



**BlackRock Private Equity Partners (PEP)**

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# **Private Equity Market Insights – Evergreen funds as an alternative to traditional private equity funds**

**BlackRock**

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## Summary

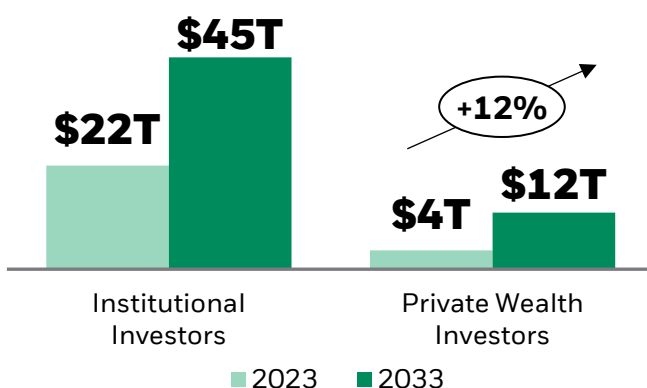
Traditionally, closed-ended funds with a fixed fund term have been the standard way for institutional investors to access private equity. These investors have been accustomed to selecting managers, committing to their funds and receiving capital calls, seeing value being created and subsequently receiving back the proceeds from exits in the form of cash distributions. Historically, this corner of the market has largely been accessed only by the largest and most sophisticated investors across the globe. Increasingly, the asset class has become more democratized through the evolution of evergreen private equity funds with regular limited liquidity that are expanding access to a broader array of investors including individual investors.

## Introducing the opportunity

Historically, private equity investments were accessed primarily through *closed-ended funds with fixed fund terms* exclusively designated for institutional and qualified investors who struggled to hit return targets through investments in public equities and fixed income. As the private equity asset class continued to demonstrate its resilient and sustained performance relative to public markets as well as provide inherent diversification benefits, many high-net-worth (HNW) individual investors began pursuing access to the asset class as managers alike sought to expand their offerings.

Over recent years, private equity managers as well as private banks and wealth platforms have introduced evergreen funds, enabling individual investors to gain access to fully funded private equity funds without the same accreditation status required to access traditional private funds. Over the next decade, the growth in private markets AUM for this investor cohort is expected to triple at a 12% CAGR compared to institutional investor AUM growth of approximately 2x with an 8% CAGR as illustrated by **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1:** Estimated global alternatives AUM by investor type (USD \$T)<sup>1</sup>



## Evergreen differentiators

With the rise of evergreen (perpetual, open-ended) funds it is important to understand their key characteristics and how these can be different from traditional (draw-down, closed-ended) funds.

Characteristics	Evergreen Fund	Closed-end Fund
Availability	Always available	During fundraising period (1-2 years)
Fund term	Evergreen, perpetual	8-12 years
Funding	Fully paid-in at subscription	Drawn down over time (3-5 years)
Liquidity	Regular, limited liquidity (subject to gates)	Illiquid (Distributions at manager's discretion when assets are realized)
Investment level steering for investors	Exposure can be adjusted over time through subscriptions and redemptions	Complex cash flow modelling and commitment pacing required to maintain target NAV level
Performance metrics	Time-weighted returns	Money-weighted returns (IRR) and money multiples

1. Bain & Company "Global Private Equity Report 2025" released in March 2025.

To start, traditional closed-end funds gradually, and mostly irregularly, draw down investor commitments as needed to fund investments over the course of the investment period. Following that 4-6 year investment period, the manager exits its stake in the underlying PE assets and the capital is distributed back to its investors. Due to this cash flow dynamic, investors in closed-end funds are likely never fully invested and market data shows that the NAV reaches a maximum of 60%-80%<sup>3</sup>.

Additionally, it is difficult to anticipate timing of capital calls and more so of distributions. In order to meet capital call requests, which typically are issued on short notice, investors in closed-end private funds typically hold the uncalled or open portion of their commitment in cash or money market instruments. This amount can be substantial, 30% to 50% of the investor's commitment, and when measuring performance, such uncalled commitment is typically not considered.

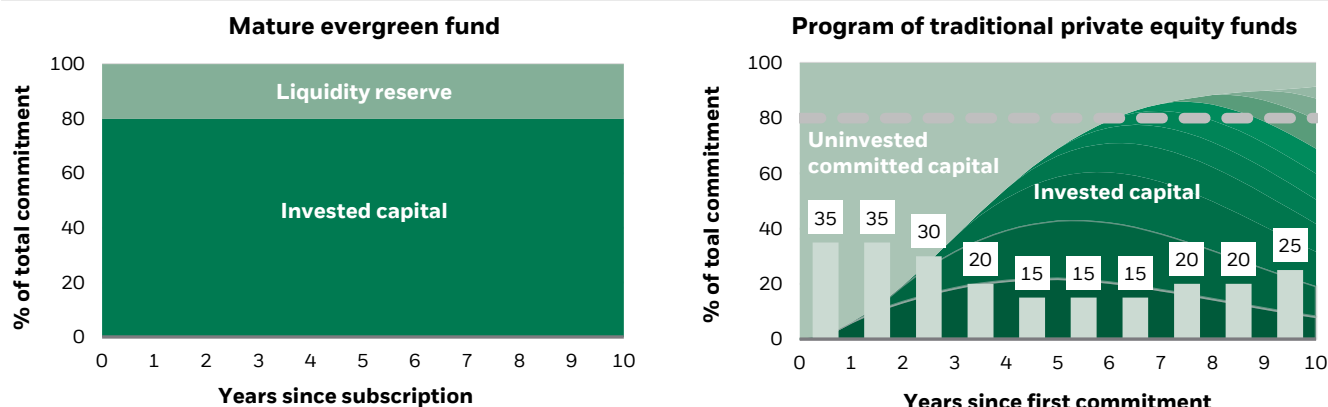
Sophisticated institutional investors have portfolios of dozens of funds and often utilize statistical models to forecast capital calls and distributions and optimize or pace commitments to future vintages, as depicted in Figure 2, such that a certain target exposure is achieved. However, this process is complex, and many institutional investors are either under- or overallocated per recent research from Preqin<sup>2</sup>. It is common to commit more capital than the target NAV, a strategy that might pose tail-end risk regarding broader portfolio liquidity and allocation breaches.

The process of reinvesting capital that is distributed from closed-ended funds not only poses re-investment risk, but it also highlights the challenge of compounding returns, given the difficulty of redeploying into new funds swiftly as they are subject to fundraising windows and timing of closings – not to mention the resources required to complete new investments requiring investment due diligence, committee approvals and operational burdens involved with the investment process.

All of these characteristics are in stark contrast with evergreen funds, where the investor's full subscription amount is invested instantly thereby allowing efficient access to a mature portfolio of private equity assets complemented by an actively managed liquidity reserve, as well as certainty around cash flows. As the name suggests, evergreen funds typically recycle or accumulate distributions to allow investors to benefit from compounding of returns within the fund.

Evergreen funds are typically structured to provide investors with limited periodic (mostly quarterly) liquidity through active portfolio management across the whole portfolio and a dedicated liquidity reserve. It should be emphasized that such redemptions are subject to a maximum at an aggregated fund level (typically 5% per quarter). Due to its simplicity and perpetual nature, the performance of evergreen funds can be measured in traditional time-weighted returns analogue to public equities.

**Figure 2:** Estimated exposure profiles of mature evergreen fund compared to program of traditional private equity funds<sup>3</sup>



## Portfolio construction considerations

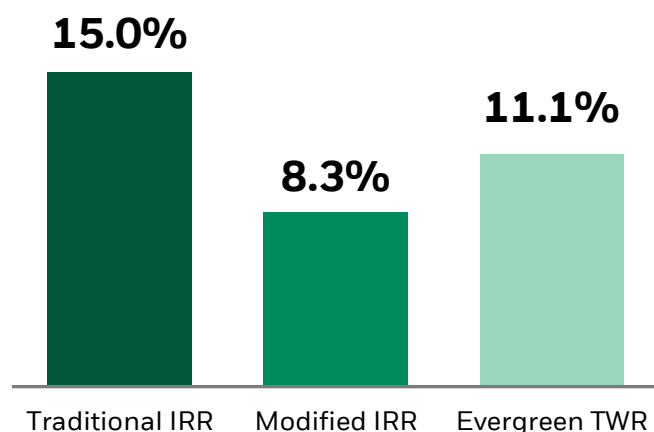
Given their unique nature, the portfolio construction of evergreen funds can be more nuanced compared to traditional private funds. Proper portfolio management and prudent portfolio construction are essential to manage cash flows of the underlying investments to enable efficient investment recycling, investor subscriptions and potential redemptions.

Structurally, most perpetual evergreen funds hold 10-30% in liquid instruments – to facilitate the ongoing subscription model, elimination of capital calls and limited periodic liquidity<sup>6</sup>. Clearly, this liquidity sleeve will dilute returns of an evergreen fund to some extent relative to pure private portfolios, but, for a true side-by-side comparison, we believe the cash drag of the uncalled

private fund must also be considered, as highlighted and explained in **Figure 3**. Assuming the underlying assets are identical, the key difference in performance reporting for evergreen and traditional draw-down funds stems from including or excluding the return of capital not at work via uncalled capital or distributions.

One concept to account for the drag associated with this uninvested capital is *modified IRR*<sup>4</sup> which blends the return of the standalone private market fund with the return earned on the uninvested capital typically through money market securities, enabling investors to draw more realistic comparisons between traditional private funds and evergreen models. **Figure 3** illustrates the difference between 1) a hypothetical TWR (time weighted return) of a mature evergreen fund including a 20% liquidity reserve invested in money market instruments, 2) an IRR of a traditional private fund<sup>3</sup> and 3) a modified IRR of that same private fund.

**Figure 3:** Comparing evergreen and traditional private fund returns<sup>5</sup>. All performance figures shown are net of hypothetical fees and assume the yield of money market securities is 3.0%.<sup>4</sup>



4. Modified IRR: A better measure. H. Kierulff, *Business Horizons* (2008).

As the liquidity reserve is an integral part of an evergreen fund (Light green), its aggregated return is certainly lower compared to a traditional closed-ended private fund, on a standalone basis excluding the uninvested capital (Dark green). When accounting for uninvested capital in a private fund, the IRR of the same traditional closed-ended private fund decreases dramatically when applying the modified IRR methodology (green) and may in fact be lower than the TWR return of an evergreen fund.

This difference makes sense as the average exposure or capital at work through the life of a traditional private fund ranges from 50% to 70% whereas in the evergreen fund 100% of capital is at work, with 80% earmarked for private investments. It should be noted that the underlying investment performance across our scenarios was identical and performance differences were the result of including the uninvested portion of a capital commitment. Hence, from a performance perspective we propose that investors should be indifferent to investing in an evergreen or drawdown fund.

In addition to the liquidity considerations, evergreen funds differ fundamentally from their private fund counterparts as theoretically they are always investing – deploying capital through various market environments while broadly diversifying across general partners, geographies, stages, sectors, vintage years and transaction types. The underlying transaction types of evergreen funds can vary widely across direct investments, secondary transaction and primary fund commitments.

We see investors expressing a preference largely for direct and secondary exposures, with less appetite for primary funds given the longer duration, lack of control on cash flows, blind pool portfolios and higher costs. Direct co-investments are of particular interest when examining their risk-adjusted returns. Academic literature demonstrates that there is no adverse selection and as such the expected investment performance is at par compared to assets that are not offered as co-investment<sup>1</sup>. On the risk spectrum, diversification across dozens of general partners results in lower concentration risk to a single general partner and internal analyses have shown that variability of outcomes reduces by as much as 15% to 20% when spreading capital over at least 20

general partners<sup>2</sup>. Combining both effects results in superior risk-adjusted returns for co-investments and making the case for a significant allocation to this transaction type in evergreen funds.

At steady-state these evergreen funds may provide exposure to over 50-100 companies via direct co-investments and may include an allocation to secondary transactions for additional diversification and potential to further enhance the risk-return profile of the portfolio. Direct co-investments offer an attractive access point to private equity backed companies due to its inherent high level of diversification across sectors, geographies, company sizes and investment themes and allow investors to obtain exposure to a wide opportunity set by investing into companies that are in the “sweet spot” of wide array of specialized general partners, as opposed to a more limited deal flow from only one general partner that may be focused on a certain area of the private equity market.

These benefits of direct co-investments have also been recognized by institutional investors with direct co-investments now representing 15% of their total private equity allocations<sup>3</sup>. This trend is only increasing, with 38% of institutional investors planning to increase their allocations to co-investments in 2025, up from 27% in 2024<sup>4</sup>.

## Key consideration for fund selectors

Key considerations when selecting an evergreen program include the manager’s ability to deploy inflows prudently into the fund and manage the portfolio diversification. It is crucial for the portfolio manager to be able to invest new capital from monthly subscriptions swiftly into high-quality private equity transaction to avoid a drag on performance from an outsized liquidity allocation in the fund. This requires an established investment platform that invests at scale and sources significant deal flow on an ongoing basis. Additionally, generating robust global deal flow introduces further breadth in the type of private equity transactions the fund will participate, as it may invest alongside a variety of general partners to gain exposure to different size of companies and different themes (e.g. family businesses, corporate carve-outs, consolidation strategies, venture capital and growth opportunities).

Additionally, fund selectors need to closely examine the fund manager’s allocation policies as one misconception could be that traditional closed-ended private funds receive priority allocations to investment opportunities and other funds receive less attractive investment opportunities, disadvantaging their investors – a concept we heavily dispute. On the contrary, it is key for evergreen funds to allocate pari-passu alongside traditional private funds into the same strategies, with legal and regulatory oversight, to ensure all investors receive exposure to the same investment opportunities.

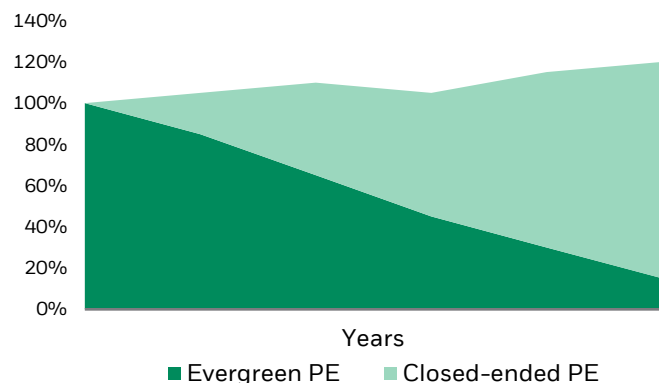
1. Adverse selection and the performance of private equity co-investments. R. Braun, T. Jenkinson, C. Schemmerl. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 136 (1), 2020, 44-62; 2. Measured by the decrease in interquartile ranges (difference between 25th and 75th percentiles) of TVPIs of buyout funds (226 actual funds) and co-investment funds (1’000 simulated funds with at least 20 distinct general partners).

Internal data per June 30, 2024; 3. Global Private Markets Report 2025 by McKinsey; 4. LP Perspectives 2025, Private Equity International

## Use cases for evergreen funds in PE portfolios

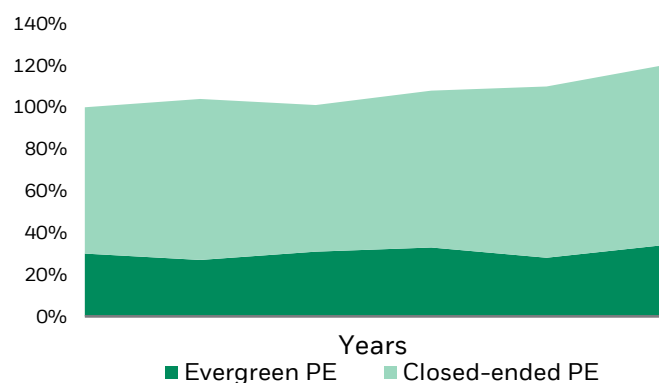
Evergreen fund structures can be used as a stand-alone investment and also, particularly for institutional investors, in combination with traditional closed-end fund structures within a diversified private equity portfolio in various use cases.

### Ramp up of new private equity allocation



Evergreen funds offer an appealing entry point for investors initiating a private equity allocation. Unlike closed-end funds, which deploy capital gradually over an investment period, evergreen funds provide immediate exposure to private markets, helping to mitigate the impact of the J-curve. As closed-end funds are added to the portfolio and begin calling capital, investors can strategically redeem portions of their evergreen fund holdings to meet these capital calls—supporting liquidity needs while maintaining their target private equity exposure over time.

### Core private equity allocation



For sophisticated investors with established private equity programmes, an evergreen fund can function both as a core portfolio holding and a strategic portfolio management tool. It complements traditional closed-end structures by offering greater flexibility and diversification. Specifically, evergreen funds enable investors to re-commit distributions from closed-end vehicles in a timely manner, helping to maintain consistent private equity exposure and smooth out fundraising cycles between vintages. More broadly, their ongoing subscription opportunities and limited redemption features make evergreen funds a valuable mechanism for actively managing the overall allocation to private equity within a portfolio.

## Efficient strategy implementation

Implementing a private equity programme through numerous traditional closed-end fund commitments demands significant portfolio management and operational resources. Investors must navigate ongoing fund selection and due diligence, commitment pacing, cash flow management, internal approval processes, and complex reporting requirements. To reduce this operational burden, some investors may choose to allocate part or all of their private equity exposure to evergreen funds. These structures offer simplified management through features such as automatic reinvestment and recycling, supporting the long-term compounding of returns while streamlining administration.

## Conclusion

As private equity becomes increasingly democratized, evergreen funds provide a broader range of investors with access to limited liquidity private equity strategies—offering exposure to the same high-quality transactions typically available only through flagship funds historically reserved for large institutional investors. At the same time, institutional investors with existing allocations to the asset class can leverage evergreen funds to complement their closed-end fund holdings, unlocking a wider range of strategic use cases and enhancing portfolio flexibility.

The evergreen private equity market currently offers a growing range of options, catering to investors seeking varied points of entry into the asset class. As these strategies continue to mature and attract interest, the opportunity for further expansion remains significant. Over time, we anticipate that evergreen managers will emerge as a distinct cohort within the private equity landscape—much like secondary fund managers have in recent years.

Given this evolution, we encourage all investors—not just wealth managers and individuals—to explore these strategies more closely and assess the valuable role they can play within a diversified portfolio.

### Want to know more?

The BlackRock Private Equity Partners team will continue to monitor all of the dynamics discussed in this Market Insights edition. We welcome the opportunities to engage further with our clients to discuss our private equity outlook as well as our differentiated origination of attractive investment opportunities in the current environment.

In order to navigate these market dynamics successfully, many clients choose to partner with experienced, cycle-tested private equity solutions providers. With 25+ years of experience sourcing, underwriting, executing and monitoring direct investments through a variety of economic and market cycles, the BlackRock Private Equity Partners' historical perspective on the private equity markets can lead to more informed investment decision making.



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