

Comparing bank deposits to money market funds

BlackRock®

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In today's environment of elevated policy rates and heightened geopolitical uncertainty, money market funds (MMFs) may be a consideration as a cash management solution.

Since early 2025, central banks have shifted from aggressive rate cuts to a more cautious "higher-for-longer" stance, with the Federal Reserve, European Central Bank (ECB) and Bank of England all signalling limited room for further easing.

This pivot, combined with the recent surge in oil prices and market volatility following the US-Israel conflict with Iran, has reinforced the consideration for liquidity, diversification¹ and capital preservation. MMFs, which are actively managed and diversified across high-quality issuers, seek to capture attractive yields while mitigating single-counterparty risk and offering daily liquidity.

Against a backdrop of sticky inflation, geopolitical shocks and constrained monetary policy, MMFs provide a flexible alternative to traditional bank deposits.

	Bank deposit	Money market fund
Counterparty diversification	Exposure to a single bank counterparty.	Investment in multiple counterparties resulting in diversification. Risk: Not FDIC insured.
Liquidity	Potential penalties for accessing cash prior to maturity of term deposit.	Most MMFs offer same or next-day liquidity with no lock up period. Risk: Product is not guaranteed by the bank and values may fluctuate such that you lose value. Liquidity fees are a mechanism in Institutional Prime and Tax-exempt funds that may be incorporated in times of uncertainty. Liquidity fees are mandatory if daily net redemptions exceed 5% unless liquidity costs are de minimum.
Operational ease	Multiple bi-lateral agreements with banks typically required to achieve laddered and diversified investment. Multiple individual instructions may be required to execute.	Single transaction which can be executed in various ways. Instructions needed for subsequent redemptions and subscriptions.
Yield	Rates driven by bank funding needs, which can be volatile.	Active management of diversified money market securities allows for nimble positioning in changing market conditions. Risk: A MMF is not a guaranteed investment. Investment in MMFs can fluctuate and investors' capital is at risk.
Fees	Agreed between client and bank (often costs to break term agreements). Risk: Low interest rate and money may be locked for certain periods of time.	Costs and fees embedded in product, so yields are received net.

The table above is intended to provide a general summary and is not exhaustive. A Money Market Fund (MMF) is not a guaranteed investment vehicle. An investment in MMFs is different from an investment in deposits; the principal invested in an MMF is capable of fluctuation and the risk of loss of the principal is to be borne by the investor. The MMF does not rely on external support for guaranteeing the liquidity of the MMF or stabilising the NAV per share.

Diversification does not ensure a profit nor protect against loss.

Money market funds are a cash management solution that seek to achieve diversification, daily access to cash and operational ease.

Risk

We believe diversification¹ is key.

A bank deposit results in sole credit exposure to that single banking counterpart. To diversify this exposure, an investor may seek to enter into bank deposits with many different banks.

MMFs are actively managed in accordance with offering documents as well as various regulatory and best practice thresholds. MMFs seek to mitigate risk by allocating across high-credit quality² issuers and money market sectors (excluding Government MMFs). Concentration risk is managed through diverse issuer counterparty selection³.

Liquidity

MMFs are designed to provide daily liquidity.

Overnight deposits provide the same liquidity profile as MMFs. However, term deposits typically lock up your capital for a defined period of time, and depending on the agreement, it can be difficult to gain access to your capital before maturity.

MMFs are required to hold minimum levels of daily and weekly maturing assets to help provide sufficient liquidity to meet investors needs. The active management of MMFs allows the fund to tailor liquidity levels through changing market cycles.

Fees

Consider the cost of liquidity.

Depending on the agreement term, bank deposits may involve restrictions and/or penalties for accessing your capital before its maturity.

MMFs incorporate costs and fees within the product itself as a single charge. There are no additional fees for subscriptions. Liquidity fees and redemption gates remain mechanisms that may be incorporated to help maintain fair treatment towards all MMF investors in times of uncertainty.

1. Diversification does not ensure a profit nor protect against loss.

2. SEC Rule 2a-7 states eligible securities must present minimal credit risks

3. Risk management cannot fully eliminate the risk of investment loss

Yield

Active management of MMFs allows for the potential of enhanced yield.

Deposits are issued either on a fixed- or floating-yield basis (often linked to an overnight reference rate). While the initial rate offered can often look attractive, we believe it is important to consider the 'break-even' compared to shorter-dated investments and how interest rate movements can impact the relative value.

MMFs blend highly-rated, short-term securities with longer-dated securities (final maturity of up to 13 months in short-term MMFs). The 'blend' of securities and duration exposures are determined by a team of portfolio managers' views on interest rates and market fundamentals. Thus often, MMFs can actively adapt their positioning in line with the latest market dynamics.

Operational ease

MMFs may achieve diversification whilst minimizing the volume of day-to-day operational needs.

Bank deposits are typically a direct bi-lateral agreement between the client and the bank. To achieve any level of counterparty and maturity diversification, multiple agreements may be needed to be executed with multiple banking entities, which can be resource intensive as they need to be rebooked each time.

Shares of MMFs can typically be traded directly with the MMFs transfer agent via various platforms. MMFs are also widely available across trading platforms with many execution options. After the initial subscription, only subsequent transactions based on your cash needs are required.

In most cases, MMFs can also benefit from a sweep functionality, which could automate the investment of surplus cash or the need to raise cash from existing holdings.

Want to know more?

blackrock.com/cash | cashmgmt@blackrock.com

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