



# Aon Plc (AON)

Updated November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 by Josh Arnold

## Key Metrics

<b>Current Price:</b>	\$207	<b>5 Year CAGR Estimate:</b>	8.5%	<b>Market Cap:</b>	\$47 B
<b>Fair Value Price:</b>	\$185	<b>5 Year Growth Estimate:</b>	10.0%	<b>Ex-Dividend Date:</b>	01/30/21 <sup>1</sup>
<b>% Fair Value:</b>	112%	<b>5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:</b>	-2.2%	<b>Dividend Payment Date:</b>	02/15/21 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Dividend Yield:</b>	0.9%	<b>5 Year Price Target</b>	\$298	<b>Years Of Dividend Growth:</b>	9
<b>Dividend Risk Score:</b>	C	<b>Retirement Suitability Score:</b>	F	<b>Last Dividend Increase:</b>	4.5%

## Overview & Current Events

Aon is a professional services firm headquartered in London, United Kingdom. The company provides a variety of services including consulting, risk management, and health plan management. Aon has approximately 500 offices worldwide that serve 120 countries through a workforce that numbers nearly 70,000. U.S. investors can initiate an ownership stake in Aon through American Depositary Receipts that trade with a market capitalization of \$47 billion on the New York Stock Exchange, under the ticker AON. Aon should generate around \$11 billion in revenue this year.

Aon reported third quarter earnings on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 with results coming in slightly better than expected on both the top and bottom lines, as Aon continues to perform quite well in a tough environment. Total revenue was flat year-over-year at \$2.4 billion, including organic revenue that was flat. Operating margin rose once again, this time up 40bps on an adjusted basis to 22.4% of revenue. Earnings-per-share was up 6% on an adjusted basis to \$1.53 as the company reaped the benefits of a lower share count, as well as stronger margins. Free cash flow through the first three quarters of the year nearly doubled to \$1.9 billion.

The company also announced that its merger with Wills Towers Watson was approved by both sets of shareholders, as well as all necessary proposals to move forward with the combination. Aon also bought back 2.4 million shares for \$500 million, announced a new \$5 billion share repurchase authorization, and boosted the dividend by 4.5%, the ninth consecutive annual dividend increase.

We've left our estimate of earnings-per-share at \$9.75 for this year.

## Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025
<b>EPS</b>	\$2.46	\$2.86	\$2.99	\$3.53	\$4.66	\$4.88	\$5.16	\$6.52	\$8.16	\$9.17	<b>\$9.75</b>	<b>\$15.70</b>
<b>DPS</b>	\$0.60	\$0.60	\$0.62	\$0.68	\$0.92	\$1.15	\$1.29	\$1.41	\$1.56	\$1.72	<b>\$1.84</b>	<b>\$3.24</b>
<b>Shares<sup>3</sup></b>	332	325	311	301	280	270	262	254	245	237	<b>233</b>	<b>210</b>

Between 2009 and 2018, Aon compounded its adjusted earnings-per-share at a rate of 14% per year. Looking ahead, we believe that company's growth is likely to continue to be quite strong, albeit a bit slower than its historical pace. More specifically, we are forecasting 10% annualized earnings growth over a full economic cycle.

Management continues to be bullish, and rightfully so, as Aon's businesses are posting very strong rates of growth across the board, for the most part. We see expense savings as a driver of earnings growth along with the buyback, and organic revenue growth should continue to move the top line higher as well. Given the broad assortment of professional services the company offers as well as its global footprint, we are bullish on Aon's future. We note forex translation has been a sizable headwind in the past, but Aon has thus far been able to overcome that, and then some. The merger with Willis Towers Watson should produce somewhat higher growth, but we will await the merger to alter our growth estimates accordingly.

<sup>1</sup> Estimated date

<sup>2</sup> Estimated date

<sup>3</sup> Share count in millions

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The dividend should continue to rise at roughly the rate of earnings, and we have the payout at \$3.24 in 2025, up from the current \$1.84. Aon is not a high-yield stock by any means, but its dividend growth potential is strong.

## Valuation Analysis

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Now	2025
Avg. P/E	16.3	16.9	16.8	19.2	18.6	19.8	20.4	20.1	17.9	17.7	21.2	19.0
Avg. Yld.	1.5%	1.2%	1.2%	1.0%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%

Aon has traded at an average price-to-earnings ratio of 18.4 over the last decade. We believe that fair value for Aon lies somewhere around 19 times earnings. The company is trading for a price-to-earnings ratio of 21.2 using our 2020 earnings-per-share estimate. That implies a small headwind to total returns from the valuation, as Aon is trading just above our estimate of fair value. We see the yield staying about where it is for the foreseeable future.

## Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025
Payout	24%	21%	21%	19%	20%	24%	25%	22%	19%	19%	19%	21%

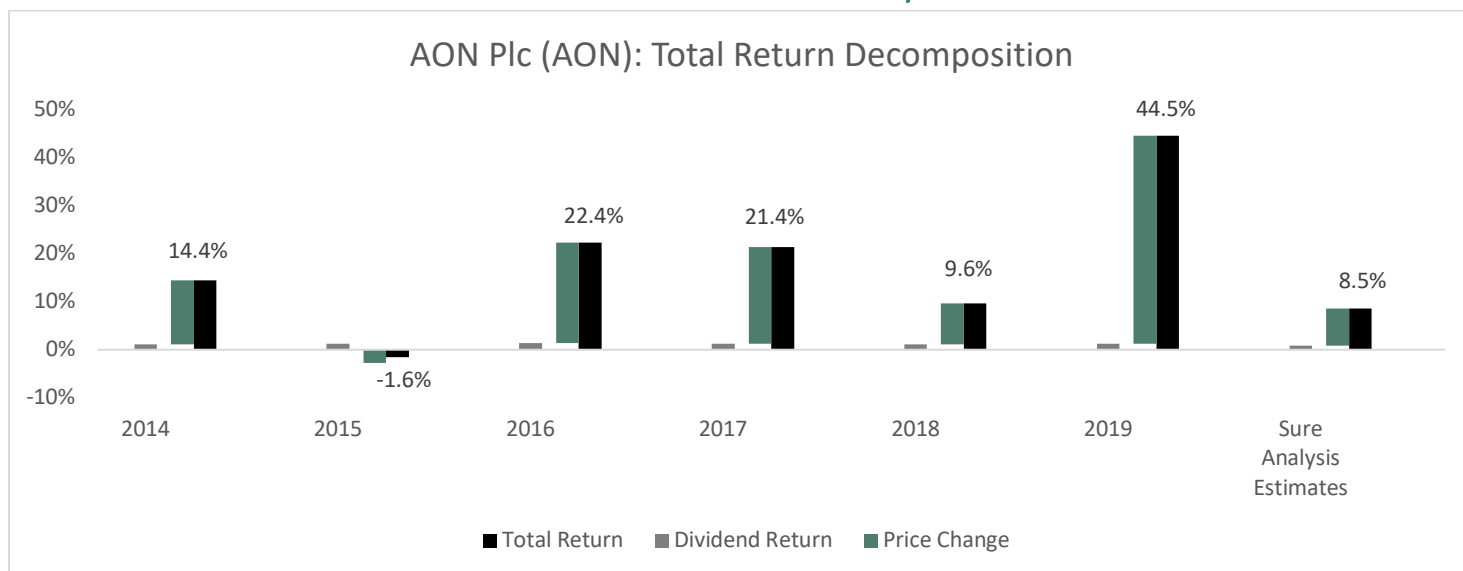
Aon's payout ratio is still very low, consistent with the company's historical practices, and we do not believe that will change. We see the dividend remaining around one-fifth of total earnings, so the payout is extremely safe. However, this means Aon is highly unlikely to have a meaningful yield anytime soon. Management did reiterate that it plans to protect the dividend during this period of uncertainty, so we see it as very safe.

Aon was resilient during the Great Recession and we expect that will be the case again; the product of its very diversified revenue streams. This is also a competitive advantage for the firm, along with its world-class client list and reputation.

## Final Thoughts & Recommendation

We are forecasting 8.5% total annual returns, consisting of the 0.9% yield, 10% earnings-per-share growth, and a small headwind from the valuation. With total returns coming down slightly due to the elevated valuation, we are moving Aon from buy to hold. Aon offers dividend growth potential, but also a long runway for earnings-per-share growth. The merger with Willis Towers Watson should help with future growth as well.

## Total Return Breakdown by Year



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## Income Statement Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenue	8512	11287	11514	11815	12045	9480	9409	9998	10770	11013
SG&A Exp.	2,171	3,124	3,209	3,199	3,065	1,951	1,765	2,039	2,354	2,226
D&A Exp.	305	582	655	635	594	338	319	891	769	564
Operating Profit	1,244	1,596	1,596	1,671	1,966	1,587	1,811	1,065	1,544	2,169
Operating Margin	14.6%	14.1%	13.9%	14.1%	16.3%	16.7%	19.2%	10.7%	14.3%	19.7%
Net Profit	706	979	993	1,113	1,397	1,385	1,396	1,226	1,134	1,532
Net Margin	8.3%	8.7%	8.6%	9.4%	11.6%	14.6%	14.8%	12.3%	10.5%	13.9%
Free Cash Flow	603	777	1,150	1,524	1,556	1,809	2,170	551	1,446	1,610
Income Tax	300	378	360	390	334	175	148	250	146	297

## Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Assets	28,982	29,552	30,486	30,251	29,772	26,883	26,615	26,088	26,422	29,405
Cash & Equivalents	346	272	291	477	374	384	426	756	656	790
Acc. Receivable		3,183	3,101	2,896	2,815	2,564	2,106	2,478	2,760	3,112
Goodwill & Int.	12,258	12,046	11,918	11,575	11,380	10,628	9,300	10,091	9,320	8,948
Total Liabilities	20,676	21,432	22,681	22,056	23,141	20,824	21,083	21,440	22,203	25,956
Accounts Payable		1,832	1,853	1,931	1,805	1,772	1,604	1,961	1,943	1,939
Long-Term Debt	4,506	4,492	4,165	4,389	5,582	5,700	6,205	5,966	6,244	7,339
Total Equity	8,251	8,078	7,762	8,145	6,571	6,002	5,475	4,583	4,151	3,375
D/E Ratio	0.55	0.56	0.54	0.54	0.85	0.95	1.13	1.30	1.50	2.17

## Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Return on Assets	2.7%	3.3%	3.3%	3.7%	4.7%	4.9%	5.2%	4.7%	4.3%	5.5%
Return on Equity	10.4%	12.0%	12.5%	14.0%	19.0%	22.0%	24.3%	24.4%	26.0%	40.7%
ROIC	7.0%	7.7%	8.1%	9.1%	11.3%	11.6%	11.9%	11.0%	10.8%	14.4%
Shares Out.	332	325	311	301	280	270	262	254	245	237
Revenue/Share	28.55	33.11	34.62	37.46	40.20	33.40	34.81	38.35	43.60	45.77
FCF/Share	2.02	2.28	3.46	4.83	5.19	6.37	8.03	2.11	5.85	6.69

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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