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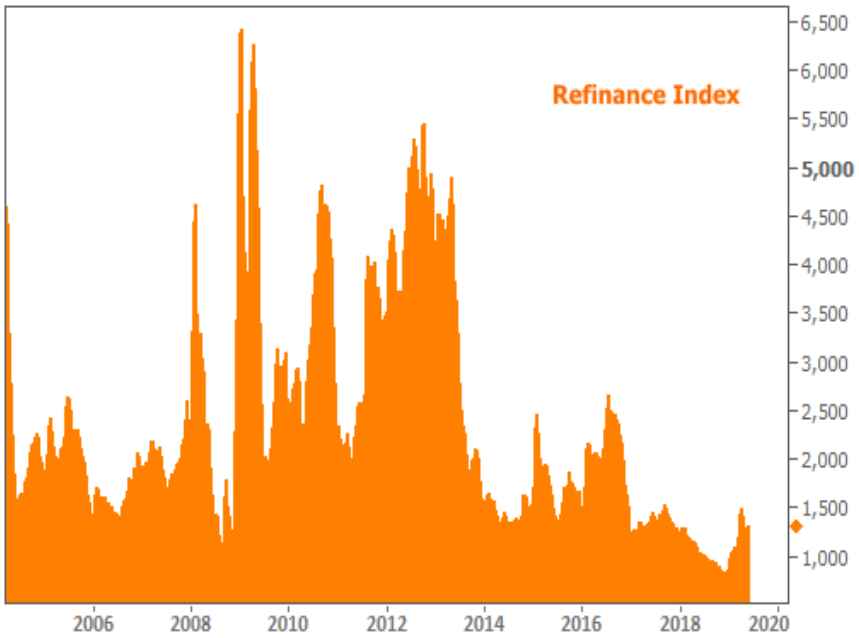
Time For the Next Refi Boom?

There are refi booms and then there are refi booms! Numbers were never higher than they were during several weeks in 2009 and they were never "extremely elevated for nearly 2 years" like they were from August 2011 through May 2013. It would take some doing to get back to those levels, but relative to the past few years, refi numbers are picking up quickly.



Granted, the chart above doesn't make things look too impressive, but it's only fair to start with that sense of scale. If we zoom in to just the past few years, the **outlook is much brighter**.

National Average Mortgage Rates

	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	7.11%	+0.02	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.64%	+0.04	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.62%	+0.02	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.40%	+0.02	0.00
5/1 ARM	6.80%	+0.02	0.00
Freddie Mac			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.74%	-0.70	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.16%	-0.60	0.00

Rates as of: 3/18

Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.5	98.72	-0.09
MBS GNMA 5.5	99.09	-0.08
10 YR Treasury	4.3240	-0.0040
30 YR Treasury	4.4480	-0.0010

Pricing as of: 3/19 4:51AM EST

Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Mar 13	201.5	+7.07%
Building Permits	Dec	1.5M	+1.91%
Housing Starts	Dec	1.46M	-4.26%
New Home Sales	Jan	661K	-0.45%
Pending Home Sales	Jan	74.3	-3.88%
Existing Home Sales	Jan	4M	+5.82%
Builder Confidence	Mar	51	+6.25%

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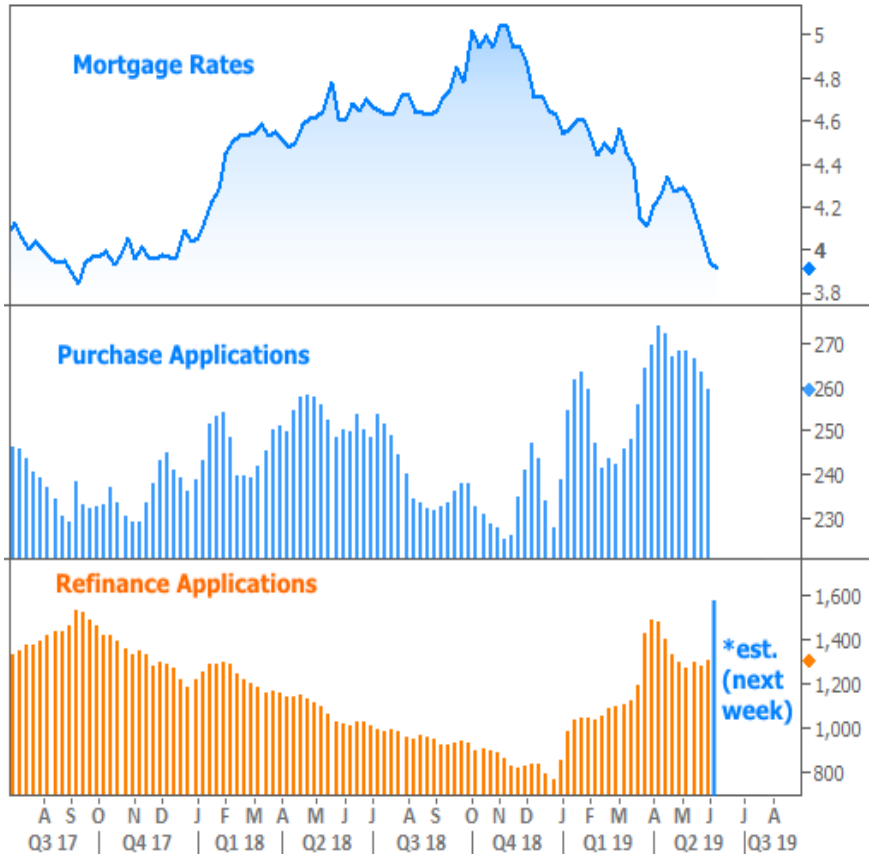

As the chart suggests, refinance demand has already increased significantly after grinding to a halt at the end of 2018. The big drop in rates in late March had an obvious impact, but this week's drop isn't even on the charts yet. Once it is, we're likely to see something just as high **if not higher**. Reason being: the long-term peak in existing home sales coincided with rates that will soon be "in the money" with respect to refinancing. Those homeowners have been trapped without access to lower rates for 2 years now.

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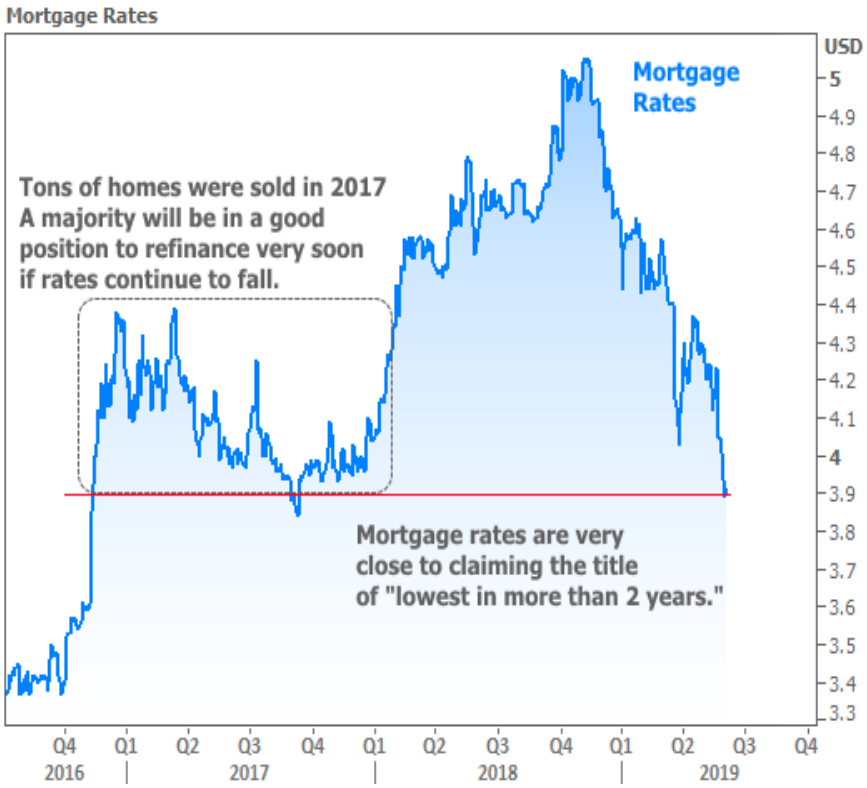
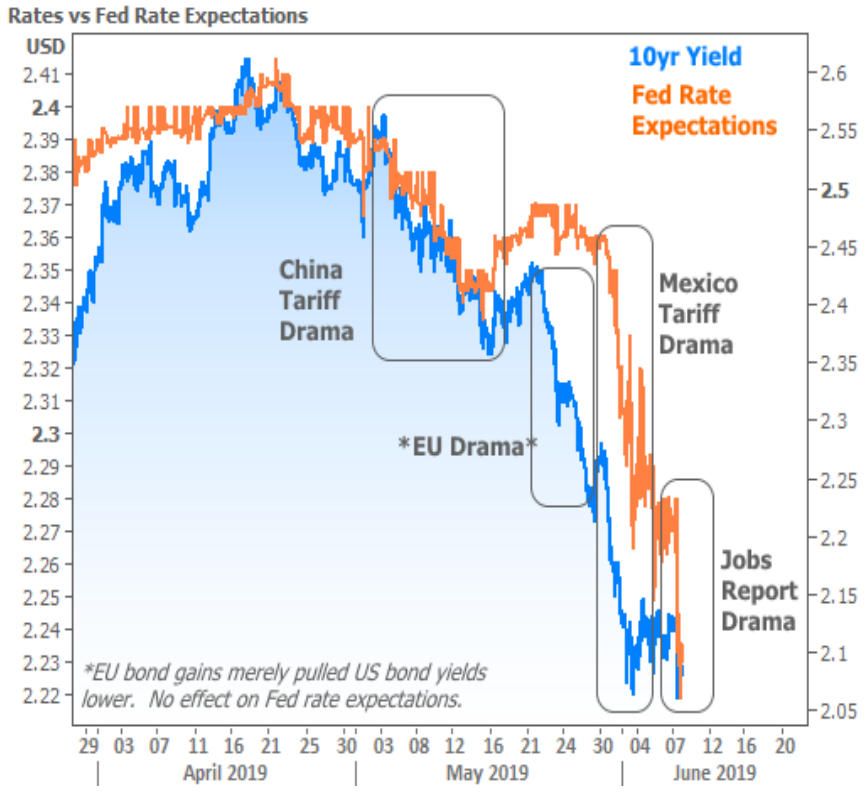


The prospect for additional improvements in rates is **more than wishful thinking**. In the past few months--and especially in this past week--we've seen strong momentum, not only toward lower rates, but also in the market's **expectations** for a **Fed rate CUT**. In the following chart, the orange line represents actual trading levels in short-term interest rate swaps (which always move to price-in changes in the Fed Funds Rate based on market expectations).



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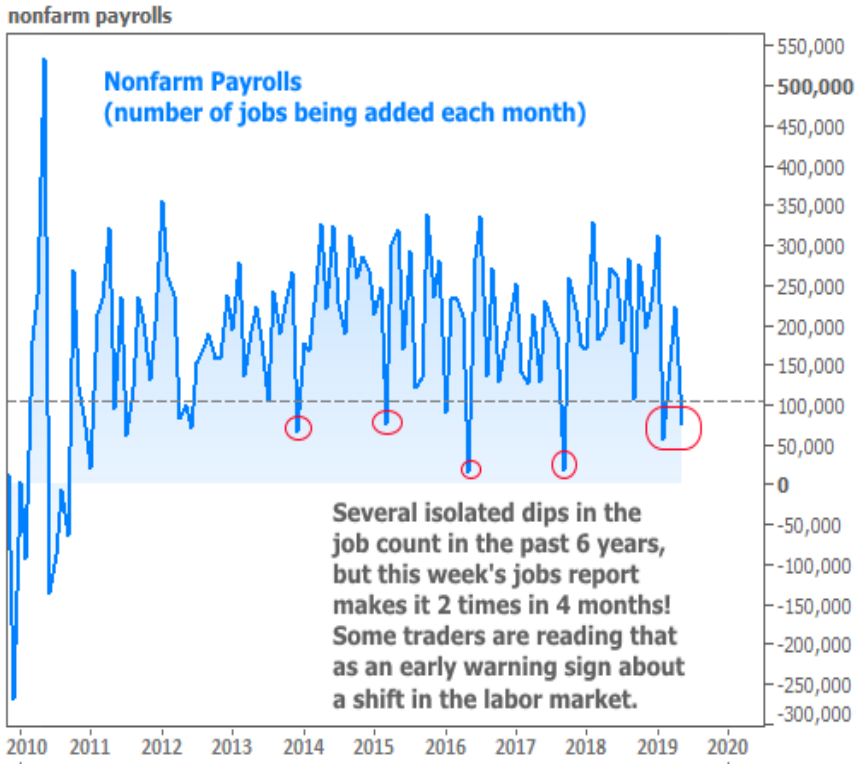
Notice how the "expectations" line was flat in April. Back then, investors **weren't** expecting the Fed to move any time soon. Shortly after Trump tweeted about raising tariffs on Chinese goods, that began to change. And it was tariffs again in late May that were responsible for the next major leg down in Fed rate expectations. This week's jobs data played a role as well, even though it's not as easy to see on the chart.

Mortgage rates in particular moved **decisively lower** on Friday following a much weaker-than-expected jobs report showing the economy only created 75k new jobs in May compared to a median forecast of 185k. The previous two months were also revised moderately lower.

The labor market has been the **strongest and most resilient** component of the current economic expansion in the US. Whereas analysts might take exception to the Fed hiking rates with inflation running well under 2%, the Fed has been able to point to record low unemployment as evidence that the economy is firing on all cylinders.

Even those pining for lower rates have been able to look past isolated drops in the job tally, which have occurred several times in the past 6 years. **The problem** with this particular drop is that it is the **SECOND** number under 100k in just a few months. That hasn't happened since 2012, when jobs were still finding their bearings after the Great Recession.



Some traders are reading this as an **early warning sign** about a potential shift in the labor market. That might seem a bit premature considering the volatility in the chart above, but the far less volatile ADP Employment data suggested trouble may be brewing when it released its own version of the payroll count earlier in the week. There's far less left to the imagination here:

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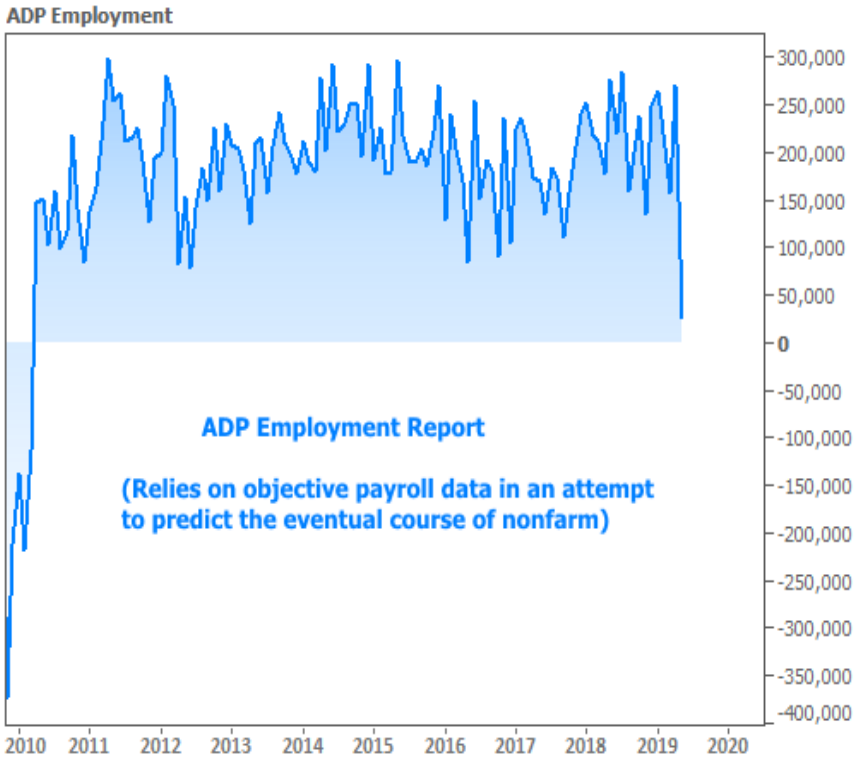

Again, the job market has been a last line of defense. As soon as it turns, that's it. Game over. A **recession** (or at least a sharp contraction) will be widely expected. The bond market (i.e. "rates") is arguably trading accordingly. From here, if economic data continues telling the same story and if progress on trade remains as elusive as it has been, the the next refi boom can be counted down in weeks and months as opposed to years.

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Recent Economic Data

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Monday, Jun 03				
10:00AM	May ISM Manufacturing PMI	52.1	53.0	52.8
10:00AM	Apr Construction spending (%)	0.0	0.4	-0.9
Tuesday, Jun 04				
9:45AM	May ISM-New York index	882.1		882.8
10:00AM	Apr Factory orders mm (%)	-0.8	-0.9	1.9
Wednesday, Jun 05				
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	253.1		259.4
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	1335.6		1255.4
8:15AM	May ADP National Employment (k)	27	180	275
10:00AM	May ISM N-Mfg PMI	56.9	55.5	55.5
Thursday, Jun 06				
8:30AM	Q1 Labor Costs Revised (%)	-1.6	-0.8	-0.9
8:30AM	w/e Jobless Claims (k)	218	220	215

Event Importance:

No Stars = Insignificant
☆ Low
★ Moderate
★★ Important
★★ Very Important

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Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Friday, Jun 07				
8:30AM	May Non-farm payrolls (k)	75	185	263
8:30AM	May Unemployment rate mm (%)	3.6	3.6	3.6
Tuesday, Jun 11				
8:30AM	May Core Producer Prices YY (%)	+2.3	2.3	2.4
1:00PM	3-Yr Note Auction (bl)	38		
Wednesday, Jun 12				
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	278.4		253.1
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	1956.5		1335.6
8:30AM	May Core CPI (Annual) (%)	+2.0	2.1	2.1
Thursday, Jun 13				
8:30AM	May Import prices mm (%)	-0.3	-0.2	0.2
8:30AM	May Export prices mm (%)	-0.2	-0.1	0.2
8:30AM	w/e Jobless Claims (k)	222	220	218
Friday, Jun 14				
8:30AM	May Retail Sales (%)	0.5	0.6	-0.2
9:15AM	May Industrial Production (%)	0.4	0.2	-0.5
10:00AM	Jun Consumer Sentiment	97.9	98.0	100.0
10:00AM	Apr Business Inventories (%)	0.5	0.5	0.0
Wednesday, Jul 10				
1:00PM	10-yr Note Auction (bl)	24		
Thursday, Jul 11				
1:00PM	30-Yr Bond Auction (bl)	16		

Responsive service, experienced expertise

I've dedicated my 22 year mortgage career to client education, superior service, and honest answers. The lending landscape has changed dramatically the past few years, and continues to do so. My job is to ensure client partners' loans close quickly, without surprises, and I take that responsibility very seriously. Referrals are a responsibility I appreciate; they're a measure of trust, and that trust must be earned every day, on every referral.

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