

Objective

The fund seeks positive total return.

Portfolio Managers

Robert J. Schoen
(industry since 1990)

James A. Fetch
(industry since 1994)

Jason R. Vaillancourt, CFA
(industry since 1993)

Current unit value

Class IA: \$9.61
Class IB: \$9.47

Non-directional strategies

Equity Selection Alpha: Long/short or beta/market neutral equity strategies that focus on individual securities, basket of securities, and/or sectors. **Fixed Income**

Selection Alpha: Long/short and/or opportunistic alpha strategies within the more unique areas of the fixed-income market, such as the securitized mortgage market. **Fixed Income Sector Alpha:**

Long/short selections strategies either within a particular fixed-income sector or between sectors. **Regional**

Equity Long/Short: Top-down equity long/short trades. Could be between two different countries or basket of countries. **Regional Fixed**

Income Long/Short: Top-down fixed-income long/short trades. Could be between two different countries or basket of countries. **Commodity**

Alpha: Long/short trades focused on commodity markets. Could be between two different indices, sub-sectors, or different parts of the futures curve. **Currency**

Alpha: Long/short individual and/or baskets of currencies. **Alternative Beta:** Seek

different sources of market beta or risk premium, constructed in a way that is market neutral.

Putnam VT Multi-Asset Absolute Return Fund

Seeks positive returns with a similar level of volatility

Targeting positive returns

The fund seeks positive returns with a similar level of volatility over a full market cycle.

Global flexibility

The strategy dynamically combines efficient beta and uncorrelated alpha strategies to create a well-diversified portfolio.

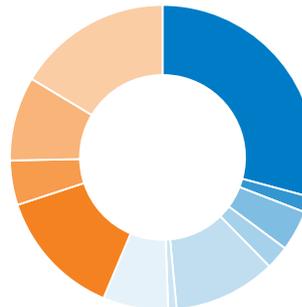
Diversification potential

Less influenced by traditional market risks, the fund can be an effective choice to improve portfolio efficiency.

Diversified strategies make the portfolio more efficient

The portfolio combines long and short directional beta strategies with non-directional alpha strategies. They have low or negative correlation to each other and combining them can reduce portfolio volatility.

Directional	43.7%
Equity	13.6
Credit	4.7
Rates	8.9
Commodities	16.4



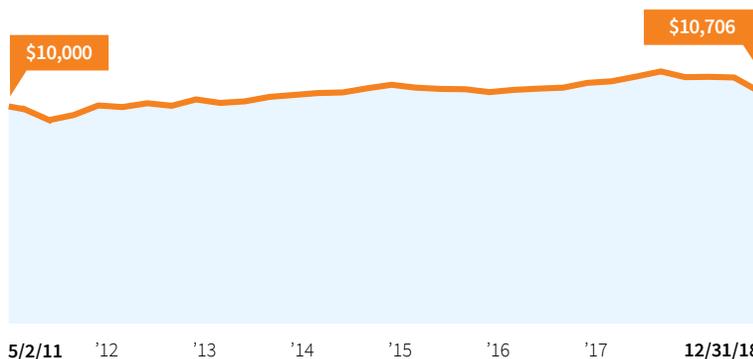
Non-directional	56.3%
Equity selection alpha	29.2
Fixed income selection alpha	1.7
Fixed income sector alpha	0.0
Regional equity long/short	4.3
Regional fixed income long/short	2.5
Commodity alpha	10.9
Currency alpha	0.9
Alternative beta	6.9

Stand-alone risk allocations as of 12/31/18.

Diversification does not guarantee a profit or ensure against loss. It is possible to lose money in a diversified portfolio.

Growth of a \$10,000 investment

The fund has returned an average of 0.9% annually since inception. (Class IB)



The fund seeks strong risk-adjusted returns with low market risk since inception

5/2/11-12/31/18

Annualized return (IB)	0.89%
Standard deviation	3.58%
Sharpe ratio	0.12
Beta (BBG U.S. Aggregate Bond Index)	0.21
Beta (S&P 500 Index)	0.22

Current performance may be lower or higher than the quoted past performance, which cannot guarantee future results. Share price, principal value, and return will vary, and you may have a gain or a loss when you sell your shares. All total return figures are at net asset value. The charges and expenses of the insurance company separate account level are not reflected. Performance for class IB shares for periods prior to their inception is based on class IA shares, adjusted to reflect the fees paid by class IB shares including a 12b-1 fee of 0.25%. To obtain the most recent month-end performance, contact your variable annuity provider, who has more information about their variable annuity and variable life products that invest in Putnam managed products. For a portion of the period, this fund limited expenses, without which returns would have been lower.

**Not FDIC insured
May lose value
No bank guarantee**

Number of holdings

533

Net assets

\$27.37M

Annual performance at net asset value (all distributions reinvested)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Class IA	—	—	—	4.6%	4.5%	4.1%	-0.2%	0.9%	7.2%	-7.6%
Class IB	—	—	—	4.4	4.1	3.9	-0.4	0.6	7.0	-7.8
ICE BofAML U.S. Treasury Bill Index	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.8	1.9

Annualized total return performance

	Class IA (5/2/11) NAV	Class IB (5/2/11) NAV	ICE BofAML U.S. Treasury Bill Index
1 year	-7.57%	-7.84%	1.88%
3 years	0.00	-0.27	1.02
5 years	0.76	0.51	0.64
Life of fund	1.16	0.89	0.45

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Beta is defined as a fund's sensitivity to market movements and is used to evaluate market related, or systematic, risk. It is a historical measure of the variability of return earned by an investment portfolio. Risk statistics are measured using a 3-year regression analysis. For funds with shorter track records, Since Inception analysis is used.

Sharpe ratio is a measure of historical adjusted performance calculated by dividing the fund's return minus the risk free rate (ML 3-Month T-Bill) by the standard deviation of the fund's return. The higher the ratio, the better the fund's return per unit of risk.

Standard deviation measures how widely a set of values varies from the mean. It is a historical measure of the variability of return earned by an investment portfolio.

Not all share classes are available on all platforms.

For informational purposes only. Not an investment recommendation.

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Putnam Retail Management
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The ICE BofAML U.S. Treasury Bill Index is an unmanaged index that tracks the performance of U.S. dollar-denominated U.S. Treasury bills publicly issued in the U.S. domestic market. Qualifying securities must have a remaining term of at least one month to final maturity and a minimum amount outstanding of \$1 billion. You cannot invest directly in an index. ICE Data Indices, LLC ("ICE BofAML"), used with permission. ICE BofAML permits use of the ICE BofAML indices and related data on an "as is" basis; makes no warranties regarding same; does not guarantee the suitability, quality, accuracy, timeliness, and/or completeness of the ICE BofAML indices or any data included in, related to, or derived therefrom; assumes no liability in connection with the use of the foregoing; and does not sponsor, endorse, or recommend Putnam Investments, or any of its products or services.

Consider these risks before investing: Allocation of assets among asset classes may hurt performance. The value of stocks and bonds in the fund's portfolio may fall or fail to rise over extended periods of time for a variety of reasons, including general financial market conditions, changing market perceptions (including, in the case of bonds, perceptions about the risk of default and expectations about monetary policy or interest rates), changes in government intervention in the financial markets, and factors related to a specific issuer or industry. These and other factors may also lead to increased volatility and reduced liquidity in the fund's portfolio holdings. Growth stocks may be more susceptible to earnings disappointments, and value stocks may fail to rebound. Bond investments are subject to interest-rate risk (the risk of bond prices falling if interest rates rise) and credit risk (the risk of an issuer defaulting on interest or principal payments). Interest-rate risk is greater for longer-term bonds, and credit risk is greater for below-investment-grade bonds. Unlike bonds, funds that invest in bonds have fees and expenses. Lower-rated bonds may offer higher yields in return for more risk. Funds that invest in government securities are not guaranteed. Mortgage-backed securities are subject to prepayment risk and the risk that they may increase in value less when interest rates decline and decline in value more when interest rates rise. International investing involves currency, economic, and political risks. Emerging-market securities have illiquidity and volatility risks. Our alpha strategy may lose money or not earn a return sufficient to cover associated trading and other costs. Our use of leverage obtained through derivatives increases these risks by increasing investment exposure. Risks associated with derivatives include increased investment exposure (which may be considered leverage) and, in the case of over-the-counter instruments, the potential inability to terminate or sell derivatives positions and the potential failure of the other party to the instrument to meet its obligations. The fund's efforts to produce lower-volatility returns may not be successful and may make it more difficult at times for the fund to achieve its targeted return. Under certain market conditions, the fund may accept greater-than-typical volatility to seek its targeted return. The fund may not achieve its goal, and it is not intended to be a complete investment program. You can lose money by investing in the fund. The fund's prospectus lists additional risks.

The Absolute Return funds are not intended to outperform stocks and bonds during strong market rallies.

Your clients should carefully consider the investment objective, risks, charges, and expenses of a fund before investing. For a prospectus containing this and other information for any variable annuity or variable life product that invests in Putnam managed products, call the Putnam Client Engagement Center at 1-800-354-4000. Your clients should read the prospectus carefully before investing.