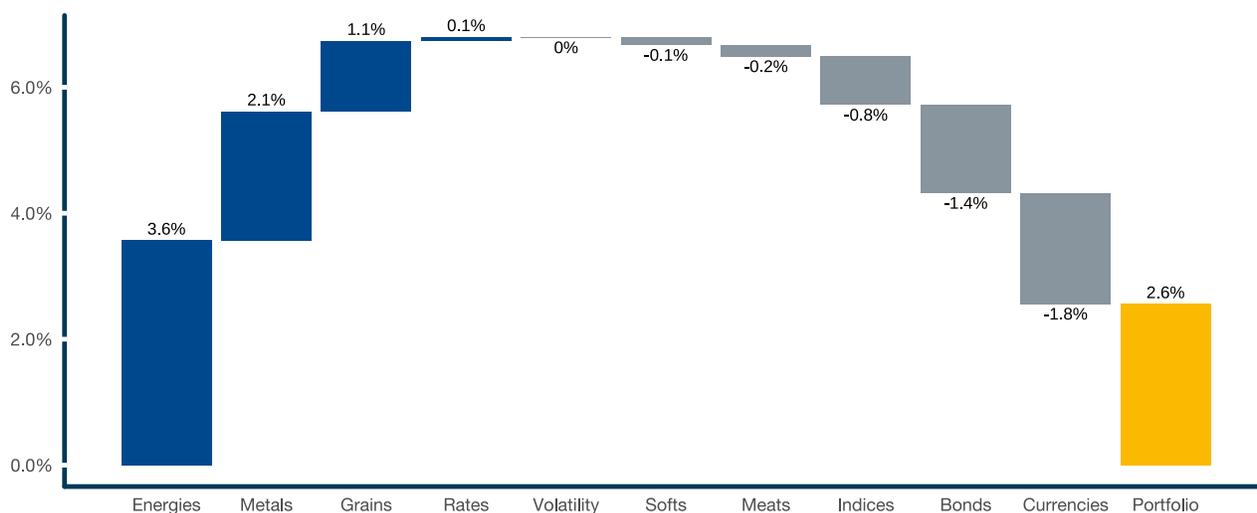


PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Osprey Program delivered a 2.5% return for 2021, with all gains coming in the first half of the year from energies, equities, metals and grains. Small losses in the third quarter were followed by a more challenging final three months, when the selloff in equities during the final days of November produced the majority of negative returns.

Figure 1. 2021 Return Attribution



Source: ReSolve Asset Management. Results may differ due to rounding. Performance is expressed in CAD. Strategy attribution is a best efforts approximation, net of all applicable borrowing costs, fees and fund accruals for the period. Indicated returns of one year or more are annualized. Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

Energies drove the largest share of P&L, mostly from longs in oils – crude, heating and gas. Carbon emissions and natural gas also contributed on the long side. Our systems were agile in reducing exposure and avoiding much of the November selloff.

Metals benefitted primarily from gains in long platinum in the first quarter, which were then protected during the seven-month trend reversal that ensued. Profits also came from long copper, especially in the first and fourth quarters, while shorts in platinum and silver also offered marginal gains.

Grains produced positive P&L, driven largely by long canola. Shorts in corn, palm oil, and the soy and wheat complexes led to small losses.

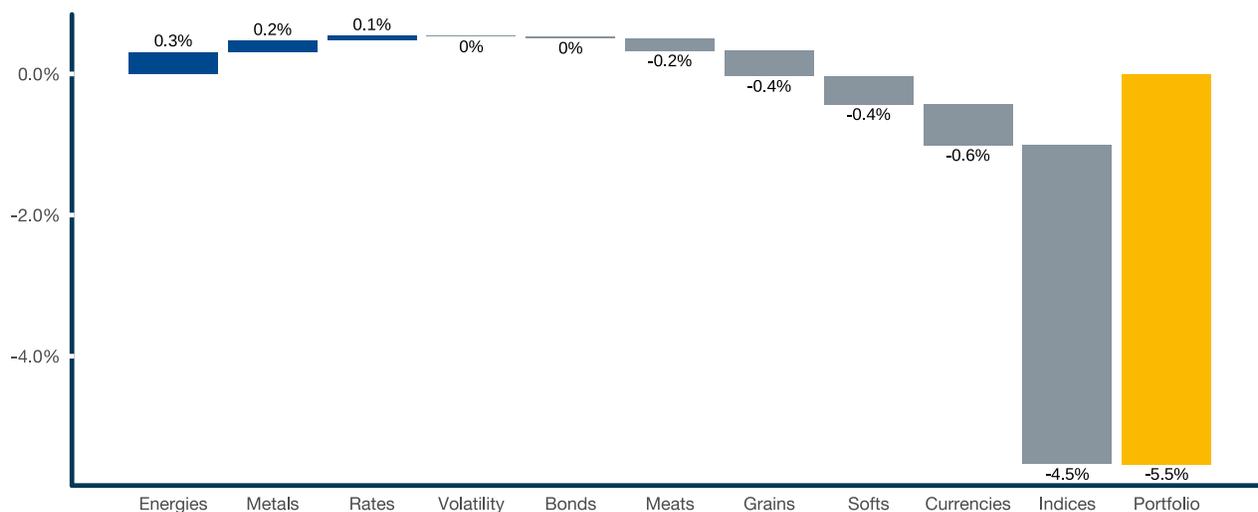
Equities were the second-best performing sector until the end of November, but became a modest negative contributor on the year following the high volatility that was sparked by the so-called Omicron Crash over the US Thanksgiving holiday (more on this in the following pages). Earlier gains in long S&P500 and UK FTSE were counterbalanced by losses in the German DAX and Russell 2000.

Currencies were the main detractors in 2021, primarily from longs in the Euro and Australian dollar, and shorts in the British Pound and Japanese Yen.

Sovereign Bond positions also led to losses, primarily driven by longs in German Buxl and US 30-year Treasuries, partially offset by profitable shorts in German Bunds and US 5-year Treasuries.

FOURTH QUARTER – A CLOSER LOOK

Figure 2. Q4 2021 Return Attribution



Source: ReSolve Asset Management. Results may differ due to rounding. Performance is expressed in CAD. Strategy attribution is a best efforts approximation, net of all applicable borrowing costs, fees and fund accruals for the period. Indicated returns of one year or more are annualized. Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

November proved a battleground for several competing narratives, punctuated by a reversal in several major sectors in the last few days of the month triggered by panic over a new COVID “variant of concern”. The Friday after Thanksgiving is always illiquid, but the post-Thanksgiving action in 2021 was really one for the record books.

Losses in the energy sector on November 26th were of a magnitude that might be expected on about 4 days out of every 10,000 trading days, when returns are conditioned on trailing volatility. Crude oil and distillates collapsed between 11 and 13 percent, while losses in global equities were in the mid-single digit range.

The strategy was quick to reduce its exposure to energies, preserving a meaningful portion of earlier gains in crude oil and distillates. Though portfolio de-risking also kicked in for equities, larger positions leading up to the event led to important losses and were the main cause for the quarter’s negative returns. Long exposure to the German DAX was by far the largest source of negative P&L, followed by the Russell 2000, Spanish IBEX and British FTSE.

GENERAL MARKET REVIEW

Investor sentiment and risk appetite continued to be dominated by the news flow surrounding the pandemic and its repercussions. The first half of the year saw renewed optimism with the successful rollout of vaccination campaigns – initially in the US and UK, followed by Europe – leading to a significant decrease in infection rates across western countries. The signing of a historic USD 1.9 trillion stimulus package in the US, the size and scope of which go beyond any other fiscal outlay since the beginning of the pandemic, was the other major driver of the economic recovery.

The case for more persistent inflation gathered steam throughout the year. Data from the United Nations pointed to a whopping 31 percent rise in global food prices for the 12-month period ending last July. Food prices in the US jumped by 8 percent over a similar period, driven largely by imports, while gas lines in Britain and other shortages in developed economies captured headlines across much of the world. Supply-chain disruptions became the most overused catchphrase in recent memory.

Though the Fed had been trying to ignite inflation since 2009, it began to indicate discomfort as inflation readings remained higher than expected throughout the second semester. Aside from supply-demand mismatches, the major inflationary thrust was exacerbated by expansionary fiscal policy directed at the population at large, associated with their higher propensity to spend it. Stubbornly low Labor Participation was another important variable, which appears to be swinging the bargaining pendulum away from capital in the form of higher wages. By mid-December, the FOMC voted to accelerate the pace of asset purchase tapering and signaled as many as three rate hikes may be warranted in 2022.

Commodities were the best performing asset-class, led by the incredible rally in the energy sector, where the price of UK natural gas rose four-fold, carbon emissions doubled, and crude oil and distillates increased between 50 and 80 percent, approximately. While copper and other base metals enjoyed double-digit gains, precious metals – including gold, silver, platinum and palladium, were down for the year. Agricultural commodities also saw huge gains, led by oils (palm, canola and bean), along with coffee, corn, cotton, sugar and wheat. Global equities experienced another strong year, led by US, European and Canadian stocks. Japanese shares had modest gains, while Chinese indices suffered from government intervention and were broadly down. Government bonds were also largely in negative territory in the wake of rising inflation, while the US Dollar strengthened against most major and emerging market currencies.

For the past decade, investors have shifted focus from the macroeconomic data itself, to an emphasis on how the data might affect Fed policy. Apart from the Fed's recent promise to "remove the party's punch bowl" sooner than expected, most other central banks have indicated loose monetary conditions for the foreseeable future. And even though, as of the writing of this commentary, markets are once again throwing a tantrum given the more hawkish tone in recently released FOMC minutes, there are reasons to doubt whether the Fed may be willing, or perhaps even able, to follow through. For one, higher inflation for a prolonged period would eventually erode, in real terms, part of the enormous debt pile that has dragged on growth for years. This suggests that, despite tough rhetoric, inflation might in fact be a feature, and not a bug, of the current policy agenda.

Further, the apparent demise of Biden's Build Back Better fiscal package removes an important tailwind for the economy just as the effects of COVID-relief legislation begin to fade. Recent evidence points to a slowdown in activity, not only in the US but also in much of the world. The Chinese economy is particularly concerning given recent draconian lockdown measures in some regions, not to mention the yet unknown knock-on effects of the likely collapse of its largest real-estate developer. Investors should expect no respite from the heightened uncertainty they've had to endure in the last few years. At the very least, they should be positioning for greater interest rate and inflation volatility, with direct effects on market multiples and growth expectations.

Sincerely,

Your ReSolve Team

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