

## Cross Asset Strategy

### Feature exploration via Boruta and Principal Components Analysis

- One basic question we are trying to ask is: ‘What’s driving the market now?’ Given the vast number of factors, we turn to machine learning techniques for help.
- We make a number of unconventional modifications to canned models (random forest, Boruta, principal components) to produce a custom feature selection process with a broad variety of cross asset applications.
- We illustrate the effectiveness of this process in a number of ways: simulation, a security replication exercise, and a cross asset tactical study. Generally, the results point to improved security selection and dynamic risk budgeting, with less turnover.

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#### Global Cross Asset Strategy

**Thomas Salopek** <sup>AC</sup>

(1-212) 834-5476

thomas.salopek@jpmorgan.com

J.P. Morgan Securities LLC

**Federico Manicardi** <sup>AC</sup>

(44-20) 7742-7008

federico.manicardi@jpmorgan.com

J.P. Morgan Securities plc

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## Abstract

In statistical applications for finance, we often want an equation that explains one variable as a function of other variables. An example is wanting an equation that tells us how to replicate the returns of an index using a weighted combination of other assets or factors. Although machine learning techniques such as random forest, gradient boosting trees, neural network, etc., can learn more complex mapping of input variables to an output variable, a simple equation lets us not only measure the relative importance of each input variable but also easily describe their relationships with the output variable.

The standard approach to obtain this equation is to run a multiple regression analysis, but this relies on assumptions that are not valid in all use cases and is not always robust due to multicollinearity. We propose a pipeline that combines ideas from machine learning and statistics to help practitioners enhance their multiple regression analyses and obtain robust equations after an initial round of feature selection. We demonstrate the utility of the pipeline in a simulation study and then apply it in a handful of relevant case studies.

## Feature Exploration Pipeline

Let  $X$  be an  $n$ -by- $p$  matrix of input data for  $n$  samples and  $p$  variables and  $y$  be an  $n$ -by-1 vector of output data. We want an equation that explains  $y$  as a linear combination of the columns of  $X$ . Multiple regression analysis sets up this problem as  $y = x_1B_1 + x_2B_2 + \dots + x_pB_p + \text{error}$  where the error is assumed to be normally distributed with mean zero and constant variance, and the weights  $\{B_1, B_2, \dots, B_p\}$  are unknown values to be estimated.

The well-known solution to this problem is  $B = (X^T X)^{-1} X^T y$ , but the matrix  $(X^T X)^{-1}$  is numerically unstable or undefined if  $X$  suffers from multicollinearity or other issues, e.g., if  $p > n$  (i.e., the number of variables is greater than the number of samples). In these cases the estimates of  $B$  are at best highly volatile and at worst impossible to calculate, so we must take action to address these issues.

To help enhance the standard analysis, our pipeline thus consists of two steps:

- 1) Data-driven feature selection using a custom model within the Boruta algorithm [1]
- 2) Principal component regression to robustly explain  $y$  using the refined set of features

Conducting a round of feature selection before fitting the model and leveraging principal component analysis to de-correlate the features are popular ideas that can be helpful in general because we want our equation to be parsimonious and to include only relevant features.

## Feature Selection

Consider the, arguably, simplest and fastest way to do feature selection by fitting a simple linear regression model for each feature independently of the others and then retaining the features with statistically significant results. This will not detect non-

linear effects or interaction effects, but it will detect significant main effects, even weak ones, with a sufficiently large sample size.

However, to apply this idea the user must decide on an initial threshold of statistical significance, e.g., the standard value of 5%, and then correct for the fact that conducting multiple hypothesis tests on the same underlying dataset will lead to an increased probability of a false positive.

It is common for feature selection algorithms like this one to rely on a threshold or hyper-parameter to distinguish between important and unimportant features. Different thresholds may be appropriate for different use cases, and so ideally we want a way to pick a suitable threshold in a data-driven way.

One such idea exists in a feature selection algorithm called Boruta [1]. This algorithm first augments  $X$  with a set of noisy features that by design have no relationship with  $y$  and then iteratively updates a list of selected features by fitting a model, calculating feature importance values, and using the most important noisy feature to derive a threshold for feature selection.

The original algorithm suggests using a random forest for this process because “the random forest ... is relatively quick, can usually be run without tuning of parameters, and it gives a numerical estimate of the feature importance.” However, there will be cases where an untuned random forest is not able to find important features, e.g., if the trees are not allowed to grow sufficiently deep, then they could miss features that only have weak effects on the target variable.

We propose a hybrid approach that uses Boruta but replaces the random forest model with a bootstrap version of the simple linear regression model where the median squared test statistic of the slope parameter for each feature is used as the measure of importance. This approach combines the best of both ideas and allows us to quickly refine the initial set of features into a filtered set that have been determined to be important and relevant for predicting  $y$  without having to manually specify a threshold of statistical significance.

In addition to the model used to calculate feature importance values, Boruta has other degrees of freedom that researchers might consider, but we believe that the default idea of using the most important noisy feature as a benchmark for feature selection is reasonable. We confirmed that this idea is highly effective in a simulation study that is detailed in a later section.

## Principal component regression

A standard way to de-correlate the features in a dataset is to apply principal component analysis to obtain a set of linear combinations of the original features that are orthogonal to each other. This means that we obtain a new matrix  $P = XL$  where  $L$  is a  $p$ -by- $c$  matrix of loadings or weights of each original feature onto each of  $c$  components. If we then use this new matrix in a regression model, we obtain a new set of weights  $W$  that explain  $y$  in terms of  $P$ , i.e.,  $y = PW$ , where  $W$  is a  $c$ -by-1 vector of parameters. We can rewrite this in terms of the original features as  $y = XLW$  and note that  $LW = B_{PCA}$  is a  $p$ -by-1 vector of weights for the columns of  $X$ .

In addition to de-correlating the features, the PCA transformation has the added benefit of helping to de-noise the feature matrix. The first principal component is the projection of  $X$  with the highest variance, and each subsequent component is the projection of  $X$  with the highest variance that is also orthogonal to all prior projections.

It is usually the case that we can explain most of the variation in  $X$  with a number of components  $c < p$ , and by doing so we can help the model focus more on the salient signals in  $X$ . This is akin to regularization where the number of components helps control for the complexity of the model with larger values allowing for more features in  $X$  to contribute to the column space of  $P$ .

We propose exploring the full “path” of regression models for each possible value of  $c$  and using the results to decide on a parsimonious and robust set of weights to explain  $y$  as a function of  $X$ . Each value of  $c$  leads to a different  $L$  that explains some amount of variation in  $X$ , results in some set of weights  $B_{PCA}$  and some coefficient of determination  $R^2$  in the regression model for  $y$ . Based on the progression of these values for increasing values of  $c$ , the user can decide on an appropriate choice of  $c$ , e.g., by looking for a point of diminishing returns in  $R^2$ .

The default ordering of the principal components of  $X$  is the one such that the incremental amount of variance in  $X$  explained by each component is maximized and each component is orthogonal to all previous components. This ordering does not take  $y$  into account, and so it may be the case that a feature is important in predicting  $y$  but does not explain so much of the variation in  $X$  and thus primarily contributes to later components in the default ordering.

This is noteworthy because the ordering of the components will affect the “path” of each feature’s coefficient, and so in our pipeline we also allow for the reordering of the principal components of  $X$  in descending order of the strength of their correlation to  $y$ . We demonstrate the effect of this optional reordering in a case study that is detailed in a later section, and refer the interested reader to other recent work that explores a similar idea [2].

## Simulation Study

To investigate the effectiveness of our feature selection component, we simulated data for  $\mathbf{X}$ ,  $\mathbf{B}$  and  $\mathbf{y}$  in a number of different scenarios, ran a set of feature selection algorithms and compared the performance of their results.

For each value of  $n$  in  $\{100, 1000, 5000, 10000\}$ , and each value of  $p$  in  $\{10, 50, 100\}$  (where  $p < n$ ), we simulated  $\mathbf{X}$  by drawing  $n$  samples from a  $p$ -dimensional multivariate normal distribution with a zero mean vector and an identity matrix as the covariance matrix.

We simulated initial values of  $\mathbf{B}$  by drawing  $p$  values independently from a standard normal distribution. To evaluate the different feature selection models we then forcibly set a proportion of the elements of  $\mathbf{B}$  to zero so that we had a clear set of important and unimportant features.

We considered proportions of  $r$  in  $\{0.1, 0.5, 0.9\}$ , and in each case to decide which elements of  $\mathbf{B}$  to set to zero, we simulated a vector  $\mathbf{T}$  of  $p$  independent random variables from a Bernoulli distribution with probability of success equal to  $r$ , i.e., we randomly generated  $p$  values that are equal to one with probability  $r$  and zero with probability  $1-r$ .

We then revised the initial values of  $\mathbf{B}$  by taking the element-wise multiplication with  $\mathbf{T}$  so that on average  $pr$  of the elements of  $\mathbf{B}$  became zero. We required that at least one element of  $\mathbf{B}$  be non-zero during this process. A perfect feature selection model would thus select only the features that have corresponding elements of  $\mathbf{T}$  equal to one.

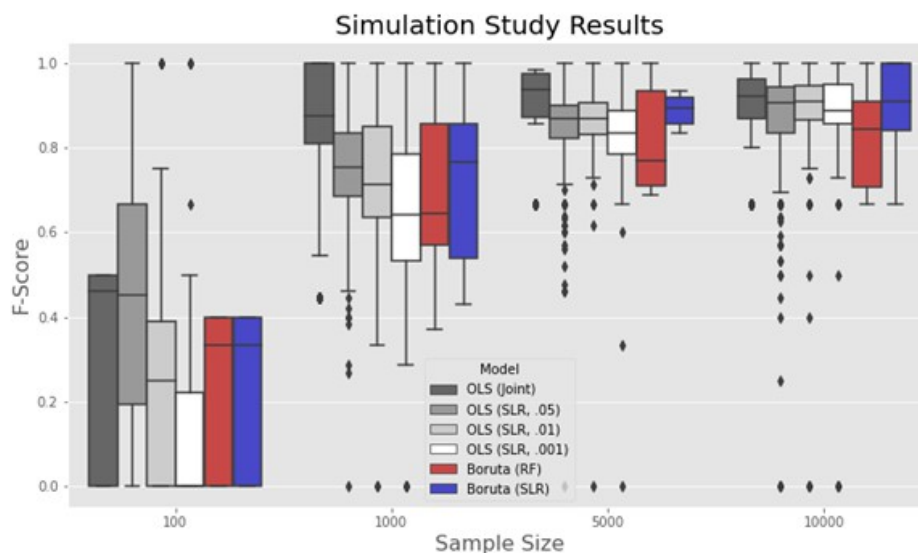
Finally, for each value of  $s$  in  $\{1, 5, 10\}$ , we simulated  $\mathbf{y}$  by adding  $n$  independent and normally distributed errors with zero mean and standard deviation equal to  $s$  to the vector of  $\mathbf{XB}$ . For each scenario we simulated 10 replicates of  $\mathbf{X}$ ,  $\mathbf{B}$  and  $\mathbf{y}$  and then fit a set of models to each dataset and compared the list of selected features to the ground truth and calculated precision, recall, and the F-score, which is the harmonic mean of precision and recall.

Figure 1 summarizes the results of this simulation study for the different values of  $n$ .

Each model is described as follows:

- OLS (Joint): Fit a multiple regression model using all features and select features with p-values less than .05
- OLS (SLR, *threshold*): Fit a simple linear regression model for each feature independently and select those with p-values less than *threshold*
- Boruta (RF): Apply the standard Boruta feature selection algorithm with an untuned random forest regressor model that has the following hyper-parameters in scikit-learn [3]:  
{“n\_jobs” = 1, “max\_depth” = 5, “min\_samples\_leaf” = 5, “max\_leaf\_nodes” = 50}
- Boruta (SLR): Apply the Boruta feature selection algorithm with a custom model that instead applies the bootstrap algorithm to fit a simple linear regression model for each feature independently a certain number of times and uses the median squared value of each feature’s test statistic as the measure of importance

Figure 1: Model performance by size for 'kitchen sink' vs 'p-hacking' vs Boruta



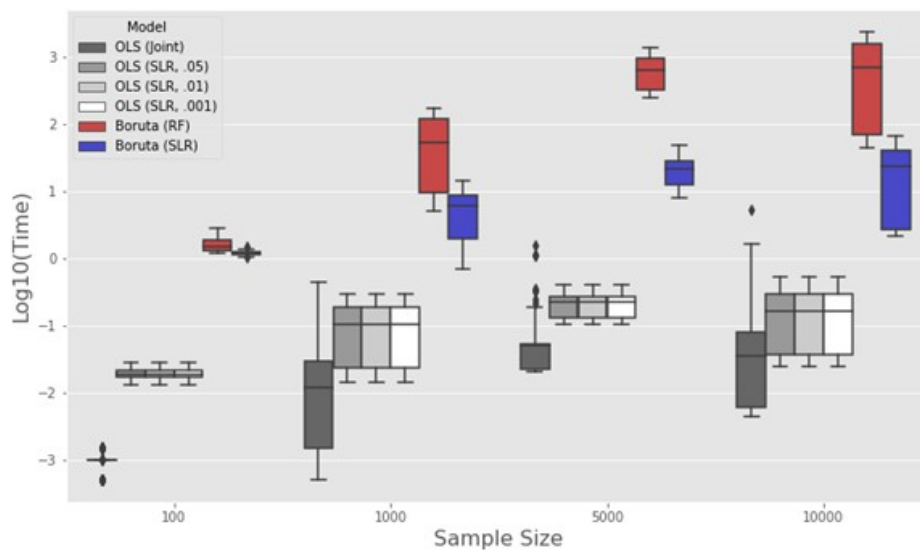
Source: J.P. Morgan

For relatively smaller sample sizes, we see that there is generally a degradation in performance as we move from the OLS (Joint) model to the OLS (SLR, .001) model. The OLS (Joint) model is the actual underlying model that was used to generate the simulated dataset, so it should intuitively consistently have relatively strong performance. The degradation in performance as we apply varying thresholds to the simple linear regression models for each feature independently reveals how the simple idea breaks down, e.g., false positives for thresholds that are too large and false negatives for thresholds that are too small. These models generally stabilize for larger sample sizes, and we see that the distribution of F-scores for the simple linear regression models become less volatile but have more extreme values than that of the OLS (Joint) model.

In terms of the Boruta models, we see that the untuned random forest model and the bootstrap simple linear regression model are comparable for relatively smaller sample sizes with performance that is typically somewhere between the OLS SLR ideas and the OLS (Joint) model. As the sample size increases, we see that the Boruta model that utilizes the bootstrap simple linear regression model has a higher median F-score with smaller variation in its distribution. This is likely due to the aforementioned situation for which an untuned random forest model struggles to select features that have relatively weak effects on the target variable.

A more thorough study might reveal other pros and cons of these models in the presence of more realistic datasets and other issues such as multicollinearity, and it also may be the case that other models including a tuned random forest could achieve greater performance. However, our intention at this point is simply to demonstrate the value of substituting an untuned random forest model with a simpler idea that not only does not require any tuning but can also achieve similar or greater performance across a variety of scenarios.

Figure 2: Time to run each model



Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 2 shows the distribution of time spent in seconds on the log scale for each model. The simulation study was conducted on a machine with an Intel Xeon Processor E3-1585L v5 (8M Cache, 3.00 GHz) and only a single job was used to fit the random forest models. The OLS SLR models have the same distribution because these differ only in terms of the threshold that is used on the p-values to select features. As the sample size grows we see a clear separation in the time required to run the Boruta feature selection algorithms with significantly more time needed for the ones that use random forest models.



## Case Studies

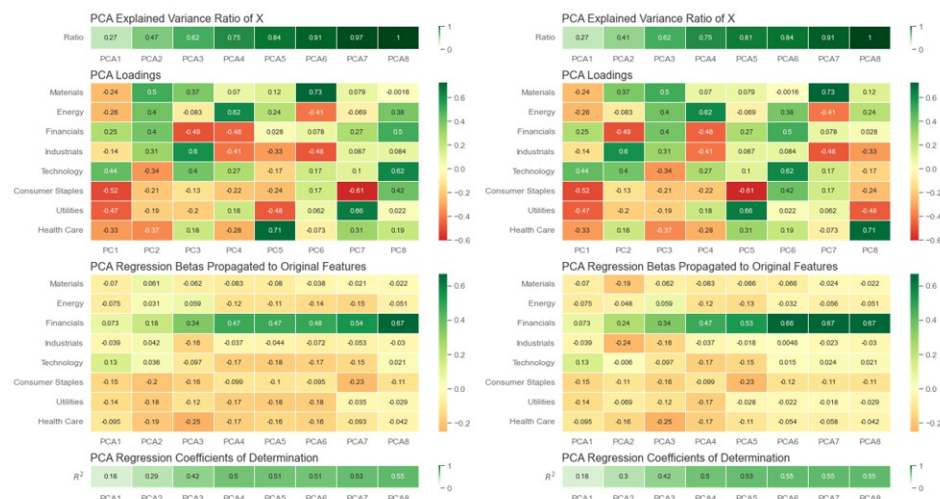
### 1) Building an equation to explain and replicate the returns of a single stock (sample US bank stock)

We test our pipeline on real financial time series data by applying it on the available data in Bloomberg between 2000-01-01 and 2016-12-31 to build an equation that explains the daily excess returns of the sample US bank stock relative to the SPX Index in terms of the excess returns of a collection of sector indices and a random noise variable that has no relationship with the target variable. Boruta removes some of the features including the noise term, and then the PCA Regression reveals that as we increase the number of components, we see that (as we might expect) the Financials sector index gradually gains in importance until it is the dominant factor in a full model with all components.

We consider the default ordering of the principal components as well as the descending order in terms of the magnitude of correlation to  $y$ . Figure 3 shows a side-by-side comparison of the results of this analysis.

Figure 3: Benefit of re-ordering the Principal Components

Left: default ordering of PCs, right: rearranged PCs based on strength of correlation to  $y$



Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Each heat map in Figure 3 has a number of columns equal to the total number of possible components, 8, which is also the number of features that were selected by Boruta. From the top to the bottom, the first shows the percent of variation of  $X$  explained for each number of components, and then the second shows the loadings of each component. The third shows the PCA Regression betas propagated back to the original features, and the final one shows the  $R^2$  values for each possible model.

In this case we see that the terminal values of the coefficients for each feature, i.e., the last column of the third heat map in each chart, are the same, but the “paths” to reach these values are slightly different. By rearranging the principal components we attempt to prioritize explaining the variation in  $y$  instead of the variation in  $X$  as we increase the



number of components.

The  $R^2$  values for the model with no rearrangement plateaus with 4 components, and so we consider stopping there and using the resulting weights to explain  $y$  in terms of  $X$ . For the models that use rearranged components, we reach a plateau of around 6 components instead. We arrived at these values programmatically by searching for the first point at which the series of  $R^2$  values, scaled by the final value so that the final value is always 1, does not increase by more than .01.

If we were to simply fit an OLS model to all data, we would obtain the coefficients shown in the final column of the third heat map. It is noteworthy that in some places these are quite different from the ones shown in the column for the model with 4 components and the default ordering of components. In both cases by adding more components, we increase the magnitude of the weight on the Financials and decrease the magnitude of the weight on some other features including the Technology and the Utilities Indices.

To test the quality of the equation and the effect of using either model as opposed to the full set of features, we first convert each set of weights into normalized versions that sum to one in magnitude and then take corresponding long and short positions in the underlying indices from 2018-01-01 to 2023-03-03 in an attempt to recreate the return stream of a sample bank stock.

Note: While it may not be possible to invest in many indices directly, one can realize similar returns by investing in Index mutual funds and ETFs.

We compare the resulting portfolios with each other and with a benchmark strategy wherein we simply buy and hold the sample US bank stock in the same time period. This is a simplified example for which we assume a constant allocation to each asset over time, i.e., a daily rebalancing, and do not account for transaction costs and so on. In practice, portfolio managers could potentially re-compute weights using the most up-to-date historical return data for all constituents of interest for use during the periodic, e.g., monthly, rebalancing of the passively managed portfolio. We obtain the following results for a subset of metrics of interest:

**Table 1: PCA Performance results**

Metric	Benchmark	Relative to Benchmark (except Turnover)		
		PCA (Default)	PCA (Rearranged)	PCA (All)
Sharpe	1.00	1.15	1.15	1.15
Max Drawdown	1.00	0.82	0.93	0.91
Volatility	1.00	0.75	0.81	0.81
Sortino	1.00	1.08	1.08	1.08
CAGR	1.00	1.14	1.15	1.17
R (Correlation)	1.00	0.83	0.9	0.89
$R^2$	1.00	0.69	0.8	0.9
Turnover		1.66	1.01	1.00

Source: J.P. Morgan

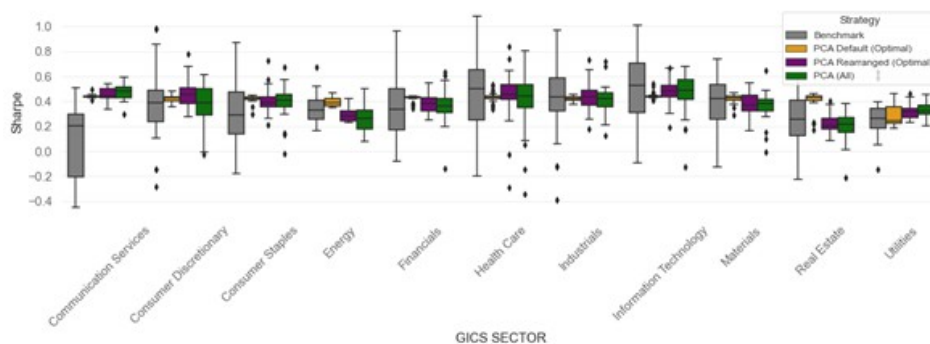
Note that the turnover is calculated for each strategy independently as the total number of dollars bought or sold (divided by 2) over time and then scaled to be relative to the PCA (All) strategy. All other metrics are shown relative to the benchmark buy and hold

strategy.

The PCA strategies show modest improvements to these metrics, but the PCA (Default) strategy is slightly better in terms of increasing Sharpe and Sortino ratios and minimizing volatility and max drawdown. However, the effect of rearranging the PCs in this case is that the selected model produces a series of daily returns with higher correlation to the actual values (0.90 compared with 0.83) with much smaller turnover.

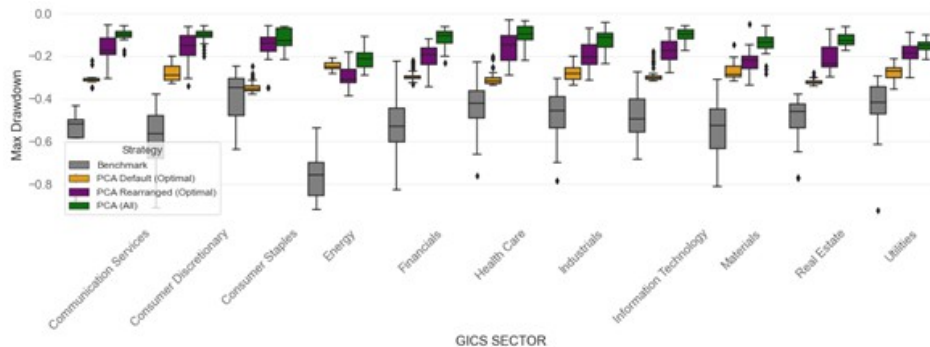
To help provide more context to these numbers and to understand if and how these findings generalize to other stocks, we replicated this kind of analysis for 377 members of the SPX Index as of 2023-03-03 with sufficient data coverage. Figure 4 through Figure 11 show the results of this study summarized by GICS sector. For this broader analysis we used a set of 60 indices that capture a variety of factors of interest in addition to the sector indices from above. We show 4 sets of results: the benchmark model, the optimal PCA model for each type of PC ordering, and the PCA (All) model that is consistent across ordering types.

Figure 4: Sharpe ratio



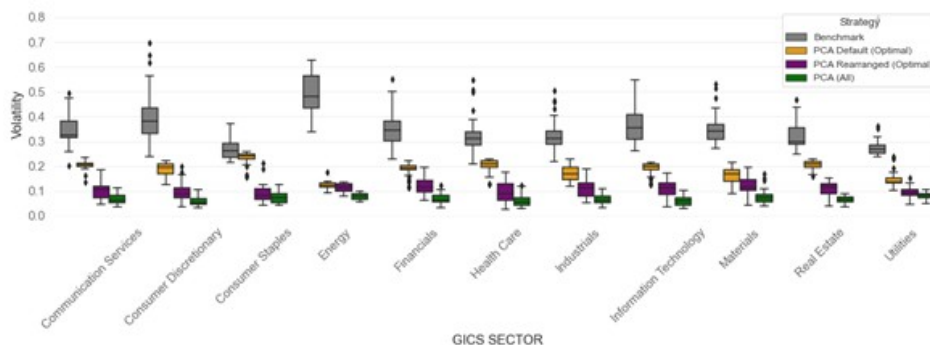
Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Figure 5: Max Drawdown



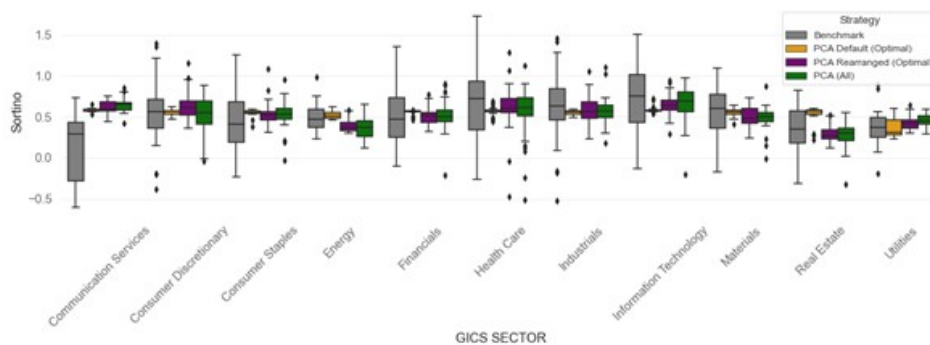
Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Figure 6: Volatility



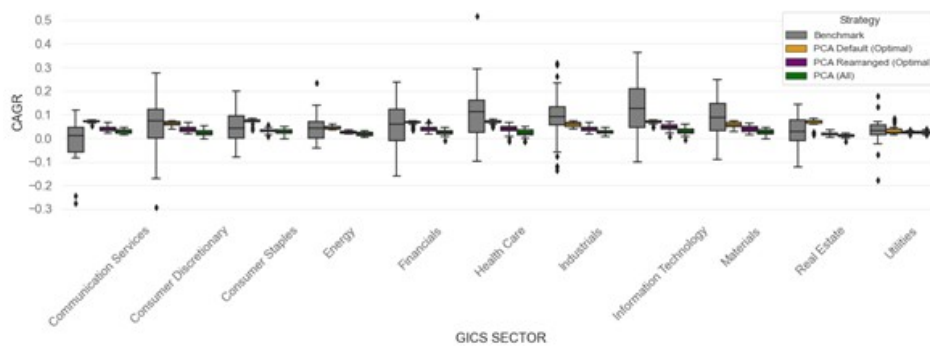
Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Figure 7: Sortino



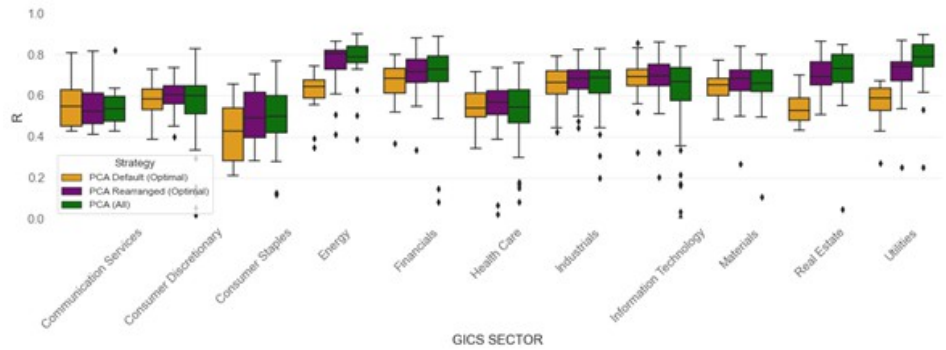
Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Figure 8: CAGR



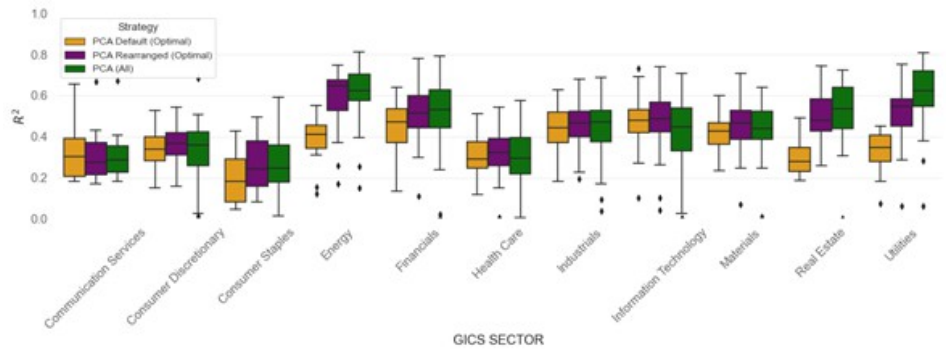
Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Figure 9: R



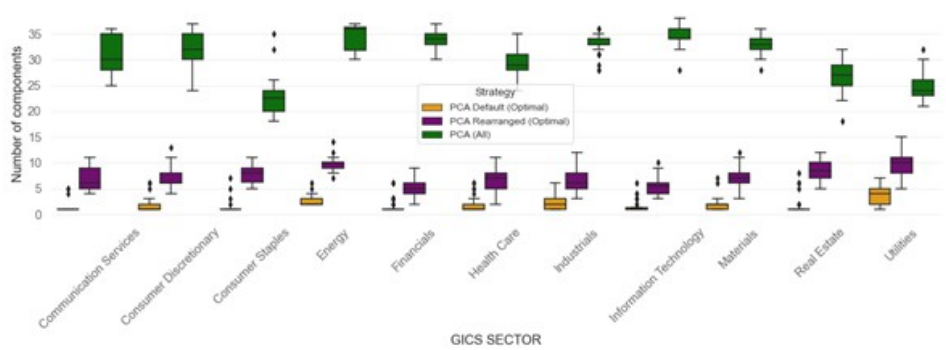
Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Figure 10: R-squared



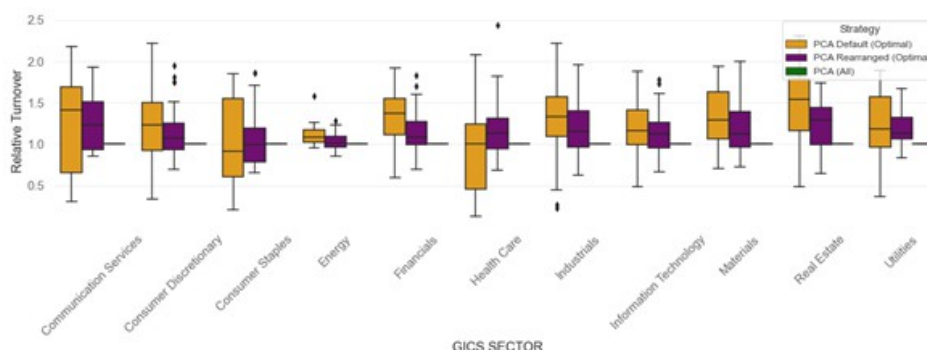
Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Figure 11: Number of Components



Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Figure 12: Relative turnover



Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Note that Figure 12 shows the turnover relative to the PCA (All) strategy.

The results confirm that the observed patterns in the sample US bank stock case study are consistent across a variety of stocks. The PCA Regression-based replication portfolios generally achieve the median Sharpe ratio for each sector or greater with uniformly lower volatility and reduced max drawdowns. Moreover, there is not much difference between the distributions of the simpler PCA models with a subset of rearranged components than the PCA models with all components; however, for some metrics there is a significant difference between these models and the PCA models that use a subset of the components in their default ordering.

We see in Figure 11 that Boruta typically filters the initial set of 60 indices down to around 30 or so, i.e., the number of components in the PCA (All) models. From there if we use the default ordering of the principal components along with the stopping rule mentioned previously, then we usually pick less than 5 components for the model. However, if we rearrange the principal components in descending order of the strength of their correlation with  $y$  and use the same stopping rule, then we instead pick between 5 and 10 components. The PCA Rearranged models thus strike a good compromise between the simple PCA Default models and the complex PCA (All) models, and this is reflected in various metrics, e.g., volatility, max drawdown, etc.

The variance in the distribution of each metric for the PCA-based models is typically small compared with the benchmark portfolios. One reason for this is that the unexplained idiosyncratic component of the variation in each stock is usually somewhat large when building models only based on these indices. Figures 9 and 10 confirm this by showing the relatively modest values of the correlation coefficient and the coefficient of determination between each PCA model's return streams and the benchmark strategy of simply buying and holding each asset.

Figure 12 shows that the turnover for the models that use a subset of the components is generally higher than the models that use all principal components and moreover that the models that use the default ordering of components tend to have the highest turnover. We discuss some possible reasons for this in a later section.

In practice there are ways to try to improve the accuracy of this kind of replication, e.g., use a larger set of features based on user preference and investment interest and/or change the input dataset so that it includes more recent information.

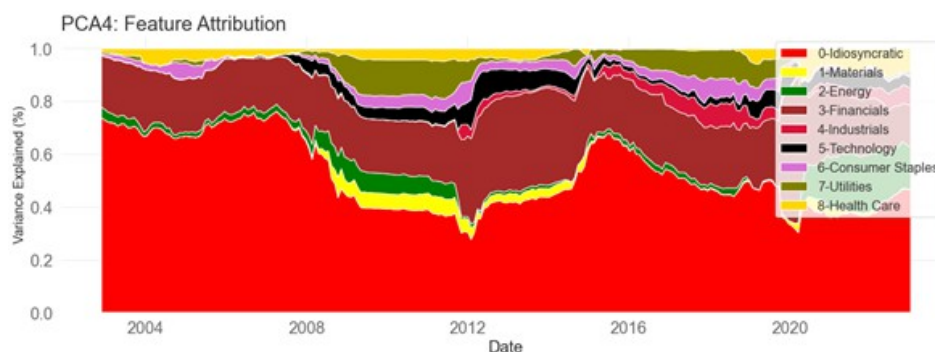
## 2) Building multiple equations to reveal how relationships to features evolve over time

By applying the pipeline to a rolling window of data, we can also explore how the importance of each feature in predicting the target variable changes over time. We use the squared value of the beta for each feature from the regression model as a proxy for its importance and then calculate the relative importance as the ratio of importance to the overall sum of importance values. We then attribute a portion of  $R^2$  to each feature by scaling  $R^2$  by the relative importance values, and finally take  $1 - R^2$  to be the idiosyncratic variation in  $y$  that is unexplained by the model.

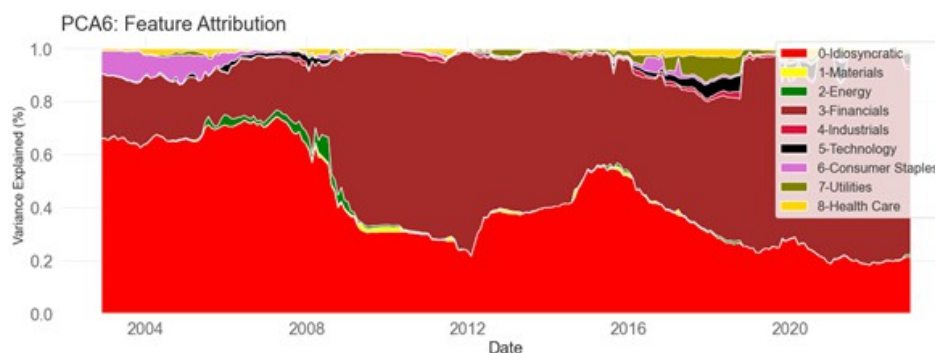
In the case of sample US bank stock from the earlier simplified example, with a rolling window of three years, we can see in Figure 13 that an  $R^2$  value of 0.5 or greater when using  $c = 4$  components in the default ordering is generally only achieved during extreme periods including financial crises as well as the COVID pandemic. These represent periods in which many assets become strongly correlated such that their movements are well captured by the top principal components. Higher  $R^2$  values are generally achieved by the model that uses  $c = 6$  components in the rearranged ordering, and we see that the Financials sector contributes the most to the model's explanatory power. This result is very similar to the model that uses all possible components as well.

Figure 13: Optimal model for a given number of components

Optimal model with default PC ordering (4 components)

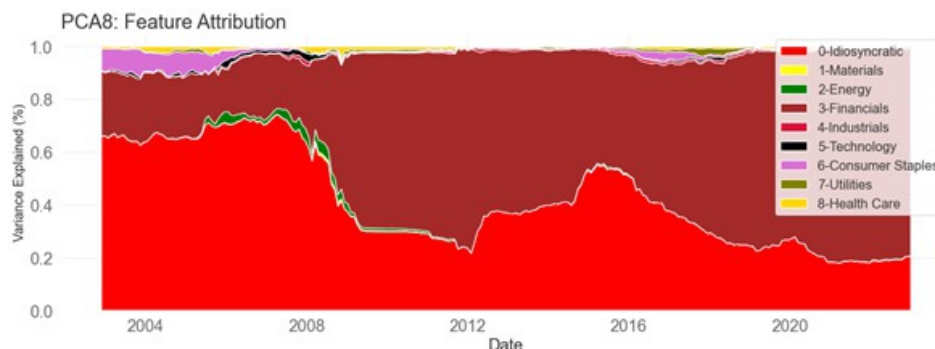


Optimal model with rearranged PCs (6 components)



Model that uses all principal components (8 components)





Source: J.P. Morgan, Bloomberg Finance L.P.

### 3) *Q-Boruta*

We present another application of the Boruta algorithm we call Q-Boruta, for quant research. The feature selection part of our pipeline replaces Boruta's default model with a custom one to try not to miss important features with relatively weak effects on the response variable. With this, we obtain an equation that explains one variable in terms of other variables, but some practitioners may instead be interested in selecting a set of assets for which a given trading strategy works well.

To this end, we replace Boruta's default model with one that no longer tries to predict  $y$  in terms of  $X$  and calculate feature importance values, but that ignores  $y$  and simply applies a trading strategy to each feature in  $X$  and computes a corresponding performance metric of interest like a Sharpe ratio.

We again use the bootstrap algorithm to build a distribution of these metrics by selecting many random contiguous subsets of time from the dataset, running the strategy on each one, and finally calculating the median Sharpe ratio for each asset. In this process we set negative Sharpe ratios to zero so that Boruta only ever operates on non-negative feature importance values.

Boruta then selects the set of assets in  $X$  for which the typical performance of the strategy is significantly greater than that of the best shadow asset. There are other ways to conduct back-tests to check the effectiveness and applicability of a strategy to a particular set of assets, so this may serve as a convenient complementary analysis to other techniques like using random portfolios to build a benchmark distribution of performance metrics.

To illustrate Q-Boruta we built a basic momentum strategy as a custom model that calculates the 12-month momentum for an asset, i.e., the percent change in price from 1 year prior to now, and invests when that value is positive. The decision to invest on any given day is based on the prior day's available information, with an investment holding period of 1 year. As before, trading costs, etc., are ignored. We consider around 100 assets from two asset classes (Equities and FX) with over 15 years of available data. Boruta supplements these with an additional 100 shadow assets it uses during the selection process.

We focus on these asset classes for simplicity, but others can be used as well. Not all asset classes may be appropriate for a given strategy, e.g., Q-Boruta might determine that a momentum strategy works well for commodities (e.g., trained during a super-



cycle “up phase”), but later that strategy may fail (out of sample) if the market environment changes.

### *Training period (2004-2022)*

We apply Q-Boruta to the period from roughly 2004 to 2022 and find 15 assets for which the 12-month momentum strategy works well. Figure 14 shows a comparison of the average cumulative profit and loss (PnL) paths for two simple portfolios that buy and hold an equal amount of the selected and unselected assets, respectively. Figure 15 shows the paths for each asset individually.

Figure 14: Average Cumulative PnL: Buy and Hold Strategy (training period)



Source: J.P. Morgan

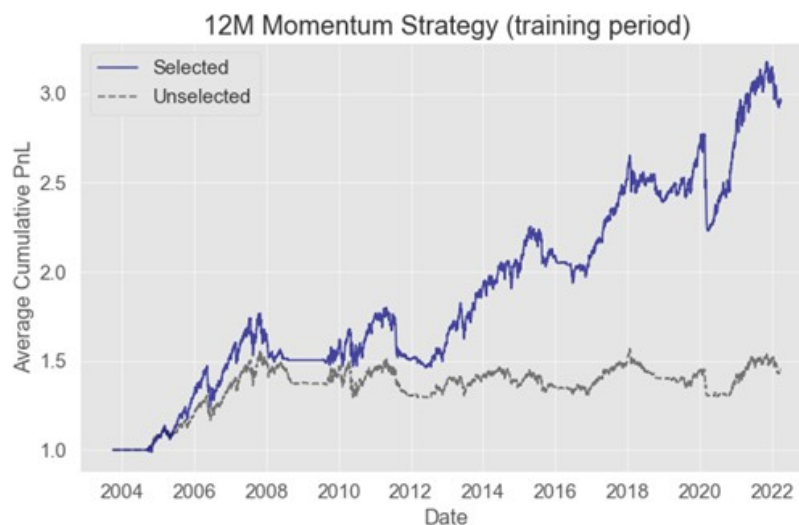
Figure 15: Cumulative PnL: Buy and Hold Strategy (training period)



Source: J.P. Morgan

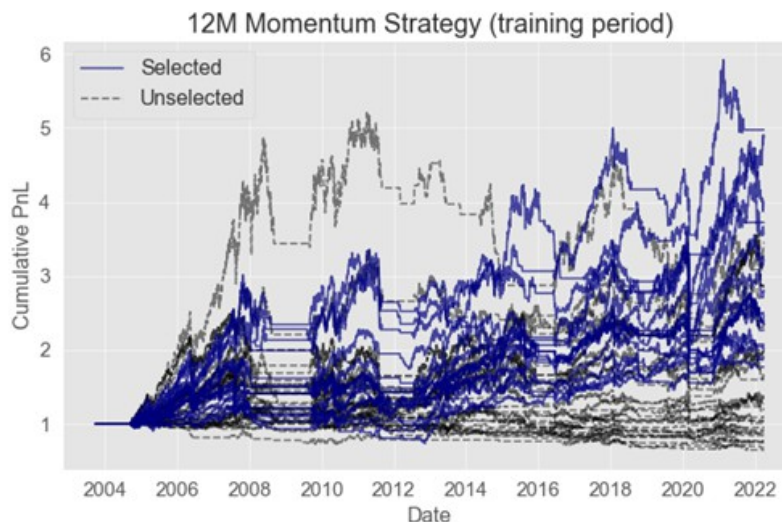
Figure 16 and Figure 17 respectively show the average and individual cumulative profit and loss paths for the momentum strategy instead.

Figure 16: Average Cumulative PnL: 12M Momentum Strategy (training period)



Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 17: Cumulative PnL: 12M Momentum Strategy (training period)



Source: J.P. Morgan

For both the buy and hold benchmark strategy and the 12-month momentum strategy, we see a widening gap between the performance of the portfolios for the selected versus unselected assets. The buy and hold benchmark achieves a higher cumulative PnL for the selected assets; however, the 12-month momentum strategy is able to avoid some large market drawdowns, e.g., around 2008 to 2010.

An index that tracks the Latin American market is an unselected asset with a relatively high cumulative PnL trajectory in the 2000s but then a stagnant and declining trajectory in the 2010s and beyond. This reflects the commodities boom and subsequent disappointing economic growth in Latin American countries around that time [4]. Q-Boruta avoids this asset and instead selects the ones for which the momentum strategy tends to work consistently well.

### ***Hold-out period (2022-2023)***

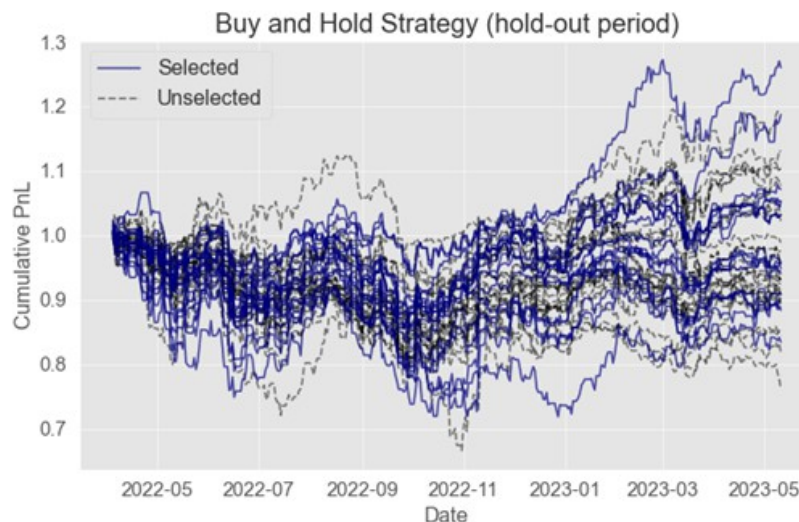
Figure 18 and Figure 19, respectively, show the average and individual cumulative PnL paths of the buy and hold strategy for each asset in the hold-out period (April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023).

**Figure 18: Average Cumulative PnL: Buy and Hold Strategy (hold-out period)**



Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 19: Cumulative PnL: Buy and Hold Strategy (hold-out period)



Source: J.P. Morgan

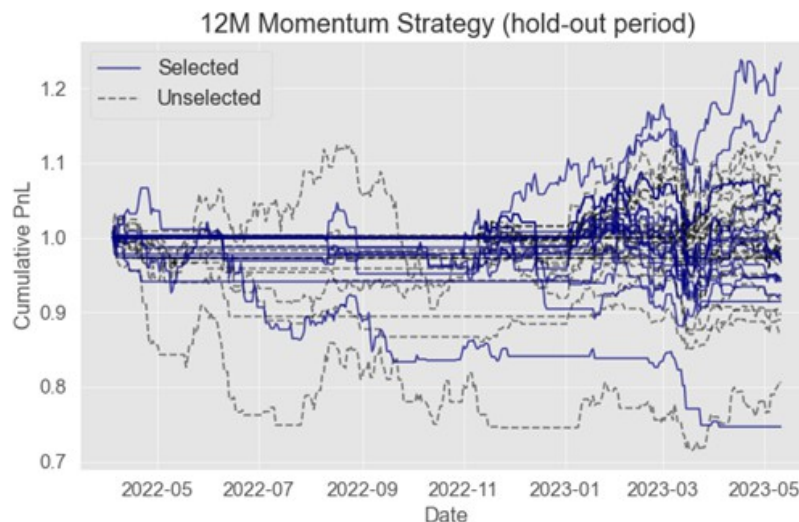
We see that the hold-out period has generally not been a good time to invest in these assets. The average cumulative PnL paths for both selected and unselected assets end slightly below 1. Figure 20 and Figure 21 show the average and individual cumulative PnL paths of the momentum strategy during this time period instead.

Figure 20: Average Cumulative PnL: 12M Momentum Strategy (hold-out period)



Source: J.P. Morgan

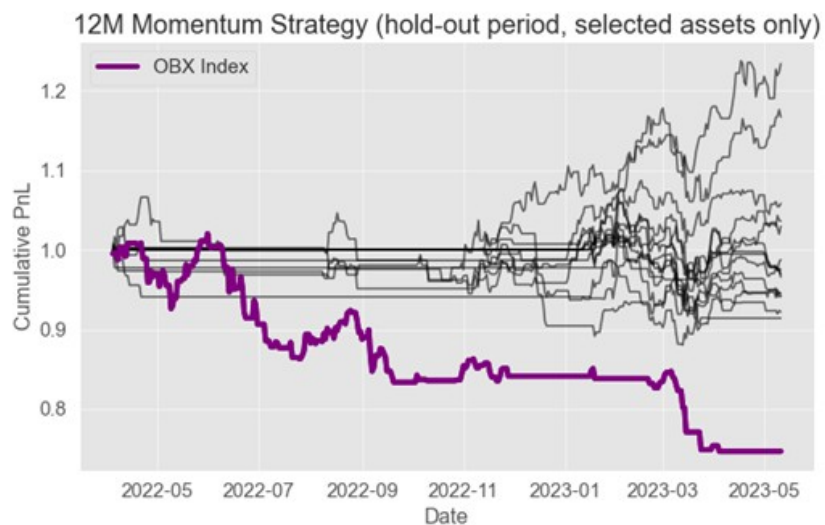
Figure 21: Cumulative PnL: 12M Momentum Strategy (hold-out period)



Source: J.P. Morgan

We see that both strategies perform similarly and somewhat poorly. Interestingly, there are even some small periods during which the unselected assets portfolio slightly outperforms the selected assets one. This is because a selected asset that tracks the Oslo Stock Exchange (OBX Index) significantly pulls down the average performance of the selected asset portfolio. Figure 22 highlights this asset in a view that shows the cumulative PnL paths for the selected assets only.

Figure 22: Cumulative PnL: 12M Momentum Strategy (hold-out period, selected assets only)

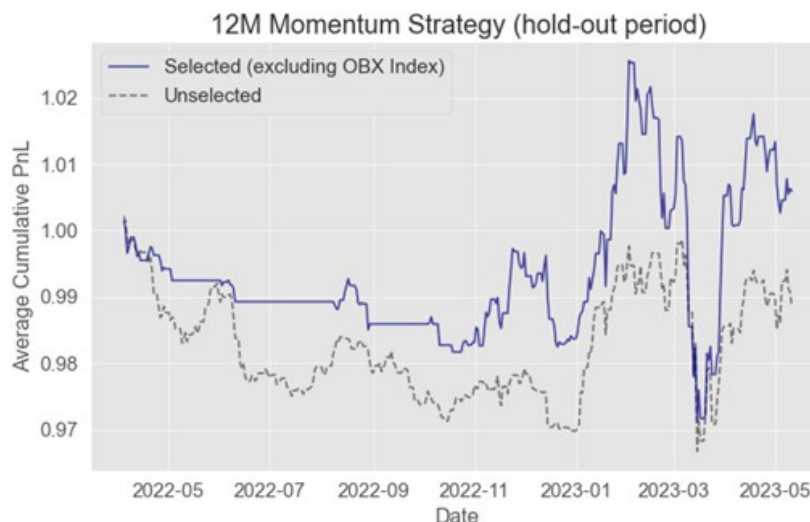


Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 23 shows an updated view of the average cumulative PnL paths if we exclude OBX Index from the set of selected assets. Here we see that the revised selected assets portfolio consistently outperforms the unselected assets one. This revised selected assets

portfolio also ends with a slightly positive overall profit.

Figure 23: Average Cumulative PnL: 12M Momentum Strategy (hold-out period)



Source: J.P. Morgan

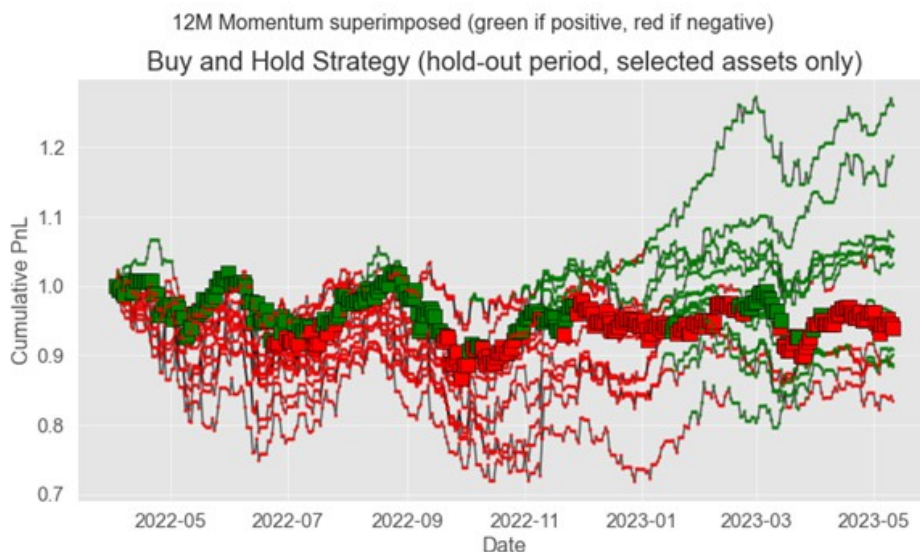
Although the 12-month momentum strategy worked well enough for the OBX Index during the training period for Q-Boruta to select it, market conditions have changed subsequently for this to no longer be the case. Figure 24 highlights the breakdown by superimposing the 12-month momentum for each selected asset on top of its cumulative PnL path during the hold-out period. The color of the marker for each day indicates whether the momentum strategy would have invested (green) or not (red) in a particular asset, and OBX Index is the only asset shown with large square markers.

There are several stretches of time during 2022 when OBX Index is the only asset with positive 12-month momentum. Figure 25 shows a view with a longer history, and it appears that the 12-month momentum of the OBX Index started decoupling from the rest of the selected assets sometime during late 2021 or early 2022.

Several factors may have contributed to this decoupling including but not limited to: interest rate hikes by Norges Bank throughout the year, rising energy costs, softening demand for freight and a new aquaculture tax proposed in September [5].

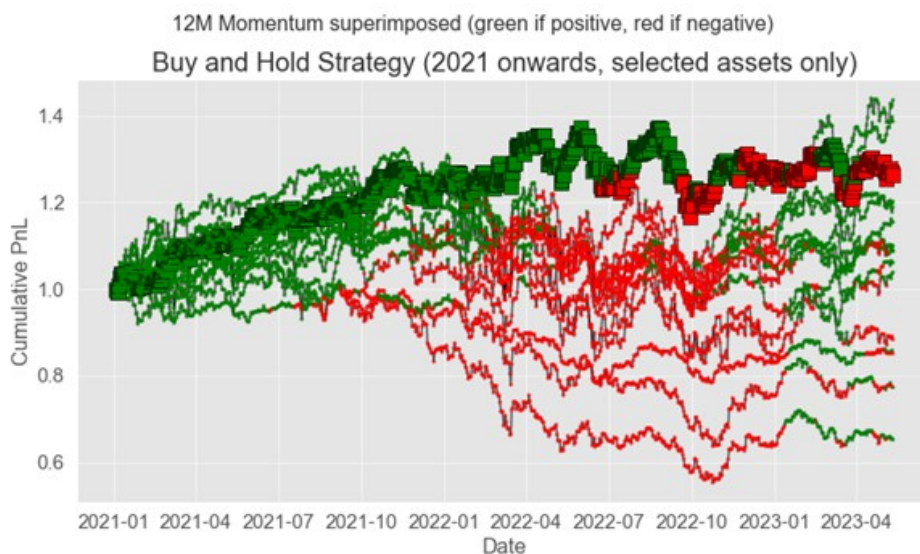


Figure 24: Cumulative PnL



Source: J.P. Morgan

Figure 25: Cumulative PnL: 2021 onwards



Source: J.P. Morgan

Table 2 shows some portfolio summary statistics for a buy and hold strategy on all assets, and the 12-month momentum strategy on the selected (with and without OBX Index) and unselected assets. The initial portfolio that applies the momentum strategy to all selected assets performs poorly, but after dropping OBX Index it achieves the best performance overall.



Table 2: Portfolio summary statistics

Metric	Benchmark	12M Momentum Strategy		
		Selected	Selected (no OBX)	Unselected
Sharpe	-0.1	-0.22	0.11	-0.19
Max Drawdown	-14.70%	-5.47%	-5.29%	-3.53%
Volatility	0.09	0.04	0.04	0.03
Sortino	-0.13	-0.29	0.15	-0.24
CAGR	-1.74%	-1.24%	0.49%	-0.83%

Source: J.P. Morgan

The anomaly we observe with the OBX Index reminds us that an assumption for Q-Boruta and similar methods is that the patterns observed during the training period will be representative of the ones that will be observed in the future, but of course this is not necessarily the case in the real world.

A particular strategy may work for an asset in certain situations and not others, and so another application of our pipeline that we leave to future work is to let  $y$  be a binary indicator for whether a given start date for a strategy works well or not for an asset and then to let  $X$  be a corresponding set of macroeconomic indicators that describe the state of the world on each day. By replacing linear regression with logistic regression and running our pipeline with this setup, we could explain regimes or situations in which a strategy is effective for an asset of interest.

The selection from Q-Boruta is based on a large historical window for a particular simple momentum strategy as an example. Depending on the strategy you analyze with the framework, how you set and tune model parameters and hyperparameters (historical window size, etc.), and the universe on which you run the model, your results and mileage may vary.

There are many factors that affect the performance of instruments in financial markets, and past performance is not always indicative of future results.

## Discussion

It would seem that for the task of replicating a single stock's return stream as a linear function of the return streams of a set of indices, the model that uses a subset of the principal components in a rearranged order strikes a compromise between using a subset of the components in their default ordering and using all components.

The model that uses all components uses all available information, and we have seen in individual case studies, e.g., the sample US bank stock, that this leads to most of the final regression betas being concentrated on a handful of stocks with other betas being close to zero. Betas close to zero naturally lead towards lower turnover because there is less of a need to rebalance for those assets. If there is no redundant information in the feature matrix, then we should use all available information to achieve the best equation that maps inputs to the output.

On the other hand, the model that uses a small number of components in their default ordering only has access to the components that are the most helpful in explaining the variation in the feature matrix. Those may or may not also be helpful in explaining the variation in the target variable. Moreover, these models tend to assign betas with

relatively larger magnitudes to the features in part because with relatively limited data they are not yet able to distinguish which features are redundant or unnecessary once accounting for the full set of features. This can lead to higher turnover and if the first few components are not also helpful in explaining the variation in the target variable then this also leads to suboptimal equations.

The model that uses a small number of components in their rearranged ordering tends to move us closer to the model that uses all components so that we begin to lessen the loadings on unimportant features and increase the loadings on the important ones. However, we still are not using all available data, and so there is a loss of some information that is perhaps noise but also possibly signal. As a result we strike a compromise between the previous models and the turnover tends to be somewhere in between.

Perhaps the models that use rearranged components are able to do better than their counterparts that use all components in situations where for a particular target variable there is redundancy in the feature matrix, and so the simplified equation obtained by the PCA-based strategy is able to hone in on the signal and remove some of the noise.

## Limitations

The pipeline does not account for any possible non-linear relationships or interaction effects between the input variables and the output variable. Moreover, it does not test any of the assumptions of the multiple regression model or try to identify and resolve any possible data quality issues, e.g., outliers or missing data. We consider the former as possible next steps and the latter as tasks and decisions for the practitioner to undertake based on each use case.

## Next Steps

The pipeline could be improved by adding a step to test and account for non-linear relationships or interaction effects between the input variables and the output variable. To test for non-linear relationships, we could use correlation coefficients such as the predictive power score or the Chatterjee correlation coefficient, that measure the strength of meaningful and potentially non-linear relationships between two variables. If meaningful non-linear relationships are detected, then we could apply a suitable flexible transformation to a feature (e.g., natural cubic spline). We could test for interaction effects using Friedman's H-statistic [6] and include significant transformed features in the model.

Regardless of the ordering of principal components in our pipeline, we sometimes observe irregularities in the "paths" of coefficients, e.g., reversals in direction, due to multicollinearity in the original feature matrix. We could further enhance the pipeline by surfacing these issues to the user if necessary and applying an additional filtering step in the analysis. For example, we could show the user a clustering of features based on their pair-wise correlations and ask the user to pick one feature to retain from each cluster. We could also introduce a regularization component to the model-fitting process that embeds the prior beliefs of the user in terms of which features are more important *a priori*, e.g., via a technique such as Bayesian variable selection.

There are trade-offs to these ideas, but a common key point is to keep a human (expert) in the loop when making these decisions. Our goal is to enable the user to reach the

desired equation of interest in a way that encourages decisions based on testing preconceived hypotheses. This convenient-to-use framework should not be employed for “p-hacking.”

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## Appendix (Some additional notes)

### “Term Structure” of Forecasts

In this paper we illustrate how an input feature set can be used with our pipeline to relate a set of input features after careful feature selection and principal component regression. We show with examples how our framework can be employed both on a one-off, and on a rolling basis, for explaining contemporaneous returns and for making return forecasts.

We could go a step further and build out a full "term structure" of forecasts (contemporaneous, +1D, +1W, +2W, +1M, +3M, +6M, +12M) and show heatmaps for a subset of factors to demonstrate how and where any relationships deteriorate. Of course, this would entail re-running the model for different horizons, and would give different regression equations for each.

The choice of factors will also vary by forecast horizon as well as by time period. There is combinatorial explosion in the number of possible experiments that can be run given the researcher degrees of freedom and the dimensionality of the problem specification, so we leave our analysis here and encourage the reader to explore further pathways on their own.

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