

Investment Weekly

7 February 2025 For Professional Clients only.

Chart of the week - Policy uncertainty and stock market valuations



In our Investment Outlook 2025 "Spinning Around", we argued that rising economic uncertainty was set to create more volatility in investment markets this year. Quantitative measures of global policy uncertainty are increasing. This week, like in the last few weeks, investors have had to deal with another burst of episodic volatility in markets.

Global stocks weakened, reflecting how policy uncertainty can be a challenge to profits and how it prompts more risk aversion. While, in government bonds, there was a "flattening" of the yield curve (see further details on page 2), as markets reflected the possibility of bumpier disinflation.

Meanwhile, the US dollar remained a safe harbour, strengthening as policy uncertainty increased. But after being a serial winner in FX markets, investors are beginning to question whether "King dollar" can keep the crown? After all, the dollar is expensive, the Fed is still cutting rates in 2025, and US fiscal deficits are very wide. Investors need to consider the possibility that further dollar strength may be temporary.

Another telling sign of risk aversion in markets was the rally in the gold price. Gold has been on a tear over the past 12 months. The recent rise in policy uncertainty has seen that trend continue.

Overall, the latest bout of volatility – the third this year after the surge in bond yields and the Al trade wobble during January – reinforces our view that markets will face a volatile ride at times in 2025, albeit against a broadly constructive backdrop of no recession, further rate cuts and resilient profits. We call this "volatile Goldilocks".

Market Spotlight

Hedging volatility

With bouts of volatility proving to be a feature of markets this year, diversification strategies are front of mind for asset allocators. After a strong performance in 2024, one asset class that could be ideally placed to keep delivering in these conditions is hedge funds.

Hedge funds have a track record of outperforming global balanced portfolios during spells of particularly high volatility. Moreover, when you combine them into well-diversified portfolios of different strategies, their own volatility profile compares well against traditional assets. In fact, with recent volatility notably affecting cryptocurrencies, hedge funds also offer potentially more resilience than non-traditional, crypto diversifiers, too.

Crucially, hedge fund strategies can profit from volatility in a range of ways, including long and short positioning, and arbitrage opportunities. Against a backdrop of higher levels of uncertainty, they have new opportunities to feed off the associated volatility. For 2025, rising uncertainty and market volatility are likely to play to the strengths of hedge funds, providing a potential boost to returns, as well as a degree of downside protection.

The value of investments and any income from them can go down as well as up and investors may not get back the amount originally invested. Past performance does not predict future returns. For informational purposes only and should not be construed as a recommendation to invest in the specific country, product, strategy, sector, or security. Any views expressed were held at the time of preparation and are subject to change without notice. Any forecast, projection or target where provided is indicative only and is not guaranteed in any way. HSBC Asset Management accepts no liability for any failure to meet such forecast, projection, or target. Diversification does not ensure a profit or protect against loss. Source: HSBC Asset Management. Macrobond, Bloomberg. Data as at 7.30am UK time 07 February 2025.

Government Bonds \rightarrow

Exploring the outlook for US government bond yields

Corporate Earnings →

Earnings season and recent trends in profit expectations

Indian Stocks \rightarrow

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Curve appeal

The yield curve has flattened by around 20bp since the US 10-year yield peaked in mid-January. However, we continue to think the trend is towards a "structural steepening". The prospect of further gradual Fed easing should put downward pressure on the two-year yield while further declines in the 10-year yield are likely to be limited by two key factors. First, US government debt is high and rising, and the situation is unlikely to change anytime soon. Second, a more fragmented geopolitical and international trade backdrop implies greater inflation volatility.

The term premium on US Treasuries could, therefore, trend higher as investors require greater compensation for holding longer dated debt, leading to a gradual steepening of the curve. Moreover, should growth disappoint, and the Fed eases policy aggressively, the curve would steepen rapidly.

Where this view could go wrong is if the Fed were forced to hike the funds rate. However, we view the bar for this to happen as quite high given Chair Powell views policy as "meaningfully restrictive" and the FOMC does not want labour markets to "cool off anymore".

Earnings broadening?

US earnings season approached half-way this week, with some of the S&P 500's big technology names reporting figures for Q4 2024. After the recent 'Al trade' wobble, the outlook for tech profits has been under the microscope – particularly given the sector's high valuations. Some 'Magnificent Seven' stock prices have been punished on marginal profit misses, high capex spending, and disappointing forward guidance.

In terms of year-on-year Q4 profit growth, financials are leading the index, with communications services and tech also beating expectations. Among the growth laggards have been industrials, energy, and materials.

While the profits growth outlook is solid for the US, there have been downward revisions to 2025 consensus expectations recently. By contrast, Europe and China, which both saw a deterioration in the profits growth outlook last year, have seen revisions pick-up for 2025. We think this is evidence of profits growth potentially broadening beyond the US to markets that are significantly cheaper. In Europe, weak sentiment has set a low bar for positive surprises. While in China, further policy stimulus this year could herald a performance pick-up.

India's growth plan

India's recent FY2025-2026 Union Budget endeavoured to strike a balance between boosting growth, maintaining capex spending, and sticking to a path of fiscal restraint.

India experienced a cyclical slowdown last year, so a key budget pivot was an income tax cut to encourage consumer spending. Meanwhile, capex spending on road and rail is set to remain flat, with marginal growth in other sectors. And as for the fiscal deficit, the reduction target for FY25-26 is 4.4% versus 4.8% in FY24-25.

In response, consumer stocks rallied, while some railway, industrial and capex-sensitive plays corrected. Indian stocks have weakened since their peak last September, and CY24 earnings expectations have fallen by 3%. With an easing in frothy valuations, the large-cap Nifty 50 index now trades on a forward price-to-earnings ratio of 19.3x, which is around its five-year average. However, major sectors (excluding financials) are still trading at a premium and could be vulnerable to any macro or profit disappointments amid elevated short term expectations. Active stock selection remains crucial.







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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
Sat. 01 February	IN	Indian Union Budget				The Indian government signalled commitment to fiscal consolidation, with a 2025-26 budget deficit/GDP target of 4.4%
Mon. 03 February	US	ISM Manufacturing Index	Jan	50.9	49.2	The manufacturing ISM moved back into expansion territory for the first time since October 2022, driven by a sharp rise in orders
	BR	S&P Global Manufacturing PMI	Jan	50.7	50.4	The headline index edged up in January but output dropped into contraction territory while price pressures continued to rise
	IN	S&P Global Manufacturing PMI (Final)	Jan	57.7	56.4	The manufacturing PMI rose to a 6 month high, led by strong domestic and export orders. Employment rose to a record high
	EZ	HICP, Flash (yoy)	Jan	2.5%	2.4%	The headline HICP rose on higher energy inflation, but core held steady. Services inflation edged down, boding well for the ECB
Tue. 04 February	US	JOLTS Job Openings	Dec	7.60mn	8.16mn	Job openings fell in December but remain above the cycle low seen in September and broadly in line with their trend level
	MX	S&P Global Manufacturing PMI	Jan	49.1	49.8	Mexican manufacturing conditions worsened, as sustained declines in new orders prompted firms to reduce output volumes
Wed. 05 February	US	ISM Services Index	Jan	52.8	54.0	The ISM fell more than expected, but poor weather was cited as the key reason. The employment index held up well
Thu. 06 February	MX	Banxico de Mexico, Overnight Lending Rate	Jan	9.50%	10.00%	Banxico lowered rates 50bp, signalling a more aggressive easing stance. The balance of risks to growth "is biased to the downside"
	UK	BoE MPC Base Rate	Feb	4.50%	4.75%	The BoE cut rates, with Dhingra and Mann (previously hawkish) voting for a 50bp move. The 2025 GDP projection was halved
Fri. 07 February	IN	RBI Repo Rate	Feb	6.25%	6.50%	The RBI retains its neutral policy stance after an anticipated 25bp cut, indicating a data-dependent approach for upcoming meetings
	US	Change in Non-Farm Payrolls	Jan	-	256k	Payrolls growth has been robust of late with a low hiring rate offset by a low quits rate and subdued layoffs
	US	Univ. of Michigan Sentiment Index (Prelim)	Feb		71.1	UoM confidence is on an improving, albeit bumpy trend, but remains below average levels despite a solid labour market

IN - India, US - United States, BR - Brazil, EZ - Eurozone, MX - Mexico, UK - United Kingdom

The week ahead

Date	Country	Indicator	Data as of	Survey	Prior	Comment
Sun. 09 February	CN	СРІ (уоу)	Jan	0.4%	0.1%	The timing of the LNY holiday may have boosted January's headline CPI. Core inflation has edged higher recently
Mon. 10 February	US	Earnings	Q4			Over 50% of S&P500 have reported. Beats in financials and some tech. Largest disappointments in consumer discretionary and energy
Tue. 11 February	US	NFIB Index of Small Business Optimism	Jan	104.0	105.1	After surging in Q424, the NFIB's business optimism index may retrace in January, but remain above its long-term average
Wed. 12 February	US	СРІ (уоу)	Jan	2.9%	2.9%	Core inflation should moderate slightly in January but a rise in oil prices early in the month is likely to keep the headline rate steady
	IN	Industrial Production (yoy)	Dec	3.8%	5.2%	Production growth is forecast to slow, unwinding some of November's unexpected strength
	IN	СРІ (уоу)	Jan	4.6%	5.2%	India's headline inflation should continue to ease, led by moderating food price inflation (primarily vegetables)
Thu. 13 February	US	PPI (mom)	Jan	0.3%	0.2%	Soft services prices held PPI inflation down in December. This is unlikely to repeat in January
	UK	GDP, Prelim (qoq)	Q4	-	0.0%	GDP looks set to remain broadly stagnant in Q424, with the risk of a small contraction. Consumer spending should weaken
	PH	Central Bank Policy Rate	Feb	5.50%	5.75%	BSP governor has signalled a more cautious stance on rising inflation worries, but is keeping the door ajar for further rate cuts
Fri. 14 February	US	Retail Sales (mom)	Jan	0.0%	0.4%	A softer retail print is expected after a run of robust readings. However, the threat of trade tariffs may boost spending
	US	Industrial Production (mom)	Jan	0.3%	0.9%	Industrial production could rise further in early 2025, as firms boost output ahead of the potential imposition of trade tariffs

CN - China, US - United States, IN - India, UK - United Kingdom, PH - Philippines

Source: HSBC Asset Management. Data as at 7.30am UK time 07 February 2025. For informational purposes only and should not be construed as a recommendation to invest in the specific country, product, strategy, sector or security. Any views expressed were held at the time of preparation and are subject to change without notice.



This week

Rising global policy uncertainty cast a pall over risk markets this week. While the US dollar index consolidated, core government bonds rallied in response to some weaker-than-expected US macro prints, with eurozone bonds and UK Gilts slightly outperforming US Treasuries. The BoE lowered rates by 25bp, with two members calling for a 50bp reduction. In the stock markets, US equities reversed early losses during the week, benefiting from lower US bond yields. The Euro Stoxx 50 index recorded stronger gains following a wave of upbeat earnings, while Japan's Nikkei 225 ended lower amid investor caution over external uncertainties and a firmer yen against the US dollar. Other Asian stocks mostly performed well, with Hong Kong's Hang Seng and China's Shanghai Composite posting catch-up rallies after the Lunar New Year holiday. In commodities, oil fell, whereas gold and copper both rose.

Selected asset performance



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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	()-1	()-1	()-1			(/
MSCI AC World Index (USD)	875	0.7	3.4	1.5	17.5	4.0	877	736	20.6
North America									
US Dow Jones Industrial Average	44,748	0.5	5.2	2.3	15.7	5.2	45,074	37,612	23.6
US S&P 500 Index	6,084	0.7	3.0	1.8	21.8	3.4	6,128	4,920	24.9
US NASDAQ Composite Index	19,792	0.8	1.6	2.7	25.6	2.5	20,205	15,223	35.6
Canada S&P/TSX Composite Index	25,534	0.0	2.4	2.8	21.8	3.3	25,876	20,467	17.2
Europe									
MSCI AC Europe (USD)	570	0.8	6.0	2.8	8.0	7.7	595	519	15.1
Euro STOXX 50 Index	5,357	1.3	6.9	10.4	14.5	9.4	5,363	4,474	15.8
UK FTSE 100 Index	8,727	0.6	5.8	7.2	14.4	6.8	8,768	7,493	12.8
Germany DAX Index*	21,902	0.8	7.7	13.1	29.4	10.0	21,921	16,832	16.5
France CAC-40 Index	8,008	0.7	6.9	7.8	5.2	8.5	8,259	7,030	15.9
Spain IBEX 35 Index	12,731	2.9	7.8	10.0	28.7	9.8	12,744	9,842	11.9
Italy FTSE MIB Index	37,122	1.8	6.2	9.2	19.8	8.6	37,122	30,653	10.7
Asia Pacific									
MSCI AC Asia Pacific ex Japan (USD)	580	0.6	1.5	-3.8	12.7	1.9	632	506	15.0
Japan Nikkei-225 Stock Average	38,787	-2.0	-3.2	-1.5	7.4	-2.8	42,427	31,156	20.8
Australian Stock Exchange 200	8,511	-0.2	2.7	3.5	11.8	4.3	8,567	7,489	19.3
Hong Kong Hang Seng Index	21,047	4.1	8.2	0.4	30.9	4.9	23,242	15,456	10.0
Shanghai Stock Exchange Composite Index	3,293	1.3	2.0	-5.1	16.4	-1.8	3,674	2,690	13.3
Hang Seng China Enterprises Index	7,745	4.9	9.9	2.6	42.9	6.2	8,373	5,208	9.4
Taiwan TAIEX Index	23,478	-0.2	-0.7	0.3	29.7	1.9	24,417	18,551	19.0
Korea KOSPI Index	2,522	0.2	1.2	-1.7	-3.4	5.1	2,896	2,360	11.1
India SENSEX 30 Index	77,948	0.6	-0.3	-2.0	8.0	-0.2	85,978	70,234	20.0
Indonesia Jakarta Stock Price Index	6,724	-5.4	-5.1	-7.2	-7.1	-5.0	7,911	6,699	12.4
Malaysia Kuala Lumpur Composite Index	1,590	2.1	-2.4	-2.0	5.1	-3.2	1,685	1,510	15.2
Philippines Stock Exchange PSE Index	6,155	5.0	-6.0	-12.3	-9.9	-5.7	7,605	5,863	10.7
Singapore FTSE Straits Times Index	3,862	0.2	0.9	5.1	22.4	2.0	3,887	3,092	12.0
Thailand SET Index	1,263	-3.9	-9.2	-14.1	-9.8	-9.8	1,507	1,260	14.8
Latam									
Argentina Merval Index	2,503,484	-2.4	-11.3	24.2	117.1	-1.2	2,867,775	955,099	11.2
Brazil Bovespa Index*	126,225	0.1	4.2	-2.7	-2.9	4.9	137,469	118,223	8.3
Chile IPSA Index	7,301	1.4	7.3	11.3	21.5	8.8	7,313	5,979	11.6
Colombia COLCAP Index	1,525	0.2	7.5	12.2	19.2	10.6	1,546	1,215	5.8
Mexico S&P/BMV IPC Index	52,675	2.9	5.2	0.7	-10.3	6.4	59,021	48,770	12.3
EEMEA									
Saudi Arabia Tadawul Index	12,434	0.1	2.6	2.5	2.2	3.3	12,883	11,318	N/A
South Africa JSE Index	87,191	1.4	3.6	1.4	17.3	3.7	87,884	71,663	12.9
Turkey ISE 100 Index*	9,842	-1.6	-1.3	10.0	11.3	0.1	11,252	8,567	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	0.7	3.4	1.7	4.1	19.3	28.2	65.6
US equities	0.7	3.2	2.4	3.7	23.5	39.9	93.6
Europe equities	0.8	6.1	3.0	7.8	10.9	13.0	33.8
Asia Pacific ex Japan equities	0.6	1.5	-3.5	2.0	15.4	2.0	19.5
Japan equities	0.7	2.5	1.2	2.3	7.3	15.2	29.1
Latam equities	2.2	8.6	-3.1	11.9	-15.0	10.7	-0.3
Emerging Markets equities	0.8	2.1	-3.0	2.6	12.6	-2.2	14.0

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	0.6	1.4	1.3	5.2	1.0
JPM EMBI Global	914.8	0.7	2.0	1.3	9.1	2.0
BarCap US Corporate Index (USD)	3331.7	0.7	2.0	0.2	4.4	1.3
BarCap Euro Corporate Index (Eur)	260.0	0.4	1.3	1.7	6.2	0.8
BarCap Global High Yield (Hedged in USD)	637.2	0.3	1.2	2.2	12.3	1.6
Markit iBoxx Asia ex-Japan Bond Index (USD)	227.3	0.4	1.2	0.7	6.1	1.0
Markit iBoxx Asia ex-Japan High-Yield Bond Index (USD)	262	0.3	0.3	-0.1	10.9	0.6

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

		1-week	1-month	3-months	1-year	Year End	52-week	52-week	1-week Change
Currencies (vs USD)	Latest	Ago	Ago	3-months Ago	Ago	2023	5z-week High	52-week Low	(%)
Developed markets									
EUR/USD	1.04	1.04	1.03	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.12	1.01	0.1
GBP/USD	1.24	1.24	1.25	1.30	1.26	1.25	1.34	1.21	0.2
CHF/USD	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.15	1.14	1.10	1.19	1.08	0.5
CAD	1.43	1.45	1.44	1.39	1.35	1.44	1.48	1.34	1.5
JPY	152	155	158	153	148	157	162	140	2.2
AUD/USD	0.63	0.62	0.62	0.67	0.65	0.62	0.69	0.61	1.0
NZD/USD	0.57	0.56	0.56	0.60	0.61	0.56	0.64	0.55	0.7
Asia									
HKD	7.79	7.79	7.78	7.77	7.82	7.77	7.84	7.76	0.1
CNY	7.29	7.24	7.33	7.14	7.19	7.30	7.33	7.01	-0.6
INR	87.4	86.6	85.7	84.4	83.0	85.6	87.6	82.6	-0.9
MYR	4.43	4.46	4.49	4.40	4.76	4.47	4.81	4.09	0.6
KRW	1448	1454	1452	1386	1328	1472	1487	1303	0.4
TWD	32.8	32.7	32.7	32.3	31.4	32.8	33.2	31.3	-0.2
Latam									
BRL	5.76	5.84	6.10	5.69	4.97	6.18	6.32	4.92	1.4
COP	4136	4209	4340	4308	3958	4406	4566	3738	1.7
MXN	20.5	20.7	20.3	19.8	17.1	20.8	21.3	16.3	1.0
ARS	1054	1051	1035	994	830	1031	1054	831	-0.3
EEMEA									
RUB	96.8	98.7	107.4	97.5	91.3	113.5	115.1	82.7	2.0
ZAR	18.5	18.7	18.7	17.3	18.9	18.8	19.4	17.0	1.1
TRY	36.0	35.7	35.3	34.2	30.6	35.4	36.0	30.4	-0.6

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	4.30	4.28	4.31	4.53	5.38	4.31	2
2-Year	4.22	4.20	4.29	4.20	4.43	4.24	3
5-Year	4.29	4.33	4.46	4.17	4.07	4.38	-4
10-Year	4.45	4.54	4.69	4.33	4.12	4.57	-9
30-Year	4.65	4.79	4.91	4.53	4.32	4.78	-14
10-year bond yields (%)							
Japan	1.30	1.24	1.13	1.00	0.71	1.09	6
UK	4.48	4.54	4.68	4.50	3.99	4.56	-5
Germany	2.38	2.46	2.48	2.44	2.32	2.36	-8
France	3.09	3.20	3.30	3.20	2.83	3.19	-11
Italy	3.45	3.55	3.63	3.73	3.88	3.52	-11
Spain	2.99	3.07	3.14	3.18	3.24	3.06	-8
China	1.60	1.63	1.61	2.12	2.42	1.68	-3
Australia	4.36	4.43	4.48	4.64	4.09	4.36	-7
Canada	2.96	3.07	3.30	3.22	3.48	3.23	-10

*Numbers may not add up due to rounding.

	5	1-week Change	1-month Change	3-month Change	1-year Change	YTD Change	52-week	52-week
Commodities		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	High	Low
Gold	2,861	2.2	8.0	5.7	40.6	9.0	2,882	1,984
Brent Oil	74.8	-1.2	-2.1	0.1	-0.2	0.7	84	68
WTI Crude Oil	71.0	-2.1	-3.5	-0.4	0.8	-0.4	79	64
R/J CRB Futures Index	307.5	0.8	2.7	7.4	13.7	3.6	312	265
LME Copper	9,277	2.5	3.0	-4.0	11.6	5.8	11,105	8,127

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