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Market expectations survey

In Q1/2012, the Central Bank of Iceland began conducting a survey of market expectations concerning leading economic variables, including inflation expectations. The survey will be used by the Bank in monetary policy implementation and in research, and the findings will be made available to market agents and the general public. Responses given by individual participants are confidential.

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Icelandic letters:

ð/Ð (pronounced like th in English this)

þ/Þ (pronounced like th in English think)

In *Monetary Bulletin*, ð is transliterated as d and þ as th in personal names, for consistency with international references, but otherwise the Icelandic letters are retained.

Symbols:

- * Preliminary or estimated data.
- 0 Less than half of the unit used.
- Nil.
- ... Not available.
- . Not applicable.

Market expectations survey¹

1. Introduction

Sound measures of inflation expectations are important for both research and the implementation of forward-looking monetary policy. At present, inflation expectations among Iceland's households and largest firms are surveyed regularly. The results of these two surveys often differ radically from inflation expectations according to bond market developments. In order to gain a clearer view of market expectations, the Central Bank has decided to begin carrying out regular market surveys of expectations vis-à-vis various economic variables, including inflation expectations. The Bank hopes that the findings will provide an accurate view of market agents' inflation expectations and make it possible to break inflation expectations in the bond market down into actual inflation expectations, on the one hand, and risk premia, on the other.

The market expectations survey is in constant progress and it is therefore possible that some questions will change, new questions be added to the questionnaire as well as new participants to the survey group. An overview of changes from when the survey was first conducted, both concerning questions and participants, can be found in appendix 3.

2. Inflation expectation data and their use

Inflation expectations are usually assessed through analysis of the yield curve or through direct questionnaires. The Central Bank of Iceland has used both methods to measure them.

Calculating zero-coupon yield curves for nominal and indexed bonds makes it possible to calculate inflation expectations based on the so-called breakeven inflation rate using the Fisher equation, according to which nominal interest rates are equivalent to real rates plus inflation expectations. The simplest form of the Fisher equation does not take account of factors such as risk premia due to inflation risk, liquidity risk, and maturity risk, to name just a few, and this skews the assessment of actual inflation expectations. Calculations of the yield curve can also be skewed by a number of factors, such as supply- and demand-side effects and the shallowness of the Icelandic bond market. If the assessment of the yield curve is skewed, the calculation of inflation expectations will likewise be skewed.

Two questionnaires on inflation expectations are administered by Capacent Gallup on behalf of the Central Bank, one on household inflation expectations and the other on the expectations of Iceland's 400

1. The Central Bank wishes to thank participants in the focus group meetings held in autumn 2011 for useful comments and discussion.

largest firms. In both surveys, respondents are asked about inflation expectations 1 and 2 years ahead. However, these respondents often have little or no involvement in the bond market, which reduces the usefulness of the survey for determining inflation expectations based on zero-coupon yield curves.

3. Market expectations survey

An expectations survey carried out among participants in the bond market will probably provide a more accurate view of actual inflation expectations. The survey is modelled on surveys carried out by central banks around the world, chief among them the *Survey of professional forecasters* (SPF) questionnaires conducted by the US Federal Reserve Bank and the European Central Bank. In the SPF surveys, analysts and professional forecasters are asked about their expectations concerning developments in the relevant economic variables.

Because there are few analysts and professional forecasters in Iceland, it was decided to approach a broader group of market agents in order to increase the size of the survey sample. Participants therefore include UCITS management companies, financial and economic research departments, the country's 10 largest pension funds, securities brokers, and companies licensed to operate as asset management firms. It is preferable that the actual respondents on behalf of these participants are the individuals who make purchase and sale decisions or manage asset portfolios, as these parties can be expected to have considerable interests at stake and are therefore likely to have well-grounded expectations concerning developments in major economic variables. A list of those invited to participate in the survey can be found in Appendix 2.

The market expectations survey is divided into two parts: short-term expectations and long-term expectations. The short-term questions focus on expectations over the coming 2 years, while the long-term questions centre on expectations 5-10 years ahead. A sample of the Central Bank expectations survey as it would have appeared for Q4/2011 can be found in Appendix 1.

Short-term expectations

The first part of the survey, which focuses on short-term expectations, contains four questions. The first two centre on respondents' expectations concerning inflation, the ISK exchange rate, Central Bank interest rates, and long-term nominal and real rates 12 and 24 months ahead. Respondents are asked about 12-month changes in the CPI 12 and 24-months ahead; that is, annual inflation 1 and 2 years ahead, in the same month that the questionnaire is answered. In the question about the exchange rate, respondents are asked about the EURISK exchange rate; that is, what one euro will cost in krónur.

Items relating to Central Bank of Iceland interest rates are based on the Bank's 7-day collateralised lending rate 12 and 24 months ahead. Long-term nominal and real interest rates are defined as nominal rates on 10-year Treasury bonds, on the one hand, and real rates on 10-year Treasury or Housing Financing Fund bonds, on the other, after 12 and 24 months.

In the third question in the first part of the survey, respondents are asked to estimate average inflation each quarter in the upcoming year. As in the first two questions, this refers to annual changes in the CPI, with the quarterly value calculated as the average of the annual change in the CPI during each month of the quarter concerned. The first column of the question contains the inflation measurement for the preceding quarter.

Finally, respondents are asked what they expect Central Bank of Iceland interest rate to be at the end of each quarter in the upcoming year. As in the first two questions, the Central Bank interest rate referred to is the Bank's 7-day collateralised lending rate. Thus the survey asks about interest rates on the last day of each quarter. As in the third question, the figure on the last day of the preceding quarter is given.

Long-term expectations

The latter half of the survey comprises three questions. In each of them, the respondent is to estimate annual inflation, long-term nominal interest rates, and real interest rates, on average, for various periods of time, with economic variables defined in the same way as in the first half of the survey. The first two questions centre on average expectations over the coming 5 and 10 years, respectively.

In the last question in this part of the survey, the respondent is asked to estimate these economic variables over a 5-year period 5 years ahead; that is, the average for years 6-10. If the question is asked in 2012, the question pertains to the average for the period 2017-2022.

4. Execution of the Central Bank expectation survey

The Central Bank expectation survey is conducted four times a year, around the middle of each quarter. The survey is sent out on a Monday, and the response deadline is on the following Friday. A short response time is specified in an attempt to avoid publication of new information just prior to the response date and ensure that all respondents' answers are based on comparable sets of data.

The survey is conducted electronically; participants are sent an e-mail containing a link to the survey website, enabling them to respond online. Responses from individual participants are treated as confidential, but the Central Bank will have access to individual responses in order to categorise them by participant and monitor participation.

The results of the survey are then published on the Central Bank website, according to the statistics publication calendar. The results include the mean and median response to each question in the survey, as well as the standard deviation of responses in each instance. Thus the results should provide an accurate view of market expectations.

5. Summary

Knowledge of the expectations of market agents, in addition to those of households and businesses, can be of great importance for research

and analysis within the Central Bank. Experience has shown that there are a number of flaws in the measurements of household and corporate expectations; therefore, it is important to obtain information on the expectations of market agents, who have interests to protect when they formulate expectations.

This information could also be useful for the market agents themselves, as publication of the survey findings enables them to position their own expectations within the respondent group. The results also give market agents, as well as the Central Bank, more detailed information on market participants' actual inflation expectations than can be gleaned from the yield curve. Consequently, the survey should be a welcome addition to the current body of expectation measurements and should be of use outside the Bank as well as inside it.

Appendix 1

Market expectations survey, Q1/2012

Part I: Short-term expectations:

1. In your opinion, what will the following economic variables be 12 months from now?

Variable	In 12 months' time
Twelve-month inflation	
EURISK exchange rate	
CBI policy rate	
Long-term nominal interest rate	
Long-term real interest rate	

Further explanation:

- Twelve-month inflation: the 12 month change in the consumer price index (CPI) after 12 months; that is, the change in the CPI after 12 months, in comparison with the current month.
- EURISK exchange rate: the price of one euro in krónur after 12 months.
- CBI policy interest rate: the Central Bank of Iceland's nominal 7-day collateralised lending rate after 12 months.
- Long-term nominal interest rate: the nominal interest rate on 10-year Treasury bonds after 12 months.
- Long-term real interest rate: the real interest rate on 10-year Treasury or Housing Financing Fund bonds after 12 months.

2. In your opinion, what will the following economic variables be 24 months from now?

Variable	In 24 months' time
Twelve-month inflation	
EURISK exchange rate	
CBI policy rate	
Long-term nominal interest rate	
Long-term real interest rate	

Further explanation:

- Twelve-month inflation: the 12 month change in the consumer price index (CPI) after 24 months; that is, the change in the CPI after 24 months, in comparison with the same month in the prior year.
- EURISK exchange rate: the price of one euro in krónur after 24 months.
- CBI policy interest rate: the Central Bank of Iceland's nominal 7-day collateralised lending rate after 24 months.
- Long-term nominal interest rate: the nominal interest rate on 10-year Treasury bonds after 24 months.
- Long-term real interest rate: the real interest rate on 10-year Treasury or Housing Financing Fund bonds after 24 months.

3. What do you think inflation will measure, on average, in each quarter?

2011Q4	2012Q1	2012Q2	2012Q3	2012Q4	2013Q1
5,3%					

Further explanation:

- This refers to the change in the CPI between the average for the quarter in question and the average for the same quarter in the prior year.

4. What do you think the Central Bank of Iceland policy rate will be at the end of each quarter?

2011Q4	2012Q1	2012Q2	2012Q3	2012Q4	2013Q1
4,75%					

Further explanation:

- This refers to the Central Bank's nominal 7-day collateralised lending rate at the end of each quarter.

Part I: Short-term expectations:

5. In your opinion, what will the following economic variables be, on average, over the next 5 years?

Variable	Five-year average
Twelve-month inflation	
Long-term nominal interest rate	
Long-term real interest rate	

Further explanation:

- Twelve-month inflation: the annual change in the CPI, on average, over the next 5 years.
- Long-term nominal interest rate: the nominal interest rate on 10-year Treasury bonds, on average, over the next 5 years.
- Long-term real interest rate: the real interest rate on 10-year Treasury or Housing Financing Fund bonds, on average, over the next 5 years.

6. In your opinion, what will the following economic variables be, on average, over the next 10 years?

Variable	Five-year average
Twelve-month inflation	
Long-term nominal interest rate	
Long-term real interest rate	

Further explanation:

- Twelve-month inflation: the annual change in the CPI, on average, over the next 10 years.
- Long-term nominal interest rate: the nominal interest rate on 10-year Treasury bonds, on average, over the next 10 years.
- Long-term real interest rate: the real interest rate on 10-year Treasury or Housing Financing Fund bonds, on average, over the next 10 years.

7. In your opinion, what will the following economic variables be, on average, over a 5-year period 5 years from now?

Variable	Over 5-yr period, 5 years from now
Twelve-month inflation	
Long-term nominal interest rate	
Long-term real interest rate	

Further explanation:

- Twelve-month inflation: the annual change in the CPI, on average, over the next 6-10 years.
- Long-term nominal interest rate: the nominal interest rate on 10-year Treasury bonds, on average, over the next 6-10 years.
- Long-term real interest rate: the real interest rate on 10-year Treasury or Housing Financing Fund bonds, on average, over the next 6-10 years.

Monetary policy stance²

8. What is your perception of the current monetary policy stance?

Very loose	Loose	Appropriate	Tight	Very tight
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9. In your opinion, what will the monetary policy stance be at the end of next quarter?

Very loose	Loose	Appropriate	Tight	Very tight
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10. In your opinion, what will the monetary policy stance be one year ahead (that is, in the same quarter next year)?

Very loose	Loose	Appropriate	Tight	Very tight
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Further explanation:

- Monetary policy stance refers to the level of the Central Bank's interest rates with regards to its mandate of keeping inflation on average close to 2½%. Loose (tight) policy stance refers to interest rates being to low (high) to achieve the Bank's target.

2. First included in the survey when conducted in Q2/2012.

Appendix 2

List of invited participants

UCITS management firms

- GAM management
- Íslandssjóðir hf.
- Íslensk verðbréf hf.
- Júpíter rekstarfélag hf.
- Landsvaki hf.
- Stefnir hf.
- Virðing

Financial research departments

- Analytica
- Arion Bank Research
- Íslandsbanki Research
- Landsbankinn Economics Department
- IFS

Pension funds (10 largest based on assets at year-end 2010)

- Almenni lífeyrissjóðurinn
- Festa lífeyrissjóður
- Frjálsi lífeyrissjóðurinn
- Gildi lífeyrissjóður
- Lífeyrissjóður starfsmanna ríkisins
- Lífeyrissjóður verslunarmanna
- Sameinaði lífeyrissjóðurinn
- Stafir lífeyrissjóður
- Stapi lífeyrissjóður
- Söfnunarsjóður lífeyrisréttinda

Securities brokerages and licensed asset management firms

- Arctica finance hf.
- Auður capital
- Eignastýring Íslandsbanka
- Eignastýring Landsbankans
- Eignastýringarsvið Arion banka
- H.F. Verðbréf
- Íslenskir fjárfestar ehf.
- Jöklar verðbréf hf.
- Straumur IB hf.

Primary dealers in Treasury securities³

- Arion bank
- MP bank
- Íslandsbanki
- Landsbankinn
- Straumur IB hf.

Commercial banks' capital market divisions⁴

- Arion bank
- MP banki
- Íslandsbanki
- Landsbankinn
- Straumur IB hf.

3. First invited to participate when conducted in Q2/2012.

4. First invited to participate when conducted in Q2/2012.

Appendix 3:

Summary of changes from the first survey

2012: Q2

- Primary dealers in Treasury securities and commercial banks' capital market divisions invited to participate in the survey.
- Questions on perception of current monetary policy stance and opinions on the stance at the end of next quarter and one year ahead added to the survey (questions 8-10).