

BCA Market Perspective © A Closer Look at Foreign Equities April 2024

Asset allocators have long considered foreign stocks an excellent diversifier to U.S. equities. The investable universe outside of the U.S. is extensive and can differ significantly between the most common indices for foreign equities; the MSCI EAFE, the MSCI Emerging Markets (EM) and the MSCI All Country World (ACW) Ex. U.S.

The MSCI EAFE is designed to represent the performance of large and mid-cap securities across 21 developed markets, including Europe, Australasia and the Far East. The largest weightings in the index are Japan (24%), UK (14%), France (12%) and Switzerland (10%). The MSCI EM captures large and mid-cap companies across 24 countries. The largest weightings in the index are China (26%), India (18%), Taiwan (17%) and South Korea (13%). The MSCI ACW Ex. U.S. captures large and mid-cap companies across 22 developed markets (including Canada) and 24 EM countries. The largest exposures are Japan (15%), UK (9%), France (8%) and Canada (8%).

Based on InvestmentMetric’s institutional universe data, public funds had a 14.5% average allocation to foreign equities, as of 12/31/23. However, it should be noted that allocations to foreign equities have not been favorable over the past 15-years, especially when adjusted against the U.S. dollar. There is additional support to justify a continued tailwind behind U.S. equities. Let’s examine Japan and the Eurozone.

In March, the Bank of Japan (BOJ) ended eight years of negative interest rates, making a historic shift away from decades of stimulus. This move however did not instill confidence, with the Japanese Yen falling to a 34-year low against the U.S. Dollar, highlighting fears of the fragility of Japan’s economy. The Eurozone is also facing challenges, especially with high energy costs and a neighboring war. Based on a slowdown in real GDP to 0.3% during Q4 2023, the IMF downgraded its growth forecast for Europe to 0.9% for 2024. Comparatively, the forecast for U.S. has been trending higher, and as a result, the divergence between U.S. and Europe continues to widen.

Central bankers around the world have a lot of big decisions to make in 2024. A soft landing and disinflation remain key concerns. Asset allocators point to lower valuations as an opportunity, as the MSCI ACW Ex. U.S. trades at a historical P/E discount of -34.5% to the S&P 500. However, confidence in the U.S., or lack thereof for International, may justify why investors are willing to continue to pay a premium to invest in the U.S.

Returns	YTD 2024		2023		15-years	
	Local	USD	Local	USD	Ann.	Beta
Regions						
U.S. (S&P 500)	-	10.6	-	26.3	15.6	0.9
AC World ex-U.S.	8.3	4.8	14.7	16.2	8.4	1.0
EAFE	10.1	5.9	16.8	18.9	8.9	1.0
Europe ex-UK	9.7	6.1	17.3	22.7	9.7	1.2
Emerging markets	4.6	2.4	10.3	10.3	7.0	1.1
Selected Countries						
Japan	19.3	11.2	29.0	20.8	8.2	0.7
United Kingdom	4.1	3.1	7.7	14.1	7.9	1.0
France	8.4	5.9	18.1	22.3	9.8	1.2

U.S. and Eurozone Growth Expectations Keep Diverging
Consensus 2024 GDP YoY% Forecasts

