

Japan Yen Rates Strategy

Decreasing volatility, increasing tail risk

- **Duration** — In our view, we have now entered into one of the strongest rally seasons due to a cash-rich June and what looks to be a relatively eventless July. We revise down our yield forecasts on the back of lowered forecasts on US rates. We expect the 10y yield to test 50bp in 4Q despite tail risks, such as a potential massive portfolio shift by the GPIF (second bazooka), a potentially surprising growth strategy, or a possible Lower House election.
- **Curve** — The seasonal rally and decreased buybacks in the 10y+ sector is likely to keep the curve in a bull-steepening mode, in our view. As volatility declines, the 10y yield looks likely to decline further while the 20y yield is already too low for duration buyers. On the other hand, the steepening in the 20y–30y looks too stretched given that the change in buybacks which should be more favorable to the 30y than the 20y in the medium term.

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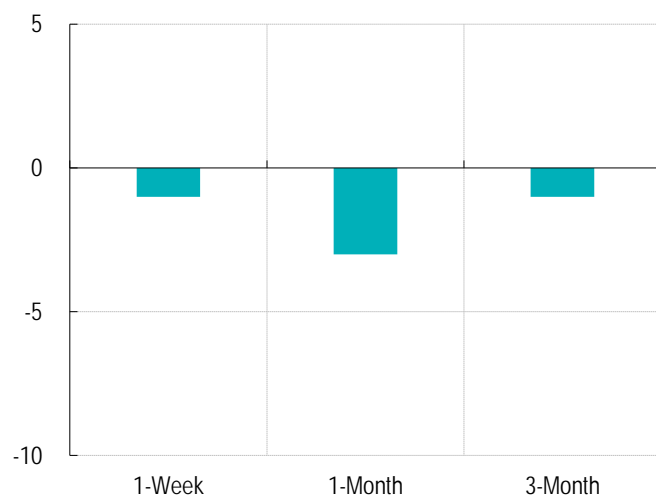
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Figure 1. Strategy summary table

	View	Strategies
Duration	Seasonal rally	Buy on a dip in the 10y
Yield curve	18y looks too rich 22y looks cheap	Short 4y fwd 5-7-10 Old JX vs. JL
Swap spreads	10y swap spread looks too rich	Old JX vs. matched duration swaps
Volatility	Skew likely to flatten 5y gamma should cheapen further	Long 10y tail against 5y and 20y
USDJPY basis	Tighter credit spread in US makes Samurai less attractive for issuers (breakeven xccy basis is tighter now)	Wait for further widening to pay

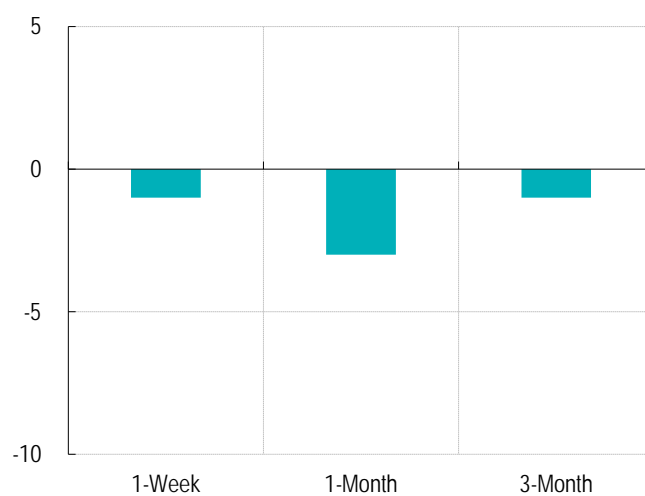
Source: Citi Research.

Figure 2. Expected changes in JGB yields (forecasts, bps)



Source: Citi Research.

Figure 3. Expected changes in volatility (forecasts, 6Mx10Y, bps)



Source: Citi Research.

Decreasing volatility, increasing tail risk

Seasonal rally to continue

In our view, we have now entered into one of the strongest rally seasons due to a cash-rich June and what looks to be a relatively eventless July. We revise down our yield forecasts on the back of lowered forecasts on US rates. We expect the 10y yield to test 50bp in 4Q despite tail risks, such as a possible massive portfolio shift by the GPIF (second bazooka), a potentially surprising growth strategy, or a possible Lower House election.

BoJ is likely to keep 10y yield compressed

As shown in Figure 4, we lower our forecasts on JGB yields. Given that domestic factors capable of pushing JGB yields higher are weak, the biggest bearish factor in our previous forecasts was US rate forecasts, which have been significantly lowered this time. We lower our 10y forecasts in 2014 and 2015, focusing more on domestic factors. We expect the 10y yield to test 50bp in 4Q 2014, by which time it probably will be clear that the BoJ is too optimistic and additional easing including increase in buybacks will be implemented, in our view. On the other hand, equities should remain strong thanks to the additional easing to support the decision to implement a second consumption tax hike in October 2015 which may, however, hamstringing the recovery and thus we think the 10y yield will be pushed back before reaching 1% in 4Q 2015.

Figure 4. Interest rate forecasts (as of June 26, quarterly average, %)

	Current	3Q 14	4Q 14	1Q 15	2Q 15	3Q 15	4Q15
O/N	0-0.1	0-0.1	0-0.1	0-0.1	0-0.1	0-0.1	0-0.1
2yr	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
5yr	0.19	0.20	0.20	0.25	0.25	0.30	0.25
10yr	0.57	0.60	0.55	0.70	0.80	0.85	0.75
30yr	1.7	1.70	1.65	1.75	1.80	1.80	1.75

Source: Citi Research.

The change by the BoJ buyback implies strong commitment in 5y-10y sector

The reasons we are bullish on the 10y are, (1) a cash-rich June (seasonal rally), (2) a strong commitment shown to the 5y-10y sector by the BoJ, (3) still-weak demand for loans and increasing deposits (4) weak wage growth, and (5) low volatility. (1) is a short term factor toward mid-July and others are medium-to long-term factors. We continue to expect the possible increase in buybacks will be again centered in the 5y-10y sector -(2), and we have not yet seen faster increase in loans than deposits to shrink the gap -(3), nominal base salaries without overtime are still decreasing YoY to make sustainable inflation quite difficult -(4), and historically lowest implied volatility is still much larger than realized volatility to encourage capitulation by long gamma players -(5).

What are the bear factors?

Possible bearish factors facing JGBs are (1) a massive portfolio shift away from domestic bonds by public pension funds including the GPIF, (2) a compelling growth strategy by the government (third arrow), and (3) a possible Lower House election in autumn. As for (1), we believe it possible for the GPIF to lower its bond ratio by 10% in two years without selling bonds in the market so that there should be little impact on JGB market, and we also believe it unlikely for them to lower the ratio immediately to disturb the market. In addition, the announcement of the new GPIF portfolio may be delayed due to reconciliation with other public funds. Without GPIF risk, the market is likely to position for carry towards the summer. As for (2), the growth strategy approved by the Cabinet on June 24 did not have critical details and did not have any impact on the market, although we consider it to be at least better

than the one announced last year which disappointed the equity market. As long as the YTD return on the Nikkei remains negative, it is unlikely for the growth strategy to have negative impact on JGBs. (3), however, it could have the largest negative impact on JGBs, because there will be strong pressure on government spending as well as pressure to support equity prices by public money such as the GPIF. If it happens, PM. Abe is likely to dissolve the Lower House for a new election in the extraordinary Diet session in autumn starting in October.

Tail risk in autumn but prolonged lull until then

There is increasing possibility for the announcement of new GPIF portfolio to be delayed and increasing possibility for US yields to remain lower than expected so that domestic investors position for carry to revise down the target yields. The volatility is also likely to remain low and long gamma players are likely to be forced to cut risk which would make historically cheap volatility even cheaper. On the other hand, there is increasing event risk in autumn. Recently more media have started commenting on a possible election in autumn and there will be strong demand for measures to bolster stock prices as well as strong demand for a supplemental budget, to push JGB yields higher. In addition, if CPI numbers come out in line with the BoJ forecast by any reasons such as high oil prices due to geopolitical risk rather than market expectations, the JGB curve might massively bear steepen. The chances are small but we should closely watch out the possibility of a Lower House election in this year. Until then, we recommend positioning for carry.

Curve: 10y is still most attractive

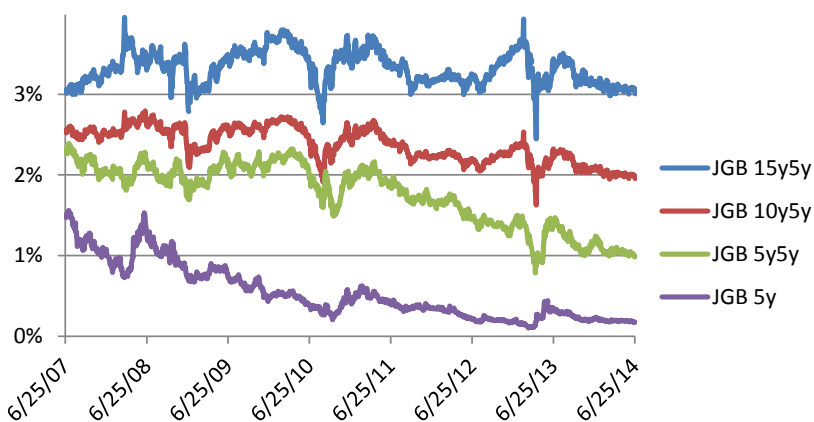
10y still looks relatively attractive

Without the BoJ buybacks, the 10y looks rich in the curve and the curve is still concavely shaped at the 10y. As shown in Figure 5, the steep slope in the JGB curve still offers attractive total return compared to its yields, 15y5y (a proxy for expected total return of 20y) of at 3%, 10y5y (that of 15y) at 2%, and 5y5y (that of 10y) at 1%. In addition, these rates have been quite stable this year. At a glance the 15y5y over 3% looks attractive and the level is in line with 2% inflation plus 1% real growth. However, we believe 5y5y at 1% is more attractive than 15y5y at 3%. The reasons are (1) 4y term funding at 10bp by the BoJ, (2) strong commitment in 5y-10y sector by the BoJ, and (3) much smaller fiscal risk within 5yrs than 15yrs

"Duration -4y" would be an accurate measure than duration itself

The attractiveness of the forwards depends on the gap between its aged forward rate; therefore, the stability of aged forward is very important. JGB 5y may go up in the future, but the risk can be easily hedged by the 4y 10bp fixed-rate funding provided by the BoJ, and therefore the sell-off itself should be limited. The gap between the 5y5y and the 5y is most likely to be realized even in case of success in Abenomics. In addition, the fact that the BoJ kept the lower bound of buyback size of the 5y-10y sector unchanged while they decreased the size of the 10y+ sector twice recently indicates their strong commitment to the 5y-10y sector. The declining lending rates and the widening deposit-loan gap are also likely to support the 10y for a while. (Please see our report of 23 May "[Our three best trades to bet on a possible increase in yen rates](#)") Finally, if a part of the roll down is due to a fiscal premium and the slope at the first 5y looks most attractive as the premium looks too high compared to the risk given the size of Japan's net overseas assets. (Please see our report of 18 April, "[Never too soon to stop the bleeding](#)")

Figure 5. JGB forward rate (a proxy for expected total return)

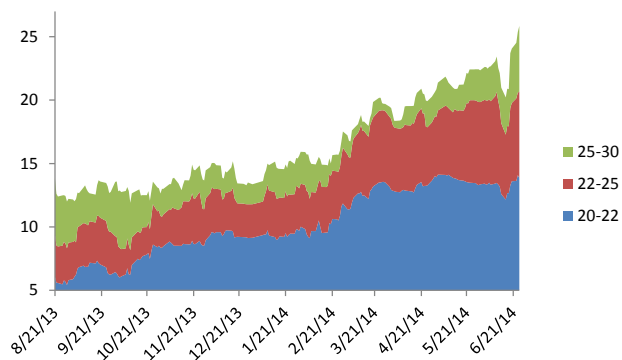


Source: Bloomberg, Citi Research.

20y-30y steepening is a bit too stretched

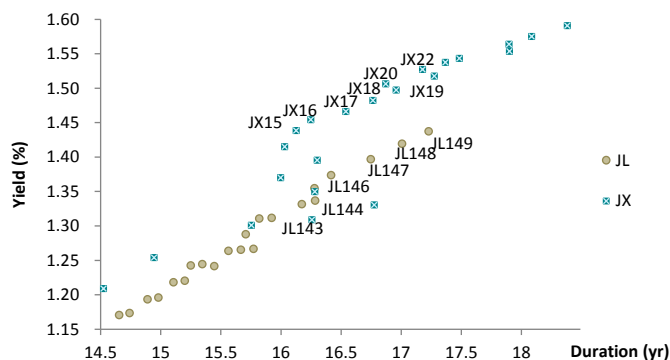
As we pointed out last week, the change by the BoJ should eventually be positive to the 30y within the 10y+ sector as the new allocation to the 25y+ zone is larger than the average result in the past. The fact that the total size of the 10y+ sector was reduced is relatively negative to the 10y+ sector compared to the 5y-10y sector and is likely to keep the 10y-20y steeper, however, the 20y-30y is eventually likely to flatten especially on the buyback day next to the 20y auction or liquidity auction for the 5y-15y when market has enough inventory in the 10y-25y sector but not in the 25y+ sector, if the BoJ continue to split the sector. On the other hand, the 20y-30y could steepen further after 30y auction on July 10, if the BoJ continues to split the sector. The intra-month volatility of the 20y-30y slope is likely to increase if the BoJ continues to split the 10y+ sector, especially after the 30y auction and liquidity auction for the 15y+ sector, when market has inventory of 30y JGBs. (Please see our outlook on BoJ buybacks and auction dates in the calendar on the next page.)

Figure 6. 20-30 steepening mostly due to 20-22 spread



Source: Citi Research.

Figure 7. 21y sector has shorter duration and higher yield than 20y



Source: Citi Research.

Figure 8. Market event calendar for June and July

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Jun 23	24	25	26	27
BoJ operation (5-10, 10+)	Enhanced-liquidity auction [JPY0.4trn]	BoJ operation (1-5, 5-10)	JGB 2y auction [JPY2.7trn]	BoJ operation (1-5, 10+)
30	Jul 1	2	3	4
	<i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i><1, 10+</i>)		JGB 10y auction [JPY2.4trn]	<i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i>1-5, 5-10</i>)
7	8	9	10	11
	JGBi 10y auction [JPY0.4trn]	<i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i><1, 5-10</i>)	JGB 30y auction [JPY0.7trn]	<i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i>1-5, 10+</i>)
14	15	16	17	18
BoJ Policy Meeting <i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i>1-5, 5-10</i>)	BoJ Policy Meeting	Enhanced-liquidity auction [JPY0.3trn]	<i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i>5-10, 10+</i>)	JGB 5y auction [JPY2.7trn]
21	22	23	24	25
National Holiday	<i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i>1-5, 5-10</i>)	JGB 20y auction [JPY1.2trn]	<i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i>1-5, 10+</i>)	Enhanced-liquidity auction [JPY0.4trn]
28	29	30	31	
<i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i>5-10, JGBi</i>)	JGB 2y auction [JPY2.7trn] FOMC	FOMC <i>BoJ operation*</i> (<i>1-5, 10+</i>)		

Note*: Schedule for the BoJ's long-term JGB purchase operation is Citi's forecast. Forecasts are shown in italics while the actual operation bracket is in regular font.

Appendix A-1

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