

Morgan Stanley Investment Funds

# Calvert Sustainable Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Fund



## Performance Review

In the three month period ending 31 March 2024, the Fund's Z shares returned 6.76% (net of fees)<sup>1</sup>, while the benchmark returned 8.88%.

MS INVF Calvert Sustainable Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Fund (the Fund) is designed to offer long-term shareholder return by investing in companies that are leaders or improvers in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) practices. The portfolio uses a proprietary analysis built on qualitative and quantitative methods to identify leaders and improvers and ensure higher levels of board gender and ethnic diversity than the benchmark, the MSCI World Index.

The main contributor to the portfolio's underperformance during the first quarter of 2024 was security selection within information technology. Underweights in real estate and materials partially offset these losses.

While an overweight to information technology contributed positively to returns from an allocation standpoint, this was more than counteracted by security selection in the sector. Not holding NVIDIA, a company that does not meet the portfolio's eligibility requirements, detracted from returns as the stock outperformed the sector and broader market. Additionally, an overweight in Apple, a DEI improver, underperformed.

Real estate contributed positively to returns from both a sector allocation and security selection standpoint. Allocation effects resulted from the Fund's underweight to the sector relative to the benchmark. The positive security selection effects were broad-based, with Mitsubishi Estate Company, an equal and inclusive culture leader, pacing gains.

The portfolio's underweight to the materials sector also contributed to returns, as the sector underperformed the benchmark. Security selection was aided by not holding BHP Group, which fails to meet the Calvert Principles for Responsible Investment.

Along country lines, security selection within the U.S. was a drag on overall performance. An underweight to Japan led to negative allocation effects, but security selection within the country was strong. While Japan has made tremendous progress in improving female board representation, it still lags in contrast to Europe and the U.S. An underweight to Australia was also beneficial.

## Market Review

For equity investors, the theme of the first quarter of 2024 might well be expressed as "the eagle has landed." In an interview just five days into the new year, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen articulated the sentiment that would drive markets for the rest of the quarter: "What we're seeing now I think we can describe as a soft landing, and my hope is that it will continue."

With U.S. stocks leading the charge, global equity markets continued the rally that began in November 2023, with the S&P 500 Index reaching 21 new all-time closing highs during the first quarter of 2024. The rally was distinguished by three notable developments during the quarter: a broadening of the stocks driving the market; a decoupling of investor sentiment from expectations of U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) actions; and a significant pop in U.S. consumer confidence.

While much of U.S. equity performance in 2023 was driven by a group of stocks dubbed the "Magnificent Seven" — Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, Apple, Alphabet, NVIDIA and Tesla — the first quarter 2024 rally was broad-based, with more than half of the stocks in the S&P 500 posting 52-week highs, even as Apple and Tesla delivered negative returns. In contrast with 2023, the broad-market S&P 500 outperformed the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite Index in the first quarter.

As the stocks driving the rally broadened, so did the factors driving investor sentiment. In 2023, the mood of the market was tightly coupled to expectations of what the Fed might do next. Equities rose and fell on projections of when the Fed would finish raising rates and how soon it might begin cutting them. The prevailing view was that good news for the economy — record-low unemployment, strong hiring and robust consumer spending — could push the Fed to keep rates higher for longer, and was therefore bad news for stocks.

In the first quarter of 2024, however, investors seemed to come around to the view that good news for the U.S. economy was indeed good news for U.S. stocks. Reports that indicated the slowdown in inflation might have temporarily paused, and the postponement of the Fed's first rate cut until at least mid-year — factors that would likely have derailed a market rally in 2023 — were taken in stride by investors in early 2024.

Strong corporate profits, excitement about a nascent artificial intelligence-driven technology boom, continued strong hiring and consumer spending, and confidence that the Fed was done raising rates combined to drive the first quarter rally. Illustrating the breadth of assets swept up in the rally, gold — which has often moved in the opposite direction of stocks — and bitcoin also reached all-time highs in March.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Morgan Stanley Investment Management Limited. Data as of 31 March 2024.

Consumers, too, appeared less troubled in 2024 than the previous year. While consumers spent strongly in 2023, their mood on the economy was sour. But in the first quarter of the new year, consumer attitudes seemed to catch up to the strong hiring and spending numbers the U.S. government was reporting — and the fact that wages were rising faster than inflation. The University of Michigan's widely followed Surveys of Consumers reported a 13% improvement in consumer sentiment from December 2023 to January 2024, and a further improvement in the final month of the quarter.

Outside the U.S., while European stock markets delivered generally strong performance during the quarter, the German economy — the largest in the eurozone and driver of much of the region's economic performance — reported a 0.3% contraction in 2023 and was predicted to deliver little growth this year.

Japan, by contrast, was the comeback story of the quarter. Benefiting from a weak yen that helped exports, improving corporate profits, and investors looking for an alternative to Chinese equities, the Nikkei 225 Index — Japan's most widely-watched stock index — closed at an all-time high on February 22, finally breaking the previous record set in 1989.

## Portfolio Activity

There was no significant portfolio activity during the period.

## Strategy and Outlook

The MS INVF Calvert Sustainable Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy is constructed using a proprietary methodology that leverages diversity and inclusion datasets and information on companies' DEI policies and programs to identify names that are leading or making meaningful improvements in DEI practices. The strategy is built on the Calvert Principles for Responsible Investment, which seek to identify companies that promote diversity and equity across workplaces, marketplaces and communities, with our research showing that these factors are material to company performance.

Higher levels of labor force participation and educational attainment by women and ethnic minorities have led to changes in overall employee makeup and boardroom diversity. However, we have yet to see these gains break through to the higher levels of executive and senior management roles. This is a critical issue affecting employee recruitment, retention, turnover, promotion equity and pay equity.

Companies with more diverse workforces benefit from diversity of thought, which leads to more innovation and an enhanced ability to problem solve and manage risks; benefits that groupthink can cause teams to miss out on. Diverse workforces also give companies a richer understanding of different customers and their unique needs, and impact strength of supplier relationships. Together, these elements lead to companies' long-term value creation. We studied the relationship between the ethnic diversity of corporate boards and equity performance using data from 2012-2020 and found that ethnic diversity factors improve U.S. large-cap equity stock selection.<sup>2</sup> We also found a significant relationship between the degree of corporate board ethnic diversity relative to country demographics and monthly equity performance.<sup>2</sup> We find that diversity is a material factor to companies across all countries and sectors. The stock performance penalty for bottom-quartile performers on diversity persists and can materially erode shareholder value.

The MS INVF Calvert Sustainable Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Fund strategy is designed to offer investors exposure to companies that are leading in workforce diversity at the board, senior and executive management levels, and that offer leading policies and programs to create more equitable and inclusive work environments. The strategy also includes companies that are demonstrating meaningful improvements on these factors; the thresholds for which are reviewed annually to ensure the bar for both leadership and improvement are adjusted as we see improvements in overall market practice.

**For further information, please contact your Morgan Stanley Investment Management representative.**

## Fund Facts

Launch date	08 April 2022
Base currency	U.S. dollars
Benchmark	MSCI World Index Net Index (USD)

<sup>2</sup> Source: Calvert. Data as of September 2021.

## Calendar Year Returns (%)

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results.

	YTD	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Class Z Shares	6.76	28.08	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
MSCI World Index Net Index (USD)	8.88	23.79	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

All performance data is calculated NAV to NAV, net of fees, and does not take account of commissions and costs incurred on the issue and redemption of units. The sources for all performance and Index data is Morgan Stanley Investment Management. **Please visit our website [www.morganstanley.com/im](http://www.morganstanley.com/im) to see the latest performance returns for the fund's other share classes.**

### Share Class Z Risk and Reward Profile

- The Fund relies on other parties to fulfill certain services, investments or transactions. If these parties become insolvent, it may expose the Fund to financial loss
- There may be an insufficient number of buyers or sellers which may affect the Fund's ability to buy or sell securities
- Sustainability factors can pose risks to investments, for example: impact asset values, increased operational costs.
- Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results. Returns may increase or decrease as a result of currency fluctuations. The value of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up and investors may lose all or a substantial portion of his or her investment.
- The value of the investments and the income from them will vary and there can be no assurance that the Fund will achieve its investment objectives.
- Investments may be in a variety of currencies and therefore changes in rates of exchange between currencies may cause the value of investments to decrease or increase. Furthermore, the value of investments may be adversely affected by fluctuations in exchange rates between the investor's reference currency and the base currency of the investments.

Please refer to the Prospectus for full risk disclosures. All data as of 31 March 2024 and subject to change daily.

Applications for shares in the Fund should not be made without first consulting the current Prospectus and the Key Information Document ("KID") or Key Investor Information Document ("KIID"), which are available in English and in the official language of your local jurisdiction at [morganstanleyinvestmentfunds.com](http://morganstanleyinvestmentfunds.com) or free of charge from the Registered Office of Morgan Stanley Investment Funds, European Bank and Business Centre, 6B route de Trèves, L-2633 Senningerberg, R.C.S. Luxembourg B 29 192.

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### INDEX INFORMATION

The **MSCI World Net Index** is a free float adjusted market capitalization weighted index that is designed to measure the global equity market performance of developed markets. The term "free float" represents the portion of shares outstanding that are deemed to be available for purchase in the public equity markets by investors. The index is unmanaged and does not include any expenses, fees or sales charges. It is not possible to directly invest in an index.

The **Standard & Poor's 500® Index (S&P 500®)** measures the performance of the large cap segment of the U.S. equities market, covering approximately 80% of the U.S. equities market. The Index includes 500 leading companies in leading industries of the U.S. economy.

The **MSCI World Index** is a free float adjusted market

capitalization weighted index that is designed to measure the global equity market performance of developed markets. The term "free float" represents the portion of shares outstanding that are deemed to be available for purchase in the public equity markets by investors. The performance of the Index is listed in U.S. dollars and assumes reinvestment of net dividends.

The **Nasdaq Composite Index** is a stock market index of the common stocks and similar securities listed on the NASDAQ stock market. It is used as an indicator of the performance of stocks of technology companies and growth companies. Since both U.S. and non-U.S. companies are listed on the NASDAQ stock market, the index is not exclusively a U.S. index.

The **Nikkei 225 Index** is a price-weighted index of Japan's top 225 blue-chip companies on the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

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