

2021 OUTLOOK: CYCLICAL ROTATION AHEAD

Jeremy Schwartz — Global Chief Investment Officer

01/11/2021

Things have changed.

Looking at 100 years of data, this chart from Morgan Stanley shows that cyclical sectors have never had a lower weight in the [S&P 500 Index](#).

[Growth](#), stability and defense sectors have never had a greater weight—now more than three-quarters of the index.¹



*Information technology, communications, health care, consumer staples, consumer discretionary, utilities, real estate **Financials, industrials, materials, energy

Source: Bloomberg as of June 22, 2020. You cannot invest directly in an index.

[Cyclical sectors](#) are Financials, Industrials, Energy and Materials. Growth, stability and defense sectors are Tech, Communications, Health Care, the Consumer sectors, Utilities and Real Estate.

So much of 2020's market performance can be attributed to this sector classification.

The growth, stability and defense sectors fared particularly well during the 2020 pandemic. Tech-enabled employees worked effectively from home. The counter-cyclicality of defense sectors shined as people stayed at home, stocked up on staples and streamed movies from the couch.

Cyclicals had their revenue wiped out directly by, or as a close by-product of, the economic shutdown.

- Airlines and airplane manufacturers within the Industrials sector had business grind to a halt.
- Banks provisioned losses for soured loans.
- Energy companies had to write down asset values from plunging oil prices.
- Materials businesses were impaired by a standstill in construction activity.

As we emerge from the pandemic shutdown in 2021, we believe investors should prepare for a more cyclical rebound

with a better economic growth environment.

Just in the past few weeks, an inflection in outperformance can be seen from some of these beaten down sectors. Financials, Industrials, and Energy have had positive momentum as a result of increasing optimism for economic conditions in the year ahead.

Sector Returns

S&P 500 Index	
12/31/19—12/31/20	9/2/20—12/31/20
43.89% - Info.Tech	16.92% - Financials
33.30% - Cons. Disc.	11.88% - Industrials
23.61% - Comm. Svc.	10.66% - Energy
20.73% - Materials	10.27% - Materials
18.40% - S&P 500	5.67% - Utilities
13.45% - Health Care	5.45% - S&P 500
11.06% - Industrials	4.57% - Health Care
10.75% - Cons. Staples	3.11% - Comm. Svc.
0.48% - Utilities	2.92% - Info.Tech
-1.69% - Financials	2.72% - Cons. Staples
-2.17% - Real Estate	1.70% - Cons. Disc.
-33.68% - Energy	0.71% - Real Estate

Sources: WisdomTree, FactSet. You cannot invest directly in an index. Past performance is not indicative of future returns.

We propose two small-cap ETF ideas with sector exposures that are almost the exact opposite of the S&P 500: the [WisdomTree U.S. SmallCap Quality Dividend Growth Fund \(DGRS\)](#) and the [WisdomTree SmallCap Fund \(EES\)](#).

By their nature, [small caps](#) tend to be more cyclical than [large caps](#). Because they have less [diversified](#) businesses, they are often more tied to economic fluctuations.

But, through sector categorization, this cyclicality is reinforced and accentuated.

- DGRS is 57% cyclicals, with more than double the Financials sector weight of the S&P 500 and nearly three times its Industrials and Materials sector weights.
- EES is 50% cyclicals, with more than double the S&P 500's Financials and Industrials sector weights and nearly two times its Materials sector weight.

SECTOR EXPOSURE					
Category	Sector	DGRS	EES	S&P 500 Index	Russell 2000 Index
Cyclicals	Energy	0.1%	2.5%	2.3%	2.1%
Cyclicals	Financials	24.7%	25.0%	10.4%	15.2%
Cyclicals	Industrials	25.3%	18.3%	8.4%	15.4%
Cyclicals	Materials	7.4%	5.0%	2.6%	4.3%
Growth Stability and Defensives	Comm. Services	2.7%	5.4%	10.8%	2.3%
Growth Stability and Defensives	Cons. Disc.	14.9%	17.3%	12.7%	13.3%
Growth Stability and Defensives	Cons. Staples	7.3%	5.6%	6.5%	3.2%
Growth Stability and Defensives	Health Care	1.1%	7.1%	13.5%	20.9%
Growth Stability and Defensives	Info. Tech.	7.7%	7.2%	27.6%	14.2%
Growth Stability and Defensives	Real Estate	0.2%	5.3%	2.4%	6.2%
Growth Stability and Defensives	Utilities	8.6%	1.2%	2.8%	2.8%
Cyclicals		57.5%	50.8%	23.7%	37.0%
Growth Stability and Defensives		42.5%	49.2%	76.3%	63.0%

Sources: WisdomTree, FactSet, 12/31/20. You cannot invest directly in an index. Weights subject to change.

On a pure [valuation](#) basis, people often think of small caps as being particularly expensive on earnings-multiples—more than 37% of the [Russell 2000](#) is currently unprofitable, after all. That's up from about 20% pre-pandemic.

But as of December 31, less than 1% of DGRS was unprofitable, and EES starts with a profitable company universe as defined by a measure of [core earnings](#).

- **Quality and cyclical small caps:** People tend not to think of small caps for [dividends](#), because about 50% of the Russell 2000 has typically been non-dividend payers. But DGRS has a considerably higher dividend yield than the S&P 500. And these dividends have not come at the expense of [share dilution](#). For a small-cap basket this is unique, as small-cap indexes generally tend to issue shares and see negative net [buyback ratios](#).
- **Positive core earnings:** Starting with a universe of positive earners naturally reduces exposure to many of the small-cap "story stocks" that tend to cluster in biotech and info tech. The trade-off is slightly lower estimated long-term growth for EES versus the Russell 2000 in exchange for a [price-to-earnings ratio](#) (excluding negative earners) of 12.8 times—a discount of nearly 40% relative to the 20.6 times for the Russell 2000, and even more relative to the 28.3 times for the S&P 500.

Characteristic	DGRS	EES	S&P 500 Index	Russell 2000 Index
Dividend Yield	2.38%	1.60%	1.54%	1.23%
Net Buyback Yield	0.46%	1.37%	1.17%	-1.95%
Gross Buyback Yield	1.46%	2.46%	1.65%	1.07%
Shareholder Yield	2.85%	2.97%	2.71%	-0.73%
Price/Earnings (P/E)	15.61	14.65	31.77	423.70
P/E Excl. Negative	15.47	12.77	28.29	20.62
Price-Cash Flow (P/CF)	8.85	5.61	15.12	13.53
Price/Book (P/B)	1.99	1.68	4.24	2.43
Wgt Avg. Est. Long-Term Growth	10.60%	12.16%	11.24%	14.41%

Sources: WisdomTree, FactSet, 12/31/20. Performance is historical and does not guarantee future results. Current performance may be lower or higher than quoted. Investment returns and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. You cannot invest directly in an index.

For standardized performance of DGRS, please click [here](#).

For standardized performance of EES, please click [here](#).

For definitions of terms in the table, please visit our [glossary](#).

Cyclical Rotation

WisdomTree's 2021 outlook calls for some cyclical rotation both to small caps and cyclical sectors that were hit during the lockdowns. The very robust growth in the [M1](#) money supply measures in 2020 that came from pandemic relief efforts supports our more optimistic outlook on the economy for 2021. We also see higher [inflation](#) coming as the economy opens up.

The big [market cap](#) indexes keep lowering exposure to cyclical sectors, as seen in the chart at the start of this blog post. For investors seeking to add exposure to that cyclical growth story, we believe DGRS and EES are two very good options.

¹The Wall Street Journal's Daily Shot email series featured this chart on 7/2/20.

Important Risks Related to this Article

There are risks associated with investing, including the possible loss of principal. Funds focusing their investments on certain sectors and/or smaller companies increase their vulnerability to any single economic or regulatory development. This may result in greater share price volatility. Please read the Fund's prospectus for specific details regarding the Fund's risk profile.

For standardized performance and the most recent month-end performance click [here](#) NOTE, this material is intended for electronic use only. Individuals who intend to print and physically deliver to an investor must print the monthly performance report to accompany this blog.

For more investing insights, check out our [Economic & Market Outlook](#)

View the online version of this article [here](#).

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

U.S. investors only: Click [here](#) to obtain a WisdomTree ETF prospectus which contains investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other information; read and consider carefully before investing.

There are risks involved with investing, including possible loss of principal. Foreign investing involves currency, political and economic risk. Funds focusing on a single country, sector and/or funds that emphasize investments in smaller companies may experience greater price volatility. Investments in emerging markets, currency, fixed income and alternative investments include additional risks. Please see prospectus for discussion of risks.

Past performance is not indicative of future results. This material contains the opinions of the author, which are subject to change, and should not to be considered or interpreted as a recommendation to participate in any particular trading strategy, or deemed to be an offer or sale of any investment product and it should not be relied on as such. There is no guarantee that any strategies discussed will work under all market conditions. This material represents an assessment of the market environment at a specific time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events or a guarantee of future results. This material should not be relied upon as research or investment advice regarding any security in particular. The user of this information assumes the entire risk of any use made of the information provided herein. Neither WisdomTree nor its affiliates, nor Foreside Fund Services, LLC, or its affiliates provide tax or legal advice. Investors seeking tax or legal advice should consult their tax or legal advisor. Unless expressly stated otherwise the opinions, interpretations or findings expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of WisdomTree or any of its affiliates.

The MSCI information may only be used for your internal use, may not be reproduced or re-disseminated in any form and may not be used as a basis for or component of any financial instruments or products or indexes. None of the MSCI information is intended to constitute investment advice or a recommendation to make (or refrain from making) any kind of investment decision and may not be relied on as such. Historical data and analysis should not be taken as an indication or guarantee of any future performance analysis, forecast or prediction. The MSCI information is provided on an "as is" basis and the user of this information assumes the entire risk of any use made of this information. MSCI, each of its affiliates and each entity involved in compiling, computing or creating any MSCI information (collectively, the "MSCI Parties") expressly disclaims all warranties. With respect to this information, in no event shall any MSCI Party have any liability for any direct, indirect, special, incidental, punitive, consequential (including loss profits) or any other damages (www.msci.com)

Jonathan Steinberg, Jeremy Schwartz, Rick Harper, Christopher Gannatti, Bradley Krom, Tripp Zimmerman, Michael Barrer, Anita Rausch, Kevin Flanagan, Brendan Loftus, Joseph Tenaglia, Jeff Weniger, Matt Wagner, Alejandro Saltiel, Ryan Krystopowicz, Jianing Wu, and Brian Manby are registered representatives of Foreside Fund Services, LLC.

WisdomTree Funds are distributed by Foreside Fund Services, LLC, in the U.S. only.

You cannot invest directly in an index.

DEFINITIONS

S&P 500 Index : Market capitalization-weighted benchmark of 500 stocks selected by the Standard and Poor's Index Committee designed to represent the performance of the leading industries in the United States economy.

Growth : Characterized by higher price levels relative to fundamentals, such as dividends or earnings. Price levels are higher because investors are willing to pay more due to their expectations of future improvements in these fundamentals.

Cyclical sectors : Consumer Discretionary, Energy, Industrials, Materials, Financials and Information Technology sectors.

Small caps : new or relatively young companies that typically have a market capitalization between \$200 million to \$2 billion.

Large-Capitalization (Large-Cap) : A term used by the investment community to refer to companies with a market capitalization value of more than \$10 billion. Large cap is an abbreviation of the term "large market capitalization". Market capitalization is calculated by multiplying the number of a company's shares outstanding by its stock price per share.

Diversification : A risk management strategy that mixes a wide variety of investments within a portfolio.

Valuation : Refers to metrics that relate financial statistics for equities to their price levels to determine if certain attributes, such as earnings or dividends, are cheap or expensive.

Russell 2000 Index : Measures the performance of the small-cap segment of the U.S. equity universe. The Russell 2000 is a subset of the Russell 3000 Index representing approximately 10% of the total market capitalization of that index. It includes approximately 2000 of the smallest securities based on a combination of their market cap and current index membership.

Core Earnings : Income generated by the company's daily operations rather than one-time events or market fluctuations.

Dividend : A portion of corporate profits paid out to shareholders.

Buyback ratio : The ratio of the amount of a company's buybacks to its market capitalization.

Price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio : Share price divided by earnings per share. Lower numbers indicate an ability to access greater amounts of earnings per dollar invested.

M1 : refers to the M1 money supply that includes physical money, such as coins and currency, as well as demand deposits, checking accounts, and Negotiable Order of Withdrawal accounts.

Inflation : Characterized by rising price levels.

Market Capitalization : Market cap = share prices x number of shares outstanding. Firms with the highest values receive the highest weights in approaches designed to weight firms by market cap.