

FLEXIBLE INCOME FUND

At a glance

Performance*

The Fund returned -1.82%, the Index returned -1.41% and the Sector returned -1.10%.

Contributors/detractors

Overall interest rate positioning detracted, while our spread risk allocation performed in line with the benchmark.

Outlook

In our view, the key takeaway from the Federal Reserve's (Fed) dovish policy pivot is that it should result in a favourable multi-year outlook for fixed income.

Portfolio management







Michael Keough

Investment environment

- The US fixed income market posted a negative return in February, with the Bloomberg US Aggregate Bond Index declining 1.4%. High yield bonds outperformed investment grade corporate bonds and US Treasuries.
- Continued solid economic data and quarterly earnings made investors re-valuate when rate cuts may begin.
 The US saw a remarkably strong jobs report (non-farm payroll growth of 517,000 versus the expected 185,000) while unemployment fell further from 3.5% to 3.4%.
- The January inflation reading of 3.1% was down from 3.4% in the prior month but was still higher relative to analyst forecasts of 2.9%. The yield on the US 10-year Treasury ended February at 4.25% relative to 3.91% at the end of January.
- Corporate investment grade credit spreads ended the month effectively flat versus the prior month at 0.96%.
 High yield credit spreads tightened 32 basis points to 3.12%, as investors increased their risk appetite on solid quarterly earnings results.

Portfolio review

We maintained a duration overweight position during the period, considering the progress that had been made on inflation, coupled with the likelihood the Federal Reserve

(Fed) is done raising rates. While our interest rate positioning detracted as rates rose, we believe rates are likely to fall further in 2024, and we also like the defensive characteristics of higher-duration exposure in the event the economy cools more quickly than expected.

Our allocation to spread risk performed in line with the benchmark. Notably, investment grade corporate bonds contributed positively, while agency mortgage-backed securities (MBS) detracted.

As credit spread products have delivered strong excess returns, valuations seem to have priced in a lot of the more favourable outlook. Yet, we still think the yields available across these asset classes are attractive and may drive strong investor demand.

Manager outlook

Following two years of tough talk and aggressive rate hikes, the Fed delivered some holiday cheer by way of a dovish pivot at its December meeting. Inflation has made a sustained move back towards target and has allowed the central bank to signal its intent to transition from a 24-month tightening campaign to an easing cycle. This is broadly positive for the economy and fixed income markets.

Looser financial conditions and lower interest rates should bring some welcome relief for consumers and corporations. We also expect the Fed's dual mandate to shift back into

Marketing communication

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*For benchmark and sector, if applicable, refer to Fund details on page 3. For relevant descriptions, risks and the Fund's investment policy statement, refer to Additional fund information on page 4.

balance. In 2022 and 2023, with inflation far too high, the central bank was focused on the one side of its mandate, namely stable prices. But given its increased confidence that inflation will move back to its 2% target, the Fed recently highlighted the need to also focus on the other side of its mandate - full employment.

In our view, the key takeaway from this policy shift is that it should result in a favourable multi-year outlook for fixed income returns. We expect demand for the fixed income asset class to increase, as investors can lock in attractive yields and benefit from the diversification that bonds may bring to multi-asset portfolios.

While the outlook has continued to improve, we must also acknowledge the risks. We believe we are yet to feel the full cumulative impacts of prior rate hikes. Monetary policy works in long and variable lags, and while the most intense headwinds of rising rates may be behind us, we should not discount the effect on the economy of a federal funds rate

that is 525 basis points above where it was a couple of years ago. As such, we think a slowdown in growth is likely, but the extent thereof remains an open question. Nonetheless, it bodes well that the Fed is now in a stronger position to lower rates if the economy shows signs of weakness.

In 2024 we will be focused on the health of the consumer, the job market outlook, and how corporations fare through this environment. We still favour an overweight position to both credit spread risk and interest rate risk, as the economy remains resilient, and as rate cuts are now on the table. Further, we continue to favour securitised sectors for their relative value, as well as higher-rated assets for their defensiveness, in case we witness economic softening.

Source: Janus Henderson Investors, as at 29 February 2024

Performance (%)

	Cumulative				Annualised			
Returns	1 Month	3 Month	YTD	1 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	
A2 USD (Net)	-1.82	1.94	-1.92	1.42	-4.78	-0.37	0.05	
Index	-1.41	2.08	-1.68	3.33	-3.16	0.56	1.43	
Sector	-1.10	1.27	-1.18	3.00	-2.32	0.79	1.20	
A2 USD (Gross)	_	_	_	_	_	1.52	1.98	
Target	_	_	_	_	_	1.82	2.70	

Calendar year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
A2 USD (Net)	3.88	-15.24	-2.33	8.89	7.90	-2.23	2.18	1.15	-1.14	3.44
Index	5.53	-13.01	-1.54	7.51	8.72	0.01	3.54	2.65	0.55	5.97
Sector	4.75	-10.17	-1.50	6.92	7.66	-1.19	4.08	2.23	-0.63	4.16

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Performance/performance target related data will display only where relevant to the share class inception date and annualised target time period. The value of an investment and the income from it can fall as well as rise and you may not get back the amount originally invested. Source for target returns (where applicable) - Janus Henderson Investors

Fund charges will impact the value of your investment. In particular, the ongoing charges applicable to each fund will dilute investment performance, particularly over time. For further explanation of charges please visit our Fund Charges page at www.janushenderson.com.

Note that any differences among portfolio securities currencies, share class currencies and costs to be paid or represented in currencies other than your home currency will expose you to currency risk. Costs and returns may increase or decrease as a result of currency and exchange rate fluctuations.

Investment objective

The Fund aims to provide a return, from a combination of income and capital growth, while seeking to limit losses to capital (although not guaranteed) over the long term. Performance target: To outperform the Bloomberg US Aggregate Bond Index by 1.25% per annum, before the deduction of charges, over any 5 year period.

For the fund's investment policy, refer to the Additional fund information on page 4.

Past performance does not predict future returns.

Fund details

Inception date	24 December 1998
Total net assets	494.78m
Asset class	Fixed Income
Domicile	Ireland
Structure	Irish Investment Company
Base currency	USD
Index	Bloomberg US Aggregate Bond Index
Morningstar sector	USD Diversified Bond
SFDR category	Article 8

In accordance with the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation, the Fund is classified as Article 8 and promotes, among other characteristics, environmental and/or social characteristics, and invests in companies with good governance practices.

Additional fund information

Tax assumptions and reliefs depend upon an investor's particular circumstances and may be subject to change. Please note the performance target is to be achieved over a specific annualised time period. Refer to the performance target wording within the objective. Availability of share classes shown may be limited by law in certain jurisdictions. Performance records/scenarios are detailed within the fund's specific KIID/KID; fees and charges, and the respective risk rating may vary. Further information can be found in the fund's prospectus and KIID/KID, which must be reviewed before investing. Please consult your local sales representative and/or financial adviser if you have any queries. This is an Irish Investment Company regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. A short-term trading fee may be applied upon exiting the fund as per the prospectus. These are the views of the author at the time of publication and may differ from the views of other individuals/teams at Janus Henderson Investors. Any securities, funds, sectors or indices mentioned within this article do not constitute or form part of any offer or solicitation to buy or sell them. The information in this commentary does not qualify as an investment recommendation. Investment into the fund will acquire units/shares of the fund itself and not the underlying assets owned by the fund. The ongoing charge is calculated using the PRIIP methodology. The PRIIP methodology differs to the UCITS ongoing charge methodology, as the PRIIP methodology captures additional recurring charges, including but not limited to: Interest paid on borrowing (e.g. bank interest); Any fees incurred in relation to stock-lending activity (i.e. the fee paid to the lending agent); Any costs associated with holding closed-ended vehicles. Cash balances and exposures are based on settled and unsettled trades as at the reporting date.

Investment policy

The Fund invests at least 67% (but normally more than 80%) of its assets in US bonds of any quality, including high yield (non-investment grade) bonds and asset-backed and mortgage-backed securities, issued by governments, companies or any other type of issuer. The Fund may also hold other assets including bonds of other types from any issuer, preference shares, cash and money market instruments. The Sub-Investment Adviser may use derivatives (complex financial instruments) to reduce risk, to manage the Fund more efficiently, or to generate additional capital or income for the Fund. The Fund is actively managed with reference to the Bloomberg US Aggregate Bond Index, which is broadly representative of the bonds in which it may invest, as this forms the basis of the Fund's performance target. The Sub-Investment Adviser has discretion to choose investments for the Fund with weightings different to the index or not in the index, but at times the Fund may hold investments similar to the index.

Investment strategy

The Sub-Investment Adviser draws on Janus Henderson's integrated fixed income and equity research function, to identify the best risk-adjusted opportunities for the Fund. The strategy has the flexibility to deviate significantly from the index on a sector basis while having a strong focus towards the US. The investment process is dynamic with allocations to different types of bonds determined by the opportunities which exist and is supported by a proprietary research and risk management system.

Fund specific risks

The Fund invests in Asset-Backed Securities (ABS) and other forms of securitised investments, which may be subject to greater credit / default, liquidity, interest rate and prepayment and extension risks, compared to other investments such as government or corporate issued bonds and this may negatively impact the realised return on investment in the securities. When the Fund, or a share/unit class, seeks to mitigate exchange rate movements of a currency relative to the base currency (hedge), the hedging strategy itself may positively or negatively impact the value of the Fund due to differences in short-term interest rates between the currencies. The Fund could lose money if a counterparty with which the Fund trades becomes unwilling or unable to meet its obligations, or as a result of failure or delay in operational processes or the failure of a third party provider. In addition to income, this share class may distribute realised and unrealised capital gains and original capital invested. Fees, charges and expenses are also deducted from capital. Both factors may result in capital erosion and reduced potential for capital growth. Investors should also note that distributions of this nature may be treated (and taxable) as income depending on local tax legislation. An issuer of a bond (or money market instrument) may become unable or unwilling to pay interest or repay capital to the Fund. If this happens or the market perceives this may happen, the value of the bond will fall. When interest rates rise (or fall), the prices of different securities will be affected differently. In particular, bond values generally fall when interest rates rise (or are expected to rise). This risk is typically greater the longer the maturity of a bond investment. The Fund invests in high yield (non-investment grade) bonds and while these generally offer higher rates of interest than investment grade bonds, they are more speculative and more sensitive to adverse changes in market conditions. Some bonds (callable bonds) allow their issuers the right to repay capital early or to extend the maturity. Issuers may exercise these rights when favourable to them and as a result the value of the Fund may be impacted. If a Fund has a high exposure to a particular country or geographical region it carries a higher level of risk than a Fund which is more broadly diversified. The Fund may use derivatives to help achieve its investment objective. This can result in leverage (higher levels of debt), which can magnify an investment outcome. Gains or losses to the Fund may therefore be greater than the cost of the derivative. Derivatives also introduce other risks, in particular, that a derivative counterparty may not meet its contractual obligations. If the Fund holds assets in currencies other than the base currency of the Fund, or you invest in a share/unit class of a different currency to the Fund (unless hedged, i.e. mitigated by taking an offsetting position in a related security), the value of your investment may be impacted by changes in exchange rates. Securities within the Fund could become hard to value or to sell at a desired time and price, especially in extreme market conditions when asset prices may be falling, increasing the risk of investment losses. Some or all of the ongoing charges may be taken from capital, which may erode capital or reduce potential for capital growth. The Fund involves a high level of buying and selling activity and as such will incur a higher level of transaction costs than a fund that trades less frequently. These transaction costs are in addition to the Fund's ongoing charges.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT JANUSHENDERSON.COM

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Source: Janus Henderson Investors, as at 29 February 2024, unless otherwise noted.

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Flexible Income Fund (as at 29/02/24)

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