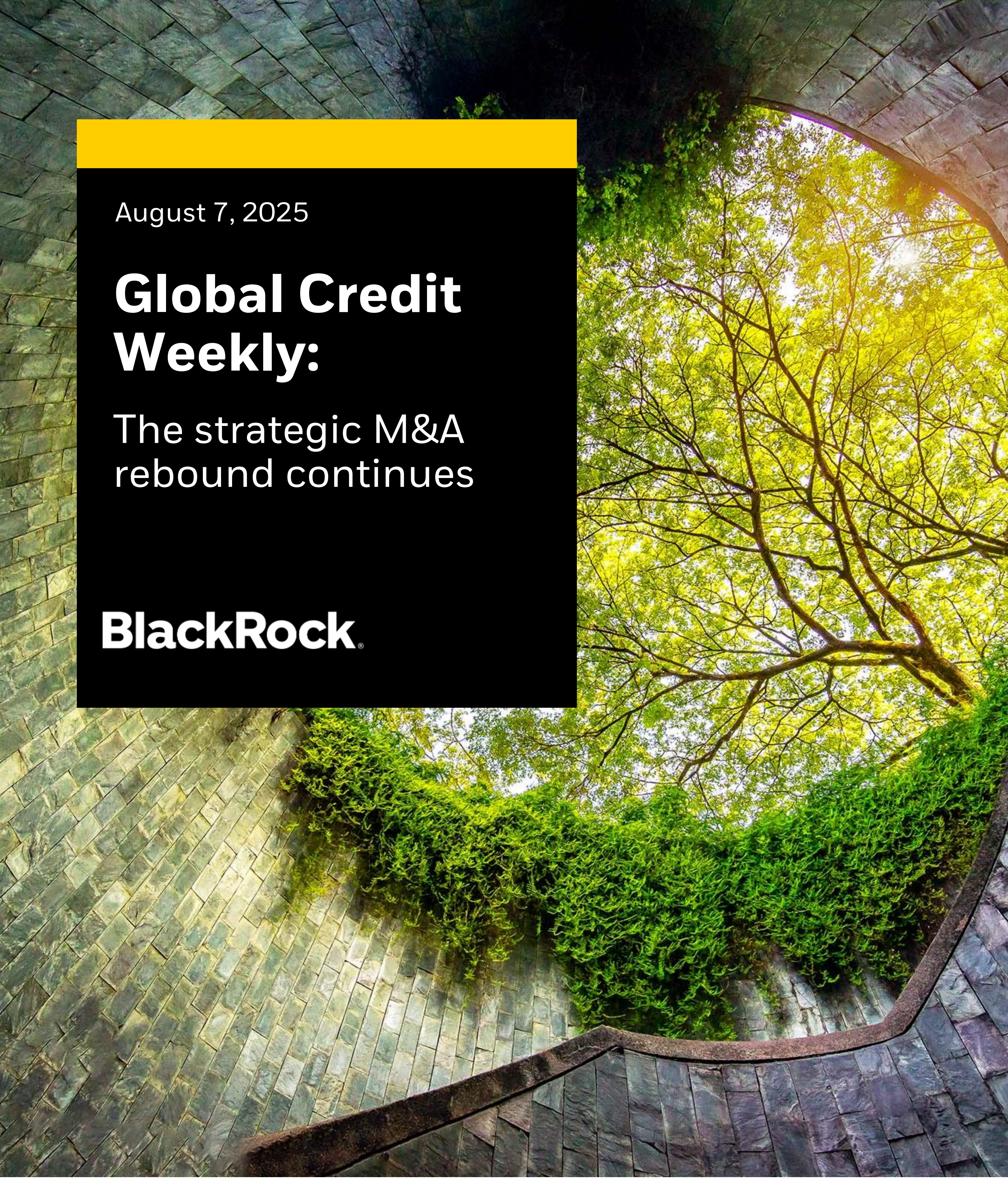


August 7, 2025

Global Credit Weekly:

The strategic M&A rebound continues

BlackRock

Market insights contributors

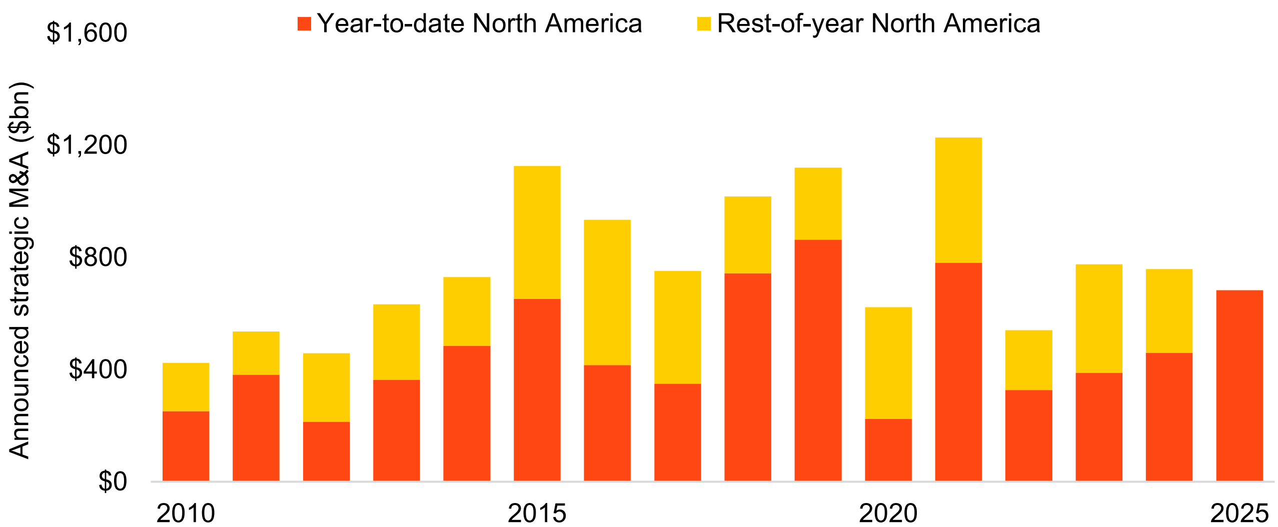
Amanda Lynam, CPA
Head of Macro Credit Research

Dominique Bly
Macro Credit Research Strategist

Key takeaways

- 2Q2025 earnings season has cleared the low bar of market consensus expectations. With 79% of the S&P 500 having reported (as of August 6th), 81% of companies have positively surprised – the strongest share of 'beats' since 3Q2023, per data tracked by Bloomberg Intelligence.
- Beyond earnings commentary from management teams, strategic M&A is also closely watched as a barometer of C-suite confidence. These deals often relate to long-term business objectives, such as product diversification, entering a new market, reaching a new customer, or acquiring new capabilities. They can also require significant investments.
- Data tracked by Dealogic shows an *acceleration* of announced strategic M&A activity in recent months – above and beyond the elevated volumes we highlighted in March and June of this year, when we pushed against the prevailing market narrative that aggregate deal-making was muted.
- So far in 3Q2025, companies based in North America have *already* announced $240 billion worth of strategic acquisitions (as of August 5th) – making the quarter the most active since 3Q2021, *with seven weeks more to go*. These volumes have been boosted by several large deals across a wide range of sectors, including Transportation, Metals & Steel, Technology, Healthcare, Financials, Oil & Gas, and Leisure & Recreation. And year-to-date volumes are now running at the most active pace since 2021 – which ultimately proved to be a record year (Exhibit 1).
- Beyond the aggregate strategic M&A volumes across regions, our analysis of the granular deal-level data for 2025 (YTD) reveals four key themes: (1) Large-cap 'mega' deals are back, (2) M&A is being used to build and add capabilities, and divestments are being used to refine focus, (3) sector 'leadership' has shifted so far in 2025, and (4) the financing mix is somewhat unfriendly for bondholders.

Exhibit 1: North American strategic M&A volumes have further accelerated in 3Q2025
Announced strategic M&A volumes by North American acquirers (in $bn), by year-to-date and rest-of-year periods. Captures deals valued at $1bn or more at announcement. Excludes cancelled and withdrawn deals.



Source: Dealogic (ION Analytics), BlackRock. As of August 6, 2025.

M&A volumes: another barometer of corporate confidence

2Q2025 earnings season has comfortably cleared the low bar of market consensus expectations. With 79% of the S&P 500 having reported (as of August 6th), 81% of companies have positively surprised – the strongest share of 'beats' since 3Q2023, per data tracked by Bloomberg Intelligence.

Beyond earnings commentary from management teams, corporate actions – such as mergers and acquisitions (M&A) – are also closely watched as a barometer of C-suite confidence. In this *Global Credit Weekly*, we focus on *strategic* M&A, which refers to transactions between corporates (as opposed to those involving a financial sponsor as a buyer and/or seller). These strategic M&A decisions provide insight into management teams' confidence in our view, because they are often related to longer-term business objectives, such as product diversification, entering a new market, reaching a new customer, or acquiring new capabilities. They can also require significant investments, at the high end of the size range.

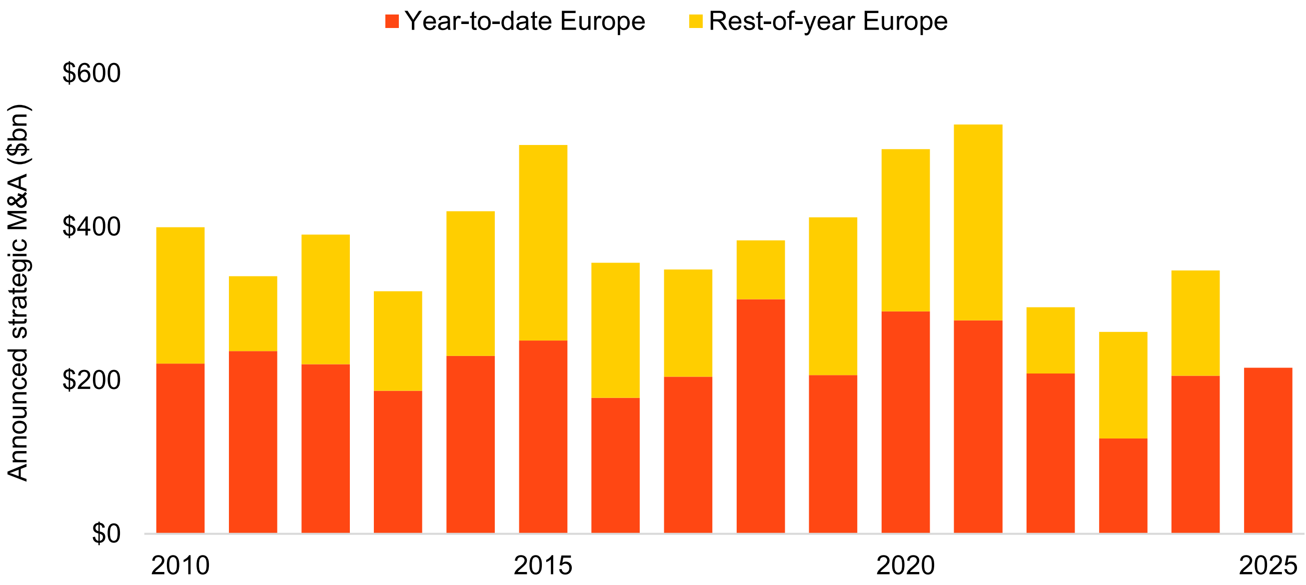
The strategic M&A rebound continues in 3Q2025, led by North America

Data tracked by Dealogic shows an acceleration of announced strategic M&A activity in recent months – above and beyond the elevated volumes we highlighted in March and June of this year, when we pushed against the prevailing market narrative that aggregate deal-making activity (inclusive of strategic and sponsor-related M&A) was depressed.

For example: so far in 3Q2025, companies based in North America have *already* announced $240 billion worth of strategic acquisitions (as of August 5th) – making the quarter the most active since 3Q2021, *with seven weeks more to go*. 3Q2025 North American strategic M&A volumes were boosted by several large deals across a wide range of sectors, including Transportation, Metals & Steel, Technology, Healthcare, Financials, Oil & Gas, and Leisure & Recreation. And as Exhibit 1 shows, year-to-date volumes are similarly running at the most active pace since 2021 – which ultimately proved to be a record year for North American strategic M&A.

European acquirers, by contrast, have been off to a slower start so far in 2025. As Exhibit 2 highlights, year-to-date strategic M&A volumes are tracking only slightly ahead of 2022 and 2024. We see scope for strategic M&A to accelerate in Europe, now that the ECB has delivered 200bp of rate cuts and concerns related to a potential recession appear to be fading. Structural shifts related to fiscal spending on infrastructure and defense – coupled with incrementally more accommodative financing conditions – may act as a catalyst for management teams to pursue their longer-term, inorganic business objectives.

Exhibit 2: We see scope for European strategic M&A to accelerate further
Announced strategic M&A volumes by European acquirers ($bn), by year-to-date and rest-of-year periods. Captures deals valued at $1bn or more at announcement. Excludes cancelled and withdrawn deals.



Source: Dealogic (ION Analytics), BlackRock. As of August 6, 2025.

Key themes from this year's strategic M&A (so far)

Beyond the aggregate strategic M&A volumes across regions, our analysis of the granular deal-level data for 2025 (YTD) reveals four key themes:

(1) Large-cap 'mega' deals are back;

(2) M&A is being used to build and add capabilities, and divestments are being used to refine focus;

(3) Sector 'leadership' has shifted so far in 2025; and

(4) The financing mix is somewhat unfriendly for bondholders.

Theme 1: Large-cap 'mega' deals are back

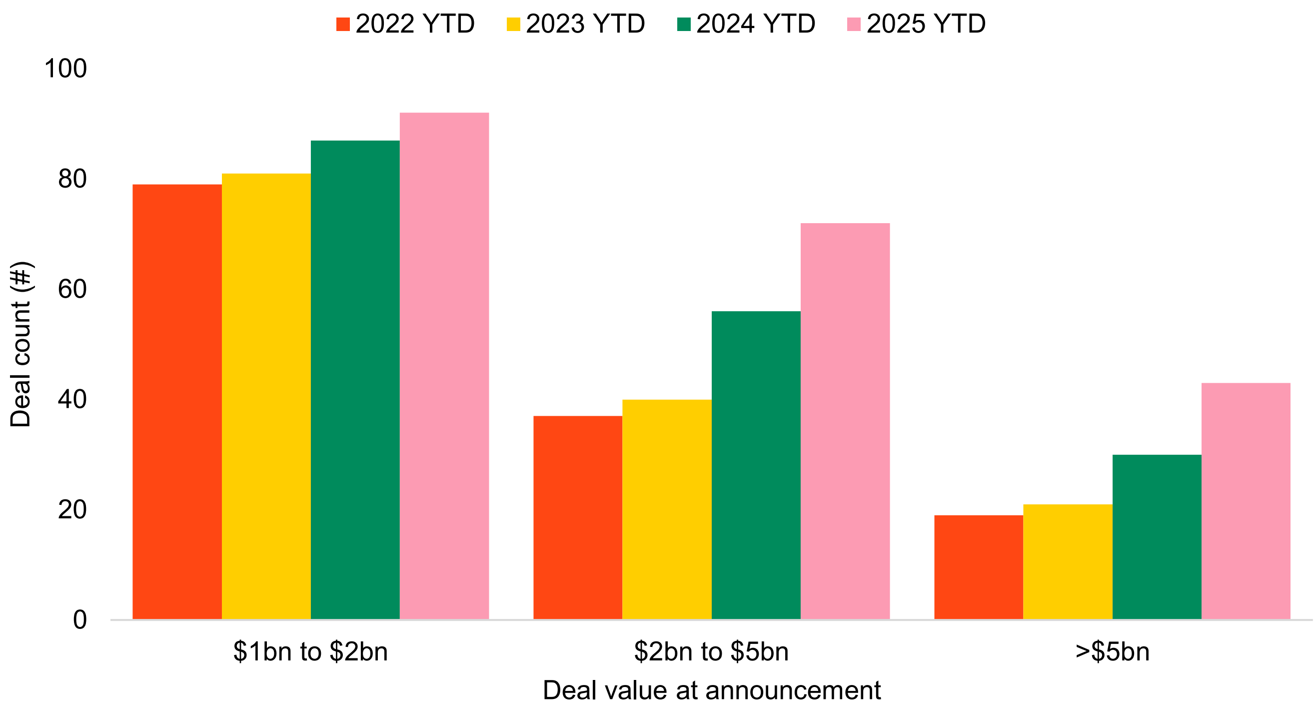
Data from Dealogic suggests that large-cap M&A transactions have rebounded in 2025 (Exhibit 3). While strong deal volumes, in aggregate, are a meaningful indicator of corporate confidence, the composition of that deal activity, by deal size, can also offer a valuable perspective into how management teams are approaching decision-making.

These large-scale transactions generally indicate corporate willingness to make high-conviction, long-term investments in their strategic vision. Often, such transactions represent a significant financial, operational, and strategic commitment to the business. As such, firms choosing to pursue transformative M&A, even amid considerable market volatility, underscore the management team's belief in their ability to deliver value through the transaction, including through synergies and expansion of their business.

The growing number of large-cap transactions also likely reflects the contribution from IG-rated, cash-rich sectors, which have significant financial flexibility and balance sheet capacity to add debt.

And more broadly, large strategic deals can also serve as bellwethers for broader market sentiment, offering encouraging signals for other firms considering strategic M&A. It may also reflect structural shifts and themes occurring in particular industries.

Exhibit 3: Deals valued at over $5 billion increased more than 40% from 2024 to 2025, YTD
Year-to-date deal count of announced strategic M&A by North American and European acquirers, categorized by deal value, in 2023, 2024, and 2025. Captures deals valued at $1bn or more at announcement. Excludes cancelled and withdrawn deals.



Source: Dealogic (ION Analytics), BlackRock. YTD volume is as of August 6, each year.

Theme 2: M&A is being used to build and add capabilities, and divestments are being used to refine focus

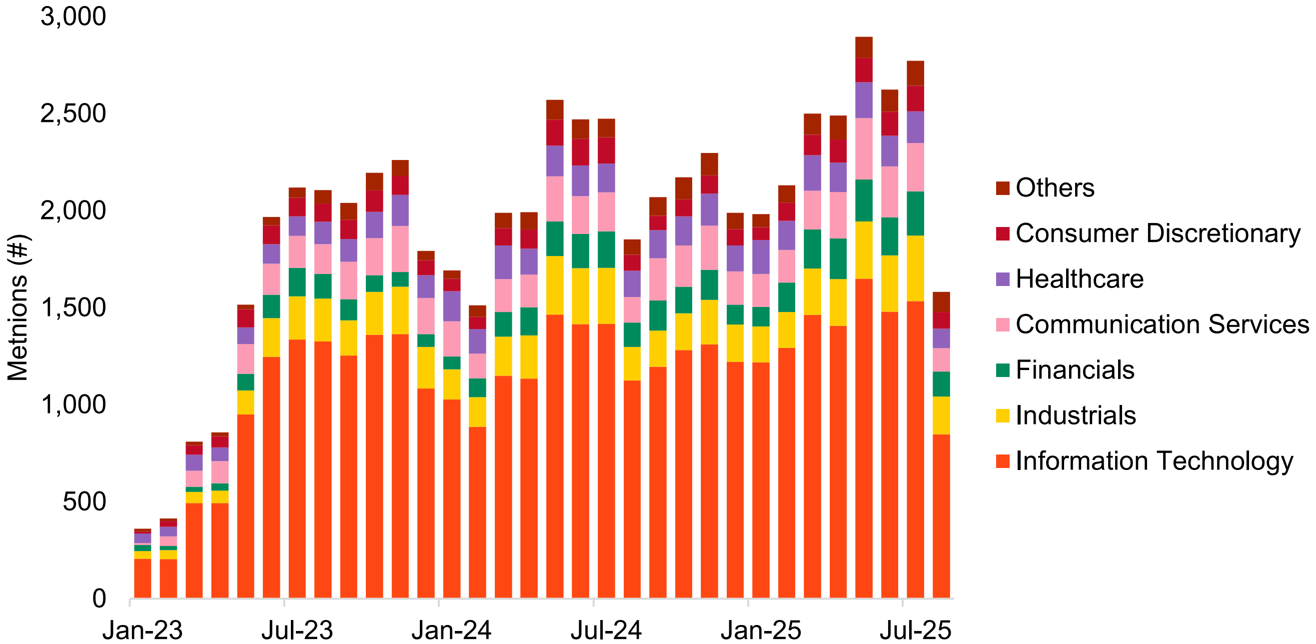
A review of over 30 recent earnings call transcripts from firms discussing their M&A approach reveals that focus and flexibility have driven much of the strategic corporate action this year.

Across management commentary, companies emphasized efforts to streamline operations and refocus on core capabilities to better navigate the evolving macro backdrop. Further, many are re-underwriting their business models to realign resources and capabilities in support of long-term priorities. These efforts, which further enhance corporate resilience, have taken shape in various corporate actions:

- **Core capability expansion:** Many corporates executed strategic acquisitions to expand their existing core capabilities or further vertical integration. One company highlighted that an acquisition added "scale and inventory depth" to support production. Others cited further product mix diversification and improved access to retail customers, for example.
- **AI-related acquisitions:** A subset of acquisitions was centered around artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities. While AI remains a key focus for technology companies, management teams across various sectors also highlighted its importance. This, in our view, underscores that business leaders see AI capabilities as critical to long-term competitiveness. Exhibit 4 demonstrates AI-identified mentions of AI and machine learning in Russell 3000 transcripts.
- **Regional expansion:** Some corporates pursued cross-border deals to either enter a new regional market or make their existing presence in the region more robust. The willingness to pursue such transactions, amidst considerable geopolitical uncertainty, reflects management teams' orientation towards long-term success and resilience, in our view.
- **Divesting non-core businesses:** But the focus on targeted *expansion* was matched with broader efforts to *sharpen* strategic focus. Indeed, many firms conducted divestments or noted their intention to, in commentary during the quarter. Rationales ranged from shifting resource priorities to bolstering cash on the balance sheet. One firm cited "decreasing synergies" between two businesses as a driver behind the divestiture. Another mentioned divesting in one business to finance the acquisition of another, further underscoring the focus on building long-term resilience, in our view.

Exhibit 4: AI is a focus area, across a wide range of sectors

3-month moving average count of AI-identified mentions of 'AI' and 'Machine Learning' in Russell 3000 transcripts, by sector



Source: Bloomberg Intelligence, BlackRock. August 2025 as of August 6, 2025. Others include Energy, Materials, Consumer Staples, Utilities, and Real Estate.

Theme 3: Sector 'leadership' has shifted so far in 2025

Sector 'leadership' has shifted so far in 2025. As Exhibit 5 illustrates, certain sectors have been larger contributors to the 2025 deal-making backdrop, relative to their historical pattern. This includes Transports and Basic Materials, for example.

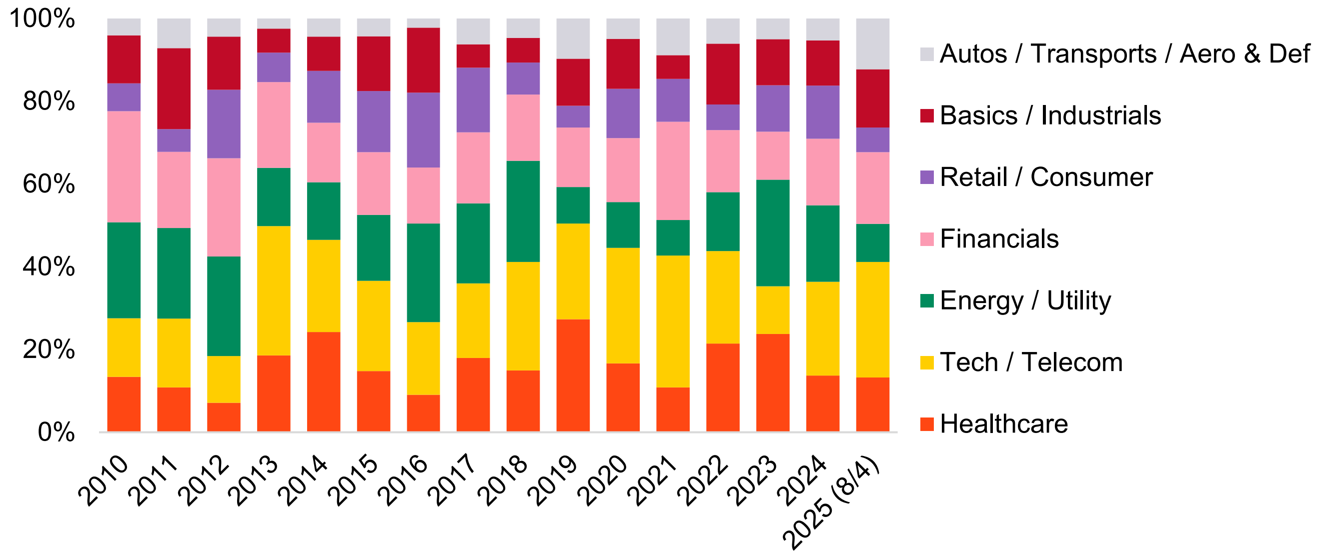
By contrast, sectors which have often been sizable contributors in past years – such as Healthcare and Energy / Utility – are tracking towards a more modest share in 2025. The contribution from Technology and Financials is generally consistent (and sizable).

Theme 4: The financing mix is somewhat unfriendly for bondholders

As Exhibit 6 shows, the share of all-stock deals in 2025 is tracking at its lowest level since 2017. Here too, we view this as a reflection of the financial flexibility and debt capacity available to some of the most active acquirers. It also likely reflects the elevated equity market volatility of the past several months.

Exhibit 5: Sector 'leadership' among strategic M&A has shifted in 2025

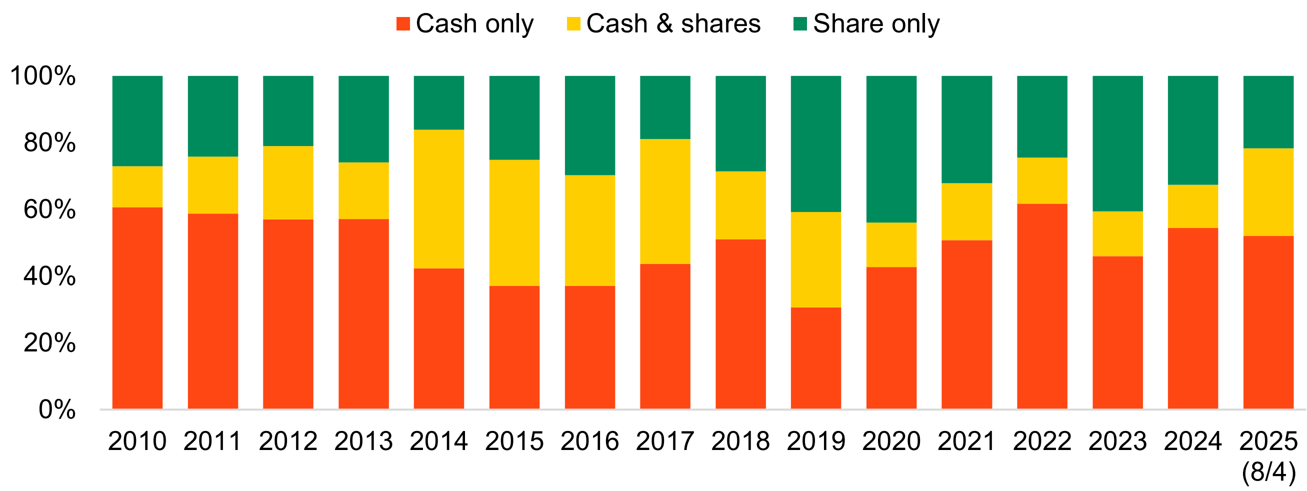
Sector mix of announced strategic M&A by North American and European acquirers. Captures deals valued at $1bn or more at announcement. Excludes cancelled and withdrawn deals.



Source: Dealogic (ION Analytics), BlackRock. As of August 4, 2025.

Exhibit 6: The financing mix has been somewhat unfriendly for bondholders in 2025

Funding mix of announced strategic M&A by North American and European acquirers. Captures deals valued at $1bn or more at announcement. Excludes cancelled and withdrawn deals.



Source: Dealogic (ION Analytics), BlackRock. 2025 is as of August 4, 2025

Unless otherwise stated, all reference to $ are in USD.

Risk Warnings:

Capital at risk. The value of investments and the income from them can fall as well as rise and are not guaranteed. You may not get back the amount originally invested.

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of current or future results and should not be the sole factor of consideration when selecting a product or strategy.

Changes in the rates of exchange between currencies may cause the value of investments to diminish or increase. Fluctuation may be particularly marked in the case of a higher volatility fund and the value of an investment may fall suddenly and substantially. Levels and basis of taxation may change from time to time.

Cliffwater Direct Lending Index (CDLI) is an index that assists investors to better understand private credit as an asset class. The CDLI seeks to measure the unlevered, gross of fees performance of U.S. middle market corporate loans, as represented by the underlying assets of Business Development Companies ("BDCs"), including both exchange-traded and unlisted BDCs, subject to certain eligibility criteria. The CDLI is an asset-weighted index that is calculated on a quarterly basis using financial statements and other information contained in the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") filings of all eligible BDCs. Eligibility is set as all assets held by BDCs that (1) are regulated by the SEC as a BDC under the Investment Company Act of 1940; (2) have a substantial majority (approximately 75%) of reported total assets represented by direct loans made to corporate borrowers, as categorized by each BDC and subject to Cliffwater's discretion, and (3) file SEC form 10-Q (or 10-K, as applicable) within 75 (or 90) calendar days following the current Valuation Date. If a BDC meets the eligibility criteria, but has not filed its report on Form 10-K or 10-Q with the SEC at the time the index is reconstituted, asset information from its report will be included in the index at the time of the next reconstitution. This information is derived from sources that are considered reliable, but BlackRock does not guarantee the veracity, currency, completeness or accuracy of this information.

Important Information:

In the U.S., this material is for institutional use only – not for public distribution.

In Canada, this material is intended for permitted clients as defined under Canadian securities law, is for educational purposes only, does not constitute investment advice and should not be construed as a solicitation or offering of units of any fund or other security in any jurisdiction.

In **China,** this material may not be distributed to individuals resident in the People's Republic of China ("PRC", for such purposes, not applicable to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) or entities registered in the PRC unless such parties have received all the required PRC government approvals to participate in any investment or receive any investment advisory or investment management services.

In **Singapore**, this document is provided by BlackRock (Singapore) Limited (company registration number:200010143N) for use only with institutional investors as defined in Section 4A of the Securities and Futures Act, Chapter 289 of Singapore. This advertisement or publication has not been reviewed by the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

In **Hong Kong**, this material is issued by BlackRock Asset Management North Asia Limited and has not been reviewed by the Securities and Futures Commission of Hong Kong. This material is for distribution to "Professional Investors" (as defined in the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Cap.571 of the laws of Hong Kong) and any rules made under that ordinance.) and should not be relied upon by any other persons or redistributed to retail clients in Hong Kong.

In **Japan**, this is issued by BlackRock Japan. Co., Ltd. (Financial Instruments Business Operator: The Kanto Regional Financial Bureau. License No375, Association Memberships: Japan Investment Advisers Association, The Investment Trusts Association, Japan, Japan Securities Dealers Association, Type II Financial Instruments Firms Association) for Institutional Investors only. All strategies or products BLK Japan offer through the discretionary investment contracts or through investment trust funds do not guarantee the principal amount invested. The risks and costs of each strategy or product we offer cannot be indicated here because the financial instruments in which they are invested vary each strategy or product. Therefore, before deciding to receive our strategies or products, please refer to the document provided prior to the execution of agreement, prospectus, terms and conditions of investment trust and the explanatory document, etc. that will be delivered to you in accordance with each offering model and confirm the contents thereof.

In **South Korea**, this information is issued by BlackRock Investment (Korea) Limited. This material is for distribution to the Qualified Professional Investors (as defined in the Financial Investment Services and Capital Market Act and its sub-regulations) and for information or educational purposes only and does not constitute investment advice or an offer or solicitation to purchase or sells in any securities or any investment strategies.

In **Brunei**, BlackRock does not hold a Capital Markets Services License and is therefore not licensed for conducting business in any regulated activity under the Securities Market Order, 2013. This document has been issued by BlackRock and is intended for the exclusive use of the recipient. The distribution of the information contained herein may be restricted by law and persons who access it are required to comply with any such restrictions. The information provided herein information is directed solely at persons who would be regarded as “Accredited Investors”, “Expert Investors” or “Institutional Investors” in accordance with the Securities Market Order 2013.

In **Australia & New Zealand**, issued by BlackRock Investment Management (Australia) Limited ABN 13 006 165 975, AFSL 230 523 (BIMAL) for the exclusive use of the recipient, who warrants by receipt of this material that they are a wholesale client as defined under the Australian Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and the New Zealand Financial Advisers Act 2008 respectively. BIMAL is not licensed by a New Zealand regulator to provide 'Financial Advice Service' 'Investment manager under an FMC offer' or 'Keeping, investing, administering, or managing money, securities, or investment portfolios on behalf of other persons'. BIMAL's registration on the New Zealand register of financial service providers does not mean that BIMAL is subject to active regulation or oversight by a New Zealand regulator. This material provides general advice only and does not take into account your individual objectives, financial situation, needs or circumstances. Before making any investment decision, you should therefore assess whether the material is appropriate for you and obtain financial advice tailored to you having regard to your individual objectives, financial situation, needs and circumstances. Refer to BIMAL's Financial Services Guide on its website for more information. This material is not a financial product recommendation or an offer or solicitation with respect to the purchase or sale of any financial product in any jurisdiction. This material is not intended for distribution to, or use by, any person or entity in any jurisdiction or country where such distribution or use would be contrary to local law or regulation. BIMAL is a part of the global BlackRock Group which comprises of financial product issuers and investment managers around the world. BIMAL is the issuer of financial products and acts as an investment manager in Australia. BIMAL does not offer financial products to persons in New Zealand who are retail investors (as that term is defined in the Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013 (FMCA)). This material does not constitute or relate to such an offer. To the extent that this material does constitute or relate to such an offer of financial products, the offer is only made to, and capable of acceptance by, persons in New Zealand who are wholesale investors (as that term is defined in the FMCA). BIMAL, its officers, employees and agents believe that the information in this material and the sources on which it is based (which may be sourced from third parties) are correct as at the date of publication. While every care has been taken in the preparation of this material, no warranty of accuracy or reliability is given and no responsibility for the information is accepted by BIMAL, its officers, employees or agents. Except where contrary to law, BIMAL excludes all liability for this information.

In **Central America**, these securities have not been registered before the Securities Superintendence of the Republic of Panama, nor did the offer, sale or their trading procedures. The registration exemption has made according to numeral 3 of Article 129 of the Consolidated Text containing of the Decree-Law No. 1 of July 8, 1999 (institutional investors). Consequently, the tax treatment set forth in Articles 334 to 336 of the Unified Text containing Decree-Law No. 1 of July 8, 1999, does not apply to them. These securities are not under the supervision of the Securities Superintendence of the Republic of Panama. The information contained herein does not describe any product that is supervised or regulated by the National Banking and Insurance Commission (CNBS) in Honduras. Therefore any investment described herein is done at the investor's own risk. This is an individual and private offer which is made in Costa Rica upon reliance on an exemption from registration before the General Superintendence of Securities ("SUGEVAL"), pursuant to articles 7 and 8 of the Regulations on the Public Offering of Securities ("Reglamento sobre Oferta Pública de Valores"). This information is confidential, and is not to be reproduced or distributed to third parties as this is NOT a public offering of securities in Costa Rica. The product being offered is not intended for the Costa Rican public or market and neither is registered or will be registered before the SUGEVAL, nor can be traded in the secondary market. If any recipient of this documentation receives this document in El Salvador, such recipient acknowledges that the same has been delivered upon his request and instructions, and on a private placement basis. For Guatemala Investors, This communication and any accompanying information (the "Materials") are intended solely for informational purposes and do not constitute (and should not be interpreted to constitute) the offering, selling, or conducting of business with respect to such securities, products or services in the jurisdiction of the addressee (this "Jurisdiction"), or the conducting of any brokerage, banking, or other similarly regulated activities ("Financial Activities") in the Jurisdiction. Neither BLACKROCK, nor the securities, products and services described herein, are registered (or intended to be registered) in the Jurisdiction. Furthermore, neither BLACKROCK, nor the securities, products, services, or activities described herein, are regulated, or supervised by any governmental or similar authority in the Jurisdiction. The Materials are private, confidential and are sent by BLACKROCK only for the exclusive use of the addressee. The Materials must not be publicly distributed and any use of the Materials by anyone other than the addressee is not authorized. The addressee is required to comply with all applicable laws in the Jurisdiction, including, without limitation, tax laws and exchange control regulations if any.

The information provided within this document is for education purposes only in **Bermuda**. This information is not intended for distribution to, or use by, any person or entity in any jurisdiction or country where such distribution would be unlawful under the securities laws of such jurisdiction or country.

In **Latin America**, for institutional investors and financial intermediaries only (not for public distribution). This material is for educational purposes only and does not constitute investment advice or an offer or solicitation to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy any shares of any fund or security and it is your responsibility to inform yourself of, and to observe, all applicable laws and regulations of your relevant jurisdiction. If any funds are mentioned or inferred in this material, such funds may not been registered with the securities regulators of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay or any other securities regulator in any Latin American country and thus, may not be publicly offered in any such countries. The securities regulators of any country within Latin America have not confirmed the accuracy of any information contained herein. No information discussed herein can be provided to the general public in Latin America. The contents of this material are strictly confidential and must not be passed to any third party.

In **Colombia**, the promotion of each product discussed herein is carried out through the Representative Office of BlackRock Fund Advisors, authorized by the Colombian Financial Superintendence. The transmission of this information does not constitute a securities public offering in Colombia. The products discussed herein may not be promoted or marketed in Colombia or to Colombian residents unless such promotion and marketing is made in compliance with Decree 2555 of 2010 and other applicable rules and regulations related to the promotion of foreign financial and/or securities related products or services in Colombia. With the receipt of these materials, and unless the Client contacts BlackRock with additional requests for information, the Client agrees to have been provided the information for due advisory required by the marketing and promotion regulatory regime applicable in Colombia.

In **Chile**, The securities if any described in this document are foreign securities, therefore: i) their rights and obligations will be subject to the legal framework of the issuer's country of origin, and therefore, investors must inform themselves regarding the form and means through which they may exercise their rights; and that ii) the supervision of the Commission for the Financial Market (Comisión para el Mercado Financiero or "CMF") will be concentrated exclusively on compliance with the information obligations established in General Standard No. 352 of the CMF and that, therefore, the supervision of the security and its issuer will be mainly made by the foreign regulator; In the case of a fund not registered with the CMF is subject to General Rule No. 336 issued by the SVS (now the CMF). The subject matter of this sale may include securities not registered with the CMF; therefore, such securities are not subject to the supervision of the CMF. Since the securities are not registered in Chile, there is no obligation of the issuer to make publicly available information about the securities in Chile. The securities shall not be subject to public offering in Chile unless registered with the relevant registry of the CMF.

IN MEXICO, FOR INSTITUTIONAL AND QUALIFIED INVESTORS USE ONLY. INVESTING INVOLVES RISK, INCLUDING POSSIBLE LOSS OF PRINCIPAL. THIS MATERIAL IS PROVIDED FOR EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY AND DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN OFFER OR SOLICITATION TO SELL OR A SOLICITATION OF AN OFFER TO BUY ANY SHARES OF ANY FUND OR SECURITY**.** This information does not consider the investment objectives, risk tolerance or the financial circumstances of any specific investor. This information does not replace the obligation of financial advisor to apply his/her best judgment in making investment decisions or investment recommendations. It is your responsibility to inform yourself of, and to observe, all applicable laws and regulations of Mexico. If any funds, securities or investment strategies are mentioned or inferred in this material, such funds, securities or strategies have not been registered with the Mexican National Banking and Securities Commission (Comisión Nacional Bancaria y de Valores, the "CNBV") and thus, may not be publicly offered in Mexico. The CNBV has not confirmed the accuracy of any information contained herein. The provision of investment management and investment advisory services ("Investment Services") is a regulated activity in Mexico, subject to strict rules, and performed under the supervision of the CNBV. These materials are shared for information purposes only, do not constitute investment advice, and are being shared in the understanding that the addressee is an Institutional or Qualified investor as defined under Mexican Securities (Ley del Mercado de Valores). Each potential investor shall make its own investment decision based on their own analysis of the available information. Please note that by receiving these materials, it shall be construed as a representation by the receiver that it is an Institutional or Qualified investor as defined under Mexican law. BlackRock México Operadora, S.A. de C.V., Sociedad Operadora de Fondos de Inversión ("BlackRock México Operadora") is a Mexican subsidiary of BlackRock, Inc., authorized by the CNBV as a Mutual Fund Manager (Operadora de Fondos), and as such, authorized to manage Mexican mutual funds, ETFs and provide Investment Advisory Services. For more information on the Investment Services offered by BlackRock Mexico, please review our Investment Services Guide available in www.blackrock.com/mx. This material represents an assessment at a specific time and its information should not be relied upon by the you as research or investment advice regarding the funds, any security or investment strategy in particular. Reliance upon information in this material is at your sole discretion. BlackRock México is not authorized to receive deposits, carry out intermediation activities, or act as a broker dealer, or bank in Mexico. For more information on BlackRock México, please visit: www.blackRock.com/mx. BlackRock receives revenue in the form of advisory fees for our advisory services and management fees for our mutual funds, exchange traded funds and collective investment trusts. Any modification, change, distribution or inadequate use of information of this document is not responsibility of BlackRock or any of its affiliates. Pursuant to the Mexican Data Privacy Law (Ley Federal de Protección de Datos Personales en Posesión de Particulares), to register your personal data you must confirm that you have read and understood the Privacy Notice of BlackRock México Operadora. For the full disclosure, please visit www.blackRock.com/mx and accept that your personal information will be managed according with the terms and conditions set forth therein.

In **Peru**, this private offer does not constitute a public offer, and is not registered with the Securities Market Public Registry of the Peruvian Securities Market Commission, for use only with institutional investors as such term is defined by the Superintendencia de Banca, Seguros y AFP.

This material is for distribution to Professional Clients (as defined by the Financial Conduct Authority or MiFID Rules) only and should not be relied upon by any other persons.

In the UK and Non-European Economic Area (EEA) countries: this is Issued by BlackRock Investment Management (UK) Limited, authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered office: 12 Throgmorton Avenue, London, EC2N 2DL. Tel: + 44 (0)20 7743 3000. Registered in England and Wales No. 02020394. For your protection telephone calls are usually recorded. Please refer to the Financial Conduct Authority website for a list of authorised activities conducted by BlackRock.

In the European Economic Area (EEA): This document is marketing material. This is Issued by BlackRock (Netherlands) B.V. and is authorised and regulated by the Netherlands Authority for the Financial Markets. Registered office Amstelplein 1, 1096 HA, Amsterdam, Tel: 020 – 549 5200, Tel: 31-20-549-5200. Trade Register No. 17068311 For your protection telephone calls are usually recorded.

In **Switzerland**: This document shall be exclusively made available to, and directed at, qualified investors as defined in Article 10 (3) of the CISA of 23 June 2006, as amended, at the exclusion of qualified investors with an opting-out pursuant to Art. 5 (1) of the Swiss Federal Act on Financial Services ("FinSA"). For information on art. 8 / 9 Financial Services Act (FinSA) and on your client segmentation under art. 4 FinSA, please see the following website: www.blackrock.com/finsa.

In **Israel**: BlackRock Investment Management (UK) Limited is not licenced under Israel's Regulation of Investment Advice, Investment Marketing and Portfolio Management Law, 5755-1995 (the "Advice Law"), nor does it carry insurance thereunder.

In the **DIFC:** This document is intended strictly for Professional Clients as defined under the Dubai Financial Services Authority ("DFSA") Conduct of Business (COB) Rules. Blackrock Advisors (UK) Limited -Dubai Branch is a DIFC Foreign Recognised Company registered with the DIFC Registrar of Companies (DIFC Registered Number 546), with its office at Unit L15 - 01A, ICD Brookfield Place, Dubai International Financial Centre, PO Box 506661, Dubai, UAE, and is regulated by the DFSA to engage in the regulated activities of 'Advising on Financial Products' and 'Arranging Deals in Investments' in or from the DIFC, both of which are limited to units in a collective investment fund (DFSA Reference Number F000738).

In **Saudi Arabia**, This document is intended for Institutional and Qualified Clients (as defined by the Capital Market Authority) only and should not be relied upon by any other persons. BlackRock Saudi Arabia, authorised and regulated by the Capital Market Authority (License Number 18- 192-30). Registered office: 7976 Salim Ibn Abi Bakr Shaikan St, 2223 West Umm Al Hamam District Riyadh, 12329 Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Tel: +966 11 838 3600. CR No, 1010479419. For your protection telephone calls are usually recorded. Please refer to the Capital Market Authority website for a list of authorised activities conducted by BlackRock Saudi Arabia. In the **UAE:** This document is intended strictly for Exempt Professional Investors.

In the **State of Qatar and the Qatar Financial Centre (QFC):** This document is intended strictly for sophisticated institutions.

In **Kuwait:** This document is intended strictly for sophisticated institutions that are 'Professional Clients' as defined under the Kuwait Capital Markets Law and its Executive Bylaws.

The information contained in this document, does not constitute and should not be construed as an offer of, invitation or proposal to make an offer for, recommendation to apply for or an opinion or guidance on a financial product, service and/or strategy. Whilst great care has been taken to ensure that the information contained in this document is accurate, no responsibility can be accepted for any errors, mistakes or omissions or for any action taken in reliance thereon. You may only reproduce, circulate and use this document (or any part of it) with the consent of BlackRock Investment Management (UK). The information contained in this document is for information purposes only. It is not intended for and should not be distributed to, or relied upon by, members of the public.

The information contained in this document, may contain statements that are not purely historical in nature but are "forward-looking statements". These include, amongst other things, projections, forecasts or estimates of income. These forward-looking statements are based upon certain assumptions, some of which are described in other relevant documents or materials. If you do not understand the contents of this document, you should consult an authorised financial adviser. Any research in this document has been procured and may have been acted on by BlackRock for its own purpose. The results of such research are being made available only incidentally. The views expressed do not constitute investment or any other advice and are subject to change. They do not necessarily reflect the views of any company in the BlackRock Group or any part thereof and no assurances are made as to their accuracy. Any opinions, forecasts represent an assessment of the market environment at a specific time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events or a guarantee of future results. This information should not be relied upon by the reader as research, investment advice or a recommendation. This document is for information purposes only and does not constitute an offer or invitation to anyone to invest in any BlackRock funds and has not been prepared in connection with any such offer. If you are an intermediary or third-party distributor, you must only disseminate this material to other Professional Investors as permitted in the above-specified jurisdictions and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Certain information contained herein has been obtained from published sources and from third parties, including without limitation, market forecasts, internal and external surveys, market research, publicly available information and industry publications. In addition, certain information contained herein may have been obtained from companies in which investments have been made by entities affiliated with BlackRock. Although such information is believed to be reliable for the purposes used herein, neither the Fund nor BlackRock assumes any responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of such information. Reliance upon information in this material is at the sole discretion of the reader. Certain information contained herein represents or is based upon forward-looking statements or information. BlackRock and its affiliates believe that such statements and information are based upon reasonable estimates and assumptions. However, forward-looking statements are inherently uncertain, and factors may cause events or results to differ from those projected. Therefore, undue reliance should not be placed on such forward-looking statements and information.