

Fund Research

KKR Global Credit Opportunities Fund (AUD)



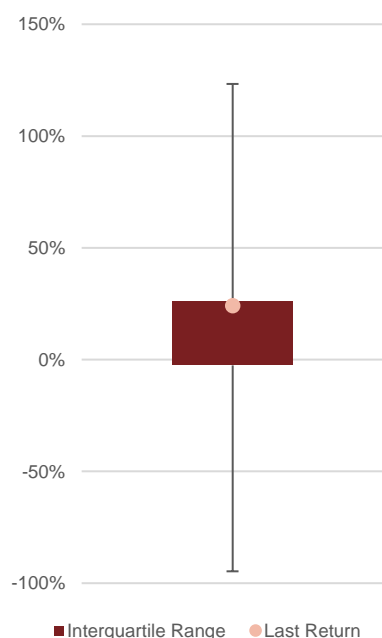
Overview

The KKR Global Credit Opportunities Fund (AUD), also referred to as the 'Fund', the 'Trust', or 'GCOF' is an open-ended fund domiciled in Australia. The Fund is designed to offer investors access to global alternative credit opportunities that are not easily tradable and have been identified and accessed via KKR's exclusive channels. The primary area of emphasis for the Fund is on undervalued opportunities within the United States. The portfolio is comprised of a select number of the Manager's highest conviction investments, with the goal of attaining both consistent income and growth in capital value throughout an entire market cycle. The strategy is opportunistic, utilising an active security selection that depends on strong conviction in a relatively small number of securities. The opportunity set available to the Manager is vast, and such a strategy subsequently commands significant resources to successfully execute.

KKR launched KKR Credit in 2004 and has since grown to a team of ~230 investment professionals covering ~1,700 issuers globally with US\$200 billion in total assets as at 30 September 2023. Further, rather than a generalist approach, each analyst specialises in a specific sector. In order for the Fund to capitalise on the Group's comparative advantages due to its scale, KKR inaugurated the Opportunistic Credit Strategy in 2007. GCOF invests in accordance with this strategy which now has a 16-year track record. All investments in the strategy are hedged back to Australian dollars.

The Fund's objective is to achieve an average pre-tax return of 5-7% per annum over the medium term, net of fees and expenses. It invests primarily in debt instruments such as loans, bonds, and alternative credit, including exit loan facilities for distressed companies and non-performing loans. Additionally, the Fund has the ability to incorporate some exposure to opportunistic assets when attractive, including structured equity and other equity-like investments, such as hybrid securities and convertibles.

Figure 1. Monthly Returns* Box Plot



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. Annualised net monthly returns based on NTA. Since inception.

Figure 2. Monthly Net Returns* (%)

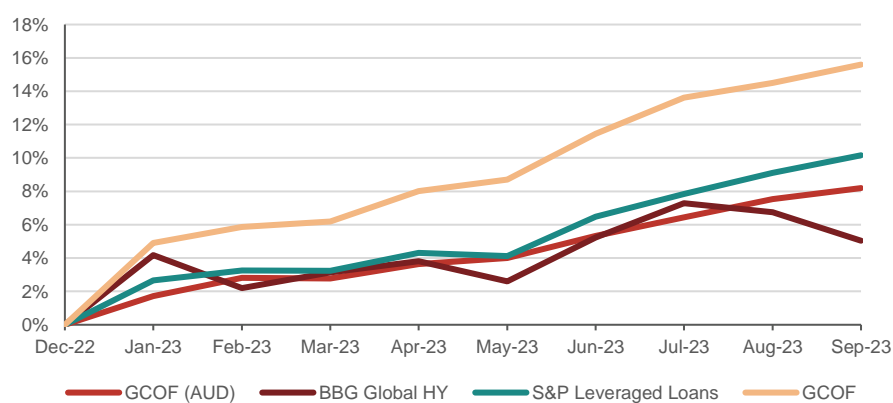
GCOF (AUD)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	YTD
2023	1.72	1.07	-0.04	0.85	0.35	1.27	1.06	1.03	0.61				7.92
2022												-0.36	-0.36

GCOF	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	YTD
2023	4.90	0.92	0.30	1.73	0.63	2.53	1.95	0.77	0.96				14.69
2022	-0.63	-0.65	-0.48	-2.60	-2.13	-4.15	2.63	1.25	-3.43	-0.01	1.85	-0.82	-9.17
2021	0.99	0.97	0.89	0.99	0.73	0.95	-0.08	0.32	0.62	0.24	-0.42	1.25	7.45
2020	0.86	-1.25	-16.21	4.11	5.93	2.90	2.92	1.73	0.89	0.97	4.12	2.17	9.14
2019	2.16	1.60	0.31	1.59	-0.84	0.53	0.31	-0.58	0.37	-0.47	0.47	2.71	8.16
2018	1.40	0.11	0.19	0.31	0.12	0.60	1.04	0.64	0.53	-0.61	-0.96	-2.16	1.22
2017	1.19	0.85	0.19	1.00	0.66	0.37	0.85	0.18	0.96	0.43	0.31	0.67	7.65
2016	-1.53	0.19	4.52	2.45	1.36	0.38	2.54	2.13	1.26	0.82	0.32	1.32	15.76
2015	-0.09	2.15	0.02	1.19	0.66	-0.50	0.40	-0.20	-1.93	1.28	-1.14	-2.98	-1.14

Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023.

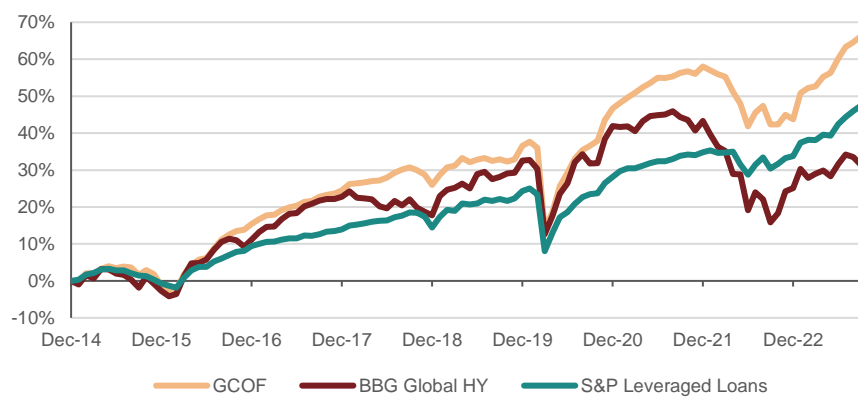
* Return is monthly gross total return based on NTA plus dividends. GCOF (AUD) December 2022 return is from inception on 14 December 2022 and is not a complete month.

Figure 3. Relative Cumulative Performance



* Calculated from cumulative net monthly returns of the Fund.
Source: BondAdviser, KKR, Bloomberg. As at 30 September 2023.

Figure 4. Relative Cumulative Performance



* Calculated from cumulative net monthly returns of the USD-denominated Fund.
Source: BondAdviser, KKR, Bloomberg. As at 30 September 2023.

Product Assessment

Recommended | Improving

High yield bond and bank loan yields are now at historically high levels after a period of sustained turbulence. The Fund is strategically positioned to take advantage of these favourable opportunities and we anticipate strong performance in the short term.

The KKR Global Credit Opportunities Fund (AUD) seeks to provide investors a compelling income stream along with appealing capital appreciation throughout a complete market cycle. This is pursued via opportunistic investments in both performing and stressed credit instruments across the ratings spectrum. This specialised offering is attractive to investors due to the mammoth challenge of replicating such a strategy for non-institutional investors. To do so would require the direct acquisition and subsequent oversight of a relatively focused portfolio of high-conviction, undervalued credits spanning loan, bond, and securitisation markets. These high-conviction trades are considered to be the “best ideas” from a pool of thousands of securities that the KKR Global Credit platform has access to, requiring a great deal of diligence to gain such confidence in the investment. In order to ensure KKR’s team are experts across the Group’s whole sphere of ~1,700 credits and can accurately price the components of each issuer’s capital structure, the Group is relatively well staffed with approximately 7 names per professional.

Despite the Fund having been inceptioned on 14 December 2022, the KKR Opportunity Credit Strategy (OCS) that the Fund invests in has a 15-year track record with key personnel from inception still present from May 2008 (months prior to the GFC). Since inception, the OCS has returned a gross 10.4% per annum and is in the **first percentile of returns versus its peers at the 1-year, 7-year, 10-year and since inception time markers.**

Over the nine full months since inception, GCOF (AUD) has returned 8.2% net of fees, which exceeds the Fund’s net return target. The pre-existing GCOF (USD version inceptioned in January 2015) has produced net annualised returns of 16.8%, 3.1%, 6.8% and 6.0% over the 1-year, 2-year, 3-year and since inception markers. These all exceed GCOF (AUD)’s net return target except for at the 2-year marker. Recent strong returns have been supported by an extended risk-on sentiment from the broader fixed income market which has seen high yield bond spreads tighten significantly. Over the past 12 months to 30 September 2023, the US Corporate High Yield Index has returned 10.3% while the Morningstar LSTA Global (US) Leveraged Loan Index produced 13.1% returns over the same period. This outperformance reflects the alpha added by the Manager to take prudent active positions and capture mispricings.

The Fund does not employ leverage as part of its investment strategy. Nevertheless, it may engage in financing to handle liquidity, address short-term working capital needs, or fulfil margin obligations related to the Fund’s foreign exchange hedging. Such a liquidity facility is not to exceed 20% of the NAV when entered into.

The primary focus for each asset in the portfolio is the resilience of cash flows and protection against potential downsides. It is typical that in the US market, misinterpreted credits often tend to be undervalued. By combining the team’s strong belief in these two key themes with thorough validation, KKR Credit can pinpoint mispriced credits. The ability to conduct comprehensive due diligence and reach well-informed conclusions before the broader market positions the Fund to capture unique aspects and generate alpha. Adding to this are the inefficiencies of the high yield market driven by flows which allow KKR to act as a liquidity provider in opportunistically selecting mispriced credits.

Credit constitutes a significant risk for the Fund, both on an individual asset basis and across the overall portfolio. With that in mind, we view KKR as possessing the requisite resources and established processes to effectively mitigate this risk. KKR’s experienced default statistics support this expectation, underscoring their notable success in preserving principal. KKR has consistently encountered defaults at a rate around half the market average for any given year, all the while achieving recovery rates above the

market norm. The annual recovery rates for the strategy since 2015 are 62.6% compared to: (1) 36.1% for the high yield market (JP Morgan HY index), and (2) 54.7% and 21.9% for the first lien and second lien leveraged loan market respectively (JP Morgan Loan Index).

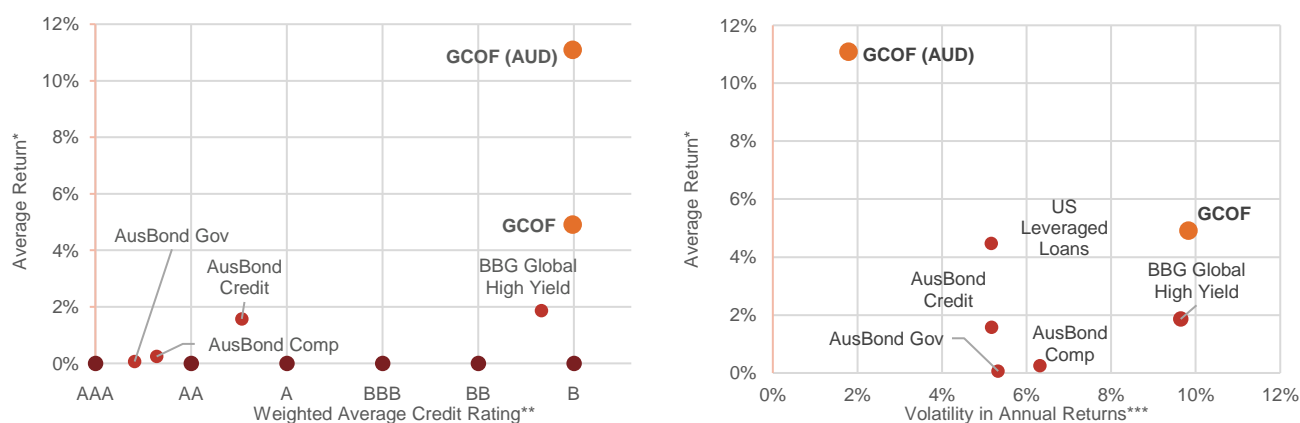
Given the Fund is open-ended with monthly redemptions completely at the discretion of the Responsible Entity, illiquidity is also a noteworthy aspect for unitholders. In the event of an unforeseen circumstance, such as a financial market downturn, the Responsible Entity has the authority to suspend redemption considerations if deemed appropriate. Considering the nature of the underlying assets, we perceive this provision for liquidity as entirely reasonable.

We have now covered the KKR Credit Fund (ASX: KKC) which invests in GCOF for five years. Over this time, we have developed confidence in the Manager's performance, risk management framework and investment processes. Additionally, a crucial aspect of our assessment involves a proven history of effectively overseeing the strategy when it is hedged to the Australian Dollar (AUD). This comfort is acquired through KKC's hedged allocation into GCOF, which operates independently of the KKC's other investments. It is important to highlight that KKC experienced significant hedge-book losses in 2020; nevertheless, subsequent adjustments have been implemented to rectify identified shortcomings. The hedging strategy that has successfully been implemented for three years following the losses in KKC has been mirrored in this Fund. The manager is targeting a 95-100% hedge ratio for portfolio-level market value of non-AUD denominated exposures. This is being executed via FX forwards with 1-2 hedging counterparties that are global investment banks.

Our expectation is for the assets under management of this Fund to soon exceed the minimum requirement of US\$100 million in order for the strategy to access 144a securities. Upon surpassing this hurdle, GCOF (AUD) would be able to mirror the investment universe of the flagship USD-denominated GCOF as was the Manager's intention at inception of the AUD version. Given our fundamental comfort in the flagship fund and several years of covering that Fund, we move our outlook to **Improving** with the expectation that GCOF (AUD) would be eligible for an upgrade to the rarely issued Highly Recommended in the next 12-24 months. At this stage, the significant investment universe restriction causes the portfolio construction of GCOF (AUD) to be too starkly different from GCOF to assess this Fund under an umbrella of chirality with the flagship Fund. Our product assessment therefore is maintained at **Recommended**.

As the Fund scales to US\$100 million, its investment universe will expand to include all securities that are investable by the flagship Fund which is in the first percentile versus peers across numerous periods.

Figure 5. Estimated Risk-Adjusted Comparison (Underlying Portfolio for Weighted Average Credit Rating)



* Average returns for indices and GCOF calculated using annualised returns for the past five years. Average return for GCOF (AUD) calculated using annualised monthly returns since January 2023, the first full month post inception in December 2022. ** Credit Ratings based on public ratings, KKR internal ratings and BondAdviser estimates. *** Calculated based on annualised monthly returns data for the past five years. Source: BondAdviser, KKR, Bloomberg. As at 30 September 2023.

Construction and Investment Process

GCOF is a strategy designed to invest in a concentrated number of securities, for which each investment idea has been arrived at following extensive due diligence to the point whereby the Manager believes the credit rating agencies have mis-allocated too low a rating to that specific security, resulting in an investment opportunity.

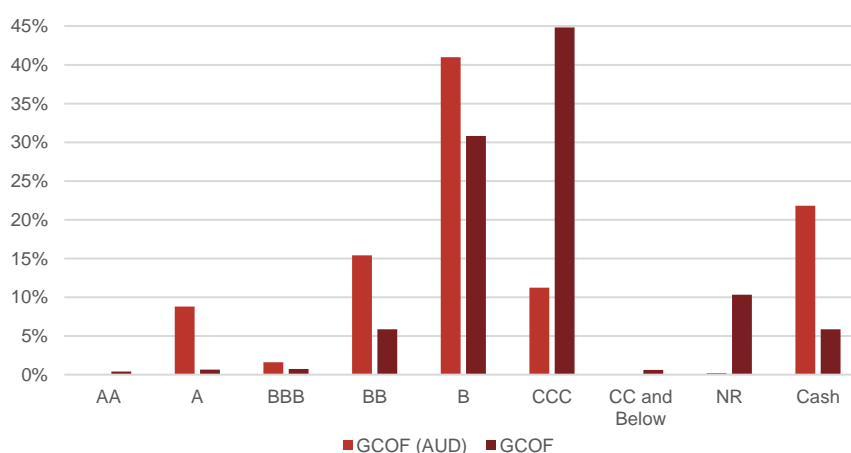
The Fund – GCOF (AUD) – was incepted with the intention of following the same strategy as the existing USD-denominated flagship Global Credit Opportunities Fund. The GCOF strategy invests in a combination of high yield bonds and bank loans. The majority of US high yield bonds are classified as 144a securities and to qualify to invest in such bonds, the FUM of the strategy must exceed US\$100 million. As at 30 November 2023, GCOF (AUD) had A\$112.3 million in assets under management, which converts to \$74.2 million in USD at that time. It is worth noting that as of 31 October 2023, the flagship Fund had US\$2,504 million, illustrating there is proof of scale in this product.

As a function of currently being restricted from investing in 144a securities, the GCOF (AUD) and GCOF investment strategies are not yet able to follow the same asset allocation. We therefore view GCOF (AUD) as its own entity at this point in time and expect for it to be eligible for a chiral assessment with GCOF once it surpasses the US\$100 million requirement. Our expectations are that in 2024, the AUD fund will have sufficient assets to qualify for wholesale (144a) status.

The below figures illustrate the material differences between asset allocation for the two funds as a result of the GCOF (AUD) US high yield bond investment universe being significantly lesser than the unrestricted GCOF. These differences are highlighted by the difference in net returns for the GCOF (AUD) being 8.18% from 31 December 2022 to 30 September 2023 while GCOF produced 16.07% for the same period. Figures 6-8 all reflect data for this same period.

Across the 9 months to 30 September, GCOF (AUD)'s allocation to CCC-rated securities was 11.2% versus GCOF's 44.8%. The AUD Fund also had an 8.1 percentage point higher exposure to A-rated securities over the period. Both the lesser weighting to high yield securities and higher exposure to investment grade instruments detract from returns as the portfolio is far less risky than the USD strategy. Adding to this is the cash holding of 21.8% (versus 5.9% for GCOF) that anchors returns even further.

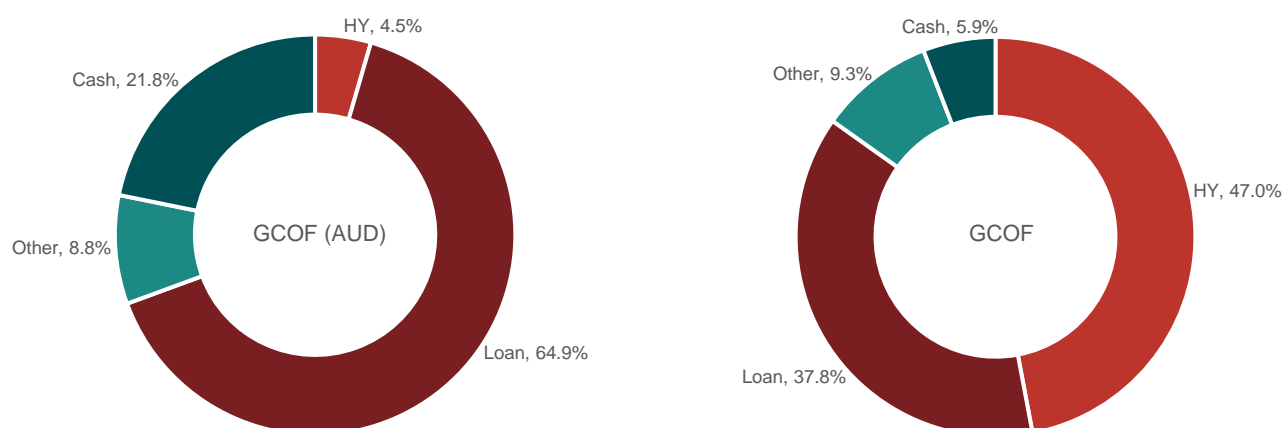
Figure 6. GCOF (AUD) vs GCOF Asset Allocation – Credit Rating



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. Reflects data from 31 December 2022 to 30 September 2023.

Figure 7 demonstrates the disparity in allocations by asset type as a result of the reduced investment universe for GCOF (AUD). For the first nine months of 2023 GCOF (AUD) has had an average 4.5% weighting to high yield bonds while the USD Fund has been 47.0% allocated to the asset class. Subsequently, the AUD version is primarily deployed into loans (64.9% versus 37.8% for the flagship).

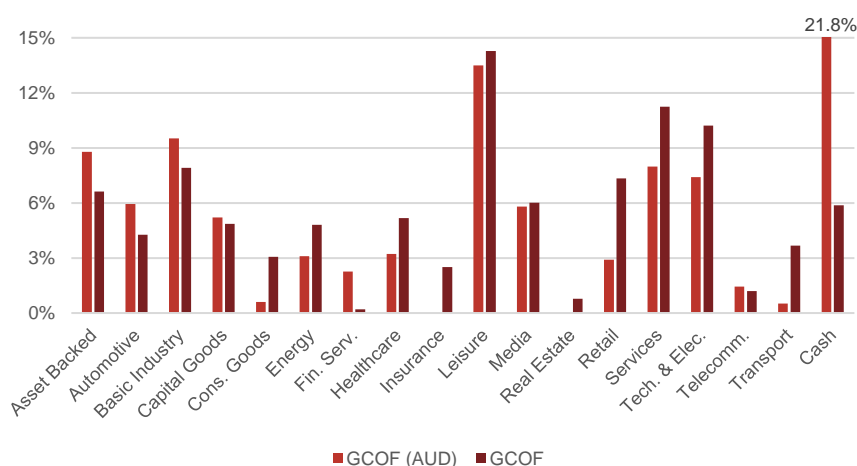
Figure 7. GCOF (AUD) vs GCOF Asset Allocation – Asset Type



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. Reflects data from 31 December 2022 to 30 September 2023.

In terms of sector allocations, there are again examples of large disparities driving the difference in returns for the two funds. The three standout examples of this are in Retail, Services, and Transportation which cumulatively GCOF is 10.8 percentage points more invested in by portfolio weight.

Figure 8. GCOF (AUD) vs GCOF Asset Allocation – Sector



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. Reflects data from 31 December 2022 to 30 September 2023.

Portfolio Risk Management

Interest rate risk is largely mitigated by the portfolio predominantly constituting floating rate securities. While this reduces the direct risks associated with movements in interest rates which could adversely impact the value of the portfolio, the floating rate nature does create a second derivative risk via heightened credit risk. Higher rates are passed onto the borrowing counterparty, subsequently increasing the interest costs and decreasing the likelihood of interest payments being made in full. Credit risk is the most important factor to consider given the asymmetric nature of returns for debt investments.

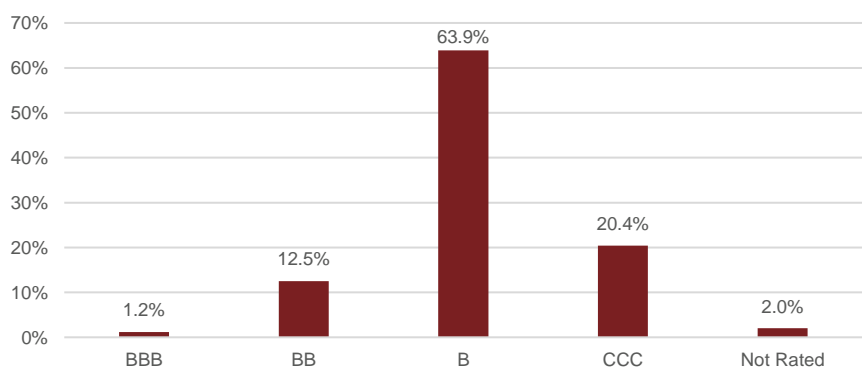
Figure 9. GCOF (AUD) Portfolio Metrics *

Effective Duration (Years)	0.41	Avg. Moody's/S&P Rating	B2/B-
Spread Duration (Years)	2.89	Avg. Time to Maturity (Years)	3.91
Current Yield	8.85%	Senior Secured Portion	91.85%
Yield to Maturity	9.36%	Floating Rate Portion	88.43%
Weighted Average Price	96.47	Number of Assets	67

Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * Excluding cash.

The Fund is comprised of predominantly sub-investment grade securities with portfolio average credit ratings from Moody's and S&P of B2 and B- respectively. Using the lowest credit rating across Moody's, S&P, and Fitch; 20.4% of the portfolio is in the CCC band while 64% is rated single B. The tilt towards ostensibly riskier credits is in line with the Fund's strategy and is not of concern as the Manager invests in a select number of credits that are viewed to be out of favour. Many of these companies have credit ratings that punitively lag the improvements made in the business following its most recent rating update. The strategy in such an instance is to invest in securities that KKR view as being of higher credit quality than the rating agencies are currently reflecting.

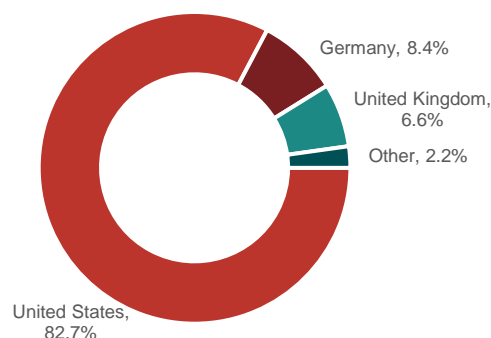
Figure 10. GCOF (AUD) Portfolio Credit Rating Mix *



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * Excluding cash. Uses lowest credit rating of S&P, Moody's, and Fitch.

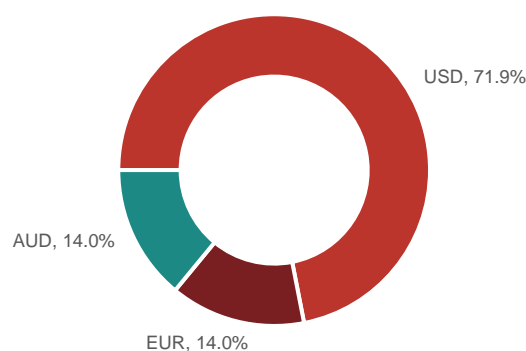
In terms of geographic exposure, while global in nature, the majority of companies GCOF invests in are in the United States with some peripheral exposure to Germany and the United Kingdom. As a result, the majority of the Fund's assets are denominated in USD. As GCOF is fully hedged back into AUD via 1-2 global investment bank counterparties, the exposure to USD and EUR is not expected to cause any foreign currency risk. The strategy being implemented for GCOF (AUD) has been successfully in practice for ASX: KKC since mid-2020.

Figure 11. GCOF (AUD) Portfolio Geography Mix *



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * Excluding cash.

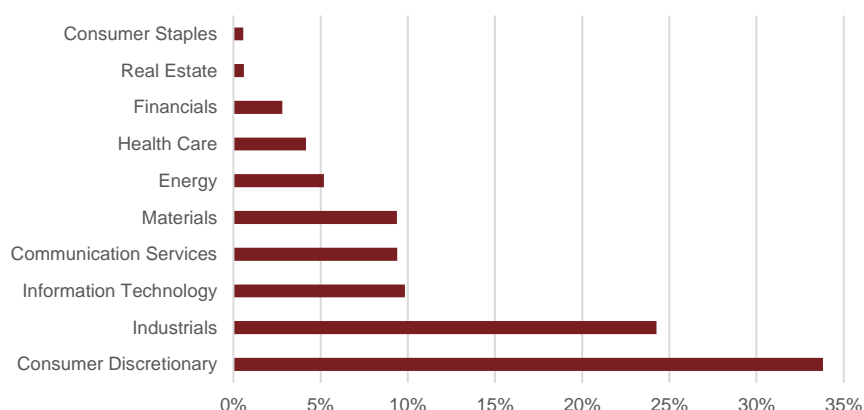
Figure 12. GCOF (AUD) Portfolio Currency Mix *



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * Excluding cash.

Another example of the Fund's strategy flying in the face of a risk averse investor's preferred exposures is the high weighting to the Consumer Discretionary sector (34% excluding cash). This again speaks to the lag effect of rating agencies in upgrading issuers that are performing well but have facets of the business worthy of caution. In a contractionary macro environment, consumer discretionary is typically a weak-performing segment of the market. However, the Fund is not taking a segment-tracking exposure with thousands of consumer discretionary securities, the investment represents 34% of a 68-security portfolio. This level of concentration goes beyond the sectoral headwinds and allocates the risk to the Manager's ability to pick the best performing companies in a sector-agnostic approach. The more general headwinds faced by a sector, the more attractive the opportunity set is for a strategy like GCOF's to take advantage of oversold credits. Additionally, flow-induced inefficiencies within the high-yield market enable KKR to act as a liquidity provider. This occurs when the market experiences a sell-off, and KKR strategically identifies and seizes opportunities in mispriced credits.

Figure 13. GCOF (AUD) Portfolio Sector Allocation *

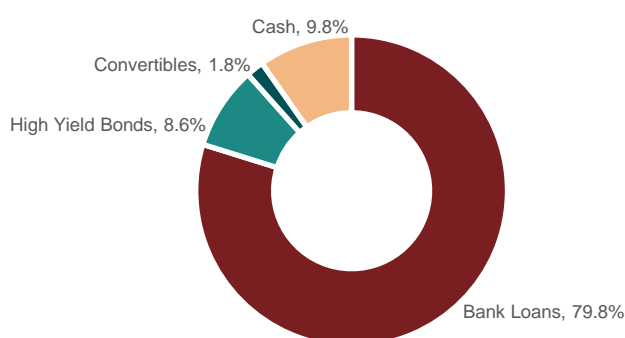


Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * Excluding cash.

The Fund is unconstrained in terms of asset mix, typically investing in either high yield bonds or bank loans. As a result of this, we expect for the portfolio's composition based on security type to change as the Manager allocates to the best value on a sub-asset class basis. Currently, spreads in high yield bonds are broadly tight relative to historical levels, meanwhile spreads in high yield loans are elevated. This dynamic is the primary driver behind the overweight position in loans relative to bonds.

The cash position of 10% is also a reflection of the current environment whereby as the cost of capital for issuers continues to reset, the investment opportunity in the future is likely to be more appealing. We view the relatively high cash holding as keeping powder dry for opportunities that arise as compensation for risk in high yield bonds returns to more attractive levels.

Figure 14. GCOF (AUD) Portfolio Asset Type Mix

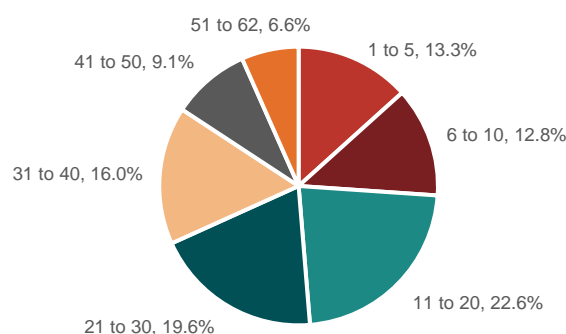


Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023.

Concentration risk is a feature of the Fund that investors need to be cognisant of prior to investing. Diversification is a significant risk factor in credit portfolios due to the asymmetric nature of returns associated with a single debt investment. Returns on bonds and loans are typically capped at a certain rate, however losses can extend as far as zeroing an investment. The greater the diversification in a credit portfolio, the less a portfolio is at risk should a single counterparty default. A passive market strategy that invests in an index of thousands of bonds is subject to significantly lesser impact when it comes to one issuer defaulting.

GCOF is an actively managed credit strategy that invests in a select number of debt securities with the largest single issuer exposure representing 3.1% of deployed funds as at 30 September 2023. The negative impact on returns from counterparty default would be more severe, however taking on this risk is what allows the Fund to generate alpha versus the benchmark.

Figure 15. GCOF (AUD) Portfolio Issuer Concentration Grouped Largest to Smallest *

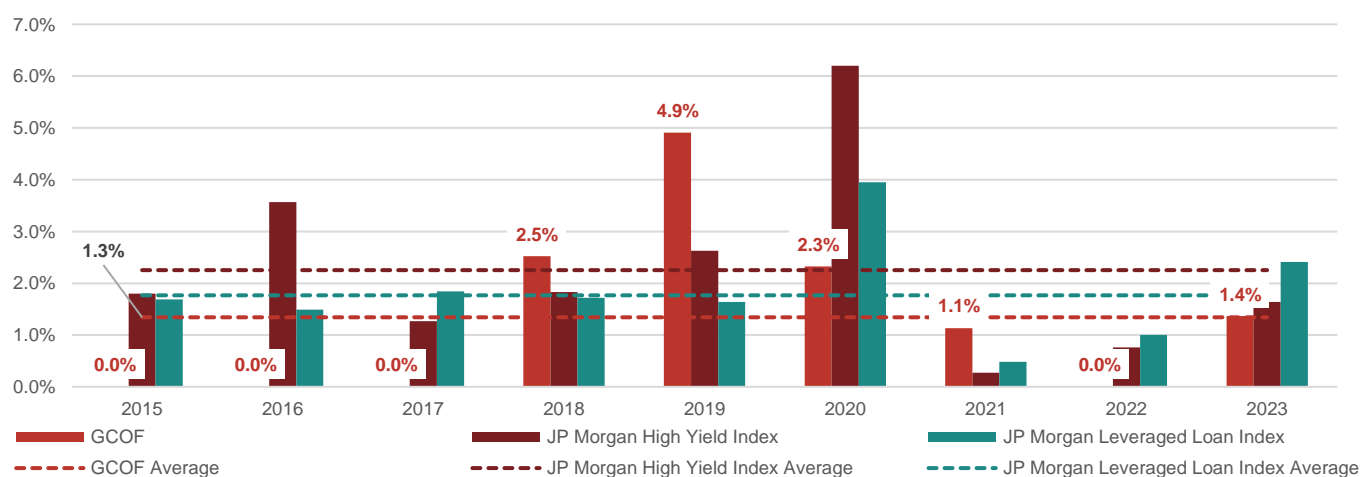


Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * Excluding cash.

Since GCOF's inception in January 2015, the Fund has demonstrated a default rate less than that of high yield and loan markets, along with recovery rates in excess of both markets. The Fund has an average default rate of 1.34% and an average recovery rate of 62.55%, resulting in an approximate average loss given default rate of 0.50%. This is contrasted with an average LGD of 1.44% for the JP Morgan High Yield Bond Index and 0.80% for the JP Morgan First Lien Leverage Loan Index.

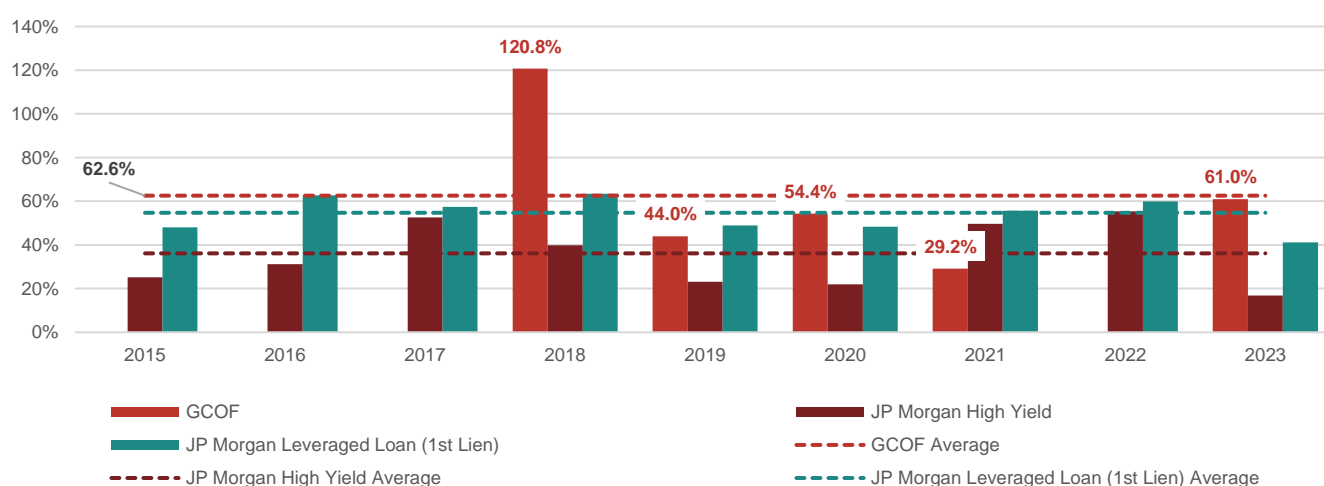
The lower default rate than the market is a function of superior credit selection whereby the Fund is allocating to better performing issuers than the market. The higher recovery rate can be attributed to two main features: (1) KKR are an active and large participant that has the capability to dictate favourable terms in the instance of a workout; and (2) The majority of the portfolio (91.9% excluding cash) is senior secured, resulting in the highest possible recovery in an event of default as subordinated capital such as equity and unsecured debt is first to meet losses.

Figure 16. Historical Default Rates *



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * 2023 includes first two quarters only.

Figure 17. Historical Recovery Rates *



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * 2023 includes first two quarters only.

Excluding cash, the average individual investment size is 1.49% with the largest being 3.06%. Of the Fund's 67 individual exposures, only four constitute 0.5% or less of deployed capital. This reinforces the conviction the Manager has in each of the Fund's holdings. Despite the low number of holdings, there is positively no relatively excessive overweight position in any single investment.

The weighted average yield of the portfolio as at 30 September 2023 is 9.36% and there is similarly banding around the average as displayed in Figure 18, underscored by only 7.2% of the portfolio having a yield to worst of greater than 12.5%.

Figure 18. Individual Investment Exposure *



Source: BondAdviser, KKR. As at 30 September 2023. * Excluding cash.

Fund Governance

There have been **no material changes** to fund governance since our last report.

The structure of the Trust has not changed and is outlined in our initiation report (see page 18 of [GCOF \(AUD\) Initiation Report – 8 September 2022](#)).

Quantitative Analysis

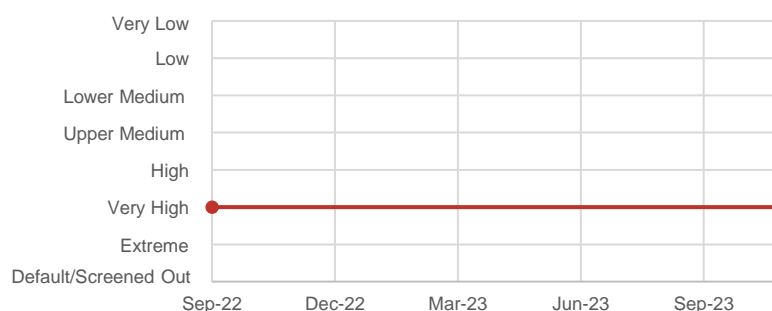
To quantitatively analyse the expected performance of GCOF's (AUD) underlying portfolio, we simulate the portfolio's expected performance in both a benign environment (Scenario 1) and a distressed environment (Scenario 2). In Scenario 1, the portfolio performs as expected, generating a median expected gross return of 7.86%, noting this figure is heavily impacted by the ~10% cash holding. The invested portion of the portfolio has an average expected return of 8.71%. The highest expected gross return across 10,000 simulations in the 2018 scenario is 10.72%, however results are dispersed even in a Goldilocks-like environment with 1% of modelled returns equal to or lower than 4.22%. This is a function of the Fund's concentration as even one poorly-performing bond would have a noticeable impact on the overall return. This is relative to a portfolio of 2,000 holdings whereby a single default is benign to the overall return.

This feature is magnified in Scenario 2, the GFC-like environment whereby the dispersion in expected returns jumps from a standard deviation of 1.3% to 2.5%. In a 2009 backdrop, the average expected gross return in the distressed backdrop is 0.83% and the 99% VaR gross return is -5.12%. While expected returns vary from a maximum of 8.35% to a minimum of -9.05%, the outcomes could be far more material.

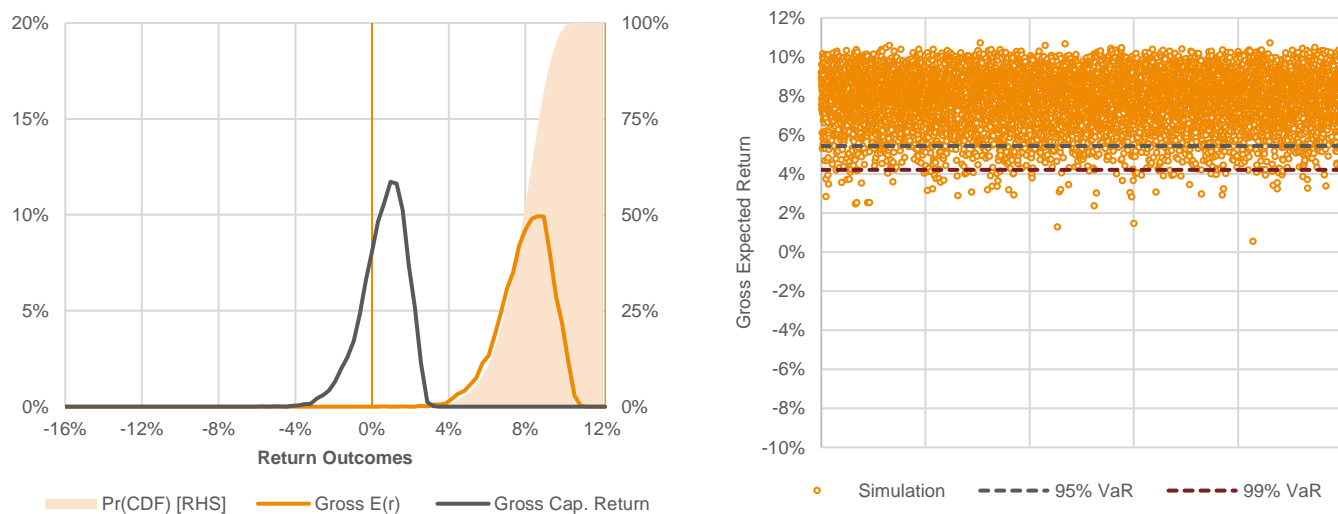
There are three primary drivers in a credit portfolio that generate the ultimate results of our quantitative analysis being credit quality/rating, seniority, and diversification. The portfolio consists of 67 individual assets with most of which constituting a 1-3% position of the portfolio. This is relatively concentrated and each individual adverse outcome has an impact on the modelled returns of the portfolio. Credit quality of the portfolio is ostensibly weak. The large majority of the portfolio is rated B or lower and our modelling punitively uses the lowest credit rating across the three major rating agencies. The lower the credit rating, the greater the likelihood of default applied to respective securities. Positively, nearly all of the Fund is invested in senior secured securities, which have the priority claim in an event of default. The more senior a security, the greater the expected recovery in an event of default. The ~92% weighting to senior secured investments works to partially offset the impacts of defaults from a relatively concentrated portfolio with a B2/B- average credit rating. The portfolio's expected outcomes in both a benign and a distressed environment are in line with a B-rated portfolio, subsequently we reiterate the Fund's risk score of **'Very High'**.

It is worth noting that these modelled outcomes do not take into account two key factors that would likely drive better results. These unaccounted-for elements are: (1) the Manager's ability to expertly select securities via extensive due diligence to arrive at investments in securities that have mis-allocated credit ratings from rating agencies; and (2) KKR has extensive experience in working with defaulting borrowers to restructure and ensure the ultimate repayment of the issuer's bonds and loans. This is emphasised by the materially lower default rate versus the market along with the higher recovery rate.

Figure 19. Risk Score

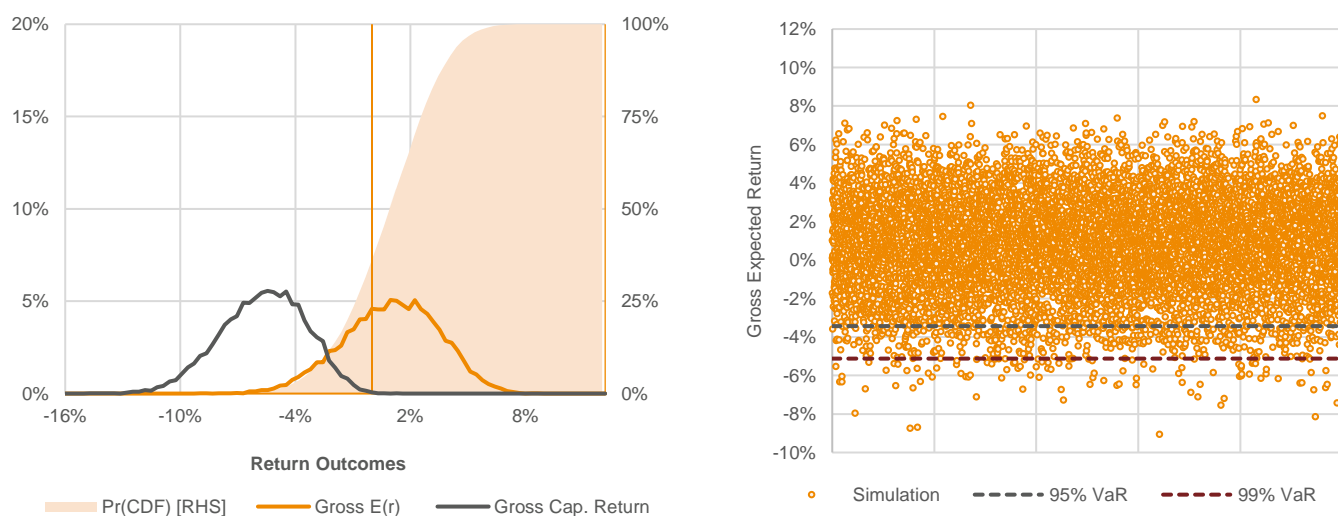


Scenario 1. Baseline Asset Assessment



Source: BondAdviser Estimates as of 30 September 2023 portfolio. Excludes impact of management and origination fees. Gross capital returns excludes the value of coupons/income and is only modelling impairment or loss given default, based on historical credit data from Moody's. Impact of traded price is not simulated. For a more detailed explanation of the methodology, please [contact](#) BondAdviser.

Scenario 2. Stressed Asset Assessment



Source: BondAdviser Estimates as of 30 September 2023 portfolio. Excludes impact of management and origination fees. Gross capital returns excludes the value of coupons/income and is only modelling impairment or loss given default, based on historical credit data from Moody's. Impact of traded price is not simulated.

Reporting History

[GCOF \(AUD\) Initial Report – 8 September 2022](#)

Alternative Investment Fund Research Methodology

[Click here to view](#)

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