NQ MACRO TIMES, TESTED

Every 5-minute bar of Nasdaq futures, measured. Which windows actually move — and which famous ones don't.

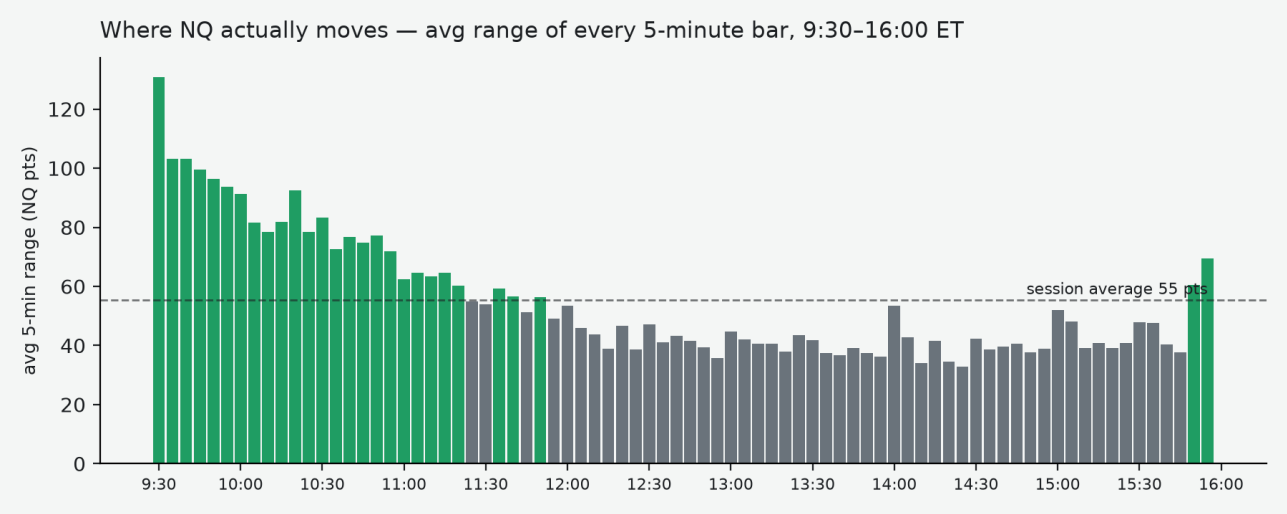
You've seen the macro-times charts: mysterious 20-minute windows each hour when 'the algo' delivers price. Nobody posts data with them. So we measured it: every 5-minute bar, 9:30–16:00 ET, ~40 trading sessions of NQ, cross-checked against 2 years of hourly data.

CLAIMED WINDOW	MEASURED	VERDICT
9:50 – 10:10	1.64x avg movement	REAL — the strongest window of the day
10:50 – 11:10	1.25x	Real, but modest
11:50 – 12:10	0.93x	Average. Nothing special
13:10 – 13:40 (lunch)	0.73x	DEADER than average — the quietest 'macro'
14:50 – 15:10	0.80x	Below average
15:15 – 15:45	0.77x	Below average
15:45 – 16:00 (MOC)	1.01x	Exactly average

Score: 2 of 7 confirmed. The rest are at or below the session average — including the famous lunch macro, which is the closest thing NQ has to a nap.

Method: range (high–low) of every 5-minute bar as the movement measure; each window compared to the all-session average bar. Jun–Aug 2026 sample, 38 sessions; hour-of-day pattern cross-checked on 2 years of hourly bars (the 9–11am dominance holds: 1.32–1.33x vs 0.78–0.88x after 12:00). Movement ≠ direction: none of this predicts which way price goes.

The actual heat map



Green bars beat the session average. The pattern is not a mystery and not hourly: **NQ's movement is front-loaded into 9:30–10:35**, peaks on the opening bar (2.36x), decays through lunch, and only twitches again into the close.

The five heaviest 5-minute bars of the day

TIME (ET)	AVG RANGE	VS AVERAGE
9:30	131 pts	2.36x
9:40	103 pts	1.87x
9:35	103 pts	1.86x
9:45	100 pts	1.80x
9:50	96 pts	1.74x

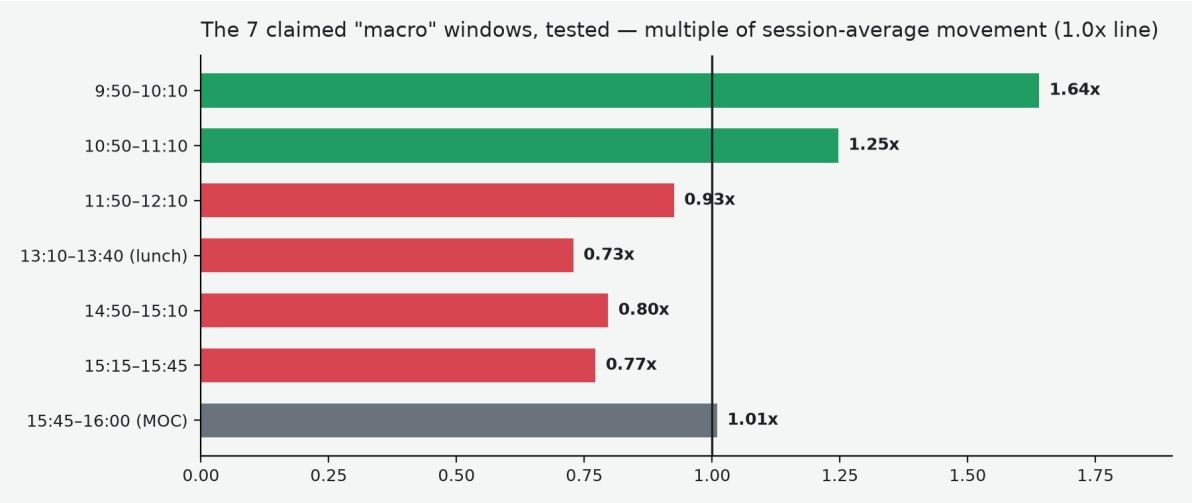
And the deadest: 14:10–14:25 (0.59–0.62x) and the 12:55 lunch trough (0.65x). If your strategy needs movement, these windows are where good setups go to die.

One more stat worth more than any macro chart:

On 79% of days, one side of the day's entire range is already set before 10:30.

(The high 37% of the time, the low 47%.) Whatever you trade, the first hour is where the day's structure gets built.

The claimed windows, measured



Why does 9:50–10:10 test well? Probably not a secret algorithm: it catches the tail of the opening drive plus the 10:00 ET economic-data slot (ISM, consumer sentiment, JOLTS all print at 10:00). The mundane explanation and the measured edge point at the same clock.

How to actually use this

1. Trade the window that pays. If your day only has 90 focused minutes in it, the data says make them 9:30–11:10 ET. Everything after 12:00 is a coin-flip on movement — and movement is the raw material of every day-trading strategy.

2. Respect the dead zones. 12:30–14:30 isn't 'manipulation', it's absence. Forcing trades there means paying full risk for 60–70% of the movement. Most overtrading blowups live in this stretch.

3. Size for the window you're in. The average 9:30 bar travels 131 points — $2,620 per NQ contract, more than a 50k eval's entire trailing drawdown. The open pays the most and forgives the least: if you trade it on a funded account, your stop math must assume 2x the movement you'd see at any other time of day.

4. If you run multiple accounts, the open is exactly when execution matters. Copying trades across accounts by hand during the fastest 20 minutes of the day is how identical accounts end up with different fills. Whatever tool you use, know its latency — measured, not claimed.

Who made this

Trading Floor is a browser-based trade copier for prop-firm futures traders (Tradovate, TopstepX, Rithmic, Volumetrica). We publish our copy latency live — every order, timed, at **tradingfloor.me/latency** — because we think every number in trading should come with a receipt. This PDF is the same policy applied to a famous chart.

Next test drops in the Discord: discord.gg/tradingfloor