

abrdrn Sustainable Index MPS

Quarterly commentary

Q3 2024

Investors should remember that the value of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up and that past performance is not a guarantee of future returns.

This report is only for use by a financial adviser or a client who has received advice on investing in this managed portfolio service. It is not for use by non-advised investors or any other third party. For full important information and key risks, please refer to the end of this document.

Objective

abrdrn Sustainable Index MPS aims to generate growth primarily through the use of sustainable, ethical and impact index tracker funds over the long term. It is intended for investors with a low attitude to a medium high attitude to risk. The diversified portfolio invests in a wide variety of assets, typically in equities, fixed interest, alternatives and money markets. This blend of assets should help to dampen down volatility over the long term.

Discrete annual returns - year to 30/09

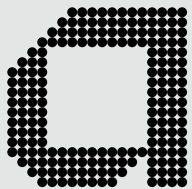
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
abrdrn Sustainable Index MPS 1	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.62%	10.93%
ARC £ Cautious	1.52%	6.33%	-8.07%	2.38%	7.83%
abrdrn Sustainable Index MPS 2	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.48%	12.97%
ARC £ Cautious	1.52%	6.33%	-8.07%	2.38%	7.83%
abrdrn Sustainable Index MPS 3	n/a	n/a	n/a	7.00%	14.30%
ARC £ Balanced Asset	0.51%	10.93%	-9.11%	3.30%	10.87%
abrdrn Sustainable Index MPS 4	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.66%	15.73%
ARC £ Steady Growth	-0.16%	15.04%	-10.12%	4.56%	12.84%
abrdrn Sustainable Index MPS 5	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.87%	17.50%
ARC £ Equity Risk	-0.25%	19.42%	-11.39%	5.53%	14.63%

Portfolio performance is based on abrdrn Sustainable Index MPS hosted on the abrdrn Wrap platform. Performance figures are net of the abrdrn Portfolio Solutions Ltd management fee and underlying funds OCF. Source: abrdrn, Financial Express. As at 30.06.2024. ARC Private Client Indices are based on actual client portfolio returns provided by various investment management companies. These portfolio returns are allocated to one of four categories based on the volatility of their returns relative to world equities, and an average return is calculated for each category. Grouping portfolios by their volatility differs from the traditional approach, which compares portfolios which have similar asset allocations. Instead, investment managers may use whatever asset allocation they consider appropriate to achieve the desired levels of return and volatility.

Key points

- Global equity markets ended the quarter higher. With continued disinflation and modest economic growth, investors are factoring in further interest rate cuts in most regions later in 2024.
- However, with inflationary pressures still present, the world's major central banks have maintained a data-dependent stance on monetary policy.
- Some weaker US economic data, particularly in the country's labour market and manufacturing sector, has raised concerns about a recession. Moreover, investors continued to be concerned about the outlook for the Chinese economy – especially the country's property sector – and the implications for global economic growth. The ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East remain other key risks.
- Government bond markets ended higher, supported by the slowdown in inflation and heightened concerns about economic growth – leading to most major central banks now cutting rates – as well as ongoing geopolitical risks. Meanwhile, US corporate bonds also performed well. Spreads on both investment grade and, particularly,





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high yield instruments tightened over the quarter, as investor risk appetite remained robust. This was despite marked volatility in late July and early August due to fears of a US recession.

Market commentary

Orbiting the Earth at an average distance of 384,400 km (238,900 miles) but with a mass of only 1.2% compared to our planet, it can be a lonely job being the Moon (or Luna if we're being scientific). So, thank goodness that September brought the announcement that a small asteroid will be captured by Earth's gravitational pull and temporarily become a second 'mini-moon'. Sadly, this new second moon will be too small and dim to see (unless you have a professional telescope) and will only be orbiting the Earth for a few months.

For millennia, the human race has watched the Moon rise steadily over the horizon each night, with it serving as a source of inspiration for cosmography, mythology, religion, art, chronology and cosmology. However, it was the stock market that looked to the heavens for inspiration this quarter, rising over the period as various central banks began their rate-cutting cycles with a big bang.

In July, there was a widely expected victory for the Labour Party in the general election. Coupled with expectations that the Bank of England (BoE) would cut rates by the beginning of August, it was the more domestically orientated mid-cap index that outperformed its blue-chip peer, with both rising as foreign investors began to reexamine the case for UK equities.

Indeed, during the first month of the quarter, global markets saw a broad rise, with many investors expecting rate cuts to come on the back of softer inflation data and more dovish central bank rhetoric. Core inflation for the US also came in at 3.3%, its lowest level in over three years, encouraging investors to gravitate towards US Treasuries during the summer months, pushing the 10-year yield to below 4% by quarter-end.

However, only the Bank of Canada saw fit to cut its borrowing costs by 25 basis points during July while

the Bank of Japan (BoJ) hiked its rates to combat rising inflation, strengthening the yen in the process.

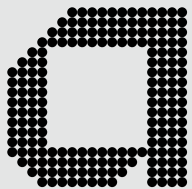
Across the Channel, however, the story was quite different. While European stocks saw decent returns for July, with gains in Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland, French stocks fell after the surprise first-round election win from the right-wing National Rally Party. However, French stocks recovered, as the party's vote faltered during the second round of elections.

Just as all seemed well heading into August, global markets cratered, much like an asteroid crashing downwards into the Moon's surface. This was partially sparked by a weak labour market reading from the US, which showed a higher-than-anticipated unemployment level, triggering the Sahm Rule – a heuristic measurement for determining when an economy has entered a recession. With the poor data weakening the US dollar further against an ever-strengthening yen (which was rising from speculation that the BoJ would raise rates again soon), the Japanese market fell by an unprecedented 12% in a single day. Such frenzied selling also affected other markets, in particular the well-performing US tech sector. Markets rebounded sharply the following day, with the Japanese market closing up 10.2%, its largest ever single-day percentage gain.

A widely expected rate cut from Threadneedle Street (the BoE's headquarters) aided domestic markets during August, as a group of three committee members, led by the Governor of the BoE Andrew Bailey, switched their vote from hold to cut, making it a 5-4 notion in favour. Striking a more cautious tone and by no means paving the way for subsequent quick cuts, Bailey commented "We need to make sure inflation stays low and be careful not to cut interest rates too quickly or by too much" in the accompanying press conference.

With the phases of the Moon driving our ocean currents, the final parts of the quarter showed the tide was turning against higher rates, with the US Federal Reserve following the lead of many of its central bank peers. Although a rate cut was fully priced in by financial markets, the





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debate as to whether it would be 25 basis points (bps) or a more significant 50 bps reduction had raged on, with investors sat on the fence right up until the evening of the announcement. Believing a 50 bps cut was pertinent, the central bank's Chair Jay Powell remarked "The logic of this both from an economic standpoint and from a risk management standpoint was clear." Much like the BoE, the Fed were quick to explain that rate cuts going forward would be spaced appropriately and was quick to emphasise that their outsized 50 bps reduction would be a once-in-a-blue-moon event.

The final week of the quarter was characterised by events in Asia, as China's central bank unveiled its largest stimulus package since the pandemic, far eclipsing most investor expectations. Aiming to pull the economy out of its deflationary orbit and back towards the government's growth target, the People's Bank of China (PBoC) predominantly targeted China's faltering property market, including a 50 bps reduction on average interest rates for existing mortgages and a cut in the minimum downpayment requirement to 15% on all types of homes, among many other measures. The moves certainly caught investors' imagination, causing the Chinese benchmark to rocket higher as we reached October.

Adding to the interstellar feel of the quarter, sterling also shot into the stratosphere during the period. How apt then is the word 'sterling', derived from the Old English *steorra* for 'star' with the added suffix *-ling* to form 'little star' for the coins in your pocket? Sterling had certainly been a shooting star during September, breaking through \$1.34 towards the end of the month, its highest level since February 2022. Stickier-than-anticipated inflation, a central bank less willing to cut interest rates than its peers and a more stable picture in Westminster all led to the pound's rise over recent months.

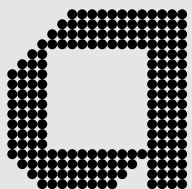
Portfolio commentary

From a geopolitical, market and macroeconomic perspective, the third quarter of 2024 had many twists and turns.

During the third quarter, we witnessed a loosening of monetary policy by most developed market central banks. However, for much of the quarter, capital markets wondered whether central banks would cut interest rates or not. At the start of July, markets were factoring in 44 basis points (bps) of rate cuts in the US by the end of 2024. By the end of July, this had moved to 72.5 bps, and by the end of August, it was circa 100 bps. At the end of the quarter, the US Federal Reserve (Fed) implemented a 'super-sized' 50 basis point cut, and markets have pencilled in a further 70 bps of cuts by year-end. So, what changed? Well, there was a slowdown in economic activity in the US, with inflation data moderating considerably and the labour market cooling. This change in momentum led markets to reprice the possibility of a soft landing (which seems to be the market consensus) and contemplate whether there could be a recession, which led to some pretty wild moves in capital markets.

Within equity markets, there was a varied set of outcomes. In local currency terms, most major exchanges ended the quarter in positive territory, but it was anything but an easy ride for investors. The sell-off in markets in early August (largely triggered by weaker US macroeconomic data) pushed most markets into the red. However, the Japanese market fell by more than 20% over the first three trading days of the month, before bouncing back to end the month only 2.9% lower. It is thought that this extreme move was driven by algorithmic trading in combination with a rapid unwinding of the Japanese yen carry trade, but it was a highly unusual event. Similarly, the liquidity rally that we witnessed in Chinese equities in the final week of the quarter was also exceptional. A continued weak macro environment led the Chinese authorities to loosen monetary policy in efforts to support the ailing property market and the country's equity markets. This led to a more than 25% rally in the onshore Chinese market in the final five trading days of the quarter. There was also some considerable currency moves over the quarter that brought mixed fortunes for sterling investors. The strength of the Japanese yen (the Bank of Japan being the one major developed world central bank that is raising rates) was a positive, as the translation effect turned a negative





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local currency return to a positive for sterling-based investors. However, the pound strengthened against most of the other G10 currencies and notably versus the US dollar (4.2%). This was, therefore, more challenging for US and European equity returns, which were flat to marginally negative from a sterling perspective (-0.1% and 0.1%, respectively). The returns from Asia excluding Japan (4.2%) and emerging markets (2.7%) were also significantly curtailed due to this sterling strength.

From a fixed interest perspective, the journey again was quite volatile but the outcomes were nearly all positive. The fall in developed world government bond yields was a big driver of positive returns across portfolios (especially at the lower risk levels). This was led by US Treasuries, which benefitted strongly from the shift in rate expectations, but the all-maturity and short-duration broader global government bond markets performed well too. UK government bonds also performed strongly, but they gave up some of their positive returns towards the end of the quarter. This was largely due to the rhetoric around the more precarious state of the UK's finances, which has been unearthed following the Labour Party's landslide win in the UK general election. Investment grade bonds benefitted from both lower rates and a mild tightening in credit spreads. Global high yield bonds were strong contributors to returns, with spread contraction again being a positive driver of returns. Emerging market debt was also a strong performer over the quarter. Hard currency bonds performed exceptionally well (largely driven by rates falling in conjunction with the US dollar weakening) while local currency bonds suffered a little from the strength in sterling.

Alternatives were a stand-out performer over the quarter. The expectation of falling interest rates has been a real positive contributor to both global real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure assets, with returns in sterling up 9.7% and 7.3%, respectively.

SMPS Index 1

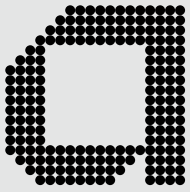
Fund selection detracted from performance during the quarter.

Fixed income returns were boosted by our fund selection within global high yield. Credit spreads tightening benefited the active managers held, as they have been running with a slightly higher beta to credit versus their benchmarks, helping the M&G Sustainable Global High Yield Bond Fund to outperform. However, this positive contribution from high yield was to a large extent neutralised by a negative contribution from investment grade credit, where the iShares ESG Sterling Corporate Bond Index Fund delivered positive returns but failed to match its benchmark.

Most of the negative contributions from our fund selection during the quarter can be attributed to equity funds. Within equities, the iShares ESG Enhanced Index Fund range avoids exposure to companies or activities that pose reputational risks or violate investors' values, while favouring those that reduce carbon emissions and minimise environmental, social and governance (ESG) risk. In partnership with Morningstar Sustainalytics, the parent index in each region is subject to ten business involvement screens (UN Global Compact, controversial weapons, tobacco, thermal coal, oil sands, nuclear weapons, civilian firearms, alcohol, gambling and adult entertainment). The remaining securities are re-weighted to minimise ESG risk rating while controlling for active risk, carbon emissions and diversification. The Funds also have a 30% carbon and other greenhouse gas intensity reduction target.

The tilt towards companies with stronger ESG credentials was mostly detrimental during the quarter, with the iShares ESG Enhanced Index Funds underperforming in most regions. The degree of underperformance was relatively modest and most extreme in emerging markets where our allocation is quite modest. While returns from the iShares US Equity ESG Index Fund were only slightly behind the returns of the US market, our larger allocation meant this was a more meaningful detractor from portfolio performance. Japanese and Asian equities stood out, as the iShares Japan ESG Equity Index Fund and iShares Pacific ex Japan ESG Index Fund both outperformed their respective benchmarks. The iShares Pacific ex Japan ESG Index Fund benefited from its exposure to Australian equities, which outperformed Asian equities over the quarter.





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Fund selection was also positive among our real assets. While the First Sentier Responsible Listed Infrastructure Fund narrowly underperformed its infrastructure benchmark, the iShares Environment & Low Carbon Tilt Real Estate Index Fund outperformed its real estate investment trust (REIT) benchmark.

There were no changes to asset allocation or fund selection during the quarter

SMPS Index 2

Fund selection detracted from performance during the quarter.

Fixed income returns were boosted by our fund selection within global high yield. Credit spreads tightening benefited the active managers held, as they have been running with a slightly higher beta to credit versus their benchmarks, helping the M&G Sustainable Global High Yield Bond Fund to outperform. However, this positive contribution from high yield was to a large extent neutralised by a negative contribution from investment grade credit, where the iShares ESG Sterling Corporate Bond Index Fund delivered positive returns but failed to match its benchmark.

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There were no changes to asset allocation or fund selection during the quarter.

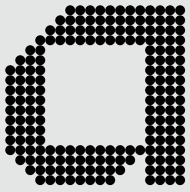
SMPS Index 3

Fund selection detracted from performance during the quarter.

Fixed income returns were boosted by our fund selection within global high yield. Credit spreads tightening benefited the active managers held, as they have been running with a slightly higher beta to credit versus their benchmarks, helping the M&G Sustainable Global High Yield Bond Fund to outperform. However, this positive contribution from high yield was to a large extent neutralised by a negative contribution from investment grade credit, where the iShares ESG Sterling Corporate Bond Index Fund delivered positive returns but failed to match its benchmark.

Most of the negative contributions from our fund selection during the quarter can be attributed to equity funds. Within equities, the iShares ESG Enhanced Index Fund range avoids exposure to companies or activities that pose reputational risks or violate investors' values, while





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favouring those that reduce carbon emissions and minimise environmental, social and governance (ESG) risk. In partnership with Morningstar Sustainalytics, the parent index in each region is subject to ten business involvement screens (UN Global Compact, controversial weapons, tobacco, thermal coal, oil sands, nuclear weapons, civilian firearms, alcohol, gambling and adult entertainment). The remaining securities are re-weighted to minimise ESG risk rating while controlling for active risk, carbon emissions and diversification. The Funds also have a 30% carbon and other greenhouse gas intensity reduction target.

The tilt towards companies with stronger ESG credentials was mostly detrimental during the quarter, with the iShares ESG Enhanced Index Funds underperforming in most regions. The degree of underperformance was relatively modest and most extreme in emerging markets where our allocation is quite modest. While returns from the iShares US Equity ESG Index Fund were only slightly behind the returns of the US market, our larger allocation meant this was a more meaningful detractor from portfolio performance. Japanese and Asian equities stood out, as the iShares Japan ESG Equity Index Fund and iShares Pacific ex Japan ESG Index Fund both outperformed their respective benchmarks. The iShares Pacific ex Japan ESG Index Fund benefited from its exposure to Australian equities, which outperformed Asian equities over the quarter.

Fund selection was also positive among our real assets. While the First Sentier Responsible Listed Infrastructure Fund narrowly underperformed its infrastructure benchmark, the iShares Environment & Low Carbon Tilt Real Estate Index Fund outperformed its real estate investment trust (REIT) benchmark.

There were no changes to asset allocation or fund selection during the quarter.

SMPS Index 4

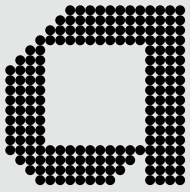
Fund selection detracted from performance during the quarter.

Fixed income returns were boosted by our fund selection within global high yield. Credit spreads tightening benefited the active managers held, as they have been running with a slightly higher beta to credit versus their benchmarks, helping the M&G Sustainable Global High Yield Bond Fund to outperform. However, this positive contribution from high yield was to a large extent neutralised by a negative contribution from investment grade credit, where the iShares ESG Sterling Corporate Bond Index Fund delivered positive returns but failed to match its benchmark.

Most of the negative contributions from our fund selection during the quarter can be attributed to equity funds. Within equities, the iShares ESG Enhanced Index Fund range avoids exposure to companies or activities that pose reputational risks or violate investors' values, while favouring those that reduce carbon emissions and minimise environmental, social and governance (ESG) risk. In partnership with Morningstar Sustainalytics, the parent index in each region is subject to ten business involvement screens (UN Global Compact, controversial weapons, tobacco, thermal coal, oil sands, nuclear weapons, civilian firearms, alcohol, gambling and adult entertainment). The remaining securities are re-weighted to minimise ESG risk rating while controlling for active risk, carbon emissions and diversification. The Funds also have a 30% carbon and other greenhouse gas intensity reduction target.

The tilt towards companies with stronger ESG credentials was mostly detrimental during the quarter, with the iShares ESG Enhanced Index Funds underperforming in most regions. The degree of underperformance was relatively modest and most extreme in emerging markets where our allocation is quite modest. While returns from the iShares US Equity ESG Index Fund were only slightly behind the returns of the US market, our larger allocation meant this was a more meaningful detractor from portfolio performance. Japanese and Asian equities stood out, as the iShares Japan ESG Equity Index Fund and iShares Pacific ex Japan ESG Index Fund both outperformed their respective benchmarks. The iShares Pacific ex Japan ESG Index Fund benefited from its exposure to Australian





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Fund selection was also positive among our real assets. While the First Sentier Responsible Listed Infrastructure Fund narrowly underperformed its infrastructure benchmark, the iShares Environment & Low Carbon Tilt Real Estate Index Fund outperformed its real estate investment trust (REIT) benchmark.

There were no changes to asset allocation or fund selection during the quarter.

SMPS Index 5

Fund selection detracted from performance during the quarter.

Our fixed income fund selection was marginally negative, as the iShares ESG Sterling Corporate Bond Index Fund delivered positive returns but failed to match its benchmark.

Most of the negative contributions from our fund selection during the quarter can be attributed to equity funds. Within equities, the iShares ESG Enhanced Index Fund range avoids exposure to companies or activities that pose reputational risks or violate investors' values, while favouring those that reduce carbon emissions and minimise environmental, social and governance (ESG) risk. In partnership with Morningstar Sustainalytics, the parent index in each region is subject to ten business involvement screens (UN Global Compact, controversial weapons, tobacco, thermal coal, oil sands, nuclear weapons, civilian firearms, alcohol, gambling and adult entertainment). The remaining securities are re-weighted to minimise ESG risk rating while controlling for active risk, carbon emissions and diversification. The Funds also have a 30% carbon and other greenhouse gas intensity reduction target.

The tilt towards companies with stronger ESG credentials was mostly detrimental during the quarter, with the iShares ESG Enhanced Index Funds underperforming in most regions. The degree of underperformance was

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Fund selection was also negative among our real assets. The First Sentier Responsible Listed Infrastructure Fund narrowly underperformed its infrastructure benchmark.

There were no changes to asset allocation or fund selection during the quarter.

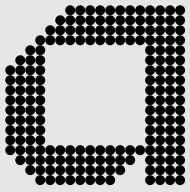
Outlook

With record highs being hit in several markets during the third quarter, amid resilient economic data in the face of falling inflation, most major asset classes have achieved a positive return during the period. However, we are cognisant that the risks surrounding a recession in the US have risen during the quarter, arising from higher-than-expected unemployment figures, but we still point to a soft landing for markets as our central thesis.

Central bank action in lowering borrowing costs should continue throughout the rest of the year as inflation falls back towards target and wage growth cools. While this combination should be supportive of consumer sentiment and spending, wage growth will need to slow further before underlying inflationary pressures settle at a consistent rate, albeit not quite as rapidly as previously expected.

It now seems that – unlike what our Moon goes through regularly – the strengthening of the global economy could now be anything but a phase...





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Important Information

This document is strictly for information purposes and should not be considered as an offer, investment recommendation or solicitation to deal in any of the investments mentioned herein. abrdr does not warrant the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of the information and materials contained in this document and expressly disclaim liability for errors or omissions in such information and materials. No part of this document may be copied or duplicated in any form or by any means or redistributed without the written consent of abrdr. This factsheet does not provide individually tailored advice. It has been prepared without regard to individual financial circumstances and objectives of persons who receive it. We recommend that investors seek the advice of a financial adviser. The appropriateness of a particular portfolio will depend on an investor's individual circumstances and objectives.

Risks

All investments involve risk. The risks of some of the funds may be comparatively high. The risk descriptions at the end of this document correspond to the main risk factors for each fund within the model. "General Risks" mostly apply to all funds within the model. A fund could potentially be affected by risks beyond those listed described in this document, nor are these risk descriptions themselves intended as exhaustive. For full information and key risks, please refer to the end of this document.

Credit risk: The fund invests in securities which are subject to the risk that the issuer may default on interest or capital payments.

Interest rate risk: The fund price can go up or down daily for a variety of reasons including changes in interest rates, inflation expectations or the perceived credit quality of individual countries or securities.

Equity risk: The fund invests in equity and equity related securities. These are sensitive to variations in the stock markets which can be volatile and change substantially in short periods of time.

Emerging Markets risk: The fund invests in emerging market equities and / or bonds. Investing in emerging markets involves a greater risk of loss than investing in more developed markets due to, among other factors, greater political, tax, economic, foreign exchange, liquidity and regulatory risks.

Derivatives risk: The use of derivatives carries the risk of reduced liquidity, substantial loss and increased volatility in adverse market conditions, such as a failure amongst market participants. The use of derivatives may result in the fund being leveraged (where market exposure and thus the potential for loss by the fund exceeds the amount it has invested) and in these market conditions the effect of leverage will be to magnify losses.

High Yield Credit risk: The fund invests in high yielding bonds which carry a greater risk of default than those with lower yields.

For more information visit abrdr.com

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