

THE SHORT AND LONG

Weekly Bulletin

Growth holds, inflation builds, markets recalibrate

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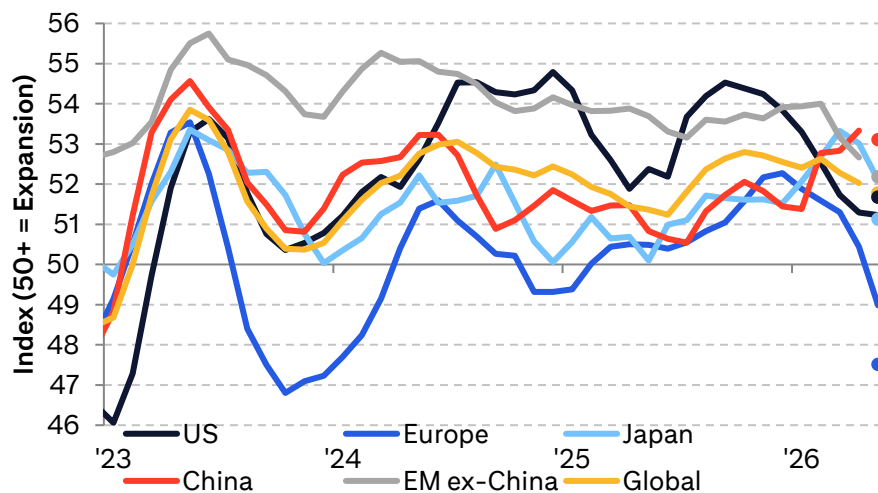
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TAKEAWAYS

- The global economy is still expanding, and recession is not our base case. The gap between consumer sentiment and consumer behavior bears watching, but we do not see evidence yet of a meaningful shift in activity.
- Bond market volatility is running hotter than equity volatility, and the direction of the global rate repricing points toward tighter conditions. We remain underweight duration and see limited near-term upside in the asset class.
- S&P 500 earnings are materially outperforming earlier projections, and the upward revision cycle is ongoing. We maintain our overweight to U.S. large caps and see the fundamental case for equities as distinct from the macro headwinds pressuring rates and consumer confidence.

This week in charts

FIGURE 1: Most regions' PMIs still indicate economic expansion
3-month average with dot for latest print



Source: Haver Analytics as of May 25, 2026. Regions are using their respective S&P PMI. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees, or sales charges, which would lower performance. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary.

Looking closer

With Europe as an exception, global Purchasing Managers' Indices (PMIs) remain above 50, indicating that we are still in an economic expansion. Despite slower growth resulting from higher energy prices, we think a near-term contraction is unlikely.

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Macro expansion continues, but consumer confidence flashes a potential warning

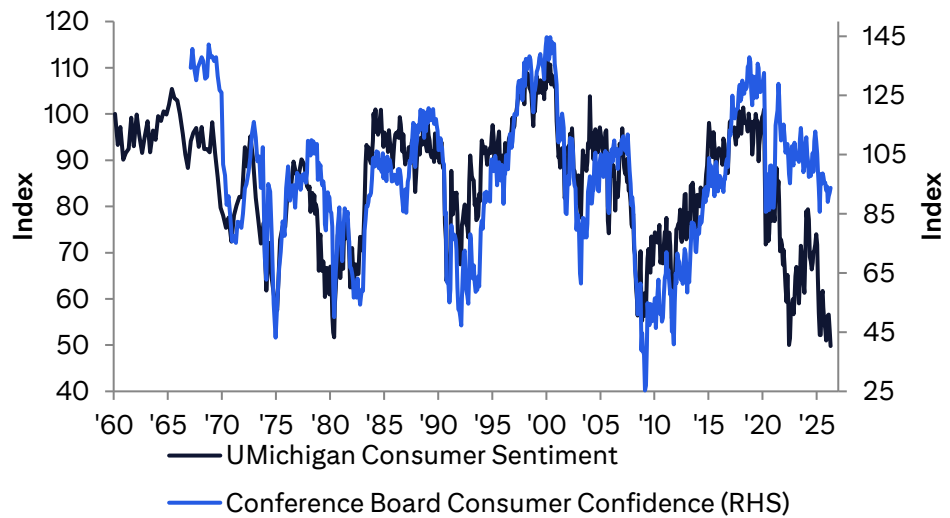
Global growth remains on solid footing. With Europe as an exception, PMIs across major economies currently sit above 50, signaling expansion rather than contraction (Figure 1). While some indicators have softened since the beginning of the year, the data does not support the recession fears that have grown louder heading into the second half of 2026.

Higher energy prices will likely feed through the economy, and we are watching the secondary and tertiary effects carefully. The boost to consumer goods prices and drag on overall activity is real, but it does not alter our fundamental view that the global economy, and the U.S. economy in particular, remains in solid shape.

A signal worth watching closely is consumer sentiment. The University of Michigan survey released last week registered its lowest reading on record. That is a striking data point, and we are not dismissing it. Yet, as of now, actual consumer behavior has not followed. There remains a disconnect between how consumers feel and how they act.

Our read on this data is much of the decline in sentiment reflects the impact of inflation on personal finances. This view is supported by the more constructive picture painted by Conference Board consumer confidence, which places a higher weight on the labor market than assessments of personal finances (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: Consumer sentiment plummets but confidence holds



Source: Haver Analytics as of May 22, 2026. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees, or sales charges, which would lower performance. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary.

We are watching for any signs of demand being pulled forward as households and businesses try to get ahead of anticipated price increases. For now, capital expenditure and consumer activity remain strong. The risk is that a sharper inflation move causes a pause in that trajectory.

Bottom line: The global economy is still expanding, and recession is not our base case. The gap between consumer sentiment and consumer behavior bears watching, but we do not see evidence yet of a meaningful shift in activity.

Bond market volatility reflects a world repricing for higher for longer

Bond market volatility has been the defining feature of financial markets this year, and it has been significantly more intense than equity volatility. The MOVE Index¹ captures this in fixed income the way the VIX² does in equities, and it is telling us that the market is in the middle of a substantial repricing of rate expectations.

At the start of 2026, the consensus assumed rate cuts across most major central banks. That consensus view is now unwinding. Expectations have shifted toward tightening or, at minimum, extended holds, for most developed market central banks. The Fed presents a somewhat distinct case given its dual mandate, but even there, the direction of the repricing is clear.

Three structural forces are pushing yields higher. First, central banks face persistent and broadening inflation that limits their ability to ease. Second, fiscal spending is rising across major governments as they respond to geopolitical disruption, supply chain security needs, and defense requirements. Third, the shock of three major global disruptions over the past six years has prompted a sustained policy response that keeps spending elevated. Together, these forces create persistent upward pressure on bond yields.

The energy disruption compounds this. Even if the Strait of Hormuz were to reopen tomorrow, restoring the roughly 14 million barrels per day currently offline would likely take months. Vessel insurance costs, inventory rebuilding, and logistical bottlenecks do not resolve quickly either.

We remain underweight duration and reduced Emerging Market (EM) debt exposure in favor of short duration US fixed income exposure at the beginning of the conflict. We expect to maintain that bias.

Bottom line: Bond market volatility is running hotter than equity volatility, and the direction of the global rate repricing points toward tighter conditions.

Earnings strength justifies overweight to U.S. large caps

Q1 S&P 500 earnings came in at 27% year-over-year growth, well above the 14% projection. The outperformance was broad, but the clearest driver was Technology and Technology-adjacent companies, where momentum exceeded even our bullish expectations.

With most reporting now complete, forward estimates have moved higher again. Next twelve months (NTM) earnings per share (EPS) revision year-to-date (YTD) are up over 14% and net margins for U.S. large caps stand at 15%, roughly three times the level of small-cap peers (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: U.S. stocks look strong on earnings revisions, margins, and interest coverage.

	NTM EPS YTD Revision	Net Margin	Interest Coverage Ratio
S&P 500	14.5%	15.2%	8.7
Russell 2000	6.5%	4.6%	1.4
Europe	7.1%	11.4%	5.4
Japan	7.3%	8.3%	8.6
Developed Markets ex-US	7.4%	11.0%	5.9
China	1.4%	10.9%	7.6
Emerging Markets	37.3%	15.7%	7.1

Source: Bloomberg as of May 25, 2026. Regions are using their respective MSCI indices as proxy. NTM EPS YTD stands for next twelve months earnings per share year-to-date. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees or sales charges, which would lower performance. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary.

¹The MOVE Index (Merrill Lynch Option Volatility Estimate) tracks market expectations for short-term fluctuations in U.S. Treasury yields.

²The VIX, or CBOE Volatility Index, measures the market's expected volatility over the next 30 days.

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Small caps present a different picture. They generally carry less pricing power, more sensitivity to input costs, and greater exposure to rate-sensitive financing. If portfolio positioning in 2026 assumed small caps would outperform as rates came down, we believe that thesis faces significant headwinds. Combined with weaker fundamentals than U.S. large caps, even holding rates steady at current levels removes the tailwind for the small cap thesis.

The strong earnings trajectory has also produced multiple compression among the market's strongest companies, which we believe changes the valuation conversation. With EPS expected to grow 23% in 2026, price-to-earnings multiples are contracting even as prices move. That dynamic supports the case for staying long risk assets in U.S. large caps.

Bottom line: S&P 500 earnings are materially outperforming earlier projections, and the upward revision cycle is ongoing. We maintain our overweight to U.S. large caps and see the fundamental case for equities as distinct from the macro headwinds pressuring rates and consumer confidence.

What happened

What's ahead

ECONOMIC DATA

U.S.

- Flash May PMI Manufacturing 55.3, highest since May 2022; Services 50.9, sluggish and on pace for weakest quarter since late 2023; input costs and selling prices highest since 2022
- Initial claims 209K, labor market remains firm; Philly Fed -0.4, lowest since December 2025, with new orders plunging to -1.7 from 33.0

Global

- Japan CPI April undershot: headline +1.4%, core +1.9%.
- UK retail sales April = -0.4% ex-fuel

U.S.

- PCE prices for April
- Q1 GDP/profits

Global

- Germany's flash CPI, Tokyo CPI
- China NBS PMI

POLICY

U.S.

- April FOMC minutes leaned hawkish: majority saw policy firming "likely appropriate" if inflation persists above 2% with three dissents around easing bias.
- Fed funds pricing now implies 22bp+ in hikes through year-end.

Global

- Iran deal narrative "hopeful but unresolved": gaps narrowed on key issues, but broad divide remains with Trump pushed back firmly on permanent Hormuz tolling.
- China imposed incremental restrictions on fentanyl-linked chemical exports in a sign of fresh cooperation.

U.S.

- Governors Waller, Bowman, Barr, Cook, and region Fed presidents speaking at various conferences.

Global

- ECB's monetary policy meeting accounts
- OPEC ministerial meeting
- RBA minutes
- Bank of Korea policy meeting

MARKETS

U.S.

- S&P 500 on pace for eighth consecutive weekly gain despite multi-decade highs in long-end yields: 10Y UST yields pushed as high as 4.68%; 30Y hit 5.19%.

Global

- Global equity volatility picked up as yields rose on inflation and Middle East conflict headlines. Some easing in yields eventually allowed stocks to recover.

U.S.

- 2yr, 5yr, 7yr Treasury auctions

Global

- 40yr JGB auction

Source: Bloomberg as of May 27, 2026. Indices are unmanaged. An investor cannot invest directly in an index. They are shown for illustrative purposes only and do not represent the performance of any specific investment. Index returns do not include any expenses, fees or sales charges, which would lower performance. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Real results may vary.

RELATED READING

[May 19, 2026 | Overheating Signals Call for Resilient Portfolio Positioning](#)

In last week's Bulletin, we looked at how earnings strength in the U.S. remains a sustainable driver of equity returns. We also analyzed why we continue to favor gold and natural resources as potential portfolio diversifiers suited to the current overheating regime, and our view of both as long-term allocations rather than near-term trades.

[April 20, 2026 | The Short and Long Podcast](#)

Hosted by Kate Moore, Chief Investment Officer of Citi Wealth, the inaugural episode “AI Through an Investor’s Lens: Looking Beyond the Hype” addresses AI – the most transformative technology of our lifetime. Watch on [YouTube](#), [Apple](#), or [Spotify](#), and subscribe for future episodes.

[April 8, 2026 | The Short and Long: Q2 Macro Investment View](#)

Citi Wealth’s quarterly report is designed to offer global, data-driven guidance to help investors navigate increasingly complex markets with confidence and clarity. The latest report states global shocks to markets are driving higher volatility and rapid risk repricing, while the U.S. economy remains relatively resilient.

[April 2, 2026 | Global Investment Council](#)

The Citi Wealth Global Investment Council met April 2, 2026, and reallocated equity exposure from Europe to the U.S. The move maintains equity allocation while shifting risk toward more resilient markets. European fundamentals were already weakening prior to the Middle East conflict, and the U.S. offers more durable earnings with less geopolitical vulnerability.

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Credit risk	Moody's ¹	Standard and Poor's ²	Fitch Rating ²
Investment Grade			
Highest quality	Aaa	AAA	AAA
High quality (very strong)	Aa	AA	AA
Upper medium grade (Strong)	A	A	A
Medium grade	Baa	BBB	BBB
Not Investment Grade			
Lower medium grade (somewhat speculative)	Ba	BB	BB
Low grade (speculative)	B	B	B
Poor quality (may default)	Caa	CCC	CCC
Most speculative	Ca	CC	CC
No interest being paid or bankruptcy petition filed	C	D	C
In default	C	D	D

¹ The ratings from Aa to Ca by Moody's may be modified by the addition of a 1, 2, or 3, to show relative standing within the category.

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- lack of liquidity in that there may be no secondary market for the fund and none is expected to develop;
- volatility of returns;
- restrictions on transferring interests in the Fund;
- potential lack of diversification and resulting higher risk due to concentration of trading authority when a single advisor is utilized;
- absence of information regarding valuations and pricing;
- complex tax structures and delays in tax reporting;
- less regulation and higher fees than mutual funds; and
- manager risk.

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