Insurance corporations' balance sheets, financial stability and monetary policy

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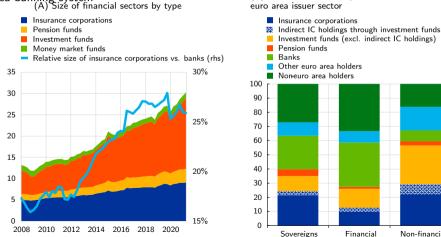
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Size of the insurance sector has grown significantly

Insurance corporations (ICs) play an important role by managing risks for households and firms and by providing financing for sovereigns and the real economy

Sector almost doubled from 5 to 9 EUR trillion between 2008-2021, equivalent to 25% of euro (B) Investor base of long-term debt securities by area banking system
(A) Size of financial sectors by type



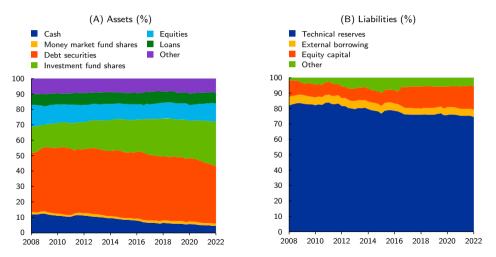
Non-financial

corporations

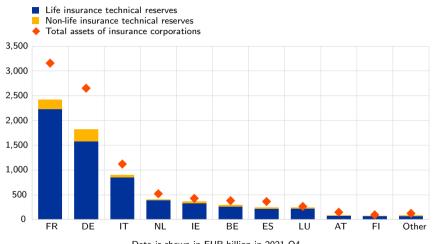
corporations

Composition of euro area insurers' balance sheets

Premiums collected from policy holders are invested in capital markets: mainly long-term bonds, investment fund shares and equity



Size of insurance corporations by country and type of insurance activities



This paper

 Given their business model, monetary policy (MP) is a key element for insurers, but systematic empirical evidence is scarce

Research questions

- How does monetary policy affect the size and composition of ICs balance sheets (Transmission)?
- ▶ What are the financial stability implications of those changes (Risks)?
- We study dynamic responses of asset & liability side balance sheet items and risk-taking metrics (credit, liquidity, duration) to monetary policy
 - ▶ Country-sector data for all 19 euro area countries between 2008 and 2021
 - ▶ High-frequency monetary policy shocks (Jarocinski & Karadi, 2020; Altavilla et al., 2020)
 - Local projections to compute impulse response functions (Jorda, 2005)

Insurance corporations and monetary policy: possible channels

What are the mechanisms explaining changes in ICs' size and behaviour after a monetary policy loosening?

Real channels:

- Insurance demand channel: GDP ↑, household disposable income & demand for IC products ↑ ⇒ Total reserves ↑, IC total assets ↑, ICs' bond & equity investments ↑, firm financing conditions improve
- ▶ ... but "Euler equation": consumption \uparrow , savings $\downarrow \Rightarrow$ less IC product demand \Rightarrow Total reserves \downarrow , Total assets \downarrow

Financial Channels:

- Negative duration gap channel: Under full mark-to-market accounting, positive valuation effects ⇒ Total assets ↑ < Total reserves ↑ ⇒ Capital ↓ and Leverage ↑, portfolio duration ↑ ⇒ long-term yields ↓, financing conditions improve</p>
- Risk-taking/search for yield channel: Cash/Cash buffers ↓, portfolio duration ↑, risky asset holdings/share ↑, capital (requirements) ↑

Results

After a monetary policy loosening:

- ► Total assets & technical reserves increase: Significant increase of ICs' financial intermediation capacity → active transmission of monetary policy
- ► ICs decrease their external borrowing, capital positions improve, leverage falls (≠ negative duration gap channel)
- Portfolio re-balancing consistent with risk-taking channel of monetary policy:
 - ► Credit risk: Less debt and more riskier stocks and fund shares
 - Within bond portfolio: shares of lower-rated debt holdings increase, driven in particular by NFC and RoW assets
 - ...but counter-cyclical shedding of lower-rated sovereign debt
 - Liquidity risk: Lower cash holdings and buffers
 - Duration risk: Share of long term bond holdings increases

Contribution to related literature

Non-banks and monetary policy:

► Hau & Lai (2016); Choi & Kronlund (2017); Elliot et al. (2022); Nelson et al. (2018); Kaufmann (2022); Giuzio et al. (2021); Xiao (2019); Daniel et al. (2021)

Investment behaviour of insurers and its effect on the economy:

 Becker & Ivashina (2015); Domanski, Shin, and Sushko (2017); Carboni and Ellison (2021); Kubitza (2022); Kubitza et al. (2022); Ozdagli & Wang (2019); Chodorow-Reich et al. (2020); Fringuellotti & Santos (2021)

Pro-/counter-cyclical behaviour of insurers:

► Timmer (2018); Koijen et al. (2017, 2021); Fache Rousová & Giuzio (2019)

Outline

Data

Monetary Policy Shock Identification

Local Projection Specification

Results

Main balance sheet aggregates response to MP shocks

Bond portfolio: Sectoral allocation, risk-taking and duration risk

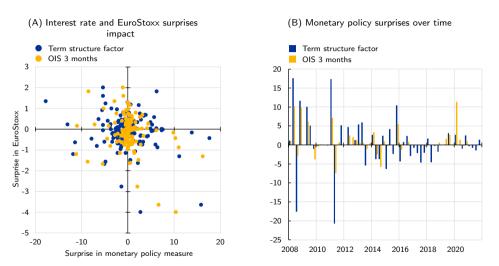
Data Sources

- Quarterly panel dataset: 19 euro area countries, 2008 Q1 2021 Q4
 - Aggregated at the sector-country level
- ▶ Sources: ICs balance sheet data (ICPF/ICB) and Securities Holding Statistics by Sector (SHSS)
 - ► ICPF/ICB: aggregate view at asset/liability balance sheet items
 - ► Structural break in 2016 Q3 when merging ICB and ICPF datasets. Cleaning breaks
 - ▶ SHSS: risk-taking behaviour from securities holdings characteristics
- Data available in market and nominal values
- ► Further variables (GDP, inflation, etc.) from standard ECB sources (SDW)

Monetary Policy Surprises

- ▶ Monetary policy surprises obtained from Altavilla et al. (2019)
 - High-frequency data for different financial assets/indicators around policy announcements by the ECB
- Jaroncinski and Karadi (2020): need to separate genuine monetary policy shocks from information shocks
 - Monetary policy shocks identified as negative co-movement in yield and stock market index changes around GovC announcements
- ▶ To capture surprise changes over whole yield curve, we calculate a "term structure factor" using method by Gürkaynak et al. (2005)
 - ▶ Principal component analysis based on OIS with maturities of 1 week, 1, 3, 6, months, and 1 year, plus changes of German Bund with maturities of 2, 5, and 10 years
 - Include longer end of yield curve to capture effects of unconventional policies during sample period, but results fully robust to short-term and other long-term measures

High-frequency monetary policy surprise measures



Panel (A): High-frequency interest rate changes (in basis points) and corresponding EuroStoxx changes (in percentage points) on all ECB Governing Council meeting days between 2008 and 2021. Panel (B): Cumulative quarterly monetary policy surprises between 2008 and 2021 in basis points.

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Local Projection Specification

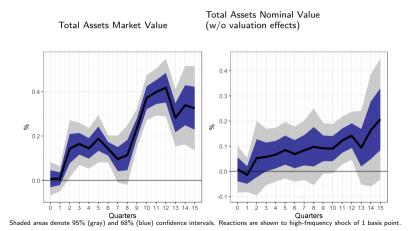
We estimate:

$$y_{i,t+h} = \alpha_i^h + \theta^h Shock_t + \sum_{l=1}^2 \beta_i^h y_{i,t-l} + \sum_{l=1}^2 \gamma_l^h Controls_{i,t-l} + \epsilon_{i,t+h}$$
 (1)

- ...controlling for macroeconomic and financial conditions: GDP growth, inflation, observed Bund yield at maturity 3 years, VSTOXX, 3-year euro area BBB-rated corporate spread, log total assets (unless dependent variable)
- ...controlling for lagged values of the shocks
- Results robust to different lag lengths: we pick 2 lags
- Standard errors clustered at country level
- Dynamics of classic real and financial macroeconomic variables consistent with conventional wisdom on monetary policy classic variables IRFs

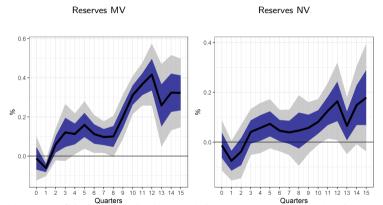
Total Assets (log levels)

Significant increase of IC sector and, thus, financial intermediation capacity after monetary loosening. 10bps shock \Rightarrow EUR 200 bn. *nominal* growth \Leftrightarrow 1.6% of EA GDP after one year



Liabilities (log levels)

Technical reserves rise \Rightarrow more business after MP loosening \Rightarrow consistent with *insurance demand channel*



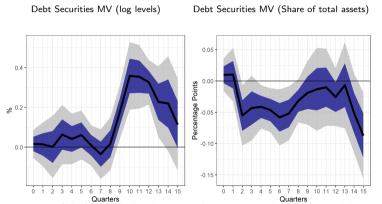
Shaded areas denote 95% (gray) and 68% (blue) confidence intervals. Reactions are shown to high-frequency shock of 1 basis point.





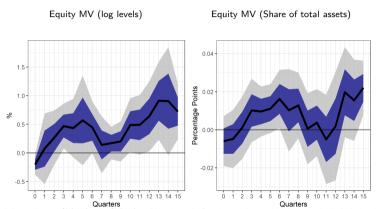
Reg. Tables

Asset Composition: Debt securities.





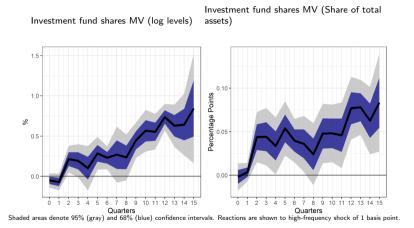
Asset Composition: Equity



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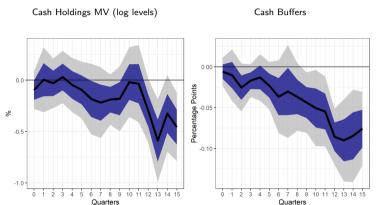
Nominal Value

Asset Composition: Investment fund shares (no MMF)





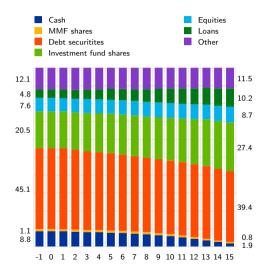
Asset Composition: Cash holdings



Shaded areas denote 95% (gray) and 68% (blue) confidence intervals. Reactions are shown to high-frequency shock of 1 basis point.

Cash + MMF shares

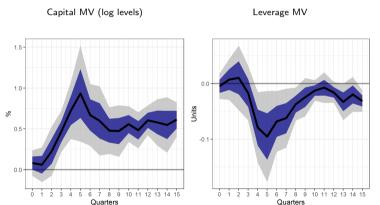
Asset Composition in Market Value (after 10bps loosening)



- ► Holdings in most asset categories increase. More financial intermediation through ICs → active monetary policy transmission
- Re-balancing to higher proportion of riskier stocks and fund shares, and out debt securities
- More liquidity risk-taking: Lower cash holdings and buffers
- Consistent with risk-taking channel of monetary policy

Capital and Leverage

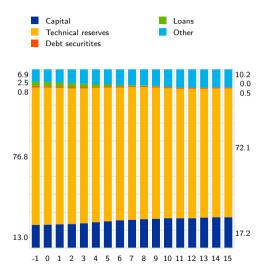
Capital positions improve, leverage falls



Shaded areas denote 95% (gray) and 68% (blue) confidence intervals. Reactions are shown to high-frequency shock of 1 basis point.

Nominal Value

Liabilities Composition in Market Value (after 10bps loosening)



Capital increases, different from negative duration gap channel. Why?

- In (historical) accounting practise, mark-to-market often on asset side only in many jurisdictions (local GAAPs, IFRS4 & 9)
- Higher-risk taking can imply higher capital requirements

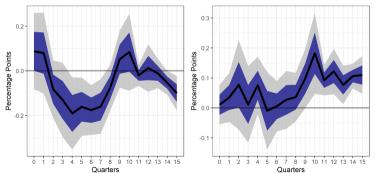
Bond portfolio: sectoral allocation, risk-taking and duration risk

We study the bond portfolio of ICs along three principal breakdowns:

- ▶ Issuer sector: euro area non-financial corporations, financial corporations and government + Rest of the World (All sectors)
- Credit Risk: low rated (BBB + High yield) + Investment Grade
- Duration Risk: holdings with residual maturity over 5 and 10 years for AAA bonds.

Overall bond portfolio

- Bond holdings (% Total Assets NV) using SHSS decrease after MP loosening
- Portfolio share of lower-rated debt securities increases

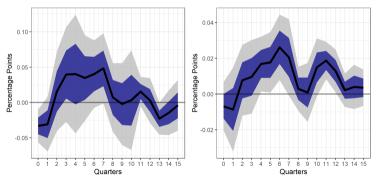


Euro area non-financial corporate bonds

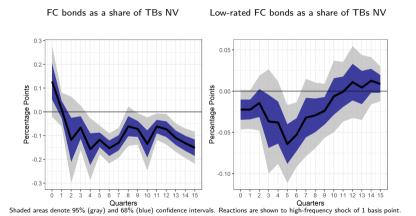
- Increase in (lower-rated) NFC bond holdings after a loosening
- Consistent with risk-taking behaviour: evidence of insurance-based MP transmission channel

NFC bonds as a share of TBs NV

Low-rated NFC bonds as a share of TBs NV



Euro area financial corporate bonds

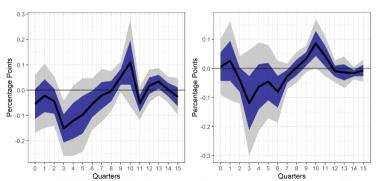


Euro area sovereign bonds

 Sovereign bond holdings fall counter-cyclically after loosening, pointing towards an insurance-sovereign nexus

Gov. bonds as a share of TBs NV

Low-rated Gov. bonds as a share of TBs NV

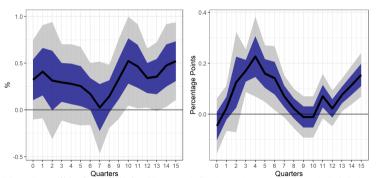


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Gov levels NV

Rest of the World bonds

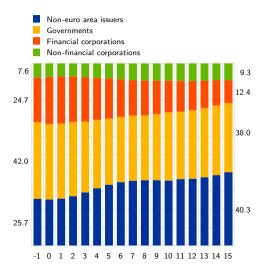






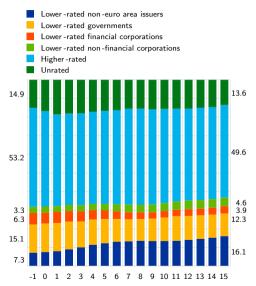
Bond portfolio: Sectoral allocation

after 10bps loosening



- Heterogeneous response of bond holdings depending on the issuer sector
- ➤ Sizeable increase in NFC & RoW bond holdings ⇒ evidence of international risk-taking channel / searching-for-yield abroad
- Counter-cyclical selling of sovereign and financial corporate bond holdings

Bond portfolio: Sectoral allocation and credit risk-taking after 10bps loosening



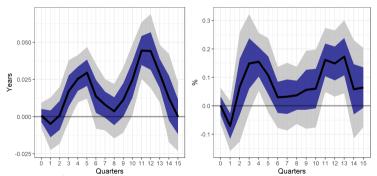
- Rise in the share of lower-rated bonds of around 5 percentage points after 16 quarters
- Driven especially by lower-rated RoW and NFC bonds
- Instead, selling of lower-rated sovereign and financial corporate bonds

Bond portfolio: Duration risk

Duration risk-taking increases after MP loosening

Weighted average residual maturity: AAA Shar Gov. bonds

Share of long term AAA Gov. bond holdings over AAA Gov holdings



Robustness checks and further results

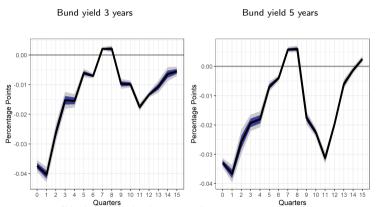
- Sample: results are consistent for longer/shorter sample 2010 Q1 to 2019 Q4 with/without GFC and COVID
- Shocks: Results are robust when using other long and short maturity shocks
- Adding demographic controls in the specification Demographic controls
- ► Adding Euro Area GDP growth (~ capturing time FEs) EA gdp FE
- ightharpoonup Central bank information shock: interest rates $\downarrow \Rightarrow$ Total assets $\downarrow \pmod{\text{shock}}$

Conclusion

- ▶ Monetary policy has macroeconomically-relevant effects on insurers' balance sheets
- After MP loosening:
 - ▶ A pro-cyclical rise in the IC sector's financial intermediation capacity
 - ▶ Portfolio re-balancing consistent with risk-taking channel of monetary policy
 - More risky assets (equity vs. debt), more lower-rated and long-duration bonds, lower cash buffers
 - ▶ But counter-cyclical selling of sovereign and financial corporation bonds
- Low yield environment contributed to build-up of financial stability risks (Grimm et al., 2023; Jiménez et al., 2022):
 - Increased vulnerability of ICs to economic downturn (credit risks) and liquidity shocks (policy lapses, margin calls)
 - Rapidly rising rates as potential trigger, but also possible reversion of some risk-taking

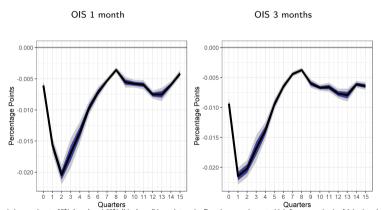
Appendix

Effects of Monetary Policy Shocks



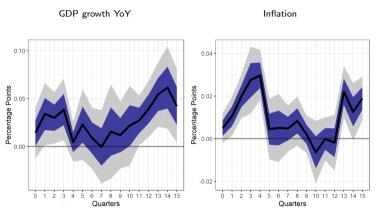
Appendix

Effects of Monetary Policy Shocks

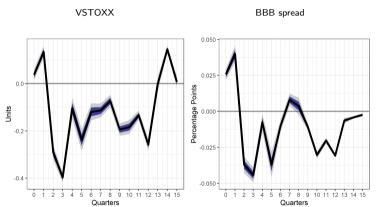


Appendix

Effects of Monetary Policy Shocks



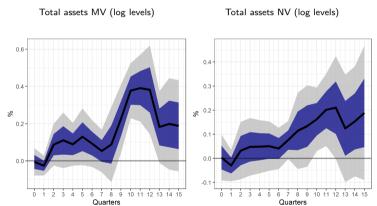
Effects of Monetary Policy Shocks



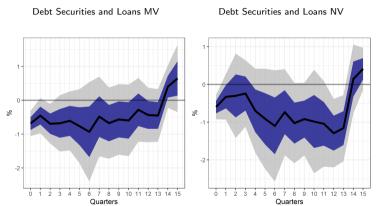


Adding demographic variables to the controls

We add the following demographics controls to the LPs: Life expectancy, old-age dependency ratio and log population

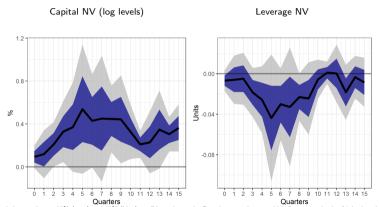


Liabilities (log levels)



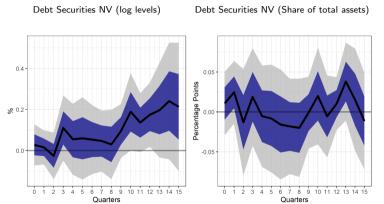


Appendix Capital and Leverage



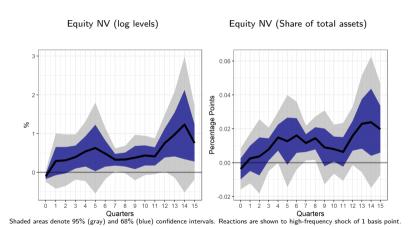


Asset Composition: Debt securities.



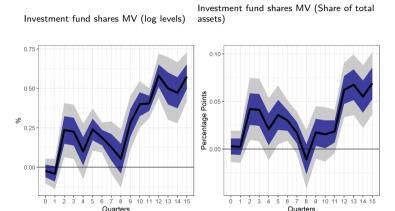


Asset Composition: Equity

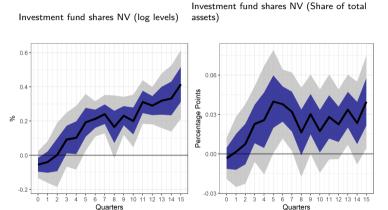




Asset Composition: Investment fund shares ALL

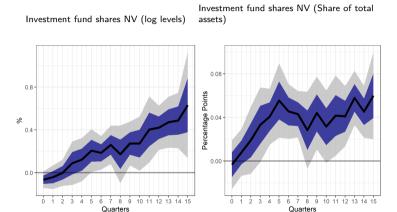


Asset Composition: Investment fund shares ALL



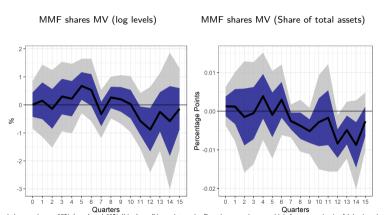


Asset Composition: Investment fund shares (no MMF)

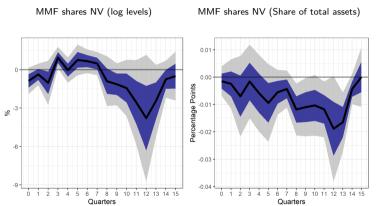




Asset Composition: Money Market Fund share

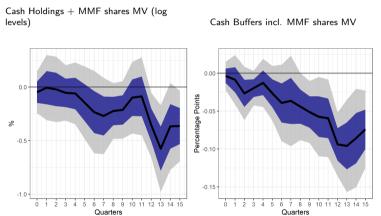


Asset Composition: Money Market Fund share





Cash holdings + MMF shares





${\sf Appendix}$

Descriptive Statistics

Table: As share of total assets %

	mean	median	SD	Max	Min
CashHoldings	8.77	7.40	6.56	30.15	0.79
Loans	4.80	1.58	7.78	45.27	0.05
DebtSec	45.14	44.25	15.88	73.84	10.52
Equity	7.55	6.83	4.63	22.47	0.17
Investmentfunds	20.55	18.02	11.38	51.28	3.26
MMFshares	1.14	0.51	1.29	5.37	0.00

return

Appendix Descriptive Statistics

Table: As share of total liabilities %

	mean	median	SD	Max	Min
DebtSec	0.75	0.38	0.85	4.93	0.00
Loans	2.50	1.70	2.51	23.45	0.00
Reserves	76.84	77.22	6.69	95.14	55.40
Capital	13.01	11.11	6.85	42.51	2.38

return

Appendix Descriptive Statistics

Table: As share of total bond portfolio %

	mean	median	SD	Max	Min
LowRatingALL	29.61	22.93	19.57	84.01	1.09
LowRatingNFC	3.26	2.84	1.79	10.58	0.22
LowRatingFC	6.27	5.22	4.33	25.94	0.08
LowRatingGov	15.34	7.46	17.67	65.75	0.03
${\sf LowRatingRoW}$	7.05	5.46	4.91	28.28	0.83



Regression Tables

Table: Total Assets MV

h	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
TA MV	0.00707	0.00726	0.14091**	0.16294***	0.1421***	0.18447***	0.13894***	0.09243*	0.11058	0.23257***	0.37042***
SD	0.03819969	0.02848034	0.06577634	0.04855976	0.04626120	0.05485507	0.03114967	0.05376127	0.06821751	0.04444107	0.05144403
N	722	703	684	665	646	627	608	589	570	551	532

Table: Total Assets NV

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	TA NV	0.00888	-0.01356	0.05299	0.05801	0.06736	0.08525	0.06925	0.08416	0.09851	0.09214*	0.09128*
	SD	0.04750370	0.03473846	0.07563658	0.05711918	0.05460235	0.05750034	0.05572274	0.06011352	0.07776828	0.05122272	0.04967459
	N	640	621	602	583	564	545	526	507	488	469	450
-												



Regression Table

Table: Total Reserves MV

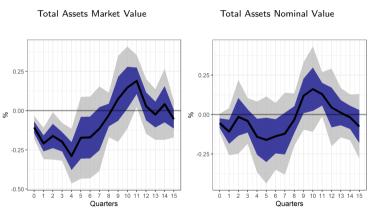
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Т	TR MV	-0.0118	-0.06125***	0.05818	0.11905	0.11118**	0.15703**	0.11046**	0.0954**	0.0985*	0.20006***	0.31023**
	SD	0.05758035	0.02122898	0.04135229	0.07409728	0.05270529	0.06142978	0.04956137	0.04092933	0.05308954	0.05776904	0.04937340
	N	699	679	659	639	620	601	582	563	544	525	506

Table: Total Reserves NV

0 1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8 9 10
TR NV -0.01311 -0.07314* -0.03578 0.04336 0.0602	7 0.07626 0.04872 0.04422 0.04933 0.06343 0.08657*
SD 0.05103652 0.04009946 0.05413147 0.04606254 0.0498	0.047
N 640 621 602 583 564	545 526 507 488 469 450

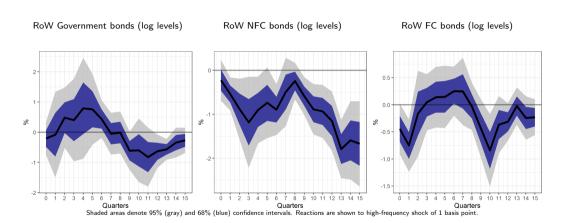


Total Assets (log levels) and News shock





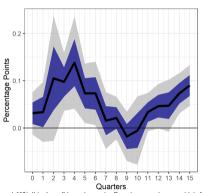
Rest of the World bonds by issuer sector (Levels)



return

Low-rated Rest of the World

Low-rated RoW bonds as a share of TBs

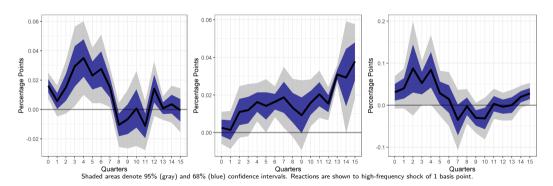


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Low-rated Rest of the World bonds by issuer sector

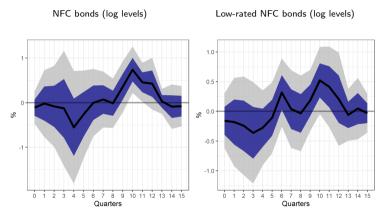
Low-rated RoW Government bonds as a Low-rated RoW NFC bonds as a share of Low-rated RoW FC bonds as a share of share of TBs

TBs



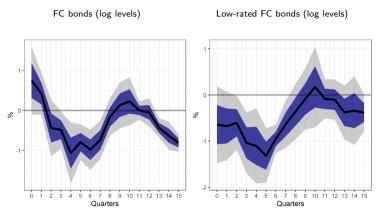
return

NFC bonds (Levels)



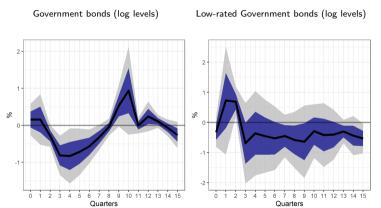


Financial corporation bonds (Levels)





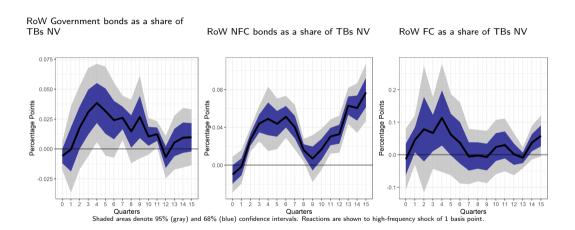
Government bonds (Levels)





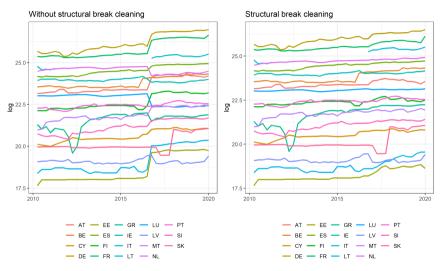
Bond portfolio: Sectoral allocation and risk-taking

Rest of the World bonds by issuer sector

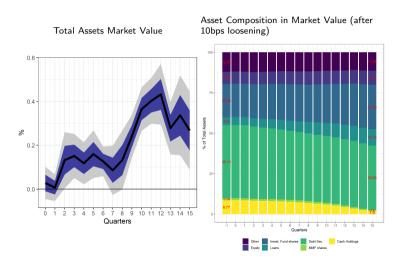


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Structural break in capital



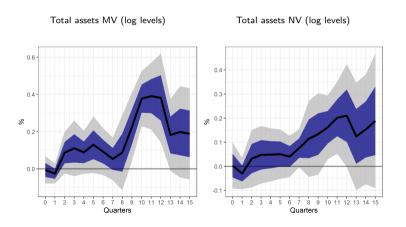
Term structure shock





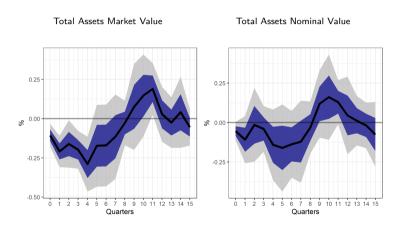
Adding demographic variables to the controls

We add the following demographics controls to the LPs: Life expectancy, old-age dependency ratio and log population





Total Assets (log levels) and News shock





Add EA gdp growth (~ capturing time FEs)

