

The Recession Never Came, so Now What?

ECONOMY

2 Economists were convinced that a recession would hit the U.S. economy, but it never came. Instead, growth held up, and consumers became more confident. Now what? With mass deportations and tariffs potentially leading to inflation, the fate of the economy is uncertain.

Inflation Worries Drag Most Indices Lower

FIXED INCOME

8 The Bloomberg US Aggregate Bond Index fell 3.1% due to the rise in interest rates, and credit spreads tightened. The yield curve steepened, with rates rising for Treasuries one year and longer. The U.S. dollar surged.

Gains in 3Q24 but Lags Benchmarks

PRIVATE CREDIT

12 Private credit rose 2.0% in 3Q24, lagging two benchmarks. But over longer time periods it has held up well and performed better than either leveraged loans or high yield bonds. Fundraising for private debt was the strongest since 4Q23, with \$51 billion raised.

Gains for 2024 but Concerns Over 2025

INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS

4 Institutional investors saw gains over 2024, but struggled against a 60% stocks/40% bonds benchmark. The new administration was the focus of many discussions, and inflation, interest rates, and the Fed continued to dominate asset-allocation decisions.

Valuations May Have Bottomed; REITs Fall

REAL ESTATE/REAL ASSETS

10 Valuations appear to have bottomed and now reflect higher borrowing costs. Income returns for private real estate were positive across sectors and regions. REITs fell, both in the U.S. and globally. Redemption queues are starting to decline.

Strong Finish but Choppy Outlook

HEDGE FUNDS/MACs

13 Hedge funds finished strong to end the year; the median Callan Institutional Hedge Fund Peer Group rose 2.4%. Within the HFRI indices, the best-performing strategy was event-driven, which was up 2.1% as current M&A deals reacted positively to the new administration.

U.S. Stocks Hit High After Volatility Spike

EQUITY

6 U.S. stocks ended up roughly 2% after a volatile quarter. Sector performance was mixed, while large cap stocks outperformed small cap, again. Tariffs threatened by the Trump administration weighed on global equity markets, with Europe one of the worst performers.

Fundraising Back; Activity Struggles

PRIVATE EQUITY

11 Fundraising by dollar is nearing the highs of 2021. Buyout activity is flat, while venture capital activity is significantly depressed. Short-term performance continues to lag, but over longer time periods, private equity maintains a premium.

Index Gains 5.6%; Turnover at Low

DEFINED CONTRIBUTION

15 The Callan DC Index™ gained 5.6% in 3Q24. Balances in the index rose entirely due to investment gains, as net flows were negative. Turnover as measured by the index hit its lowest level ever, while fixed income saw the most flows, outpacing even target date funds.

Broad Market Quarterly Returns

U.S. Equity
Russell 3000



2.6%

Global ex-U.S. Equity
MSCI ACWI ex USA



-7.6%

U.S. Fixed Income
Bloomberg Agg



-3.1%

Global ex-U.S. Fixed Income
Bloomberg Global Agg ex US



-6.8%

Sources: Bloomberg, FTSE Russell, MSCI

The Recession Never Came, so Now What?

ECONOMY | Jay Kloepfer

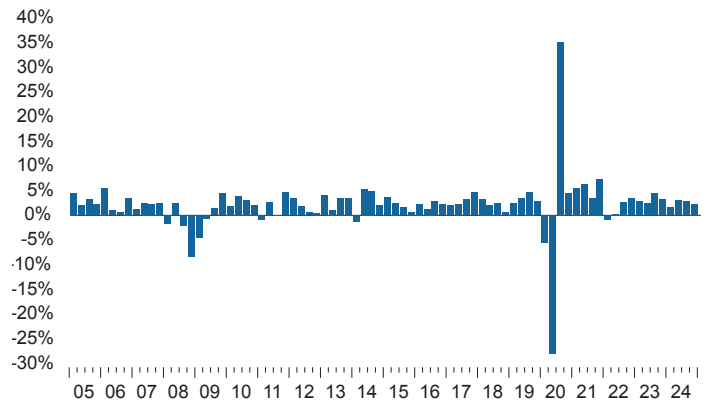
Economists and market prognosticators were all so sure that a recession was in the cards, if not in 2023, then surely in 2024. But one never came, and now we are left scratching our collective heads as to what is in store for the global economy. The U.S. economy showed a few signs of slowing during 2024, scattered across indicators like inventories and consumer debt levels, especially for autos, and exports and imports. In the end solid GDP growth persisted, and the job market proved resilient despite some head fakes during the year. The hurricanes in the Southeast took a bite out of consumer optimism and the job market in the fall, when new jobs fell precipitously in October to recessionary readings (below 50,000). But hiring came bouncing back in November and December, and the U.S. economy clocked consecutive months with greater than 200,000 new jobs, a level associated with continued economic expansion. The unemployment rate remains low at 4.1%. GDP grew 2.5% over the course of 2024, after a gain of 2.9% the previous year.

The Federal Reserve's process of rate hikes to tackle elevated inflation, in which the Fed Funds rate and mortgage rates and credit card and auto loan rates all rose dramatically within a very concentrated period of about six quarters, barely dented the U.S. economic growth engine. A tumultuous federal election year and spreading geopolitical turmoil around the globe has not hurt consumer confidence much. We can trace the consumer optimism in broad strokes to the strong, steady job market, and wages and salaries that have risen fast enough to finally outpace inflation, a reversal that took hold when the rate of inflation dropped sharply from its peak in 2022. Real average hourly earnings increased 1% over the course of 2024 (in other words, nominal wages outpaced inflation by 1%). Real wage growth has sustained confidence and boosted disposable income and spending.

The Fed signaled that it completed its mission to raise interest rates to fight inflation in mid-2024 and began cutting rates in September 2024. The Fed cut a total of 1% in 2024, and the current target range for the Fed Funds rate is 4.25%–4.50%. Longer term, the midpoint of the Fed's target for short rates is 3.0%,

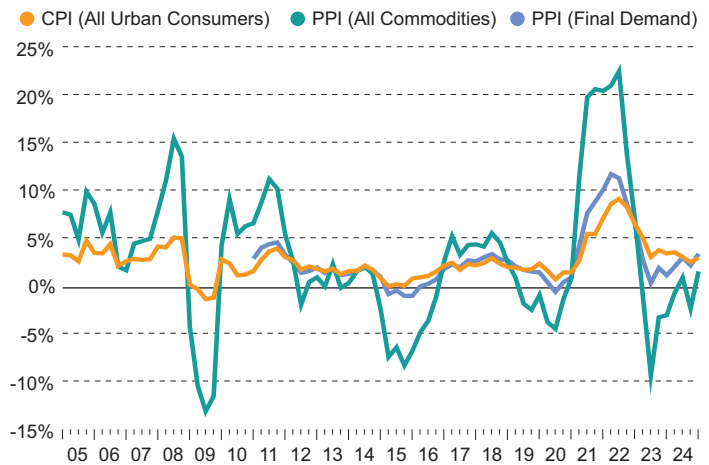
Quarterly Real GDP Growth

(20 Years)



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Inflation Year-Over-Year



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

but the size of the range around this midpoint is unprecedented, 2.4% to 4%, suggesting a wide range of opinions at the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). The debt market is pricing in a halt to the Fed's rate cuts at 4%, suggesting belief that inflation and therefore short rates may have to settle in at levels higher than previously thought.

Despite the gains in real wages, the shadow of inflation still looms. The effects of this once-in-a-generation inflation spike will hang over companies and consumers for years. Inflation is a rate of increase in general prices; even if we hit the Federal Reserve's

articulated goal of 2% long term, it still means prices continue to rise, every year. More importantly, that 9% spike in inflation is now baked in. Prices are “permanently” higher, and they are continuing to rise, just at a lower rate. Simple daily indicators abound that remind households and companies and governments that everything is substantially more expensive. None are more prevalent than the cost of food, both at home and at restaurants: How much did I just pay for those eggs?

Strong GDP growth suggests little easing in tight labor markets; the prospect for continued inflationary pressure from the labor market is high. Getting inflation down to the Fed’s stated goal of 2% will take time and some discomfort. Squeezing out the last of excess inflation will require a period of below trend growth, a loosening of the labor market, and the pain of a rise in unemployment. In the face of this labor market tightness, deporting undocumented workers has the potential, most mainstream economists agree, to greatly restrict the supply of labor in agriculture across the country and could result in substantial upward pressure on the cost of food either from reduced supply (more likely) or increased wages to lure American workers to do these jobs (less likely). Other sectors including construction and services could see similar severe tightening in their supply of labor and upward pressure on prices.

The other part of the inflation shadow is the prospect of trade wars, namely the imposition of tariffs by the U.S., with potential retaliation from its trading partners. Within the complex web of global sourcing, assembly, and delivery of goods and services by U.S. companies, it is not clear what or who will be subject to a tariff. American automakers source parts, including computer chips, and assemble vehicles outside of the U.S. American tech companies make much of their hardware either entirely overseas or with

The Long-Term View

Index	4Q24	Periods Ended 12/31/24			
		1 Yr	5 Yrs	10 Yrs	25 Yrs
U.S. Equity					
Russell 3000	2.6	23.8	13.9	12.5	7.8
S&P 500	2.4	25.0	14.5	13.1	7.7
Russell 2000	0.3	11.5	7.4	7.8	7.6
Global ex-U.S. Equity					
MSCI EAFE	-8.1	3.8	4.7	5.2	3.6
MSCI ACWI ex USA	-7.6	5.5	4.1	4.8	--
MSCI Emerging Markets	-8.0	7.5	1.7	3.6	--
MSCI ACWI ex USA Small Cap	-7.7	3.4	4.3	5.7	6.2
Fixed Income					
Bloomberg Agg	-3.1	1.3	-0.3	1.3	3.9
90-Day T-Bill	1.2	5.3	2.5	1.8	1.9
Bloomberg Long G/C	-7.4	-4.2	-3.3	1.0	5.4
Bloomberg GI Agg ex US	-6.8	-4.2	-3.4	-0.9	2.4
Real Estate					
NCREIF Property	0.9	0.4	3.1	5.7	7.6
FTSE Nareit Equity	-6.2	8.7	4.3	5.7	9.8
Alternatives					
Cambridge PE*	2.5	9.2	16.4	15.4	13.3
Cambridge Senior Debt*	3.3	10.2	7.9	7.3	4.6
HFRI Fund Weighted	1.5	9.8	7.0	5.3	5.6
Bloomberg Commodity	-0.4	5.4	6.8	1.3	2.1
Inflation – CPI-U	0.1	2.9	4.2	3.0	2.5

*Data for most recent period lags. Data as of 3Q24.
Sources: Bloomberg, Bureau of Economic Analysis, FTSE Russell, Hedge Fund Research, MSCI, NCREIF, Refinitiv/Cambridge, S&P Dow Jones Indices

components from overseas. Auto companies from Germany and Japan assemble autos in the U.S. How do we define an import car, exactly? Tariffs raise the prices to the end buyer, leading to more inflationary pressures. Spiraling prices may be the catalyst of the long-awaited recession, finally killing growth in the current economic cycle.

Recent Quarterly Economic Indicators

	4Q24	3Q24	2Q24	1Q24	4Q23	3Q23
Employment Cost: Total Compensation Growth	3.8%	3.9%	4.1%	4.2%	4.2%	4.3%
Nonfarm Business: Productivity Growth	1.2%	2.3%	2.1%	0.7%	3.1%	3.8%
GDP Growth	2.3%	2.8%	3.0%	1.6%	3.2%	4.4%
Manufacturing Capacity Utilization	76.3%	76.7%	77.2%	77.1%	77.6%	78.1%
Consumer Sentiment Index (1966=100)	72.1	68.1	71.1	78.4	64.9	69.6

Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Reserve, IHS Economics, Reuters/University of Michigan

Gains for 2024 but Concerns Over 2025

INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS

- Public defined benefit (DB) plans and nonprofits gained 10% over the last year, easily topping U.S. fixed income and global ex-U.S. stocks.
- Corporate plans, with their heavier allocations to bonds, only rose 6%.
- But extraordinary stock gains easily outpaced those returns, and all institutional investor types lagged a 60% S&P 500/40% Bloomberg Aggregate benchmark.
- Over 5-, 10-, and 20-year time periods, the same pattern held: public DB plans and nonprofits outpaced corporate plans, but all lagged the benchmark.
- The margin of that outperformance narrowed over time.

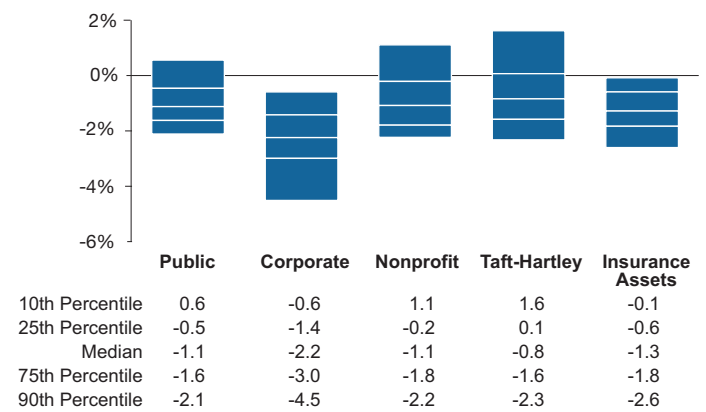
Macroeconomic Issues

- Not surprisingly, the new administration was a major topic of discussions, with investors trying to understand its impact on inflation, trade, taxes, and deregulation.
- Global ex-U.S. markets continue to be a source of consternation, with their underperformance compared to U.S. equities a sore spot.
- At the same time, the excessive concentration within U.S. large cap stocks is a concern, as active managers struggle to outpace benchmarks.

Public DB plans

- Asset-allocation decisions drive many conversations for these plans.
- Fixed income, especially its performance compared to other asset classes, has been a pain point. However, increased capital markets expectations for the asset class, especially compared to two years ago, has led some plans to reconsider bonds.
- Interest rates and the Fed's actions continue to be a top-of-mind issue.

Quarterly Returns, Callan Database Groups (12/31/24)



Source: Callan

Callan Database Median and Index Returns* for Periods Ended 12/31/24

Database Group	Quarter	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	20 Years
Public Database	-1.1	10.0	3.0	7.2	7.3	6.9
Corporate Database	-2.2	6.0	-0.7	3.9	5.5	6.2
Nonprofit Database	-1.1	10.1	2.9	7.2	7.0	6.7
Taft-Hartley Database	-0.8	9.7	2.8	6.8	7.0	6.7
Insurance Assets Database	-1.3	6.4	1.5	3.4	4.1	4.5
All Institutional Investors	-1.3	9.4	2.5	6.6	6.7	6.7
Large (>\$1 billion)	-1.1	8.6	2.6	7.0	7.1	6.9
Medium (\$100mm - \$1bn)	-1.3	9.5	2.5	6.7	6.8	6.8
Small (<\$100 million)	-1.4	10.0	2.5	6.5	6.6	6.5
60% S&P 500/40% Bloomberg Agg	0.2	15.1	4.5	8.8	8.6	7.7

*Returns less than one year are not annualized.

Source: Callan. Callan's database includes the following groups: public defined benefit (DB) plans, corporate DB plans, nonprofits, insurance assets, and Taft-Hartley plans. Approximately 10% to 15% of the database constituents are Callan's clients. All database group returns presented gross of fees. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Reference to or inclusion in this report of any product, service, or entity should not be construed as a recommendation, approval, affiliation, or endorsement of such product, service, or entity by Callan.

Corporate DB plans

- Funded status improvements are leading plans to discuss changes to asset allocation to protect the gains, or to derisk, or to examine pension risk transfer.
- Allocation issues touch a range of asset classes, including hedge funds and growth assets.
- Investors ranked artificial intelligence as the most topical issue they are addressing, followed by geopolitical uncertainty.
- With the pandemic and related lockdowns firmly in the rear-view mirror for many, firm culture after COVID-19 was last in their rankings.

DC plans

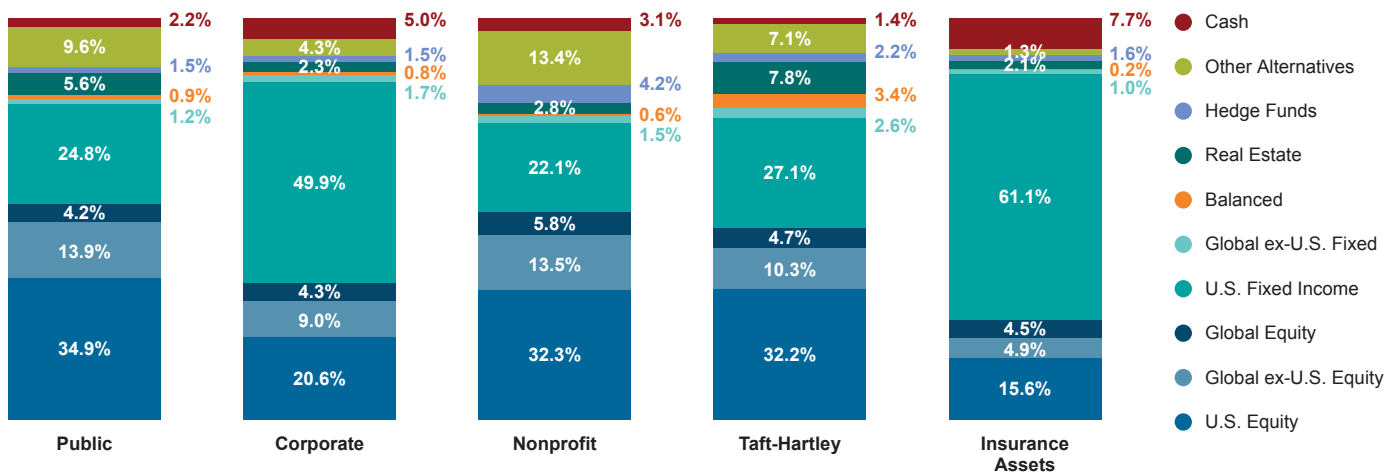
- Retirement income is still under discussion by sponsors, to help participants with the “decumulation” phase of their careers and post-career lives.

- Target date funds are attracting scrutiny. They are quite popular, but some plans wonder if they have the “right” ones.
- The implications of SECURE 2.0 and other regulatory changes are uncertain, but sponsors are trying to assess what if any changes they need to make in response.

Nonprofits

- These investors are also weighing critical asset-allocation decisions, including how much to allocate to alternative investments, what to do with fixed income, and whether to overweight U.S. equities vs. global ex-U.S. equities.
- Return enhancement is another area of focus, with a desire to assure the growth of the portfolio.
- Interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion continues to be low, even compared to other types of institutional investors, with only 6% of clients this quarter planning future action and 26% taking no steps to implement DEI policies.

Average Asset Allocation, Callan Database Groups



Note: Charts may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Other alternatives include but is not limited to: diversified multi-asset, private credit, private equity, and real assets. Source: Callan

Equity

U.S. Equities

U.S. market reaches record high after spike in volatility

- The U.S. equity market ended with the S&P 500 Index up over 2%. However, the quarter was marked by volatility, particularly during October and December.
- Negative returns in October were driven by investor anxiety around the U.S. presidential election, uncertainty with the Fed’s approach to interest rate cuts, and some misses to corporate earnings expectations. December returns, while initially buoyed by the Fed’s third consecutive rate cut, cooled after the Fed announced no additional rate cuts until the second half of 2025.
- Sector performance was mixed; only four (Communication Services, Consumer Discretionary, Financials, and Information Technology) posted gains.
- During 4Q24, large cap stocks outperformed small caps. Growth outperformed value across the market cap spectrum.

Large caps continue to drive narrow markets

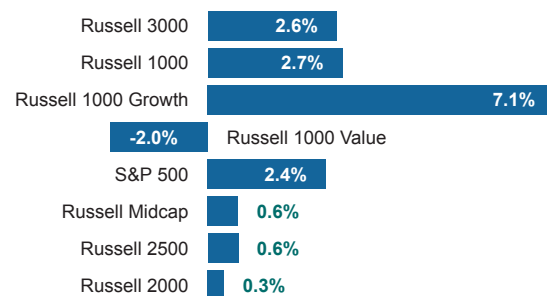
- Concentration and performance contribution of the Magnificent Seven stocks within the large cap benchmarks remain outsized relative to the aggregate of benchmark constituents. In 2024, the S&P 500’s return was 25%; the S&P 500 ex-Mag 7 return was 16%.
- For the second year in a row, less than 30% of S&P 500 stocks have outperformed the S&P 500 itself.

Fundamentals critical to success of large caps

- In recent years, themes—like “work from home” stocks and AI—as well as momentum have been attributed to the prolonged success of the Magnificent Seven.
- However, Magnificent Seven valuations have been supported by strong earnings, low debt, and high cash levels. Consensus and forward-looking EPS growth expectations also remain high for large cap companies.

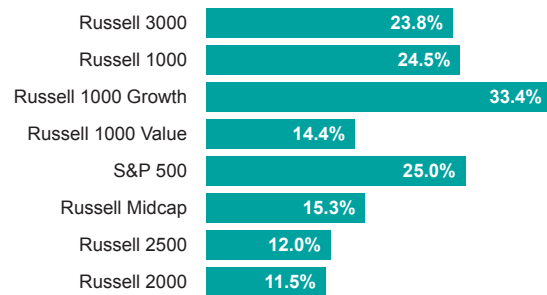
U.S. Equity: Quarterly Returns

(12/31/24)



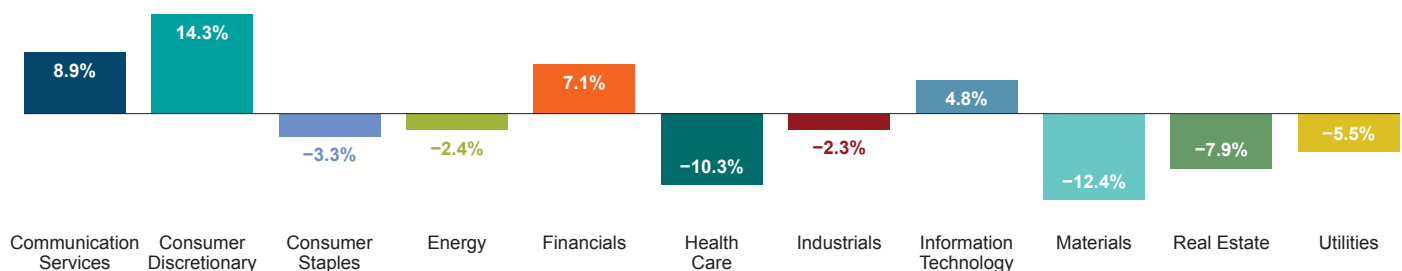
U.S. Equity: One-Year Returns

(12/31/24)



Sources: FTSE Russell and S&P Dow Jones Indices

Quarterly Performance of Industry Sectors (12/31/24)



Source: S&P Dow Jones Indices

Global Equities

Trump tariffs weigh on markets

- Global equity markets had a rough end to the year as proposed Trump tariffs weighed on Europe and China.
- Europe was one of the worst-performing regions, plagued by political uncertainty and continued economic woes.
- While still negative, Japan's decline over the quarter was stemmed by the approval of a new economic stimulus plan focused on issues such as wage stability and deflation.

Emerging markets: China, India fall short

- Emerging markets declined on the heels of poor results out of China and India. Although Chinese stocks initially gained from the announced stimulus, they later declined due to expected tariffs. Economic growth in India fell short of expectations.

Growth vs. value: Muted tech influence on growth

- In developed ex-U.S. markets, the influence of technology and AI is comparatively more muted, which makes the trend of growth stocks, especially those from the Magnificent Seven, outperforming value stocks less pronounced.

U.S. dollar: Strength from beneficial effects of Trump

- The U.S. dollar shifted direction from the last quarter as expectations for interest rate cuts faded, along with the anticipated beneficial effects of the Trump administration on the U.S. economy; in total the U.S. Dollar Index rose over 7% during the quarter.

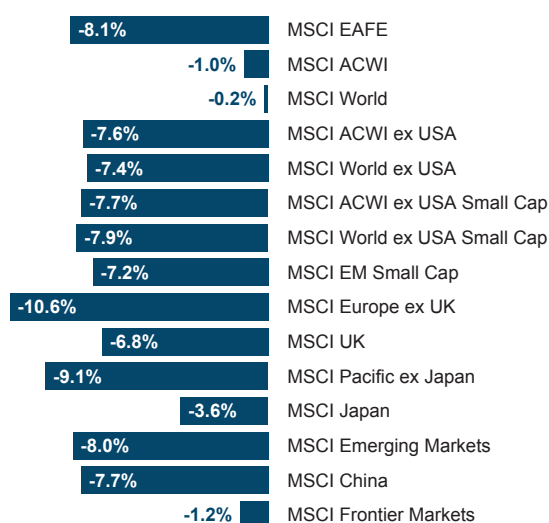
Global equity market concentration continues higher

- The U.S. share of global market capitalization in global indices is at all-time highs as U.S. technology companies lead markets higher.
- Market capitalization-weighted global benchmarks are providing lower diversification benefits than historically at not only the country level but also the security level as the top five constituents of the MSCI ACWI Index currently comprise over 17% of the benchmark.

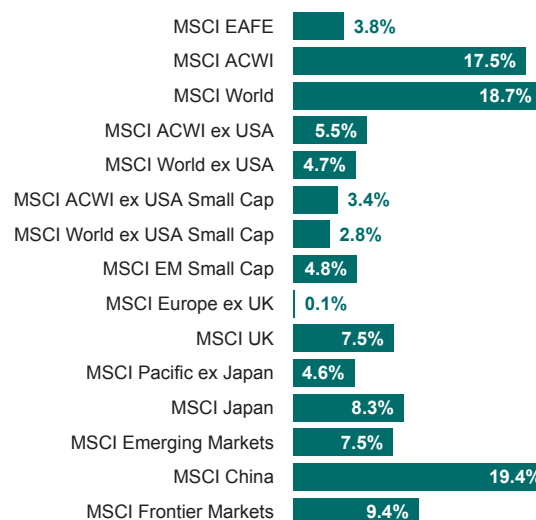
U.S. dollar strength has been a headwind

- Recent U.S. dollar strength has been a notable headwind for non-U.S. equities as local currency revenues of companies continue to weaken against the U.S. dollar.
- Some contributing factors to U.S. dollar strength have been higher interest rate policy by the Federal Reserve compared to other central banks, U.S. economic and market strength, and recent rhetoric regarding potentially higher tariff rates on U.S. imports.

Global ex-U.S. Equity: Quarterly Returns (U.S. Dollar, 12/31/24)



Global ex-U.S. Equity: One-Year Returns (U.S. Dollar, 12/31/24)



Source: MSCI

Fixed Income

U.S. Fixed Income

Inflation concerns resurface

- The Fed continued the rate cutting cycle, most recently in December, bringing the target range to 4.25%-4.50%.
- The yield curve steepened, with rates rising for Treasuries one year and longer. The 10-year rose 77 bps to 4.58%.
- Inflation concerns resurfaced, with the breakeven inflation rate rising by 19 bps to 2.30% over the course of the quarter.

Performance drivers

- The Bloomberg US Aggregate Bond Index fell 3.1% due to the rise in rates.
- With the steepening yield curve, long government bonds fared the worst among sectors.
- Leveraged finance sectors (High yield: +0.2%, leveraged loans: +2.3%) were the only positive fixed income sectors as spreads tightened.

Credit spreads tighten

- Corporate credit spreads across both investment grade and leveraged finance tightened, with both being “priced to perfection.”
- New issuance continued to be strong, with 2024 totals for both IG and HY outpacing 2023.

Municipal Bonds

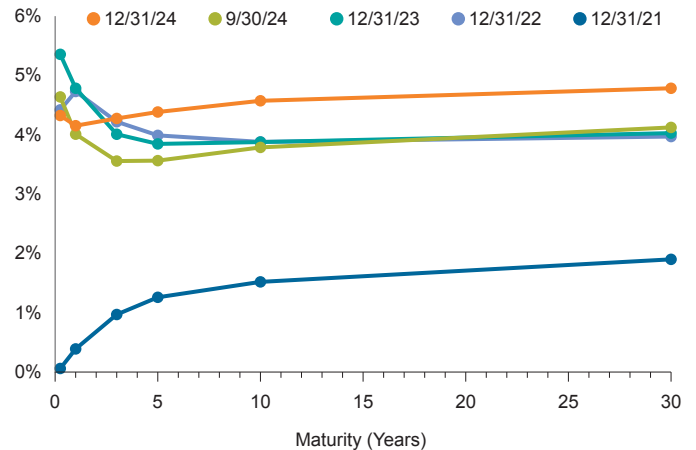
Negative returns in 4Q

- The muni AAA-rated curve shifted upward across the curve and the curve steepened.
- The spreads between the AAA 2s/10s key rates (24 bps) ended the year slightly tighter than Treasuries (33 bps).

Low dispersion across quality in 4Q and for the year

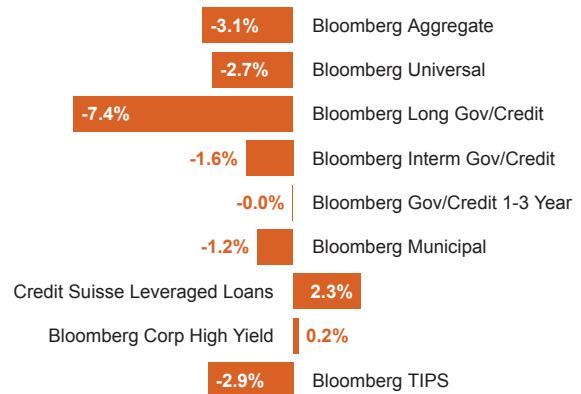
- AAA: -1.3%; +1.4%
- AA: -1.2%; +1.5%
- A: -1.2%; +1.5%
- BBB: -1.3%; +1.6%

U.S. Treasury Yield Curves

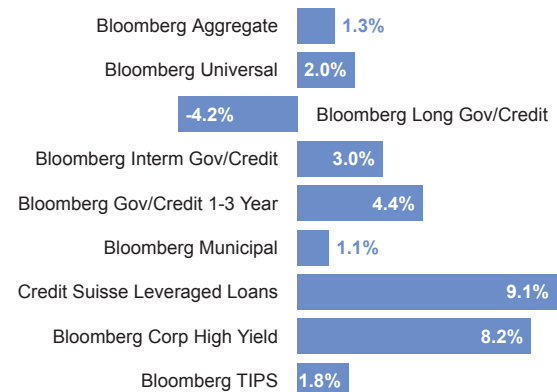


Source: Bloomberg

U.S. Fixed Income: Quarterly Returns (12/31/24)



U.S. Fixed Income: One-Year Returns (12/31/24)



Sources: Bloomberg and Credit Suisse

Robust issuance through 4Q, demand softened slightly

- Total issuance in 2024 was \$508 billion, beating the previous high of \$485 billion in 2020 and up 32% year over year.
- Demand absorbed issuance most of the quarter, but December exhibited three weeks of fund outflows, after 23 weeks of consecutive net inflows.

Muni valuations vs. U.S. Treasuries remain rich

- 10-year AAA muni/10-year U.S. Treasury yield ratio was rich relative to the 10-year median (67% now vs. 80% historical).

Global Fixed Income

Political controversy dogs euro zone

- The euro zone was marred with political controversy in 4Q, specifically in Germany and France.
- GDP growth in the euro zone rose modestly (+0.4%), while the ECB cut rates in December.
- Japan’s GDP grew 1.2% on the back of strong exports and a weaker yen.

U.S. dollar surges

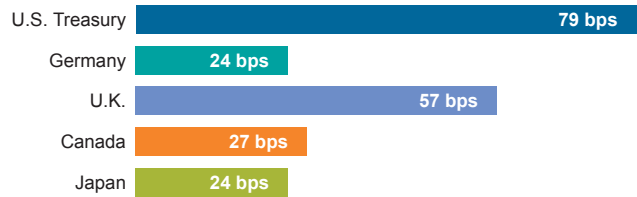
- The U.S. dollar rose 8% versus a basket of six developed market currencies.
- Global fixed income returns varied based on currency exposure, with the Bloomberg Global Aggregate ex US Hedged Index rising 0.7%, while the Bloomberg Global Aggregate ex US Unhedged Index fell by 6.8%.

Emerging market debt faced similar challenges

- Both EM local and hard currency bonds posted negative returns on the quarter, weighed down by the strength of the dollar and geopolitical risk. Hard currency spreads narrowed at the tail end of the quarter, partially offsetting an early quarter drawdown.
- Brazil increased its policy rate by 150 bps in 4Q, resulting in the Brazilian real depreciating by 13.4% versus the U.S. dollar.

Change in 10-Year Global Government Bond Yields

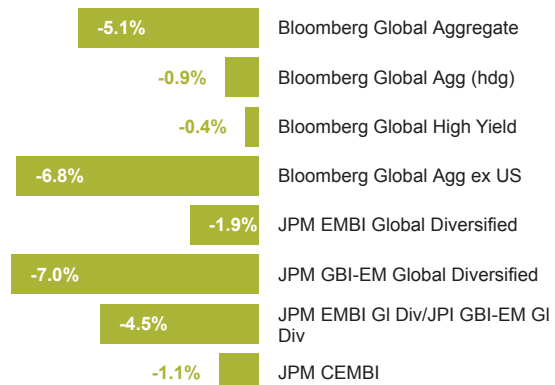
3Q24 to 4Q24



Source: Bloomberg

Global Fixed Income: Quarterly Returns

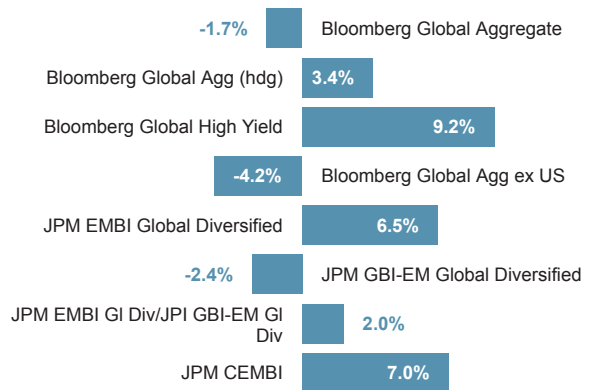
(12/31/24)



Sources: Bloomberg and JPMorgan Chase

Global Fixed Income: One-Year Returns

(12/31/24)



Sources: Bloomberg and JPMorgan Chase

Valuations May Have Bottomed; REITs Fall

REAL ESTATE/REAL ASSETS | Munir Iman

Valuations reflect higher interest rates

- Valuations appear to have bottomed and now reflect higher borrowing costs.
- Income returns were positive across sectors and regions.
- Property sectors were mixed; Office and Hotel experienced negative appreciation, and the remaining sectors had flat or positive appreciation.
- Return dispersion by manager within the ODCE Index was due to the composition of underlying portfolios.

REITs fall and trade at a discount to NAV

- Global REITs underperformed in 4Q24, down 9.7% compared to a 0.2% decline for global equities (MSCI World).
- U.S. REITs fell 6.2% in 4Q24, in contrast with the S&P 500 Index, which rose 2.4%.
- Global REITs are trading at a discount to NAV (-7.0%).
- Historically, global REITs have traded at a 3.9% discount to NAV.

Redemption queues are falling

- ODCE redemption queues are 16.4% of net asset value (NAV), with a median queue of 13.4%. This compares to the GFC, when queues peaked at approximately 15% of NAV.
- Outstanding redemption requests for most large ODCE funds are approximately 6% to 33% of NAV (one outlier at 56%).

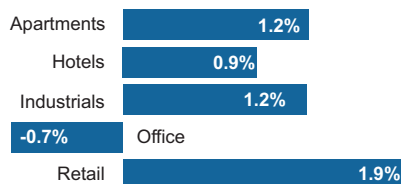
Callan Database Median and Index Returns* for Periods Ended 12/31/24

Private Real Assets	Quarter	Year to Date	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	20 Years
Real Estate ODCE Style	0.7	-2.2	-2.2	-3.0	2.4	5.4	5.5
NFI-ODCE (value-weighted, net)	1.0	-2.3	-2.3	-3.1	2.0	4.9	5.5
NCREIF Property	0.9	0.4	0.4	-0.8	3.1	5.7	7.0
NCREIF Farmland	-1.3	-1.0	-1.0	4.4	4.8	5.9	11.2
NCREIF Timberland	1.4	7.0	7.0	9.7	7.8	5.4	6.9
Public Real Estate							
Global Real Estate Style	-9.3	2.7	2.7	-4.8	1.4	4.5	6.1
FTSE EPRA Nareit Developed	-5.1	9.3	9.3	1.7	3.1	5.3	--
Global ex-U.S. Real Estate Style	-15.8	-7.9	-7.9	-9.0	-3.9	3.1	--
FTSE EPRA Nareit Dev ex US	-15.2	-8.4	-8.4	-9.7	-5.8	-0.2	--
U.S. REIT Style	-6.6	8.0	8.0	-2.5	5.0	6.4	7.7
FTSE EPRA Nareit Equity REITs	-6.2	8.7	8.7	-2.2	4.3	5.7	7.0

*Returns less than one year are not annualized. Sources: Callan, FTSE Russell, NCREIF

Sector Quarterly Returns by Property Type

(12/31/24)



Source: NCREIF

- Redemption queues are now sharply decreasing after having peaked at 19.3% of NAV in 1Q24. This has been driven primarily by rescissions of redemption requests within a handful of managers with large queues. In certain cases, this has been due to loyalty fee programs being instituted.

Pricing, transaction volumes increasing

- Transaction volume is increasing on a rolling four-quarter basis yet remains below five-year averages.
- In 4Q24, transaction volume increased on a quarter-over-quarter basis. Volume remains lower compared to 2022.
- The volatile rise in interest rates is the driving force behind the slowdown in transactions. Increasing transactions are driven by increasing confidence in multi-family and industrial values. Valuations have largely adjusted to increased borrowing costs.

Fundraising Rebounds but Activity Struggles

PRIVATE EQUITY | Ashley Kahn

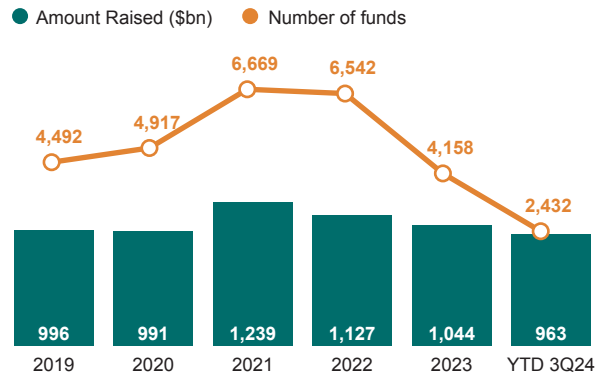
Fundraising ► By volume, 2024 fundraising has been creeping toward the highs of 2021 (only 3% off). And compared to the same time last year, volume is up by 7%. On the other hand, fundraising by count was down significantly: 23% fewer funds raised in YTD 3Q24 compared to the same time last year.

Buyouts ► Buyout activity in 2024 was essentially flat compared to 2023, by both count and volume. Buyout valuations have started to creep back up, although still off by about a turn from the highs of 2021. They exhibited a large uptick in 3Q24, reflecting the Fed’s first interest rate cut that quarter.

Venture Capital and Growth Equity ► Deal volume in 2024 was up from 2023 but still significantly depressed compared to the highs of 2021-22. Deal activity by count has declined each year, with the average deal size increasing. Early-stage valuations have reached record highs, up 28% from last year and 44% from 2021. This has been driven by today’s AI “supercycle,” with greater competition for AI startups pushing up valuations.

Exits ► Volume has remained significantly depressed through 3Q24, down 13% from last year and at 43% of 2021 levels.

Annual Fundraising (9/30/24)



Source: Pitchbook

Exit count is also down by 14% from last year and at 67% of 2021 levels.

Returns ► Short-term performance continues to lag public equity (driven by the “Magnificent Seven”). Due to the smoothed nature of its returns, private equity doesn’t outperform when public equity is at record highs (it likewise doesn’t drop as sharply when public equity drops). By strategy type, venture capital and growth equity are still recovering after losses in 2022-23, while buyouts have proven to be much more resilient.

Private Equity Performance (%) (Pooled Horizon IRRs through 9/30/24*)

Strategy	Quarter	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	20 Years
All Venture	1.4	2.4	-5.3	14.9	14.8	12.2
Growth Equity	2.8	7.7	-0.5	13.9	13.2	13.5
All Buyouts	3.3	10.1	6.3	15.2	14.0	14.0
Mezzanine	3.0	10.4	9.1	11.7	10.9	11.4
Credit Opportunities	2.5	9.9	7.6	9.2	7.6	9.2
Control Distressed	0.9	3.3	6.7	13.3	10.8	11.2
All Private Equity	2.7	7.9	2.8	14.4	13.4	13.1

Note: Private equity returns are net of fees. Sources: LSEG/Cambridge and S&P Dow Jones Indices
*Most recent data available at time of publication

Note: Transaction count and dollar volume figures across all private equity measures are preliminary figures and are subject to update in subsequent versions of the *Capital Markets Review* and other Callan publications.

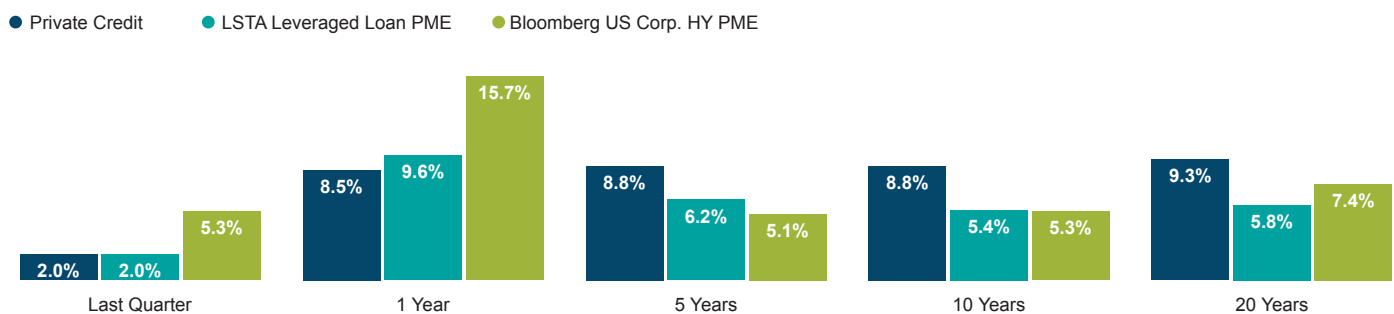
Private Credit Gains in 3Q24 but Lags Benchmarks

PRIVATE CREDIT | Cos Braswell

Private credit gained 2.0% in 3Q24, the most recent quarter available. That matched the LSTA Leveraged Loan PME Index but significantly trailed the Bloomberg US Corporate High Yield PME Index. Results over the trailing one year were roughly the same, but over 5-, 10-, and 20-year time periods private credit topped the two benchmarks.

- Private credit performance varies across sub-asset class and underlying return drivers. Higher-risk strategies have performed better than lower-risk strategies.
- Fundraising for private debt was the strongest since 4Q23, with \$51 billion raised.
- Direct lending was responsible for 76% of 3Q fundraising, with \$39 billion raised.
- While direct lending continues to dominate fundraises, we are noticing increased interest in specialty finance strategies for more mature PC portfolios.
- Private credit stayed in high demand among Callan clients, and a number of large DB plans are looking to increase their allocations from 2%–3% to 5%–10%.
- North American private debt AUM is expected to grow significantly, from \$1.01 trillion in 2024 to \$1.74 trillion in 2029, representing an annualized growth rate of 11%. European private debt AUM is projected to grow at a slower pace of 8%, reflecting resilience despite a more challenging economic environment.
- Fundraising in Europe is forecast to remain static, which could create upside potential as reduced competition for deals may improve investment opportunities.
- The private debt market is positioned to maintain strong growth, particularly in North America, while Europe’s steadier trajectory still offers attractive prospects in a less crowded landscape.

Private Credit Performance (%) (Pooled Horizon IRRs through 9/30/24*)



Private Credit Performance (%) (Pooled Horizon IRRs by Strategy through 9/30/24*)

Strategy	Quarter	1 Year	5 Years	10 Years	20 Years
Senior Debt	2.3	9.1	7.8	8.2	8.4
Subordinated	0.8	7.5	10.1	10.3	10.3
Credit Opportunities	1.6	8.1	8.8	8.7	9.4
Total Private Credit	2.0	8.5	8.8	8.8	9.3

Source: LSEG/Cambridge

*Most recent data available at time of publication

Strong Finish to the Year but Choppy Outlook Ahead

HEDGE FUNDS/MACs | Joe McGuane

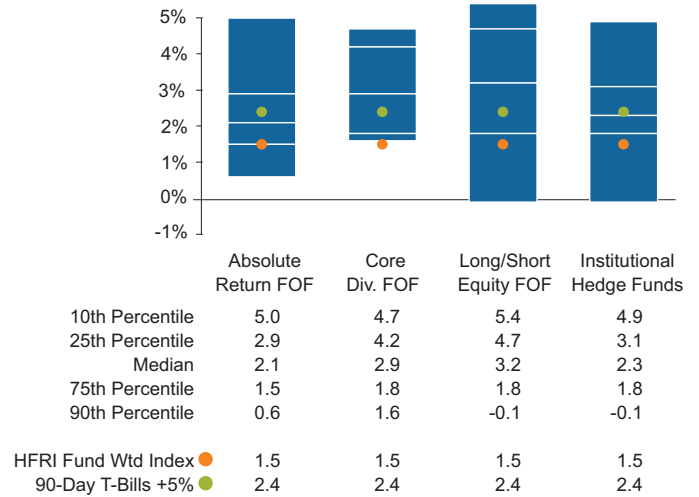
U.S. equity markets ended 4Q24 in positive territory, following the U.S. election, the Federal Reserve interest rate cut, and reports of strong economic data. Markets gave back some of that performance in December, as investors grew concerned about inflation and the potential slowdown in future rate cuts. Credit indices generated mixed returns during the quarter, with high yield outperforming investment grade bonds. The 10-year Treasury yield rose throughout the quarter and ended the year at 4.6%.

The S&P 500 gained 2.4%, with performance driven by earnings growth as rising rates caused the market's price-to-earnings ratio to modestly decline despite the Fed cutting interest rates 50 basis points. Index performance was led by Discretionary and Communication Services, which benefited from a better growth outlook, offset by declines in Materials, Health Care and REITs, due to a weaker China outlook and higher rates.

Hedge funds finished strong to end the year, and relative value strategies finished higher, as managers were able to profit off rising bond yields. Equity hedge strategies had strong

Hedge Fund Style Group Returns

(12/31/24)



Sources: Callan, Credit Suisse, Federal Reserve

momentum, as managers profited on both the long and short side during the quarter as stock dispersion remained elevated. Event-driven managers soared in November, on the expectation of a strong M&A cycle in 2025. Macro strategies had a strong November, as managers were able to profit off rates moving higher in the final quarter of the year.

Callan Peer Group Median and Index Returns* for Periods Ended 12/31/24

Hedge Fund Universe	Quarter	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	15 Years
Callan Institutional Hedge Fund Peer Group	2.3	9.7	6.7	7.3	6.7	7.0
Callan Fund-of-Funds Peer Group	2.9	10.7	4.8	6.1	4.7	5.1
Callan Absolute Return FOF Style	2.1	9.5	5.8	6.0	4.6	4.7
Callan Core Diversified FOF Style	2.9	10.9	4.7	6.4	4.7	5.1
Callan Long/Short Equity FOF Style	3.2	12.3	2.6	5.8	5.7	5.5
HFRI Fund Weighted Index	1.4	9.8	4.4	7.0	5.3	5.0
HFRI Fixed Convertible Arbitrage	1.4	10.9	4.8	6.9	5.7	5.5
HFRI Distressed/Restructuring	3.4	12.0	5.0	8.4	5.5	5.8
HFRI Emerging Markets	-0.4	9.2	1.0	4.5	4.3	3.4
HFRI Equity Market Neutral	2.4	10.5	5.8	4.8	3.7	3.3
HFRI Event-Driven	2.1	9.8	4.9	7.2	5.5	5.7
HFRI Relative Value	1.9	8.6	4.9	5.1	4.5	5.2
HFRI Macro	0.6	5.5	4.6	5.4	3.1	2.6
HFRI Equity Hedge	1.4	11.9	3.8	8.1	6.3	5.8
HFRI Multi-Strategy	5.0	13.7	4.3	7.0	4.2	4.2
HFRI Merger Arbitrage	1.7	5.6	4.5	5.8	5.0	4.4
90-Day T-Bill + 5%	2.4	10.3	8.9	7.5	6.8	6.2

*Net of fees. Sources: Callan, Credit Suisse, Hedge Fund Research

Serving as a proxy for large, broadly diversified hedge funds with low-beta exposure to equity markets, the median manager in the Callan Institutional Hedge Fund Peer Group rose 2.3%. Within this style group of 50 peers, the average hedge credit manager gained 2.5%, driven by interest rate volatility in November following the U.S. election. Meanwhile, the average hedge equity manager added 2.1%, as managers were able to profit off elevated dispersion across sectors.

Within the HFRI indices the best-performing strategy was multi-strategy, which gained 5.0%, followed by distressed/restructuring, which took advantage of deal activity and was up 3.4%. Equity market neutral gained 2.4%.

Across the Callan Hedge FOF database, the median Callan Long-Short Equity FOF ended 3.2% higher, as managers profited off the dispersion across sectors. Meanwhile, the median Callan Core Diversified FOF ended 2.9% higher, as equity hedge and event-driven strategies drove performance for the quarter. The Callan Absolute Return FOF ended 2.1% higher, as an overweight to relative value strategies drove performance.

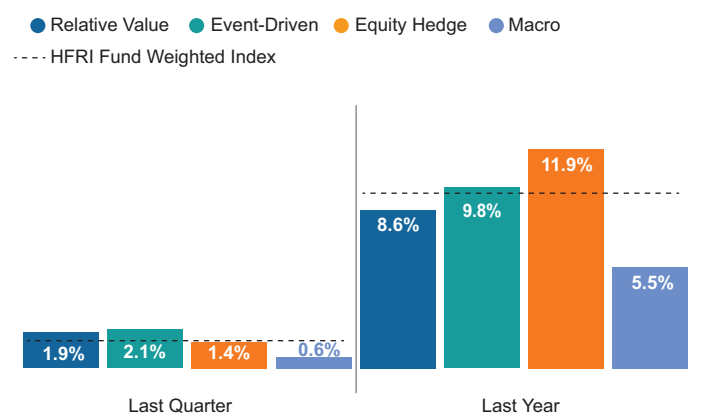
Since the Global Financial Crisis, liquid alternatives to hedge funds have become popular among investors due to their attractive risk-adjusted returns that are similarly uncorrelated

with traditional stock and bond investments but offered at a lower cost. Much of that interest is focused on rules-based, long-short strategies that isolate known risk premia such as value, momentum, and carry found across the various capital markets. These alternative risk premia are often embedded, to varying degrees, in hedge funds as well as other actively managed investment products.

Within Callan’s database of liquid alternative solutions, the Callan MAC Risk Parity peer group fell 3.6%, as fixed income and commodities were a drag on performance, while U.S. equities were able to offset some of that negative performance. The Callan Long Biased MAC peer group fell 2.7%, as negative performance from fixed income pushed the strategy into negative territory.

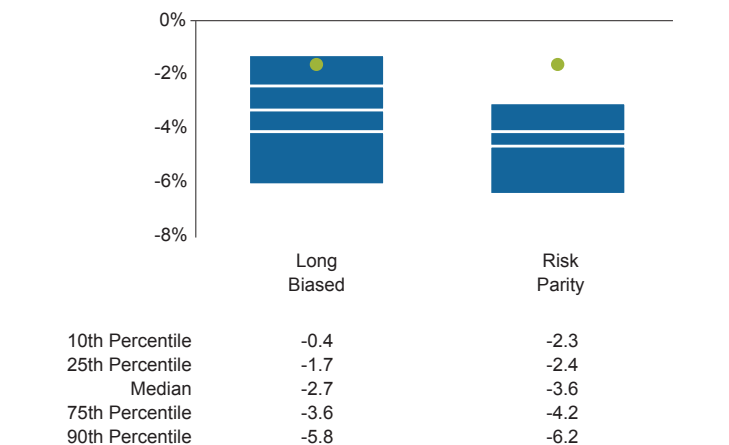
After a strong run for hedge funds in 2024, the market environment outlook appears to be choppy in 2025. While economic growth remains strong and recession probabilities seem low, market expectations remain high, valuations are at all-time highs in equities and spreads are tight in credit markets, leaving investors with limited margin for errors. With a new administration in the White House, change seems the most likely outcome, and uncertainty should be expected for market participants. In this environment, hedge funds should be able to profit off this dispersion.

HFRI Hedge Fund-Weighted Strategy Returns (12/31/24)



Source: HFRI

MAC Style Group Returns (12/31/24)



Sources: Bloomberg, Callan, Eurekahedge, S&P Dow Jones Indices

Index Gains 5.6%; Turnover at All-Time Low

DEFINED CONTRIBUTION | [Scotty Lee](#)

Performance: Index gains for fourth straight quarter

- The Callan DC Index™ gained 5.6% in 3Q24. The Age 45 Target Date Fund (analogous to the 2045 vintage) had a higher quarterly return (6.5%).

Growth sources: Balances rise due to investment gains

- Balances within the DC Index rose by 4.7% after a 1.1% increase in the previous quarter. Investment gains (5.6%) were the sole driver of the gain as net flows (-0.9%) had a contrary effect.

Turnover: Lowest since index inception

- Turnover (i.e., net transfer activity levels within DC plans) in the DC Index decreased to 0.02%, the lowest ever, from the previous quarter's measure of 0.17%.

Net cash flow analysis: U.S. fixed income ousts TDFs

- Automatic features and their appeal to “do-it-for-me” investors typically result in target date funds (TDFs) receiving the largest net inflows in the DC Index. But in 3Q24, as turnover reached the lowest level since the DC Index inception, U.S. fixed income outpaced the asset allocation funds, earning 68.3% of quarterly net flows.

Equity allocation: Exposure rises

- The Index's overall allocation to equity (74.0%) rose slightly from the previous quarter's level (73.7%).

Asset allocation: Smid cap equity gains

- U.S. small/mid cap equity (7.1%) and target date funds (35.7%) were among the asset classes with the largest percentage increases in allocation, while stable value (6.1%) had the largest decrease in allocation from the previous quarter due to net outflows.

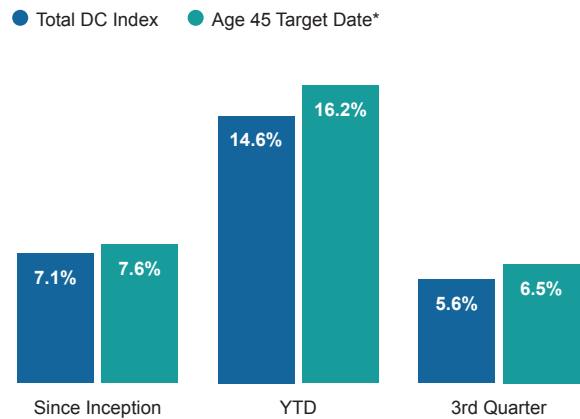
Prevalence of asset class: Global equity funds rise

- The prevalence of global equity funds (18.6%) rose by 0.7 percentage points, matching the increase in the prevalence of emerging markets (18.6%), which also rose by 0.7 percentage points. Other notable movements included a 1.4 percentage point increase in the prevalence of U.S. small/mid cap equity offerings (94.3%).

Underlying fund performance, asset allocation, and cash flows of more than 100 large defined contribution plans representing approximately \$400 billion in assets are tracked in the Callan DC Index.

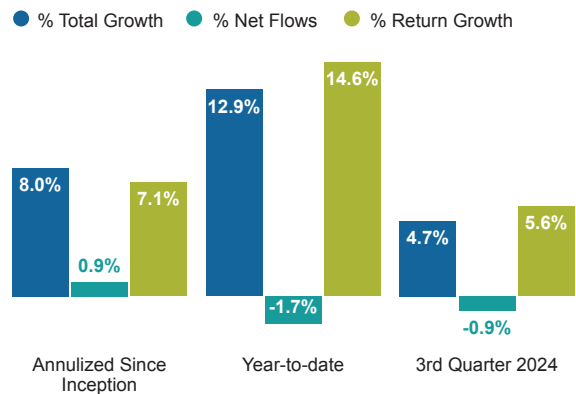
Investment Performance

(9/30/24)



Growth Sources

(9/30/24)



Net Cash Flow Analysis 3Q24

(Top Two and Bottom Two Asset Gatherers)

Asset Class	Flows as % of Total Net Flows
U.S. Fixed Income	68.3%
High Yield Fixed Income	5.3%
U.S. Small/Mid Cap	-15.2%
U.S. Large Cap	-38.6%
Total Turnover**	0.02%

Data provided here is the most recent available at time of publication.

Source: Callan DC Index

Note: DC Index inception date is January 2006.

* The Age 45 Fund transitioned from the average 2040 TDF to the 2045 TDF in June 2023.

** Total Index “turnover” measures the percentage of total invested assets (transfers only, excluding contributions and withdrawals) that moved between asset classes.

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The *Capital Markets Review* is a quarterly macroeconomic indicator newsletter that provides thoughtful insights on the economy and recent performance in the equity, fixed income, alternatives, real estate, and other capital markets.

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