

Athene Just Rocketed Into the Top Three for U.S. Annuity Sales

See our tables of the top 20 annuity issuers in five different categories.

By Cyril Tuohy | November 18, 2022

Athene has roared up the rankings to become the No. 3 U.S. annuity issuer, a dizzying ascent powered by almost \$3.5 billion of sales of fixed-rate annuities in three months.

The company sold \$12.9 billion of annuities overall in the first nine months of the year, more than twice its total through the same period last year, according to Limra data.

Before the last quarter of 2021, Athene had never cracked the top 10 in Limra's year-to-date quarterly sales rankings. Now it's within sight of two rivals with a much longer history, No. 1 New York Life and No. 2 Corebridge Financial, formerly AIG's life insurance and retirement business.

Sales have never been this high, said Mike Downing, executive VP and chief operating officer of parent company Athene Holding, in an interview. The carrier's goal is to be No. 1, he added.

Athene is based in Bermuda but has a big U.S. operation, Athene USA, that sells fixed-rate, indexed, immediate and buffered variable annuities.

Athene's fixed-rate volume soared to \$5.1 billion in the first three quarters, enough to land the carrier in the No. 5 spot for the category.

The company sells fixed-rate annuities under the brand Athene MYG, Athene MYG with return of premium option and Athene MaxRate. Rates for its three-year MYG annuity increased from 2.9% in May to 3.9% by the end of September, according to Athene. MaxRate 3 was yielding 4.6% at the end of last month, according to one annuity website.



Mike Downing, executive

VP and COO, Athene

Holding

Historically, the five-year fixed-rate annuity has been the most popular but more recently consumers have been drawn to the three-year product, he said.

Patience Pays Off

Downing said that last year, when rates were much lower, Athene had trouble seeing how competitors were able to price fixed-rate annuities while still remaining profitable. Athene took a backseat at the time, waiting for things to change.

“We’re not going to chase volume,” Downing said. But this year rising interest rates have turned those economic dynamics around, he added.

“Athene has been aggressive in their pursuit of competitive multiyear guaranteed annuity rates during the quarter,” Sheryl Moore, CEO of Wink, publisher of *Wink’s Sales & Market Report*, said in an email.

The company retained its No. 1 rank in indexed annuity sales, selling \$7.12 billion, or 34% more than in the first three quarters of last year. Volume for its buffered variable annuity jumped 91% to \$677.8 million, Limra reported.

Downing said Athene had added new bank distribution relationships this year, but he declined to give further details.

Banks can offer conservative customers much higher yields through a fixed annuity than they can with certificates of deposit. “When CDs are yielding 1% a year and annuities are yielding 4% or 5% a year, it’s a straightforward financial decision,” Downing added.

Pacific Life was also a big winner in fixed-rate sales, with sales up 351.3%, according to Limra.

At Sammons Financial Group, fixed-rate sales were up 129% in the third quarter over a year ago and indexed sales jumped 57%, said Rob TeKolste, president of Sammons independent annuity group.

Sammons saw its market share increase in every sales channel for fixed-rate and indexed sales in the third quarter, he said in an email.



*Rob TeKolste, president,
Sammons independent
annuity group*

Banks Deliver

Investors are looking for good investments during a rocky year where both stocks and bonds have suffered, Mark Caner, president of W&S Financial Group Distributors, said in an earlier interview.

“Gold, silver, crypto – where they might have gone in the past are not doing well, so one of the last places is fixed annuities,” he said.

Banks were a big reason for the blowout third quarter in fixed-rate annuities.

Todd Giesing, assistant vice president of annuity research for Limra, said that volume of fixed-rate annuities sold through banks jumped 243% in the third quarter while fixed-indexed annuity sales through the financial institutions rose 61%.

Average fixed-rate crediting rates were more than triple the rates offered in bank CDs in the third quarter, which enticed bank customers to buy annuities instead. Almost half, or 49%, of the quarter’s record-setting fixed-rate annuity sales went through banks, Giesing said.

Indexed annuity sales at Lincoln National rose 246% in the first three quarters, with the company’s OptiBlend product showing the most growth, followed by Lincoln Covered Choice, it said.

“Strong sales were the result of more competitive fixed and indexed cap rates within both products, which were reflective of the rising interest rate environment,” Lincoln said in an emailed statement.

U.S. Overall Annuity Sales, 3Q 2022 YTD

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mIns)	Change*
1	New York Life	16,014.7	47.8%
2	Corebridge**	14,840.8	5.2%
3	Athene	12,932.9	118.4%
4	MassMutual	12,309.5	87.0%
5	Jackson National	11,752.1	-18.2%
6	Equitable Financial	11,552.2	8.9%
7	Allianz	10,719.5	5.0%
8	Lincoln	8,839.8	-1.0%
9	Pacific Life	8,171.2	38.4%
10	Brighthouse	7,843.8	21.4%
11	Nationwide	7,307.7	-12.9%
12	Global Atlantic	7,041.6	11.2%
13	Western Southern	6,502.6	NA
14	Fidelity & Guaranty	5,853.0	24.8%
15	Sammons	5,752.1	25.3%
16	TIAA	5,675.8	-4.8%
17	USAA Life	4,668.8	NA
18	Prudential	4,579.9	-10.4%
19	Symetra Financial	4,570.3	42.2%
20	RiverSource	3,168.1	-29.6%

*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 last year.

Source: Limra

U.S. Fixed-Rate Deferred Annuity Sales, 3Q 2022 YTD

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	New York Life	10,740.7	107.1%
2	MassMutual	6,854.0	85.5%
3	Western Southern	5,285.5	169.8%
4	Corebridge**	5,178.5	58.4%
5	Athene	5,128.5	NA
6	Global Atlantic	3,654.8	-1.1%
7	Pacific Life	3,326.6	351.3%
8	USAA Life	3,258.9	100.0%
9	Fidelity & Guaranty	2,666.0	85.7%
10	Brighthouse	2,192.4	NA
11	Symetra Financial	2,075.5	-6.6%
12	Sammons	1,512.0	44.4%
13	Reliance Standard	1,185.6	116.0%
14	Delaware Life	794.3	15.0%
15	American National	668.1	-5.2%
16	The Standard	618.7	55.0%
17	Thrivent Financial	412.3	NA
18	Modern Woodmen of America	387.8	44.2%
19	Mutual of Omaha	366.6	NA
20	Knights of Columbus	334.3	-16.4%

*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 last year.

Source: Limra

U.S. Indexed Annuity Sales, 3Q 2022 YTD

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	Athene	7,124.0	34.4%
2	Allianz	6,161.8	18.1%
3	Corebridge**	4,836.0	5.6%
4	Sammons	3,986.1	26.3%
5	MassMutual	3,474.9	128.7%
6	Global Atlantic	3,272.5	30.3%
7	Fidelity & Guaranty	3,185.2	-2.1%
8	Nationwide	2,617.3	23.3%
9	American Equity	2,381.6	-3.5%
10	Security Benefit	2,092.0	-6.7%
11	Lincoln	1,960.2	246.7%
12	Symetra Financial	1,875.2	190.5%
13	EquiTrust Life	1,223.2	6.1%
14	Delaware Life	1,160.5	-4.6%
15	National Life	1,154.7	2.6%
16	Bankers Life	1,097.2	15.0%
17	Pacific Life	1,036.5	NA
18	Nassau	669.9	47.1%
19	American National	383.7	-39.2%
20	Protective Life	380.4	-35.3%

*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 last year.

Source: Limra

U.S. Index-Linked Variable Annuity Sales, 3Q 2022 YTD

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	Equitable Financial	6,541.6	17.5%
2	Allianz	4,547.4	-8.7%
3	Brighthouse	4,462.5	-4.2%
4	Prudential	3,937.3	-7.9%
5	Lincoln	3,515.2	-10.6%
6	RiverSource	2,071.4	2.5%
7	Jackson National	1,130.4	NA
8	CMFG Life Insurance	1,021.2	-9.1%
9	New York Life	954.1	100.6%
10	MassMutual	704.0	396.0%
11	Nationwide	686.0	113.9%
12	Athene	677.8	91.3%
13	Symetra Financial	571.2	102.6%
14	Protective Life	67.8	-5.5%
15	Transamerica	50.4	NA
16	Global Atlantic	8.7	NA
17	Sammons	6.1	NA

*From a year earlier

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

Source: Limra

U.S. Traditional Variable Annuity Sales, 3Q 2022 YTD

Rank	Name	Total (\$ mlns)	Change*
1	Jackson National	10,402.1	-26.5%
2	TIAA	5,675.8	-4.8%
3	Equitable Financial	4,973.1	-0.9%
4	Corebridge**	4,410.2	-27.3%
5	Nationwide	3,506.7	-39.8%
6	Lincoln	3,257.9	-25.7%
7	New York Life	2,839.4	-17.1%
8	Pacific Life	2,781.0	-33.1%
9	Thrivent Financial	1,705.7	-19.4%
10	RiverSource	1,040.5	-57.0%
11	BrightHouse	1,039.1	-34.2%
12	Fidelity Investments	992.6	-47.8%
13	Northwestern Mutual	705.1	-13.5%
14	Protective Life	515.2	-29.6%
15	Transamerica	501.4	-49.9%
16	Principal Financial	323.5	-16.5%
17	Horace Mann Life Insurance Company	282.3	-3.3%
18	Penn Mutual	276.9	NA
19	Securian Financial	253.1	NA
20	Sammons	241.6	-34.9%

*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 last year.

Source: Limra