

MI Brewin Dolphin Voyager Fund Range

Quarterly report – Q4 2024
Annual report – 2024



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Introduction

The U.S. economy was a bright spot in 2024, with households continuing to spend and incomes rising. In contrast, China's economy was weak, with a decline in property prices and low consumer spending. The UK economy grew modestly, hampered by high government debt and households grappling with inflation. The global economy was marked by political change, with over 100 countries holding elections and many incumbent governments being dismissed.

In the UK, the new Labour government announced a budget that included tax increases and borrowing, which is expected to fuel inflation which could hamper economic growth. In mainland Europe, France and Germany experienced political instability, with early elections and changes in government.

The U.S. elections saw President-elect Donald Trump's victory and a surprise sweep for the Republicans in both legislative chambers (the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives), albeit with a narrow majority. This was cheered by the stock market, but bonds weakened towards the end of the year.

The Republican Congress is expected to cut taxes, but this might be challenging given the large federal budget deficit. The regulatory environment is expected to be lighter under a second Trump presidency, which could benefit U.S. financials.

The technology and communication services sectors performed well in 2024, driven by the increased investment in artificial intelligence (AI). Gold had a strong year, due to its limited supply and attractiveness as a store of value. Economists are sceptical that President-elect Trump's policies will increase economic growth, but the market is focusing on the easier regulatory environment that can be implemented without Congressional input.

Market overview Q4 2024

- The fourth quarter saw gold returning 5.8%, whilst globally, commercial property declined by 3.3%.
- Equity markets were mixed. North America stood out with a strong return of 9.8%. Japan also performed well, returning 2.8%. However, Developed Europe ex UK and Developed Asia ex Japan saw significant declines, slipping -3.7% and -1.8%, respectively.
- The UK and Emerging markets were also soft, with returns of -0.4% and -0.9%, respectively. Cash delivered a positive return in the higher rate environment.
- Bonds fared poorly. Global Inflation Linked and UK Sovereign Bonds underperformed, returning -2.9% and -3.1%, respectively. Global Corporate Bonds and Global Sovereign Bonds also declined, but to a lesser extent, with returns of -1.5% and -1.8%, respectively.

Voyager performance

Voyager performance								
	Q4	2024 YTD	1yr	2yr	3yr	2023	2022	2021
Voyager 40%	0.2	6.1	6.1	13.2	0.7	6.7	-11.0	3.5
Voyager 60%	1.4	8.7	8.7	17.0	5.2	7.6	-10.1	6.5
Voyager 70%	2.1	10.3	10.3	19.4	8.0	8.3	-9.6	8.6
Voyager 80%	2.8	11.5	11.5	21.4	9.6	8.9	-9.7	10.6
Voyager 90%	3.7	13.5	13.5	23.9	11.6	9.2	-9.9	13.5
Voyager 100% ¹	4.7	15.7	15.7	27.2	15.5	9.9	-9.2	N/A

(1) Inception Date of 15/09/2021.

All figures shown above are calculated to 31 December 2024.

Performance Calculation: All income is reinvested. Performance is shown inclusive of underlying fund charges but gross of RBC Brewin Dolphin's investment management charge. Deduction of this charge will have the result of reducing the illustrated performance. Neither simulated nor actual past performance are reliable indicators of future performance.

Voyager performance highlights Q4 2024



Asset allocation

What worked and why?

Portfolios benefitted from the overweight position to U.S. equities, which performed well in the hopes of lighter regulation under a new U.S. president. The underweight to European equities over a period of economic weakness was helpful. Gold also helped to drive portfolios higher.

What didn't work and why?

An overweight position to sovereign bonds was a detractor, but much of the drag was offset by an underweight position to corporate bonds, which also declined.

Fund selection

What worked and why?

In the U.S., the high-growth Baillie Gifford American strategy rose almost 20%, outperforming the broader U.S. equity market, which rose almost 10% (in sterling terms). Redwheel UK Equity Income, CT UK Equity Income, and Lindsell Train outperformed as positive earnings and takeovers were announced.

Among bonds, the Man GLG Sterling Corporate strategy demonstrated its resilience, rising 0.7% whilst many bond funds fell. The SCOR Catbond fund, which provides insurance against earthquakes and wind events, had another strong quarter despite major storms in the U.S.

What didn't work and why?

U.S. value strategies such as BNY Mellon U.S. Equity Income and DWS US Value struggled over the quarter. Teviot UK Smaller Companies fell as markets digested the impact of the new budget on UK firms with low market capitalisations. Schroder Global Cities struggled over the quarter as the possibility of inflation remaining higher dampened interest in the commercial property sector.

The value of investments can fall and you may get back less than you invested.

Voyager portfolio changes Q4 2024

Asset allocation

The Asset Allocation Committee increased the exposure to Asia ex Japan in October, funded by a reduction in our UK equity allocation, and further reduced our corporate bond allocation in favour of sovereign bonds. We also increased the allocation to gold, funded by a reduction in cash.

Following the U.S. presidential election in November, we reduced our European equity allocation by 2% and increased our US equity allocation by 2%, given the potential negative impacts of trade tariffs on European economies.

Fund selection

In Q4, we increased our gold allocation and reduced corporate bond strategies in favour of sovereign bonds.

We also made changes to Asia and Emerging markets exposure, replacing the Fidelity Emerging Markets fund with the JPM Emerging Markets Income fund, and removing the Fidelity Asia and BNY Mellon Asian Income funds. We added or increased Invesco Perpetual Asian, Morgan Stanley Asia Opportunity, and Stewart Asia Pacific Leaders, which our analysts now prefer.

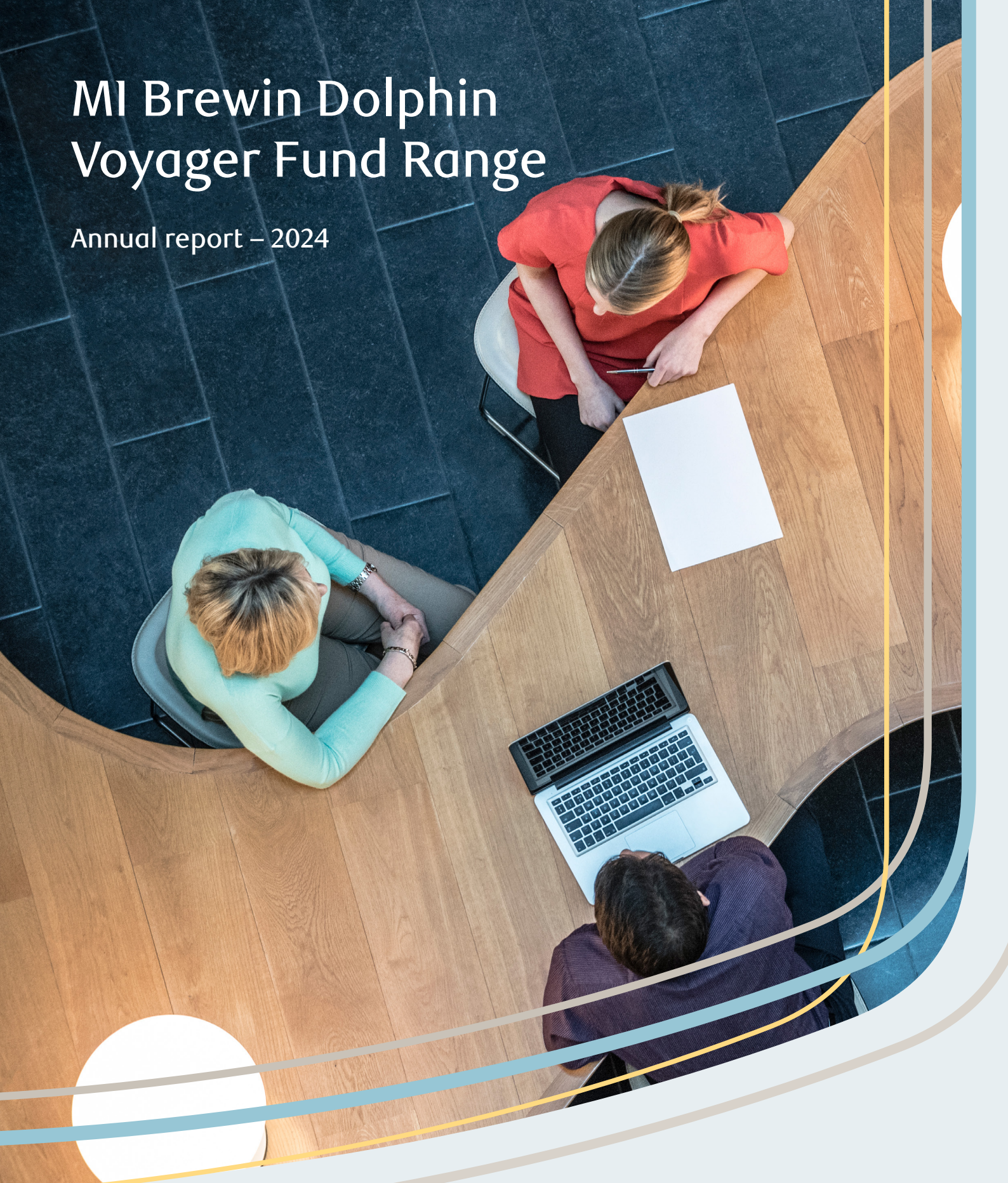
MI Select Manager fund weights

MISM fund weights			
Date	MISM Fund	Mandate	Weight (%)
31/12/2024	MI Select Managers Bond Instl Inc	BNY Mellon Gilt	27
		Colchester Global Bond	24
		Robeco Global Credits	19
		DWS US TIPS	16
		Man GLG Sterling Corporate Bond	14
31/12/2024	MI Select Managers NA Equity Instl Inc	DWS US Quality Growth	30
		Brown Advisory US Sust Growth	25
		BNY Mellon US Equity Income	20
		DWS US Value	20
		Baillie Gifford American	5
31/12/2024	MI Select Managers UK Equity Income	Ninety One UK Equity Income	42
		Man GLG UK Equity Income	40
		CT UK Equity Income	18
31/12/2024	MI Select Managers UK Equity	JPM UK Equity Core	32
		Redwheel UK Equity Income	30
		Lindsell Train UK Equity	29
		Teviot UK Smaller Companies	9
31/12/2024	MI Select Managers Alternatives	Commodities and other alternatives	54
		Schroder Global Cities	22
		Muzinich Global Tactical Credit	16
		Absolute Return funds	8

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Annual report – 2024



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Voyager annual market overview 2024

- Generally, 2024 was a good year for investors with gold and U.S. equities the standout performers, rising 27.3% and 26.3% respectively. Other asset classes also put in respectable performances, with commercial property and absolute return rising 4.2% and 4.7%, respectively.
- Bonds were more mixed. Global Corporate Bonds performed well with a return of 3.6%, whilst UK Sovereign Bonds fell -3.4%.
- As noted above, North America was the standout equity market, followed by Japan at 10.1% and the UK at 9.5%. Developed Asia ex Japan returned 11.8%, while Developed Europe ex UK saw a relatively modest return of 2.2%. Emerging markets, however, experienced a decline of -5.3% as the Chinese economy languished.
- Cash delivered positive returns in the higher interest rate environment.

Voyager performance highlights 2024



Asset allocation

What worked and why?

Overweight positions to U.S. equities and gold were positive in a year when they were the star performers, rising over 25%. An underweight to absolute return was also beneficial during a year when this part of the benchmark made more modest gains.

Fund selection

What worked and why?

In the U.S., the high-growth Baillie Gifford American strategy outperformed the broader U.S. equity market for the second year in a row. The UK equity income strategy from Redwheel has returned over double the UK benchmark, which itself was up over 9%. The sterling corporate strategy bond from Man GLG has outperformed significantly. The SCOR Catbond fund, which provides insurance against earthquakes and wind events, had another strong year despite major storms in the U.S.



What didn't work and why?

An overweight position to sovereign bonds was a detractor but much of the drag was offset by an underweight position to corporate bonds.

What didn't work and why?

In the U.S., value strategies such as BNY Mellon US Equity Income and DWS US Value struggled this year. These strategies emphasise companies that are keenly priced in a year when tech companies drove the market higher, as investors paid more attention to the possibilities of future growth rather than the price being paid. Value strategies could do well if market sentiment were to turn, however.

The value of investments can fall and you may get back less than you invested.

Voyager portfolio changes 2024

Asset allocation change highlights

In Q1, the Asset Allocation Committee made several changes to our tactical guidance. In February, we increased the allocation to U.S. equity and global property by 0.5% each, funded by reductions in cash and Absolute Return. In March, we raised the allocation to non-U.S. equity regions to neutral, while maintaining a positive stance on U.S. equities, again funded by a reduction in Absolute Return exposure.

In Q2, we made further changes. In April, we increased the allocation to U.S. equity by a further 0.5% and reduced cash. We also took advantage of weakness in the gold price to move overweight, funded by a reduction in global index-linked bonds. Additionally, we moved overweight on UK equities due to the improved economic backdrop, funded by reducing the cash allocation.

In Q3, we advised for no tactical changes, maintaining our overweight position in sovereign bonds and underweight position in corporate bonds. We believed that the overweight position in sovereign bonds was appropriate ahead of the forthcoming interest rate cutting cycle, and that corporate bonds did not provide adequate compensation for the level of risk.

In Q4, we made several changes. We increased our exposure to Asia ex Japan, funded by a reduction in UK equity, and further reduced our corporate bond allocation in favour of sovereign bonds. We also increased our allocation to gold, funded by a reduction in cash. Following the U.S. presidential election, we reduced our European equity allocation by 2% and increased our U.S. equity allocation by 2%, given the potential negative impacts of trade tariffs on European economies.

Fund change highlights

In Q1, we made several changes to portfolios. We replaced the Man GLG Japan Core Alpha fund with M&G Japan, as the market environment in Japan has changed, with inflation finally taking hold after decades of deflation. We also decreased cash, increased U.S. funds, and added to global property through Schroder Global Cities. Additionally, we increased non-U.S. equities and reduced Absolute Return strategies.

In Q2, we continued to refine our U.S. equity exposure by reducing the Vanguard US Equity Index fund and increasing U.S. Quality Growth exposure within the MI Select Managers North American fund. We also replaced the Baillie Gifford Japanese fund with M&G Japan, increased our allocation to gold and reduced U.S. TIPS (Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities). We reduced cash to increase exposure to top UK equity fund managers.

In Q3, we added the One River Risk Responders strategy to the MI Select Managers Alternatives fund to provide diversification and protection in case of a sharp equity market sell-off. We also increased the allocation to infrastructure investment trusts and the Teviot UK Smaller Companies strategy.

In Q4, we increased our gold allocation and reduced corporate bond strategies in favour of sovereign bonds. We also made changes to Asia and Emerging Markets exposure, replacing Fidelity Emerging Markets fund with the JPM Emerging Markets Income fund, and removing the Fidelity Asia and BNY Mellon Asian Income funds. We added or increased Invesco Perpetual Asian, Morgan Stanley Asia Opportunity, and Stewart Asia Pacific Leaders, which our analysts now prefer.

Asset Allocation Committee investment outlook

These views are implemented across our portfolios but there may be deviations where asset classes or suitable investments are unavailable or excluded.

Cash

Although cash continues to offer a decent yield, we are underweight. We see continued scope for equity market gains, and gold to move higher.

Bonds

Government bond yields tend to move in a directionally similar fashion as central bank rate expectations. In the U.S., the market is currently pricing in 85 basis points of Federal Reserve (the Fed) rate cuts by this time next year. In the UK, market implied expectations are for 78 basis points in cuts. Our base case is that both the U.S. and UK experience decent economic growth over the next year. Our expectation is that inflation continues to slowly subside, but that there will be an element of stickiness. As such, we doubt central banks will reduce rates by more than what's already priced in. The upshot is that in this scenario, government bond prices probably don't have much upside. Nevertheless, we remain overweight, offsetting this with an underweight position in corporate bonds, where spreads are very tight. This positioning provides a hedge to our equity overweight if economic growth disappoints.

Global Equities

We expect the global economy to continue to expand, which is consistent with corporate profits going up. We also believe there's the potential for artificial intelligence (AI) themes to drive both strong economy-wide productivity and solid profit gains among the pick and shovel plays. There's a lot of momentum behind the stock market, and we believe it makes sense to stay on the right side of the trend. However, it doesn't appear to be a great time to raise our exposure further. For one, there's limited room for cyclical economic growth. With most economies close to full employment and high labour force participation, there isn't much scope for workers on the sidelines to get a job, earn an income, and increase aggregate consumption. Meanwhile, equity sentiment is bullish, with the dominant market emotion being one of 'greed' rather than 'fear'. The implication is that a lot of good news is already in the price. Finally, U.S. equity valuations are unappealing. Valuations don't work as a good predictor of medium-term returns, but eventually, the medium term becomes the long term. As such, we maintain only a modest global equity overweight.

Alternatives

Gold has corrected from overbought territory following the U.S. election. Looking ahead, there are both cyclical and structural factors supporting gold. These include the scope for real bond yields to continue to decline, and central banks diversifying their reserve holdings out of the U.S. dollar and other developed world currencies. Gold also acts as a good hedge against several risks. Turning to property, while fundamentals are challenging in the office space, the market cap weighting of this subsector is small. The backdrop is notably brighter in other REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) subsectors. We maintain a neutral position.

→ UK Equities

UK relative performance should continue to be closely linked to value versus growth style performance, and there are reasons to believe the outlook for the latter remains brighter. However, some diversification into the value plays that the UK is so heavily weighted in makes sense at this stage, in our view. Although the domestic economic outlook is less important for UK equity relative performance given its high international exposure, it still matters. Indeed, there's a positive relationship between the performance of UK versus global gross domestic product and UK versus global equity performance. We suspect Labour will have some success in boosting economic growth. However, the pathway to success isn't guaranteed. The UK equity market trades on very undemanding valuation multiples.

↑ U.S. Equities

A key concern with regards to U.S. equity exposure relates to valuation. Equity valuation multiples and the valuation of the dollar both appear stretched. Nevertheless, we're more optimistic on U.S. equities than other regions. The secular outlook appears relatively bright for the technology stocks the U.S. is so heavily weighted in. The main upside risk for the global equity market over the next few years is if an 'AI boom' scenario unfolds. With the Fed now cutting rates, a weaker version of the second half of the 1990s is a possibility this cycle. Back then, excitement linked to the growth of the internet drove gains. This cycle, AI could be the driver. Following November's presidential election victory of Donald Trump, we've boosted our U.S. equity exposure. In a trade war, the country with the trade deficit stands to win most (or lose the least), and the U.S. runs trade deficits against many countries. Trump's trade policies give the U.S. a better chance of maintaining its growth advantage versus the rest of the world. Relatively strong growth could boost the U.S. dollar, providing support to U.S. equity relative performance in common currency terms. In the event of a global trade war, the U.S. might also benefit from its relatively defensive sector composition.

↓ Europe ex-UK Equities

We remain underweight Europe ex UK. The European Union (EU) will be in Trump's sights given its big trade surplus versus the U.S. The EU also has additional growth headwinds coming from its two biggest economies. In France, the new government has just collapsed, and political uncertainty is high. The next government will be confronted with the same fiscal reality and will likely be forced to take steps to reduce the deficit, which should weigh on growth. Germany continues to struggle, with its automobile companies under pressure from cheap Chinese electric vehicles. More broadly, its export sector is under pressure due to weak Chinese domestic demand.

↑ Japan

There's momentum behind shareholder-friendly reform in Japan, which could help drive a further expansion in relatively depressed price-to-book multiples. However, demographics amount to a major structural headwind for Japanese equity relative performance. Meanwhile, with the unemployment rate low and labour force participation high, Japan doesn't have much scope to put idle economic resources to work to drive cyclical growth. Despite low price-to-book multiples, Japan doesn't stand out as cheap, in our view. Indeed, it trades at a premium to the world ex U.S. market on 12-month forward price/earnings.

Asia ex-Japan Equities

The Chinese authorities appear to be taking the deflation risk more seriously. To successfully boost inflation, the authorities will try to stoke demand growth. The combination of higher inflation, stronger growth and declining real interest rates is a supportive backdrop for equities. The Chinese housing market remains weak, but the authorities are incentivised to drive an improvement as soon as possible. Given that over 90% of the Chinese population own their own home, they'd be risking a breakdown in social instability (who they're very keen to avoid) if house prices decline much further. China and Hong Kong equities appear oversold on a medium-term time horizon. We acknowledge that the change in tack by the authorities doesn't alter the fact that the structural headwinds leaning against China haven't gone away. However, there are structural bright spots in the Asia ex Japan equity index, including India and Taiwan.

Emerging Markets ex-Asia

Brazil, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates are the countries with the highest market cap weightings in the EM ex Asia equity index, making it very commodity exposed. We don't expect much upside to commodity prices in an environment where global growth is slowing. That said, EM ex Asia remains very cheaply valued.



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