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Session 098: The Evolution of the Corporate Bond Market and Hidden Risks

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The Evolution of the Corporate Bond Market and Hidden Risks

October 29, 2019

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Understanding the Risks

Back to the Basics



Role of Fixed Income in U.S. Pensions

	SINGLE-EMPLOYER (CORPORATE) PENSIONS	TAFT-HARTLEY AND PUBLIC PENSIONS
Framework	Funded status: Assets/Liabilities	Funded status: Assets/Liabilities
Discount Rate	AA bond yields ¹	Long-term expected return
Total Portfolio Investment Objective	Balance (1) hedging mark-to-market liability and (2) generating returns to close asset-liability gap and offset future accruals and costs	Generate total returns to close asset-liability gap and offset future accruals and costs
Primary Role of Fixed Income	Liability hedge Primary source of liquidity <i>Potentially</i> modest excess return generation relative to liabilities	Diversifier to equities Deflation or inflation hedge ² Primary source of liquidity

[1] Under US and international accounting standards, pension liabilities are valued using high quality bond yields, generally interpreted as AA; for funding purposes (i.e., under ERISA), liabilities are valued using long-term averages of bonds rated A-AAA. [2] Nominal bonds serve as a deflation hedge, while inflation-linked bonds (e.g., TIPS) serve as an inflation hedge.

Role of Corporate Bonds in U.S. Pension

Single-Employer (Corporate) Plans

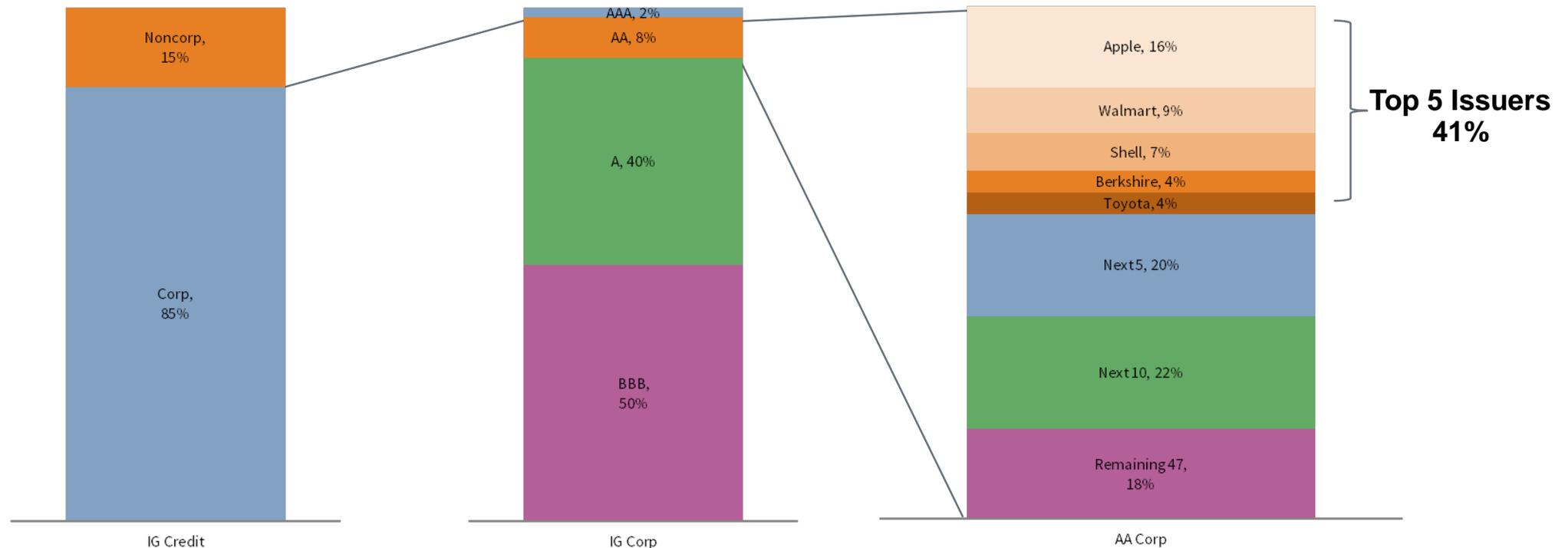
- Pension liabilities have a long duration (typically 12-16 years), so a natural hedge would be long duration AA bonds
- However, the fixed income portfolio should not be entirely in AA bonds
 - The AA bond universe is extremely narrow
 - The credit spread component of corporate bond return is highly correlated to equity returns
 - Active management is necessary to mitigate downgrades and defaults

Taft-Hartley and Public Plans

- These plans generally have much higher allocation to equities
- Consequently, they need to even more carefully consider the correlation between corporate bonds and equities

AA Universe is Small and Concentrated

- 7.8% of US investment grade corporate bonds are rated AA, and within the AA universe, the top 5 issuers represent 41%; the concentration is even more acute in long investment grade corporates
- Any pure AA portfolio would be highly concentrated

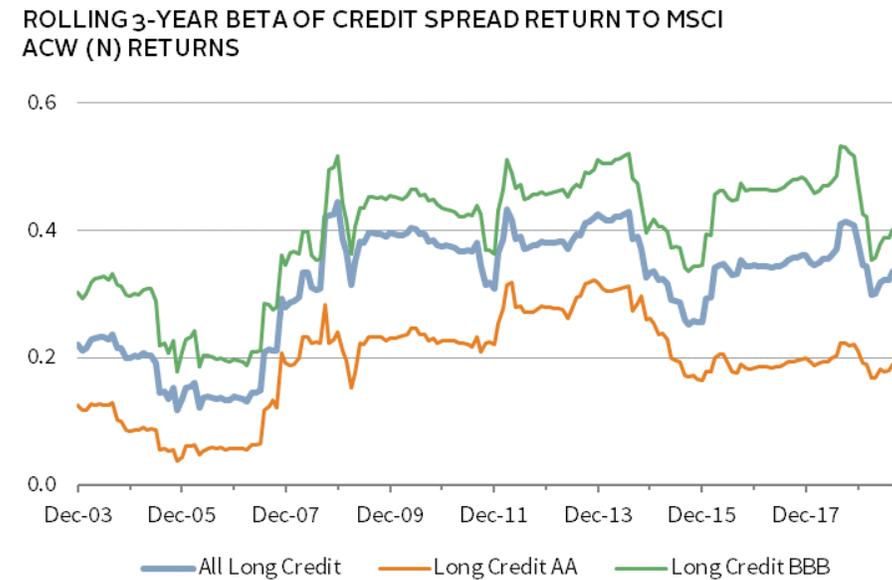
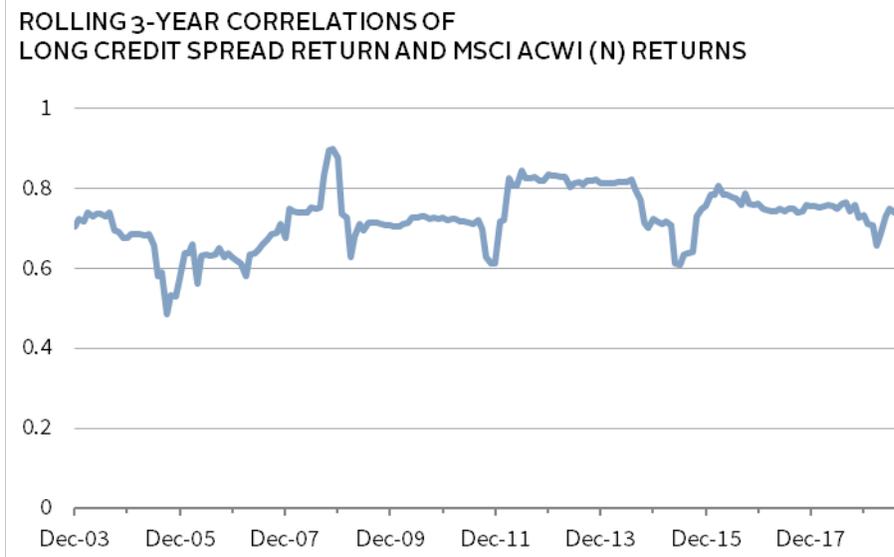


Source: Bloomberg and Cambridge Associates, as of August 31, 2019. Data represents Bloomberg Barclays indices as shown.

Corporate Bonds and Equities

CORPORATE BOND SPREAD RETURNS ARE HIGHLY CORRELATED TO EQUITIES

- Long-term correlation of corporate bond spread returns to equity returns is 0.7 with an average beta of 0.3 (over the last 15 years)
- The beta of BBB corporate bond spread returns to equities is higher than that of AA, roughly by a factor of 2



Source: Bloomberg and Cambridge Associates. Credit spread return represents excess return as defined by Bloomberg Barclays; data reflect monthly observations.

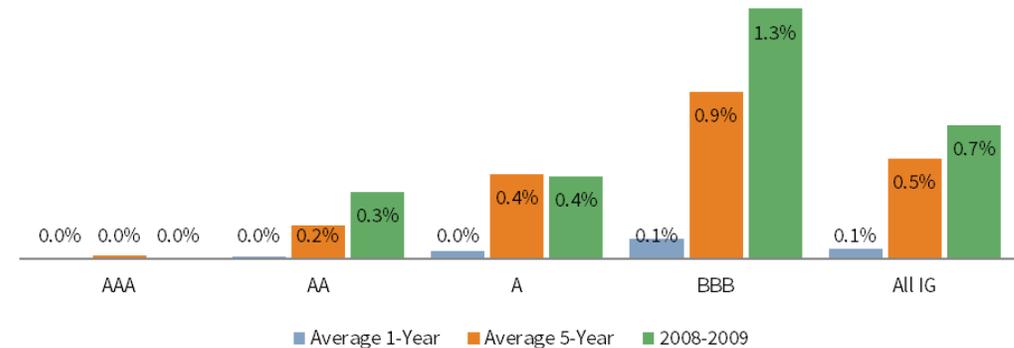
Corporate Bonds are Subject to Defaults and Downgrades

- IG downgrades are common, with more than 50% of AA bonds in any given cohort being downgraded or the rating withdrawn within 5 years
 - This creates a headwind to hedging liabilities valued with a AA discount rate
- IG defaults and credit losses are relatively low, but can spike in periods of stress
- Active management can alleviate these challenges

5-YEAR MIGRATION RATE, 1970-2018

	AAA	AA	A	BBB	Below IG	Withdrawn	Default
AAA	53.7%	23.3%	4.9%	0.6%	0.4%	17.1%	0.1%
AA	2.2%	46.1%	23.7%	3.9%	1.2%	22.8%	0.3%
A	0.2%	7.2%	51.7%	14.5%	3.4%	22.4%	0.7%
BBB	0.1%	1.0%	12.2%	49.7%	11.2%	24.4%	1.4%
BB	0.0%	0.2%	2.5%	14.4%	41.7%	34.5%	6.7%

CREDIT LOSS RATES, 1983-2018



Source: Moody's.

Role of Fixed Income in U.S. Insurance

Framework	NAIC risk-based capital (RBC) relative to book value of assets ¹
Total Portfolio Investment Objective	Balance (1) matching expected losses and expenses and (2) generating returns for growth and profitability, after taxes
Primary Role of Fixed Income	Pay losses and expenses Generate high book yield

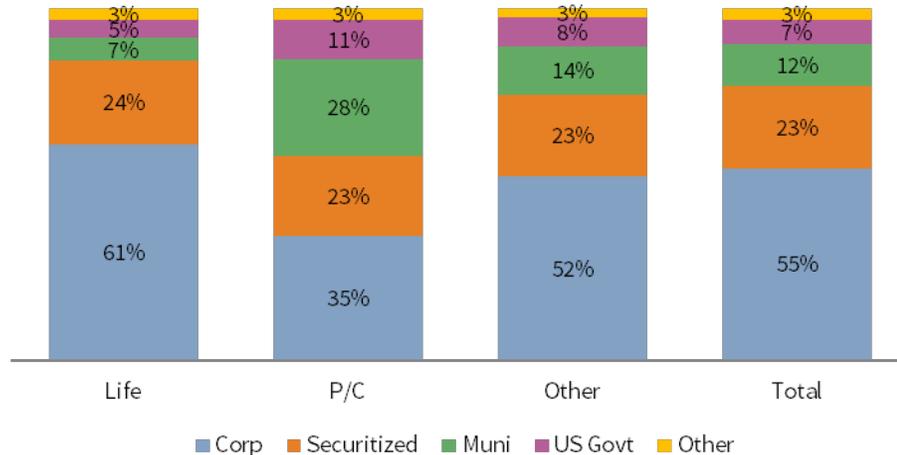
- Fixed income is typically the largest component of insurance asset allocations
- Companies with higher RBC ratios (large surpluses) typically will have lower fixed income allocations

[1] Under NAIC rules, assets rates NAIC-1 to NAIC-5 are held at book value, and NAIC-6 at the smaller of book value and market value.

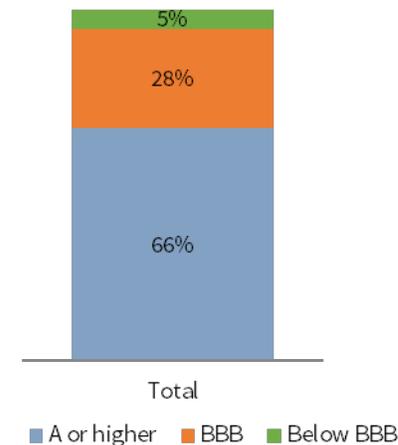
Role of Corporate Bonds in U.S. Insurance

- Unlike pensions, since most insurance companies hold their assets at book value rather than mark them to market, **book yield**, rather than total return, is a larger driver of bond selection
- Sector allocation within fixed income is driven by yield, risk based capital requirements, profitability and taxes (especially for P/C companies), and the size of surplus relative to reserves

US INSURANCE AGGREGATE BOND
SECTOR ALLOCATION, 2018



US INSURANCE AGGREGATE BOND
QUALITY ALLOCATION, 2018



Source: NAIC. A or higher represents NAIC-1 (which includes A- or higher); BBB represents NAIC-2 (which includes BBB+, BBB, and BBB-).

Risk-Based Capital Charges in the NAIC Framework

- NAIC is likely moving to a more granular system of RBC charges for corporate bonds
 - This approach would more accurately reflect default risk over a typical holding period for different types of insurers (e.g., 10 years for life and 5 years for P/C)
 - Additional factors would account for portfolio diversification (not shown here)
- Proposed factors would increase RBC for most companies, putting a greater focus on portfolio quality

		Life		P/C	
		Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
NAIC-1	AAA		0.31%		0.20%
	AA+		0.43%		0.40%
	AA		0.57%		0.60%
	AA-	0.40%	0.72%	0.30%	0.80%
	A+		0.86%		1.00%
	A		1.06%		1.30%
	A-		1.24%		1.50%
NAIC-2	BBB+		1.42%		1.80%
	BBB	1.30%	1.69%	1.00%	2.10%
	BBB-		2.00%		2.50%
NAIC-3	BB+		3.75%		5.50%
	BB	4.60%	4.76%	2.00%	6.00%
	BB-		6.16%		6.60%
NAIC-4	B+		6.35%		7.10%
	B	10.00%	8.54%	4.50%	7.70%
	B-		11.82%		8.70%
NAIC-5	CCC+		17.31%		9.80%
	CCC	23.00%	23.22%	10.00%	10.90%
	CCC-		30.00%		12.00%
NAIC-6	Default	30.00%	30.00%	30.00%	30.00%

Source: NAIC, AAA.

Canadian Considerations

Corporate Pension Plans

- International accounting standards are similar to US accounting standards and reflect mark-to-market accounting even more so than the US standards
- Funding requirements are evolving to focus more on a going concern (long-term expected return) rather than solvency (mark-to-market) liabilities

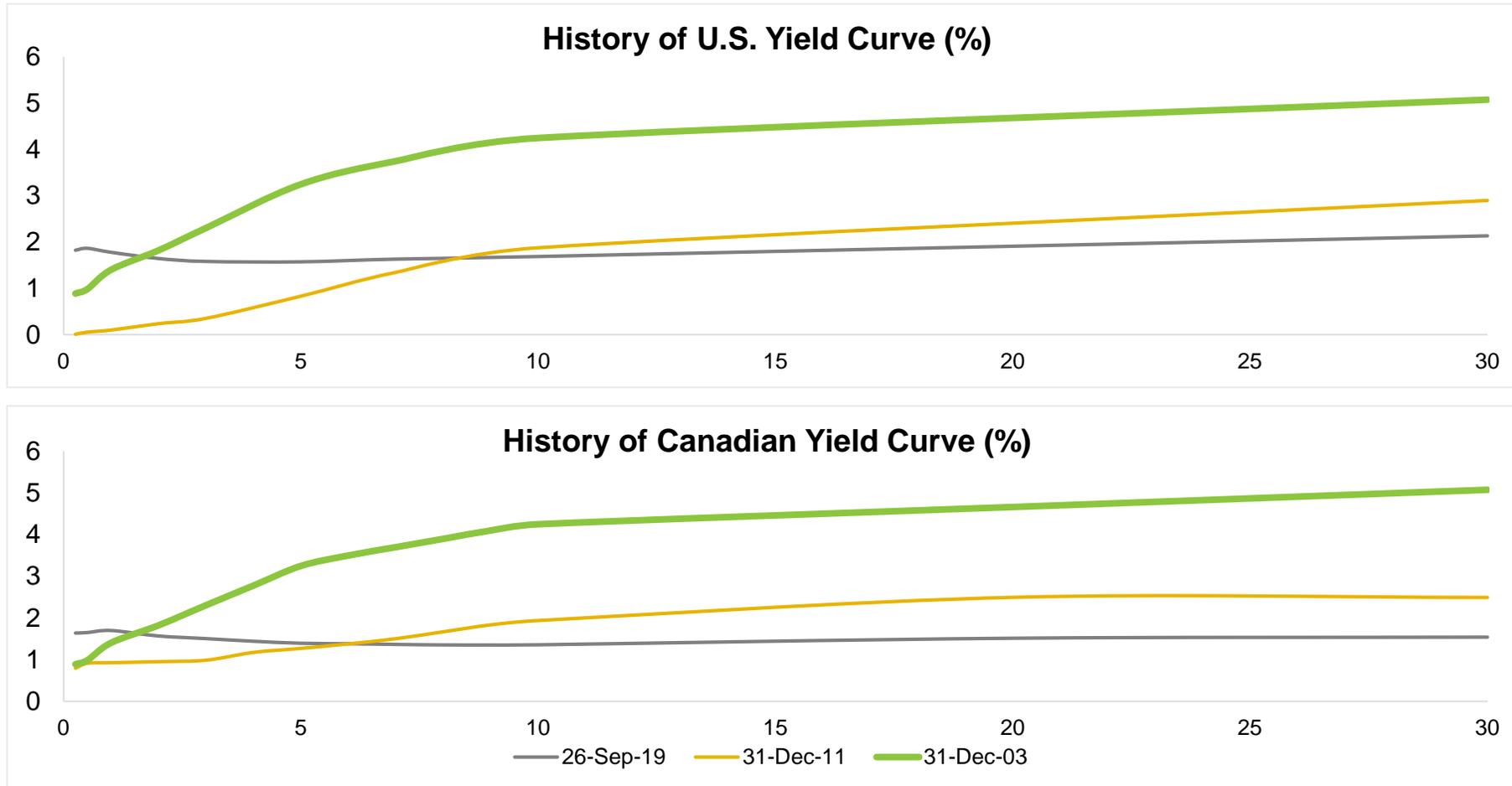
Provincial Pension Plans

- Generally greater focus on long-term expected return, as in the US

Insurance

- Similar risk-based capital approach with charges for different types of assets, reflecting maturity and quality for bonds

History of Yield Curves



Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P.. For illustrative purposes only. Data as of August 2019.

Economic Growth expectation

Expectation of Falling Rates

Supply & Demand

Central Banking System

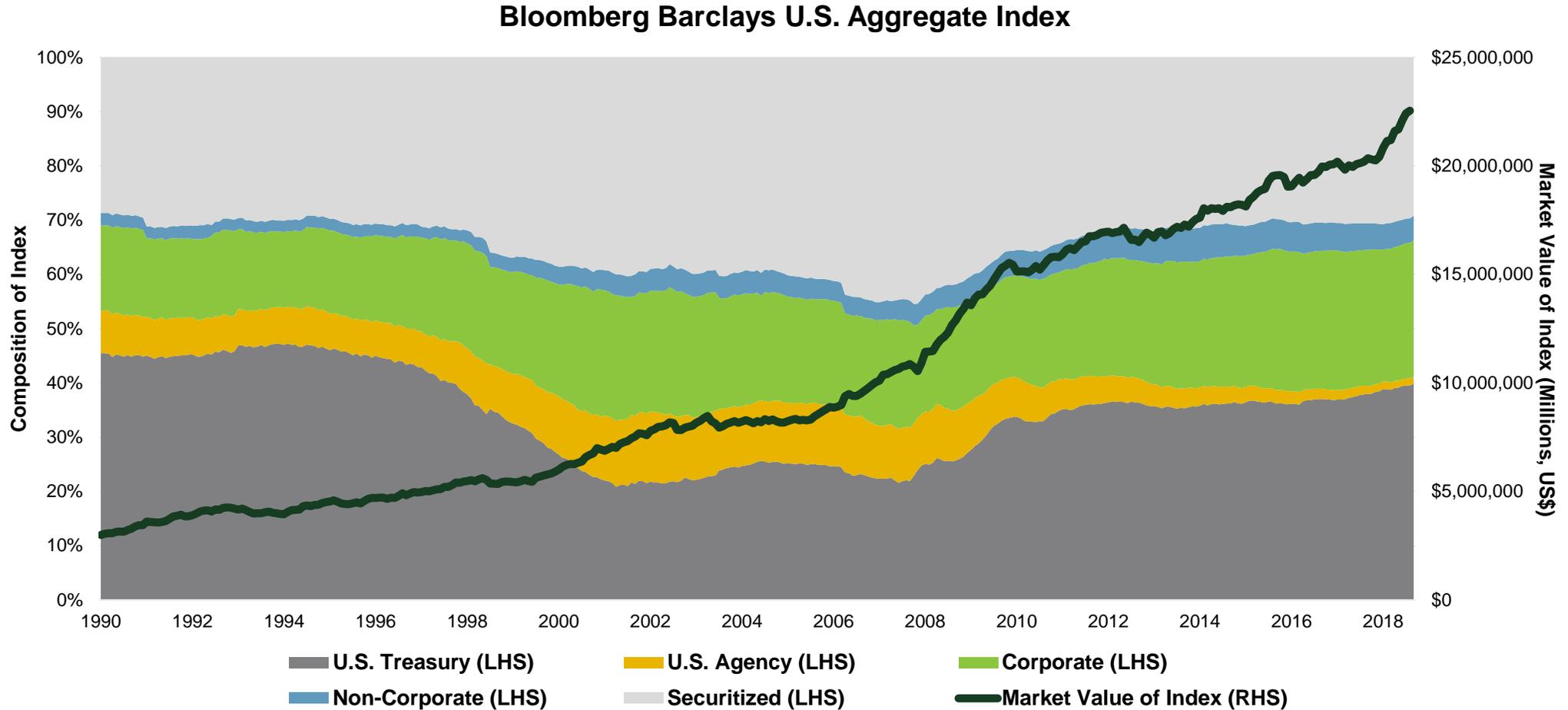
Inflation expectation

Government Financial Health

Evolution of the U.S. Corporate Bond Market

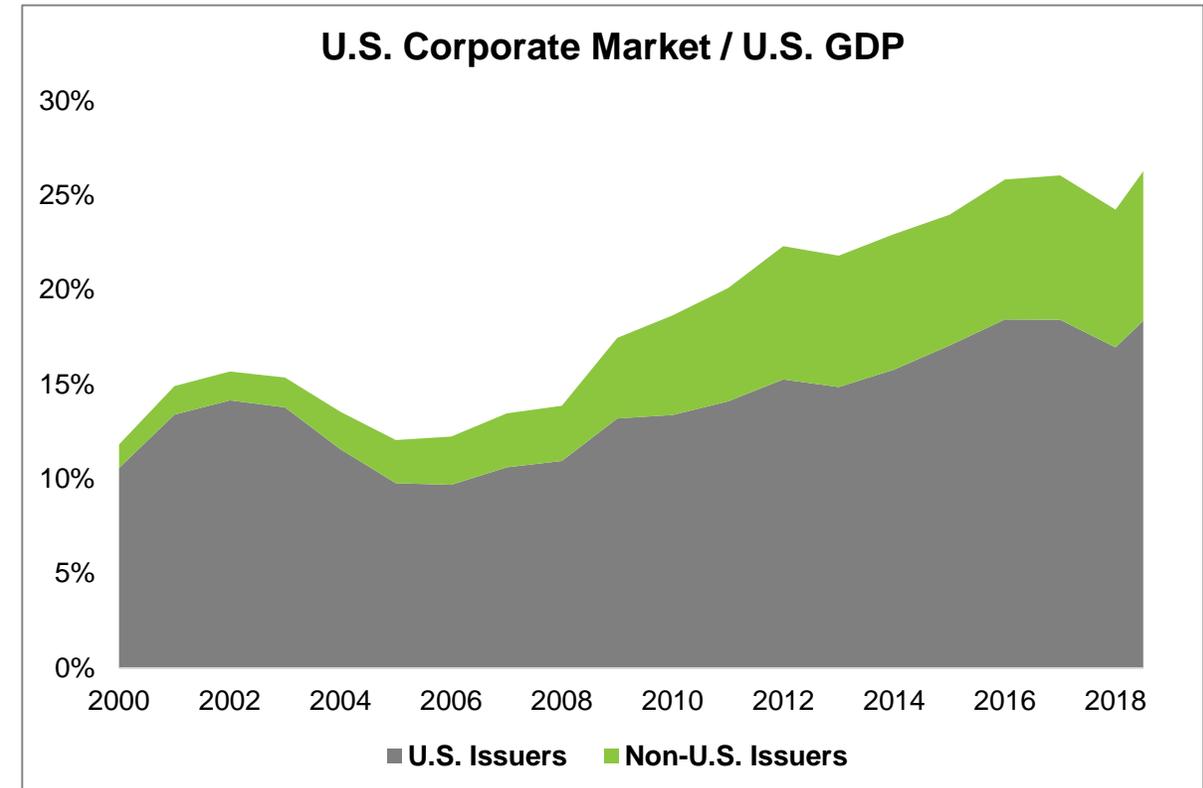
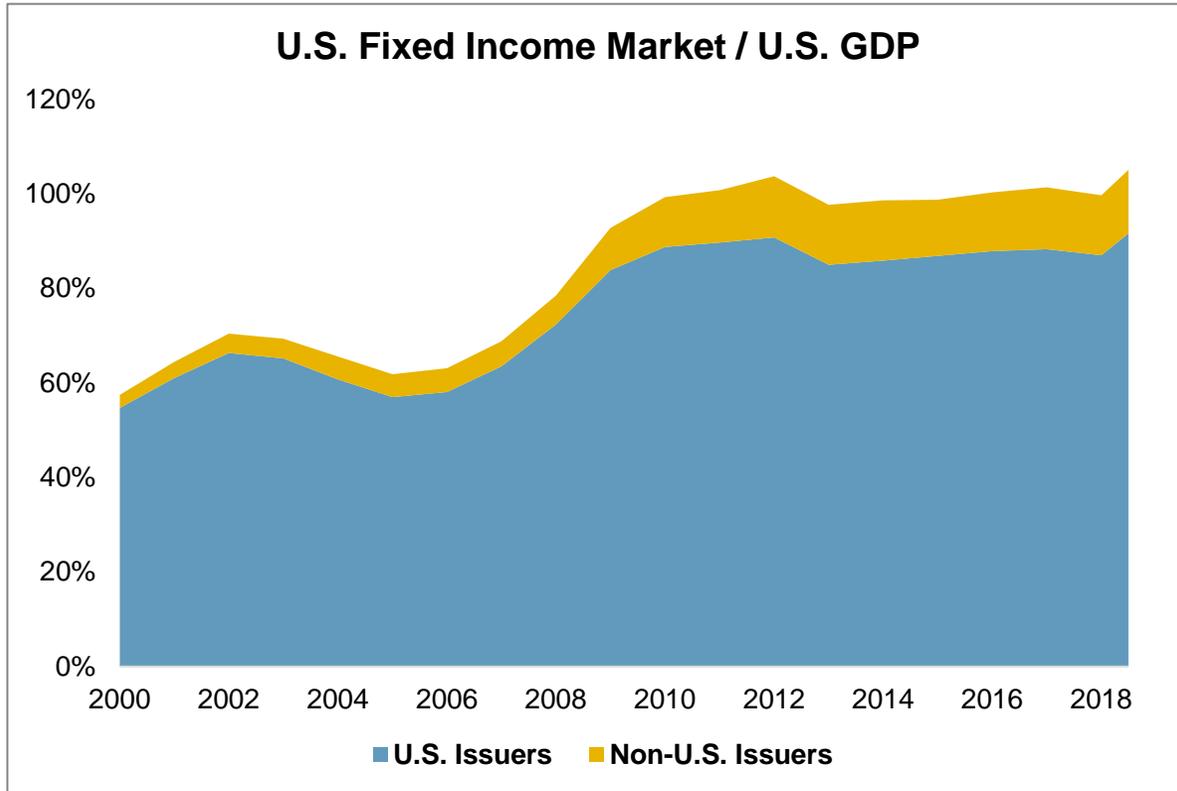


Investment-Grade by Industry Sector



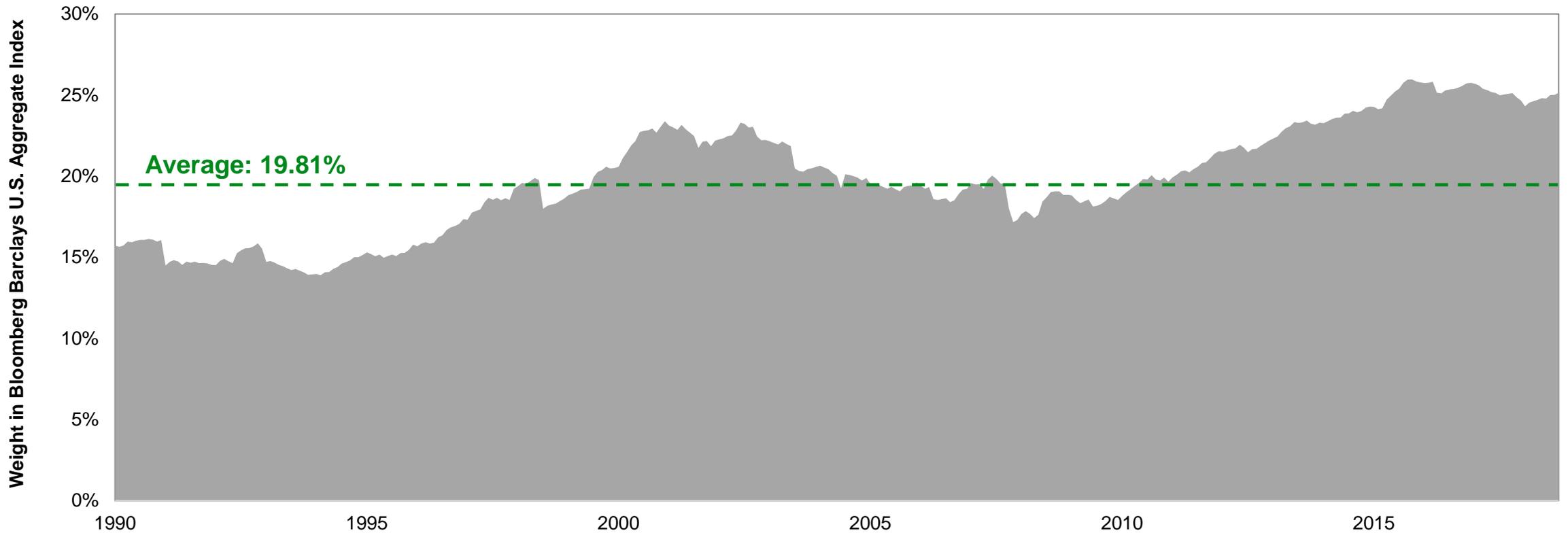
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Growth Relative to U.S. GDP



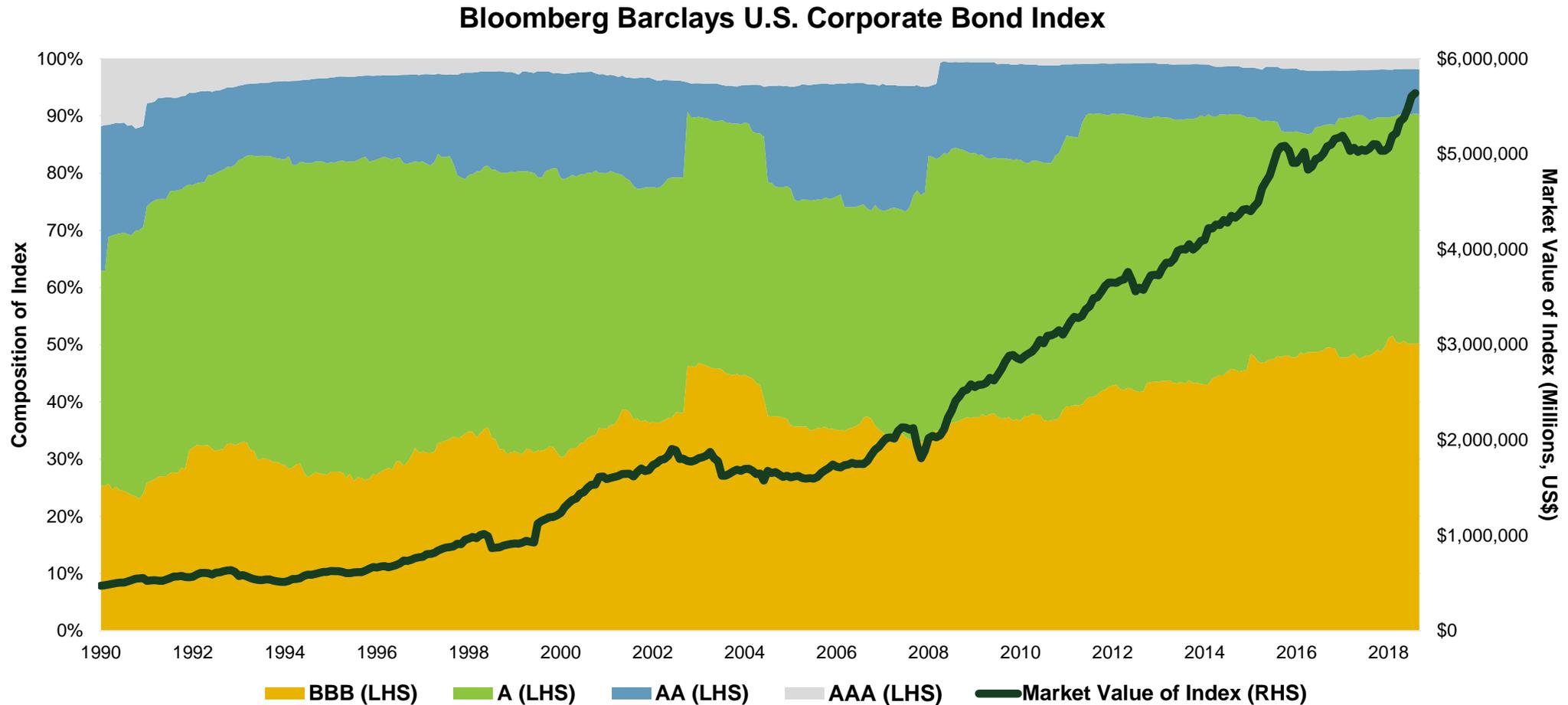
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Corporate Weighting of the Index



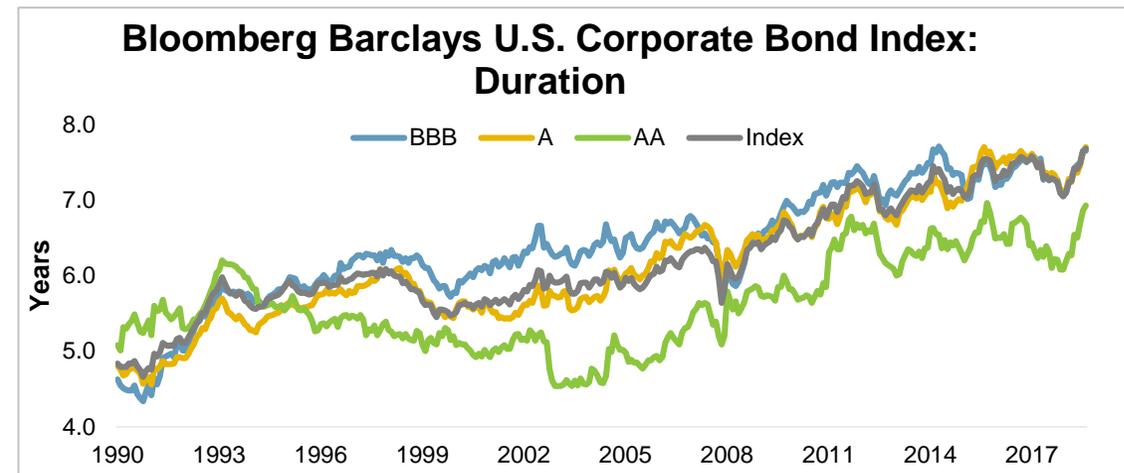
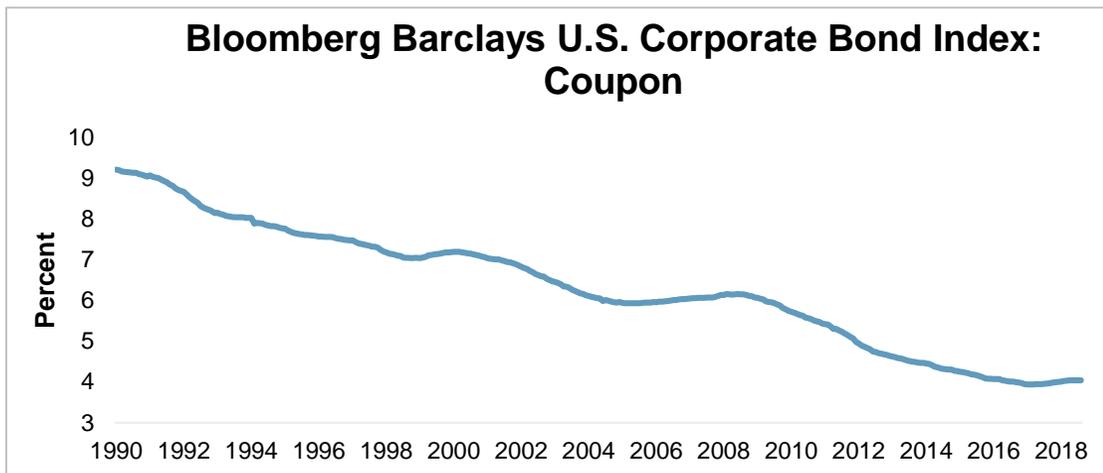
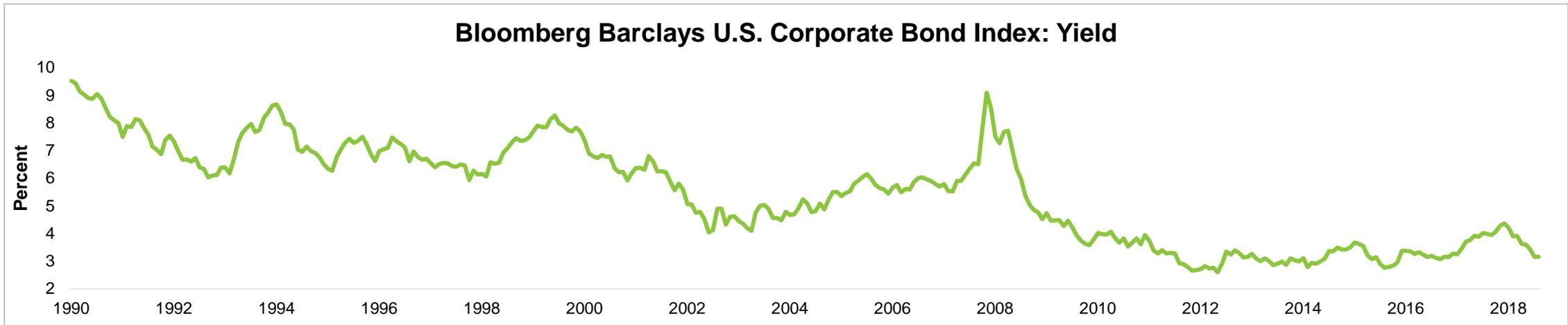
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Corporate Sector by Quality



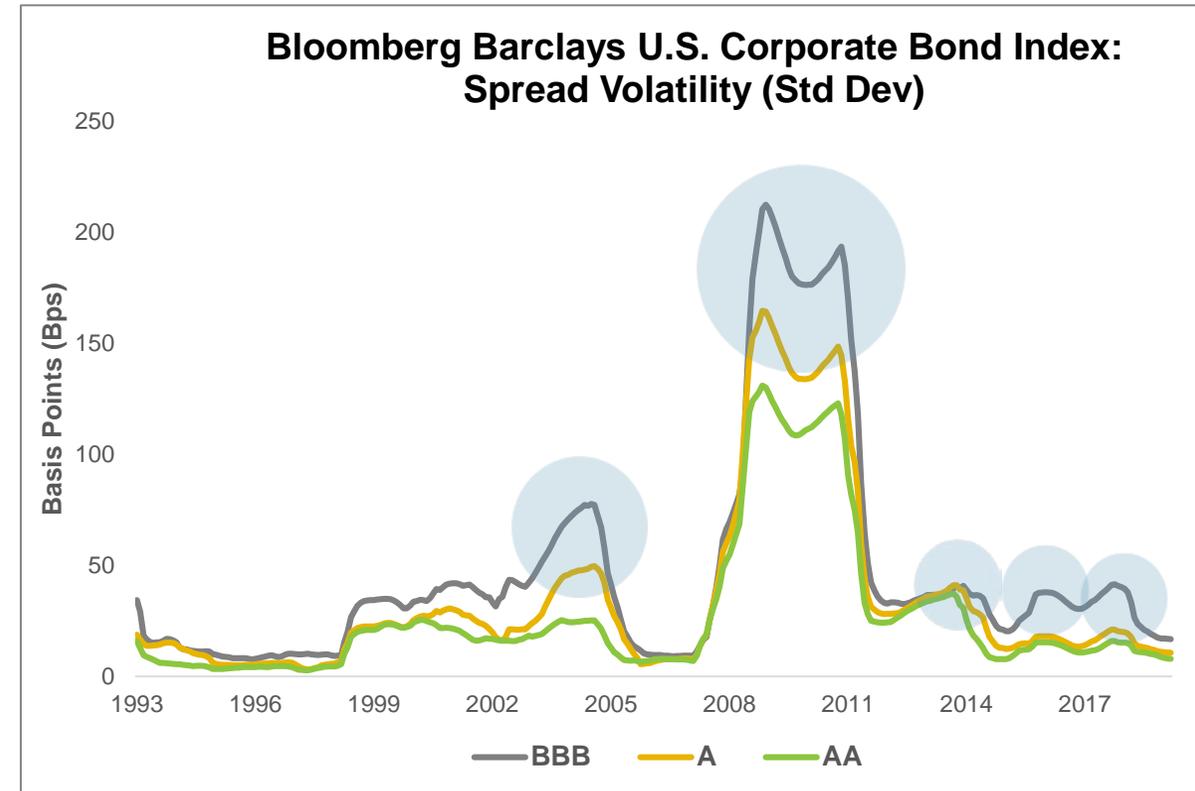
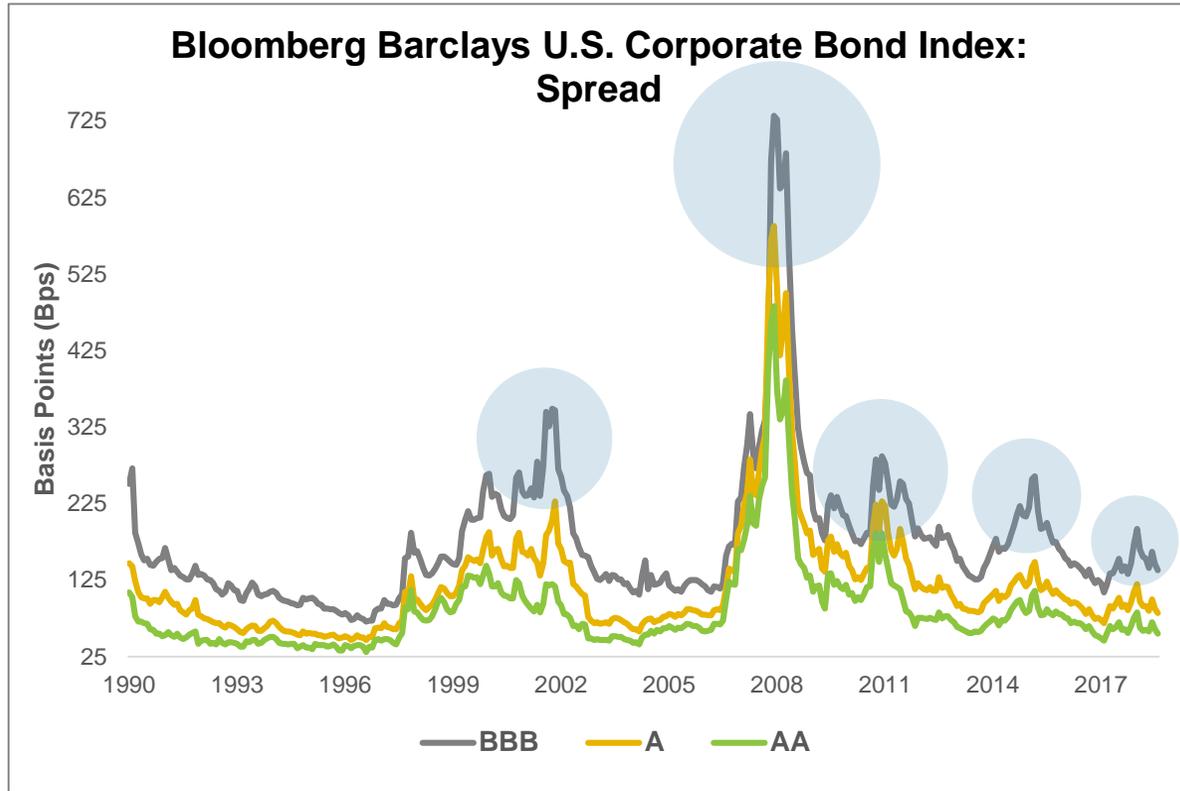
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Corporate Sector: Characteristics



Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Magnitude and Frequency of Spread Increases

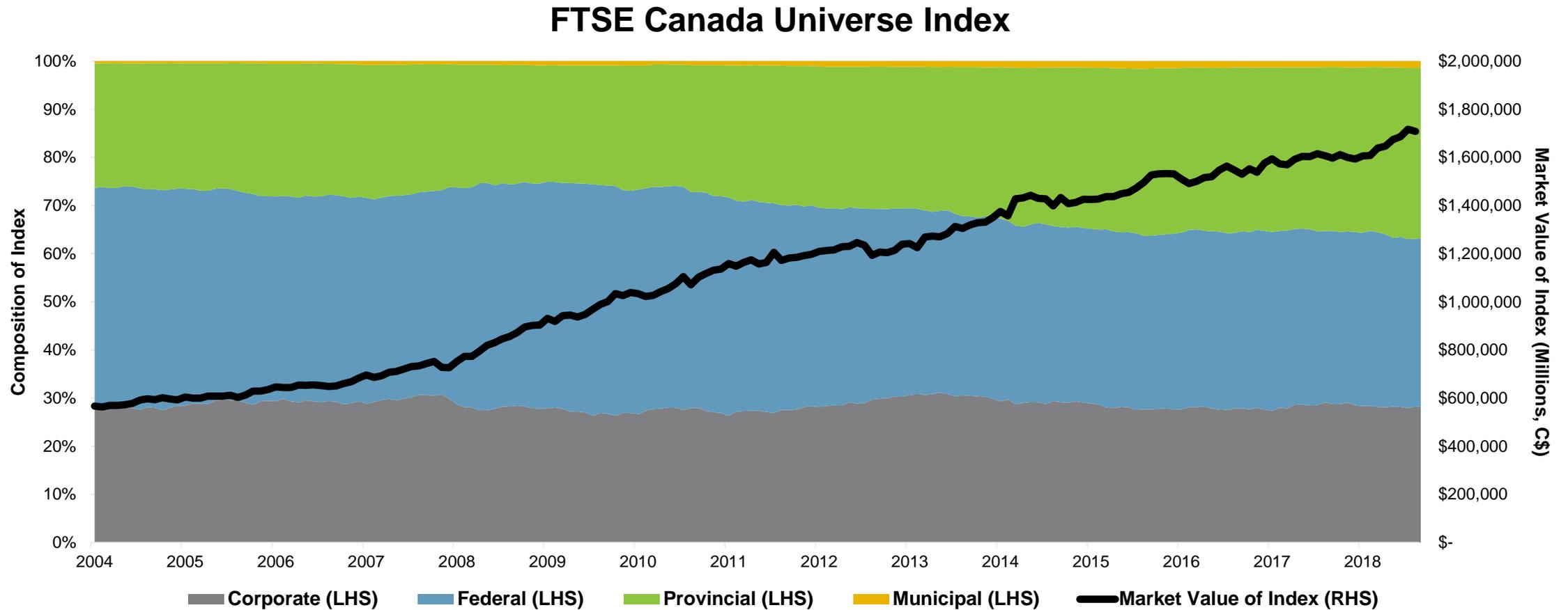


Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Evolution of the Canadian Corporate Bond Market



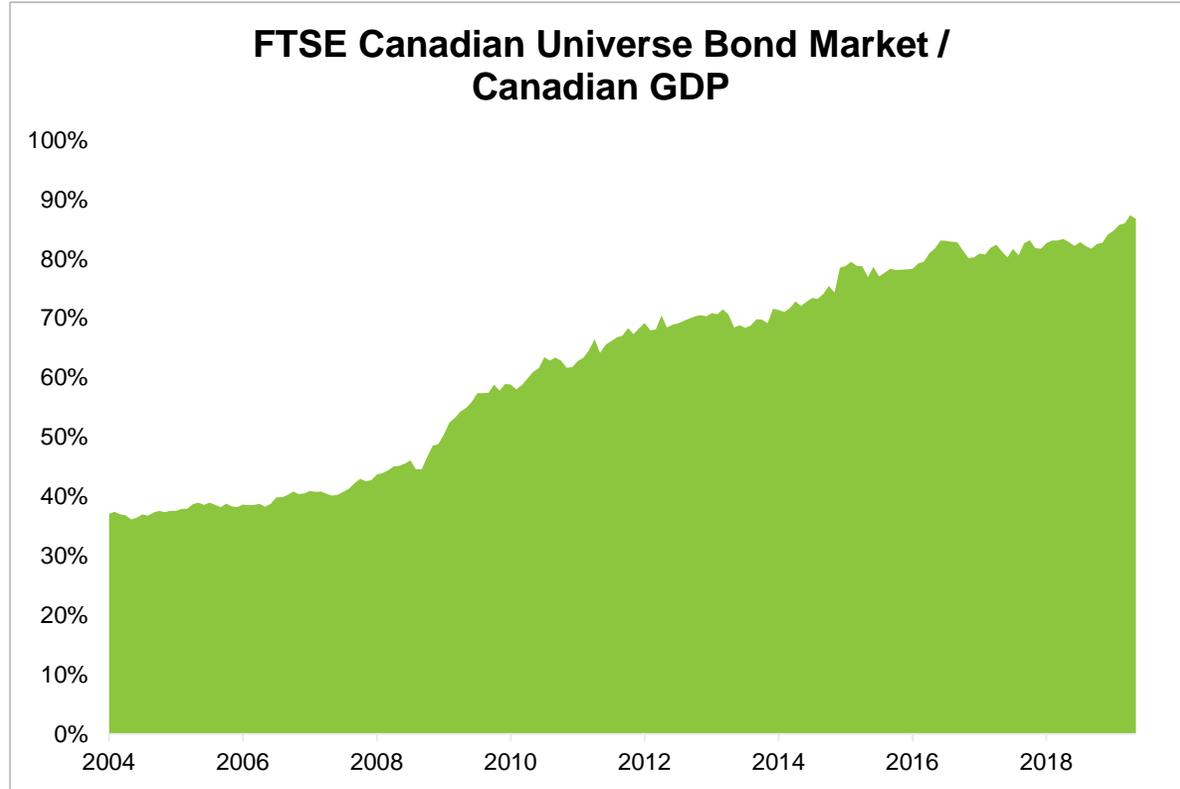
Investment-Grade by Industry Sector



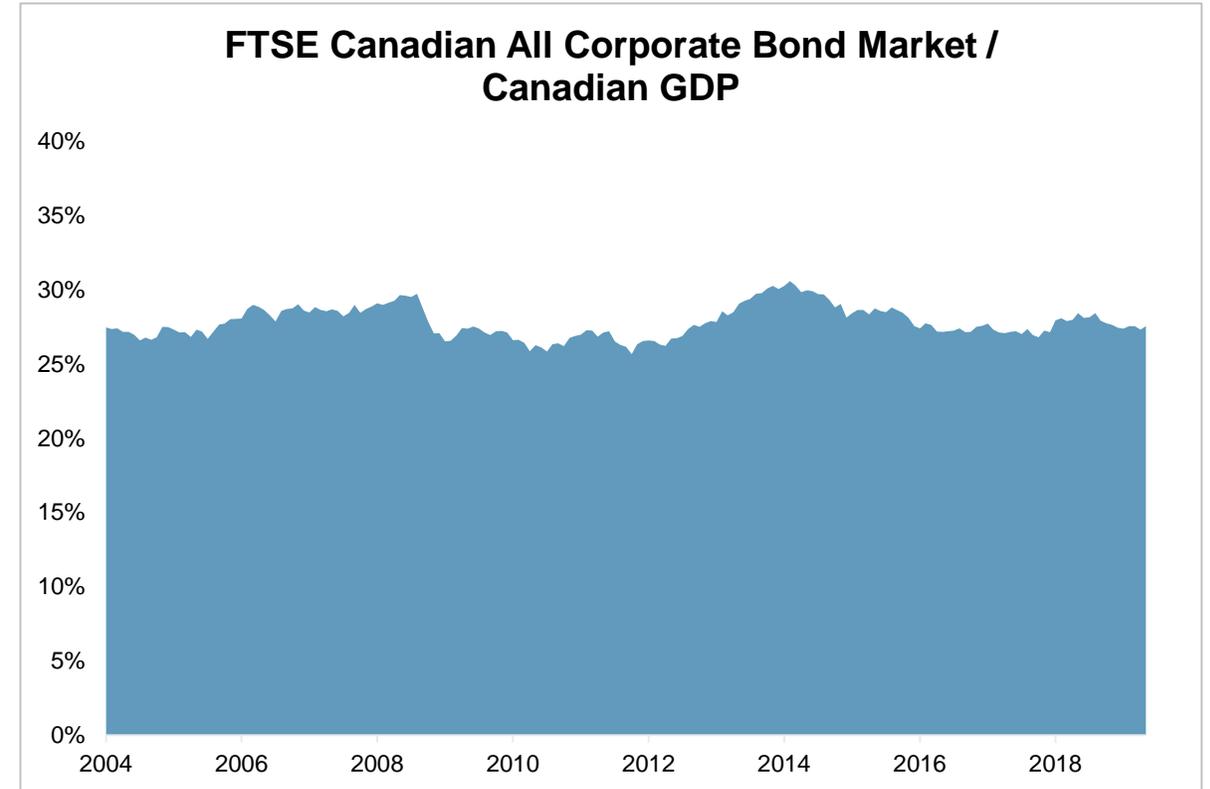
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of June 2019.

Growth Relative to Canadian GDP

**FTSE Canadian Universe Bond Market /
Canadian GDP**

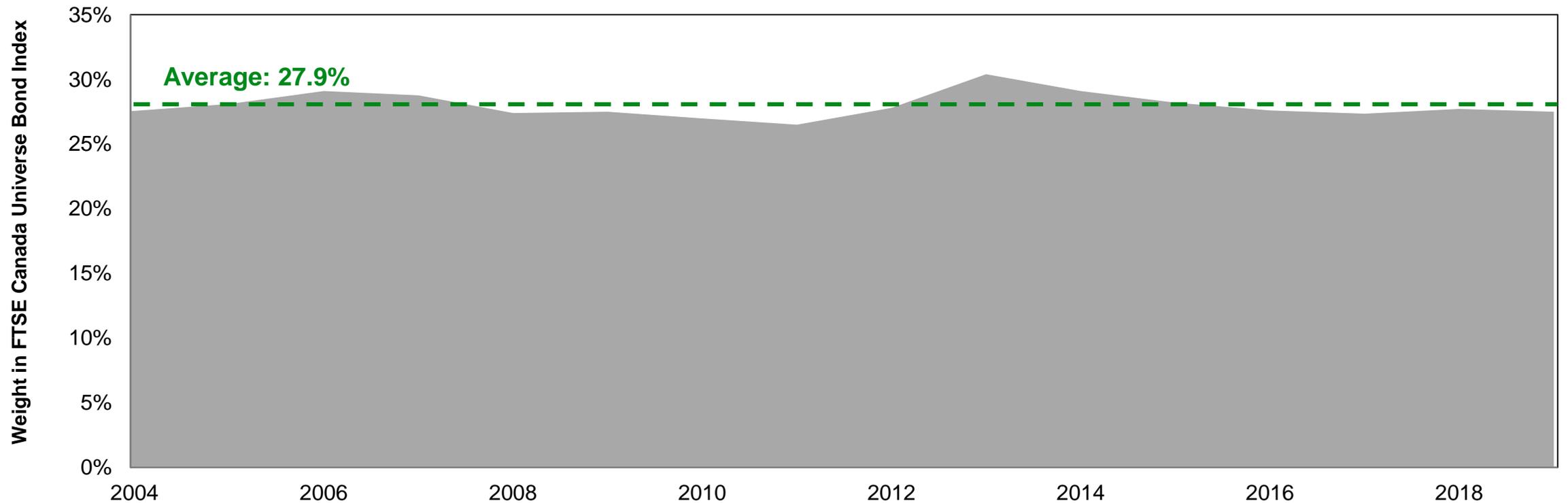


**FTSE Canadian All Corporate Bond Market /
Canadian GDP**



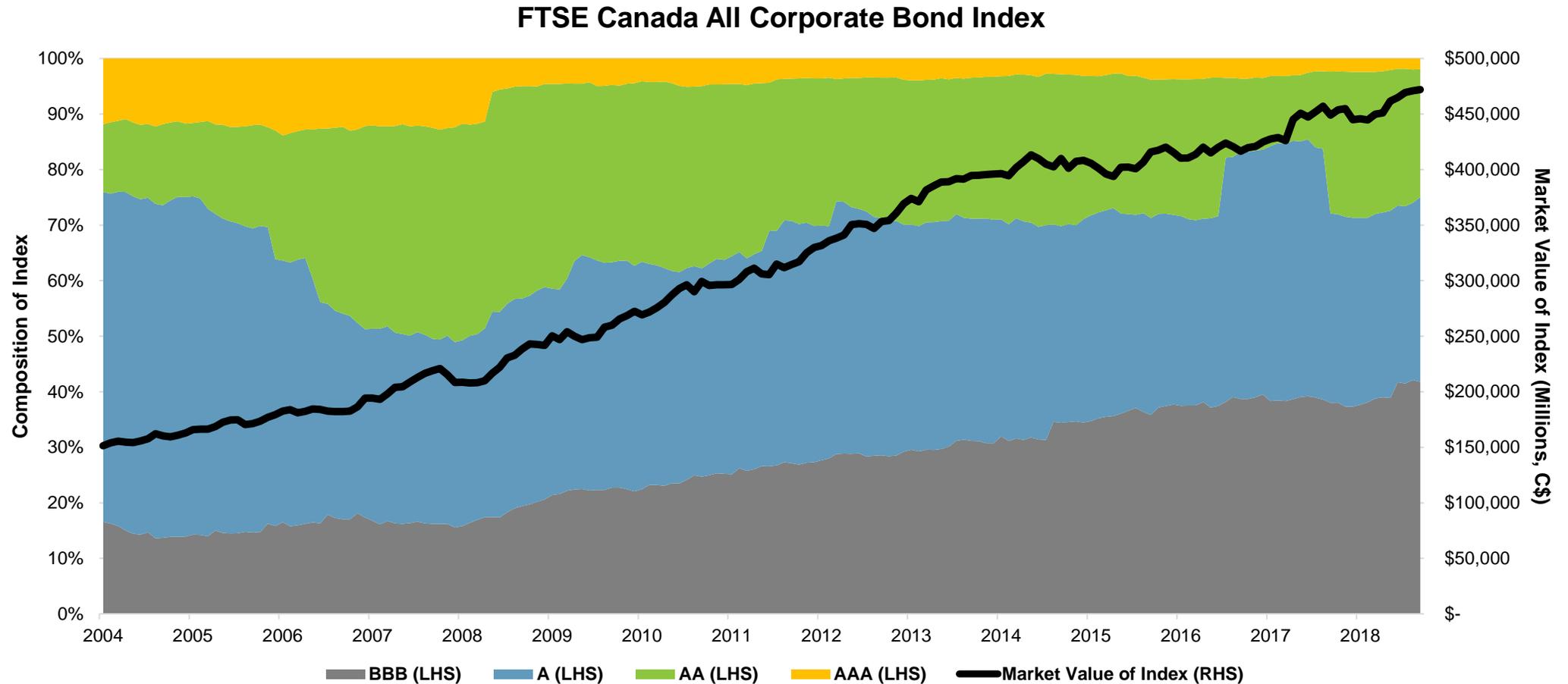
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of June 2019.

Corporate Weighting of the Index



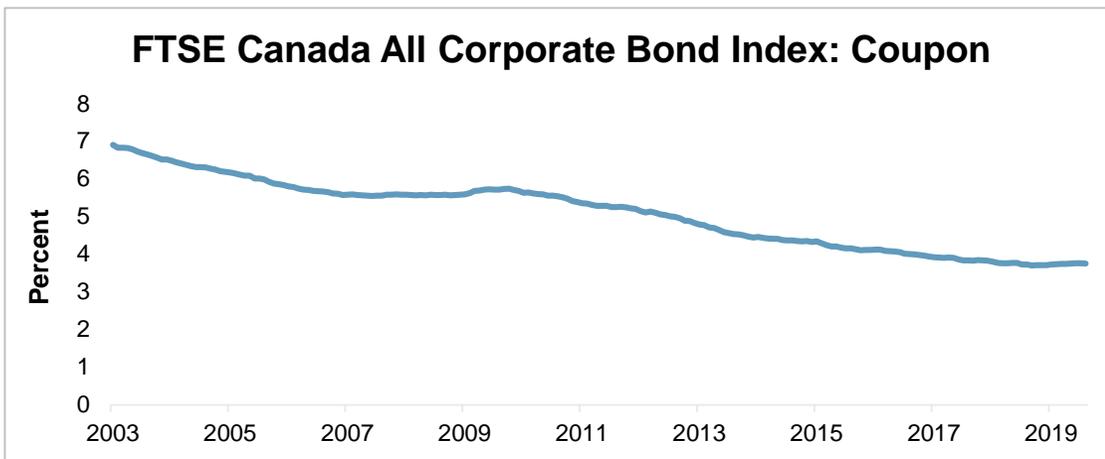
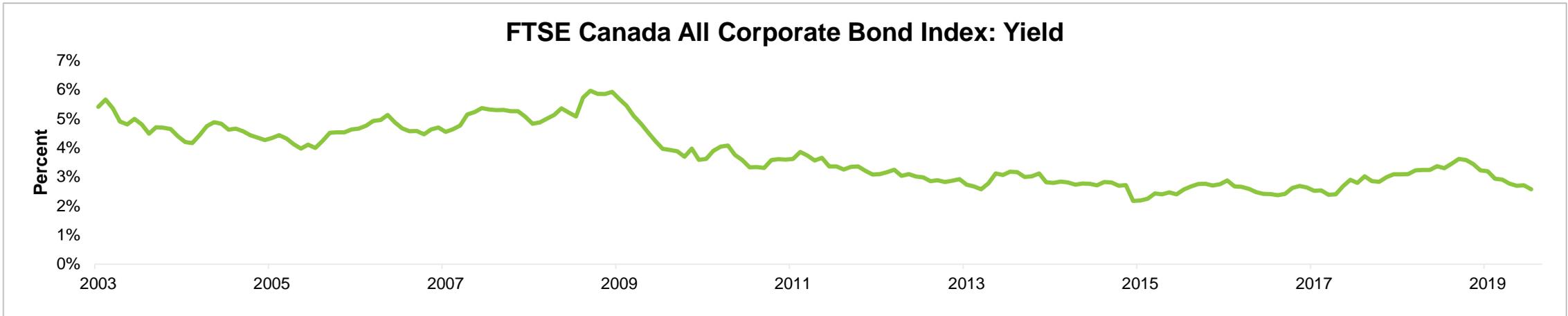
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Corporate Sector by Quality



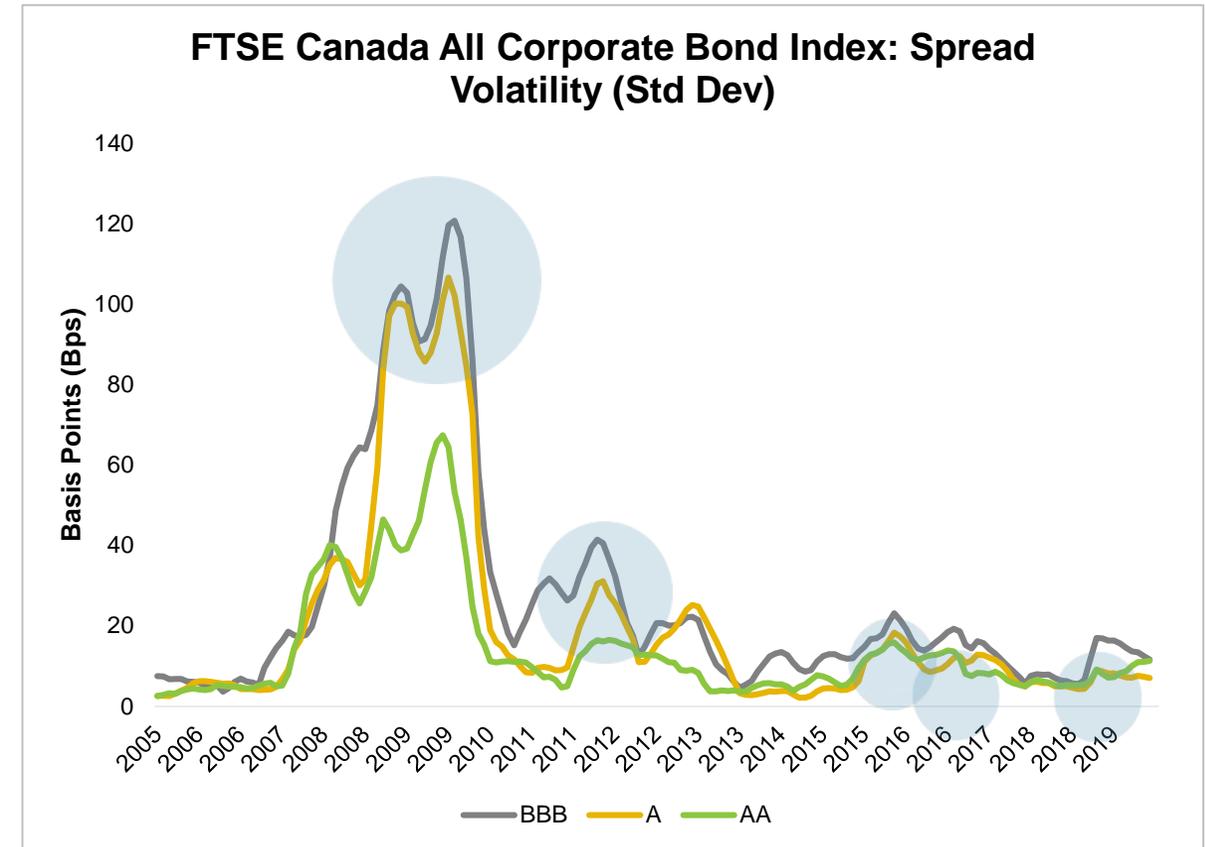
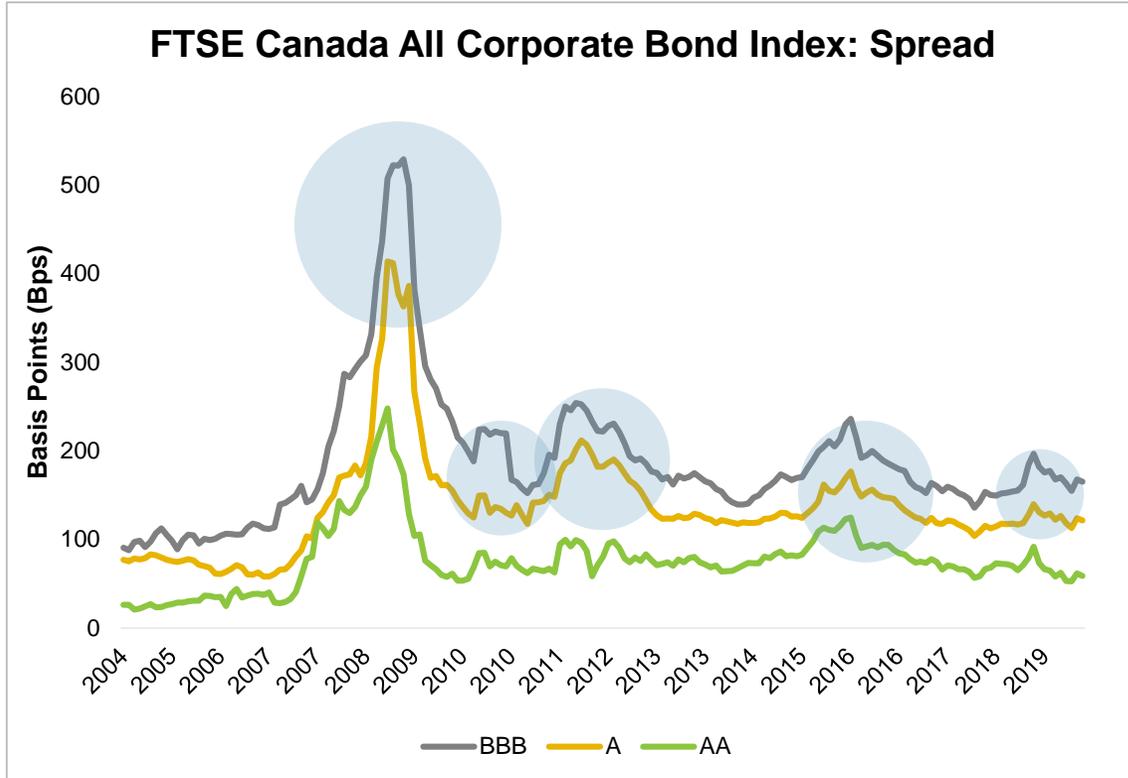
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Corporate Sector: Characteristics



Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of August 2019.

Magnitude and Frequency of Spread Increases



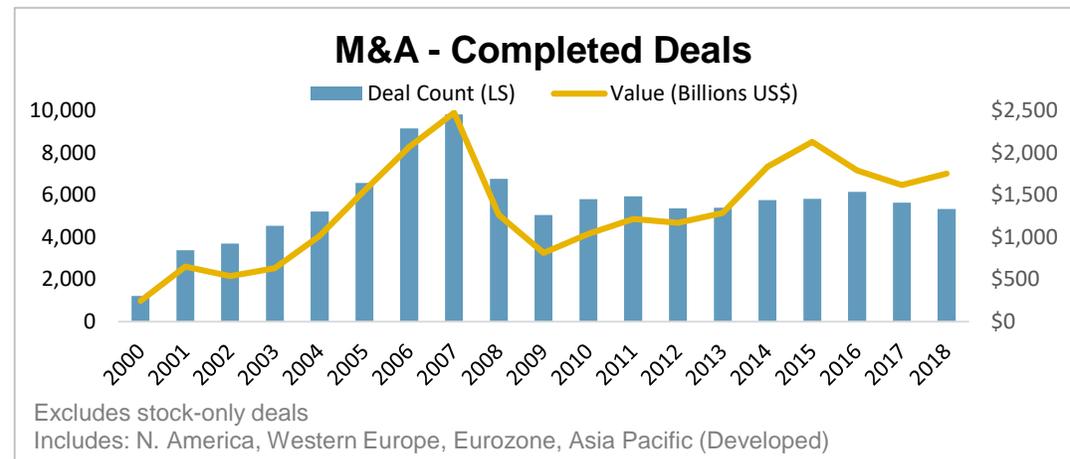
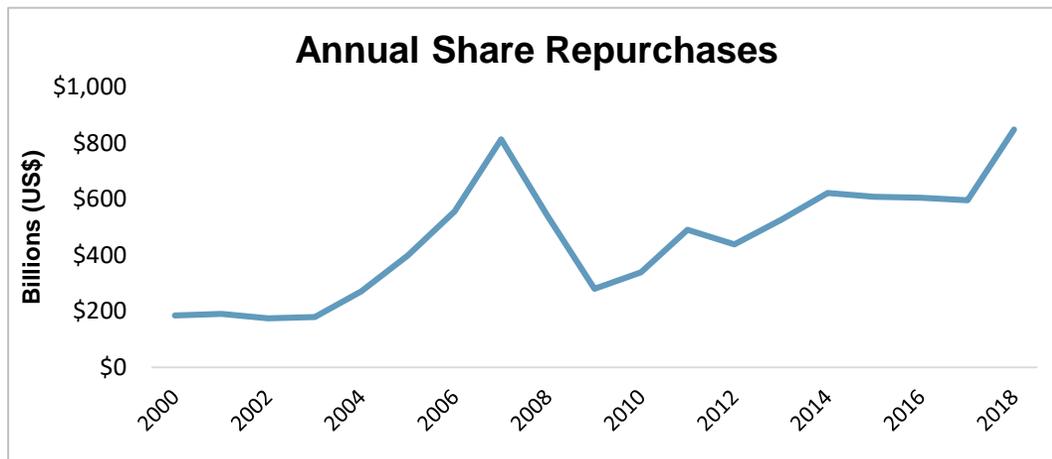
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

Fundamental Analysis

Investment Implications
in the Corporate Space

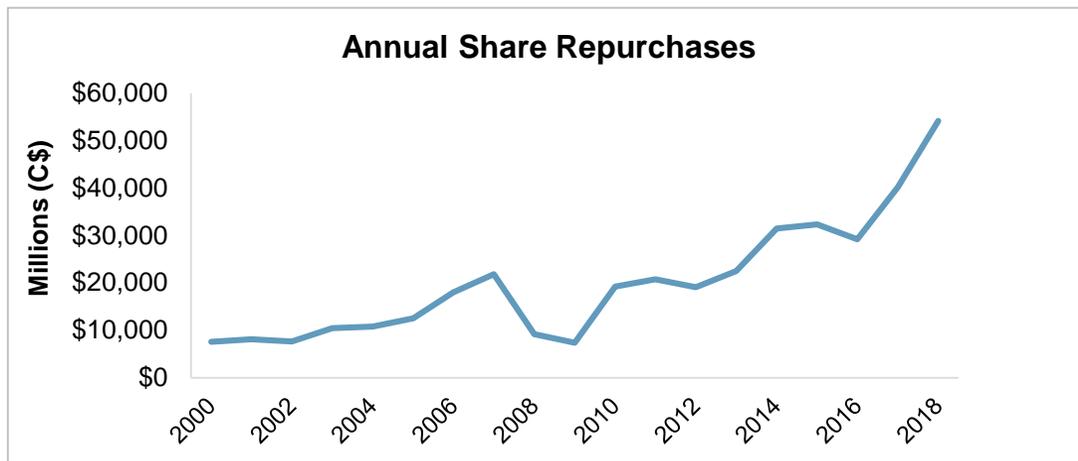
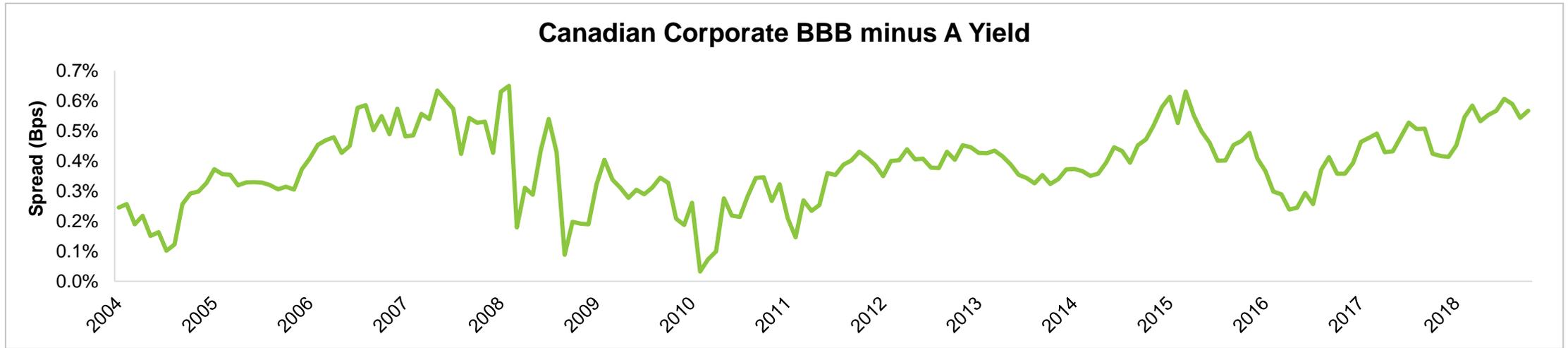


What is Driving the Increase in BBBs



Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of July 2019.

What is Driving the Increase in BBBs



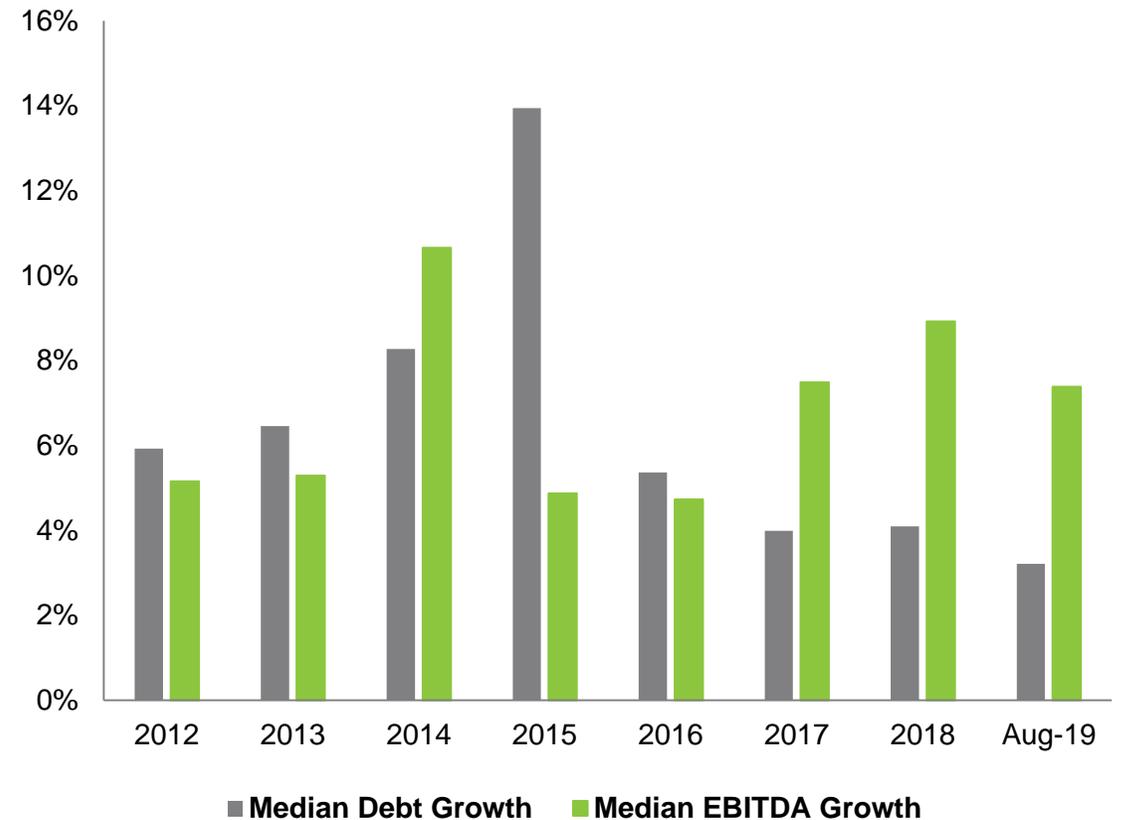
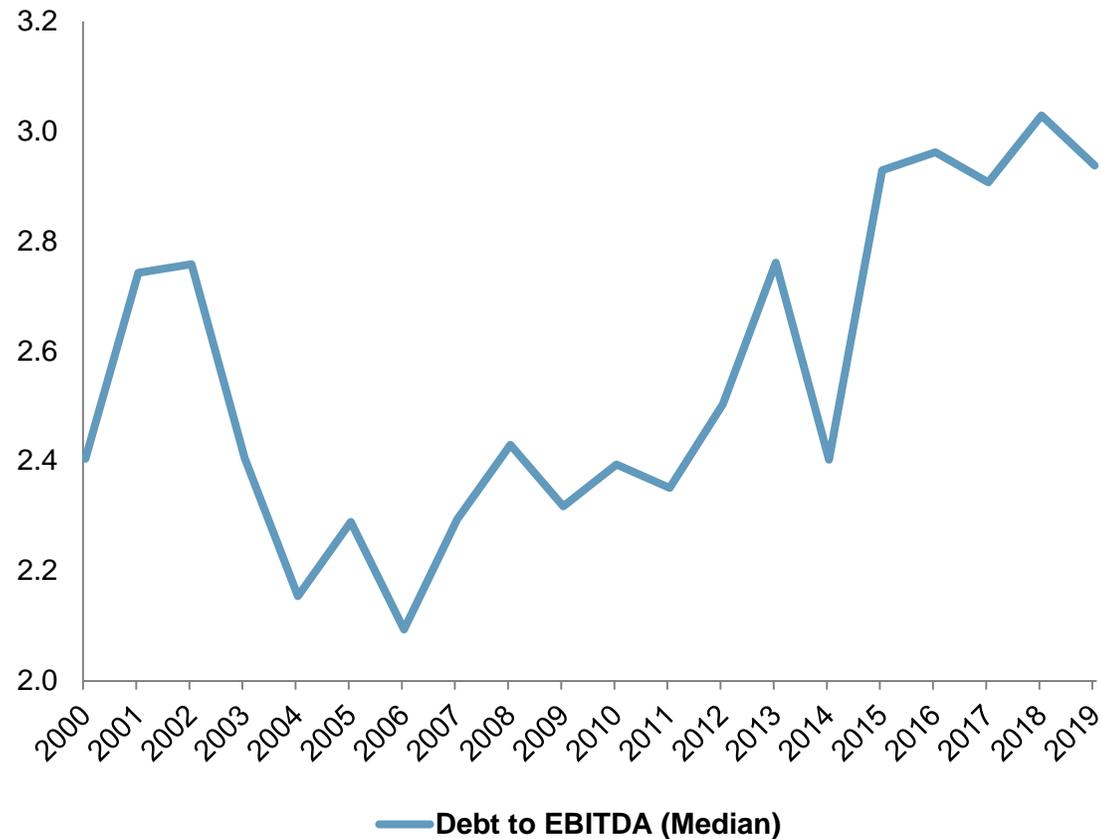
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of August 2019.

Debt to EBITDA: Threshold Changing

Debt to EBITDA (Adj.)													
Rating	10 Year Change	5 Year Change	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
AAA	+0.1	+0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2
AA	+1.0	+0.9	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	1.1	1.3
A	+0.5	+0.4	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.5
BBB	+0.7	+0.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.4
BB	+0.7	+0.5	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.2
B	+2.0	+2.2	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.8	4.2	4.9	5.2	5.6

Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data through fiscal year 2017.

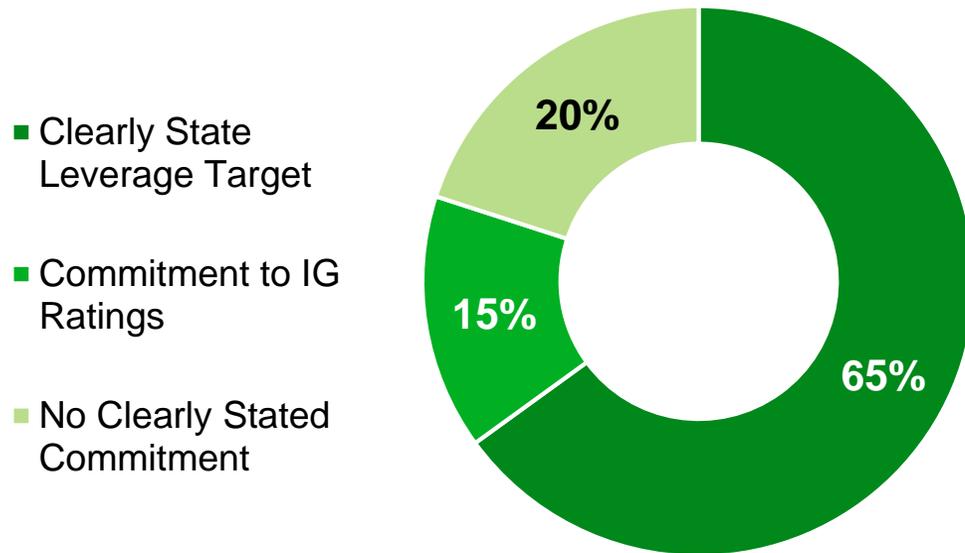
Fundamental Analysis Demonstrates that Leverage is High but Improving



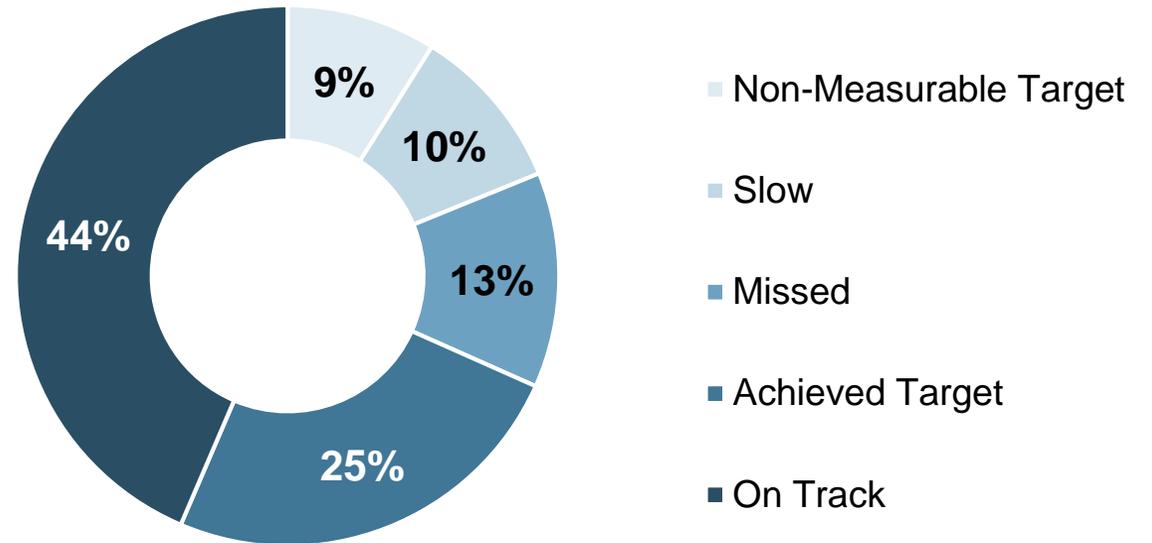
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of August 2019.

Clear Deleveraging Commitment Among Majority of BBB Issuers

80% of the top 100 issuers are committed to retaining IG rating



De-leveraging progress broadly on track



Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of August 2019.

Ongoing Risk Assessments

Risks to Fundamentals



Macroeconomic Risk



- Ability and/or commitment to de-lever declines among many BBB issuers
- Ratings downgrade pressure on any large BBBs
- Large increase in BBB supply
- Higher spread widening than fundamentals warrant
 - Slowdown or recession

Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of August 2019.

Identifying Opportunities As They Arise

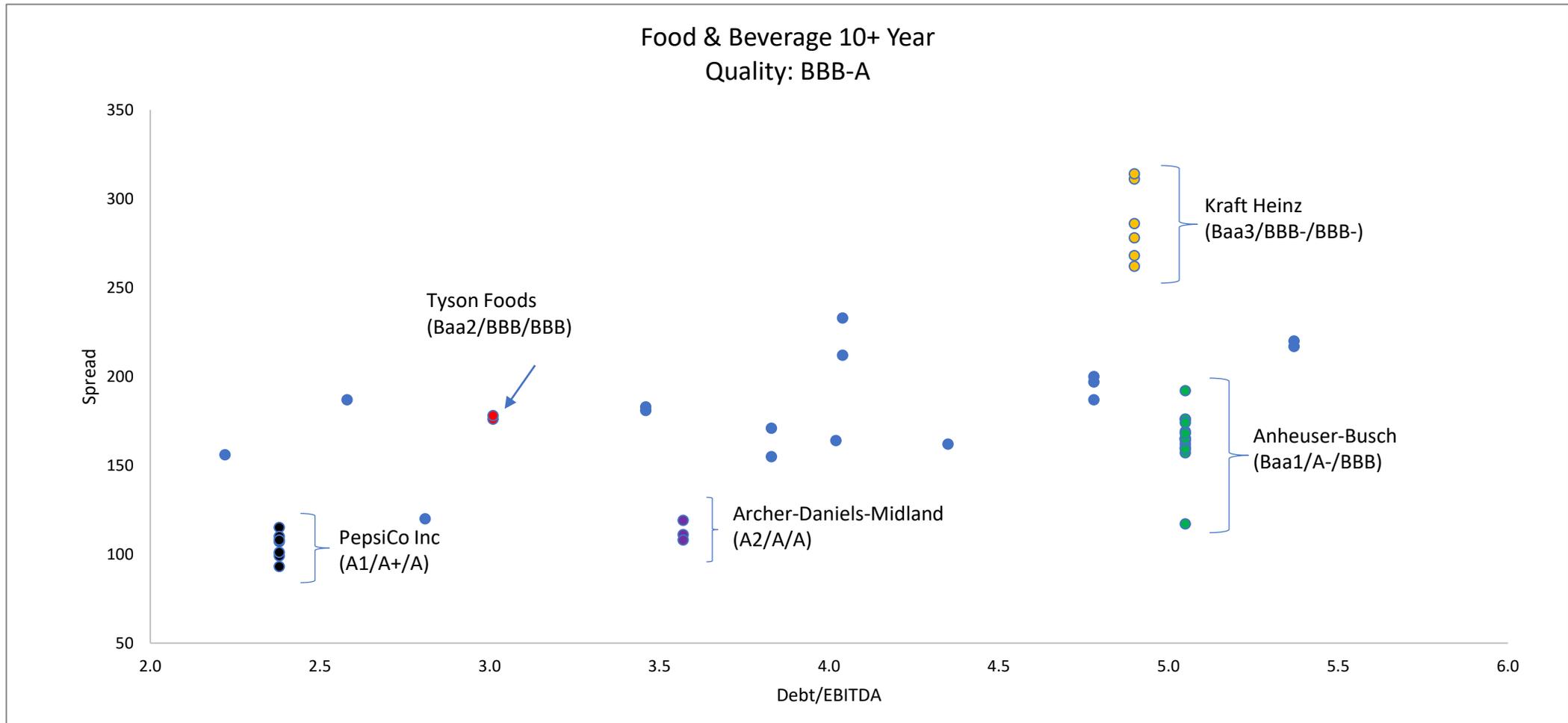


Ratings Migration: Top 50 Corporate Issuers (December 2000 to July 2019)

Company Name	% Mkt Value YE 2000	Year End 2000	Year End 2010	July 2019	Company Name	% Mkt Value YE 2000	Year End 2000	Year End 2010	July 2019
Ford Motor Co	4.46	A	CCC	BBB	Raytheon Company	0.76	BBB	A	A
Citigroup Inc	3.42	AA	A	A	Altria Group Inc	0.71	A	BBB	BBB
General Electric Co	1.90	AAA	AA	BBB	FleetBoston Financial Corp	0.69	A	Acquired	
Bank of America Corp	1.90	A	A	A	Chase Manhattan Corp	0.67	A	Acquired	
General Motors Acceptance Corp	1.80	A	Bankrupt		Bear Stearns Co	0.65	A	Bankrupt	
AT&T Inc	1.76	A	A	BBB	BellSouth LLC	0.64	AA	Acquired	
Verizon Communications Inc	1.34	A	A	BBB	International Business Machine	0.58	A	A	A
Household Finance	1.30	A	Acquired		News America Inc	0.57	BBB	Acquired	
Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc	1.24	A	Bankrupt		Dominion Energy Inc	0.55	A	BBB	A
Wells Fargo & Co	1.19	AA	AA	A	Viacom Inc	0.50	BBB	BBB	BBB
Merrill Lynch & Co Inc	1.16	AA	Acquired		Unilever PLC	0.50	A	A	A
Daimler Chrysler	1.14	A	Chrysler Bankrupt		Coca-Cola Enterprises	0.49	A	Acquired	BBB
WorldCom Inc - WorldCom Group	1.11	A	Bankrupt		Boeing Co/The	0.49	A	A	A
Time Warner Inc	1.10	BBB	BBB	Acquired	Goldman Sachs Group Inc/The	0.48	A	A	A
Morgan Stanley	1.06	AA	A	A	Phillips Petroleum	0.47	BBB	Acquired	
Banc One Corp	1.04	A	Acquired		BP PLC	0.47	AA	A	A
First Union Corp	0.96	A	Acquired		JPMorgan Chase & Co	0.46	A	AA	A
Qwest Communications Intl	0.92	BBB	BBB	Acquired	Kroger Co/The	0.46	BBB	BBB	BBB
CIT Group Inc	0.90	A	Bankrupt		Norfolk Southern Corp	0.45	BBB	BBB	BBB
Walmart Inc	0.86	AA	AA	AA	Burlington Northern Santa Fe	0.45	BBB	Acquired	
SBC Communications Inc	0.82	AA	Acquired		Equity Office Properties Trust	0.45	BBB	Acquired	
Deutsche Telekom	0.80	A	BBB	BBB	Sears Roebuck Co	0.45	A	BB	
Lockheed Martin Corp	0.80	BBB	A	A	Texas Utilities	0.45	BBB	CCC	
British Telecommunications PLC	0.77	A	BBB	BBB	Procter & Gamble Co/The	0.44	AA	AA	AA
Sprint Communications Inc	0.76	BBB	BB	B	Telefonica Europe	0.43	A	A	BBB

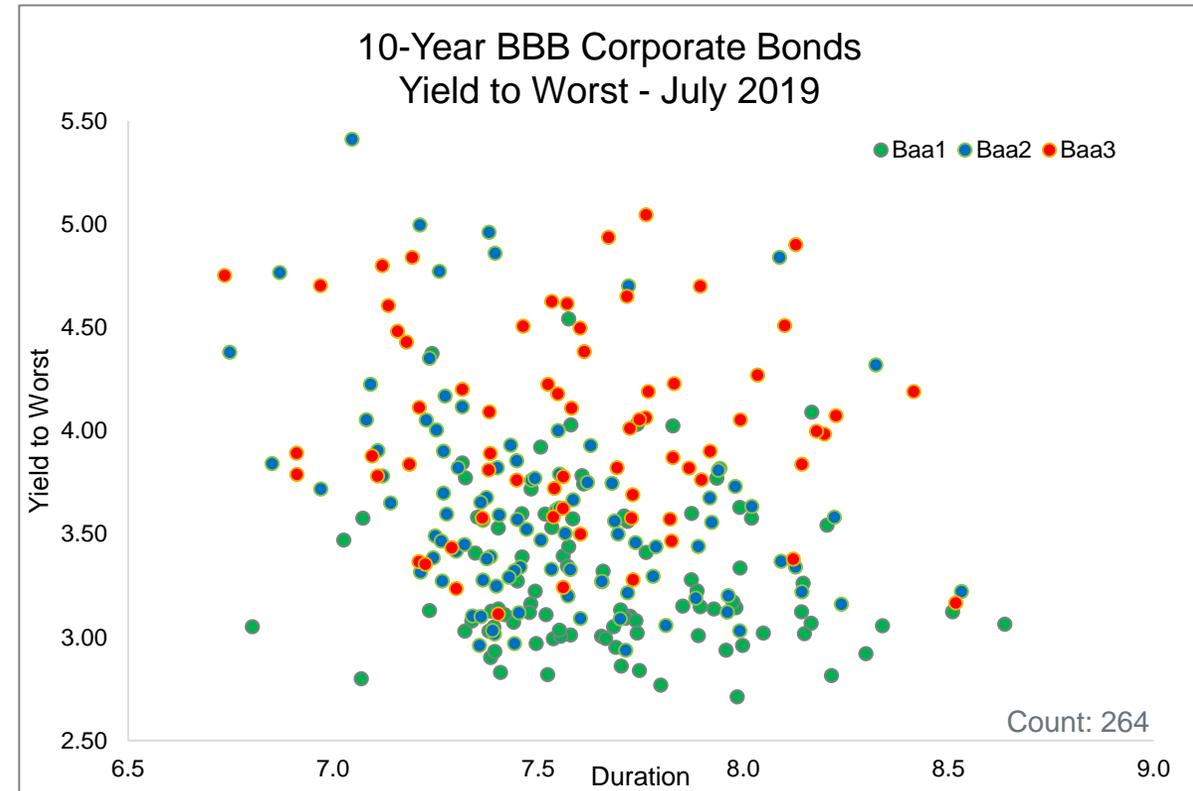
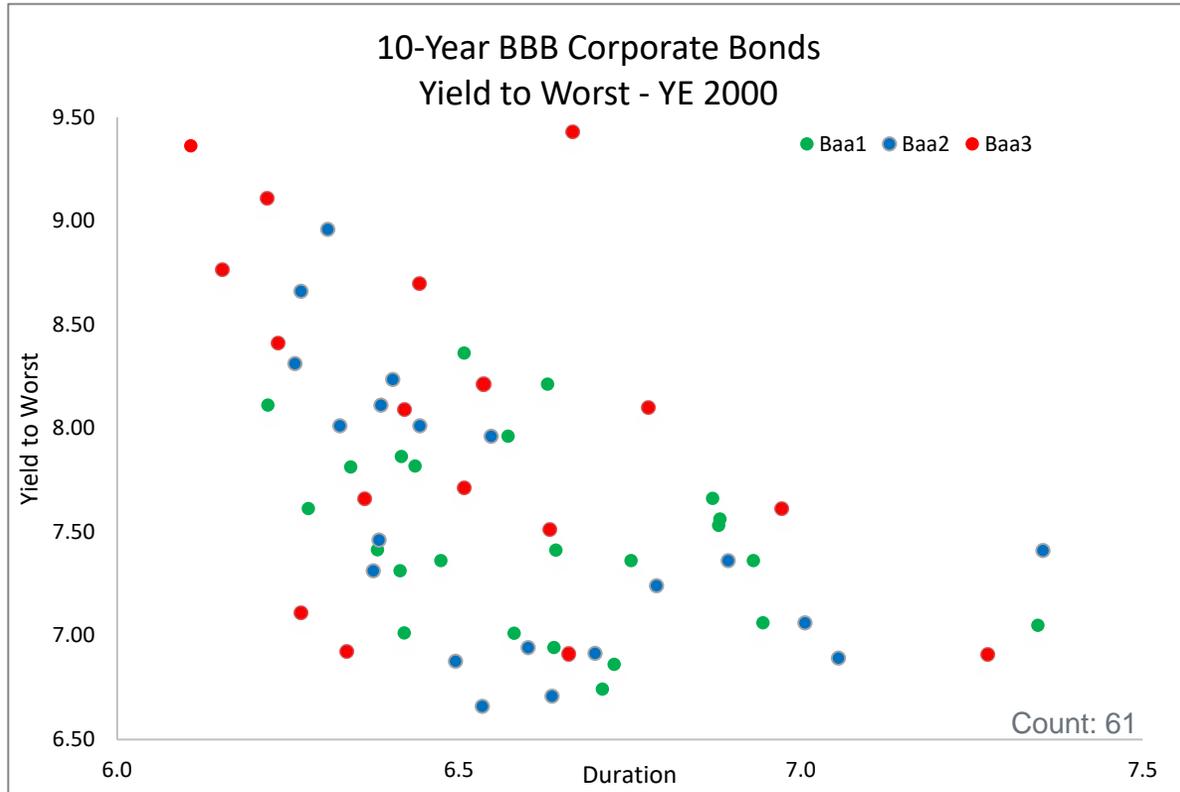
Source: TD Asset Management, ICE BofAML US Corporate Index.

Leverage and Ratings: Large Differences Within the Same Sector



Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of September 2019.

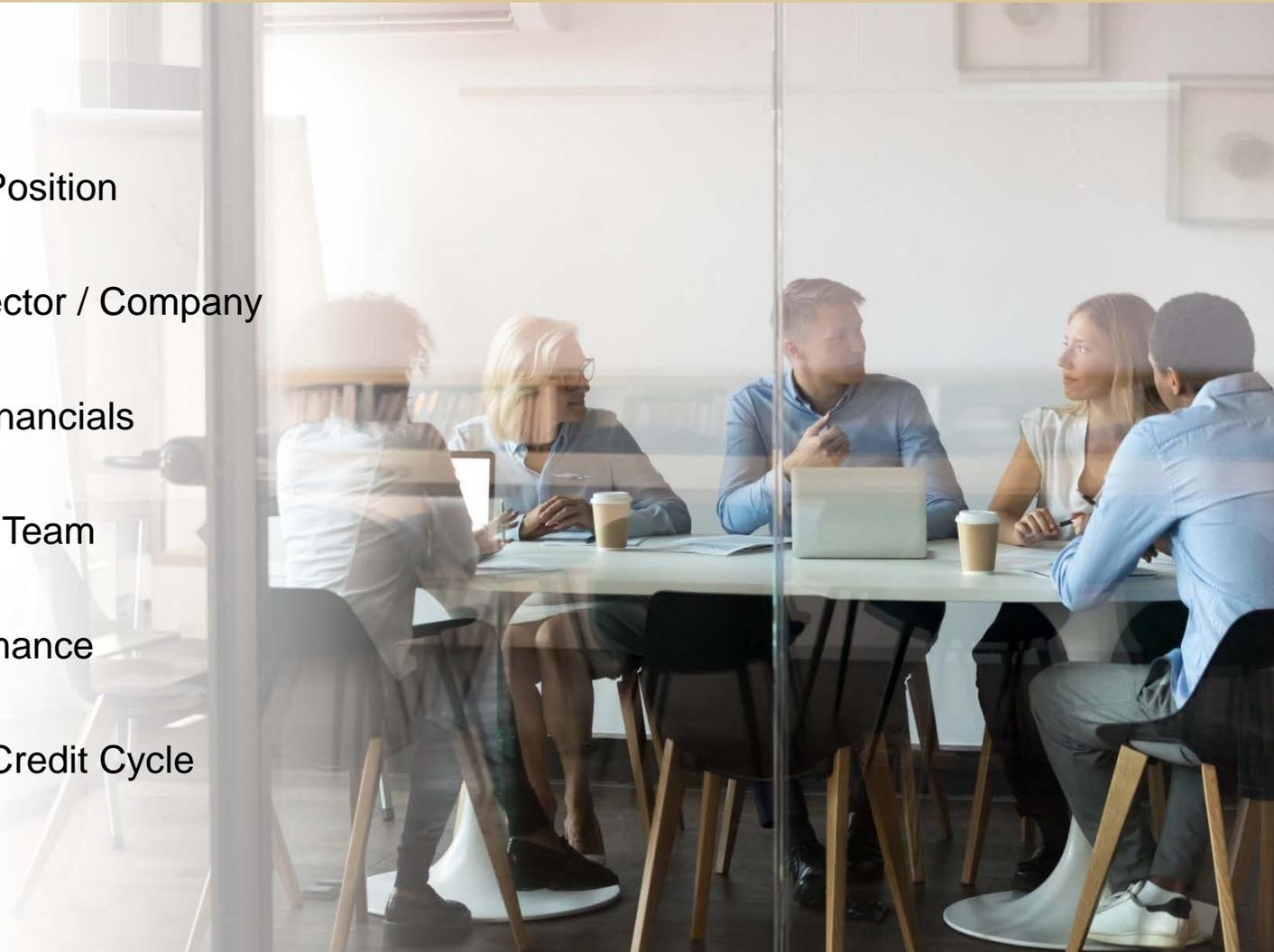
BBB Sector: More Issuers, Less Yield



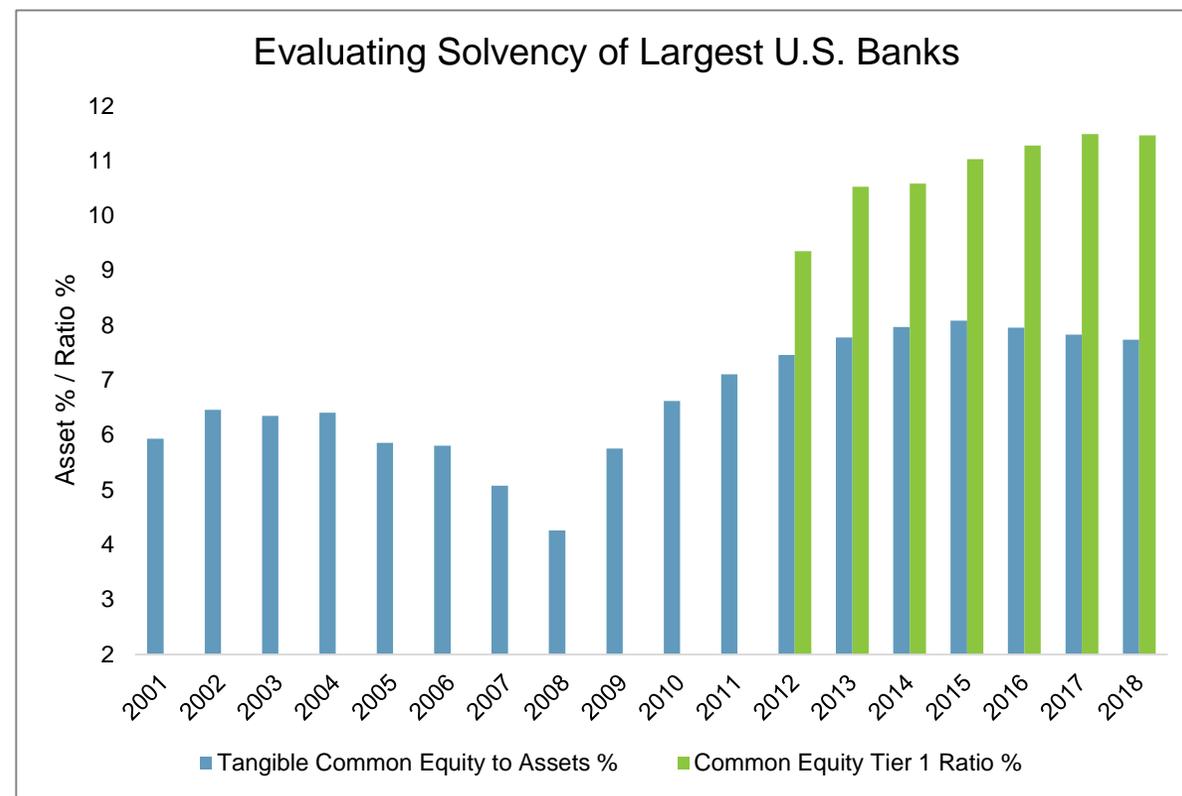
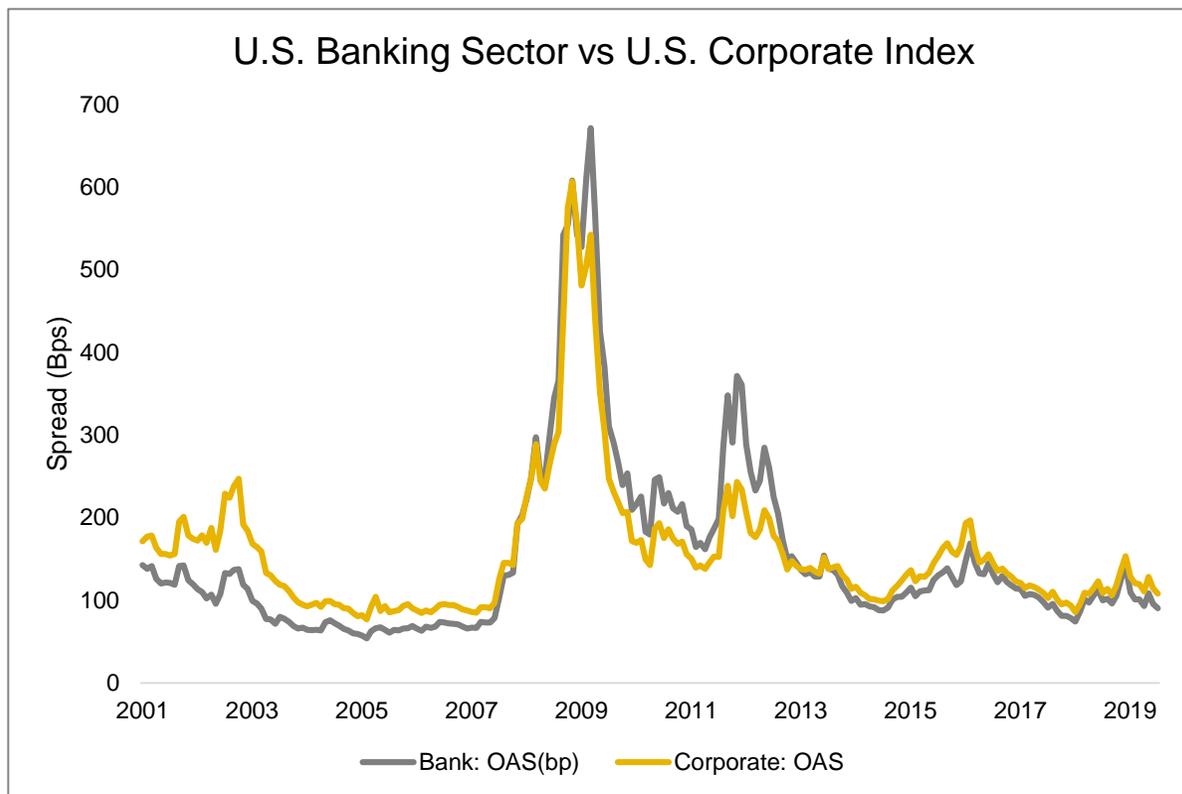
Source: TD Asset Management, Bloomberg Finance L.P. Data as of August 2019.

Credit Drivers: Portfolio Manager Assessment

- Leverage
- Credit Metrics
- Quality
- Rank in Capital Structure
- Valuation
- Regulation
- Industry
- Covenant Review
- Product Mix
- Competitive Position
- Stability of Sector / Company
- Volatility of Financials
- Management Team
- Asset Performance
- Stage of the Credit Cycle



Credit Drivers: Regulation and the Banking Sector



Source: Bloomberg Barclay's Index and represents USD bonds. As of July 2019.

Evolution of the Corporate Bond Market

What does this mean for
investors?



"Big Picture" Implications for Investors

- Assess various sources of risk and determine appropriate risk posture, both long-term and short-term
- Select investment universe and benchmark based on investment objectives and risk... or consider a benchmark-agnostic approach
- Credit research is more critical than ever
- Consider alternatives or supplements to corporate bonds
- Be nimble



Practical Implications for U.S. Pensions

	SINGLE-EMPLOYER (CORPORATE) PENSIONS	TAFT-HARTLEY AND PUBLIC PENSIONS
Corporate bond market is bigger than ever	Understand relationship between the entire investment grade market and the AA discount rate	Evaluate risk, return, diversification, and liquidity vs. other assets in the portfolio
Corporate bond yields are lower and durations are longer	Ensure that fixed income duration matches the liability hedge target and total portfolio yield is similar to (or greater than) the liability yield	Yield/duration trade-off is less attractive, but longer duration helps diversify equity exposure
The BBB space is growing	Do not paint all BBB's with the same brush Potentially cap, but don't avoid, BBB exposure	
The universe is concentrated but diverse	Diversification is critical Apply active management to avoid defaults and downgrades (and potentially add additional value through credit selection)	

Practical Implications for U.S. Insurance

Corporate bond market is bigger than ever

Evaluate implications of changing NAIC risk-based capital charges

Corporate bond yields are lower and durations are longer

Ensure that fixed income duration matches the expected loss profile
Given book yield focus, may need to reach for yield but be mindful of risk

The BBB space is growing

Do not paint all BBB's with the same brush
Evaluate BBB exposure in light of changing NAIC risk-based capital charges

The universe is broad but concentrated

Diversification is critical
Apply active management to mitigate defaults and downgrades (and potentially select bonds with highest risk-adjusted yield)

Supplements, Not Alternatives, to Corporate Bonds

	PROFILE	PENSION	INSURANCE
High quality securitized assets	Generally low duration Potentially higher yield than A or AA corporates	Limited use, some long-duration CMBS	High use by P/C, limited use by life companies NAIC-1
BB-rated high yield and bank loans	Potential replacement for lower BBB, upgrade potential	Generate higher yield Not a duration hedge	Yield, but NAIC-3
Investment grade private credit	Various durations Higher yield due to lower liquidity	Generate yield, match cashflows Is a duration hedge	Yield NAIC-1 or NAIC-2
Private credit lockup vehicle	Illiquid , 6+ year lock-up Potentially much higher yield	Generate yield, match cashflows Not a duration hedge	Yield Schedule BA asset

This is an illustrative description of the asset classes presented and their applications to pensions and insurance; actual description and application will depend on the specific security and investment strategy.

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