

FIXED INCOME MUSINGS

INFLATION CHECK-IN

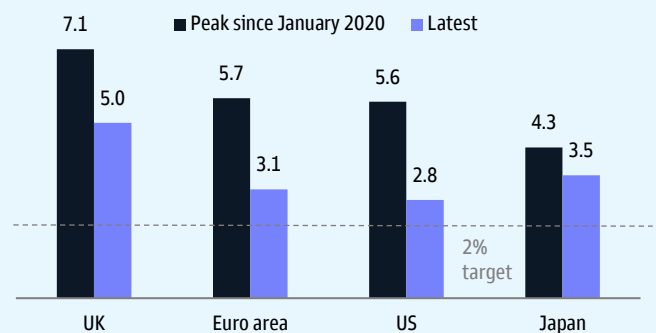
US – January setback. Core PCE inflation, the Fed’s preferred measure of price pressures, rose by 0.4% in January, the largest monthly increase in a year, confirming the firm signal from both [core CPI](#) and PPI inflation. While start-of-the-year price increases were anticipated, the strength in owners’ equivalent rent – the largest component of core CPI – bears monitoring. That said, ongoing disinflation in goods and services as the labor market rebalances should allow the Fed to commence rate cuts this summer.

Euro area – falling slowly. Annual headline and core inflation both eased less than expected in January, further delaying the expected timeline for rate cuts. ECB President Lagarde [noted](#) wage growth is “expected to become an increasingly important driver of inflation dynamics.” Encouragingly, the ECB indicator of negotiated wages fell from a record high of 4.7% in the third quarter to 4.5% in the fourth quarter which should ease fears of elevated wages translating into prices. We continue to expect the first rate cut to be in June given slow but steady disinflation and a gradually easing labor market.

Japan – rate hikes on the horizon? Despite falling for a third consecutive month, annual national core inflation rose above consensus expectations in January. In response, the 2-year Japanese Government Bond yield reached the highest level since 2011 as stronger-than-expected inflation suggests an exit from negative interest rates in the coming months remains plausible. In addition, we think spring wage negotiations in March will confirm rising wage pressures, further supporting a rate hike in April.

Disinflation still on track despite recent bump

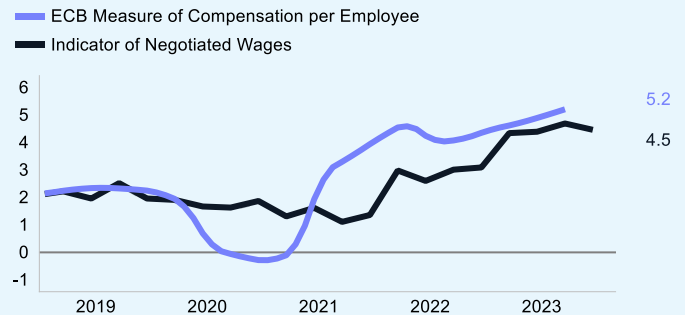
Annual core inflation (%)



Source: Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Macrobond. As of January 2024. US denotes core PCE inflation. Japan denotes national core CPI inflation (excludes fresh food and energy).

Euro area wage growth – elevated but easing

Annual wage growth (%)



Source: Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Macrobond. As of December 2023.

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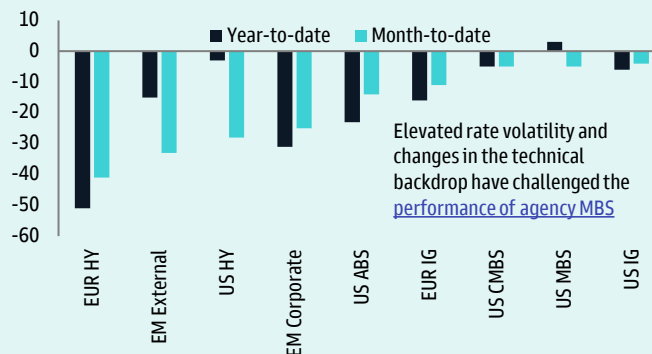
NAVIGATING FIXED INCOME

What happened in February?

Ongoing strength in the US economy, as reflected by a resilient labor market and signals from [January PMI surveys](#), alongside improving sentiment across Europe have boosted risk assets in February. In contrast, sovereign bond yields fluctuated as financial markets pulled back the number of expected central bank rate cuts for 2024. Resilient growth data allowed central bank officials to push back against expectations of early policy easing as they wait for further evidence of disinflation. For context, global government bonds exited February 1.9% lower. That said, we continue to expect central banks to cut policy rates this year – albeit later than initially expected – which should dampen upside rate volatility.

Spreads generally tighter on the month and year

Fixed income spread changes (basis points)



Source: Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Macrobond. As of February 29, 2024.

LEARNINGS FROM EARNINGS

Robust earnings. Corporate issuers in the US reported better-than-expected earnings in the fourth quarter. EBITDA increased by about 4% for the median company relative to a year ago as net profit margins showed signs of strength. That said, management teams maintained conservative guidance.

Challenges in Europe. In contrast to US companies, earnings of European companies decelerated compared to the prior quarter. Net profit margins of European companies also faced greater headwinds from higher minimum wages and slower economic growth.

Balance sheet conservatism. We have observed cash flow allocated to capex, dividends and share buybacks remain moderate. In fact, they have rarely been at this level outside of a recession period. We think management teams are responding to higher rates and the companies that are more exposed to rising interest costs are proceeding more cautiously than those we estimate are less exposed.

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Q4 2023 earnings highlights

86%

Share of operating cash flow US companies are spending on capex, dividends and buybacks¹

52%

Share of European companies that beat EPS expectations, the lowest level since 2019²

Source: ¹ Bloomberg and calculations from Goldman Sachs Asset Management. ² Based on consensus from the Stoxx 600. As of February 29, 2024.

CENTRAL BANK SNAPSHOT

	Interest Rate Policy	Balance Sheet Policy	Outlook	Our outlook relative to market-implied pricing
Fed	<p>Federal funds rate: 5.25-5.5%</p> <p>Prior changes:</p> <p>July, May, March, February 2023 (+25bps)</p> <p>December 2022 (+50bps)</p> <p>June, July, September and November 2022 (+75bps)</p> <p>May 2022 (+50bps)</p> <p>March 2022 (+25bps)</p>	<p>The Fed has engaged in passive QT since June 2022, reducing reinvestments of proceeds from maturing securities held on its balance sheet.</p>	<p>We believe the Fed will lower the Fed funds rate by 0.25% in June and anticipate a total of four cuts in 2024.</p> <p>Expected rate at end-2024: 4.25-4.5%</p>	Neutral
ECB	<p>Deposit facility rate: 4%</p> <p>Prior changes:</p> <p>September, July, June, May 2023 (+25bps)</p> <p>March, February 2023 and December 2022 (+50bps)</p> <p>September and October 2022 (+75bps)</p> <p>July 2022 (+50bps), the first hike since 2011</p>	<p>The ECB began winding down its balance sheet in March 2023 and ended reinvestments of securities purchased through its APP in July 2023. Reinvestments of proceeds from maturing securities purchased through the PEPP will be wound down from July 2024 and end in December 2024.</p>	<p>We foresee a 0.25% rate cut in June, followed by further cuts in September and December. Faster disinflation or intensifying downside growth risks may motivate larger and sooner rate cuts.</p> <p>Expected rate at end-2024: 3.25%</p>	Slightly dovish
BoE	<p>Bank Rate: 5.25%</p> <p>Prior changes:</p> <p>August 2023 (+25bps)</p> <p>June 2023 (+50bps)</p> <p>May, March 2023 (+25bps)</p> <p>February 2023 and December 2022 (+50bps)</p> <p>November 2022 (+75bps)</p> <p>August and September 2022 (+50bps)</p> <p>February, March, May, June 2022 (+25bps)</p> <p>December 2021 (+15bps)</p>	<p>The BoE has been engaged in active QT since November 2022. We anticipate passive QT would likely continue alongside rate cuts; however, we think active bond sales may be paused.</p>	<p>We expect the easing cycle to begin in May with a 0.25% rate cut, followed by further rate cuts in June, August, September, November and December.</p> <p>Expected rate at end-2024: 3.75%</p>	Neutral
BoJ	<p>Policy deposit rate: -0.10%</p> <p>Prior changes:</p> <p>Suspension of fixed-rate purchase operations. 1% upper bound of 10-year JGB yield is a 'reference' and removal of the -/+50bps tolerance band.</p> <p>Fixed-rate purchase operations:</p> <p>Increased from 0.5% to 1%</p> <p>10-year JGB yield target: ~0%, with tolerance band of -/+50bps (YCC)</p> <p>January 2016, when the Bank introduced its negative interest rate policy (NIRP)</p>	<p>The BoJ increased JGB purchases sharply in 2023 to defend its YCC policy. We think a 'reference rate' for YCC may be retained in 2024, with modest JGB purchases enabling an orderly departure from a negative deposit rate.</p>	<p>We anticipate an exit from negative rates in April 2024 and think a move into positive policy rate territory this year is likely; however, fading inflationary pressures imply less hiking than we previously envisaged.</p> <p>Expected rate at end-2024: 0.25%</p>	Neutral

Source: Goldman Sachs Asset Management. As of March 1, 2024. Abbreviations: Quantitative Easing (QE), Quantitative Tightening (QT), Yield Curve Control (YCC), Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program (PEPP), Asset Purchase Program (APP), Targeted Longer-Term Refinancing Operations (TLTROs), Japanese Government Bond (JGB). The economic and market forecasts presented herein are for informational purposes as of the date of this document. There can be no assurance that the forecasts will be achieved. Please see additional disclosures at the end of this document.

SOVEREIGN BOND YIELDS (%)

	Latest	6 months ago	12 months ago
US 2 Year	4.6	4.9	4.8
US 10 Year	4.3	4.1	3.9
US 2-10 Slope	-0.4	-0.8	-0.9
US Treasury 10-Year Inflation-Protected	1.9	1.8	1.5
Germany 2 Year	3.0	3.0	3.1
Germany 10 Year	2.5	2.5	2.6
Japanese 10 Year	0.7	0.7	0.5
UK 10 Year	4.2	4.4	3.8
Chinese 10 Year	2.3	2.6	2.9

Source: Macrobond, Goldman Sachs Asset Management. As of 29 February 2024.

EXCHANGE RATES

	Latest	6 months ago	12 months ago
Euro (€ per \$)	0.92	0.92	0.94
British Pound (£ per \$)	0.79	0.79	0.83
Japanese Yen (¥ per \$)	150.77	146.29	136.21
Chinese Yuan Renminbi (CNY per \$)	7.20	7.29	6.93

Source: Macrobond, Goldman Sachs Asset Management. As of 29 February 2024.

FIXED INCOME SECTOR YIELDS (%)

	Latest	Last 10 year average	Last 10 year Percentile
US Investment Grade	5.5	3.5	91.8
European Investment Grade	4.3	1.4	89.5
UK Investment Grade	5.6	3.2	90.8
US High Yield	7.9	6.5	78.4
European High Yield	6.3	4.2	83.1
EM External	8.1	6.2	83.6
EM Corporate	6.6	5.3	83.0
US Agency MBS	5.1	2.8	96.4
US ABS	5.7	2.6	90.5
US Munis	3.5	2.3	89.5
US CMBS	4.9	2.6	94.7

Source: Macrobond, Goldman Sachs Asset Management, ICE BofAML and J.P. Morgan. As of 29 February 2024.

FIXED INCOME SECTOR SPREADS (BASIS POINTS)

	Latest	12 months ago	Last 10 Year Percentile
US Investment Grade	98	130	9.0
European Investment Grade	119	147	55.0
UK Investment Grade	119	168	12.6
US High Yield	331	422	7.1
European High Yield	344	421	28.3
EM External	368	447	56.0
EM Corporate	257	302	0.1
US Agency MBS	51	47	77.3
US ABS	99	119	66.8
US CMBS	46	50	21.1

Source: Macrobond, Goldman Sachs Asset Management, ICE BofAML and J.P. Morgan. As of 29 February 2024.

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ADDITIONAL FIXED INCOME INSIGHTS

Musings

[February 23, 2024](#)

[February 16, 2024](#)

[February 9, 2024](#)

[February 2, 2024](#)

Navigating Fixed Income

[Navigating Disinflation: The Case for EM Local Bonds](#)

[Navigating EM External Debt: Earning Carry, Finding Alpha](#)

[Navigating Investment Grade Credit with Goldman Sachs Asset Management](#)

[Navigating Opportunities in Investment Grade Credit](#)

[Navigating External EM Debt](#)

[Bear \(Market\) Necessities: The Case for Core Fixed Income](#)

Fixed Income Outlook

[Q1 2024 Outlook: Balancing Act](#)

[Q4 2023 Outlook: Turning Cautious](#)

[Q3 2023 Outlook: Resilience and Risk](#)

[Q2 2023 Outlook: Quality Control](#)

Asset Management Insights

[Asset Management Outlook 2024: Embracing New Realities](#)

[Asset Management Perspectives: Coming into Focus](#)

- [Introduction](#)
- [Forces of Change: Investing in a World of Cyclical and Structural Drivers](#)
- [Triple A to Triple Threat: US Debt Sustainability, Serviceability, and Geopolitical Risks](#)
- [Taking The High Road: Investing In A Higher-for-Longer Rate World](#)
- [Japan's Economic Revival and the Road Ahead](#)

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Investments in fixed income securities are subject to the risks associated with debt securities generally, including credit, liquidity, interest rate, prepayment and extension risk. Bond prices fluctuate inversely to changes in interest rates. Therefore, a general rise in interest rates can result in the decline in the bond's price. The value of securities with variable and floating interest rates are generally less sensitive to interest rate changes than securities with fixed interest rates. Variable and floating rate securities may decline in value if interest rates do not move as expected. Conversely, variable and floating rate securities will not generally rise in value if market interest rates decline. Credit risk is the risk that an issuer will default on payments of interest and principal. Credit risk is higher when investing in high yield bonds, also known as junk bonds. Prepayment risk is the risk that the issuer of a security may pay off principal more quickly than originally anticipated. Extension risk is the risk that the issuer of a security may pay off principal more slowly than originally anticipated. All fixed income investments may be worth less than their original cost upon redemption or maturity.

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When interest rates increase, fixed income securities will generally decline in value. Fluctuations in interest rates may also affect the yield and liquidity of fixed income securities.

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Index Benchmarks

Indices are unmanaged. The figures for the index reflect the reinvestment of all income or dividends, as applicable, but do not reflect the deduction of any fees or expenses which would reduce returns. Investors cannot invest directly in indices.

The indices referenced herein have been selected because they are well known, easily recognized by investors, and reflect those indices that the Investment Manager believes, in part based on industry practice, provide a suitable benchmark against which to evaluate the investment or broader market described herein. The exclusion of "failed" or closed hedge funds may mean that each index overstates the performance of hedge funds generally.

Sector Spread Indexes

US Investment Grade Corporates: ICE BofAML US Corporate Index

US High Yield Corporates: ICE BofAML US Corporate High Yield Index

European Investment Grade Corporates: ICE BofAML Euro Corporate Index

European High Yield Corporates: ICE BofAML Euro High Yield Index

ABS: ICE BofAML US Fixed Rate Asset-Backed Securities Index

MBS: ICE BofAML US Agency Mortgage-Backed Securities Index

CMBS: ICE BofAML US Fixed Rate Commercial Mortgage-Backed Securities Index

EM External Debt: J.P. Morgan, EMBI Global Diversified Face Constrained Index

Past performance does not guarantee future results, which may vary. The value of investments and the income derived from investments will fluctuate and can go down as well as up. A loss of principal may occur.

Abbreviations: US Federal Reserve (Fed), European Central Bank (ECB), Bank of England (BoE), Bank of Japan (BoJ), Swiss National Bank (SNB), Central Bank of Sweden (Riksbank), Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ), Central Bank of Norway (Norges Bank) Bank of Canada (BoC), Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA), Quantitative Easing (QE), Quantitative Tightening (QT), Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program (PEPP), Consumer price index (CPI), producer price index (PPI), developed markets (DM), emerging markets (EM), Japanese Government Bond (JGB). Mortgage-backed securities (MBS), Asset-backed securities (ABS).

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