

Mexico Watch

Banxico will anticipate the Fed

Banxico will likely anticipate the US Fed

We expect Banxico to start the easing cycle with a 25bp policy rate cut on March 21. We then expect Banxico to cut 25bp at each subsequent meeting until November (a change from our previous forecast), accelerating the pace at the end of the year to 50bp as we expect the economy to decelerate significantly in 2H after the election. Our US economics team expects the Fed to cut 25bp in June and then at every other meeting. So, we expect Banxico to anticipate and to cut more than the Fed in this cycle. We present our full path for Banxico and for the Fed for the rest of this year in Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2. We expect the spread between Banxico and the Fed to narrow (Exhibit 3). The risk to our view is that Banxico starts in May instead of March, and that once it starts it decides to skip meeting in between cuts, but those are not our baseline. On the other hand, another risk is that Banxico accelerates to 50bp clips right after the Fed starts cutting, especially if the Mexican economy decelerates as we expect (1.8% in 2024).

Why do we expect Banxico to cut soon?

We expect Banxico to cut as soon as March for five reasons: 1) Banxico has clearly communicated that a cut is imminent: it stopped hiking in March 2023, then changed the forward guidance in November 2023 and then again in February 2024 each time to a less restrictive language. In addition, the most recent minutes and 4Q quarterly report presentation show that at least 3 out of the 5 board members, including the governor, are ready to cut; 2) Inflation and core inflation have fallen 197bp and 333bp respectively since Banxico's last hike, and both are currently below 5%; 3) The economy decelerated sharply in 4Q 2023 to 0.3% gog saar (Exhibit 4), below potential, and Banxico now estimates the output gap has peaked; 4) Banxico has said that the real ex-ante policy rate at the current 7.17% is too restrictive, after increasing 106bp since the last hike amid a drop in 12m-ahead inflation expectations from 4.85% in March 2023 to 3.81% in February 2024 (Exhibit 5); and 5) Banxico estimates the neutral real rate is 2.6%.

Why do we believe it is too soon for Banxico to cut?

We believe that inflation and core inflation above 4% are still high (Exhibit 6). A trimmed measure of inflation and services inflation remains high and resilient (Exhibit 7 and Exhibit 8). Inflation expectations are all above the 3% inflation target and breakevens are close to 5% (Exhibit 9 and Exhibit 10). In addition, we estimate the output gap will still take many quarters to close (Exhibit 11) and the labor market is still too tight (Exhibit 12, Exhibit 13). Other variables also point to an economy too hot to start a cutting cycle. For instance, credit to consumption still grows at double-digit rates in real terms (Exhibit 14). The only variable that points to a tight monetary policy is the real exchange rate, which remains too strong (Exhibit 15). Yet, the combination of a weak monetary policy transmission, aggressive fiscal stimulus, and a resilient US economy, offsets the impact of the FX channel. This suggests monetary policy may not be as restrictive as it seems.

Lower rates, weaker MXN but sticky inflation

As a result of Banxico cutting ahead and more than the Fed, but also probably cutting too early, in the following months we expect lower short term interest rates, a weaker MXN but inflation staying above 4%.

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See glossary of abbreviations on page 5

Exhibit 1: Banxico and US Fed policy rate paths

We now expect Banxico to cut on a continuous way, considering recent communication

Change in Banxico path; Fed path

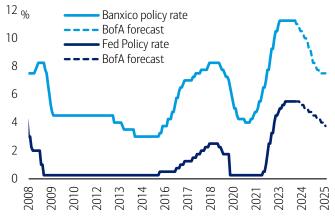
	New		Old		US Fed	
Meeting	Rate	Change (bp)	Rate	Change (bp)	Rate	Change (bp)
Jan-24	11.25		11.25		5.50	
Feb-24	11.25		11.25		5.50	
Mar-24	11.00	-25	11.00	-25	5.50	
Apr-24	11.00		11.00		5.50	
May-24	10.75	-25	11.00		5.50	
Jun-24	10.50	-25	10.75	-25	5.25	-25
Jul-24	10.50		10.75		5.25	
Aug-24	10.25	-25	10.75		5.25	
Sep-24	10.00	-25	10.25	-50	5.00	-25
Oct-24	10.00		10.25		5.00	
Nov-24	9.75	-25	9.75	-50	5.00	
Dec-24	9.25	-50	9.25	-50	4.75	-25
Jan-25	9.25		9.25		4.75	
Feb-25	8.75	-50	8.75	-50	4.75	
Mar-25	8.25	-50	8.25	-50	4.50	-25
Apr-25	8.25		8.25		4.50	
May-25	8.00	-25	8.00	-25	4.50	
Jun-25	7.75	-25	7.75	-25	4.25	-25
Jul-25	7.75		7.75		4.25	
Aug-25	7.50	-25	7.50	-25	4.25	
Sep-25	7.50		7.50		4.00	-25
Oct-25	7.50		7.50		4.00	
Nov-25	7.50		7.50		4.00	
Dec-25	7.50		7.50		3.75	-25

Source: BofA Global Research estimates

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Exhibit 2: Banxico and US Fed policy rate paths and forecasts (%)

We expect Banxico to start cutting before the Fed and to go deeper

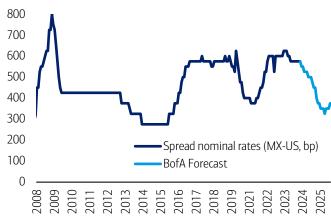


Source: BofA Global Research estimates, Bloomberg

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Exhibit 3: Banxico policy rate-Fed funds rate nominal spread (bp)

We expect a narrower spread given Banxico's more aggressive cutting cycle



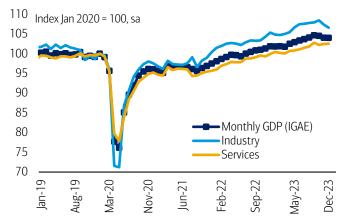
Source: BofA Global Research estimates, Bloomberg

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Exhibit 4: Monthly GDP Index (Jan. 2020 = 100)

IGAE falling each month since October points towards economic weakness



Source: BofA Global Research, INEGI

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Exhibit 6: Headline and core inflation (%)

Headline recovered the downward trend while core kept falling

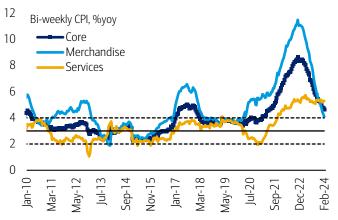


Source: BofA Global Research, INEGI

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Exhibit 8: Core inflation by components (%)

All eyes are on services inflation, which remains high



Source: BofA Global Research, INEGI

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Exhibit 5: Expected inflation for the next 12 months (%)

Expected inflation for the next 12 months is now below 4.0%

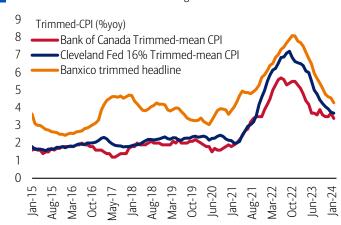


Source: BofA Global Research, Banco de Mexico

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Exhibit 7: Trimmed inflation by country (%)

Trimmed inflation in Mexico remains high

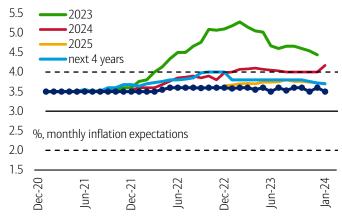


Source: BofA Global Research, Bloomberg

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Exhibit 9: Inflation expectations at different horizons (%)

Expectations for 2024 ticked up; longer-term expectations are above 3.0%



Source: BofA Global Research, Banco de Mexico

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Exhibit 10: 30-year breakeven inflation (%)

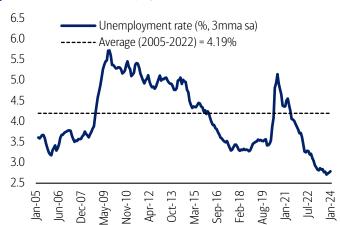
The market still expects high inflation ahead



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Exhibit 12: Unemployment rate, 3mma sa (%)

The labor market remains very tight

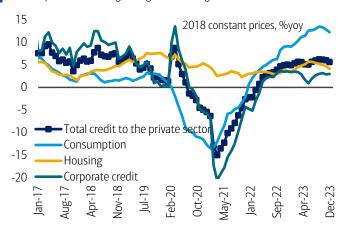


Source: BofA Global Research, IMSS

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Exhibit 14: Credit to the private sector breakdown

Consumption credit still growing at double digit rates in real terms

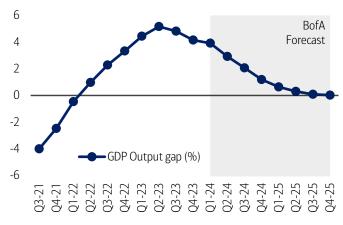


Source: BofA Global Research, Banxico

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Exhibit 11: Output gap estimation (%)

We expect the economy to slowdown in the following quarters

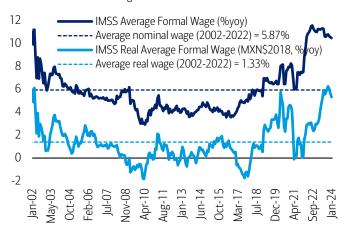


Source: BofA Global Research estimates

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Exhibit 13: Average formal nominal and real wage growth (%)

Both measures remain at high historical levels



Source: BofA Global Research, IMSS

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Exhibit 15: Real exchange rate

The real exchange rate has strengthened in recent years



Source: BofA Global Research, Banxico

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List of acronyms

Banxico: Central Bank of Mexico Fed: US Federal Reserve FX: Exchange rate MXN: Mexican peso



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