

THE PRICING OF EQUITY ON THE  
LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE:  
SEASONALITY AND SIZE PREMIUM

by

Albert CORHAY\*  
Gabriel HAWAWINI\*\*  
Pierre MICHEL\*\*\*

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\* Albert CORHAY, University of Liège

\*\* Gabriel HAWAWINI, INSEAD, Fontainebleau

\*\*\* Pierre MICHEL, University of Liège

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Albert Corhay  
University of Liège

Gabriel Hawawini  
INSEAD, Fontainebleau

Pierre Michel  
University of Liège

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# THE PRICING OF EQUITY ON THE LONDON STOCK

## EXCHANGE: SEASONALITY AND SIZE PREMIUM

Albert Corhay, Gabriel Hawawini and Pierre Michel

### 1. Purpose of the study

In this study we examine the relationship between average monthly returns and risk for portfolios of common stocks traded on the London Stock Exchange (LSE). We test the validity of the Capital Asset Pricing Model (Sharpe (1964), Black (1970)) using a methodology similar to that of Fama and MacBeth (1973). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first empirical test of the CAPM on the LSE that uses the Fama-MacBeth methodology.

Using the LSE data we also investigate two phenomena recently observed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). The first is the size effect discovered by Banz (1981). He showed that small capitalization firms earn, on average, higher risk-adjusted returns than large capitalization firms<sup>1</sup>. The second phenomenon was documented by Tinic and West (1984, 1986). They showed that the estimated slope coefficient (risk premium) of the relationship between average returns and systematic risk on the NYSE is significantly positive only in January. During the rest of the year there is no significant relationship between average returns and systematic risk on the NYSE. In other words, the CAPM is valid only in January on the NYSE.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we give a summary of our major findings. In section 3 we look at the evidence from countries other than the United Kingdom. In section 4 we describe the properties of our sample and outline the methodology we employ to perform our analysis. As pointed out earlier, we estimate the coefficient (risk premium) of the relationship between average monthly stock returns and their corresponding risk using a methodology similar to that of Fama and MacBeth (1973). We examine various specifications of the risk-return relationship. In section 5.1 we adopt the two-parameter capital asset pricing model in which the risk-measure is systematic

risk (beta coefficients) and examine the seasonality of the average estimated monthly systematic risk-premia. In section 5.3 we examine the seasonality of the average estimated monthly risk premia when the risk-measure is total risk (variance of returns), unsystematic risk and skewness. In section 5.4 we look at the seasonality in the average estimated monthly coefficients of the Fama and MacBeth (1973) four-parameter model. In sections 6 and 7 we examine the size effect on the LSE. Concluding remarks are found in section 8.

## 2. Summary of major findings

- (1) The relationship between average monthly returns and systematic risk over the entire test-period is not statistically significant (section 5.1 and table 1).
- (2) The relationship between average monthly returns and systematic risk is significantly positive only in April and significantly negative only in May. An interpretation of this phenomenon is given in section 5.2 (table 1).
- (3) When risk is measured by either total risk, unsystematic risk or skewness we found a significantly positive relationship between average monthly returns and risk. These relationships do, however, exhibit monthly seasonality (section 5.3 and table 2).
- (4) The positive April seasonal in the systematic risk premium remains but the negative May seasonal disappears after controlling for unsystematic risk. It appears that the CAPM is valid on the LSE only in April (section 5.4 and table 3).
- (5) There is a weak size effect on the LSE. This phenomenon is seasonal. May is the only month for which the size effect is significant. On the LSE most of the small size premium is earned during the month of May (section 6 and tables 4 and 5).
- (6) After controlling for systematic risk, the size effect is significant over the entire period as well as over April and May. After controlling for size the systematic risk premium is significantly positive in April and June. It is significantly negative in May (section 7 and table 6).

### 3. Evidence from other countries

At the time of this writing the evidence on estimated risk-premia seasonality is limited to the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Belgium. The U.S. evidence was briefly presented in the introductory section. The U.K. evidence is presented in this paper. Evidence on French and Belgian common stocks can be found in Corhay, Hawawini and Michel (1985, 1986). They report a significantly positive January effect in the systematic risk premium of Belgian common stocks over the 15-year period from January 1969 to December 1983. Over that same period, the systematic risk premium of French common stocks is never significant.

### 4. Methodology

#### 4.1 Data

The rates of return data used in the study are drawn from the London Business School monthly returns file (Smithers (1977) (1980)). Monthly returns are calculated as logarithms of price relatives including dividend payments ( $\log(P_t + D_t)/P_{t-1}$ ). The data begin on January 1955 and end on December 1983. The number of firms in the sample varies from a minimum of 761 to a maximum of 1674.

The market index we employed is an equally-weighted portfolio of all the securities in the sample. We have also performed our tests with a value-weighted index. Since we found that the choice of the index does not affect the results significantly, we only report our findings based on the equally-weighted index<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4.2 Test design

The methodology employed to estimate monthly risk premia and examine the size effect on the LSE is similar to that found in Fama and MacBeth (1973) and Banz (1981). It is carried out in three steps. An initial period of one year of monthly data is used to construct portfolios on the basis of size and risk (construction period). The following year of monthly data is employed to estimate the risk of the portfolios (with estimation period). Finally, the estimation of the risk premia and the examination of the size effect are performed over the third year of monthly data (test period). The entire procedure is then repeated after

dropping the first year of data. Details are given below.

#### 4.3 Portfolio construction

The first year of monthly data (1955) is used to construct five equally-weighted portfolios ranked on the basis of the magnitude of their year-end market capitalization (size). Each of those five size-related portfolios are then divided into four portfolios ranked on the basis of the magnitude of their beta coefficients<sup>3</sup>. This procedure led to a total of twenty equally-weighted portfolios constructed on the basis of both market capitalization (size) and systematic risk (beta). The total number of securities with which we constructed the portfolios varied from 761 over the period 1971-1976 to 1674 over the period 1979-1983.

#### 4.4 Risk estimation

The second year of monthly data (1956) is used to estimate the risk of each stock in the sample. Four measures of risk are considered in this study: systematic risk (beta coefficient), total risk (variance of total returns), unsystematic risk (standard error of the residuals of the single-index market model) and skewness (the ratio of the return distribution's third moment around its mean to the distribution's standard deviation cubed). Portfolios' betas ( $\beta_p$ ) are obtained by calculating the arithmetic average of the betas of the individual stocks that make up the portfolio. The same averaging procedure is used to calculate portfolios' total risk or variance ( $V_p$ ), portfolios' unsystematic risk ( $U_p$ ) and portfolios' skewness ( $SK_p$ ).

#### 4.5 Model testing

Finally, the third year of monthly data (1957) is used to estimate the monthly risk-premia according to the following set of regressions:

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t} + \gamma_{1t} \cdot \beta_{p,t-1} + \mu_{pt} \quad (1)$$

$$R_{pt} = \gamma'_{0t} + \gamma_{2t} \cdot V_{p,t-1} + \mu'_{pt} \quad (2)$$

$$R_{pt} = \gamma''_{0t} + \gamma_{3t} \cdot U_{p,t-1} + \mu''_{pt} \quad (3)$$

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t}^* + \gamma_{1t}^* \cdot \beta_{p,t-1} + \gamma_{1t}^{**} \cdot \beta_{p,t-1}^2 + \gamma_{3t}^* \cdot U_{p,t-1} + \mu_{pt}^* \quad (4)$$

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t}^{***} + \gamma_{4t} \cdot SK_{p,t-1} + \mu_{pt}^{***} \quad (5)$$

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t}^{**} + \gamma_{5t} \cdot \log(\text{SIZE})_{p,t-1} + \epsilon_{pt} \quad (6)$$

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t}^s + \gamma_{1t}^s \cdot \beta_{p,t-1} + \gamma_{5t}^* \cdot \log(\text{SIZE})_{p,t-1} + \epsilon_{pt}^s \quad (7)$$

in which:

$R_{pt}$  = realized return of portfolio p in month t,

$\gamma_{1t}$  = systematic risk premium in month t,

$\gamma_{2t}$  = total risk premium in month t,

$\gamma_{3t}$  = unsystematic risk premium in month t,

$\gamma_{4t}$  = skewness premium in month t,

$\gamma_{5t}$  = size premium in month t,

$\beta_{p,t-1}$  = beta of portfolio p estimated over a 12-month estimation period ending on the calendar year preceding month t and updated yearly,

$V_{p,t-1}$  = variance of portfolio p estimated over a 12 month estimation period ending on the calendar year preceding month t and updated yearly,

$U_{p,t-1}$  = unsystematic risk of portfolio p estimated over a 12-month estimation period ending on the calendar year preceding month t and updated yearly,

$SK_{p,t-1}$  = skewness coefficient (return distributions' third movement around the mean divided by the standard deviation cubed) of portfolio p estimated over a 12-month estimation period ending on the calendar year preceding month t and updated yearly,

$\log(\text{SIZE})_{p,t-1}$  = logarithm of the market capitalization of portfolio  $p$  (market capitalization is given in units of  $\frac{1}{2}$  million pounds) at the end of the calendar year preceding month  $t$  and updated yearly.

Regression (1) is the standard two-parameter capital asset pricing model (Sharpe (1964), Black (1973) and Fama (1976)) according to which security holders are compensated only for bearing systematic risk. Regressions (2) and (3) are run on the theory that investors may not be fully diversified. In this case, both total risk (variance) and unsystematic risk may contribute to the pricing of securities (Levy (1978)).

Regression (4) is the Fama and MacBeth (1973) version of a four-parameter capital asset pricing model. With this specification we test for the linearity of the relationship between average returns and systematic risk (if the relationship is linear  $\gamma_{1t}^{**}$  should be statistically equal to zero) and for the marginal contribution of unsystematic risk to the pricing of securities (if unsystematic is diversified away it is not priced in the market and  $\gamma_{3t}^*$  should be statistically equal to zero).

Regression (5) is run to determine whether the skewness of return distributions is priced in the market. We should expect a negative relationship between average returns and skewness ( $\gamma_{4t} < 0$ ) since investors should be willing to accept lower average returns on portfolios with positively skewed returns (Francis and Archer (1979), chapter 16).

Regression (6) is run to determine if there is a size premium on the LSE. If portfolios constructed on the basis of market capitalization at the end of the calendar year have different average returns over the following year then  $\gamma_{5t}$  will be different from zero. If portfolios of smaller firms outperform portfolios of larger firms then  $\gamma_{5t}$  will be negative. Finally, regression (7) allows us to examine the combined effect of systematic risk and size on average returns.

For each month of the 12-month test period we calculate the realized return of each one of the 20 portfolios ( $R_{pt}$ ). These 20 portfolio returns are then cross-sectionally regressed on beta



(regression (1)), variance (regression (2)), unsystematic risk (regression (3)), skewness (regression (5)), size (regression (6)) as well as on beta, beta squared and unsystematic risk (regression (4)) and beta and size (regression (7)). Recall that risk and size are estimated over the preceding calendar year (estimation period) and are updated every year. From the 12 cross-sectional regressions we obtain 12 monthly estimates of the market risk premia  $\gamma_1$ ,  $\gamma_2$ ,  $\gamma_3$ ,  $\gamma_4$ ,  $\gamma_1^*$ ,  $\gamma_1^{**}$ , and  $\gamma_3^*$  and the coefficients of size  $\gamma_5$  and  $\gamma_5^*$ .

The entire procedure is then repeated using the second year of monthly data (1956) to construct portfolios, the third year of monthly data (1957) to estimate risk and size and the fourth year of monthly data (1958) to estimate the monthly relationship between realized returns, risk and size. Dropping one year of early data and adding a new one to estimate the risk and size premia, we kept on repeating the entire procedure until we reached the year 1983. This approach provides a total of 324 monthly estimates of the risk and size premia  $\gamma_1$ ,  $\gamma_2$ ,  $\gamma_3$ ,  $\gamma_4$ , and  $\gamma_5$ ; 27 estimates for each of the 12 months of the year (from January 1957 to December 1983). Note that all the tests performed in this study are predictive tests since the set of independent or explanatory variables are estimated over a period that precedes the month over which portfolios' returns are calculated.

## 5. Evidence of monthly risk premia seasonality

### 5.1 Systematic risk premium seasonality (regression (1))

Evidence of seasonality in the monthly estimates of the systematic risk premia is reported in table 1. First, note that no relationship exists, on average, between monthly portfolio returns and systematic risk over the entire 27-year period from January 1957 to December 1983. Price behavior on the LSE is not consistent with the standard two-parameter capital asset pricing model.

Turning to the month-to-month results we see that April is the only month of the year in which the systematic risk premium is positive. It is equal to 1.84 percent. This is equivalent to 22 percent on an annual basis. If we remove the month of April from the data, the relationship between return and systematic risk is, on average, negative. This phenomenon is primarily the result

Table 1

Average values of the estimated coefficients of the regression

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t} + \gamma_{1t} \cdot \beta_{p,t-1} + \mu_{pt}$$

based on monthly data from Jan. 57 to Dec. 83<sup>a</sup> using the Fama-MacBeth (1973) methodology with an equally-weighted market index.

Average over	Sample Size	$\bar{\gamma}_0$ (Intercept)	$\bar{\gamma}_1$ (Beta)
All months	324	0.0153 <sup>b</sup> 7.59	- 0.0041 - 1.51
January	27	0.0282 <sup>b</sup> 3.61	0.0094 0.61
February	27	0.0249 <sup>b</sup> 5.44	- 0.0119 - 1.45
March	27	0.0087 1.49	0.0006 0.06
April	27	0.0177 <sup>b</sup> 2.28	0.0184 <sup>b</sup> 1.89
May	27	0.0204 <sup>b</sup> 3.00	- 0.0207 <sup>b</sup> - 2.84
June	27	0.0069 1.05	- 0.0148 - 1.40
July	27	0.0122 1.53	- 0.0106 - 1.10
August	27	0.0040 0.57	0.0118 1.64
September	27	0.0083 1.03	- 0.0091 - 1.35
October	27	0.0194 <sup>b</sup> 3.19	- 0.0094 - 1.27
November	27	0.0189 <sup>b</sup> 2.16	- 0.0153 <sup>b</sup> - 1.91
December	27	0.0135 <sup>b</sup> 2.96	0.0026 0.31

a. t statistics are below the average values of the estimated coefficients.

b. significant average values at the 0.05 level.

of a significantly downward sloping risk-return relationship in the month of May (the May risk premium is equal to minus 2.07 percent, that is, minus 24.84 percent on an annual basis). Clearly, the negative relationship between return and systematic risk in the month of May offsets the positive contribution of the month of April and yields a negative but statistically insignificant risk-return relationship over the entire 27-year test period.

## 5.2 Interpretation

The positive April effect reported above may be tax-induced. It is consistent with the tax-loss selling hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, as the end of the fiscal year approaches (March in the United Kingdom), investors can reduce their taxes by selling the stocks on which they lost money during the year. In doing so, they realize capital losses that are deductible from their taxable income. The sales of securities at the end of the fiscal year depresses prices which recover at the beginning of the next fiscal year (April) as stocks move back toward their equilibrium value. The linear and positive relationship between average returns and systematic risk in April is therefore consistent with the tax-loss selling hypothesis.

The negative May effect is consistent with the old LSE adage "sell in May and go away". According to the Investors Chronicle (1986), there is some logic behind this adage since the market winds down for the holiday season. Parliament goes quiet and many companies with March year-ends have published their final results by mid-June.

## 5.3 Other risk premia seasonality (regressions (2), (3) and (4))

The estimated risk premia when risk is measured by variance, unsystematic risk and skewness are reported in table 2. To save space, we do not report the estimated value of the intercepts<sup>4</sup>. Over the 27-year period, the three risk measures are significantly positively related to average return.

Turning to the month-to-month results, note that the total risk premium (variance) is significantly positive in January and significantly negative in August. Hence, the positive April effect in the systematic risk premium is replaced by a positive January effect

Table 2

Average values of the estimated slope coefficient of the regressions

$$R_{pt} = \gamma'_{ot} + \gamma_{2t} \cdot V_{p,t-1} + \mu'_{pt}$$

$$R_{pt} = \gamma''_{ot} + \gamma_{3t} \cdot U_{p,t-1} + \mu''_{pt}$$

$$R_{pt} = \gamma'''_{ot} + \gamma_{4t} \cdot SK_{p,t-1} + \mu'''_{pt}$$

based on monthly data from Jan. 57 to Dec. 83<sup>a</sup> using the Fama-MacBeth (1973) methodology with an equally-weighted market index.

Average over	Sample Size	$\bar{\gamma}_2$ (Total risk)	$\bar{\gamma}_3$ (Unsystematic Risk)	$\bar{\gamma}_4$ (Skewness)
All months	324	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">0.3038</span> <sup>b</sup> 1.89	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">0.0896</span> <sup>b</sup> 2.19	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">0.0338</span> <sup>b</sup> 2.36
January	27	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">1.4429</span> <sup>b</sup> 2.16	0.1860 1.01	0.1253 1.27
February	27	0.4746 1.09	0.1720 1.31	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">0.1244</span> <sup>b</sup> 2.41
March	27	- 0.3982 - 0.68	- 0.1048 - 0.73	- 0.0393 - 0.93
April	27	0.0643 0.14	- 0.0036 - 0.03	- 0.0514 0.94
May	27	0.6266 1.14	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">0.3338</span> <sup>b</sup> 2.57	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">0.0825</span> <sup>b</sup> 2.61
June	27	0.0300 0.06	0.1178 0.93	0.0104 0.19
July	27	0.9677 1.42	0.1953 1.34	0.0111 0.26
August	27	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">- 0.9614</span> <sup>b</sup> - 2.68	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">- 0.2115</span> <sup>b</sup> - 1.97	- 0.0379 - 0.96
September	27	0.2961 0.53	0.1376 1.03	0.0248 0.65
October	27	0.8932 1.49	0.2508 1.73	0.0080 0.28
November	27	- 0.0543 - 0.09	0.1317 0.82	0.0606 1.54
December	27	0.2639 0.52	- 0.1298 - 1.02	- 0.0151 - 0.43

a. t statistics are below the average values of the estimated slopes.

b. significant average values at the 0.05 level.

in the total risk premium. The unsystematic risk premium is significantly positive in May and significantly negative in August. The skewness premium is significantly positive in February and May.

A comparison of results in table 2 and table 1 indicates that unsystematic risk premia (table 2) and systematic risk premia (table 1) have opposite signs. This observation is consistent with the fact that portfolios' unsystematic risk is negatively correlated with portfolios' systematic risk on the LSE (low beta portfolios have higher unsystematic risk than high beta portfolios).

Finally, the significantly positive skewness premium reported in table 2 is not consistent with the hypothesis that investors should be willing to accept lower average returns on portfolios with positively skewed returns. A similar positive skewness effect has been observed in U.S. common stock data. See Francis and Archer (1979) for possible explanations of this phenomenon.

#### 5.4 Seasonality in the risk premia of the four-parameter capital asset pricing model (regression (4))

Results are summarized in table 3. For the overall period unsystematic risk dominates with a significantly positive premium. This result is not consistent with security pricing according to the CAPM.

Turning to the month-to-month results we still observe a positive April effect in the systematic risk premium even after controlling for unsystematic risk. This result provides additional support to our earlier conclusion (section 4.1) that stock price behavior on the LSE is consistent with the standard CAPM only in April.

#### 6. Evidence of a size effect (regression (6))

The relationship between average portfolio returns and the logarithm of market capitalization is given in table 4. Note first that over the 27-year period (from 1957 to 1983) the relationship is negative (indicating that small firms outperformed, on average, large firms) but it is not statistically significant.

Turning to the month-to-month results we can see that the size effect is a seasonal phenomenon. Indeed, May is the only month of the year for which there is a significant relationship

Table 3

Average values of the estimated coefficients of the regression

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t}^* + \gamma_{1t}^* \cdot \beta_{p,t-1} + \gamma_{1t}^{**} \cdot \beta_{p,t-1}^2 + \gamma_{3t}^* \cdot U_{p,t-1} + \mu_{pt}^*$$

based on monthly data from Jan. 57 to Dec. 83<sup>a</sup> using the Fama-MacBeth (1973) methodology with an equally-weighted market index.

Average over	Sample Size	$\bar{\gamma}_0^*$ (Intercept)	$\bar{\gamma}_1^*$ (Beta)	$\bar{\gamma}_{11}^{**}$ (Beta) <sup>2</sup>	$\bar{\gamma}_3^*$ (Unsys. risk)
All months	324	0.0102 <sup>b</sup> 3.17	- 0.0040 - 1.05	0.0001 0.10	0.0653 <sup>b</sup> 1.81
January	27	- 0.0003 - 0.02	0.0176 1.12	- 0.0012 - 0.28	0.3263 <sup>b</sup> 1.83
February	27	0.0112 0.94	- 0.0043 - 0.29	- 0.0036 - 0.58	0.2071 1.58
March	27	0.0136 1.047	- 0.0019 - 0.15	0.0016 0.29	- 0.1121 - 0.81
April	27	0.0137 1.35	0.0269 <sup>b</sup> 1.87	- 0.0061 - 1.24	0.0565 0.64
May	27	0.0079 0.63	- 0.0136 - 1.02	- 0.0026 - 0.47	0.1424 1.19
June	27	0.0066 0.81	- 0.0159 - 0.96	- 0.0008 - 0.15	0.0143 0.18
July	27	0.0149 1.40	- 0.0267 - 1.69	0.0076 1.40	0.0428 0.34
August	27	0.0099 1.15	0.0149 1.68	- 0.0032 - 1.11	- 0.0217 - 0.23
September	27	0.0060 0.57	- 0.0109 - 1.103	0.0002 0.61	0.0334 0.25
October	27	- 0.0052 - 0.43	0.0067 0.56	- 0.0061 - 1.21	0.2142 1.60
November	27	0.0201 1.54	- 0.0267 <sup>b</sup> - 2.22	0.0057 1.49	- 0.0305 - 0.22
December	27	0.0239 <sup>b</sup> 2.74	- 0.0147 <sup>b</sup> - 1.46	0.0100 <sup>b</sup> 2.34	- 0.0893 - 0.85

a. t statistics are below the average values of the estimated coefficients.

b. significant average values at the 0.05 level.

Table 4

Average values of the estimated coefficients of the regression

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t}^{**} + \gamma_{5t} \cdot \log(\text{SIZE})_{p,t-1} + \epsilon_{pt}$$

based on monthly data from Jan. 57 to Dec. 83<sup>a</sup> using the Fama-MacBeth (1973) methodology with an equally-weighted market index.

Average over	Sample Size	$\bar{\gamma}_0^{**}$ (Intercept)	$\bar{\gamma}_5$ (Size)
All months	324	0.0244 3.70	- 0.0009 - 1.74
January	27	0.0246 0.67	0.0008 0.26
February	27	0.0402 <sup>b</sup> 1.81	- 0.0018 - 1.05
March	27	0.0025 0.11	0.0005 0.32
April	27	0.0213 0.94	0.0009 0.56
May	27	0.0690 <sup>b</sup> 3.92	- 0.0045 <sup>b</sup> - 3.51
June	27	0.0249 1.21	0.0021 - 1.31
July	27	0.0363 <sup>b</sup> 2.01	- 0.0023 - 1.69
August	27	- 0.0146 - 0.74	0.0020 1.35
September	27	0.0337 <sup>b</sup> 1.88	- 0.0022 - 1.54
October	27	0.0487 <sup>b</sup> 2.20	- 0.0026 - 1.56
November	27	0.0267 1.10	- 0.0014 - 0.82
December	27	- 0.0201 - 0.87	0.0024 1.54

a. t statistics are below the average values of the estimated coefficients.

b. significant average values at the 0.05 level.

between average returns and size. The relationship is negative indicating that most of the small size premium is earned during the month of May. These results are consistent with the earlier findings of Levis (1985).

**7. The risk-adjusted size-effect and risk-premia seasonality**  
**(regression (7))**

What is the relationship between average returns and size after controlling for systematic risk? If small firms were riskier than large firms the risk differential would explain the difference in returns. This is not the case. On the contrary, the results in table 5 indicate that on the LSE smaller firms have smaller systematic risk than larger firms. Similar findings are also reported by Levis (1985).

The relationship between average returns and size after controlling for systematic risk can also be examined with the estimated coefficients of regression (7) given in table 6. Over the 27-year period the size effect is significantly negative after controlling for systematic risk. Recall that the size effect without risk adjustment was found negative but not statistically significant (regression (2)).

Turning to the month-to-month results we note the following: (1) after adjusting for size, the systematic risk premium is significantly positive only in April and significantly negative in May and June. These results are consistent with those reported in section 4.1, table 1 where no adjustment for size was made; (2) after adjusting for systematic risk, the size effect is significant only in May and it is negative. This result is consistent with that reported in section 5 table 4 where no adjustment for systematic risk was made.

Note that in May we have both a negative systematic risk premium and a negative size effect. As a result, small firms have, on average, positive returns in May (see table 5). As pointed out by Levis (1985), the city's old saying "sell in May and go away" seems to be applicable only to larger firms. This conclusion is supported by the results given in the last column of table 5.



Table 5

Characteristics of the five size-portfolios over the period  
Jan. 57 to Dec. 83<sup>a</sup>

Portfolio size	Average market value in £ million	Average monthly beta	Average monthly return (all months)	Average return in May
Largest	99.59	1.09	0.0095 (3.02) <sup>b</sup>	- 0.0060 (- .67)
2	14.30	0.97	0.0114 (3.82) <sup>b</sup>	- 0.0002 (- 0.02)
3	5.14	0.82	0.0110 (4.06) <sup>b</sup>	- 0.0020 (- .26)
4	2.03	0.68	0.0122 (5.24) <sup>b</sup>	- 0.0029 (- .46)
Smallest	0.66	0.51	0.0144 (7.04) <sup>b</sup>	0.0096 (1.96) <sup>b</sup>

a. t statistics are below the average returns.

b. significant average values at the 0.05 level.

Table 6

Average values of the estimated coefficients of the regression

$$R_{pt} = \gamma_{0t}^s + \gamma_{1t}^s \cdot \beta_{p,t-1} + \gamma_{5t}^* \cdot \log(\text{SIZE})_{p,t-1} + \epsilon_{pt}^s$$

based on monthly data from Jan. 57 to Dec. 83<sup>a</sup> using the Fama-MacBeth (1973) methodology with an equally-weighted market index.

Average over	Sample Size	$\bar{\gamma}_0^s$ (Intercept)	$\bar{\gamma}_1^s$ (Beta)	$\bar{\gamma}_5^*$ (Size)
All months	324	0.0270 4.26	- 0.0032 - 1.44	- 0.0008 <sup>b</sup> - 1.96
January	27	0.0628 <sup>b</sup> 1.98	0.0169 1.52	- 0.0028 - 1.32
February	27	0.0388 <sup>b</sup> 1.96	- 0.0067 - 1.16	- 0.0013 - 0.89
March	27	0.0093 0.40	- 0.0008 - 0.10	0.0001 0.04
April	27	0.0258 1.25	0.0157 <sup>b</sup> 2.10	- 0.0004 <sup>b</sup> - 2.13
May	27	0.0538 <sup>b</sup> 2.95	- 0.0150 <sup>b</sup> - 2.61	- 0.0025 <sup>b</sup> - 2.14
June	27	0.0098 0.54	- 0.0190 <sup>b</sup> 2.55	0.0001 0.08
July	27	0.0286 1.27	- 0.0129 - 1.54	- 0.0009 - 0.68
August	27	- 0.0058 - 0.32	0.0037 0.68	0.0012 0.97
September	27	0.0269 1.33	- 0.0064 - 0.96	- 0.0014 - 1.03
October	27	0.0439 <sup>b</sup> 1.88	- 0.0023 - 0.33	- 0.0021 - 1.26
November	27	0.0314 1.31	- 0.0123 - 1.52	- 0.0009 - 0.57
December	27	- 0.0012 - 0.06	0.0012 0.18	0.0010 0.77

a. t statistics are below the average values of the estimated coefficients.

b. significant average values at the 0.05 level.

## 8. Concluding remarks

We reported evidence of seasonality in the estimated coefficients of the relationship between average returns and risk on the LSE. We also reported the presence of a size effect which is itself seasonal. We can conclude from this evidence that the capital asset pricing model does not provide an adequate description of the historical relationship between average returns and risk on the LSE over the 27-year period covered by this study (1957-1983).

This conclusion can be interpreted either as a failure of the two-parameter capital asset pricing model to provide an accurate representation of how securities are priced on the LSE over the sample period or, according to Roll (1977), as a proof that the capital asset pricing model cannot be tested unambiguously without knowing (and using) the exact composition of the true market portfolio.

Footnotes

1. See also Keim (1983) and Roll (1983).
2. Results based on the value-weighted index are available on request from the second author.
3. The beta coefficient of individual securities was estimated with the single-index market model (Sharpe (1963), Fama (1976)) using 12 monthly security returns and the corresponding 12 monthly returns on the equally-weighted index.
4. Complete results are available on request from the second author.

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