

RBC Select Aggressive Growth Portfolio



Commentary as at June 30, 2025

Trade negotiations dominated the direction of financial markets during the first six months of 2025 as early optimism that the Trump administration would focus on deregulating the economy gave way to concern that he would instead implement across-the-board tariffs on U.S. trade partners. The outlook subsequently improved as the U.S. administration reached trade agreements that ensured a worst-case scenario would not unfold. Geopolitical turmoil in the Middle East sent oil prices surging toward the end of the period on fears of a wider conflict and instability in the region, but they came back down after tensions eased. The U.S. Federal Reserve left its benchmark interest rate unchanged in a range between 4.25% and 4.50% as concern that the tariff war would spark inflation outweighed worries that the economy was slowing.

U.S. stocks retreated from all-time highs established early in the year after Trump announced his tariffs but then rebounded to finish the period near their highs. The Information Technology sector continued to support U.S. equities, while the Consumer Discretionary sector lagged. European stocks outperformed U.S. stocks due to a shift by investors to euro-denominated assets, as well as Germany's decision to boost government spending after decades of conservative fiscal policy. In emerging markets, an equity recovery in China, which accounts for about a third of the emerging-market benchmark, bolstered emerging-market equity performance. One of the most notable emerging-market developments in 2025 was the release of an artificial-intelligence ("AI") model introduced by China's DeepSeek. The release of this AI service, which might be competitive with U.S. AI leaders such as ChatGPT, boosted investor impressions of Chinese technology companies and emerging-market technology stocks in general.

Tariffs will exert a substantial drag on economic growth over the second half of 2025, but probably not to the extent of causing a global recession. Stocks offer slightly better return potential than bonds, particularly outside of U.S. large caps, in the view of the portfolio manager. The portfolio manager has tilted away from expensive U.S. large-cap stocks in favour of non-U.S. stocks, particularly in Europe, where valuations are more appealing.

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