

Fixed-annuities sales rose 60% in 2008

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Sales of fixed annuities climbed to \$107 billion last year, up 60% from 2007, according to the Beacon Research Fixed Annuity Premium Study.

Fourth-quarter fixed-annuities sales hit a six-year record for the third-consecutive quarter, rising to \$34.1 billion, up 90% from a year earlier, according to data from the Beacon Research Publications Inc. of Evanston, Ill.

During the fourth quarter, book-value annuities, which pay a declared rate of interest for a given period, raked in the most money, with \$17.1 billion in sales, more than double what they were a year earlier. Sales of market-value-adjusted annuities, which allow the investor to fix a time period and interest rate, were \$7.4 billion, three and a half times higher than a year earlier.

Meanwhile, index annuities climbed 12% to \$7.2 billion, and immediate annuities sales were \$2.4 billion, up 22% from the year-earlier period.

MetLife Inc. of New York sold the most in the fixed-annuity arena, hitting \$4.1 billion in the fourth quarter.

New York Life Insurance Co., which formerly held first place, pulled in \$2.6 billion in sales. Aviva USA of West Des Moines, Iowa, came in third with \$2.3 billion.

The top-selling product during the fourth quarter was MetLife Investors' Fixed Annuity FA, a market value product, followed by MetLife's Target Maturity market-value annuity. Aviva-American Investors Life came in third with its Income Select Bonus index annuity.