

February 2025

Monthly **CIO View**



Strategy Snapshot

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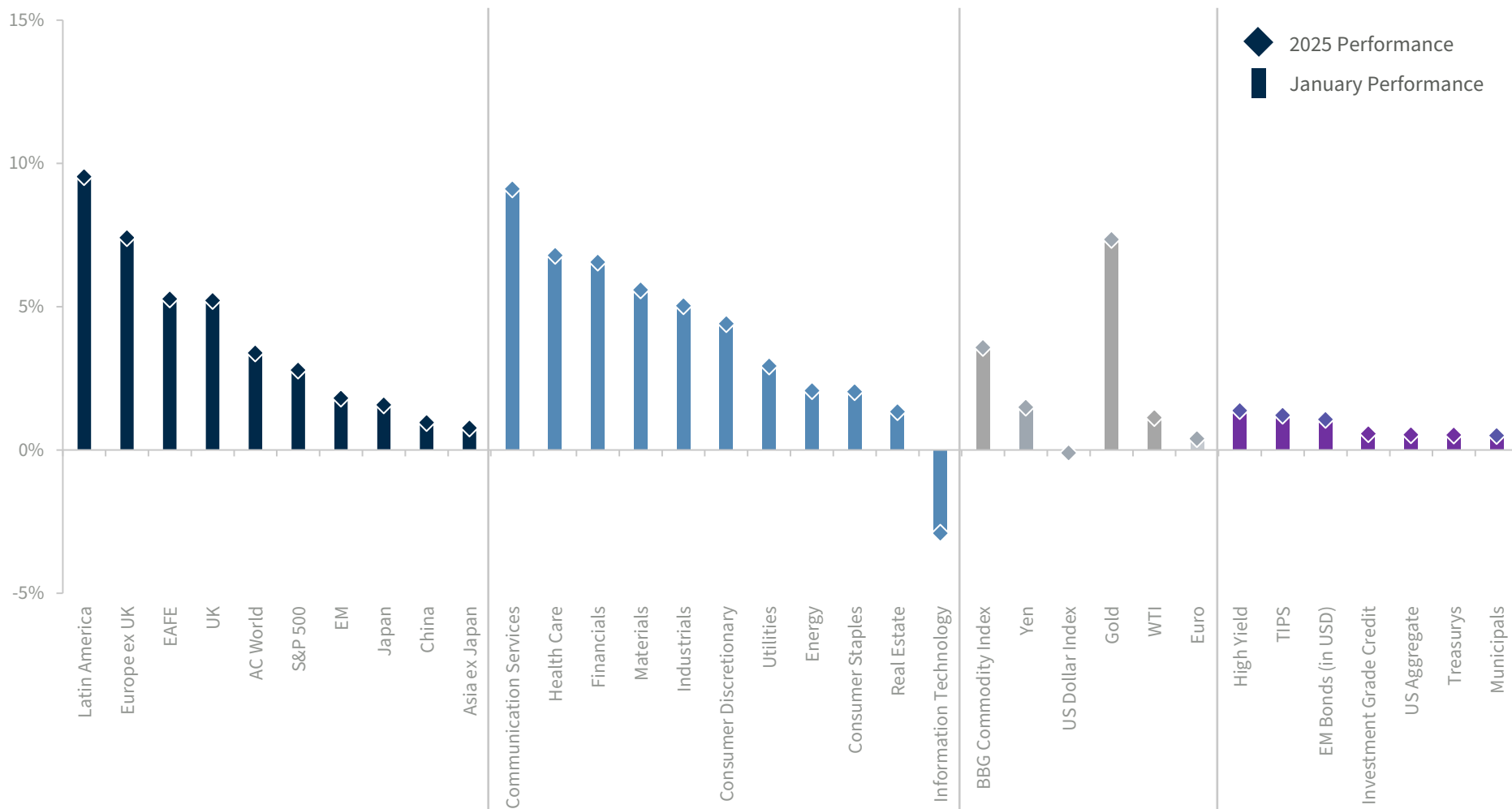
Returns by Asset Class | January and 2025

Equities: International Equities Outperformed The US—With LatAm and Europe Leading The Way.

Sectors: Ten Of The Eleven S&P 500 Sectors Were Positive, Tech Underperformed By A Wide Margin.

FX: Gold Reached New All-Time High; US Dollar Flat.

Fixed Income: All Fixed Income Sectors Delivered Positive Returns.



Data as of 1/31/2025. Source: FactSet

All international equity indices are MSCI indices and are in USD. Diamonds in chart represent the year-to-date total returns and the bars represent monthly returns.

Global Economy | Trump Tariffs Push Trade Uncertainty Front And Center

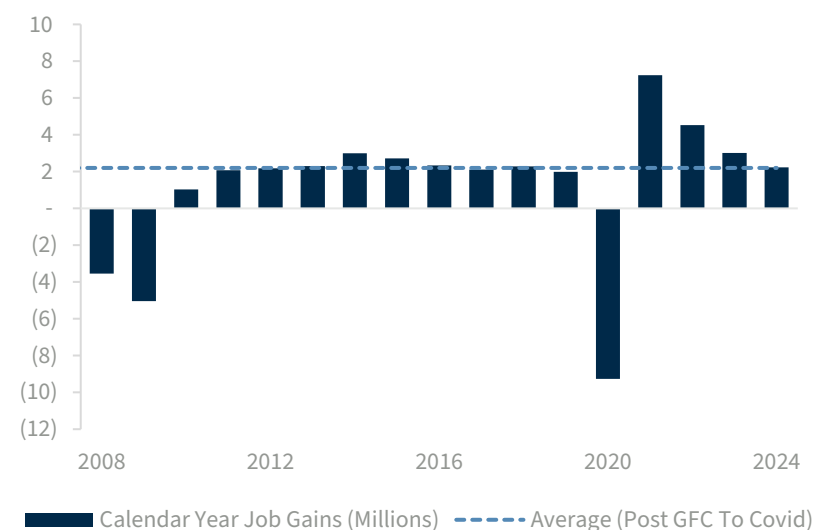
Global Economy | Recent Trends

- **The labor market finished 2024 on a strong note**, with the US economy adding 256k jobs and the unemployment rate ticking down to 4.1%. This marked the 48th consecutive month of job gains—the second longest streak in history. However, the annual pace of job growth fell to 2.2 million in 2024, matching the average calendar year job gains from 2010-2019.
- **Rising energy prices pushed headline inflation higher, but the core measure (which excludes food and energy prices) slowed.** After four consecutive months of +0.3% MoM gains, core CPI stepped down to 0.2% in December, bringing the YoY rate down to 3.2%. Further disinflationary progress should be welcome news for the Fed.
- **Concerns over the new administration's tariff policy drove the US Trade Policy Uncertainty Index to near-record levels.** This uncertainty is starting to impact business decisions, with the Fed's Beige Book reporting that companies are stockpiling inventories and adjusting supply chains in anticipation of tariffs.
- **Germany, Europe's largest economy, saw a 0.1% decline in GDP in 4Q24, marking its second consecutive year of negative growth.** While the wider euro area bloc has delivered stronger growth (consensus expectations see +0.7% in 2024), largely driven by its southern counterparts, Germany's economic malaise remains a headwind to Europe's growth outlook.

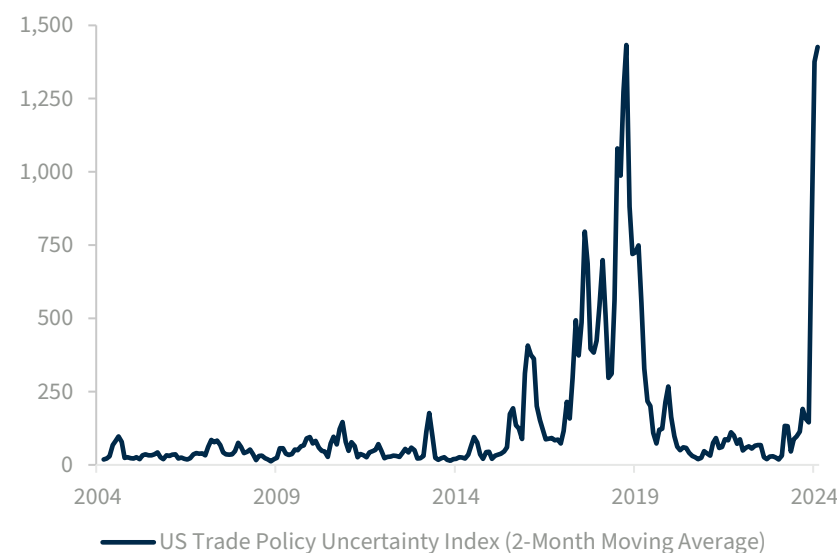
Global Economy | 12-Month Outlook

- **The US economy is on track to grow 2.4% this year.** Slowing, but still positive job gains, healthy levels of consumption, increased business investment in AI, and continued disbursements from the IRA and CHIPs Acts will support the fifth year of expansion. Trump's America First fiscal policies and less restrictive monetary policy should also support output.
- **While progress has been slow, the disinflationary trend should remain intact in 2025.** The combination of falling energy prices, a stronger US dollar, consumer pushback against rising prices, and the long-awaited decline in shelter costs should support further disinflation. While tariffs pose a potential upside risk, these concerns are likely overstated.
- **The Fed will slow its pace of rate cuts in 2025 as the economy remains on solid ground.** After 100 bps of preemptive rate cuts, the Fed is no longer in a hurry to cut rates—particularly given the uncertainties around tax, trade, and other Trump policies. However, as growth moderates and the disinflation trend continues, two additional rate cuts are likely in 2025.
- US economic growth will continue to outpace other developed economies. **Europe's economic growth will remain sluggish**, with ongoing weaknesses in Germany a headwind for the region. **China will require more fiscal support due to the ongoing property market slump**, with heightened trade policy uncertainty creating further economic challenges.

2024 Job Gains Match Post GFC To Pandemic Average



Trade Uncertainty Nears Record Highs



Equities | Long-Awaited Broadening Beyond Mega-Cap Tech Has Arrived

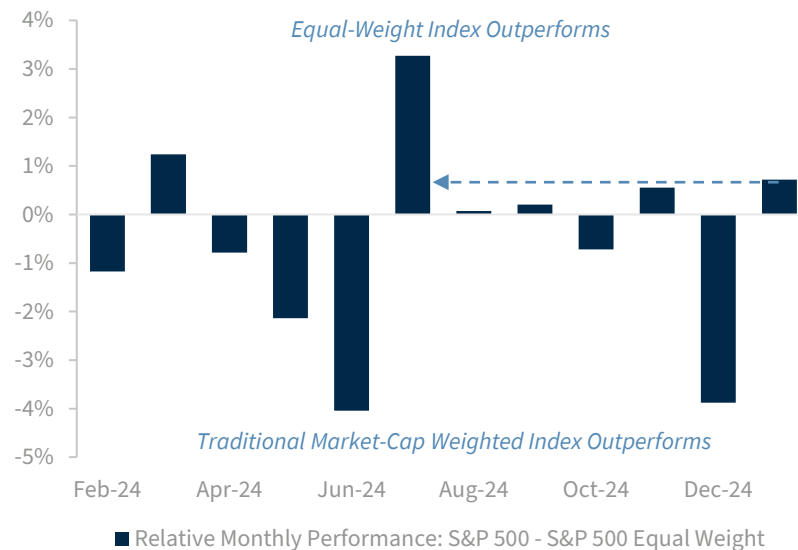
Global Equities | Recent Trends

- **Despite a turbulent start to the year, US equities ended the month higher**—with the S&P 500 up 2.8% MoM. Early concerns over rising interest rates dampened investor sentiment, but a favorable core CPI report led to a recovery. Breadth improved from its 2023 low, helping the S&P 500 Equal Weight Index outperform the S&P 500 by its widest margin since last July.
- **Tech lagged in January (-2.9% MoM) and was the only S&P 500 sector to end the month in negative territory.** The emergence of a Chinese competitor with a low-cost AI model (DeepSeek) raised concerns about US tech dominance and AI spending plans. This caused the tech-heavy NASDAQ lost \$1t in market cap in a single day.
- **Earnings season is off to a solid start.** With 52% of the S&P 500 market cap reported for 4Q24 so far, EPS growth is set to climb ~13% YoY—its best quarter in three years. While mega-cap tech is still posting strong EPS growth relative to the S&P 500, earnings for the rest of the index have started to shine, rising ~8.7% in 4Q24—the best quarter of growth since 2Q22.
- **International equities outpaced US equities in January as tech weakness broadly weighed on the S&P 500.** European equities (+7.4% MoM in USD) beat the S&P 500 by the widest margin (+4.6%) since Dec. 2022—driven by positive 4Q earnings results and ECB rate cuts. LatAm equities rebounded +9.5% MoM in USD terms after dismal performance in 2024.

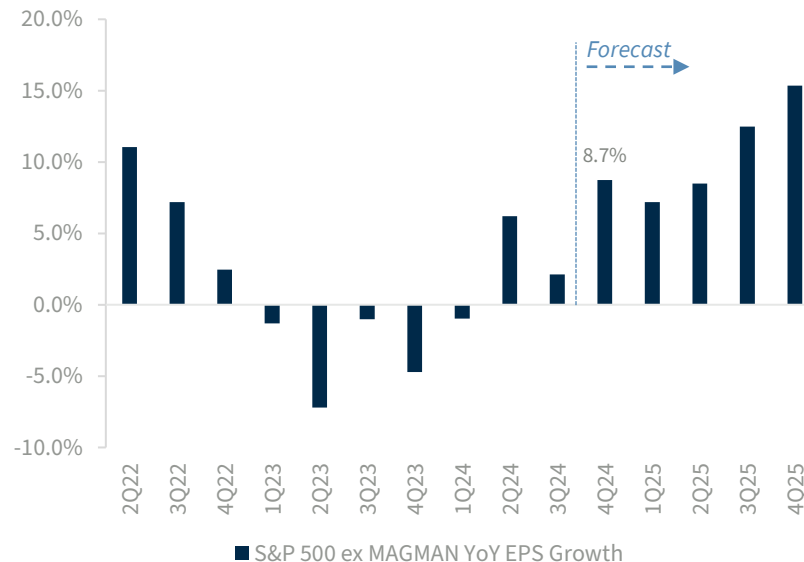
Global Equities | 12-Month Outlook

- **Overoptimism after two consecutive years of 20+% gains has tempered our expectations, but our outlook is still positive.** Robust fundamentals and a supportive macro backdrop should underpin earnings; however, elevated valuations and investor complacency could leave the market vulnerable for a pullback.
- **With limited room for additional P/E expansion, earnings will need to be the key driver in 2025.** We expect the S&P 500 to rise to 6,375 (\$270 EPS, 23.5 P/E) by the end of the year—supported by solid earnings growth. While we remain optimistic, our modest year-end target is consistent with the more muted returns typically seen in the third year of a bull market.
- **At a sector level, we prefer Tech, Industrials, and Health Care.** In an environment with stretched valuations, we concentrate on sectors with the best earnings growth and favorable long-term macro themes. AI investment, aging infrastructure, further government spending, and increased health care needs supported by aging demographics should provide tailwinds.
- **We favor US stocks over International,** particularly Europe, due to its stronger economic and earnings growth, and more exposure to our favorite sectors. Within International, Japanese equities are set to outperform thanks to a more favorable economic backdrop—including rising wages—stable global growth, and a gradual strengthening in the yen.

Equal Weight Outperforms By Widest Margin Since July



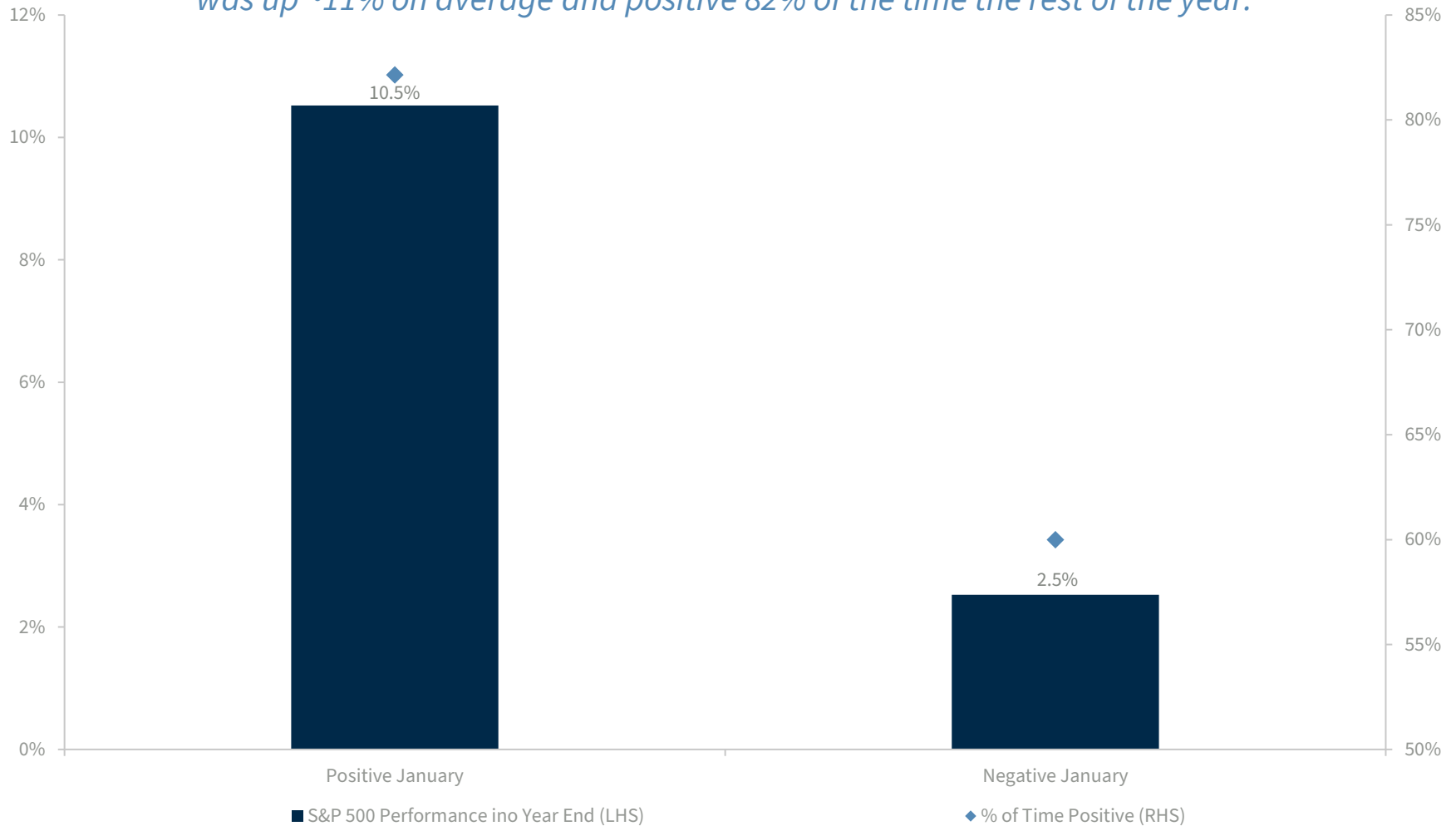
S&P 500 Earnings Ex-MAGMAN Are Rising



Source: FactSet. MAGMAN represents six of the largest mega-cap tech companies: Meta, Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Apple and Nvidia.

As Goes January, So Goes The Year

A Strong January Is A Good Sign: Following positive performance in January, the S&P 500 was up ~11% on average and positive 82% of the time the rest of the year.



Source: FactSet, Data as of 1/31/2025. Data Goes back to 1934.

Fixed Income | Treasury Yields Remain Elevated As Fed Pauses Rate Cuts

Global Bonds | Recent Trends

- **The Federal Reserve held its overnight policy rate steady at 4.25-4.50%, as widely expected.** With the economy showing signs of economic momentum heading into the new year and inflation still above the Fed's 2.0% target, Chairman Powell emphasized the Fed is not in a hurry to cut rates. With the Fed's policy stance in a good place, it can afford to wait.
- **The 10-year Treasury yield briefly touched a 14-month high of ~4.8% in early January, but reversed course following a downside surprise in core inflation.** The tech-led equity selloff toward month-end boosted demand for high-quality bonds, underscoring their value as a hedge during bouts of equity volatility—with the US Agg delivering 0.5% MoM gain.
- **Credit spreads continued to grind tighter across the high yield, investment grade, and emerging markets sectors,** despite an uptick in volatility. The supportive macro backdrop, healthy credit fundamentals, and strong investor demand continue to underpin performance, helping the credit markets outperform comparable Treasuries.
- **Municipal bonds matched Treasuries with a 0.5% return MoM, but the muni yield curve steepened more significantly.** While the Treasury curve remained stable, the benchmark AAA muni curve widened 40 bps as short-term yields fell and longer-term yields rose. The upward slope of the muni curve rewards investors for taking on additional interest rate risk.

Global Bonds | 12-Month Outlook

- **The resilient economy and slowly moderating inflation may keep the Fed on the sidelines in the coming months,** keeping interest rates elevated across the curve. While there is limited scope for capital appreciation in the near term, investors can still reap benefits from the favorable carry environment and yields at multi-year highs.
- **The 10-year Treasury yield should remain range-bound in 2025.** Dueling cross-currents may drive yields in either direction, but we expect the 10-year Treasury yield to coalesce around our year-end target of 4.5%. However, shorter-maturity yields could decline further as moderating growth and easing inflation pressures allow the Fed to resume its easing cycle.
- **With the yield curve now positively sloped, investors should consider gradually moving out of cash** on any volatility-induced steepening. While the Fed remains in wait and see mode in the near term there is no rush, but with more rate cuts likely in 2025, it is important to be mindful of reinvestment risk now that the Fed funds rate is 100 bps lower.
- **At a sector level, we favor high-quality corporates and municipal bonds.** While IG credit spreads remain historically tight, corporations are better positioned to withstand a potentially weaker growth or profit environment. Munis' steeper yield curve (vs. Treasuries) and favorable tax-equivalent yields make them an attractive opportunity for high-tax earners.

The 10-Year Reversed Course After Core CPI Surprise



Credit Spreads Grind Tighter Despite Bouts Of Volatility



Commodities & Currencies | Commodity Prices Climb To Start The Year

Commodities & Currencies | Recent Trends

- **The Bloomberg Commodity Index (+3.6% MoM) had its best month since September, supported by positive gains in every sub-index.** Colder weather, dialed-back harvest estimates and strong gains in precious metals contributed to positive performance. Cattle and coffee prices reached new all-time highs, while silver saw double-digit gains (+10.3%).
- **WTI crude oil prices rose 1.1% MoM to \$73/barrel** as the Biden administration in its final days unveiled new sanctions on Russia. The sanctions aim to make it more difficult for Russia to ship to China and India, though it remains to be seen if Trump will maintain this policy. A cold snap sweeping across the Northern Hemisphere also supported energy prices.
- **Precious metals rose 7.2% and industrial metals gained 1.0% in January.** Gold prices climbed 7.3% MoM, reaching a fresh all-time high amid increased central bank purchases and uncertainty over tariffs and inflation. Industrial metals were bolstered by recovering Chinese trade import data and anticipated stimulus plans to boost consumption.
- **The US dollar modestly declined 0.1% MoM, ending a three-month streak of gains.** Cooling US Treasury yields drove profit-taking mid-month, while stronger than expected euro zone PMI data and the BOJ's third rate hike in its tightening cycle modestly lifted the euro and yen. However, an unveiling of Trump's tariff plans boosted the USD at month-end.

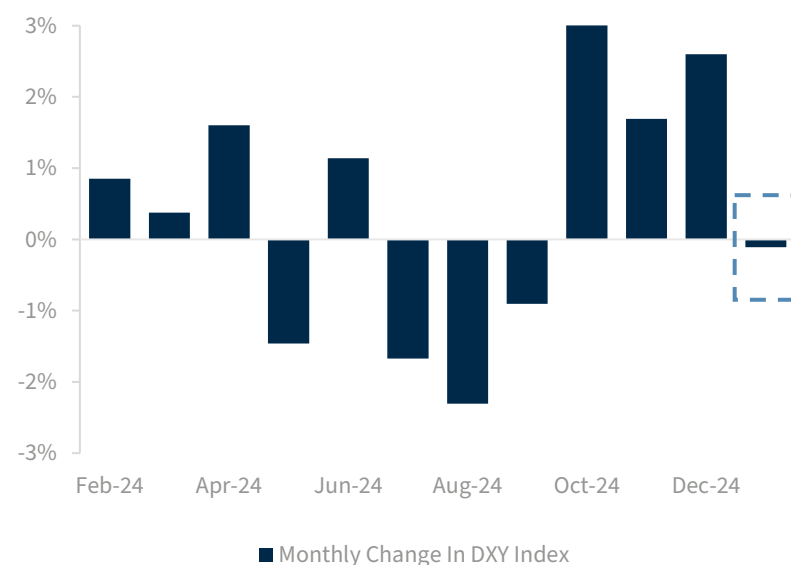
Commodities & Currencies | 12-Month Outlook

- **The Bloomberg Commodity Index should remain rangebound** as easing measures from key central banks counterbalance the softness in Chinese demand. However, geopolitical headlines, trade uncertainty, and unexpected weather patterns have the potential to inject volatility and drive disparate performances between sub-indices.
- **Supply/demand dynamics should drive WTI crude oil prices to our year-end forecast of \$65/barrel.** With global demand growth remaining subdued, 2025 shaping up to have more oilfield project startups than any year since 2015, and with OPEC expected to unwind its production cuts, oil prices should trend towards the lower end of their recent range.
- **In the near term, the US dollar should remain firm, bolstered by robust economic growth and the Fed's decision to pause rate cuts.** This pause, contrasted with ongoing rate cuts by some other major central banks, should keep relative interest rate differentials in the USD's favor. Tariffs, if implemented, should also be dollar supportive.
- **US trade policy uncertainty is likely to keep volatility elevated in foreign exchange markets.** This will keep currencies in countries most vulnerable to trade disputes (i.e., China, Mexico, Canada and Europe) under pressure, however some weakness has already been priced in. The euro is likely to trade on the low end of our expected 1.0-1.1 range.

Gold Reaches First All-Time High Since October



The Dollar Takes A Breather After 3 Months Of Gains



Summary | Key Year-End 2025 Forecasts and Views

1 ECONOMY

US GDP: +2.4%

The US economic expansion remains intact. While growth is expected to moderate, the economy is on pace for 2.4% growth in 2025, driven by steady but slowing job gains, healthy consumer spending, and strong business investment. While the path may be bumpy, inflation should gradually decline toward the Fed's 2% goal, supported by lower energy prices, a strong dollar, and falling shelter costs. Policy uncertainty remains the biggest wildcard; however, while we wait for more clarity, the economy is expected to remain on solid ground.

2 BOND MARKET

10-Year Treasury: 4.5%

As growth slows and inflation resumes its downward trend, the Fed should be able to cut rates again, delivering two additional rate cuts in 2025. As the fed funds rate falls to 3.75-4.0%, short-term Treasury yields should follow it lower, leading to a steeper yield curve. However, the 10-year Treasury yield will be more responsive to shifts in growth, inflation, and debt dynamics. While the implementation of tariffs poses an upside risk to our 4.5% 10-year yield forecast, we expect yields to remain range-bound. Attractive yields lead us to favor high-quality corporate and municipal bonds.

3 EQUITIES

S&P 500: 6,375

We maintain a positive, yet more cautious stance on the equity market. While fundamentals remain robust (double-digit earnings growth, shareholder-friendly activity) and the macro backdrop is supportive, near-term expectations should be tempered. Stretched valuations and investor complacency make the market vulnerable to a pullback on disappointing news. Our year-end target for the S&P 500 is 6,375, (\$270 EPS and a 23.5x P/E multiple). We favor the Tech, Industrials, and Health Care sectors, prefer US stocks over Europe, and maintain a bullish stance on US mid caps.

4 DOLLAR DIRECTION

EUR/USD: 1.05

The threat of tariffs boosted the dollar, with the USD up nearly 6% since Trump's election. Beyond tariffs, the dollar's strength is supported by favorable interest rate differentials and durable growth advantages. However, further appreciation may be limited unless a trade war escalates. Sluggish growth in Europe, political challenges, a deeper ECB easing cycle, and tariff concerns pose downside risks to the euro, but it should remain in a 1.00-1.10 against the dollar. The yen could appreciate from depressed levels as divergent monetary policy shifts further in its favor.

5 OIL

Oil: \$65/barrel

Our forecast for WTI crude oil is \$65/barrel, driven by supply and demand fundamentals. Global demand growth remains weak while an unwind of OPEC production cuts and increased oilfield projects should lift supply. Thus, prices may trend toward the lower end of their recent range. Geopolitical tensions may temporarily lift prices, but any spikes should quickly subside provided supply disruptions are avoided. Trade wars pose a risk to the global economy and oil demand, with prolonged tariff uncertainties exerting further downward pressure on prices.

6 VOLATILITY

Higher

Overoptimism set the stage for increased volatility this year, with January already hinting at this trend. Despite recent turmoil, stock markets are still priced to perfection. Uncertainties from the new administration or negative earnings surprises could ignite higher volatility. In addition, Treasury volatility is expected to stay elevated due to debt ceiling negotiations, anticipated increased supply, and uncertainties around inflation and monetary policy. Recent tariff announcements are likely to buoy volatility as the market and corporations assess the impacts.

Disclosures

Diversification does not ensure a profit or guarantee against a loss. Investing in small cap stocks generally involves greater risks, and therefore, may not be appropriate for every investor.

A credit rating of a security is not a recommendation to buy, sell or hold the security and may be subject to review, revision, suspension, reduction or withdrawal at any time by the assigning Rating Agency. Ratings and insurance do not remove market risk since they do not guarantee the market value of the bond.

INTERNATIONAL INVESTING | International investing involves additional risks such as currency fluctuations, differing financial accounting standards, and possible political and economic instability. These risks are greater in emerging markets including India.

SECTORS | Sector investments including tech are companies engaged in business related to a specific economic sector and are presented herein for illustrative purposes only and should not be considered as the sole basis for an investment decision. Sectors are subject to fierce competition and their products and services may be subject to rapid obsolescence. There are additional risks associated with investing in an individual sector, including limited diversification.

OIL | Investing in oil involves special risks, including the potential adverse effects of state and federal regulation and may not be suitable for all investors.

CURRENCIES | Investing in currencies is generally considered speculative because of the significant potential for investment loss. Their markets are likely to be volatile and there may be sharp price fluctuations even during periods when prices overall are rising.

GOLD | Gold is subject to the special risks associated with investing in precious metals, including but not limited to: price may be subject to wide fluctuation; the market is relatively limited; the sources are concentrated in countries that have the potential for instability; and the market is unregulated.

FIXED INCOME | Fixed-income securities (or “bonds”) are exposed to various risks including but not limited to credit (risk of default of principal and interest payments), market and liquidity, interest rate, reinvestment, legislative (changes to the tax code), and call risks. There is an inverse relationship between interest rate movements and fixed income prices. Generally, when interest rates rise, fixed income prices fall and when interest rates fall, fixed income prices generally rise. Municipal securities typically provide a lower yield than comparably rated taxable investments in consideration of their tax-advantaged status. Investments in municipal securities may not be appropriate for all investors, particularly those who do not stand to benefit from the tax status of the investment. Municipal bond interest is not subject to federal income tax but may be subject to AMT, state or local taxes.

US TREASURYS | US Treasury securities are guaranteed by the US government and, if held to maturity, generally offer a fixed rate of return and guaranteed principal value.

US DOLLAR | The US Dollar Index is an index (or measure) of the value of the United States dollar relative to a basket of foreign currencies,[1] often referred to as a basket of U.S. trade partners' currencies.[2] The Index goes up when the US dollar gains "strength" (value) when compared to other currencies.

DEFINITIONS

AGGREGATE BOND | Bloomberg US Agg Bond Total Return Index: The index is a measure of the investment grade, fixed-rate, taxable bond market of roughly 6,000 SEC-registered securities with intermediate maturities averaging approximately 10 years. The index includes bonds from the Treasury, Government-Related, Corporate, MBS, ABS, and CMBS sectors.

HIGH YIELD | Bloomberg US Corporate High Yield Total Return Index: The index measures the USD-denominated, high yield, fixed-rate corporate bond market. Securities are classified as high yield if the middle rating of Moody's, Fitch and S&P is Ba1/BB+/BB+ or below.

CREDIT | Bloomberg US Credit Total Return Index: The index measures the investment grade, US dollar-denominated, fixed-rate, taxable corporate and government related bond markets. It is composed of the US Corporate Index and a non-corporate component that includes foreign agencies, sovereigns, supnationals and local authorities.

VIX | The CBOE Volatility Index® (VIX® Index®) is a key measure of market expectations of near-term volatility conveyed by S&P 500 stock index option prices.

MUNICIPAL | Bloomberg Municipal Total Return Index: The index is a measure of the long-term tax-exempt bond market with securities of investment grade (rated at least Baa by Moody's Investors Service and BBB by Standard and Poor's). This index has four main sectors: state and local general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, insured bonds, and prerefunded bonds.

Disclosures

BG COMMODITY INDEX | Bloomberg Commodity Index is calculated on an excess return basis and reflects commodity futures price movements.

BLOOMBERG INDUSTRIAL METALS INDEX | Bloomberg Industrial Metals Index reflects the returns that are potentially available through an unleveraged investment in the futures contracts on industrial metal commodities.

BLOOMBERG ENERGY INDEX | Bloomberg Energy Index is composed of futures contracts on crude oil, heating oil, unleaded gasoline and natural gas. It reflects the return of underlying commodity futures price movements only and is quoted in USD

MSCI EM ASIA INDEX | The MSCI Emerging Markets (EM) Asia Index captures large and mid cap representation across 8 Emerging Markets countries*. With 1,160 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country.

NASDAQ | The Nasdaq Composite Index is a market capitalization-weighted index of more than 3,700 stocks listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange. As a broad index heavily weighted toward the important technology sector, the Nasdaq Composite Index has become a staple of financial markets reports.

S&P 500 | The S&P 500 Total Return Index: The index is widely regarded as the best single gauge of large-cap U.S. equities.

EMERGING MARKETS EASTERN EUROPE | MSCI EM Eastern Europe Net Return Index: The index captures large- and mid-cap representation across four Emerging Markets (EM) countries in Eastern Europe. With 50 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country.

ASIA EX JAPAN INDEX | The MSCI AC Asia ex Japan Index captures large and mid cap representation across 2 of 3 Developed Markets (DM) countries* (excluding Japan) and 9 Emerging Markets (EM) countries in Asia. With 983 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float adjusted market capitalization in each country.

AC WORLD INDEX | The MSCI AC World Index is a market capitalization weighted index designed to provide a broad measure of equity-market performance throughout the world. The MSCI ACWI is maintained by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) and is comprised of stocks from 23 developed countries and 24 emerging markets.

EMERGING MARKETS LATIN AMERICA | MSCI EM Latin America Net Return Index: The index captures large- and mid-cap representation across five Emerging Markets (EM) countries in Latin America. With 116 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country.

EMERGING MARKETS | MSCI Emerging Markets Net Return Index: This index consists of 23 countries representing 10% of world market capitalization. The index is available for a number of regions, market segments/sizes and covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each of the 23 countries.

JAPAN | MSCI Japan Net Return Index: The index is designed to measure the performance of the large and mid cap segments of the Japanese market. With 319 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float- adjusted market capitalization in Japan.

EUROPE | The MSCI Europe Index captures large and mid cap representation across 15 Developed Markets (DM) countries in Europe*. With 428 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization across the European Developed Markets equity universe.

MSCI EAFE | The MSCI EAFE (Europe, Australasia, and Far East) is a free float-adjusted market capitalization index that is designed to measure developed market equity performance, excluding the United States & Canada. The EAFE consists of the country indices of 22 developed nations.

MSCI EM | The MSCI Emerging Markets Index captures large and mid cap representation across 25 Emerging Markets (EM) countries*. With 1,420 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country.

CITIGROUP ECONOMIC SURPRISE INDEX | Citigroup Economic Surprise Index represents the sum of the difference between official economic results and forecasts. With a sum over 0, its economic performance generally beats market expectations. With a sum below 0, its economic conditions are generally worse than expected.

US TRADE POLICY UNCERTAINTY INDEX | The US Trade Policy Uncertainty (TPU) Index is a monthly index that measures how often trade policy and uncertainty terms appear in major newspapers.

Disclosures

PCE INDEX | Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) Index: The PCE price index looks at U.S. inflation by measuring changes in the cost of living for households. It tracks the prices of a basket of goods and services, each with different weightings, to reflect how much a typical household spends every month.

ISM MANUFACTURING INDEX | The ISM Manufacturing Index, also known as the purchasing managers' index (PMI), is a monthly indicator of U.S. economic activity based on a survey of purchasing managers at more than 300 manufacturing firms.

CPI | The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services.

EMPLOYMENT COST INDEX | The Employment Cost Index (ECI) measures the change in the hourly labor cost to employers over time.

MOVE INDEX | The MOVE index, or Merrill Lynch Option Volatility Estimate Index, is a gauge of interest rate volatility in the Treasury market.

THE DOW JONES INDUSTRIAL AVERAGE | The Dow Jones Industrial Average, Dow Jones, or simply the Dow, is a stock market index of 30 prominent companies listed on stock exchanges in the United States.

THE RUSSELL 2000 | The Russell 2000 Index is a small-cap U.S. stock market index that makes up the smallest 2,000 stocks in the Russell Index.

THE MSCI EUROPE EX UK | The MSCI Europe ex UK Index captures large and mid cap representation across 14 Developed Markets (DM) countries in Europe excluding UK.

THE BLOOMBERG PRECIOUS METALS SUBINDEX | The Bloomberg Precious Metals Subindex is a commodity group subindex of the Bloomberg Commodity Index (BCOM) that reflects the returns of gold and silver futures contracts.

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DATA SOURCES FactSet as of 1/31/2025.

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