

CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICE

Capital Market Outlook

August 23, 2021

All data, projections and opinions are as of the date of this report and subject to change.

IN THIS ISSUE

Macro Strategy—According to the latest National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) survey, the U.S. labor market is the tightest since the monthly survey began in 1986. The single most important problem reported in July was finding qualified applicants for job openings. The tight labor market is also apparent in the surge in unfilled job openings reported by the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), which exceeded 10 million (private and public sector) for the first time ever. With demand for labor exceeding supply by an ever-widening margin, we believe it's time for the Federal Reserve (Fed) to taper.

Global Market View—Our key drivers for asset prices will be economic resilience, higher-than-anticipated inflation and additional fiscal stimulus. We favor remaining invested in U.S. equities, consider re-engaging with Value stocks, and be on the lookout for rebalancing opportunities as interest rates rise.

Thought of the Week—Congress is inching closer to enacting another part of the president's agenda, this time on a party-line vote. Due to divisions among Democrats, it will not be easy. This may serve as an appetizer for the next course: addressing the debt ceiling.

Portfolio Considerations—We believe the ultimate trend for Equities is still positive but with occasional bouts of weakness, which should provide investors with potential opportunities to rebalance portfolios; look to add to underweight positions in Equities or increase exposure as cash builds.

MACRO STRATEGY

Time to Taper

Chief Investment Office, Macro Strategy Team

As noted in our report last week, the July consumer price index (CPI) shows inflation in the U.S. is running at a 7.1% pace year-to-date (YTD), the highest seven-month inflation rate since 1982, and is still accelerating. Indeed, pipeline pressures continue to build for higher future inflation, with the producer price index for final demand accelerating to an 11% pace YTD. Prices of processed goods for intermediate demand accelerated to the highest rate since 1975.

Despite clear signs that inflation continues to gain momentum, consensus economists remain well behind the curve in their inflation outlook. In January, the Blue Chip Economic

MACRO STRATEGY

**Chief Investment Office
Macro Strategy Team**

GLOBAL MARKET VIEW

Niladri Mukherjee
Managing Director and Head of CIO
Portfolio Strategy

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

**Chief Investment Office
National Wealth Strategies Team**

**Data as of 8/23/2021,
and subject to change**

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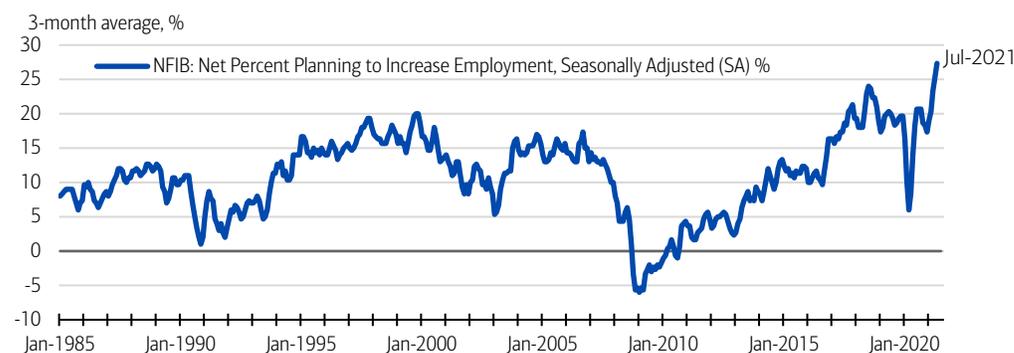
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Indicators consensus outlook for CPI in 2021 was for a 2% rise. Every month since then, that forecast has been adjusted higher, and in August, it reached 4%. Still, despite doubling since the beginning of the year, the 4% consensus CPI forecast for 2021 remains dramatically behind the actual CPI performance to date (+7.1%), with little sign of the sharp deceleration that would bring it down to 4% by year-end. Indeed, as noted above, pipeline pressures and other leading indicators of inflation have pointed to accelerating, not decelerating, inflation ahead.

The Fed has looked the other way, while consensus economists have embraced its “transitory” inflation narrative. The U.S. central bank has deflected attention from the worst inflation in 40 years, focusing instead on its goal of achieving “substantial further progress” in the labor market. However, the latest NFIB survey of the small and medium-sized businesses that create most of the jobs in the U.S. economy already finds the tightest labor market conditions in the history of its monthly survey, which dates back about 35 years.

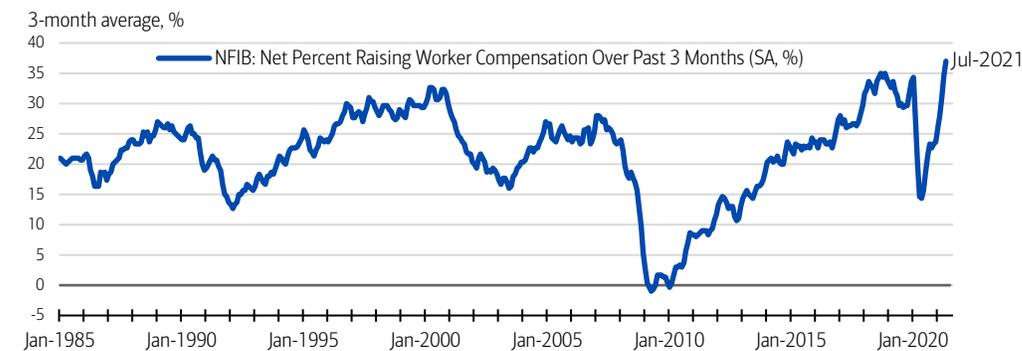
First of all, looking at averages of the past three months, the survey finds a record-high percentage of respondents planning to increase employment (Exhibit 1). The fact that the survey shows the strongest labor demand in its history is not surprising, as the JOLTS also finds a record number of unfilled job openings in the economy. As would be expected given the unprecedented need for more workers, a record percentage of NFIB survey respondents raised worker compensation during the past three months (Exhibit 2). Also not surprisingly, businesses plan to raise their prices to cover rising labor (and other) costs. The percentage of respondents planning to raise selling prices has soared to record highs over the past three months (Exhibit 3), supporting the view that inflation is still headed higher.

Exhibit 1: Record-High Business Demand for Labor.



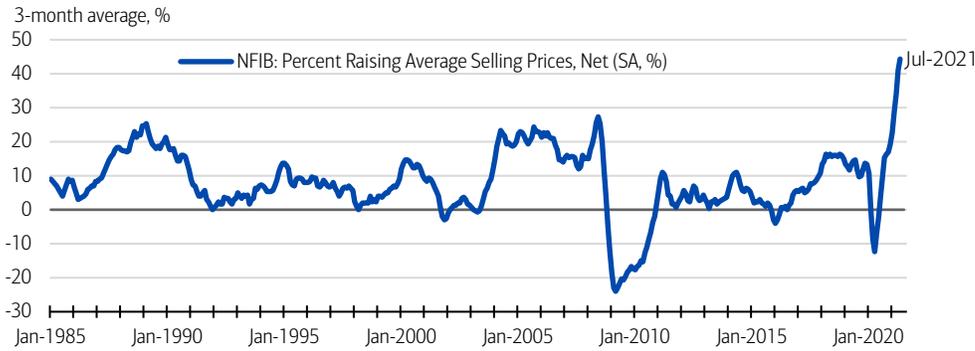
Sources: National Federation of Independent Business/Haver Analytics; Chief Investment Office. Data as of August 17, 2021.

Exhibit 2: Most Businesses Raising Workers’ Pay in Survey History.



Sources: National Federation of Independent Business/Haver Analytics; Chief Investment Office. Data as of August 17, 2021.

Exhibit 3: Record-High Share of Businesses Raising Prices.



Sources: National Federation of Independent Business/Haver Analytics; Chief Investment Office. Data as of August 17, 2021.

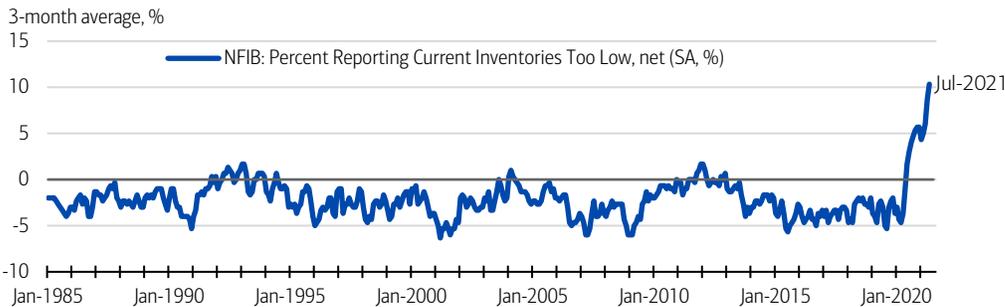
A big problem for businesses that was already apparent before the pandemic is the difficulty of finding qualified labor. In fact, by more than 2 to 1 over any other problem facing small businesses, from taxes, poor sales and government requirements to competition from big businesses, interest rates, costs and quality of labor or inflation, respondents chose “quality of labor” as their No. 1 problem, with the highest percentage of businesses choosing this option in the survey’s history (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4: Quality of Labor Is Businesses’ Biggest Concern.



Sources: National Federation of Independent Business/Haver Analytics; Chief Investment Office. Data as of August 17, 2021.

Exhibit 5: Businesses Cannot Produce Fast Enough.



Sources: National Federation of Independent Business/Haver Analytics; Chief Investment Office. Data as of August 17, 2021.

This unprecedented labor market crisis is just one of many reasons for widespread supply and inflation problems. As shown in Exhibit 5, inventories have never been reported as low as today, and by a very wide margin, according to the NFIB survey. Coronavirus disruptions combined with massive excess demand from excessively stimulative policy and work disincentives are making it impossible for businesses to restock inventories and catch up to demand.

Given this accelerating inflationary backdrop of persistent excess demand and inadequate labor supply, it is not surprising that, according to the minutes of the Fed’s July 27–28, 2021,

Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting, “recent data pointed to a greater risk that the upward pressure on inflation that had resulted from supply-related issues would unwind more slowly than the staff’s baseline projection assumed.” As a result, a host of Fed officials, including Governor Waller and several regional Fed presidents, have begun to talk about the advantages of an early tapering. By tapering earlier and faster than expected, they have suggested an earlier interest rate hike may be avoided. In any case, according to the minutes, many FOMC participants also noted that, “when a reduction in the pace of asset purchases became appropriate, it would be important that the Committee clearly reaffirm the absence of any mechanical link between the timing of tapering and that of an eventual increase in the target range for the federal funds rate.”

All this suggests the Fed will likely be slow to bring inflation under control even if it “baby steps” its way to less accommodation in hopes of achieving the ever-elusive soft landing. In our view, the power of the biggest demand stimulus since World War II remains an order of magnitude greater than the slowing effects of these “baby steps.” As long as demand grows faster than potential gross domestic product (GDP), it will sustain high inflation for the foreseeable future.

GLOBAL MARKET VIEW

Key Drivers and Portfolio Considerations for the rest of 2021

Niladri Mukherjee, Managing Director and Head of CIO Portfolio Strategy

So far this year, economic growth has been running at over 10%, while inflation reports have consistently come in above the Fed’s flexible target of 2%. Coronavirus risks have risen with the spread of the Delta variant causing significant stress for areas with lower vaccination rates. And buoyed by the hope for economic normalization, risk assets have handily led the performance charts YTD—Global equities +14%; Commodities +20%; Gold -6%; Global bonds -2.6%.¹ Peering into the rest of the year, we highlight our key drivers for asset prices and portfolio strategy considerations.

U.S. equities have continued to trend higher (large-caps +18%; small-caps +11% YTD²), but below the surface we’ve seen some significant churn, which in part can be attributed to the Delta wave. Value stocks have underperformed Growth by roughly 9% since May. Cyclical sectors like financials, materials and industrials have stalled, while mega-cap technology names have regained their leadership, overcoming valuation concerns. Meanwhile, the reopening trades have been challenged—the Hotels, Restaurants & Leisure index³ has underperformed the S&P 500 by 12% since March; the Airlines index⁴ by a whopping 33%. Virus concerns seem to have sent investors back into the tried and tested Growth names, which generated enormous cash flows and benefited from long-term trends such as digitization.

A significant pullback in bond yields since March has been at odds with a roaring economy and accelerating year-over-year (YoY) increases in core CPI and core personal consumption expenditure index (PCE). This head-scratching disconnect has been attributed to rotation into Fixed Income by pension funds and foreign investors, the bond market pricing in the risk of a Delta-driven slowdown being ignored by Equities, or that the bond market is in the Fed’s camp that inflation will prove to be transitory.

A path forward and key indicators to watch

As we flip the calendar to the last few months of 2021, it is likely that the U.S. economy will remain resilient. However, we could experience a near-term speed bump as virus cases remain high, leading consumers to pull back on activities like travel, leisure and dining out,

¹ MSCI ACWI Index; Bloomberg Commodity Index; ICE BofA Global Broad Market Index. As of August 17, 2021.

² Russell Large-caps and Russell Small-caps Index as of August 17, 2021.

³ S&P 500 Hotels, Restaurants & Leisure Industry Index as of August 17, 2021.

⁴ S&P 500 Airlines Industry Index as of August 17, 2021.

Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

and some businesses to push out their return-to-office plans. The latest dip in consumer confidence and the slight widening of credit spreads, albeit from historically tight levels, is worth monitoring, but largely there is enough firepower of excess savings, elevated household net worth, and an acceleration in jobs and wages to keep consumer spending robust. **Some key indicators to watch:** Coronavirus hospitalizations; high-frequency indicators like air traffic passenger volume and Opentable seated diners; consumer confidence; credit spreads.

Inflation is likely to keep surprising the markets and the Fed to the upside. Supply chain disruptions and shortages will take more time to be rectified than generally assumed—semiconductor shortages, for instance, could stretch into Q1 2023, with average lead times between 25 and 52+ weeks, according to electronics supply chain analysis firm Supplyframe.⁵ Meanwhile, stickier components of inflation, like rents (CoreLogic Single-Family Rent index up 6.6% YoY in May) and wage growth, should firm further. This is likely to put upward pressure on the long end of the curve, where yields should drift higher, bringing steeper yield curves. Financial conditions may tighten as the Fed signals tapering and real yields rise, injecting market volatility and potentially slowing the pace of future equity returns. However, in our view, most investors are better prepared for tapering this time around than they were in 2013, and the Fed is also more aware and communicative.

Some key indicators to watch: Jobs reports; inflation breakeven 5 year forward; commodity prices; CPI (especially owner's equivalent rent); survey-based measures of consumer inflation expectations.

Additional giant fiscal policy is likely to be announced by Congress. The \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill, if it clears the House, should be beneficial for the economy in the medium to long term, as the “multiplier” for infrastructure investment is large relative to other fiscal spending initiatives, leading to productivity/efficiency gains that keep inflation lower. The \$3.5 trillion “human infrastructure” bill will need more negotiations as the Democratic Party leadership tries to balance the resistance of moderates within the party toward higher levels of spending and taxes with that of progressives who want even more. House Speaker Pelosi can lose no more than three defectors between moderates and progressives, setting the stage for heightened uncertainty and headline risk for the markets, especially if much-higher-than-anticipated taxes become a reality and debt ceiling negotiations drag on till the eleventh hour. **Some key indicators to watch:** Short-term funding markets; machinery, engineering and construction, building materials, renewable energy equities.

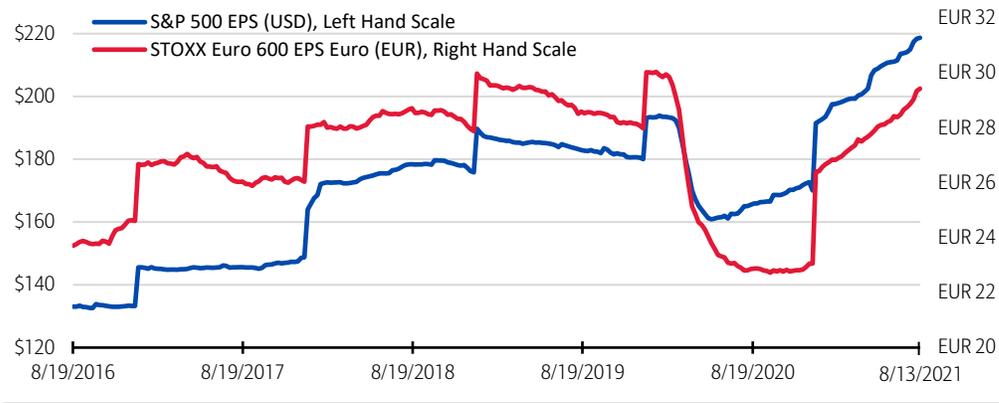
Portfolio strategy considerations

An acceleration in economic activity and corporate earnings, lower interest rates, more fiscal stimulus, improving investor sentiment and a robust environment for deal activity have been powerful tailwinds for risk assets. We still favor remaining invested in Equities, with a preference for U.S. Large- and Small-cap stocks over International. U.S. corporate earnings are currently coming in exceptionally strong, and the S&P 500 index's earnings per share (EPS) estimate for 2022 is at a new high of \$219, which is roughly 10% better than this year's estimate (Exhibit 6). The new orders component of purchasing managers indexes (PMI) continues to be elevated, setting the stage for more revisions higher—global earnings revisions ratios have strengthened to 1.52, the third-highest level on record, and is particularly strong for the U.S. and Europe.⁶ Additionally, operating margin for the S&P 500 has risen to 14%, which is higher than prepandemic levels, in part because companies have been able to manage costs through productivity improvements.

⁵ supplychainquarterly.com/articles/5158-semiconductor-shortages-could-last-into-2023-supplyframe-says as of July 2021.

⁶ BofA Global Research as of August 14, 2021.

Exhibit 6: EPS for 2022 Are Likely Marching Higher for the U.S. and Europe.



Sources: Chief Investment Office; Bloomberg. Data as of August 16, 2021.

Our view remains that U.S. Equities are likely to grind higher over a 12-month horizon. However, given recent performance and the lack of a 5% pullback since October, a consolidation phase should be expected, especially as the Fed begins the process of pulling back from their historic level of monetary policy accommodation. We view pullbacks as buying opportunities, especially for cyclical areas and Value. Alternatively, if both Equities and bond yields move higher in the coming months, a rebalancing opportunity from Equities and into bonds could be considered from a risk management perspective.

The fall in bond yields has created an interesting entry point for re-engaging with the Value trades that did well through May. Financials appear attractive due to the prospect for higher bond yields, rising shareholder payouts and productivity improvements adding to margins. And Industrials should benefit from strong pricing power due to capacity limitations at manufacturers, robust demand for industrial goods due to the American Jobs Plan stimulus (machinery, and engineering and construction companies are potential beneficiaries) and expanding margins due to automation. On the thematic side, there is long-term opportunity in the clean energy space, which has sold off by 33%⁷ since January. Europe's "Fit for 55" legislation aims to make itself a world leader in climate policy and decarbonization, and will likely prompt countermeasures by the U.S. and China, making the 2020s a decade of global energy transformation. Investors with a higher risk tolerance can consider the travel and leisure sector, where the short-term outlook is unknown, but supply constraints, capacity reductions, consumer pent-up demand and pricing power on the other side of the pandemic could bring upside for select players.

Outside the U.S., European fundamentals remain attractive as vaccination rates move up, and employment and the services sector further improve potentially bringing the economy to its pre-virus size in the coming months. However, the Tourism sector is being held back due to travel restrictions causing the southern economies to lag. Emerging markets (EM) may still face headwinds as China continues with their regulatory crackdown, and many countries struggle to contain the virus; however, we believe it is worth staying invested in EM as valuations look reasonable compared to the U.S. Timing this volatile asset class is difficult, as performance has tended to come in short-term bursts—for example, in 2020, EM outperformed the MSCI All-country World Index by 1.9% and the S&P 500 by 40 basis point on a total return basis, and, in 2017, by 13% and 16%, respectively.

⁷ S&P Global Clean Energy Index as of August 17, 2021.

Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

One Step Closer: Budget Resolution Passed in the Senate

Chief Investment Office, National Wealth Strategies Team

Let's not get over our (water) skis. At least, not yet.

The Senate passed a Budget Resolution on August 11, with no Republican support. The Budget Resolution is merely a first, yet important, step in opening the budget reconciliation window and introducing a reconciliation bill (which could then be approved without any Republican support in both Houses). It is the reconciliation bill that will contain the potential changes that many are concerned about. The House is expected to vote on an identical budget resolution the week of August 23.

The resolution that was approved in the Senate calls for up to \$3.5 trillion in spending—a significant portion of which is likely to be offset by spending cuts and tax increases. That does not necessarily mean \$3.5 trillion in new taxes. What it means is that the Senate Finance Committee (and the House Ways and Means Committee—assuming the House passes an identical budget resolution) are given significant latitude and flexibility with respect to taxes. The expectation is that about \$1.4 trillion to \$1.7 trillion will be raised through tax increases, and the balance will come from spending cuts and/or an increase in our deficit. To put this in perspective, President Biden's formal tax proposals—the American Families Plan and the American Jobs Act—called for about \$3.4 trillion in new taxes. We seem to be far off that mark.

The Resolution authorized up to \$3.5 trillion in new spending, but it will likely be pared back due to centrist-Democrat concerns. There is significant division among Democrats about the size of the ultimate bill. The lack of unification within the party is clear, as centrist and progressive Democrats disagree on the appropriate level of spending. Some Democrat-centrists have called the proposed level of spending “irresponsible” in light of the current status of the economy. However, if the level of spending is reduced, a majority of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (which includes 95 House members) have indicated they will then withhold support for the Senate-passed \$1 trillion infrastructure bill. Currently, the House will not consider the infrastructure bill until the Senate passes a budget reconciliation bill. That could change with White House pressure. To add to the mix of uncertainty, a group of nine centrist House Democrats threatened to block a vote on the \$3.5 trillion budget resolution until the House passes the Senate's infrastructure bill. That's enough to block the budget resolution in the House since it will likely be opposed by all Republicans.

If we see tax increases in the range of \$1.4 trillion to \$1.7 trillion, Congress could get there without bringing the capital gains rate up to 39.6% and without incorporating some controversial changes like the “elimination of step-up in basis” or the limitation of tax-deferred real estate exchanges. Several test votes in the Senate prior to passage of the Resolution indicate that changing the step-up in basis rules and curtailing like-kind exchanges will be difficult. Instead, there could be greater pressure to take a more traditional path: Increasing top income tax rates, bumping up capital gains rates, lowering estate tax exemptions, increasing estate tax rates, and more funding for IRS enforcement and reporting are the likely levers to pull.

The foregoing process will take time. Looking at previous reconciliation measures, it typically takes about two months from passage of a budget resolution to passage of a reconciliation bill, so we may not see a final bill until November (or later). If that is the case, that will make it much tougher to have an effective date for a capital gains tax increase of April 28—the date originally suggested by the president. We could expect Congress to pick another date, but would not count on it being prospective to the beginning of next year. September 15 is the current deadline for various congressional committees to write legislation to fulfill their spending targets. This could be the effective date for a capital gain tax increase. If that is the case, there could be a window of

opportunity to accelerate gains into a lower tax rate environment. Now is the time for conversations around the sell-now versus sell-later tradeoff, in our view.

Debt Ceiling

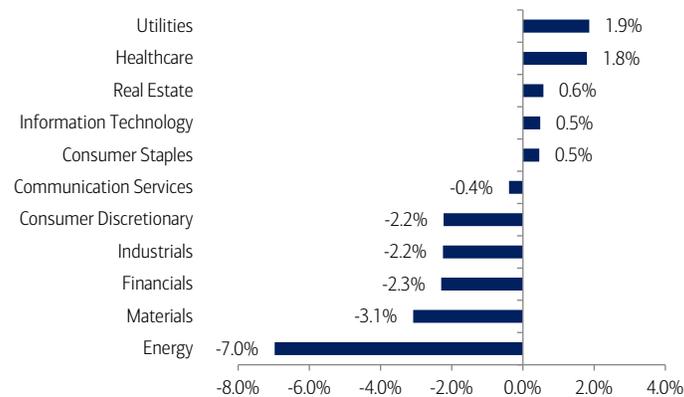
It remains to be seen whether the budget resolution will be the vehicle to raise the debt ceiling, which was suspended through July 31. On August 1, the debt limit was reinstated at \$28.5 trillion. Extraordinary measures can be taken to allow the Treasury to continue to borrow, but that not likely much beyond September 30, according to Treasury Secretary Yellen. Currently, the budget resolution does not authorize raising the debt ceiling, but it is entirely permissible to do so in a budget reconciliation bill. It is expected that a provision to increase the debt ceiling will be added to a late-September bill funding the government. Such a bill would require 60 votes in the Senate, so at least 10 Republicans will be needed. That will not be easy and likely could bring us closer to a government shutdown.

MARKETS IN REVIEW

Equities

	Total Return in USD (%)			
	Current	WTD	MTD	YTD
DJIA	35,120.08	-1.0	0.7	16.1
NASDAQ	14,714.66	-0.7	0.4	14.7
S&P 500	4,441.67	-0.5	1.2	19.4
S&P 400 Mid Cap	2,675.67	-2.0	-1.0	16.9
Russell 2000	2,167.60	-2.5	-2.6	10.4
MSCI World	3,080.02	-1.4	0.5	15.6
MSCI EAFE	2,307.19	-2.9	-0.4	9.2
MSCI Emerging Markets	1,220.78	-4.6	-4.3	-4.1

S&P 500 Sector Returns



Fixed Income†

	Total Return in USD (%)			
	Current	WTD	MTD	YTD
Corporate & Government	1.32	0.25	-0.11	-0.78
Agencies	0.71	0.07	-0.09	-0.19
Municipals	0.94	0.02	-0.29	1.60
U.S. Investment Grade Credit	1.43	0.16	-0.15	-0.65
International	2.00	0.19	-0.31	-0.23
High Yield	4.16	-0.06	-0.41	3.59
90 Day Yield	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.06
2 Year Yield	0.22	0.21	0.18	0.12
10 Year Yield	1.26	1.28	1.22	0.91
30 Year Yield	1.87	1.93	1.89	1.64

Commodities & Currencies

	Total Return in USD (%)			
	Current	WTD	MTD	YTD
Commodities				
Bloomberg Commodity	194.66	-4.2	-5.3	16.8
WTI Crude \$/Barrel ^{††}	62.32	-8.9	-15.7	28.4
Gold Spot \$/Ounce ^{††}	1781.11	0.1	-1.8	-6.2

	Total Return in USD (%)			
	Current	Prior Week End	Prior Month End	2020 Year End
Currencies				
EUR/USD	1.17	1.18	1.19	1.22
USD/JPY	109.78	109.59	109.72	103.25
USD/CNH	6.50	6.48	6.46	6.50

Sources: Bloomberg, Factset. Total Returns from the period of 8/16/2021 to 8/20/2021. †Bloomberg Barclays Indices. ††Spot price returns. All data as of the 8/20/2021 close. Data would differ if a different time period was displayed. Short term performance shown to illustrate more recent trend. **Past performance is no guarantee of future results.**

Asset Class Weightings (as of 8/3/2021)

Asset Class	CIO View		
	Underweight	Neutral	Overweight
Global Equities	●	●	●
U.S. Large Cap Growth	●	●	●
U.S. Large Cap Value	●	●	●
U.S. Small Cap Growth	●	●	●
U.S. Small Cap Value	●	●	●
International Developed	●	●	●
Emerging Markets	●	●	●
Global Fixed Income	●	●	●
U.S. Governments	●	●	●
U.S. Mortgages	●	●	●
U.S. Corporates	●	●	●
High Yield	●	●	●
U.S. Investment Grade Tax Exempt	●	●	●
U.S. High Yield Tax Exempt	●	●	●
International Fixed Income	●	●	●
Alternative Investments*			
Hedge Funds			
Private Equity			
Real Assets			
Cash			

*Many products that pursue Alternative Investment strategies, specifically Private Equity and Hedge Funds, are available only to qualified investors.

CIO asset class views are relative to the CIO Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA) of a multi-asset portfolio.

Economic Forecasts (as of 8/20/2021)

	2020A	Q1 2021A	Q2 2021E	Q3 2021E	Q4 2021E	2021E
Real global GDP (% y/y annualized)	-3.2	-	-	-	-	5.8
Real U.S. GDP (% q/q annualized)	-3.4	6.3	6.5	4.5	6.0	5.9
CPI inflation (% y/y)	1.2	1.9	4.8	5.3	5.2	4.3
Core CPI inflation (% y/y)	1.7	1.4	3.7	4.1	4.1	3.3
Unemployment rate (%)	8.1	6.2	5.9	5.2	4.5	5.5
Fed funds rate, end period (%)	0.09	0.06	0.08	0.13	0.13	0.13

The forecasts in the table above are the base line view from BofA Global Research. The Global Wealth & Investment Management (GWIM) Investment Strategy Committee (ISC) may make adjustments to this view over the course of the year and can express upside/downside to these forecasts. Historical data is sourced from Bloomberg, FactSet, and Haver Analytics.

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A = Actual. E/* = Estimate.

Sources: BofA Global Research; GWIM ISC as of August 20, 2021.

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Securities indexes assume reinvestment of all distributions and interest payments. Indexes are unmanaged and do not take into account fees or expenses. It is not possible to invest directly in an index. Indexes are all based in U.S. dollars.

S&P 500 Total Return Index is a stock market index that measures the stock performance of 500 large companies listed on stock exchanges in the United States. It is one of the most commonly followed equity indices.

Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures changes in the price level of a weighted average market basket of consumer goods and services purchased by households.

Producer Price Index (PPI) is a family of indexes that gauges the average fluctuation in selling prices received by domestic producers over time.

Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) Index refers to a measure of imputed household expenditures defined for a period of time.

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an index of the prevailing direction of economic trends in the manufacturing and service sectors.

STOXX Europe 600 Index is a stock index of European stocks designed by STOXX Ltd.

MSCI All Country World Index is a stock index designed to track broad global equity-market performance.

S&P Global Clean Energy Index is designed to measure the performance of companies in global clean energy-related businesses from both developed and emerging markets, with a target constituent count of 100.

Russell large-caps Index comprises about 92% of the total market cap of all listed stocks in the U.S. equity market.

Russell small-caps Index measures the performance of the companies in the Russell 3000 Index excluding the companies in the S&P 500.

Hotels, Restaurants, and Leisure Index in the Consumer Discretionary Sector includes owners and operators of Casinos & Gaming, Hotels, Resorts, and Cruise Lines, Leisure Facilities, and Restaurants.

Airline Industry Index is a modified equal-dollar weighted index designed to measure the performance of highly capitalized and liquid international airline companies.

CoreLogic Single-Family Rent Index analyzes data across four price tiers: Lower-priced, which represent rentals with prices 75% or below the regional median; lower-middle, 75% to 100% of the regional median; higher-middle, 100%-125% of the regional median; and higher-priced, 125% or more above the regional median.

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All recommendations must be considered in the context of an individual investor's goals, time horizon, liquidity needs and risk tolerance. Not all recommendations will be in the best interest of all investors.

Asset allocation, diversification and rebalancing do not ensure a profit or protect against loss in declining markets.

Investments have varying degrees of risk. Some of the risks involved with equity securities include the possibility that the value of the stocks may fluctuate in response to events specific to the companies or markets, as well as economic, political or social events in the U.S. or abroad. Small cap and mid cap companies pose special risks, including possible illiquidity and greater price volatility than funds consisting of larger, more established companies. Bonds are subject to interest rate, inflation and credit risks. Investments in foreign securities involve special risks, including foreign currency risk and the possibility of substantial volatility due to adverse political, economic or other developments. These risks are magnified for investments made in emerging markets. Investments in a certain industry or sector may pose additional risk due to lack of diversification and sector concentration. There are special risks associated with an investment in commodities, including market price fluctuations, regulatory changes, interest rate changes, credit risk, economic changes and the impact of adverse political or financial factors. Investing in fixed-income securities may involve certain risks, including the credit quality of individual issuers, possible prepayments, market or economic developments and yields and share price fluctuations due to changes in interest rates.

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