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Rates Are At 2017 Lows, But So Are Home Sales

This week brought the release of New and Existing Home sales. Both reports fell short of expectations. Fortunately, central bankers also delivered **less than expected**, thus helping rates stay at 2017's lows.

Markets ended the previous week on the jog, with big moves on Thursday and Friday thanks to confirmed rumors of Steve Bannon's departure. Without a fresh supply of drama, trading was much less volatile this week.

Most investors focused on the **Jackson Hole** Symposium that began in earnest on Friday morning. Both Janet Yellen and European Central Bank (ECB) President Mario Draghi were on the agenda and both central banks are widely expected to adjust their bond-buying programs soon. Such adjustments tend to have a big impact on rates although they're gradually priced-in as central bankers drop hints.

Jackson Hole has historically served as a venue for such hints. As such, it's no wonder investors had a **hard time** getting over their anticipation, even as recent news suggested both speakers would stick to the script.

Trading ranges remained narrow as investors waited for Friday's speeches, but true to more recent reports, **neither** central banker shared any policy clues. With no further inspiration on tap, stocks and bonds held inside the week's increasingly narrow ranges.

That leaves stocks in a somewhat precarious position, but it's **far from unpleasant** for bonds. 10yr yields (the best proxy for momentum in long-term rates like mortgages) remained in line with recent lows. Mortgage rates themselves continued to outperform, pushing into their lowest levels since late 2016.

National Average Mortgage Rates



	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.89%	0.00	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.33%	+0.01	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.33%	+0.01	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.05%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	6.58%	0.00	0.00

Freddie Mac

30 Yr. Fixed	6.77%	-0.09	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.05%	-0.11	0.00

Rates as of: 7/22

Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.5	99.39	-0.01
MBS GNMA 5.5	99.78	+0.00
10 YR Treasury	4.2306	-0.0219
30 YR Treasury	4.4486	-0.0239

Pricing as of: 7/23 7:05AM EST

Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Jul 10	206.1	-0.19%
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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10yr Treasury Yield vs Mortgage Rates



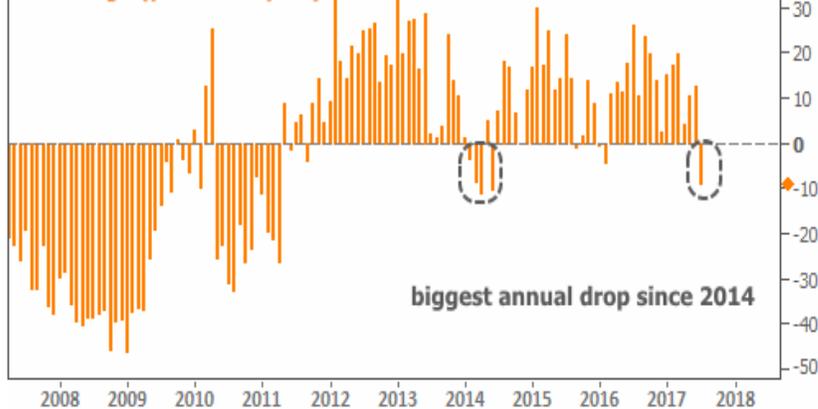
Unfortunately, both **New** and **Existing** Home Sales also fell to the **lowest levels of the year** in reports issued by the Census Bureau and the National Association of Realtors respectively. This data wasn't of great interest to financial markets but it could get more interesting for the housing market. If year-over-year sales continue to operate near or below 0% in the coming months, it could signal the contraction that some economists were worried about last year. For now though, the drop in sales is isolated.

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New Home Sales

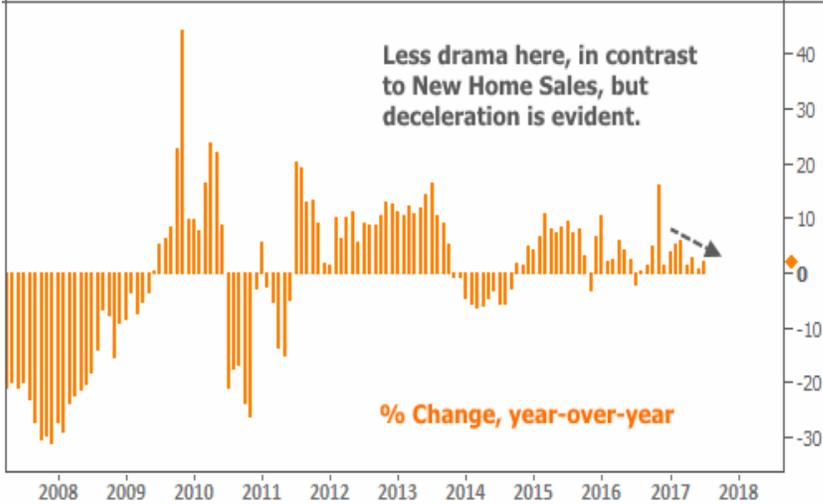
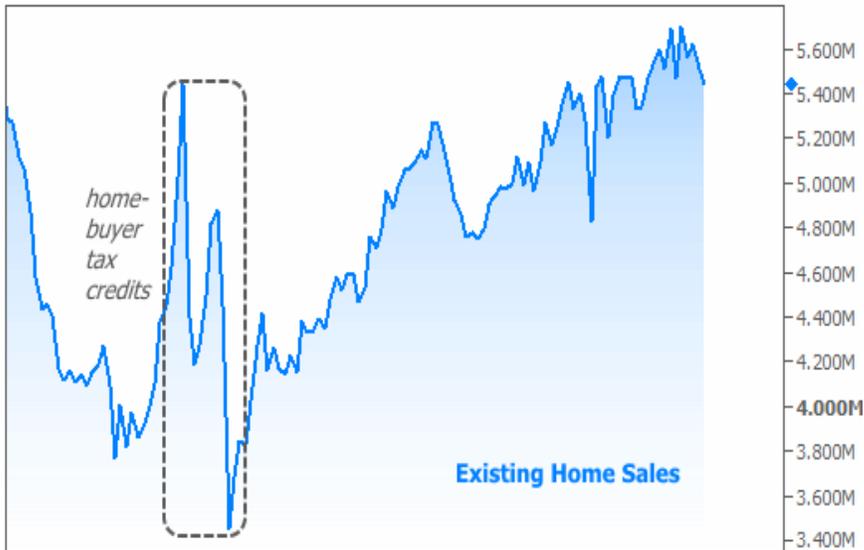


% Change (year-over-year)



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Existing Home Sales



On **brighter notes** for housing, both Black Knight and the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) noted significant milestones in **foreclosure** and **delinquency** metrics. In separate data the MBA noted ongoing **resilience** in mortgage applications, thanks in large part to lower rates helping drive refi demand.

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Update: Buyer Broker Agreement

After requests from real estate companies, a nonprofit consumer watchdog group the Consumer Federation of America has developed a list of factors to consider when creating a buyer contract in preparation for upcoming practice changes in the industry.

CFA released its "Proposed Criteria for Evaluating Home Buyer Contract Forms" on Tuesday. The 15 criteria focus on the contracts' form – whether the documents are readable and understandable – and content – whether they are fair to homebuyers.

- the document's expiration date (CFA recommends buyers asks for a three-month contract and never sign one longer than six months)
- the right to terminate the contract
- the disclosure that compensation is negotiable
- the broker's compensation clearly stated and that the buyer broker can't receive additional compensation for facilitating a sale
- that any additional fees, such as for showing a home, will be deducted from the broker's commission if there is a successful sale
- that the commission is due only if there is a successful closing
- that buyers have an obligation – for no longer than 60 days, CFA recommends – to pay a broker who earlier showed them a home they purchased after the contract ended
- seller concessions paid directly to buyers
- dual agency not pre-approved by the contract
- an explanation of how a broker treats different buyer clients interested in the same property
- that buyers should not be required to first go through mediation or arbitration if they have a complaint

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