



# VIEWPOINT

## Newsflash

A new month and the 119<sup>th</sup> issue of Viewpoint from **Financial Partners**.

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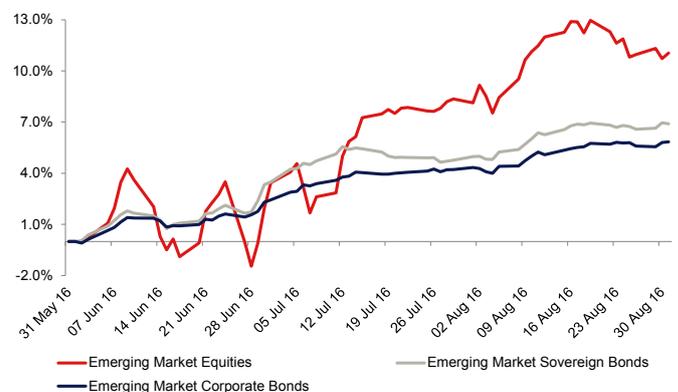
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## Market Commentary

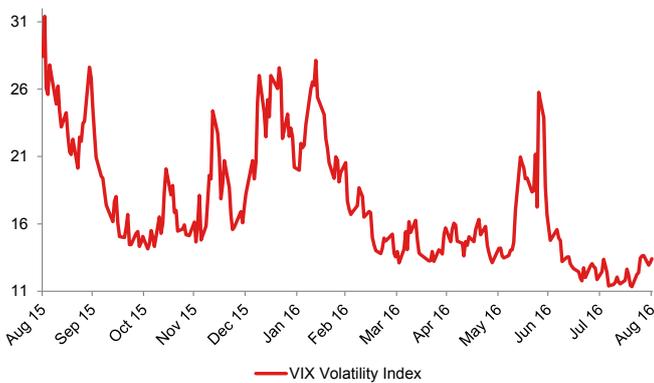
August proved to be a particularly quiet month for markets, with low levels of volatility across equities and bonds, and little by way of significant news flow. Overall the 'risk on' environment of July, post the UK Brexit referendum, broadly continued in August: most equity markets rose modestly higher, with emerging markets leading the way and adding 2.5% in the month. Within developed markets the US inched 0.1% higher while Asia, Japan, the UK and Europe outperformed in local currency terms, returning 3.0%, 1.3%, 1.5% and 1.0% respectively. In dollar terms, returns were held back by the strength of the greenback, one of the more notable features of the month, which rose by 0.5% against a basket of major currencies. Within fixed income, most government markets produced negative returns whereas credit, especially high-yield bonds, and emerging market debt, performed well.

Figure 1: Strong summer for emerging markets



The most significant development was the change in expectations for US interest rate rises. Post Brexit the market had pushed out expectations for the next rate rise by the US Federal Reserve (Fed) to late 2017, but strong July payroll numbers and generally positive data flows from the labour market and economy, together with a series of more hawkish comments from Fed governors and Janet Yellen (saying at her annual Jackson Hole speech that "the rate hike case had strengthened in recent months") all led to a sharp change in the market's view. Over the month the yield on the two year US Treasury increased by 0.15 percentage points to 0.8% and most commentators now anticipate at least one, possibly two, rate rises before year end. The positive data flow and prospect of higher rates also impacted on equity markets, with financials and cyclicals outperforming more defensive stocks. Banks were particularly strong, continuing the recovery from the post Brexit sell-off globally. Over the month European bank shares rose by close to 10% and from the post Brexit lows, bank shares globally recovered by close to 25%.

Figure 2: Twelve month market volatility troughs in August



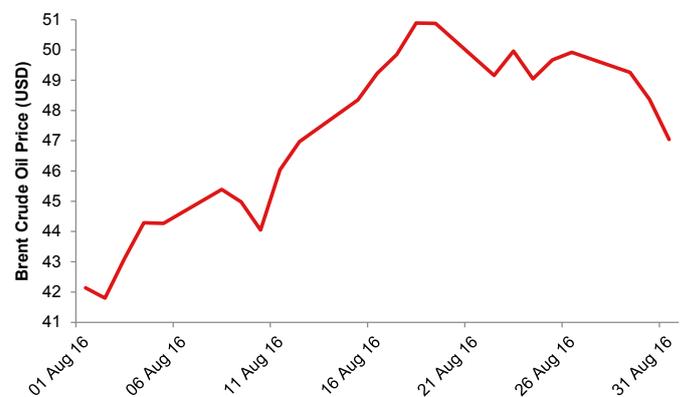
The recovery in UK markets following the immediate post Brexit declines continued through the month and sterling was broadly stable against currencies, other than the US dollar. UK economic data was also reassuring, showing resilient consumer spending and strong retail sales in July. The manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index, which fell sharply in July as businesses worried about the period of uncertainty ahead, bounced back in August,

posting the biggest monthly gain on record. The 11.7% fall in sterling, on a trade weighted basis since the referendum, is undoubtedly helping exporters and supporting confidence, as is the firm resolve of the government under new Prime Minister Theresa May.

In Japan, following the disappointment of last month's underwhelming Bank of Japan (BoJ) and fiscal stimulus packages, which resulted in an unwelcome rise in the yen to JPY 100 to the dollar, Haruhiko Kuroda, Governor of the BoJ, said that he would not hesitate to boost monetary stimulus if needed and that the BoJ has ample space for additional easing measures. The yen finally responded as wished and fell back, helping the equity market to a recovery.

The most volatile moves in markets over the month came in commodities. Gold, after a strong rise this year, fell back by 3.1% as the USD strengthened, and some industrial metals also came under pressure, as well as soft commodities. However the biggest moves came in oil, which initially rallied by over 20% from July lows, in part on the back of rumours of a deal among OPEC and some non-OPEC members to agree on a production curb or freeze at a meeting scheduled for the end of September. However, scepticism about the ability of OPEC to deliver on such a deal, together with increased stockpiles of crude oil in the US, dampened the enthusiasm and the Brent crude oil price fell back to USD 47.04 per barrel, still leaving a rise of 10.8% on the month.

Figure 3: Oil price surge, then falter



The strength in equity and bond markets in the past two months has taken year-to-date returns to 5.0% for global equities, 14.6% for global emerging market equities and 11.2% for government bonds (14.6% for emerging market bonds). At current yields most bonds offer poor value. Almost half of all developed world government bonds offer negative nominal yields, and 75% offer yields of under 1%. They offer no protection against any pick-up in inflation or in short term interest rates and look extremely expensive. Some credit sectors offer better value, while equities are broadly fairly valued, having mostly tracked sideways for the past two years. Given the very considerable uncertainties and headwinds that persist periods of volatility are inevitable and we face the real possibility of a rate rise from the Fed in the next few months, as well as the less likely but not impossible prospect of a Trump presidency. However we continue to see these as an opportunity to accumulate positions and to take advantage of a cycle which is proving to be unusually long and sustainable.

## Market Performance

Asset Class/Region	Index	To 31 August 2016		
		Currency	1 Month	Year to date
<b>Developed markets equities</b>				
United States	S&P 500 NR	USD	0.1%	7.3%
United Kingdom	MSCI UK NR	GBP	1.5%	12.3%
Continental Europe	MSCI Europe ex UK NR	EUR	0.8%	-3.6%
Japan	Topix TR	JPY	0.5%	-13.0%*
Asia Pacific (ex Japan)	MSCI AC Asia Pacific ex Japan NR	USD	2.1%	10.3%
Global	MSCI World NR	USD	0.1%	5.0%
<b>Emerging Market Equities</b>				
Emerging Europe	MSCI EM Europe NR	USD	1.8%	13.1%
Emerging Asia	MSCI EM Asia NR	USD	4.0%	11.5%
Emerging Latin America	MSCI EM Latin America NR	USD	0.7%	33.3%
BRICs	MSCI BRIC NR	USD	4.7%	14.7%
Global Emerging Markets	MSCI EM (Emerging Markets) NR	USD	2.5%	14.5%
<b>Bonds</b>				
US Treasuries	JP Morgan United States Government Bond Index TR	USD	-0.6%	5.6%
US Treasuries (inflation protected)	Barclays Capital U.S. Government Inflation Linked TR	USD	-0.4%	7.2%
US Corporate (investment grade)	Barclays Capital U.S. Corporate Investment Grade TR	USD	0.2%	9.5%
US High Yield	Barclays Capital U.S. High Yield 2% Issuer Cap TR	USD	2.1%	14.4%
UK Gilts	JP Morgan United Kingdom Government Bond Index TR	GBP	2.8%	17.6%
UK Corporate (investment grade)	BofA Merrill Lynch Sterling Non Gilts TR	GBP	3.0%	15.2%
Euro Government Bonds	Citigroup EMU GBI TR	EUR	-0.3%	6.2%
Euro Corporate (investment grade)	Barclays Capital Euro Aggregate Corporate TR	EUR	0.2%	6.1%
Euro High Yield	BofA Merrill Lynch Euro High Yield Constrained TR	EUR	1.6%	7.7%
Japanese Government	JP Morgan Japan Government Bond Index TR	JPY	-1.2%	5.4%
Australian Government	JP Morgan Australia GBI TR	AUD	0.3%	7.4%
Global Government Bonds	JP Morgan Global GBI	USD	-0.8%	10.2%
Global Bonds	Citigroup World Broad Investment Grade (WBIG) TR	USD	-0.5%	8.7%
Global Convertible Bonds	UBS Global Focus Convertible Bond	USD	0.4%	2.3%
Emerging Market Bonds	JP Morgan EMBI+ (Hard currency)	USD	1.8%	15.2%

## Market Performance

Asset Class/Region	Index	To 31 August 2016		
		Currency	1 Month	Year to date
<b>Property</b>				
US Property Securities	MSCI US REIT NR	USD	-3.7%	13.1%
Australian Property Securities	S&P/ASX 200 A-REIT Index TR	AUD	-3.5%	15.6%
Asia Property Securities	S&P Asia Property 40 Index NR	USD	-0.9%	7.0%
Global Property Securities	S&P Global Property USD TR	USD	-2.2%	11.6%
<b>Currencies</b>				
Euro		USD	-0.2%	2.8%
UK Pound Sterling		USD	-0.7%	-10.8%
Japanese Yen		USD	-1.3%	16.3%
Australian Dollar		USD	-1.0%	3.2%
South African Rand		USD	-5.7%	5.0%
<b>Commodities &amp; Alternatives</b>				
Commodities	RICI TR	USD	-0.5%	5.0%
Agricultural Commodities	RICI Agriculture TR	USD	-5.1%	-3.0%
Oil	Brent Crude Oil	USD	10.8%	26.2%
Gold	Gold Spot	USD	-3.1%	23.3%
Hedge funds	HFRX Global Hedge Fund	USD	0.3%*	0.9%*
<b>Interest Rates</b>		<b>Current Rate</b>		
United States			0.50%	
United Kingdom			0.25%	
Eurozone			0.00%	
Japan			-0.10%	
Australia			1.50%	
South Africa			7.00%	

**Asset Allocation Dashboard**
■ Positive    ■ Neutral    ■ Negative

Asset class	View
<b>Equities</b>	
Developed equities	●
UK equities (relative to developed)	●
European equities (relative to developed)	●
US equities (relative to developed)	●
Japan equities (relative to developed)	●
Emerging market equities	●
<b>Fixed Income</b>	
Government	●
Index-linked (relative to government)	●
Investment grade (relative to government)	●
High yield	●
Loans	●
Emerging market debt	●
Convertible bonds	●
<b>Alternatives</b>	
Commodities	●
Property (UK)	●
<b>Currencies</b>	
GBP	●
Euro	●
Yen	●

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