

# Investment Weekly

6 December 2024 For Professional Clients only.

### Chart of the week - Political realities bite in France



Are good economics now bad politics? Recent developments in France are a case in point. IMF forecasts show the country's public finances are on an unsustainable path, with the debt ratio expected to reach almost 130% of GDP by the end of the decade. But with the French parliament split into three blocs, there is limited political will to find a solution. French Prime Minister Barnier's proposed EUR60bn budget consolidation saw him swiftly ejected from office.

Amid the political impasse, France's 10-year government bond spread over Germany has moved higher, and is now above that of Spain and Portugal. Yet, in our view, this is not a marker of an imminent crisis. In the words of financial wags, it's not a "Truss moment". Spreads in France have not blown out in the same way they did in the UK in September 2022, when then-Prime Minster Truss introduced a budget that incorporated significant unfinanced tax cuts, worsening debt sustainability. No such measures are being touted in France for the time being.

The market reaction to this week's events in France has been sanguine. That reflects today's better economic reality versus 2022 – ongoing disinflation, central bank rate cuts, and decent global growth. The ECB also provides an ultimate backstop against disorderly market dynamics in the eurozone via the Transmission Protection Instrument (TPI), even if this comes with strings attached. So, although events require monitoring, and the distinction between the eurozone core and periphery is blurring, this is likely to be a slow-burn issue rather than the start of a new crisis.

### **Market Spotlight**

### Hedge funds in a higher-for-longer world

With inflation remaining a bit sticky in places, and fiscal activism still in play, it makes sense that investors expect a fairly shallow rate cutting cycle in 2025. The ability of central banks to insulate the economy and markets against adverse shocks – the so called "Fed put" – looks constrained.

So, there is considerable uncertainty about the direction of the bond-stock correlation in 2025. What if bonds can no longer act as a reliable portfolio diversifier? This is a key question posed in our Investment Outlook 2025.

We think many alternative asset classes offer an attractive solution. Hedge funds, for example, have exhibited consistently low correlations to stocks over the past three years. This coincides with a period of higher rates and a higher dispersion of equity returns which typically benefits "stock picking" strategies that hedge funds embed. This contrasts with the 2010s when record-low interest rates were causing nearly all stocks to rise in unison. For 2025, an environment of rising uncertainty and market volatility would likely to keep dispersion high. And for those hedge funds with significant unencumbered cash balances, higher rates would provide a further boost to their total return.

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Source: HSBC Asset Management. Macrobond, Bloomberg. Data as at 7.30am UK time 06 December 2024.



US stock valuations  $\rightarrow$ 

Stretched US valuations and the 2025 outlook

European Equities  $\rightarrow$ 

European challenges but also opportunities

Asia high-yield →

Increased diversification for Asia credit investors

Read our latest views: Investment Outlook 2025

### Multiple concerns

Barring a major shock between now and the new year, US stock markets are set to notch up world beating performance in 2024. To many this comes as no surprise in a year where the soft landing was delivered, profit growth rebounded, and AI started delivering on its huge potential. But where does this leave us for 2025?

We think US markets can continue to perform well. The prospects of tax cuts and deregulation is the icing on top of the cake that is a resilient US economy. Profit growth is likely to remain strong, even if current expectations of c. 15% for 2025 EPS growth look somewhat optimistic.

But a key challenge will be valuations. Decomposing year-to-date equity returns shows multiple expansion has been responsible for the bulk of US gains this year, unlike in emerging markets – particularly in Asia - where profits and dividends have driven stocks higher. This leave US stocks trading on a 12-month forward PE of 22.0x, well above the last 10-year average of 18.6x. As we explain in our Investment Outlook 2025, stretched US valuations along with a "broadening out" of profit growth across the world makes it important to look beyond recent winners.

### Europe on sale?

Despite a good start to 2024, European equities have struggled for momentum since the summer, while US stocks have zipped ahead. Yearto-date this leaves European stocks experiencing their worst relative performance to the US in close to 50 years.

Investor pessimism around Europe is perhaps unsurprising. The exportdependent bloc is weighed down by weak global trade growth, exposure to soft Chinese demand, and competition from China's lower cost carmakers. German Fortune 500 companies have announced over 60,000 layoffs this year with more expected to come. On top of the bad economic news, the region's politics looks troubling (see main story).

The outcome is a European market that now looks very cheap. MSCI Europe is on a trailing PE of 15.3x versus 30x for the US. At the sector level, discounts look particularly pronounced for consumer staples, healthcare, financials and industrials. So, although caution is warranted, some re-rating is possible – triggered perhaps by scope for China reflation, or government support for domestic "world class" brands. A weaker euro helps. And bargain hunters are likely to be out in force, making M&A and buyback activity a potential boost in 2025.

### Asia high yield's evolution

2024 has been a great year for Asia's credit markets, especially for highyield bonds. The benchmark JACI high-yield index has delivered doubledigit returns. Following a tough period for the market post-pandemic, several factors have reignited investor enthusiasm.

Firstly, exposure to China has fallen considerably as troubled real estate names have defaulted and dropped off indices. This "flushing out" process has resulted in a market that is not only more geographically and sectorally diverse, but also has a much lower average default rate. Many companies now operate with healthy balance sheets and easy access to cheap local funding channels.

This leaves the asset class in a strong position for 2025. Yields remain higher versus historical levels and DM equivalents, providing room for further spread compression. Of course, China's macro situation is a key risk to monitor, and there is likely to be noise around tariffs. But improved diversification – including increased exposure to fast-growing India – and ongoing China stimulus measures should limit the downside.







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# Asset class views

Our baseline macro scenario is for a soft-ish landing, characterised by growth falling below trend and inflation returning to target. But the data flow is likely to remain bumpy and the outlook remains uncertain. Risk asset valuations are stretched in many areas. That means that any deterioration in corporate fundamentals could create market volatility. A defensive positioning in portfolios remains appropriate, which includes selective exposures to fixed income, risk assets, and private markets.

House view represents a 12-month investment view across major asset classes in our portfolios.



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### This week

Date	Country	Indicator	Data as of	Actual	Prior	Comment
Mon. 02 December	US	ISM Manufacturing Index	Nov	48.4	46.5	The ISM index rose to its highest level since June, but remains low. Gains came from new orders and employment
	BR	S&P Global Manufacturing PMI	Nov	52.3	52.9	Brazil's PMI remained in expansion territory as resilient domestic demand encouraged firms to scale up production volumes
	MX	S&P Global Manufacturing PMI	Nov	49.9	48.4	Whilst remaining in contraction territory, the November reading indicated softer falls in total sales and production volumes
Tue. 03 December	US	JOLTS Job Openings	Oct	7.74mn	7.37mn	The JOLTS survey was mixed. Openings and quits rebounded, with still low layoffs. Hiring pulled back to a cycle low
	BR	GDP (qoq)	Q3	0.9%	1.4%	Despite slowing in Q324, GDP has strengthened over the last year, fuelled by fiscal stimulus and domestic demand
Wed. 04 December	US	ISM Services Index	Nov	52.1	56.0	The ISM services index surprised to the downside in November, but the index still signals expansion in the sector
	US	Fed Chair Powell	Dec	-	-	Powell said the Fed can afford "to be a little more cautious" on the path to a neutral stance, citing the strong US economy
Fri. 06 December	IN	RBI Repo Rate	Dec	6.50%	6.50%	The RBI kept the policy rate unchanged in December, but cut cash reserve ratio to boost liquidity to balance growth-inflation risks
	US	Change in Non-Farm Payrolls	Nov	-	12.0k	The underlying trend in non-farm payrolls has slowed recently, mirroring the message from other labour market measures
	US	Univ. of Michigan Sentiment Index (Prelim)	Dec	-	71.8	The University of Michigan's confidence index has risen steadily, aided by improving household income expectations

US - United States, BR - Brazil, MX - Mexico, IN - India

## The week ahead

Date	Country	Indicator	Data as of	Survey	Prior	Comment
Mon. 09 December	CN	СРІ (уоу)	Nov	0.5%	0.3%	Inflation remains soft, reflecting muted price pressures among non- food items and ongoing demand/supply imbalances
Tue. 10 December	US	NFIB Index of Small Business Optimism	Nov	94.1	93.7	The small business optimism index has risen gradually since the spring, although the components have been mixed
	BR	СРІ (уоу)	Nov	4.8%	4.8%	Headline inflation has increased steadily since the spring, driven by a weaker currency and tight labour market conditions
	AU	RBA Cash Target Rate	Dec	4.35%	4.35%	The RBA should keep rates unchanged near-term amid its cautious stance on inflation, despite downbeat Q3 GDP growth
	CN	Trade Balance (USD)	Nov	92.0bn	95.7bn	China's sizeable trade surplus should persist given resilient external demand, albeit with the risk of rising trade tensions
Wed. 11 December	US	СРІ (уоу)	Nov	2.7%	2.6%	Headline inflation is expected to edge up on energy prices in November. Core inflation is likely to remain stable at 3.3%
	BR	Banco de Brazil SELIC Target Rate	Dec	12.00%	11.25%	Rising inflation expectations, a weaker BRL and an overheating economy point to more aggressive policy tightening
	CA	BoC Policy Rate	Dec	3.25%	3.75%	October's solid employment report and firmer CPI suggest a close call between a 25bp or 50bp cut
Thu. 12 December	US	PPI (mom)	Nov	0.3%	0.2%	Core PPI has picked up recently, led by modestly higher core goods and core services inflation
	EZ	ECB Deposit Rate	Dec	3.00%	3.25%	Recent inflation data have been encouraging. The majority of recent ECB speeches point to further gradual policy easing
	JP	TANKAN Business Conditions Manufacturing Index	Q4	13.0	13.0	Large manufacturers' business confidence has risen since Q123, medium-term price expectations are just above 2%
	IN	Industrial Production (yoy)	Oct	3.5%	3.1%	Favourable base effects should support y/y growth, although weaker infrastructure output remains a concern
	IN	СРІ (уоу)	Nov	5.7%	6.2%	Moderating vegetable price inflation should allow headline inflation to return to the RBI's target range

### CN - China, US - United States, BR - Brazil, AU - Australia, CA - Canada, EZ - Euro Zone, JP - Japan, IN - India

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### This week

Positive risk market appetite persists despite increased political tensions, and the US Dollar index consolidated. Core government bonds were rangebound, as Fed Chair Powell stated the Fed "can afford to be a little more cautious" on the path to a neutral policy stance. In US equities, the S&P500 touched an all-time high but lagged the Nasdaq. The Euro Stoxx 50 rallied, with France's CAC rebounding. The Nikkei 225 strengthened on higher machinery makers as the yen traded sideways (vs USD). EM stock markets were broadly higher, led by India's Sensex index. The Shanghai Composite and Hang Seng advanced ahead of China's Central Economic Work Conference whereas rising political worries weighed on Korea's Kospi index. In commodities, oil edged higher as the OPEC+'s decided to delay a plan to roll back production cuts to April 2025. Gold edged lower, while copper gained.

### Selected asset performance



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Source: HSBC Asset Management. Macrobond, Bloomberg. Data as at 7.30am am UK time 06 December 2024. Note: Asset class performance is represented by different indices. Global Equities: MSCI ACWI Net Total Return USD Index. Gene Equities: MSCI Emerging Net Total Return USD Index. Corporate Bonds: Bloomberg Barclays Global HY Total Return Index value unhedged. Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Treasuries Total Return Index. JP Morgan EMBI Global Total Return local currency. Commodities and real estate: Gold Spot \$/OZ/ Other commodities: S&P GSCI Total Return CME. Real Estate: FTSE EPRA/NAREIT Global Index TR USD. All the data above is in in USD, total return, month-to-date terms.



Equity Indices	Close	1-week Change (%)	1-month Change (%)	3-month Change (%)	1-year Change (%)	YTD Change (%)	52-week High	52-week Low	Fwd P/E (X)
World		()-1	()-7	()-1	()-1	()-1			(/
MSCI AC World Index (USD)	872	1.1	2.0	8.7	25.9	20.0	874	691	20.5
North America									
US Dow Jones Industrial Average	44,766	-0.3	2.4	11.0	24.2	18.8	45,074	36,022	23.9
US S&P 500 Index	6,075	0.7	2.5	12.3	33.5	27.4	6,095	4,547	25.1
US NASDAQ Composite Index	19,701	2.5	3.8	18.0	39.3	31.2	19,790	14,139	36.1
Canada S&P/TSX Composite Index	25,680	0.1	4.2	12.7	26.7	22.5	25,760	20,125	17.4
Europe									
MSCI AC Europe (USD)	553	2.0	1.0	-2.6	8.0	3.6	595	508	14.4
Euro STOXX 50 Index	4,952	3.1	3.1	4.5	10.4	9.5	5,122	4,381	14.6
UK FTSE 100 Index	8,349	0.7	2.2	2.1	11.1	8.0	8,474	7,404	12.2
Germany DAX Index*	20,359	3.7	6.9	11.2	22.2	21.5	20,373	16,345	15.5
France CAC-40 Index	7,331	1.3	-0.5	-0.3	-1.4	-2.8	8,259	7,030	14.3
Spain IBEX 35 Index	12,119	4.1	5.4	8.5	18.1	20.0	12,129	9,799	11.5
Italy FTSE MIB Index	34,626	3.6	2.0	4.0	14.2	14.1	35,474	29,926	10.2
Asia Pacific									
MSCI AC Asia Pacific ex Japan (USD)	586	1.6	-1.9	3.8	17.0	10.7	632	490	14.9
Japan Nikkei-225 Stock Average	39,091	2.3	-1.0	7.4	16.9	16.8	42,427	31,156	20.6
Australian Stock Exchange 200	8,421	-0.2	2.7	5.1	17.3	10.9	8,515	7,062	19.4
Hong Kong Hang Seng Index	19,898	2.4	-3.1	14.1	20.9	16.7	23,242	14,794	9.2
Shanghai Stock Exchange Composite Index	3,407	2.4	0.7	23.2	14.8	14.5	3,674	2,635	13.4
Hang Seng China Enterprises Index	7,145	2.9	-3.0	17.0	26.2	23.9	8,373	4,943	8.6
Taiwan TAIEX Index	23,193	4.2	-0.1	8.2	33.6	29.3	24,417	17,152	18.8
Korea KOSPI Index	2,428	-1.1	-5.3	-4.6	-2.7	-8.6	2,896	2,387	10.0
India SENSEX 30 Index	81,821	2.5	1.8	0.8	17.5	13.3	85,978	69,101	23.3
Indonesia Jakarta Stock Price Index	7,340	3.2	-0.6	-5.0	3.6	0.9	7,911	6,699	12.4
Malaysia Kuala Lumpur Composite Index	1,613	1.2	-1.3	-2.4	11.6	10.9	1,685	1,440	15.0
Philippines Stock Exchange PSE Index	6,710	1.4	-6.4	-3.3	6.4	4.0	7,605	6,158	11.4
Singapore FTSE Straits Times Index	3,805	1.8	5.6	10.1	23.3	17.4	3,843	3,052	12.0
Thailand SET Index	1,451	1.6	-1.1	1.6	4.4	2.5	1,507	1,273	16.8
Latam									
Argentina Merval Index	2,211,583	-2.1	11.9	28.5	147.2	137.9	2,326,959	859,521	9.3
Brazil Bovespa Index*	127,858	1.7	-1.9	-5.0	1.8	-4.7	137,469	118,685	8.5
Chile IPSA Index	6,660	1.3	1.2	6.6	12.5	7.5	6,838	5,823	12.0
Colombia COLCAP Index	1,395	0.2	2.2	5.0	23.0	16.7	1,451	1,129	5.5
Mexico S&P/BMV IPC Index	51,757	3.9	0.0	1.3	-4.3	-9.8	59,021	49,459	12.0
EEMEA							·		
Saudi Arabia Tadawul Index	11,932	2.5	-1.3	-1.4	6.8	-0.3	12,883	11,138	N/A
South Africa JSE Index	86,846	2.8	1.8	6.7	15.2	12.9	87,884	71,635	12.6
Turkey ISE 100 Index*	9,936	2.9	12.1	1.7	26.5	33.0	11,252	7,203	6.5

\*Indices expressed as total returns. All others are price returns.

Equity Indices - Total Return	1-week Change (%)	1-month Change (%)	3-month Change (%)	YTD Change (%)	1-year Change (%)	3-year Change (%)	5-year Change (%)
Global equities	1.1	2.2	9.0	21.7	27.8	25.7	72.7
US equities	0.8	2.9	13.4	28.9	35.4	35.5	105.0
Europe equities	2.0	1.2	-2.2	6.4	10.9	11.1	34.0
Asia Pacific ex Japan equities	1.6	-1.8	4.0	13.2	19.8	2.5	25.7
Japan equities	2.6	3.6	1.4	11.5	15.3	13.0	30.9
Latam equities	2.0	-4.8	-6.5	-20.0	-13.1	18.4	-1.8
Emerging Markets equities	2.2	-2.6	2.7	10.0	15.7	-1.8	18.6

All total returns quoted in USD terms and subject to one-day lag. Data sourced from MSCI AC World Total Return Index, MSCI USA Total Return Index, MSCI AC Europe Total Return Index, MSCI AC Asia Pacific ex Japan Total Return Index, MSCI Japan Total Return Index, MSCI Emerging Latin America Total Return Index, and MSCI Emerging Markets Total Return Index

Total return includes income from dividends and interest as well as appreciation or depreciation in the price of an asset over the given period.

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Bond indices - Total Return	Close	1-week Change (%)	1-month Change (%)	3-month Change (%)	1-year Change (%)	YTD Change (%)
BarCap GlobalAgg (Hedged in USD)	586	0.2	1.7	0.3	6.4	4.4
JPM EMBI Global	914.1	0.4	2.1	1.1	11.0	7.7
BarCap US Corporate Index (USD)	3365.6	0.3	2.0	-0.3	7.2	4.5
BarCap Euro Corporate Index (Eur)	259.4	0.2	1.3	2.1	6.9	5.3
BarCap Global High Yield (Hedged in USD)	630.5	0.4	1.5	3.3	14.5	11.3
Markit iBoxx Asia ex-Japan Bond Index (USD)	227.0	0.1	1.0	0.3	8.0	6.2
Markit iBoxx Asia ex-Japan High-Yield Bond Index (USD)	262	0.3	0.0	2.1	16.8	14.2

Total return includes income from dividends and interest as well as appreciation or depreciation in the price of an asset over the given period.

				3-months Ago	·		52-week High	52-week Low	1-week Change (%)
Currencies (vs USD)	Latest	1-week Ago	1-month Ago		1-year Ago	Year End 2023			
Developed markets									
EUR/USD	1.06	1.06	1.07	1.11	1.08	1.10	1.12	1.03	0.0
GBP/USD	1.27	1.27	1.29	1.31	1.26	1.27	1.34	1.23	0.1
CHF/USD	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.19	1.14	1.19	1.20	1.08	0.2
CAD	1.40	1.40	1.39	1.36	1.36	1.32	1.42	1.32	-0.2
JPY	150	150	155	142	147	141	162	140	0.0
AUD/USD	0.64	0.65	0.66	0.67	0.65	0.68	0.69	0.64	-1.3
NZD/USD	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.62	0.61	0.63	0.64	0.58	-1.0
Asia									
HKD	7.78	7.78	7.78	7.80	7.81	7.81	7.84	7.76	0.0
CNY	7.26	7.25	7.18	7.10	7.16	7.10	7.30	7.01	-0.2
INR	84.7	84.5	84.3	83.9	83.3	83.2	84.8	82.6	-0.2
MYR	4.42	4.45	4.40	4.33	4.67	4.59	4.81	4.09	0.6
KRW	1419	1397	1401	1335	1313	1288	1445	1286	-1.6
TWD	32.4	32.5	32.2	31.9	31.5	30.7	32.9	30.6	0.3
Latam									
BRL	6.01	5.97	5.68	5.60	4.90	4.86	6.12	4.80	-0.6
COP	4415	4433	4412	4174	4000	3855	4566	3738	0.4
MXN	20.2	20.4	20.1	20.0	17.3	17.0	20.8	16.3	0.8
ARS	1012	1010	993	956	364	808	1014	364	-0.2
EEMEA									
RUB	100.8	106.5	97.2	90.5	92.9	89.5	114.7	82.7	5.4
ZAR	18.0	18.1	17.6	17.9	19.0	18.4	19.4	17.0	0.3
TRY	34.8	34.7	34.2	34.0	28.9	29.5	34.8	28.9	-0.3

Bonds	Close	1-week Ago	1-month Ago	3-months Ago	1-year Ago	Year End 2023	1-week basis point change*
US Treasury yields (%)							
3-Month	4.41	4.49	4.53	5.05	5.39	5.33	-8
2-Year	4.15	4.15	4.26	3.65	4.59	4.25	0
5-Year	4.07	4.05	4.27	3.49	4.10	3.85	3
10-Year	4.17	4.17	4.43	3.71	4.10	3.88	0
30-Year	4.32	4.36	4.61	4.02	4.21	4.03	-4
10-year bond yields (%)							
Japan	1.05	1.04	0.97	0.85	0.63	0.61	1
UK	4.28	4.24	4.56	3.89	3.94	3.53	4
Germany	2.11	2.09	2.40	2.17	2.20	2.02	2
France	2.89	2.89	3.17	2.88	2.74	2.56	0
Italy	3.20	3.28	3.73	3.62	3.93	3.69	-8
Spain	2.76	2.79	3.15	2.99	3.19	2.98	-3
China	1.95	2.03	2.12	2.14	2.70	2.56	-8
Australia	4.22	4.34	4.63	3.88	4.28	3.96	-12
Canada	3.08	3.09	3.31	2.96	3.28	3.11	-1

\*Numbers may not add up due to rounding.

<i>·</i> · ·	0	1-week	1-month	3-month	1-year	YTD		
		Change	Change	Change	Change	Change	52-week	52-week
Commodities		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	High	Low
Gold	2,639	-0.2	-0.8	5.7	30.3	27.9	2,790	1,973
Brent Oil	72.1	0.3	-3.4	2.5	-1.6	-3.1	85	68
WTI Crude Oil	68.4	0.5	-4.1	3.2	-1.1	-2.3	81	64
R/J CRB Futures Index	286.4	-0.2	1.8	7.3	10.3	8.6	300	258
LME Copper	9,075	0.7	-2.9	0.9	9.5	6.0	11,105	8,127

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