



# PIMCO Australian Short-Term Bond Fund



Quarterly Investment Report | 4Q23

**Institutional Class**

**For the use of Wholesale Clients (within the meaning of the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) only. Not for retail distribution.**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

Please note that this material contains the opinions of the manager as of the date noted, and may not have been updated to reflect real time market developments. All opinions are subject to change without notice.

# Executive summary

## Portfolio Performance

Over the quarter, the Australian Short-Term Bond Strategy provided a positive absolute return, mainly driven by duration and spread positioning.

### CONTRIBUTORS

- Long exposure to duration in Australia and New Zealand, as yields fell
- Long exposure to duration in the euro bloc, as yields fell
- Long exposure to non-financial investment-grade corporate credit, as spreads tightened

### DETRACTORS

- Short exposure to duration in Japan, as rates fell
- Long exposure to semi-government credit, as spreads widened
- Positioning within EM Asian currencies detracted from absolute performance

Performance periods ended 31 Dec '23	3 mos.	FYTD	1 yr.	3 yrs.	5 yrs.	10 yrs.	SI
Gross of fees (%)	3.10	3.69	5.80	-0.36	1.62	2.69	4.11
Net of fees (%)	2.98	3.46	5.32	-0.81	1.17	2.24	3.64
Benchmark*	2.43	2.84	4.53	-0.46	1.06	2.23	3.07

### Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results.

Returns for periods longer than 1 year are annualised.

Gross of Fees - Fund performance assumes the reinvestment of all distributions but does not take into account personal income tax.

Net of Fees - Fund performance is quoted net of fees and expenses and assumes the reinvestment of all distributions but does not take into account personal income tax.

## Portfolio strategy

The Fund maintains an absolute exposure to Australian and New Zealand duration. The fund has a bias to securities with short and intermediate maturities.

Remain cautious of generic corporate beta with a focus on financials and bottom-up security selection. Prefer senior securitized exposure, including short weighted average life Australian RMBS.

<b>Class:</b>	<b>INST</b>
<b>Inception date:</b>	<b>05 Feb '09</b>
<b>Fund assets (in millions):</b>	<b>AUD248.20</b>

Summary information	31 Dec '23
Effective duration (yrs)	2.37
Benchmark duration (yrs)	2.59
Effective maturity (yrs)	2.85
Average coupon	3.44%

Regional exposure (currency in Dur yrs)	Portfolio (yrs)	Benchmark (yrs)
United States	-0.17	0.00
Japan	-0.55	0.00
Eurozone	-0.06	0.00
United Kingdom	0.00	0.00
Europe non-EMU	0.25	0.00
Australia	2.82	2.59
Canada	0.00	0.00
New Zealand	0.08	0.00
Other Industrialized Countries	0.00	0.00
Emerging markets	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.37</b>	<b>2.59</b>

Quality Exposure (MV %)	31 Dec '23
AAA	53.19
AA	26.63
A	12.74
BBB	6.82
Sub Investment Grade	0.61
<b>Average Credit Quality</b>	<b>AA</b>

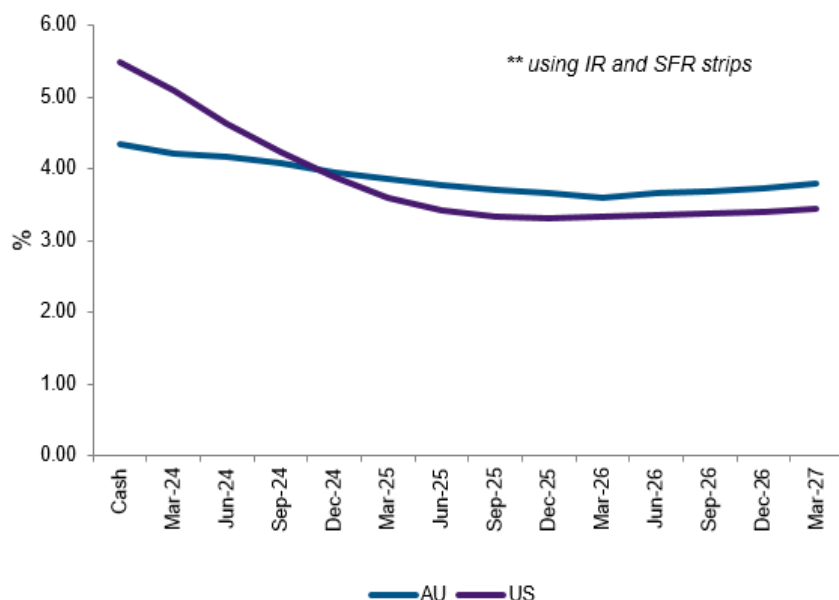
\*50% Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bills Index / 50% Bloomberg AusBond Composite 0+ Yr Index

# Quarter in Review

## Early signs of economic weakening spark market optimism

Indications of slowing inflation and a cooling labor market led market participants to price in an accelerated path of rate cuts for 2024, prompting a broad rally across the global bond market. During the quarter, the RBA hiked its policy rate once (25 bps) before pausing, ending the year with the cash rate at 4.35%. Whilst the RBA remain vigilant around the inflation outlook and in particular the anchoring of inflation expectations, this did not alter the market's expectation for central bank pivots to rate cuts in 2024.

**Market Policy Expectations**



The market is currently pricing in an aggressive rate cut path by the Fed starting in March 2024, whereas the expectations for the RBA are more modest, with the first cut expected to occur in the second half of 2024.

Source: ABS, RBA.

**10-year government bond yields (%)**



Global rates have finally taken some reversal from their year-long upward trend, concluding 2023 with 10-year bond rates in both the US and Australia at levels similar to those of a year ago.

Source: Bloomberg.

# Market Summary

## Q4'23: Weakening economic data

Over the quarter, the Australian Short-Term Bond Strategy provided a positive absolute return, mainly driven by duration and spread positioning.

### Developed market debt

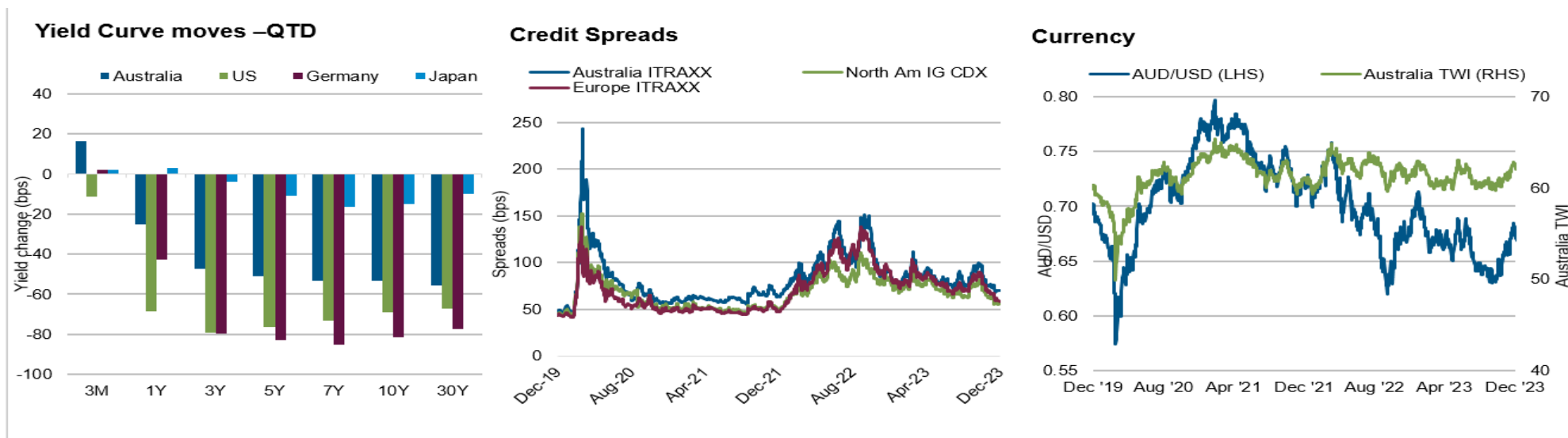
Indications of slowing inflation in the second half of the quarter prompted markets to price in accelerated expectations of rate cuts for next year. Australian sovereign bond yields fell across the yield curve, broadly in line with trends in global bond markets.

### Global credit market

The credit sector returned 8.15%, outperforming like-duration treasuries by 1.81%. High quality credit posted two strong months of returns to end the year amid the rate rally.

### Currencies

The Australian dollar appreciated against the USD, up 5.86% in the fourth quarter of 2023, closing the December month above 0.68 for the first time since mid-July 2023.



As of 31 December, 2023. SOURCE: PIMCO, Bloomberg.

# Navigating the Descent: Four economic themes

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**Peak inflation and rising unemployment consistent with rate cuts**



**Soft landings are possible, but risks remain**



**Markets already price a substantial cutting cycle**



**Global divergence in monetary policy**

# Portfolio Outlook

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## Strategic outlook

Further disinflation and the potential for a faster cutting cycle should, in our view, raise the prospects for a soft landing. However, this is not to say that we believe that the path toward a soft landing is the only possible path. It is our view that the tighter-for-longer strategy that central banks have been communicating along with the strong possibility of stagnation in developed market supply and demand growth leave recession risks elevated.

## Key strategies

### Duration and curve positions

The Fund maintains an absolute position to Australian and New Zealand duration but we remain tactical based on valuations. The Fund aims to augment duration position with modest allocations to higher conviction global exposures.

### Spread positions

Within corporate credit, we remain cautious of generic corporate beta with a focus on global financials over local names. The Fund continues to own Australian RMBS, however emphasizes those with high quality and have short weighted-average-life statistics.

### State-government exposure

The Fund has an absolute exposure to the semi-government and agency space given valuations and high quality characteristics.

# Sector exposure

	Portfolio				Benchmark	
	% of Market value		Duration in years		% of Market value	Duration in years
	30 Sep '23	31 Dec '23	30 Sep '23	31 Dec '23	31 Dec '23	31 Dec '23
<b>Government</b>	-19.81	0.28	-0.45	-0.38	26.09	1.42
<b>Semi-Gov</b>	24.04	21.79	1.44	1.44	17.48	0.91
<b>Agency</b>	16.62	17.06	0.54	0.52	2.05	0.06
<b>IG Corporates</b>	11.86	13.87	0.33	0.34	53.86	0.18
Financial	9.25	11.41	0.23	0.24	2.10	0.06
Industrial	2.17	2.01	0.07	0.08	1.47	0.05
Utilities	0.43	0.45	0.02	0.02	0.33	0.01
Other Investment Grade Credit	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	49.97	0.06
<b>High Yield</b>	0.61	0.60	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00
Financial	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Industrial	0.61	0.60	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00
Utilities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other High Yield Credit	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Securitized*</b>	7.62	7.86	0.47	0.42	0.33	0.01
Agency Mortgages	3.95	3.93	0.23	0.15	0.00	0.00
Non-Agency Mortgages	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Asset-Backed Securities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Covered Bonds	3.67	3.93	0.25	0.26	0.33	0.01
<b>Emerging Markets**</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.01
Sovereigns	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Quasi-Sovereigns	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.00
Corporates	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.00
<b>Cash Equiv &amp; Other</b>	59.07	38.53	0.31	0.02	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2.66</b>	<b>2.37</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2.59</b>

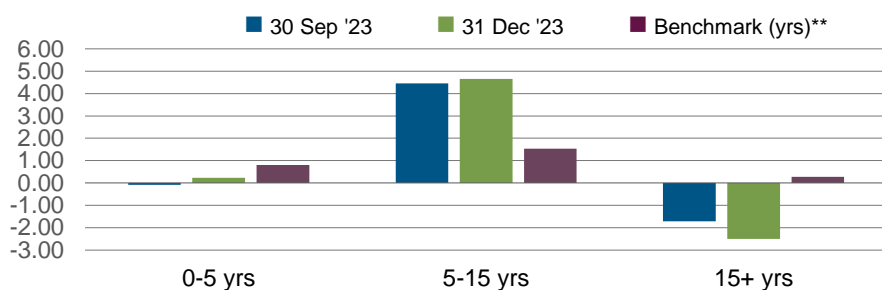
\*Securitized includes Agency MBS, non-Agency MBS, CMBS, ABS, CDO, CLO, and Pooled Funds.

\*\*Emerging markets instruments includes an emerging market security or other instrument economically tied to an emerging market country by country of risk with an effective duration less than one year and rated investment grade or higher or if unrated, determined to be similar quality by PIMCO. Emerging Markets includes the value of short duration emerging markets instruments previously reported in another category.

Benchmark: 50% Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bills Index / 50% Bloomberg AusBond Composite 0+ Yr Index

# Portfolio characteristics

## Key rate duration exposure



	Portfolio (yrs)		Benchmark (yrs)**
	30 Sep '23	31 Dec '23	31 Dec '23
0-5 yrs	-0.08	0.23	0.80
5-15 yrs	4.46	4.65	1.54
15+ yrs	-1.72	-2.50	0.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.66</b>	<b>2.38</b>	<b>2.61</b>

## Interest rate exposure

	Portfolio (yrs)		Benchmark (yrs)**
	30 Sep '23	31 Dec '23	31 Dec '23
Effective duration	2.67	2.37	2.61
<b>Spread duration</b>			
Mortgage spread duration	0.46	0.39	0.00
Corporate spread duration	0.52	0.52	0.18
Emerging markets spread duration	0.00	0.00	0.01
Swap spread duration	0.54	-0.62	0.00
Covered bond spread duration	0.27	0.30	0.01
Sovereign related spread duration	2.03	2.01	0.99

\*\*Benchmark duration is calculated by PIMCO

Benchmark: 50% Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bills Index / 50% Bloomberg AusBond Composite 0+ Yr Index



# Country and currency exposure

Country exposure by country of settlement

	30 Sep '23		31 Dec '23		Benchmark	
	Duration (yrs)	FX (%)	Duration (yrs)	FX (%)	Duration (yrs)	FX (%)
<b>United States</b>	0.20	-0.35	-0.17	-0.89	0.00	0.00
<b>Japan</b>	-0.38	1.04	-0.55	0.59	0.00	0.00
<b>Eurozone</b>	-0.21	-0.94	-0.06	-1.04	0.00	0.00
European Union	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Euro Currency	0.00	-0.94	0.00	-1.04	0.00	0.00
Germany	-0.52	0.00	-0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>United Kingdom</b>	-0.00	-0.48	0.00	-0.32	0.00	0.00
<b>Europe non-EMU</b>	0.23	-0.15	0.25	0.08	0.00	0.00
Denmark	0.21	-0.08	0.23	0.13	0.00	0.00
Sweden	0.02	-0.07	0.02	-0.05	0.00	0.00
<b>Dollar Block</b>	2.82	99.90	2.90	100.65	2.59	100.00
Australia	2.75	100.72	2.82	100.60	2.59	100.00
Canada	-0.00	-0.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
New Zealand	0.07	-0.54	0.08	0.05	0.00	0.00
<b>Other Industrialized Countries</b>	-0.00	-0.24	-0.00	-0.25	0.00	0.00
Taiwan	-0.00	-0.24	-0.00	-0.25	0.00	0.00
<b>EM - Asia</b>	0.00	1.22	0.00	1.17	0.00	0.00
China	-0.00	-0.25	-0.00	-0.24	0.00	0.00
Indonesia	0.00	0.53	0.00	0.52	0.00	0.00
India	0.00	0.94	0.00	0.90	0.00	0.00
Malaysia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Philippines	-0.00	-0.01	-0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00
<b>EM - Latin America</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>EM - CEEMEA</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Liabilities</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2.37</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>100</b>

Benchmark: 50% Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bills Index / 50% Bloomberg AusBond Composite 0+ Yr Index

# Important Disclosures

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This publication is intended to be general information for financial advisers and wholesale investors only. This should not be passed on to retail clients within the meaning of the Corporations Act.

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Statements concerning financial market trends or portfolio strategies are based on current market conditions, which will fluctuate. There is no guarantee that these investment strategies will work under all market conditions or are appropriate for all investors and each investor should evaluate their ability to invest for the long term, especially during periods of downturn in the market. Outlook and strategies are subject to change without notice.

Forecasts, estimates and certain information contained herein are based upon proprietary research and should not be interpreted as investment advice, as an offer or solicitation, nor as the purchase or sale of any financial instrument. Forecasts and estimates have certain inherent limitations, and unlike an actual performance record, do not reflect actual trading, liquidity constraints, fees, and/or other costs. In addition, references to future results should not be construed as an estimate or promise of results that a client portfolio may achieve.

The Fund's benchmark index is a blend of 50% Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bills Index and 50% Bloomberg AusBond Composite 0+ Yr Index. The Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bills Index is an unmanaged index representative of the total return performance of Australian money market securities. The Bloomberg AusBond Composite 0+ Yr Index is an unmanaged market index representative of the total return performance of AUD-denominated bonds. It is not possible to invest in an unmanaged index.

Portfolio allocations and other information in the charts in this Quarterly Investment Report are based on the fund's net assets.

All \$ amounts referenced are in USD and source citations are PIMCO unless stated otherwise.

# Important Disclosures

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The following defined terms are used throughout the report. **Emerging market short duration instruments** includes an emerging market security or other instrument economically tied to an emerging market country by country of risk with an effective duration less than one year and rated investment grade or higher or if unrated, determined to be similar quality by PIMCO. **Net other short duration instruments** includes securities and other instruments (except instruments tied to emerging markets by country of risk) with an effective duration less than one year and rated investment grade or higher or, if unrated, determined by PIMCO to be of comparable quality, commingled liquidity funds, uninvested cash, interest receivables, net unsettled trades, broker money and derivatives offset. With respect to certain categories of short duration securities, the Adviser reserves the discretion to require a minimum credit rating higher than investment grade for inclusion in this category. **Short duration derivatives and derivatives offsets** include: 1) derivatives with an effective duration less than one year and where the country of risk is not an emerging market country (for example, Eurodollar futures) and 2) offsets associated with investments in futures, swaps and other derivatives. Such offsets may be taken at the notional value of the derivative position which in certain instances may exceed the actual amount owed on such positions.

**The performance figures presented reflect the performance for the institutional class unless otherwise noted.**

PIMCO uses an internal model for calculating effective duration, which may result in a different value for the duration of an index compared to the duration calculated by the index provider or another third party.

# Important Disclosures

Acronyms and definitions of investment terms used throughout the report:

**Alpha** is a measure of performance on a risk-adjusted basis calculated by comparing the volatility (price risk) of a portfolio vs. its risk-adjusted performance to a benchmark index; the excess return relative to the benchmark is alpha.

**Average coupon** is the average of the coupon payments of the underlying bonds within the portfolio.

**Average effective maturity** is a weighted average of all the maturities of the bonds in a portfolio, computed by weighting each bond's effective maturity by the market value of the security.

**"Bend-but-not-break"** refers to credits that PIMCO would not expect to default in a credit-stressed environment.

**Beta** is a measure of price sensitivity to market movements. Market beta is 1.

**Breakeven inflation rate** (or expectation) is a market-based measure of expected inflation or the difference between the yield of a nominal and an inflation-linked bond of the same maturity.

**Carry** is the rate of interest earned by holding the respective securities.

The terms **"cheap" and "rich"** as used herein generally refer to a security or asset class that is deemed to be substantially under- or overpriced compared to both its historical average as well as to the investment manager's future expectations. There is no guarantee of future results or that a security's valuation will ensure a profit or protect against a loss.

**CPI** is the Consumer Price Index.

The **credit quality** of a particular security or group of securities does not ensure the stability or safety of an overall portfolio. The quality ratings of individual issues/issuers are provided to indicate the credit-worthiness of such issues/issuer and generally range from AAA, Aaa, or AAA (highest) to D, C, or D (lowest) for S&P, Moody's, and Fitch respectively.

**Dividend yield** is represented by the weighted average coupon divided by the weighted average price.

**Duration** is the measure of a bond's price sensitivity to interest rates and is expressed in years.

**Effective duration** is the duration for a bond with an embedded option when the value is calculated to include the expected change in cash flow caused by the option as interest rates change.

**Forward curve** is a function graph that defines the prices at which a contract for future delivery or payment can be concluded today.

**Fallen angel** is a bond that was initially given an investment grade rating but has since been reduced to below investment grade status.

**GFC** is the Global Financial Crisis.

**Information ratio** is a ratio of portfolio returns above the returns of a benchmark to the volatility of those returns.

**Like-duration Securities** are calculated by the index provider by comparing the index return to a hypothetical matched position in the security.

**LNG** is Liquefied Natural Gas.

The **Option Adjusted Spread (OAS)** measures the spread over a variety of possible interest rate paths. A security's OAS is the average return an investor will earn over Treasury returns, taking all possible future interest rate scenarios into account. The OAS is the net spread over the swap curve that will on average be earned if the security is held to maturity.

**Rising star** is the term given to a bond that was rated high yield but has since been upgraded to investment grade.

**"Risk assets"** are any financial security or instrument that are likely to fluctuate in price.

**Risk premia** is the return in excess of the risk-free rate of return an investment is expected to yield.

**Roll yield** is the yield that a futures investor captures as their long position in a futures contract converges to the spot price.

**"Safe haven"** is an investment that is expected to retain or increase in value during times of market turbulence.

**"Safe Spread"** is defined as sectors that we believe are most likely to withstand the vicissitudes of a wide range of possible economic scenarios. All investments contain risk and may lose value.

The **SEC yield** is an annualized yield based on the most recent 30 day period. The subsidized yield includes contractual expense reimbursements and it would be lower without those reimbursements. The

**Unsubsidized 30 day SEC Yield** excludes contractual expense reimbursements.

**Tracking error** measures the dispersion or volatility of excess returns relative to a benchmark.

To relate the price sensitivity of ILBs to changes in nominal yields, yield beta is applied to nominal changes to arrive at a price sensitivity of ILBs to changes in nominal rates. A **yield beta** of 0.90 implies that if nominal yields move 100 basis points, real yields will move 90 basis points. ILBs with long maturity may respond differently to changes in nominal rates than shorter maturity ILBs.

The distribution yield for monthly paying Funds is calculated by annualizing actual dividends distributed for the monthly period ended on the date shown and dividing by the net asset value on the last business day for the same period. The distribution yield for quarterly paying Funds is calculated by taking the average of the prior four quarterly distribution yields. The quarterly distribution yields are calculated by annualizing actual dividends distributed for the quarterly period ended on the most recent quarterly distribution date and dividing by the net asset value for the same date. The yield does not include long- or short-term capital gains distributions.

Asset-Backed Security (ABS); Bank of England (BOE); Bank of Japan (BOJ); Breakeven Inflation (BEI); Collateralized Debt Obligation (CDO); Collateralized Loan Obligation (CLO); Commercial Mortgage-Backed Security (CMBS); Developed Markets (DM); Emerging Markets (EM); Federal Reserve Board (The Fed); Europe Central Bank (ECB); Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC); Foreign Exchange (FX); Gross Domestic Product (GDP); Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); High Yield (HY); Inflation-Linked Bond (ILS); Investment Grade (IG); Leveraged-buyout (LBO); Loan-to-Value (LTV); Master Limited Partnership (MLP); Mortgage-Backed Security (MBS); Market Weighted Spread (MWS); Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT); Residential Mortgage-Backed Security (RMBS); Treasury Inflation-Protected Security (TIPS); Year-over-Year (YoY)