

Allocation Insights



MACROECONOMIC OVERVIEW

- Imbalances in the global economy stemming from the effects of the pandemic, China's zero-COVID policy, and the war in Ukraine have led to stubborn inflation and aggressive tightening of monetary policy. This has fueled uncertainty and volatility, but we believe that resolution may be on the horizon for at least some of these imbalances.
- The October consumer price index (CPI) surprised to the downside with prices rising 0.4% in October and 7.7% over the year, a deceleration from September's 8.2% year-over-year increase.
- Federal Reserve (Fed) Chair Jerome Powell, however, said that "it is very premature to be thinking about pausing" rate hikes following the November Fed meeting. The Fed's statement was updated and focused on the lag in which policy impacts the economy, opening the door for an eventual policy "pivot." Fed funds futures are indicating an 80% probability of a 50-basis-point hike in December.
- We believe that inflation will continue to cool into 2023, a drop supported by the impact of Fed tightening and easing of supply chain pressures. We acknowledge that the macroeconomic environment is weakening, but we don't yet forecast a recession in our base case as there continue to be positive forces at work to support the economy.



PORTFOLIO CONSTRUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- Equity markets have rallied in the fourth quarter as a result of a policy "pivot" narrative that's emerged and optimism that inflation may be starting to cool. The narrative revolves around the idea that the Fed will soon slow and eventually pause rate hikes as it assesses the lagging effects of rate hikes.
- Given the uncertainty surrounding the global economy, we do not have a high degree of conviction in the near-term direction of capital markets. We still believe, however, that the S&P 500 will be higher from current levels next year as we find balance on some of the issues mentioned in the first bullet point above.
- Our conviction in our dynamic leanings is more muted than usual as the range of potential outcomes is wider, especially given a cooling economy and numerous geopolitical risks being present. As a result, in our portfolios we remain neutral versus our longer-term strategic asset allocation with a continued focus on quality.
- We remain vigilant and are prepared to take advantage of possible dislocations as we begin to see some of the lagging effects of monetary policy tightening and markets adjust to the unfolding environment.

UNPACKING THE LATEST INFLATION REPORT

Following months of upside surprises on inflation, the October CPI report showed glimpses of easing price pressures, leading to the biggest one-day gain for the S&P 500 in more than two years. What did we learn from the report? Prices for used vehicles, apparel, and household furnishings (~10% of CPI) fell as supply chain pressures ease further and consumers spend more on services. Services (~29% of CPI) showed the first monthly decline since May 2020, led by a drop in medical care services, telephone services, and airline fares. Shelter inflation (~32% of CPI) is still running hot, but we saw a slight deceleration in the pace of price increases, and we expect it to cool further in 2023.






The October CPI report was a step in the right direction, but Chair Jerome Powell said that the Fed wants to see "inflation coming down decisively and good evidence of that would be a series of down monthly readings." The next CPI report is on December 13 followed by the Fed's next monetary policy decision on December 14.

STIFEL

INVESTMENT THEMES

The following table summarizes our thinking across various asset classes and regions.

 Underweight
  Neutral
  Overweight




	ASSET CLASS	CURRENT	COMMENTS
EQUITY	U.S. Equity vs. Non-U.S. Equity		Non-U.S. equity valuations remain attractive relative to the U.S., but we are not compelled to remain overweight given the economic and geopolitical risks stemming from the war in Ukraine and China's zero-COVID policy.
	U.S. Large Cap vs. U.S. Small Cap		We suggest a neutral allocation to small cap companies relative to large caps as higher rates, a shortage of labor, and higher cost pressures pose a challenge for smaller companies, which, while generally more nimble, tend to be more domestically oriented.
	U.S. Large Value vs. U.S. Large Growth		We believe investors should have an allocation to both value and growth styles, with a preference for companies with stable profits and solid financial metrics. Rising rates and higher inflation are conditions that typically benefit the value style while the backdrop of a slowing economy typically favors growth stocks.
	Non-U.S. Developed Markets vs. Emerging Markets		We are neutral within non-U.S. equity between developed and emerging markets, as we find the risks to be balanced between both. Our team is closely following the developments in Europe and China, and we are prepared to act swiftly as we receive further clarity on the macroeconomic outlook.
	Europe vs. Japan		We are increasingly positive on the corporate governance reform in Japan that is likely to enhance shareholder value in the medium-to-long term. Given the highly uncertain environment, we elected to maintain our neutral leaning for the time being.

Continued on next page

INVESTMENT THEMES (CONTINUED)

The following table summarizes our thinking across various asset classes and regions.

 Underweight
  Neutral
  Overweight

	ASSET CLASS	CURRENT	COMMENTS
FIXED INCOME	U.S. Investment Grade vs. U.S. High Yield		Within fixed income, we had been overweight of U.S. high yield relative to U.S. investment grade with the use of active management for almost 24 months. Strong commodity prices have helped many companies shore up their balance sheets. We have moved back to neutral relative to our strategic asset allocation given the rising risk of recession and limited upside potential in the near term.
	Corporates Government/Agency MBS		We recommend a diversified approach to the full spectrum of investment-grade fixed income.
	Duration		We don't expect longer-tenure interest rates to rise much higher from here. We view duration as a diversifier in a multiasset class portfolio and remain neutral to the overall market.
ALTERNATIVES	Private Assets		For investors interested in alternative investments and able to handle illiquidity, exposure to some combination of private equity, private debt, and/or private real estate can be considered as part of a diversified portfolio.
	Hedge Funds		For investors interested in alternative investments and able to handle less liquidity who have conviction about manager skill, exposure to hedge funds can be a helpful part of a diversified portfolio. This is especially true in volatile, low-return environments.

DISCLOSURE

Opinions expressed are subject to change without notice and do not take into account the particular investment objectives, financial situation, or needs of individual investors. There is no guarantee that the figures or opinions forecasted in this report will be realized or achieved. Employees of Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Incorporated or its affiliates may, at times, release written or oral commentary, technical analysis, or trading strategies that differ from the opinions expressed within.

Diversification and asset allocation do not ensure a profit or protect against loss. Investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal. Any data on past performance contained herein is no indication as to future performance. The value of any investment may fluctuate as a result of market changes. The information in this document is not intended to predict actual results, and no assurances are given with respect thereto. The products mentioned in this document may not be suitable for all types of investors.

Led by Stifel Chief Investment Officer Michael O'Keeffe, the Stifel CIO Office is comprised of several investment professionals. The team works collaboratively with other Stifel professionals to develop macroeconomic analysis, market analysis, strategic and tactical asset allocation guidance, applied behavioral finance, and specific investment solutions for advisors and clients.

ASSET CLASS RISK

Bonds – Bonds are subject to market, interest rate, and credit risk. Prices on bonds and other interest rate-sensitive securities will decline as interest rates rise. Municipal bonds may be subject to state and alternative minimum taxes, and capital gains taxes may apply. High yield bonds have greater credit risk than higher quality bonds. Yields and market values will fluctuate, and if sold prior to maturity, bonds may be worth more or less than the original investment.

Equities – Portfolios that emphasize stocks may involve price fluctuations as stock market conditions change. Small and mid capitalization stocks are typically more volatile and carry additional risks, since smaller companies generally are not as well established as larger companies.

International/Global/Emerging Markets – There are special considerations associated with international investing, including the risk of currency fluctuations and political and economic events. Investing in emerging markets may involve greater risk and volatility than investing in more developed countries.

Alternative Investments – Alternative investments involve a high degree of risk, often engage in leveraging and other speculative investment practices that may increase the risk of investment loss, can be highly illiquid, are not required to provide periodic pricing or valuation information to investors, may involve complex tax structures and delays in distributing tax information, are not subject to the same regulatory requirements as more traditional investments, and often charge high fees, which may erode performance. An investment is appropriate only for investors who have the capacity to absorb a loss of some or all of their investment. Alternative investments may include, but are not limited to: Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), Commodities, Futures, and Hedge Funds. **Real Estate** – When investing in real estate companies, property values can fall due to environmental, economic, or other reasons, and changes in interest rates can negatively impact the performance. **Commodities and Futures** – The risk of loss in trading commodities and futures can be substantial. You should therefore carefully consider whether such trading is suitable for you in light of your financial condition. The high degree of leverage that is often obtainable in commodity trading can work against you as well as for you. The use of leverage can lead to large losses as well as gains. **Hedge Funds** – Investors should be aware that hedge funds often engage in leverage, short-selling, arbitrage, hedging, derivatives, and other speculative investment practices that may increase investment loss. Hedge funds can be highly illiquid, are not required to provide periodic pricing or valuation information to investors, and often charge high fees that can erode performance. Additionally, they may involve complex tax structures and delays in distributing tax information. While hedge funds may appear similar to mutual funds, they are not necessarily subject to the same regulatory requirements as mutual funds.

INDEX DESCRIPTIONS

The Russell 3000 Index measures the performance of the 3,000 largest U.S. companies based on total market capitalization, which represents approximately 98% of the investable U.S. equity market. The average market capitalization is approximately \$4 billion, and the median market capitalization is approximately \$700 million.

The Standard & Poor's 500 Index is a capitalization-weighted index that is generally considered representative of the U.S. large capitalization market.

The Standard & Poor's/TSX Composite Index is the benchmark Canadian index, representing roughly 70% of the total market capitalization on the Toronto Stock Exchange with about 250 companies included in it.

The Russell 1000 Index measures the performance of the 1,000 largest companies in the Russell 3000 Index, which measures the performance of the 3,000 largest U.S. companies based on total market capitalization. The average market capitalization is approximately \$11 billion, and the median market capitalization is approximately \$3.5 billion.

The Russell 1000 Growth Index measures the performance of those Russell 1000 index companies with higher price-to-book ratios and higher forecasted growth values.

The Russell 1000 Value Index measures the performance of those Russell 1000 index companies with lower price-to-book ratios and lower forecasted growth values.

The Russell 2000 Index measures the performance of the 2,000 smallest companies in the broader Russell 3000 Index, which measures the performance of the 3,000 largest U.S. companies based on total market capitalization. The average market capitalization is approximately \$490 million, and the median market capitalization is approximately \$395 million.

The Russell 2000 Growth Index measures the performance of those Russell 2000 index companies with higher price-to-book ratios and higher forecasted growth values.

The Russell 2000 Value Index measures the performance of those Russell 2000 index companies with lower price-to-book ratios and lower forecasted growth values.

The Russell Microcap Index is a capitalization-weighted index of 2,000 small cap and micro cap stocks, including the smallest 1,000 companies in the Russell 2000 plus 1,000 smaller U.S. based listed stocks. Over-the-counter stocks and pink sheet securities are excluded.

The MSCI World ex USA All Cap Index captures large, mid, small, and micro cap representation across 22 of 23 Developed Markets (DM) countries (excluding the United States). With 8,138 constituents, the index covers approximately 99% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country.

The MSCI EAFE Index (Europe, Australasia, and the Far East) is a free float-adjusted market capitalization index that is designed to measure the equity market performance of developed markets, excluding the U.S. and Canada.

The MSCI Europe Index is a free float-adjusted market capitalization-weighted index that is designed to measure the equity market performance of the developed markets in Europe.

The MSCI Pacific Index captures large and mid cap representation across five Developed Markets (DM) countries in the Pacific region. With 470 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country.

The MSCI Japan Index is designed to measure the performance of the large and mid cap segments of the Japanese market. With 322 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in Japan.

The MSCI EM (Emerging Markets) Europe, Middle East and Africa Index is a free float-adjusted market

capitalization weighted index that is designed to measure the equity market performance of the emerging market countries of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

The Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index is a broad-based flagship benchmark that measures the investment-grade, U.S. dollar-denominated, fixed-rate taxable bond market. The index includes Treasuries, government-related, and corporate securities, MBS (agency fixed-rate and hybrid ARM pass-throughs), ABS, and CMBS (agency and nonagency). Provided the necessary inclusion rules are met, U.S. Aggregate-eligible securities also contribute to the multicurrency Global Aggregate Index and the U.S. Universal Index, which includes high yield and emerging markets debt.

The Bloomberg U.S. Government/Credit Bond Index is a broad-based flagship benchmark that measures the non-securitized component of the U.S. Aggregate Index. It includes investment-grade, U.S. dollar-denominated, fixed-rate Treasuries, government-related, and corporate securities.

The Bloomberg U.S. Treasury Index measures U.S. dollar-denominated, fixed-rate, nominal debt issued by the U.S. Treasury. Treasury bills are excluded by the maturity constraint, but are part of a separate Short Treasury Index. STRIPS are excluded from the index because their inclusion would result in double-counting. The U.S. Treasury Index is a component of the U.S. Aggregate, U.S. Universal, Global Aggregate, and Global Treasury Indices.

The Bloomberg U.S. Treasury U.S. TIPS index includes all publicly issued, U.S. Treasury inflation-protected securities that have at least one year remaining to maturity, are rated investment grade, and have \$250 million or more of outstanding face value.

The Bloomberg U.S. Municipal Index covers the U.S. dollar-denominated, long-term, tax-exempt bond market. The index has four main sectors: state and local general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, insured bonds, and prerefunded bonds.

The Bloomberg U.S. Credit Index measures the investment-grade, U.S. dollar-denominated, fixed-rate, taxable corporate and government-related bond markets. It is composed of the U.S. Corporate Index and a non-corporate component that includes foreign agencies, sovereigns, supranationals, and local authorities.

The Bloomberg U.S. Corporate High Yield Bond Index measures the U.S. dollar-denominated, high yield, fixed-rate corporate bond market. Securities are classified as high yield if the middle rating of Moody's, Fitch, and S&P is Ba1/BB+/BB+ or below. Bonds from issuers with an emerging markets country of risk, based on Barclays EM country definition, are excluded.

The Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index is a flagship measure of global investment-grade debt from twenty-four local currency markets. This multi-currency benchmark includes treasury, government-related, corporate, and securitized fixed-rate bonds from both developed and emerging markets issuers.

The Bloomberg Emerging Markets Hard Currency Aggregate Index is a flagship hard currency Emerging Markets debt benchmark that includes U.S. dollar-denominated debt from sovereign, quasi-sovereign, and corporate EM issuers.

The Wilshire U.S. REIT Index is a float-adjusted market capitalization-weighted index that measures U.S. publicly traded real estate investment trusts (REITs), excluding mortgage REITs, net-lease REITs, real estate finance companies, home builders, large landowners and sub-dividers, hybrid REITs, and companies that have more than 25% of their assets in direct mortgage investments.

The Wilshire ex U.S. Real Estate Investment Trust IndexSM (Wilshire ex U.S. REIT) measures global publicly traded real estate investment trusts, less all U.S. securities. The Wilshire ex U.S. REIT is a subset of the Wilshire ex U.S. Real Estate Securities IndexSM (Wilshire ex U.S. RESI).

The Wilshire Global REIT Index is a float-adjusted, market capitalization-weighted index that measures global publicly traded real estate investment trusts (REITs), excluding mortgage REITs, net-lease REITs, real estate finance companies, home builders, large landowners and sub-dividers, hybrid REITs, and companies that have more than 25% of their assets in direct mortgage investments.

Bloomberg Commodity Index (BCOM) is calculated on an excess return basis and reflects commodity futures price movements. The index rebalances annually weighted two-thirds by trading volume and one-third by world production, and weight-caps are applied at the commodity, sector, and group level for diversification. Roll period typically occurs from the sixth to the tenth business day based on the roll schedule.

The S&P GSCI Crude Oil Index is a sub-index of the S&P GSCI Commodity Index. The production-weighted index reflects the returns that are potentially available through an unleveraged investment in the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil futures contract.

The Wilshire Liquid Alternative IndexSM measures the collective performance of the five Wilshire Liquid Alternative strategies that make up the Wilshire Liquid Alternative Universe. The Wilshire Liquid Alternative Index (WLIQA) is designed to provide a broad measure of the liquid alternative market by combining the performance of the Wilshire Liquid Alternative Equity Hedge IndexSM (WLIQAEH), Wilshire Liquid Alternative Global Macro IndexSM (WLIQAGM), Wilshire Liquid Alternative Relative Value IndexSM (WLIQARV), Wilshire Liquid Alternative Multi-Strategy IndexSM (WLIQAMS), and Wilshire Liquid Alternative Event Driven IndexSM (WLIQAED).

Indices are unmanaged, do not reflect fees or expenses, and you cannot invest directly in an index.