

CREDIT RISK MONITOR



Pain delayed?

Credit quality in aggregate has mostly held up due to the impact of high nominal growth and COVID-era consumer savings on corporate revenues, with default rates yet to show a meaningful rise this side of the debt maturity wall. Nonetheless, traditional indicators of a deteriorating credit cycle – an inverted yield curve, tighter lending standards, and elevated debt levels – remain. Notable in the third quarter was the sharp rise in real rates which, alongside a fresh tightening in financial conditions, is likely to weigh on credit.



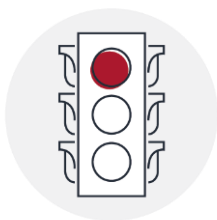
Jim Cielinski, CFA
Global Head of Fixed
Income

Longer term predictors still flashing red

Debt servicing costs have risen with higher yields and may remain elevated given the looming maturity wall and prospect of higher-for-longer policy rates.

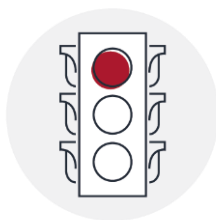
Stronger, larger companies can access capital, but at a higher price. Smaller companies reliant on bank lending are finding it tougher.

The earnings rebound post COVID is now (with some exceptions) being challenged by weaker nominal growth and the incremental rise in financing costs.



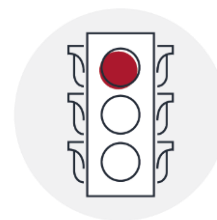
HIGH DEBT LOADS

Key metrics: interest cover, leverage
Prognosis: stock of debt high; refinancing costs higher



RESTRICTED CAPITAL ACCESS

Key metrics: liquidity cycle, real borrowing costs
Prognosis: liquidity withdrawal amid QT and tighter lending standards



EXOGENOUS SHOCK TO CASH FLOW

Key metrics: earnings, earnings revisions
Prognosis: earnings growth weakening

Note: Our traffic lights represent historically reliable predictors of credit cycles on a medium- to long-term basis. They indicate the direction of the cycle. They do not predict the precise timing, shape or magnitude of a turn in the cycle. Our Credit Risk Monitor is not designed around valuations and is not intended to be used as a market-timing tool.

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The value of an investment and the income from it can fall as well as rise and you may not get back the amount originally invested.

Sharp rise in real yields as market dialogue shifts to supply-demand imbalances

- Rates rose sharply in the third quarter as investors focused on G7 budget deficits and supply-demand imbalances creeping into fixed income markets, driving term premia higher.
- A reset in policy rate expectations to a “higher for longer” mentality upended markets. Inflation has peaked (except in Japan), but targets of 2% are still a long way away.
- The staggering rise in real yields has helped push the real cost of borrowing higher than it has been for a decade. This is a negative for economic growth and credit creation.

Access to capital – a mixed picture

- Large companies still appear able to borrow with ease. Large cash balances prevented net interest payments climbing at first, but each refinancing comes at a premium. The rise in borrowing costs is set to be felt more heavily in the coming quarters. This could impair finances and credit quality quickly if revenue growth stumbles.
- Small and medium enterprises – those relying on the banking system – are more exposed to higher costs, particularly as more leveraged borrowers have been turning to floating rate loans.
- High yield issuers have been met with decent appetite for bonds, but this could rapidly fade if the ‘soft landing’ narrative falters, given a heavy refinancing calendar in coming quarters.

Issuer fundamentals – generally okay but areas of credit stress evident

- We expect default rates to climb but remain relatively low for the next 12 months. Issuers came into the slowdown with strong fundamentals and many companies have termed out their debt.
- That said, higher borrowing costs typically lead to defaults (with a lag) and areas of stress are emerging. Europe is experiencing a weaker economic environment, partially offset by a higher quality high yield market.

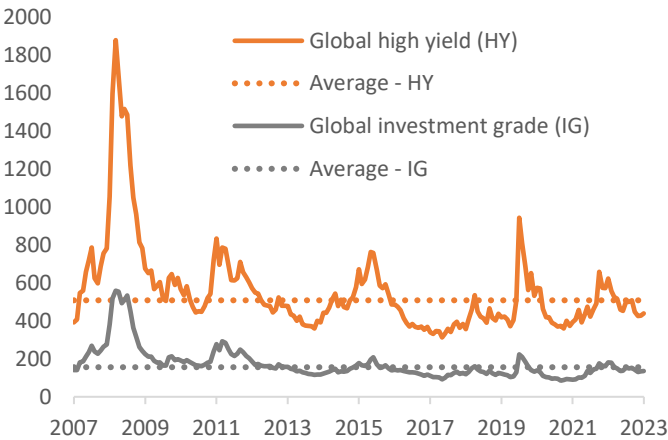
An unusual cycle – and why we remain cautious

- Leading indicators pointing to a recession (the Conference Board Leading Index, for example, indicates a recession should have already started) have been somewhat blindsided by consumer strength, the disconnect between nominal and real growth, and easy fiscal policy.
- Nonetheless, we think the market narrative could shift quite quickly given the sharply higher rates and the lagged effect of cumulative tightening means (two years on from initial tightening) we are entering a high-risk period. We continue to be cautious around security selection in portfolios.

Valuations

Quality-adjusted spreads (bps) tighten

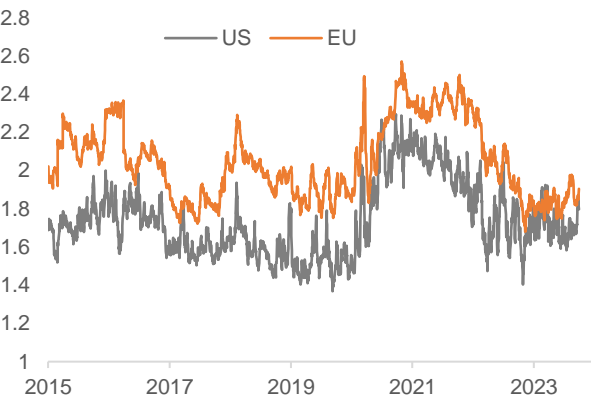
Credit spreads are below long-term averages on ratings-adjusted basis



Source: Bloomberg indices as at 30 September 2023. Option-adjusted spreads (OAS) shown. Average is over the last 20 years. See Important Information for full information on underlying indices. **Past performance does not predict future returns.**

High yield vs investment grade (spread ratio) rangebound

A lower BB/BBB ratio could indicate worse value in BB-rated bonds compared to BBB-rated bonds. The ratios ended the quarter slightly up.

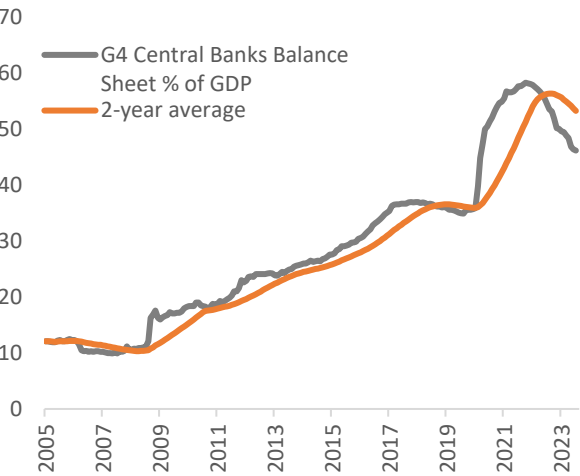


Source: ICE BofA corporate bond indices as at 30 September 2023. The spread ratio is calculated by dividing the BB spread by BBB spread. See Important Information for full information on underlying indices.

Cycle indicators

Central bank liquidity (% GDP) falls

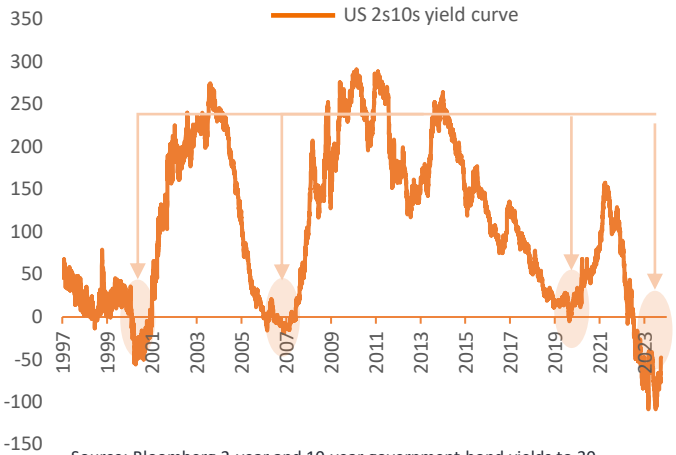
G4 central bank balance sheets fall below the 2-year average.



Source: Janus Henderson Investors as at 30 September 2023.

2s 10s yield curve slope flattens (bps)

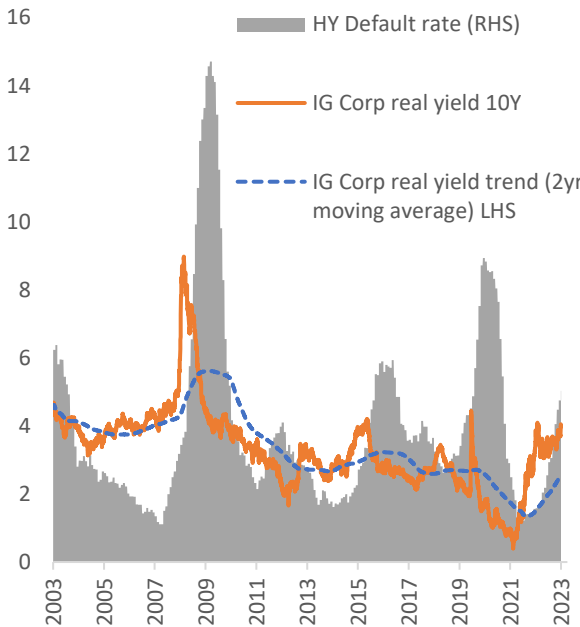
The yield curve slope remains in negative territory, indicating ongoing recession risk.



Source: Bloomberg 2-year and 10-year government bond yields to 30 September 2023. Past performance does not predict future returns.

Real rates (%) spike higher

Sharp moves higher in real yields tend to lead a default cycle.

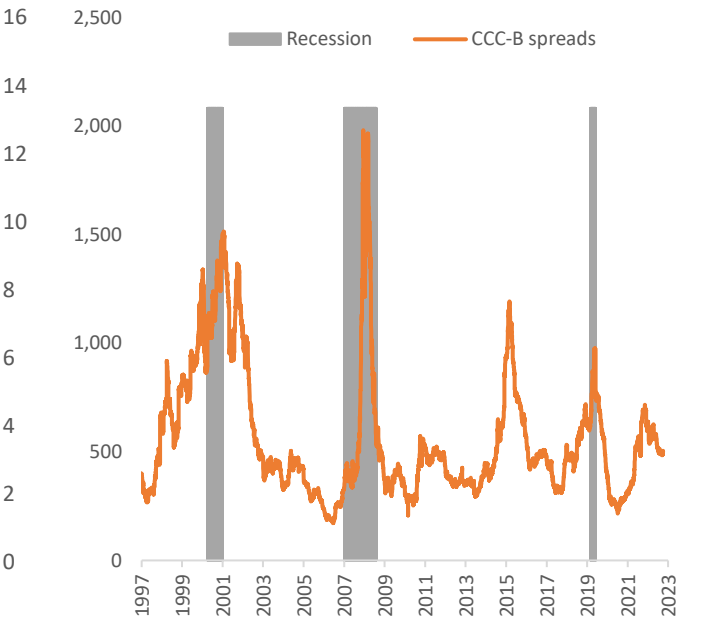


Source: Janus Henderson calculations, Bloomberg, Moody's, as at 30 September 2023. HY = high yield, IG = investment grade. Note: There is no guarantee that past trends will continue, or forecasts will be realised. The views are subject to change without notice. See Important Information for full information on underlying indices.

Past performance does not predict future returns.

CCC v B spreads differential (bps) falls

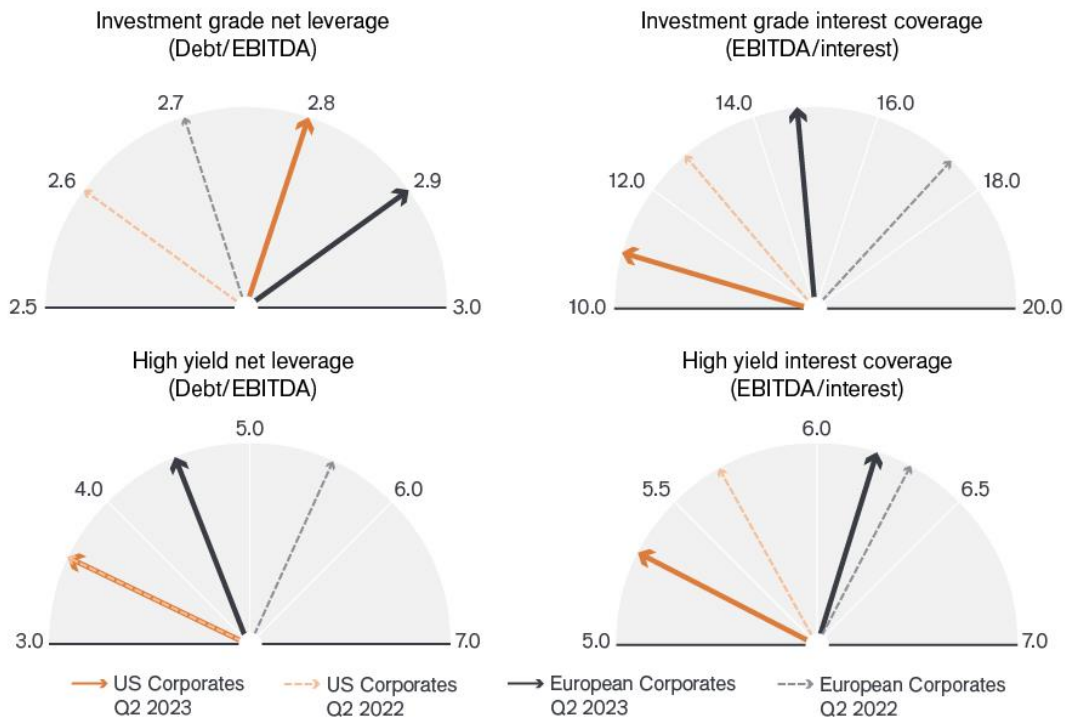
Weaker performance trends in lower quality (CCC) is a warning sign of stress – this is shown by periods where the orange line rises sharply from low levels. The recent fall in the US slowed in Q3.



Source ICE BofA US High Yield CCC and ICE BofA US High Yield B spread-to-worst shown. Data as at 30 September 2023.

Issuer fundamentals show mild weakening

Median interest coverage has edged lower across the board (US and Europe; IG and HY). Notably, interest cover in the US CCC-rated segment has declined to 2.15x as at Q2 2023 from 2.87x in Q2 2022. Meanwhile, Moody's data, as at 31 August 2023, shows the global corporate trailing 12-month (TTM) default rates for speculative grade issuers has risen in aggregate to 4.3% from 3.8% a year earlier.



Source: JPMorgan. Net leverage and interest coverage is as at Q2 2023, except for European HY which reflects Q4 2022, the latest available complete data at 30 September 2023. Data is subject to change.

Earnings growth (%) weakness expected to broaden

Year-on-year earnings per share growth revisions were mixed in developed markets, with the UK the laggard, while emerging markets were generally weaker.

Region	22F	23F	24F	Revisions on '23 forecasts since last Quarter
Global	10	0	11	↓
Developed	10	1	10	↓
US	6	2	12	↑
Eurozone	20	4	7	↑
UK	29	-12	5	↓
Japan	3	13	7	↑
Emerging	6	-4	19	↓
China	2	16	16	↓

Source: Refinitiv Datastream data, 30 September 2023. 2022, 2023 and 2024 data are estimates. There is no guarantee that past trends will continue, or forecasts will be realised. The views are subject to change without notice. Past performance does not predict future returns.

“Each cycle is different, but when you have a lot of debt, when you have companies losing access to capital at a reasonable price, and when you then get some type of exogenous shock on top of that – that tells you that a credit cycle is likely to unfold in a negative way.”

Jim Cielinski
Global Head of Fixed Income

Important information

Page	Data sources (supplementary information)
2	Quality-adjusted spreads (%):
	Global IG = ICE BofA Global Corporate Index data used
	Global HY = ICE BofA Global High Yield Index data used
	High yield vs investment grade (spread ratio)
	US ratio : ICE BofA BB US High Yield Index / ICE BofA BBB US Corporate Index
	Euro ratio: ICE BofA BB Euro High Yield Index / ICE BofA BBB Euro Corporate Index
3	Bloomberg: G4 Balance sheet as a % of GDP (BSPGCPG4 Index)
	Bloomberg: 10- year minus 2-year US government bond yields
	Bloomberg: US 10-year generic real yield and 7-10yr BBB Corporate spread
	ICE BofA Single-B US High Yield Index and ICE BofA CCC & Lower US High Yield Index
4	Earnings growth (%)
	Global earnings = MSCI AC World Index
	Developed earnings = MSCI World Index
	US earnings = The MSCI USA Index
	Eurozone earnings = The MSCI EMU Index (European Economic and Monetary Union)
	UK earnings = MSCI United Kingdom Index
	Japan earnings = TOPIX Index
	China earnings = MSCI China Index

Glossary

Balance Sheet	A financial statement that summarises a company's assets, liabilities and shareholders' equity at a particular point in time. Each segment gives investors an idea as to what the company owns and owes, as well as the amount invested by shareholders. It is called a balance sheet because of the accounting equation: assets = liabilities + shareholders' equity.
Volatility	The rate and extent at which the price of a portfolio, security or index, moves up and down. If the price swings up and down with large movements, it has high volatility. If the price moves more slowly and to a lesser extent, it has lower volatility. Higher volatility means the higher the risk of the investment.
High-yield or "junk" bonds	Involve a greater risk of default and price volatility and can experience sudden and sharp price swings.
Credit Spread	The difference in yield between securities with similar maturity but different credit quality. Widening spreads generally indicate deteriorating creditworthiness of corporate borrowers, and narrowing indicate improving.
A yield curve	Plots the yields (interest rate) of bonds with equal credit quality but differing maturity dates. Typically bonds with longer maturities have higher yields.
Basis point (bp)	Equals 1/100 of a percentage point. 1 bp = 0.01%, 100 bps = 1%.

Important information

Janus Henderson
INVESTORS

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