Insights

# **Fixed Income**

## Q3 2024

# EMD Local Currency: Not All Indices Are the Same

# **SPDR EMEA ETF Strategy Team**

Index rules vary from one provider to the other. In some cases this variance could lead to differences in the interpretation or definition of certain regions.

In the fixed income space, and emerging market debt in particular, there are different approaches to country inclusion rules. For investment vehicles like ETFs, understanding this difference can in turn present opportunities when using a fund that follows one index or another.

This paper compares and contrasts the index construction approach of Bloomberg and JP Morgan as it pertains to local currency emerging market debt (EMD) indices tracked by ETFs in Europe. The focus is on the two indices most representative of the assets invested in European-domiciled ETFs, as they comprise close to 95% of assets with c. \$9.2 billion.<sup>1</sup>

- Within EMD indices, there are various methodologies for determining country inclusions;
   JP Morgan, in particular, created a range of custom indices that introduce pre-determined 'floors' (i.e. a minimum weight within the index) and 'caps' (a maximum weight within the index) for their constituents. These differences can result in substantially different index performance.
- In terms of investment universe, the Bloomberg Emerging Markets Local Currency Liquid Government Bond Index has a greater number of constituent (609 bonds) than its JP Morgan counterpart, thus providing a broader pool of securities in which to invest.<sup>2</sup> This is an important consideration, especially for investors who may be concerned about fund sizes, market impact and liquidity constraints.

- 1 Bloomberg Finance L.P., as of 31 August 2024.
- 2 Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., as of 31 August 2024.

# Inclusion Rules: Countries

Figure 1

# Summary of Country Inclusion Rules

Bloomberg vs. JP Morgan Index

	Bloomberg Emerging Markets Local Currency Liquid Government Bond Index	JP Morgan GBI-EM Global Diversified 10% Cap & 1% Floor		
Emerging Market Country Definition & Country Eligibility	Bloomberg uses a fixed list of emerging market countries that is reviewed annually to define country eligibility in dedicated EM hard currency, local currency and inflation-linked benchmarks. Criteria for inclusion in the EM country list are rules based and include:  • Countries that meet one of the following two criteria: World Bank Income group classifications of low/middle income OR International Monetary Fund (IMF) classification as a non-advanced country.	For a country to be eligible for inclusion in the JP Morgan GBI-EM indices, GNI per capita must be below the Index Income Ceiling (IIC) for three consecutive years. JP Morgan defines the IIC as the GNI per capita level that is adjusted every year by the growth rate of the World GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$), provided by the World Bank annually. An existing country may be considered for removal from the index if its GNI per capita is above the IIC for three consecutive years and its long-term local sovereign credit rating (the available rating agencies: S&P, Moody's & Fitch) is A-/A3/A- or above for three consecutive years.		
Additional Criteria	In addition to being defined as an Emerging Market under Bloomberg EM country definition, inclusion in the EM Local Currency Liquid Government Bond Index is also based on market size and an evaluation of market investability. The maximum weight of a country is capped at 10% based on market cap.	The JP Morgan GBI EM Global Diversified 10% Cap & 1% Floor Index does NOT include markets with capital controls. The maximum weight of a country is capped at 10% based on market cap. The minimum weight of a country is 1% based on issue amount outstanding. New markets require a weight of at least 1% in the flagship GBI-EN Global Diversified.		
EM Country List	EM country list is evaluated once a year by Bloomberg.	_		
Recent Index Changes	Russia removed March 2022. China added (April 2019), Argentina removed (September 2019)	India added June 2024, Egypt removed January 2024, Russia removed March 2022. Egypt added (January 2022), China added (April 2020), Argentina removed (November 2019)		

Source: State Street Global Advisors, Bloomberg Finance L.P., JP Morgan, as of 31 August 2024.

# **Country Rules Impact** on Index Composition

The difference in emerging market definitions will lead to differences in countries between the Bloomberg and JP Morgan index families.

Figure 2

Summary of Key Index

Characteristics

	Bloomberg Emerging Markets Local Currency Liquid Government Bond Index	JP Morgan EM-GBI Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor Index
# Countries	18	16
# Constituents	609	367
Cpn	3.742	5.244
Yield to Worst	6.16	6.57
OAD	6.28	5.20
OAC	0.83	0.50
Mty (Yrs)	9.04	7.36
Index Rtg	A3/BAA1	BAA1/BAA2

Source: State Street Global Advisors, Bloomberg Finance L.P., JP Morgan, as of 31 August 2024. Data are as of the date indicated, subject to change, and should not be relied upon as current thereafter. The index rating is the middle rating of the three main rating agencies S&P, Moody's and Fitch.

# **Country Distribution**

Index rules will have an impact on country membership, bonds that are included in each country, and market valuations. Within countries, the difference will also come from the types of bonds included.

In the Philippines, the Bloomberg index includes both international and domestic bonds, while the JP Morgan no longer provides exposure to Philippines due its inclusion criteria.

Both indices removed Russia in March 2022. Egypt was removed from the JP Morgan index in January 2024, having been re-admitted only in January 2022. JP Morgan have started to include Indian bonds from June 2024, these will also be integrated into the Bloomberg index from January 2025.

Figure 3 **Country Distribution** 

		eal Currency Liquid t Bond Index	JP Morgan EM-GBI Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor Index			
	Market Value (%)	# Constituents	Market Value (%)	# Constituents		
Total	100.00	609	100.00	367		
Brazil	7.11	15	8.39	11		
Chile	1.59	15	1.92	11		
China	10.00	156	9.98	68		
Colombia	3.02	14	4.40	12		
Czech Republic	4.00	22	5.91	22		
Hungary	2.00	18	3.04	18		
India	_	_	1.95	29		
Indonesia	10.00	57	10.34	40		
Israel	3.15	13	_	_		
Malaysia	10.00	57	10.53	42		
Mexico	8.60	22	9.18	16		
Peru	1.50	12	2.10	10		
Philippines	4.26	33	_	_		
Poland	5.67	16	7.98	15		
Romania	2.78	24	4.05	24		
S. Africa	6.09	12	8.93	12		
S. Korea	10.00	66	_	_		
Thailand	8.60	39	9.74	25		
Turkey	1.63	18	1.55	12		

Source: State Street Global Advisors, Bloomberg Finance L.P., JP Morgan, as of 31 August 2024. Data are as of the date indicated, subject to change, and should not be relied upon as current thereafter.

Figure 4

Country Weights

Drive Average

Quality Differences

		g EM Local Curre ernment Bond Ir		JP Morgan EM-GBI Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor Index			
	Market Ir Value (%)		Index Rating Index Rating Number		Index Rating	Index Rating Number	
Total	100.00	A3/BAA1	8.74	99.99	BAA1/BAA2	9.4	
Brazil	7.11	BA2	13.00	8.39	BA2	13.00	
Chile	1.59	A2	7.00	1.92	A2	7.00	
China	10.00	A1	6.00	9.98	A1	6.00	
Colombia	3.02	BAA3	11.00	4.40	BAA3	11.00	
Czech Republic	4.00	AA3	5.00	5.91	AA3	5.00	
Hungary	2.00	BAA2	10.00	3.04	BAA2	10.00	
India	_	_	_	1.95	BAA3	11.00	
Indonesia	10.00	BAA2	10.00	10.34	BAA2	10.00	
Israel	3.15	A2	7.00	_	_	_	
Malaysia	10.00	A3	8.00	10.53	A3	8.00	
Mexico	8.60	BAA2	10.00	9.18	BAA2	10.00	
Peru	1.50	BAA2	10.00	2.10	BAA2	10.00	
Philippines	4.26	BAA2	10.00	_	_	_	
Poland	5.67	A2	7.00	7.98	A2	7.00	
Romania	2.78	ВААЗ	11.00	4.05	BAA3	11.00	
S. Africa	6.09	BA2	13.00	8.93	BA2	13.00	
S. Korea	10.00	AA2	4.00	_	_	_	
Thailand	8.60	BAA1	9.00	9.74	BAA1	9.00	
Turkey	1.63	B1	15.00	1.55	B1	15.00	

Source: State Street Global Advisors, Bloomberg Finance L.P., JP Morgan, as of 31 August 2024. Data are as of the date indicated, subject to change, and should not be relied upon as current thereafter. The index rating is the middle rating of the three main rating agencies S&P, Moody's and Fitch.

As a consequence of the index inclusion rules, the number of bonds and the market value of the indices will vary. The difference between the two local currency EM debt indices will come from the countries included as well as the criteria for bond inclusion. Moreover, the JP Morgan GBI-EM Diversified Index methodology uses only a limited portion of a country's current face amount outstanding for calculating weights (see JP Morgan Index rules and methodology for further details).

A result of country and bond selection can be seen in the investment universes of the indices. The Bloomberg index has a greater number of constituents (around 609 bonds against 367 for the JP Morgan index), thus providing a broader pool of securities in which to invest. This is an important consideration, especially for investors who may be concerned about fund sizes, market impact and liquidity constraints.

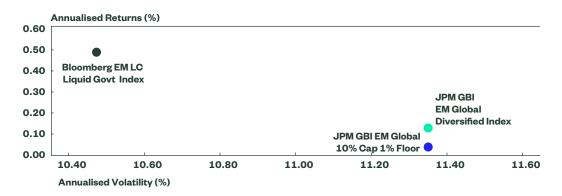
Both of these indices operate a 10% cap, meaning any country weights in excess of the cap are re-distributed to other, smaller countries. The JP Morgan index also operates a 1% minimum weight floor. This creates higher weights for smaller countries, a small cap bias, and could lead to questions concerning liquidity.

# Diversification and Risk-Adjusted Returns

The Bloomberg EM Local Currency Liquid Government Index has, over time, exhibited a better risk-adjusted profile than that of the JP Morgan GBI-EM Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor index. This is in part due to the inclusion of South Korea and Israel in the Bloomberg universe, which, while having a longer duration than average, have typically behaved more like developed market bonds. Based on current yield levels, the addition of India to both the JP Morgan and Bloomberg indices is expected to have a similar effect of dampening volatility while enhancing returns.

In Figure 5, we plot the risk versus return of the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Liquid Government Index, the JP Morgan EM-GBI Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor and the JP Morgan EM Global Diversified Index over the past 5 years.

Figure 5
5-Year Annualised Risk
Return in USD Unhedged



Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., as of 31 August 2024. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. It is not possible to invest directly in an index. Index performance does not reflect charges and expenses associated with the fund or brokerage commissions associated with buying and selling a fund. Index performance is not meant to represent that of any particular fund.

Figure 6

Annualised Performance & Volatility in USD Unhedged

	Annualised Return (%)			Annualised Volatility (%)			Sharpe Ratio		
	Bloomberg EM Local Currency Liquid Government Index	JPM EM GBI Global Diversified	JPM EM GBI Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor	Bloomberg EM Local Currency Liquid Government Index	JPM EM GBI Global Diversified	JPM EM GBI Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor	Bloomberg EM Local Currency Liquid Government Index	JPM EM GBI Global Diversified	JPM EM GBI Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor
Last 1 year	6.61	6.00	5.68	9.75	8.87	8.87	0.10	0.04	0.00
Last 3 years	-1.24	-1.67	-1.60	10.71	10.79	10.69	-0.43	-0.47	-0.47
Last 5 years	0.50	0.11	0.04	10.48	11.36	11.36	-0.17	-0.19	-0.20
Last 10 years	0.33	-0.29	-0.31	10.08	11.24	11.22	-0.14	-0.18	-0.18

Source: State Street Global Advisors, Bloomberg Finance L.P., JP Morgan, as of 31 August 2024. Risk-free rate based on JP Morgan 1M USD Cash index. The JP Morgan EM-GBI Global Diversified 10% Cap 1% Floor index was incepted on 28 February 2017. Results prior to this date were calculated by using available data at the time in accordance with the Index's current methodology. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. It is not possible to invest directly in an index. Index performance does not reflect charges and expenses associated with the fund or brokerage commissions associated with buying and selling a fund. Index performance is not meant to represent that of any particular fund.

### **Summary**

Understanding the key differences between emerging market local currency indices is important as they drive the overall characteristics of the ETF benchmarked against them. For instance the longer duration of the Bloomberg index will be a drag on performance as central bank rates rise but may provide benefits in rate cutting cycles. The inclusion of Indian bonds should add to yield while dampening volatility in both indices.

In addition, there will always be idiosyncratic risk in Emerging Market debt which makes the understanding of index constituents equally important. For instance Russian bonds were a major drag on the performance of EM debt in 2022. These bonds were excluded from most indices at the March 2022 month-end rebalancing. This had a greater impact on the JPM GBI EM Global Diversified Index given the weight of Russia within the index was just over 6%, against just under 4% for the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Liquid Govt Index. The extreme volatility in returns for countries such as Egypt and Turkey can have meaningful impact on overall portfolio performance even though holdings may be relatively small. Investors should therefore consider both top line risk characteristics and the index constituents carefully when selecting the ETF most appropriate to their investment objectives.

State Street Global Advisors' size, scale and experience in the emerging market local currency debt space mean that we can accommodate the needs of clients whose specific objectives cannot be met by a general index; we would be happy to discuss your options as necessary.

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## **Key Risks**

**Government default** There is still always the chance that governments can default on their debt. In that event, governments may not be able to meet their obligations and investors could lose the value of their investment.

**Geopolitical risk** Emerging market countries can at times be less stable than their developed market counterparts. Any disruption to the governments or financial markets in emerging markets can have an impact on how effectively governments can service their debt.

**Market uncertainty** Emerging market debt performance is driven by interest rates and credit spreads. Thus any significant moves in these factors can have an impact (positive or negative) on the value of this asset class.

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long-term returns.

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