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Area investors less exposed to stock losses, advisers say

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Area financial advisers say their clients are taking the stock market's recent woes reasonably well, perhaps because they are less heavily invested in stocks than when the financial crisis in 2008 ended a long bull market.

"Definitely a lot of clients have toned down their stock exposure," said Burk Rosenthal, principal at Rosenthal Retirement Planning in Fort Worth. Whereas a typical investment account before the financial crisis had about 60 percent of its money in stocks and stock mutual funds, today it might be 40 or 50 percent with most of the rest in bond funds, he said.

"A lot of individual investors are still not back in the market from '08," said Bryan Clintsman of Clintsman Financial Planning in Southlake. While they may view that as a victory today, Clintsman still thinks it's a mistake to give up the long-term gains that stocks have historically provided, as long as they are balanced with bonds and other alternatives.

First Command Financial Planning, a Fort Worth-based firm that primarily serves military personnel, received only an average number of calls at its local customer service center, "although we did get a few more inquiries than usual regarding opportunities for moving to cash," spokesman Mark Leach said.

The advisers said clients don't seem to be anticipating another meltdown, like the financial crisis triggered when the Dow fell more than 50 percent over about 17 months. And while fear and bewilderment were the dominant reactions three years ago, many clients now feel something closer to anger at Washington for bickering over the nation's debt crisis.

"There's a growing perception we dug this hole ourselves," said Greg Hutto of Hutto Retirement Advisors in Colleyville. "There's more anger than fear," he said.

Rosenthal said he hears similar sentiments.

"People back then were shocked," he said of the financial crisis. "Now they're mad."

And not at Standard & Poor's, the debt rating agency that, for the first time, downgraded U.S. government debt late Friday from the top AAA rating to the next-highest level, AA+.

"They might not agree with it, but they understand it," Rosenthal said.

Hutto said one client noted that "this is the same S&P that gave AAA ratings to subprime mortgages."

But the same person "had to acknowledge that we got downgraded because we deserved it."

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