

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0929-1199(17)30761-7
DOI: [doi:10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2018.05.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2018.05.006)
Reference: CORFIN 1373
To appear in: *Journal of Corporate Finance*
Received date: 14 December 2017
Revised date: 6 May 2018
Accepted date: 26 May 2018

Please cite this article as: Manisha Goel, Michelle Zemel , Switching to Bonds When Loans Are Scarce: Evidence from Four U.S. Crises. Corfin (2018), doi:[10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2018.05.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2018.05.006)

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Switching to Bonds When Loans Are Scarce: Evidence from Four U.S. Crises

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May 2018

Abstract

To what extent do public firms switch to bonds when bank credit supply falls, and how do their real outcomes compare to those of other firms? Examining four U.S. crises during 1988-2011 shows that only 8.4% of debt-receiving firms broke their reliance on loans and switched to bonds. These were high quality firms that, despite incurring large costs, did not suffer significantly more in output, investment, and employment than predominantly bond-issuing firms. Most firms either received loans, or no debt, and fared significantly worse. Thus, public firms do not widely substitute bonds for loans, remaining vulnerable to bank health fluctuations.

JEL Classifications: E44, G01, G30

Keywords: Financial Crises, Corporate Finance, Banks, Bonds, Employment, Output, Investment

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