

Private for Longer: The New IPO Timeline

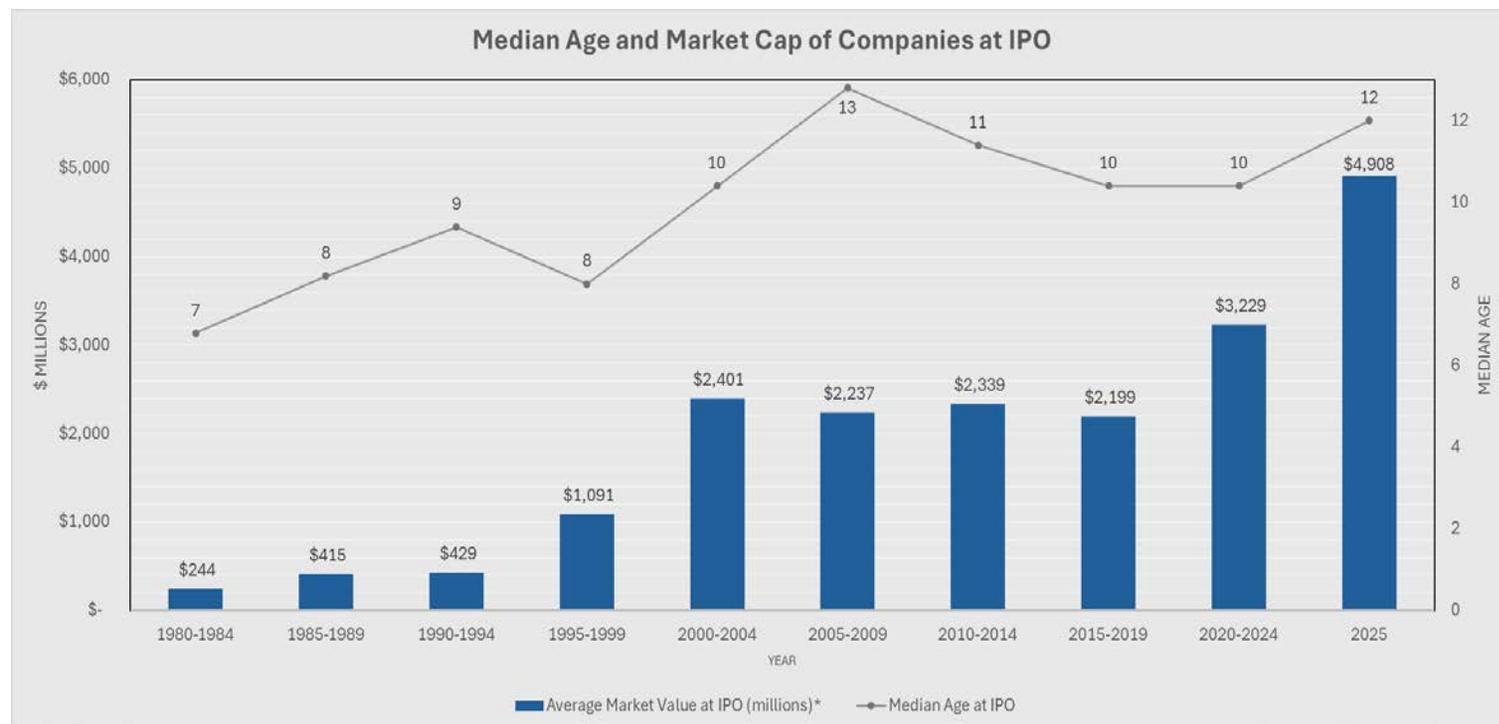
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The Rise of the Delayed IPO

The chart¹ below highlights a major change in how companies go public. Over the past few decades, businesses have been waiting much longer before launching an initial public offering (IPO). In 1980, the typical company went public about seven years after it was founded. Today, that number is closer to twelve years, an increase of more than 70%. Not only are companies staying private longer, but they are also going public at much larger sizes. Adjusted for inflation (in today's dollars), the average IPO in the early 1980s was about \$244 million. Last year, the average IPO was nearly twenty times larger, close to \$4.9 billion.

This means that much of a company's early growth now happens while they are still private. Decades ago, investors could buy shares in companies like Apple just four years after it was founded. More recently, companies such as Uber waited about 10 years to go public, and Airbnb waited roughly 17 years. By the time these firms reach the public markets today, a significant portion of their early expansion has already taken place.

This trend is expected to persist, leaving investors with fewer small public companies to choose from, as many businesses now enter the market at later and more mature stages of development.



*Adjusted for inflation using 2025 dollars

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¹ [IPO Data - Warrington School of Business](#)