

**UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549**

FORM 10-K

(Mark One)

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020 or

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the transition period from _____ to _____.

COMMISSION FILE NUMBER: 000-26489

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware
(State or other jurisdiction of
incorporation or organization)

48-1090909
(IRS Employer
Identification No.)

**350 Camino De La Reina, Suite 100
San Diego, California 92108**
(Address of principal executive offices, including zip code)

(877) 445-4581
(Registrant's telephone number, including area code)
Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of Each Class	Trading Symbol(s)	Name of Each Exchange on Which Registered
Common Stock, \$0.01 Par Value Per Share	ECPG	The NASDAQ Stock Market LLC

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act: None

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant: (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically every Interactive Data File required to be submitted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit such files). Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, a smaller reporting company or an emerging growth company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer," "accelerated filer," "smaller reporting company" and "emerging growth company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act. (Check one):

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer Non-accelerated filer Smaller reporting company

Emerging growth company

If an emerging growth company, indicate by check mark if the registrant has elected not to use the extended transition period for complying with any new or revised financial accounting standards provided pursuant to Section 13(a) of the Exchange Act.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has filed a report on and attestation to its management's assessment of the effectiveness of its internal control over financial reporting under Section 404(b) of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (15 U.S.C. 7262(b)) by the registered public accounting firm that prepared or issued its audit report.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act). Yes No

The aggregate market value of the voting stock held by non-affiliates of the registrant was approximately \$1,058.5 million at June 30, 2020, based on the closing price of the common stock of \$34.18 per share on such date, as reported by NASDAQ.

The number of shares of our Common Stock outstanding at February 17, 2021, was 31,345,569.

Documents Incorporated by Reference

Portions of the registrant's definitive proxy statement in connection with its annual meeting of stockholders to be held in 2021 are incorporated by reference in Items 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 of Part III of this Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020, which proxy statement will be filed no later than 120 days after the close of the registrant's fiscal year December 31, 2020.

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PART I
Item 1—Business

Our Business

We are an international specialty finance company providing debt recovery solutions and other related services for consumers across a broad range of financial assets. We primarily purchase portfolios of defaulted consumer receivables at deep discounts to face value and manage them by working with individuals as they repay their obligations and work toward financial recovery. Defaulted receivables are consumers' unpaid financial obligations to credit originators, including banks, credit unions, consumer finance companies and commercial retailers. Defaulted receivables may also include receivables subject to bankruptcy proceedings. We also provide debt servicing and other portfolio management services to credit originators for non-performing loans.

Through Midland Credit Management, Inc. and its domestic affiliates (collectively, "MCM") we are a market leader in portfolio purchasing and recovery in the United States. Through Cabot Credit Management Limited ("CCM") and its subsidiaries and European affiliates (collectively, "Cabot") we are one of the largest credit management services providers in Europe and a market leader in the United Kingdom and Ireland. These are our primary operations.

We also have additional international investments and operations as we have explored new asset classes and geographies including: (1) our investments in non-performing loans in Colombia, Peru and Mexico; and (2) an investment in Encore Asset Reconstruction Company ("EARC") in India. We refer to these additional international operations as our Latin America and Asia-Pacific ("LAAP") operations.

To date, operating results from LAAP have not been significant to our total consolidated operating results. Our long-term growth strategy is focused on continuing to invest in our core portfolio purchasing and recovery business in the United States and United Kingdom and strengthening and developing our business in the rest of Europe. As a result, descriptions of our operations in Part I - Item 1 of this Form 10-K will focus primarily on MCM (United States) and Cabot (Europe) operations.

Throughout this Annual Report on Form 10-K, when we refer to our United States operations, we include accounts originated in the United States that are serviced through our operations centers in the United States, India and Costa Rica. When we refer to our international operations, we are referring to accounts originated outside of the United States. Those accounts are generally serviced in the country of origin.

Company Information

We were incorporated in Delaware in 1999. In June 2013, we completed our merger with Asset Acceptance Capital Corp., which was another leading provider of debt recovery solutions in the United States. In July 2013, by acquiring a majority ownership interest in the indirect holding company of CCM, Janus Holdings S.à r.l., we acquired control of CCM. In February 2014, CCM acquired Marlin Financial Group Limited, a leading acquirer of non-performing consumer debt in the United Kingdom. In August 2014, we acquired Atlantic Credit & Finance, Inc., which was a market leader in the United States in buying and collecting on freshly charged-off debt. In June 2015, CCM expanded in the United Kingdom by acquiring Hillesden Securities Ltd and its subsidiaries ("dlc"). In March 2016, we completed the divestiture of our membership interests in Propel Acquisition LLC and its subsidiaries, our tax lien business. In November 2017, CCM strengthened its debt servicing offerings with the acquisition of Wescot Credit Services Limited ("Wescot"), a leading U.K. contingency debt collection and BPO services company. In July 2018, we completed the purchase of all of the outstanding equity of CCM not owned by us. As a result, CCM became our wholly owned subsidiary.

Our headquarters is located in San Diego, California 92108 and our telephone number is (877) 445-4581. Our website address is www.encorecapital.com. The site provides access, free of charge, to relevant investor related information, such as our annual report on Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K, and any amendments to those reports that are filed with or furnished to the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") pursuant to Sections 13(a) or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, press releases, featured articles, an event calendar, and frequently asked questions. SEC filings are available on our Internet site as soon as reasonably practicable after being filed with, or furnished to, the SEC. Also available on our website are our Standards of Business Conduct and charters for the committees of our Board of Directors. We intend to disclose any amendment to, or waiver of, a provision of our Standards of Business Conduct on our website. The content of our Internet site is not incorporated by reference into this Annual Report on Form 10-K. The SEC maintains an Internet site that contains reports, proxy and information statements, and other information regarding issuers that file electronically with the SEC (<http://www.sec.gov>).

Our Competitive Advantages

Analytic Strength. We believe that success in our business depends on our ability to establish and maintain an information and data advantage. Leveraging an industry-leading financially distressed consumer database, our in-house team of statisticians, business analysts, and software programmers have developed, and continually enhance, proprietary behavioral and valuation models, custom software applications, and other business tools that guide our portfolio purchases.

We have been able to leverage over 20 years of data, insights, modeling and operational integration. Each year we invest significant capital to purchase credit bureau and customized consumer data that describe account level and macroeconomic factors related to credit, savings, and payment behavior. This robust data accumulation from our collection channels and other sources supports our direct mail, call center and digital collection efforts and our market-leading proprietary scorecards for legal placements. We leverage these and other powerful statistical models to drive each collection activity.

We have made significant progress in developing our digital collection strategies, which we continue to optimize along with our collections websites. In developing our digital platform, we have allowed consumers to access account information, supporting documents and perform payments online. By leveraging direct mail, email and search engines we have bolstered data accumulation and collections payments through our digital platform. Innovation and investment in digital collection technology and speech analytics have enhanced our ability to collect and enabled us to quickly adapt to the varying operating conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as they provide real-time insights that help optimize our interaction with consumers, as well as valuable information for training purposes.

Consumer Intelligence and Principled Intent. Across the full extent of our operations, we strive to treat consumers with respect, compassion and integrity. From affordable payment plans to hardship solutions, we work with our consumers as they attempt to return to financial health. We are committed to having a dialogue that is honorable and constructive and hope to play an important and positive role in our consumers' financial recovery. We believe that our interests and those of the financial institutions from which we purchase portfolios are closely aligned with the interests of government agencies seeking to protect consumer rights. To demonstrate our commitment to conducting business ethically, we developed our Consumer Bill of Rights. Its articles govern the principled treatment we aim to provide consumers. Operating with a consumer-first approach has built trust among consumers and issuers of consumer credit, allowing us to improve liquidation and maintain purchasing supply. We expect to continue to invest in infrastructure and processes that support consumer advocacy and financial literacy while promoting an appropriate balance between corporate and consumer responsibility.

At the core of our analytic approach is a focus on characterizing our consumers' willingness and ability to repay their financial obligations. In this effort, we apply tools and methods from statistics, economics, and management science across the full extent of our business. During portfolio valuation, we use internally developed proprietary statistical models that determine the likelihood and expected amount of collections from each consumer within a portfolio. Subsequently, the expectations for each account are aggregated to arrive at a portfolio-level liquidation model and a valuation for the entire portfolio is determined. During the collection process, we apply a number of proprietary operational frameworks to match our collection approach to an individual consumer's payment behavior.

Our data collection practices and analytics processes are designed with consumer experience in mind. Over time we have adjusted our execution to optimize lifetime liquidation with a high-touch, focused approach. We connect with the consumer through extended conversations and offer expanded interaction and payment options. Our analytics infrastructure provides insights to consumer sentiment, allowing us to tailor our communication and collections efforts to each consumer. This sustained consumer focus and other operational enhancements have led to improved liquidation effectiveness and fair consumer treatment.

Regulatory Expertise. Both the U.S. and UK markets have established regulatory systems and compliance requirements, benefiting scaled market participants such as Encore. Issuers of consumer debt sell charged-off receivables to a select universe of trusted buyers, further necessitating a robust compliance and regulatory framework. As the cost of compliance increases, economies of scale are important to the provision of cost effective credit management services. Our established regulatory framework uniquely positions us to capture new portfolios and realize cost-efficiencies.

Although MCM and Cabot both operate in developed and established credit markets, fundamental differences exist between the two from the standpoint of the regulatory approach being followed. The U.S. environment is governed by a rules-based approach which details specific rules on how the company should conduct operations when interacting with consumers. The UK landscape is principles-based in nature; outcomes and principles are set by the regulators. Parties under their purview are responsible for determining how to appropriately achieve the stated outcomes and principles. We have strategically structured our compliance infrastructure at MCM and Cabot to account for these key market-specific factors.

Many credit providers seek to do business with credit management companies that provide consistent, compliant and consumer-focused services to protect the credit provider's own reputation. Encore's established regulatory and compliance programs are a key differentiator that enables the Company to successfully and efficiently demonstrate its expertise to credit providers. MCM averages approximately 35 issuer audits and due diligence exercises per year and has achieved certification from all major U.S. issuers who sell their charged-off accounts to third parties. Cabot also maintains a leading track record of regulatory approval and was the first large UK-based credit management service company to receive full FCA authorization.

Strong Capital Stewardship. We continue to maintain a focus on raising and deploying capital prudently to maximize the return on our invested capital. Our operational scale and geographic diversification enable us to adjust to market trends and deploy capital to maximize risk-adjusted returns.

Operational Scale and Cost Efficiency. We are a market leader in portfolio purchasing and recovery in the United States and one of the largest credit management services providers in Europe. This operational scale combined with cost efficiency is central to our purchasing and collection strategies. We also experience considerable cost advantages stemming from our scale and focus on collecting in a cost-efficient manner. Our operations in India and Costa Rica have been critical to achieving these improvements. We are one of the only companies in the industry with a successful, late stage collection platform in India, which has helped to reduce our call center variable cost-to-collect while maintaining our quality standards.

Our Strategy

Competitive Advantage. We strive to enhance our competitive advantages through innovation, which we expect will result in collections growth and improved productivity. To continue generating strong risk-adjusted returns, we intend to continue investing in analytics and technology, risk management and compliance. We will also continue investing in initiatives that enhance our relationships with consumers, expand our digital capabilities and collections, improve liquidation rates on our portfolios or reduce costs.

Market Focus. We continue to concentrate on our core portfolio purchasing and recovery business in the U.S. and the U.K. markets, where scale helps us generate our highest risk-adjusted returns. We believe these markets have attractive structural characteristics including: (1) a large and consistent flow of purchasing opportunities; (2) a strong regulatory framework that creates advantages for firms with sufficient financial and operational capabilities; (3) a high degree of sophistication and data availability; and (4) stable long term returns and resilience in the event of macroeconomic disruption. In addition, we are strengthening our presence in Spain, France, Portugal and Ireland, each of which we believe shares a number of these same attractive market characteristics.

Balance Sheet Strength. We are focused on optimizing our balance sheet while delivering strong financial and operational results. This includes increasing our cash flow generation through efficient collection operations and applying excess cash toward reducing our debt, reducing financial leverage. In addition, through our new global funding structure established in September 2020, we have reduced our funding costs, enhanced our access to capital markets and increased our financial flexibility, particularly with respect to our ability to allocate capital to our markets with the best risk-adjusted returns.

Our Priority Framework

We have tailored our strategy to optimize our ability to achieve and maintain strong returns throughout the credit cycle. With respect to our balance sheet, we will strive to maintain financial flexibility and operate with leverage in a range that we believe benefits the company, and we also target a strong debt rating. Our capital allocation priorities include portfolio purchases at attractive returns, strategic merger and acquisition (M&A) consideration, and the return of capital to stockholders.

Purchasing Approach

We provide sellers of delinquent receivables liquidity and immediate value through the purchase of charged-off consumer receivables. We believe that we are a valuable partner to these sellers given our financial strength, focus on principled intent, and track record of financial success.

Identify purchase opportunities. We maintain relationships with various financial service providers such as banks, credit unions, consumer finance companies, retailers, utilities companies and government agencies. These relationships frequently generate recurring purchase opportunities. We identify purchase opportunities and secure, where possible, exclusive negotiation rights. We believe that we are a valued partner for credit originators from whom we purchase portfolios, and our ability to secure exclusive negotiation rights is typically a result of our strong relationships and our purchasing scale. Receivable portfolios are typically sold either through a general auction, in which the seller requests bids from market participants, or in a private sale where the buyer negotiates directly with a seller. The sale transaction can be either for a one-time spot purchase or for a "forward flow" contract. A "forward flow" contract is a commitment to purchase receivables over a duration that is typically three to twelve months, but can be longer, with specifically defined volume, frequency, and pricing. Typically, these

forward flow contracts have provisions that allow for early termination or price renegotiation should the underlying quality of the portfolio deteriorate over time or if any particular month's delivery is materially different than the original portfolio used to price the forward flow contract. In the U.S., where we have the ability in many of our forward flow contracts to terminate upon a certain specified amount of notice, we generally attempt to secure forward flow contracts for receivables because a consistent volume of receivables over a set duration can enable us to more accurately forecast and plan our operational needs.

Evaluate purchase opportunities using analytical models. Once a portfolio of interest is identified, we obtain detailed information regarding the portfolio's accounts, including certain information regarding the consumers themselves. We use this account-level information to perform due diligence and evaluate the portfolio. We use statistical analysis and forecasting to analyze this information to create expected future cash forecasts for the portfolio. Our collection expectations are based on, among other things, account characteristics and credit file variables, which we use to predict a consumer's willingness and ability to repay their debt. Our servicing strategy and collections channel capacity are also a major determinant of collections expectations and portfolio expected value. Additional adjustments to cash expectations are made to account for qualitative factors that may affect the payment behavior of our consumers (such as prior collection activities or the underwriting approach of the seller), and to ensure our valuations are aligned with our operations.

Formal approval process. Once we have determined the estimated value of the portfolio and have completed our qualitative due diligence, we present the purchase opportunity to our investment committee, which either sets the maximum purchase price for the portfolio based on an Internal Rate of Return ("IRR"), or declines to bid. Members of the investment committee vary based on the type, amount, IRR and jurisdiction of the purchase opportunity, but include our Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer for all material purchases.

We believe long-term success is best achieved by combining a diversified asset sourcing approach with an account-level scoring methodology and a disciplined evaluation process.

Collection Approach

MCM (United States)

We continue to expand and build upon the insight developed from previous collections when developing our account collection strategies for portfolios we have acquired. We refine our collection approach to determine the most effective collection strategy to pursue for each account. Our current collection approaches consist of:

- **Direct Mail and Email.** We develop innovative mail and email campaigns offering consumers payment programs, and occasionally appropriate discounts, to encourage settlement of their accounts.
- **Call Centers.** We maintain domestic collection call centers in Phoenix, Arizona, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Troy, Michigan, and Roanoke, Virginia and international call centers in Gurgaon, India and San Jose, Costa Rica. Call centers generally consist of multiple collection departments. Account managers supervised by group managers are trained and divided into specialty teams. Account managers assess our consumers' willingness and capacity to pay. They attempt to work with consumers to evaluate sources and means of repayment to achieve a lump sum settlement or develop payment programs customized to the individual's ability to pay. In cases where a payment plan is developed, account managers encourage consumers to pay through automatic payment arrangements. We continuously educate account managers to understand and apply applicable laws and policies that are relevant in the account manager's daily collection activities. Our ongoing training and monitoring efforts help ensure compliance with applicable laws and policies by account managers.
- **Legal Action.** We generally refer accounts for legal action when the consumer has not responded to our direct mail efforts or our calls and it appears the consumer is able, but unwilling, to pay their obligations. When we decide to pursue legal action, we place the account into our internal legal channel or refer them to our network of retained law firms. If placed to our internal legal channel, attorneys in that channel will evaluate the accounts and make the final determination whether to pursue legal action. If referred to our network of retained law firms, we rely on our law firms' expertise with respect to applicable debt collection laws to evaluate the accounts placed in that channel in order to make the decision about whether or not to pursue collection litigation. Prior to engaging an external law firm (and throughout our engagement of any external law firm), we monitor and evaluate the firm's compliance with consumer credit laws and regulations, operations, financial condition, and experience, among other key criteria. The law firms we hire may also attempt to communicate with the consumers in an attempt to collect their debts prior to initiating litigation. We pay these law firms a contingent fee based on amounts they collect on our behalf.

- **Third-Party Collection Agencies.** We selectively employ a strategy that uses collection agencies. Collection agencies receive a contingent fee based on amounts they collect on our behalf. Generally, we use these agencies when they can generate more collections than our internal call centers or can do so at a lower cost.
- **Digital Collections.** We have made significant progress in developing our digital strategies and continue to analyze and optimize our digital strategies and our collection website. Currently consumers can access their account information, view supporting documents and make payments through our website. We leverage direct mail, email, and search engines to promote our digital channel to our consumers. Account managers in our call centers are also encouraged to make consumers aware of our digital channels including our website. We expect digital collections to increase as we continue to develop our digital strategies and more consumers become aware of the digital channel.
- **Inactive.** We strive to use our financial resources judiciously and efficiently by not deploying resources on accounts where the prospects of collection are remote based on a consumer's situation.
- **No Resale.** Our policy is to not resell accounts to third parties in the ordinary course of business.

We expand and build upon the insight developed during our purchase process when developing our account collection strategies for portfolios we have acquired. Our proprietary consumer-level collectability analysis is the primary determinant of whether an account is actively serviced post-purchase. The channel identification process is analogous to a decision tree where we first differentiate those consumers who we believe are unable to pay from those who we believe are able to pay. Consumers who we believe are financially incapable of making any payments, or are facing extenuating circumstances or hardships that would prevent them from making payments, are excluded from our collection process. It is our practice to attempt to contact consumers and assess each consumer's willingness to pay through analytics, phone calls, email and/or letters. If the consumer's contact information is unavailable or out of date, the account is routed to our skip tracing process, which includes the use of different skip tracing companies to provide accurate phone numbers and addresses. The consumers that engage with us are presented with payment plans that are intended to suit their needs or are sometimes offered discounts on their obligations. For the consumers that do not respond to our calls, emails or our letters we must then decide whether to pursue collections through legal action. Throughout our ownership period of accounts, we periodically refine our collection approach to determine the most effective collection strategy to pursue for each account.

Cabot (Europe)

In Europe, we also use direct mail and email, call centers, legal action, third-party collection agencies and digital methods to pursue collections.

We use insights developed during our purchasing process to build account collection strategies. Our proprietary consumer-level collectability analysis is the primary determinant of how an account will be serviced post-purchase. We continuously refine this analysis to determine the most effective collection strategy to pursue for each account we own. We purchase both paying portfolios, which consist of accounts where over 50% of the investment value is associated with consumers who are already repaying some of their debt, albeit at levels that still require the debt to be written off under the originators' internal accounting policies, and non-paying portfolios, where 50% or more of the investment value is associated with consumers who are not repaying some of their debt, which are higher risk and have less predictable cash flows than paying portfolios. Paying portfolios tend to have a higher purchase price relative to face value than non-paying accounts due to the higher expectations for collections, as well as lower anticipated collection costs. Non-paying portfolios often consist of a substantial number of accounts without contact details and for which the vendor has made numerous unsuccessful attempts to collect.

We employ a variety of collections strategies from the point of purchase, tailored to both the type of account and the consumer's financial strength. For paying accounts, we seek to engage with the consumers to transfer their payment stream to us and understand their detailed financial situation. For non-paying accounts, we apply a segmentation framework tailoring our communication and contact intensity in line with our assessment of their credit bureau data, the size of their debt, and whether we have an existing relationship with them from other accounts. Where contact is made and consumers indicate both a willingness and ability to pay, we create tailor-made payment plans to suit the consumer's situation. In doing so, we utilize U.K. regulatory protocols to assess affordability and ensure their plan is fair, balanced and sustainable. Where we identify consumers with an ability to pay but who appear to be unwilling to pay their debt due, we pursue a range of collections strategies, which may include litigation processes in order to stimulate engagement and enable us to agree to a suitable plan. Scoring is applied in conjunction with manual selection criteria to determine whether litigation might be an option, also informing any enforcement action that may be deemed most appropriate to the consumer's situation. Relationships with consumers are maintained through the duration of the payment plan, seeking to review plans at least annually in order to take into account fluctuations in consumers' financial situations. Again, scoring is used to vary the intensity of contact effort, mirroring the likelihood of a consumer's financial situation having changed. In the event that a consumer breaks their plan, segmentation is used to tailor the communication and contact intensity as we seek to re-engage with the consumer and understand the reason for the break. By understanding the reason for the break we can tailor the solutions we recommend to rehabilitate the plan and put the consumer back on the path to financial recovery. In this way, we have built strong relationships with our consumer base with a robust repayment stream, reflected in exceptional customer service scores.

Debt Servicing

Our debt servicing operations, which are primarily performed by subsidiaries of Cabot, include early stage collections, business process outsourcing and contingent collections for credit originators. We mainly provide debt servicing for consumer accounts, but also provide services for business-to-business accounts. We believe our debt servicing operations provide us: exposure to the oversight requirements of financial services clients that drive a continually evolving compliance agenda; access to proprietary debt purchase opportunities; and an opportunity to support clients across the collections and recoveries lifecycle, thereby allowing us to remain close to evolving trends.

Seasonality

MCM (United States)

While seasonality does not have a material impact on our business, collections are generally higher in the first three calendar quarters and are the slowest in the fourth calendar quarter. Relatively higher collections for a quarter can result in a lower cost-to-collect ratio compared to the other quarters, as our fixed costs are relatively constant and applied against a larger collection base. The seasonal impact on our business may also be influenced by our purchasing levels, the types of portfolios we purchase, and our operating strategies.

Collection seasonality can also affect revenue as a percentage of collections, also referred to as our revenue recognition rate. Generally, revenue for each pool group declines steadily over time, whereas collections can fluctuate from quarter to quarter based on seasonality, as described above. In quarters with lower collections (*e.g.*, the fourth calendar quarter), the revenue recognition rate can be higher than in quarters with higher collections (*e.g.*, the first three calendar quarters).

In addition, seasonality could have an impact on the relative level of quarterly earnings. In quarters with stronger collections, total costs are higher as a result of the additional efforts required to generate those collections. Since revenue for each pool group declines steadily over time, in quarters with higher collections and higher costs (*e.g.*, the first three calendar quarters), all else being equal, earnings could be lower than in quarters with lower collections and lower costs (*e.g.*, the fourth calendar quarter). Additionally, in quarters where a greater percentage of collections come from our legal and agency outsourcing channels, cost to collect will be higher than if there were more collections from our internal collection sites.

Cabot (Europe)

While seasonality does not have a material impact on European operations, collections are generally strongest in the second and third calendar quarters and slower in the first and fourth quarters, largely driven by the impact of the December holiday season and the New Year holiday, and the related impact on consumers' ability to repay their balances. This drives a higher level of payment plan defaults over this period, which are typically repaired across the first quarter of the following year. The August vacation season in the United Kingdom also has an unfavorable effect on the level of collections, but this is traditionally compensated for by higher collections in July and September.

Compliance and Enterprise Risk Management

We have established a compliance management system framework, operational procedures, and governance structures to enable us to conduct business in accordance with applicable rules, regulations, and guidelines. Our philosophy rests on well-established risk management principles including a model leveraging three lines of defense. Our first line of defense consists of business lines or other operating units, whose role is to own and manage risks and associated mitigating controls. Our second line of defense is comprised of strong legal, compliance, and enterprise risk management functions, who ensure that the business maintains policies and procedures in compliance with existing laws and regulations, advise the business on assessing risk and strengthening controls, and provide additional, related support. These second-line functions facilitate oversight by our management and Board of Directors and are responsible for promoting compliance with applicable laws and regulations, assisting in formulating and maintaining policies and procedures, and engaging in training, risk assessments, testing, monitoring, complaint response, compliance audits and corrective actions. Our third line of defense is provided by our internal audit function, providing independent assurance that both first and second line functions are performing their roles appropriately within the context of our framework.

Beyond written policies, one of our core internal goals is the adherence to principled intent as it pertains to all consumer interactions. We believe that it is in our shareholders' and our employees' best interest to treat all consumers with the highest standards of integrity. Specifically, we have strict policies and a code of ethics that guide all dealings with our consumers. Our employees undergo comprehensive training on legal and regulatory compliance, and we engage in regular call monitoring checks, data checks, performance reviews, and other operational reviews to ensure compliance with company guidelines.

Credit originators who sell us defaulted consumer receivables routinely conduct examinations of our collection practices and procedures and typically make reports with recommendations to us as to how they believe we can improve those practices and procedures. We respond to these reports in the ordinary course of business and make changes to our practices and procedures that we believe are appropriate to address any issues raised in such reports.

Information Technology

Our Technology. We strive to utilize best of breed technologies throughout our business from our core collection platforms and decision engines to our enterprise wide predictive dialer capability. Using these industry leading platforms in conjunction with certain company-specific integrations, provides us with an overall solution that enables us to both interact with consumers in their preferred manner, such as telephone calls, SMS, email, web chat, etc., as well as monitor such consumer interactions for compliance with applicable rules and regulations.

Process Control. To provide assurance that our technology solutions continue to operate efficiently and securely, we have developed strong process and control environments. These governance, risk management, and control protocols govern all areas of the enterprise: from physical security and cybersecurity, to change management, data protection, and segregation of duties.

Cybersecurity. We divide our cybersecurity and information security functions into the four core tenets that we believe make up a solid information security practice: (1) security strategy and architecture; (2) operational security; (3) vulnerability and threat management; and (4) IT governance, risk and controls. We invest in cybersecurity and advanced technologies, including next generation threat prevention and threat intelligence solutions, to protect our organization and consumer and proprietary data throughout its life cycle. We believe that our adoption and implementation of leading security frameworks for the financial services industry and the regulatory environments and geographies in which we operate demonstrates our commitment to cybersecurity and information security. To ensure the integrity and reliability of our environment, we periodically engage outside auditors specializing in information technology and cybersecurity to examine and test our operating systems, technical posture as well as our detection and response capabilities, including our disaster recovery plans.

Competition

The consumer credit recovery industry is highly competitive in the United States, the United Kingdom and throughout Europe. We compete with a wide range of collection and financial services companies, traditional contingency collection agencies and in-house recovery departments. Competitive pressures affect the availability and pricing of receivable portfolios, as well as the availability and cost of qualified recovery personnel.

When purchasing receivables, we compete primarily on the basis of price, the ease of negotiating and closing the prospective portfolio purchases with us, our ability to obtain funding, and our reputation with respect to the quality of services that we provide. We believe that our ability to compete effectively in this market is also dependent upon, among other things, our relationships with credit originators and portfolio resellers of charged-off consumer receivables, and our ability to provide quality collection strategies in compliance with applicable laws.

We believe that smaller competitors in the United States and the United Kingdom are facing difficulties in the portfolio purchasing market because of the higher cost to operate due to increased regulatory pressure and scrutiny applied by regulators.

In addition, sellers of charged-off consumer receivables are increasingly sensitive to the reputational risks involved in the industry and are therefore being more selective with buyers in the marketplace. We believe this favors larger participants in this market, such as us, that are better able to adapt to these pressures.

Government Regulation

There have been various governmental actions taken, or proposed, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as limiting debt collection efforts and encouraging or requiring extensions, modifications or forbearance, with respect to certain loans and fees. In addition, in certain jurisdictions courts have closed and/or government actions have affected the litigation process. Government actions have not been consistent across jurisdictions and the efficacy and ultimate effect of such actions is not known. We continue to monitor federal, state and international regulatory developments in relation to COVID-19 and their potential impact on our operations.

MCM (United States)

Our U.S. debt purchasing business and collection activities are subject to federal, state, and municipal statutes, rules, regulations, and ordinances that establish specific requirements and procedures that debt purchasers and collectors must follow when collecting consumer accounts, including requirements to obtain and maintain relevant licenses in certain U.S. states in which we conduct our activities. It is our policy to comply with the provisions of all applicable laws in all of our recovery activities, including any applicable state licensing requirements. Our failure to comply with these laws or to maintain relevant state licenses could have a material adverse effect on us to the extent that they limit our recovery activities or subject us to fines or penalties in connection with such activities.

The federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (“FDCPA”) and comparable state and local laws establish specific requirements and procedures that debt collectors must follow when communicating with consumers, including the time, place and manner of the communications, and prohibit unfair, deceptive, or abusive debt collection practices. Pursuant to the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 (the “Dodd-Frank Act”), Congress transferred the Federal Trade Commission’s (“FTC”) role of administering the FDCPA to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (“CFPB”), along with certain other federal statutes, and gave the CFPB authority to implement regulations under the FDCPA. The FTC and the CFPB share enforcement responsibilities under the FDCPA.

In addition to the FDCPA, the federal laws that directly or indirectly apply to our business (including the regulations that implement these laws) include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Dodd-Frank Act, including the Consumer Financial Protection Act (Title X of the Dodd-Frank Act, “CFPA”)
- Electronic Fund Transfer Act and the CFPB’s Regulation E
- Equal Credit Opportunity Act and the CFPB’s Regulation B
- Fair Credit Billing Act
- Fair Credit Reporting Act (“FCRA”) and the CFPB’s Regulation V
- Federal Trade Commission Act (“FTCA”)
- Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act and the CFPB’s Regulation P
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
- Servicemembers’ Civil Relief Act
- Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”)
- Truth In Lending Act and the CFPB’s Regulation Z
- U.S. Bankruptcy Code
- Wire Act
- Credit CARD Act
- Foreign Corrupt Practices Act

The Dodd-Frank Act was adopted to reform and strengthen regulation and supervision of the U.S. financial services industry. It contains comprehensive provisions governing the oversight of financial institutions, some of which apply to us. Among other things, the Dodd-Frank Act established the CFPB, which has broad authority to implement and enforce “federal consumer financial law,” as well as authority to examine financial institutions, including credit issuers that may be sellers of receivables and debt buyers and collectors such as us, for compliance with federal consumer financial law. The CFPB has broad authority to prevent unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices by issuing regulations or by using its enforcement authority without first issuing regulations. State Attorneys General and state financial regulators have authority to enforce the CFPB’s general prohibitions against unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices, as well as state-specific prohibitions against unfair or deceptive acts or practices. Additionally, the FTCA prohibits unfair and deceptive acts or practices in connection with a trade or business and gives the FTC enforcement authority to prevent and redress violations of this prohibition.

The Dodd-Frank Act also gave the CFPB supervisory and examination authority over a variety of institutions that may engage in debt collection, including us. Accordingly, the CFPB is authorized to supervise and conduct examinations of our business practices. The prospect of supervision has increased the potential consequences of noncompliance with federal consumer financial law.

The CFPB can conduct hearings, adjudication proceedings, and investigations, either unilaterally or jointly with other state and federal regulators, to determine if federal consumer financial law has been violated. The CFPB has authority to impose monetary penalties for violations of applicable federal consumer financial laws (including the CFPA, FDCPA, and FCRA, among other consumer protection statutes), require remediation of practices, and pursue enforcement actions. The CFPB also has authority to obtain cease and desist orders (which can include orders for restitution or rescission of contracts, as well as other kinds of affirmative relief), costs, and monetary penalties ranging from \$5,000 per day for ordinary violations of federal consumer financial laws to \$25,000 per day for reckless violations and \$1 million per day for knowing violations. The CFPB has been active in its supervision, examination and enforcement of financial services companies, including bringing enforcement actions, imposing fines and mandating large refunds to customers of several financial institutions for practices relating to debt collection practices.

The CFPB and the FTC continue to devote substantial attention to debt collection activities, and, as a result, the CFPB and the FTC have brought multiple investigations and enforcement actions against debt collectors for violations of the FDCPA and other applicable laws. Continued regulatory scrutiny by the CFPB and the FTC over debt collection practices may result in additional investigations and enforcement actions against the debt collection industry.

In September 2015, we entered into a consent order (the “2015 Consent Order”) with the CFPB in which we settled allegations arising from our practices between 2011 and 2015. On September 8, 2020, the CFPB filed a lawsuit alleging that we violated the 2015 Consent Order. In the lawsuit, the CFPB alleged that we did not perfectly adhere to certain operational provisions of the 2015 Consent Order, leading to alleged violations of federal consumer financial law.

On October 15, 2020, we entered into a stipulated judgment (“Stipulated Judgment”) with the CFPB to resolve the lawsuit. The Stipulated Judgment requires us to, among other things: (1) continue to follow a narrow subset of the operational requirements contained in the 2015 Consent Order, all of which have long been part of our routine practices; (2) pay a \$15.0 million civil monetary penalty; and (3) provide redress of approximately \$9,000 to 14 affected consumers, which is in addition to approximately \$70,000 of redress that we had previously voluntarily provided. In connection with the Stipulated Judgment, the CFPB has formally terminated the 2015 Consent Order.

We recorded an after-tax charge of \$15.0 million for the year ended December 31, 2020 as a result of the Stipulated Judgment.

Additionally, we are subject to ancillary state Attorney General investigations related to similar debt collection practices. For example, in 2018, we also entered into settlement agreements with the Attorneys General of 42 U.S. states and the District of Columbia in connection with our debt collection and litigation practices.

On October 30, 2020, the CFPB issued final rules in the form of new Regulation F to implement the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, which rules restate and clarify prohibitions on harassment and abuse, false or misleading representations, and unfair practices by debt collectors when collecting consumer debt. The rules included provisions related to, among other things, the use of newer technologies (text, voicemail and email) to communicate with consumers and limits relating to telephonic communications. On December 18, 2020, the CFPB also issued an additional debt collection final rule focused on consumer disclosures. This final rule amends Regulation F to provide additional requirements regarding validation information and disclosures provided at the outset of debt collection communications, prohibit suits and threats of suits regarding time-barred debt, and identify actions that must be taken before a debt collector may report information about a debt to consumer reporting agencies. The rules will each become effective on November 30, 2021. Based on our preliminary assessment of the rules, we believe that the new rules will not have a material incremental effect on our operations.

In addition, the CFPB has issued guidance in the form of bulletins on debt collection and credit furnishing activities generally, including one that specifically addresses representations regarding credit reports and credit scores during the debt collection process, another that focuses on the application of the CFPA’s prohibition of unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices on debt collection and another that discusses the risks that in-person collection of consumer debt may create in violating the FDPCA and CFPA. The CFPB also accepts debt collection consumer complaints and released template letters for consumers to use when corresponding with debt collectors. The CFPB makes publicly available its data on consumer complaints. The Dodd-Frank Act also mandates the submission of multiple studies and reports to Congress by the CFPB, and CFPB staff regularly make speeches on topics related to credit and debt. All of these activities could trigger additional legislative or regulatory action. In addition, the CFPB has engaged in enforcement activity in sectors adjacent to our industry, impacting credit originators, collection firms, and payment processors, among others. The CFPB’s enforcement activity in these spaces, especially in the absence of clear rules or regulatory expectations, can be disruptive to third parties as they attempt to define appropriate business practices. As a result, certain commercial relationships we maintain may be disrupted or impacted by changes in third-parties’ business practices or perceptions of elevated risk relating to the debt collection industry.

Our activities are also subject to federal and state laws concerning identity theft, data privacy, and cybersecurity. The Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act and its implementing regulations require us generally to protect the confidentiality of our consumers' nonpublic personal information and to disclose to our consumers our privacy policy and practices, including those regarding sharing consumers' nonpublic personal information with third parties. In addition, the FCRA requires us to prevent identity theft and to securely dispose of consumer credit reports. Certain state laws impose similar or stricter privacy obligations as well as obligations to provide notification of security breaches of personal information to affected individuals, consumer reporting agencies, businesses and governmental agencies. The applicable regulatory framework for privacy and cybersecurity issues is evolving and uncertain. For example, the California Consumer Privacy Act ("CCPA"), which became effective January 1, 2020, imposes more stringent requirements on certain businesses with respect to California data privacy. The CCPA includes provisions that give California residents expanded rights to access and delete certain personal information, opt out of certain personal information sharing, and receive detailed information about how certain personal information is used. Compliance with any new or developing privacy laws in the United States, including any state or federal laws, may require significant resources and subject us to a variety of regulatory and private sanctions.

Our activities are also subject to federal and state laws concerning the use of automated dialing equipment, and other laws related to consumers and consumer protection. In response to petitions filed by third parties, in July 2015, the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") released a declaratory ruling interpreting the TCPA, which could impact the way consumers may be contacted on their cellular phones and could impact our operations and financial results. The FCC is currently engaged in further rulemaking regarding the definition of an automatic telephone dialing system under the TCPA.

In addition to the federal statutes detailed above, many states have general consumer protection statutes, laws, regulations, or court rules that apply to debt purchasing and collection. In a number of states and cities, we must maintain licenses to perform debt recovery services and must satisfy ongoing compliance and bonding requirements. It is our policy to comply with all material licensing, compliance and bonding requirements. Our failure to comply with existing requirements, changing interpretations of existing requirements, or adoption of new requirements, could subject us to a variety of regulatory and private sanctions. These could include license suspension or revocation; orders or injunctive relief, including orders providing for rescission of transactions or other affirmative relief; and monetary relief, including restitution, damages, fines and/or penalties. In addition, failure to comply with state licensing and compliance requirements could restrict our ability to collect in regions, subject us to increased regulation, increase our costs, or adversely affect our ability to collect our receivables.

State laws, among other things, also may limit the interest rate and the fees that a credit originator may impose on our consumers, limit the time in which we may file legal actions to enforce consumer accounts, and require specific account information for certain collection activities. By way of example, the California Fair Debt Buying Practices Act that directly applies to debt buyers, applies to accounts sold after January 1, 2014. The law requires debt buyers operating in the state to have in their possession specific account information before debt collection efforts can begin, among other requirements. Moreover, the New York State Department of Financial Services issued new debt collection regulations, which took effect in September 2015 and established new requirements for collecting debt in the state. In addition, other state and local requirements and court rulings in various jurisdictions may also affect our ability to collect.

The relationship between consumers and credit card issuers is also extensively regulated by federal and state consumer protection and related laws and regulations. These laws may affect some of our operations because the majority of our receivables originate through credit card transactions. The laws and regulations applicable to credit card issuers, among other things, impose disclosure requirements when a credit card account is advertised, when it is applied for and when it is opened, at the end of monthly billing cycles, and at year-end. Federal law requires, among other things, that credit card issuers disclose to consumers the interest rates, fees, grace periods, and balance calculation methods associated with their credit card accounts. Some laws prohibit discriminatory practices in connection with the extension of credit. If the originating institution fails to comply with applicable statutes, rules, and regulations, it could create claims and rights for consumers that would reduce or eliminate their obligations related to those receivables. When we acquire receivables, we generally require the credit originator or portfolio reseller to represent that they have complied with applicable statutes, rules, and regulations relating to the origination and collection of the receivables before they were sold to us.

Federal statutes further provide that, in some cases, consumers cannot be held liable for, or their liability is limited with respect to, charges to their credit card accounts that resulted from unauthorized use of their credit cards. These laws, among others, may give consumers a legal cause of action against us, or may limit our ability to recover amounts owing with respect to the receivables, whether or not we committed any wrongful act or omission in connection with the account.

These laws and regulations, and others similar to the ones listed above, as well as laws applicable to specific types of debt, impose requirements or restrictions on collection methods or our ability to enforce and recover certain of our receivables. Effects of the law, including those described above, and any new or changed laws, rules, or regulations, and reinterpretation of

the same, may adversely affect our ability to recover amounts owing with respect to our receivables or the sale of receivables by creditors and resellers.

Cabot (Europe)

Our operations in Europe are affected by local statutes, rules and regulations. It is our policy to comply with these laws in all of our recovery activities in Europe, where applicable.

Financial Conduct Authority Regulation. UK debt purchase and services collections businesses are principally regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (“FCA”), the UK Information Commissioner’s Office and the UK Office of Communications. Cabot has three regulated entities in the UK: the debt purchase brand Cabot Credit Management Group Limited (“CCMG”), the servicing brand Wescot and its law firm, Mortimer Clarke Solicitors (“Mortimer Clarke”). The FCA regards debt collection as a “high risk” activity primarily due to the potential impact that poor practice can have on already vulnerable consumers and as a result maintains a high focus on the sector. The FCA Handbook sets out the FCA rules and other provisions. Firms wishing to carry on regulated consumer credit activities must comply with all applicable sections of the FCA Handbook, including “Treating Customers Fairly” principles, as well as the applicable consumer credit laws and regulations. The FCA also publishes guidance on various topics from time to time that it expects firms to comply with. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the FCA has made it clear by way of its guidance to consumer credit and debt management firms that it expects such firms to adjust policies and lending and collection practices as necessary to accommodate customers that may be experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The FCA has applied its rules to consumer credit firms in a number of areas, including its high-level principles and conduct of business standards. The FCA has significant powers and, as the FCA deepens its understanding of the industry through continued supervision, it is likely that the regulatory requirements applicable to the debt purchase industry will continue to increase. In addition, it is likely that the compliance framework that will be needed to continue to satisfy the FCA requirements will demand continued investment and resources in our compliance governance framework.

One particularly significant regulatory change program was the implementation of the Senior Managers and Certification Regime (“SMCR”) for UK operations in December 2019. These requirements are designed to drive accountability and risk ownership within businesses. This directly impacted CCMG’s senior management team and the wider requirements, which are required to be fully implemented by March 31, 2021, affect the majority of colleagues who need to be aware and adhere to the required standards of conduct.

Companies authorized by the FCA must be able to demonstrate that they meet the threshold conditions for authorization and comply on an ongoing basis with the FCA’s high level standards for authorized firms, such as its Principles for Business (including the principle of “treating customers fairly”), and rules and guidance on systems and controls. In addition to the full authorization of its business with the FCA, CCMG, Wescot and Mortimer Clarke have appointed certain individuals who have significant control or influence over the management of the respective businesses, known as Senior Management Function Managers (“SMF Managers”). SMF Managers are subject to statements of principle and codes of practice established and enforced by the FCA.

The FCA has the ability to, among other things, impose significant fines, ban certain individuals from carrying on trade within the financial services industry, impose requirements on a firm’s permission, cease certain products from being collected upon and in extreme circumstances remove permissions to trade.

In addition to the permissions granted originally as part of its FCA authorization, in February 2017, CCMG was granted a variation of permissions from the FCA in order to administer regulated mortgage contracts.

Consumer protection. The Consumer Credit Act of 1974 (and its related regulations) (the “UK Consumer Credit Act”) and the UK Consumer Rights Act 2015 set forth requirements for the entry into and ongoing management of consumer credit arrangements in the United Kingdom. A failure to comply with these requirements can make agreements unenforceable or can result in a requirement that charged and collected interest be repaid. The FCA undertook a review of the provisions of the UK Consumer Credit Act and published its Final Report in March 2019 which set out its views on whether the repeal of certain UK Consumer Credit Act provisions would adversely affect the appropriate degree of protection for consumers. The UK Government is now tasked with deciding whether to implement any of the FCA’s recommendations.

Data protection. In addition to these regulations on debt collection and debt purchase activities, Cabot must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (“GDPR”). This substantially replaced the previous legislation (Data Protection Act of 1998) and introduced significant changes to the data protection regime including but not limited to: the conditions for obtaining consent to process personal data; transparency and providing information to individuals regarding the processing of their personal data; enhanced rights for individuals; notification obligations for personal data breach; and new supervisory authorities, including a European Data Protection Board (“EDPB”). The GDPR was further enhanced in the UK

through new UK specific legislation in the form of an updated UK Data Protection Act 2018. Cabot made required changes in its UK operations across its debt purchasing and servicing businesses to meet the requirements of GDPR. Data Protection Officer(s) have been appointed and are supported by Privacy Champions at each European/UK site to promote and enforce good data protection practices.

Ireland. The regulatory regime in Ireland has been subject to significant changes in recent years. In July 2015, the Irish Parliament introduced the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2015 (as amended, the “2015 Act”), which requires credit servicing firms to be regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland to ensure regulatory protection for consumers following the sale of consumer loan portfolios to unregulated entities. Cabot Financial (Ireland) Limited is authorized by the Central Bank of Ireland under Part V of the Central Bank Act 1997 as amended by the 2015 Act as a Credit Servicing Firm. As a result, Cabot Financial (Ireland) Limited is subject to the Central Bank of Ireland’s supervisory and enforcement regime and is subject to various regulatory consumer protection codes. Cabot Financial (Ireland) Limited was already obligated to ensure compliance with these codes through its contractual agreements to service loans on behalf of various Irish financial institutions and is audited on a regular basis against such obligations.

In June 2016, the United Kingdom held a referendum in which voters approved the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union, commonly referred to as “Brexit.” The United Kingdom formally exited the European Union on January 31, 2020 although an agreement was not reached until the end of the allocated transition period in December 2020. Even though an agreement has been reached there remains a significant lack of clarity over the terms of the United Kingdom’s future relationship with the European Union in certain key areas not least Financial Services where a temporary additional transition period has been assigned while negotiations continue. The full impact of Brexit has yet to be felt and could, among other outcomes, disrupt the free movement of goods, services and people between the United Kingdom and the European Union, undermine bilateral cooperation in key policy areas and significantly disrupt trade between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

In addition, the other markets in which we currently operate (including Spain, Italy, Poland and Portugal) are subject to local laws and regulations, and we continue to review the required risk and compliance programs to facilitate compliance with applicable laws and regulations in those markets. Our operations outside the United States are subject to the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which prohibits U.S. companies and their agents and employees from providing anything of value to a foreign official for the purposes of influencing any act or decision of these individuals in order to obtain an unfair advantage, to help, obtain, or retain business.

Human Capital Management

As of December 31, 2020, we had 7,725 employees, of which approximately 20% were in the United States and 80% were in our international locations. We have no employees in North America represented by a labor union or subject to the terms of collective bargaining agreements. We have employees in Spain and the United Kingdom who are represented by collective bargaining agreements. We believe that our relations with our employees in all locations are positive.

Our approach to human capital management starts with a strong foundation anchored in our commitment to values and ethics. Attracting, developing and retaining talent is critical to executing our strategy and our ability to compete effectively. We believe in the importance of creating a diverse and inclusive work environment for our employees, supporting their well-being with fair and market-competitive pay and benefits, and investing in their growth and development.

We also value feedback from our employees and regularly survey them to understand how they feel about the company and subsequently take appropriate actions and employ employee engagement best practices to improve their work experience.

Commitment to Values and Ethics

We hold our employees to the highest ethical practices and decision making as guided by our Standards of Business Conduct (the “Standards”), which embody Encore’s Mission, Vision and Values, provide guidance on specific behaviors, and set the foundation for ethical decision making. Our Standards reflect our commitment to operating in a fair, honest, responsible and ethical manner and provide direction for reporting complaints in the event of alleged violations of our policies (including through our Employee Compliance Hotline).

Diversity and Inclusion

At Encore, we are committed to cultivating an inclusive culture that reflects our consumers and our communities, where our actions and mindset ensure every individual can thrive. We see advancing Diversity and Inclusion as a journey that we will continually work on to build a better Encore for our employees and other stakeholders. We value diverse viewpoints and inclusive experiences and strive for balanced representation in our overall organization. We foster a culture of respect and inclusion in various ways, including offering unconscious bias and diversity training, tracking gender diversity, and celebrating

diversity through global cultural appreciation initiatives. As of December 31, 2020, approximately 50% of our total workforce were women.

Financial, Health and Mental Well-Being

We strive to retain and attract the most talented employees by taking a holistic approach to well-being. This includes competitive compensation and benefits in the form of base salary, short-term incentives, opportunities for long-term incentives, retirement and financial support, and recognition programs as part of our financial well-being offerings. We also provide competitive benefits that include comprehensive health and welfare insurance, generous time-off and leave, and programs such as Employee Assistance Program, paid time off for volunteering activities, and wellness incentives to support the health and mental well-being of our employees.

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, we implemented programs and services that we determined were in the best interest of our employees, their families, our consumers and business partners, as well as the communities in which we operate. These include continued work-from-home arrangements for a majority of our employees, reimbursement of certain home office related expenses, enhanced information technology (IT) support, backup childcare, enhanced medical insurance coverage, activities and programs supporting mental health, and regular communications and updates to employees.

Growth and Development

We are committed to actively fostering a learning culture and investing in ongoing professional and career development for our employees. We empower managers and employees with collective accountability for developing themselves and others, and promote ongoing dialogue, coaching, feedback, and improvement through our performance management practices. We offer employees an extensive number of programs and tools for their personal and professional development including instructor-led training courses, leadership development programs, on-demand virtual learning, individual development planning, mentoring, roles-based functional and technical training, compliance training, peer learning opportunities, and tuition reimbursement programs. We also aligned our talent and succession planning framework at a global level to support the development of our internal talent pipeline for current and future organizational needs, and to provide an overall health gauge of our global talent pool.

Item 1A—Risk Factors

There are risks and uncertainties in our business that could cause our actual results to differ from those anticipated. We urge you to read these risk factors carefully in connection with evaluating our business and in connection with the forward-looking statements and other information contained in this Annual Report on Form 10-K. Any of the risks described herein could affect our business, financial condition, or future results and the actual outcome of matters as to which forward-looking statements are made. The list of risks is not intended to be exhaustive, and the order in which the risks appear is not intended as an indication of their relative weight or importance. Additional risks and uncertainties not currently known to us, or that we currently deem to be immaterial, also may adversely affect our business, financial condition and/or operating results.

Risks Related to Our Business and Industry

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures implemented to contain the spread of the virus have had, and could continue to have, an impact on our business and results of operations.

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting containment measures have caused economic and financial disruptions that have adversely affected, and could continue to affect, our business and results of operations. The extent to which the pandemic will continue to affect our business and results of operations will depend on future developments that we are not able to predict, including the duration, spread and severity of the outbreak; the nature, extent and effectiveness of containment measures; the extent and duration of the effect on the economy; and how quickly and to what extent normal economic and operating conditions can resume. It is also possible that any adverse impacts of the pandemic and containment measures may continue once the pandemic is controlled.

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting containment measures have contributed to among other things:

- Adverse impacts on our daily business operations and our ability to perform necessary business functions, including as a result of illness or as a result of restrictions on movement, which has caused expected delays in collections;
- Widespread changes to financial and economic conditions of consumers;
- Uncertainty in certain jurisdictions with respect to near-term availability of receivable portfolios that meet our purchasing standards;
- Governmental actions discussed, proposed or taken to provide forms of relief, such as limiting debt collections efforts and encouraging or requiring extensions, modifications or forbearance, with respect to certain loans and fees;
- Impacts on the court system and the legal process, which have impacted our ability to collect through the litigation process;
- Adverse impacts on third-party service providers;
- Impacts on capital and credit market conditions, which may limit our access to funding, increase our cost of capital, and affect our ability to meet liquidity needs;
- Increased spending on business continuity efforts and readiness efforts for returning to our offices, which may in turn require that we cut costs and investments in other areas; and
- An increased risk of an information or cyber-security incident, fraud or a failure in the effectiveness of our compliance programs due to, among other things, an increase in remote work.

On January 1, 2020 we adopted the new accounting standard for Financial Instruments - Credit Losses (or “CECL”). Our ability to accurately forecast future losses under CECL may be impaired by the significant uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and containment measures and the lack of comparable precedent. See “*Note 1: Ownership, Description of Business, and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies*” to our consolidated financial statements for our accounting policy under CECL.

We do not yet know the full extent of how the COVID-19 pandemic could affect our business, results of operations and financial condition. However, the effects could have a material impact on our business and results of operations and heighten many of the other risks described in this “*Risk Factors*” section.

Financial and economic conditions affect the ability of consumers to pay their obligations, which could harm our financial results.

Economic conditions globally and locally directly affect unemployment and credit availability. Adverse conditions, economic changes, and financial disruptions place financial pressure on the consumer, which may reduce our ability to collect on our consumer receivable portfolios and may adversely affect the value of our consumer receivable portfolios. Further, increased financial pressures on the financially distressed consumer may result in additional regulatory requirements or restrictions on our operations and increased litigation filed against us. These conditions could increase our costs and harm our business, financial condition, and operating results.

We may not be able to purchase receivables at favorable prices, which could limit our growth or profitability.

Our ability to continue to operate profitably depends upon the continued availability of receivable portfolios that meet our purchasing standards and are cost-effective based upon projected collections exceeding our costs. Due, in part, to fluctuating prices for receivable portfolios, fluctuating supply and competition within the marketplace, there has been considerable variation in our purchasing volume and pricing from quarter to quarter and we expect that to continue. The volume of our portfolio purchases may be limited when prices are high and may or may not increase when portfolio pricing is more favorable to us. Further, our rates of return may decline when portfolio prices are high. We do not know how long portfolios will be available for purchase on terms acceptable to us, or at all.

The availability of receivable portfolios at favorable prices depends on a number of factors, including:

- volume of defaults in consumer debt;
- continued sale of receivable portfolios by originating institutions and portfolio resellers at sufficient volumes and acceptable price levels;
- competition in the marketplace;
- our ability to develop and maintain favorable relationships with key major credit originators and portfolio resellers;
- our ability to obtain adequate data from credit originators or portfolio resellers to appropriately evaluate the collectability of, estimate the value of, and collect on portfolios; and
- changes in laws and regulations governing consumer lending, bankruptcy, and collections.

We enter into “forward flow” contracts, which are commitments to purchase receivables on a periodic basis over a specified period of time in accordance with certain criteria, which may include a specifically defined volume, frequency, and pricing. In periods of decreasing prices, we may end up paying an amount higher for such debt portfolios in a forward flow contract than we would otherwise agree to pay at the time for a spot purchase, which could result in reduced returns. We would likely only be able to terminate such forward flow agreements in certain limited circumstances.

In addition, because of the length of time involved in collecting charged-off consumer receivables on acquired portfolios and the volatility in the timing of our collections, we may not be able to identify trends and make changes in our purchasing strategies in a timely manner. Ultimately, if we are unable to continually purchase and collect on a sufficient volume of receivables to generate cash collections that exceed our costs or to generate satisfactory returns, our business, financial condition and operating results will be adversely affected.

A significant portion of our portfolio purchases during any period may be concentrated with a small number of sellers, which could adversely affect our volume and timing of purchases.

A significant percentage of our portfolio purchases for any given fiscal quarter or year may be concentrated with a few large sellers, some of which may also involve forward flow arrangements. We cannot be certain that any of our significant sellers will continue to sell charged-off receivables to us, that such sales would be on terms or in quantities acceptable to us, or that we would be able to replace these purchases with purchases from other sellers.

A significant decrease in the volume of portfolio available from any of our principal sellers would force us to seek alternative sources of charged-off receivables.

We may be unable to find alternative sources from which to purchase charged-off receivables, and even if we could successfully replace these purchases, the search could take time and the receivables could be of lower quality, cost more, or both, any of which could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

We face intense competition that could impair our ability to maintain or grow our purchasing volumes.

The charged-off receivables purchasing market is highly competitive. We compete with a wide range of other purchasers of charged-off consumer receivables. To the extent our competitors are able to better maximize recoveries on their assets or are willing to accept lower rates of return, we may not be able to grow or sustain our purchasing volumes or we may be forced to acquire portfolios at expected rates of return lower than our historical rates of return. Some of our competitors may obtain alternative sources of financing at more favorable rates than those available to us, the proceeds from which may be used to fund expansion and to increase the amount of charged-off receivables they purchase.

We face bidding competition in our acquisition of charged-off consumer receivables. We believe that successful bids are predominantly awarded based on price and, to a lesser extent, based on service, reputation, and relationships with the sellers of charged-off receivables. Some of our current competitors, and potential new competitors, may have more effective pricing and collection models, greater adaptability to changing market needs, and more established relationships in our industry than we do. Moreover, our competitors may elect to pay prices for portfolios that we determine are not economically sustainable and, in that event, we may not be able to continue to offer competitive bids for charged-off receivables.

If we are unable to develop and expand our business or to adapt to changing market needs as well as our current or future competitors, we may experience reduced access to portfolios of charged-off consumer receivables in sufficient face value amounts at appropriate prices, which could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

We may purchase receivable portfolios that are unprofitable or we may not be able to collect sufficient amounts to recover our costs and to fund our operations.

We acquire and service charged-off receivables that the obligors have failed to pay and the sellers have deemed uncollectible and have written off. The originating institutions and/or portfolio resellers generally make numerous attempts to recover on these nonperforming receivables, often using a combination of their in-house collection and legal departments, as well as third-party collection agencies. In order to operate profitably over the long term, we must continually purchase and collect on a sufficient volume of charged-off receivables to generate revenue that exceeds our costs. These receivables are difficult to collect, and we may not be successful in collecting amounts sufficient to cover the costs associated with purchasing the receivables and funding our operations. If we are not able to collect on these receivables, collect sufficient amounts to cover our costs or generate satisfactory returns, this may adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

We may experience losses on portfolios consisting of new types of receivables or receivables in new geographies due to our lack of collection experience with these receivables, which could harm our business, financial condition and operating results.

We continually look for opportunities to expand the classes of assets that make up the portfolios we acquire. Therefore, we may acquire portfolios consisting of assets with which we have little or no collection experience or portfolios of receivables in new geographies where we do not historically maintain an operational footprint. Our lack of experience with these assets may hinder our ability to generate expected levels of profits from these portfolios. Further, our existing methods of collections may prove ineffective for these new receivables, and we may not be able to collect on these portfolios. Our inexperience with these receivables may have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results.

The statistical models we use to project remaining cash flows from our receivable portfolios may prove to be inaccurate and, if so, our financial results may be adversely affected.

We use internally developed models to project the remaining cash flows from our receivable portfolios. These models consider known data about our consumers' accounts, including, among other things, our collection experience and changes in external consumer factors, in addition to data known when we acquire the accounts. Our models also consider data provided by third parties including public sources. We may not be able to achieve the collections forecasted by our models. Our models may not appropriately identify or assess all material factors and yield correct or accurate forecasts as our historical collection experience may not reflect current or future realities. We also have no control over the accuracy of information received from third parties. If such information is not accurate our models may not accurately project estimated remaining cash flows. If we are not able to achieve the levels of forecasted collection, our revenues will be reduced or we may be required to record a charge, which may adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

A significant portion of our collections relies upon our success in individual lawsuits brought against consumers and our ability to collect on judgments in our favor.

We generate a significant portion of our revenue by collecting on judgments that are granted by courts in lawsuits filed against consumers. A decrease in the willingness of courts to grant these judgments, a change in the requirements for filing these cases or obtaining these judgments, or a decrease in our ability to collect on these judgments could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results. As we increase our use of the legal channel for collections, our short-

term margins may decrease as a result of an increase in upfront court costs and costs related to counter claims. We may not be able to collect on certain aged accounts because of applicable statutes of limitations and we may be subject to adverse effects of regulatory changes. Further, courts in certain jurisdictions require that a copy of the account statements or applications be attached to the pleadings in order to obtain a judgment against consumers. If we are unable to produce those account documents, these courts could deny our claims, and our business, financial condition and operating results may be adversely affected.

Increases in costs associated with our collections through collection litigation can raise our costs associated with our collection strategies and the individual lawsuits brought against consumers to collect on judgments in our favor.

We have substantial collection activity through our legal collections channel and, as a consequence, increases in upfront court costs, costs related to counterclaims, and other court costs may increase our total cost in collecting on accounts in this channel, which may have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results.

Our business, financial condition and operating results may be adversely affected if consumer bankruptcy filings increase or if bankruptcy laws change.

Our business model may be uniquely vulnerable to an economic recession, which typically results in an increase in the amount of defaulted consumer receivables, thereby contributing to an increase in the amount of personal bankruptcy filings. Under certain bankruptcy filings, a consumer's assets are sold to repay credit originators, with priority given to holders of secured debt. Since the defaulted consumer receivables we purchase are generally unsecured, we often are not able to collect on those receivables. In addition, since we purchase receivables that may have been delinquent for a long period of time, this may be an indication that many of the consumers from whom we collect will be unable to pay their debts going forward and are more likely to file for bankruptcy in an economic recession. Furthermore, potential changes to existing bankruptcy laws could contribute to an increase in consumer bankruptcy filings. We cannot be certain that our collection experience would not decline with an increase in consumer bankruptcy filings. If our actual collection experience with respect to a defaulted consumer receivable portfolio is significantly lower than we projected when we purchased the portfolio, our business, financial condition and operating results could be adversely affected.

We are subject to audits conducted by sellers of debt portfolios and may be required to implement specific changes to our policies and practices as a result of adverse findings by such sellers as a part of the audit process, which could limit our ability to purchase debt portfolios from them in the future, which could materially and adversely affect our business.

Pursuant to purchase contracts, we are subject to audits that are conducted by sellers of debt portfolios. Such audits may occur with little notice and the assessment criteria used by each seller varies based on their own requirements, policies and standards. Although much of the assessment criteria is based on regulatory requirements, we may be asked to comply with additional terms and conditions that are unique to particular debt originators. From time to time, sellers may believe that we are not in compliance with certain of their criteria and in such cases, we may be required to dedicate resources and to incur expenses to address such concerns, including the implementation of new policies and procedures. In addition, to the extent that we are unable to satisfy the requirements of a particular seller, such seller could remove us from their panel of preferred purchasers, which could limit our ability to purchase debt portfolios from that seller in the future, which could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

We rely on third parties to provide us with services in connection with certain aspects of our business, and any failure by these third parties to perform their obligations, or our inability to arrange for alternative third-party providers for such services, could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results.

We use outside collection services to collect a substantial portion of our charged-off receivables. We are dependent upon the efforts of third-party service providers including collection agencies, law firms, data providers, tracing service providers and other servicers to help service and collect our charged-off receivables. Our third-party servicers could fail to perform collection services for us adequately, remit those collections to us or otherwise perform their obligations adequately. In addition, one or more of those third-party service providers could cease operations abruptly or become insolvent, or our relationships with such third-party service providers may otherwise change adversely. Further, we might not be able to secure replacement third-party service providers or promptly transfer account information to our new third-party service provider or in-house in the event our agreements with our third-party collection agencies and attorneys were terminated. In addition, to the extent these third-party service providers violate laws, other regulatory requirements or their contractual obligations, or act inappropriately in the conduct of their business, our business and reputation could be negatively affected or penalties could be directly imposed upon us. Any of the foregoing factors could cause our business, financial condition and operating results to be adversely affected.

We have entered into agreements with third parties to provide us with services in connection with our business, including payment processing, credit card authorization and processing, payroll processing, record keeping for retirement and benefit plans and certain information technology functions. Any failure by a third party to provide us with contracted services on a

timely basis or within service level expectations and performance standards may have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results. In addition, we may be unable to find, or enter into agreements with, suitable replacement third party providers for such services, which could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

We are dependent on our data gathering systems and proprietary consumer profiles, and if access to such data was lost or became public, our business could be materially and adversely affected.

Our models and consumer databases provide information that is critical to our business. We rely on data provided to us by multiple credit reference agencies, our servicing partners and other sources in order to operate our systems, develop our proprietary consumer profiles and run our business generally. If these credit reference agencies were to terminate their agreements or stop providing us with data for any reason, for example, due to a change in governmental regulation, or if they were to considerably raise the price of their services, our business could be materially and adversely affected. Also, if any of the proprietary information or data that we use became public, for example, due to a change in government regulations, we could lose a significant competitive advantage and our business could be negatively impacted.

If we become unable to continue to acquire or use information and data in the manner in which it is currently acquired and used, or if we were prohibited from accessing or aggregating the data in these systems or profiles for any reason, we may lose a significant competitive advantage, in particular if our competitors continue to be able to acquire and use such data, and our business could be materially and adversely affected.

If our technology and telecommunications systems were to fail, or if we are not able to successfully anticipate, invest in, or adopt technological advances within our industry, it could have an adverse effect on our operations.

Our success depends in large part on sophisticated computer and telecommunications systems. The temporary or permanent loss of our computer and telecommunications equipment and software systems, through casualty, operating malfunction, software virus, or service provider failure, could disrupt our operations. In the normal course of our business, we must record and process significant amounts of data quickly and accurately to properly bid on prospective acquisitions of receivable portfolios and to access, maintain, and expand the databases we use for our collection activities. Any simultaneous failure of our information systems and their backup systems would interrupt our business operations.

In addition, our business relies on computer and telecommunications technologies, and our ability to integrate new technologies into our business is essential to our competitive position and our success. We may not be successful in anticipating, investing in, or adopting technological changes on a timely or cost-effective basis. Computer and telecommunications technologies are evolving rapidly and are characterized by short product life cycles.

We continue to make significant modifications to our information systems to ensure that they continue to be adequate for our current and foreseeable demands and continued expansion, and our future growth may require additional investment in these systems. These system modifications may exceed our cost or time estimates for completion or may be unsuccessful. If we cannot update our information systems effectively, our business, financial condition and operating results may be adversely affected.

In the event of a cyber security breach or similar incident, our business and operations could suffer.

We rely on information technology networks and systems to process and store electronic information. We collect and store sensitive data, including personally identifiable information of our consumers, on our information technology networks. Despite the implementation of security measures, our information technology networks and systems have been, and in the future may be, vulnerable to disruptions and shutdowns due to attacks by hackers or breaches due to malfeasance by contractors, employees and others who have access to our networks and systems. The occurrence of any of these cyber security events could compromise our networks and the information stored on our networks could be accessed. Any such access could disrupt our operations, adversely affect the willingness of sellers to sell to us or result in legal claims, liability, reputational damage or regulatory penalties under laws protecting the privacy of personal information, any of which could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

We have significant international operations, which exposes us to additional risks and uncertainties.

Our international operations subject us to a number of additional risks and uncertainties, including:

- compliance with and changes in international laws, including regulatory and compliance requirements that could affect our business;
- differing accounting standards and practices;

- increased exposure to U.S. laws that apply abroad, such as the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and exposure to other anti-corruption laws such as the U.K. Bribery Act;
- social, political and economic instability or recessions;
- fluctuations in foreign economies and currency exchange rates;
- difficulty in hiring, staffing and managing qualified and proficient local employees and advisors to run international operations;
- the difficulty of managing and operating an international enterprise, including difficulties in maintaining effective communications with employees due to distance, language, and cultural barriers;
- difficulties implementing and maintaining effective internal controls and risk management and compliance initiatives;
- potential disagreements with our joint venture business partners;
- differing labor regulations and business practices; and
- foreign and, in some circumstances, U.S. tax consequences.

Each of these could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

We may not be able to adequately protect the intellectual property rights upon which we rely and, as a result, any lack of protection may diminish our competitive advantage.

We rely on proprietary software programs and valuation and collection processes and techniques, and we believe that these assets provide us with a competitive advantage. We consider our proprietary software, processes, and techniques to be trade secrets, but they are not protected by patent or registered copyright. We may not be able to protect our technology and data resources adequately, which may diminish our competitive advantage, which may, in turn, adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

In June 2016, the United Kingdom held a referendum in which voters approved the United Kingdom's exit from the E.U., commonly referred to as "Brexit." The United Kingdom formally exited the European Union on January 31, 2020 although an agreement was not reached until the end of the allocated transition period in December 31, 2020. Even though an agreement has been reached there remains a significant lack of clarity over the terms of the United Kingdom's future relationship with the European Union in certain key areas including financial services where a temporary additional transition period has been assigned while negotiations continue.

These developments may have a material adverse effect on global economic conditions and the stability of global financial markets, and may significantly reduce global market liquidity, restrict the ability of key market participants to operate in certain financial markets or restrict our access to capital. In addition, Brexit has caused, and may continue to cause, both significant volatility in global stock markets and currency exchange rate fluctuations, as well as create significant uncertainty among United Kingdom businesses and investors. In particular, the pound sterling has lost a significant amount of its value against the U.S. dollar and the euro respectively since the referendum. We generate a significant portion of our earnings in the United Kingdom, and any significant change in the value of the pound and/or recession in the United Kingdom or any of the foregoing factors could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results.

Exchange rate fluctuations could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

Because we conduct some business in currencies other than U.S. dollars, primarily the British Pound, but report our financial results in U.S. dollars, we face exposure to fluctuations in currency exchange rates upon translation of these business results into U.S. dollars. In the normal course of business, we may employ various strategies to manage these risks, including the use of derivative instruments. These strategies may not be effective in protecting us against the effects of fluctuations from movements in foreign exchange rates. Fluctuations in the foreign currency exchange rates could adversely affect our financial condition and operating results.

Risks Related to Government Regulation and Litigation

Our business is subject to extensive laws and regulations, which have increased and may continue to increase.

As noted in detail in “Item 1 - Part 1 - Business - Government Regulation” of this Annual Report on Form 10-K, extensive laws and regulations directly apply to key portions of our business. These laws and regulations are also subject to review from time to time and may be subject to significant change. Changes in laws and regulations applicable to our operations, or the manner in which they are interpreted or applied, could limit our activities in the future or could significantly increase the cost of regulatory compliance. These negative effects could result from changes in collection laws and guidance, laws related to credit reporting, consumer bankruptcy laws, laws related to the management and enforcement of consumer debt, court and enforcement procedures, the statute of limitation for debts, accounting standards, taxation requirements, employment laws, communications laws, data privacy and protection laws, anti-bribery and corruption laws and anti-money laundering laws. For example, on October 30, 2020, the CFPB issued final rules in the form of new Regulation F to implement the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, which rules restate and clarify prohibitions on harassment and abuse, false or misleading representations, and unfair practices by debt collectors when collecting consumer debt. The rules included provisions related to, among other things, the use of newer technologies (text, voicemail and email) to communicate with consumers and limits relating to telephonic communications. On December 18, 2020, the CFPB also announced that it issued an additional debt collection final rule focused on consumer disclosures. This final rule amends Regulation F to provide additional requirements regarding validation information and disclosures provided at the outset of debt collection communications, prohibit suits and threats of suits regarding time-barred debt, and identify actions that must be taken before a debt collector may report information about a debt to consumer reporting agencies. The rules will each become effective on November 30, 2021.

We sometimes purchase accounts in asset classes that are subject to industry-specific and/or issuer-specific restrictions that limit the collection methods that we can use on those accounts. Further, we have seen a trend in laws, rules and regulations requiring increased availability of historic information about receivables in order to collect. If credit originators or portfolio resellers are unable or unwilling to meet these evolving requirements, we may be unable to collect on certain accounts. Our inability to collect sufficient amounts from these accounts, through available collection methods, could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

In addition, the CFPB has engaged in enforcement activity in sectors adjacent to our industry, impacting credit originators, collection firms, and payment processors, among others. Enforcement activity in these spaces by the CFPB or others, especially in the absence of clear rules or regulatory expectations, may be disruptive to third parties as they attempt to define appropriate business practices. As a result, certain commercial relationships we maintain may be disrupted or impacted by changes in third-parties’ business practices or perceptions of elevated risk relating to the debt collection industry, which could reduce our revenues, or increase our expenses, and consequently adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

Additional consumer protection or privacy laws, rules and regulations may be enacted, or existing laws, rules or regulations may be reinterpreted or enforced in a different manner, imposing additional restrictions or requirements on the collection of receivables.

Any of the developments described above may adversely affect our ability to purchase and collect on receivables and may increase our costs associated with regulatory compliance, which could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

Failure to comply with government regulation could result in the suspension, termination or impairment of our ability to conduct business, may require the payment of significant fines and penalties, or require other significant expenditures.

The U.S. collections industry is heavily regulated under various federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations. Many states and several cities require that we be licensed as a debt collection company. The CFPB, FTC, state Attorneys General and other regulatory bodies have the authority to investigate a variety of matters, including consumer complaints against debt collection companies, and can bring enforcement actions and seek monetary penalties, consumer restitution, and injunctive relief. If we, or our third-party collection agencies or law firms fail to comply with applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including, but not limited to, identity theft, privacy, data security, the use of automated dialing equipment, laws related to consumer protection, debt collection, and laws applicable to specific types of debt, it could result in the suspension or termination of our ability to conduct collection operations, which would adversely affect us. Further, our ability to collect our receivables may be affected by state laws, which require that certain types of account documentation be presented prior to the institution of any collection activities.

Our failure or the failure of third-party agencies and attorneys, or the credit originators or portfolio resellers selling receivables to us, to comply with existing or new laws, rules, or regulations could limit our ability to recover on receivables, affect the willingness of financial institutions to sell portfolios to us, cause us to pay damages to consumers or result in fines or

penalties, which could reduce our revenues, or increase our expenses, and consequently adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results. For example, on September 8, 2020, the CFPB filed a lawsuit alleging that Encore and certain of its US subsidiaries had violated a consent order (the “2015 Consent Order”) pursuant to which we had previously settled allegations raised by the CFPB arising from practices during the period between 2011 and 2015. In the lawsuit, the CFPB alleged that we did not perfectly adhere to certain operational provisions of the 2015 Consent Order, leading to alleged violations of federal consumer financial law. On October 15, 2020, we entered into a stipulated judgment (“Stipulated Judgment”) with the CFPB to resolve the lawsuit. The Stipulated Judgment requires us to, among other things: (1) continue to follow a narrow subset of the operational requirements contained in the 2015 Consent Order, all of which have long been part of the Company’s routine practices; (2) pay a \$15.0 million civil monetary penalty; and (3) provide redress of approximately \$9,000 to 14 affected consumers, which is in addition to approximately \$70,000 of redress that the Company had previously voluntarily provided.

In addition, new federal, state or local laws or regulations, or changes in the ways these rules or laws are interpreted or enforced, could limit our activities in the future and/or significantly increase the cost of regulatory compliance.

Our operations outside the United States are subject to foreign and U.S. laws and regulations that apply to our international operations, including GDPR, the U.K. Consumer Credit Act, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, the U.K. Bribery Act and other local laws prohibiting corrupt payments to government officials. Violations of these laws and regulations could result in fines and penalties, criminal sanctions, prohibitions on the conduct of our business and reputational damage.

The debt purchase and collections sector and the broader consumer credit industry in the United Kingdom, Ireland and the other European jurisdictions in which we operate are also highly regulated under various laws and regulations. This legislation is principles-based and therefore the interpretation of compliance is complex and may change over time. Failure to comply with any applicable laws, regulations, rules or contractual compliance obligations could result in investigations, information gathering, public censures, financial penalties, disciplinary measures, liability and/or enforcement actions, including licenses or permissions that we need to do business not being granted or being revoked or the suspension or termination of our ability to conduct collections. In addition, our debt purchase contracts with vendors include certain conditions and failure to comply or revocation of a permission or authorization, or other actions taken by us that may damage the reputation of the vendor, may entitle the vendor to terminate any agreements with us. Damage to our reputation, whether because of a failure to comply with applicable laws, regulations or rules, revocation of a permission or authorization, any other regulatory action or our failure to comply with contractual compliance obligations, could deter vendors from choosing us as their debt purchase or collections provider.

Compliance with this extensive regulatory framework is expensive and labor-intensive. Any of the foregoing could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results.

We are subject to ongoing risks of regulatory investigations and litigation, including individual and class action lawsuits, under consumer credit, consumer protection, theft, privacy, collections, and other laws, and we may be subject to awards of substantial damages or be required to make other expenditures or change our business practices as a result.

We operate in an extremely litigious climate and currently are, and may in the future be, named as defendants in litigation, including individual and class action lawsuits under consumer credit, consumer protection, theft, privacy, data security, automated dialing equipment, debt collections, and other laws. Many of these cases present novel issues on which there is no clear legal precedent, which increases the difficulty in predicting both the potential outcomes and costs of defending these cases. We are subject to ongoing risks of regulatory investigations, inquiries, litigation, and other actions by the CFPB, FTC, FCA, state Attorneys General, Central Bank of Ireland or other governmental bodies relating to our activities. For example, on September 8, 2020, the CFPB filed a lawsuit alleging that Encore and certain of its US subsidiaries had violated the 2015 Consent Order. On October 15, 2020, we entered into the Stipulated Judgment with the CFPB to resolve the lawsuit. These litigation and regulatory actions involve potential compensatory or punitive damage claims, fines, costs, sanctions, civil monetary penalties, consumer restitution, or injunctive relief, as well as other forms of relief, that could require us to pay damages, make other expenditures or result in changes to our business practices. Any changes to our business practices could result in lower collections, increased cost to collect or reductions in estimated remaining collections. Actual losses incurred by us in connection with judgments or settlements of these matters may be more than our associated reserves. Further, defending lawsuits and responding to governmental inquiries or investigations, regardless of their merit, could be costly and divert management’s attention from the operation of our business. All of these factors could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results.

Negative publicity associated with litigation, governmental investigations, regulatory actions, cyber security breaches and other public statements could damage our reputation.

From time to time there are negative news stories about our industry or company, especially with respect to alleged conduct in collecting debt from consumers. These stories may follow the announcements of litigation or regulatory actions involving us or others in our industry. Negative publicity about our alleged or actual debt collection practices, about the debt collection industry in general or our cyber security could adversely affect our stock price, our position in the marketplace in which we compete, and our ability to purchase charged-off receivables, any of which could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results.

Risks Related to Our Indebtedness and Common Stock

Our significant indebtedness could adversely affect our financial health and could harm our ability to react to changes to our business.

As described in greater detail in “Note 7: Borrowings” to our consolidated financial statements, as of December 31, 2020, our total long-term indebtedness outstanding was approximately \$3.3 billion. Our substantial indebtedness could have important consequences to investors. For example, it could:

- increase our vulnerability to general economic downturns and industry conditions;
- require us to dedicate a substantial portion of our cash flow from operations to payments on our indebtedness, thereby reducing the availability of our cash flow to fund working capital, capital expenditures and other general corporate requirements;
- limit our flexibility in planning for, or reacting to, changes in our business and the industry in which we operate;
- place us at a competitive disadvantage compared to competitors that have less debt;
- increase our exposure to market and regulatory changes that could diminish the amount and value of our inventory that we borrow against under our secured credit facilities; and
- limit, along with the financial and other restrictive covenants contained in the documents governing our indebtedness, our ability to borrow additional funds, make investments and incur liens, among other things.

Any of these factors could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

Servicing our indebtedness requires a significant amount of cash, and we may not have sufficient cash flow from our business to pay our substantial indebtedness.

Our ability to make scheduled payments of the principal of, to pay interest on or to refinance our indebtedness or to make cash payments in connection with any conversion or exchange of our convertible notes or exchangeable notes, respectively, depends on our future performance, which is subject to economic, financial, competitive and other factors beyond our control. Our business may not continue to generate cash flow from operations in the future sufficient to service our indebtedness and make necessary capital expenditures. If we are unable to generate adequate cash flow, we may be required to adopt one or more alternatives, such as selling assets, restructuring indebtedness or obtaining additional equity capital on terms that may be onerous or highly dilutive. Our ability to refinance our indebtedness will depend on the capital markets and our financial condition at that time. We may not be able to engage in any of these activities or engage in these activities on desirable terms, which could result in a default on our debt obligations which could, in turn, adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

Despite our current indebtedness levels, we may still incur substantially more indebtedness or take other actions which would intensify the risks discussed above.

Despite our current consolidated indebtedness levels, we and our subsidiaries may be able to incur substantial additional indebtedness in the future. We are not restricted under the terms of the indentures governing our convertible notes or exchangeable notes from incurring additional indebtedness, securing existing or future indebtedness, recapitalizing our indebtedness or taking a number of other actions that could have the effect of diminishing our ability to make payments on our indebtedness. Although our credit facilities and other existing debt currently limit the ability of us and certain of our subsidiaries to incur certain additional indebtedness, these restrictions are subject to a number of qualifications and exceptions and, under certain circumstances, additional indebtedness incurred in compliance with these restrictions, including additional secured indebtedness, could be substantial. Also, these restrictions will not prevent us from incurring obligations that do not constitute indebtedness. To the extent new indebtedness or other new obligations are added to our current levels, the risks described above could intensify.

We may not be able to continue to satisfy the covenants in our debt agreements.

Our debt agreements impose a number of covenants, including restrictive covenants on how we operate our business. Failure to satisfy any one of these covenants could result in negative consequences including the following, each of which could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results:

- acceleration or amortization of outstanding indebtedness;
- exercise by our lenders of rights with respect to the collateral pledged under certain of our outstanding indebtedness;
- our inability to continue to purchase receivables needed to operate our business;
- decrease in the level of liquidity that can be accessed under certain of our debt agreements; or
- our inability to secure alternative financing on favorable terms, if at all.

In particular, the Global Senior Facility also requires the Company and the guarantors to observe certain customary affirmative covenants, including three maintenance covenants. These require the Company to ensure that the LTV Ratio (as defined in the Global Senior Facility) does not exceed 0.75 and the SSRCF Ratio (as defined in the Global Senior Facility) does not exceed 0.275. The Company is further required to maintain a Fixed Charge Coverage Ratio (as defined in the Global Senior Facility) of at least 2.0. These financial covenants are, subject in the case of the LTV Ratio to a minimum drawing requirement, tested quarterly (or with respect to the SSRCF Ratio, monthly). The breach of any of these maintenance covenants could lead to the consequences referred to above.

Increases in interest rates could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

Portions of our outstanding debt bear interest at a variable rate. Increases in interest rates could increase our interest expense which would, in turn, lower our earnings. We may periodically evaluate whether to enter into derivative financial instruments, such as interest rate swap agreements, to reduce our exposure to fluctuations in interest rates on variable interest rate debt and their impact on earnings and cash flows. These strategies may not be effective in protecting us against the effects of fluctuations from movements in interest rates. Increases in interest rates could adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results.

Changes in the method pursuant to which LIBOR or EURIBOR rates are determined, including the potential phasing out of LIBOR after 2021, may affect the value of the financial obligations to be held or issued by us that are linked to LIBOR or EURIBOR, or our results of operations or financial condition.

As of December 31, 2020, we held \$196.4 million notional amount of interest rate swap agreements and \$487.7 million notional amount of interest rate cap contracts that use the London Interbank Offered Rate ("LIBOR") as a reference rate and borrowings under our Global Senior Secured Revolving Credit Facility and various other debt obligations bear interest based upon certain reference rates, including LIBOR and EURIBOR. On July 27, 2017, the FCA, which regulates LIBOR, announced that it will no longer persuade or compel banks to submit rates for the calculation of LIBOR after 2021. It is unclear whether new methods of calculating LIBOR will be established such that it continues to exist after 2021. The U.S. Federal Reserve began publishing the Secured Overnight Financing Rate ("SOFR") in April 2018 as an alternative for LIBOR. SOFR is a broad measure of the cost of borrowing cash overnight collateralized by U.S. Treasury securities. A transition away from the widespread use of LIBOR to SOFR or another benchmark rate may occur over the course of the next few years. Whether or not SOFR attains market traction as a LIBOR replacement tool remains in question and the future of LIBOR currently is uncertain. As a result, it is not possible to predict the effect of any changes, establishment of alternative reference rates or other reforms to LIBOR or EURIBOR that may be enacted in the U.K. or elsewhere. The elimination of LIBOR or EURIBOR or any other changes or reforms to the determination or supervision of LIBOR or EURIBOR could have an adverse impact on the market for or value of any LIBOR or EURIBOR-linked securities, loans, derivatives and other financial obligations or extensions of credit held by or due to us or on our business, financial condition and operating results.

Our common stock price may be subject to significant fluctuations and volatility.

The market price of our common stock has been subject to significant fluctuations. These fluctuations could continue. Among the factors that could affect our stock price are:

- our operating and financial performance and prospects;
- our ability to repay our debt;
- our access to financial and capital markets to refinance our debt;

- investor perceptions of us and the industry and markets in which we operate;
- future sales of equity or equity-related securities;
- changes in earnings estimates or buy/sell recommendations by analysts;
- changes in the supply of, demand for or price of portfolios;
- our acquisition activity, including our expansion into new markets;
- regulatory changes affecting our industry generally or our business and operations;
- general financial, domestic, international, economic and other market conditions; and
- the number of short positions on our stock at any particular time.

The stock market in recent years has experienced significant price and volume fluctuations that have often been unrelated to the operating performance of companies. The market price of our common stock could fluctuate significantly for many reasons, including in response to the risks described in this Annual Report on Form 10-K, elsewhere in our filings with the SEC from time to time or for reasons unrelated to our operations, such as reports by industry analysts, investor perceptions or negative announcements by our customers, competitors or suppliers regarding their own performance, as well as industry conditions and general financial, economic and political instability.

The price of our common stock could also be affected by possible sales of our common stock by investors who view our convertible notes or exchangeable notes as a more attractive means of equity participation in us and by hedging or arbitrage trading activity that we expect to develop involving our common stock.

If securities or industry analysts have a negative outlook regarding our stock or our industry, or our operating results do not meet their expectations, our stock price could decline. The trading market for our common stock is influenced by the research and reports that industry or securities analysts publish about us. If one or more of the analysts who cover our company downgrade our stock or if our operating results do not meet their expectations, our stock price could decline.

Future sales of our common stock or the issuance of other equity securities may adversely affect the market price of our common stock.

In the future, we may sell additional shares of our common stock or other equity or equity-related securities to raise capital or issue equity securities to finance acquisitions. In addition, a substantial number of shares of our common stock are reserved for issuance upon conversion of our convertible notes and exchangeable notes and our at-the-market equity offering program. We are not restricted from issuing additional common stock, including securities that are convertible into or exchangeable for, or that represent the right to receive, common stock.

The liquidity and trading volume of our common stock is limited. The issuance or sale of substantial amounts of our common stock or other equity or equity-related securities (or the perception that such issuances or sales may occur) could adversely affect the market price of our common stock as well as our ability to raise capital through the sale of additional equity or equity-related securities. We cannot predict the effect that future issuances or sales of our common stock or other equity or equity-related securities would have on the market price of our common stock.

We may not have the ability to raise the funds necessary to repurchase our notes upon a fundamental change or change of control or to settle conversions or exchanges in cash, and our future indebtedness may contain limitations on our ability to pay cash upon conversion of our convertible notes.

Holders of our notes will have the right to require us to repurchase their notes upon the occurrence of a fundamental change or a change of control at a repurchase price equal to 100% of their principal amount, plus accrued and unpaid interest, if any. In addition, upon a conversion or exchange of notes we will be required to make cash payments for each \$1,000 in principal amount of notes converted or exchanged of at least the lesser of \$1,000 and the sum of certain daily conversion values. However, we may not have enough available cash or be able to obtain financing at the time we are required to make repurchases of the notes surrendered therefor or to settle conversions or exchanges in cash. In addition, certain of our debt agreements contain restrictive covenants that limit our ability to engage in specified types of transactions, which may affect our ability to repurchase our notes. Further, our ability to repurchase our notes or to pay cash upon conversion or exchange may be limited by law, by regulatory authority or by agreements governing our future indebtedness. Our failure to repurchase the notes or to pay cash upon conversion or exchange of the notes at a time when the repurchase or cash payment upon conversion or exchange is required by any indenture pursuant to which the notes were offered would constitute a default under the relevant indenture. Such default could constitute a default under other agreements governing our indebtedness. If the repayment of any indebtedness were to be accelerated, we may not have sufficient funds to repay such indebtedness and repurchase the notes.

Provisions in our charter documents and Delaware law may delay or prevent acquisition of us, which could decrease the value of shares of our common stock.

Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws and Delaware law contain provisions that could make it more difficult for a third party to acquire us without the consent of our Board of Directors. These provisions include advance notice provisions, limitations on actions by our stockholders by written consent and special approval requirements for transactions involving interested stockholders. We are authorized to issue up to five million shares of preferred stock, the relative rights and preferences of which may be fixed by our Board of Directors, subject to the provisions of our articles of incorporation, without stockholder approval. The issuance of preferred stock could be used to dilute the stock ownership of a potential hostile acquirer. The provisions that discourage potential acquisitions of us and adversely affect the voting power of the holders of common stock may adversely affect the price of our common stock and the value of the Convertible Notes.

General

We are dependent on our management team for the adoption and implementation of our strategies and the loss of its services could have an adverse effect on our business.

Our management team has considerable experience in finance, banking, consumer collections, and other industries. We believe that the expertise of our executives obtained by managing businesses across numerous other industries has been critical to the enhancement of our operations. Our management team has created a culture of new ideas and progressive thinking, coupled with increased use of technology and statistical analysis. The management teams at each of our operating subsidiaries are also important to the success of their respective operations. The loss of the services of one or more key members of management could disrupt our collective operations and seriously impair our ability to continue to acquire or collect on portfolios of charged-off receivables and to manage and expand our business, any of which could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and operating results.

We may make acquisitions that prove unsuccessful and any mergers, acquisitions, dispositions or joint venture activities may change our business and financial results and introduce new risks.

From time to time, we may make acquisitions of, or otherwise invest in, other companies that could complement our business, including the acquisition of entities in diverse geographic regions and entities offering greater access to businesses and markets that we do not currently serve. The acquisitions we make may be unprofitable or may take some time to achieve profitability. In addition, we may not successfully operate the businesses that we acquire, or may not successfully integrate these businesses with our own, which may result in our inability to maintain our goals, objectives, standards, controls, policies, culture, or profitability. Through acquisitions, we may enter markets in which we have limited or no experience. Any acquisition may result in a potentially dilutive issuance of equity securities, and the incurrence of additional debt which could reduce our profitability. We also pursue dispositions and joint ventures from time to time. Any such transactions could change our business lines, geographic reach, financial results or capital structure. Our company could be larger or smaller after any such transactions and may have a different investment profile.

We may consume resources in pursuing business opportunities, financings or other transactions that are not consummated, which may strain or divert our resources.

We anticipate that the investigation of various transactions, and the negotiation, drafting, and execution of relevant agreements, disclosure documents and other instruments with respect to such transactions, will require substantial management time and attention and substantial costs for financial advisors, accountants, attorneys and other advisors. If a decision is made not to consummate a specific transaction, the costs incurred up to that point for the proposed transaction likely would not be recoverable. Furthermore, even if an agreement is reached relating to a specific transaction, we may fail to consummate the transaction for any number of reasons, including those beyond our control. Any such event could consume significant management time and result in a loss to us of the related costs incurred, which could adversely affect our financial position and our business.

Item 1B—Unresolved Staff Comments

None.

Item 2—Properties

We lease office space for our corporate headquarters in San Diego, California. We also lease office space for our call centers, internal legal and consumer support services in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. We believe that our current leased facilities are generally well maintained and in good operating condition. We believe that these facilities are suitable and sufficient for our operational needs. Our policy is to improve, replace, and supplement the facilities as considered appropriate to meet the needs of our operations.

Item 3—Legal Proceedings

We are involved in disputes, legal actions, regulatory investigations, inquiries, and other actions from time to time in the ordinary course of business. Although no assurance can be given with respect to the outcome of these or any other actions and the effect such outcomes may have, based on our current knowledge, we believe any liability resulting from the outcome of such disputes, legal actions, regulatory investigations, inquiries, and other actions will not have a material adverse effect on our business, financial position or results of operations.

For additional information see “Note 12: Commitments and Contingencies” to the consolidated financial statements.

Item 4—Mine Safety Disclosures

Not applicable.

PART II

Item 5—Market for the Registrant’s Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities

Our common stock is traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol “ECPG.”

The closing price of our common stock on February 17, 2021, was \$32.85 per share and there were 28 stockholders of record. Because many of our shares of common stock are held by brokers and other institutions on behalf of stockholders, we are unable to estimate the total number of beneficial owners of our stock represented by these stockholders of record.

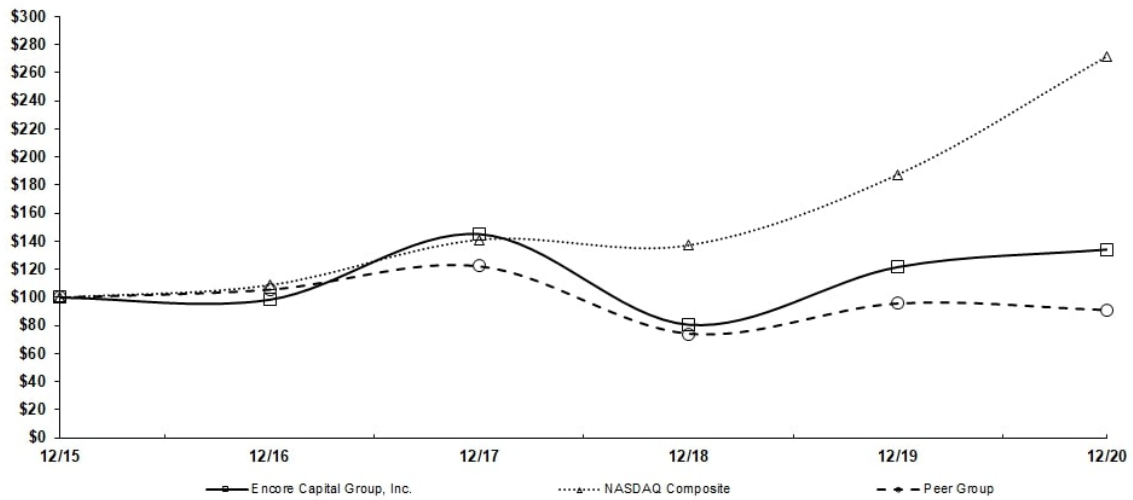
Performance Graph

The following performance graph and related information shall not be deemed “soliciting material” or “filed” with the SEC, nor shall such information be incorporated by reference into any future filing under the Securities Act of 1933 or Securities Exchange Act of 1934, each, as amended, except to the extent that we specifically incorporate it by reference into such filing.

The following graph compares the total cumulative stockholder return on our common stock for the period from December 31, 2015 through December 31, 2020, with the cumulative total return of (a) the NASDAQ Composite Index, (b) a peer group consisting of Arrow Global, B2Holding, Hoist Finance, Intrum, Kruk and PRA Group, Inc. which we believe are comparable companies. The comparison assumes that \$100 was invested on December 31, 2015, in our common stock and in each of the comparison indices (including reinvestment of dividends). The stock price performance reflected in the following graph is not necessarily indicative of future stock price performance.

COMPARISON OF 5 YEAR CUMULATIVE TOTAL RETURN*

Encore Capital Group, Inc., the NASDAQ Composite Index, and Peer Group



	12/15	12/16	12/17	12/18	12/19	12/20
Encore Capital Group, Inc.	\$ 100.00	\$ 98.52	\$ 144.77	\$ 80.81	\$ 121.60	\$ 133.94
NASDAQ Composite Index	\$ 100.00	\$ 108.87	\$ 141.13	\$ 137.12	\$ 187.44	\$ 271.64
Peer Group	\$ 100.00	\$ 105.65	\$ 122.53	\$ 73.87	\$ 95.68	\$ 90.96

Dividend Policy

As a public company, we have never declared or paid dividends on our common stock. The declaration, payment, and amount of future dividends, if any, is subject to the discretion of our Board of Directors, which may review our dividend policy from time to time in light of the then existing relevant facts and circumstances. Our ability to pay dividends may be restricted by covenants in certain of the indentures governing our senior secured notes and by the terms of our Global Senior Secured Revolving Credit Facility. We may also be subject to additional dividend restrictions under future debt agreements or the terms of securities we may issue in the future.

Share Repurchases

In August 2015, our Board of Directors approved a \$50.0 million share repurchase program. Repurchases under this program are expected to be made with cash on hand and may be made from time to time, subject to market conditions and other factors, in the open market, through private transactions, block transactions, or other methods as determined by the management and our Board of Directors, and in accordance with market conditions, other corporate considerations, and applicable regulatory requirements. The program does not obligate the Company to acquire any particular amount of common stock, and it may be modified or suspended at any time at the Company's discretion. As of December 31, 2020, we had not made any repurchases under the share repurchase program.

Recent Sales of Unregistered Securities

None.

Equity Compensation Plan Information

See Item 12—"Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and Management and Related Stockholder Matters."

Item 7—Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations

This Annual Report on Form 10-K contains “forward-looking statements” relating to Encore Capital Group, Inc. (“Encore”) and its subsidiaries (which we may collectively refer to as the “Company,” “we,” “our” or “us”) within the meaning of the securities laws. The words “believe,” “expect,” “anticipate,” “estimate,” “project,” “intend,” “plan,” “will,” “may,” and similar expressions often characterize forward-looking statements. These statements may include, but are not limited to, projections of collections, revenues, income or loss, estimates of capital expenditures, plans for future operations, products or services, and financing needs or plans, as well as assumptions relating to these matters. Although we believe that the expectations reflected in these forward-looking statements are reasonable, we caution that these expectations or predictions may not prove to be correct or we may not achieve the financial results, savings or other benefits anticipated in the forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements are necessarily estimates reflecting the best judgment of our senior management and involve a number of risks and uncertainties, some of which may be beyond our control or cannot be predicted or quantified, that could cause actual results to differ materially from those suggested by the forward-looking statements. Many factors including, but not limited to, those set forth in this Annual Report on Form 10-K under “Part I, Item 1A—Risk Factors,” could cause our actual results, performance, achievements, or industry results to be very different from the results, performance, achievements or industry results expressed or implied by these forward-looking statements. Our business, financial condition, or results of operations could also be materially and adversely affected by other factors besides those listed. Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date the statements were made. We do not undertake any obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements to reflect new information or future events, or for any other reason, even if experience or future events make it clear that any expected results expressed or implied by these forward-looking statements will not be realized. In addition, it is generally our policy not to make any specific projections as to future earnings, and we do not endorse projections regarding future performance that may be made by third parties.

Our Business

We are an international specialty finance company providing debt recovery solutions and other related services for consumers across a broad range of financial assets. We purchase portfolios of defaulted consumer receivables at deep discounts to face value and manage them by working with individuals as they repay their obligations and work toward financial recovery. Defaulted receivables are consumers’ unpaid financial commitments to credit originators, including banks, credit unions, consumer finance companies and commercial retailers. Defaulted receivables may also include receivables subject to bankruptcy proceedings. We also provide debt servicing and other portfolio management services to credit originators for non-performing loans.

Encore Capital Group, Inc. (“Encore”) has three primary business units: MCM, which consists of Midland Credit Management, Inc. and its subsidiaries and domestic affiliates; Cabot, which consists of Cabot Credit Management Limited (“CCM”) and its subsidiaries and European affiliates, and LAAP, which is comprised of our investments and operations in Latin America and Asia-Pacific.

MCM (United States)

Through MCM, we are a market leader in portfolio purchasing and recovery in the United States, including Puerto Rico.

Cabot (Europe)

Through Cabot, we are one of the largest credit management services providers in Europe and a market leader in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Cabot, in addition to its primary business of portfolio purchasing and recovery, also provides a range of debt servicing offerings such as early stage collections, business process outsourcing (“BPO”), and contingent collections, including through Wescot Credit Services Limited (“Wescot”), a leading U.K. contingency debt collection and BPO services company.

LAAP (Latin America and Asia-Pacific)

We have purchased non-performing loans in Colombia, Peru, Mexico and Brazil (which was sold in April 2020). Additionally, we have invested in Encore Asset Reconstruction Company (“EARC”) in India.

To date, operating results from LAAP have not been significant to our total consolidated operating results. Our long-term growth strategy is focused on continuing to invest in our core portfolio purchasing and recovery business in the United States and United Kingdom and strengthening and developing our business in the rest of Europe.

Recent Developments

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”) a pandemic, which has resulted in authorities implementing numerous measures to contain the virus, including travel bans and

restrictions, quarantines, shelter-in-place orders, and business limitations and shutdowns (including court closures in certain jurisdictions). While we are unable to accurately predict the full impact that COVID-19 will have on our results from operations, financial condition, liquidity and cash flows due to numerous uncertainties, including the duration and severity of the pandemic and containment measures, our compliance with these measures has impacted our day-to-day operations and could disrupt our business and operations for an indefinite period of time. Through a combination of work-from-home and social distancing, we remain fully operational in all the markets we serve. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting containment measures, we have observed, among other things: a decrease in supply of receivable portfolios in the U.S. driven mainly by a decrease in charge-off rates; a decrease in supply of receivable portfolios in Europe, which we believe is driven by both a decrease in charge-off rates and decreased sales as the banks focus on their customers' needs; and impacts to the legal collections process, which negatively affected legal collections beginning in late March 2020 and could continue to affect legal collections and related costs depending on the duration and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting containment measures.

Government Regulation

As discussed in more detail under "Part I - Item 1—Business - Government Regulation" contained in this Annual Report on Form 10-K, our operations in the United States are subject to federal, state and municipal statutes, rules, regulations and ordinances that establish specific guidelines and procedures that debt purchasers and collectors must follow when collecting consumer accounts, including among others, specific guidelines and procedures for communicating with consumers and prohibitions on unfair, deceptive or abusive debt collection practices. Additionally, our operations in Europe are affected by foreign statutes, rules and regulations regarding debt collection and debt purchase activities. These statutes, rules, regulations, ordinances, guidelines and procedures are modified from time to time by the relevant authorities charged with their administration, which could affect the way we conduct our business.

Portfolio Purchasing and Recovery

MCM (United States)

In the United States, the defaulted consumer receivable portfolios we purchase are primarily charged-off credit card debt portfolios. A small percentage of our capital deployment in the United States comprises of receivable portfolios subject to Chapter 13 and Chapter 7 bankruptcy proceedings.

We purchase receivables based on robust, account-level valuation methods and employ proprietary statistical and behavioral models across our U.S. operations. These methods and models allow us to value portfolios accurately (and limit the risk of overpaying), avoid buying portfolios that are incompatible with our methods or strategies and align the accounts we purchase with our business channels to maximize future collections. As a result, we have been able to realize significant returns from the receivables we acquire. We maintain strong relationships with many of the largest financial service providers in the United States.

Cabot (Europe)

In Europe, our purchased under-performing debt portfolios primarily consist of paying and non-paying consumer loan accounts. We also purchase: (1) portfolios that are in insolvency status, in particular, individual voluntary arrangements; and (2) non-performing secured mortgage portfolios and real estate assets previously securing mortgage portfolios. When we take possession of the underlying real estate assets or purchase real estate assets, we refer to those as real estate-owned assets, or REO assets.

We purchase paying and non-paying receivable portfolios using a proprietary pricing model that utilizes account-level statistical and behavioral data. This model allows us to value portfolios accurately and quantify portfolio performance in order to maximize future collections. As a result, we have been able to realize significant returns from the assets we have acquired. We maintain strong relationships with many of the largest financial services providers in the United Kingdom and continue to expand in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe with our acquisitions of portfolios and other credit management services providers.

Purchases and Collections

Portfolio Pricing, Supply and Demand

MCM (United States)

Issuers have continued to sell predominantly fresh portfolios. Fresh portfolios are portfolios that are generally sold within six months of the consumer’s account being charged-off by the financial institution. Pricing in the fourth quarter remained favorable. Issuers continued to sell their volume in mostly forward flow arrangements that are often committed early in the calendar year. We are closely monitoring the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on pricing and supply. We have observed a decrease in supply as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but expect supply to ultimately increase.

We believe that smaller competitors continue to face difficulties in the portfolio purchasing market because of the high cost to operate due to regulatory pressure and because issuers are being more selective with buyers in the marketplace. We believe this favors larger participants, such as us, because the larger market participants are better able to adapt to these pressures and commit to larger forward flow agreements.

Cabot (Europe)

The U.K. market for charged-off portfolios has generally provided a relatively consistent pipeline of opportunities over the past few years, despite an ongoing historic low level of charge-off rates, as creditors have embedded debt sales as an integral part of their business models and consumer indebtedness has continued to grow since the financial crisis.

The Spanish debt market continues to be one of the largest in Europe with a significant amount of debt to be sold and serviced. In particular, we anticipate strong debt purchasing and servicing opportunities in the secured and small and medium enterprise asset classes given the backlog of non-performing debt that has accumulated in these sectors. Additionally, financial institutions continue to experience both market and regulatory pressure to dispose of non-performing loans, which should further increase debt purchasing opportunities in Spain.

Across all of our European markets, we are closely monitoring the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on pricing and supply of portfolios to purchase. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, banks have decreased portfolio sales in order to focus on customers’ needs. As a result, we expect a lower level of supply available for purchase in the near-term.

Purchases by Geographic Location

The following table summarizes the geographic locations of receivable portfolios we purchased during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
United States	\$ 542,973	\$ 681,777	\$ 637,881
Europe ⁽¹⁾	116,899	306,504	455,444
Other geographies	—	11,577	38,573
Total purchases	\$ 659,872	\$ 999,858	\$ 1,131,898

(1) Amounts exclude receivable portfolios purchased and immediately sold to our co-investors under our co-investment framework. In the fourth quarter of 2019, we entered into co-investment framework agreements with certain third-party investors that enabled us to share the investment with co-investors while providing credit management solutions as the lead servicer for the portfolios.

In the United States, capital deployment decreased during the year ended December 31, 2020, as compared to 2019. The majority of our deployments in the U.S. are in forward flow agreements, and the timing, contract duration, and volumes for each contract can fluctuate leading to variation when comparing to prior periods. The decrease in purchases in the U.S. resulted from a decrease in supply and our cautious approach to purchasing at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when the potential impacts were relatively unknown. Capital deployment increased for the year ended December 31, 2019, as compared to 2018, primarily due to higher supply of fresh portfolios in 2019.

In Europe, capital deployment decreased during the year ended December 31, 2020, as compared to 2019. The decrease was primarily the result of a relatively limited supply of portfolios during the year ended December 31, 2020 and a heightened return expectation as a result of greater uncertainty relating to the future impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. European capital deployment also decreased for the year ended December 31, 2019, as compared to 2018. The decrease was primarily the result

of a more selective purchasing process in conjunction with a plan to reduce European debt leverage over time and the strengthening of the U.S. dollar against the British Pound.

The average purchase price as a percentage of face value was 11.3%, 8.6%, and 13.3% for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively. The average purchase price, as a percentage of face value, varies from period to period depending on, among other factors, the type and quality of the accounts purchased and the length of time from charge-off to the time we purchase the portfolios. For example, the average purchase price as a percentage of face value is higher for fresh portfolios as compared to more seasoned portfolios because we generally expect higher collections from fresh paper. Further, paying portfolios tend to have a higher purchase price relative to face value than non-paying accounts due to the higher expectations for collections, as well as lower anticipated collection costs. As a result, in periods that we purchase a higher percentage of fresh paper or paying portfolios, we expect that our purchase price as a percentage of face value would be higher than would be in periods where a higher ratio of seasoned paper or non-paying portfolios were purchased.

During the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019 and 2018, we also invested \$1.5 million, \$30.9 million, and \$8.0 million in REO assets, respectively.

Collections from Purchased Receivables by Channel and Geographic Location

We utilize three channels for the collection of our purchased receivables: call center and digital collections; legal collections; and collection agencies. The call center and digital collections channel consists of collections that result from our call centers, direct mail program and online collections. The legal collections channel consists of collections that result from our internal legal channel or from our network of retained law firms. The collection agencies channel consists of collections from third-party collection agencies that we utilize when we believe they can liquidate better or less expensively than we can or to supplement capacity in our internal call centers. The collection agencies channel also includes collections on accounts purchased where we maintain the collection agency servicing until the accounts can be recalled and placed in our collection channels. The following table summarizes the total collections by collection channel and geographic area during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
United States:			
Call center and digital collections	\$ 941,682	\$ 742,272	\$ 658,272
Legal collections	573,510	563,038	548,374
Collection agencies	13,750	10,799	17,317
Subtotal	<u>1,528,942</u>	<u>1,316,109</u>	<u>1,223,963</u>
Europe:			
Call center and digital collections	245,762	257,317	291,540
Legal collections	165,249	198,903	161,556
Collection agencies	142,935	178,998	182,081
Subtotal	<u>553,946</u>	<u>635,218</u>	<u>635,177</u>
Other geographies⁽¹⁾:			
Call center and digital collections	—	25,620	86,407
Legal collections	—	3,541	7,908
Collection agencies	28,960	46,440	14,165
Subtotal	<u>28,960</u>	<u>75,601</u>	<u>108,480</u>
Total collections from purchased receivables	<u>\$ 2,111,848</u>	<u>\$ 2,026,928</u>	<u>\$ 1,967,620</u>

(1) In December 2018, we completed the sale of all our interest in Refinancia S.A. ("Refinancia"), which remains the servicer for the non-performing loans we own in Colombia and Peru. As such, subsequent to December 2018, collections for these non-performing loans are classified as collection agency collections instead of call center and digital collections. In August 2019, we completed the sale of our wholly-owned subsidiary Baycorp.

Gross collections from purchased receivables increased by \$84.9 million, or 4.2%, to \$2,111.8 million during the year ended December 31, 2020, from \$2,026.9 million during the year ended December 31, 2019. The increase of collections in the United States was primarily due to the acquisition of portfolios with higher returns in recent periods, the increase in our collection capacity, and our continued effort in improving liquidation. Our consumer centric collection approach and our capacity buildup are driving a higher proportion of call center and digital collections compared to legal collections in the United

States. European collection decreased primarily due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We anticipate a material portion of the reduced collections in 2020 will be recovered in future years.

Gross collections from purchased receivables increased \$59.3 million, or 3.0%, to \$2,026.9 million during the year ended December 31, 2019, from \$1,967.6 million during the year ended December 31, 2018. The increase of collections in the United States was primarily due to the acquisition of portfolios with higher returns in recent periods, the increase in our collection capacity and our continued effort in improving liquidation. European collection improvement was partially offset by the unfavorable impact of foreign currency translation, primarily from the strengthening of the U.S. dollar against the British Pound during the year ended December 31, 2019 as compared to 2018.

Results of Operations

Results of operations, in dollars and as a percentage of total revenues, adjusted by net allowances, were as follows for the periods presented (*in thousands, except percentages*):

	Year Ended December 31,					
	2020		2019		2018	
Revenues						
Revenue from receivable portfolios	\$ 1,374,717	91.5 %	\$ 1,269,288	90.8 %	\$ 1,167,132	85.7 %
Changes in expected current and future recoveries	7,246	0.5 %	—	— %	—	— %
Servicing revenue	115,118	7.7 %	126,527	9.1 %	148,044	10.9 %
Other revenues	4,319	0.3 %	9,974	0.7 %	5,381	0.4 %
Total revenues	1,501,400	100.0 %	1,405,789	100.6 %	1,320,557	97.0 %
(Allowances) allowance reversals on receivable portfolios, net			(8,108)	(0.6)%	41,473	3.0 %
Total revenues, adjusted by net allowances			1,397,681	100.0 %	1,362,030	100.0 %
Operating expenses						
Salaries and employee benefits	378,176	25.2 %	376,365	26.9 %	369,064	27.1 %
Cost of legal collections	239,071	15.9 %	202,670	14.5 %	205,204	15.1 %
General and administrative expenses	149,113	9.9 %	148,256	10.6 %	158,352	11.6 %
Other operating expenses	108,944	7.3 %	108,433	7.8 %	134,934	9.9 %
Collection agency commissions	49,754	3.3 %	63,865	4.6 %	47,948	3.5 %
Depreciation and amortization	42,780	2.8 %	41,029	2.9 %	41,228	3.0 %
Goodwill impairment	—	— %	10,718	0.8 %	—	— %
Total operating expenses	967,838	64.4 %	951,336	68.1 %	956,730	70.2 %
Income from operations	533,562	35.6 %	446,345	31.9 %	405,300	29.8 %
Other expense						
Interest expense	(209,356)	(14.0)%	(217,771)	(15.6)%	(237,355)	(17.4)%
Loss on extinguishment of debt	(40,951)	(2.7)%	(8,989)	(0.6)%	(2,693)	(0.2)%
Other expense	(357)	0.0 %	(18,343)	(1.3)%	(8,764)	(0.7)%
Total other expense	(250,664)	(16.7)%	(245,103)	(17.5)%	(248,812)	(18.3)%
Income before income taxes	282,898	18.9 %	201,242	14.4 %	156,488	11.5 %
Provision for income taxes	(70,374)	(4.7)%	(32,333)	(2.3)%	(46,752)	(3.4)%
Net income	212,524	14.2 %	168,909	12.1 %	109,736	8.1 %
Net (income) loss attributable to noncontrolling interest	(676)	(0.1)%	(1,040)	(0.1)%	6,150	0.4 %
Net income attributable to Encore Capital Group, Inc. stockholders	\$ 211,848	14.1 %	\$ 167,869	12.0 %	\$ 115,886	8.5 %

Comparison of Results of Operations

Our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2019 includes discussion and analysis of our financial condition and results of operations for the year ended December 31, 2019 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2018 in Item 7 of Part II, “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations.”

Year Ended December 31, 2020 Compared to Year Ended December 31, 2019

Revenues

Our revenues primarily include revenue recognized from engaging in debt purchasing and recovery activities. Effective January 1, 2020, we adopted the CECL accounting standard. Under CECL, we apply our charge-off policy and fully write-off the amortized costs (i.e., face value net of noncredit discount) of the individual receivables we acquire immediately after purchasing the portfolio. We then record a negative allowance that represents the present value of all expected future recoveries for pools of receivables that share similar risk characteristics using a discounted cash flow approach, which is presented as “Investment in receivable portfolios, net” in our consolidated statements of financial condition. The discount rate is an effective interest rate (or “purchase EIR”) established based on the purchase price of the portfolio and the expected future cash flows at the time of purchase. Revenue generated by such activities primarily includes two components: (1) the accretion of the discount on the negative allowance due to the passage of time, which is included in “Revenue from receivable portfolios” and (2) changes in expected cash flows, which includes (a) the current period variances between actual cash collected and expected cash recoveries and (b) the present value change of expected future recoveries, and is presented in our consolidated statements of operations as “Changes in expected current and future recoveries.”

Certain pools already fully recovered their cost basis and became zero basis portfolios (“ZBA”) prior to our adoption of CECL. We did not establish a negative allowance for these pools as we elected the Transition Resource Group for Credit Losses’ practical expedient to retain the integrity of these legacy pools. Similar to how we treated ZBA collections prior to the adoption of CECL, all subsequent collections to the ZBA pools are recognized as ZBA revenue, which is included in revenue from receivable portfolios in our consolidated statements of operations.

Servicing revenue consists primarily of fee-based income earned on accounts collected on behalf of others, primarily credit originators. We earn fee-based income by providing debt servicing (such as early stage collections, BPO, contingent collections, trace services and litigation activities) to credit originators for non-performing loans.

Other revenues primarily include revenues recognized from the sale of real estate assets that are acquired as a result of our investments in non-performing secured residential mortgage portfolios in Europe and LAAP. Other revenues also include gains recognized on transfers of financial assets.

We have not adjusted prior period comparative information and will continue to disclose prior period financial information in accordance with the previous accounting guidance. The following table summarizes revenues during the periods presented (*in thousands, except percentages*):

	Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2019	\$ Change	% Change
Revenue recognized from portfolio basis	\$ 1,318,306	\$ 1,185,681	\$ 132,625	11.2 %
ZBA revenue	56,411	83,607	(27,196)	(32.5)%
Revenue from receivable portfolios	1,374,717	1,269,288	105,429	8.3 %
Changes in expected current period recoveries	228,075			
Changes in expected future period recoveries	(220,829)			
Changes in expected current and future recoveries	7,246			
Servicing revenue	115,118	126,527	(11,409)	(9.0)%
Other revenues	4,319	9,974	(5,655)	(56.7)%
Total revenues	\$ 1,501,400	\$ 1,405,789	\$ 95,611	6.8 %
Allowance reversals on receivable portfolios, net ⁽¹⁾		(8,108)		
Total revenues, adjusted by net allowances		\$ 1,397,681		

(1) Amount includes \$8.6 million of allowance reversals for zero-basis portfolios.

Our operating results are impacted by foreign currency translation, which represents the effect of translating operating results where the functional currency is different than our U.S. dollar reporting currency. The strengthening of the U.S. dollar relative to other foreign currencies has an unfavorable impact on our international revenues, and the weakening of the U.S. dollar relative to other foreign currencies has a favorable impact on our international revenues. Our international revenues were favorably impacted by foreign currency translation, primarily from the weakening of the U.S. dollar, which decreased, based on average exchange rates, against the British Pound by approximately 0.5%, during the year ended December 31, 2020 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2019.

The increase in revenue recognized from portfolio basis during the year ended December 31, 2020 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily due to higher expected total future cash flows resulting from a change in the expected economic life of static pool groups based on a lifetime expected recovery model upon the adoption of CECL which led to increased EIR, and increased expected total future cash flows resulting from a change in our accounting policy for court costs. Under our new accounting policy, all future expected cash flows, including the expected total recoveries in our legal channel, are included in the initial curve in the establishment of negative allowance, which in turn, increased the EIR.

As discussed above, ZBA revenue represents collections from our legacy ZBA pools. We expect our ZBA revenue to continue to decline as we collect on these legacy pools. We do not expect to have new ZBA pools in the future.

Under CECL, changes in expected current period recoveries represent over and under-performance in the reporting period. Collections during the year ended December 31, 2020 significantly outperformed the projected cash flows by approximately \$228.1 million. We believe the collection over-performance was largely driven by the reduced near-term expected recoveries as a result of adjustments made to our projected cash flow forecast during the first quarter of 2020 associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The over-performance was also a result of our sustained improvements in portfolio collections driven by liquidation improvement initiatives.

While we now have additional information with respect to the impact on collections of the COVID-19 pandemic, the future outlook remains uncertain, and will continue to evolve depending on future developments, including the duration and spread of the pandemic and related actions taken by governments. When reassessing the future forecasts of expected lifetime recoveries during the year ended December 31, 2020, management considered historical and current collection performance, uncertainty in economic forecasts in the geographies in which we operate, and believes that the operational disruption as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has, for the near term, been resolved through a combination of social distancing in the workplace and working remotely. However, the macroeconomic driven consumer distress is still present and will likely continue to impact our collections performance in the near future. As a result, we have updated our forecast, resulting in a reduction of total estimated remaining collections which in turn, when discounted to present value, resulted in a provision for credit loss adjustment of approximately \$220.8 million during the year ended December 31, 2020. The circumstances around this pandemic are evolving rapidly and will continue to impact our business and our estimation of expected recoveries in future periods. We will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation and update our assumptions accordingly.

The following tables summarize collections from purchased receivables, revenue, end of period receivable balance and other related supplemental data, by year of purchase (in thousands, except percentages):

	Year Ended December 31, 2020			As of December 31, 2020	
	Collections	Revenue from Receivable Portfolios	Changes in Expected Current and Future Recoveries	Investment in Receivable Portfolios	Monthly EIR
United States:					
ZBA	\$ 51,730	\$ 51,865	\$ —	\$ —	— %
2011	25,497	22,389	2,173	1,741	88.6 %
2012	27,740	24,934	742	4,039	42.0 %
2013	64,367	59,837	126	10,718	40.5 %
2014	47,628	34,687	(4,364)	33,955	6.7 %
2015	64,133	31,837	1,397	52,960	3.9 %
2016	116,452	57,473	4,277	98,035	3.9 %
2017	193,328	105,124	23,054	138,455	5.2 %
2018	308,302	157,303	(2,980)	266,170	3.8 %
2019	416,315	262,751	(10,325)	469,130	3.8 %
2020	213,450	118,448	51,072	496,275	3.7 %
Subtotal	1,528,942	926,648	65,172	1,571,478	4.4 %
Europe:					
ZBA	184	183	—	—	— %
2013	93,203	86,148	(8,540)	230,333	3.2 %
2014	84,255	69,170	(2,488)	197,075	3.0 %
2015	55,102	42,970	1,150	151,976	2.4 %
2016	51,584	42,806	(6,275)	131,685	2.9 %
2017	87,549	59,801	(12,788)	261,915	1.9 %
2018	78,846	59,211	(36,973)	307,267	1.6 %
2019	80,502	54,377	(4,804)	245,191	1.8 %
2020	22,721	15,908	11,141	125,959	2.3 %
Subtotal	553,946	430,574	(59,577)	1,651,401	2.3 %
Other geographies:					
ZBA	4,362	4,363	—	—	— %
2014 ⁽¹⁾	3,837	1,703	359	47,909	102.5 %
2015 ⁽¹⁾	4,688	2,649	733	3,477	96.7 %
2016	2,633	1,827	(52)	1,523	7.2 %
2017 ⁽¹⁾	7,303	3,850	212	10,794	6.2 %
2018	5,892	2,963	399	5,122	3.7 %
2019	245	140	—	214	4.6 %
2020	—	—	—	—	— %
Subtotal	28,960	17,495	1,651	69,039	7.9 %
Total	\$ 2,111,848	\$ 1,374,717	\$ 7,246	\$ 3,291,918	3.3 %

(1) Portfolio balance includes non-accrual pool groups. The EIR presented is only for pool groups that accrete portfolio revenue.

	Year Ended December 31, 2019			As of December 31, 2019	
	Collections	Revenue from Receivable Portfolios	Net Reversal (Portfolio Allowance)	Unamortized Balances	Monthly EIR
United States:					
ZBA	\$ 83,217	\$ 74,614	\$ 8,626	\$ —	— %
2011	21,684	21,158	304	2,546	85.5 %
2012	32,258	27,850	273	5,916	35.5 %
2013	84,133	73,248	(150)	14,697	33.4 %
2014	69,059	41,886	3,905	50,097	6.0 %
2015	85,042	37,207	6,099	82,187	3.1 %
2016	159,279	73,054	109	149,159	3.2 %
2017	255,048	132,946	191	198,714	4.5 %
2018	351,696	199,561	(4,955)	409,717	3.3 %
2019	174,693	121,614	—	626,911	3.3 %
Subtotal	1,316,109	803,138	14,402	1,539,944	4.1 %
Europe:					
ZBA	324	326	—	—	— %
2013	113,224	88,244	4,991	238,033	3.1 %
2014	105,337	73,230	(372)	206,895	2.9 %
2015	72,042	44,009	462	160,113	2.3 %
2016	63,113	43,309	(529)	140,663	2.7 %
2017	118,794	65,501	(7,190)	290,071	1.8 %
2018	118,266	70,553	(18,332)	347,399	1.5 %
2019	44,118	29,262	(470)	264,903	1.8 %
Subtotal	635,218	414,434	(21,440)	1,648,077	2.2 %
Other geographies:					
ZBA	8,647	8,667	—	—	— %
2014	4,663	6,548	—	60,479	103.0 %
2015	16,530	12,149	382	6,240	22.0 %
2016	12,172	6,402	(399)	4,680	5.3 %
2017	15,383	8,505	(98)	15,894	6.2 %
2018	15,008	8,082	(955)	8,330	3.8 %
2019	3,198	1,363	—	340	4.6 %
Subtotal	75,601	51,716	(1,070)	95,963	7.0 %
Total	\$ 2,026,928	\$ 1,269,288	\$ (8,108)	\$ 3,283,984	3.1 %

The decrease in servicing revenues during the year ended December 31, 2020 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily attributable to the sale of Baycorp in August 2019. Through Baycorp, we earned servicing revenues through August 2019. The decrease was also driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. The decrease during the year ended December 31, 2020 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was partially offset by the favorable impact of foreign currency translation, which was primarily the result of the weakening of the U.S. dollar against the British Pound.

Operating Expenses

The following table summarizes operating expenses during the periods presented (*in thousands, except percentages*):

	Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2019	\$ Change	\$ Change
Salaries and employee benefits	\$ 378,176	\$ 376,365	\$ 1,811	0.5 %
Cost of legal collections	239,071	202,670	36,401	18.0 %
General and administrative expenses	149,113	148,256	857	0.6 %
Other operating expenses	108,944	108,433	511	0.5 %
Collection agency commissions	49,754	63,865	(14,111)	(22.1)%
Depreciation and amortization	42,780	41,029	1,751	4.3 %
Goodwill impairment	—	10,718	(10,718)	(100.0)%
Total operating expenses	<u>\$ 967,838</u>	<u>\$ 951,336</u>	<u>\$ 16,502</u>	1.7 %

Our operating results are impacted by foreign currency translation, which represents the effect of translating operating results where the functional currency is different than our U.S. dollar reporting currency. The strengthening of the U.S. dollar relative to other foreign currencies has a favorable impact on our international operating expenses, and the weakening of the U.S. dollar relative to other foreign currencies has an unfavorable impact on our international operating expenses. Our operating expenses were unfavorably impacted by foreign currency translation, primarily by the weakening of the U.S. dollar against the British Pound by approximately 0.5% for the year ended December 31, 2020 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2019.

Operating expenses are explained in more detail as follows:

Salaries and Employee Benefits

The increase in salaries and employee benefits during the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily due to the following reasons:

- Increase in stock-based compensation for the year ended December 31, 2020 due to adjustments to estimated vesting of certain performance-based awards;
- Increased employee headcount, see “Supplemental Performance Data - Headcount by Function by Geographic Location” for details;
- The unfavorable impact of foreign currency translation, primarily by the weakening of the U.S. dollar against the British Pound during the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to the year ended December 31, 2019;
- Partially offset by reduced salaries and employee benefits due to the sale of Baycorp in August 2019.

Cost of Legal Collections

Cost of legal collections primarily includes contingent fees paid to our external network of attorneys and the cost of litigation. We pursue legal collections using a network of attorneys that specialize in collection matters and through our internal legal channel. Under the agreements with our contracted attorneys, we advance certain out-of-pocket court costs. Effective January 1, 2020, we no longer capitalize upfront court costs and recognize a portion of court costs as expense based on a loss-rate methodology, but rather, we expense all court costs as incurred. Cost of legal collections does not include internal legal channel employee costs, which are included in salaries and employee benefits in our consolidated statements of operations.

The following table summarizes our cost of legal collections during the periods presented (*in thousands, except percentages*):

	Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2019	\$ Change	% Change
Court costs	\$ 148,596	\$ 94,165	\$ 54,431	57.8 %
Legal collection fees	90,475	108,505	(18,030)	(16.6)%
Total cost of legal collections	\$ 239,071	\$ 202,670	\$ 36,401	18.0 %

The increase in cost of legal collections during the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily due to the following reasons:

- No longer capitalizing upfront court costs but rather expensing all court costs as incurred;
- Partially offset by lower court cost spending due to court closures in certain jurisdictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

General and Administrative Expenses

The increase in general and administrative expenses during the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily due to the following reasons:

- A charge of \$15.0 million relating to our settlement with the CFPB;
- Certain third-party costs of approximately \$6.9 million incurred relating to various financing transactions completed in September 2020;
- Partially offset by reduced travel and facilities expenses, and consulting fees and lower general and administrative expenses due to the sale of Baycorp in August 2019.

Other Operating Expenses

The increase in other operating expenses during the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily due to the following reasons:

- Increased postage and printing expenses primarily at our domestic operations;
- Partially offset by lower collection expenses primarily due to the sale of Baycorp in August 2019.

Collection Agency Commissions

Collection agency commissions are commissions paid to third-party collection agencies. Collections through the collections agencies channel are predominately in Europe and Latin America and vary from period to period depending on, among other things, the number of accounts placed with an agency versus accounts collected internally. Commission rates vary depending on, among other things, the amount of time that has passed since the charge-off of the accounts placed with an agency, the asset class, and the geographic location of the receivables. Generally, freshly charged-off accounts have a lower commission rate than accounts that have been charged off for a longer period of time, and commission rates for purchased bankruptcy portfolios are lower than the commission rates for charged-off credit card accounts.

The decrease in collections agency commissions during the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily due to the decrease in agency collections in Europe and other geographies.

Depreciation and Amortization

The increase in depreciation and amortization expense during the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily due to the following reasons:

- Increased depreciation expense primarily incurred at our U.S. facilities;
- Partially offset by the decrease due to the sale of Baycorp in August 2019.

Goodwill Impairment

In August 2019, we completed the sale of Baycorp. The transaction resulted in a goodwill impairment charge of \$10.7 million and an additional loss on sale of \$12.5 million during the year ended December 31, 2019.

Interest Expense

The following table summarizes our interest expense during the periods presented (*in thousands, except percentages*):

	Year Ended December 31,			
	2020	2019	\$ Change	% Change
Stated interest on debt obligations	\$ 181,536	\$ 193,003	\$ (11,467)	(5.9)%
Amortization of loan fees and other loan costs	16,343	11,455	4,888	42.7 %
Amortization of debt discount	11,477	13,313	(1,836)	(13.8)%
Total interest expense	\$ 209,356	\$ 217,771	\$ (8,415)	(3.9)%

In September 2020, we entered into various transactions, agreements and amendments related to our borrowings and completed the implementation of our new global funding structure. In November and December 2020, we completed two offerings of senior secured notes, partially redeemed our Cabot senior secured notes due in 2023 and fully redeemed our Cabot floating rate notes due 2024. These refinancing transactions successfully reduced the interest rates on our outstanding borrowings.

The decrease in interest expense during the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to the year ended December 31, 2019 was primarily due to the following reasons:

- Lower average debt balances;
- A decrease in LIBOR which resulted in decreased interest expense for the revolving credit facilities that reference LIBOR;
- Decreased interest rates as a result of various refinancing transactions;
- Partially offset by increased amortization of loan fees and other loan costs as a result of higher capitalized debt issuance costs.

Loss on Extinguishment of Debt

We presented certain refinancing charges such as make-whole provisions, call premiums, and write-offs of unamortized debt issuance costs and debt discount as interest expense in prior periods. During the three months ended December 31, 2020, we reclassified such costs as loss on extinguishment of debt as a single line item in our consolidated statements of operations. Loss on extinguishment of debt was \$41.0 million and \$9.0 million during the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019, respectively. Refer to “Note 7: Borrowings” in the notes to our consolidated financial statements for details of our financing activities.

Other Expense

Other expense or income consists primarily of foreign currency exchange gains or losses, interest income and gains or losses recognized on certain transactions outside of our normal course of business. Other expense was \$0.4 million during the year ended December 31, 2020, which included a loss of \$4.8 million as a result of the divestiture of our investment in Brazil. This loss was partially offset by other income from fair value changes for currency exchange forward contracts that were not designated as hedge instruments for accounting purposes.

Other expense was \$18.3 million during the year ended December 31, 2019 and was primarily the result of a loss recognized on the sale of Baycorp of approximately \$12.5 million.

Provision for Income Taxes

During the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019, we recorded income tax provisions for income from continuing operations of \$70.4 million and \$32.3 million, respectively.

The effective tax rates for the respective periods are shown below:

	Year Ended December 31,	
	2020	2019
Federal provision	21.0 %	21.0 %
State provision	3.2 %	0.2 %
Foreign rate differential ⁽¹⁾	(0.5)%	(2.2)%
Change in valuation allowance	0.9 %	(0.5)%
IRS settlement ⁽²⁾	— %	(2.4)%
Tax effect of CFPB settlement fees ⁽³⁾	1.1 %	— %
Other	(0.8)%	— %
Effective rate	<u>24.9 %</u>	<u>16.1 %</u>

(1) Relates primarily to the lower tax rates on the income or loss attributable to international operations.

(2) In 2019, includes tax benefit resulting from tax accounting method change.

(3) Non-deductible expense for tax purposes. Refer to “Note 12: Commitments and Contingencies” in the notes to our consolidated financial statements for details of the CFPB settlement.

The effective tax rate for the year ended December 31, 2020 increased to 24.9% as compared to 16.1% for the year ended December 31, 2019. The lower tax rate in 2019 was primarily related to benefits resulting from tax accounting method change and exam resolutions with certain state taxing authorities.

Our effective tax rate could fluctuate significantly on a quarterly basis and could be adversely affected to the extent earnings are lower than anticipated in countries that have lower statutory tax rates and higher than anticipated in countries that have higher statutory tax rates.

Non-GAAP Disclosure

In addition to the financial information prepared in conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (“GAAP”), we provide historical non-GAAP financial information. Management believes that the presentation of such non-GAAP financial information is meaningful and useful in understanding the activities and business metrics of our operations. Management believes that these non-GAAP financial measures reflect an additional way of viewing aspects of our business that, when viewed with our GAAP results, provide a more complete understanding of factors and trends affecting our business.

Management believes that the presentation of these measures provides investors with greater transparency and facilitates comparison of operating results across a broad spectrum of companies with varying capital structures, compensation strategies, derivative instruments, and amortization methods, which provide a more complete understanding of our financial performance, competitive position, and prospects for the future. Readers should consider the information in addition to, but not instead of, our financial statements prepared in accordance with GAAP. This non-GAAP financial information may be determined or calculated differently by other companies, limiting the usefulness of these measures for comparative purposes.

Adjusted Earnings Per Share. Management uses non-GAAP adjusted net income and adjusted earnings per share, to assess operating performance, in order to highlight trends in our business that may not otherwise be apparent when relying on financial measures calculated in accordance with GAAP. Adjusted net income attributable to Encore excludes non-cash interest and issuance cost amortization relating to our convertible and exchangeable notes, acquisition, integration and restructuring related expenses, settlement fees and related administrative expenses, amortization of certain acquired intangible assets and other charges or gains that are not indicative of ongoing operations.

The following table provides a reconciliation between net income and diluted earnings per share attributable to Encore calculated in accordance with GAAP, to adjusted net income and adjusted earnings per share attributable to Encore, respectively (*in thousands, except per share data*):

	Year Ended December 31,					
	2020		2019		2018	
	\$	Per Diluted Share	\$	Per Diluted Share	\$	Per Diluted Share
GAAP net income attributable to Encore, as reported	\$ 211,848	\$ 6.68	\$ 167,869	\$ 5.33	\$ 115,886	\$ 4.06
Adjustments:						
CFPB settlement fees ⁽¹⁾	15,009	0.47	—	—	—	—
Convertible and exchangeable notes non-cash interest and issuance cost amortization	14,444	0.46	15,501	0.50	13,896	0.50
Acquisition, integration and restructuring related expenses ⁽²⁾	4,962	0.16	7,049	0.22	11,506	0.40
Amortization of certain acquired intangible assets ⁽³⁾	7,010	0.22	7,017	0.22	8,337	0.29
Loss on sale of Baycorp ⁽⁴⁾	—	—	12,489	0.40	—	—
Goodwill impairment ⁽⁴⁾	—	—	10,718	0.34	—	—
Net gain on fair value adjustments to contingent considerations ⁽⁵⁾	—	—	(2,300)	(0.07)	(5,664)	(0.20)
Change in tax accounting method ⁽⁶⁾	—	—	(7,825)	(0.25)	—	—
Expenses related to withdrawn Cabot IPO ⁽⁷⁾	—	—	—	—	2,984	0.10
Loss on derivatives in connection with the Cabot Transaction ⁽⁸⁾	—	—	—	—	9,315	0.33
Adjustments attributable to noncontrolling interest ⁽⁹⁾	—	—	—	—	(5,022)	(0.18)
Income tax effect of the adjustments ⁽¹⁰⁾	(7,478)	(0.24)	(23,230)	(0.74)	(9,079)	(0.32)
Adjusted net income attributable to Encore	\$ 245,795	\$ 7.75	\$ 187,288	\$ 5.95	\$ 142,159	\$ 4.98

- (1) Amount represents a charge resulting from the Stipulated Judgment with the CFPB. We have adjusted for this amount because we believe it is not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for it enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (2) Amount represents acquisition, integration and restructuring related expenses. We adjust for this amount because we believe these expenses are not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for these expenses enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (3) We have acquired intangible assets, such as trade names and customer relationships, as a result of our acquisition of debt solution service providers. These intangible assets are valued at the time of the acquisition and amortized over their estimated lives. We believe that amortization of acquisition-related intangible assets, especially the amortization of an acquired company's trade names and customer relationships, is the result of pre-acquisition activities. In addition, the amortization of these acquired intangibles is a non-cash static expense that is not affected by operations during any reporting period. As a result, the amortization of certain acquired intangible assets is excluded from our adjusted income attributable to Encore and adjusted income per share.
- (4) The sale of Baycorp resulted in a goodwill impairment charge of \$10.7 million and a loss on sale of \$12.5 million during the year ended December 31, 2019. We believe the goodwill impairment charge and the loss on sale are not indicative of ongoing operations, therefore adjusting for these expenses enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (5) Amount represents the net gain recognized as a result of fair value adjustments to contingent considerations that were established for our acquisitions of debt solution service providers in Europe. We have adjusted for this amount because we do not believe this is indicative of ongoing operations. Refer to the Contingent Consideration section of "Note 2: Fair Value Measurements" in the notes to our consolidated financial statements for further details.
- (6) Amount represents the benefit from the tax accounting method change related to revenue reporting. We adjust for certain discrete tax items that are not indicative of our ongoing operations.
- (7) Amount represents expenses related to the proposed and later withdrawn initial public offering by Cabot. We adjust for this amount because we believe these expenses are not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for these expenses enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (8) Amount represents the loss recognized on the forward contract we entered into in anticipation of the completion of the purchase of all of the outstanding equity of CCM not owned by Encore (the "Cabot Transaction"). We adjust for this amount because we believe the loss is not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for this loss enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (9) Certain of the above pre-tax adjustments include expenses recognized by our partially-owned subsidiaries. This adjustment represents the portion of the non-GAAP adjustments that are attributable to noncontrolling interest.
- (10) Amount represents the total income tax effect of the adjustments, which is generally calculated based on the applicable marginal tax rate of the jurisdiction in which the portion of the adjustment occurred. Additionally, we adjust for certain discrete tax items that are not indicative of our ongoing operations. We recognized approximately \$17.5 million, or \$0.55 per diluted share, in tax benefit as a result of the sale of Baycorp, which is included in this income tax adjustment during the year ended December 31, 2019.

Adjusted EBITDA. Management utilizes adjusted EBITDA (defined as net income before discontinued operations, interest income and expense, taxes, depreciation and amortization, stock-based compensation expenses, acquisition, integration and restructuring related expenses, settlement fees and related administrative expenses and other charges or gains that are not indicative of ongoing operations), in the evaluation of our operating performance. Adjusted EBITDA for the periods presented is as follows (in thousands):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
GAAP net income, as reported	\$ 212,524	\$ 168,909	\$ 109,736
Adjustments:			
Interest expense	209,356	217,771	237,355
Loss on extinguishment of debt	40,951	8,989	2,693
Interest income	(2,397)	(3,693)	(3,345)
Provision for income taxes	70,374	32,333	46,752
Depreciation and amortization	42,780	41,029	41,228
CFPB settlement fees ⁽¹⁾	15,009	—	—
Stock-based compensation expense	16,560	12,557	12,980
Acquisition, integration and restructuring related expenses ⁽²⁾	4,962	7,049	7,523
Loss on sale of Baycorp ⁽³⁾	—	12,489	—
Goodwill impairment ⁽³⁾	—	10,718	—
Net gain on fair value adjustments to contingent considerations ⁽⁴⁾	—	(2,300)	(5,664)
Loss on derivative in connection with the Cabot Transaction ⁽⁵⁾	—	—	9,315
Expenses related to withdrawn Cabot IPO ⁽⁶⁾	—	—	2,984
Adjusted EBITDA	\$ 610,119	\$ 505,851	\$ 461,557
Collections applied to principal balance ⁽⁷⁾	\$ 740,350	\$ 765,748	\$ 759,014

- (1) Amount represents a charge resulting from the Stipulated Judgment with the CFPB. We have adjusted for this amount because we believe it is not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for it enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (2) Amount represents acquisition, integration and restructuring related expenses. We adjust for this amount because we believe these expenses are not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for these expenses enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (3) The sale of Baycorp resulted in a goodwill impairment charge of \$10.7 million and a loss on sale of \$12.5 million during the year ended December 31, 2019. We believe the goodwill impairment charge and the loss on sale are not indicative of ongoing operations, therefore adjusting for these expenses enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (4) Amount represents the net gain recognized as a result of fair value adjustments to contingent considerations that were established for our acquisitions of debt solution service providers in Europe. We have adjusted for this amount because we do not believe this is indicative of ongoing operations. Refer to the Contingent Consideration section of "Note 2: Fair Value Measurements" in the notes to our consolidated financial statements for further details.
- (5) Amount represents the loss recognized on the forward contract we entered into in anticipation of the completion of the Cabot Transaction. We adjust for this amount because we believe the loss is not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for this loss enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (6) Amount represents expenses related to the proposed and later withdrawn initial public offering by Cabot. We adjust for this amount because we believe these expenses are not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for these expenses enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (7) For periods prior to January 1, 2020, amount represents (a) gross collections from receivable portfolios less the sum of (b) revenue from receivable portfolios and (c) allowance charges or allowance reversals on receivable portfolios. For periods subsequent to January 1, 2020 amount represents (a) gross collections from receivable portfolios less the sum of (b) revenue from receivable portfolios and (c) changes in expected recoveries. For consistency with the Company debt covenant reporting, for periods subsequent to June 30, 2020, the collections applied to principal balance also includes proceeds applied to basis from sales of REO assets and related activities; prior period amounts have not been adjusted to reflect this change as such amounts were immaterial.

Adjusted Operating Expenses. Management utilizes adjusted operating expenses in order to facilitate a comparison of approximate costs to cash collections for our portfolio purchasing and recovery business. Adjusted operating expenses for our portfolio purchasing and recovery business are calculated by starting with GAAP total operating expenses and backing out stock-based compensation expense, operating expenses related to non-portfolio purchasing and recovery business, acquisition, integration and restructuring related operating expenses, settlement fees and related administrative expenses and other charges or gains that are not indicative of ongoing operations. Adjusted operating expenses related to our portfolio purchasing and recovery business for the periods presented are as follows (in thousands):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
GAAP total operating expenses, as reported	\$ 967,838	\$ 951,336	\$ 956,730
Adjustments:			
Operating expenses related to non-portfolio purchasing and recovery business ⁽¹⁾	(182,930)	(173,190)	(193,715)
CFPB settlement fees ⁽²⁾	(15,009)	—	—
Stock-based compensation expense	(16,560)	(12,557)	(12,980)
Acquisition, integration and restructuring related operating expenses ⁽³⁾	(154)	(7,049)	(7,523)
Goodwill impairment ⁽⁴⁾	—	(10,718)	—
Net gain on fair value adjustments to contingent considerations ⁽⁵⁾	—	2,300	5,664
Expenses related to withdrawn Cabot IPO ⁽⁶⁾	—	—	(2,984)
Adjusted operating expenses related to portfolio purchasing and recovery business	<u>\$ 753,185</u>	<u>\$ 750,122</u>	<u>\$ 745,192</u>

- (1) Operating expenses related to non-portfolio purchasing and recovery business include operating expenses from other operating segments that primarily engage in fee-based business, as well as corporate overhead not related to our portfolio purchasing and recovery business.
- (2) Amount represents a charge resulting from the Stipulated Judgment with the CFPB. We have adjusted for this amount because we believe it is not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for it enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (3) Amount represents acquisition, integration and restructuring related operating expenses. We adjust for this amount because we believe these expenses are not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for these expenses enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (4) The sale of Baycorp resulted in a goodwill impairment charge of \$10.7 million that is included in operating expenses during the year ended December 31, 2019. We believe the goodwill impairment charge is not indicative of ongoing operations, therefore, adjusting for the expense enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.
- (5) Amount represents the net gain recognized as a result of fair value adjustments to contingent considerations that were established for our acquisitions of debt solution service providers in Europe. We have adjusted for this amount because we do not believe this is indicative of ongoing operations. Refer to the Contingent Consideration section of "Note 2: Fair Value Measurements" in the notes to our consolidated financial statements for further details.
- (6) Amount represents expenses related to the proposed and later withdrawn initial public offering by Cabot. We adjust for this amount because we believe these expenses are not indicative of ongoing operations; therefore, adjusting for these expenses enhances comparability to prior periods, anticipated future periods, and our competitors' results.

Cost per Dollar Collected

We utilize cost per dollar collected (or “cost-to-collect”) in order to facilitate a comparison of approximate costs to cash collections from purchased receivables for our portfolio purchasing and recovery business. Cost-to-collect is calculated by dividing adjusted operating expenses by collections from purchased receivables. The calculation of adjusted operating expenses is illustrated in detail above. The following table summarizes our overall cost per dollar collected by geographic location during the periods presented:

	Year Ended December 31,	
	2020	2019
United States	37.4 %	40.3 %
Europe	29.9 %	28.2 %
Other geographies	55.9 %	54.3 %
Overall cost per dollar collected	35.7 %	37.0 %

As discussed in the “Change in Accounting Principle” section in “Note 1: Ownership, Description of Business, and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies” of the notes to the consolidated financial statements, effective January 1, 2020, we expense all court costs as incurred and no longer capitalize such costs as Deferred Court Costs based on a loss-rate methodology. This change in accounting principle increased the cost-to-collect metric as compared to prior periods because the court costs expense recognized in prior periods only represented costs we did not expect to recover. The change in accounting principle has no impact on the amount of court cost payments incurred.

Despite the increase in expense due to the change in accounting principle discussed above, cost-to-collect decreased 130 basis points to 35.7% for the year ended December 31, 2020 from 37.0% during the prior year.

The decrease in overall cost-to-collect was driven by improved cost-to-collect in the United States, which was due to a combination of (1) continued improvement in operational efficiencies in the collection process, (2) a large reduction in legal channel spending due to court closures in certain jurisdictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the legal channel spending has gradually increased in the third and fourth quarters as compared to the previous quarters but is still lower than historical levels and (3) collection mix shifting towards non-legal collection, which has a lower cost-to-collect. Collections from other geographies continue to decline as we continue to focus on the U.S. and European markets. Cost-to-collect in LAAP is expected to stay at an elevated level and will continue to fluctuate over time.

Over time, we expect our cost-to-collect to remain competitive, but also to fluctuate from quarter to quarter based on seasonality, product mix, acquisitions, foreign exchange rates, the cost of new operating initiatives, and the changing regulatory and legislative environment.

Supplemental Performance Data

The tables included in this supplemental performance data section include detail for purchases, collections and ERC by year of purchase.

Our collection expectations are based on account characteristics and economic variables. Additional adjustments are made to account for qualitative factors that may affect the payment behavior of our consumers and servicing related adjustments to ensure our collection expectations are aligned with our operations. We continue to refine our process of forecasting collections both domestically and internationally with a focus on operational enhancements. Our collection expectations vary between types of portfolio and geographic location. For example, in the U.K., due to the higher concentration of payment plans, as compared to the U.S. and other locations in Europe, we expect to receive streams of collections over longer periods of time. As a result, past performance of pools in certain geographic locations or of certain types of portfolio are not necessarily a suitable indicator of future results in other locations or for other types of portfolio.

The supplemental performance data presented in this section is impacted by foreign currency translation, which represents the effect of translating financial results where the functional currency of our foreign subsidiary is different than our U.S. dollar reporting currency. For example, the strengthening of the U.S. dollar relative to other foreign currencies has an unfavorable reporting impact on our international purchases, collections, and ERC, and the weakening of the U.S. dollar relative to other foreign currencies has a favorable impact on our international purchases, collections, and ERC.

We utilize proprietary forecasting models to continuously evaluate the economic life of each pool.

Cumulative Collections from Purchased Receivables to Purchase Price Multiple

The following table summarizes our receivable purchases and related gross collections by year of purchase (in thousands, except multiples):

Year of Purchase	Purchase Price ⁽¹⁾	Cumulative Collections through December 31, 2020												Total ⁽²⁾	Multiple ⁽³⁾
		<2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020			
<i>United States:</i>															
<2011	\$ 1,760,989	\$3,222,155	\$637,415	\$458,336	\$ 328,076	\$ 236,557	\$ 180,622	\$ 129,676	\$ 99,169	\$ 80,397	\$ 65,855	\$ 51,481	\$ 5,489,739	3.1	
2011	383,794	—	123,596	301,949	226,521	155,180	112,906	77,257	56,287	41,148	33,445	25,620	1,153,909	3.0	
2012	548,808	—	—	187,721	350,134	259,252	176,914	113,067	74,507	48,832	37,327	27,797	1,275,551	2.3	
2013	551,895	—	—	—	230,051	397,646	298,068	203,386	147,503	107,399	84,665	64,436	1,533,154	2.8	
2014	517,685	—	—	—	—	144,178	307,814	216,357	142,147	94,929	69,059	47,628	1,022,112	2.0	
2015	499,257	—	—	—	—	—	105,610	231,102	186,391	125,673	85,042	64,133	797,951	1.6	
2016	553,335	—	—	—	—	—	—	110,875	283,035	234,690	159,279	116,452	904,331	1.6	
2017	528,384	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	111,902	315,853	255,048	193,328	876,131	1.7	
2018	630,775	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	175,042	351,696	308,302	835,040	1.3	
2019	677,357	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	174,693	416,315	591,008	0.9	
2020	540,264	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	213,450	213,450	0.4	
Subtotal	7,192,543	3,222,155	761,011	948,006	1,134,782	1,192,813	1,181,934	1,081,720	1,100,941	1,223,963	1,316,109	1,528,942	14,692,376	2.0	
<i>Europe:</i>															
2013	619,079	—	—	—	134,259	249,307	212,129	165,610	146,993	132,663	113,228	93,203	1,247,392	2.0	
2014	623,129	—	—	—	—	135,549	198,127	156,665	137,806	129,033	105,337	84,255	946,772	1.5	
2015	419,941	—	—	—	—	—	65,870	127,084	103,823	88,065	72,277	55,261	512,380	1.2	
2016	258,218	—	—	—	—	—	—	44,641	97,587	83,107	63,198	51,609	340,142	1.3	
2017	461,571	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	68,111	152,926	118,794	87,549	427,380	0.9	
2018	433,302	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	49,383	118,266	78,846	246,495	0.6	
2019	273,354	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	44,118	80,502	124,620	0.5	
2020	116,899	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22,721	22,721	0.2	
Subtotal	3,205,493	—	—	—	134,259	384,856	476,126	494,000	554,320	635,177	635,218	553,946	3,867,902	1.2	
<i>Other geographies:</i>															
2012	6,721	—	—	—	3,848	2,561	1,208	542	551	422	390	294	9,816	1.5	
2013	29,568	—	—	—	6,617	17,615	10,334	4,606	3,339	2,468	1,573	1,042	47,594	1.6	
2014	86,989	—	—	—	—	9,652	16,062	18,403	9,813	7,991	6,472	4,300	72,693	0.8	
2015	83,198	—	—	—	—	—	15,061	57,064	43,499	32,622	17,499	4,688	170,433	2.0	
2016	64,450	—	—	—	—	—	—	29,269	39,710	28,992	16,078	5,196	119,245	1.9	
2017	49,670	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15,471	23,075	15,383	7,303	61,232	1.2	
2018	26,371	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12,910	15,008	5,892	33,810	1.3	
2019	2,668	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,198	245	3,443	1.3	
2020	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Subtotal	349,635	—	—	—	10,465	29,828	42,665	109,884	112,383	108,480	75,601	28,960	518,266	1.5	
Total	\$10,747,671	\$3,222,155	\$761,011	\$948,006	\$1,279,506	\$1,607,497	\$1,700,725	\$1,685,604	\$1,767,644	\$1,967,620	\$2,026,928	\$2,111,848	\$19,078,544	1.8	

(1) Adjusted for Put-Backs and Recalls. Put-Backs (“Put-Backs”) and recalls (“Recalls”) represent ineligible accounts that are returned by us or recalled by the seller pursuant to specific guidelines as set forth in the respective purchase agreement.

(2) Cumulative collections from inception through December 31, 2020, excluding collections on behalf of others.

(3) Cumulative Collections Multiple (“Multiple”) through December 31, 2020 refers to collections as a multiple of purchase price.

Total Estimated Collections from Purchased Receivables to Purchase Price Multiple

The following table summarizes our purchases, resulting historical gross collections, and estimated remaining gross collections for purchased receivables, by year of purchase (in thousands, except multiples):

	Purchase Price ⁽¹⁾	Historical Collections ⁽²⁾	Estimated Remaining Collections	Total Estimated Gross Collections	Total Estimated Gross Collections to Purchase Price
United States:					
<2011	\$ 1,760,989	\$ 5,489,739	\$ 115,101	\$ 5,604,840	3.2
2011	383,794	1,153,909	54,675	1,208,584	3.1
2012	548,808	1,275,551	61,317	1,336,868	2.4
2013 ⁽³⁾	551,895	1,533,154	172,934	1,706,088	3.1
2014 ⁽³⁾	517,685	1,022,112	110,916	1,133,028	2.2
2015	499,257	797,951	120,743	918,694	1.8
2016	553,335	904,331	223,731	1,128,062	2.0
2017	528,384	876,131	366,098	1,242,229	2.4
2018	630,775	835,040	562,107	1,397,147	2.2
2019	677,357	591,008	995,808	1,586,816	2.3
2020	540,264	213,450	1,110,044	1,323,494	2.4
Subtotal	7,192,543	14,692,376	3,893,474	18,585,850	2.6
Europe:					
2013 ⁽³⁾	619,079	1,247,392	914,652	2,162,044	3.5
2014 ⁽³⁾	623,129	946,772	678,545	1,625,317	2.6
2015 ⁽³⁾	419,941	512,380	437,102	949,482	2.3
2016	258,218	340,142	337,273	677,415	2.6
2017	461,571	427,380	583,441	1,010,821	2.2
2018	433,302	246,495	637,914	884,409	2.0
2019	273,354	124,620	530,179	654,799	2.4
2020	116,899	22,721	312,508	335,229	2.9
Subtotal	3,205,493	3,867,902	4,431,614	8,299,516	2.6
Other geographies:					
2012	6,721	9,816	162	9,978	1.5
2013	29,568	47,594	1,106	48,700	1.6
2014	86,989	72,693	54,635	127,328	1.5
2015	83,198	170,433	17,864	188,297	2.3
2016	64,450	119,245	5,899	125,144	1.9
2017	49,670	61,232	30,289	91,521	1.8
2018	26,371	33,810	9,920	43,730	1.7
2019	2,668	3,443	421	3,864	1.4
2020	—	—	—	—	—
Subtotal	349,635	518,266	120,296	638,562	1.8
Total	\$ 10,747,671	\$ 19,078,544	\$ 8,445,384	\$ 27,523,928	2.6

(1) Purchase price refers to the cash paid to a seller to acquire a portfolio less Put-backs, Recalls, and other adjustments. Put-Backs and Recalls represent ineligible accounts that are returned by us or recalled by the seller pursuant to specific guidelines as set forth in the respective purchase agreement.

(2) Cumulative collections from inception through December 31, 2020, excluding collections on behalf of others.

(3) Includes portfolios acquired in connection with certain business combinations.

Estimated Remaining Gross Collections from Purchased Receivables by Year of Purchase

The following table summarizes our estimated remaining gross collections for purchased receivables by year of purchase (*in thousands*):

	Estimated Remaining Gross Collections by Year of Purchase ⁽¹⁾										Total ⁽²⁾
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	>2029	
United States:											
<2011	\$ 35,925	\$ 26,180	\$ 18,179	\$ 12,553	\$ 8,564	\$ 5,800	\$ 3,848	\$ 2,384	\$ 1,258	\$ 410	\$ 115,101
2011	16,599	11,808	8,183	5,723	4,033	2,847	2,016	1,429	1,017	1,020	54,675
2012	18,501	13,009	9,137	6,414	4,515	3,183	2,250	1,596	1,136	1,576	61,317
2013 ⁽³⁾	49,612	36,577	25,902	18,368	13,032	9,246	6,562	4,659	3,309	5,667	172,934
2014 ⁽³⁾	33,329	23,568	16,301	11,291	7,979	5,648	4,001	2,838	2,015	3,946	110,916
2015	37,280	26,255	18,062	12,277	8,197	5,660	3,990	2,819	1,996	4,207	120,743
2016	73,054	46,967	31,826	22,079	15,355	10,517	7,353	5,174	3,648	7,758	223,731
2017	120,287	81,528	51,712	34,557	23,705	16,527	11,581	8,167	5,759	12,275	366,098
2018	191,409	131,151	84,377	53,132	34,927	23,047	15,214	9,950	6,620	12,280	562,107
2019	349,045	213,131	134,793	91,889	62,683	43,723	31,172	22,231	15,498	31,643	995,808
2020	298,297	300,371	175,189	106,095	71,412	48,451	34,062	24,310	17,327	34,530	1,110,044
Subtotal	1,223,338	910,545	573,661	374,378	254,402	174,649	122,049	85,557	59,583	115,312	3,893,474
Europe:											
2013 ⁽³⁾	100,145	97,594	91,655	85,731	78,218	69,395	62,179	56,149	50,925	222,661	914,652
2014 ⁽³⁾	85,220	77,011	72,046	65,329	58,565	49,705	44,325	38,965	34,983	152,396	678,545
2015 ⁽³⁾	55,714	50,404	46,506	41,560	37,585	33,159	28,535	24,972	22,833	95,834	437,102
2016	58,524	54,097	40,481	34,949	29,138	24,020	19,938	16,963	14,403	44,760	337,273
2017	87,521	82,023	70,536	60,050	50,134	42,541	36,495	30,357	26,206	97,578	583,441
2018	87,004	84,426	76,090	66,778	58,662	48,514	41,395	35,900	29,928	109,217	637,914
2019	83,648	77,209	65,517	55,199	45,684	37,710	31,496	26,896	22,616	84,204	530,179
2020	43,738	46,970	42,865	34,312	27,479	24,542	19,572	16,263	13,420	43,347	312,508
Subtotal	601,514	569,734	505,696	443,908	385,465	329,586	283,935	246,465	215,314	849,997	4,431,614
Other geographies:											
2012	113	49	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	162
2013	555	357	194	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,106
2014	10,548	8,488	7,630	6,531	4,934	2,899	1,649	1,502	1,502	8,952	54,635
2015	3,500	2,991	2,763	1,942	1,284	949	831	719	601	2,284	17,864
2016	3,189	1,615	573	258	169	95	—	—	—	—	5,899
2017	7,820	5,502	4,061	2,302	2,042	1,530	878	773	773	4,608	30,289
2018	3,766	2,350	1,676	963	518	338	222	87	—	—	9,920
2019	179	106	72	54	10	—	—	—	—	—	421
2020	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Subtotal	29,670	21,458	16,969	12,050	8,957	5,811	3,580	3,081	2,876	15,844	120,296
Portfolio ERC	1,854,522	1,501,737	1,096,326	830,336	648,824	510,046	409,564	335,103	277,773	981,153	8,445,384
REO ERC ⁽⁴⁾	27,115	26,403	17,203	7,791	1,866	64	6	78	74	—	80,600
Total	\$ 1,881,637	\$ 1,528,140	\$ 1,113,529	\$ 838,127	\$ 650,690	\$ 510,110	\$ 409,570	\$ 335,181	\$ 277,847	\$ 981,153	\$ 8,525,984

(1) ERC for Zero Basis Portfolios can extend beyond our collection forecasts. As of December 31, 2020, ERC for Zero Basis Portfolios includes approximately \$115.1 million for purchased consumer and bankruptcy receivables in the United States. ERC for Zero Basis Portfolios in Europe and other geographies was immaterial. ERC also includes approximately \$84.0 million from cost recovery portfolios, primarily in other geographies.

(2) Represents the expected remaining gross cash collections on purchased portfolios over a 180-month period. As of December 31, 2020, ERC for purchased receivables for 84-month and 120-month periods were:

	84-Month ERC		120-Month ERC	
United States	\$	3,633,022	\$	3,819,461
Europe		3,119,838		3,769,186
Other geographies		98,495		107,248
Portfolio ERC	\$	6,851,355	\$	7,695,895
REO ERC	\$	80,448	\$	80,600
Total ERC	\$	6,931,803	\$	7,776,495

(3) Includes portfolios acquired in connection with certain business combinations.

(4) Real estate-owned assets ERC includes approximately \$78.7 million and \$1.9 million of estimated future cash flows for Europe and Other Geographies, respectively.

Estimated Future Collections Applied to Principal

As of December 31, 2020, we had \$3.3 billion in investment in receivable portfolios. The estimated future collections applied to the investment in receivable portfolios net balance is as follows (*in thousands*):

Years Ending December 31,	United States		Europe		Other Geographies		Total Amortization	
2021	\$	474,872	\$	168,875	\$	18,437	\$	662,184
2022		397,791		188,289		14,561		600,641
2023		237,719		173,000		9,525		420,244
2024		146,742		155,394		6,886		309,022
2025		97,357		136,759		5,392		239,508
2026		65,289		115,726		3,198		184,213
2027		45,463		99,366		1,822		146,651
2028		32,109		86,979		1,577		120,665
2029		22,570		78,265		1,502		102,337
2030		15,961		70,738		1,502		88,201
2031		11,467		67,531		1,502		80,500
2032		8,479		67,055		1,502		77,036
2033		6,725		70,895		1,502		79,122
2034		5,685		77,893		131		83,709
2035		3,249		88,833		—		92,082
2036		—		5,803		—		5,803
Total	\$	1,571,478	\$	1,651,401	\$	69,039	\$	3,291,918

Headcount by Function by Geographic Location

The following table summarizes our headcount by function and by geographic location:

	Headcount as of December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
United States:			
General & Administrative	1,167	1,106	1,060
Account Manager	389	418	504
Subtotal	1,556	1,524	1,564
Europe:			
General & Administrative	997	998	1,036
Account Manager	2,483	2,085	2,037
Subtotal	3,480	3,083	3,073
Other Geographies⁽¹⁾:			
General & Administrative	1,227	1,173	1,345
Account Manager	1,462	1,475	1,884
Subtotal	2,689	2,648	3,229
Total	7,725	7,255	7,866

(1) Headcount for other geographies includes employees in India and Costa Rica that service accounts originated in the United States. Headcount as of December 31, 2018 includes 191 general and administrative and 361 account manager Baycorp employees.

Purchases by Quarter

The following table summarizes the receivable portfolios we purchased by quarter, and the respective purchase prices (*in thousands*):

Quarter	# of Accounts	Face Value	Purchase Price
Q1 2018	973	\$ 1,799,804	\$ 276,762
Q2 2018	1,031	2,870,456	359,580
Q3 2018	706	1,559,241	248,691
Q4 2018	766	2,272,113	246,865
Q1 2019	854	1,732,977	262,335
Q2 2019	778	2,307,711	242,697
Q3 2019	1,255	5,313,092	259,910
Q4 2019	803	2,241,628	234,916
Q1 2020	943	1,703,022	214,113
Q2 2020	754	1,305,875	147,939
Q3 2020	735	1,782,733	170,131
Q4 2020	558	1,036,332	127,689

Liquidity and Capital Resources**Liquidity**

The following table summarizes our cash flow activity during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Net cash provided by operating activities	\$ 312,864	\$ 244,733	\$ 186,791
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	82,826	(202,333)	(397,516)
Net cash (used in) provided by financing activities	(403,200)	(19,770)	166,377

Operating Cash Flows

Cash flows from operating activities represent the cash receipts and disbursements related to all of our activities other than investing and financing activities.

Net cash provided by operating activities was \$312.9 million, \$244.7 million, and \$186.8 million during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively. Operating cash flows are derived by adjusting net income for non-cash operating items such as depreciation and amortization, changes in expected recoveries, allowance charges, stock-based compensation charges, and changes in operating assets and liabilities which reflect timing differences between the receipt and payment of cash associated with transactions and when they are recognized in results of operations.

Investing Cash Flows

Net cash provided by investing activities was \$82.8 million during year ended December 31, 2020, net cash used in investing activities was \$202.3 million and \$397.5 million during the years ended December 31, 2019 and 2018, respectively. Cash provided by or used in investing activities is primarily affected by receivable portfolio purchases offset by collection proceeds applied to the principal of our receivable portfolios. Receivable portfolio purchases were \$644.0 million, \$1,035.1 million, and \$1,131.1 million during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively. Collection proceeds applied to the principal of our receivable portfolios were \$737.1 million, \$757.6 million, and \$809.7 million during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively.

Financing Cash Flows

Net cash used in financing activities was \$403.2 million and \$19.8 million during the years ended December 2020 and 2019, respectively, net cash provided by financing activities was \$166.4 million during the year ended December 31, 2018. Financing cash flows are generally affected by borrowings under our credit facilities and proceeds from various debt offerings, offset by repayments of amounts outstanding under our credit facilities and repayments of various notes. Borrowings under our credit facilities were \$1,820.6 million, \$603.6 million and \$942.2 million during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively. Repayments of amounts outstanding under our credit facilities were \$2,290.8 million, \$586.4 million and \$571.1 million during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively. Proceeds from the issuance of senior secured notes were \$1,313.4 million and \$454.6 million during the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019, respectively. Repayments of senior secured notes were \$1,033.8 million, \$470.8 million and \$91.6 million during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively.

Capital Resources

Historically, we have met our cash requirements by utilizing our cash flows from operations, cash collections from our investment in receivable portfolios, bank borrowings, debt offerings, and equity offerings. Depending on the capital markets, we consider additional financings to fund our operations and acquisitions. From time to time, we may repurchase outstanding debt or equity and/or restructure or refinance debt obligations. Our primary cash requirements have included the purchase of receivable portfolios, entity acquisitions, operating expenses, the payment of interest and principal on borrowings, and the payment of income taxes.

Currently, all of our portfolio purchases are funded with cash from operations, cash collections from our investment in receivable portfolios, and our bank borrowings.

We are in material compliance with all covenants under our financing arrangements. See "Note 7: Borrowings" in the notes to our consolidated financial statements for a further discussion of our debt.

In August 2018, we established an at-the-market equity offering program (the “ATM Program”) pursuant to which we may issue and sell shares of Encore’s common stock having an aggregate offering price of \$50.0 million. During the year ended December 31, 2020, we did not issue any shares under our ATM Program. We have issued a total of 13,600 shares under our ATM Program, generating proceeds of approximately \$0.54 million.

We have no obligation to sell any of such shares under our ATM Program. Actual sales will depend on a variety of factors to be determined by the Company from time to time, including, among others, market conditions, the trading price of our common stock, our determination of the appropriate sources of funding for the Company, and potential uses of funding available to us. We intend to use the net proceeds from the offering of such shares, if any, for general corporate purposes, which could include repayments of our credit facilities from time to time.

Our cash and cash equivalents as of December 31, 2020 consisted of \$39.4 million held by U.S.-based entities and \$149.8 million held by foreign entities. Most of our cash and cash equivalents held by foreign entities is indefinitely reinvested and may be subject to material tax effects if repatriated. However, we believe that our sources of cash and liquidity are sufficient to meet our business needs in the United States and do not expect that we will need to repatriate the funds.

Included in cash and cash equivalents is cash that was collected on behalf of, and remains payable to, third-party clients. The balance of cash held for clients was \$20.3 million and \$25.0 million as of December 31, 2020 and 2019, respectively.

Cash from operations could also be affected by various risks and uncertainties, including, but not limited to, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including timing of cash collections from our consumers, and other risks detailed in our Risk Factors. However, we believe that we have sufficient liquidity to fund our operations for at least the next twelve months, given our expectation of continued positive cash flows from operations, cash collections from our investment in receivable portfolios, our cash and cash equivalents, our access to capital markets, and availability under our credit facilities. Our future cash needs will depend on our acquisitions of portfolios and businesses.

Future Contractual Cash Obligations

The following table summarizes our future contractual cash obligations as of December 31, 2020 (*in thousands*):

Contractual Obligations	Payment Due By Period				
	Total	Less Than 1 Year	1 – 3 Years	3 – 5 Years	More Than 5 Years
Principal payments on debt	\$ 3,365,205	\$ 208,132	\$ 720,392	\$ 1,520,452	\$ 916,229
Estimated interest payments ⁽¹⁾	649,961	141,033	274,117	174,693	60,118
Finance leases	8,792	3,674	4,877	241	—
Operating leases	113,485	19,440	30,183	26,086	37,776
Purchase commitments on receivable portfolios	157,448	150,713	6,735	—	—
Total contractual cash obligations ⁽²⁾	<u>\$ 4,294,891</u>	<u>\$ 522,992</u>	<u>\$ 1,036,304</u>	<u>\$ 1,721,472</u>	<u>\$ 1,014,123</u>

(1) Estimated interest payments are calculated based on outstanding principal amounts, applicable fixed interest rates or currently effective interest rates as of December 31, 2020 for variable rate debt, timing of scheduled payments and the term of the debt obligations.

(2) We had approximately \$6.9 million of liabilities and accrued interests related to uncertain tax positions as of December 31, 2020. We are unable to reasonably estimate the timing of the cash settlement with the tax authorities due to uncertainties related to these tax matters and, as a result, these obligations are not included in the table. See “Note 10: Income Taxes” to our consolidated financial statements for additional information on our uncertain tax positions.

Off-Balance Sheet Arrangements

We do not have any off-balance sheet arrangements as defined by Item 303(a)(4) of Regulation S-K.

Critical Accounting Policies and Estimates

We prepare our financial statements, in conformity with GAAP, which requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. “Note 1: Ownership, Description of Business, and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies” of the notes to the consolidated financial statements describes the significant accounting policies and methods used in the preparation of our consolidated financial statements.

We base our estimates on past experience and other assumptions that we believe are reasonable under the circumstances, and we evaluate these estimates on an ongoing basis. Actual results may differ from these estimates and such differences may be material. We refer to accounting estimates of this type as critical accounting policies and estimates, which we discuss further below. We have reviewed our critical accounting policies and estimates with the audit committee of our board of directors.

Investment in Receivable Portfolios and Related Revenue. Effective January 1, 2020, our investment in receivable portfolios is accounted for under CECL.

Receivable portfolio purchases are aggregated into pools based on similar risk characteristics. Examples of risk characteristics include financial asset type, collateral type, size, interest rate, date of origination, term, and geographic location. Our static pools are typically grouped into credit card, purchased consumer bankruptcy, and mortgage portfolios. We further group these static pools by geographic location. Once a pool is established, the portfolios will remain in the designated pool unless the underlying risk characteristics change. The purchase EIR of a pool will not change over the life of the pool even if expected future cash flows change.

Revenue is recognized for each static pool over the economic life of the pool. We make significant assumptions in determining the economic life of a pool, including the reasonable and supportable economic forecast period based on asset type and geography, which considers the availability of forward-looking scenarios and their respective time horizons. In general, we forecast recoveries over one or two years prior to reverting to historical averages at an estimate-level over the remaining life using various methodologies depending on the asset type and geography. The speed at which forecasts revert varies based on the spread between the forecast period and historical data. In addition, estimated recoveries include a qualitative component, which generally reflects management's assessment of macroeconomic environment and business initiatives. We continue to evaluate the reasonable economic life of a pool and reversion method annually. Revenue primarily includes two components: (1) accretion of the discount on the negative allowance due to the passage of time, and (2) changes in expected cash flows, which includes (a) the current period variances between actual cash collected and expected cash recoveries and (b) the present value change of expected future recoveries.

We measure expected future recoveries based on historical experience, current conditions, and reasonable and supportable forecasts. Factors that may change the expected future recoveries may include both internal as well as external factors. Internal factors include operational performance, such as capacity and the productivity of our collection staff. External factors that may have an impact on our collections include macroeconomic conditions, new laws or regulations, and new interpretations of existing laws or regulations. See "Note 4: Investment in Receivable Portfolios, Net" for further discussion of investment in receivable portfolios.

Valuation of Goodwill and Other Intangible Assets. Business combinations typically result in the recording of goodwill and other intangible assets. The excess of the purchase price over the fair value assigned to the tangible and identifiable intangible assets, liabilities assumed, and noncontrolling interest in the acquiree is recorded as goodwill.

Goodwill is tested annually for impairment and in interim periods if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the assets may be impaired. Our judgments regarding the existence of impairment indicators and future cash flows related to goodwill may be based on economic environment, business climate, market capitalization, operating performance, competition, and other factors. Significant judgments are required to estimate the fair value of reporting units including estimating future cash flows, determining appropriate discount rates, growth rates, comparable guideline companies and other assumptions. Future business conditions and/or activities could differ materially from the projections made by management, which in turn, could result in the need for impairment charges. We will perform additional impairment testing if events occur or circumstances change indicating that the carrying amounts may be impaired.

The determination of the recorded value of intangible assets acquired in a business combination requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect our consolidated financial statements. Valuation techniques consistent with the market approach, income approach and/or cost approach are used to measure fair value. An estimate of fair value can be affected by many assumptions that require significant judgment.

Income Taxes. We use the asset and liability method of accounting for income taxes. When we prepare the consolidated financial statements, we estimate our income taxes based on the various jurisdictions where we conduct business. This requires us to estimate our current tax exposure and to assess temporary differences that result from differing treatments of certain items for tax and accounting purposes. Deferred income taxes are recognized based on the differences between the financial statement and income tax bases of assets and liabilities using enacted tax rates in effect for the year in which the differences are expected to reverse. We then assess the likelihood that our deferred tax assets will be realized. In completing this evaluation, we consider all available positive and negative evidence. Such evidence includes historical earnings, taxable income in prior carryback year(s) if permitted under the tax law, projections of future pretax book income, the time period over which our temporary differences will reverse, and the implementation of feasible and prudent tax planning strategies. Deferred tax assets are reduced

by a valuation allowance if, based on the weight of this evidence, it is more likely than not that all or a portion of the recorded deferred tax assets will not be realized in future periods. When we establish a valuation allowance or increase this allowance in an accounting period, we record a corresponding tax expense in our statement of operations. When we reduce our valuation allowance in an accounting period, we record a corresponding tax benefit in our statement of operations. We include interest and penalties related to income taxes within our provision for income taxes. See “Note 10: Income Taxes” to our consolidated financial statements for further discussion of income taxes.

Recent Accounting Pronouncements

Information regarding recent accounting pronouncements and the impact of those pronouncements, if any, on our consolidated financial statements is provided in this Annual Report in “Note 1: Ownership, Description of Business, and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies” to our consolidated financial statements.

Item 7A—Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk

We are exposed to economic risks from foreign currency exchange rates and interest rates. A portion of these risks is hedged, but the risks may affect our financial statements.

Foreign Currency Exchange Rates

We have operations in foreign countries, which expose us to foreign currency exchange rate fluctuations due to transactions denominated in foreign currencies. Our primary foreign currency exposures relate to the British Pound, Euro, and Indian Rupee. We continuously evaluate and manage our foreign currency risk through the use of derivative financial instruments, including foreign currency forward contracts with financial counterparties where practicable. Such derivative instruments are viewed as risk management tools and are not used for speculative or trading purposes.

Cross-currency swap agreements are used to effectively convert fixed-rate Euro-denominated borrowings, including the principal amount of the underlying debt and periodic interest payments, to fixed-rate U.S. dollar denominated debt and are accounted for as cash flow hedges.

As of December 31, 2020, we had €350.0 million (approximately \$426.8 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to €0.82, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) of outstanding Euro-denominated borrowings in our U.S. dollar functional currency entity. We have four cross-currency swap agreements with a total notional amount of €350.0 million that effectively convert interest and principal payments on this debt from Euro to U.S. dollar. The cross-currency derivative instruments have maturities of October 2023. As of December 31, 2020, the cross-currency swap agreements had a fair value asset position of \$11.6 million. These swaps eliminate the foreign currency risk associated with our Euro-denominated borrowings.

Interest Rates

We have variable interest-bearing borrowings under our credit facilities that subject us to interest rate risk. We have, from time to time, utilized derivative financial instruments, including interest rate swap contracts and interest rate cap contracts with financial counterparties to manage our interest rate risk. As of December 31, 2020, we had two interest rate swap agreements outstanding with a total notional amount of \$196.4 million. As of December 31, 2020, we held two interest rate cap contracts with a total notional amount of approximately \$965.8 million used to manage risk related to interest rate fluctuations. Both the interest rate swap and interest rate cap instruments are designated as cash flow hedges and are accounted for using hedge accounting.

Our variable interest-bearing debt that is not hedged by derivative financial instruments is subject to the risk of interest rate fluctuations. Significant increases in future interest rates on our variable rate debt could lead to a material decrease in future earnings assuming all other factors remain constant. The rates used in our variable interest-bearing debt are based LIBOR, or other index rates, which in certain cases are subject to a floor. A hypothetical 50 basis points increase in interest rates as of December 31, 2020 related to variable rate debt agreements not hedged by derivatives would have a \$3.1 million negative impact on income before income taxes. Conversely, a hypothetical 50 basis points decrease in interest rates as of December 31, 2020 related to variable rate debt agreements not hedged by derivatives would have a \$0.8 million positive impact on income before income taxes.

As of December 31, 2020, our outstanding interest rate swap agreements had a fair value liability position of \$5.2 million. If the market interest rates increased 50 basis points, the result would have a favorable effect to the interest rate swap's fair value of \$0.9 million. Conversely, if the market interest rates decreased 50 basis points, the result would have an unfavorable effect to the interest rate swap's fair value of \$0.9 million. As of December 31, 2020, our outstanding interest rate cap contracts had a fair value asset position of \$0.7 million. If the market interest rates increased 50 basis points, the result would have a favorable effect to the interest rate cap's fair value of \$2.6 million. Conversely, if the market interest rates decreased 50 basis points, the result would have an unfavorable effect to the interest rate cap's fair value of \$0.5 million.

Our analysis and methods used to assess and mitigate the risks discussed above should not be considered projections of future risks.

Item 8—Financial Statements and Supplementary Data

Our consolidated financial statements, the notes thereto and the Report of BDO USA, LLP, our Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm, are included in this Annual Report on Form 10-K on pages F-1 through F-39.

Item 9—Changes in and Disagreements With Accountants on Accounting and Financial Disclosure

None.

Item 9A—Controls and Procedures

Evaluation of Disclosure Controls and Procedures

As of the end of the period covered by this report, we carried out an evaluation, under the supervision and with the participation of our management, including our Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer, of the effectiveness of the design and operation of our disclosure controls and procedures, as defined in Exchange Act Rule 13a-15(e) and 15d-15(e). Based upon that evaluation, our Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer concluded that, as of the end of the period covered by this Annual Report on Form 10-K, our disclosure controls and procedures are effective at the reasonable assurance level in enabling us to record, process, summarize and report information required to be included in our periodic SEC filings within the required time period.

Management's Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting

The Company's management, including our Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer, is responsible for establishing and maintaining adequate internal control over financial reporting (as such term is defined in Exchange Act Rule 13a-15(f) and 15d-15(f)) for Encore Capital Group, Inc. and its subsidiaries (the "Company"). The Company's internal control system was designed to provide reasonable assurance to the Company's management and Board of Directors regarding the preparation and fair presentation of published consolidated financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Because of its inherent limitations, a system of internal control over financial reporting can provide only reasonable assurance and may not prevent or detect misstatements. Further, because of changing conditions, effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting may vary over time. The Company's processes contain self-monitoring mechanisms and actions are taken to correct deficiencies as they are identified.

Management has assessed the effectiveness of Encore's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2020, based on the criteria for effective internal control described in Internal Control—Integrated Framework (2013) issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission. Based on its assessment, management concluded that the Company's internal control over financial reporting was effective as of December 31, 2020.

BDO USA, LLP, the independent registered public accounting firm that audited the consolidated financial statements included in this Annual Report on Form 10-K, was engaged to attest to and report on the effectiveness of Encore's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2020, as stated in its report below.

Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm

Shareholders and Board of Directors
Encore Capital Group, Inc.
San Diego, California

Opinion on Internal Control over Financial Reporting

We have audited Encore Capital Group, Inc.'s (the "Company's") internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2020, based on criteria established in *Internal Control – Integrated Framework (2013)* issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (the "COSO criteria"). In our opinion, the Company maintained, in all material respects, effective internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2020, based on the COSO criteria.

We also have audited, in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) ("PCAOB"), the consolidated statements of financial condition of the Company as of December 31, 2020 and 2019 and the related consolidated statements of operations, comprehensive income, equity, and cash flows for each of the three years in the period ended December 31, 2020, and the related notes and our report dated February 24, 2021 expressed an unqualified opinion thereon.

Basis for Opinion

The Company's management is responsible for maintaining effective internal control over financial reporting and for its assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting, included in the accompanying "Item 9A, Management's Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting". Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Company's internal control over financial reporting based on our audit. We are a public accounting firm registered with the PCAOB and are required to be independent with respect to the Company in accordance with U.S. federal securities laws and the applicable rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the PCAOB.

We conducted our audit of internal control over financial reporting in accordance with the standards of the PCAOB. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether effective internal control over financial reporting was maintained in all material respects. Our audit included obtaining an understanding of internal control over financial reporting, assessing the risk that a material weakness exists, and testing and evaluating the design and operating effectiveness of internal control based on the assessed risk. Our audit also included performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

Definition and Limitations of Internal Control over Financial Reporting

A company's internal control over financial reporting is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. A company's internal control over financial reporting includes those policies and procedures that (1) pertain to the maintenance of records that, in reasonable detail, accurately and fairly reflect the transactions and dispositions of the assets of the company; (2) provide reasonable assurance that transactions are recorded as necessary to permit preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and that receipts and expenditures of the company are being made only in accordance with authorizations of management and directors of the company; and (3) provide reasonable assurance regarding prevention or timely detection of unauthorized acquisition, use, or disposition of the company's assets that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risk that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

/s/ BDO USA, LLP

San Diego, California
February 24, 2021

Changes in Internal Control over Financial Reporting

We implemented certain internal controls related to the adoption of Topic 326, “Financial Instruments – Credit Losses” to ensure we adequately interpreted the guidance and properly assessed the impact of the standard on our financial statements to facilitate its adoption effective January 1, 2020. There were no other changes in our system of internal control over financial reporting (as defined in Rule 13a-15(f) and Rule 15d-15(f) under the Exchange Act) that occurred during the year ended December 31, 2020, that have materially affected, or are reasonably likely to materially affect, our internal control over financial reporting.

In the course of our ongoing preparations for management’s report on internal control over financial reporting as required by Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, we have identified areas in need of improvement and have taken remedial actions to strengthen the affected controls as appropriate. We make these and other changes, which do not have a material effect on our overall internal control over financial reporting, to enhance the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting.

Item 9B—Other Information

None.

PART III

Item 10—Directors, Executive Officers and Corporate Governance

The information required by this item is incorporated by reference to our Proxy Statement for our 2021 Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be filed with the SEC within 120 days of the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020.

Item 11—Executive Compensation

The information required by this item is incorporated by reference to our Proxy Statement for our 2021 Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be filed with the SEC within 120 days of the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020.

Item 12—Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and Management and Related Stockholder Matters

The information required by this item is incorporated by reference to our Proxy Statement for our 2021 Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be filed with the SEC within 120 days of the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020.

Item 13—Certain Relationships and Related Transactions, and Director Independence

The information required by this item is incorporated by reference to our Proxy Statement for our 2021 Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be filed with the SEC within 120 days of the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020.

Item 14—Principal Accountant Fees and Services

The information required by this item is incorporated by reference to our Proxy Statement for our 2021 Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be filed with the SEC within 120 days of the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020.

PART IV
Item 15—Exhibits and Financial Statement Schedules

(a) Financial Statements.

The following consolidated financial statements of Encore Capital Group, Inc. are filed as part of this annual report on Form 10-K:

	Page
Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm	F-1
Consolidated Statements of Financial Condition at December 31, 2020 and 2019	F-3
Consolidated Statements of Operations for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019 and 2018	F-4
Consolidated Statements of Comprehensive Income for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019 and 2018	F-5
Consolidated Statements of Equity for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019 and 2018	F-6
Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019 and 2018	F-7
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements	F-8

(b) Exhibits.

Exhibit Number	Exhibit Description	Incorporated By Reference				Filed or Furnished Herewith
		Form	File Number	Exhibit	Filing Date	
3.1.1	Restated Certificate of Incorporation	S-1/A	333-77483	3.1	6/14/1999	
3.1.2	Certificate of Amendment to the Certificate of Incorporation	8-K	000-26489	3.1	4/4/2002	
3.1.3	Second Certificate of Amendment to the Certificate of Incorporation	10-Q	000-26489	3.1.3	8/7/2019	
3.2	Bylaws, as amended through February 8, 2011	10-K	000-26489	3.3	2/14/2011	
4.1	Form of Common Stock Certificate	S-3	333-163876	4.7	12/21/2009	
4.2	Fourth Amended and Restated Senior Secured Note Purchase Agreement (including the forms of the Notes), dated as of September 1, 2020, by and among Encore Capital Group, Inc. and the purchasers named therein	8-K	000-26489	10.2	9/1/2020	
4.6	Indenture (including form of note), dated as of March 11, 2014, by and between Encore Capital Group, Inc., Midland Credit Management, Inc., as guarantor, and Union Bank, N.A., as trustee	8-K	000-26489	4.1	3/11/2014	
4.6.1	Supplemental Indenture, dated November 6, 2018, to the Indenture, dated as of March 11, 2014, by and between Encore Capital Group, Inc., Midland Credit Management, Inc., as guarantor, and Union Bank, N.A., as trustee	10-Q	000-26489	4.6	11/7/2018	
4.6.2	Second Supplemental Indenture, dated October 29, 2020, to the Indenture, dated as of March 11, 2014, by and among Encore Capital Group, Inc., Midland Credit Management, Inc., as guarantor, and MUFG Union Bank, N.A., as trustee	10-Q	000-26489	4.4	11/2/2020	

Exhibit Number	Exhibit Description	Incorporated By Reference				Filed or Furnished Herewith
		Form	File Number	Exhibit	Filing Date	
4.9	Indenture (including form of note), dated October 6, 2016, between Cabot Financial (Luxembourg) S.A., Cabot Credit Management Limited, Cabot Financial Limited, the subsidiary guarantors party thereto, J.P. Morgan Europe Limited, as security agent, Citibank, N.A., London Branch as trustee, principal paying agent and transfer agent and Citigroup Global Markets Deutschland AG, as registrar	8-K	000-26489	4.1	10/7/2016	
4.9.1	First Supplemental Indenture dated September 7, 2020 to Indenture dated October 6, 2016	8-K	000-26489	4.3	9/24/2020	
4.9.2	Second Supplemental Indenture dated September 24, 2020 to Indenture dated October 6, 2016	8-K	000-26489	4.5	9/24/2020	
4.10	Indenture (including form of note), dated March 3, 2017, by and among Encore Capital Group, Inc., Midland Credit Management, Inc., as guarantor, and MUFG Union Bank, N.A., as trustee	8-K	000-26489	4.1	3/3/2017	
4.10.1	First Supplemental Indenture, dated October 29, 2020, to the Indenture, dated as of March 3, 2017, by and among Encore Capital Group, Inc., Midland Credit Management, Inc., as guarantor, and MUFG Union Bank, N.A., as trustee	10-Q	000-26489	4.5	11/2/2020	
4.11	Indenture, dated July 20, 2018, between Encore Capital Europe Finance Limited and MUFG Union Bank, N.A.	8-K	000-26489	4.1	7/20/2018	
4.11.1	Supplemental Indenture (including the form of 4.50% Exchangeable Senior Notes due 2023), dated July 20, 2018, among Encore Capital Europe Finance Limited, Encore Capital Group, Inc. and MUFG Union Bank, N.A.	8-K	000-26489	4.2	7/20/2018	
4.11.2	Second Supplemental Indenture, dated October 29, 2020, to the Indenture, dated as of July 20, 2018, by and among Encore Capital Europe Finance Limited, Encore Capital Group, Inc., as guarantor, and MUFG Union Bank, N.A., as trustee	10-Q	000-26489	4.6	11/2/2020	
4.13	Indenture (including form of note), dated September 9, 2019, by and among Encore Capital Group, Inc., Midland Credit Management, Inc., as guarantor, and MUFG Union Bank, N.A., as trustee.	8-K	000-26489	4.1	9/10/2019	
4.13.1	First Supplemental Indenture, dated October 29, 2020, to the Indenture, dated as of September 9, 2019, by and among Encore Capital Group, Inc., Midland Credit Management, Inc., as guarantor, and MUFG Union Bank, N.A., as trustee	10-Q	000-26489	4.7	11/2/2020	
4.14	Description of Registrant's Securities Registered Pursuant to Section 12 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934	10-K	000-26489	4.14	2/26/2020	
4.15	Indenture dated September 24, 2020 between Encore Capital Group, Inc., the subsidiary guarantors party thereto, Citibank, N.A., London Branch as trustee and Truist Bank as security agent	8-K	000-26489	4.1	9/24/2020	

Exhibit Number	Exhibit Description	Incorporated By Reference				Filed or Furnished Herewith
		Form	File Number	Exhibit	Filing Date	
4.16	Indenture dated November 23, 2020 between Encore Capital Group, Inc., the subsidiary guarantors party thereto, Citibank, N.A., London Branch as trustee and Truist Bank as security agent	8-K	000-26489	4.1	11/23/2020	
4.17	Indenture dated December 21, 2020 between Encore Capital Group, Inc., the subsidiary guarantors party thereto, Citibank, N.A., London Branch as trustee and Truist Bank as security agent	8-K	000-26489	4.1	12/21/2020	
10.1+	Form of Indemnification Agreement	8-K	000-26489	10.1	5/4/2006	
10.3+	Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2005 Stock Incentive Plan, as amended and restated	8-K	000-26489	10.1	6/15/2009	
10.3.2+	Form of Non-Incentive Stock Option Agreement under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2005 Stock Incentive Plan	10-Q	000-26489	10.3	11/1/2012	
10.4+	Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2013 Incentive Compensation Plan	Def 14A	000-26489	Appendix A	4/26/2013	
10.4.1+	First Amendment to Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2013 Incentive Compensation Plan, dated February 20, 2014	10-K	000-26489	10.84	2/25/2014	
10.4.2+	Form of Non-Incentive Stock Option Agreement under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2013 Incentive Compensation Plan	10-Q	000-26489	10.5	8/8/2013	
10.4.8+	Form of Restricted Stock Unit Grant Notice and Agreement (Non-Employee Director) under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2013 Incentive Compensation Plan	10-Q	000-26489	10.11	8/8/2013	
10.4.14+	Form of Performance Stock Option Agreement under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2013 Incentive Compensation Plan	10-K	000-26489	10.108	2/23/2017	
10.5+	Encore Capital Group, Inc. Executive Separation Plan	10-Q	000-26489	10.2	11/6/2014	
10.6+	Employment offer letter dated October 9, 2014 by and between Encore Capital Group, Inc. and Jonathan Clark	8-K	000-26489	10.1	2/26/2015	
10.7+	Non-Employee Director Compensation Program Guidelines, effective June 17, 2020	10-Q	000-26489	10.1	8/5/2020	
10.8+	Non-Employee Director Deferred Stock Compensation Plan	10-Q	000-26489	10.2	8/4/2016	
10.8.1+	First Amendment to Non-Employee Director Deferred Stock Compensation Plan, dated August 11, 2016	10-Q	000-26489	10.1	11/9/2016	
10.9+	Letter, dated June 15, 2017, from Encore Capital Group, Inc. to Ashish Masih	8-K	000-26489	10.1	6/20/2017	
10.11+	The Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan	8-K	000-26489	10.3	6/20/2017	
10.11.1+	Form of Restricted Stock Unit Grant Notice and Award Agreement under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan	8-K	000-26489	10.4	6/20/2017	
10.11.2+	Form of Restricted Stock Unit Grant Notice and Award Agreement under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan (Executive Separation Plan Participant)	8-K	000-26489	10.5	6/20/2017	

Exhibit Number	Exhibit Description	Incorporated By Reference				Filed or Furnished Herewith
		Form	File Number	Exhibit	Filing Date	
10.11.3+	Form of Restricted Stock Award Grant Notice and Award Agreement under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan	8-K	000-26489	10.6	6/20/2017	
10.11.4+	Form of Stock Option Grant Notice and Award Agreement under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan	8-K	000-26489	10.7	6/20/2017	
10.11.5+	Form of Performance Share Unit Award Grant Notice and Award Agreement (EPS) under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan (Executive Separation Plan Participant)	8-K	000-26489	10.1	3/15/2018	
10.11.6+	Form of Performance Share Unit Award Grant Notice and Award Agreement (EPS) under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan	8-K	000-26489	10.2	3/15/2018	
10.11.7+	Form of Performance Share Unit Award Grant Notice and Award Agreement (TSR) under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan (Executive Separation Plan Participant)	8-K	000-26489	10.3	3/15/2018	
10.11.8+	Form of Performance Share Unit Award Grant Notice and Award Agreement (TSR) under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan	8-K	000-26489	10.4	3/15/2018	
10.11.9+	Form of Performance Share Unit Award Grant Notice and Award Agreement (ROAE) under the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan	10-K	000-26489	10.11.9	2/26/2020	
10.19	Amended and Restated Senior Facilities Agreement, dated September 1, 2020, by and among Encore Capital Group, Inc., the several guarantors, banks and other financial institutions and lenders from time to time party thereto and Truist Bank as Agent and Security Agent	8-K	000-26489	10.1	9/1/2020	
10.21.1	Letter Agreement, dated March 5, 2014, between Citibank, N.A. and Encore Capital Group, Inc., regarding the Base Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.1	3/11/2014	
10.21.2	Letter Agreement, dated March 5, 2014, between Credit Suisse International and Encore Capital Group, Inc., regarding the Base Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.2	3/11/2014	
10.21.3	Letter Agreement, dated March 5, 2014, between Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC and Encore Capital Group, Inc., regarding the Base Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.3	3/11/2014	
10.21.4	Letter Agreement, dated March 5, 2014, between Société Générale and Encore Capital Group, Inc., regarding the Base Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.4	3/11/2014	
10.21.5	Letter Agreement, dated March 6, 2014, between Citibank, N.A. and Encore Capital Group, Inc., regarding the Additional Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.5	3/11/2014	

Exhibit Number	Exhibit Description	Incorporated By Reference				Filed or Furnished Herewith
		Form	File Number	Exhibit	Filing Date	
10.21.6	Letter Agreement, dated March 6, 2014, between Credit Suisse International and Encore Capital Group, Inc., regarding the Additional Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.6	3/11/2014	
10.21.7	Letter Agreement, dated March 6, 2014, between Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC and Encore Capital Group, Inc., regarding the Additional Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.7	3/11/2014	
10.21.8	Letter Agreement, dated March 6, 2014, between Société Générale and Encore Capital Group, Inc., regarding the Additional Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.8	3/11/2014	
10.22	Senior Facility Agreement, dated February 18, 2020, between Cabot Securitisation UK Limited, Cabot Financial (UK) Limited, HSBC Corporate Trustee Company (UK) Limited as Security Trustee, HSBC Bank PLC as Senior Agent and Goldman Sachs International Bank as Senior Lender	8-K	000-26489	10.1	2/24/2020	
10.23.1	Letter Agreement, dated July 17, 2018, between Bank of Montreal and Encore Capital Group, Inc. regarding the Base Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.1	7/20/2018	
10.23.2	Letter Agreement, dated July 17, 2018, between Credit Suisse International and Encore Capital Group, Inc. regarding the Base Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.2	7/20/2018	
10.23.3	Letter Agreement, dated July 17, 2018, between Bank of America, N.A. and Encore Capital Group, Inc. regarding the Base Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.3	7/20/2018	
10.23.4	Letter Agreement, dated July 19, 2018, between Bank of Montreal and Encore Capital Group, Inc. regarding the Additional Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.4	7/20/2018	
10.23.5	Letter Agreement, dated July 19, 2018, between Credit Suisse International and Encore Capital Group, Inc. regarding the Additional Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.5	7/20/2018	
10.23.6	Letter Agreement, dated July 19, 2018, between Bank of America, N.A. and Encore Capital Group, Inc. regarding the Additional Capped Call Transaction	8-K	000-26489	10.6	7/20/2018	
10.26+	Executive Service Agreement, dated November 25, 2019, between Cabot UK Holdco Limited and Craig Buick	10-Q	000-26489	10.2+	5/11/2020	
21	List of Subsidiaries					X
22	List of Issuers of Guaranteed Securities					X
23	Consent of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm, BDO USA, LLP, dated February 24, 2021					X
31.1	Certification of the Principal Executive Officer pursuant to Rule 13a-14(a) or 15d-14(a) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934					X

Exhibit Number	Exhibit Description	Incorporated By Reference				Filed or Furnished Herewith
		Form	File Number	Exhibit	Filing Date	
31.2	Certification of the Principal Financial Officer pursuant to Rule 13a-14(a) or 15d-14(a) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934					X
32.1	Certifications of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section 1350, as adopted pursuant to Section 906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (furnished herewith)					X
101.INS	XBRL Instance Document					X
101.SCH	XBRL Taxonomy Extension Schema Document					X
101.CAL	XBRL Taxonomy Extension Calculation Linkbase Document					X
101.DEF	XBRL Taxonomy Extension Definition Linkbase Document					X
101.LAB	XBRL Taxonomy Extension Label Linkbase Document					X
101.PRE	XBRL Taxonomy Extension Presentation Linkbase Document					X
104	Cover Page Interactive Data File (formatted as Inline XBRL and contained in Exhibit 101)					X
+	Management contract or compensatory plan or arrangement.					

Item 16—Form 10-K Summary

None.

SIGNATURES

Pursuant to the requirements of Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the registrant has duly caused this report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned, thereunto duly authorized.

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.,
a Delaware corporation

By: /s/ ASHISH MASIH
Ashish Masih
President and Chief Executive Officer

Date: February 24, 2021

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, this report has been signed by the following persons on behalf of the registrant and in the capacities and on the dates indicated.

<u>Name and Signature</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
<u> /s/ ASHISH MASIH</u> Ashish Masih	President and Chief Executive Officer and Director (Principal Executive Officer)	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ JONATHAN C. CLARK</u> Jonathan C. Clark	Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer (Principal Financial and Accounting Officer)	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ ASHWINI GUPTA</u> Ashwini Gupta	Director	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ WENDY G. HANNAM</u> Wendy G. Hannam	Director	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ JEFFREY A. HILZINGER</u> Jeffrey A. Hilzinger	Director	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ ANGELA A. KNIGHT</u> Angela A. Knight	Director	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ MICHAEL P. MONACO</u> Michael P. Monaco	Director	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ LAURA OLLE</u> Laura Olle	Director	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ RICHARD J. SREDNICKI</u> Richard J. Srednicki	Director	February 24, 2021
<u> /s/ RICHARD P. STOVSKY</u> Richard P. Stovsky	Director	February 24, 2021

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.
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Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm

Shareholders and Board of Directors
Encore Capital Group, Inc.
San Diego, California

Opinion on the Consolidated Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statements of financial condition of Encore Capital Group, Inc. (the “Company”) as of December 31, 2020 and 2019, the related consolidated statements of operations, comprehensive income, equity, and cash flows for each of the three years in the period ended December 31, 2020, and the related notes (collectively referred to as the “consolidated financial statements”). In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company at December 31, 2020 and 2019, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for each of the three years in the period ended December 31, 2020, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

We also have audited, in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) (“PCAOB”), the Company’s internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2020, based on criteria established in *Internal Control – Integrated Framework (2013)* issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (“COSO”) and our report dated February 24, 2021 expressed an unqualified opinion thereon.

Changes in Accounting Principles

As discussed in Notes 1 and 4 to the consolidated financial statements, effective January 1, 2020, the Company adopted Accounting Standards Codification (“ASC”) Topic 326, *Financial Instruments—Credit Losses*.

As discussed in Notes 1 to the consolidated financial statements, effective January 1, 2019, the Company adopted ASC Topic 842, *Leases*.

Basis for Opinion

These consolidated financial statements are the responsibility of the Company’s management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Company’s consolidated financial statements based on our audits. We are a public accounting firm registered with the PCAOB and are required to be independent with respect to the Company in accordance with the U.S. federal securities laws and the applicable rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the PCAOB.

We conducted our audits in accordance with the standards of the PCAOB. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free of material misstatement, whether due to error or fraud.

Our audits included performing procedures to assess the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to error or fraud, and performing procedures that respond to those risks. Such procedures included examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the consolidated financial statements. Our audits also included evaluating the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

Critical Audit Matters

The critical audit matters communicated below are matters arising from the current period audit of the consolidated financial statements that were communicated or required to be communicated to the audit committee and that: (1) relates to accounts or disclosures that are material to the consolidated financial statements and (2) involved our especially challenging, subjective, or complex judgments. The communication of critical audit matters does not alter in any way our opinion on the consolidated financial statements, taken as a whole, and we are not, by communicating the critical audit matters below, providing separate opinions on the critical audit matters or on the accounts or disclosures to which they relate.

Investment in Receivable Portfolios, Revenue from Receivable Portfolios and Changes in Expected Current and Future Recoveries

As more fully described in Notes 1 and 4 to the consolidated financial statements, the Company’s investment in receivable portfolios balance was approximately \$3.3 billion at December 31, 2020. Investment in receivable portfolios are comprised of loans with deteriorated credit quality since origination upon purchase. In accordance with the Company’s charge-off policy each loan is deemed to be uncollectible on an individual basis. Receivable portfolio purchases are grouped based on similar risk

characteristics (“pool”) and a negative allowance is established based on future recoveries of the pool using a discounted cash flow approach. The discount rate is an effective interest rate (or “EIR”) based on the purchase price of the portfolio and the expected future cash flows at the time of purchase and does not change over the life of the pool unless the risk characteristics of the pool change. Revenue from receivable portfolios is recognized at an EIR through the accretion of the discount on the negative allowance, differences between actual versus expected recoveries and the present value of changes in expected future recoveries. The Company reviews each pool for current trends, actual versus expected performance and expected timing of cash flows (curve shape). The Company then re-forecasts the timing and amount of future recoveries.

We identified the recording of investment in receivable portfolios, revenue from receivable portfolios and changes in expected current and future recoveries as a critical audit matter. Specifically, management is required to make significant judgments and assumptions to estimate future recoveries. Estimated future recoveries are based on historical experience, current conditions, and reasonable and supportable forecasts. Auditing these elements involved especially challenging auditor judgment due to the nature and extent of audit effort required to address these matters.

The primary procedures we performed to address this critical audit matter included:

- Testing the design and operating effectiveness of controls over management’s assessment of the reasonableness of: (i) inputs and outputs from the Company’s proprietary statistical and behavioral models used to forecast collections, (ii) cash collection performance of pools, and (iii) a pool’s EIR.
- Testing the completeness and accuracy of collection data used by management to calculate investment in receivable portfolios, revenue from receivable portfolios and changes in expected current and future recoveries.
- Evaluating the Company’s process used to develop estimates of future recoveries by testing source data and evaluating the reasonableness of assumptions by comparing to historical results, including current period forecasts to actual performance, recent performance trends, curve shape and changes to the expected recoveries.

Goodwill Impairment Assessment

As more fully described in Notes 1 and 14 to the consolidated financial statements, the Company’s goodwill balance was approximately \$0.9 billion at December 31, 2020, which was allocated between two reporting units, MCM and Cabot, that carried goodwill. The Company’s evaluation of goodwill for impairment involves the comparison of the fair value of each reporting unit to its carrying value. For the MCM reporting unit, management performed a qualitative assessment and determined it was not necessary to perform a quantitative test. For the Cabot reporting unit, management performed a quantitative analysis which utilized a combination of the income approach and the market approach.

We identified the goodwill impairment assessment of the Cabot reporting unit as a critical audit matter because of the significant assumptions and judgments management makes as part of the assessment to estimate the fair value of the reporting unit. The income approach requires significant management assumptions such as assumptions used in the cash flow forecasts, the discount rate, and the terminal value exit multiple. The market approach requires significant management judgment in the selection of the appropriate peer group companies and the valuation multiples. Auditing these significant assumptions and judgments involved a high degree of auditor judgment and an increased extent of effort, including the extent of specialized skill or knowledge needed.

The primary procedures we performed to address this critical audit matter included:

- Testing the design and operating effectiveness of controls over goodwill impairment assessment, including controls over significant management assumptions and judgments used in the income and the market approaches.
- Testing management’s process for developing fair value estimates including testing the completeness, accuracy, and relevance of underlying data and evaluating significant management assumptions by comparing to historical results and market participant data.
- Utilizing personnel with specialized knowledge and skill in valuation to assist in: (i) assessing the appropriateness of the fair value methodology, (ii) evaluating the reasonableness of certain assumptions used including the discount rate and the terminal value exit multiple, and (iii) assessing the reasonableness of the discount rate by developing independent estimates and comparing estimates to those utilized by management.

/s/ BDO USA, LLP

We have served as the Company's auditor since 2001.

San Diego, California

February 24, 2021

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.
Consolidated Statements of Financial Condition
(In Thousands, Except Par Value Amounts)

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 189,184	\$ 192,335
Investment in receivable portfolios, net	3,291,918	3,283,984
Deferred court costs, net	—	100,172
Property and equipment, net	127,297	120,051
Other assets	349,162	329,223
Goodwill	906,962	884,185
Total assets	<u>\$ 4,864,523</u>	<u>\$ 4,909,950</u>
Liabilities and Equity		
Liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 215,920	\$ 223,911
Borrowings	3,281,634	3,513,197
Other liabilities	146,893	147,436
Total liabilities	<u>3,644,447</u>	<u>3,884,544</u>
Commitments and contingencies (Note 12)		
Equity:		
Convertible preferred stock, \$0.01 par value, 5,000 shares authorized, no shares issued and outstanding	—	—
Common stock, \$0.01 par value, 75,000 shares authorized, 31,345 shares and 31,097 shares issued and outstanding as of December 31, 2020 and December 31, 2019, respectively	313	311
Additional paid-in capital	230,440	222,590
Accumulated earnings	1,055,668	888,058
Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(68,813)	(88,766)
Total Encore Capital Group, Inc. stockholders' equity	<u>1,217,608</u>	<u>1,022,193</u>
Noncontrolling interest	2,468	3,213
Total equity	<u>1,220,076</u>	<u>1,025,406</u>
Total liabilities and equity	<u>\$ 4,864,523</u>	<u>\$ 4,909,950</u>

The following table presents certain assets and liabilities of consolidated variable interest entities ("VIEs") included in the consolidated statements of financial condition above. Most assets in the table below include those assets that can only be used to settle obligations of consolidated VIEs. The liabilities exclude amounts where creditors or beneficial interest holders have recourse to the general credit of the Company. See "Note 8: Variable Interest Entities" for additional information on the Company's VIEs.

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,223	\$ 34
Investment in receivable portfolios, net	553,621	539,596
Other assets	5,127	4,759
Liabilities		
Borrowings	478,131	464,092
Other liabilities	37	—

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.
Consolidated Statements of Operations
(In Thousands, Except Per Share Amounts)

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Revenues			
Revenue from receivable portfolios	\$ 1,374,717	\$ 1,269,288	\$ 1,167,132
Changes in expected current and future recoveries	7,246	—	—
Servicing revenue	115,118	126,527	148,044
Other revenues	4,319	9,974	5,381
Total revenues	1,501,400	1,405,789	1,320,557
(Allowances) allowance reversals on receivable portfolios, net		(8,108)	41,473
Total revenues, adjusted by net allowances		1,397,681	1,362,030
Operating expenses			
Salaries and employee benefits	378,176	376,365	369,064
Cost of legal collections	239,071	202,670	205,204
General and administrative expenses	149,113	148,256	158,352
Other operating expenses	108,944	108,433	134,934
Collection agency commissions	49,754	63,865	47,948
Depreciation and amortization	42,780	41,029	41,228
Goodwill impairment	—	10,718	—
Total operating expenses	967,838	951,336	956,730
Income from operations	533,562	446,345	405,300
Other expense			
Interest expense	(209,356)	(217,771)	(237,355)
Loss on extinguishment of debt	(40,951)	(8,989)	(2,693)
Other expense	(357)	(18,343)	(8,764)
Total other expense	(250,664)	(245,103)	(248,812)
Income before income taxes	282,898	201,242	156,488
Provision for income taxes	(70,374)	(32,333)	(46,752)
Net income	212,524	168,909	109,736
Net (income) loss attributable to noncontrolling interest	(676)	(1,040)	6,150
Net income attributable to Encore Capital Group, Inc. stockholders	\$ 211,848	\$ 167,869	\$ 115,886
Earnings per share attributable to Encore Capital Group, Inc.:			
Basic	\$ 6.74	\$ 5.38	\$ 4.09
Diluted	\$ 6.68	\$ 5.33	\$ 4.06
Weighted average shares outstanding:			
Basic	31,427	31,210	28,313
Diluted	31,710	31,474	28,572

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.
Consolidated Statements of Comprehensive Income
(In Thousands)

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Net income	\$ 212,524	\$ 168,909	\$ 109,736
Other comprehensive income (loss), net of tax:			
Change in unrealized gain (loss) on derivative instruments:			
Unrealized gain (loss) on derivative instruments	234	(5,029)	(7,658)
Income tax effect	(66)	761	1,743
Unrealized gain (loss) on derivative instruments, net of tax	168	(4,268)	(5,915)
Change in foreign currency translation:			
Unrealized gain (loss) on foreign currency translation	17,160	23,169	(36,927)
Removal of other comprehensive loss in connection with divestiture	2,632	3,814	3,663
Unrealized gain (loss) on foreign currency translation, net of divestiture	19,792	26,983	(33,264)
Other comprehensive income (loss), net of tax	19,960	22,715	(39,179)
Comprehensive income	232,484	191,624	70,557
Comprehensive (income) loss attributable to noncontrolling interest:			
Net (income) loss attributable to noncontrolling interest	(676)	(1,040)	6,150
Unrealized (income) loss on foreign currency translation	(7)	(494)	5,548
Comprehensive (income) loss attributable to noncontrolling interest	(683)	(1,534)	11,698
Comprehensive income attributable to Encore Capital Group, Inc. stockholders	\$ 231,801	\$ 190,090	\$ 82,255

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.
Consolidated Statements of Equity
(In Thousands)

	Common Stock		Additional Paid-In Capital	Accumulated Earnings	Accumulated Other Comprehensive (Loss) Income	Noncontrolling Interest	Total Equity
	Shares	Par					
Balance as of December 31, 2017	25,801	\$ 258	\$ 42,646	\$ 616,314	\$ (77,356)	\$ (9,929)	\$ 571,933
Net income (loss)	—	—	—	115,886	—	(1,359)	114,527
Other comprehensive (loss) income, net of tax	—	—	—	—	(37,294)	920	(36,374)
Change in fair value of redeemable noncontrolling interest	—	—	19,430	(12,011)	—	—	7,419
Purchase of noncontrolling interest	—	—	—	—	—	9,626	9,626
Exercise of stock options and issuance of share-based awards, net of shares withheld for employee taxes	163	2	(2,510)	—	—	—	(2,508)
Issuance of common stock	4,920	49	181,138	—	—	—	181,187
Stock-based compensation	—	—	12,980	—	—	—	12,980
Issuance of exchangeable notes	—	—	14,009	—	—	—	14,009
Exchangeable notes hedge transactions	—	—	(17,785)	—	—	—	(17,785)
Net equity adjustment on Cabot Transaction	—	—	(43,097)	—	—	—	(43,097)
Other	—	—	1,687	—	3,663	2,421	7,771
Balance as of December 31, 2018	30,884	309	208,498	720,189	(110,987)	1,679	819,688
Net income	—	—	—	167,869	—	1,040	168,909
Other comprehensive income, net of tax	—	—	—	—	18,407	494	18,901
Exercise of stock options and issuance of share-based awards, net of shares withheld for employee taxes	213	2	(4,874)	—	—	—	(4,872)
Stock-based compensation	—	—	12,557	—	—	—	12,557
Issuance of exchangeable notes	—	—	4,733	—	—	—	4,733
Exchangeable notes hedge transactions	—	—	1,792	—	—	—	1,792
Other	—	—	(116)	—	3,814	—	3,698
Balance as of December 31, 2019	31,097	311	222,590	888,058	(88,766)	3,213	1,025,406
Cumulative adjustment	—	—	—	(44,238)	—	—	(44,238)
Net income	—	—	—	211,848	—	676	212,524
Other comprehensive income, net of tax	—	—	—	—	17,321	7	17,328
Purchase of noncontrolling interest	—	—	(2,394)	—	—	(1,428)	(3,822)
Issuance of share-based awards, net of shares withheld for employee taxes	248	2	(6,316)	—	—	—	(6,314)
Stock-based compensation	—	—	16,560	—	—	—	16,560
Other	—	—	—	—	2,632	—	2,632
Balance as of December 31, 2020	31,345	\$ 313	\$ 230,440	\$ 1,055,668	\$ (68,813)	\$ 2,468	\$ 1,220,076

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.
Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows
(In Thousands)

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Operating activities:			
Net income	\$ 212,524	\$ 168,909	\$ 109,736
Adjustments to reconcile net income to net cash provided by operating activities:			
Depreciation and amortization	42,780	41,029	41,228
Expense related to financing	51,117	3,523	11,710
Other non-cash interest expense, net	23,639	30,299	38,549
Stock-based compensation expense	16,560	12,557	12,980
Deferred income taxes	11,898	22,339	16,814
Goodwill impairment	—	10,718	—
Changes in expected current and future recoveries	(7,246)	—	—
Provision for (reversal of) allowances on receivable portfolios, net	—	8,108	(41,473)
Other, net	16,260	9,794	(7,016)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities			
Deferred court costs	—	(3,646)	(17,701)
Other assets	8,980	29,025	(17,925)
Prepaid income tax and income taxes payable	(27,693)	(25,678)	24,284
Accounts payable, accrued liabilities and other liabilities	(35,955)	(62,244)	15,605
Net cash provided by operating activities	312,864	244,733	186,791
Investing activities:			
Purchases of receivable portfolios, net of put-backs	(644,048)	(1,035,130)	(1,131,095)
Collections applied to investment in receivable portfolios, net	737,131	757,640	809,688
Purchases of property and equipment	(34,600)	(39,602)	(67,475)
Proceeds from sale of portfolios	—	107,937	—
Other, net	24,343	6,822	(8,634)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	82,826	(202,333)	(397,516)
Financing activities:			
Payment of loan and debt refinancing costs	(82,455)	(11,586)	(23,286)
Proceeds from credit facilities	1,820,634	603,634	942,186
Repayment of credit facilities	(2,290,822)	(586,429)	(571,144)
Proceeds from senior secured notes	1,313,385	454,573	—
Repayment of senior secured notes	(1,033,765)	(470,768)	(91,578)
Proceeds from issuance of convertible and exchangeable senior notes	—	100,000	172,500
Repayment of convertible senior notes	(89,355)	(84,600)	—
Payment for the purchase of PECs and noncontrolling interest	—	—	(234,101)
Other, net	(40,822)	(24,594)	(28,200)
Net cash (used in) provided by financing activities	(403,200)	(19,770)	166,377
Net (decrease) increase in cash and cash equivalents	(7,510)	22,630	(44,348)
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents	4,359	12,287	(10,373)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of period	192,335	157,418	212,139
Cash and cash equivalents, end of period	\$ 189,184	\$ 192,335	\$ 157,418
Supplemental disclosures of cash flow information:			
Cash paid for interest	\$ 169,553	\$ 178,948	\$ 198,797
Cash paid for income taxes, net of refunds	88,816	43,973	5,734
Supplemental schedule of non-cash investing and financing activities:			
Stock consideration for the Cabot Transaction	\$ —	\$ —	\$ 180,559
Investment in receivable portfolios transferred to real estate owned	2,214	5,058	4,701
Property and equipment acquired through finance leases	3,276	5,299	3,283

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

Note 1: Ownership, Description of Business, and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Encore Capital Group, Inc. (“Encore”), through its subsidiaries (collectively with Encore, the “Company”), is an international specialty finance company providing debt recovery solutions and other related services for consumers across a broad range of financial assets. The Company purchases portfolios of defaulted consumer receivables at deep discounts to face value and manages them by working with individuals as they repay their obligations and work toward financial recovery. Defaulted receivables are consumers’ unpaid financial obligations to credit originators, including banks, credit unions, consumer finance companies and commercial retailers. Defaulted receivables may also include receivables subject to bankruptcy proceedings. The Company also provides debt servicing and other portfolio management services to credit originators for non-performing loans.

Through Midland Credit Management, Inc. and its domestic affiliates (collectively, “MCM”), the Company is a market leader in portfolio purchasing and recovery in the United States. Through Cabot Credit Management Limited (“CCM”) and its subsidiaries and European affiliates (collectively, “Cabot”) the Company is one of the largest credit management services providers in Europe and a market leader in the United Kingdom and Ireland. These are the Company’s primary operations.

The Company also has investments and operations in Latin America and Asia-Pacific, which the Company refers to as “LAAP.” In August 2019, the Company completed the sale of Baycorp, which represented the Company’s investments and operations in Australia and New Zealand.

COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of a novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”) as a global pandemic, which continues to spread throughout the United States and around the world. The COVID-19 outbreak and resulting containment measures implemented by governments around the world, as well as increased business uncertainty, have impacted the Company. The circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic are rapidly evolving and will continue to impact the Company’s business and its estimation of expected recoveries in future periods. The Company will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation and update its assumptions accordingly.

Basis of Consolidation

The consolidated financial statements have been prepared in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (“GAAP”) and reflect the accounts and operations of the Company and those of its subsidiaries in which the Company has a controlling financial interest. The Company also consolidates VIEs for which it is the primary beneficiary. The primary beneficiary has both (a) the power to direct the activities of the VIE that most significantly affect the entity’s economic performance and (b) either the obligation to absorb losses or the right to receive benefits. Refer to “Note 8: Variable Interest Entities” for further details. All intercompany transactions and balances have been eliminated in consolidation.

Translation of Foreign Currencies

The financial statements of certain of the Company’s foreign subsidiaries are measured using their local currency as the functional currency. Assets and liabilities of foreign operations are translated into U.S. dollars using period-end exchange rates, and revenues and expenses are translated into U.S. dollars using average exchange rates in effect during each period. The resulting translation adjustments are recorded as a component of other comprehensive income or loss. Equity accounts are translated at historical rates, except for the change in retained earnings during the year which is the result of the income statement translation process. Intercompany transaction gains or losses at each period end arising from subsequent measurement of balances for which settlement is not planned or anticipated in the foreseeable future are included as translation adjustments and recorded within other comprehensive income or loss. Translation gains or losses are the material components of accumulated other comprehensive income or loss and are reclassified to earnings upon the substantial sale or liquidation of investments in foreign operations.

Reclassifications

Certain immaterial reclassifications have been made to the prior years’ consolidated financial statements to conform to current year presentation. The Company presented certain refinancing charges such as make-whole provisions, call premiums, and write-offs of unamortized debt issuance costs and debt discount as interest expense in prior periods, and have reclassified such costs as loss on extinguishment of debt as a single line item in the Company’s consolidated statements of operations rather than presenting them as part of interest expense. These reclassifications have no effect on net income, total assets, accumulated earnings or cash flow statements as previously reported.

Change in Accounting Principle

On January 1, 2020, the Company adopted the new accounting standard for Financial Instruments - Credit Losses (“CECL”). CECL introduces a new impairment approach for credit loss recognition based on current expected lifetime losses rather than incurred losses. CECL applies to all financial assets carried at amortized costs, including the Company’s investment in receivable portfolios, which are defined as purchased credit deteriorated (“PCD”) financial assets under CECL. The adoption of CECL represents a significant change from the previous U.S. GAAP guidance relating to purchased credit impaired assets and resulted in changes to the Company’s accounting for its investment in receivable portfolios and the related income from the receivable portfolios.

As part of the adoption of CECL, the Company changed its accounting methodology for its court costs spent in its legal collection channel effective January 1, 2020. Previously, the Company capitalized its upfront court costs spent in its consolidated financial statements (“Deferred Court Costs”) and provided a reserve for those costs that it believed would ultimately be uncollectible. Effective January 1, 2020, the Company expenses all of its court costs as incurred. All expected cash flows, including all the expected collections from the legal channel, are included in the measurement of the negative allowance, or investment in receivable portfolios, at a discounted value. Upon transition, an adjustment was made to retained earnings to reflect the net change from an undiscounted to discounted value prior to writing-off uncollectible receivables and establishing a balance for discounted value of future recoveries of amounts expected to be collected.

The Company has not adjusted prior period comparative information and will continue to disclose prior period financial information in accordance with the previous accounting guidance. The following table summarizes the cumulative effects of adopting the CECL guidance on the Company’s consolidated statements of financial condition as of January 1, 2020 (*in thousands*):

	Balance as of December 31, 2019	Adjustment	Opening Balance as of January 1, 2020
Assets			
Investment in receivable portfolios, net	\$ 3,283,984	\$ 44,166	\$ 3,328,150
Deferred court costs, net	100,172	(100,172)	—
Liabilities			
Other liabilities (for deferred tax liabilities)	147,436	(11,768)	135,668
Equity			
Accumulated earnings	888,058	(44,238)	843,820

In March 2020, the FASB issued ASU No. 2020-04, Reference Rate Reform (Topic 848): Facilitation of the Effects of Reference Rate Reform on Financial Reporting. The ASU provides optional expedients and exceptions for applying GAAP to transactions affected by reference rate (e.g., LIBOR) reform if certain criteria are met, for a limited period of time to ease the potential burden in accounting for (or recognizing the effects of) reference rate reform on financial reporting. Additionally, in January 2021, the FASB issued ASU 2021-01, which clarifies the scope of Topic 848 and allows entities to elect certain optional expedients and exceptions when accounting for derivative contracts and certain hedging relationships affected by changes in the interest rates. These ASUs are effective as of March 12, 2020 through December 31, 2022 and may be applied prospectively to contract modifications made and hedging relationships entered into or evaluated on or before December 31, 2022. The Company is currently evaluating its contracts and the optional expedients provided by the new standards. The ASUs are currently not expected to have a material impact on the Company’s consolidated financial statements.

Effective January 1, 2019, the Company adopted Accounting Standard Codification 842 - Leases using the modified retrospective method. Refer to “Note 11: Leases” for details of the Company’s leases.

Recent Accounting Pronouncements

Recent Accounting Pronouncements Not Yet Effective

In August 2020, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (“FASB”) issued Accounting Standards Update (“ASU”) No. 2020-06, Debt — Debt with Conversion and Other Options (“Subtopic 470-20”) and Derivatives and Hedging — Contracts in Entity’s Own Equity (“Subtopic 815-40”): Accounting for Convertible Instruments and Contracts in an Entity’s Own Equity (“ASU 2020-06”). The ASU simplifies the accounting for convertible instruments by removing certain models in Subtopic 470-20 and revises the guidance in Subtopic 815-40 to simplify the accounting for contracts in an entity’s own equity. The ASU

also amends the guidance to improve the consistency of earnings per share calculations, which requires the if-converted method be used for convertible instruments. ASU 2020-06 is effective for reporting periods beginning after December 15, 2021 with early adoption permitted for reporting periods beginning after December 15, 2020. The amendment is to be adopted through either a modified retrospective or fully retrospective method of transition. Under ASU 2020-06, the Company's convertible and exchangeable notes will no longer be bifurcated to a debt component and an equity component, instead, they will be carried as a single liability. The interest expense recognized on the convertible and exchangeable notes will be based on coupon rates, rather than higher effective interest rates. As a result, the Company will recognize lower interest expense. The Company's convertible and exchangeable notes require net share settlement. Additionally, the if-converted method will not substantially change the dilutive effect for convertible instruments that require net share settlement, only in-the-money shares will be included in the dilutive effect. The Company will early adopt ASU 2020-06 as of January 1, 2021 using a modified-retrospective approach, by recording a decrease to opening accumulated earnings of approximately \$16.1 million, which represents the debt discount of all outstanding convertible and exchangeable notes as of December 31, 2020, adjusted for income tax effect. Implementation efforts have been substantially complete.

With the exception of the updated standards discussed above, there have been no new accounting pronouncements not yet effective as of December 31, 2020 that have significance, or potential significance, to the Company's consolidated financial statements.

Use of Estimates

The preparation of financial statements, in conformity with GAAP, requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. The inputs into the judgments and estimates consider the economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Company's critical and significant accounting estimates. Actual results could materially differ from those estimates.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents consist of highly liquid investments with maturities of three months or less at the date of purchase. The Company maintains its cash and cash equivalents in multiple financial institutions and certain account balances exceed federally insurable limits. To date, the Company has experienced no loss or lack of access to cash in its bank accounts. The Company believes any risks are mitigated by maintaining cash with highly rated financial institutions. The carrying amounts reported in the consolidated statements of financial condition for cash and cash equivalents approximate their fair value.

Included in cash and cash equivalents is cash collected on behalf of and due to third-party clients. A corresponding balance is included in accounts payable and accrued liabilities. The balance of cash held for clients was \$20.3 million and \$25.0 million as of December 31, 2020 and 2019, respectively.

Investment in Receivable Portfolios

Current Accounting Policy

As a result of the adoption of CECL, the Company revised its accounting policy for investment in receivable portfolios effective January 1, 2020:

The Company purchases portfolios of loans that have experienced significant deterioration of credit quality since origination from banks and other financial institutions. These financial assets are defined as purchased credit deteriorated (or "PCD") assets under CECL. Under the PCD accounting model, the purchased assets are recognized at their face value with an offsetting allowance and noncredit discount allocated to the individual receivables as the unit of account is at the individual loan level. Since each loan is deeply delinquent and deemed uncollectible at the individual loan level, the Company applies its charge-off policy and fully writes-off the amortized costs (i.e., face value net of noncredit discount) of the individual receivables immediately after purchasing the portfolio. The Company then records a negative allowance that represents the present value of all expected future recoveries for pools of receivables that share similar risk characteristics using a discounted cash flow approach, which ultimately equals the amount paid for a portfolio purchase and presented as "Investment in receivable portfolios, net" in the Company's consolidated statements of financial condition. The discount rate is an effective interest rate (or "purchase EIR") based on the purchase price of the portfolio and the expected future cash flows at the time of purchase. The amount of the negative allowance (i.e., investment in receivable portfolios) will not exceed the total amortized cost basis of the loans written-off.

Receivable portfolio purchases are aggregated into pools based on similar risk characteristics. Examples of risk characteristics include financial asset type, collateral type, size, interest rate, date of origination, term, and geographic location.

The Company's static pools are typically grouped into credit card, purchased consumer bankruptcy, and mortgage portfolios. The Company further groups these static pools by geographic location. Once a pool is established, the portfolios will remain in the designated pool unless the underlying risk characteristics change, which is not expected due to the delinquent nature of the individual loans. The purchase EIR of a pool will not change over the life of the pool even if expected future cash flows change.

Revenue is recognized for each static pool over the economic life of the pool. The Company makes significant assumptions in determining the economic life of a pool, including the reasonable and supportable economic forecast period based on asset type and geography, which considers the availability of forward-looking scenarios and their respective time horizons. In general, the Company forecasts recoveries over one or two years prior to reverting to historical averages at an estimate-level over the remaining life using various methodologies depending on the asset type and geography. The speed at which forecasts revert varies based on the spread between the forecast period and historical data. In addition, estimated recoveries include a qualitative component, which generally reflects management's assessment of macroeconomic environment and business initiatives. The Company continues to evaluate the reasonable economic life of a pool and reversion method annually. Revenue primarily includes two components: (1) accretion of the discount on the negative allowance due to the passage of time, which is included in "Revenue from receivable portfolios" and (2) changes in expected cash flows, which includes (a) the current period variances between actual cash collected and expected cash recoveries and (b) the present value change of expected future recoveries, and is presented in our consolidated statements of operations as "Changes in expected current and future recoveries."

The Company measures expected future recoveries based on historical experience, current conditions, and reasonable and supportable forecasts. Factors that may change the expected future recoveries may include both internal as well as external factors. Internal factors include operational performance, such as capacity and the productivity of our collection staff. External factors that may have an impact on our collections include macroeconomic conditions, new laws or regulations, and new interpretations of existing laws or regulations.

The Company elected not to maintain its previously formed pool groups with amortized costs at transition. Certain pools already fully recovered their cost basis and became zero basis portfolios ("ZBA") prior to the transition. The Company did not establish a negative allowance from ZBA pools as the Company elected the Transition Resource Group for Credit Losses' practical expedient to retain the integrity of its legacy pools. All subsequent collections to the ZBA pools are recognized as ZBA revenue, which is included in revenue from receivable portfolios in the Company's consolidated statements of operations.

Accounting Policy Prior to January 1, 2020

Discrete receivable portfolio purchases during the same fiscal quarter were aggregated into pools based on common risk characteristics. Once a static pool was established, the portfolios were permanently assigned to the pool. Receivable portfolios were recorded at cost at the time of acquisition. The purchase cost of the portfolios included certain fees paid to third parties incurred in connection with the direct acquisition of the receivable portfolios.

Revenues were calculated using either the interest method or the cost recovery method. The interest method applies an internal rate of return ("IRR") to the cost basis of the pool, which remained unchanged throughout the life of the pool, unless there was an increase in subsequent expected cash flows. Subsequent increases in expected cash flows were recognized prospectively through an upward adjustment of the pool's IRR over its remaining life. Subsequent decreases in expected cash flows did not change the IRR, but were recognized as an allowance to the cost basis of the pool, and were reflected in the consolidated statements of operations as an adjustment to revenue, with a corresponding valuation allowance, offsetting the investment in receivable portfolios in the consolidated statements of financial condition. With gross collections being discounted at monthly IRRs, when collections were lower in the near term, even if substantially higher collections were expected later in the collection curve, an allowance charge could result.

The Company accounted for each static pool as a unit for the economic life of the pool (similar to one loan) for recognition of revenue from receivable portfolios, for collections applied to the cost basis of receivable portfolios and for provision for loss or allowance. Revenue from receivable portfolios was accrued based on each pool's IRR applied to each pool's adjusted cost basis. The cost basis of each pool was increased by revenue earned and portfolio allowance reversals and decreased by gross collections and portfolio allowances. Once the net book value of a static pool has been fully recovered, it became ZBA and all subsequent collections were recognized as ZBA revenue.

If the amount and timing of future cash collections on a pool of receivables were not reasonably estimable, the Company accounted for such portfolios on the cost recovery method as Cost Recovery Portfolios. The accounts in these portfolios had different risk characteristics than those included in other portfolios acquired during the same quarter, or the necessary information was not available to estimate future cash flows and, accordingly, they were not aggregated with other portfolios. Under the cost recovery method of accounting, no revenue was recognized until the carrying value of a Cost Recovery Portfolio has been fully recovered.

See “Note 4: Investment in Receivable Portfolios, Net” for further discussion of investment in receivable portfolios.

Transfers of Financial Assets

The Company accounts for transfers of financial assets as sales when it has surrendered control over the related assets. Whether control has been relinquished requires, among other things, an evaluation of relevant legal considerations and an assessment of the nature and extent of the Company’s ongoing involvement with the assets transferred. Gains and losses stemming from transfers reported as sales are included in “Other revenues” in the Company’s consolidated statements of operations. Assets obtained and liabilities incurred in connection with transfers reported as sales are initially recognized in the statements of financial condition at fair value.

Transfers of financial assets that do not qualify for sale accounting are reported as collateralized borrowings. Accordingly, the related assets remain on the Company’s statements of financial condition and continue to be reported and accounted for as if the transfer had not occurred. Cash proceeds from these transfers are reported as liabilities, with attributable interest expense recognized over the life of the related transactions. To date, the Company has not had any transfers of financial assets that did not qualify for sale accounting.

Servicing Revenue

Certain of the Company’s subsidiaries earn servicing revenue by providing portfolio management services to credit originators for non-performing loans. The Company recognizes servicing revenue when it satisfies the performance obligation over time by providing debt solution and credit management services. The Company typically invoices for its services monthly with payment terms of 30 days.

Goodwill and Other Intangible Assets

Goodwill represents the excess of purchase price over the value assigned to tangible and identifiable intangible assets, liabilities assumed, and noncontrolling interest of businesses acquired. Acquired intangible assets other than goodwill are amortized over their useful lives unless the lives are determined to be indefinite. Goodwill is tested at the reporting unit level annually for impairment and in interim periods if certain events occur indicating the fair value of a reporting unit may be below its carrying value. See “Note 14: Goodwill and Identifiable Intangible Assets” for further discussion of the Company’s goodwill and other intangible assets.

Property and Equipment

Property and equipment are recorded at cost, less accumulated depreciation and amortization. The provision for depreciation and amortization is computed using the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of the assets as follows:

Fixed Asset Category	Estimated Useful Life
Leasehold improvements	Lesser of lease term, including periods covered by renewal options, or useful life
Furniture, fixtures and equipment	5 to 10 years
Computer hardware and software	3 to 5 years

Maintenance and repairs are charged to expense in the year incurred. Expenditures for major renewals that extend the useful lives of fixed assets are capitalized and depreciated over the useful lives of such assets.

The Company reviews property and equipment for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying amount of an asset may not be recoverable. The Company measures recoverability by comparing the carrying amount to the future undiscounted cash flows that the asset is expected to generate. If the asset is not recoverable, its carrying amount would be adjusted down to its fair value.

Deferred Court Costs

The Company pursues legal collections using a network of attorneys that specialize in collection matters and through its internal legal channel. The Company generally pursues collections through legal means only when it believes a consumer has sufficient assets to repay their indebtedness but has, to date, been unwilling to pay. In order to pursue legal collections, the Company is required to pay certain upfront costs to the applicable courts that are recoverable from the consumer. Effective January 1, 2020, the Company expenses all of its court costs as incurred and no longer capitalizes such costs as Deferred Court Costs. All expected cash flows, including all the expected collections from the legal channel, are included in the measurement of the negative allowance, or investment in receivable portfolios, at a discounted value.

Prior to January 1, 2020, the Company capitalized Deferred Court Costs in its consolidated financial statements and provided a reserve for those costs that it estimated to be uncollectible. The Company determined the reserve based on an estimated court cost recovery rate established based on its analysis of historical court costs recovery data. The Company estimated deferral periods for Deferred Court Costs based on jurisdiction and nature of litigation and wrote off any Deferred Court Costs not recovered within the respective deferral period. Collections received from debtors were first applied against related court costs with the balance applied to the debtors' account balance. See "Note 5: Deferred Court Costs, Net" for further details.

Income Taxes

The Company uses the asset and liability method of accounting for income taxes. When the Company prepares its consolidated financial statements, it estimates income taxes based on the various jurisdictions and countries where it conducts business. This requires the Company to estimate current tax exposure and to assess temporary differences that result from differing treatments of certain items for tax and accounting purposes. Deferred income taxes are recognized based on the differences between the financial statement and income tax bases of assets and liabilities using enacted tax rates in effect for the year in which the differences are expected to reverse. The Company then assesses the likelihood that deferred tax assets will be realized. Valuation allowances are established, when it is more likely than not the deferred tax assets will not be realized. When the Company establishes a valuation allowance or increases this allowance in an accounting period, it records a corresponding tax expense in the consolidated statements of operations. The Company includes interest and penalties related to income taxes within its provision for income taxes. See "Note 10: Income Taxes" for further discussion.

Management must make significant judgments to determine the provision for income taxes, deferred tax assets and liabilities, and any valuation allowance to be recorded against deferred tax assets.

Stock-Based Compensation

The Company determines stock-based compensation expense for all share-based payment awards based on the measurement date fair value. The Company uses the Black-Scholes option-pricing model to determine the fair-value of stock option grants. The Company has certain share awards that include market conditions that affect vesting, the fair value of these shares is estimated using a lattice model. Compensation cost is not adjusted if the market condition is not met, as long as the requisite service is provided. For share awards that require service and performance conditions, the Company recognizes compensation cost only for those awards expected to meet the service and performance vesting conditions over the requisite service period of the award. Forfeiture rates are estimated based on the Company's historical experience. Stock-based compensation expenses are included in "Salaries and Employee Benefits" in the Company's consolidated statements of operations. See "Note 9: Stock-Based Compensation" for further discussion.

Derivative Instruments and Hedging Activities

The Company recognizes all derivative financial instruments in its consolidated financial statements at fair value. Changes in the fair value of derivative instruments are recorded in earnings unless hedge accounting criteria are met. The Company designates certain derivative instruments as cash flow hedges. The changes in fair value of derivatives designated as cash flow hedges is recorded each period, net of tax, in accumulated other comprehensive income or loss until the related hedged transaction occurs. If in the event the hedged cash flow does not occur, or it becomes probable that it will not occur, the Company would reclassify the amount of any gain or loss on the related cash flow hedge to income or expense at that time. If the hedged cash flows are still reasonably possible to occur, the hedged cash flows will continue to be recorded in accumulated other comprehensive income or loss until the hedged cash flows are no longer probable of occurring. The Company classifies the cash flows from a derivative instrument that is accounted for as a cash flow hedge (and that does not contain an other-than-insignificant financing element at inception) in the same category as the cash flows from the items being hedged. See "Note 3: Derivatives and Hedging Instruments" for further discussion.

Concentration of Supply Risk

A significant percentage of the Company's portfolio purchases for any given fiscal quarter or year may be concentrated with a few large sellers, some of which may also involve forward flow arrangements. A significant decrease in the volume of portfolio available from any of the Company's principal sellers would force the Company to seek alternative sources of charged-off receivables.

The Company may be unable to find alternative sources from which to purchase charged-off receivables, and even if it could successfully replace these purchases, the search could take time and the receivables could be of lower quality, cost more, or both, any of which could adversely affect the Company's business, financial condition and operating results.

Earnings Per Share

Basic earnings per share is calculated by dividing net earnings attributable to Encore by the weighted average number of shares of common stock outstanding during the period. Diluted earnings per share is calculated on the basis of the weighted average number of shares of common stock plus the effect of dilutive potential common shares outstanding during the period using the treasury stock method. Dilutive potential common shares include outstanding stock options, restricted stock, and the dilutive effect of the convertible and exchangeable senior notes, if applicable.

A reconciliation of shares used in calculating earnings per basic and diluted shares follows for the periods presented (*in thousands, except per share amounts*):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Net income attributable to Encore Capital Group, Inc.	\$ 211,848	\$ 167,869	\$ 115,886
Total weighted-average basic shares outstanding	31,427	31,210	28,313
Dilutive effect of stock-based awards	283	264	259
Total weighted-average dilutive shares outstanding	31,710	31,474	28,572
Basic earnings per share	\$ 6.74	\$ 5.38	\$ 4.09
Diluted earnings per share	\$ 6.68	\$ 5.33	\$ 4.06

Anti-dilutive employee stock options outstanding were approximately 51,000, 64,000 and 66,000 during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively.

Note 2: Fair Value Measurements

Fair value is defined as the price that would be received upon sale of an asset or the price paid to transfer a liability, in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date (*i.e.*, the “exit price”). The Company uses a fair value hierarchy that prioritizes the inputs used in valuation techniques to measure fair value into three broad levels. The following is a brief description of each level:

- Level 1: Observable inputs such as quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities.
- Level 2: Inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly. These include quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities in active markets and quoted prices for identical or similar assets or liabilities in markets that are not active.
- Level 3: Unobservable inputs, including inputs that reflect the reporting entity’s own assumptions.

Financial Instruments Required To Be Carried At Fair Value

Financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis are summarized below (*in thousands*):

	Fair Value Measurements as of December 31, 2020			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Total
Assets				
Cross-currency swap agreements	\$ —	\$ 11,578	\$ —	\$ 11,578
Interest rate cap contracts	—	659	—	659
Liabilities				
Interest rate swap agreements	—	(5,232)	—	(5,232)
Contingent consideration	—	—	(2,957)	(2,957)

	Fair Value Measurements as of December 31, 2019			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Total
Assets				
Foreign currency exchange contracts	\$ —	\$ 1,473	\$ —	\$ 1,473
Interest rate cap contracts	—	2,460	—	2,460
Liabilities				
Interest rate swap agreements	—	(9,116)	—	(9,116)
Contingent consideration	—	—	(66)	(66)

Derivative Contracts:

The Company uses derivative instruments to manage its exposure to fluctuations in interest rates and foreign currency exchange rates. Fair values of these derivative instruments are estimated using industry standard valuation models. These models project future cash flows and discount the future amounts to a present value using market-based observable inputs, including interest rate curves, foreign currency exchange rates, and forward and spot prices for currencies.

Contingent Consideration:

The Company carries certain contingent liabilities resulting from its mergers and acquisition activities. Certain sellers of the Company's acquired entities could earn additional earn-out payments in cash based on the entities' subsequent operating performance. The Company recorded the acquisition date fair values of these contingent liabilities, based on the likelihood of contingent earn-out payments, as part of the consideration transferred. The earn-out payments are subsequently remeasured to fair value at each reporting date, based on actual and forecasted operating performance.

The following table provides a roll-forward of the fair value of contingent consideration for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019 and 2018 (*in thousands*):

	Amount
Balance as of December 31, 2017	\$ 10,612
Issuance of contingent consideration	1,728
Change in fair value of contingent consideration	(5,664)
Payment of contingent consideration	(271)
Effect of foreign currency translation	(207)
Balance as of December 31, 2018	6,198
Change in fair value of contingent consideration	(2,300)
Payment of contingent consideration	(3,686)
Effect of foreign currency translation	(146)
Balance as of December 31, 2019	66
Issuance of contingent consideration	2,848
Payment of contingent consideration	(88)
Effect of foreign currency translation	131
Balance as of December 31, 2020	\$ 2,957

Redeemable Noncontrolling Interest:

Some minority shareholders in certain subsidiaries of the Company had the right, at certain times, to require the Company to acquire their ownership interest in those entities at fair value and, in some cases, to force a sale of the subsidiary if the Company chose not to purchase their interests at fair value. In connection with various business transactions, the Company redeemed or deconsolidated all of its redeemable noncontrolling interest during the year ended December 31, 2018 and no longer carried any redeemable noncontrolling interest as of December 31, 2018.

The components of the change in the redeemable noncontrolling interest for the years ended December 31, 2018 are presented in the following table (*in thousands*):

	Amount
Balance as of December 31, 2017	\$ 151,978
Redemption of redeemable noncontrolling interest	(138,835)
Deconsolidation upon sale of redeemable noncontrolling interest	5,535
Net loss attributable to redeemable noncontrolling interest	(4,791)
Adjustment of the redeemable noncontrolling interest to fair value	(7,419)
Effect of foreign currency translation attributable to redeemable noncontrolling interest	(6,468)
Balance as of December 31, 2018	\$ —

Non-Recurring Fair Value Measurement:

Certain assets are measured at fair value on a nonrecurring basis. These assets include real estate-owned assets classified as held for sale at the lower of their carrying value or fair value less cost to sell. The fair value of the assets held for sale and estimated selling expenses were determined at the time of initial recognition and in each reporting period using Level 3 measurements. The fair value estimate of the assets held for sale was approximately \$42.2 million and \$46.7 million as of December 31, 2020 and December 31, 2019, respectively.

Financial Instruments Not Required To Be Carried At Fair Value

The table below summarizes fair value estimates for the Company's financial instruments that are not required to be carried at fair value. The total of the fair value calculations presented does not represent, and should not be construed to represent, the underlying value of the Company. The carrying amounts in the following table are recorded in the consolidated statements of financial condition as of December 31, 2020 and December 31, 2019 (*in thousands*):

	December 31, 2020		December 31, 2019	
	Carrying Amount	Estimated Fair Value	Carrying Amount	Estimated Fair Value
Financial Assets				
Investment in receivable portfolios	\$ 3,291,918	\$ 3,705,672	\$ 3,283,984	\$ 3,464,050
Deferred court costs	—	—	100,172	100,172
Financial Liabilities				
Convertible notes and exchangeable notes ⁽¹⁾	564,136	622,081	642,547	693,708
Senior secured notes ⁽²⁾	1,642,058	1,684,729	1,127,435	1,170,945

(1) Carrying amount represents the portion of the convertible and exchangeable notes classified as debt, while estimated fair value pertains to the face amount of the notes.

(2) Carrying amount represents historical cost, adjusted for any related debt discount or debt premium.

Investment in Receivable Portfolios:

The fair value of investment in receivable portfolios is measured using Level 3 inputs by discounting the estimated future cash flows generated by the Company's proprietary forecasting models. The key inputs include the estimated future gross cash flow, average cost to collect, and discount rate. The determination of such inputs requires significant judgment, including assessing the assumed market participant's cost structure, its determination of whether to include fixed costs in its valuation, its collection strategies, and determining the appropriate weighted average cost of capital. The Company evaluates the use of these key inputs on an ongoing basis and refines the data as it continues to obtain better information from market participants in the debt recovery and purchasing business.

Deferred Court Costs:

Effective January 1, 2020, the Company no longer carries Deferred Court Costs as a result of its change in accounting policy. The fair value estimate for Deferred Court Costs as of December 31, 2019 involved Level 3 inputs as there was little observable market data available and management was required to use significant judgment in its estimates.

Borrowings:

The Company's convertible notes, exchangeable notes and senior secured notes are carried at historical cost, adjusted for the applicable debt discount. The fair value estimate for the convertible and exchangeable notes incorporates quoted market prices using Level 2 inputs. The fair value of the senior secured notes is estimated using widely accepted valuation techniques, including discounted cash flow analyses using available market information on discount and borrowing rates with similar terms, maturities, and credit ratings. Accordingly, the Company used Level 2 inputs for these debt instrument fair value estimates.

The carrying value of the Company's senior secured revolving credit facility agreement approximates fair value due to the short-term nature of the interest rate period. The Company's borrowings also include private placement notes, securitisation senior facility and finance lease liabilities for which the carrying value approximates respective fair value.

Note 3: Derivatives and Hedging Instruments

The Company may periodically enter into derivative financial instruments to manage risks related to interest rates and foreign currency. Certain of the Company's derivative financial instruments qualify for hedge accounting treatment.

The following table summarizes the fair value of derivative instruments as recorded in the Company's consolidated statements of financial condition (*in thousands*):

	December 31, 2020		December 31, 2019	
	Balance Sheet Location	Fair Value	Balance Sheet Location	Fair Value
Derivatives designated as hedging instruments:				
Interest rate cap contracts	Other assets	\$ 659	Other assets	\$ 2,460
Foreign currency exchange contracts	Other assets	—	Other assets	443
Interest rate swap agreements	Other liabilities	(5,232)	Other liabilities	(9,116)
Cross-currency swap agreements	Other assets	11,578	Other assets	—
Derivatives not designated as hedging instruments:				
Foreign currency exchange contracts	Other assets	—	Other assets	1,030

Derivatives Designated as Hedging Instruments

The Company has operations in foreign countries, which expose the Company to foreign currency exchange rate fluctuations due to transactions denominated in foreign currencies. To mitigate a portion of this risk, the Company enters into derivative financial instruments, principally foreign currency forward contracts with financial counterparties. The Company adjusts the level and use of derivatives as soon as practicable after learning that an exposure has changed and reviews all exposures and derivative positions on an ongoing basis.

The Company held certain foreign currency forward contracts designated as cash flow hedging instruments that matured in June 2020. As of December 31, 2020, the Company had no outstanding forward contracts that were designated as cash flow hedging instruments. No gains or losses were reclassified from OCI into earnings as a result of forecasted transactions that failed to occur during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, or 2018.

The Company may periodically enter into interest rate swap agreements to reduce its exposure to fluctuations in interest rates on variable interest rate debt and their impact on earnings and cash flows. Under the swap agreements, the Company receives floating interest rate payments and makes interest payments based on fixed interest rates. The Company designates its interest rate swap instruments as cash flow hedges. Previously, the Company held four interest rate swap agreements that hedged the risk of USD-LIBOR interest rate fluctuations for the Encore revolving credit facility and term loan facility. As part of the financing transactions completed in September 2020, the Company settled two of the interest rate swap agreements. As of December 31, 2020, there were two interest rate swap agreements outstanding with a total notional amount of \$196.4 million. The Company expects to reclassify approximately \$8.7 million of net derivative loss from OCI into earnings relating to interest rate swaps within the next 12 months.

In connection with the financing transactions discussed above, the Company entered into cross-currency swap agreements, which are used to manage foreign currency exchange risk by converting fixed-rate Euro-denominated borrowings including periodic interest payments and the payment of principal at maturity to fixed-rate USD debt and are accounted for as cash flow hedges. As of December 31, 2020, there were four cross-currency swap agreements outstanding with a total notional amount of €350.0 million (approximately \$426.8 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to €0.82, the exchange rate as of

December 31, 2020). The Company expects to reclassify approximately \$3.8 million of net derivative loss from OCI into earnings relating to cross-currency swaps within the next 12 months.

Previously, the Company held two interest rate cap contracts (the “2018 Caps”) that hedged the risk of GBP-LIBOR interest rate fluctuations for the Cabot Securitisation Senior Facility interest payments. In February 2020, the Company settled the 2018 Caps and ceased the hedge relationship, which resulted in the reclassification of the associated other comprehensive loss balance to interest expense for approximately \$2.5 million during the first quarter of 2020.

As of December 31, 2020, the Company held two interest rate cap contracts with a notional amount of approximately \$965.8 million that are used to manage its risk related to interest rate fluctuations on the Company’s variable interest rate bearing debt. The interest rate cap hedging the fluctuations in three-month EURIBOR floating rate debt (“2019 Cap”) has a notional amount of €400.0 million (approximately \$487.7 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to €0.82, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) and matures in 2024. The interest rate cap hedging the fluctuations in sterling overnight index average (“SONIA”) bearing debt (“2020 Cap”) has a notional amount of £350.0 million (approximately \$478.1 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to £0.73, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) and matures in 2023. The 2019 Cap is structured as a series of European call options (“Caplets”) such that if exercised, the Company will receive a payment equal to 3-months EURIBOR on a notional amount equal to the hedged notional amount net of a fixed strike price. The 2020 Cap is also structured as a series of Caplets such that if exercised, the Company will receive a payment equal to SONIA on a notional amount equal to the hedged notional amount net of a fixed strike price. Each interest rate reset date, the Company will elect to exercise the Caplet or let it expire. The potential cash flows from each Caplet are expected to offset any variability in the cash flows of the interest payments to the extent EURIBOR or SONIA exceeds the strike price of the Caplets. The Company expects the hedge relationships to be highly effective and designates the 2019 Cap and 2020 Cap as cash flow hedge instruments. The Company expects to reclassify approximately \$0.5 million of net derivative loss from OCI into earnings relating to interest rate caps within the next 12 months.

The following table summarizes the effects of derivatives in cash flow hedging relationships designated as hedging instruments in the Company’s consolidated financial statements during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

Derivatives Designated as Hedging Instruments	Gain (Loss) Recognized in OCI		Location of Gain (Loss) Reclassified from OCI into Income	Gain (Loss) Reclassified from OCI into Income	
	Year Ended December 31,			Year Ended December 31,	
	2020	2019		2020	2019
Foreign currency exchange contracts	\$ (341)	\$ 1,100	Salaries and employee benefits	\$ 49	\$ 383
Foreign currency exchange contracts	(44)	(56)	General and administrative expenses	11	(19)
Interest rate swap agreements	(7,441)	(6,347)	Interest expense	(7,893)	(2,560)
Interest rate cap contracts	(3,001)	(1,752)	Interest expense	(2,846)	146
Cross-currency swap agreements	10,503	—	Interest expense / Other expense	10,121	—

Derivatives Not Designated as Hedging Instruments

The Company enters into currency exchange forward contracts to reduce the effects of currency exchange rate fluctuations between the British Pound and Euro. These derivative contracts generally mature within one to three months and are not designated as hedge instruments for accounting purposes. The Company continues to monitor the level of exposure of the foreign currency exchange risk and may enter into additional short-term forward contracts on an ongoing basis. The gains or losses on these derivative contracts are recognized in other income or expense based on the changes in fair value. As of December 31, 2020, the Company had no outstanding currency exchange forward contracts that were not designated as cash flow hedging instruments.

In May 2018, in anticipation of the completion of the purchase of all of the outstanding equity of CCM not owned by Encore (the “Cabot Transaction”), Encore entered into a foreign exchange forward contract with a notional amount of £176.0 million, which was approximately the amount of cash consideration for the Cabot Transaction. The forward contract settled in August 2018 at a total loss of \$9.3 million. This loss was substantially offset by a decrease in the final purchase price in U.S. dollars for the Cabot Transaction.

The following table summarizes the effects of derivatives not designated as hedging instruments on the Company's consolidated statements of operations during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

Derivatives Not Designated as Hedging Instruments	Location of Gain (Loss) Recognized in Income on Derivative	Amount of Gain (Loss) Recognized in Income		
		Year ended December 31,		
		2020	2019	2018
Foreign currency exchange contracts	Other expense	\$ 3,564	\$ (2,959)	\$ (9,221)
Interest rate cap contracts	Interest expense	—	—	(1,568)

Note 4: Investment in Receivable Portfolios, Net

As discussed in "Note 1: Ownership, Description of Business, and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies," effective January 1, 2020, the Company accounts for its investment in receivable portfolios as PCD assets under CECL and changed its accounting policy for reimbursable court costs. As a result, the Company wrote-off the previous Deferred Court Costs balance that represented an undiscounted value of recoverable historic spend as a result of a loss-rate methodology, and established a discounted value of expected future recoveries of these reimbursable court costs, which is included in the beginning balance of the investment in receivable portfolios.

The table below illustrates the Company's transition approach for its investment in receivable portfolios as of January 1, 2020 (*in thousands*):

	Amount
Investment in receivable portfolios prior to transition	\$ 3,283,984
Initial transitioned deferred court costs	44,166
	<u>3,328,150</u>
Allowance for credit losses	79,028,043
Amortized cost	82,356,193
Noncredit discount	132,533,142
Face value	214,889,335
Write-off of amortized cost	(82,356,193)
Write-off of noncredit discount	(132,533,142)
Negative allowance	3,328,150
Initial negative allowance from transition	<u>\$ 3,328,150</u>

The table below provides the detail on the establishment of negative allowance for expected recoveries of portfolios purchased during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31, 2020
Purchase price	\$ 659,872
Allowance for credit losses	1,703,420
Amortized cost	2,363,292
Noncredit discount	3,464,670
Face value	5,827,962
Write-off of amortized cost	(2,363,292)
Write-off of noncredit discount	(3,464,670)
Negative allowance	659,872
Negative allowance for expected recoveries - current period purchases	<u>\$ 659,872</u>

The following tables summarize the changes in the balance of the investment in receivable portfolios during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Balance, beginning of period	\$ 3,328,150	\$ 3,137,893	\$ 2,890,613
Purchases of receivable portfolios	659,872	1,046,696	1,131,898
Deconsolidation of receivable portfolios ⁽¹⁾	(2,822)	(51,935)	—
Put-backs and Recalls	(15,824)	(11,591)	(14,429)
Disposals and transfers to real estate owned	(9,459)	(11,495)	(12,456)
Sale of receivable portfolios ⁽²⁾	—	(98,636)	—
Cash collections	(2,111,848)	(2,026,928)	(1,967,620)
Revenue from receivable portfolios	1,374,717	1,269,288	1,167,132
Changes in expected current period recoveries	228,075	—	—
Changes in expected future period recoveries	(220,829)	—	—
Portfolio (allowance) reversals, net	—	(8,108)	41,473
Foreign currency adjustments	61,886	38,800	(98,718)
Balance, end of period	<u>\$ 3,291,918</u>	<u>\$ 3,283,984</u>	<u>\$ 3,137,893</u>

(1) Deconsolidation of receivable portfolios as a result of the Company's divestiture of its investment in Brazil for the year ended December 31, 2020 and as a result of the sale of Baycorp for the year ended December 31, 2019.

(2) Represents the sale of certain portfolios in the Company's European operations under its co-investment framework.

Changes in expected current period recoveries represent over and under-performance in the reporting period. Collections during the year ended December 31, 2020 significantly outperformed the projected cash flows by approximately \$228.1 million. The Company believes the collection over-performance was largely driven by the reduced near-term expected recoveries as a result of adjustments made to the projected cash flow forecast during the first quarter of 2020 associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The over-performance was also a result of sustained improvements in portfolio collections driven by liquidation improvement initiatives.

While the Company now has additional information with respect to the impact on collections of the COVID-19 pandemic, the future outlook remains uncertain, and will continue to evolve depending on future developments, including the duration and spread of the pandemic and related actions taken by governments. When reassessing the future forecasts of expected lifetime recoveries during the year ended December 31, 2020, management considered historical and current collection performance, uncertainty in economic forecasts in the geographies in which we operate, and believes that the operational disruption as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has, for the near term, been resolved through a combination of social distancing in the workplace and working remotely. However, the macroeconomic driven consumer distress is still present and will likely continue to impact the Company's collections performance in the near future. As a result, the Company has updated its forecast, resulting in a reduction of total estimated remaining collections which in turn, when discounted to present value, resulted in a provision for credit loss adjustment of approximately \$220.8 million during the year ended December 31, 2020. The circumstances around this pandemic are evolving rapidly and will continue to impact the Company's business and its estimation of expected recoveries in future periods. The Company will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation and update its assumptions accordingly.

Accretable yield represented the amount of revenue on purchased receivable portfolios the Company expected to recognize over the remaining life of its existing portfolios. The following table summarizes the change in accretable yield under the previous accounting guidance during the period presented (*in thousands*):

Balance as of December 31, 2018	\$	4,026,206
Revenue from receivable portfolios		(1,269,288)
Allowance on receivable portfolios, net		8,108
Additions on existing portfolios, net		524,964
Additions for current purchases, net		1,081,774
Effect of foreign currency translation		77,307
Balance as of December 31, 2019	\$	4,449,071

The following table summarizes the change in the valuation allowance for investment in receivable portfolios as accounted for under the previous accounting guidance during the period presented (*in thousands*):

	Valuation Allowance	
Balance as of December 31, 2017	\$	102,576
Provision for portfolio allowances		14,421
Reversal of prior allowances		(55,894)
Effect of foreign currency translation		(472)
Balance as of December 31, 2018		60,631
Provision for portfolio allowances		36,806
Reversal of prior allowances		(28,698)
Sale of Baycorp		(1,036)
Effect of foreign currency translation		1,776
Balance as of December 31, 2019	\$	69,479

Note 5: Deferred Court Costs, Net

As discussed in “Note 1: Ownership, Description of Business, and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies,” effective January 1, 2020 and as part of the adoption of CECL, the Company changed its method of accounting for court costs spent in its legal collection channel. The Company now expenses all of its court costs as incurred and includes all expected recoveries, including the recoveries from the legal channel, in the measurement of the investment in receivable portfolios at a discounted value. As a result, the Company no longer carries deferred court costs.

Net deferred court costs under the previous accounting method consisted of the following as of the date presented (*in thousands*):

	December 31, 2019	
Court costs advanced	\$	891,207
Court costs recovered		(369,043)
Court costs reserve		(421,992)
Deferred court costs, net	\$	100,172

A roll-forward of the Company's court cost reserve as accounted for under the previous accounting method is as follows for the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,	
	2019	2018
Balance as of beginning of period	\$ (396,460)	\$ (364,015)
Provision for court costs	(82,987)	(90,026)
Charge-offs	60,618	53,383
Effect of foreign currency translation	(3,163)	4,198
Balance as of end of period	\$ (421,992)	\$ (396,460)

Note 6: Composition of Certain Financial Statement Items

Property and Equipment, Net

Property and equipment consist of the following as of the dates presented (*in thousands*):

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Computer equipment and software	\$ 194,678	\$ 167,045
Leasehold improvements	43,621	39,542
Furniture, fixtures and equipment	10,514	10,428
Telecommunications equipment and other	3,450	3,156
Construction in process	4,739	2,089
	257,002	222,260
Less: accumulated depreciation and amortization	(129,705)	(102,209)
	\$ 127,297	\$ 120,051

Depreciation and amortization expense related to property and equipment was \$34.8 million, \$33.3 million, and \$29.5 million during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively.

Other Assets

Other assets consist of the following as of the dates presented (*in thousands*):

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Operating lease right-of-use assets	\$ 72,164	\$ 75,254
Identifiable intangible assets, net	45,012	51,371
Real estate owned	42,173	46,717
Income tax deposit	35,853	5,822
Deferred tax assets	33,202	24,134
Prepaid expenses	26,717	22,272
Service fee receivables	26,539	27,705
Other financial receivables	12,238	17,308
Other	55,264	58,640
Total	\$ 349,162	\$ 329,223

Note 7: Borrowings

The Company is in compliance in all material respects with all covenants under its financing arrangements as of December 31, 2020. The components of the Company's consolidated borrowings were as follows as of the dates presented (*in thousands*):

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Global senior secured revolving credit facility	\$ 481,007	\$ —
Encore revolving credit facility	—	492,000
Encore term loan facility	—	171,677
Encore private placement notes	146,550	308,750
Senior secured notes	1,651,619	1,129,039
Convertible notes and exchangeable notes	583,500	672,855
Cabot senior revolving credit facility	—	285,749
Cabot securitisation senior facility	478,131	464,092
Other	24,398	54,151
Finance lease liabilities	8,288	8,121
	<u>3,373,493</u>	<u>3,586,434</u>
Less: debt discount and issuance costs, net of amortization	(91,859)	(73,237)
Total	\$ 3,281,634	\$ 3,513,197

In September 2020 the Company entered into various transactions, agreements and amendments related to its borrowings including (collectively, the "Financing Transactions"):

- an amended multi-currency revolving credit facility that formerly supported only Cabot that now supports the operations of all operating units;
- an issuance of €350.0 million (approximately \$410.8 million) in 4.875% senior secured notes due 2025; and
- an amendment to the terms of the existing Senior Secured Notes (defined below).

Following the Financing Transactions, Encore is the parent of the restricted group for the Global Senior Facility, the Senior Secured Notes and the Private Placement Notes, each of which is now guaranteed by the same group of material Encore subsidiaries and secured by the same collateral, which represents substantially all of the assets of those subsidiaries.

In connection with the Financing Transactions, Encore repaid and terminated the Encore Senior Secured Credit Facilities (defined below) and prepaid a portion of its Encore Private Placement Notes (defined below). The total fees paid to the lenders and third-party costs incurred relating to the Financing Transactions were approximately \$49.7 million, a portion of which were capitalized as debt issuance costs. Additionally, certain of the unamortized debt issuance costs prior to the Financing Transaction were written-off. The Company recorded a pre-tax expense of approximately \$24.6 million (approximately \$18.9 million net of tax) relating to the Financing Transactions, \$15.0 million of which was included in loss on extinguishment of debt, \$2.7 million was included in interest expense, and \$6.9 million was included in general and administrative expense in the Company's consolidated statements of operations during the year ended December 31, 2020.

Global Senior Secured Revolving Credit Facility

The Company has entered into a multi-currency senior secured revolving credit facility agreement (as amended and restated, the "Global Senior Facility"). In previous periods, the Company referred to this facility as the Cabot Credit Facility. As of December 31, 2020, the Global Senior Facility provided for a total committed facility of \$1,050.0 million that matures in September 2024 and included the following key provisions:

- Interest at LIBOR (or EURIBOR for any loan drawn in euro) plus 2.50% per annum, with a LIBOR (or EURIBOR) floor of 0.75%;
- A restrictive covenant that limits the LTV Ratio (defined in the Global Senior Facility) to 0.75 in the event that the Global Senior Facility is more than 20% utilized;
- A restrictive covenant that limits the SSRCF Ratio (defined in the Global Senior Facility) to 0.275;

- A restrictive covenant that requires the Company to maintain a Fixed Charge Coverage Ratio (as defined in the Global Senior Facility) of at least 2.0;
- Additional restrictions and covenants which limit, among other things, the payment of dividends and the incurrence of additional indebtedness and liens; and
- Standard events of default which, upon occurrence, may permit the lenders to terminate the Global Senior Facility and declare all amounts outstanding to be immediately due and payable.

The Global Senior Facility is secured by substantially all of the assets of the Company and the guarantors. Pursuant to the terms of an intercreditor agreement entered into with respect to the relative positions of (1) the Global Senior Facility, any super priority hedging liabilities and the Encore Private Placement Notes (collectively, “Super Senior Liabilities”) and (2) the Senior Secured Notes, Super Senior Liabilities that are secured by assets that also secure the Senior Secured Notes will receive priority with respect to any proceeds received upon any enforcement action over any such assets.

As of December 31, 2020, the outstanding borrowings under the Global Senior Facility were \$481.0 million. Since the completion of the Financing Transactions, the weighted average interest rate of the Global Senior Facility was 3.25%. The weighted average interest rate of the previous Cabot Credit Facility was 3.30% and 3.52% for the years ended December 31, 2020 and December 31, 2019, respectively. The weighted average interest rate of the previous Encore Revolving Credit Facility was 3.90% and 5.27% for the years ended December 31, 2020 and December 31, 2019, respectively. Available capacity under the Global Senior Facility was \$569.0 million as of December 31, 2020.

Encore Revolving Credit Facility and Term Loan Facility

The Company had a revolving credit facility (the “Revolving Credit Facility”) and term loan facility (the “Term Loan Facility,” and together with the Revolving Credit Facility, the “Encore Senior Secured Credit Facilities”) pursuant to a Third Amended and Restated Credit Agreement dated December 20, 2016 (as amended, the “Restated Credit Agreement”) that was previously used to support the Company’s domestic operations. In connection with the Financing Transactions on September 24, 2020, the Company repaid the Encore Senior Secured Credit Facilities and terminated the Restated Credit Agreement.

Encore Private Placement Notes

In August 2017, Encore entered into \$325.0 million in senior secured notes with a group of insurance companies (the “Encore Private Placement Notes”). In September 2020, as part of the Financing Transactions, the Company prepaid approximately \$103.7 million of the Encore Private Placement Notes and made a \$10.4 million make-whole payment to the holders of notes that were prepaid. The make-whole payment was included in loss on extinguishment of debt in the Company’s consolidated statements of operations during the year ended December 31, 2020. As of December 31, 2020, \$146.6 million of the Encore Private Placement Notes remained outstanding. The Encore Private Placement Notes bear an annual interest rate of 5.625%, mature in August 2024 and require quarterly principal payments of \$9.8 million. The covenants and material terms for the Encore Private Placement Notes are substantially similar to those for the Global Senior Facility.

Senior Secured Notes

The following table provides a summary of the Senior Secured Notes (*\$ in thousands*):

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019	Maturity Date	Interest Rate
Cabot 2023 Notes	\$ 309,034	\$ 680,118	Oct 1, 2023	7.500 %
Cabot 2024 Floating Rate Notes	—	448,921	Jun 1, 2024	EURIBOR +6.375%
Encore 2025 Notes	426,752	—	Oct 15, 2025	4.875 %
Encore 2026 Notes	409,827	—	Feb 15, 2026	5.375 %
Encore 2028 Floating Rate Notes	506,006	—	Jan 15, 2028	EURIBOR +4.250%
	<u>\$ 1,651,619</u>	<u>\$ 1,129,039</u>		

In September 2020, as part of the Financing Transactions, Encore issued €350.0 million (approximately \$426.8 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to €0.82, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) in aggregate principal amount of 4.875% Senior Secured Notes due 2025 at an issue price of 98.889% (the “Encore 2025 Notes”). Interest on the Encore 2025 Notes is payable semi-annually, in arrears, on April 15 and October 15 of each year, commencing on April 15, 2021.

In November 2020, Encore issued £300.0 million (approximately \$409.8 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to £0.73, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) in aggregate principal amount of 5.375% Senior Secured Notes due 2026 at an issue price of 100.000% (the “Encore 2026 Notes”). Interest on the Encore 2026 Notes is payable semi-annually, in arrears, on February 15 and August 15 of each year, commencing on February 15, 2021. The Company used the proceeds from this

offering to redeem £286.7 million (approximately \$391.7 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to £0.73, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) of the outstanding £512.9 million (approximately \$700.7 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to £0.73, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) aggregate principal amount of 7.500% Senior Secured Notes due 2023 (the “Cabot 2023 Notes”) at a redemption price of 101.875%, and pay certain transaction fees and expenses incurred in connection with this offering. The Company recognized a loss on extinguishment of debt of approximately \$12.8 million (approximately \$10.3 million net of tax) associated with this transaction during the year ended December 31, 2020. As of December 31, 2020, £226.2 million (approximately \$309.0 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to £0.73, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) of the Cabot 2023 Notes were outstanding, interest is payable semi-annually, in arrears, on April 1 and October 1 of each year.

In December 2020, Encore issued €415.0 million (approximately \$506.0 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to €0.82, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) in aggregate principal amount of senior secured floating rate notes due 2028 at an issue price of 99.000% (the “Encore 2028 Floating Rate Notes” and together with the Cabot 2023 Notes, Encore 2025 Notes and Encore 2026 Notes, the “Senior Secured Notes”). The Encore 2028 Floating Rate Notes bear interest at a rate equal to the sum of (i) three-month EURIBOR (subject to a 0% floor) plus (ii) 4.250% per annum, reset quarterly. Interest is payable quarterly in arrears on January 15, April 15, July 15 and October 15 of each year, commencing on April 15, 2021. The Company used the proceeds from this offering to redeem the outstanding €400.0 million (approximately \$487.7 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to €0.82, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) aggregate principal amount Senior Secured Floating Rate Notes due 2024 (the “Cabot 2024 Floating Rate Notes”) in full and pay certain transaction fees and expenses incurred in connection with this offering. The Company recognized a loss on extinguishment of debt of approximately \$13.1 million (approximately \$10.6 million net of tax) associated with this transaction during the year ended December 31, 2020. The Cabot 2024 Floating Rate Notes bore interest at a rate equal to the sum of (i) three-month EURIBOR (subject to a 0% floor) plus (ii) 6.375%, reset quarterly.

The Senior Secured Notes are secured by the same collateral as the Global Senior Facility and the Encore Private Placement Notes. The guarantees provided in respect of the Senior Secured Notes are pari passu with each such guarantee given in respect of the Global Senior Facility and Encore Private Placement Notes. Subject to the intercreditor agreement described above under “Global Senior Secured Revolving Credit Facility,” Super Senior Liabilities that are secured by assets that also secure the Senior Secured Notes will receive priority with respect to any proceeds received upon any enforcement action over any such assets.

Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes

The following table provides a summary of the principal balance, maturity date and interest rate for the outstanding convertible and exchangeable senior notes (the “Convertible Notes” or “Exchangeable Notes,” as applicable) (\$ in thousands):

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019	Maturity Date	Interest Rate
2020 Convertible Notes ⁽¹⁾	\$ —	\$ 89,355	Jul 1, 2020	3.000 %
2021 Convertible Notes	161,000	161,000	Mar 15, 2021	2.875 %
2022 Convertible Notes	150,000	150,000	Mar 15, 2022	3.250 %
2023 Exchangeable Notes	172,500	172,500	Sep 1, 2023	4.500 %
2025 Convertible Notes	100,000	100,000	Oct 1, 2025	3.250 %
	<u>\$ 583,500</u>	<u>\$ 672,855</u>		

(1) The 2020 Convertible Notes matured on July 1, 2020 and the Company repaid the outstanding principal in cash.

The Exchangeable Notes were issued by Encore Capital Europe Finance Limited (“Encore Finance”), a 100% owned finance subsidiary of Encore, and are fully and unconditionally guaranteed by Encore. Unless otherwise indicated in connection with a particular offering of debt securities, Encore will fully and unconditionally guarantee any debt securities issued by Encore Finance. Amounts related to Encore Finance are included in the consolidated financial statements of Encore subsequent to April 30, 2018, the date of incorporation of Encore Finance.

Prior to the close of business on the business day immediately preceding their respective free conversion or exchange date (listed below), holders may convert or exchange their Convertible Notes or Exchangeable Notes under certain circumstances set forth in the applicable indentures. On or after their respective free conversion or exchange dates until the close of business on the second scheduled trading day immediately preceding their respective maturity date, holders may convert or exchange their notes at any time. Certain key terms related to the convertible and exchangeable features as of December 31, 2020 are listed below:

	2021 Convertible Notes	2022 Convertible Notes	2023 Exchangeable Notes	2025 Convertible Notes
Initial conversion or exchange price	\$ 59.39	\$ 45.57	\$ 44.62	\$ 40.00
Closing stock price at date of issuance	\$ 47.51	\$ 35.05	\$ 36.45	\$ 32.00
Closing stock price date	Mar 5, 2014	Feb 27, 2017	Jul 20, 2018	Sep 4, 2019
Conversion or exchange rate (shares per \$1,000 principal amount)	16.8386	21.9467	22.4090	25.0000
Conversion or exchange date	Sep 15, 2020	Sep 15, 2021	Mar 1, 2023	Jul 1, 2025

Prior to October 29, 2020, in the event of conversion or exchange, holders of the Company's Convertible Notes or Exchangeable Notes would receive cash, shares of the Company's common stock or a combination of cash and shares of the Company's common stock, at the Company's election. The Company's intent was to settle conversions and exchanges through combination settlement with a minimum specified dollar amount of \$1,000 per \$1,000 principal amount of notes (i.e., convertible or exchangeable into cash up to the aggregate principal amount, and shares of the Company's common stock or a combination of cash and shares of the Company's common stock, at the Company's election and subject to certain restrictions contained in each of the indentures governing the Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes, for the remainder). As a result, only the conversion or exchange spread was included in the diluted earnings per share calculation, if dilutive. Under such method, the settlement of the conversion or exchange spread had a dilutive effect when, during any quarter, the average share price of the Company's common stock exceeds the initial conversion or exchange prices listed in the above table.

On October 29, 2020, the Company entered into supplemental indentures for the Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes so that in the event of conversion or exchange, the notes are convertible or exchangeable into cash up to the aggregate principal amount of the notes and the excess conversion premium, if any, may be settled in cash or shares of the Company's common stock at the Company's election and subject to certain restrictions contained in each of the indentures governing the Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes. Only the conversion or exchange spread is included in the diluted earnings per share calculation, if dilutive. There was no dilutive effect relating to our convertible or exchangeable notes during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, or 2018.

The debt and equity components, the issuance costs related to the equity component, the stated interest rate, and the effective interest rate for each of the Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes at the time of the original offering are listed below (*in thousands, except percentages*):

	2021 Convertible Notes	2022 Convertible Notes	2023 Exchangeable Notes	2025 Convertible Notes
Debt component	\$ 143,645	\$ 137,266	\$ 157,971	\$ 91,024
Equity component	\$ 17,355	\$ 12,734	\$ 14,009	\$ 8,976
Equity issuance cost	\$ 581	\$ 398	\$ —	\$ 224
Stated interest rate	2.875 %	3.250 %	4.500 %	3.250 %
Effective interest rate	4.700 %	5.200 %	6.500 %	5.000 %

The balances of the liability and equity components of all the Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes outstanding were as follows (*in thousands*):

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Liability component—principal amount	\$ 583,500	\$ 672,855
Unamortized debt discount	(19,364)	(30,308)
Liability component—net carrying amount	\$ 564,136	\$ 642,547
Equity component	\$ 53,074	\$ 83,127

The debt discount is being amortized into interest expense over the remaining life of the Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes using the effective interest rates. Interest expense related to the Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes was as follows during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Interest expense—stated coupon rate	\$ 21,857	\$ 23,845	\$ 17,518
Interest expense—amortization of debt discount	10,945	12,780	10,888
Interest expense—Convertible Notes and Exchangeable Notes	\$ 32,802	\$ 36,625	\$ 28,406

Hedge Transactions

In order to reduce the risk related to the potential dilution and/or the potential cash payments the Company may be required to make in the event that the market price of the Company’s common stock becomes greater than the conversion or exchange prices of the Convertible Notes and the Exchangeable Notes, the Company maintains a hedge program that increases the effective conversion or exchange price for the 2021 Convertible Notes and the Exchangeable Notes. All of the hedge instruments related to the Convertible Notes and the Exchangeable Notes have been determined to be indexed to the Company’s own stock and meet the criteria for equity classification. The Company recorded the cost of the hedge instruments as a reduction in additional paid-in capital, and does not recognize subsequent changes in fair value of these financial instruments in its consolidated financial statements. The Company did not hedge the 2022 Convertible Notes or the 2025 Convertible Notes.

The details of the hedge program are listed below (*in thousands, except conversion or exchange price*):

	2021 Convertible Notes	2023 Exchangeable Notes
Cost of the hedge transaction(s)	\$ 19,545	\$ 17,785
Initial conversion or exchange price	\$ 59.39	\$ 44.62
Effective conversion or exchange price	\$ 83.14	\$ 62.48

Cabot Securitisation Senior Facility

Cabot Securitisation UK Ltd (“Cabot Securitisation”), an indirect subsidiary of Encore, has a senior facility for a committed amount of £350.0 million (as amended, the “Cabot Securitisation Senior Facility”). The Cabot Securitisation Senior Facility matures in March 2025. Funds drawn under the Cabot Securitisation Senior Facility bear interest at a rate per annum equal to SONIA plus a margin of 3.06% plus, for periods after March 15, 2023, a step-up margin ranging from zero to 1.00%.

As of December 31, 2020, the outstanding borrowings under the Cabot Securitisation Senior Facility were £350.0 million (approximately \$478.1 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to £0.73, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020). The obligations of Cabot Securitisation under the Cabot Securitisation Senior Facility are secured by first ranking security interests over all of Cabot Securitisation’s property, assets and rights (including receivables purchased from Cabot Financial UK from time to time), the book value of which was approximately £397.7 million (approximately \$543.3 million based on an exchange rate of \$1.00 to £0.73, the exchange rate as of December 31, 2020) as of December 31, 2020. The weighted average interest rate was 3.23% and 3.74% for the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019, respectively.

Cabot Securitisation and Cabot Securitisation II are securitized financing vehicles and are VIEs for consolidation purposes. Refer to “Note 8: Variable Interest Entities” for further details.

Finance Lease Liabilities

The Company has finance lease liabilities primarily for computer equipment. As of December 31, 2020, the Company’s finance lease liabilities were approximately \$8.3 million. Refer to “Note 11: Leases” for further details.

Maturity Schedule

The aggregate amounts of the Company's borrowings, maturing in each of the next five years and thereafter are as follows (*in thousands*):

2021	\$	211,499
2022		198,573
2023		526,502
2024		511,963
2025		1,008,727
Thereafter		916,229
Total	\$	<u>3,373,493</u>

Note 8: Variable Interest Entities

A VIE is defined as a legal entity whose equity owners do not have sufficient equity at risk, or, as a group, the holders of the equity investment at risk lack any of the following three characteristics: decision-making rights, the obligation to absorb expected losses, or the right to receive expected residual returns of the entity. The primary beneficiary is identified as the variable interest holder that has both the power to direct the activities of the VIE that most significantly affect the entity's economic performance and the obligation to absorb expected losses or the right to receive benefits from the entity that could potentially be significant to the VIE. The Company consolidates VIEs when it is the primary beneficiary.

As of December 31, 2020, the Company's VIEs include certain securitized financing vehicles and other immaterial special purpose entities that were created to purchase receivable portfolios in certain geographies. The Company is the primary beneficiary of these VIEs. The Company has the power to direct the activities of the VIEs which includes but is not limited to the ability to exercise discretion in the servicing of the financial assets. The Company evaluates its relationships with its VIEs on an ongoing basis to ensure that it continues to be the primary beneficiary.

Most assets recognized as a result of consolidating these VIEs do not represent additional assets that could be used to satisfy claims against the Company's general assets. Conversely, liabilities recognized as a result of consolidating these VIEs do not represent additional claims on the Company's general assets; rather, they represent claims against the specific assets of the VIE.

Note 9: Stock-Based Compensation

In April 2017, Encore's Board of Directors (the "Board") approved the Encore Capital Group, Inc. 2017 Incentive Award Plan (the "2017 Plan"), which was then approved by the Company's stockholders on June 15, 2017. The 2017 Plan superseded the Company's 2013 Incentive Compensation Plan (as amended, the "2013 Plan"), which had previously superseded the Company's 2005 Stock Incentive Plan ("2005 Plan"). Board members, employees, and consultants of Encore and its subsidiaries and affiliates are eligible to receive awards under the 2017 Plan. Subject to certain adjustments, the Company may grant awards for an aggregate of 5,713,571 shares of the Company's common stock under the 2017 Plan. The aggregate number of shares available for issuance under the 2017 Plan will be reduced by 2.12 shares for each share delivered in settlement of any full value award and by one share for each share delivered in settlement of any stock option or stock appreciation right. If an award under the 2017 Plan or the 2013 Plan expires, lapses or is terminated, exchanged for cash, surrendered, repurchased, canceled without having been fully exercised or forfeited, the unused shares covered by such award will again become or again be available for award grants under the 2017 Plan. Shares available under the 2017 Plan will be increased by 2.12 shares for each share subject to a full value award and by one share for each share subject to a stock option or a stock appreciation right, in each case, that become or again be available for issuance pursuant to the foregoing share counting provisions.

The 2017 Plan provides for the grant of incentive stock options, nonqualified stock options, restricted stock, restricted stock units, dividend equivalent rights, stock appreciation rights, cash awards, performance-based awards and any other types of awards not inconsistent with the 2017 Plan.

Total stock-based compensation expense during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018 was \$16.6 million, \$12.6 million, and \$13.0 million, respectively. The actual tax benefit from stock-based compensation arrangements totaled \$2.5 million, \$1.2 million, and \$1.3 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively.

The Company's stock-based compensation arrangements are described below:

Stock Options

Under the 2005 Plan, option awards were generally granted with an exercise price equal to the market price of the Company’s stock at the date of issuance. They generally vest over three to five years of continuous service, and have ten-year contractual terms. Other than the Performance Options discussed below, no options have been awarded under the 2013 Plan or 2017 Plan.

There were no options granted during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, or 2018. As of December 31, 2020, all outstanding stock options have been fully vested and all related compensation expense has been fully recognized.

A summary of the Company’s stock option activity as of December 31, 2020, and changes during the year then ended, are presented below:

	Number of Shares	Weighted Average Exercise Price	Weighted Average Remaining Contractual Term (in years)	Aggregate Intrinsic Value (in thousands)
Outstanding as of December 31, 2019	9,166	\$ 22.17		
Outstanding as of December 31, 2020	9,166	\$ 22.17	1.26	\$ 154
Exercisable as of December 31, 2020	9,166	\$ 22.17	1.26	\$ 154

The total intrinsic value of options exercised during the years ended December 31, 2019 and 2018 was \$1.0 million and \$0.4 million, respectively. Cash received from option exercise under all share-based payment arrangements during the years ended December 31, 2019 and 2018, was \$0.3 million and \$0.7 million, respectively. There were no options exercised during the year ended December 31, 2020.

Performance Stock Options

Under the 2017 Plan and the 2013 Plan, the Company granted performance stock options, with an exercise price equal to the closing price of the Company’s stock at the date of issuance, that vest in equal annual installments over a three year service period but only if, within four years from the date of grant, the 20 trading day average of the closing price of the Company’s stock (subject to dividend-related adjustments) exceeds a target equal to a 25% increase from the closing price on the date of grant. These performance options have a seven-year contractual life.

A summary of the Company’s performance stock option activity as of December 31, 2020, and changes during the year then ended, are presented below:

	Number of Shares	Weighted Average Exercise Price	Weighted Average Remaining Contractual Term (in years)	Aggregate Intrinsic Value (in thousands)
Outstanding as of December 31, 2019	164,013	\$ 31.73		
Outstanding as of December 31, 2020	164,013	\$ 31.73	3.21	\$ 1,206
Vested as of December 31, 2020	150,697	\$ 30.95	3.19	\$ 1,206
Exercisable as of December 31, 2020	150,697	\$ 30.95	3.19	\$ 1,206

As of December 31, 2020, all related compensation expense has been fully recognized. No performance stock options were granted during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018.

Non-Vested Shares

The Company’s 2017 Plan (and previously, the 2013 Plan and 2005 Plan), permits restricted stock units, restricted stock awards, performance stock units, and performance stock awards (collectively “stock awards”). The fair value of non-vested shares with a service condition and/or a performance condition that affect vesting is equal to the closing sale price of the Company’s common stock on the grant date. Compensation expense is recognized only for the awards that ultimately vest. The Company has certain share awards that include market conditions that affect vesting. These shares vest based on the Company’s three-year relative total stockholder return compared to the other companies in the S&P SmallCap 600 Financial Sector Index as of the date of grant. The fair value of these shares is estimated using a lattice model. For the majority of non-vested shares,

shares are issued on the vesting dates net of the number of shares needed to satisfy minimal statutory tax withholding requirements. The tax obligations are then paid by the Company on behalf of the employees.

A summary of the Company's stock award activities as of December 31, 2020, and changes during the year then ended, is presented below:

	Non-Vested Shares ⁽¹⁾	Weighted Average Grant Date Fair Value
Non-vested as of December 31, 2019	922,530	\$ 33.11
Awarded	443,101	\$ 38.51
Vested	(389,484)	\$ 35.45
Cancelled	(33,629)	\$ 39.68
Non-vested as of December 31, 2020	<u>942,518</u>	<u>\$ 35.29</u>

(1) Certain of the Company's stock awards have a vesting matrix under which the stock awards can vest at a maximum level that is 200% of the shares that would vest for achieving the performance goals at target. The number of shares presented is based on achieving the performance goals at target levels as defined in the stock award agreements. As of December 31, 2020 and 2019, the maximum number of non-vested performance shares that could vest under the provisions of the agreements was 1,255,445 and 1,171,334, respectively.

Unrecognized compensation expense related to non-vested shares as of December 31, 2020 was \$15.4 million. The weighted-average remaining expense period, based on the unamortized value of these outstanding non-vested shares, was approximately 1.2 years. The fair value of restricted stock units and restricted stock awards vested for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018 was \$14.5 million, \$8.9 million, and \$8.8 million, respectively. The weighted average grant date fair value for stock awards granted during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018 was \$38.51, \$32.42, and \$38.52, respectively.

Note 10: Income Taxes

Income before provision for income taxes consisted of the following (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
US	\$ 259,132	\$ 144,495	\$ 61,972
Foreign	23,766	56,747	94,516
Total income before provision for income taxes	<u>\$ 282,898</u>	<u>\$ 201,242</u>	<u>\$ 156,488</u>

The provision for income tax on earnings from continuing operations consisted of the following (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Current expense (benefit):			
Federal	\$ 43,185	\$ (2,917)	\$ 23,254
State	8,528	(6,464)	2,983
Foreign	10,112	21,008	29,532
	<u>61,825</u>	<u>11,627</u>	<u>55,769</u>
Deferred expense (benefit):			
Federal	15,851	27,640	(10,447)
State	2,192	5,535	(2,169)
Foreign	(9,494)	(12,469)	3,599
	<u>8,549</u>	<u>20,706</u>	<u>(9,017)</u>
Provision for income taxes	<u>\$ 70,374</u>	<u>\$ 32,333</u>	<u>\$ 46,752</u>

The reconciliation of federal statutory income tax rate to our effective tax rate was as follows:

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Federal provision	21.0 %	21.0 %	21.0 %
State provision	3.2 %	0.2 %	0.1 %
Foreign rate differential ⁽¹⁾	(0.5)%	(2.2)%	(11.7)%
Change in valuation allowance ⁽²⁾	0.9 %	(0.5)%	17.7 %
IRS settlement ⁽³⁾	— %	(2.4)%	— %
Tax effect of CFPB settlement fees ⁽⁴⁾	1.1 %	— %	— %
Other	(0.8)%	— %	2.8 %
Effective rate	<u>24.9 %</u>	<u>16.1 %</u>	<u>29.9 %</u>

(1) Relates primarily to lower tax rates on income or loss attributable to international operations.

(2) In 2018, valuation allowance net increase recorded as a result of certain foreign subsidiaries' cumulative operating losses for tax purposes.

(3) In 2019, relates to tax benefit resulting from tax accounting method change.

(4) Non-deductible expense for tax purposes. Refer to "Note 12: Commitments and Contingencies" for details of the CFPB settlement.

The Company's subsidiary in Costa Rica is operating under a 100% tax holiday through December 31, 2026. The impact of the tax holiday in Costa Rica for the year ended December 31, 2020 was immaterial.

The Company has not provided for applicable income or withholding taxes on the undistributed earnings from continuing operations for certain of its subsidiaries operating outside of the United States. Undistributed net income of these subsidiaries as of December 31, 2020, were approximately \$71.3 million. Such undistributed earnings are considered permanently reinvested. The Company does not provide deferred taxes on translation adjustments of unremitted earnings under the indefinite reinvestment exemption. Determination of the amount of unrecognized deferred tax liability related to these earnings is not practical due to the complexities of a hypothetical calculation. Subsidiaries operating outside of the United States for which the Company does not consider under the indefinite reinvestment exemption have no material undistributed earnings or outside basis differences.

Deferred income taxes reflect the net effects of temporary differences between the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for financial reporting purposes and the carrying amounts for income tax purposes. Significant components of the Company's deferred tax assets and liabilities were as follows (*in thousands*):

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Deferred tax assets:		
Net operating losses	\$ 43,307	\$ 36,236
Operating lease liabilities	12,583	18,023
Accrued expenses	12,862	10,050
Difference in basis of bond and loan costs	1,267	4,194
Stock-based compensation	2,787	2,882
Other	5,596	1,822
Total deferred tax assets	78,402	73,207
Valuation allowance	(38,463)	(36,422)
Total deferred tax assets net of valuation allowance	39,939	36,785
Deferred tax liabilities:		
Deferred court cost	—	(23,682)
Difference in basis of receivable portfolio	(20,806)	(57)
Right-of-use asset	(8,525)	(14,422)
Difference in basis of depreciable and amortizable assets	(13,863)	(3,680)
Prepaid expenses	(793)	(628)
Other	(1,682)	(4,559)
Total deferred tax liabilities	(45,669)	(47,028)
Net deferred tax liability ⁽¹⁾	\$ (5,730)	\$ (10,243)

(1) The Company operates in multiple jurisdictions. Deferred tax assets and liabilities are netted for each tax-paying component of the Company within a particular tax jurisdiction and presented as a single amount in the statement of financial condition.

As of December 31, 2020, certain of the Company's foreign subsidiaries have net operating loss carry forwards of approximately \$155.3 million, which will begin to expire in 2024. Certain of the Company's domestic subsidiaries have state net operating losses which the Company expects to fully utilize upon filing the 2020 income tax returns.

Valuation allowances are recorded against deferred tax assets, including certain net operating losses recorded as deferred tax assets, if the Company believes that it is more likely than not that some or all of the deferred tax assets will not be realized. As of December 31, 2020, valuation allowances increased to \$38.5 million, as compared to \$36.4 million as of December 31, 2019. The increase was primarily related to current period losses at certain foreign entities with cumulative operating losses during the period ended December 31, 2020.

A reconciliation of the beginning and ending amounts of unrecognized tax benefit is as follows (*in thousands*):

	Amount
Balance as of December 31, 2017	\$ 20,020
Increases related to prior year tax positions	256
Increases related to current year tax positions	1,958
Decrease related to expiration of statute of limitations	(3,221)
Decreases related to settlements with taxing authorities	(461)
Balance as of December 31, 2018	18,552
Decreases related to prior year tax positions	(10,673)
Increases related to current year tax positions	4,442
Decrease related to expiration of statute of limitations	(2,493)
Decreases related to settlements with taxing authorities	(1,920)
Balance as of December 31, 2019	7,908
Decrease related to prior year tax positions	(608)
Increases related to prior year tax positions	6
Increases related to current year tax positions	574
Decrease related to expiration of statute of limitations	(827)
Decreases related to settlements with taxing authorities	(272)
Balance as of December 31, 2020	\$ 6,781

The Company had gross unrecognized tax benefits, inclusive of penalties and interest, of \$6.9 million, \$8.2 million and \$19.9 million as of December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018 respectively. As of December 31, 2020, 2019 and 2018, there was \$6.5 million, \$7.6 million and \$13.0 million, respectively, of unrecognized tax benefit that if recognized, would result in a net tax benefit. During the year ended December 31, 2020, the decrease in the Company's gross unrecognized tax benefit was primarily related to the expiration of state statute of limitations. During the year ended December 31, 2019, the decrease in the Company's gross unrecognized tax benefit was primarily related to decreases in prior year tax positions from exam resolutions. During the year ended December 31, 2018, the decrease in the Company's gross unrecognized tax benefit was primarily related to expiration of state statute of limitations.

The Company believes that an adequate provision has been made for any adjustments that may result from tax examinations. However, it is reasonably possible that certain changes may occur within the next 12 months, which could significantly increase or decrease the balance of the Company's gross unrecognized tax benefits.

The Company recognizes interest and penalties related to unrecognized tax benefits as a component of tax expense. The Company recognized expense of \$0.2 million, benefit of \$2.7 million and expense of \$0.6 million in interest and penalties during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019 and 2018, respectively. Interest and penalties accrued as of December 31, 2020 and 2019 were \$0.2 million and \$0.3 million, respectively.

The Company files federal, state and non-U.S. income tax returns in jurisdictions with varying statutes of limitations. The Company is no longer subject to federal tax examinations for years prior to 2018. For U.S. state tax returns, the Company is generally not subject to tax examinations prior to 2013. The Company is subject to the examination of its income tax returns by various taxing authorities, and the timing of the resolution of income tax examinations cannot be predicted with certainty. The Company's management regularly assesses the likelihood of adverse outcomes resulting from these examinations to determine the adequacy of the Company's provision for income taxes. If any issues addressed in the Company's tax examinations are resolved in a manner not consistent with management's expectations, the Company could be required to adjust its provision for income taxes in the period such resolution occurs.

Note 11: Leases

The majority of the Company's leases are for corporate offices, various facilities, and information technology equipment. The Company elected not to apply the recognition requirements to short-term leases and not to separate non-lease components from lease components.

The Company recognizes operating lease right-of-use ("ROU") assets and operating lease liabilities in the consolidated statements of financial condition. ROU assets represent the Company's right to use an underlying asset during the lease term

and lease liabilities represent the Company's obligation to make lease payments arising from the lease. ROU assets and lease liabilities are recognized at commencement date based on the net present value of fixed lease payments over the lease term. The Company's lease term includes options to extend or terminate the lease when it is reasonably certain that it will exercise that option. ROU assets also include any advance lease payments made and are net of any lease incentives. As most of the Company's operating leases do not provide an implicit rate, the Company uses its incremental borrowing rate based on the information available at commencement date in determining the present value of lease payments. The incremental borrowing rate is the rate of interest that the Company would expect to pay to borrow over a similar term, and on a collateralized basis, an amount equal to the lease payments in a similar economic environment.

The components of lease expense were as follows during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,	
	2020	2019
Operating lease costs ⁽¹⁾	\$ 16,331	\$ 19,450
Finance lease costs		
Amortization of ROU assets	3,149	1,825
Interest on lease liabilities	420	563
Total lease costs	\$ 19,900	\$ 21,838

(1) Operating lease expenses are included in general and administrative expenses in the Company's consolidated statements of operations. Costs include short-term and variable lease components which were not material for the periods presented.

The following table provides supplemental consolidated statement of financial condition information related to leases as of the dates presented (*in thousands*):

	Classification	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Assets			
Operating lease ROU assets	Other assets	\$ 72,164	\$ 75,254
Finance lease ROU assets	Property and equipment, net	12,410	9,133
Total lease ROU assets		\$ 84,574	\$ 84,387
Liabilities			
Operating lease liabilities	Other liabilities	\$ 90,659	\$ 93,847
Finance lease liabilities	Borrowings	8,288	8,121
Total lease liabilities		\$ 98,947	\$ 101,968

Supplemental lease information is summarized below (*in thousands, except rate and lease term*):

	Year Ended December 31,	
	2020	2019
ROU assets obtained in exchange for new operating lease obligations ⁽¹⁾	\$ 8,990	\$ 123,477
ROU assets obtained in exchange for new finance lease obligations	3,276	5,299
Cash paid for amounts included in the measurement of lease liabilities		
Operating leases - operating cash flows	17,396	14,874
Finance leases - operating cash flows	419	295
Finance leases - financing cash flows	3,114	1,898

(1) During the year ended December 31, 2019, the amount includes \$89.1 million for operating leases existing as of January 1, 2019.

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
Weighted-average remaining lease term (<i>in years</i>)		
Operating leases	7.1	8.1
Finance leases	2.5	3.1
Weighted-average discount rate		
Operating leases ⁽¹⁾	5.0 %	5.3 %
Finance leases	4.6 %	4.7 %

(1) Upon adoption of the new lease standard, discount rates used for existing operating leases were established at January 1, 2019.

Maturities of lease liabilities under non-cancelable leases as of December 31, 2020 are summarized as follows (*in thousands*):

	Finance Leases	Operating Leases	Total
2021	\$ 3,674	\$ 19,440	\$ 23,114
2022	3,410	15,872	19,282
2023	1,467	14,311	15,778
2024	241	14,474	14,715
2025	—	11,612	11,612
Thereafter	—	37,776	37,776
Total undiscounted lease payments	8,792	113,485	122,277
Less: imputed interest	(504)	(22,826)	(23,330)
Total lease liabilities	\$ 8,288	\$ 90,659	\$ 98,947

Note 12: Commitments and Contingencies

Litigation and Regulatory

The Company is involved in disputes, legal actions, regulatory investigations, inquiries, and other actions from time to time in the ordinary course of business. The Company, along with others in its industry, is routinely subject to legal actions based on the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (“FDCPA”), comparable state statutes, the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”), state and federal unfair competition statutes, and common law causes of action. The violations of law investigated or alleged in these actions often include claims that the Company lacks specified licenses to conduct its business, attempts to collect debts on which the statute of limitations has run, has made inaccurate or unsupported assertions of fact in support of its collection actions and/or has acted improperly in connection with its efforts to contact consumers. Such litigation and regulatory actions could involve potential compensatory or punitive damage claims, fines, sanctions, injunctive relief, or changes in business practices. Many continue on for some length of time and involve substantial investigation, litigation, negotiation, and other expense and effort before a result is achieved, and during the process the Company often cannot determine the substance or timing of any eventual outcome.

In September 2015, the Company entered into a consent order (the “2015 Consent Order”) with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (the “CFPB”) in which the Company settled allegations arising from its practices between 2011 and 2015. On September 8, 2020, a suit captioned Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection v. Encore Capital Group, Inc. et al. was filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of California. In the suit, the CFPB alleged that the Company did not perfectly adhere to certain operational provisions of the 2015 Consent Order, leading to alleged violations of federal consumer financial law. On October 15, 2020, the parties entered into a stipulated judgment (“Stipulated Judgment”) to resolve the lawsuit. The Stipulated Judgment includes obligations on the Company to, among other things: (1) continue to follow a narrow subset of the operational requirements contained in the 2015 Consent Order, all of which have long been part of the Company’s routine practices; (2) pay a \$15.0 million civil monetary penalty; and (3) provide redress of approximately \$9,000 to 14 affected consumers, which is in addition to approximately \$70,000 of redress that the Company had previously voluntarily provided. Under the Stipulated Judgment, the Company neither admits nor denies the allegations in the CFPB’s suit. In connection with the Stipulated Judgment the CFPB has formally terminated the 2015 Consent Order. As a result of the Stipulated Judgment the Company recorded an after-tax charge of \$15.0 million, which is included in the general and administration expenses in its consolidated statements of operations for the year ended December 31, 2020.

Additionally, we are subject to ancillary state Attorney General investigations related to similar debt collection practices. In 2018, we entered into settlement agreements with the Attorneys General of 42 U.S. states and the District of Columbia in connection with our debt collection and litigation practices. The Company has discussed with additional state attorneys general potential resolution of these investigations, which could include penalties, restitution, and/or the adoption of new operational requirements. If the Company is unable to resolve its differences with the state attorneys general, it is possible that they may file claims against the Company.

In certain legal proceedings, the Company may have recourse to insurance or third-party contractual indemnities to cover all or portions of its litigation expenses, judgments, or settlements. The Company records loss contingencies in its financial statements only for matters in which losses are probable and can be reasonably estimated. Where a range of loss can be reasonably estimated with no best estimate in the range, the Company records the minimum estimated liability. The Company continuously assesses the potential liability related to its pending litigation and regulatory matters and revises its estimates when additional information becomes available. The Company's legal costs are recorded to expense as incurred.

As of December 31, 2020, the Company has no material reserves for legal matters.

Purchase Commitments

In the normal course of business, the Company enters into forward flow purchase agreements. A forward flow purchase agreement is a commitment to purchase receivables over a duration that is typically three to twelve months, but can be longer, generally with a specifically defined volume range, frequency, and pricing. Typically, these forward flow contracts have provisions that allow for early termination or price re-negotiation should the underlying quality of the portfolio deteriorate over time or if any particular month's delivery is materially different than the original portfolio used to price the forward flow contract. Certain of these forward flow purchase agreements may also have termination clauses, whereby the agreements can be canceled by either party upon providing a certain specified amount of notice.

As of December 31, 2020, the Company had entered into forward flow purchase agreements for the purchase of nonperforming loans with an estimated minimum aggregate purchase price of approximately \$157.4 million. We expect actual purchases under these forward flow purchase agreements to be significantly greater than the estimated minimum aggregate purchase price.

Employee Savings and Retirement Plan

The Company has a 401(k) Savings Plan that qualifies as deferred salary arrangements under Section 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code. Under the 401(k) Plan, matching contributions are based upon the amount of the employees' contributions subject to certain limitations. The Company recognized expense of approximately \$2.9 million, \$2.8 million, and \$2.5 million for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively.

Guarantees

Encore's Certificate of Incorporation and indemnification agreements between the Company and its officers and directors provide that the Company will indemnify and hold harmless its officers and directors for certain events or occurrences arising as a result of the officer or director serving in such capacity. The Company has also agreed to indemnify certain third parties under certain circumstances pursuant to the terms of certain underwriting agreements, registration rights agreements, credit facilities, portfolio purchase and sale agreements, and other agreements entered into by the Company in the ordinary course of business. The maximum potential amount of future payments the Company could be required to make under these indemnification agreements is unlimited. The Company believes the estimated fair value of these indemnification agreements is minimal and, as of December 31, 2020, has no liabilities recorded for these agreements.

Note 13: Segment and Geographic Information

The Company conducts business through several operating segments. The Company's management relies on internal management reporting processes that provide segment revenue, segment operating income, and segment asset information in order to make financial decisions and allocate resources. The Company determined its operating segments meet the aggregation criteria, and therefore, it has one reportable segment, portfolio purchasing and recovery, based on similarities among the operating units including economic characteristics, the nature of the services, the nature of the production process, customer types for their services, the methods used to provide their services and the nature of the regulatory environment.

The following tables present information about geographic areas in which the Company operates (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2020	2019	2018
Total revenues ⁽¹⁾ :			
United States	\$ 992,916	\$ 817,693	\$ 709,493
International			
Europe ⁽²⁾	490,385	520,433	556,265
Other geographies	18,099	59,555	96,272
Total	\$ 1,501,400	\$ 1,397,681	\$ 1,362,030

(1) Total revenues for periods in 2019 and 2018 are adjusted by net allowances. Total revenues are attributed to countries based on consumer location.

(2) Based on the financial information that is used to produce the general-purpose financial statements, providing further geographic information is impracticable.

	December 31,	
	2020	2019
Long-lived assets ⁽¹⁾ :		
United States	\$ 83,523	\$ 84,118
International		
United Kingdom	37,225	28,602
Other foreign countries	6,549	7,331
Total	\$ 127,297	\$ 120,051

(1) Long-lived assets consist of property and equipment, net and finance leases.

Note 14: Goodwill and Identifiable Intangible Assets

The Company's goodwill is attributable to reporting units included in its portfolio purchasing and recovery segment. Goodwill is tested for impairment at the reporting unit level annually and in interim periods if certain events occur that indicate that the fair value of a reporting unit may be below its carrying value. Determining the number of reporting units and the fair value of a reporting unit requires the Company to make judgments and involves the use of significant estimates and assumptions. The Company performs its annual goodwill impairment assessment as of October 1. As of October 1, 2020, the Company had two reporting units, MCM and Cabot, that carried goodwill.

The Company first assesses qualitative factors to determine whether it is necessary to perform the quantitative goodwill impairment test. The qualitative factors include economic environment, business climate, market capitalization, operating performance, competition, and other factors. The Company may proceed directly to the quantitative test without performing the qualitative test. For the goodwill impairment tests performed as of October 1, 2020, the Company updated its consideration of the current and expected future economic and market conditions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on each of the reporting units. The Company performed qualitative analysis for the MCM reporting unit and proceeded directly to the quantitative test for its Cabot reporting unit.

If goodwill is quantitatively assessed for impairment and a reporting unit's carrying value exceeds its fair value, the difference is recorded as an impairment. The Company applies various valuation techniques to measure the fair value of each reporting unit, including the income approach and the market approach. For goodwill impairment analyses, the Company uses the income approach in determining fair value, specifically the discounted cash flow method, or DCF. In applying the DCF method, an identified level of future cash flow is estimated. Annual estimated cash flows and a terminal value are then discounted to their present value at an appropriate discount rate to obtain an indication of fair value. The discount rate utilized reflects estimates of required rates of return for investments that are seen as similar to an investment in the reporting unit. DCF analyses are based on management's long-term financial projections and require significant judgments. Therefore, for the Company's reporting units where the Company has access to reliable market participant data, the market approach is conducted in addition to the income approach in determining the fair value. The Company uses a guideline company method under the market approach to estimate the fair value of equity and the market value of invested capital ("MVIC"). The guideline company approach relies on estimated remaining collections data or the earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization

(“EBITDA”) for each of the selected guideline companies, which enables a direct comparison between the reporting unit and the selected peer group. The Company believes that the current methodology used in determining the fair value at its reporting units represent its best estimates. In addition, the Company compares the aggregate fair value of the reporting units to its overall market capitalization.

Based on the annual goodwill impairment tests performed at October 1, 2020, no goodwill impairment existed at these two reporting units.

On August 15, 2019, the Company completed the sale of Baycorp. The Company concluded that the fair value of Baycorp immediately prior to the sale was less than its recorded book value and, as a result, the entire goodwill balance carried at the Baycorp reporting unit of \$10.7 million was impaired. The goodwill impairment is included in operating expenses in the Company’s consolidated statements of operations during the year ended December 31, 2019.

Management continues to evaluate and monitor all key factors impacting the carrying value of the Company’s recorded goodwill and long-lived assets. Further adverse changes in the Company’s actual or expected operating results, market capitalization, business climate, economic factors or other negative events that may be outside the control of management could result in a material non-cash impairment charge in the future.

The Company’s goodwill is attributable to reporting units included in its portfolio purchasing and recovery segment. The following table summarizes the activity in the Company’s goodwill balance during the periods presented (*in thousands*):

	Year Ended December 31,	
	2020	2019
Balance as of beginning of period:	\$ 884,185	\$ 868,126
Goodwill impairment	—	(10,718)
Effect of foreign currency translation	22,777	26,777
Balance as of end of period:	\$ 906,962	\$ 884,185

The Company’s acquired intangible assets are summarized as follows (*in thousands*):

	As of December 31, 2020			As of December 31, 2019		
	Gross Carrying Amount	Accumulated Amortization	Net Carrying Amount	Gross Carrying Amount	Accumulated Amortization	Net Carrying Amount
Customer relationships	\$ 66,796	\$ (22,714)	\$ 44,082	\$ 67,897	\$ (18,191)	\$ 49,706
Developed technologies	5,048	(4,760)	288	4,734	(4,124)	610
Trade name and other	6,644	(6,002)	642	6,299	(5,244)	1,055
Total intangible assets	\$ 78,488	\$ (33,476)	\$ 45,012	\$ 78,930	\$ (27,559)	\$ 51,371

The weighted-average useful lives of intangible assets at the time of acquisition were as follows (*in years*):

	Weighted-Average Useful Lives
Customer relationships	10
Developed technologies	5
Trade name and other	7

The amortization expense for intangible assets subject to amortization was \$8.0 million, \$7.7 million, and \$11.7 million during the years ended December 31, 2020, 2019, and 2018, respectively. Estimated future amortization expense related to finite-lived intangible assets as of December 31, 2020 is as follows (*in thousands*):

2021	\$	6,746
2022		6,720
2023		6,361
2024		6,274
2025		6,226
Thereafter		12,685
Total	\$	<u>45,012</u>

Subsidiaries of Encore Capital Group, Inc.

As of December 31, 2020

<u>Name</u>	<u>Jurisdiction of Incorporation or Formation</u>
Apex Credit Management Limited	United Kingdom
Asset Acceptance Capital Corp.	Delaware
Asset Acceptance, LLC	Delaware
Atlantic Credit & Finance Special Finance Unit III, LLC	Virginia
Atlantic Credit & Finance Special Finance Unit, LLC	Virginia
Atlantic Credit & Finance, Inc.	Virginia
Black Tip Capital Holdings Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Asset Purchases (Ireland) Limited	Ireland
Cabot Credit Management Group Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Credit Management Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Financial (Europe) Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Financial (Ireland) Limited	Ireland
Cabot Financial (Luxembourg) S.A.	Luxembourg
Cabot Financial (Luxembourg) II S.A.	Luxembourg
Cabot Financial Spain SAU	Spain
Cabot Financial (UK) Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Financial Debt Recovery Services Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Financial Holdings Group Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Financial Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Holdings S.à r.l.	Luxembourg
Cabot Securitisation Europe Limited	Ireland
Cabot Securitisation (UK) Holdings II Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Securitisation (UK) II Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Securitisation Topco Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Securitisation UK Holdings Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot Securitisation UK Limited	United Kingdom
Cabot UK Holdco Limited	United Kingdom
Dessetec Desarrollo de Sistemas, S.A. de C.V.	Mexico
Encore Asset Reconstruction Company Private Limited	India
Encore Capital Europe Finance Limited	Jersey
Encore Capital Group Singapore Pte. Ltd.	Singapore
Encore Capital Group UK Limited	United Kingdom
Encore Europe Holdings S.à r.l.	Luxembourg
Encore Holdings Luxembourg S.à r.l.	Luxembourg

<u>Name</u>	<u>Jurisdiction of Incorporation or Formation</u>
Encore Luxembourg Brazil S.à r.l.	Luxembourg
Encore Mexico Nominee LLC	Delaware
Encoremex Holdings S. de R.L. de C.V.	Mexico
Financial Investigations and Recoveries (Europe) Limited	United Kingdom
GC Encore Euro S.à r.l.	Luxembourg
Hillesden Securities Limited	United Kingdom
Janus Holdings Luxembourg S.à r.l.	Luxembourg
Marlin Financial Group Limited	United Kingdom
Marlin Financial Intermediate II Limited	United Kingdom
Marlin Financial Intermediate Limited	United Kingdom
Marlin Intermediate Holdings Limited	United Kingdom
Marlin Legal Services Limited	United Kingdom
Marlin Midway Limited	United Kingdom
Marlin Portfolio Holdings Limited	United Kingdom
Marlin Senior Holdings Limited	United Kingdom
MCM Midland Management Costa Rica, S.R.L.	Costa Rica
Midland Credit Management India Private Limited	India
Midland Credit Management, Inc.	Kansas
Midland Funding LLC	Delaware
Midland India LLC	Minnesota
Midland International LLC	Delaware
Midland Portfolio Services, Inc.	Delaware
Mortimer Clarke Solicitors Limited	United Kingdom
MRC Receivables Corporation	Delaware
RF Encore S.A.S.	Colombia
Wescot Acquisitions Limited	United Kingdom
Wescot Credit Services Limited	United Kingdom
Wescot Topco Limited	United Kingdom

The names of certain subsidiaries are omitted pursuant to Item 601(b)(21)(ii) of Regulation S-K.

List of Issuers of Guaranteed Securities

As of December 31, 2020, the following subsidiary was the issuer of the 4.50% Exchangeable Senior Notes due 2023 guaranteed by Encore Capital Group, Inc.

Name of Subsidiary	Jurisdiction of Organization
Encore Capital Europe Finance Limited	Jersey

Consent of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm

Encore Capital Group, Inc.
San Diego, California

We hereby consent to the incorporation by reference in the Registration Statements on Form S-3ASR (Nos. 333-226189 and 333-227542), Form S-3 (No. 333-115551) and Form S-8 (Nos. 333-125340, 333-125341, 333-125342, 333-160042, 333-189860, and 333-218877) of Encore Capital Group, Inc. of our reports dated February 24, 2021, relating to the consolidated financial statements and the effectiveness of Encore Capital Group, Inc.'s internal control over financial reporting, which appear in this Form 10-K.

/s/ BDO USA, LLP

San Diego, California
February 24, 2021

ENCORE CAPITAL GROUP, INC.

**CERTIFICATION OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
PURSUANT TO 18 U.S.C. SECTION 1350,
AS ADOPTED PURSUANT TO
SECTION 906 OF THE SARBANES-OXLEY ACT OF 2002**

In connection with the Annual Report of Encore Capital Group, Inc. (the "Company") on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2020 as filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on the date hereof (the "Report"), each of the undersigned certifies, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section 1350, as adopted pursuant to Section 906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, that to the best of his knowledge:

- (1) The Report fully complies with the requirements of section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended; and
- (2) The information contained in the Report fairly presents, in all material respects, the consolidated financial condition and results of operations of the Company.

/s/ ASHISH MASIH

Ashish Masih

President and Chief Executive Officer

February 24, 2021

/s/ JONATHAN C. CLARK

Jonathan C. Clark

**Executive Vice President,
Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer**

February 24, 2021

This certification accompanies the above described Report and is being furnished pursuant to Section 906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and shall be not be deemed filed as part of the Report.