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Q1 2022 | Putnam Global Income Trust Q&A

Relative outperformance in difficult period for global bonds

Michael V. Salm
Chief Investment Officer, Fixed Income
Industry since 1989

Michael J. Atkin
Head of Macro and Sovereign Credit
Industry since 1988
(Photo not available)

Norman P. Boucher
Portfolio Manager
Industry since 1985

Albert Chan, CFA
Head of Portfolio Construction
Industry since 2002

Robert L. Davis, CFA
Portfolio Manager
Industry since 1999

All major fixed income sectors posted losses amid global market turbulence.

Interest-rate and yield curve positioning added the most value versus the benchmark, while an allocation to investment-grade corporate bonds detracted.

We have a cautiously optimistic outlook but recognize that geopolitical tensions and monetary policy decisions will likely continue to influence fixed income markets.

How did the fund perform for the three months ended March 31, 2022?

The fund's class Y shares returned –5.51%, a bit ahead of the –6.16% result of the benchmark Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index.

What was the market environment like during the first quarter of 2022?

It was a volatile period for bond markets around the world. Hawkish policy pivots from the U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank in the face of rapidly rising inflation, combined with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, fueled a flight from risk.

Within this environment, credit spreads widened and interest rates rose. [Spreads are the yield advantage credit-sensitive bonds offer over comparable-maturity U.S. Treasuries. Bond prices rise as yield spreads tighten and decline as spreads widen.] The yield on the benchmark 10-year U.S. Treasury rose from 1.63% on January 3 to 2.32% on March 31. In anticipation of Fed policy changes, short-term yields rose even more, causing the yield curve to flatten materially.

On March 16, the central bank approved a 0.25% hike, its first increase since December 2018. Fed Chair Jerome Powell signaled an aggressive approach going forward, indicating that additional hikes could occur at each of the remaining six policy meetings in 2022.

From a sector perspective, all fixed income categories posted losses. Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities [TIPS] held up better than the broad fixed income market, aided by rising inflation. Investment-grade [IG] corporate credit, meanwhile, was among the poorer performers, given its relatively high interest-rate sensitivity.

Outside of fixed income, commodities such as oil, wheat, and metals experienced large price increases during the quarter on expectations of global shortages resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. U.S. crude oil prices climbed 32%, ending the quarter at $100.28 per barrel. Major stock indexes in the U.S. and overseas suffered their worst quarterly performance in two years.

Which holdings and strategies aided the fund's performance versus the benchmark?

Our interest-rate and yield curve strategy added the most value on a relative basis. The portfolio benefited from an increase in real interest rates during the quarter. [Real interest rates adjust for the effects of inflation by subtracting the actual or expected rate of inflation from nominal interest rates.] Our interest-rate and yield curve strategy is intended to provide a degree of protection against underperformance of risk-based assets. It accomplished that objective this quarter.

Our active currency strategy also aided relative performance, led by positions in the Japanese yen and the euro.

Relative positioning in emerging market debt was another contributor, despite turbulence in the sector resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Underweight exposure to Russian debt boosted the fund's result in this sector.

Mortgage credit holdings also helped on a relative basis, largely driven by our holdings of commercial mortgage-backed securities [CMBS]. Despite broader market volatility, the continued reopening of the economy and the success of vaccines helped many types of property recover, which, in turn, boosted our CMBS positions.

What about relative detractors?

An allocation to investment-grade corporate bonds was the biggest relative detractor this quarter, hampered by widening credit spreads.

What are your current views on the major sectors in which the fund invests?

We have a cautiously optimistic outlook but recognize that geopolitical tensions and monetary policy decisions will likely continue to influence fixed income markets.

Looking first at corporate credit, we have a constructive outlook for IG bonds. That said, we anticipate continued bouts of volatility given the conflict in Ukraine, the pace of Fed rate hikes, and potentially negative effects on energy supplies from sanctions on Russia. We have a positive view of corporate fundamentals, while having a more neutral outlook for the market's supply-and-demand backdrop and valuation level.

We believe the fundamental environment will continue to improve in the CMBS market as workers return to offices, consumer traffic increases at retailers, and hotels welcome back business and leisure travelers. Our emphasis on investment opportunities in the U.S. broadly isolates us from geopolitical risk. Moreover, with real assets serving as collateral, along with the potential for rent adjustments, CMBS have historically performed well during periods of rising inflation. Consistent with risk markets generally, CMBS spreads widened during the quarter. The increased liquidity premium enhanced the appeal of select market segments.

Within residential mortgage credit, we believe continued high demand and low inventory of available homes is likely to push prices even higher. Given that home prices have already risen substantially and mortgage rates have moved up, we are aware that affordability has become a constraint for many prospective buyers. Consequently, we think the pace of home price appreciation is likely to moderate during 2022. Wider spreads have created better value among mid-tier and lower-rated securities. As a result, we are finding attractive investment opportunities in that area of the market, as well as among higher-rated securities.

We believe the Fed's shift toward tighter monetary policy may cause it to accelerate sales of mortgage-backed securities [MBS] that it currently holds. A faster pace of MBS tapering may reduce home price inflation, helping to boost the Fed's inflation-fighting mandate. Against this backdrop, we believe many prepayment-sensitive securities may offer attractive risk-adjusted returns from current price levels and may offer meaningful upside potential if mortgage prepayment speeds slow. We think the fund's prepayment-related strategies provide an important source of diversification in the portfolio. In our view, prepayment strategies could benefit from an economic slowdown, a shift to supportive fiscal policies, or a sustained increase in mortgage rates.

In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, along with the Fed's shift to monetary tightening, the near-term outlook for emerging markets has become highly uncertain. Against this backdrop, we will focus on opportunities in countries that are less directly affected by geopolitical turmoil and global policy risk.

Putnam Global Income Trust (PGGYX)

Annualized total return performance as of 3/31/22

	Class Y shares Inception 10/4/05	**Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index**
Last quarter	–5.51%	–6.16%
1 year	–8.54	–6.40
3 years	–0.09	0.69
5 years	1.19	1.70
10 years	1.71	1.04
Life of fund	5.75	—
Total expense ratio: 0.93%		
What you pay: 0.63%		

Source: Bloomberg Index Services Limited.

"What you pay" reflects Putnam Management's decision to contractually limit expenses through 2/28/23.

Returns for periods of less than one year are not annualized.

Current performance may be lower or higher than the quoted past performance, which cannot guarantee future results. Share price, principal value, and return will vary, and you may have a gain or a loss when you sell your shares. Performance assumes reinvestment of distributions and does not account for taxes. For the most recent month-end performance, please visit putnam.com. Class Y shares before their inception are derived from the historical performance of class A shares (inception 6/1/87), which have not been adjusted for the lower expenses; had they, returns would have been higher. For a portion of the periods, this fund may have had expense limitations, without which returns would have been lower. Class Y shares are generally only available for corporate and institutional clients and have no initial sales charge.

The Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index is an unmanaged index of global investment-grade fixed-income securities. You cannot invest directly in an index.

Diversification does not guarantee a profit or ensure against loss. It is possible to lose money in a diversified portfolio.

The views and opinions expressed are those of the portfolio managers as of March 31, 2022, are subject to change with market conditions, and are not meant as investment advice. All performance and economic information is historical and is not indicative of future results.

Consider these risks before investing: International investing involves currency, economic, and political risks. Emerging-market securities carry illiquidity and volatility risks. Lower-rated bonds may offer higher yields in return for more risk. Funds that invest in government securities are not guaranteed. Mortgage-backed investments, unlike traditional debt investments, are subject to prepayment risk, which means that they may increase in value less than other bonds when interest rates decline and decline in value more than other bonds when interest rates rise.

The fund concentrates on a limited group of industries and is non-diversified. Because the fund may invest in fewer issuers than a diversified fund, it is vulnerable to common economic forces and may result in greater losses and volatility. Bond investments are subject to interest-rate risk (the risk of bond prices falling if interest rates rise) and credit risk (the risk of an issuer defaulting on interest or principal payments). Interest-rate risk is generally greater for longer-term bonds, and credit risk is generally greater for below-investment-grade bonds. Risks associated with derivatives include increased investment exposure (which may be considered leverage) and, in the case of over-the-counter instruments, the potential inability to terminate or sell derivatives positions and the potential failure of the other party to the instrument to meet its obligations. Unlike bonds, funds that invest in bonds have fees and expenses. The value of investments in the fund's portfolio may fall or fail to rise over extended periods of time for a variety of reasons, including general economic, political, or financial market conditions; investor sentiment and market perceptions; government actions; geopolitical events or changes; and factors related to a specific issuer, geography, industry, or sector. These and other factors may lead to increased volatility and reduced liquidity in the fund's portfolio holdings.

Our investment techniques, analyses, and judgments may not produce the outcome we intend. The investments we select for the fund may not perform as well as other securities that we do not select for the fund. We, or the fund's other service providers, may experience disruptions or operating errors that could have a negative effect on the fund. You can lose money by investing in the fund.

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Request a prospectus or summary prospectus from your financial representative or by calling 1-800-225-1581. The prospectus includes investment objectives, risks, fees, expenses, and other information that you should read and consider carefully before investing.

Putnam Retail Management

Putnam Investments | 100 Federal Street | Boston, MA 02110 | putnam.com

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