



Mike Baker

Head Interest Rate Shopper, The Rate Shop
 Individual NMLS: 259076 Company NMLS: 2554765 State
 23211 W 45th St Shawnee, KS 66226

Office: 913-213-3335
 Mobile: 913-213-3335
mike@rateshopkc.com
[View My Website](#)

Rates Are Officially Breaking The Rules, But Why?

This was supposed to be the week where a key inflation report would cast a vote on the fate of interest rate momentum. The vote was ostensibly friendly but rates surged higher anyway. What gives?

First off, let's revisit why rates would care so much about an inflation report. CPI (the Consumer Price Index) is the biggest monthly report on inflation in the US. Inflation is the key reason that rates are as high as they are. If inflation falls back to target levels, rates would theoretically move lower in concert.

Last month's CPI was good for rates because it came in below the consensus (the median forecast among multiple economists). It was also a noticeable departure from a highly indecisive trend at elevated levels that, until then, had simply refused to decide whether it would move higher or lower.



As seen in the chart above, the indecisive trend resolved toward lower levels last month with core inflation falling to 0.16%. It matched that same level in the new data released this week. If this were the only thing that mattered to interest rates, rates would be much lower than they are today. Alas, rates

National Average Mortgage Rates



	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	7.07%	+0.02	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.45%	0.00	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.51%	+0.02	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.26%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	7.02%	-0.01	0.00

Freddie Mac

30 Yr. Fixed	6.86%	-0.01	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.16%	+0.03	0.00

Rates as of: 6/28

Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.5	98.49	-0.45
MBS GNMA 5.5	99.10	-0.44
10 YR Treasury	4.3980	+0.1111
30 YR Treasury	4.5640	+0.1383

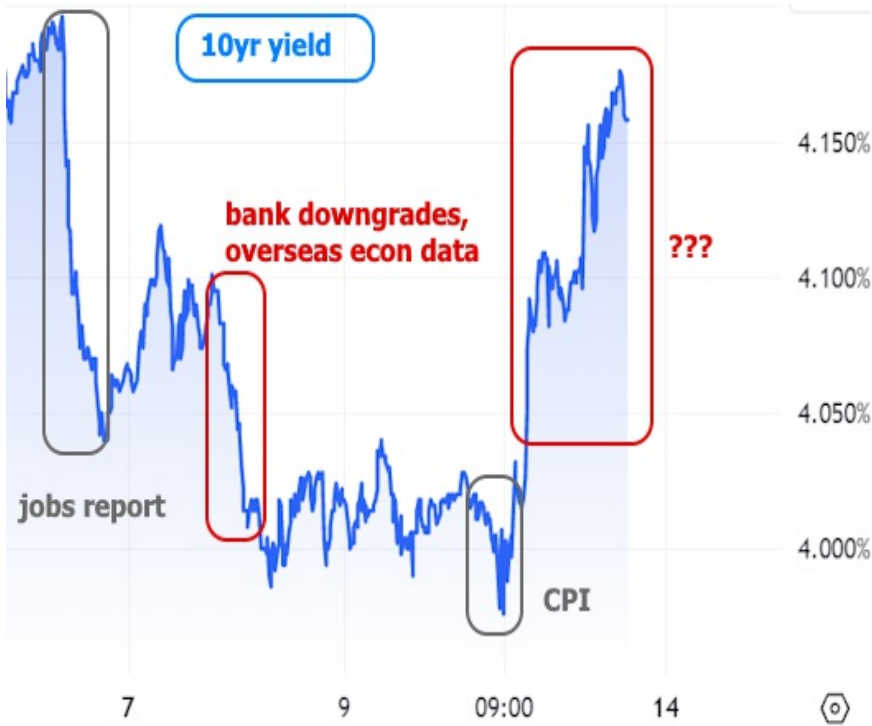
Pricing as of: 6/28 5:59PM EST

Recent Housing Data

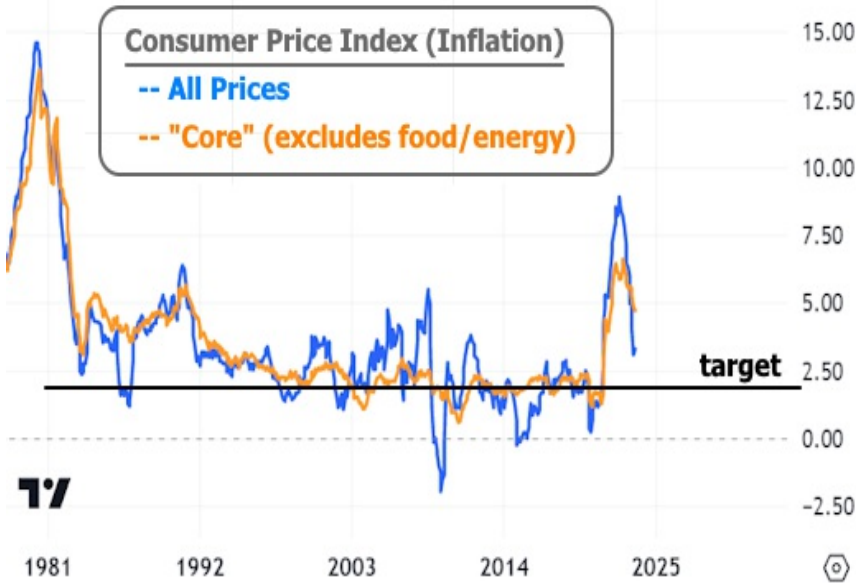
	Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Jun 12 208.5	+15.58%
Building Permits	Mar 1.46M	-3.95%
Housing Starts	Mar 1.32M	-13.15%
New Home Sales	Mar 693K	+4.68%
Pending Home Sales	Feb 75.6	+1.75%
Existing Home Sales	Feb 3.97M	-0.75%
Builder Confidence	Mar 51	+6.25%

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found other things to worry about. The following chart of 10yr Treasury yields serves as a benchmark for this week's rate movement (starting with last Friday's jobs report).

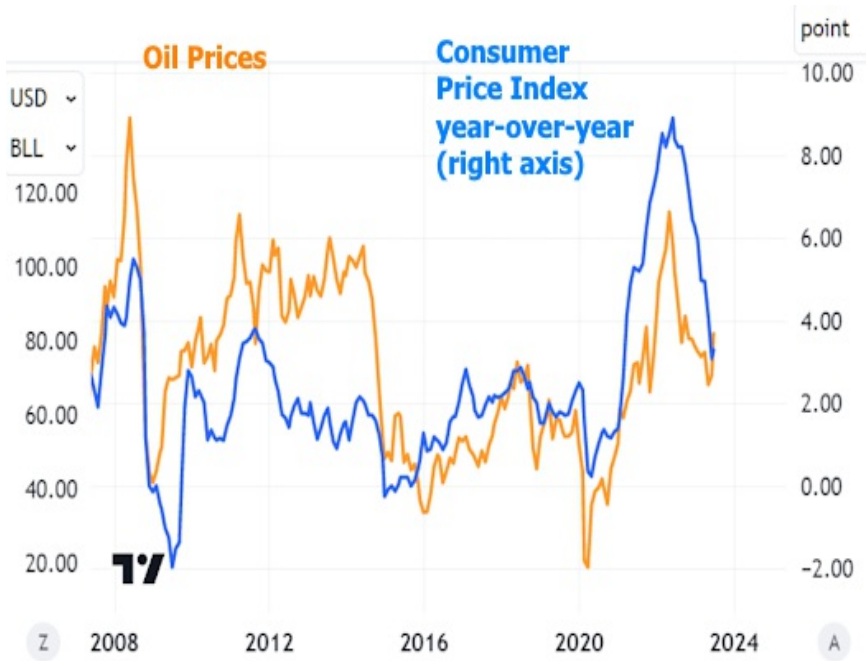


If we take the 10yr yield's word for it, rates are thinking less about inflation and more about other things. Part of the reason is that inflation still has to prove it can maintain this trajectory. Annual numbers remain far from target levels, especially at the core level.



The recent rise in oil prices has some economists thinking that the next few inflation reports might not result in the same easy victory. Oil doesn't always dictate day to day changes in the rate market, but there's no question about its broad correlation with inflation (note: correlation isn't necessarily causality, as can easily be seen amid rising oil prices and falling inflation between 2011 and 2014).

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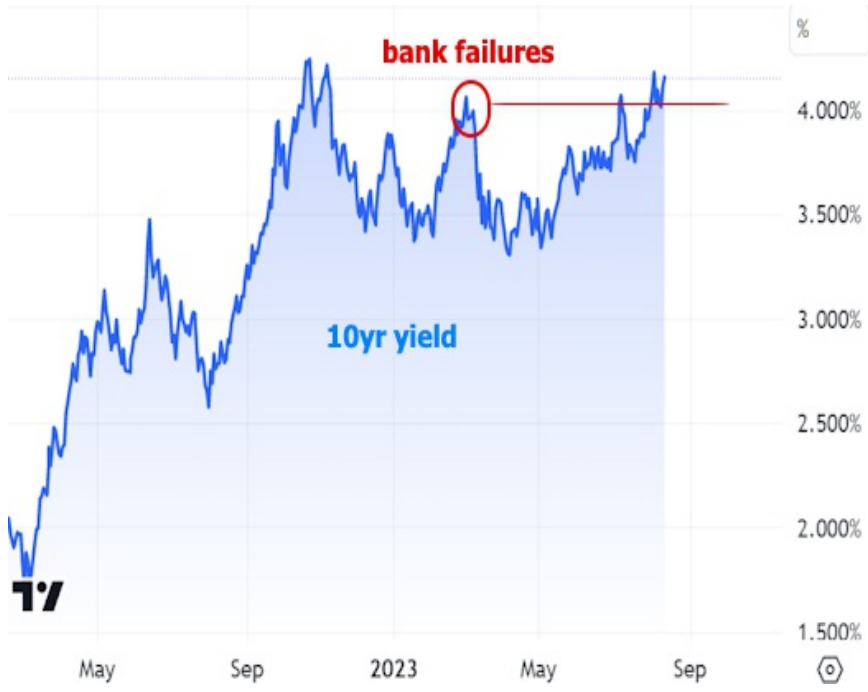


If we take a bigger step back to examine the longer term trends in rates, we can see that the market was more willing to head toward lower levels between late 2022 and May 2023. Since then, rates have trended higher with a purpose and, notably, **without** paying much attention to tamer inflation data.

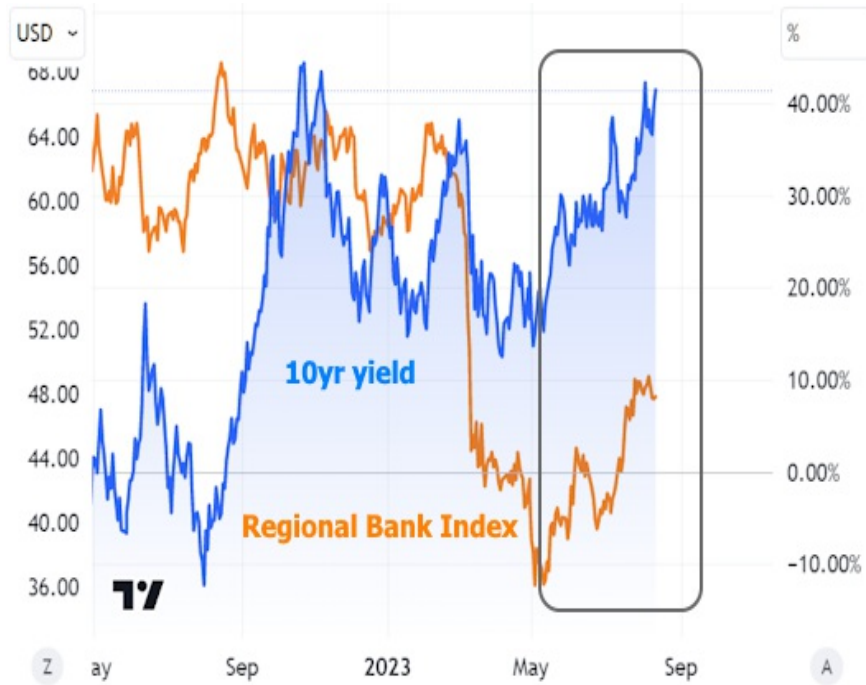


One hugely underappreciated factor in the summertime rate saga is the role of banking sector fears. Up until March of 2023, there was really no discernible progress toward lower rates. Bank failures led to an immediate drop and rates have only slowly been inching back toward previous levels.

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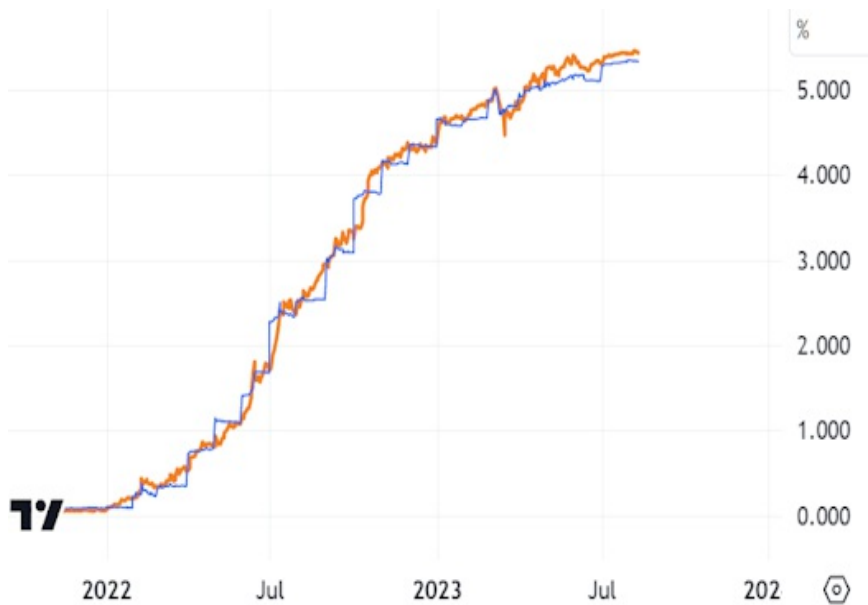


The regional bank stock index bottomed and bounced at the same time rates abandoned their attempts to continue moving lower.

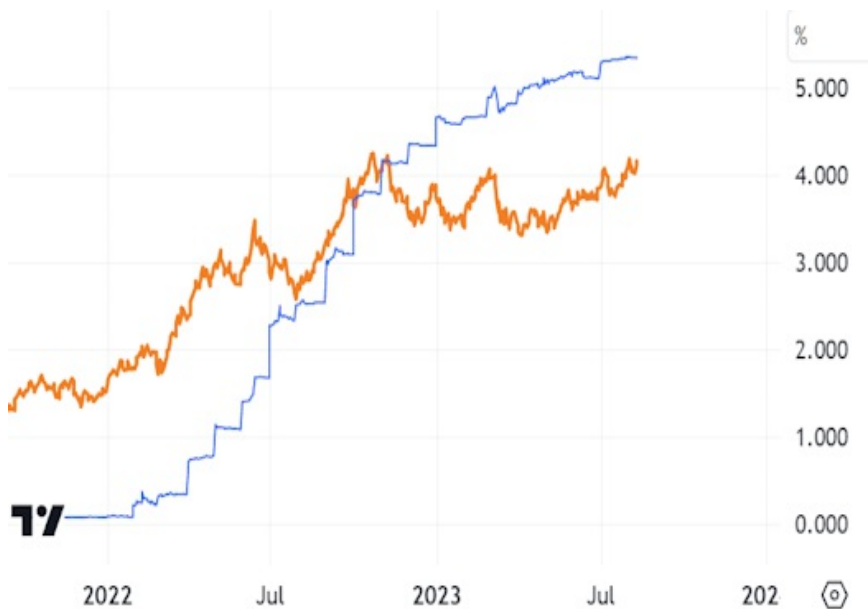


Longer term rates have also had to consider that they are increasingly responsible for the brunt of the bond market's response to economic data and Fed policy. This is an esoteric concept, but it has to do with the fact that bonds exist with varying levels of duration (aka life spans) and that shorter duration bonds have a slightly different set of concerns than longer term bonds.

For instance, the shortest terms bonds are almost perfectly correlated with expectations for the Fed Funds Rate. Here's a chart of the market's short term Fed rate expectations and 6-month US Treasuries.



Same chart, same time frame, but 6 month Treasuries are replaced with 10yr Treasuries:



The phenomenon here is that shorter-term rates have had to go much higher due to the Fed's aggressive rate hike campaign, but longer term rates "believe" the Fed will succeed in lowering inflation and crimping economic growth. Longer term rates believed that shorter term rates would eventually come back down such that the average over 10 years would be much lower than current short term rates.

But now that the Fed is talking about holding its policy rate steady, we are no longer seeing as much of an adjustment in short term rates. Instead, the adjustments that arise due to economic data and other motivations are playing out in longer-term rates. This doesn't mean short-term bonds like 2yr Treasuries aren't moving. They just aren't moving as much as the 10yr and they're less willing to spike to higher levels.



Looked at another way, the Fed's unlikely plan of engineering a "soft landing" for the economy by hiking rates abruptly enough to defeat inflation, but not as abruptly as seen in the 1980s (in order to avoid the associated economic pain) appears to be working. To whatever extent that continues to be the case, longer-term rates must continue to adjust for a comparatively better economic outlook than they'd been expecting. They are also adjusting for the reality of lower revenues and higher debt issuance from the Federal government--a supply/demand scenario that has certainly added to upward pressure on rates recently (and potentially exacerbated by new or additional spending needs related to Ukraine and the wildfires in Hawaii).

Last but not least, in case it needs to be clarified, mortgage rates fall into the "longer-term" category and have been walking a similar path to longer-term Treasuries--albeit at higher outright levels.

30yr fixed mortgage rate index
(source: MND.NEWS)



This is the new and persistent reality until one of 3 things happens:

1. Annual core inflation makes it back near 2%
2. The economy starts showing more serious signs of stress (or actual signs of recession)
3. Something completely unprecedented and unexpected results in the U.S. government taking in higher revenue and spending less money

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Real Talk

At The Rate Shop, we're not your average mortgage banker. We specialize in bringing you ridiculously low interest rates that will make you wonder what the other guys are doing. In fact the ONLY objection we ever hear is "your rates sound too good to be true". Well they're not, and here is why...

After 15 years in the retail banking world I was frustrated with the high interest rates that came from that business model. As I looked around at all the bloated layers of management and their expensive salaries and the overhead of running a larger company (think rent costs, employee health and benefit costs, payroll taxes, and on and on) it dawned on me that I was a part of the problem, and the solution, for me at least, was so easy to see.

Start my own mortgage brokerage shop. No expensive executive salaries, no expensive building to pay rent at, no unnecessary employees and all the costs that are associated with that. What happens when you cut out all the fat? You can provide lower rates and lower closing costs. It's simple. Now here is the best part, you still get great service from a local Kansas City Lender. My mission is to let everyone know that low rates and great customer service are NOT mutually exclusive.

Thanks for coming along on this journey where Low Rates meet Great Service. The two do NOT have to be mutually exclusive. It's just a lie that the big box mortgage companies have been telling you for years. Don't believe me? Give me a call or shoot me a text on my personal cell phone today and compare my rates and costs up against any other lender in the country, and be prepared to be blown away.

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