Dollar Asset Holding and Hedging Around the Globe

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RESEARCH QUESTION

- US dollar has been the dominant currency in the past century.

- Studies of international finance often take stance on agents' FX activities:
  - Exchange rate determination, e.g., Koijen and Yogo (2020), Liao and Zhang (2020), Camanho et al. (2022), Bräuer and Hau (2022).

  - Dollar dominance, e.g., He et al. (2016), Coppola et al. (2023).

  - US monetary policy spillover, e.g. Gourinchas et al. (2019), Jiang et al. (2021), Giovanni et al. (2021).

- Yet data on dollar asset holdings and hedging behaviors are scattered.

- This paper: **Which foreign investors hold USD securities and how do they manage their FX exposure?**

APPROACH

- Data challenge: to analyze USD holding and hedging relative to investor's portfolio.
    - Typical sources (TIC, CPIS) track only aggregate holdings of securities issued by US residents.

    - **Our approach:** hand-collect company filings and industry statistics to track, by country and sector, overall portfolio size and USD holdings and hedging.

Data coverage

- Complete portfolio, including holding and hedging of USD debt vs. equity:
  - **Insurance: 31 countries.**
  - **Pension: 19 countries.**
  - **Mutual funds: 64 countries.**
  - Banks: 48 countries.

- Total USD holding by debt vs. equity:
  - Hedge funds: 53 countries.
  - The official sector: 237 countries and regions.
  - The non-financial sector: 56 countries

Details

Approach

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  - Typical sources (TIC, CPIS) track only aggregate holdings of securities issued by US residents.
  - **Our approach:** hand-collect company filings and industry statistics to track, by country and sector, overall portfolio size and USD holdings and hedging.

- Modeling challenge: to rationalize investors' behavior in an economic framework.
  - No existing framework on allocation when facing joint decision of domestic asset vs. USD asset vs. hedging.
  - **Our approach:** construct mean-variance optimal portfolio with three types of returns, and take model predictions to data.

KEY RESULTS

- Three stylized facts:
  - Foreign investors show increasing preference for USD securities.
  - There is substantial amount of hedging in actively-managed industries post-GFC despite rising hedging cost.
  - Hedging behaviors exhibit heterogeneity across geographies.

Key results

- Three stylized facts:
  - Foreign investors show increasing preference for USD securities.
  - There is substantial amount of hedging in actively-managed industries post-GFC despite rising hedging cost.
  - Hedging behaviors exhibit heterogeneity across geographies.

- Mean-variance preference fits hedging patterns in the time-series but not the cross-section:
  - Hedging trades off FX return with portfolio variance reduction, which depends on relative covariance and allocation to domestic vs. USD assets.
  - Time-series: investors' post-GFC USD holding and hedging broadly consistent with model predictions w.r.t. higher expected USD asset returns.
  - Cross-section: investors in low interest rate countries hedge more, opposite to model predictions w.r.t. expected FX returns.

Key results

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    - Cross-section: investors in low interest rate countries hedge more, opposite to model predictions w.r.t. expected FX returns.

- To fully rationalize data, need (1) hedging demand shocks that vary across countries and (2) segmented and upward-sloping hedging supply.
    - Cross-country hedging contributes to the cross-section of CIP deviations.
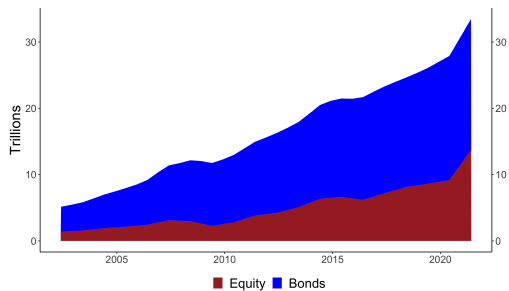
Foreign holding of USD securities

Estimated total · TIC · CPIS (US) · CPIS (USD)
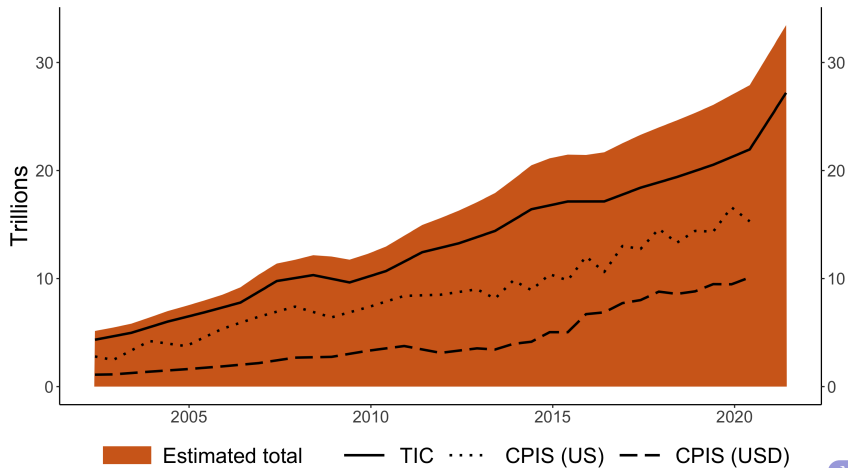
Foreign USD holding by security type

Foreign-held USD bonds and equity as share of total outstanding

Foreign-issued bond

12 currencies: AUD, CAD, CHF, DKK, EUR, GBP, JPY, NOK, SEK, CLP, ILS, TWD.

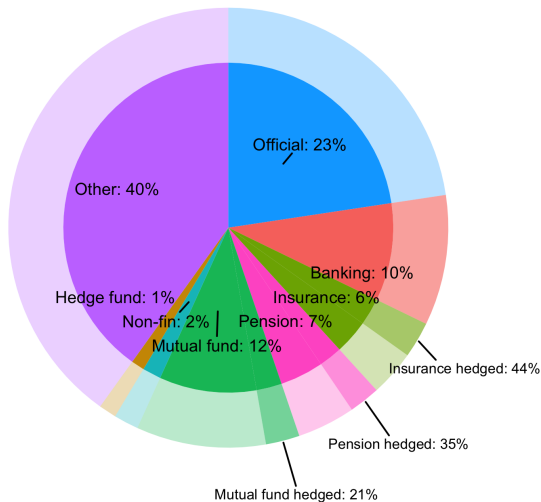|	Share: USD in Portfolio		Share: USD in Foreign	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indicator: Crisis	0.69**		2.8*	
	(0.31)		(1.4)	
Indicator: Post-Crisis	7.7***		6.6***	
	(0.85)		(1.1)	
Counter by Quarter		0.23***		0.18***
		(0.01)		(0.02)
Currency X Industry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,449	1,449	1,082	1,082
R^2	0.78	0.84	0.70	0.71

Global share of USD

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Global share of USD

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FACT 2: THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF HEDGING IN ACTIVELY-MANAGED INDUSTRIES POST-GFC

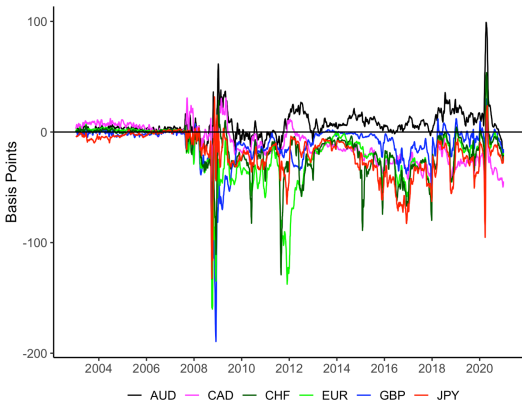**Foreign holding of USD by industry and hedging status, June 2020**

Official: 23%

Banking: 10%

Insurance: 6%

Insurance hedged: 44%

Pension: 7%

Pension hedged: 35%

Mutual fund hedged: 21%

Mutual fund: 12%

Non-fin: 2%

Hedge fund: 1%

Other: 40%

Quick aside: cost of hedging

- CIP: $r_{t,\tau}^{\$} = r_{t,\tau}^{c} - (f_{t,\tau} - s_t)$.

- CIP basis:
  $x_{t,\tau}^{c,\$} = r_{t,\tau}^{\$} - [r_{t,\tau}^{c} - (f_{t,\tau} - s_t)]$.

- Or $f_{t,\tau} - s_t = (r_{t,\tau}^{c} - r_{t,\tau}^{\$}) + x_{t,\tau}^{c,\$}$.

- Exchange rates: unit of local currency per USD.

- A more negative x:
  - Increases the cost of hedging from dollars into local currency.
  - Decreases the cost of hedging from local currencies back to dollars.

Three-month IBOR-based CIP basis

Fact 2 cont.: hedging despite rising hedging cost

12 currencies: AUD, CAD, CHF, DKK, EUR, GBP, JPY, NOK, SEK, CLP, ILS, TWD.

| | Hedge Ratio | | Unhedged USD alloc | Hedge Ratio |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indicator: Crisis	0.052***	0.079***	0.026*	
	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.014)	
Indicator: Post-Crisis	0.160***	0.147***	0.066***	
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.011)	
CIP 3M Basis Qtr Avg				-0.041**
				(0.015)
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R^2	0.07	0.86	0.70	0.91

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2017-2020 average annual hedging cost across insurers and pensions: **$2.7B**.

Fact 3: Hedging behaviors exhibit heterogeneity across geographies
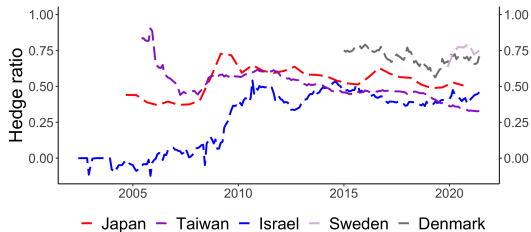
(A) **Insurance**
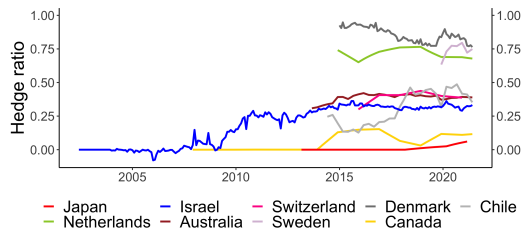
(B) **Pensions**

MODEL ENVIRONMENT

- Two assets: local-currency asset (lb) and USD asset ($\$b$).

  - $rx_{t+1}^{lb} = r_{t+1}^{lb} - rf_t$.

  - $rx_{t+1}^{\$b} = r_{t+1}^{\$b} - rf_t^{\$}$.

Model environment

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  - $rx_{t+1}^{lb} = r_{t+1}^{lb} - rf_t.$

  - $rx_{t+1}^{\$b} = r_{t+1}^{\$b} - rf_t^{\$}.$

- Foreign investor cannot earn $rx_{t+1}^{\$b}$ without buying the USD asset; the local-currency return on holding USD asset depends on currency hedging.

  - $rx_{t+1}^{\$b,NH} = r_{t+1}^{\$b} + \Delta s_{t+1} - rf_t \equiv rx_{t+1}^{\$b} + rx_{t+1}^{FX}.$

  - $rx_{t+1}^{\$b,H} = r_{t+1}^{\$b} + (f_t - s_t) - rf_t = rx_{t+1}^{\$b} + x_t.$

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- Foreign investor therefore faces three types of returns:

  - $rx_{t+1}^{lb}.$

  - $rx_{t+1}^{\$b}.$

  - $rx_{t+1}^{FX}.$

  - x_t is not a return but determined at time t.

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Investor's problem

The investor chooses w_{US} and w_{NH} to maximize his utility:

$$\max_{w_{US}, w_{NH}} \mathbb{E} rx_{t+1}^P - \frac{\gamma}{2} \mathbb{V}(rx_{t+1}^p),$$

where rx_{t+1}^P is the log excess return of the entire portfolio given by:

$$rx_{t+1}^P = (1 - w_{US}) rx_{t+1}^{lb} + w_{US} rx_{t+1}^{\$b} + w_{NH} rx_{t+1}^{FX} + (w_{US} - w_{NH}) x_t.$$

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From FOC:

$$w_{US}^* = \frac{(\sigma_{\$b,FX} - \sigma_{lb,FX})(\overline{rx}^{FX} - x - \gamma \sigma_{lb,FX}) + \sigma_{FX}^2 (\overline{rx}^{lb} - \overline{rx}^{\$b} - x + \gamma \sigma_{lb,\$b} - \gamma \sigma_{lb}^2)}{\gamma(\sigma_{lb,FX} - \sigma_{\$b,FX})^2 - \gamma \sigma_{FX}^2 \sigma_{lb-\$b}^2},$$

$$w_{NH}^* = \frac{\gamma \sigma_{lb,FX}(\sigma_{\$b}^2 - \sigma_{lb,\$b}) + \gamma \sigma_{\$b,FX}(\sigma_{lb}^2 - \sigma_{lb,\$b}) + (\sigma_{lb,FX} - \sigma_{\$b,FX})(\overline{rx}^{lb} - \overline{rx}^{\$b} - x) - (\overline{rx}^{FX} - x)\sigma_{lb-\$b}^2}{\gamma(\sigma_{lb,FX} - \sigma_{\$b,FX})^2 - \gamma \sigma_{FX}^2 \sigma_{lb-\$b}^2}$$

INTUITION ON HEDGING HOLDING w_{US} CONSTANT

- Holding w_{US}^* constant, changing w_{NH}^* changes hedge ratio (HR): $1 - \frac{w_{NH}^*}{w_{US}^*}$.
  - In general, variance of returns $>>$ covariance of returns.
  - $\frac{\partial HR}{\partial \overline{rx}^{FX}} < 0$.
  - $\frac{\partial HR}{\partial \sigma_{lb,FX}} > 0$.
  - $\frac{\partial HR}{\partial \sigma_{\$b,FX}} > 0$.

- Hedging trades-off $\overline{rx}^{FX}$ with effect on portfolio variance.
  - Low $\overline{rx}^{FX}$, highly positive $\sigma_{lb,FX}$ or $\sigma_{\$b,FX} \Rightarrow$ hedge.
  - High $\overline{rx}^{FX}$, highly negative $\sigma_{lb,FX}$ or $\sigma_{\$b,FX} \Rightarrow$ don't.

DERIVING MODEL PREDICTIONS

- Objective: how does hedging change as investment opportunities change?

- Complication: w_{US}^*, w_{NH}^* are functions of the same expected returns and covariance.
    - $\frac{\partial HedgeRatio}{\partial rx} \propto -\frac{\partial w_{NH}}{\partial rx} \cdot w_{US} + \frac{\partial w_{US}}{\partial rx} \cdot w_{NH}$.
        - Optimal HR can depend on w_{US}.

    - $\frac{\partial w_{US}^*}{\partial \overline{rx}^{FX}} = f(\sigma_{lb,FX} - \sigma_{\$b,FX})$.
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    - Relative strength of covariance is what matters.

- We estimate $\frac{\partial w_{NH}}{\partial rx}, \frac{\partial w_{US}}{\partial rx}$:
  - Functions of covariance.
  - Assuming stationarity, estimate using realized returns from 2002/06 to 2021/06.
  - Bond: 1M holding excess returns on 10Y sovereign.
  - Equity: 1M holding excess return on major stock index.
  - 12 currencies: 9 AE, 3 EM; for whom we have good hedging data.

Comparative statics on USD hedge ratio (HR)

	Bond	Equity
$\overline{rx^{\$b}} - \overline{rx^{lb}} \uparrow$	HR $\uparrow$*	HR $\uparrow$*
$\overline{rx}^{FX} \uparrow$	HR $\downarrow$	HR $\downarrow$
$x \uparrow$	HR $\uparrow$	HR $\uparrow$

- Effect of $\overline{rx}^{\$b} - \overline{rx}^{lb} \uparrow$:
  - AE: $w_{US} \uparrow$, w_{NH} also $\uparrow$ but not as fast.
    - * True up until a threshold HR, which is about 80% in bond and 50% in equity.
  - EM: $w_{US} \uparrow$, $w_{NH} \downarrow$.

- Effect of $\overline{rx}^{FX} \uparrow$:
  - AE: $w_{NH} \uparrow$, w_{US} also $\uparrow$ but not as fast.
  - EM: $w_{NH} \uparrow$, $w_{US} \downarrow$.

Threshold HR   Relative covariance

Model predictions

- In the time-series, $\overline{rx}^{\$b}$ changes for all:
  - Post-crisis, expected returns in USD bond and USD stocks are more favorable.

    $\Rightarrow$ All countries increase total USD allocation, increase USD hedge ratio.

- In the cross-section, $\overline{rx}^{FX}$ differs:
  - Deviation from UIP: currencies where $rf^{\$} > rf$ are expected to have high $\overline{rx}^{FX}$, vice versa.

    $\Rightarrow$ Negative correlation between $rf^{\$} - rf$ and HR.

- CIP basis, x, varies in the time-series and the cross-section:

    $\Rightarrow$ Positive correlation between x and HR.

Expected relative returns

In the data

- In the time series:
  - Total USD allocation $\uparrow$, USD hedge ratio $\uparrow$, $corr(x, HR) < 0$.

- In the cross-section:

	USD hedge ratio			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Diff USD vs. local 3M ibor	0.068***	0.056***	0.071***	0.063***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.013)
CIP basis 3M				-0.060**
				(0.026)
Time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industry	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
$\text{Cov}(rx^{FX}, rx^{asset})$	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	952	952	952	952
R^2	0.16	0.41	0.48	0.48

Reconciling data with mean-variance

- Time series:
    - Total USD allocation ↑, USD hedge ratio ↑: consistent with mean-variance optimization when $E[\overline{rx}^{\$b} - \overline{rx}^{lb}] \uparrow$.

    - $corr(x, HR) < 0$: FX hedging supply not perfectly elastic.

- Cross section:
    - $corr(\overline{rx}^{FX}, HR) > 0$: missing hedging demand shocks that vary across country.
        - VAR considerations, e.g., liability matching.

        - Agency frictions, e.g., mandate.

        - Risk aversion.

    - $corr(x, HR) < 0$: FX hedging supply segmented across country.

    ⇒ mean-variance is good starting point but insufficient.
    - We conjecture on the nature of missing demand drivers: vary in the cross-section.
    - We include supply side and derive further predictions.

INTERMEDIARY'S PROBLEM

The intermediary offers FX derivatives, H_l, to maximize risk-adjusted total return:

$$\max_{H_l} \mathbb{E}[x_l H_l + f(I_l)],$$
$$\text{s.t. } |H_l| + I_l = W_l,$$
$$H_l = A_l \cdot (w_{US} - w_{NH}),$$
$$\sum_l W_l = W$$

- I is all other investments.
- $f(I)$ denotes its risk-adjusted return, net of all regulatory costs other than balance sheet size, e.g., risk-weighted capital requirements.
- x_l is compensation for offering balance-sheet intensive FX derivatives.
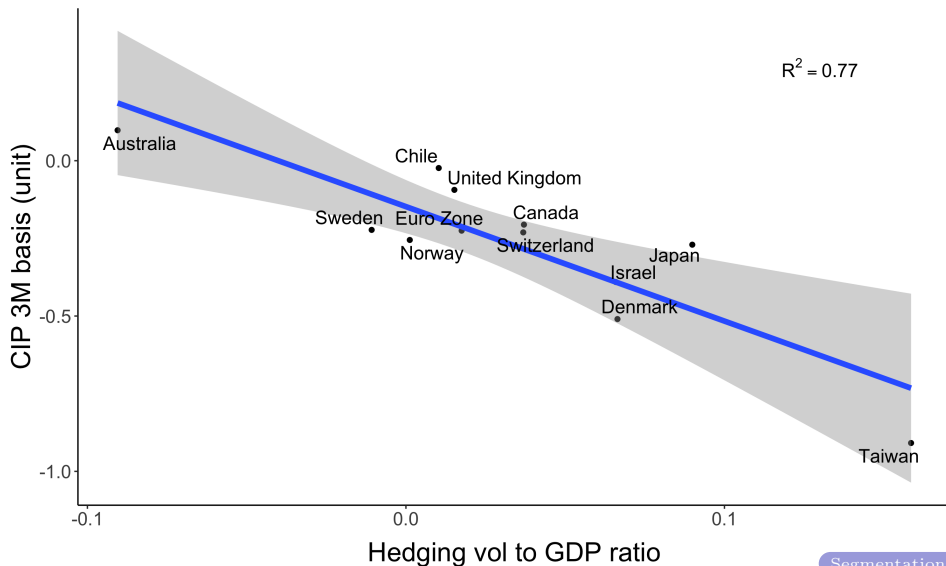- x_l follows the same sign as the net FX derivative position, H_l.

$$|x_l^*| = f'(I_l^*)$$

Assume $f(I) = \theta \log(I) - I$ and $\theta = W$:

$$x_l^* = \frac{H_l^*}{W_l - |H_l^*|}$$

- Time-series: x_l^* increases as H_l increases, as seen in the data.
- Cross-section: CIP basis is not uniform.
    - **Prediction:** The more net FX derivative a country demands relative to the intermediary's balance sheet available for that country, the larger CIP basis is in absolute terms.

CROSS-SECTION OF HEDGING AND CIP BASIS

$R^2 = 0.77$

CIP 3M basis (unit)

Hedging vol to GDP ratio

Australia
Chile
United Kingdom
Sweden Euro Zone
Canada
Norway Switzerland
Japan
Israel
Denmark
Taiwan

Segmentation by GDP

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Conclusions

- Foreign investors hold increasingly more USD securities and they hedge a substantial amount of their USD FX exposure.

- Understanding investors' hedging is important:
    - Hedging incurs substantial financial cost, especially post-GFC.
    - Hedging potentially explains CIP deviations in the cross-section.

- Mean-variance optimization with three-assets emphasizes that hedging depends on relative covariance and on total dollar allocation.

- Investors' hedging is broadly consistent with mean-variance trade-off in the time-series, but not the cross section.
    - Examination of drivers of these deviations invites future research.

Appendix

Data detail 1

Industry	Region / Country	Company filings	Industry or national statistics providers	Start	End	Hedging info start
Insurance	Asia: Japan	11		2004	2020	2004
	Asia: Taiwan	6	Central Bank of the Republic of China	2005	2021	2005
	Europe: Denmark		Danmarks Nationalbank	2015	2021	2015
	Europe: Sweden		Sveriges Riksbank	2014	2021	2019
	Europe: UK		EIOPA	2017	2020	2017
	Europe: Euro 19 countries		EIOPA	2017	2021	–
			SHS	2013	2017	–
	Europe: 9 other EU countries		EIOPA	2017	2021	–
	ROW: Israel		Bank of Israel	2002	2021	2002

Data detail 2

Industry	Region / Country	Company filings	Industry or national statistics providers	Start	End	Hedging info start
Pensions	Asia: Japan	1		2013	2021	2013
	Asia: Australia		APRA, Australian Bureau of Statistics	2004	2021	2013
	Europe: Netherlands	2		2014	2021	2014
	Europe: Denmark		Danmarks Nationalbank	2015	2021	2015
	Europe: Sweden		Sveriges Riksbank	2014	2021	2019
	Europe: Switzerland		Federal Statistical Office	2004	2020	2015
	Europe: UK		Office for National Statistics	2002	2021	–
	NA: Canada	2		2007	2021	2010
	ROW: Israel		Bank of Israel	2002	2021	2002
	ROW: Chile		Superintendencia de Pensiones	2014	2023	2014
	ROW: 13 Latam countries		FIAP	2002	2021	–

Data detail 3

Industry	Region / Country	Company filings	Industry or national statistics providers	Start	End	Hedging info start
Mutual funds	64 countries		Morningstar	2002	2021	2002
Banking	48 countries		BIS Locational Banking Statistics	2002	2021	–
Hedge funds	53 countries		13F, Factset	2002	2021	–
Non-financial	56 countries		CPIS	2002	2020	–
Official sector	237 countries		TIC	2002	2021	–

# DATA: AGGREGATE USD HOLDINGS

Total Foreign Holding of USD Securities

=Foreign USD Holding of U.S. Issuers + Foreign USD Holding of Non-U.S. Issuers

=(TIC Foreign Holding of U.S. Securities

  −TIC Foreign Holdings of Non-USD Securities)

  + (USD Securities Outstanding Outside the U.S.
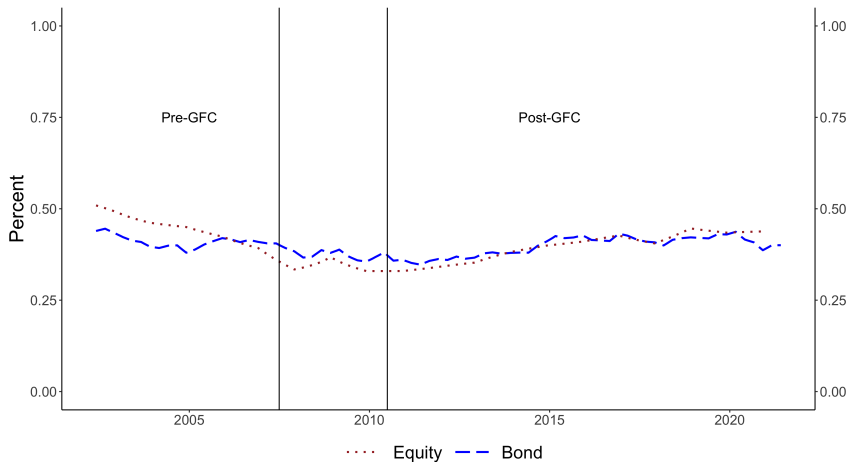
  −U.S. Investors' Cross-border USD Holdings).

Back

INVESTORS DISPROPORTIONATELY HOLD FOREIGN-ISSUED BOND

Share of USD debt and equity in global total
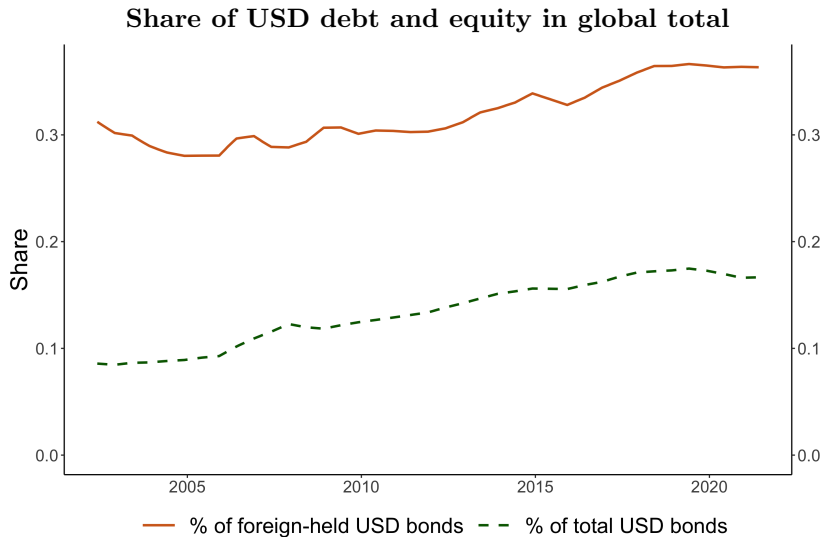
Global share of USD security remains stable

Share of USD debt and equity in global total

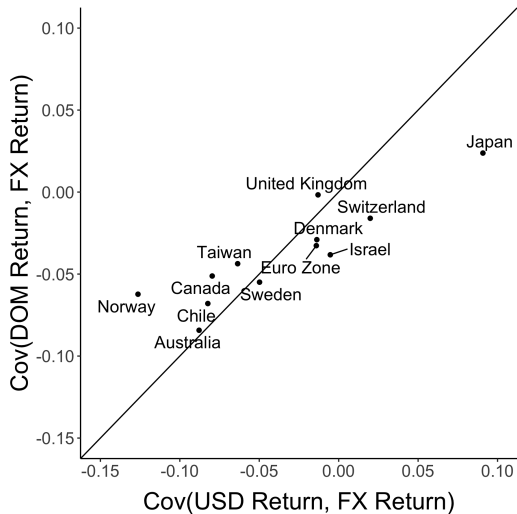# CORRELATION BETWEEN GDP AND BANKS' CROSS-COUNTRY TRADING ASSETS

	Trading Assets			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Citi	Citi	JPM	JPM
	All	Ex China	All	Ex China
GDP	0.073***	0.764***	0.419**	1.29***
	(0.013)	(0.110)	(0.091)	(0.230)
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	120	115	100	95
R^2	0.03	0.27	0.20	0.28

COVARIANCE BETWEEN rx^{FX} AND ASSET RETURNS

Bond
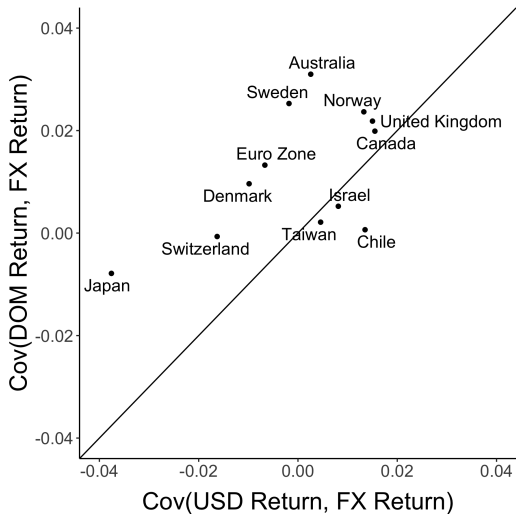
Equity

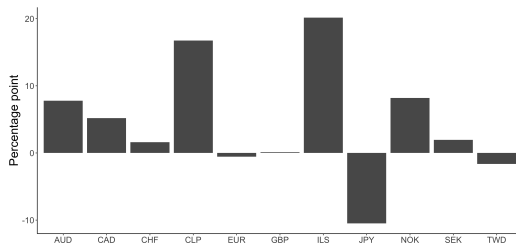# THRESHOLD HR FOR REVERSING $\frac{\partial HR}{\partial rx^{\$b} - rx^{lb}}$

Currency	Bond	Equity
AUD	84%	-
CAD	96%	-
CHF	87%	70%
DKK	81%	85%
EUR	81%	83%
GBP	93%	-
JPY	68%	27%
NOK	94%	-
SEK	82%	97%
CLP	-	-
ILS	-	51%
TWD	-	-

Post-GFC and pre-GFC differential in relative returns between USD and domestic assets

Yield curve slope
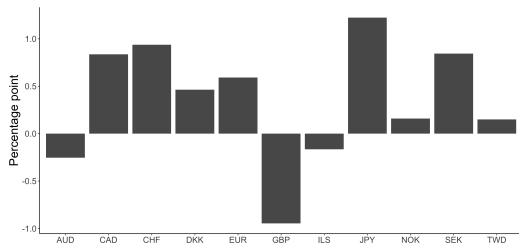
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