

BondBloxx Fixed Income Monthly Update

August 2023

- Fixed income markets took a breather in August, as interest rates rose** at the long end of the yield curve (Chart 3), and **spreads were modestly wider** across investment grade, high yield, and emerging markets (Table 1).
- Recent statements from the Federal Reserve (“Fed”) **indicate a continued commitment to +2.0% inflation** even though headline inflation has fallen from +9.0% to +3.0% over the past year.
- In spite of weaker global growth, including economic data out of China, **oil prices have risen since June**, due to product cutbacks from Saudi Arabia and Russia. This makes the Fed’s inflation fight more difficult, but also hinders growth and consumer demand.
- In addition to Janet Yellen, several major banks, including Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan, have **recently reduced their probability that the U.S. experiences a recession** over the next 12 months.
- High yield was the only major fixed income asset class to generate positive performance in August.** Year-to-date, high yield has returned +7.2%, significantly outperforming the US Aggregate Index return of +1.4%.
- The back-up in interest rates, combined with tighter lending conditions, **drove equity markets lower**, especially in small-cap space, with the Russell 2000 Index down over 5% in August, compared to -1.8% for the S&P 500.

Chart 1

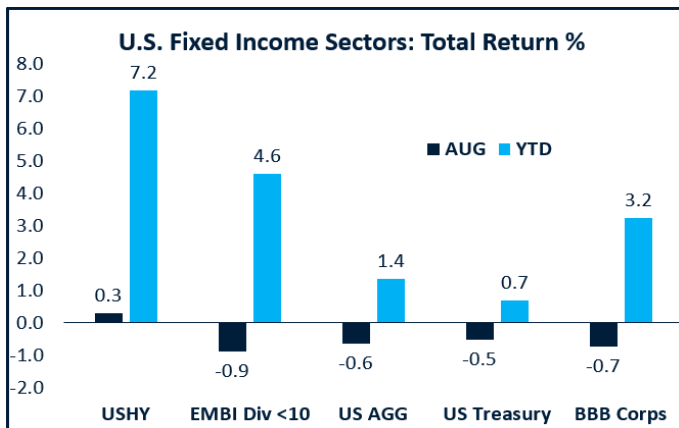


Chart 2

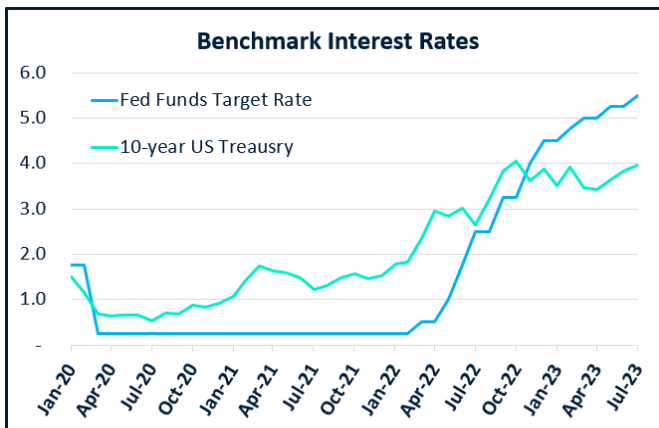


Table 1

Name	Index Name	Total Return			OAS				Yield (%)	Duration
		Aug	3 Mo	YTD	Aug	Δ Aug	Δ 3 Mo	Δ YTD		
US AGG	Bloomberg US Agg Index	-0.6%	-1.1%	1.4%	48	+3	-6	-3	4.97	6.2
US Treasury	Bloomberg US Treasury Index	-0.5%	-1.6%	0.7%					4.51	6.0
Mortgages	Bloomberg US Mortgage-Backed Securities Index	-0.8%	-1.3%	1.0%	53	+5	-2	+2	5.02	6.2
A Corps	Bloomberg A Corporate Index	-0.8%	-0.3%	2.4%	100	+6	-16	-8	5.45	6.9
BBB Corps	Bloomberg BBB Corporate index	-0.7%	0.4%	3.2%	143	+5	-25	-16	5.87	6.7
Munis	Bloomberg Municipal Bond Index	-1.4%	-0.1%	1.6%					3.79	6.2
USHY	ICE BofA US Cash Pay High Yield Constrained Index	0.3%	3.4%	7.2%	381	+4	-86	-96	8.44	3.6
EMBI DIV<10	JP Morgan EMBI Global Diversified 1-10 Liquid Index	-0.9%	3.0%	4.6%	594	+37	-67	+29	10.23	4.1

Chart 1, 2 and Table 1 Sources: ICE Data Services, JP Morgan, Bloomberg | Data as of 8/31/2023

Past performance is no guarantee of future results. See important disclosures and definitions at end of document.

Fixed Income: U.S. Treasuries

- **U.S. interest rates rose at the longer end of the yield curve in August.** This effect is likely due to investors reacting to data on inflation, strong employment figures, Federal Reserve meeting minutes, and comments from Jerome Powell at Jackson Hole.
- **While this summer’s headline inflation figures (+3.0%)** are significantly lower than last summer’s 40-year peak (+9%), prices continue to grow above 2.0% annually, a target consistently emphasized by Federal Reserve Chairman Jay Powell (Chart 4).
- Consistent with previous reports, **labor statistics in August were strong.** Unemployment edged up slightly to 3.8% from 3.5% due to an expansion in the labor force. Average hourly earnings increased by +4.3% on an annual basis suggesting that workers’ pay is now rising faster than prices.
- After a “pause” in June, **the Fed raised their target rate by 25 basis points in July** to a target range of 5.25%-5.50% (Chart 2). Given the recent economic data, Fed statements, and the Fed's interest rate projections, it is likely that the **Fed will increase rates again in 2023** to demonstrate their commitment to their inflation goal.
- In August, shorter-duration Treasuries experienced positive returns, while Treasuries with duration above five years reported negative total returns (Table 2).

Chart 3

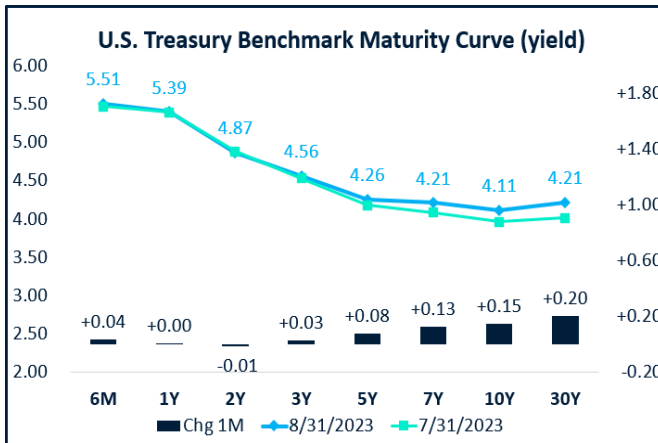


Chart 4

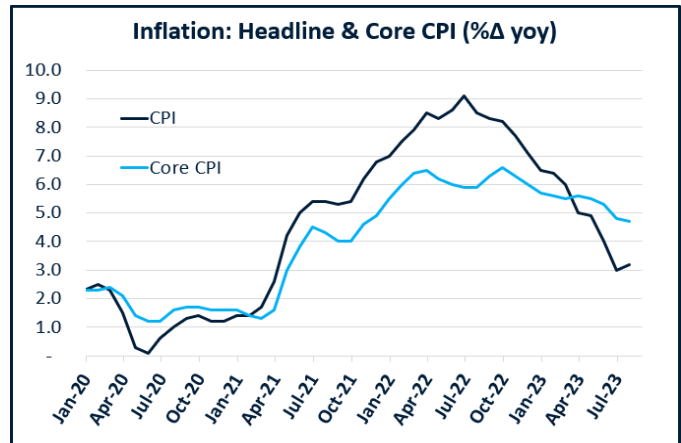


Table 2

Name	Index Name	Total Return			Yield (%)	Duration
		Aug	3 Mo	YTD		
6m Tsy	Bloomberg US Treasury Six Month Duration Index	0.4%	1.2%	3.0%	5.42	0.5
1y Tsy	Bloomberg US Treasury One Year Duration Index	0.4%	1.0%	2.5%	5.35	1.0
2y Tsy	Bloomberg US Treasury Two Year Duration Index	0.4%	0.1%	1.7%	4.86	2.0
3y Tsy	Bloomberg US Treasury Three Year Duration Index	0.2%	-0.5%	1.4%	4.53	3.0
5y Tsy	Bloomberg US Treasury Five Year Duration Index	-0.2%	-1.5%	1.0%	4.26	5.0
7y Tsy	Bloomberg US Treasury Seven Year Duration Index	-0.7%	-2.4%	0.3%	4.15	7.0
10y Tsy	Bloomberg US Treasury Ten Year Duration Index	-1.4%	-3.3%	-0.3%	4.24	10.0
20y Tsy	Bloomberg US Treasury Twenty Year Duration Index	-3.8%	-6.2%	-2.3%	4.27	20.0

Chart 3, 4 and Table 2 Sources: Bloomberg | Data as of 8/31/2023

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Fixed Income: Emerging Markets Debt

- **Emerging Markets (“EM”) debt posted negative returns in August** in line with weaker equity markets and rising longer-term interest rates. EM debt with maturities under 10 years returned -0.9% for the month (Table 3).
- **EM spreads were wider in August for the first time since May**, as tighter credit conditions, a lower economic forecast from the World Bank, and a wave of government coups across central Africa weighed on investor sentiment.
- **Year-to-date, EM Debt** continues to be second only to U.S. high yield in performance when compared to other US-dollar fixed income assets, posting a **+4.6% total return** through August.
- **Countries in Africa lagged the broader market**, as soldiers in Gabon arrested the declared winner of the recent election and took over the government on August 26th, resulting in a sell-off across similar assets. This is the 8th military coup across the region since 2020.
- **Countries from the Middle East reported the strongest performance in August**, as oil prices continued their rise from about \$70/barrel in June to over \$85/barrel.
- **Lower-rated EM debt** has led returns year-to-date, returning over 6.5% so far this year, compared to +2.5% for investment grade-rated EM debt (Chart 5, Table 3).

Chart 5

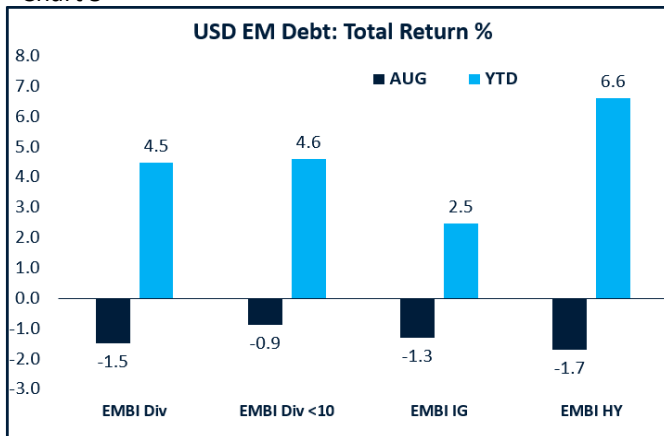


Chart 6

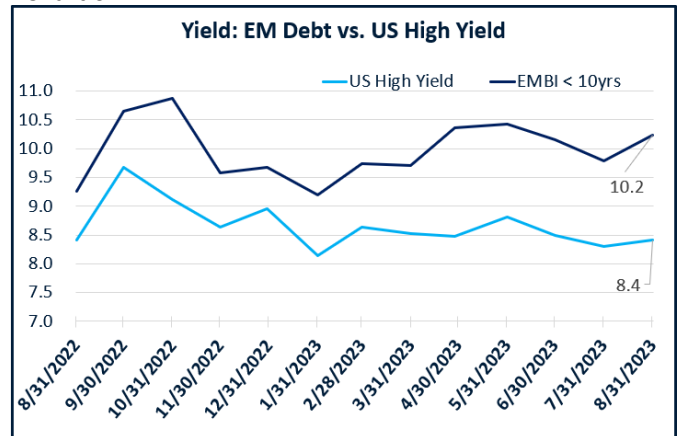


Table 3

Name	JP Morgan Index Name	Total Return			OAS				Yield (%)	Duration
		Aug	3 Mo	YTD	Aug	Δ Aug	Δ 3 Mo	Δ YTD		
EMBI DIV<10	EMBI Global Diversified 1-10 Liquid Index	-0.9%	3.0%	4.6%	594	+37	-67	+29	10.23	4.1
EMBI DIV	EMBI Global Diversified Composite Index	-1.5%	2.6%	4.5%	422	+24	-55	-31	8.51	6.7
EMBI IG	EMBI Global Diversified Inv Grade Index	-1.3%	-0.4%	2.5%	130	+7	-18	-9	5.58	7.9
EMBI HY	EMBI Global Diversified High Yield Index	-1.7%	5.9%	6.6%	779	+46	-115	-43	12.10	5.4

Chart 5, 6 and Table 3 Sources: J.P. Morgan | Data as of 8/31/2023

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Fixed Income: U.S. High Yield Ratings

- The U.S. high yield market generated a modest positive return in August, and it was the only major fixed income sector to generate a positive return for the month. **Year-to-date, high yield remains the clear performance leader among fixed income**, returning over 7% (Table 1, Chart 1).
- In credit rating categories, the CCC-rated sector extended its gains in August, up 1.0% for the month. It further increased its year-to-date performance versus both BB's and single-B's, with its 13.0% return (Chart 7, Table 4) **CCC spreads have tightened an impressive 272 basis points year-to-date** (Chart 8, Table 4).
- **Single-B and BB-rated high yield bonds** have generated year-to-date returns of 7.8% and 5.3% respectively, although August was a weaker month of performance for both these rating categories (Chart 7, Table 4).
- **High yield new issue volume of only \$9.3 billion in August** was distinguished as the third lightest month of 2023. Nonetheless, year-to-date new issue volume of \$111.2 billion remains well ahead of last year's volume at this time of \$81 billion. Refinancing activity continues to lead in terms of the use of proceeds year-to-date, representing over 60% of gross volume (J.P. Morgan).
- **Default activity was higher in August**, with five companies defaulting and six completing distressed exchanges during the month. However, six of the eleven defaults/distressed transactions were from loan-only borrowers, and as a result, the month-over month default rate for high yield bonds deteriorated only modestly to 2.4% at the end of August from 2.3% at the end of July. Both rates are still well below the long-term average of 4.0% (J.P. Morgan).

Chart 7

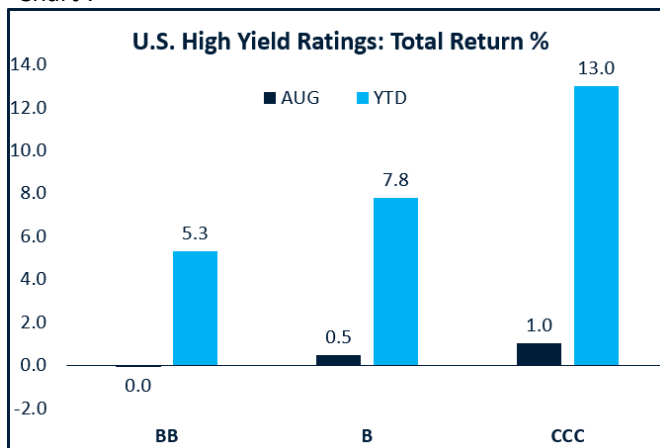


Chart 8

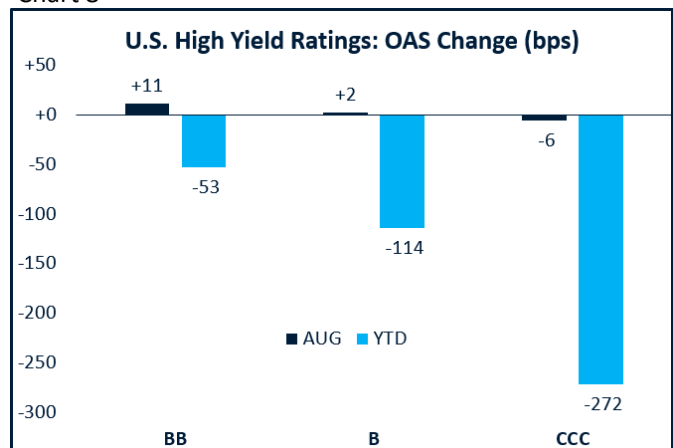


Table 4

Name	Index Name	Total Return			OAS				Yield (%)	Duration
		Aug	3 Mo	YTD	Aug	Δ Aug	Δ 3 Mo	Δ YTD		
BB	ICE BofA BB US Cash Pay High Yield Constrained Index	0.0%	2.3%	5.3%	256	+11	-54	-53	7.17	3.9
B	ICE BofA Single-B US Cash Pay High Yield Constrained Index	0.5%	3.6%	7.8%	398	+2	-94	-114	8.64	3.4
CCC	ICE CCC US Cash Pay High Yield Constrained Index	1.0%	6.7%	13.0%	824	-6	-159	-272	12.86	3.1

Chart 7, 8 and Table 4 Sources: ICE Data Services, Bloomberg | Data as of 8/31/2023

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Fixed Income: U.S. High Yield Industry Sectors

- Six of the seven high yield industry sectors generated positive returns in August, with Consumer Cyclical the only one to generate a modest loss, down -0.10% for the month (Chart 9, Table 5).
- Energy and Healthcare experienced the best performance for the month, up 0.9% and 0.7% respectively in total return (Chart 9, Table 5)
- Despite a weaker month of performance in August, the **Consumer Cyclical industry remains the total return performance leader** among sectors, up 9.7%, with large issuers such as Ford, Carnival Corp. and Royal Caribbean boosting returns for the sector (Chart 9, Table 5).
- With its strong relative performance in August, **the Energy sector (+8.2%) pulled ahead of Healthcare (+7.4%) and Core Industrial (+7.2%)** sectors year-to-date (Chart 9, Table 5).
- **Credit spreads for the Consumer Cyclical sector**, while 16 basis points wider in August, **have tightened 179 basis points year-to-date**, the largest spread move among all high yield industry sectors.
- **The next largest year-to-date spread moves** were experienced by the Healthcare (-134 bps), Financials & REITs (-106 bps) and Core Industrial (-102 bps) sectors, while the TMT sector tightened the least (-21 bps) (Chart 10, Table 5).
- The year-to-date performance of the TMT sector has lagged all other sectors (Chart 9, Table 5).

Chart 9

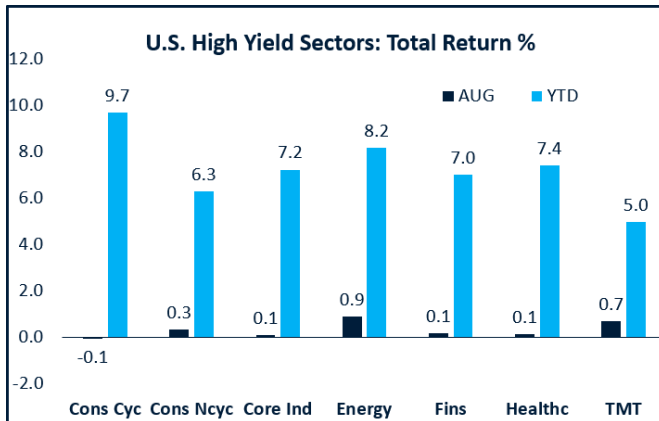


Chart 10

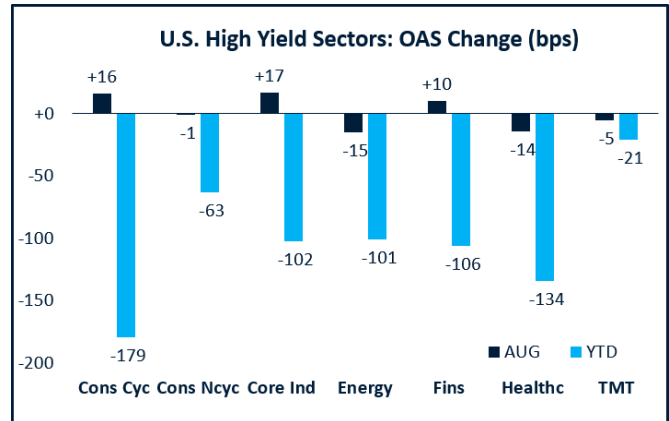


Table 5

Name	ICE Diversified U.S. Cash Pay High Yield Index Name	Total Return			OAS			Yield (%)	Duration	
		Aug	3 Mo	YTD	Aug	Δ Aug	Δ 3 Mo			Δ YTD
Cons Cyc	Consumer Cyclical Index	-0.1%	3.0%	9.7%	348	+16	-75	-179	8.13	3.5
Cons Ncyc	Consumer Non-Cyclical Index	0.3%	2.0%	6.3%	309	-1	-47	-63	7.66	4.0
Core Ind	Core Industrial Index	0.1%	2.6%	7.2%	331	+17	-62	-102	7.97	3.4
Energy	Energy Index	0.9%	4.0%	8.2%	276	-15	-109	-101	7.55	3.3
Fins	Financial & REIT Index	0.1%	4.1%	7.0%	381	+10	-124	-106	8.49	3.4
Healthc	Healthcare Index	0.1%	3.5%	7.4%	478	-14	-114	-134	9.33	3.7
TMT	Telecom Media & Technology Index	0.7%	4.4%	5.0%	519	-5	-95	-21	9.69	3.9

Chart 9, 10 and Table 5 Sources: ICE Data Services | Data as of 8/31/2023.

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Glossary and Index Definitions

- **Credit Spread:** the difference in yield between a debt security and its benchmark measured in basis points
- **OAS:** Option Adjusted Spread. For a bond, the option-adjusted spread is the measurement of the spread between the bond and the underlying government yield curve. For an Index, the average of its constituent security government option-adjusted spreads, weighted by full market value.
- The **Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Index** is a broad-based flagship benchmark that measures the investment grade, US-dollar-denominated, fixed-rate taxable bond market.
- The **Bloomberg A Corporate Index** measures the A-rated, fixed-rate, taxable corporate bond market.
- The **Bloomberg BBB Corporate Index** measures the BBB-rated, fixed-rate, taxable corporate bond market.
- The **Bloomberg Municipal Bond Index** covers the USD-denominated long-term tax-exempt bond market. The index has four main sectors: state and local general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, insured bonds and prefunded bonds.
- The **Bloomberg US Mortgage-Backed Securities Index** tracks fixed-rate agency mortgage-backed pass-through securities guaranteed by Ginnie Mae (GNMA), Fannie Mae (FNMA), and Freddie Mac (FHLMC).
- The **Bloomberg U.S. Treasury Target Duration Indices** are a suite of 8 indices designed to target a specific duration using US Treasury securities. The 8 durations targeted are 6 Month, 1 Year, 2 Year, 3 Year, 5 Year, 7 Year, 10 Year and 20 Year.
- The **ICE BofA U.S. High Yield Index** tracks the performance of U.S. dollar-denominated, below investment grade-rated corporate debt publicly issued in the U.S. domestic market.
- The **ICE BofA Broad Market Index** measures the performance of U.S. dollar-denominated, investment grade debt securities, including U.S. Treasury notes and bonds, quasi-government securities, corporate securities, residential and commercial mortgage-backed securities and asset-backed securities.
- The **ICE BofA U.S. Corporate Index** tracks the performance of U.S. dollar-denominated investment grade rated corporate debt publicly issued in the U.S. domestic market.
- The **ICE BofA U.S. Treasury Index** tracks the performance of U.S. dollar denominated sovereign debt publicly issued by the U.S. government in its domestic market.
- The **ICE BofA Current 10-year U.S. Treasury Index** is a one-security index comprised of the most recently issued 10-year U.S. Treasury note.
- The **ICE Diversified U.S. Cash Pay High Yield Rating Category Indices** contain all securities in the ICE BofA U.S. Cash Pay High Yield Index, broken down by their rating categories: BB1-BB3, B1-B3, and CCC1-CCC3. Index constituents are capitalization-weighted, based on their current amount outstanding.
- The **ICE Diversified U.S. Cash Pay High Yield Sector Category Indices** contain all securities in the ICE BofA U.S. Cash Pay High Yield Index, broken down by industry including: Industrials; Telecom, Media & Technology; Healthcare; Financial & REIT; Energy; Consumer Cyclical; Consumer Non-Cyclical. Index constituents are capitalization-weighted, based on their current amount outstanding.
- The **JP Morgan EMBI Global Diversified Index** tracks total returns for traded external debt instruments in the emerging markets, including U.S. dollar-denominated Brady bonds, loans, and Eurobonds with an outstanding face value of at least \$500 million.
- The **J.P. Morgan 1-10 Year Emerging Markets Sovereign Index** tracks liquid, U.S. dollar emerging market fixed and floating-rate debt instruments issued by sovereign and quasi sovereign entities. The EMBIGDL 1-10 Index is based on the long-established J.P. Morgan EMBI Global Diversified Index and follows its methodology closely, but only includes securities with at least \$1 billion in face amount outstanding and average life below 10 years.
- The **NASDAQ Composite Index** measures all NASDAQ domestic and international based common type stocks listed on The NASDAQ Stock Market, including over 2,500 companies. An investment can not be made in an index.
- The **Russell 2000 Index** is a small-cap U.S. stock market index that makes up the smallest 2,000 stocks in the Russell 3000 Index, which is a capitalization-weighted stock market index that seeks to be a benchmark of the entire U.S. stock market.
- The **S&P 500 Index** tracks the performance of 500 leading large-cap U.S. equities and covers approximately 80% of available market capitalization.

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