

Heat Waves, Broke Businesses, and Big Bets

February 20, 2024

- **Broke Businesses** – 2023 was a hot year for bankruptcy filings, with 17,051 businesses and 416,607 individuals filing for bankruptcy in the 12-month period ending September 30, 2023. This follows 13,125 business and 370,685 non-business bankruptcy filings for the 12-month period ending September 30, 2022 (source: United States Courts).
- **Not Out of the Woods Yet** – January 2024 was a tough month for certain sectors, with six out of the eleven sectors posting negative returns for the 1-month period, including energy (-0.5%), industrial (-1.0%), utilities (-3.0%), materials (-3.9%), consumer discretionary (-4.4%), and real estate (-4.8%). Communication services (4.4%), financial (3.1%), health care (2.9%), technology (2.7%), and consumer staples (1.2%) all boasted positive January 2024 returns (source: Y Charts).
- **Enter Entrepreneurs** – The United States Census Bureau reported 5,481,437 new business formations in 2023, surpassing 2022's level of 5,084,894, beating out the previous record of 5,408,029 in 2021 (source: United States Census Bureau).
- **Not the Golden Child Anymore** – The price of gold fell 2.1% in January 2024, ending the month at \$2,053.30 per ounce, down from December 31, 2023's price of \$2,078.40. However, the price of gold is up from January 2023's price of \$1,923.90 (source: Y Charts).
- **Trying to Find Power** – Tesla Inc (TSLA) posted a 1-month price return of -24.6% in January. This follows a Delaware judge ruling that nixes Elon Musk's \$55 billion pay package, requiring repayment (source: Y Charts).
- **Foot Off the Gas** – Brent crude oil prices averaged \$83 per barrel in 2023, a \$18 decline from 2022's average price of \$101 per barrel. The average gas price in 2023 was \$3.52, decreasing from 2022's average price of \$3.95 (source: U.S. Energy Information Administration).
- **Filing Frenzy** – The IRS processed 13.9 million federal income tax returns in January 2024, down from the 16.7 million processed in January 2023 (source: IRS).
- **Behind Closed Doors** – Former Heartland Tri-State Bank CEO Shan Hanes has been charged with embezzling \$47.1 million in wire transfers to buy cryptocurrency. Heartland Tri-State Bank was closed by the Kansas Office of the State Bank Commissioner on July 28, 2023 (source: Bloomberg).
- **Summer Already?** – January 2024 goes on record as the Earth's warmest January to date, with a global average air temperature of 55.6 degrees Fahrenheit. This beats the 1991-2000 January average by 1.26 degrees Fahrenheit (source: Fox Weather).
- **Betting Big** – Sports bets placed in 2023 reached unprecedented highs, with November 2023 clocking \$14,192,826,632 in wagered funds, generating \$913,578,025 in revenue and \$177,006,903 in tax income. From January 2023 to December 2023, \$119,835,278,700 in wagers were made, creating \$10,930,877,460 in revenue and \$2,132,891,947 in tax income (source: Legal Sports Report).

[*Definitions and Indexes](#)

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