

Long Story Short

Long Story Short is our CIO Equity newsletter highlighting key equity-market developments and trends.

Broadening of the rally

The story

After closing our opportunistic idea on semiconductors in early May, we have been recommending a more diversified exposure within equities and calling for a broadening of the rally. Our latest AI bubble meter for June 2026 supports the stance as the latest reading calls for risk reward moving down from “better” to “good”, indicating a 0-5% return for the AI theme on a 3-6 month basis.

Long or positive implications

We lean into the broadening rally by initiating an opportunistic idea on MSCI World Equal Weight – the most direct expression of reducing mega-cap concentration risk. Together with other pro-risk ideas such as Hang Seng Technology and US Aerospace & Defence, these ideas provide a diversified exposure to capture equity upside.

Short or negative implications

We took profit on the Global semiconductors and Global ex-US buybacks ideas that have run their course, while also closing the US utilities idea as inflation headwinds may weigh on rate-sensitive utilities in the near-term.

Index forecasts

Index	12m forecast*	Our views
S&P500	7,750	US ▲
Nasdaq 100	30,000	
Euro Stoxx 50	6,120	Europe ex-UK ◆
FTSE 100	10,800	UK ▼
Hang Seng	28,300	China ▲
Nifty 50	26,100	India ▲
Nikkei 225	63,300	Japan ◆

Source: Standard Chartered. China and India views are relative to Asia ex-Japan market

Note:

* Target prices created as of 5 May 2026

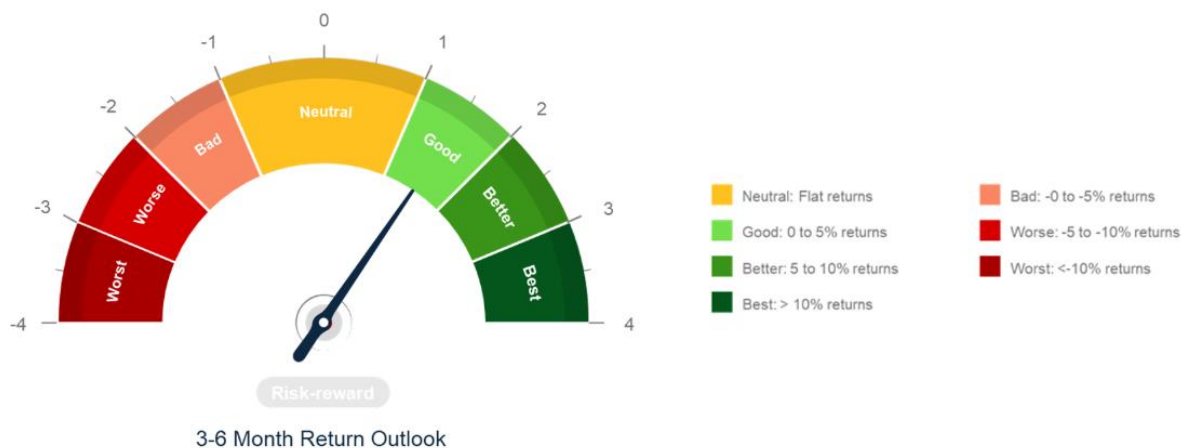
Legends: ▲ Most preferred | ▼ Least preferred | ◆ Core holding.
Green / Red represents an upgrade / downgrade from the prior GMO.

AI bubble meter update for June 2026

For June 2026, our **AI Bubble Meter moved down** from a “better” to a “good” risk-reward profile, with the overall confidence index easing to 1.5 from 2.5 previously and suggesting a more moderate 3–6 month return outlook of 0–5% for the AI theme, in our view.

The table below illustrates how our ‘AI bubble meter’ has evolved each month over the past three-plus years. While the total catalyst score held steady – with the capex trend factor remaining elevated at 4.5, reflecting continued strength in hyperscaler AI spending – rising valuation concerns and macro risks drove the downgrade. Specifically, valuation risks increased from 2.5 to 3.0, and other risks also rose from 3.0 to 3.5, lifting the total risk score from 14.5 to 15.5. The Nasdaq Composite index now trades at a ~25.5x 12-month forward P/E, above its five-year average, implying a reduced margin of safety.

Fig. 1 AI bubble meter for June 2026



Source: Company reports, Standard Chartered

Macro risks also remain a key overhang, with sticky inflation reinforcing downside pressures. April’s headline consumer price index (CPI) rose 3.8% y/y, while the producer price index (PPI) was up 6% on an annual basis — its highest level since late 2022. This complicates the Fed’s path and higher rates tend to put pressure on long-duration tech valuations.

Table 1: How have our AI catalyst and risk scores evolved over time?

Catalysts and risks scores since December 2022

	AI bubble meter	Capex trends	Adoption rates	Earnings revision	Quality of growth	Big tech’s commitment	Total catalyst score	Disruption risks	Valuation risks	Funding risks	Regulation risks	Other risks	Total risk score
Dec-22	1.0	2.5	0.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10.5	2.0	1.0	1.5	2.5	2.5	9.5
Jan-23	1.0	2.5	1.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	12.0	2.5	1.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	11.0
Feb-23	1.5	3.0	1.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	12.5	2.5	1.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	11.0
Mar-23	2.0	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	2.5	13.5	2.5	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	11.5
Apr-23	2.5	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	2.5	13.5	2.5	1.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	11.0
May-23	2.5	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	11.5
Jun-23	2.5	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	11.5
Jul-23	2.0	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.0
Aug-23	1.5	3.0	1.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	13.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.0
Sep-23	1.0	3.0	1.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	13.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	12.5
Oct-23	1.0	3.0	1.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	13.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	12.5
Nov-23	2.0	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	1.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	12.0
Dec-23	1.5	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	12.5
Jan-24	2.0	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.0
Feb-24	2.0	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.0
Mar-24	1.5	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Apr-24	1.5	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
May-24	1.5	3.0	1.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Jun-24	1.0	3.0	1.5	3.5	2.5	3.0	13.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Jul-24	1.0	3.0	2.0	3.5	2.5	3.0	14.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	13.0
Aug-24	1.5	3.5	2.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Sep-24	1.5	3.5	2.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Oct-24	2.0	3.5	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	14.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Nov-24	2.0	3.5	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	14.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Dec-24	1.5	3.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Jan-25	1.5	3.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	14.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Feb-25	1.0	3.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	13.5	3.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	12.5
Mar-25	1.0	3.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	13.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	3.5	2.5	12.5
Apr-25	2.5	4.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.0	15.0	2.5	1.0	2.5	4.0	2.5	12.5
May-25	3.5	4.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	16.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	12.5
Jun-25	3.5	4.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	16.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	12.5
Jul-25	3.0	4.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	16.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	13.0
Aug-25	3.0	4.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	16.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	13.0
Sep-25	2.5	4.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	16.0	2.5	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	13.5
Oct-25	1.5	4.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.5	15.5	2.5	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	14.0
Nov-25	1.0	4.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.5	15.5	2.5	3.5	3.5	2.5	2.5	14.5
Dec-25	1.0	4.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.5	15.5	2.5	3.5	3.5	2.5	2.5	14.5
Jan-26	2.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	3.5	16.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.5	14.0

	AI bubble meter	Capex trends	Adoption rates	Earnings revision	Quality of growth	Big tech's commitment	Total catalyst score	Disruption risks	Valuation risks	Funding risks	Regulation risks	Other risks	Total risk score
Feb-26	2.5	4.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.5	16.5	2.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.5	14.0
Mar-26	2.5	4.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.5	17.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.5	14.5
Apr-26	2.5	4.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.5	17.0	3.0	2.5	3.5	2.5	3.0	14.5
May-26	2.5	4.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.5	17.0	3.0	2.5	3.5	2.5	3.0	14.5
Jun-26	1.5	4.5	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.5	17.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	3.5	15.5

Source: Company reports, Standard Chartered

Opportunistic idea – June updates

Opportunistic ideas	Tracking index	Initiation date	ITD performance*
MSCI World equal weight	MSCI World Equal Weighted Net Total Return USD Index (M1WOEW)	21-May-26	N/A
Global gold miners	MarketVector Global Gold Miners Index (MVGDXTR Index)	23-Apr-26	-7.2%
US aerospace & defence	Dow Jones US Select Aerospace & Defence Index (DJSASDT Index)	12-Feb-26	-3.9%
Hang Seng technology	Hang Seng Technology index (HSTECH Index)	31-Oct-24	7.5%

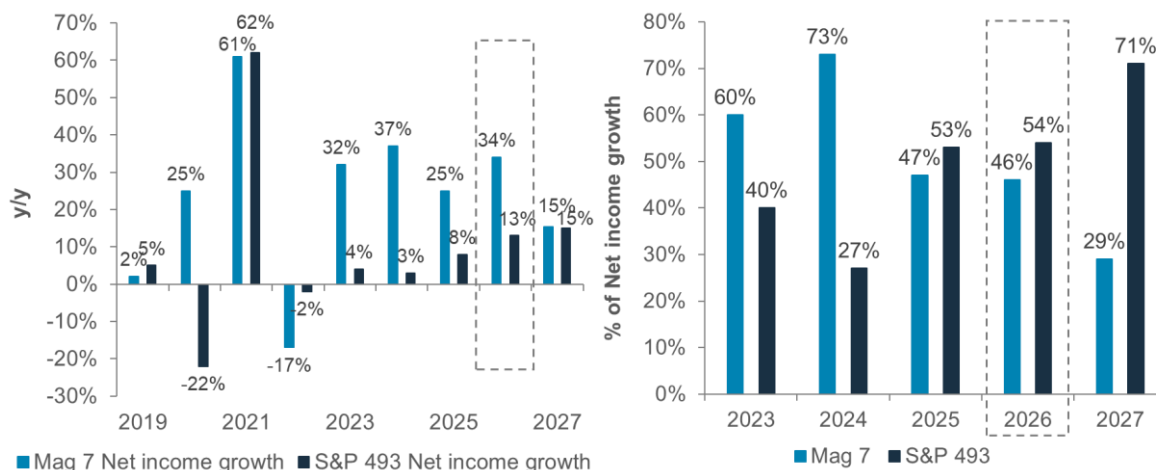
*Initiation to date performance. Data as of 21-May-2026

The first half of May saw global equities extend their rebound, with AI-related sectors leading the gains on continued hyperscaler capex growth and resilient Q1 2026 earnings. While we expect equities to end the year higher, we see near-term volatility due to elevated rates and as the focus shifts to macro developments, now that the reporting season is over. Heading into June, we see growing evidence that the next leg of the rally will broaden well beyond mega-cap Tech.

It is worth highlighting that the earnings growth gap between the small group of Magnificent 7 companies, and the rest of the S&P 500, is expected to narrow meaningfully in 2027. As seen in the chart below, the growth differential between the Magnificent 7 and the remaining 493 companies is expected to flatten in 2027, from a gap of +21% in 2026, +17% in 2025 and +34% in 2024. Profit contribution tells the same story: the Mag 7 are set to drive just 29% of S&P 500 profit growth in 2027, versus 73% in 2024, with the other 493 companies taking the lead.

Fig. 2 Flattening growth differentials between Mag 7 and remaining S&P 493 implies broadening of growth

Mag 7 vs. S&P 493: Projected net income growth and respective contribution to the total S&P 500 profit growth



Source: FactSet, Bloomberg, Standard Chartered. Mag 7 refers to "Magnificent 7" stocks, namely Nvidia, Microsoft, Alphabet, Meta, Apple, Amazon, Tesla.

Against this backdrop, we are taking profit on three ideas — global semiconductors, global ex-US buybacks, and US utilities — and initiating MSCI World Equal Weight, the most direct expression of the broadening thesis.

▼ **Global Semiconductors — Closed 4 May 2026 (31.4% gain from 19-Mar-26 to 4-May-26)**

We are locking in profits as the rally broadens – semiconductors had been driving up to 50% of global equities’ year-to-date performance in early May. Within Tech, we now prefer internet names, which lagged the semis run and should benefit as participation widens. The structural AI thesis is intact, but with valuations re-rated and our **AI bubble meter** easing to 1.5 (from 2.5), rotating into less-stretched sub-sectors offer a better risk reward.

▼ **Global ex-US Buybacks — Closed 21 May 2026 (5.2% gain from 19-Mar-26 to 21-May-26)**

The international buybacks idea played its role as a stabilising, defensive-with-upside allocation during a period of elevated geopolitical uncertainty and stagflation concerns. It benefitted from sizeable exposure to the energy sector (over 20% of the buybacks index) and we prefer to take profit now, with our base scenario that the Hormuz strait reopens in weeks.

▼ **US Utilities — Closed 21 May 2026 (1.3% gain from 30-Oct-25 to 21-May-26)**

A defensive anchor through geopolitical shocks, US utilities also enjoy data-centre power demand as an added growth kicker. However, there is near-term headwind for the rate-sensitive utilities from potentially higher-for-longer interest rates, due to inflationary pressures. Closure of the idea is in line with our downgrade of the sector globally from Overweight to a Core holding.

MSCI World equal weight

We initiate a new opportunistic idea — MSCI World Equal Weight — designed to ride our growing conviction that the global equity rally is broadening beyond mega-cap AI leaders. By equal-weighting constituents, the strategy structurally tilts toward cyclicals, with heavier exposure to Industrials, Financials, and Materials versus the standard MSCI World — these sectors benefit from resilient macro data and a soft-landing backdrop. Valuations are reasonable – the MSCI World Equal Weighted Index trades at a 12-month forward P/E of ~16.2x, only ~0.5 standard deviation above its 5-year historical average — a meaningful discount to the cap-weighted parent at 19x. Over the last 12 months, MSCI World Equal Weighted has lagged its cap-weighted parent by almost 7%, with an opportunity to catch up now, in our view.

Fig. 3 Equal-weighted MSCI World has lagged its market-cap weighted parent by nearly 7% over the last 12 months

MSCI World Equal Weighted Net Total Return USD and MSCI World indices (rebased to 100, starting from close of 1-May-25)



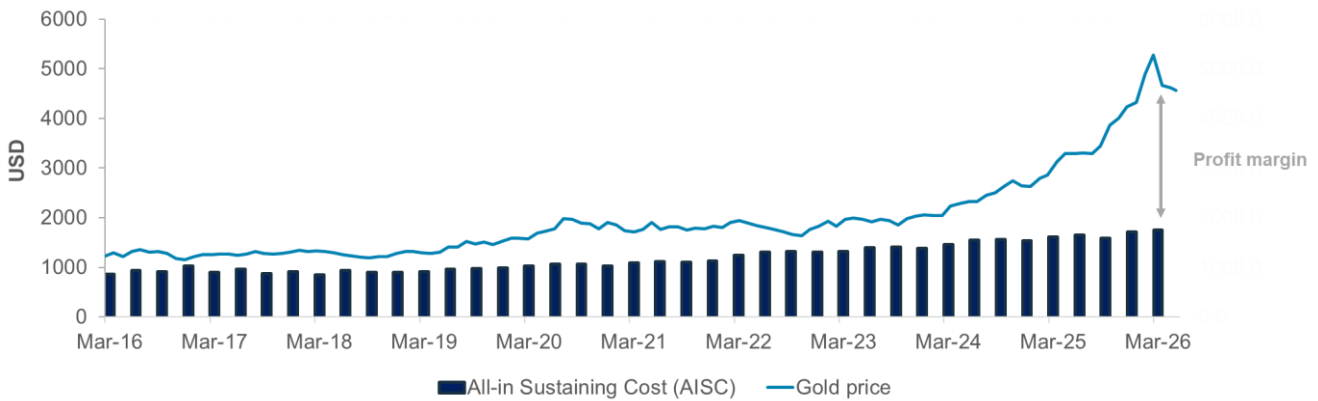
Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

Global gold miners

We remain constructive on gold and expect investors to look through the near-term, liquidity-driven weakness. Structural central bank demand remains, and we also expect a Fed rate cut in H2 2026 to be supportive. Higher oil prices would raise operating cost for miners, but we expect gold prices to rise faster. A widening spread between all-in sustaining costs (AISC) and gold prices continue to support miners’ margins.

Fig. 4 Gold prices outrunning rising costs. We are expecting gold miners to enjoy expanding profit margins

Gold prices and all-in sustaining cost (AISC)



Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

US aerospace & defence

Major US aerospace names rallied into the Trump-Xi summit, but gave back gains after China committed to fewer US aircraft purchases than expected. Looking past this, geopolitical tensions are fuelling a renewed upswing in US defence spending — President Trump's proposed record USD 1.5trn defence budget for FY2027 underpins a robust demand pipeline. Beyond military contracts, commercial aerospace continues to benefit from post-pandemic travel recovery and fleet modernisation. While the Middle East conflict is weighing on travel activity, we view the disruption as transitory. This dual exposure positions the sector as a compelling growth engine — offering both upside potential and a hedge against geopolitical risk.

Fig. 5 We expect the sector to move higher driven by solid earnings growth, with structural demand in commercial aerospace and resilient defence spending

US aerospace & defence index and its 12-month forward earnings growth



Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

Hang Seng technology

Hang Seng Tech offers exposure to innovative companies positioned for both near-term recovery and long-term expansion. With energy seen as a bottleneck for power hungry AI data centres, China is in a unique position here. Decades of heavy investment into renewable energy leave Chinese firms relatively insulated from energy supply shocks, enhancing their resilience amid escalating geopolitical risks. A strong pipeline of Hong Kong tech listings should also bolster investor sentiment, while China's 15th Five-Year Plan reinforces technological self-reliance — providing structural support for major Hong Kong-listed tech leaders. We continue to see an attractive valuation re-rating opportunity for Hang Seng Tech.

Fig. 6 AI and technology developments, along with further policy stimulus can drive further valuation re-rating

12-month forward P/E ratio for the Hang Seng Tech index



Source: Bloomberg, Standard Chartered

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