in the sample half of interest that are outside of the 25-month bubble periods. We find that investors that time in normal times are more likely to time market bubbles.

[13]Our results do not depend on the exact cut-off value chosen (e.g. with a cut-off of 12 flows, the correlation between first and second period monthly timing measures was 0.0714 and is significant at the 0.01% level). The cut-off value was chosen to optimize the trade-off between sample size and capturing active investors.

an investor must have non-zero flows in at least 8 months during the first bubble period. We use the first half of the sample to determine if investors meet the minimum number of non-zero flows so there is no look ahead bias in our results. All of our tests of timing persistence will use the group of frequent traders to ensure we have an accurate measure of timing ability. For all period lengths, the frequent traders are less than 10% of the investor population. For the entire period measure there are 70,396 investors in the first half. In the second period, 2,153 of the first half frequent traders fail to have at least two non-zero flows and thus drop out of the sample because we are unable to calculate a correlation for them.

The mean of the entire period timing measure is 0.03 in the first half and 0.00 in the second half of the sample. In unreported results, we find that the mean monthly timing measure for all investors is -0.01 in each half of the sample. Frequent traders are on average better monthly timers than the entire population and these differences are statistically significant at the 1% level. A correlation of -0.01 for all investors is evidence that investors cannot time the market on average, consistent with Dichev (2007). There is significant variation in the timing measure especially in the first half of the sample. In the first half, the standard deviation is 0.18, 25% of investors have a correlation less than -.07 and 25% of investors have a correlation greater than 0.13. In the second half, the standard deviation is only 0.10 and the 25th and 75th percentiles are -0.06 and 0.10, respectively.

In the rows labeled Bubble Period, we present summary statistics for the bubble period timing measure. There are 70,252 frequent traders in the first period and 52,461 in the second period. The attrition is most likely due to the short time period in which we measure bubble period performance. The mean is 0.04 in the first period and -0.03 in the second period. This is evidence that frequent traders timed the 2000 market bubble better than the 2007 bubble. The standard deviation of the bubble timing measure is larger in the first period than the second period, 0.25 versus 0.18. 25% of investors had a correlation greater than 0.20 in the first period, while the 75th percentile in the second period was only 0.10. In our persistence tests, we will examine if investors that were in the top (bottom) percentiles in the first period were more likely to be in the top (bottom) percentiles in the second period.

2 Results

Table 3 reports our first set of results on timing persistence. The table is a simple cross tabulation of the first and second half entire period monthly timing measures, which is defined in equation (1). The rows of the table are sorted into quintiles based on performance in the first half, while the columns are sorted into quintiles based on performance in the second half. We present row percentages, i.e. percentages conditional on being in the relevant first half quintile. Under the null hypothesis that there is no relation between timing performance in the first and second halves of the sample we would expect to see twenty percent of the observations in each cell. The indications of statistical significance in the table are for tests of the null hypothesis.[14]

The results of Table 3 clearly show that there is some timing ability in our data. Focusing on the top row, which corresponds to the best performers in the first half, the fraction of investors that appear in each performance quintile in the second half of the sample declines monotonically from 24.38% to 17.32%. The best first period timers are 41% more likely to be in the top 20% than in the bottom 20% in the second half. Looking at the last row, the fraction in each cell increases monotonically. Many of the extreme values in these two rows are statistically significantly different from the null value of twenty percent. Looking at the first column of the table, again the fractions in each cell decline monotonically. In the last column the fractions increase monotonically. These columns show that the best timers in the second half come disproportionately from the better quintiles in the first half, and the worst timers in the second half come disproportionately from the worst quintiles in the first half. This is good evidence for persistent market timing ability among the investors in our sample.

Throughout Table 3, the pattern of more successful timers in the first half displaying timing

[14]p-values are calculated using the bootstrap procedure discussed later in this section.

ability in the second half is remarkably consistent. Looking at the top 20-40% row (Q2), the fraction of first period observations in each cell declines monotonically across all the rows of the table. Looking at the bottom 60-80% row (Q4), the fraction increases almost monotonically across rows. The rank correlation coefficient of timing ability in the first half and the second half is 0.071, which is extremely statistically significant. The results of the table imply that the correlation is not driven by the tails of the distribution, and it is not driven primarily by either very unsuccessful or very successful timers. Rather, there is a considerable amount of persistence in good and bad timing ability, and across the entire distribution.

If investors make correlated investment decisions due to factors beyond individual market timing ability, like regional shocks to wealth or a common financial advisor, then simple tests of statistical significance may be misspecified. To account for any influence of such clustering of individuals, we calculate p-values in the main tests of market timing using a bootstrap procedure. We first sort individuals into one of nine geographical regions based on their zip codes. Then within each region we sort individuals into terciles based on trading frequency, generating a total of 27 region/frequency groups. We match each investor with a randomly chosen (with replacement) investor from the same region/frequency group 1,000 times. Finally, we use the distribution of the matched samples to determine the significance level of each cell in the cross-tabulation. We find that our bootstrapped significance tests are extremely close to the simple p-values calculated using OLS methods. This gives us confidence that the standard errors are correct in some of our robustness analyses which do not use a bootstrap procedure.

In Table 4, we report the results of persistence tests using our bubble period market timing measure. This measure assesses investors' ability to time the market bubbles of 2000 and 2007. Since the bubble timing measures are based on just 25 months of trades right around the market crash, they are likely to be weaker than the results reported in Table 3. Looking at the first column, the percentages in the cells consistently decrease from 22.06% to 18.40%. Looking at the final column of the table, except for the top 20-40% row, the percentages are monotonically increasing, though none of the cells are statistically significant. The rank correlation between the 2000 and 2007 bubble timing measures is 0.022, significantly lower than the correlations of our full period measure, but still statistically different from zero at the thousandths level of confidence. Overall, there appears to be significant persistence in investors ability to time bubbles over monthly horizons.

In Table 5, we report the persistence tests for significant outflows around the market peaks of 2000 and 2007. Only investors with at least 8 non-zero monthly flows during the first bubble period are included. Our significant outflow measure is the difference between average flow over the six months ending with the market peak month and the average flow over the entire sample half divided by the standard deviation of flow. We standardize the difference by standard deviation to know if a particular six month average flow is unusual for a particular investor. Thus, the measure is calculated as follows: $-\frac{\frac{1}{6}\sum_{m=PeakMonth-5}^{PeakMonth}[flow_{im}]-\overline{flow_i}}{s_i}$, where $flow_{im}$ is the flow of investor i in month m, $\overline{flow_i}$ is the average flow for investor i over the sample half in which the bubble occurs, s_i is the standard deviation of flows for investor i over the sample half in which the bubble occurs, $PeakMonth$ is the month the market reached its apex during the sample half.

The persistence pattern is similar to the pattern of the monthly flow measure, although it is weaker. Investors that were in the top quintile of timers of the 2000 peak were more likely to be in the top quintile than in the bottom quintile of timers of the 2007 peak. Similarly, investors that were in the bottom quintile in 2000 were significantly more likely to be in the bottom quintile in 2007. The pairwise correlation is 0.0117 and is significant at the 1% level. In an unreported test, we calculate the standardized flow measure over the 11 months centered at the monthly peak. The results are similar. Investors that were more likely to have significant outflows around the market peak in 2000 were more likely to have significant outflows around the market peak in 2007.

There have been many studies that document persistence in stock picking ability across individual investors. How does market timing persistence compare to stock picking persistence?

We create a measure for an investor's stock selection ability following Seru, Shumway and Stoffman (2009). For each investor, we calculate the average 30-day return on their stock purchases minus the market return. If the investor sells the security before 30 days, we use the return during the holding period. We calculate a performance measure for each half and present the cross-tabulation in Table 6. Confirming previous findings, we find significant persistence in stock picking ability. There is a similar monotonic decline in frequencies across quintiles, the pairwise correlation is 0.035 and the spearman rank correlation is 0.047. Both correlations are highly significant at the 0.01% level. Surprisingly, the persistence in the main market timing measure is as strong or stronger than the stock picking persistence. These results show that market timing persistence is likely as economically significant as stock picking persistence.

2.1 Flow Analysis and Return Predictability

The observed persistence in market timing ability could be due to investors trading on many different types of information: valuation ratios, past market returns, news flow, etc. In this section, we explore what drives the persistence in market timing. If we find that a simple strategy explains the observed persistence (e.g. change the asset allocation based only on past market returns), then our paper is a noisy test of return predictability using this simple strategy. If we find little evidence supporting a simple strategy, this indicates that our market timing measure captures individual investor skill, and there is additional information in investor flows than can be gleaned from simple predictive regressions using economic variables.

First, we compare investor flows to three predictors of market returns: earnings-price ratio, dividend yield and the concurrent market return. To do this, we sort investors based on their first period monthly market timing measure into quintiles and create a monthly quintile group flow measure for each month in the second half of the sample. To be clear, our group flow is defined as follows:

$$NormFlow_{it} = \frac{Flow_{it} - \overline{Flow_{it(H2)}}}{\sigma(Flow_{it(H1)})},$$

$$AggFlow_{gt} = \sum_{i \in g} NormFlow_{it},$$

$$GroupFlow_{gt} = \frac{AggFlow_{gt} - \overline{AggFlow_{gt(H2)}}}{\sigma(AggFlow_{gt(H2)})}, \tag{2}$$

where the subscript g indexes quintile groups $(H1)$ and $(H2)$ indicate sample averages or standard deviations taken over the first or second half of the sample, respectively. The first normalization in our measure weights each investor equally. Since we use these flows as effective market portfolio weights, the second normalization ensures that the average market risk taken by each group is the same. Each group flow will have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1, allowing for comparison across groups.

The corresponding flow measure of the long-short strategy, which is long in the top 20% timers and short in the bottom 20% timers, is calculated:

$$StdLongShortFlow_t = \frac{LongShortFlow_t - \overline{LongShortFlow_t}}{\sigma(LongShortFlow_t)}, \tag{3}$$

where $LongShortFlow_t = (AggFlow_{top,t} - AggFlow_{bottom,t})$, top g and bottom g are the groups of the top 20% and bottom 20% timers, $\overline{LongShortFlow_t}$ is the mean of $LongShortFlow_t$ during the second period, $\sigma(LongShortFlow_t)$ is the standard deviation of $LongShortFlow_t$ flow during the second period. Individuals' flows are standardized using the second period mean and first period standard deviation. Like the group flow measures, the long-short strategy has a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1.

In Table 7, we present correlations between the top 20% group flow, the bottom 20% group flow, the long-short strategy (Top 20-Bottom 20) and the three predictor variables. Examining Columns (2) and (3), we see that group flows are contrarian. Both the top 20% and bottom 20% group flows are positively correlated with the valuation ratios (earnings-price ratio and the dividend yield) and negatively correlated with concurrent market returns. The long-short strategy (presented in Column (1)), is significantly positively correlated with the earnings-price ratio and past market returns, and insignificantly negatively correlated with the dividend yield.

These correlations are consistent with the "timing" portion of flows capturing momentum trading (correlation with past market returns), but also trading in a contrarian manner (correlation with the earnings-price ratio). Based on these results the persistence in timing that we capture cannot be fully explained by one of these simple strategies.

We next turn to return predictability regressions to examine the relationship between flows and future returns after controlling for other economic variables. If the group flow measure can improve predictions of future returns beyond the three economic variables (past returns, dividend yield and earnings-price ratio), then it is unlikely that a simple strategy can explain our results. To test for additional predictability, we run monthly market return predictability regressions. We sort investors based on their first-half timing performance and examine the ability of individual investor flows to predict future returns during the second-half of our sample. Specifically, we run regressions of the form:

$$HEX25_{t+1} - r_{f,t+1} = \beta \times GroupFlow_{gt} + \alpha + \epsilon_t,$$

where $HEX25_{t+1}$ is the excess return on the HEX 25 over month $t+1$, $r_{f,t+1}$ is the one-month Euribor rate and $GroupFlow_{gt}$ is calculated for month t according to equation (2). We focus on the flows of the top 20% and bottom 20% groups.

Results are presented in Table 8. In Columns 1-3 we run univariate OLS regressions using the flow-based measures. The top 20% flow is positively related to future returns with a coefficient of 0.0063, which is insignificant. The bottom 20% flow has a negative coefficient of -0.0023 and is insignificant. The coefficients are the expected sign, but the coefficients and R^2 are small in magnitude. In Column 1, the independent variable is the long-short strategy, calculated according to equation (3). This measure can significantly predict future market returns at the 5% level.The coefficient is 0.0150, which is over twice as large as the top 20% flow measure alone. This implies that a one-standard deviation increase in the flow measure is associated with an increase in the market return of 1.5%. The R^2 is 0.053, which is much larger than any of the other univariate regressions. The long-short strategy has some ability to predict returns before controlling for the other economic variables.

In Columns 4-6, we regress the market return in month $t+1$ on the logarithm of the earnings-price ratio of the HEX25 at the end of month t, the logarithm of the dividend yield of the HEX25 at the end of month t and the HEX25 return in month t, respectively. The dividend yield and earnings-price ratio show little forecasting power. They both have negative and insignificant coefficients. We would expect a positive coefficient on these two valuation ratios. The coefficient on past market return is 0.200 and is significant at the 10% level. The R^2 is 0.04, which is of reasonable magnitude. There is some auto-correlation in the HEX25 returns during this period.[15] In column 7, we include all three economic variables. The R^2 is 0.05, which is slightly smaller than the R^2 of the long-short strategy alone. In Column 8, we include the long-short strategy with the other economic variables. The R^2 almost doubles to 0.101. The long-short strategy remains significant at the 5% level and the coefficient actually increases to 0.0161. Unreported tests for autocorrelation of the residuals in these regressions do not indicate that autocorrelation is a problem. The difference in performance across good and bad timers is not captured by the simple strategies examined and the results suggest that including information in individual investor flows can improve the performance of predictability regressions.

The observed market timing persistence and return predictability is especially surprising given the different economic drivers behind the run up and crash in the 1995-2002 time period and the run up and crash in the 2002-2009 time period. The relative outperformance of investor flows could be due to investors dynamically adjusting their models to different economic environments and synthesizing many public signals beyond a single economic variable. These results and the different economic environments across the two time periods ease concerns that performance persistence can be explained by investors following a simple strategy.

[15] In unreported tests, we create a market timing measure that is orthogonal to a strategy based on the auto-correlation in monthly returns. We find similar persistence in market timing as in our main test.

2.2 Economic Significance

There is clear persistence in timing ability and information in investor flows is correlated with future market returns. In this section, we examine the economic significance of the observed timing persistence. We calculate the performance of strategies that mimic successful and unsuccessful timers as well as a strategy that is long the best timers and short the worst timers. We look at the performance for all the entire period and bubble period timing measures. To find the past successful and unsuccessful timers we sort investors into quintile groups based on their first half performance. We create a monthly group flow measure in the second half of our sample for each performance quintile group according to equations (2) and (3).

We calculate three performance metrics. First, we calculate the correlation between the quintile group flow in month t and the excess return on the HEX25 (minus 1-month Euribor) in month $t+1$. Second, we calculate the average return to a flow-weighted return strategy. The strategy weights each month's return by the previous month's group flow. Specifically,

$$FlowWeightedReturn_{g,t+1} = GroupFlow_{gt} * ExcessReturn_{t+1}, \tag{4}$$

where $ExcessReturn_{t+1}$ is the excess return on the HEX 25 index in month $t+1$, $GroupFlow_{gt}$ is the monthly group flow. The third measure accounts for the risk in the flow-weighted return strategy. We deflate the average return from the flow-weighted strategy by the standard deviation of the strategy. This is similar to a Sharpe ratio.

Results are presented in Table 9. Panel A of Table 9 shows the correlations between group flows and market excess returns. Consistent with previous results, successful timers in the first half of our sample are more likely to be successful in the second half of our sample. The top performing groups (Q1) have correlations of 0.10 and 0.08 for the entire and bubble period measures, respectively. The correlations decrease monotonically from the top to bottom quintiles. For the worst timers, the correlations are -0.04 and -0.03. Note that the passive buy-and-hold strategy has a zero correlation since it's analogous to investing one euro into the index in the first month and then cumulating that investment in subsequent months. The correlations for the long-short strategy are 0.23 and 0.22, and are significantly different from zero. These results provide further evidence of the persistence in market timing.

We report the average annualized flow-weighted returns along with the returns generated by a passive buy-and-hold strategy in Panel B. Consistent with our earlier results, past successful timers outperform unsuccessful timers by 10.19% per year using the entire period measure and by 8.55% using the bubble period measure. Past successful timers outperform a passive benchmark by 6.43% and 5.31% using the entire and bubble period measures, respectively. The corresponding returns of the long-short strategy are 17.74% and 17.27%, i.e., about 17 times the passive return. The differences are not statistically significant. The dispersion in returns are economically large and the monotonic decrease in performance from top to bottom quintiles is unlikely to be due to chance.

In Panel C of Table 9 we report the total risk-adjusted performance measure (i.e., Flow-Weighted Return-Volatility Ratio). The successful timers' ratios are 5 to 6 times the ratio of the passive buy-and-hold strategy. The ratios of the worst timers are -0.11 and -0.09 and the ratios of the long-short strategy are 0.85 for both measures. The ratios are not statistically significantly different from the passive strategy. Our results suggest that the market timing ability of our investors is economically large and important.

Our tests, so far, have examined a linear relationship between investor flows and future returns. We are also interested in whether investor flows can improve our predictions of "bear" markets - defined as a return at least a half of one standard deviation below the sample average. We calculate the increase in probability of a "bear" market the next period if there is a large discrepancy between good and bad timers flows. We consider a discrepancy in flows "large" if it is at least half of a standard deviation below its mean (labeled "Low Flow"). The discrepancy in flows is calculated in the same way as the long-short strategy in equation (3).

In Table 10, we calculate the probability of a "bear" market, the probability of a "Low Flow", the probability of a "Low Flow" in month t given a "bear" market in month $t+1$, and the probability of a "bear" market in month $t+1$ given a "Low Flow" in month t. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when good timers have lower flows than bad timers, this is a pretty good predictor of poor market returns. For both measures, a "Low Flow" gives a higher probability of negative market returns in the next month than the unconditional probability. For the entire period measure, the probability almost doubles. Because we only have 87 months over which to calculate the probabilities and very few months with significant outflows, these numbers should be considered only suggestive evidence.

2.3 Investor Skills and Characteristics

In this subsection we analyze which types of investors are better at market timing. Further, we study if successful market timers are also successful in stock picking. We analyze investors along many dimensions: sex, age, education, other demographics, and trading behavior. We estimate three separate regressions where the dependent variable for investor skill is based on the investor's monthly timing measure calculated over the entire period of interest.

Regression results are reported in Table 11. In Column 1, the dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to 1 if an investor is in the top 20% of investors. In Column 2, the dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the investor is in the bottom 20% of investors. In Column 3, the variable is equal to 5 if the investor is in the Top 20%, 4 if the investor is in the Top 20-40%, etc. The regressions in Columns 1 and 2 are probits. The regression in Column 3 is an ordinary least squares regression.

Men are more likely to be in the top and bottom of the distribution. The coefficient in the overall timing skill regression is positive, but insignificant. Middle age investors (45-64 in 1995) are better timers than younger and older investors and are the most likely to be in the top of the distribution. Retirement-age (65+) investors are the least likely to be in the bottom of the distribution. Young investors are the worst timers. The age results are consistent with investors learning with experience as they age. After a certain point performance decays, perhaps as cognitive abilities decline.

Examining the characteristics of the traders zip code, we see that investors from more dense (urban) zip codes are not significantly better timers. Surprisingly, living around highly educated people (% of individuals in a zip-code with a University degree) significantly reduces the likelihood of being in the top 20%. This could be due to educated individuals focusing more on markets outside of Finland than less educated individuals.

Investors that speak the Finnish language are more likely to be better timers, but are not more skilled in general. These investors may be better at interpreting the public signals than non-Finnish investors. We proxy for sophistication using an indicator for an individual ever trading an option (following Seru, Stoffman and Shumway (2009)). We find that sophisticated investors are more likely to be good timers. This is further evidence that financial sophistication is correlated with investor performance. Good timers also trade less. This could be due to macro information arriving at a slower frequency than firm-level information or, possibly, good market timers being less overconfident (Barber and Odean (2001)). Good timers have increased exposure to market risk; they invest in higher average beta securities and are more diversified (proxied by the logarithm of the number of unique securities the investor traded during the sample). Market timers are not more likely to use the OMX ETF - a low-cost strategy to time the market. There are two possible explanations for this result. We may not have enough variation across investors as the OMX ETF accounts for only 0.04% of transactions or unsophisticated investors could be using the OMX ETF to achieve low-cost diversification. We find that investors with a larger portion of their transactions in Nokia stock (in % of euro value) are less likely to be good at market timing. We find that investors with larger absolute flows (a proxy for wealth) are less likely to be in the top 20%, but also less likely to be in the bottom 20% of investors. Flow size is negatively correlated with timing ability in general. It is not obvious whether or not wealthier investors should be better or worse market timers as they have a greater monetary incentive to gather information, but they may have larger opportunity costs. They are also more likely to invest outside of Finland. There is no simple explanation of which traders are good timers and which are poor timers.

Are market timers better stock pickers? We calculate the stock selection measure and the monthly market timing measure over the entire sample period (14.5 years) for investors with at least 100 trades and 15 non-zero monthly flows in the first half of the sample. We find a Spearman rank correlation between the two measures of -0.0134 (p-value of .04) and a pairwise correlation of -0.0026 (p-value of .70). There is little evidence that good market timers are more likely to be good stock pickers when ability is calculated over a long time span. The lack of a positive correlation between skills could be due to noise in our measure of stock picking ability or due to investor's specializing in one of the two skills. Kacperczyk, Van Nieuwerburgh and Veldkamp (2013) provide evidence that skilled fund managers will focus on one of the two skills conditional on the business cycle. They find that fund managers that are good stock pickers in expansions are more likely to be good timers in recessions. In the online appendix, we provide evidence that investors that are better timers in the bubble period are also better timers during normal times. We do not measure stock picking or market timing ability during different periods of the business cycle, however. Instead, we show that, unconditionally, stock picking and market timing are relatively uncorrelated.

2.4 Survivorship

In previous tests we have shown that investors exhibit persistence in their market timing ability and this timing ability is large and economically significant. In this subsection, we ask, do investors learn about their abilities? To answer this question we examine how first period market timing performance affects the probability of an investor stopping active participation in the market. In Table 12, we calculate the probability an investor becoming inactive (zero absolute monthly flow in the second period) for each first period performance quintile. We use the entire period timing measure as the first period performance measure. The results are mixed. Investors in the worst market timing quintile are about 42% more likely to drop out of the sample than investors in the top market timing quintile and the difference is significant at the 0.000 level. Investors in the middle quintiles are more likely to drop out than either the top or bottom quintile. Thus, the relationship is nonlinear in a way that investors with average timing performance are most likely to drop out.

2.5 Additional Tests

In this subsection, we control for several possible explanations for our results besides heterogeneity in investor market timing ability. We adjust our timing measure in various ways to rule out alternative theories for the observed persistence and show the robustness of our results. We also examine the ability (or inability) of financial institutions to persistently time the market in our sample.

Finland is a relatively unique market in that Nokia makes up approximately 50% of the market capitalization during our sample period. Although the market weight of Nokia in our index is capped at 10%, one possible explanation for our results is that investors are just timing movements in Nokia and this is driving our results. To address this concern we run two tests. First, we test whether investors can persistently time Nokia, by correlating investor monthly flows into and out of the market with Nokia returns over the next month. The results are presented in the online appendix. The persistence is similar to the results using market returns, with a nearly monotonic relationship between first and second period performance. Because Nokia's returns are correlated with market returns, this result may not be surprising and does not necessarily mean Nokia is driving our results. To determine whether investors are timing the market, not solely Nokia, we run a similar test, but omit flows into and out of Nokia and exclude Nokia's returns from the index. The detailed results are in the online appendix. Once again, we see a near monotonic relationship between first and second period performance and very significant departures from the null of no timing, so it is highly unlikely Nokia alone is driving the timing persistence we observe.

Investors may time the market at various frequencies: daily, monthly, quarterly, or longer. We focus on monthly timing for two reasons. First, we cannot reliably estimate timing over longer frequencies due to the length of our sample. Second, a very small percentage of individuals trade on a daily basis in our sample and trading daily would be a costly activity for most individual investors. Goetzmann, Ingersoll and Ivković (2000) show that estimating timing ability of daily timers at a monthly frequency will create downward bias in the estimation of timing skill when using a Henrikson and Merton (1981) returns-based measure of skill. It is unclear if a similar bias exists with our timing measure and if the rank-order of investors would change significantly if we changed the frequency. As a robustness check, we re-estimate our main sets of analysis with a quarterly timing measure. This measure is calculated following equation (1) except we replace the cash return in month $t+1$ with the cash return from the start of month $t+1$ to the end of month $t+3$. The results are presented in the online appendix and are very similar to those for the monthly measure. The monthly and quarterly measures are highly correlated with a correlation of 0.75. This gives us confidence that our results are robust to measuring timing over different frequencies.

Up to this point, we have focused on the simplest form of market timing, placing money in the market before upturns and withdrawing money before downturns. Investors could also time the market by adjusting the betas of their portfolios. We examine this type of timing by correlating a beta-adjusted flow measure with market returns. The beta-adjusted flow is the euro value of each transaction multiplied by the security's beta (euro-value of trade of security i times beta of security i). For example, if an investor sells 100 euros of stock Y with beta equal to 1 and purchases 100 euros of stock Z with beta equal to 2, we calculate a beta-adjusted flow of $100 * 2 - 100 * 1 = 100$ adjusted euros. Specifically, the measure is calculated:

$$MonthlyTimingBeta_i = Correlation\left(\sum_{j=1}^{J} \beta_j * Flow_{ijt}, MonthReturn_{t+1}\right), \tag{5}$$

where $Flow_{ijt}$ is the monthly flow for investor i into security j in month t, β_j is the beta of stock j, J is the total number of securities in the market, and $MonthReturn_{t+1}$ is the cash return on the HEX 25 in month t+1. We calculate betas using weekly returns over a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 5 years before the transaction date. For those securities for which we are unable to calculate a beta, we set the beta equal to one. In Table 13, we present the results. The results are similar to and slightly stronger than the unadjusted monthly timing measure results in Table 3. For instance, 25.06% of the investors in the top 20% in the first half are in the top 20% in the second half. Only 17.17% of the bottom 20% of investors in the first half are in the top 20% in the second half. The rank correlation is 0.0725 and is significant at the one-thousandths of a percent level. Once again, this is strong evidence of persistent timing ability across individuals.

In Table 14 we look for persistent timing ability among financial institutions. We perform the same kinds of tests for institutions that we perform for individuals. However, our tests are somewhat limited by the relatively small number of active institutions in our data; there are only 330 institutions that trade sufficiently in both halves of the sample to be included in our analysis. The results in the tables reveal that there is no clear evidence of timing for these firms. This is not too surprising given the low sample size of our tests, the objectives of most financial institutions and the lack of control institutions have over their investors inflows and outflows. We would not expect, for example, for market makers, index funds, or standard equity funds to display any timing ability.

Finally, we examine whether our sample selection process affects our inferences by performing the same analysis with investors that are active (having at least 15 months with nonzero flows) in both sample halves instead of classifying based on just first half activity. The results are presented in the online appendix are very similar to those in Table 3, so we conclude that our sample selection procedure is reasonable.

3 Conclusion

We document significant persistence in the ability of individual investors to time the stock market, both in general and during market bubble periods. We find that some consistently time the market while others consistently mis-time the market, which we think is surprising. This implies that there must be some predictability in returns and there must be variation in the skills of individuals in processing news about markets and the economy. We find that information in investor flows is a better predictor of future market returns than commonly used economic variables. Our evidence is consistent with models that feature both rational arbitrageurs and noise traders, such as DeLong, Shleifer, Summers and Waldman (1990) and Abreu and Brunnermeier (2003).

The fact that some investors consistently time the market has important implications for the way we model markets and investor behavior. It means, of course, that the market cannot be perfectly informationally efficient. If there is a lot of dispersion in the skill of investors then people may rationally incur significant costs to improve their skills. They may trade in an experimental fashion to learn, or they may use financial products that do not make sense in a world characterized by efficient markets. If companies can successfully time the market they may want to issue shares at times when prices are abnormally high. They may also want to time their share repurchases or their granting of executive stock options. We leave a detailed exploration of the implications of market timing to future research.

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Table 1: Summary Statistics of Investor Monthly Flows

Year	**# Trades**	**# Flows**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Outflows**	**Flow= 0**	**Inflows**
1995	1,106,131	5,989,419	-4.44	6,932.47	1.48%	92.95%	5.57%
1996	1,653,754	6,270,538	-147.83	10,421.84	3.00%	95.22%	1.78%
1997	1,045,212	6,611,850	12.72	17,922.49	2.15%	93.08%	4.76%
1998	1,636,010	8,187,194	15.60	18,390.69	2.43%	92.44%	5.13%
1999	3,184,759	10,110,636	139.71	76,550.73	3.90%	88.46%	7.63%
2000	4,197,161	11,945,160	-308.52	62,920.32	4.81%	89.26%	5.93%
2001	3,024,283	13,099,352	54.30	21,880.88	2.32%	93.73%	3.95%
2002	2,424,148	13,515,142	-30.12	63,610.97	2.99%	94.80%	2.22%
2003	2,085,021	13,876,732	67.85	13,345.63	1.50%	95.81%	2.70%
2004	3,026,862	14,212,349	136.34	85,171.38	1.76%	94.87%	3.38%
2005	3,472,769	14,455,703	-80.24	55,313.11	3.10%	94.25%	2.65%
2006	3,607,899	14,719,870	-144.70	112,676.70	2.14%	95.56%	2.30%
2007	4,575,925	15,158,231	-54.16	41,974.89	2.09%	95.81%	2.10%
2008	4,679,523	15,706,092	122.51	20,921.38	1.00%	96.48%	2.52%
2009*	3,510,097	8,198,472	114.37	10,335.64	1.75%	92.85%	5.40%

This table displays summary statistics of monthly investor flows into and out of securities on the Helsinki Stock Exchange. Our sample contains all transactions by individual investors from January 1995 to June 2009. **# Trades** is the number of trades made during the year. **# Flows** is the number of monthly flows aggregated at the investor-month level. **Mean** is the average investor-month flow size in euros. **Std. Dev.** is the standard deviation of investor-month flows. **Outflows** is the percentage of flows that are outflows during the year. **Flow**= 0 is the percentage of flows equal to 0 during the year. **Inflows** is the percentage of flows that are inflows during the year. We drop all trades with 0 value and all cancelled trades from our original transaction data.
*The 2009 values are for the first six months of the year.

Table 2: Summary Statistics of Market Timing Measures

Time Period	Flow Freq.	Return Freq.	Mean	Std. Dev.	25th	Median	75th	N
Entire Period								
1995-2002	Monthly	Monthly	0.03	0.18	-0.07	0.01	0.13	70,396
2002-2009	Monthly	Monthly	0.00	0.10	-0.06	0.00	0.07	68,243
Bubble Period								
2000 Bubble	Monthly	Monthly	0.04	0.25	-0.12	0.01	0.20	70,252
2007 Bubble	Monthly	Monthly	-0.03	0.18	-0.15	-0.04	0.10	52,461

This table gives the summary statistics (mean, standard deviation, 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile) for the market timing measure. The monthly measure is calculated using equation (1). We separate the sample into two equal length sub-periods: January 1995 - March 2002 and April 2002 - June 2009. Timing measures calculated for each half are presented under the "Entire Period" heading. For the "Bubble Period" measures, we center our analysis around the market peak during the relevant half of our sample (February 2000 and October 2007). We calculate each investor's performance during the time period from 12 months before the peak to 12 months after (e.g., for the 2000 bubble, the performance period is February 1999 to February 2001). Statistics are presented for the active traders in our sample. To be considered an active trader, investors must have monthly absolute flows greater than zero in a minimum number of months during the first half. For the entire period ("Bubble Period") measure, the minimum is 15 (8) months. N is the number of investors that meet the criteria and have enough flows to calculate a correlation.

Table 3: Two Period Cross-Tab of the Entire Period Monthly Timing Measure

	Second Period					
First Period	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Total**
Q1	24.38%***	20.55%	19.27%**	18.48%***	17.32%***	100%
Q2	20.27%	20.24%	20.02%	19.93%	19.54%*	100%
Q3	19.23%**	20.35%	20.67%**	19.97%	19.78%	100%
Q4	18.82%***	20.01%	20.25%	20.20%	20.72%**	100%
Q5	17.25%***	18.85%***	19.81%	21.43%***	22.67%***	100%
Total	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	100%

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$. Null: Cell%=20%.

This table provides frequencies of investors sorted and grouped by their monthly timing measure in each of the two sample sub-periods (January 1995 - March 2002 and April 2002 - June 2009). The monthly timing measure is calculated using equation (1). The January 1995 - March 2002 (April 2002 - June 2009) percentile rank is along the vertical (horizontal) axis. The timing measures are grouped into quintiles. **Q1** is the top performance quintile. We present row percentages. If the two periods were independent, we would expect row percentages of 20% in each cell. p-values are calculated using bootstrapping procedures conducted as follows: each first period investor is matched with a second period investor based on their geographic region (9 regions in Finland) and their within-region tercile ranking of the number of trades. We match first and second period investors 1,000 times. Significance levels are based on two-sided tests of significance. Significance levels are nearly identical if basic OLS standard errors are used to calculate significance. The quintile cut-off values for the first period are: -.097, -.019, .051 & .172. For the second period, the cut-off values are: -.079, -.022, .028 & .088. The sample size is 68,243 investors.

The pairwise correlation between the first and second period monthly timing measures is 0.0727 and is significant at the 0.01% level. The spearman rank correlation coefficient is 0.0710 and is significant at the 0.01% level.

Table 4: Two Period Cross-Tab of the Bubble Period Monthly Timing Measure

	2007 Bubble					
2000 Bubble	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Total**
Q1	22.06%***	19.09%*	20.04%	19.05%	19.76%	100%
Q2	20.02%	19.11%*	20.28%	20.55%***	20.03%	100%
Q3	19.98%	20.33%	19.52%	20.30%**	19.87%	100%
Q4	19.49%	19.41%	20.58%**	20.52%**	20.01%	100%
Q5	18.40%***	19.77%	20.17%	21.32%***	20.33%	100%
Total	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	100%

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$. Null: Cell%=20%

This table provides frequencies of investors sorted and grouped by their 2000 and 2007 market bubble monthly timing measure. The monthly timing measure is calculated using equation (1). The 2000 (2007) percentile rank is along the vertical (horizontal) axis. The timing measures are grouped into quintiles. **Q1** is the top performance quintile. We present row percentages. If the two periods were independent, we would expect row percentages of 20%. p-values are calculated using bootstrapping procedures conducted as follows: each first period investor is matched with a second period investor based on their geographic region (9 regions in Finland) and their within-region tercile ranking of the number of trades. We match first and second period investors 1,000 times. Significance levels are based on two-sided tests of significance. Significance levels are nearly identical if basic OLS standard errors are used to calculate significance. The quintile cut-off values for the first period are: -.156, -.035, .074, .250. For the second period, the cut-off values are: -.181, -.084, .015, .128. The sample size is 52,461 investors.

The pairwise correlation between the first and second period monthly timing measures is 0.0241 and is significant at the 0.01% level. The spearman rank correlation coefficient is 0.0218 and is significant at the 0.01% level.

Table 5: Two Period Cross-Tab of Significant Outflows Around the Market Peak

	2007 Bubble					
2000 Bubble	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Total**
Q1	20.20%	21.18%***	18.94%***	21.62%***	18.05%***	100%
Q2	20.18%	20.43%	20.30%	20.14%	18.95%***	100%
Q3	19.70%*	20.01%	20.71%**	19.31%	20.27%	100%
Q4	20.29%	19.73%	20.78%**	18.93%***	20.27%	100%
Q5	19.62%	18.66%***	19.28%**	20.00%**	22.44%***	100%
Total	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	100%

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Null: Cell%=20%

This table provides frequencies of investors sorted and grouped by their flows around the market peaks in 2000 and 2007. The significant flow for investor i is calculated as follows: $-\frac{1}{6}\sum_{PeakMonth-5}^{PeakMonth}\frac{flow_{im}-\overline{flow_i}}{s_i}$, where $flow_{im}$ is the flow of investor i in month m, $\overline{flow_i}$ is the average flow for investor i over the sample half in which the bubble occurs, s_i is the standard deviation of flows for investor i over the sample half in which the bubble occurs, $PeakMonth$ is the month the market reached its apex during the sample half. The 2000 (2007) percentile rank is along the vertical (horizontal) axis. The flow measures are grouped into quintiles. **Q1** is the top performance quintile. We present row percentages. If the two periods were independent, we would expect row percentages of 20%. p-values are calculated using bootstrapping procedures conducted as follows: each first period investor is matched with a second period investor based on their geographic region (9 regions in Finland) and their within-region tercile ranking of the number of trades. We match first and second period investors 1,000 times. Significance levels are based on two-sided tests of significance. Significance levels are nearly identical if basic OLS standard errors are used to calculate significance. The quintile cut-off values for the first period are: -.437, -.007, .266, .740. For the second period, the cut-off values are: -.151, -.065, .042, .231. The sample size is 67,444 investors.

The pairwise correlation between the first and second period monthly timing measures is 0.0117 and is significant at the 0.3% level. The spearman rank correlation coefficient is 0.0234 and is significant at the 0.01% level.

Table 6: Two Period Cross-Tab of the Stock Picking Measure

	Second Period					
First Period	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Total**
Q1	22.46%***	21.19%***	19.40%	18.30%***	18.64%***	100%
Q2	20.01%	20.31%	21.12%**	19.67%	18.89%***	100%
Q3	18.59%***	20.24%	20.06%	20.42%	20.69%	100%
Q4	19.32%	18.98%*	20.38%	20.62%	20.70%	100%
Q5	19.58%	18.57%***	18.44%***	20.44%	22.97%***	100%
Total	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	100%

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$. Null: Cell%=20%.

This table provides frequencies of investors sorted and grouped by their stock picking measure in each of the two sample sub-periods (January 1995 - March 2002 and April 2002 - June 2009). The stock picking measure is calculated according to Seru, Stoffman and Shumway (2009). For all stock purchases, we calculate the return over the next 30 days less the market return. If the investor sells the stock before 30 days, we use the holding period return less the market return. The stock picking measure is the average of these returns over all stock purchases. The January 1995 - March 2002 (April 2002 - June 2009) percentile rank is along the vertical (horizontal) axis. The stock picking measures are grouped into quintiles. **Q1** is the top performance quintile. We present row percentages. If the two periods were independent, we would expect row percentages of 20% in each cell. The quintile cut-off values for the first period are: -2.8%, -1.3%, -0.1% & 1.4%. For the second period, the cut-off values are: -1.0%, -0.2%, 0.3% & 1.1%. The sample size is 25,028 investors.

The pairwise correlation between the first and second period monthly timing measures is 0.0354 and is significant at the 0.01% level. The spearman rank correlation coefficient is 0.0466 and is significant at the 0.01% level.

Table 7: Cross-correlation Between Market Timing Group Flows and Return Predictors

Variables	Top 20-Bottom 20	Top 20 Flow	Bottom 20 Flow	Log(EP ratio)	Log(Div. Yield)	HEX25
Top 20-Bottom 20	1.000					
Top 20 Flow	0.660	1.000				
	(0.000)					
Bottom 20 Flow	0.161	0.848	1.000			
	(0.136)	(0.000)				
Log(EP ratio)	0.228	0.348	0.296	1.000		
	(0.033)	(0.001)	(0.005)			
Log(Div. Yield)	-0.029	0.352	0.484	0.369	1.000	
	(0.788)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)		
HEX25	0.286	-0.225	-0.497	-0.243	-0.339	1.000
	(0.007)	(0.036)	(0.000)	(0.023)	(0.001)	

This table presents correlations between group flows and various return predictors over the time period April 2002 to June 2009. Top 20 Flow (Bottom 20 Flow) is the month t standardized group flow from for the top (bottom) quintile of timers sorted by first half performance measured using equation (1). Top 20-Bottom 20 which is the month t standardized difference in group flows between the top and bottom quintile of timers sorted by first half performance. Log(EP ratio) is the logarithm of the earnings-price ratio of the HEX25 at the end of month t. Log(Div. Yield) is the logarithm of the dividend yield of the HEX25 at the end of month t. HEX25 is the return on the HEX25 in month t-1. p-values are reported in parentheses.

Table 8: In-Sample Predictability Regressions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
VARIABLES	HEX25	HEX25	HEX25	HEX25	HEX25	HEX25	HEX25	HEX25
Top 20-Bottom 20	0.0150**							0.0161**
	(0.00686)							(0.00750)
Top 20 Flow		0.00628						
		(0.00702)						
Bottom 20 Flow			-0.00231					
			(0.00705)					
Log(EP ratio)				-0.0337			-0.0270	-0.0461
				(0.0256)			(0.0277)	(0.0285)
Log(Div. Yield)					-0.0149		0.0120	0.0138
					(0.0277)		(0.0306)	(0.0300)
HEX25 t-1						0.200*	0.188	0.0998
						(0.107)	(0.115)	(0.120)
Observations	87	87	87	87	87	87	87	87
R-squared	0.053	0.009	0.001	0.020	0.003	0.040	0.050	0.101

Standard Errors in Parentheses

*** $p<0.01$ ** $p<0.05$ * $p<0.1$

This table presents predictive OLS regressions for the market excess return over the time period April 2002 to June 2009. The dependent variable is the monthly HEX25 return less the monthly Euribor rate. Top 20-Bottom 20 is the month t-1 standardized difference in group flows between the top and bottom quantile of timers sorted by first half performance (see equation 2). Top 20 Flow (Bottom 20 Flow) is the month t-1 standardized group flow from for the top (bottom) quantile of timers sorted by first half performance (see equation 3). Log(EP ratio) is the logarithm of the earnings-price ratio of the HEX25 at the end of month t-1. Log(Div. Yield) is the logarithm of the dividend yield of the HEX25 at the end of month t-1. HEX25 t-1 is the return on the HEX25 in month t-1. R-squared is the unadjusted R^2.

Table 9: Second Half Performance Measures

Timing	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Top 20%-Bot. 20%**	**Passive**
Panel A: Correlation between flow$_t$ and HEX25 Excess Return$_{t+1}$							
Entire Period	0.10	0.05	0.04	0.02	-0.04	0.23**	0.00
Bubble Period	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.01	-0.03	0.22**	0.00
Panel B: Average Flow-Weighted Excess Return							
Entire Period	7.45	3.97	3.06	1.80	-2.74	17.74	1.02
Bubble Period	6.33	2.35	1.52	0.75	-2.22	17.27	1.02
Panel C: Flow-Weighted Return-Volatility Ratio							
Entire Period	0.31	0.17	0.13	0.08	-0.11	0.85	0.05
Bubble Period	0.26	0.10	0.06	0.03	-0.09	0.85	0.05

This table provides measures of performance in the second half of our sample for investors grouped by first period performance. We present results sorting by the two main timing measures. We by market timing calculated during the entire period (**Entire Period**) and by market timing calculated during the Bubble Period (**Bubble Period**). Panel A presents the correlations between quintile group flows in month t and market returns in month $t+1$. Panel B presents the average flow-weighted return, labeled Average Flow-Weighted Return, calculated according to equation (4). This measure multiplies the return in month $t+1$ by the group flow in month t. Panel C presents the ratio of the average flow-weighted return to the standard deviation of the flow-weighted return, labeled Flow-Weighted Return-Volatility Ratio. The quintile group flows are calculated according to equation (2). The Top 20% - Bot. 20% flow is calculated according to equation (3).

Table 10: Predicting Negative Returns With Difference Between Good and Bad Timers' Flows

Timing Measure	**P(Bear Mkt)**	**P(Low Flow)**	**P(Low Flow |Bear Mkt)**	**P(Bear Mkt |Low Flow)**
Entire Period	24.1%	13.8%	33.3%	**59.0%**
Bubble Period	24.1%	18.4%	28.6%	**37.9%**

This table presents the probability of a "large" negative excess return in month $t+1$ conditional on a large negative difference in flows between the good and bad timers in month t. We examine 2 timing measures: market timing calculated over the entire period (**Entire Period**) and market timing calculated in the Bubble Period (**Bubble-Monthly**). The timing measures are calculated in the relevant months of the first half of our sample (January 1995 - March 2002) whereas all the probabilities are calculated in the second half of our sample (April 2002 - June 2009). There are 87 months in the second half of our sample. In column 1, we provide the unconditional probability of a "bear" market. A "bear" market is defined as a monthly excess return (HEX25 minus 1m-Euribor) that is at least half of one standard deviation below the mean excess return. In column 2, we provide the unconditional probability of a "Low Flow" defined as a difference between the top and bottom timers flows that is at least half of one standard deviation below the average. The difference between the top and bottom group flows is calculated according to equation (3). In column 3, we provide the probability of "Low Flow" given the next month is a "bear" market. In column 4, we provide the probability of a "bear" market in month $t+1$ given investors have a significant outflow in month t.

Table 11: Timing Investors Characteristic Regressions

VARIABLES	(1) Top 20	(2) Bottom 20	(3) Timing Skill
Male	0.0254*	0.00233	0.0212
	(0.0138)	(0.0139)	(0.0132)
Age 25-45	0.00810	0.0186	-0.00924
	(0.0199)	(0.0196)	(0.0192)
Age 46-64	0.0559***	-0.0573***	0.0714***
	(0.0202)	(0.0202)	(0.0196)
Age 65+	-0.0704***	-0.0822***	-0.00215
	(0.0270)	(0.0270)	(0.0254)
Density	0.182	-0.520*	0.230
	(0.285)	(0.283)	(0.268)
University %	-0.00298***	5.73e-05	-0.00185***
	(0.000650)	(0.000639)	(0.000611)
Finance %	-0.000721	-0.000152	-0.000826
	(0.00204)	(0.00202)	(0.00191)
Finnish	0.0517***	0.0163	-0.00499
	(0.0197)	(0.0192)	(0.0182)
Option	0.235***	-0.0602***	0.158***
	(0.0262)	(0.0230)	(0.0231)
OMX ETF	-0.0754*	0.0421	-0.0931**
	(0.0453)	(0.0419)	(0.0415)
Nokia Flow %	-0.426***	0.399***	-0.560***
	(0.0309)	(0.0293)	(0.0285)
Avg. Beta	0.777***	0.225***	0.346***
	(0.0322)	(0.0319)	(0.0308)
Log(Trades)	-0.311***	0.213***	-0.311***
	(0.0109)	(0.00963)	(0.00955)
Log(Flow Size)	-0.117***	-0.0592***	-0.0252***
	(0.00699)	(0.00663)	(0.00638)
Log(Securities)	0.352***	-0.240***	0.374***
	(0.0176)	(0.0164)	(0.0160)
Observations	64,179	64,179	64,179
R-squared			0.034

Standard Errors in Parentheses
*** p<0.01 ** p<0.05 * p<0.1

This table presents results for regressions of timing ability on investor characteristics. We use investors monthly timing ability measured over the entire period for these tests. We run the regressions for 3 skill measures: Top 20, Bottom 20 and Timing Skill. Top 20 is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the investor is in the top 20% of investors. Bottom 20 is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the investor is in the bottom 20% of investors. Timing Skill is a variable equal to 5 if the investor is in the top 20%, 4 if the investor is in the Top 20-40%, 3 if the investor is in the Top 40-60%, etc. The regressions in columns 1 and 2 are probit regressions. The regression in column 3 is an OLS regression. Male is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the investor is a male. Age 25-45 is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the investor is 25 to 45 years old at the end of 1995. Age 46-64 is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the investor is 46 to 64 years old at the end of 1995. Age 65+ is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the investor is 65 years old or older at the end of 1995. Density is the population density of the investor's zip code times 10^{-5}. University % is the percentage of persons in the investor's zip code with a university degree. Finance Profession % is the percentage of persons in the investor's zip code working in the finance industry. Finnish is a dummy equal to one if the individual's primary language is Finnish. Option is an indicator variable equal to 1 if the investor ever trades an option. OMX ETF is an indicator variable equal to 1 if the investor transacted in the OMX ETF during the sample period. Nokia Flow % is the value percentage of absolute flows in Nokia. Avg. Beta is the average beta of all securities the investor traded. Log(Trades) is the logarithm of the total number of transactions placed by the investor over the entire sample. Log(Flow Size) is the logarithm of the investor's mean absolute monthly flow over the entire sample. Log(Securities) is the logarithm of the number of securities (unique CUSIPS) the investor transacted in during the sample period. The R^2 reported for the probit regressions in columns 1 and 2 are Pseudo-R^2. The reported R^2 from the OLS regression in column 3 is the adjusted-R^2. We report the number of observations in the last row and z and t-stats are reported in parentheses.

Table 12: Investor Survivorship

First Period Performance	**% 2nd Half Inactives**
Q1 (Best)	2.08 %
Q2	3.41 %
Q3	3.73 %
Q4	3.11 %
Q5 (Worst)	2.96 %
t-test (Top-Bottom) p-value	0.00

This table presents the percentage of investors within each first period performance quintile that do not move money in or out of the market in the second half of the sample (Inactives). First Period Performance is the first period performance quintile, measured using the monthly timing measure. 2nd Half Inactives is the percentage of investors within the quintile that did not move money in or out of the market during the second half of the sample period (April 2002 - June 2009). The last row presents the p-value for a student's t-test for a difference in means between the best (Q1) and worst (Q5) investor groups.

Table 13: Two Period Cross-Tab of the Entire Period Monthly *Beta-Adjusted* Timing Measure

	Second Period					
First Period	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Total**
Q1	25.06%***	20.50%	18.88%***	18.59%***	16.97%***	100%
Q2	19.88%	20.49%	20.09%	19.92%	19.61%	100%
Q3	19.14%***	20.32%	20.38%	20.02%	20.14%	100%
Q4	18.70%***	19.38%**	20.37%	20.51%*	21.05%***	100%
Q5	17.17%***	19.32%**	20.29%	20.97%***	22.25%***	100%
Total	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	100%

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$. Null: Cell%=20%.

This table provides frequencies of investors sorted and grouped by their monthly timing beta-adjusted measure in each of the two sample sub-periods (January 1995 - March 2002 and April 2002 - June 2009). The beta-adjusted timing measure is calculated using equation (5). The January 1995 - March 2002 (April 2002 - June 2009) percentile rank is along the vertical (horizontal) axis. The timing measures are grouped into quintiles. **Q1** is the top performance quintile. We present row percentages. If the two periods were independent, we would expect row percentages of 20% in each cell. The p-values are calculated using OLS regressions.

The pairwise correlation between the first and second period monthly timing measures is 0.0752 and is significant at the 0.01% level. The spearman rank correlation coefficient is 0.0725 and is significant at the 0.01% level.

Table 14: Institutions Entire Period Monthly Timing Measure

	Second Period					
First Period	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Total**
Q1	17.74%	20.97%	25.81%	19.35%	16.13%	100%
Q2	29.31%	17.24%*	13.79%	15.52%	24.14%	100%
Q3	18.46%	23.08%	21.54%	15.38%	21.54%	100%
Q4	16.67%	20.83%	19.44%	26.39%	16.67%	100%
Q5	19.18%	17.81%	19.18%	21.92%	21.92%	100%
Total	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	100%

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$. Null: Cell%=20%.

This table provides frequencies of institutions sorted and grouped by their monthly timing measure in each of the two sample sub-periods (January 1995 - March 2002 and April 2002 - June 2009). The monthly timing measure is calculated using equation (1). The January 1995 - March 2002 (April 2002 - June 2009) percentile rank is along the vertical (horizontal) axis. The timing measures are grouped into quintiles. **Q1** is the top performance quintile. We present row percentages. If the two periods were independent, we would expect row percentages of 20% in each cell. p-values are calculated using OLS standard errors. There are 376 institutions that have non-zero flows in at least 15 months during the first period, 330 of these institutions have at least 2 months of non-zero flows in the second period. The sample size is 330 institutions.

The pairwise correlation between the first and second period monthly timing measures is 0.0476 and is insignificant with a p-value of 0.3889. The spearman rank correlation coefficient is 0.0544 and is insignificant with a p-value of 0.3248.

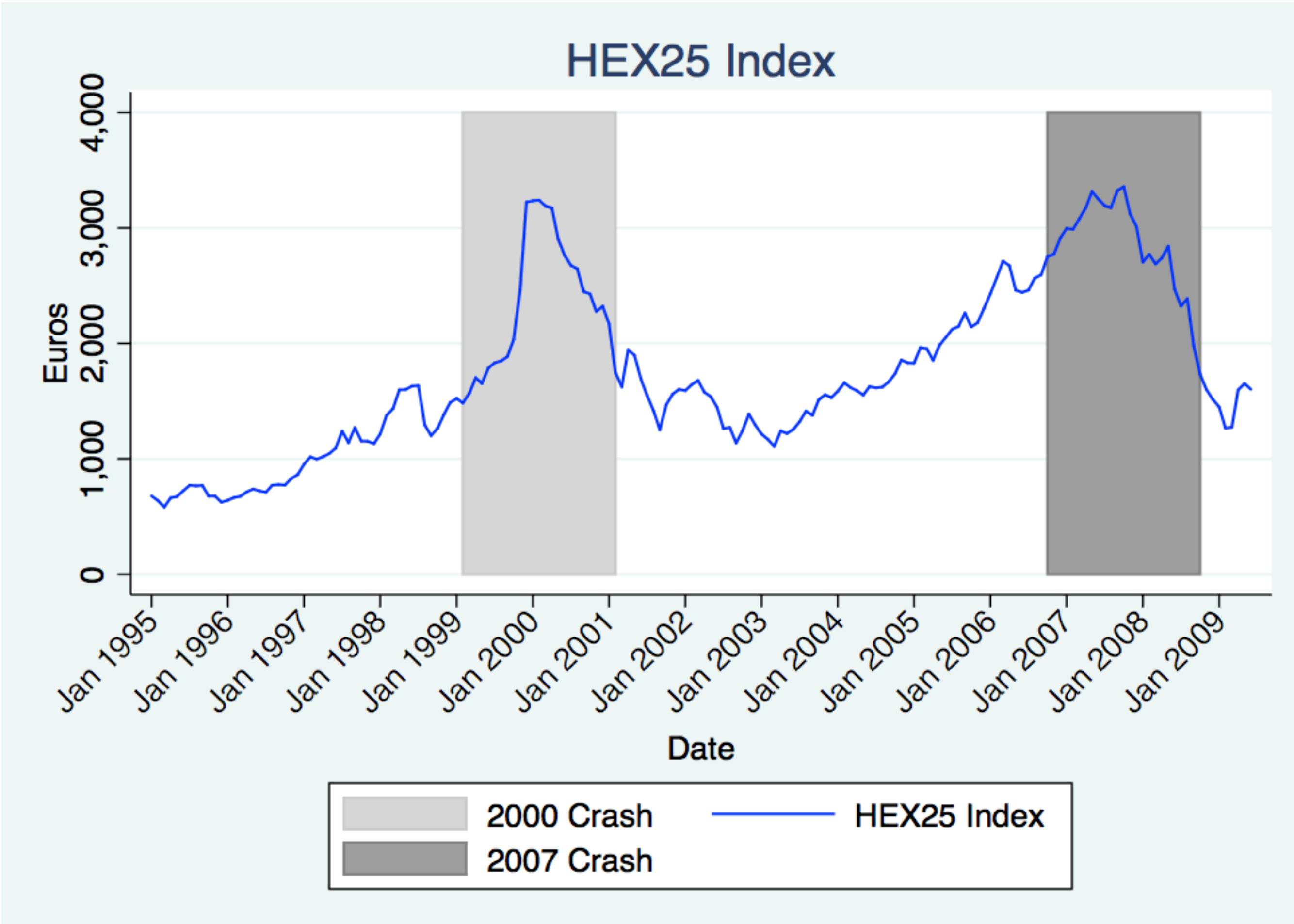

Figure 1: HEX25 Cumulative Returns

This figure displays the growth of the OMX Helsinki 25 index (formerly the HEX25 index). The HEX25 is a stock index of the 25 most traded shares on the NASDAQ OMS Helsinki exchange. The index is value weighted with a maximum weight on an individual security of 10 percent. We present the value of the OMX Helsinki 25 index for our sample period: January 1995 to June 2009. The shaded areas are the periods in which we examine performance around a market bubble.

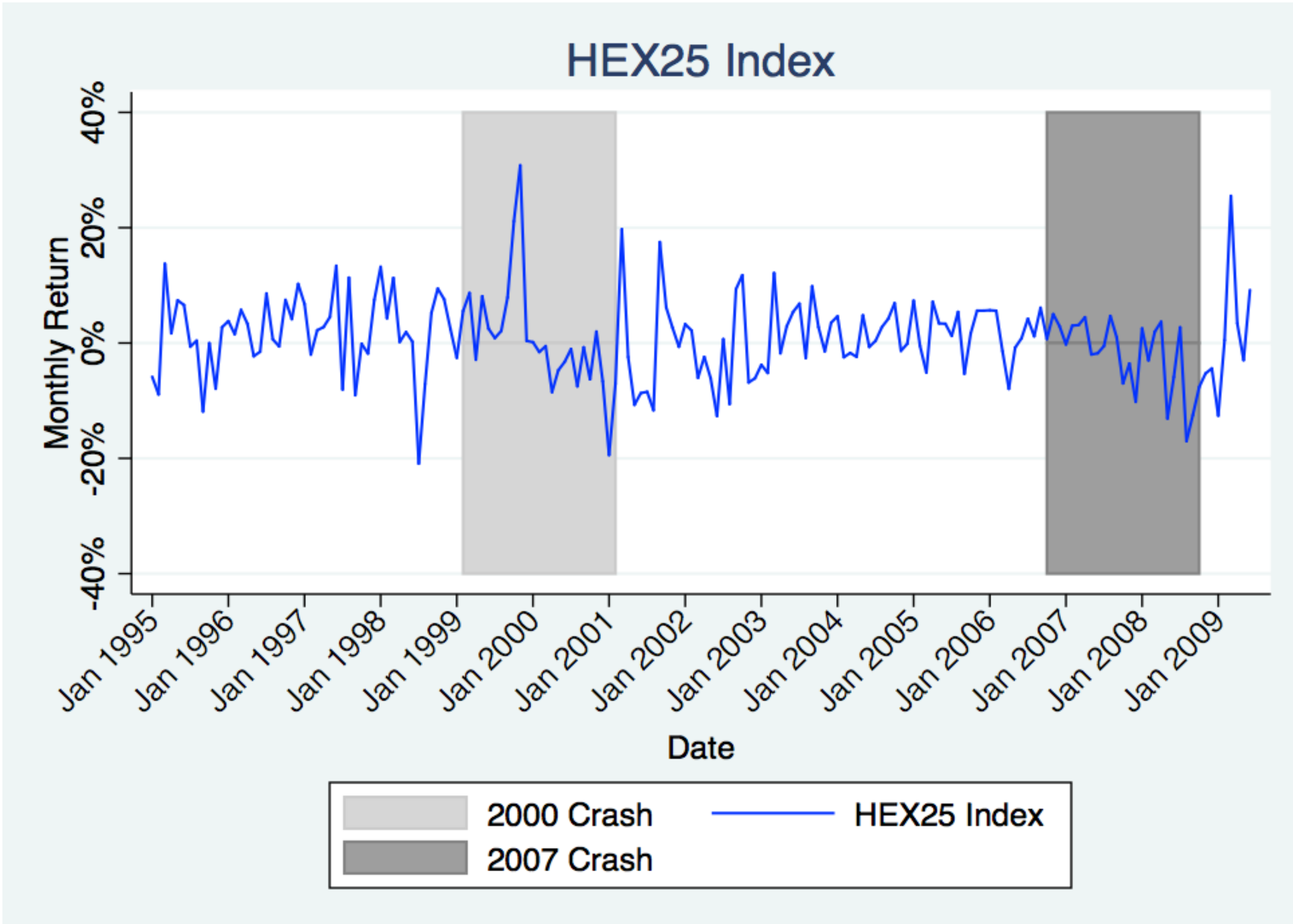

Figure 2: HEX25 Monthly Returns

This figure displays the monthly returns of the OMX Helsinki 25 index (formerly the HEX25 index). The HEX25 is a stock index of the 25 most traded shares on the NASDAQ OMS Helsinki exchange. The index is value weighted with a maximum weight on an individual security of 10 percent. We present the monthly returns of the OMX Helsinki 25 index for our sample period: January 1995 to June 2009. The shaded areas are the periods in which we examine performance around a market bubble.