



January 7, 2022



## Challenges Persist

### Key Updates

In the previous Anchor Economic Update, we warned that the economic recovery in Bermuda would be delayed by the surge in the Covid Delta variant cases in the third quarter. Just as the Delta variant cases declined and Bermuda's Covid risk rating improved, the Omicron variant took hold on the island over the important Christmas period. As a result, the already suffering restaurant, hospitality and retail sectors could not experience the 2021 recovery they expected.

2021 proved to be another dire year for the country's tourism industry. While final figures for 2021 have yet to be reported, we compared our 2021 air arrivals forecast versus the reported numbers through the end of November. Unfortunately, the figures are more in line with our bear case scenario. The COVID-19 outbreak in March and the subsequent lock-down just before the start of tourism season really hurt this sector. From April 5th – June 8th Bermuda was classified by the CDC as a "Level 4: Very High" COVID-19 risk country – the highest risk category – a category for which the CDC recommends travelers avoid the country. Bermuda was again classified as "Level 4: Very High" on September 20<sup>th</sup>. As a result, tourism numbers plummeted, and several planned international sporting events on the island were canceled or downsized during the year. As of the time of this writing, Bermuda is classified as "Level 3: High" (risk).

Thankfully for Bermuda, the international business sector has held up well over the past two years. International Business has supported the Bermuda economy despite challenges presented by the Covid pandemic and historically high catastrophe losses. The insurance industry is busy expanding its offering of risk mitigating services. The long duration risk management sector has grown significantly on the island, with assets surpassing the P&C markets. New opportunities also exist for Bermuda, including cyber risk, longevity reinsurance, and fintech. Potential global income tax law changes represent the most significant risk to the local market. Still, industry representatives continue to present their case for the importance of Bermuda's insurance capacity in meeting the ever-increasing demand for risk-mitigating capital. The local real estate market has also heated up, driven by "digital nomads" and employees upgrading their home workspaces.

In this update we also update our analysis on Bermuda's debt which was initially done in 2011. Unfortunately, over this period Bermuda's debt has continued to grow at an alarming rate and now sits at roughly 44% of GDP. Thankfully the average cost of debt has declined from 5.7% to the current rate of 3.8%. Our analysis would suggest that at the current time Bermuda's debt situation is not at a crisis level. In general, the cost of debt and the level of deficits have improved the potential trajectory of the island's fiscal situation. However, it is the potential growth rate that gives us great concern. Without a decent level of nominal growth, we fear it will be increasingly difficult to tackle the escalating government debt. Thus, our largest concern continues to be growth and the prospects for growth in Bermuda.

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### Economic Statistics

Year	Real GDP Inflation	
2018	-0.4%	1.6%
2019	0.3%	2.4%
2020	-6.9%	-0.5%
2021E	1.0%	3.0%
10 Year Bermuda Govt. Bond Yield	2.55%	



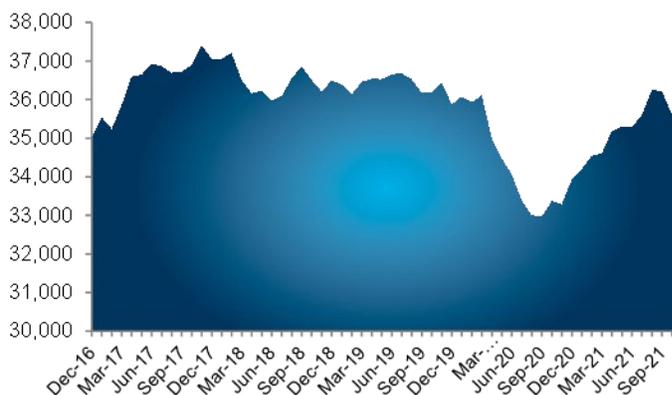
## Retail Sales and Freight

Despite the impact of the Covid variants and lack of tourists on the island, the local economy has been resilient. Over the first 11 months of 2021, container moves on the local docks rose 6.3% from 2020 and are down only 2.0% from 2019 levels. The economic hit from the Delta variant showed up in the September and October freight figures, with container moves on the Hamilton docks declining 10.3% compared to 2020. But the volume rebounded in November, rising 8.5% compared to November 2020 and 6% higher than 2019. While monthly figures can be volatile, the annual volumes show that Bermuda has done much better than our neighbors to the south who are more dependent on tourism revenue. Refrigerated container moves were up 7.0% over the first 11 months of 2021 compared to 2020 but were down from 2019 due to hospitality's weakness. Roll-on and Roll-Off cargo has benefited from a recovery in the construction industry and a strong renovation market, with volumes surging more than 25% this year.

The latest retail sales report from September indicated that sales volumes had recovered 4.1% in 2021 from the depressed 2020 levels. The strength has been driven by the double-digit growth in Motor Vehicle Stores. The offset to weak tourism spending is many locals are shopping on the island due to travel restrictions. Monthly volume comparisons turned negative in July, August and September as the Delta variant impacted the local economy. Building Material Stores sales had been the most robust sector in 2021, but September restrictions reduced sales volumes by 23.7% in the month compared to the prior year. Local apparel retail store sales have remained weak, but courier sales continue to benefit from online shopping, hitting new record. Courier sales were up 12% in the latest 12-month period to \$172 million. Individuals are consuming more on household products as they spend more time working from home. The value of imports by households by sea surged 251% to \$73 million in the first nine months of the year compared to the prior year and +552% from 2019.

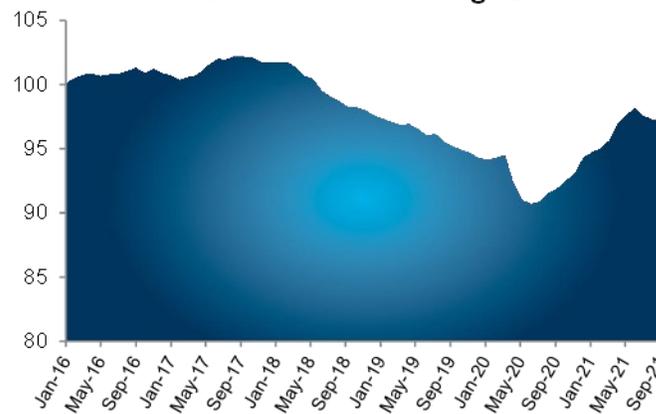
In the previous economic update, we pointed out that we believe inflation will become a growing headwind for the Bermuda economy. The official Bermuda inflation figures gradually rose last year, with a 2.2% annual rate reported in September. This is well below the CPI figures that have been published by Bermuda's major trading partners. Inflation showed up in the September retail sales report with the highest difference

### Container Moves - Trailing 12 Months



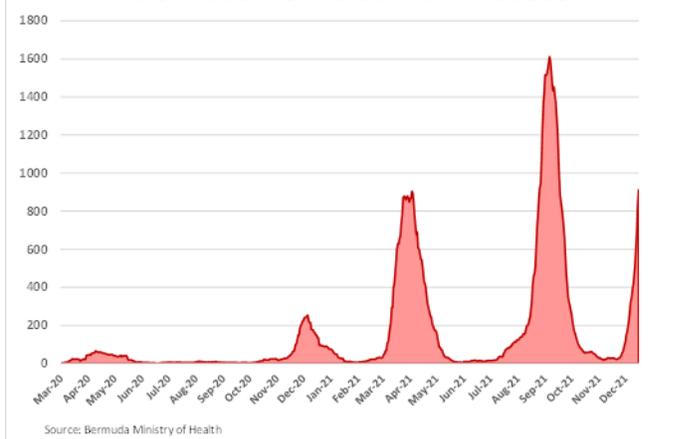
Source: Stevedoring Services Limited, Anchor Investment Management

### Retail Sales Volumes - Trailing 12 Months



Source: Department of Statistics

### Bermuda Active COVID-19 Cases



Source: Bermuda Ministry of Health



## Retail Sales and Freight

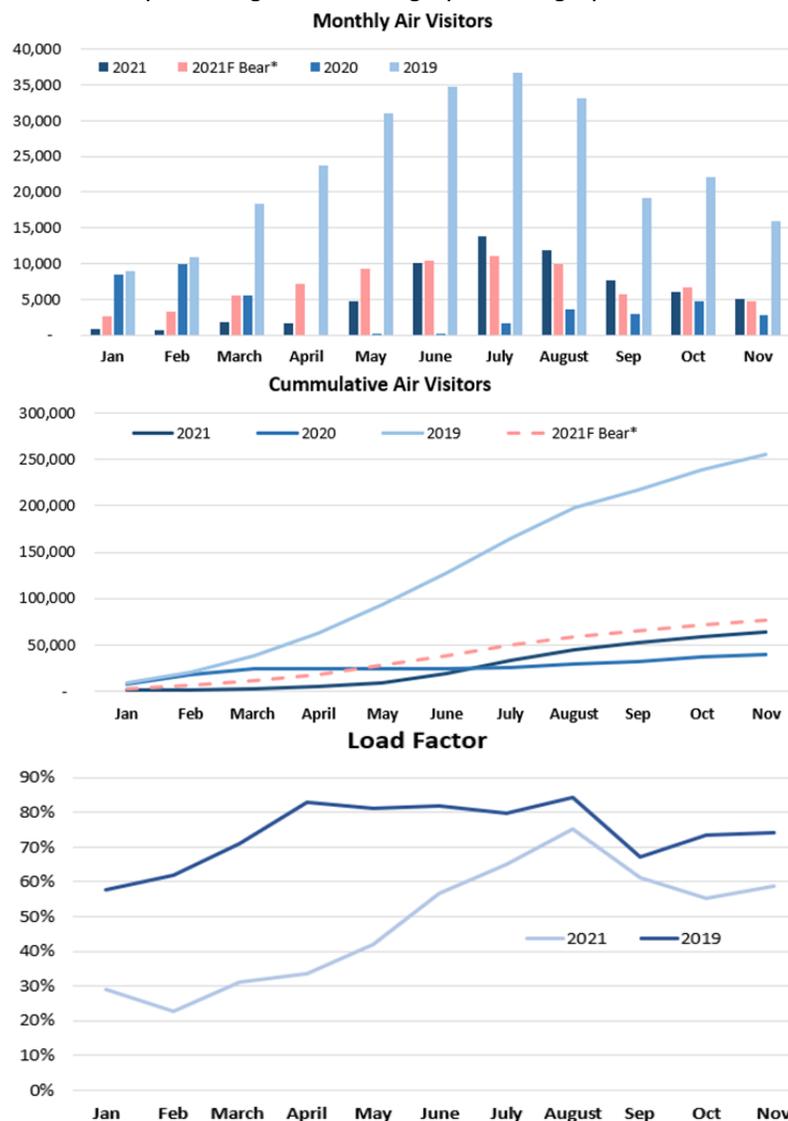
between annual sales volume change and sales value (3.0%) in recent history. This means that consumers have to spend 3.0% more for the basket of goods in the retail sales index. The local inflation rate has been held down by the way the government calculates rent which is the largest component of the CPI (26.7% weighting in the index). Energy, transport and food commodity prices moved significantly higher last year, and we expect this will be passed on to the local consumers. We anticipate the combined impact of rising commodity prices and the heated real estate market will cause the local inflation rate to rise towards 5%. This is the equivalent of instituting an inflation tax on consumption and will slow spending.

## Tourism

While figures for 2021 have yet to be reported, we compared our 2021 air arrivals forecast versus the reported numbers through the end of November. Unfortunately, the figures are more in line with our bear case scenario. As seen in the graphics below, total air arrivals have unsurprisingly been well below pre-COVID levels seen in 2019. The COVID-19 outbreak in March and the subsequent lock-down just before the start of tourism season really hurt this sector. From April 5th – June 8th Bermuda was classified by the CDC as a "Level 4: Very High" COVID-19 risk country – the highest risk category – a category for which the CDC recommends travelers avoid the country. Bermuda was again classified as "Level 4: Very High" on September 20<sup>th</sup>. As of the time of this writing, Bermuda is classified as "Level 3: High" (risk).

The impact of the March/April COVID-19 breakout is also evident in the air load factor (bottom graphic), which only rose to just over 70% in August. This compares with a load factor of over 80% from March to August in 2019. It should also be noted that the total airline capacity in 2021 was roughly 55% lower from May to August 2021 than the same period in 2019. As such, in 2021 we had less than 50% of 2019's capacity, and a load factor well below 2019 (2021 YTD avg of 48% vs 74% in 2019).

One key area of weakness is in business visitor arrivals. In 2018 and 2019, business visitors accounted for approximately 17% of total air visitors, while in 2021, business visitors accounted for just 8% of air visitors through November-end. Much like the impact that work-from home has had on office space, the proliferation of video meetings via Zoom (or other services) since COVID-19 may be a structural change. If this proves to be the case, it also has ramifications for airlines given business class and first-class passengers, which business visitors often travel, are more profitable. The next couple years should give us an answer to this, however, it's difficult to believe that business travel will return to pre-COVID levels given the vast cost differential between an in-person meeting



Source: Bermuda Tourism Authority



## Tourism

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and a Zoom call. This ultimately could limit profitability for the airlines coming to Bermuda and the level of the overall airlift.

Like air, the cruise industry continues to be severely disrupted by COVID-19. As of November-end, cruise visitors to the island were down 98% from 2019 levels. For 2022, 180 cruise ship visits are scheduled to visit the island, which is two more than what was planned for 2021. Hopefully, the reaction to future COVID-19 outbreaks (and variants) will ease in 2022. At the time of this writing the Omicron variant is spreading rapidly, however, hospitalization rates remain low. Should this ultimately lead to herd immunity and/or a more relaxed view of COVID-19, it would be a boon for Bermuda tourism, assuming we eased our testing requirements for visitors. When interviewed by the Royal Gazette recently, Charles Jeffers II, the chief executive of the Bermuda Tourism Authority commented, *"I'm hoping for all of those cruise lines to come in safely, and I'm hopeful that we'll see air passengers coming in and approaching the 2019 numbers. Is that realistic? Not sure, but I don't think anyone knows."* I'd suggest that isn't realistic until the mania/narrative surrounding COVID-19 (and variants) and the associated testing/restrictions also ease dramatically. The critical question for Bermuda tourism in 2022 is... is that realistic?

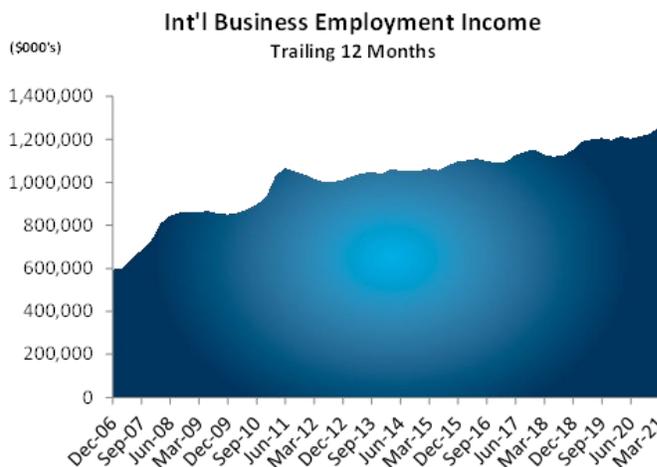
*Source: Bermuda Tourism Authority*

*Anchor Investment Management Ltd. is licensed to conduct investment business by the Bermuda Monetary Authority*



### International Business

The Bermuda International Business (IB) sector continued to grow during the Covid pandemic. In his 2021/22 Budget Statement update in December, the Minister of Finance Curtis Dickenson stated, “Payroll Taxes remain on budget” despite the negative impact of the Covid variants on the hospitality industry. He had previously stated, “the international business sector remained resilient providing 4,199 jobs in the economy, reflecting a growth of 4.5% year over year in 2020.” Over the latest 12 month reporting period (through June 30, 2021), the government reported 8.0% growth in international business employment income to \$1.3 billion. IB now represents 39% of employment income up from 33% just three years ago. This produces critical support for the Bermuda economy and generates essential tax revenue for the government when other sectors suffer. The challenges of climate change and cyber risk has highlighted the importance of the Bermuda insurance industry to the global economy.



Source: Government of Bermuda—Department of Statistics

Much of the growth in the Bermuda insurance industry has been in long-duration risk management. In a recent article in ThinkAdvisor, editor Allison Bell asked the question: “Will all annuity issuers move to Bermuda?” New mark-to-market rules instituted by the Financial Accounting Standards Board will make the earnings of publicly traded life insurance companies appear far more volatile. As a result, life insurers are selling and transferring their long-term risk to private equity, reinsurers and other entities based in Bermuda. The Bermuda International Long Term Insurers and Reinsurers (BILTIR) association has expanded over the past decade and assets now exceed the property and casualty business on the island. According to the latest published figures, BILTIR represents 63 long-term insurance, reinsurance and servicing companies with assets of \$667 billion. The group states that the industry provides almost \$500 million in direct and indirect expenditure to the Bermuda economy. It is estimated that they employ more than 600 people on the island, with the majority of them being Bermudian. The Bermuda Monetary Authority regulates the industry and the companies have to provide audited financial statements to state insurance regulators.

### Active Year for Hurricane, Tornadoes and Wildfires

The Property and Casualty industry experienced rising premium prices as losses remained elevated in 2021. Loss estimates for Covid-19 range from \$44-\$80 billion which would make it one of the top three largest cost to insurers of any catastrophe, along with Hurricane Katrina and the 9/11 attacks. The reinsurance industry projects that Covid-19 losses will total almost \$50 billion, with much of the loss experienced by the life business. According to reinsurance broker Guy Carpenter, global property catastrophe reinsurance rates rose by 10.8% on average in 2021. The industry is still calculating losses from the record U.S. tornado activity in the fourth quarter, estimated between \$3 to \$6 billion. This follows record first-quarter losses from Winter Storm Uri in Texas and another busy hurricane and wildfire season. In a report on nine months results for the industry, AM Best calculated the industry experienced \$6.1 billion in underwriting losses for the first nine month period. According to the report, the P&C industry recorded 8.2% growth in net earned premiums, but this was offset by a 12.1% increase in incurred losses and loss adjustment expenses and a 5.9% increase in underwriting expenses during the first nine months of the year. They estimated the combined ratio for the industry weakened from the prior-year period to 99.5%.

The reinsurance industry also saw premium growth in the first three quarters of the year. Data from the Reinsurance Association of America (RAA) shows that a group of 17 U.S. property/casualty reinsurers (including Bermuda companies) wrote \$57.3 billion of net premiums during the first nine months of the year which was 16.2% higher than the \$49.3 billion reported for the same period last year, while gross premiums written increased from \$61.9 billion in the first nine months of 2020 to \$72.1 billion this year. The



## International Business

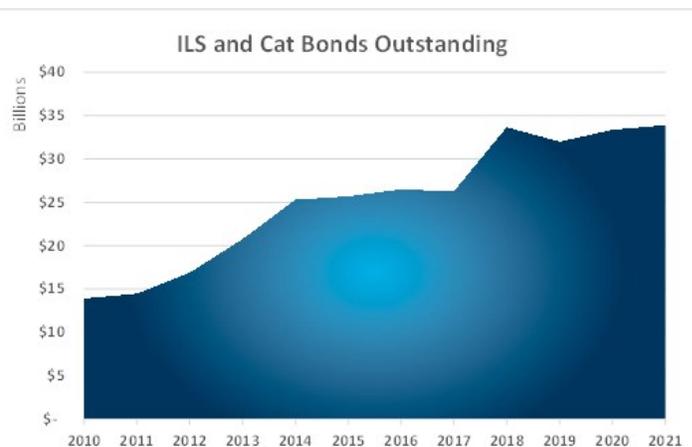
group's combined ratio deteriorated slightly to 100.7% from the 100.2% reported for the prior year period. The loss ratio moved from 75.5% in first nine months of 2020 to 76.6% in the same period in 2021. The group's expense ratio moved from 24.7% 2020 to 24.1% this year. The group recorded net income of \$8.1 billion for the period, which is an increase from income of \$6.2 billion in the prior year.

Property catastrophe reinsurance rates rose 9% year-on-year during the January 1 renewal period, marking the largest annual gain in 13 years, according to a recent report from broker Howden. Global property catastrophe reinsurance rates rose by 10.8% on average this year, reinsurance broker Guy Carpenter said in a separate report. Rising Inflation had a major impact on pricing. Gallagher Re stated that some European property reinsurance rates rose by more than 50% after the region suffered record insured losses last year from natural catastrophes such as floods and storms.

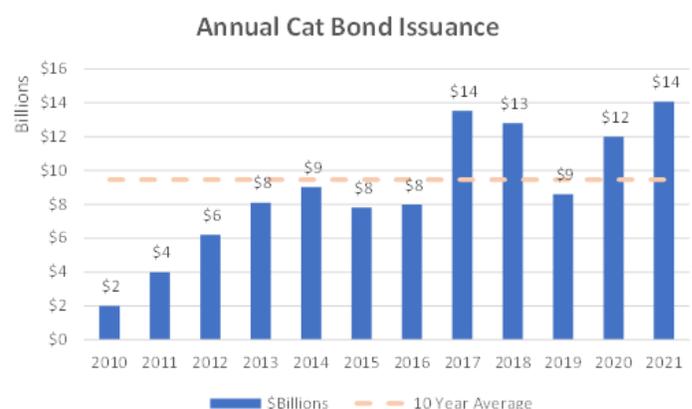
### Another Record for Alternative Capital

The insurance-linked securities (ILS) market continued to grow in 2021, driven by a firming reinsurance pricing environment and a shortage of traditional reinsurance capital. According to Artemis Deal Directory, the outstanding catastrophe bond and ILS market (excluding mortgage insurance-linked securities) reached a new record of \$33.9 billion in their latest report compared to \$33.4 billion at year-end 2020. 2021 was busy with \$20.4 billion in total issuance on Artemis data. There has been \$14.1 billion in issuance compared to \$12.5 billion last year (excluding mortgage securities). Bermuda is the dominant jurisdiction for the issuance of catastrophe bonds and insurance-linked securities (ILS). This "alternative" insurance market has been an important growth driver for the international business sector on the island, and issuance picked up during the Covid pandemic.

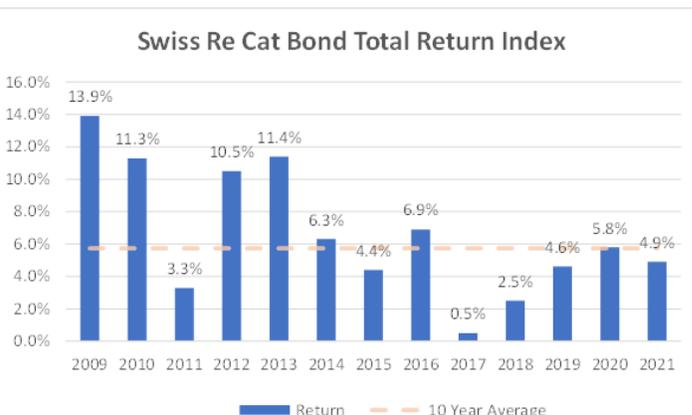
The Swiss RE Cat Bond Total Return Index tracks the total rate of return for all outstanding USD denominated cat bonds. The active hurricane and wildfire seasons have impacted returns this year. Coupons have also declined over the past two years, in line with falling interest rates. The index returned 4.9% in 2021 after a 5.7% return in 2020. This compares to the average 5.8% annualized return over the past decade compared to the 11.8% return for the MSCI ACWI Total Return (Stock) Index and 3.2% for the ICE Bank of America Merrill Lynch US Corporate and Government Bond Index. The risk-adjusted returns are attractive when considering the low relative volatility and knowing that 2017 and 2018 were the highest two-year cat loss period in history. Institutional Investors are attracted to the non-correlating nature of the ILS market.



Source: Artemis Deal Directory: excluding Mortgage insurance-linked securities



Source: Bloomberg/Artemis Deal Directory. Excludes mortgage issuance



Source: Bloomberg/Swiss Re



### Bermuda's Debt

*"Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen pounds nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery."*

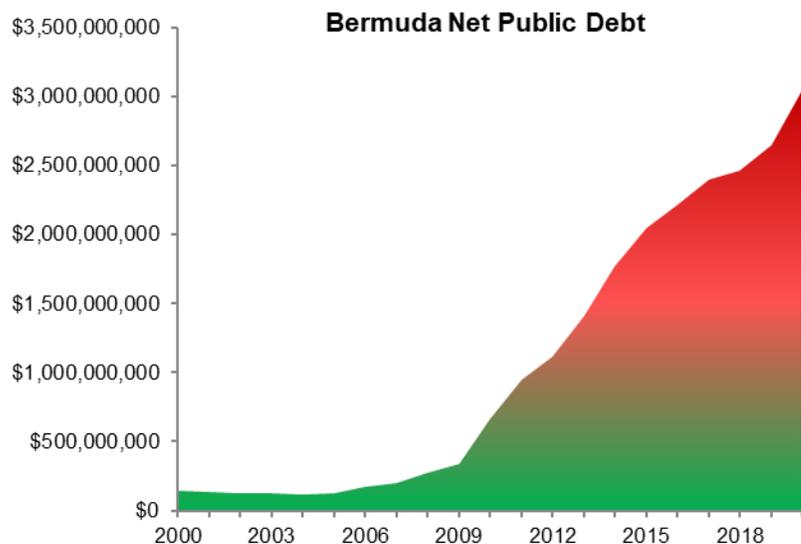
- Wilkins Micawber a fictional character from Charles Dickens's 1850 novel, *David Copperfield*.

When one discusses the debts of nations it often becomes a very emotionally charged conversation. A sort of national fervor tends to follow and there can often be periods of rash commentary that borders on hysteria or panic. Fiscal policy is crucial to a nation as it shapes society and tends to have far reaching consequences that impact generations to come. What follows is our attempt to remove some of these emotional biases and look at Bermuda's debt situation considering only the data and facts. It would be disingenuous to suggest we know for certain the future outcome of Bermuda, but we have tried to assess the situation with the use of sound economic principals and analysis. Readers will note that this analysis follows the same line and contains similar commentary to work done in 2011. We are refreshing this as a 10-year review.

#### Debt Sustainability and the Tipping Point

Citizens and taxpayers all want a plethora of services with little cost. We tend to want unlimited benefits and prefer to pay very limited taxes. This has always been the fundamental human flaw in government expenditures. There is constant disconnect between the benefit and the cost. As a result, governments tend to run varying levels of budget surpluses and deficits as the balancing act is very difficult and not simply an "economic" decision as one must consider very important social aspects as well. Bermuda is no different. Over the last few years, expenditures have soared in relation to revenues and the debt has escalated at an alarming level.

The rapid growth in this future liability has caused much consternation so we decided to rationally assess the situation. The first aspect we will consider is how to stop the growing debt burden; next what will prevent the debt from continually escalating; and lastly what future risks can one perceive. A debt crisis is hard to predict and is subject to numerous factors. One key factor, however, is the debt-to-GDP ratio. As this ratio escalates, investors tend to require higher levels of interest rates to compensate for perceived risk. The major tipping point tends to occur when the average interest rate on the debt exceeds the countries' nominal growth rate. When this occurs, the debt-to-GDP ratio will automatically increase unless the country runs a primary budget surplus. A primary budget surplus is the budget surplus excluding interest paid on the debt.



Source: Bermuda Government Department of Statistics, Anchor Investment Management

The economic equation can be thought of like this:

$(\text{Average Rate of Interest on Public Debt} - \text{Nominal GDP Growth Rate}) \times \text{Public Debt as a \% of GDP} = \text{Required Primary Surplus}$



## Bermuda's Debt

In assessing Bermuda's current situation, we will start with the composition of its debt. In exhibit #2, you will see the debt profile of Bermuda.

### Exhibit 2: Government of Bermuda - Weighted Average Borrowing Cost As of February 28, 2021

	MATURITY	RATE	Amount	Interest		GDP IPI	CPI	
140M SENIOR NOTES (multiple purchasers)	12/4/2022	5.730%	140,000,000	8,022,000.000		2010	2%	2.4%
144Reg/S Bond	1/3/2023	4.138%	353,905,000	14,644,588.900		2011	-1%	2.7%
Local Bond	12/16/2023	4.750%	50,000,000	2,375,000.000		2012	7%	2.4%
144Reg/S Bond	2/6/2024	4.854%	402,203,000	19,522,933.620		2013	2%	1.8%
144Reg/S Bond	1/25/2027	3.717%	604,624,000	22,473,874.080		2014	3%	2.0%
144Reg/S Bond	2/15/2029	4.750%	449,268,000	21,340,230.000		2015	3%	1.5%
New 10-Year	8/20/2030	2.375%	675,000,000	16,031,250.000		2016	4.4%	1.5%
New 30-Year	8/20/2050	3.375%	675,000,000	22,781,250.000		2017	-0.1%	1.9%
<b>Total</b>			<b>3,350,000,000</b>	<b>127,191,127</b>		2018	1.6%	1.4%
						2019	2.4%	0.9%
						2020	-0.5%	0.0%
						Average	2.1%	1.7%
			<b>Average Weighted Interest Rate</b>	<b>3.80%</b>				

Source: Government of Bermuda—Department of Statistics

From the calculation above we note the weighted cost of borrowing currently stands at 3.8%. In our prior analysis the rate we were paying was 5.7%. This nearly 200 basis point savings in the weighted average rate is a big positive for our fiscal situation. We would also note that the debt coming due this year is high coupon debt and it is highly likely that Bermuda will be able to refinance this at a lower coupon – thus further lowering the average rate being charged.

In previous commentaries, we conducted an analysis on Bermuda's future growth potential. Our, initial analysis suggests a minus 1.4% labor force population trend combined with an assumed 1.4% positive change in productivity. Ironically the total filled positions in jobs from the Government's Employment briefs for the last ten years of data (2009-2019) shows a decline of 1.4% annually. Therefore, we don't necessarily believe the labor force contraction estimate needs adjusting. The workforce does seem to be contracting around that rate. In our review of the productivity numbers, we have found that rates have unfortunately been decreasing. Our calculations suggest a very disappointing productivity growth of -0.4% annually for the prior 10 years. As a result of our efforts to update this exercise we conclude that Bermuda's current real GDP growth prospects look increasingly bleak. Potential future real growth given current assumptions is nearly -2%. This is not, however, a nominal figure so one will need to add an assumed future inflation rate to this to ascertain an estimated nominal growth rate in the future. In our updated and more recent review of the historic inflation rate in Bermuda and being aware that historic patterns do not necessarily equate to future patterns, we have found that over recent varying periods of 10 years this rate tends to be about 2%. This analysis considers the GDP implicit price index and Consumer Price Index rate.

As a result, we feel it is reasonable that Bermuda's future nominal growth rate in nominal GDP could run at about 0% (calculated as -2% real plus 2% inflation). This then is a negative development as we had initially assumed nominal growth of 2%.

As for the calculation of the debt to GDP number we will need to take 2020 nominal GDP of \$6.88 billion and the assumed total net debt level of \$3.04 billion. We get an estimated debt-to-GDP ratio of 44%.

Taking all components as noted above we can derive the primary budget surplus that the Bermuda government will need to run in future years to maintain the current debt level:

$$(3.8\% - 0\%) \times 44\% = 1.7\%$$



## Bermuda's Debt

What this essentially tells us is that the government can stabilize the debt level at its current ratio by running a primary budget surplus of 1.7%.

The next questions one may ask are: Can this be done? And what happens if trends persist? **Exhibit #4: Bermuda's Historic and Estimated Primary Budget Surpluses**

In assessing potential outcomes in the trajectory of the debt profile in Bermuda, we had made additional assumptions regarding the government's ability and willingness to run a primary budget surplus. We took a recent historic snapshot of the government's track record in developing potential outcomes. We have done the same to get a more recent ten-year look. Exhibit # 4 gives a historic snapshot of the government's record of primary budget surpluses and deficits.

Year	Primary Budget Surplus (Deficit) '(000s)	Nominal GDP '(000s)	Primary Budget Surplus (Deficit) as a %age of GDP
2010	\$ (170,000)	\$ 6,634,526	-2.6%
2011	\$ (131,100)	\$ 6,312,691	-2.1%
2012	\$ (171,100)	\$ 6,378,188	-2.7%
2013	\$ (164,500)	\$ 6,465,756	-2.5%
2014	\$ (121,100)	\$ 6,413,988	-1.9%
2015	\$ (59,500)	\$ 6,654,541	-0.9%
2016	\$ (2,300)	\$ 6,899,911	0.0%
2017	\$ (52,840)	\$ 7,142,316	-0.7%
2018	\$ 84,620	\$ 7,224,329	1.2%
2019	\$ 80,160	\$ 7,423,465	1.1%
2020	\$ (103,260)	\$ 6,881,662	-1.5%
<b>10 Year Average</b>			<b>-1.2%</b>

It suggests that historically, at least, the government continues to have difficulty generating a primary budget surplus. The level of deficits on average compared to the prior ten-year period have improved, however. They were running at a higher ten-year rate. In the five years (2005-2009) primary deficits were running at over 2% of GDP on average.

Our analysis would suggest that at the current time Bermuda's debt situation is not at a crisis level. In general, the cost of debt and the level of deficits have improved the potential trajectory of the island's fiscal situation. However, it is the potential growth rate that gives us great concern. Without a decent level of nominal growth, we fear it will be increasingly difficult to tackle the escalating government debt. Thus, our largest concern continues to be growth and the prospects for growth in Bermuda.

Assuming interest rates remain constant on debt financing, and Bermuda continues to run primary budget deficits of about 1% of GDP and does not grow, debt levels will escalate to about 75% of GDP in 10 years. If, however, budget discipline is adopted with a balanced primary deficit, growth is achieved at a 2% level and debt costs do not escalate from current levels, the debt level will not become an excessive threat. In fact, it appears to be manageable.

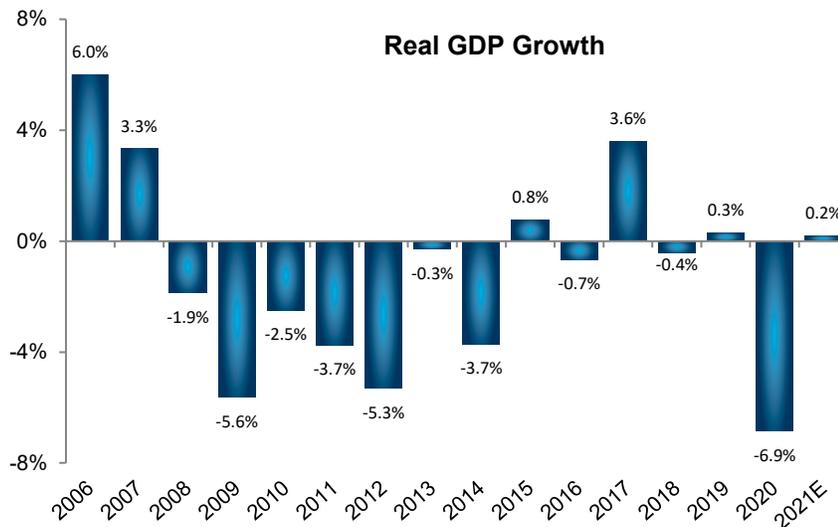
At the end of the day, the value of government debt must equal the future stream of discounted government surpluses. If at some point, the market feels the future stream of revenues and surpluses is insufficient to service these growing liabilities, it will revolt and force up the interest rates at which the country can borrow. To prevent this from happening, Bermuda still needs a credible plan to bring government spending into balance and a strategy for dealing with ballooning entitlements that are compounding in the face of challenging demographic trends. Ultimately, all these problems are much easier to resolve if the government can implement policies that stimulate economic growth. Therefore, the optimal solution is determining the balance between controlling spending and fostering an environment for growth. If you had to worry about only one, however, it would be economic growth.

Very difficult decisions are necessary to deal with the debt problem and tackling it will create a headwind to growth. The focus should be on policies to promote international business and tourism. Harsh austerity at this stage would only perpetuate the recession but government spending does need to be brought in line with revenues. Tackling the deficit is important but if it is done hastily and abruptly, Bermuda is at risk of entering a debt deflationary spiral of falling GDP and escalating debt levels. Policies to stimulate growth could offset the negative impact of higher taxes and reduction in government jobs. Too much national debt impairs the government's ability to deliver those essential services to its citizens. A credible plan must be made to tackle escalating levels of debt.



## Summary

In late November the government finally released their official number for 2020 GDP growth which came in at -6.9% which was close to our estimates. Also of note was that nominal GDP was estimated at -7.3% implying deflation of nearly 0.5%. Since our last update we have also received the GDP data for the first and second quarters. Growth in the first quarter was revised to -3.4% and second quarter came in at growth of 13.6% from depressed 2020 levels while the Island was locked down for much of the quarter. We expect a further improvement in Q3 from a more functioning tourism sector and improved consumer spending as large events were resumed. Unfortunately, we believe the improvement stalled due to the Delta and Omicron variants from September through the end of the year. Overall, we estimate nominal GDP growth of 4.0% for 2021 inline with government estimates. If we incorporate our inflation estimate of 3.0%, we see real GDP for 2021 coming in at 1.0%. Growth for 2022 will unfortunately again be tied to what happens with COVID-19.





### Risks and Disclaimer

#### Risks

The biggest risks to our forecasts are COVID-19, international accounting, regulatory and taxation-related issues, along with Bermuda Government tax and work permit policies. The increase in serious criminal activity also represents a potential threat to the growth of the economy, as companies can easily move employees to less volatile jurisdictions. Specific factors that may impact our forecasts include: interest rates, global tax rates, offshore/onshore regulatory changes, negative offshore media coverage and global economic growth rates.

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