

AUGUST 2024



# *InView*

Global house view & investment perspectives

A photograph of a Wall Street sign with an American flag in the background. The sign is black with white text. The text reads '← 22-51 WALL ST'. The background shows several American flags on poles, slightly out of focus.

← 22-51  
**WALL ST**

The small cap shift

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# Editorial

Welcome to the August edition of *InView: Monthly Global House View*. In this publication we consider significant developments in the world's markets, and discuss our key convictions and themes for the coming months.



Moz Afzal  
Chief Investment Officer

The rally in equity markets that characterized stock markets in the first half of the year, continued last month. The MSCI World index saw a gain of 1.8% in July, to bring year-to-date returns to 13.7%. However, the highlight of the month was the strong outperformance of US small-cap stocks, with the Russell 2000 index up by 10.2% in July, offsetting the sell-off in technology stocks.

Softer than expected June US CPI inflation data catalysed a change in investor sentiment that cemented expectations of a 25bps reduction in the fed funds rate at the Federal Open Market Committee meeting in September. This led to a shift in investor positioning away from mega-cap technology stocks into small-cap stocks. Smaller firms are more sensitive to interest rates given their greater dependence on external financing for growth than large-cap firms. Therefore, the potential for lower interest rates in the coming months triggered a rally in the sector. The broadening of market returns has been a positive for equities, particularly for US stocks.

A weakening in US economic data over the last month, predominantly declining manufacturing activity and a deceleration in the housing market, explains why bond markets rallied in July. The 10-year US Treasury yield fell by over 35bps over the month while both investment grade and high yield bond indices also rallied. However, we remain defensive on credit as bond spreads remain tight.

A small overweight to equities remains advisable for balanced mandates although we have reduced our exposure to equities as we move into the summer months, adding to high quality fixed income, with a small overweight in duration, as a means of managing portfolio risks.

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# ASSET ALLOCATION

## Global Allocation

Based on a balanced mandate, the matrix below shows our 6-12 month view on investment strategy

Following the reduction in equity exposure the previous month, we retain our modest overweight position. Given the recent outperformance of US small caps and a broadening out of market participation we think this sets a positive scene for the coming 2-3 months and so do not yet want to cut equity risk further. Economic surprise indices have turned negative for G10 economies and are in decline for emerging markets, so it has been unsurprising as to why the bond market has rallied lately. Expectations for a rate cut from the Federal Reserve in September have firmed and we have maintained our fixed income overweight. Alternatives positioning is still underweight, as is cash but are on the look-out for any opportunities in late Q3/Q4 to deploy cash. We remain alert to the possibility of enhanced market volatility over the summer months.

	Allocation versus the benchmark	Weighting change from last month*
<b>FIXED INCOME</b>	+	↔
<b>EQUITIES</b>	+	↔
<b>ALTERNATIVES</b>	-	↔
<b>CASH &amp; MONEY MARKET</b>	-	↔
<b>FX</b>	●	↔

- Underweight + Overweight ● Neutral

↔ No change ↑ Increase ↓ Decrease

\*Note that arrows reflect any adjustment to allocation weighting and is not necessarily a full upgrade or downgrade.

## Fixed Income

The key risk to our core scenario in this context is the Fed not cutting rates in the coming months. If markets feel the Fed is too slow to start easing monetary policy and the economy slows faster than consensus, then the long end of the curve could rally significantly. Therefore, it is important to maintain duration higher than the benchmark for the time being. On allocation we remain defensive, not chasing the credit rally. Spreads remain tight despite the recent correction, which gives an indication that this is a profit-taking situation rather than a sharp deceleration and so we remain underweight in high yield. Rates are our favoured area of fixed income, alongside convertible bonds, in which performance has picked up recently due to the small cap equity outperformance.

		Allocation versus the benchmark	Weighting change from last month
	<b>Rates</b>	+	↔
<b>USD</b>	Investment Grade	+	↔
	Sovereign	+	↔
<b>EUR</b>	Investment Grade	+	↔
	Sovereign	+	↔
<b>GBP</b>	Investment Grade	-	↔
	Sovereign	+	↔
<b>CHF</b>	Investment Grade	+	↔
	Sovereign	+	↔
	<b>Credit</b>	-	↔
<b>USD</b>	High Yield	-	↔
<b>EUR</b>	High Yield	-	↔
	Hybrids	-	↔
	Asset-backed Securities	-	↔
	Convertibles	+	↔
	EM Local Currency	●	↔
	EM Hard Currency	-	↔

- Underweight + Overweight ● Neutral

↔ No change ↑ Increase ↓ Decrease

# ASSET ALLOCATION

## Equities

US equity allocation overall remains underweight versus the benchmark where valuations remain relatively stretched. Following July's rally in US small caps we are waiting on market dips to present buying opportunities. For now, we continue to have a small overweight position in European equities while remaining positive on UK equities following the election result. Our view on Asia ex-Japan as a whole is unchanged, but on a country level, we trimmed our China exposure given disappointment over the plenum, but still hold an overweight as further stimulus is expected. Meanwhile India exposure was increased, taking it to an overweight position versus the benchmark. Asian markets are very sensitive to falling US interest rates and therefore the markets of the region could be interesting once the Federal Reserve makes a move. In addition, the EMEA region could benefit but for now we remain neutral and the position is marginal.

	Allocation versus the benchmark	Weighting change from last month
North America	–	↔
Europe	+	↔
UK	+	↔
Switzerland	•	↔
Asia ex-Japan	+	↔
China & Hong Kong	+	↓
India	+	↑
Indonesia	+	↑
Korea	+	↓
Malaysia	–	↔
Philippines	+	↑
Taiwan	–	↓
Thailand	–	↔
Other	–	↔
Japan	–	↔
Latin America	•	↔
EMEA	•	↔
Thematic/Global	•	↔

– Underweight + Overweight • Neutral  
 ↔ No change ↑ Increase ↓ Decrease

## Equity Sector Views

### UK

Industrials remains the largest sector overweight within our UK exposure. We took advantage of the de-rating seen across the sector to pick-up high quality companies with resilient earnings at more attractive valuations last year, and have more recently been adding to cyclical areas within the sector as the macroeconomic outlook has continued to improve.

This view has also been a significant contributory factor to our decision to increase our exposure to utilities, given our view that declining bond yields providing support for the sector. Furthermore, regulatory uncertainty has recently taken a back seat with clarity provided over windfall taxes, and earnings will be further supported by the large amount of capex required in grid infrastructure over the coming years needed to meet climate targets.

We also continue to see an opportunity for the outperformance of UK midcaps over the coming quarters, reversing a multi-year period of underperformance through high inflation and interest rates as both of these factors normalise. Information technology has been a sector where we have initiated several new positions recently that fit this theme, and where we have found specialist UK companies trading on attractive valuations in our view backed by strong structural tailwinds.

# ASSET ALLOCATION

## Equity Sector Views (cont.)

### US

The information technology sector continues to be favoured and within it, the risk/reward ratio for the “Magnificent-7” group of tech heavyweights now looks more balanced given their July underperformance. We continue to like secularly growing segments such as public Cloud, digital advertising and life science tools. We favour a neutral position with respect to defensive versus cyclical sector allocation given the carefully balanced market backdrop.

### Europe

We are becoming more constructively positioned in the European equity market, having added to our cyclical and small/mid cap holdings previously, which typically perform well as interest rate cuts come through and economic growth prospects improve. In this regard we recently added capital to our holdings within industrials, materials, financials and energy, whilst reducing our exposure in consumer staples, health care and utilities. Given where we are in the cycle and uncertainty regarding the timing and pace of interest rate cuts, both from the European Central Bank and the Federal Reserve, our preference remains very much on quality orientated stocks.

## Alternatives

Within alternatives we have marginally reduced our commodity exposure, taking it further underweight, with our only exposure being in gold. While there has been a recent pull-back in industrial metals we think that it is still too early to consider this as a buying opportunity, given that the OECD leading indicator has fallen into negative territory and so there may still be further declines. To balance out the moderate decrease in commodities, hedge fund positioning was raised, taking it to a modest overweight. Our overweight in insurance remains unchanged.

	Allocation versus the benchmark	Weighting change from last month
Hedge Fund	+	↑
Private Markets	●	↔
Real Assets	●	↔
Commodity	-	↓
Insurance	+	↔

- Underweight + Overweight ● Neutral  
 ↔ No change ↑ Increase ↓ Decrease

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