Increases in public debt to above 100 percent are reasonably frequent, with very diverse dynamics of the debt-to-GDP ratios. These episodes are clustered around four major eras: the last quarter of the 19th century, the periods following the two world wars, and the last quarter of the 20th century.

Figure 3.2. Debt-to-GDP Dynamics after Public Debt Reaches 100 Percent of GDP
(Percent of GDP, advanced economies)

Sources: Abbas and others (2010); and IMF staff calculations.
Note: BEL = Belgium; CAN = Canada; DEU = Germany; ESP = Spain; FRA = France; GBR = United Kingdom; GRC = Greece; IRL = Ireland; ISR = Israel; ITA = Italy; JPN = Japan; NLD = Netherlands; NZL = New Zealand; USA = United States. We consider all historical episodes when gross public debt rose above 100 percent of GDP and trace the evolution of the debt-to-GDP ratios for the subsequent 15 years. Where data are missing, dotted lines represent linear interpolations between available data points.