

Overweight Global Equity Long/Short Hedge Funds/Underweight 40% Equities/60% Bonds

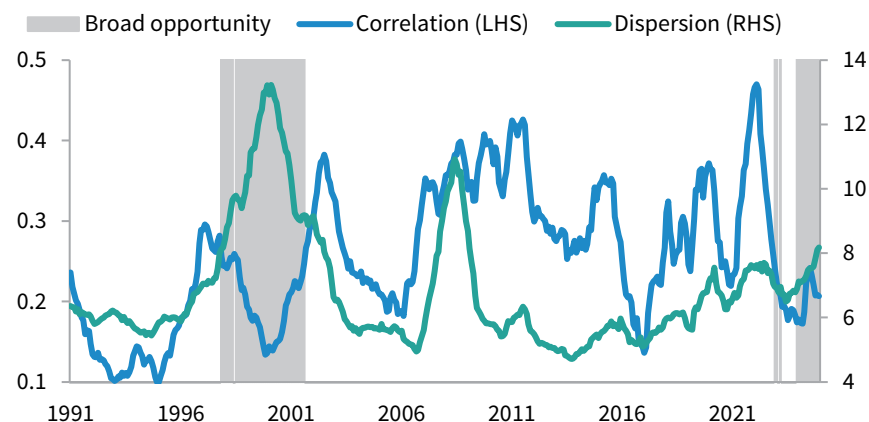
Recommended since September 30, 2025

Investment thesis: We expect equity long-short (ELS) hedge funds to outperform a 40/60 stock/bond blend, as increased equity dispersion creates more opportunities for ELS managers to generate differentiated returns. The rise of AI and policy changes may sustain this environment. ELS funds also benefit from a positive short rebate, which—despite a modest expected decline—should remain supportive and above previous low-rate levels.

Key support 1: Elevated dispersion in stock returns creates a more favorable environment for stock-pickers like ELS hedge funds, offering greater potential for differentiated performance on both long and short trades. While periods of higher dispersion and lower correlations have historically coincided with stronger ELS results—such as 1.4% average monthly returns versus 0.5% for a 40/60 stock/bond blend—research shows that dispersion, rather than correlation, is the meaningful driver of active manager opportunity.

Rolling 12-month S&P 500 correlation & dispersion

December 31, 1991 – November 30, 2025



Sources: CBOT, Federal Reserve, Standard and Poor's, and Thomson Reuters Datastream.

Notes: Correlation is calculated as the weighted average pairwise correlation across the stocks in the index over one month. Dispersion is calculated as the weighted cross-sectional standard deviation of the performance of stocks within the index for one month. Board opportunity reflects periods of above average dispersion and below average correlation. The short rebate is represented by the effective federal funds rate minus a 50-bp spread. Dashed line reflects short rebate expectations based on fed funds futures.

Key support 2: ELS hedge funds earn a short rebate—the interest on cash collateral from short sales, net of broker fees. From 2010–21, this rebate was minimal or even negative due to low rates. Today, it is much higher, boosting ELS baseline returns and supporting outperformance versus a 40/60 stock/bond blend. While rate cuts are expected, futures indicate rates will remain well above pre-COVID levels, keeping the short rebate supportive.

Key risks: ELS hedge funds may underperform if equity markets transition to an environment characterized by lower dispersion and higher correlations, as this limits alpha opportunities and causes beta to dominate returns, while short positions become a broader drag on performance. Additionally, if central banks cut rates more aggressively than anticipated, ELS hedge funds could lag both equity and bond markets and face greater challenges in capturing upside due to their short exposures.

Short rebate versus dividend yield

January 31, 1990 – December 31, 2028 • Percent (%)

