

A Blowout Quarter Puts Athene Atop Annuity Ranking for First Time

One of every \$16 that consumers spent on annuities in the first quarter went to a fixed-rate annuity issued by Athene. See our top 20 tables showing rises and drops for the largest issuers.

By Cyril Tuohy | May 24, 2023

Marc Rowan, chief executive of Apollo Global Management, recently described this as “the golden age of annuities,” and it’s not hard to see why.

Its Athene unit sold \$8.62 billion of annuities in the first quarter of 2023, tripling its year-earlier total, according to data Limra reported Tuesday (see tables below).

It was the biggest quarter since MetLife issued \$9.45 billion of annuities in the third quarter of 2011, the data show.

When MetLife pulled off its feat, variable annuities powered the gains. For Athene though, it was fixed-rate products that surged by more than 13 times from a year ago, to \$5.92 billion. Another way of looking at that: one dollar of every \$16 that U.S. consumers spent on annuities in the first quarter went toward a fixed-rate annuity from Athene.

Its products in that line include Athene MYG, Athene MYG with Return of Premium Option and Athene MaxRate brands. Athene, a Bermuda-based company with a booming U.S. business headquartered in West Des Moines, Iowa, also sells income annuities, fixed-indexed annuities and buffered variable annuities.

Fixed-rate annuities guarantee a return typically over three, five or seven years and sales of the products have boomed with the rise in interest rates and the volatile environment for stocks.



*Mike Downing, executive
VP and COO, Athene
Holding*

“The results feel great,” said Mike Downing, chief operating officer of Athene Holding. “It’s the best condition for annuities we’ve had in 20 years.”

The U.S. population is aging, stocks remain volatile, and more people are looking to lower the risk in their retirement portfolio. Also the products that fixed-rate annuities compete with, bank certificates of deposit, are paying much lower yields.

Reaching No. 1 is a byproduct of offering more product choices through more distributors, he said. Athene was also the top seller of fixed-indexed annuities. Sales of those products rose 11% to \$2.5 billion, Limra reported.

In recent years, Athene has worked to distribute annuities beyond independent agents and marketing organizations and into banks and broker-dealers. Downing said Wells Fargo began distributing Athene annuities partway through last year.

“Wells Fargo was big for us,” he said.

The company has also seen more sales come through LPL Financial, and there are “a couple more” distributors in the pipeline so products are making their way to a broader suite of advisors, he said.

Apollo CEO Rowan said in a conference call with analysts that while 2022 was the best year in Athene’s history, 2023 is expected to be even better.

He said the annuity issuer’s first-quarter inflows were \$12 billion, or about as much as the entire amount for 2022.

Rowan thinks the reason isn’t complicated. “Consumers simply prefer 5% to 2%,” he said.

Last month, Athene’s Max Rate 5 was yielding 5.20%, just before the Federal Reserve raised rates another 0.25 percentage point, the tenth increase since March of 2022. The national average interest rate for a five-year certificate of deposit on April 26 was 1.23%, according to Bankrate.com.

Athene’s retirement savings products are distributed through a network of about 54 independent marketing organizations, 81,000 independent agents in 50 states and a growing network of 16 banks and 134 regional broker-dealers.

While bank fixed-rate sales more than tripled and represented 42% of the industry total, other distributors saw impressive gains as well, Todd Giesing, assistant VP of Limra annuity research, said in a news release.

Independent broker-dealers increased their fixed-rate sales more than sixfold and independent agents did so by sevenfold, he noted.



*Marc Rowan, CEO, Apollo
Global Management*

For overall annuity sales growth, Fidelity & Guaranty also had strong sales, which jumped 90%.

Tamra VanAllen, senior VP and head of the retirement segment at F&G, said the combination of elevated interest rates and market volatility makes fixed-rate products “a trusted solution to provide guaranteed growth.”

F&G has continued to see strong growth, partly because of the company’s No. 2 placing in the J.D. Power’s ranking of annuity customer satisfaction.

U.S. Overall Annuity Sales, 1q '23

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	Athene	8,628.9	199.3%
2	Corebridge**	6,246.1	24.9%
3	New York Life	6,035.5	35.1%
4	MassMutual	5,047.3	58.9%
5	Nationwide	3,924.9	73.4%
6	Allianz	3,894.2	19.9%
7	Equitable	3,797.0	2.2%
8	Pacific Life	3,400.9	75.4%
9	Lincoln	3,220.0	16.5%
10	Global Atlantic	3,214.5	64.5%
11	Jackson	3,034.5	-28.5%
12	Fidelity & Guaranty	2,723.7	89.9%
13	Brighthouse	2,705.0	41.7%
14	Security Benefit	2,574.2	NA
15	Symetra Financial	2,247.6	83.3%
16	Sammons	2,069.4	75.6%
17	TIAA	1,876.0	-0.8%
18	Western Southern	1,875.6	29.9%
19	Prudential	1,728.4	11.9%
20	American Equity	1,370.3	NA

*From a year earlier

**Corebridge results were compared to those of AIG, which it was spun off from

Note: Sales of individual annuities only. NA means the company wasn't in the top 20 the prior year.

Source: Limra

U.S. Fixed-Rate Annuity Sales, 1q '23

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	Athene	5,925.4	1325.8%
2	MassMutual	3,456.8	112.7%
3	New York Life	2,877.6	3.3%
4	Corebridge**	2,788.8	52.8%
5	Global Atlantic	2,122.3	112.5%
6	Pacific Life	1,802.6	381.6%
7	Western Southern	1,723.1	50.2%
8	Symetra Financial	1,588.9	172.1%
9	Fidelity & Guaranty	1,513.2	220.4%
10	Nationwide	1,192.5	NA
11	Security Benefit	1,084.6	NA
12	Brighthouse	916.6	NA
13	Delaware Life	831.0	324.2%
14	American National	498.7	487.2%
15	American Equity	406.1	NA
16	Knights of Columbus	397.3	288.5%
17	Sammons	394.0	NA
18	USAA Life	376.5	-69.0%
19	The Standard	363.0	459.0%
20	National Life	350.1	NA

*From a year earlier

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Source: Limra

U.S. Fixed Indexed Annuity Sales, 1q '23

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	Athene	2,485.9	11.4%
2	Allianz	2,450.7	41.0%
3	Corebridge**	2,132.8	47.1%
4	Sammons	1,640.4	60.1%
5	Nationwide	1,479.6	107.3%

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
6	Security Benefit	1,447.7	126.5%
7	Fidelity & Guaranty	1,210.3	25.8%
8	Global Atlantic	1,049.8	16.2%
9	Lincoln	1,013.6	184.7%
10	MassMutual	981.5	5.0%
11	American Equity	963.7	10.0%
12	Pacific Life	865.9	718.1%
13	Symetra Financial	487.3	8.0%
14	National Life	458.3	26.7%
15	EquiTrust Life	385.4	6.5%
16	Prudential	331.0	NA
17	Bankers Life	316.2	-9.5%
18	Ameritas	235.4	127.9%
19	Nassau	202.1	-7.4%
20	Delaware Life	174.9	-43.1%

*From a year earlier

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Source: Limra

U.S. Index-Linked Variable Annuity Sales, 1q '23

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	Equitable	2,240.0	12.4%
2	Brighthouse	1,552.7	13.6%
3	Allianz	1,419.9	-5.8%
4	Lincoln	1,147.2	9.4%
5	Prudential	1,061.4	-24.5%
6	New York Life	745.2	240.4%
7	RiverSource	654.8	5.7%
8	Jackson	481.2	179.4%
9	TruStage	242.9	-41.0%
10	Athene	217.3	-7.3%
11	Nationwide	193.1	20.8%
12	MassMutual	159.1	-40.1%
13	Symetra Financial	90.7	-48.5%
14	Transamerica	75.9	NA

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
15	Sammons	32.8	NA
16	Global Atlantic	14.5	2481.6%
17	Protective Life	10.0	-55.2%

*From a year earlier

Note: Sales of individual annuities only. NA means the company wasn't in the top 20 the prior year.

Source: Limra

U.S. Traditional Variable Annuity Sales, 1q '23

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	Jackson	2,415.0	-39.9%
2	TIAA	1,876.0	-0.8%
3	Equitable	1,538.7	-10.6%
4	Corebridge**	1,142.4	-29.1%
5	Nationwide	824.8	-38.7%
6	Lincoln	755.1	-43.6%
7	Pacific Life	698.6	-38.4%
8	New York Life	622.9	-41.5%
9	Thrivent Financial	412.8	-37.0%
10	Fidelity Investments	239.6	-45.8%
11	Transamerica	229.3	-1.2%
12	RiverSource	218.7	-49.3%
13	BrightHouse	198.9	-55.1%
14	Northwestern Mutual	188.9	-25.5%
15	Protective Life	158.7	-8.3%
16	Principal Financial	110.3	12.3%
17	Horace Mann	82.5	NA
18	Prudential	67.9	-32.1%
19	Penn Mutual	67.5	-34.2%
20	Securian Financial	53.8	-41.1%

*From a year earlier

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Source: Limra

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