



# J. Safra Sarasin Cross-Asset Weekly

17 November 2023

## Gold is back in favour

Geopolitical tensions spurred a major gold rebound in October, widening the gap between real yields and gold even further. In our view, the weakening of the decade-long correlation between real yield levels and gold is not only a reflection of the current higher inflation regime, but also reveals stronger structural demand. Emerging Markets central banks have substantially increased their gold holdings in an effort to gain more independence from the US dollar. And the ongoing shift in China's growth model has increased economic uncertainty and has led to higher physical demand for gold from local investors. Taken together, the confluence of these factors should support gold at a structurally higher price level, thus weakening the historic influence of real yields.

The surprisingly loose fiscal stance this year goes a long way towards explaining the US economy's resilience to higher interest rates. While Congress seems averse to spending cuts, some factors that led to the sharp widening of the budget deficit should reverse over the coming year. As a result, fiscal policy probably won't play a meaningful role in driving the economy in 2024. Rather, private sector dynamics and the lagged impact from past monetary tightening should be in the driving seat.

Staying with US politics, we review equity performance around presidential elections over the past 50 years. We find that the eventual election outcome has little impact on equity markets ahead of the election, while it does substantially alter performance after the vote. Typically, markets do best if the incumbent wins and the Fed cuts rates. This scenario appears feasible in 2024, but a recession could stand in the way. The governing party always lost the White House in the past 50 years when the election took place during a recession year.

## This week's highlights

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## Precious metals

### Higher structural demand for gold

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**Geopolitical tensions spurred a major gold rebound in October, widening the gap between real yields and gold even further. In our view, the weakening of the decade-long correlation between real yield levels and gold is not only a reflection of the current higher inflation regime, but also reveals stronger structural demand. EM central banks have ramped up their gold holdings in an effort to gain more independence from the US dollar. Moreover, the shift in China's growth model has increased economic uncertainty, boosting physical demand for gold from local investors. Taken together, the confluence of these factors should support gold at a structurally higher price level than prior to the pandemic, softening the historic influence of real yields.**

**A major recovery of the gold price has led to a further decoupling from real yield levels**

Geopolitical tensions spurred a major rebound in the gold price in October, pushing the metal close to \$2'000 per ounce. Notably, the surge followed a period of consolidation that gold had experienced on the back of rising real yields. As such, the precious metal's recent pickup has amplified its recent decoupling from US TIPS 10-year yields. This prompts us to take a closer look at the underlying factors.

**High inflation accounts for part of this gap**

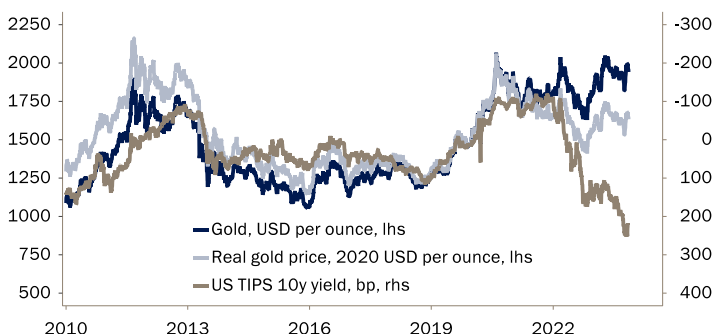
Some time ago, we established inflation as an important long-term driver of gold. The precious metal's post-pandemic price dynamics largely confirm this hypothesis. Clearly, the elevated inflation rates seen over the past two years imply a markedly lower gold price in real terms (that we obtain by deflating the dollar gold price with US headline inflation), which essentially reduces the gap between real yields and gold (Exhibit 1).

**EM central banks have stepped up their purchases substantially...**

Yet a substantial part of the gap remains unexplained. In our view, the decoupling of the decade-long correlation between long-term US real yield levels and the gold price largely points towards structural shifts in demand. In an effort to gain more independence from the US dollar, EM central banks have stepped up their gold holdings substantially over the past two decades – in particular China and Russia (Exhibit 2). The pace of institutional gold buying saw another acceleration after the US and their allies froze Russian dollar reserves in response to the invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. With official gold purchases exceeding 100 tonnes in H1 2023 alone, China continues to be the most significant institutional buyer year to date. Given the ongoing geopolitical fragmentation, we expect institutional purchases to remain elevated.

**Exhibit 1: Real gold price somewhat better aligned to real yield levels**

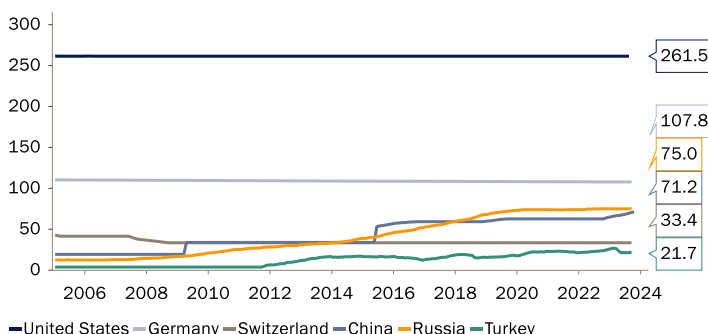
Nominal and real gold price vs US real yield



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

**Exhibit 2: EMs have stepped up their gold reserves for some time**

Official central bank gold reserves, in million ounces



Source: IMF, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

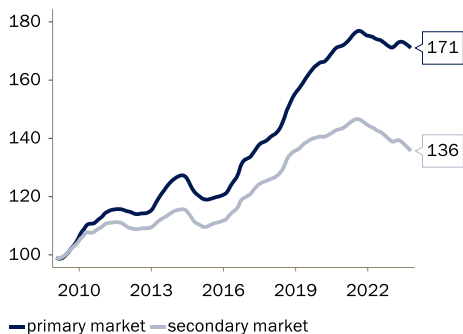


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### Exhibit 3: Chinese house prices in decline

China, residential real estate prices, index, 2008 = 100



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

### Exhibit 4: Subdued equity performance

MSCI China, A Onshore Index, Total Return, USD



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

### Exhibit 5: Weaker Chinese renminbi

Chinese renminbi



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

### ...along with physical buyers in China

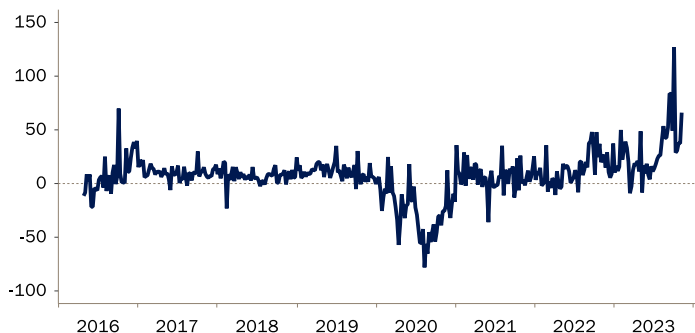
Gold has also become increasingly attractive for individual buyers. Again, China is a case in point. Once considered a safe asset, real estate has lost much of its appeal among local investors. The government's decision to deflate the housing market means that the sector is in a structural decline. New sales and housing starts have fallen to levels not seen in a decade, and house prices have moved markedly lower over the past quarters (Exhibit 3). Chinese equities have similarly underperformed over the past two years (Exhibit 4) and the renminbi has revisited its 2022 lows, erasing the gains it made after China's reopening (Exhibit 5). And with the government enforcing strict limits on capital outflows, it is hard for investors to turn to the outside world.

### A confluence of structural factors support gold at fundamentally higher levels than prior to the pandemic

China's macro backdrop along with its lack of viable and attractive domestic investment alternatives make gold shine ever more. Beyond this, local investors see gold as a hedge against the weakness of the Chinese renminbi. The unusually high demand for gold is particularly visible in a recent spike of the China gold premium – the spread at which gold is traded in Shanghai compared to London. The spread typically hovered around \$10 per ounce over the past ten years, yet it temporarily rose above \$50 per ounce during Q3 2023 (Exhibit 6). Given that domestic financial asset returns are set to remain highly volatile, we expect physical gold demand to stay strong in China, large enough to matter for the world market (Exhibit 7). Taken together, we expect the confluence of these factors to support the gold price at a structurally higher level than prior to the pandemic, weakening the historic influence of real yields on gold to a considerable extent.

### Exhibit 6: High China gold premium points to strong local demand

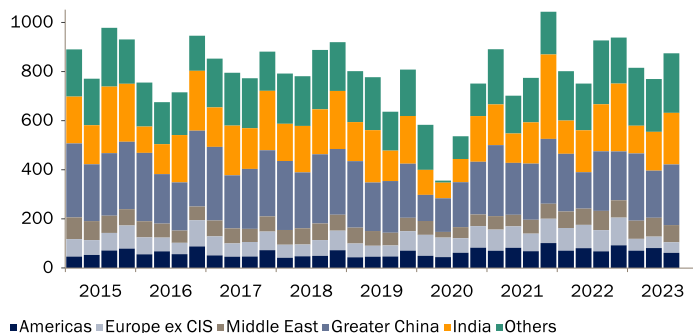
China gold premium, USD per ounce



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

### Exhibit 7: Chinese demand matters for the world market

Gold, world private consumption (jewellery, bars, coins), metric tonnes



Source: World Gold Council, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023



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## US macro

### No more fiscal boost

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**The surprisingly loose fiscal stance this year is an important factor, in our view, behind the economy's resilience to higher interest rates. While Congress seems averse to spending cuts, some factors that led to the sharp widening of the budget deficit should reverse over the coming year. As a result, fiscal policy probably won't play a meaningful role in driving the economy in 2024. Rather, private sector dynamics and the lagged impact from past monetary tightening should be in the driving seat.**

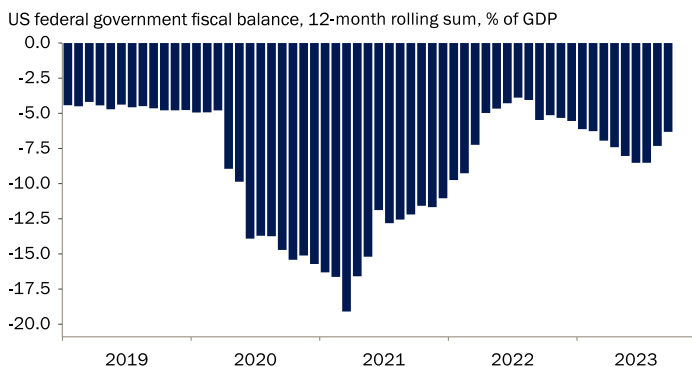
#### The deficit has widened sharply this year, despite an economy at full employment

The sharp deterioration in the government budget deficit this year came as a big surprise. An economy operating at full employment, and arguably beyond, should be running a surplus. At this stage of the business cycle, spending on unemployment benefits, for example, is relatively low and tax intakes high. Instead, the government deficit widened by about 4.5 percentage points (pp) of GDP in the year to July 2023, when it peaked (Exhibit 1). As we wrote previously, this probably goes a long way towards explaining the economy's resilience to higher interest rates. Can this be repeated over the coming year? Probably not.

#### Higher interest spending, larger social benefits and a fall in personal income taxes explain most of the widening

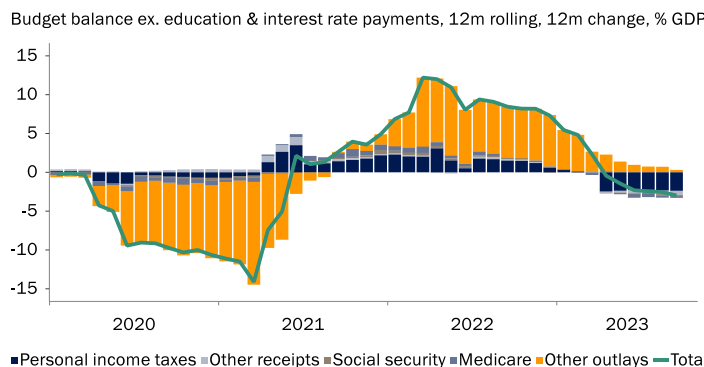
Of course, not all government spending adds to growth. Net interest service has increased by about 1pp of GDP on the back of the sharp rise in bond yields. The Administration's decision to cancel the student debt in 2022 was overturned by the Supreme Court earlier this year. This has led to a large but offsetting impact on the fiscal balance in these two years, and explains to large extent the reduction in the headline budget deficit of the past few months. If we exclude interest payments and spending on education from the budget, the deficit has risen by 3pp in the past year and remains deeply negative at close to -4% of GDP. This deterioration largely reflects a drop in personal income taxes (2.5pp) and a rise in spending on social security and Medicare (0.35pp) (Exhibit 2).

#### Exhibit 1: A sharp widening of the fiscal deficit



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

#### Exhibit 2: Change in balance excl. education and interest payments



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

#### The fiscal stance has probably added 1.5-2% to GDP this year

About half of these transfers appear to have been spent and the other half saved by households. Indeed, personal savings rose by about 2pp of GDP between mid-2022 and mid-2023, and then dropped again in the third quarter. This suggests that the fiscal expansion directly added about 1.5% to GDP this year (Exhibit 3). The IMF estimates that the stance of fiscal policy is even a bit looser, with a fiscal impulse of 1.9% of GDP. Its measure is a more precise assessment of the true fiscal stance as it takes into account the role of automatic stabilisers in supporting the budget balance at this stage of the business cycle.



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## The fiscal impulse could turn negative next year

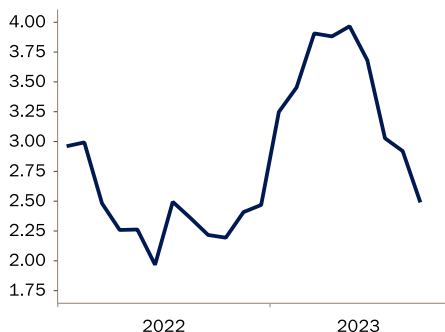
Looking into next year, we doubt that fiscal policy will play again such a supportive role. The fiscal expansion in 2023 largely reflects factors that are likely to reverse or be much smaller. Indeed, most of the 2.5pp decline in personal income taxes is due to lower capital gains in 2022. But with equity prices up strongly year to date, capital gains taxes should pick up again in 2024. The rise in social benefits reflects more spending on Medicare and social security, with the latter mostly owing to the cost-of-living adjustment. This adjustment is largely a function of the previous year's inflation rate. With inflation down considerably in 2023, the Social Security Administration already announced that its 2024 cost-of-living adjustment will be 3.2%, a much smaller bump than the 8.7% increase beneficiaries received this year. Looking ahead, we therefore expect an improvement in tax revenues and in the budget deficit, with some cap on expenditures. The IMF expects the fiscal impulse to turn negative in 2024, and hence to detract from growth (Exhibit 4).

## But the White House has some leeway to prevent a tightening of fiscal policy

Can we realistically expect fiscal policy to act as a headwind to the economy in a presidential election year? True, the White House doesn't control the public purse – Congress does – but it nonetheless has some leeway. It can, for example, reallocate funds from past programs that have not been fully used up. And so far this year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has distributed \$165bn of tax refunds to businesses through rarely used old COVID programs (Exhibit 5). The IRS has stopped lately distributing these refunds to ensure there is no fraud. But once this issue is cleared, the IRS is likely to restart.

### Exhibit 3: Part of the transfers were saved

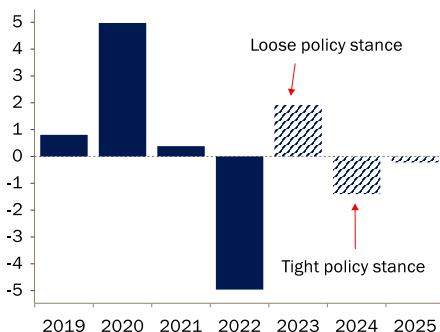
Personal savings, % of GDP



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

### Exhibit 4: A negative fiscal impulse for 2024

US fiscal impulse, % of potential GDP



Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

### Exhibit 5: Large tax refunds

IRS Tax Refunds Business, 1-month rolling sum, \$bn



United States, Financing Activities (Treasury State...

Source: Macrobond, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

## And Congress appears to be unable to cut spending

In addition, Congress appears to be unable to cut spending. Earlier this week, it passed a Continuing Resolution in order to keep the government funded through early next year. But that bill contained no spending cuts in order to get the support from Democrats. This arrangement between the Speaker of the House and the opposition seems likely to be repeated again next year, and up until the elections. Finally, the Administration asked Congress for additional defence spending of around \$100bn (0.5% of GDP) to support Ukraine, Israel and to fund border security, among other things. These issues will be dealt with in separate bills. None will be easy to clear out, but isolating these issues makes it easier for Congress to resolve each of them.

## The fiscal impulse next year is probably going to be close to neutral. Private sector dynamics will drive the outlook

Our best guess therefore is that fiscal policy will probably be at best neutral next year. Private sector dynamics and the lagged impact from past monetary tightening will be key in driving the economy.



# J. Safra Sarasin

## Cross-Asset Weekly

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### US equities

## US elections mostly matter for markets after the vote

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**The US presidential elections take place in exactly 12 months. We take the opportunity to review equity market performance around elections over the past 50 years. We find that (i) there's little impact on US equity market performance ahead of the election, (ii) once the election date has passed, equity market moves diverge substantially, depending on the outcome. If the incumbent administration remains in power, equities tend to rise the most over the following year, while they are close to flat, on average, if the administration changes after two terms. A one-term presidency is typically followed by a ~10% rise in equities over the following year, which would be roughly in line with non-election years. (iii) In addition, Fed rate cuts tend to support market performance in election years. As a result, the most favourable outcome is one in which the incumbent president is re-elected and the central bank eases policy. Such an outcome is possible in 2024. Yet to achieve it, a recession would have to be avoided. In the past 50 years, the governing party has always lost the White House when a recession occurred during the election year.**

**Over the past 50 years, equity markets have underperformed slightly going into elections vs non-election years**

With the next US presidential election exactly 12 months away, we take the opportunity to look at the equity market's performance during election years since 1976. On average, the performance during the 12 months preceding a presidential election (+7%) was slightly worse than it was during a typical non-election year (+10%). Looking at the median instead of the average, the impact of outliers like the election year 2008 becomes less pronounced and leads to a convergence of results (+10% in election years vs +12% in non-election years, Exhibit 3). Yet what remains is that the equity market going into an election slightly underperforms vs non-election years.

**The election outcome has little impact on equity performance ahead of the election, but this changes after the election has passed**

Interestingly, the nature of the presidential race appears to have little impact on the performance going into the election, while it tends to have a larger impact after the election is over. No matter whether it is an open race (between two new candidates) or the incumbent and another candidate, the S&P 500 typically gains between 7% and 16% in the preceding 12 months (ex 2008, Exhibit 1). Once the election date has passed, the performance gap between different outcomes widens significantly. The strongest equity market gains are typically observed after the incumbent has been re-elected (+19% over the following year), while a new president in an open race has only seen the market gain 3% on average during the first 12 months of his tenure.

**Fed cuts typically support equity market performance after presidential elections**

In addition to the nature of the presidential race, we considered the Fed's policy stance in presidential election years. The strongest performance going into an election and coming out of an election could be observed in election years with no Fed rate changes. Yet it should better be called year, not "years", as 2012 is the only year in our sample when this was the case. Apart from that, there's a striking difference between hike- and no-hike election years. While the 12-month performance going into the election once again has been fairly narrow, regardless of the Fed's monetary policy, following the election, the S&P 500 on average gained 22% over 12 months when the Fed cut rates (ex 2008, Exhibit 2) and was almost flat when it hiked rates.

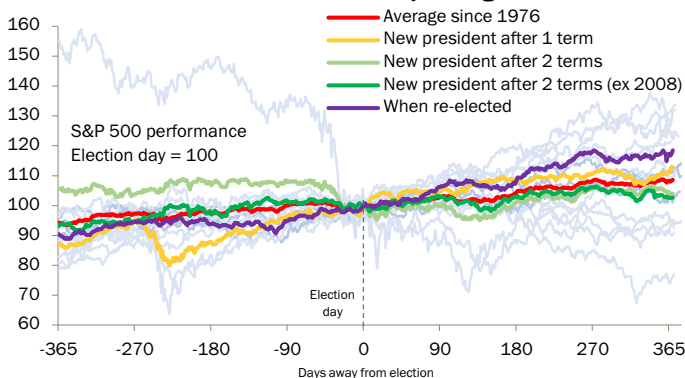




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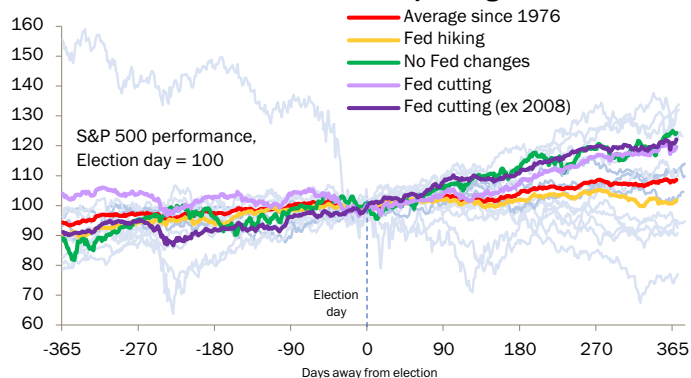
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**Exhibit 1: S&P 500 around elections depending on outcome**



Source: Refinitiv, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

**Exhibit 2: S&P 500 around elections depending on Fed stance**



Source: Refinitiv, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023

**Continuity in the White House and a dovish Fed typically lead to strongest S&P 500 gains after the election**

This leaves us with a simple conclusion. Going into an election, performance differences are typically quite narrow, regardless of the expected outcome or respective monetary policy stance. The government and policy stance coming out of the election matter a lot more, with the strongest gains observed when the incumbent wins and the Fed cuts rates. This scenario is definitely feasible, but not a given.

**History suggests that a re-election is difficult if the US economy is in recession in the election year**

Yet the above conclusions come with a big caveat. The election outcome itself is not independent of the market and of the cycle. Over the past 50 years, no incumbent party has ever managed to win an election if the US economy was in recession during the election year. Hence, a re-election of the current administration may very much depend on the trajectory of the economy over the coming 12 months, which we expect to soften and enter a shallow recession by mid-2024. At that point, it may well be the right time to add risk regardless of the political considerations going into the November vote.

**Exhibit 3: S&P 500 performance going into US presidential elections since 1976, as well as sector moves, rates changes and outcomes**

Presidential election	S&P 500 12m before election	Best sector	Worst sector	Recession	US 10Y yield 12m before election (bps)	Fed action in election year	Incumbent party	New president?
1976	13%	Materials	Health Care	No	-50	hike	Lost	After 2 terms
1980	29%	Real Estate	Comm. Serv.	Yes	176	hike	Lost	After 1 term
1984	4%	Real Estate	Materials	No	-25	cut	Won	No, re-elected
1988	9%	Materials	Tech	No	13	hike	Won	After 2 terms
1992	8%	Insurance	Energy	No	-64	cut	Lost	After 1 term
1996	21%	Industrials	Comm. Serv.	No	35	cut	Won	No, re-elected
2000	4%	Utilities	Comm. Serv.	No	-8	hike	Lost	After 2 terms
2004	11%	Energy	Tech	No	-17	hike	Won	No, re-elected
2008	-37%	Staples	Materials	Yes	-62	cut	Lost	After 2 terms
2012	13%	Banks	Materials	No	-36	no change	Won	No, re-elected
2016	-1%	Materials	Health Care	No	-45	hike	Lost	After 2 terms
2020	14%	Tech	Energy	Yes	-109	cut	Lost	After 1 term
Average	7%				-16			
Median	10%				-30			

Source: Refinitiv, Bank J. Safra Sarasin, 16.11.2023



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## Economic Calendar

### Week of 20/11 – 24/11/2023

Country	Time	Item	Date	Unit	Consensus Forecast	Prev.
<b>Monday, 20.11.2023</b>						
GE	08:00	PPI MoM	Oct	mom	--	-0.20%
	08:00	PPI YoY	Oct	yoy	--	-14.70%
US	16:00	CB Leading Index	Oct	mom	-0.60%	-0.70%
<b>Tuesday, 21.11.2023</b>						
US	14:30	Chicago Fed Nat. Activity Index	Oct	Index	--	0.02
	14:30	Philadelphia Non-Manuf. Activity	Oct	Index	--	-20.30
	16:00	Existing Home Sales	Oct	mn	3.91m	3.96m
	20:00	FOMC Meeting Minutes				
<b>Wednesday, 22.11.2023</b>						
UK	12:00	CBI Trends Total Orders	Nov	Index	--	-26.00
	12:00	CBI Trends Selling Prices	Nov	Index	--	7.00
US	13:00	MBA Mortgage Applications	Nov17	wow	--	2.80%
	14:30	Initial Jobless Claims	Nov18	1'000	--	--
	14:30	Durables Ex Transportation	Oct	mom	--	0.40%
	14:30	Cap Goods Orders Nondef Ex Air	Oct	mom	--	0.50%
<b>Thursday, 23.11.2023</b>						
GE	09:30	Germany Manufacturing PMI	Nov	Index	--	40.80
EU	10:00	Eurozone Manufacturing PMI	Nov	Index	--	43.10
UK	16:00	UK Manufacturing PMI	Nov	Index	--	44.80
<b>Friday, 24.11.2023</b>						
JN	00:30	Natl CPI Ex Food, Energy YoY	Oct	YoY	--	4.20%
	01:30	Jibun Bank Japan PMI Mfg	Nov P	Index	--	48.70
GE	10:00	IFO Expectations	Nov	Index	--	84.70
US	15:45	US Manufacturing PMI	Nov	Index	--	50.00

Source: Bloomberg, J. Safra Sarasin as of 16.11.2023





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### Market Performance

#### Global Markets in Local Currencies

Government Bonds	Current value	Δ 1W (bp)	Δ YTD (bp)	TR YTD in %
Swiss Eidgenosse 10 year (%)	1.02	-11	-60	5.6
German Bund 10 year (%)	2.59	-13	2	2.0
UK Gilt 10 year (%)	4.15	-9	48	0.8
US Treasury 10 year (%)	4.46	-19	59	-1.4
French OAT - Bund, spread (bp)	56	-2	2	
Italian BTP - Bund, spread (bp)	176	-9	-38	

Stock Markets	Level	P/E ratio	1W TR in %	TR YTD in %
SMI - Switzerland	10'643	16.7	0.0	2.3
DAX - Germany	15'787	11.6	2.8	13.4
MSCI Italy	928	7.7	1.5	23.2
IBEX - Spain	9'667	10.2	2.8	22.1
DJ Euro Stoxx 50 - Eurozone	4'302	12.2	1.8	17.1
MSCI UK	2'124	10.7	-0.5	2.8
S&P 500 - USA	4'508	20.8	3.8	19.1
Nasdaq 100 - USA	15'833	28.0	4.3	45.8
MSCI Emerging Markets	982	13.6	2.7	5.4

Forex - Crossrates	Level	3M implied volatility	1W in %	YTD in %
USD-CHF	0.89	6.2	-1.6	-3.9
EUR-CHF	0.96	4.8	0.0	-2.6
GBP-CHF	1.10	6.2	0.0	-1.4
EUR-USD	1.09	6.2	1.6	1.4
GBP-USD	1.24	7.2	1.5	2.8
USD-JPY	150.6	8.0	-0.6	14.9
EUR-GBP	0.87	4.7	0.0	-1.3
EUR-SEK	11.49	6.7	-1.3	3.0
EUR-NOK	11.87	8.9	-0.1	13.0

Commodities	Level	3M realised volatility	1W in %	YTD in %
Bloomberg Commodity Index	102	13.2	-0.6	-9.8
Brent crude oil - USD / barrel	78	34.9	-5.1	-3.5
Gold bullion - USD / Troy ounce	1'984	14.3	1.3	8.7

Source: J. Safra Sarasin, Bloomberg as of 16.11.2023



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