



VictoryShares Short-Term Bond ETF

QUARTERLY COMMENTARY • Q2 // June 30, 2023

Executive Summary

The quarter began with a regional banking crisis but, by its end, banks had faded from the headlines and the tumult subsided. Come June, the markets had returned their attention to predicting the next policy move by the Federal Reserve (the Fed), where inflation was going and, always in the background, if and when there might be an economic slowdown. Against this backdrop, the VictoryShares Short-Term Bond ETF outperformed its benchmark, the Bloomberg 1-3 Year Credit Index, for the quarter ended June 30, 2023.

Market Update & Commentary

The first quarter closed with the U.S. in the throes of a banking panic that began in regional banks but leaked over to continental Europe in the form of a forced merger of Credit Suisse with UBS. As the second quarter closed, the banking crisis was forgotten and back to the forefront was how to interpret three common harbingers of difficult economic times: rising interest rates, high inflation, and a recession that—seemingly—has loomed on the horizon for some time.

Federal Reserve policy held center stage as the second quarter progressed. By the June meeting, the market was ready to welcome and indeed had come to expect that the Fed would finally pause its hiking campaign; this is what it got, as the Federal Open Market Committee kept rates at 5.15%. But the accompanying hawkish commentary disquieted many, and Chairman Powell's insistence over the ensuing weeks that the Committee was firm in its willingness to hike again if inflation should not abate persuaded many that the Fed may not be done tightening after all. The shift in expectations is evident in the market's pricing of the federal funds rate for January 31, 2024. At the end of the first quarter, the consensus was 4.17%, indicating widespread expectations of rate cuts in the latter months of 2023. By the end of Q2, the implied rate had jumped to 5.29%, revealing that the market believed the Fed could hike again. However grudgingly, the market has come to admit that rates will probably go higher in the near term, rather than lower, and that, if they go higher, they will likely stay higher for longer. How much longer is anyone's guess, but the numbers to watch are those involving inflation. The Fed wants inflation back at or below 2% and, while headline inflation is well off its peak, core CPI remains stubbornly above 5%. As long as core CPI is elevated, the Fed is likely to keep monetary policy restrictive, and this could be for a while.

Markets whipsawed—sometimes violently—from April to June, but little of this turmoil leaked into the corporate bond market. Corporate credit spreads tightened during the quarter across all rating categories. Still, performance across the major fixed income asset classes during the quarter was mixed as tighter credit spreads in both investment grade and high yield corporate credit were partially offset by an increase in yields along the Treasury curve.

- The Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index returned -0.8% during the quarter.

	Yield (%)	Spreads (bps)			Returns (%)	
		3/30/2023	6/30/2023	Δ (+/-)	3M	1YR
Investment Grade (Moody's Ratings)						
U.S. Treasury	4.4	0	0	0	(1.4)	(2.1)
U.S. Aggregate	4.8	56	49	-7	(0.8)	(0.9)
U.S. Credit	5.4	130	113	-17	(0.3)	1.4
Corporate	5.5	140	122	-18	(0.3)	1.5
Aa	4.8	70	60	-10	(0.7)	(0.0)
A	5.3	120	103	-17	(0.4)	0.8
Baa	5.8	169	150	-19	(0.1)	2.5
Crossover	6.7	265	226	-39	0.6	6.1
High Yield (Moody's Ratings)						
U.S. Corporate High Yield	8.6	469	392	-77	1.7	9.1
Ba	7.1	300	251	-49	0.9	8.1
B	8.7	492	400	-92	1.9	9.9
Caa	13.2	1015	837	-178	4.2	9.4
Ca-D	23.1	3636	1,805	1,831	11.5	18.7
Structured Product						
U.S. MBS	4.8	59	51	-7	(0.6)	(1.5)
ABS	5.5	84	68	-16	(0.1)	1.2
CMBS	5.7	142	134	-8	(0.6)	(1.7)

Source: Bloomberg

- Investment grade (IG) corporate bonds returned -0.3% on a yield increase of 30 basis points (commonly abbreviated "bps," with each basis point equal to 1/100th of a percentage point), to 5.5%. Investment grade credit spreads tightened 18 bps to 122 bps, led by bonds rated A and BBB.
- Corporate high yield bonds were up 1.7% to 8.6% as a decline in credit spreads more than offset a higher Treasury curve. High yield spreads fell 77 bps during the quarter.
- Asset-backed securities (ABS) performed best across structured product categories, returning -0.1%. Agency mortgage-backed securities (MBS) and collateralized mortgage-backed securities (CMBS) lagged, with both down 0.6%.

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Portfolio Performance & Positioning

During the quarter, we increased our allocation to the banking sector, as well as other corporates and asset-backed securities. We also reduced our positions in high yield, and added Treasuries.

Contributors

- Best performers were retailers, real estate investment trusts (REITs), banking, wireless and bank loans.
- From a credit perspective, our allocation to high yield and BBB-rated bonds provided the best performance, as did being underweight single-A bonds.
- Allocation and selection added 49 bps to performance. Duration added 28 bps to performance, as the Fund's portfolio is more laddered than the index, which is concentrated in the 2- to 3-year maturity range.

Detractors

- Sectors that detracted from performance included other financial, tobacco, Treasuries, construction machinery, and transportation services.
- From a credit perspective, AA-rated bonds performed the worst.

ANNUALIZED RATE OF RETURN (%)

VictoryShares Short-Term Bond ETF (USTB)	QTR	YTD	1YR	3YR	5YR	Since Inception Oct 24, 2017	Expense Ratio (%)	
							Gross	Net
Net Asset Value (NAV)	0.84	2.33	3.32	0.97	2.36	2.08		
Closing Market Price	0.74	2.23	3.33	0.85	2.31	2.08	0.36	0.35
Indexes								
Bloomberg 1-3 Year Credit Index	0.11	1.44	1.39	-0.37	1.58	—		

Past performance does not guarantee future results. The performance data quoted represents past performance and current performance may be lower or higher. The investment return and principal value will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than the original cost. To obtain performance information current to the most recent month-end, visit www.victoryshares.com. ETF shares are bought and sold at market price (not NAV) and are not individually redeemed from the Fund. Brokerage commissions will reduce returns. Market price returns are based on the price of the last reported trade on the Fund's primary

exchange. If you trade your shares at another time, your return may differ. Returns include reinvestment of dividends and capital gains. Performance for periods greater than one year is annualized. Fee waivers and/or expense reimbursements were in place for some or all periods shown, without which Fund performance would have been lower. Net expense ratio reflects the contractual waiver and/or reimbursement of management fees through October 31, 2023. Index performance is shown for illustrative purposes only. Indexes are unmanaged and one cannot invest directly in an index.





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SECTOR WEIGHTING (%)

Sector	USTB	Bloomberg Credit (1-3 Y)
ABS	30.7	–
CMBS*	5.8	–
Finance	27.4	36.7
Government Related	4.9	20.0
Industrials	23.1	39.2
Treasury	3.6	–
Utilities	2.7	4.1
Cash	1.0	–
Unassigned	0.7	–

*Commercial Mortgage-Backed Securities

FUND TOP 10 HOLDINGS

	Weighting (%)
US Government	3.60
Fordr 2023-1	0.77
Omega Healthcare Investors	0.76
Standard Chartered Plc	0.74
Wflf 2023-1	0.68
NRG Energy Inc.	0.67
Vcu 2023-1	0.67
Var Energi ASA	0.66
Celanese Corp.	0.65
Barclays Bank Plc	0.64

Carefully consider a fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses before investing. To obtain a prospectus or summary prospectus containing this and other important information, visit www.vcm.com/prospectus. Read it carefully before investing.

All investing involves risk, including the potential loss of principal. The Fund has the same risks as the underlying securities traded on the exchange throughout the day. Redemptions are limited, and commissions are often charged on each trade. ETFs may trade at a premium or discount to their net asset value. Fixed income securities are subject to interest rate, inflation, credit and default risk. The bond market is volatile. Bonds and bond funds will decrease in value as interest rates rise and vice versa. Credit risk refers to the possibility that debt issuers may not be able to make principal and interest payments or may have their debt downgraded by ratings agencies. High yield securities may be more volatile, be subject to greater levels of credit or default risk, and may be less liquid and more difficult to sell at an advantageous time or price than higher-rated securities of similar maturity. Mortgage-backed securities (MBS) are subject to credit, prepayment and extension risk and may react differently to changes in interest rates than other bonds. Small movements in interest rates may quickly and significantly reduce the value of certain MBS. Derivatives may not work as intended and may result in losses. The value of your investment is also subject to geopolitical risks such as wars, terrorism, environmental disasters, and public health crises; the risk of technology malfunctions or disruptions; and the responses to such events by governments and/or individual companies. Fund holdings and sector allocations are subject to change, may differ from the Index, and should not be considered investment advice.

Average Effective Duration is a duration calculation for bonds that have embedded options. This measure of duration takes into account the fact that expected cash flows will fluctuate as interest rates change and is, therefore, a measure of risk.

Beta is a measure of the volatility, or systematic risk, of a security or portfolio relative to the market or a benchmark.

Consumer Price Index (CPI), a popular measure of inflation and deflation calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, measures the

monthly change in prices paid by U.S. consumers.

Market Capitalization is the total dollar value of all outstanding shares computed as number of shares times current market price.

Market Price is the price of the last reported trade on a fund's primary exchange.

Net Asset Value or **NAV** is a fund's total assets minus its total liabilities, divided by the number of outstanding shares.

Premium/Discount % indicates whether an ETF is currently trading at a higher or lower price than the current value of the securities in that portfolio.

Yield Curve shows yields (interest rates) of bonds having equal credit quality but differing maturity dates. The slope of the yield curve gives an idea of future interest rate changes and economic activity.

Credit Quality ratings on underlying securities of the fund reflect the highest long-term rating from S&P, Moody's, or Fitch, and are converted to the equivalent S&P major rating category. S&P rates securities in descending order as AAA, AA, A, BBB, BB, B, CCC, CC, C and D. Unrated securities do not necessarily indicate low quality. Below-investment-grade is represented by a rating of BB and below. Quality ratings are subject to change.

The Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index measures the investment grade, USD-denominated, fixed-rate taxable bond market. The index includes Treasuries, government-related and corporate securities, MBS, ABS and CMBS.

The Bloomberg 1–3 Year Credit Index measures the performance of investment grade corporate debt and sovereign, supranational, local authority and non-U.S. agency bonds that have a remaining maturity of at least one year and less than three years.

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