

ROBECO HIGH YIELD SOLUTIONS

# Six ways to build high yield exposure

- High yield bonds are diversifiers in a fixed income portfolio
- Current valuations in high yield provide an attractive entry point
- Robeco offers a suite of high yield solutions that meet a range of objectives

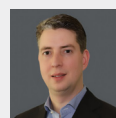
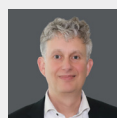
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### INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

Marketing material for professional investors, not for onward distribution.

From left to right: Sander Bus, Portfolio Manager; Patrick Houweling, Portfolio Manager; Ralph Berkien, Client Portfolio Manager; Joop Kohler, Client Portfolio Manager



# Why invest in high yield bonds – and why now?

## Why invest in high yield bonds?

High yield bonds provide clear diversification benefits in a fixed income portfolio. This asset class tends to have a lower duration than the global bond universe, which means it is less sensitive to changes in the interest rate environment.

It also tends to offer higher income than the overall universe, because high yield bonds typically have wider spreads than their investment grade counterparts. Importantly, these higher spreads mean that should bond prices decline, this would be offset by an attractive carry. In fact, this is borne out by historical data that shows how unusual it is for negative total returns to persist in this asset class for multiple years.

Although the high yield asset class is inclined to be more volatile – and therefore riskier – than most other fixed income asset classes, a carefully managed approach to this risk could result in favorable return outcomes. In particular, a conservative and quality-based fundamental approach to high yield, as well as quantitative, factor-based methodologies, are suitable approaches.

Furthermore, asset owners wanting to reduce their overall portfolio risk without necessarily sacrificing returns could trim their equity holdings in favor of high yield bonds.

## Why now?

Over the course of 2022, high yield spreads widened to more attractive levels. Even more compelling is the current yield of the various high yield markets: at a range of between 7% and 8%, they are very attractive from a long-term perspective. These features imply not only that the asset class has a decent buffer to protect investors against rate volatility, but also that it has a higher probability of generating positive (annualized) total returns over the next three to five years.

## Heightened market volatility

With inflation at levels last seen in the 1970s and 80s, central banks are scrambling to end the super stimulus that has been supporting markets over the last decade. In such an environment, it will once again be a necessity for markets to distinguish between good and bad credit. The unwinding of supportive policies combined with elevated geopolitical risk is likely to result in heightened market volatility and risk premiums.

To outperform in this market, credit investors will need the skills and experience to identify which companies are best placed to do well.

Investors who are concerned about the impact of rising rates on performance could look for opportunities in lower-duration credit asset classes, like high yield. While higher expected volatility is a factor, our view is that investors are increasingly being compensated for this as spreads move closer to their long-term averages.

## Sound fundamentals in the sector

Fundamentals in the high yield asset class are sound, including trends in corporate profitability and credit metrics for most issuers in the category. Default rates are still low and, with years of abundant liquidity in the sector, debt refinancing is not an imminent threat. It will take a while before the average cost of debt increases for the higher-quality high yield companies. For highly leveraged, cyclical businesses, time will tell if they are able to refinance at much higher coupons. We continue to prefer investing in businesses with the capacity to absorb higher inflation and rates.

Robeco's fundamental and quantitative credit teams are positioned to benefit in this market environment, with our sound bottom-up fundamental research, proven factor-based models, and our contrarian, conservative approach. These capabilities are expressed in our suite of high yield bond solutions.

# Why Robeco high yield bond solutions?

Robeco has a compelling track record and profile as a high yield investment manager, with almost EUR 10 billion in high yield assets under management.<sup>1</sup> The portfolio managers of our high yield strategies have decades of experience and are supported by a global team of analysts, quantitative researchers and sustainable investing specialists.

## A long history in fundamental and quantitative high yield investing

- Our fundamental high yield capability has a truly global track record that dates back to 1998
- Our quant high yield capability has its origins in 2005, when the factor-based credit-selection model was first used in the High Yield Bond strategy

## Stable portfolio management team

- Sander Bus and Roeland Moraal have managed the fundamental high yield team since 1998 and 2003, respectively
- Patrick Houweling, who is lead portfolio manager of Robeco's quantitative credit strategies, joined Robeco in 2003
- The lead portfolio managers are supported by a team of portfolio managers

## Large team of seasoned credit analysts and researchers

- The fundamental capability builds on a highly experienced and diverse analyst team, and follows a conservative and research-based approach with a preference for higher-quality bonds
- The quantitative high yield strategies rely on researchers with strong academic credentials, who use credit factors to identify bonds with attractive risk-adjusted returns

## Close collaboration between fundamental and quantitative investment teams

- The factor-based credit-selection model is used to provide relative-value insights for the fundamental high yield strategy
- Fundamental credit analysts are consulted by the quantitative team as part of their human oversight process to check the model findings for potential blind spots

## Substantial offering

- Robeco's assets under management in the high yield asset class totaled almost EUR 10 billion by the end of 2022

## Leaders in sustainable investing

- Various high yield strategies are managed on sustainability principles that range from ESG and sustainability integration to impact and have an Article 8 SFDR classification

1. At the end of 2022.

# A selection of six high yield solutions to meet investor objectives

## Robeco High Yield Bonds

Robeco High Yield Bonds is an actively managed strategy that invests globally in high yield corporate bonds. The selection of these bonds is based mainly on fundamental analysis. Its objective is to provide long-term capital growth and it invests in corporate bonds with a sub-investment grade rating, issued primarily by issuers from developed markets. The portfolio is broadly diversified, with a structural bias towards the higher-rated portion of the high yield market. Performance drivers are the top-down beta positioning as well as bottom-up issuer selection.

## Robeco European High Yield Bonds

This strategy follows a similar approach to the Robeco High Yield Bonds strategy, with a focus on the European high yield market. It has a successful track record dating back to 2005, and been managed by the same team since then. It is a broadly diversified portfolio with a structural bias towards the higher-rated portion of the high yield market. Top-down beta positioning and bottom-up issuer selection are the performance drivers.

## RobecoSAM SDG High Yield Bonds

This is an actively managed strategy which has the objective of providing long-term capital growth. It invests in high yield corporate bonds with a sub-investment grade rating, and has a structural bias to the higher-rated portion of the high yield market. It invests in global corporate bonds, including financials and emerging market issuers, with bond selection based on fundamental analysis. The portfolio invests in issuers that are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and have been screened by our internally developed SDG investing framework.

## Robeco QI Dynamic High Yield

Robeco QI Dynamic High Yield is an actively managed quant-based strategy that dynamically times its exposure to high yield. It uses Robeco's credit beta model to assess the outlook for high yield bonds and it adjusts the exposure accordingly. Instead of individual issuer selection, the strategy invests in two CDS index derivatives that give exposure to 175 high yield companies from the US and Europe. This results in well-diversified, highly liquid and low-cost high yield exposure with attractive risk-adjusted returns.

## Robeco QI Global Multi-Factor High Yield

Robeco QI Global Multi-Factor High Yield is an actively managed factor-based strategy that invests in high yield bonds with the objective of providing long-term capital growth. It offers balanced exposure to a number of proven factors by focusing on bonds with a low level of expected risk (the low-risk factor), high quality (the quality factor), an attractive valuation (value), a strong performance trend (momentum) and a small market value of debt (size). The investment universe includes bonds with BB, B, and CCC credit ratings.

## Robeco Sustainable Enhanced Index High Yield

Robeco's Sustainable Enhanced Index High Yield strategy aims to deliver high yield index-like returns and risk, after fees and transaction costs. This tackles the challenge that high yield managers, active as well as passive, face in outperforming the market because of obstacles such as high transaction costs and illiquidity in the high yield bond market. The strategy sets constraints on exposures to aspects such as sectors and ratings, and then applies factor-based bond selection within these dimensions to generate higher returns. In addition, the portfolio is constructed to be sustainable in terms of a range of metrics, such as ESG risk rating, carbon emissions and exclusions. In short, the strategy delivers 'sustainable beta'.



# Characteristics of Robeco's high yield bond strategies

	High Yield Bonds (Global)	European High Yield Bonds	SDG High Yield Bonds	Dynamic High Yield	Global Multi-Factor High Yield	Sustainable Enhanced Index High Yield
Focus	Unconstrained investing	Unconstrained investing	Sustainable Development	Dynamic market timing	Harvesting factor premiums	Market-like returns with low tracking error and improved sustainability
Sustainability	ESG integration to provide downside protection, engagement on controversial behavior	ESG integration to provide downside protection, engagement on controversial behavior	Contribution to the 17 SDGs by screening the investable universe on alignment with the SDGs	No sustainability focus	Exclusions, human and model-based ESG integration, carbon, waste and water footprint reduction, engagement	Delivering sustainable beta. Highly customizable.
Universe	Global High Yield ex Financials, ex EM (I20727 Index)	Pan-Euro High Yield ex Financials (I20718 Index)	Global High Yield (I23509 Index)	High Yield CDS indices	Global High Yield ex Financials (I27954 Index)	Global High Yield Corporates
Sector diversification	***	***	**	***	***	****
Tracking error	***	**	***	****	***	*
Green bonds	*	*	*	-	-	-
Social bonds	*	*	*	-	-	-
Engagement	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
% of the universe excluded	~2%	~2%	~25%	0%	~2%	~10%
Performance target <sup>1</sup>	110 bps	80 bps	110 bps	100 bps	100 bps	0 bps net of fees
SFDR fund classification	Article 8	Article 8	Article 8	Article 6	Article 8	Article 8

Source: Robeco

1. Excess return target, gross of fees unless stated otherwise, over a full cycle. In reality costs (such as management fees and other costs) are charged. These have a negative effect on the returns shown.

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