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MARKET INSIGHT

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The third quarter of 2025 was another strong period for global markets, as equities continued to rise despite persistent economic and political headwinds.

Investor enthusiasm for Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to fuel optimism, while the Federal Reserve's (Fed) first interest rate cut in over a year provided an additional boost. However, not all indicators are positive: slowing job growth in the US, mounting political pressure on central banks, and stretched valuations underscore that risks persist alongside opportunities.

Global growth loses momentum

The world economy is slowing, with growth projected at around 2.5% this year – the weakest since the pandemic downturn. The US has shown resilience in consumer spending, especially among wealthier households, but job creation is weakening, and manufacturing has been contracting for several months.

Inflation has eased but remains above target, prompting the Fed to cut rates to 4% and signal further reductions later this year.

Uneven growth across major economies

In Europe, growth is flat, and new US tariffs are weighing on exporters, particularly in industrial and healthcare sectors. The UK economy has been stronger than expected, growing 1.1% in the first half of the year, but concerns about government borrowing have unsettled the gilt market. China continues to target 5% growth, but activity remains patchy. India is showing strong momentum with record manufacturing and services activity.

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Equities rally on AI optimism

Equities drove markets higher in Q3, with many global indices reaching new all-time highs. Global equities gained more than 7.5% in the third quarter, led by Japan's markets, which surged 13.0%. US stocks rose more than 8%, driven by technology mega-caps that are investing heavily in AI.

Emerging markets surged, with China benefiting from state support for its tech sector and India from robust domestic demand. Europe gained more modestly, constrained by tariffs and weakness in healthcare. UK equities continue to lag longer-term, reflecting weaker corporate profit growth compared to US peers.

AI remains the dominant theme, but much of the performance has been concentrated in a small group of large companies, leaving markets vulnerable if earnings fail to meet expectations.

Mixed performance across bonds and commodities

Government bonds had a mixed quarter. US Treasuries rallied as rate cuts took hold, but UK gilts fell sharply on fiscal worries. Credit markets remain expensive, with spreads near historic lows, offering limited protection if growth slows.

Commodities diverged; oil prices slipped on weaker demand expectations, while gold surged on safe-haven demand and concerns about central bank independence.

Balancing opportunity and risk in a shifting market landscape

Markets remain supported by optimism around AI and looser monetary policy, but vulnerabilities are clear. Slower global growth, political risk, and stretched valuations could trigger bouts of volatility.

We continue to believe that the best approach is disciplined diversification - balancing exposure to long-term growth opportunities such as AI with defensive assets and alternative sources of return. This helps protect portfolios while still capturing the upside from innovation and economic recovery.

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[Click here to watch the video](#)

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