



ALLIANCEBERNSTEIN®

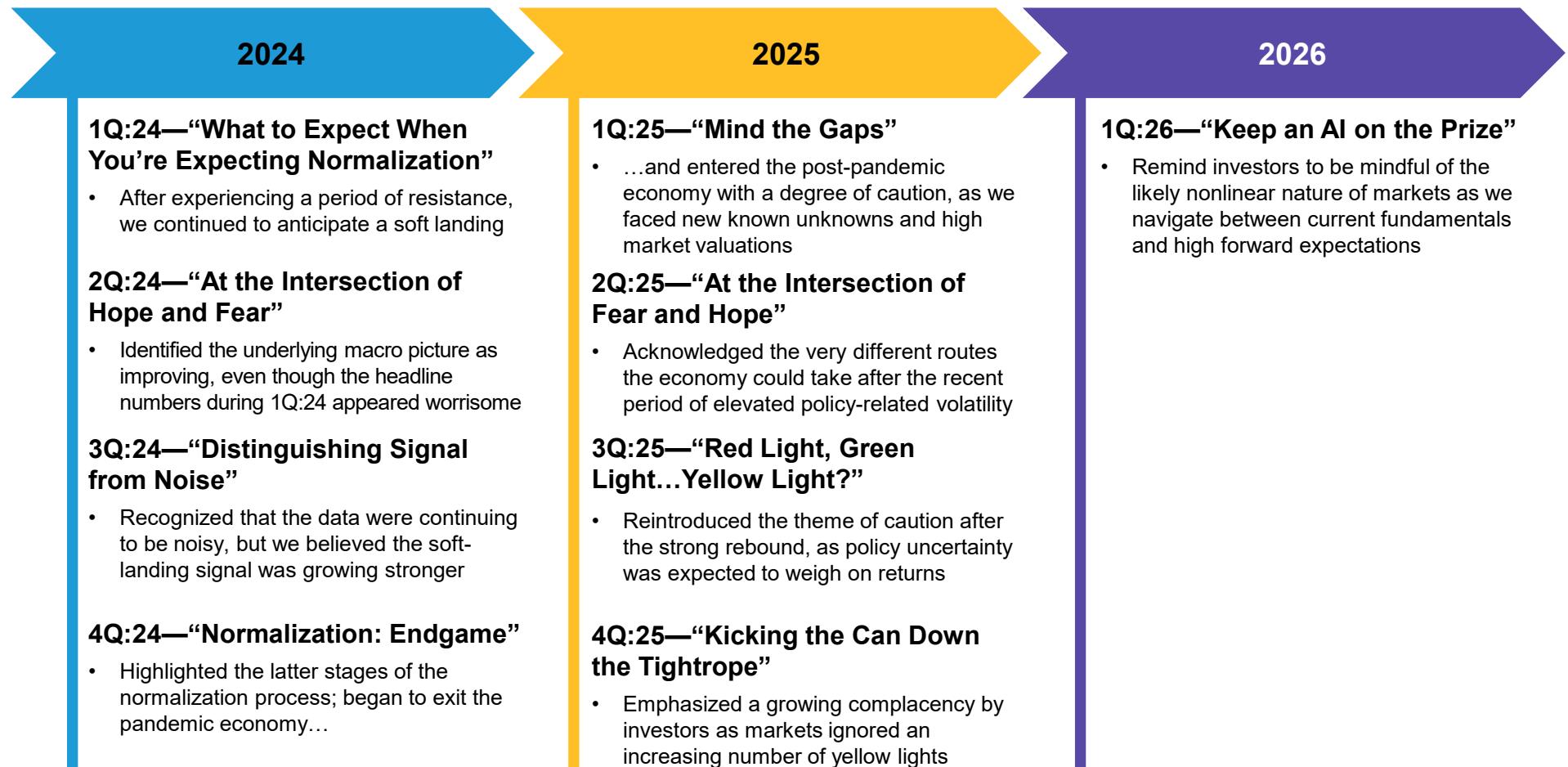
First Quarter 2026

# Global Capital Markets Outlook

Keep an AI on the Prize

The information herein reflects prevailing market conditions and our judgments, which are subject to change, as of the date of this document. In preparing this document, we have relied upon and assumed, without independent verification, the accuracy and completeness of all information available from public sources. Opinions and estimates may be changed without notice and involve a number of assumptions that may not prove valid. There is no guarantee that any forecasts or opinions in this material will be realized. Information should not be construed as investment advice.

# Timeline of AB's Capital Markets Outlook Themes

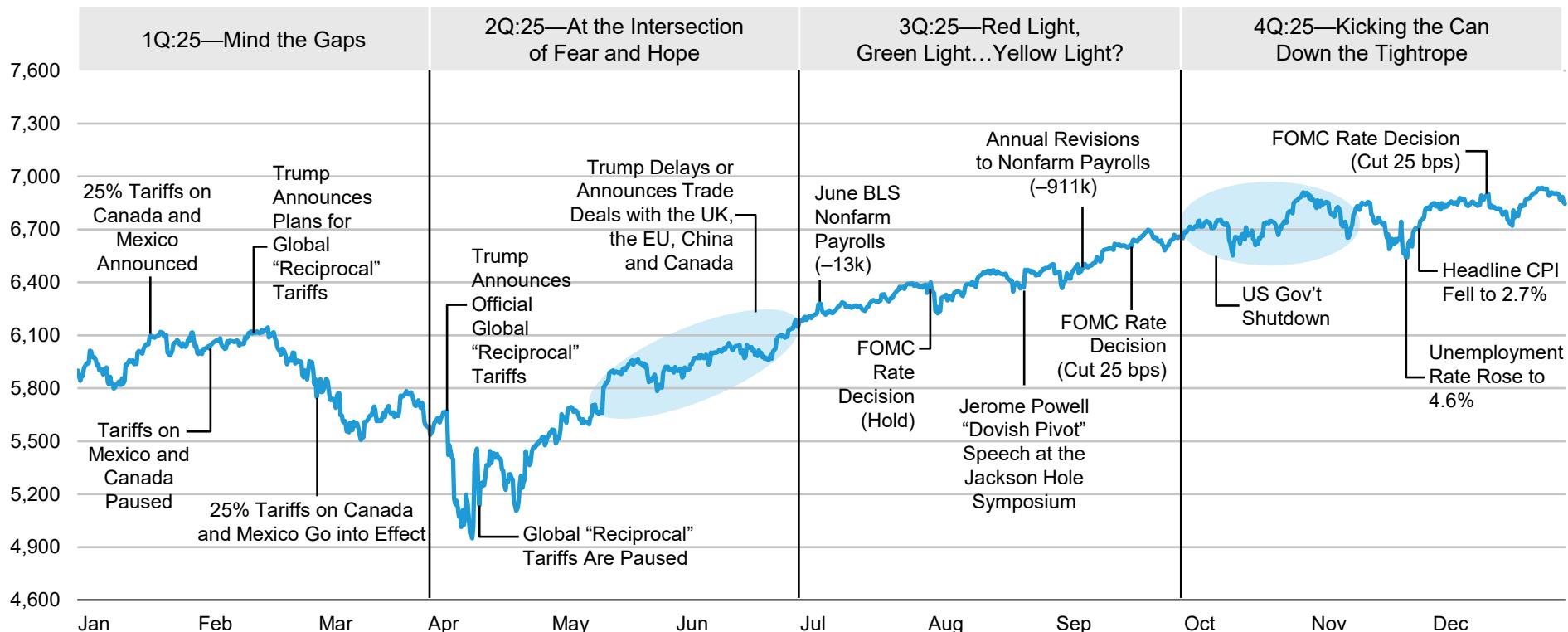


Current analysis does not guarantee future results.

Source: AB

# 2025: After a Volatile Start, Markets Rallied on the Avoidance of Worst-Case-Scenario Tariffs, the AI Trade and Non-Recessionary Rate Cuts

## S&P 500 Price Chart (in USD)



**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

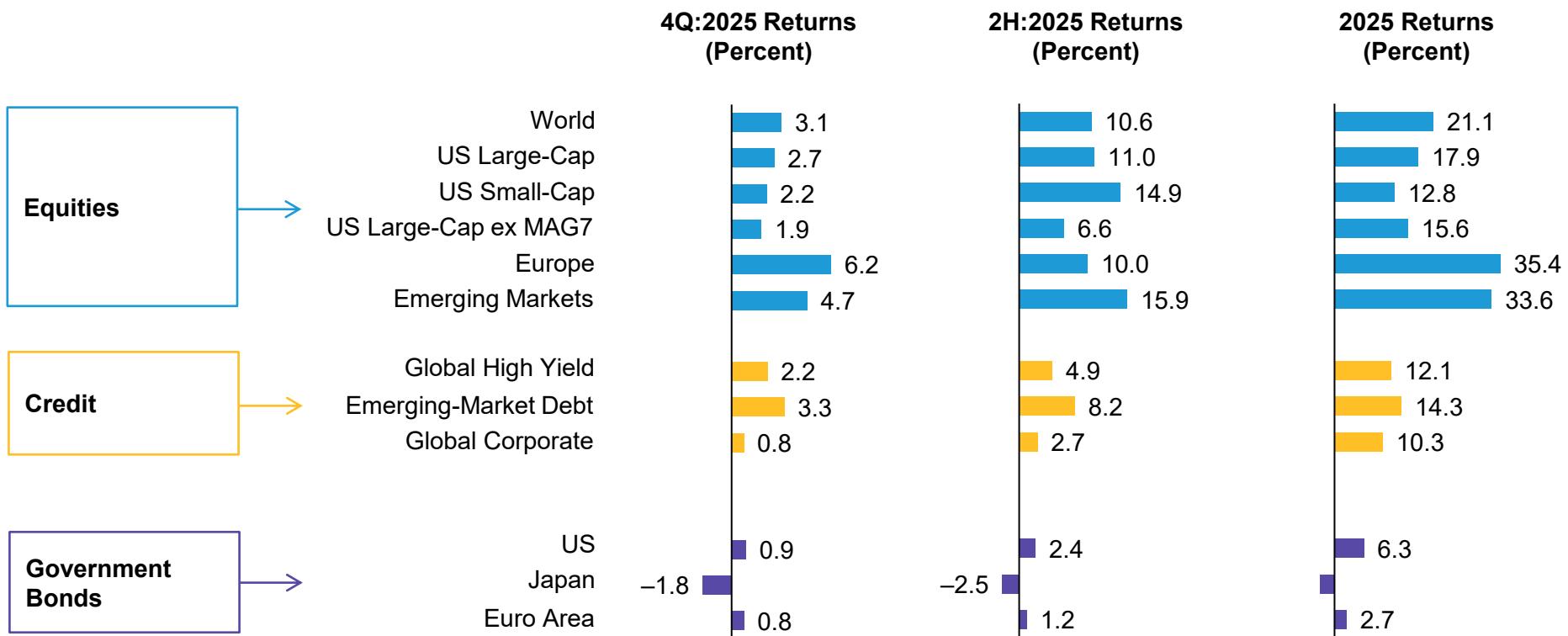
BLS: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; bps: basis points; FOMC: Federal Open Market Committee

Returns are price returns; event dates are approximate.

Through 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, Federal Reserve, Institute for Supply Management, S&P, US Bureau of Labor Statistics and AB

# Ex-COVID Rebound, 2025 Equity Performance Capped Off the Strongest Three-Year Period Since the Buildup of the Tech Bubble in the 1990s



**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

Returns in US dollars. "World", "Emerging-Markets" and "Europe" returns are net returns; all other returns are total returns. Japan government bonds are in hedged USD terms. All other non-US returns are in unhedged USD terms. US large-cap is represented by S&P 500. US small-cap is represented by Russell 2000. US large-cap ex MAG7 is represented by Bloomberg US Large Cap ex Magnificent 7 Total Return. Emerging-market debt returns are for dollar-denominated bonds as represented by the J.P. Morgan Emerging Markets Bond Index Global Diversified. An investor cannot invest directly in an index, and its performance does not reflect the performance of any AB portfolio. The unmanaged index does not reflect the fees and expenses associated with the active management of a portfolio.

As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, J.P. Morgan, FTSE Russell, MSCI, Standard & Poor's (S&P) and AB

# Macro Outlook: New Year, Similar Story

## Rates

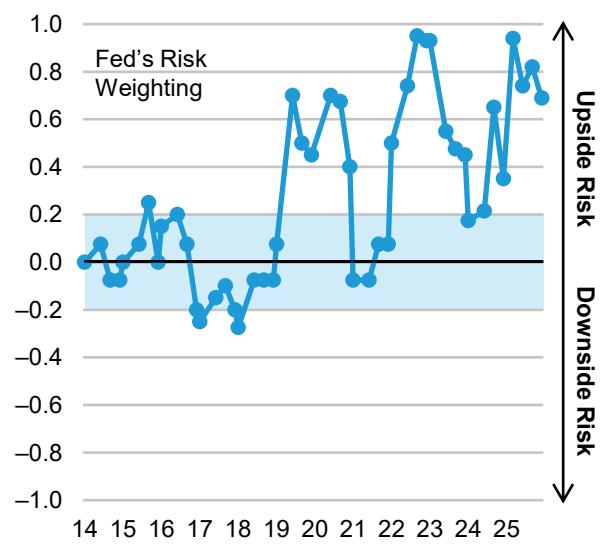
"Payroll jobs averaging 40,000 per month since April. We think there's an overstatement in these numbers by about 60,000, **so that would be negative 20,000 per month.**"

...The labor market has continued to cool gradually, maybe just a touch more gradually than we thought."

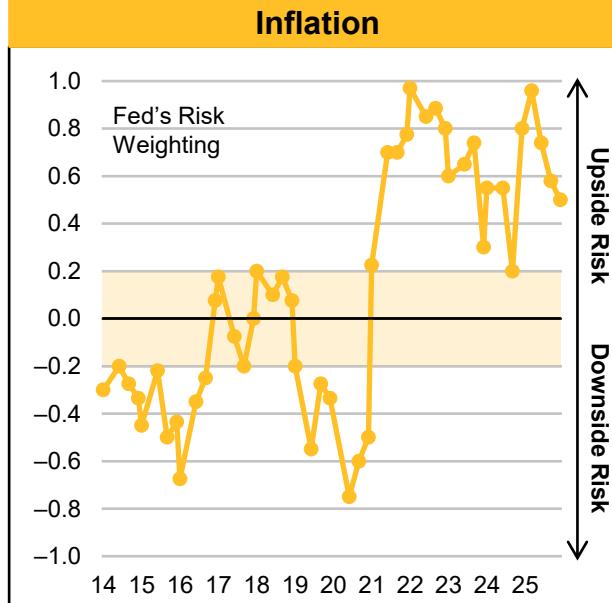
"The story with inflation...is that **if you get away from tariffs, inflation is in the low 2s**, right? So, it's really tariffs that's [sic] causing...the inflation overshoot. And we do think of those as likely to...be a one-time... price increase."

"A number of things are driving what's happening in the [growth] forecast....Fiscal policy is going to be supportive. And, as I mentioned, AI spending will continue. The consumer continues to spend. **So it looks like the baseline would be solid growth next year.**"

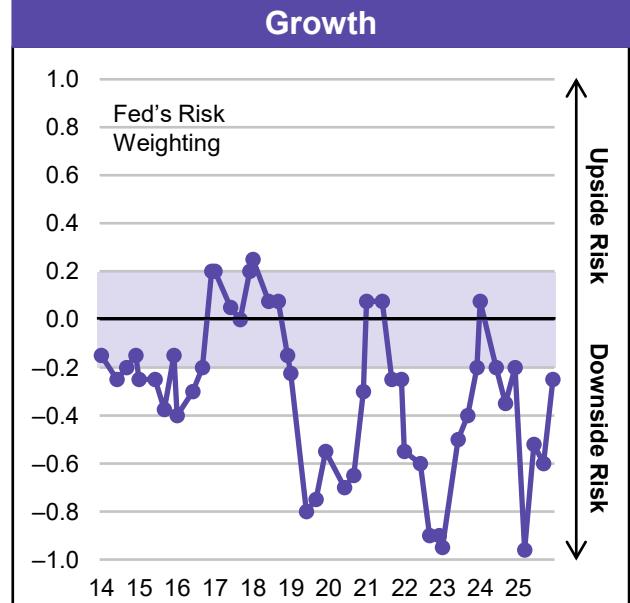
## Labor Market



## Inflation



## Growth



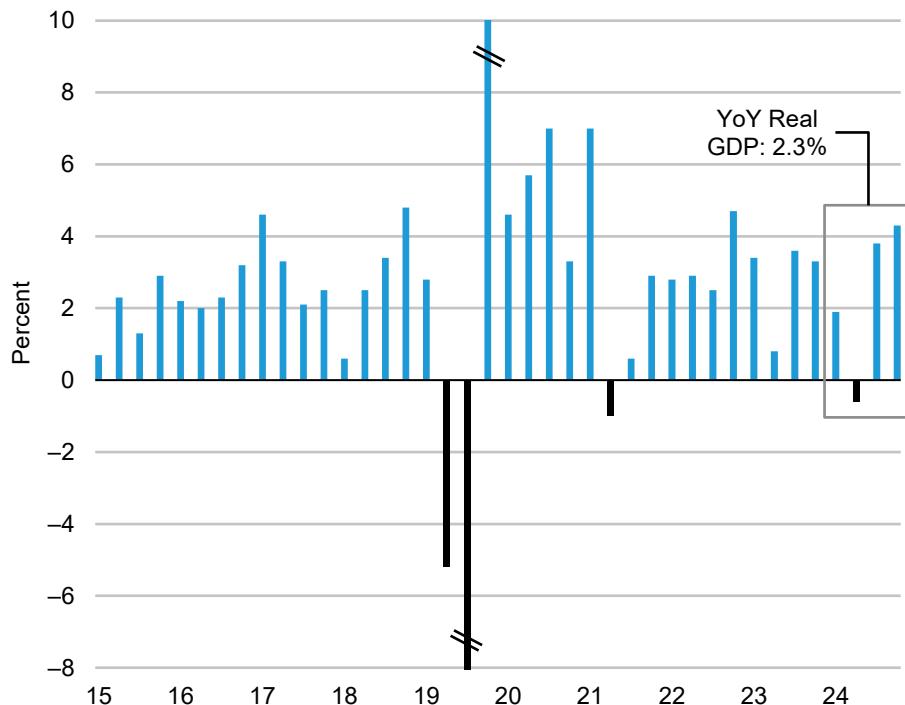
**Historical analysis and current forecasts do not guarantee future results.**

Quotes are from Jerome Powell on 10 December 2025. The shaded areas are considered risk weightings that are more neutral. Each point in the diffusion indices represents the number of participants who responded "weighted to the upside" minus the number who responded "weighted to the downside," divided by the total number of participants. Through 31 December 2025. Source: Federal Reserve and AB

# Growth: “Solid”

## Real GDP on the Surface

Growth has been resilient in the face of great policy uncertainty



Current analysis does not guarantee future results.

YoY: year-over-year

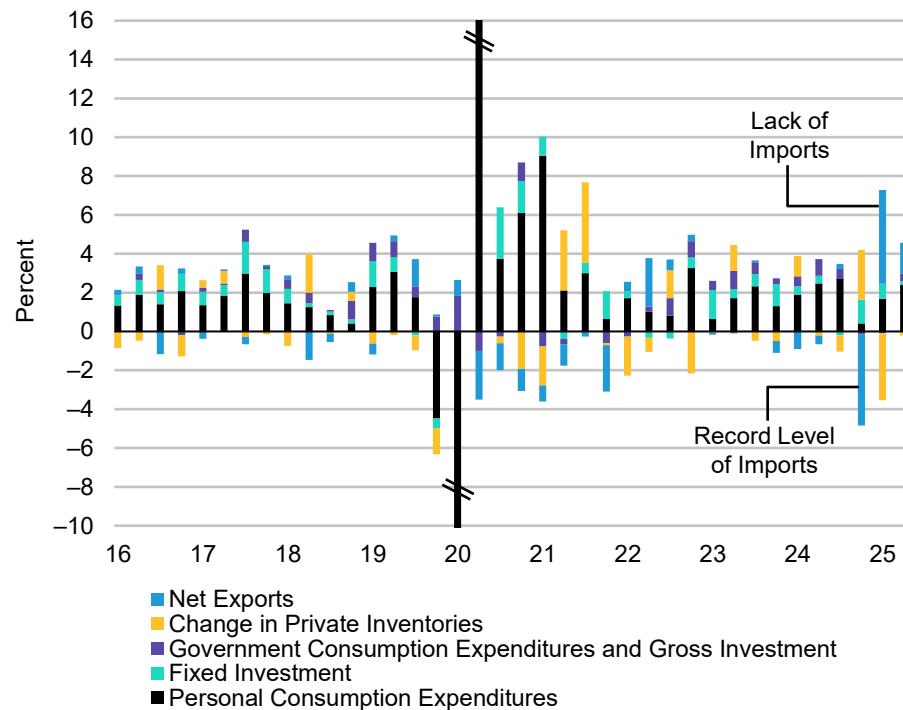
As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, Bureau of Economic Analysis and AB

[A]  
[B]

## Real GDP One Layer Deeper

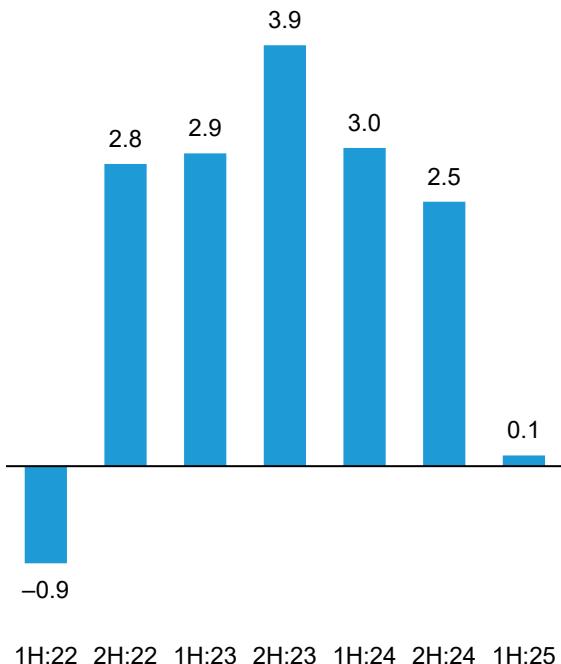
After two quarters of noisy GDP reports, the primary driver of 3Q:25 GDP was consumer spending...a healthier signal



# Growth: What's Driving It?

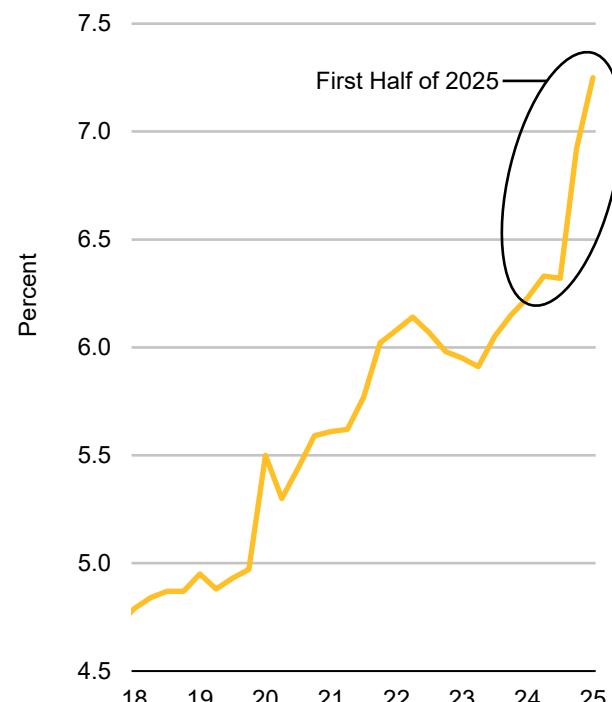
## Business Spending

Real GDP *excluding* information-processing equipment and software investment (percent)



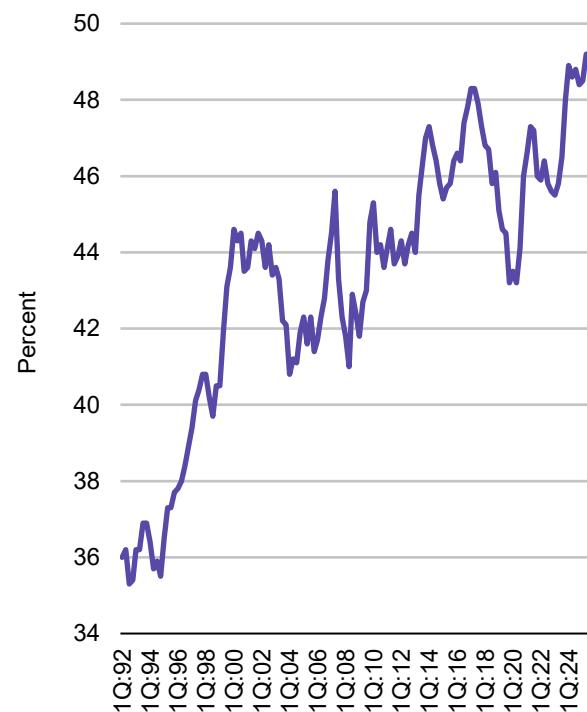
## Business Spending

Real private fixed investment: tech related



## Consumer Spending

Top 10% of earners make up nearly half of all consumer spending in the US



**Current analysis does not guarantee future results.**

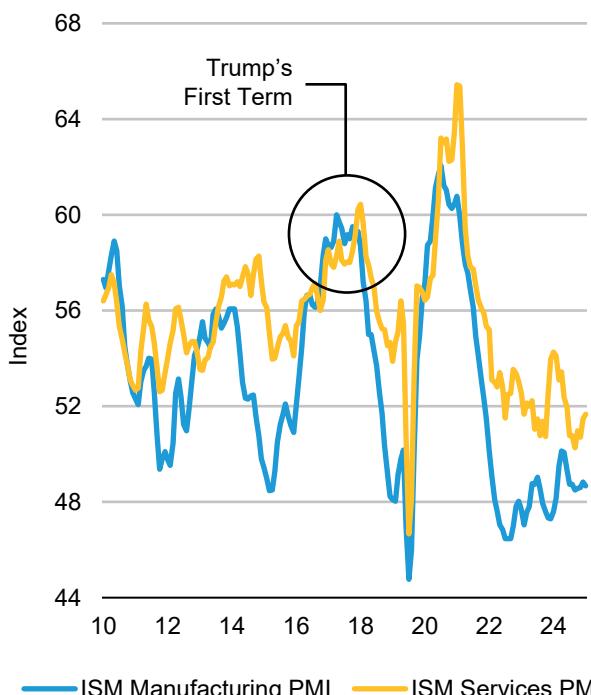
1H: first half; 2H: second half

As of 31 December 2025

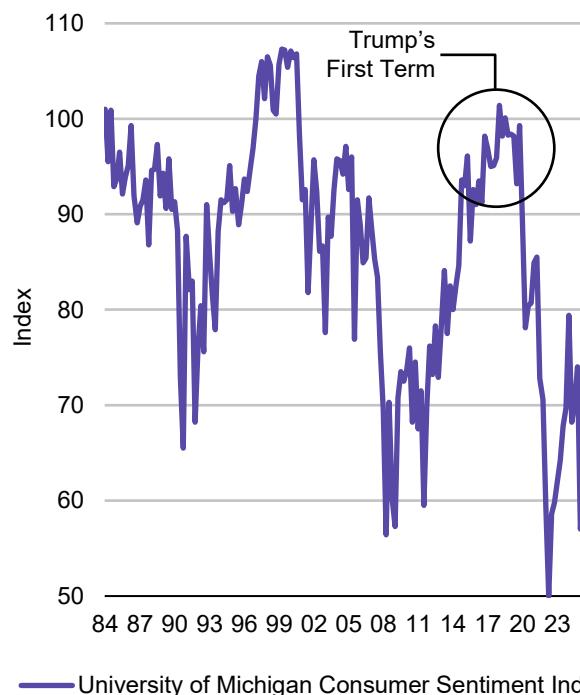
Source: Bloomberg, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Jason Furman, LSEG Data & Analytics, Moody's Analytics and AB

# Growth: How Sustainable Is It?

## Business Confidence\* Remains Persistently Low

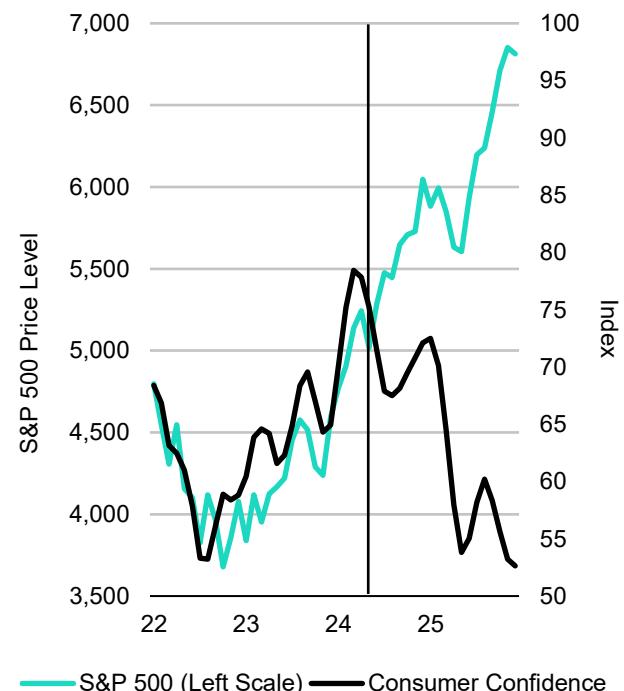


## Consumer Confidence Remains Persistently Low



## The “K-Shaped” Economy

The gap is wide and getting wider



**Current analysis does not guarantee future results.**

ISM: Institute for Supply Management; PMI: Purchasing Managers' Index

\*Rolling three-month average

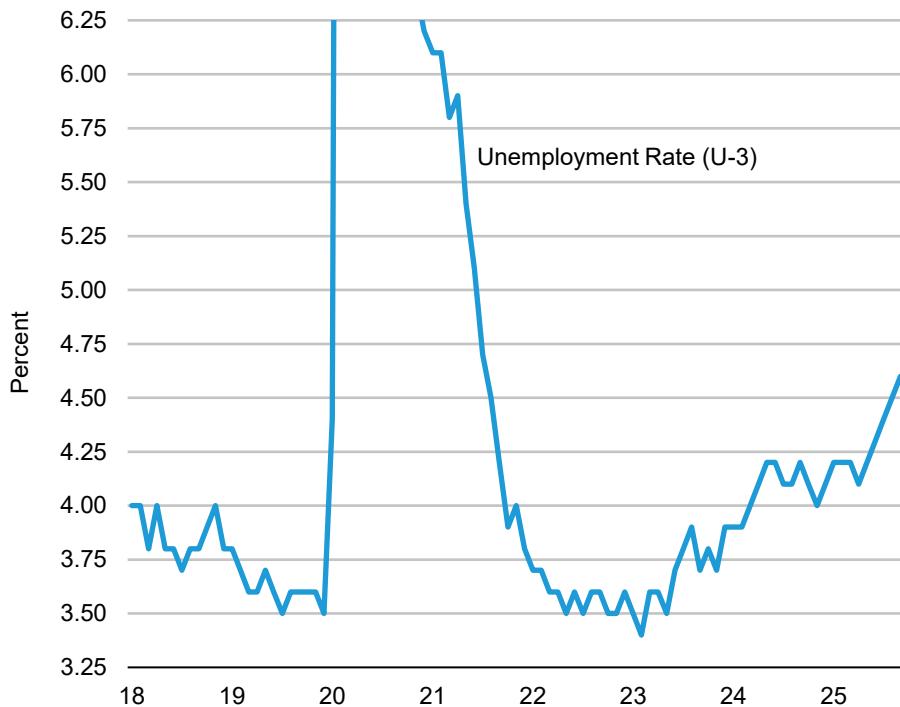
As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, Institute for Supply Management, LSEG Data & Analytics, S&P, University of Michigan and AB

# Labor: The Shark Circling the Boat

## The Gold Standard

Unemployment rate (U-3)



**Current analysis does not guarantee future results.**

U-3: measures the percentage of people in the labor force who are actively looking for work and available to work; U-6: measures the percentage of the US labor force that is unemployed (U-3), plus those who are underemployed and marginally attached to the workforce, and who have given up looking for work.

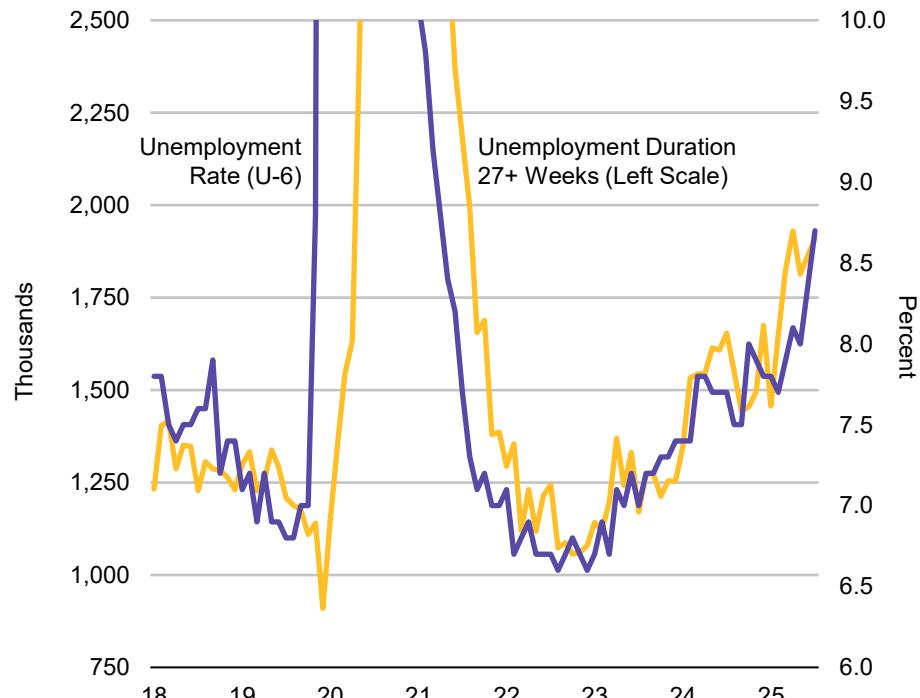
Through 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, Bureau of Economic Analysis and AB

[A]  
[B]

## Another Lens

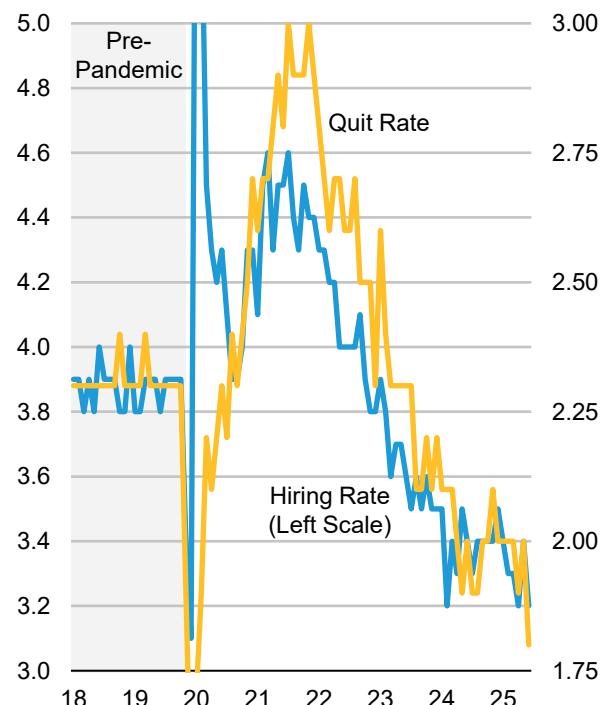
Unemployed for 27+ weeks and unemployment rate (U-6)



# Labor: Blood in the Water?

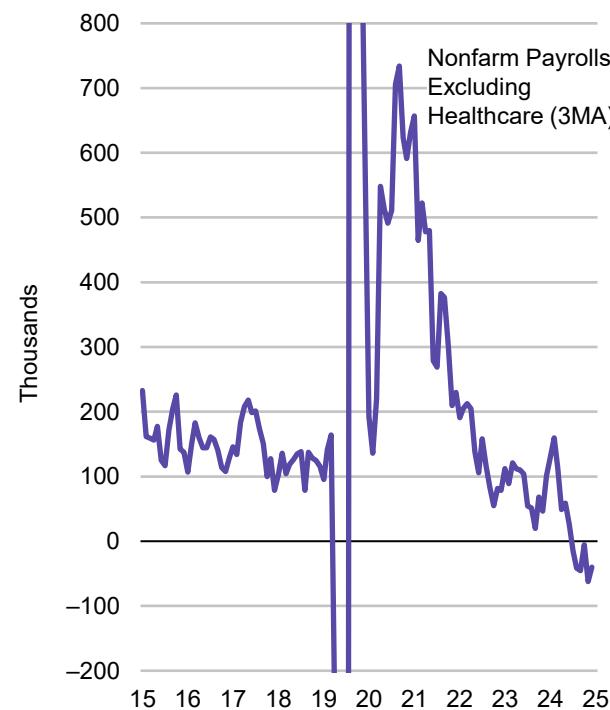
## The Labor Market Is Frozen...

Percent

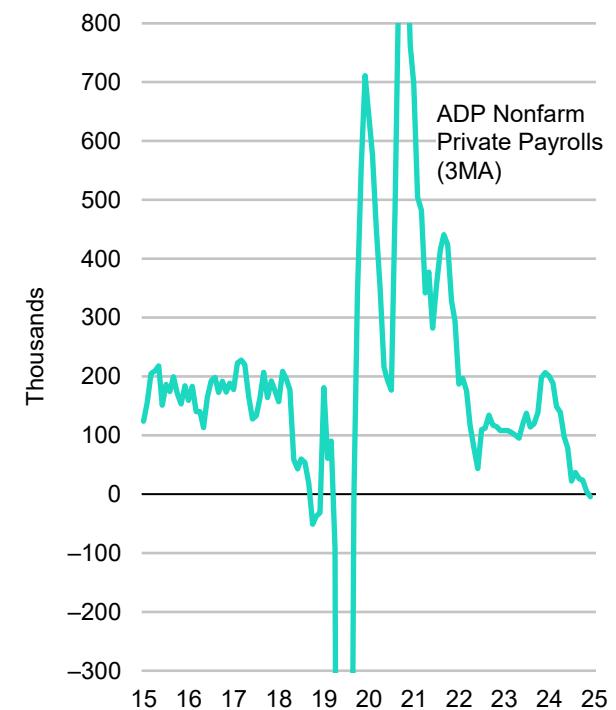


## ...Which Could Lead to It Stalling Out

Payrolls ex the least cyclical category



## This Slowdown Is Further Evidenced by Private Payrolls Data



Current analysis does not guarantee future results.

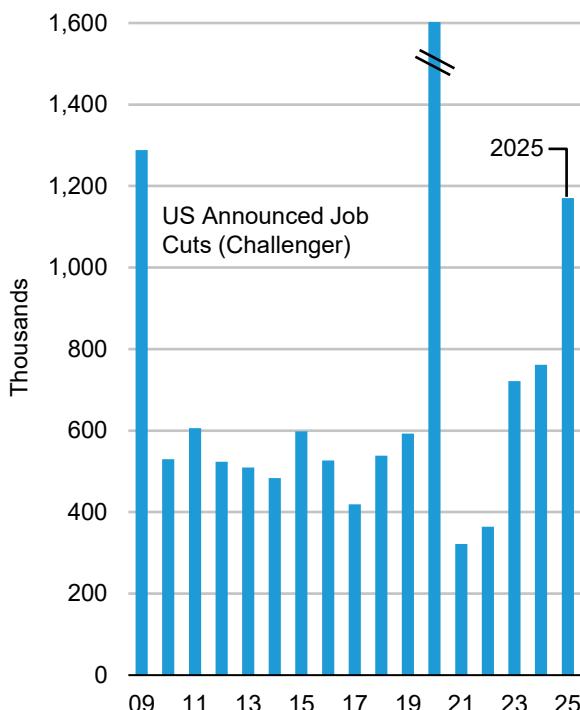
3MA: three-month moving average

Through 31 December 2025

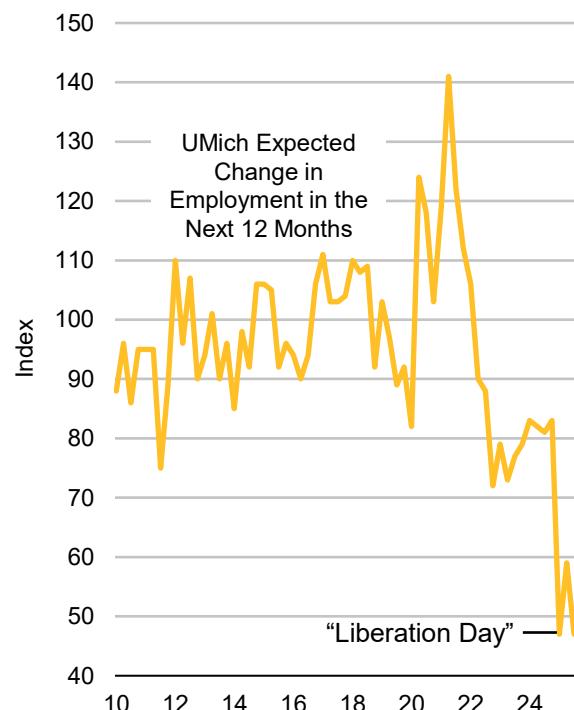
Source: ADP, Bloomberg, US Bureau of Labor Statistics and AB

# Labor: Blood in the Water?

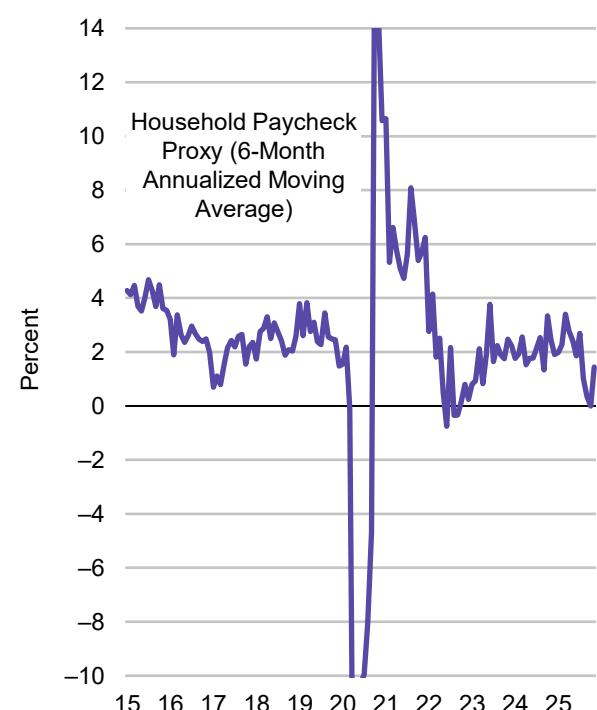
## Job Cuts Are at the Highest Level in over a Decade Outside a Recession



## Consumer Sentiment for the Labor Market Is Near an All-Time Low



## As Wage Growth Slows, Paychecks Are Struggling to Keep Up with Inflation



**Current analysis does not guarantee future results.**

Through 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg; Challenger, Gray & Christmas; University of Michigan and AB

# Inflation: On the Right Path

## The Labor Market Isn't Creating Meaningful Inflationary Pressures

“

Do we see what's going on with wages? You saw the ECI report today. It doesn't feel like a hot economy that wants to generate, you know, a Phillips curve [wage-based] kind of inflation.”

—Jerome Powell  
10 December 2025

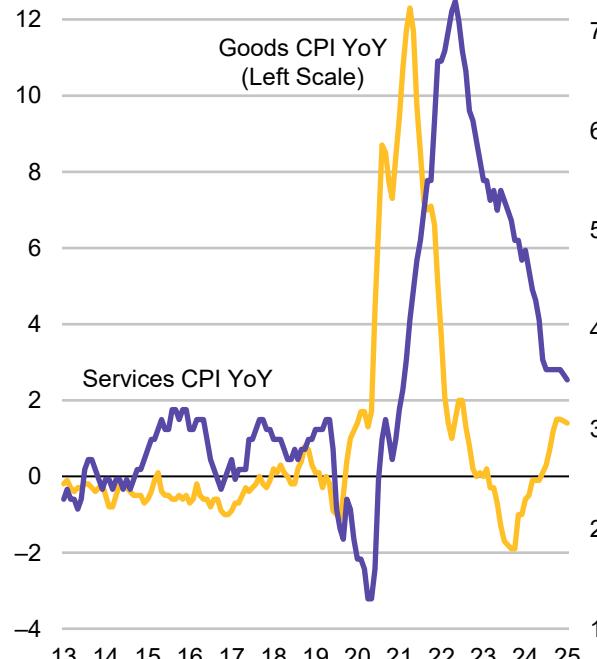
“

I think the other possibility is less likely, and that is...that...the labor market gets tight or the economy gets tight and you see...just traditional inflation. I don't see that as particularly likely.”

—Jerome Powell  
10 December 2025

## Instead, Tariffs—Manifested Through Goods—Are the Primary Cause

Percent



## Fortunately, Tariffs Are Expected to Be a One-Off Price Change

“

A reasonable base case is that the effects of tariffs on inflation will be relatively short-lived—effectively a one-time shift in the price level.”

—Jerome Powell  
10 December 2025

“

Let's assume there are no major new tariff announcements— inflation from goods should peak in the first quarter or so....[A]fter that [it] will take nine months to get fully in—and nine months is also an estimate—then you should start to see that [inflation] coming down in the back half of next year.”

—Jerome Powell  
10 December 2025

**Current analysis does not guarantee future results.**

YoY: year over year

As of 31 December 2025

Source: Federal Reserve, US Bureau of Labor Statistics and AB

# Inflation: Tariff Exemptions

Many of the tariffs initially imposed/threatened have been revised away



## Food

Tariff exemptions related to food contain over 200 products. Some of these products include:

- Beef
- Coffee and tea
- Fruits
- Cocoa
- Spices
- Fertilizers



## Energy

Tariff exemptions related to energy are broad-based and have been in place since "Liberation Day." They include:

- Crude oil (gasoline)
- Natural gas
- Critical minerals
- Energy products



## Goods

Tariff exemptions related to goods include:

- Most goods from Canada and Mexico—the top two US trading partners
- Pharmaceuticals
- Semiconductors
- Lumber
- Metals
- Digital goods



## Services

Tariffs around services are limited and hard to implement. Services prices are mostly tied to wages, which are not directly affected by tariffs. The main service categories include:

- Shelter (wages)
- Education and communication services (wages)
- Medical care services (wages)
- Transportation services (wages)

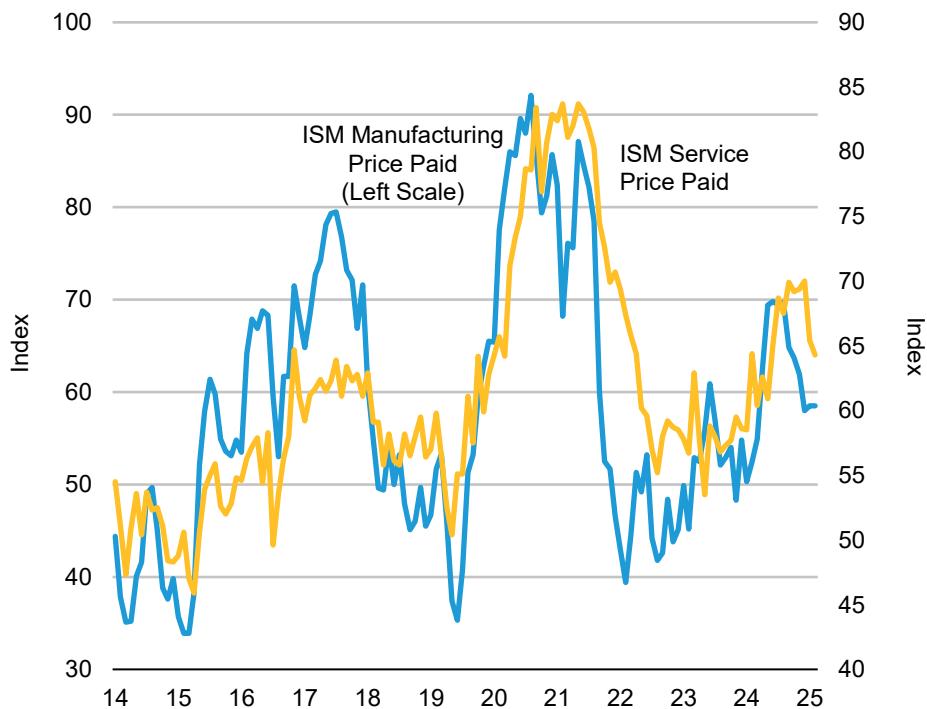
**Current analysis does not guarantee future results.**

As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, The White House and AB

# Inflation: What to Watch for Going Forward

## Prices Paid by Manufacturing and Service Providers May Have Already Peaked, Similar to Trump's First Term



Current analysis does not guarantee future results.

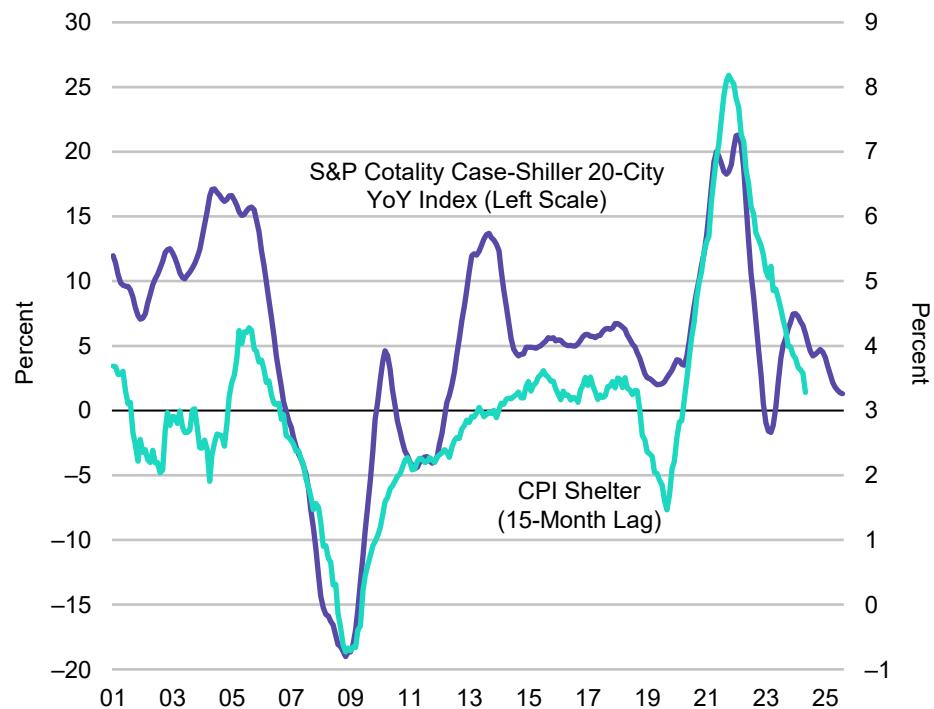
ISM: Institute for Supply Management; YoY: year-over-year

Through 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, Institute for Supply Management, S&P and AB

[A]  
[B]

## Although Tariffs Have Taken Center Stage in the Inflation Discussion, Don't Forget About Inflation's Biggest Driver



# Bringing It All Together: What Does the Fed Think?

## Fed's Summary of Economic Projections

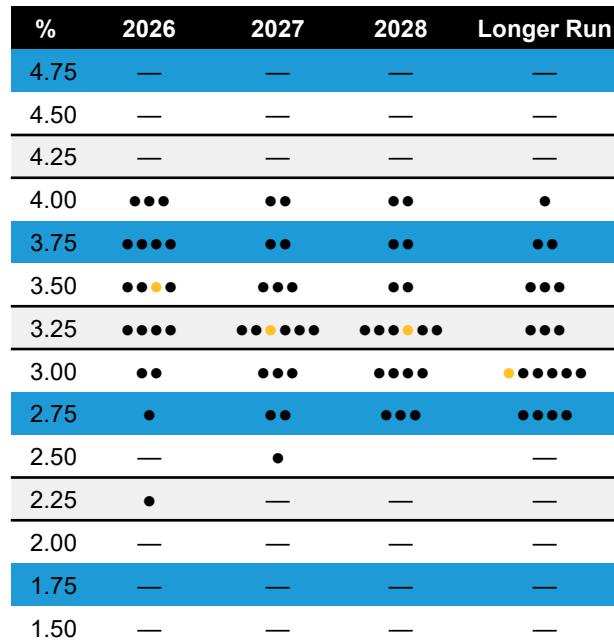
Inflation Year-End Fed Estimates				
2026 2.4%	vs.	2027 2.1%	vs.	2028 2.0%

Real GDP Year-End Fed Estimate				
2026 2.3%	vs.	2027 2.0%	vs.	2028 1.9%

Unemployment Year-End Fed Estimate				
2026 4.4%	vs.	2027 4.2%	vs.	2028 4.2%

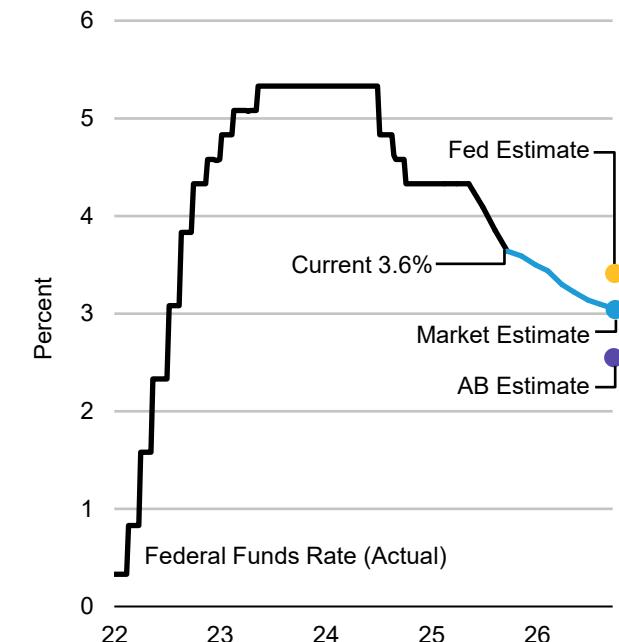
## Fed's Dot Plot

Direction is lower, but magnitude is limited



## Year-End 2026 FFR Estimate

AllianceBernstein vs. market vs. Fed



Current analysis does not guarantee future results.

FFR: federal funds rate

In the middle display, each dot represents a vote from a Federal Open Market Committee member; the gold dots are the approximate median dots.

As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, Federal Reserve, Thompson Reuters and AB

# Macro Summary

## Reviewing the “holy trinity” for markets

### Growth

Solid

- Growth has been resilient in the face of elevated policy uncertainty. Going forward, the growth rate is expected to moderate
- Consumers are experiencing a “K-shaped” economy, where those earning the most—and exposed to rising asset markets—are continuing to spend, while those in the lower income brackets are struggling
- As long as the labor market doesn’t stall, consumer spending should remain positive. The top 10% of earners, who account for nearly 50% of all consumer spending, remain largely unfazed by higher inflation and a low hiring rate
- A downturn in the stock markets could have significant consequences for the economy, as the wealth effect has been a major tailwind

### Labor Market

Soft and vulnerable to a shock

- The labor market is flashing yellow and has become the primary focus of the Fed, as it threatens economic growth
- After a period of overhiring during the pandemic, a cooler labor market was initially welcomed as a limit to wage inflation. However, instead of returning to more neutral levels, the labor market has continued to cool
- This cooling is due to both a lower supply of and demand for, workers; however, demand is starting to decrease faster than supply
- The buffer in the labor market is gone, making it vulnerable to stalling and impacting growth. The Fed is cutting rates in an attempt to provide support
- The key variable to monitor going forward is the hiring rate

### Inflation

Higher than target, but on the right path

- After a long normalization process post-pandemic, inflation is once again under pressure, this time due to tariffs
- While inflation’s path, which was heading lower, was disrupted by tariffs, we expect inflation to resume its downward move in 2026 as no new tariffs are implemented, the list of tariff exemptions grows and the softer labor market pressures companies to “eat” price increases
- The key variables to monitor going forward are producer paid prices and inflation expectations (BEIs)
- Ultimately, the Fed is willing to allow slightly higher inflation to protect the labor market
  - The Fed prefers 2.5% inflation with a more stable labor market over 2% inflation and a deteriorating labor market

**Historical analysis and current forecasts do not guarantee future results.**

BEI: break-even inflation

As of 31 December 2025

Source: AB

# Macro Summary

## AB Global Economic Forecast

	Real Growth (Percent)		Inflation (Percent)		Official Rates (Percent)		Long Rates (Percent)	
	25F	26F	25F	26F	25F	26F	25F	26F
Global ex Russia	2.6	2.5	3.0	2.7	3.75	3.19	4.15	4.02
Industrial Countries	1.7	1.5	2.7	2.3	2.88	2.25	3.55	3.32
Emerging Countries	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.5	5.92	5.30	4.86	4.84
<b>US</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>2.63</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>3.75</b>
Euro Area	1.4	1.1	2.1	1.8	2.00	1.75	2.80	2.65
UK	1.4	0.9	3.5	2.4	3.75	3.00	4.50	4.10
Japan	1.0	1.0	2.8	2.2	0.50	0.75	2.00	2.25
China	4.5	4.3	0.5	1.0	1.00	1.25	2.00	2.25

### Past performance and current analysis do not guarantee future results.

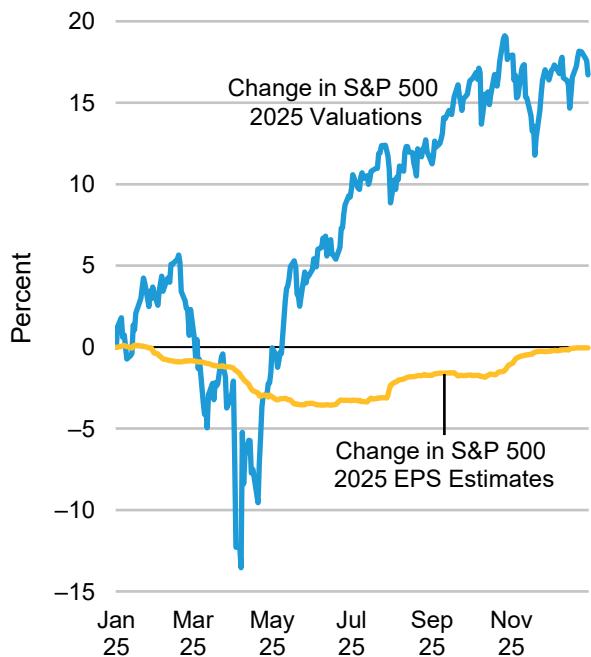
Inflation is a Core Consumer Price Index (CPI) estimate. Growth and inflation forecasts are calendar-year averages. Interest rates are year-end forecasts. Real growth aggregates represent 29 country forecasts, not all of which are shown. Long rates are 10-year yields.

As of 31 December 2025

Source: AB

# S&P 500 Earnings: Companies Showed Resilience in the Face of Uncertainty, but Context Is Still King

## Equity Price Performance Was Entirely Driven by Multiple Expansion During 2025

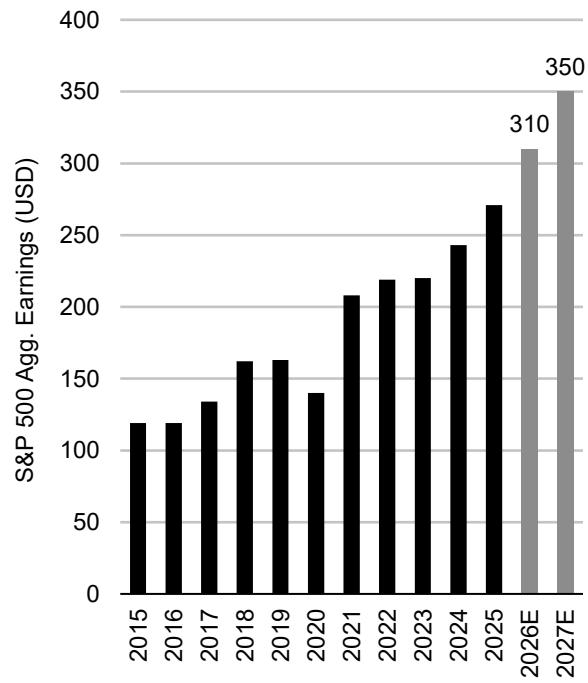


## Consequently, Companies Will Need to Deliver in 2026 or Face Increased Pricing Pressures from Markets



## The Hurdle Rate for 2026 Is High

Markets have priced in 14% earnings growth—a high mark to beat



Historical analysis and current forecasts do not guarantee future results.

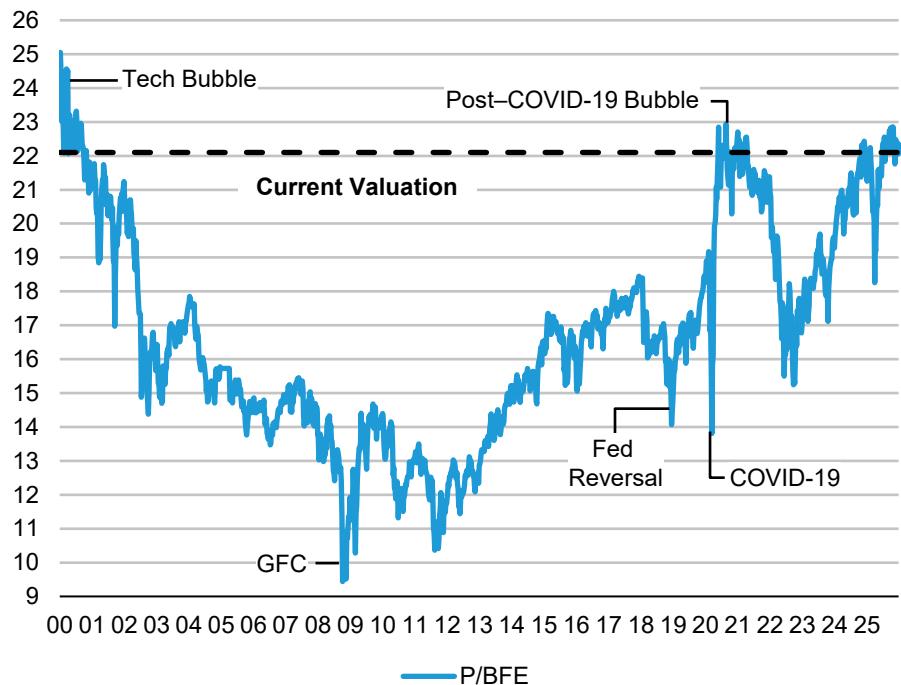
EPS: earnings-per-share. \*For S&P 500 companies

As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, FactSet, S&P and AB

# S&P 500 Valuations: Multiples Appear to Have Hit a Ceiling as Fears Around an “AI Bubble” Swirled

## S&P 500 Multiples



Time Period	P/E	P/BFE
31 December 2025	25.1	22.2
31 December 2024	24.7	21.5
31 December 2023	21.5	19.6
31 December 2022	17.2	16.8
Pre-Pandemic*	20.3	18.9
10-Year Average	20.5	18.8
Pre-Pandemic Five-Year Average	18.3	16.9
Average Since 2000	19.0	16.7

Current analysis does not guarantee future results.

GFC: global financial crisis. Price/earnings (P/E) is for the trailing 12 months; price/blended forward earnings (P/BFE) is for the next 12 months.

\*21 February 2020

As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, S&P and AB

# S&P 500 Scenario Chart: Using Earnings and Valuations to Form a Price Target Range

## Choose Your Own Adventure

2026	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	S&P Price Level	2026 Price Return*
280	4,760	5,040	5,320	5,600	5,880	6,160	6,440	6,720	7,000	5,800	-15.3%
285	4,845	5,130	5,415	5,700	5,985	6,270	6,555	6,840	7,125	6,000	-12.3
290	4,930	5,220	5,510	5,800	6,090	6,380	6,670	6,960	7,250	6,200	-9.4
295	5,015	5,310	5,605	5,900	6,195	6,490	6,785	7,080	7,375	6,400	-6.5
300	5,100	5,400	5,700	6,000	6,300	6,600	6,900	7,200	7,500	6,600	-3.6
305	5,185	5,490	5,795	6,100	6,405	6,710	7,015	7,320	7,625	6,845	0.0
310	5,270	5,580	5,890	6,200	6,510	6,845	7,130	7,440	7,750	7,000	2.3
315	5,355	5,670	5,985	6,300	6,615	6,930	7,245	7,560	7,875	7,250	5.9
320	5,440	5,760	6,080	6,400	6,720	7,040	7,360	7,680	8,000	7,500	9.6

2027	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	S&P Price Level	2026–27 Price Return†
325	4,875	5,200	5,525	5,850	6,175	6,500	6,825	7,150	7,475	6,000	-8.3%
330	4,950	5,280	5,610	5,940	6,270	6,600	6,930	7,260	7,590	6,200	-6.3
335	5,025	5,360	5,695	6,030	6,365	6,700	7,035	7,370	7,705	6,400	-4.3
340	5,100	5,440	5,780	6,120	6,460	6,800	7,140	7,480	7,820	6,600	-2.4
345	5,175	5,520	5,865	6,210	6,555	6,900	7,245	7,590	7,935	6,845	0.0
350	5,250	5,600	5,950	6,300	6,650	6,845	7,350	7,700	8,050	7,000	1.5
355	5,325	5,680	6,035	6,390	6,745	7,100	7,455	7,810	8,165	7,250	3.9
360	5,400	5,760	6,120	6,480	6,840	7,200	7,560	7,920	8,280	7,500	6.2
365	5,475	5,840	6,205	6,570	6,935	7,300	7,665	8,030	8,395	7,750	8.5

■ 31 December 2025 (What's Currently Priced In by Markets\*) ■ AB's Most Likely Range of Future Outcomes

### Historical analysis and current forecasts do not guarantee future results.

\*Based on S&P 500's 4Q:25 closing price of 6,845; horizontal axis contains forward price/earnings multiples; vertical axis contains forward earnings; numbers may not sum due to rounding; †Annualized

As of 31 December 2025

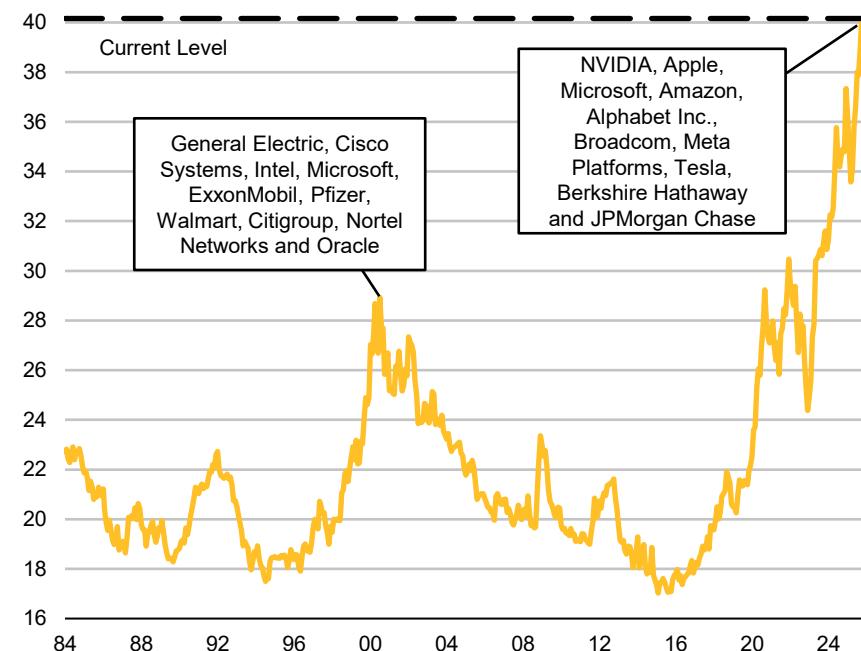
Source: Bloomberg, S&P and AB

# International and Growth Equities Led, and Concentration Persists

## Another Year of Strong Returns YTD (percent)



## While the Names Have Changed, the MAG7 and Tech- Adjacent Stocks Are Leading the Concentration Charge 10 largest combined weights (percent)



Past performance does not guarantee future results. Analysis is provided for illustrative purposes only and is subject to revision. References to specific securities discussed are not to be considered recommendations by AllianceBernstein L.P.

EAFE: Europe, Australasia and the Far East; MAG7: Magnificent Seven; YTD: year to date.

As of 31 December 2025

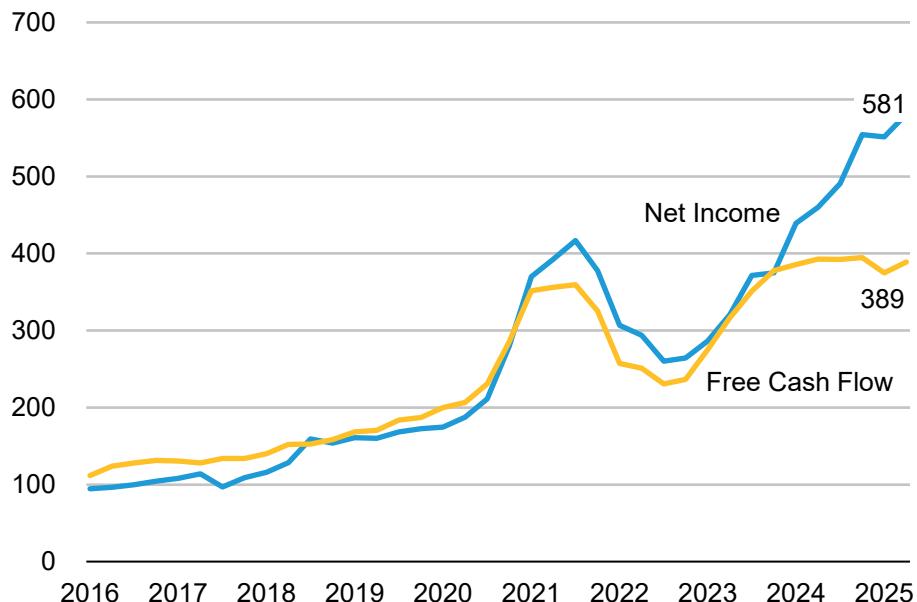
Source: Bloomberg, FTSE Russell, MSCI, S&P and AB

# Earnings for the MAG7 Have Been Strong, but Free Cash Flow Has Stalled

Hyperscalers' massive capital spending could pressure their future profits and their monolithic status

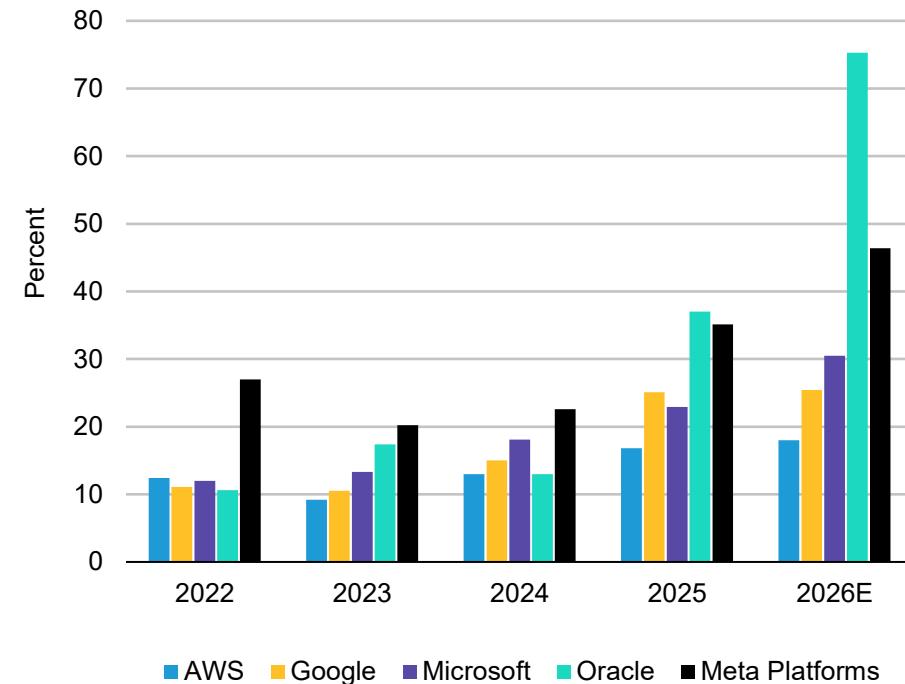
## Magnificent Seven Earnings vs. Free Cash Flow

Last 12 months (USD billions)



## Spending Spree Has Led to Hyperscalers Becoming More Asset-Heavy vs. Asset-Light Businesses

Hyperscalers capex as a percent of sales



**Past performance and current analysis do not guarantee future results.**

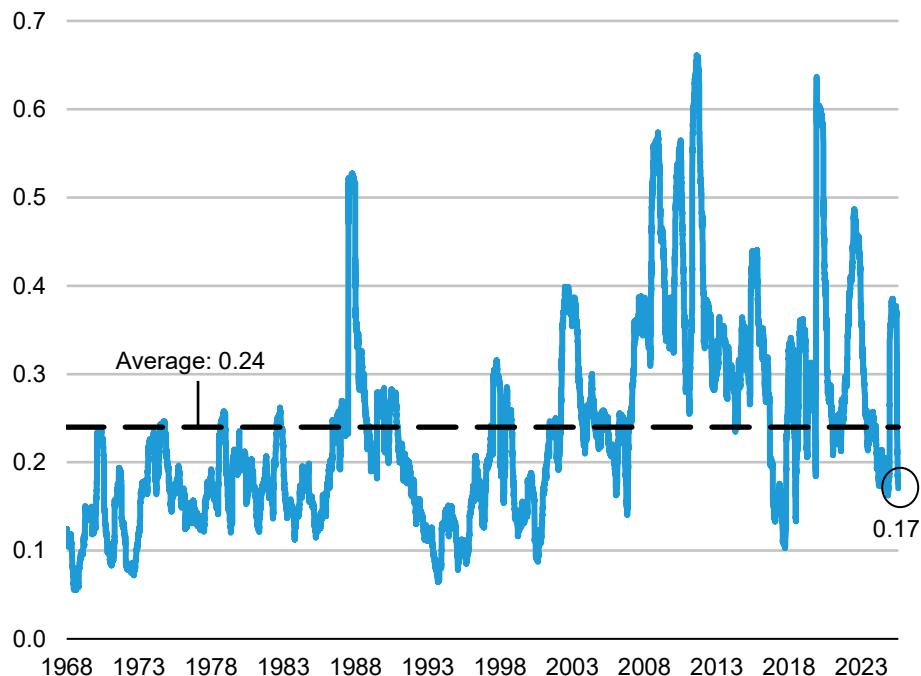
Left display through 30 September 2025; right display through 31 December 2025

Source: Amazon Web Services (AWS), Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs, Google, Meta Platforms, Microsoft, NVIDIA, Oracle, S&P and AB

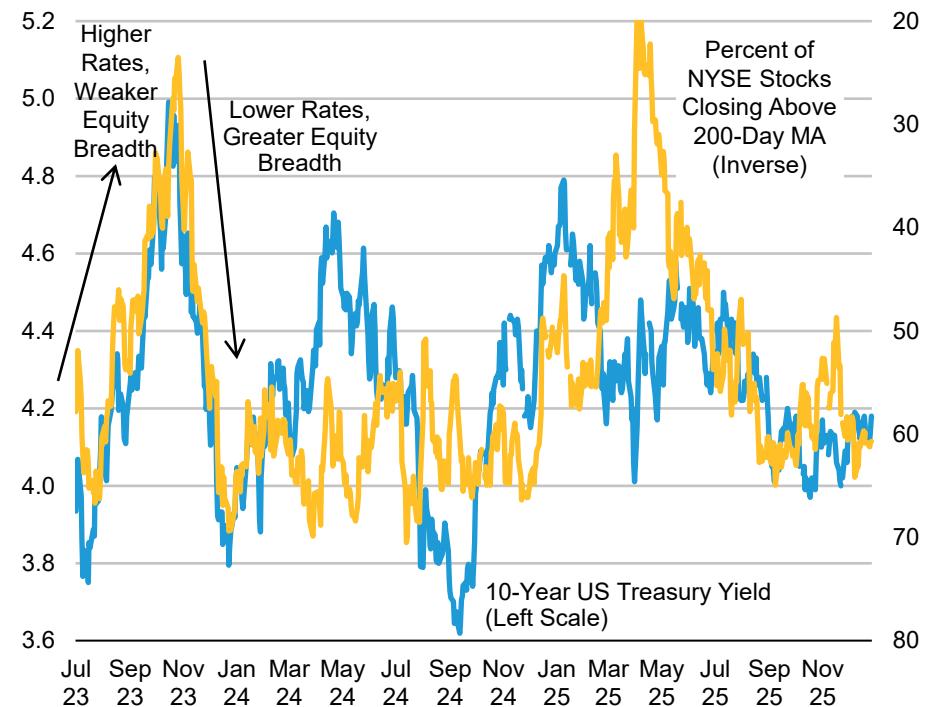
# Lower Correlations and Rates Imply a Better Active Management Backdrop

Fed easing and questions surrounding artificial intelligence spending returns led to a broadening

## Average US Pairwise Stock Correlation\*



## We Expect Lower Rates Ahead, Which Has Historically Led to Stronger Equity Breadth (Percent)



**Past performance does not guarantee future results. Analysis is provided for illustrative purposes only and is subject to revision.**

MA: moving average

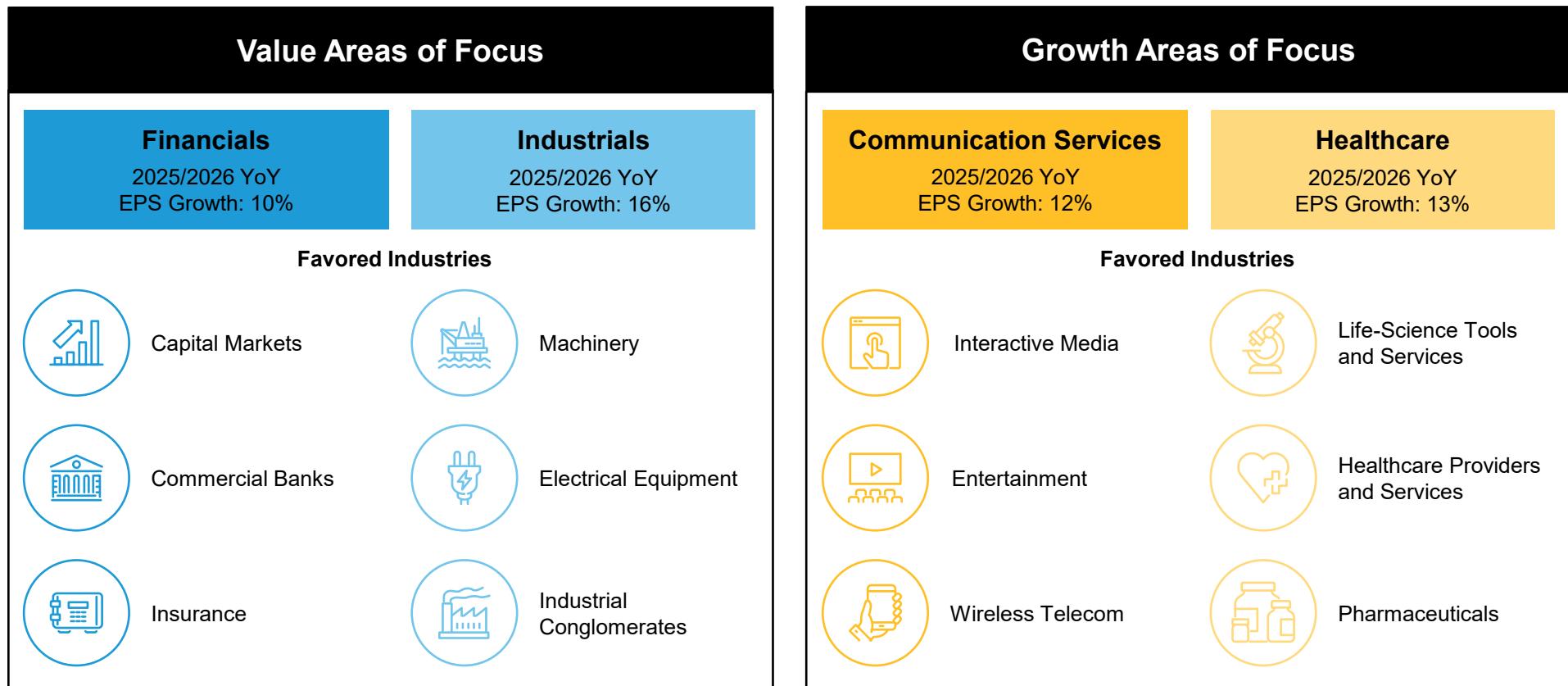
\*The stock correlations are the average pairwise correlations of daily stock returns for the constituents of the MSCI USA over rolling six-month windows.

Left display as of 11 November 2025; right display as of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, FactSet, MSCI and AB

# Value or Growth... Yes! In a Fast-Changing World, Optionality Is Key

Remain style neutral, given high index valuations and a diverse opportunity set



**Current analysis does not guarantee future results.**

EPS: earnings per share; YoY: year-over-year

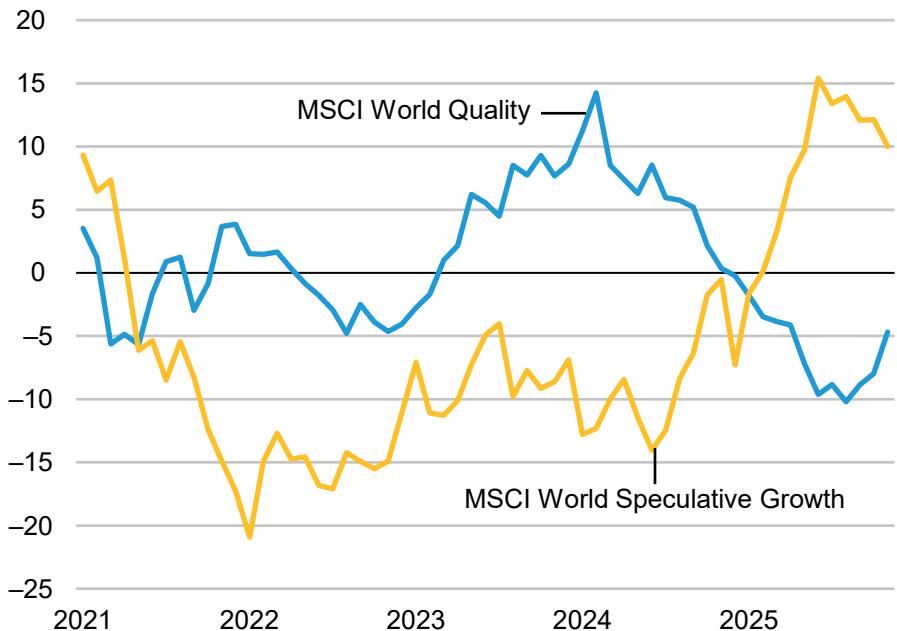
As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, FactSet and AB

# Despite Quality Stocks Lagging More Speculative Cohorts, Their Long-Term Return Profile Is Compelling

## Global Quality and Speculative Growth vs. MSCI World\*

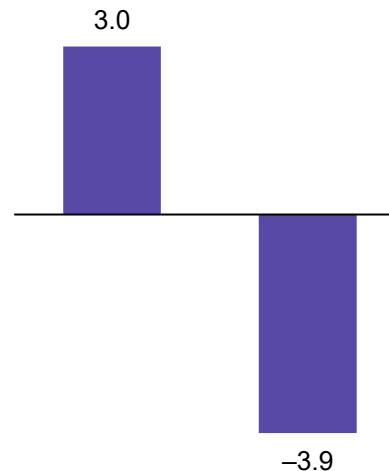
Trailing 12-month relative returns (percent)



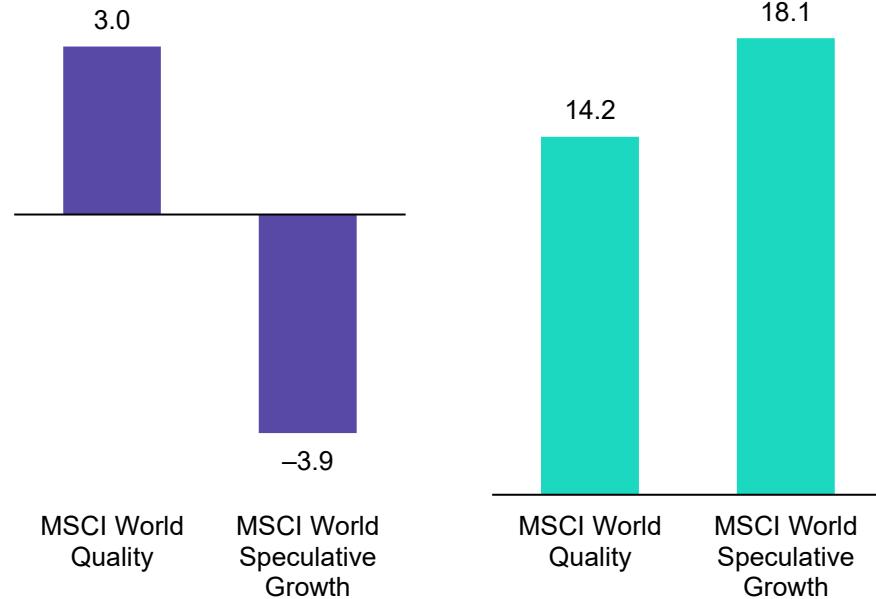
## Quality: Higher Relative Returns and Lower Volatility

USD (percent)

### 30-Year Average Relative Return



### 30-Year Realized Volatility



**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

\*Quality represented by MSCI World Quality. Speculative growth stocks are hypergrowers with profitability (free cash flow to assets) and valuation (free cash flow to price) in the bottom 60% (lower profitability and more expensive stocks in quintiles 3–5) and year-over-year sales growth in the top 30%.

As of 1 December 2025

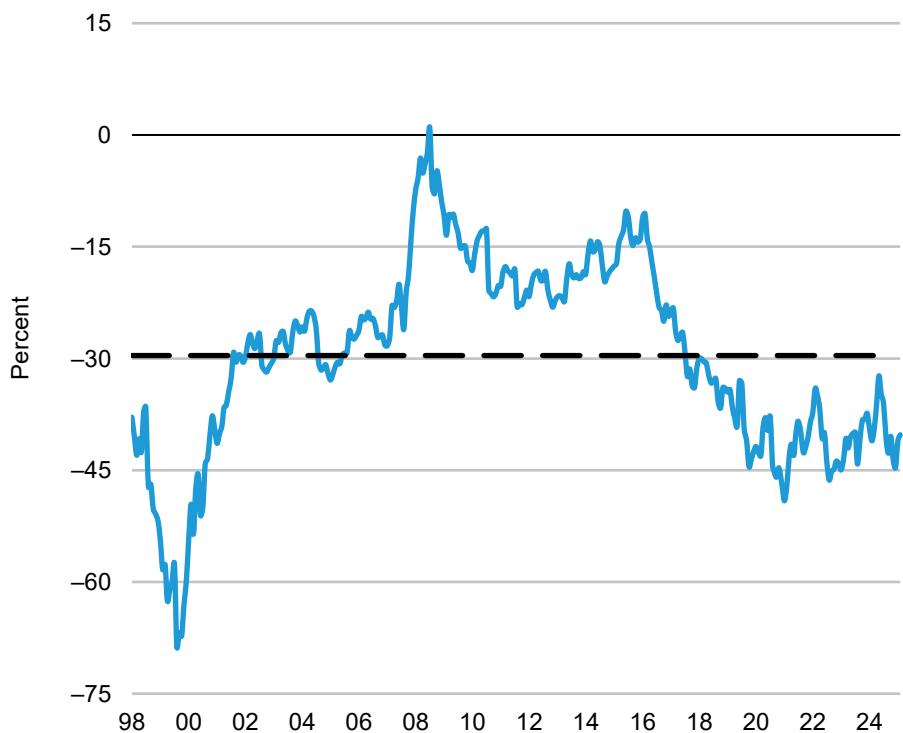
Source: FTSE Russell, International Data Corporation, MSCI, S&P and AB

# Not All Stocks Are Expensive, and Cheap Does Not Mean Dull

Many value stocks have strong earnings potential, and an economic recovery could be a boost

## Russell 1000 Value vs. Russell 1000 Growth

Price/forward earnings discount



**Past performance and current analysis do not guarantee future results.**

EPS: earnings-per-share; YoY: year-over-year

As of 31 December 2025

Source: FactSet, FTSE Russell and AB

## Finding Growth Within Value

Key investment themes

### Commercial Aircraft Manufacturing

2025/2026 YoY EPS Growth: 22%

- Commercial aircraft production has been crimped in the last five years, and consumers still prefer experiences over goods



### Cyclically Depressed Consumer Spending

2025/2026 YoY EPS Growth: 10%

- Recent, softer consumer demand has led to faster-growing quick-service restaurants and entertainment parks being attractively priced



### Agricultural Cycle and Productivity

2025/2026 YoY EPS Growth: 24%

- Farm equipment and seed sales are off from COVID-19's surge but are needed to spur agricultural productivity, given limited acreage availability



### Healthcare Spending

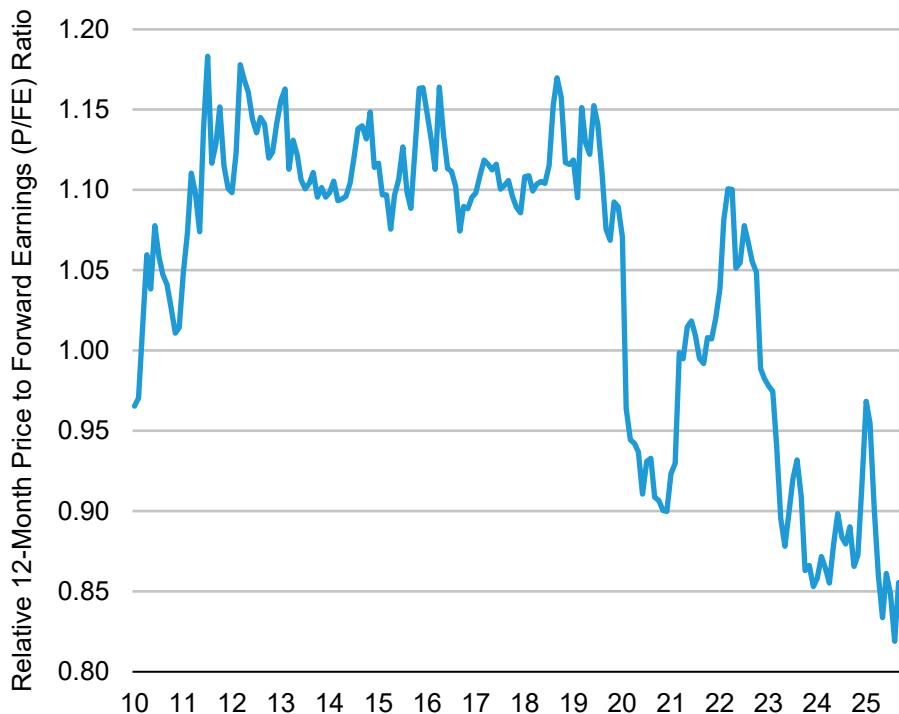
2025/2026 YoY EPS Growth: 8%

- The managed-care industry's long-term growth is intact despite cyclical pressures, and secular research and development spending is likely to remain above GDP growth



# Lower-Volatility Stocks on Sale Have Potential to Play Both Defense and Offense

## Low-Volatility Relative Factor Valuation Is the Lowest in More than 15 Years?\*



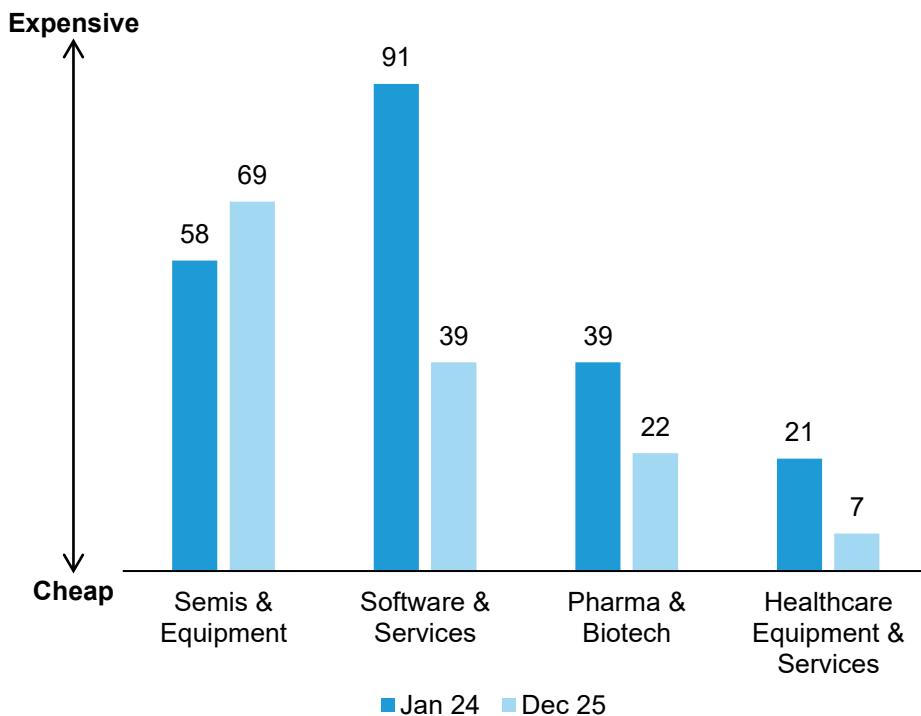
**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

\*Calculated as a ratio of the MSCI USA Low Volatility Index P/E ratio relative to those of the MSCI USA Large and Mid Cap indices.

†Valuation percentiles for industries are cap-weighted average price-to-next-12-months earnings forecast relative to the benchmark and relative to their own history. The investable benchmark is the S&P 500.

As of 30 November 2025. Source: Macrobond, MSCI, S&P and AB

## Software Preferred vs. Semiconductors, and Healthcare Remains Attractively Priced Relative-valuation percentiles<sup>†</sup>

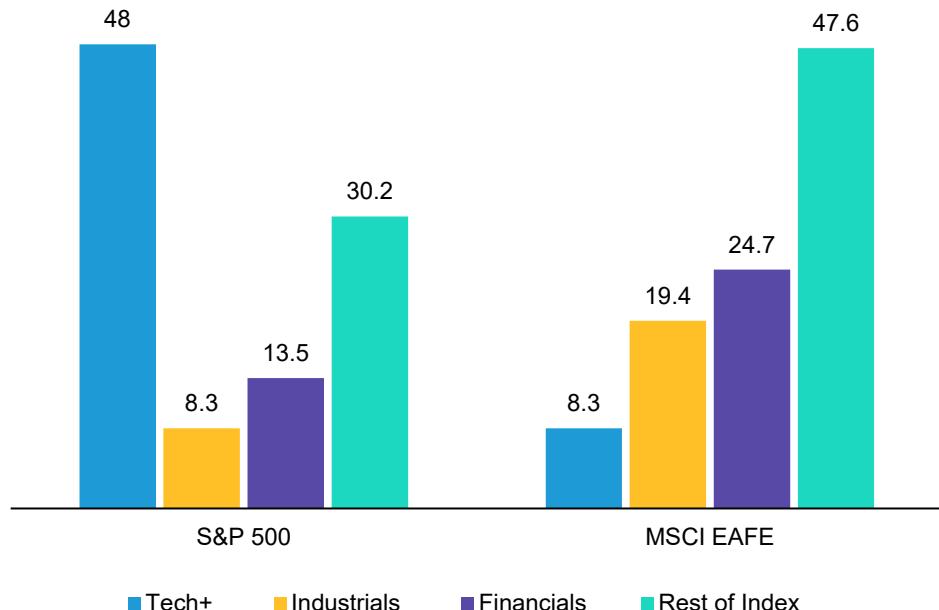


# The Surge of US Mega-Caps Has Led to a Highly Concentrated S&P 500

Non-US markets also offer leading companies, but in a less crowded house

## Comparative Sector Weights: 2025

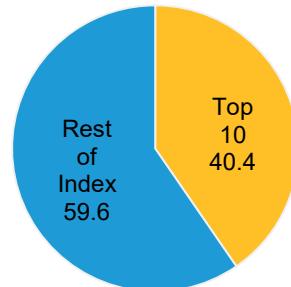
Percent



## Comparative Index Weights

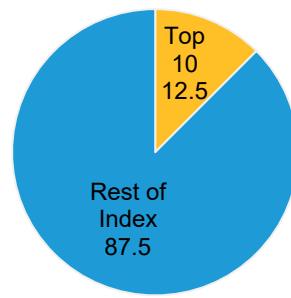
Percent

### S&P 500



Company	Percent
NVIDIA	8.0%
Microsoft	6.8%
Apple	6.6%
Alphabet Inc.	4.5%
Amazon	3.7%
<b>Top Five</b>	<b>29.6%</b>

### MSCI EAFE



Company	Percent
ASML	2.0%
SAP	1.4%
HSBC	1.3%
Novartis	1.2%
Nestlé	1.2%
<b>Top Five</b>	<b>7.1%</b>

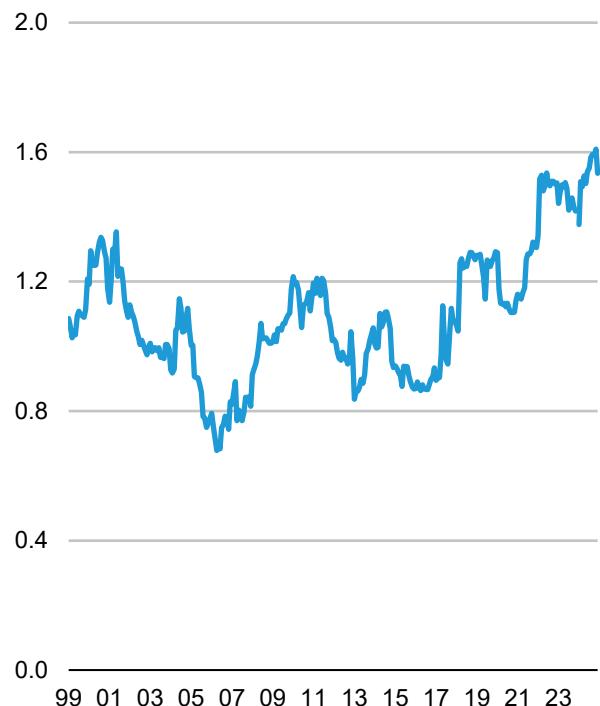
Past performance and current analysis do not guarantee future results.

As of 30 September 2025

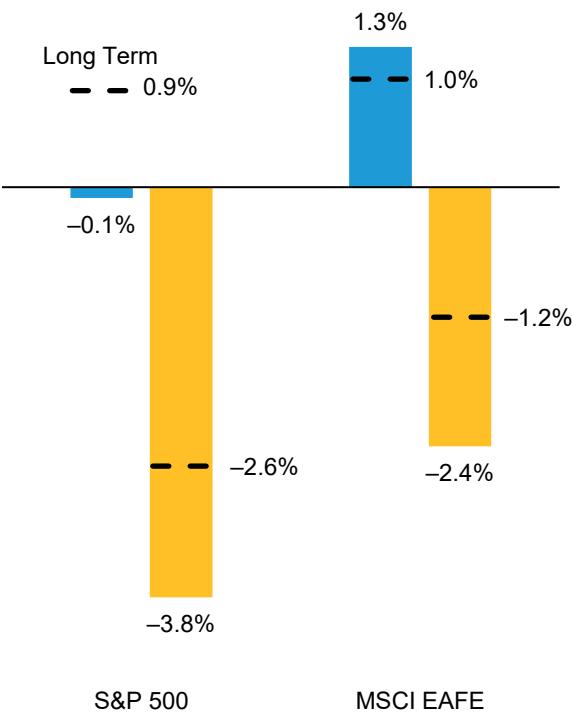
Source: FactSet, FTSE Russell, MSCI, S&P and AB

# Many Dynamics Remain Positive for International Stocks

**US Stocks Come with a Higher Beta...**  
Trailing 24 months volatility ratio  
S&P 500/MSCI EAFE



**...and This Has Been Evident During Earnings Season\***



**Favoring Long-Cycle Industrials, Banks with Strong Shareholder Yields and Differentiated Consumer Businesses**

## Industry Overweights

**Electrical Equipment**  
2025/2026 YoY EPS Growth: 13%



**Commercial Banks**  
2025/2026 YoY EPS Growth: 9%



**Leisure and Interactive Media**  
2025/2026 YoY EPS Growth: 14%



**Past performance does not guarantee of future results.**

EPS: earnings-per-share; YoY: year-over-year. Long term is a 20-year period from January 2005 through December 2024. \*Beat and miss returns measure the relative return during a five-day period around an earnings report: two days before the report, the day of the report and two days after the report.

Left display as of 31 August 2025; middle display as of 30 November 2025; right display as of 31 December 2025

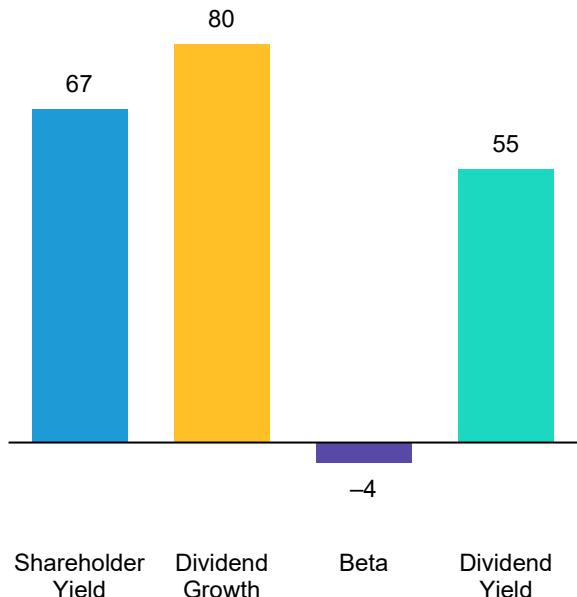
Source: FactSet, International Data Corporation, MSCI, S&P and AB

# Sharing the Wealth Pays, Especially When the Fed Lowers Rates

Companies that thoughtfully return capital outpace more volatile ones over time, and the price is right

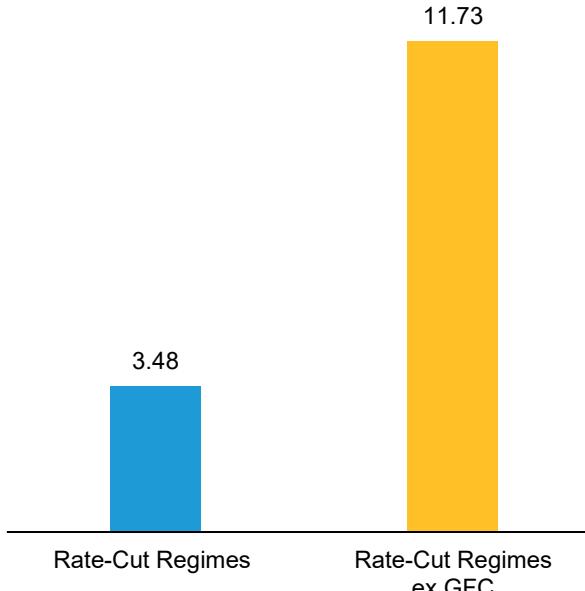
## History Tells Us Beta's Staying Power Is Not Robust\*

20-year cumulative returns (percent)



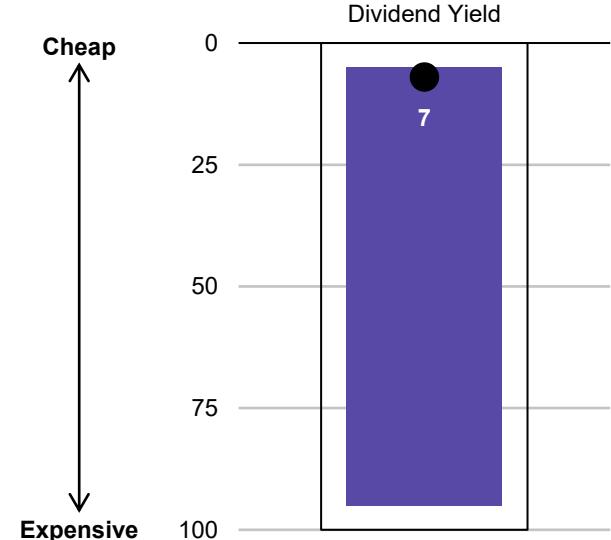
## Dividend Stocks Have Delivered When the Fed Has Cut Rates†

Percent



## Dividend Payers: An Inexpensive Space, and You Get Paid While You Wait‡

Percentile



**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

GFC: global financial crisis. \*Factor returns are calculated by the relative performance of the top-quintile cohort vs. the bottom-quintile cohort within the S&P 500. †Top tercile of dividend payers, cap-weighted, recalculated monthly returns vs. the S&P 500 over six distinct Fed cutting regimes, starting from 1998, where a regime is defined to be at least three months of consecutive rate cuts. ‡Percentile rankings are based on monthly valuations (i.e., relative price to earnings of first quarter for each factor vs. Russell 1000) from 1990.

Dividend yield: last 12 months' dividends per share divided by current share price.

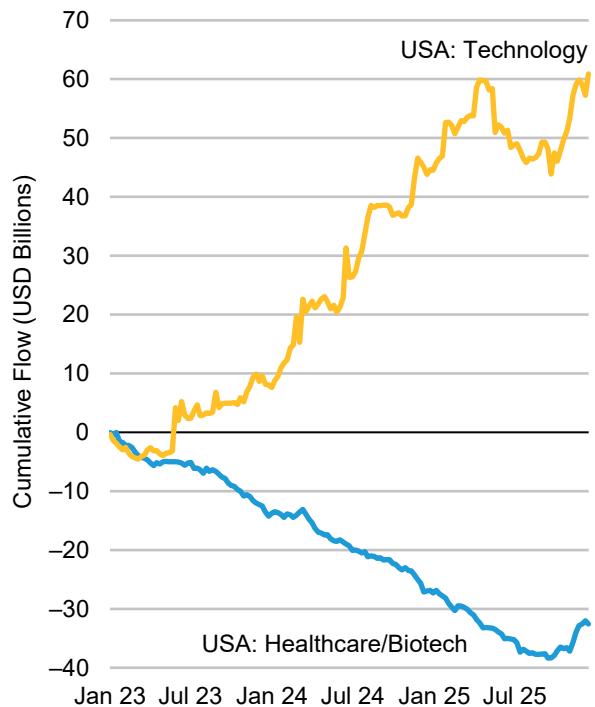
Left display as of 31 December 2025; middle display as of 31 December 2024; right display as of 30 November 2025

Source: Bloomberg, FTSE Russell, Piper Sandler, S&P, US Federal Reserve and AB

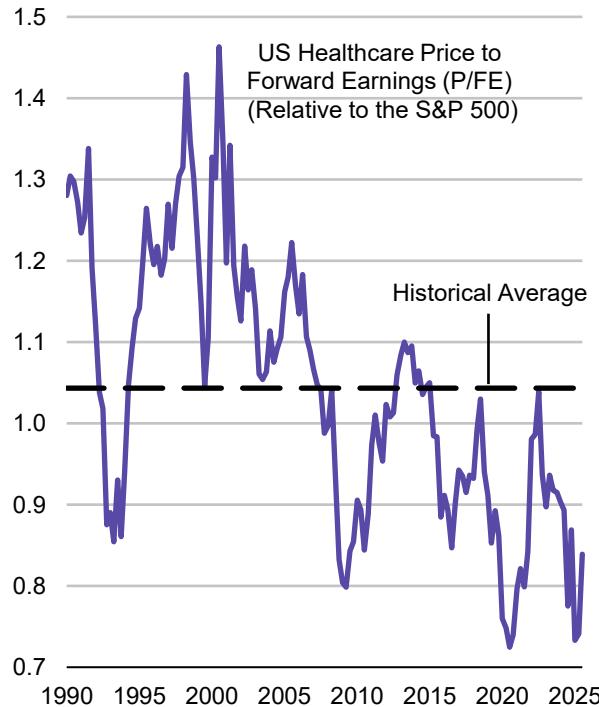
# Healthcare Remains a Compelling Quality Growth Opportunity

An out-of-favor sector that has improved regulatory clarity and earnings support

## Rampant Outflows from Healthcare vs. Technology Stocks Has Led to...

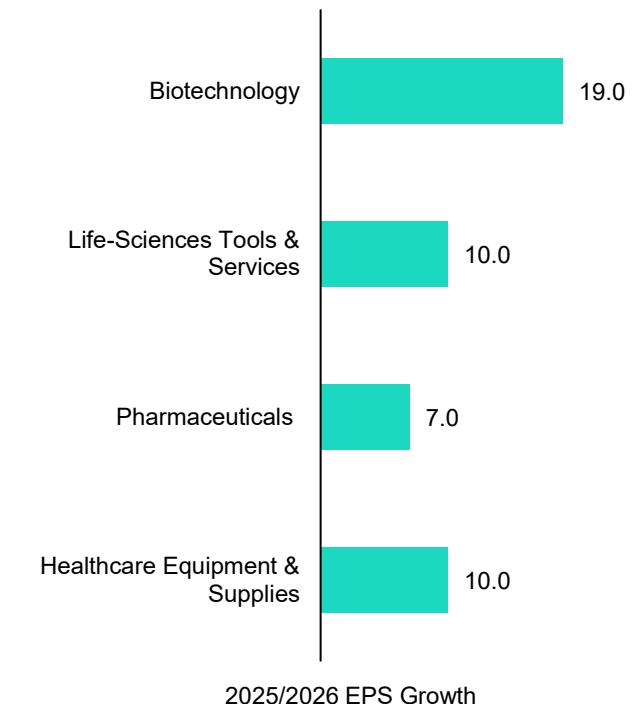


## ...Healthcare Stocks Trading at a Large Discount to the Broader Market



## Favorable Earnings-Growth Rates for Healthcare Industries

Earnings-growth forecast (percent)



Historical analysis does not guarantee future results.

EPS: earnings-per-share

Left display as of 17 December 2025; middle and right displays as of 31 December 2025

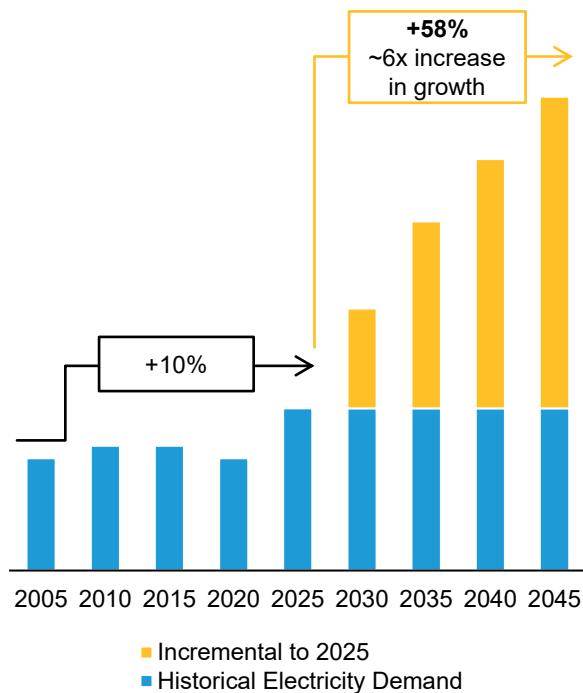
Source: Bloomberg, Emerging Portfolio Fund Research Global, FactSet and AB

# Power Demand and Cybersecurity: Two Vital Needs in Today's World

Secular themes are driving demand growth across multiple industries

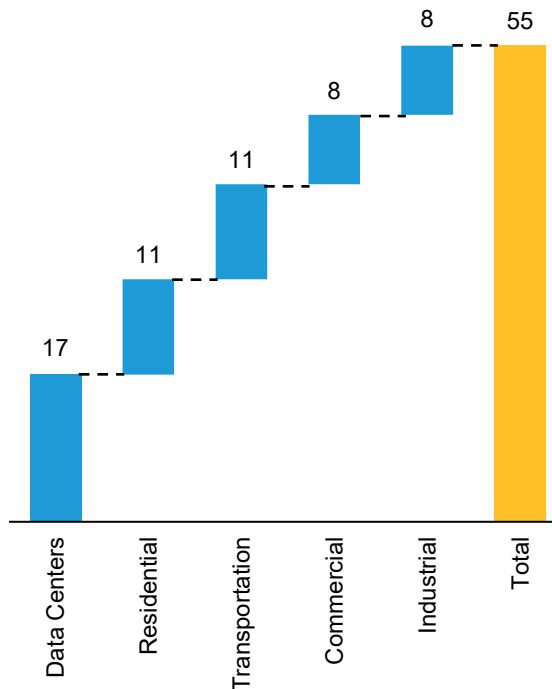
## US Power Demand Is Expected to Grow ~58% over the Next Two Decades

US power demand, thousand TWh\*



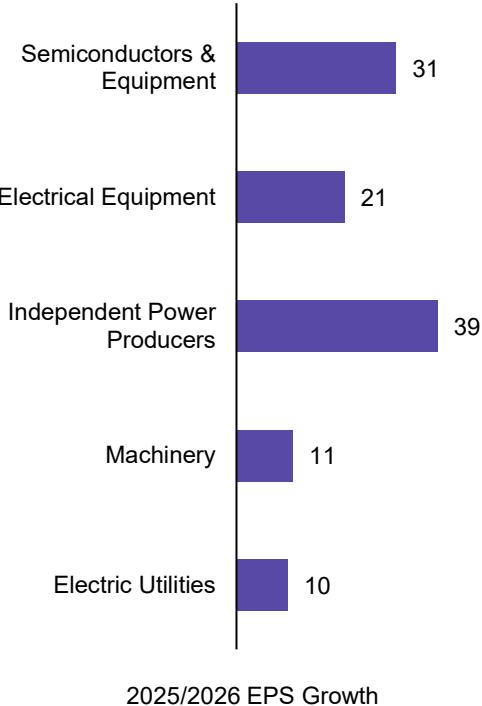
## Incremental Power Demand Growth Is Not All About Data Centers

Percent



## Favorable Earnings-Growth Rates for Power Electrification Industries

Earnings-growth forecast (percent)†



Current analysis does not guarantee future results.

EPS: earnings-per-share; TWh: terawatt hour. \*McKinsey & Company, *Global Energy Perspective 2023*; US Energy Information Administration (EIA), *Annual Energy Outlook 2023*.

†Earnings-growth forecasts are based on consensus estimates.

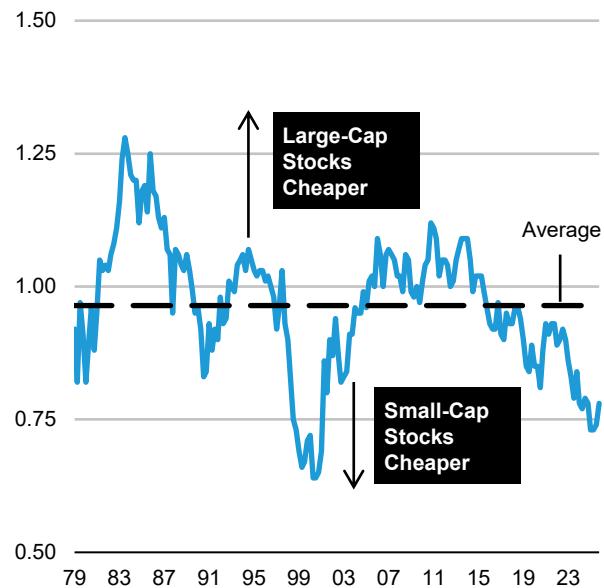
Left and middle displays as of 31 March 2025; right display as of 31 December 2025

Source: Bank of America, Bloomberg, EIA, Electric Reliability Council of Texas, Goldman Sachs, McKinsey & Company and AB

# The Case for Rebalancing into Small-Caps Is Gaining Traction

Attractive valuations are finally accompanied by consensus earnings support

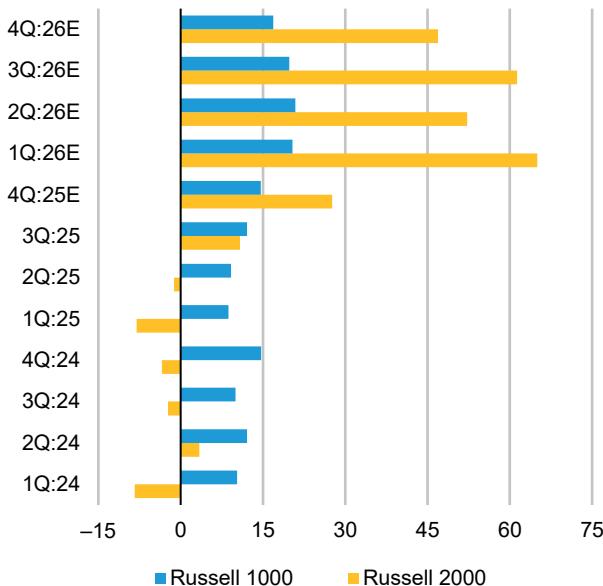
## Relative Valuations Are at Modern-Day Lows



- Price/earnings ratio: Russell 2000 vs. S&P 500

## Small-Caps Projected to Have an Earnings Edge

Percent



- Quarterly EPS growth: Russell 2000 vs. Russell 1000

## Small-Caps Projected to Have an Earnings Edge

Favored Value (V) Sectors:  
Industrials, Materials, Financials

Favored Growth (G) Sectors:  
Industrials, Technology, Consumer Discretionary

Focus on:  
Value with a Catalyst (V)  
Strong Free Cash Flow (V)  
Unrecognized Growth Potential (G)  
Positive Earnings Revisions (G)

- Stay selective: a focus on profitability in value and positive earnings revisions in growth

Past performance does not guarantee future results.

EPS: earnings-per-share

As of 31 December 2025

Source: FactSet, FTSE Russell, S&P, Strategas Research Partners and AB

# 1Q 2026 Equity Playbook



## Current Market Backdrop

- The S&P 500 trades well above its long-term averages, and the top 10 biggest stocks remain a large portion of the index
- While not declaring the end of the tech run, concerns persist regarding select hyperscalers' massive capital spending
- Improved earnings outlooks across the cap spectrum led to other asset classes, such as small-cap stocks, participating in the upswing
- Higher-beta and momentum stocks fueled last year's gains, but we advise a focus on durable businesses with staying power



## Key Areas of Conviction

- **Large-Cap Quality Core:** Optionality is key, as a fast-changing world and passive index concentration offers diverse opportunities to be active
  - Financials, industrials, communication services and healthcare
- **Value:** Attractive price points, an easing Fed and slow but positive economic growth argue for a gradual rotation into high cash-flow generators
  - Commercial aircraft manufacturing, select consumer businesses, agricultural productivity and healthcare spending beneficiaries
  - Sustainable dividend growers that could get a tailwind from expected Fed easing
- **Thematic:** Long-term trends offer many avenues to capitalize on them; the opportunity set intersects with traditional growth and value stocks
  - Robust power demand and related capital-spending beneficiaries
- **Low Volatility:** Higher-quality, lower-beta names are typically more resilient in market pullbacks, especially when speculation is out of favor
  - Healthcare, tech software and other select defensive industries
- **International:** Lower earnings volatility, expected additional dollar weakness and many stocks still trading at a discount
  - Electrical equipment, commercial banks, leisure and online media



## Other Thoughts

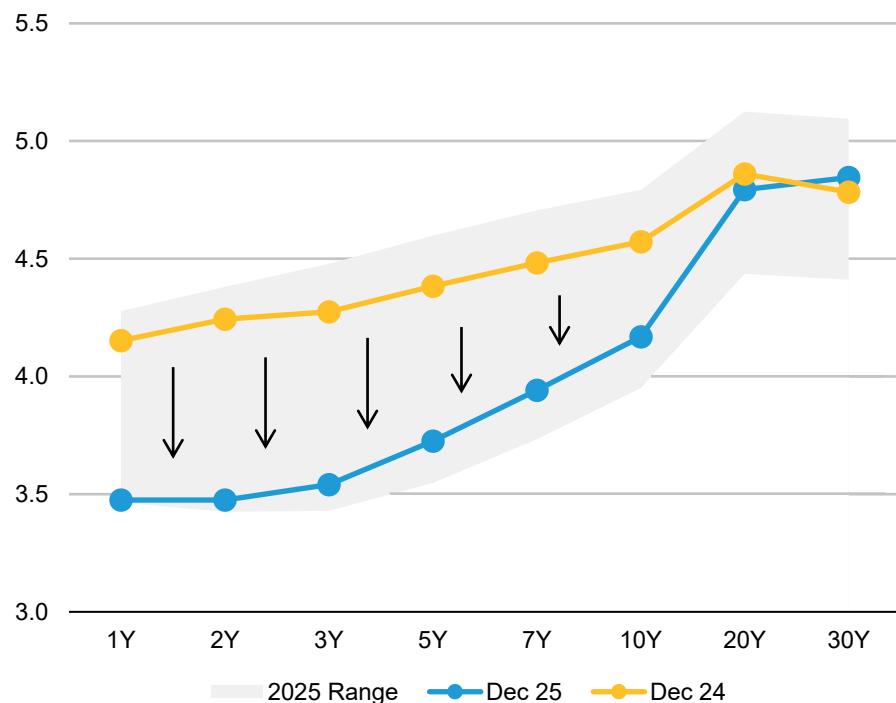
- Rebalance into small-cap equities—attractive valuations and long-awaited expected earnings traction may augment recent gains

As of 31 December 2025  
Source: AB

# The Treasury Curve Steepened in 2025, Led by a Decline in Front-End Yields

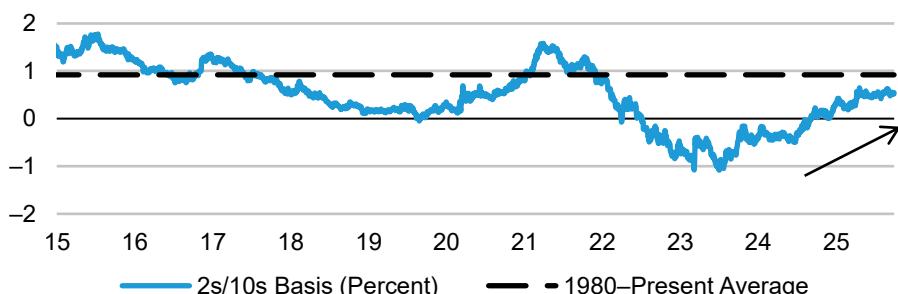
## The Front End of the Curve Fell in 2025

Yield (percent)



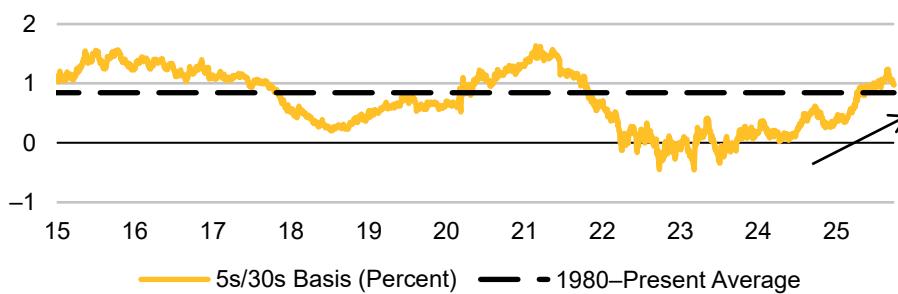
## The Yield Pickup Between 10-Year and Two-Year Treasuries Has Increased...

Basis (difference in yield)



## ...as Has the Yield Pickup Between the 30-Year and Five-Year

Basis (difference in yield)



Historical analysis does not guarantee future results.

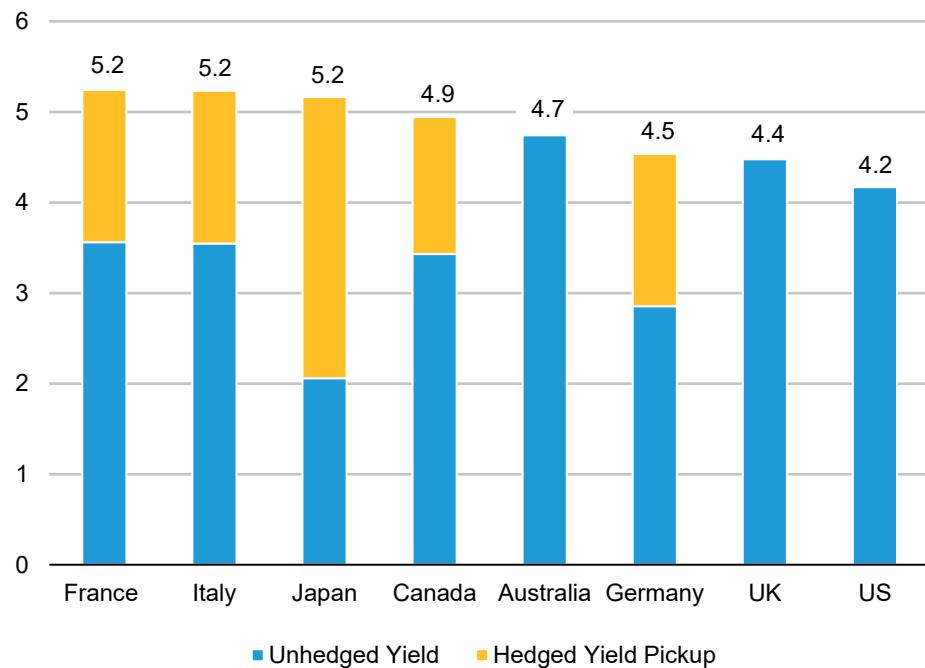
As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg and AB

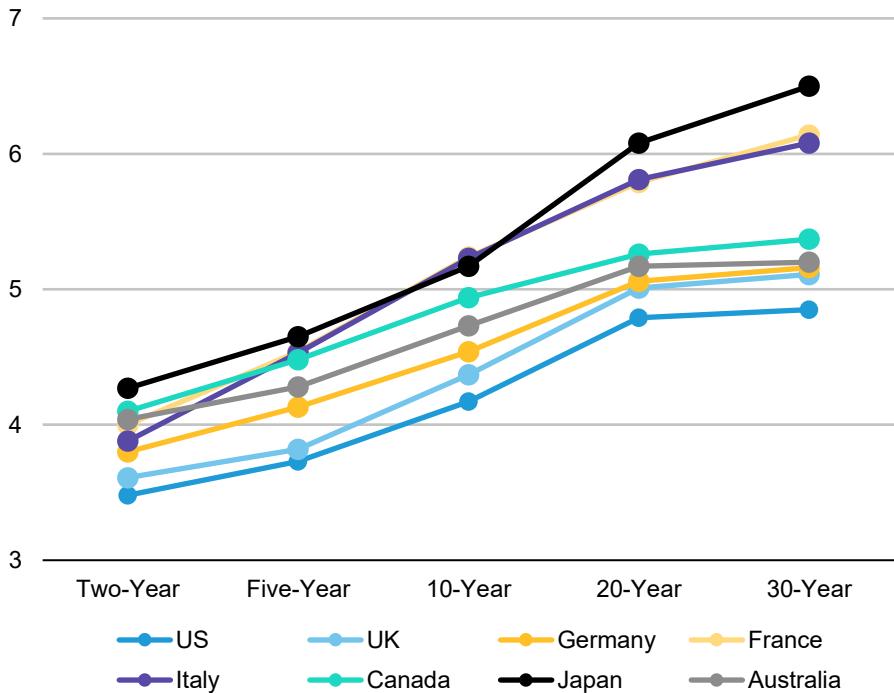
# Navigating Global Rates

## US Treasury Yields Look Low Compared to Attractive USD-Hedged Global Yields

Percent



## Major Developed-Market Yield Curves, Hedged Percent



**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

Hedged yields are hedged to US dollars. Left display shows 10-year maturities.

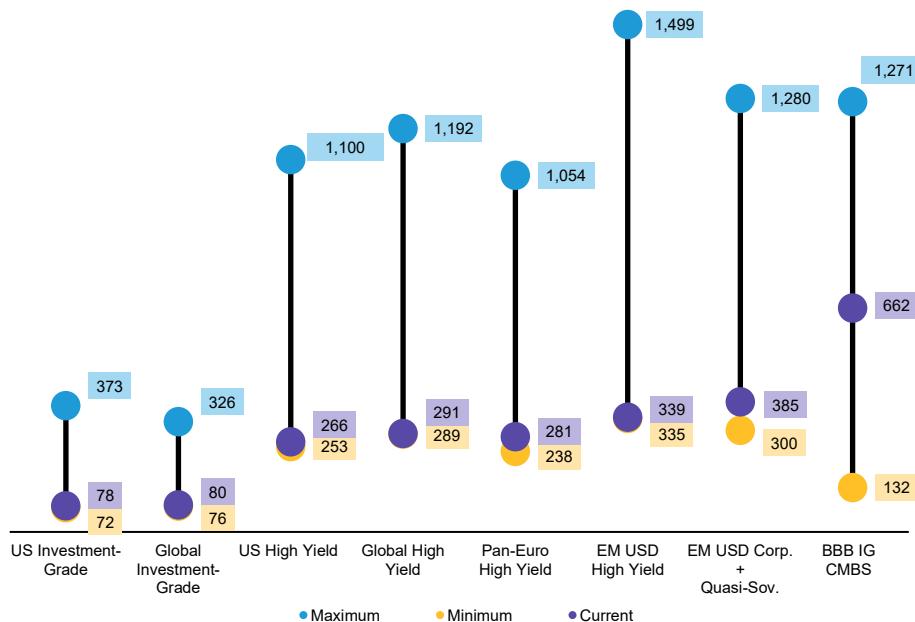
As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg and AB

# Spreads Are at Relatively Tight Levels, but Yields Are Still Attractive

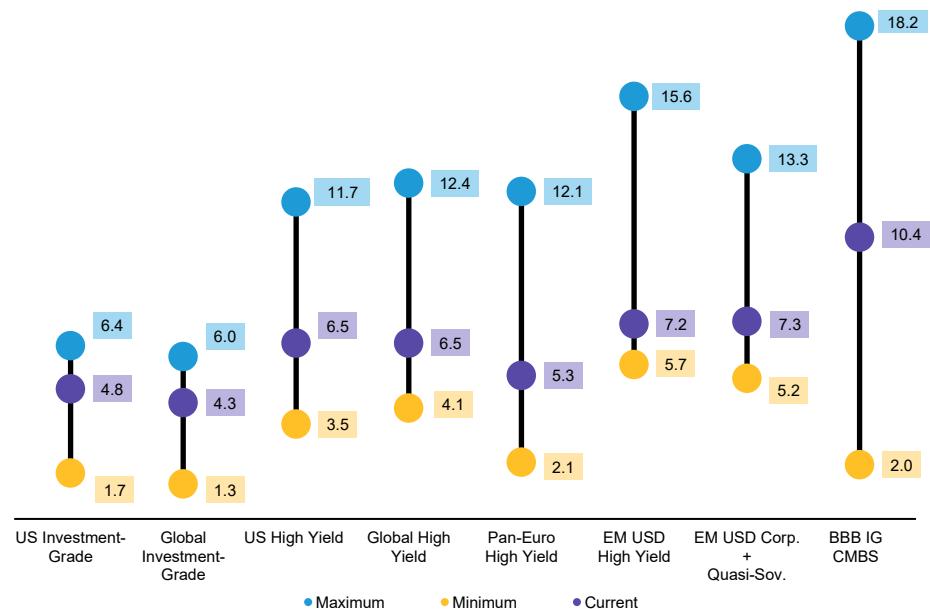
## Spread Ranges

January 2010–December 2025



## Yield Ranges

January 2010–December 2025



**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

CMBS: commercial mortgage-backed securities; EM: emerging-market; IG: investment-grade; quasi-sov.: quasi-sovereign; USD: US dollar. Historical information is provided for illustrative purposes only. US investment-grade is represented by Bloomberg US Agg Corporate; global investment-grade by Bloomberg Global Agg Corporate; US high yield by Bloomberg US High Yield Corporate; global high yield by Bloomberg Global High Yield Corporate; Pan-Euro high yield by Bloomberg Pan-European High Yield; EM USD high yield by Bloomberg EM USD Sovereign High Yield; EM USD corp. + quasi-sov. by Bloomberg EM USD Corp + Quasi-Sovereign High Yield; BBB IG CMBS by Bloomberg CMBS IG BBB.

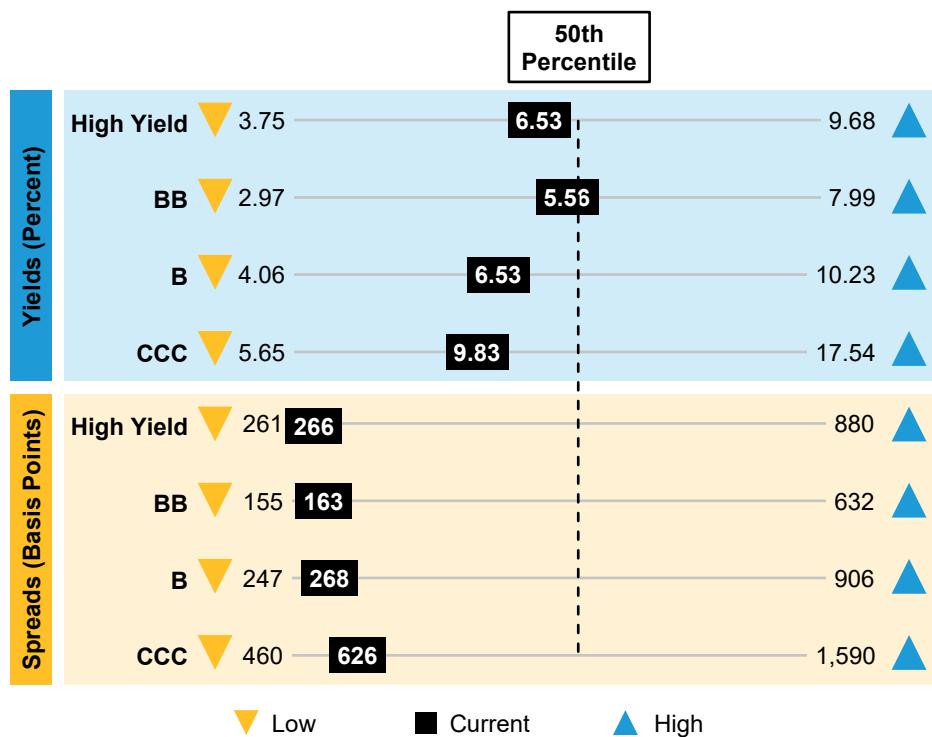
As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg and AB

# US High Yield: Current High-Yield Valuations May Lead to Attractive Future Returns

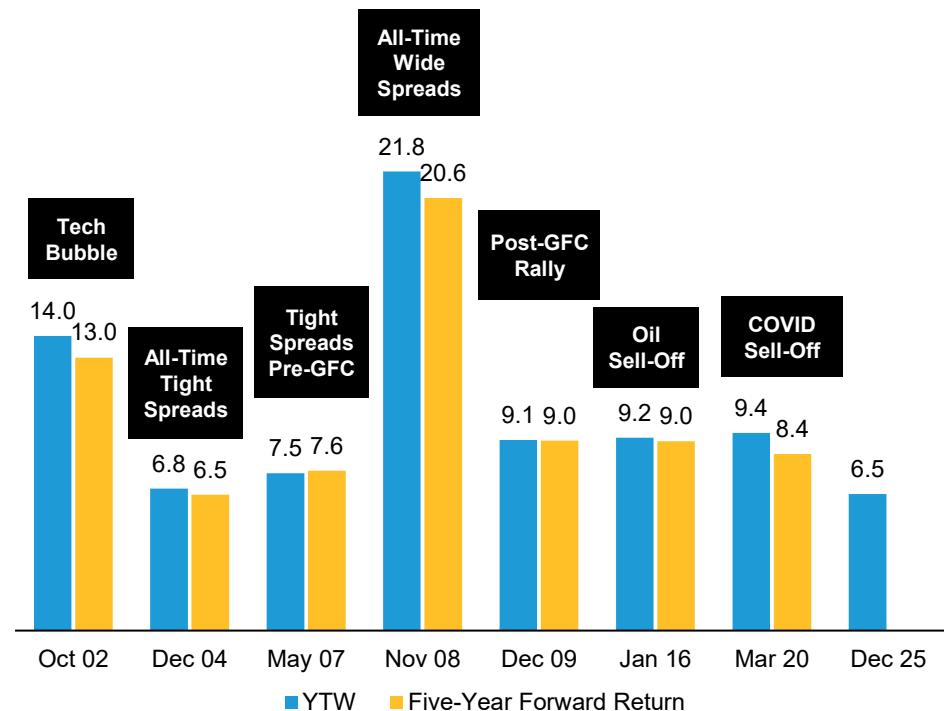
## Spreads Are Tight but Yields Are Attractive

Yields near long-term average levels



## Yield to Worst Has Historically Been a Strong Predictor of Future Returns

Yield to worst and five-year forward annualized returns (percent)



Past performance and historical analysis do not guarantee future results.

GFC: global financial crisis; YTW: yield to worst

Both displays are represented by the Bloomberg US Corporate High Yield.

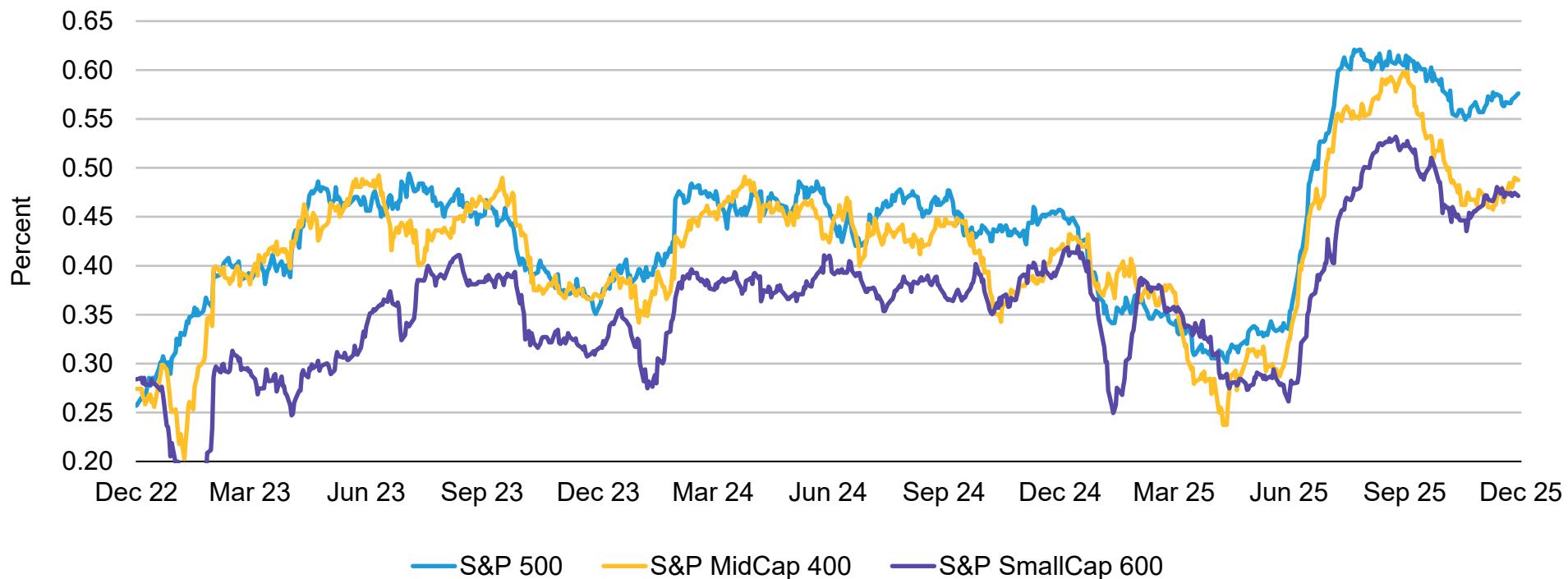
Data from January 2016 to December 2025

As of 31 December 2025. Source: Bloomberg and AB

# Appendix

# Forward Revisions Breadth Is the Highest It's Been in Three Years

## Forward Revisions Breadth



**Past performance does not guarantee future results. Analysis is provided for illustrative purposes only and is subject to revision.**

Earnings revisions breadth is calculated as the number of positive revisions minus the number of negative revisions divided by the total estimates.

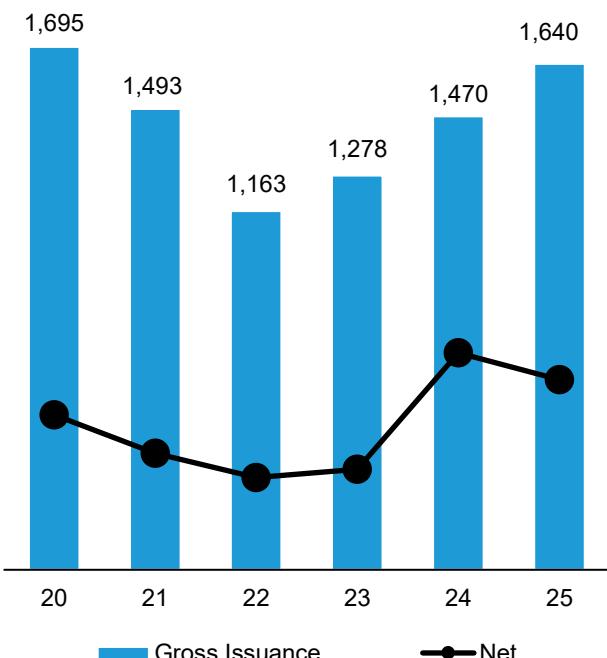
Through 31 December 2025

Source: FactSet, S&P and AB

# Investment-Grade Corporates Can Help Diversify Investors' Credit Allocations

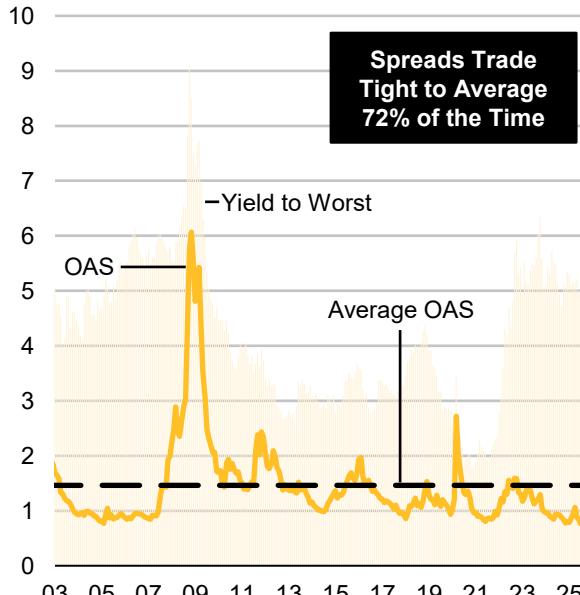
## Net Supply Remains Manageable in the Face of Strong Issuance

US IG supply (billions)



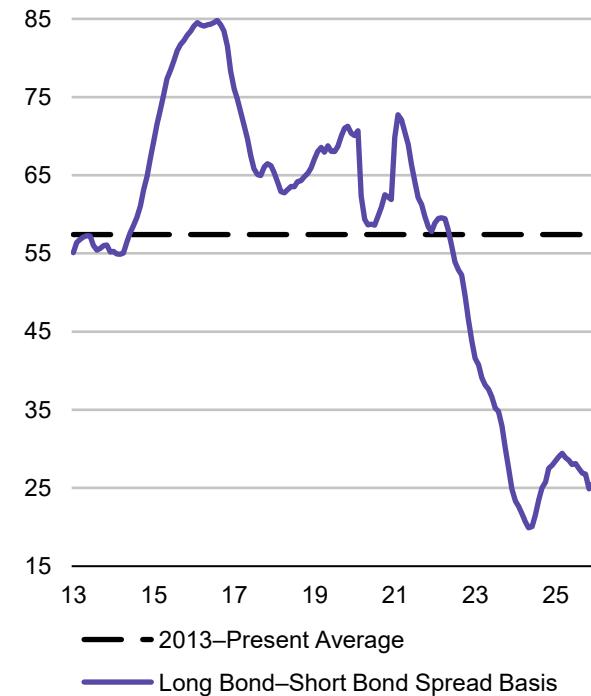
## Yields Are Compelling, While Spreads Are Still Tight

Percent



## Long-End Bonds Are Offering Historically Low-Spread Pickup

OAS (basis points)



Historical and current analyses do not guarantee future results.

IG: investment-grade; OAS: option-adjusted spread

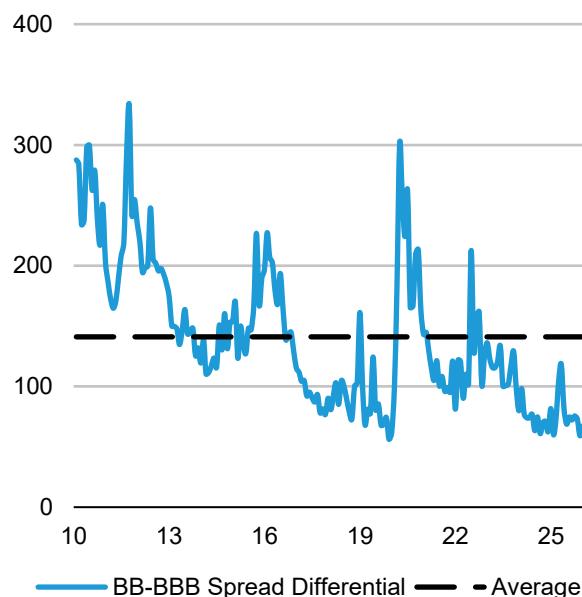
Middle display average since 1 January 2003; right display index represented by Bloomberg US Corporate

Through 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, J.P. Morgan and AB

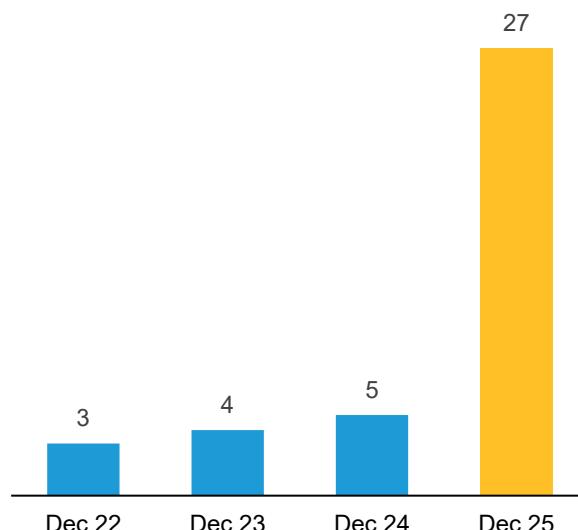
# Investors Can Move Up in Quality from BBs to BBBs Without Giving Up Much (or Any) Yield

The BB–BBB Spread Ratio Is Trading at Tight Levels...  
Spread (basis points)



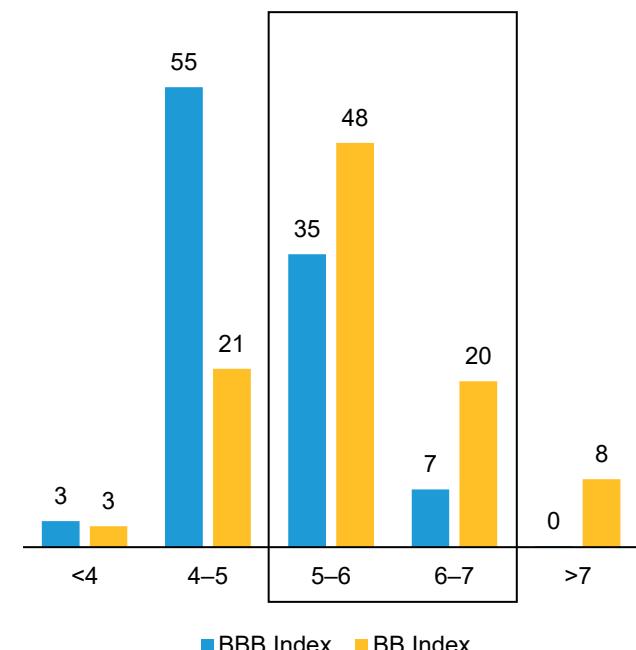
...Dramatically Increasing the Share of BBB Bonds that Yield More than the BB Market

Percent of BBB cohort with YTW above BB cohort



42% of the BBB Market Offers Yields Similar to BBs

Yield-to-worst buckets (percent)



**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

YTW: yield to worst. Bonds are rated by a nationally recognized statistical rating organization; AAA is highest (best) and D is lowest (worst). BBB bonds are represented by the BBB cohort bonds in the Bloomberg US Credit Corp. BB bonds are represented by the BB cohort bonds in the Bloomberg US High Yield Corporate.

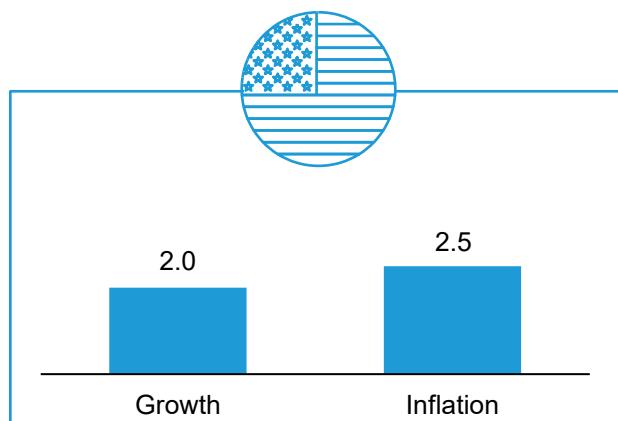
Middle display: percent of BBB portion of investment-grade market trading with a yield above the BB index yield at that point

As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg and AB

# Tariffs Have a Different Impact on the US than on Europe

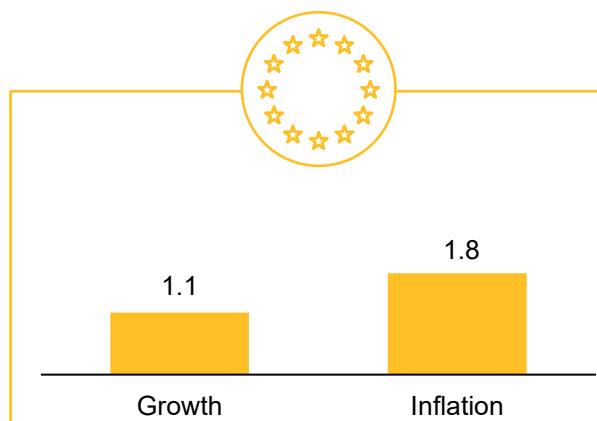
## US Outlook: Growth Uncertainty and Inflationary Trends 2026 forecast (percent)



**Growth:**  
Reduced policy uncertainty, AI adoption and easier monetary policy could support expansion

**Inflation:**  
Potential transitory inflationary impact

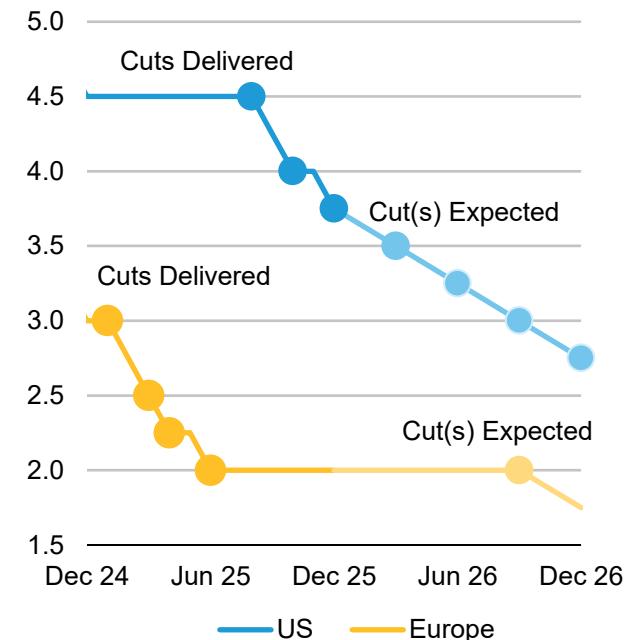
## EU Outlook: Export-Demand Weakness and Disinflationary Trends 2026 forecast (percent)



**Growth:**  
Reduced export demand likely to weigh on growth; Germany's fiscal package likely to support growth in 2026 and beyond

**Inflation:**  
Potential disinflationary impact

## The ECB May Have Room to Cut Again Fed and ECB policy rates (percent)



Current analysis does not guarantee future results. There is no guarantee that any estimates or forecasts will be realized.

Growth forecasts are year-over-year calendar averages.

As of 31 December 2025

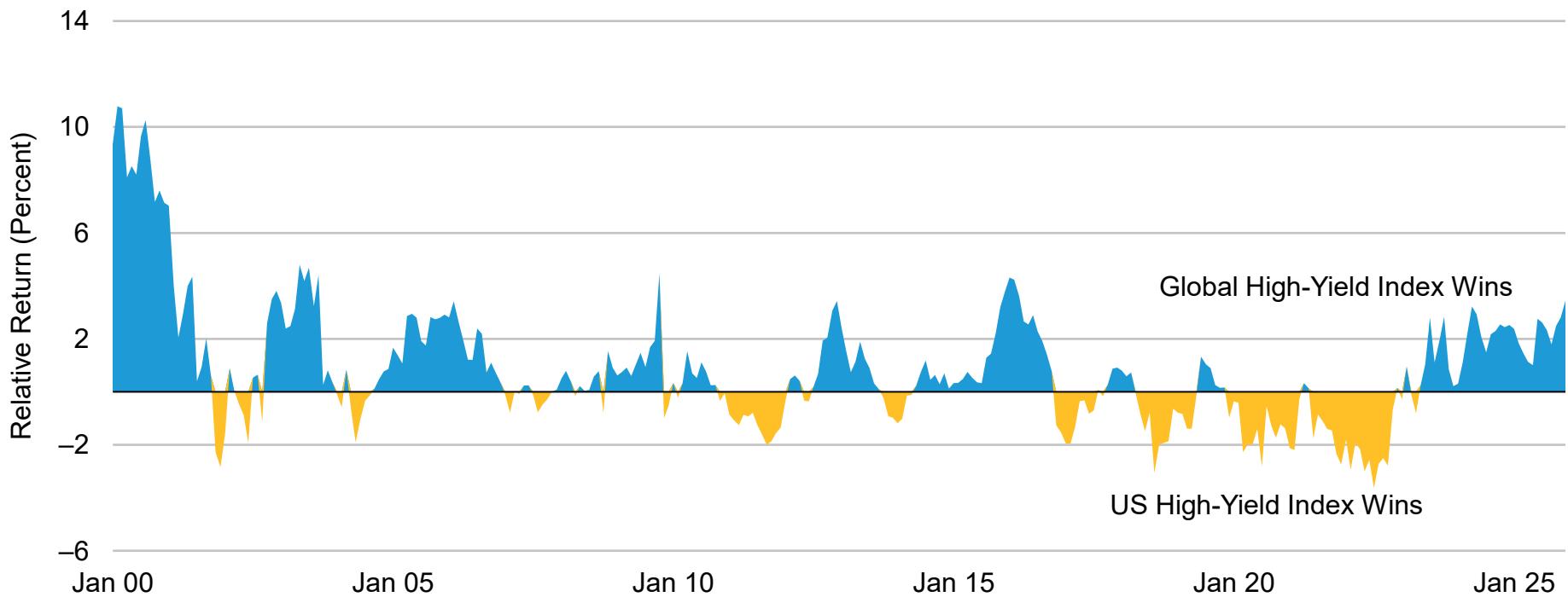
Source: AB

# Globalizing Your Exposure Could Generate Additional Alpha

Global high yield historically outperforms US high yield ~65% of the time

## Global Is Back in Favor After Lagging US High Yield in Recent Years

Trailing 12-month relative return



**Past performance and current analysis do not guarantee future results.**

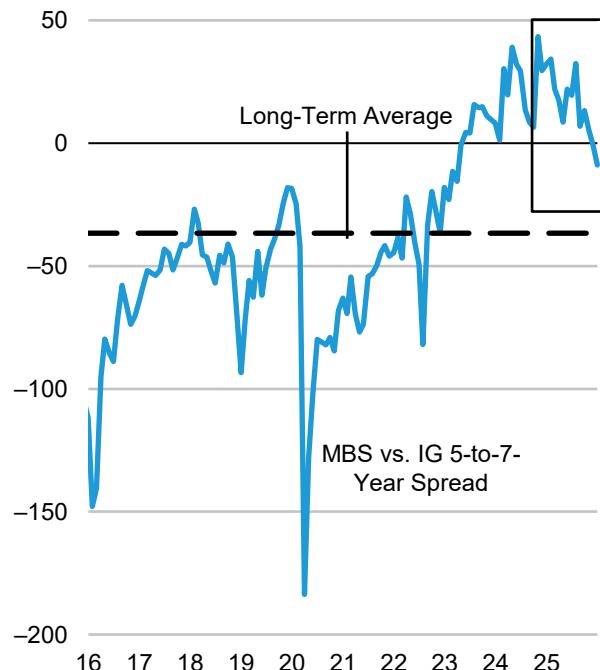
Global high-yield index USD hedged is represented by the Bloomberg Global High Yield USD Hedged; US high-yield index is represented by the Bloomberg US Corporate High Yield. Relative return represents rolling 12-month outperformance of global high-yield and US high-yield indices.

31 January 2000 through 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg and AB

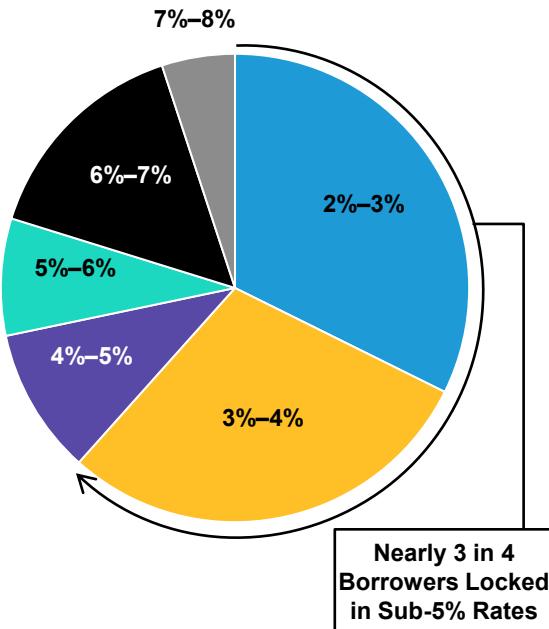
# We Believe Agency MBS Deserve a Place in Today's Asset Allocation

## Despite Recent Outperformance, Agency MBS Spreads Look Attractive vs. IG Corporates (Spread Difference, bps)



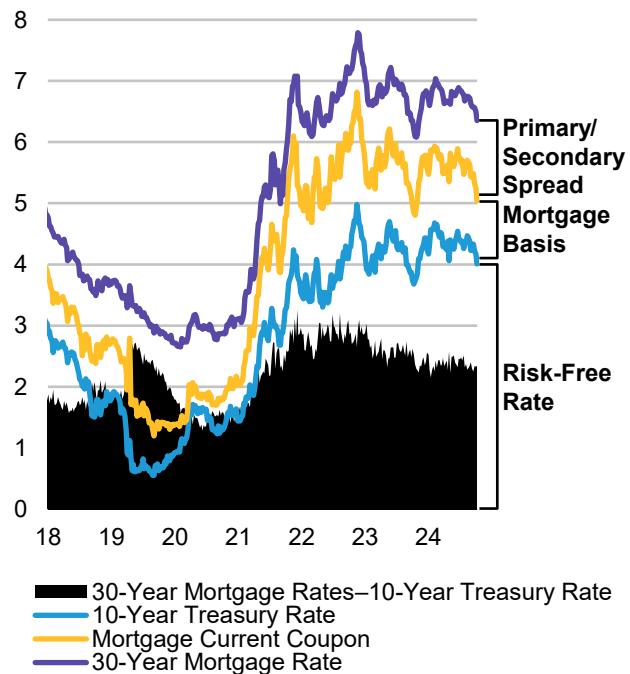
## We Don't Expect a Wave of Refinancing Despite the Fed's Cutting Cycle

MBS universe by mortgage rate



## A Significant Decline in Mortgage Rates Is Unlikely

Percent



**Past performance does not guarantee future results. There is no guarantee that any estimates or forecasts will be realized.**

bps: basis points; IG: investment-grade; MBS: mortgage-backed securities

Agency MBS spread is represented by J.P. Morgan 30-Year Current Coupon Zero-Volatility spread; IG spread by JULI All Main Sectors ALL 5–7 Portfolio spread (Treasury)

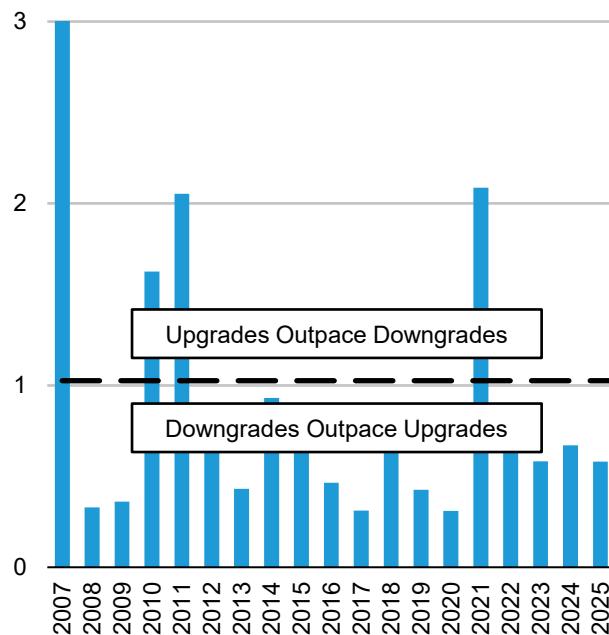
Left display from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2025; middle display as of 1 July 2025; right display as of 11 September 2025

Source: Bloomberg, J.P. Morgan and AB

# While Cautious on Underlying Loans, CLOs Offer a Resilient Structure with an Attractive Spread Pickup over Corporates

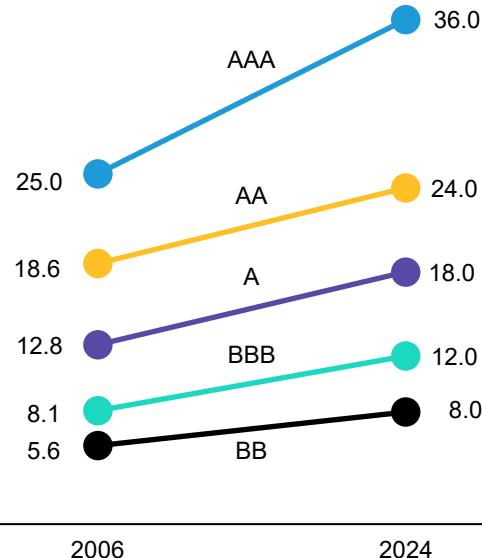
## Loan Market Quality Is Declining

Ratings upgrade/downgrade ratio by amount outstanding



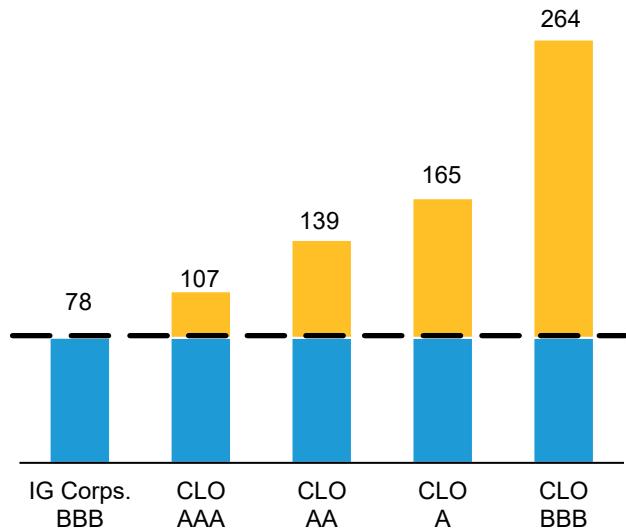
## Newly Issued CLOs Have Stronger Credit Enhancements than Pre-GFC

Credit enhancement levels\* (percent)



## CLOs Offer a Compelling Spread Pickup over BBB Corporate Bonds

Spreads (basis points)



**Past performance does not guarantee future results.**

CLO: collateralized loan obligation; GFC: global financial crisis; IG: investment-grade

Bonds are rated by a nationally recognized statistical rating organization; AAA is highest (best) and D is lowest (worst). Ratings are subject to change. Investment-grade securities are those rated BBB and above.

\*Credit enhancement levels are for broadly syndicated loan CLOs.

As of 31 December 2025

Source: Bloomberg, J.P. Morgan, KANERAI, Wells Fargo and AB

# A Word About Risk

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## **Important Risk Information Related to Investing in Equity and Short Strategies**

All investments involve risk. Equity securities may rise and decline in value due to both real and perceived market and economic factors as well as general industry conditions.

A short strategy may not always be able to close out a short position on favorable terms. Short sales involve the risk of loss by subsequently buying a security at a higher price than the price at which it sold the security short. The amount of such loss is theoretically unlimited (since it is limited only by the increase in value of the security sold short). In contrast, the risk of loss from a long position is limited to the investment in the long position, since its value cannot fall below zero. Short selling is a form of leverage. To mitigate leverage risk, a strategy will always hold liquid assets (including its long positions) at least equal to its short position exposure, marked to market daily.

## **Important Risk Information Related to Investing in Emerging Markets and Foreign Currencies**

Investing in emerging-market debt poses risks, including those generally associated with fixed-income investments. Fixed-income securities may lose value due to market fluctuations or changes in interest rates. Longer-maturity bonds are more vulnerable to rising interest rates. A bond issuer's credit rating may be lowered due to deteriorating financial condition; this may result in losses and potentially default, or failure to meet payment obligations. The default probability is higher in bonds with lower, noninvestment-grade ratings (commonly known as "junk bonds").

There are other potential risks when investing in emerging-market debt. Non-US securities may be more volatile because of the associated political, regulatory, market and economic uncertainties; these risks can be magnified in emerging-market securities. Emerging-market bonds may also be exposed to fluctuating currency values. If a bond's currency weakens against the US dollar, this can negatively affect its value when translated back into US-dollar terms.

## **Bond Ratings Definition**

A measure of the quality and safety of a bond or portfolio, is based on the issuer's financial condition, and not based on the financial condition of the fund itself. AAA is highest (best) and D is lowest (worst). Ratings are subject to change. Investment-grade securities are those rated BBB and above. If applicable, the Pre-Refunded category includes bonds which are secured by US government securities and therefore are deemed high-quality investment grade by the advisor.

# Index Definitions

Following are definitions of the indices referred to in this presentation. It is important to recognize that all indices are unmanaged and do not reflect fees and expenses associated with the active management of a mutual fund portfolio. Investors cannot invest directly in an index, and its performance does not reflect the performance of any AB mutual fund.

- **Bloomberg Commodity Index:** is calculated on an excess return basis and reflects commodity futures price movements. The index is designed to minimize concentration in any one commodity or sector. It currently has 23 commodity futures in six sectors. No one commodity can compose more than 15% of the index, no one commodity and its derived commodities can compose more than 25% of the index, and no sector can represent more than 33% of the index (as of the annual weightings of the components)
- **Bloomberg Emerging Markets Hard Currency (USD) Aggregate Index:** A hard currency emerging markets debt benchmark that includes USD-denominated debt from sovereign, quasi-sovereign, and corporate EM issuers
- **Bloomberg Emerging Markets Local Currency Government Index:** Tracks the fixed-rate local currency sovereign debt of emerging market countries
- **Bloomberg Emerging Markets USD Aggregate Index:** A hard currency Emerging Markets debt benchmark that includes fixed and floating-rate US dollar-denominated debt issued from sovereign, quasi-sovereign, and corporate EM issuers
- **Bloomberg Global Aggregate Corporate Bond Index:** Tracks the performance of investment-grade corporate bonds publicly issued in the global market and found in the Global Aggregate. (Represents global corporate on slide 4)
- **Bloomberg Global High-Yield Bond Index:** Provides a broad-based measure of the global high-yield fixed-income markets. It represents the union of the US High-Yield, Pan-European High Yield, US Emerging Markets High-Yield, CMBS High Yield and Pan-European Emerging Markets High-Yield indices. (Represents high yield on slide 4)
- **Bloomberg Global Investment Grade Corporate Bond Index:** a rules-based market-value-weighted index engineered to measure the investment-grade, fixed rate, global corporate bond market
- **Bloomberg Global Treasury Index:** Tracks fixed-rate local currency government debt of investment-grade countries. The index represents the Treasury sector of the Global Aggregate Bond Index
- **Bloomberg Global Treasury: Euro Bond Index:** Includes fixed-rate, local-currency sovereign debt that makes up the Euro Area Treasury sector of the Global Aggregate Bond Index. (Represents euro-area government bonds on slide 4)
- **Bloomberg Global Treasury: Japan Bond Index:** Includes fixed-rate, local-currency sovereign debt that makes up the Japanese Treasury sector of the Global Aggregate Bond Index. (Represents Japan government bonds on slide 4)
- **Bloomberg Leveraged Loan Index:** A market value-weighted index designed to measure the performance of the US leveraged loan market based upon market weightings, spreads and interest payments

# Index Definitions (cont.)

- **Bloomberg MBS Index:** tracks fixed-rate agency mortgage-backed pass-through securities guaranteed by Ginnie Mae (GNMA), Fannie Mae (FNMA), and Freddie Mac (FHLMC)
- **Bloomberg Pan-European High Yield Index:** Measures the market of non-investment grade, fixed-rate corporate bonds denominated in the following currencies: euro, pounds sterling, Danish krone, Norwegian krone, Swedish krona, and Swiss franc
- **Bloomberg US Aggregate Bond Index:** A broad-based benchmark that measures the investment-grade, US dollar-denominated, fixed-rate, taxable bond market, including US Treasuries, government-related and corporate securities, mortgage-backed securities (MBS [agency fixed-rate and hybrid ARM pass-throughs]), asset-backed securities (ABS), and commercial mortgage-backed securities (CMBS)
- **Bloomberg US CMBS Investment Grade Index:** Measures the market of US Agency and US Non-Agency conduit and fusion CMBS deals with a minimum current deal size of \$300mn
- **Bloomberg US Corporate High-Yield Bond Index:** Represents the corporate component of the Bloomberg US High-Yield Index and measures the USD-denominated, high yield, fixed-rate corporate bond market
- **Bloomberg US Treasury Index:** Includes fixed-rate, local-currency sovereign debt that makes up the US Treasury sector of the Global Aggregate Index. (Represents US government bonds on slide 4)
- **J.P. Morgan Emerging Market Bond Index Global:** A benchmark index for measuring the total return performance of government bonds issued by emerging-market countries that are considered sovereign (issued in something other than local currency) and that meet specific liquidity and structural requirements. In order to qualify for index membership, the debt must be more than one year to maturity, have more than \$500 million outstanding, and meet stringent trading guidelines to ensure that pricing inefficiencies don't affect the index. (Represents emerging-market debt on slide 4)
- **MSCI EAFE Index:** A free float-adjusted, market capitalization-weighted index designed to measure developed-market equity performance, excluding the US and Canada. It consists of 22 developed-market country indices
- **MSCI Emerging Markets Index:** A free float-adjusted, market capitalization-weighted index designed to measure equity market performance in the global emerging markets. It consists of 21 emerging-market country indices. (Represents emerging markets on slide 4)
- **MSCI Europe Index:** Represents the performance of large and mid-cap equities across 15 developed countries in Europe. (Represents European Equities on slide 4)
- **MSCI USA Index:** Measures the performance of the large and mid-cap segments of the US market. With 624 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in the US
- **MSCI USA Minimum Volatility Index:** aims to reflect the performance characteristics of a minimum variance strategy applied to the US large and mid-cap equity universe
- **MSCI World Index:** A market capitalization-weighted index that measures the performance of stock markets in 24 countries. (Represents world on slide 4)

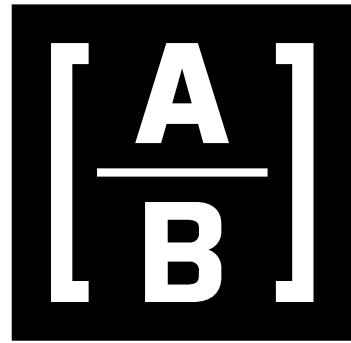
# Index Definitions (cont.)

- **Russell 1000 Index:** A stock market index that represents the highest-ranking 1,000 stocks in the Russell 3000 Index, representing about 90% of the total market capitalization of that index.
- **Russell 2000 Index:** Measures the performance of the small-cap segment of the US equity universe. It is a subset of the Russell 3000 Index, representing approximately 8% of the total market capitalization of that index. It includes approximately 2,000 of the smallest securities based on a combination of their market cap and current index membership. (Represents US Small Cap on slide 4)
- **S&P 500 Index:** Includes a representative sample of 500 leading companies in leading industries of the US economy. (Represents US Large Cap on slide 4)
- **S&P Global REIT:** serves as a comprehensive benchmark of publicly traded equity REITs listed in both developed and emerging markets

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Hypothetical or simulated performance results have certain inherent limitations. Unlike an actual performance record, simulated results do not represent actual trading. Also, since the trades have not actually been executed, the results may not reflect the impact that certain material economic and market factors might have had on an investment advisor's actual decision-making if they were reflected of a managed account. Simulated trading programs in general are also subject to the fact that they are designed with the benefit of hindsight. No representation is being made that any account will, or is likely to, achieve profits or losses similar to those shown.



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