

## Morgan Stanley Investment Funds US Growth Fund

ACTIVE FUNDAMENTAL EQUITY | COUNTERPOINT GLOBAL | QUARTERLY COMMENTARY | 31 DECEMBER 2018

### Performance Review

In the three month period ending 31 December 2018, the Fund's I shares returned -17.28% (net of fees)<sup>1</sup>, while the benchmark returned -15.97%.

There is a discrepancy between the attribution and performance data due to pricing and NAV calculations for the INVF portfolio. The final performance for the Fund is reflected above. The long-term investment horizon and conviction-weighted investment approach embraced by the team since 1998 can result in periods of performance deviation from the benchmark and peers. Over time, this has led to the strong record we have developed over our product set. The Fund underperformed the benchmark this quarter due to mixed stock selection and sector allocations.

Large-cap growth stocks declined during the quarter, with energy and information technology the poorest performing sectors in the Russell 1000 Growth Index. All sectors posted a decline over the period; however, real estate was the relative outperformer in the index.

Communication services was the greatest detractor in the portfolio this quarter, largely due to unfavorable stock selection. Video game publisher Activision Blizzard was the greatest detractor in the sector and across the portfolio. The company reported in-line results, however, concerns about the underperformance of certain game franchises and a somewhat weaker than expected outlook weighed on investor sentiment. Music streaming services provider Spotify was the second greatest detractor in the sector. Its shares declined despite solid reported results, as management indicated the company expects to ramp up investments in research, development and content, which may impede near-term profit growth.

Stock selection in health care and materials, along with a lack of exposure to consumer staples, financials and real estate, also detracted. Veeva Systems, which provides cloud-based software solutions to life sciences companies, and Illumina, a leader in genetic testing and analysis, were the greatest detractors among these areas and the fourth and fifth greatest, respectively, across the portfolio. Both companies continued to execute well, so we attribute the performance to some mean reversion, as both stocks had performed strongly through much of the year and declined during the broader sell-off in higher multiple stocks over the fourth quarter. Within the sector, the weakness in these holdings was partly offset by relative strength in Athenahealth, a company which provides cloud-based software solutions to physicians and other health care providers. Athenahealth was the fifth greatest contributor in the portfolio. In November, following a six-month long strategic alternatives review process that the company had announced after an activist investor offered to buy the company in May, Athenahealth announced it had entered into a definitive agreement to be acquired by private equity firms Evergreen Coast Capital and Veritas Capital. The acquisition price provided a perceived floor on the stock during a period of generally greater market volatility in the fourth quarter.

Conversely, information technology was the top contributor in the portfolio, due to favorable stock selection and a sector underweight position. Workday, which provides cloud-based human resources and financial management software solutions to enterprises, was the top contributor in the sector and the second greatest across the portfolio. Its shares advanced on strong reported results, characterized by accelerating billings growth and a raised financial outlook. Workday has also seen early success integrating its recent acquisition, Adaptive Insights; results have been ahead of plan and the company has been able to leverage its distribution capabilities to cross sell Adaptive's solutions to its existing customer base. Nvidia, a leading maker of graphics processor units, also contributed. Nvidia shares declined due to an earnings miss, characterized by somewhat weaker than expected revenue and profit growth; the position contributed due to a slight underweight position.

Stock selection in consumer discretionary also contributed. Performance was led by global coffee retailer Starbucks, which was the top contributor across the portfolio. After weaker performance earlier in the year, Starbucks shares recovered this quarter due to stabilizing same-store sales growth in China and improving sales trends in the United States.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Morgan Stanley Investment Management Limited. Data as of 31 December 2018.

Lastly, stock selection and an underweight in industrials, along with a lack of exposure to energy, also contributed to a lesser extent.

## Strategy and Outlook

The investment team is looking for high quality companies that generally have these attributes: a sustainable competitive advantage, business visibility, rising return on invested capital, free cash flow and a favourable risk/reward. We find these companies through intense fundamental research. Our emphasis is on secular growth, and as a result short-term market events are not as meaningful in the stock selection process. It is our goal to hold a portfolio of high quality companies we believe will perform well longer term regardless of the market environment.

As a team, we believe having a market outlook can be an anchor. Our focus is on assessing a company over a three- to five-year horizon.

### FUND FACTS

#### Launch date

01 August 1992

#### Base currency

U.S. dollars

#### Index

Russell 1000 Growth Net 30% Withholding Tax TR Index

## 12 Month Performance Periods to Latest Month End (%)

	DECEMBER '17 - DECEMBER '18	DECEMBER '16 - DECEMBER '17	DECEMBER '15 - DECEMBER '16	DECEMBER '14 - DECEMBER '15	DECEMBER '13 - DECEMBER '14
MS INVF US Growth Fund - I Shares	5.58	44.14	-2.40	11.38	7.01
Russell 1000 Growth Net 30% Withholding Tax TR Index	-1.89	29.67	6.56	5.19	12.54

**Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results.** Returns may increase or decrease as a result of currency fluctuations. 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 I Risk and Reward Profile

Lower Risk

Higher Risk



Potentially Lower Rewards

Potentially Higher Rewards

The risk and reward category shown is based on historic data.

- Historic figures are only a guide and may not be a reliable indicator of what may happen in the future.
- As such this category may change in the future.
- The higher the category, the greater the potential reward, but also the greater the risk of losing the investment. Category 1 does not indicate a risk free investment.
- The fund is in this category because it invests in company shares and the fund's simulated and/or realised return has experienced high rises and falls historically.
- The fund may be impacted by movements in the exchange rates between the fund's currency and the currencies of the fund's investments.

This rating does not take into account other risk factors which should be considered before investing, these include:

- 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 funds ability to buy or sell securities.
- Investment in China A-Shares via Shanghai-Hong Kong and Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect programs may also entail additional risks, such as risks linked to the ownership of shares.
- There are increased risks of investing in emerging markets as political, legal and operational systems may be less developed than in developed markets.
- 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 December 2018 and subject to change daily.

## INDEX INFORMATION

The **Russell 1000 Growth Net 30% Withholding Tax TR Index** measures the performance of the large-cap growth segment of the U.S. equity universe, net 30% withholding tax TR. It includes those Russell 1000® Index companies with higher price-to-book ratios and higher forecasted growth values. The Russell 1000® Index is an index of approximately 1,000 of the largest U.S. companies based on a combination of market capitalization and current index membership.

The **Russell 1000® Growth Index** measures the performance of the large-cap growth segment of the U.S. equity universe. It includes those Russell 1000® Index companies with higher price-to-book ratios and higher forecasted growth values. The Russell 1000® Index is an index of approximately 1,000 of the largest U.S. companies based on a combination of market capitalization and current index membership.

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