



## Loomis on Loans

A quarterly look at data and topics in the syndicated loan market

### DEMYSTIFYING CLO DEMAND FOR LEVERAGED LOANS

We often talk about leveraged loans and the beneficial characteristics that make them distinct within the fixed income universe: they're floating rate instruments, senior in a company's capital structure, secured by collateral, and tend to have short average lives. Those traits make them attractive to investors seeking yield potential with typically lower volatility, and those investors have different options for accessing the loan market. Some institutions invest through separately managed accounts or commingled vehicles, while individuals might choose to access the market through mutual funds and ETFs. But the biggest source of demand for loans, especially over the last year, has been Collateralized Loan Obligations, or CLOs. A wide variety of investors come together to form each special purpose vehicle, and they help provide stability to the loan market through multi-year commitments. Representing 59% of the leverage loan investor base at September 30, 2020, and 72% of new loan purchases for the last 12 months ending September 30, 2020, it's important to understand how CLO managers behave and what incentives they have.

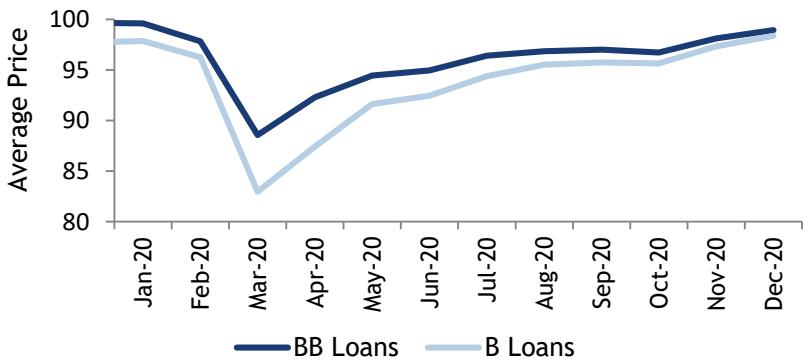
CLO managers buy the same types of loans that are bought in other loan accounts, but they must adhere to a strict set of tested covenants that help ensure diversification and other requirements. While they are seeking a high total return for the investors who own the equity of the structure, they cannot breach the indenture guidelines without the prospect of the structure being downgraded. Therefore, in addition to the credit research work that must be done to understand each company and the prospects for being repaid, each loan must be evaluated within the portfolio overall to make sure that all of the guidelines are met. That imperative can lead CLO managers to behave in ways that impact the loan market overall. We believe CLO behavior is a factor that all loan managers should consider when making their own credit selections.

### LOAN MARKET QUICK TAKE

(Continued on the next page.)

S&P/LSTA Index	4Q 2020	YTD 2020	Price	12-Mo. Price Change	Nominal Spread
"All" Leveraged Loan Index	3.81%	3.12%	96.19	-0.96%	L+375
BB Index	2.75%	0.75%	98.93	-0.72%	L+281
B Index	3.88%	3.80%	98.35	0.67%	L+407

#### B-rated Loans Closed the Pricing Gap



#### Performance Rebound

Price recovery for lower-rated and COVID-impacted loans continued in the fourth quarter due to positive vaccine news and increased certainty around domestic political outcomes. The pace of rating agency downgrades has slowed considerably, and the size of the loan market is nearly the same as at the start of 2020.

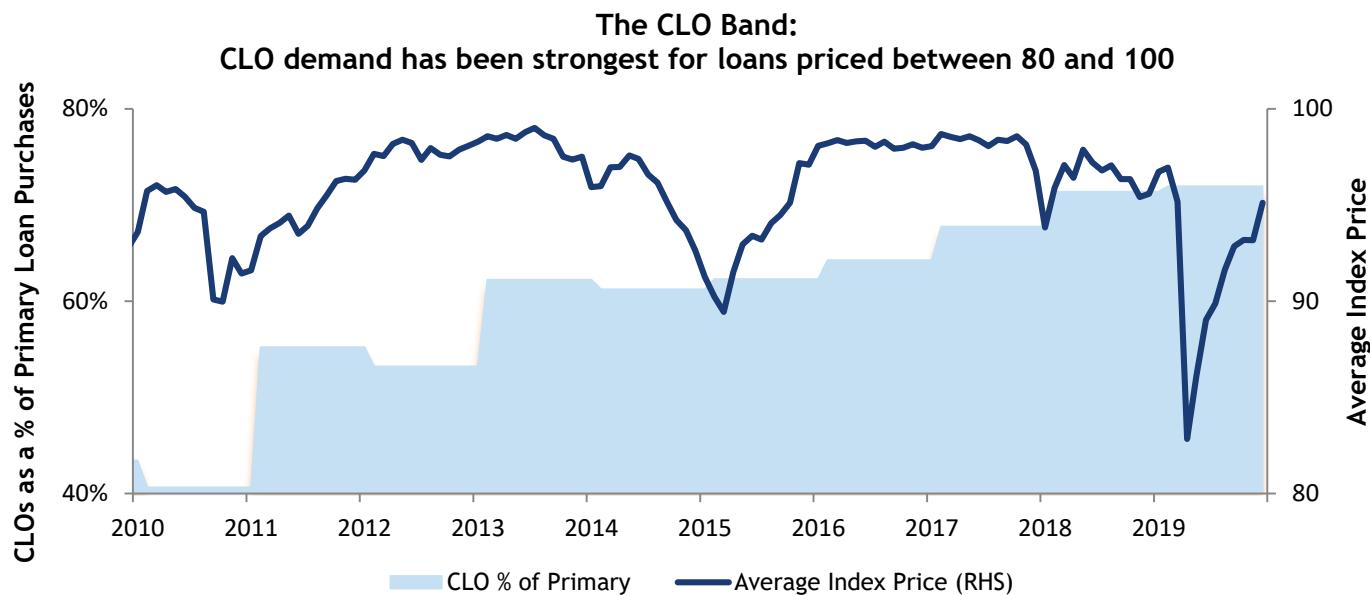
Source : LCD, an offering of S&P Global Market Intelligence; S&P/LSTA Leveraged Loan Index, as of 12/31/20.



## HERE ARE A FEW WAYS THAT CLOS CAN IMPACT THE LOAN MARKET

**LOAN PRICING** CLOs are incentivized to “build par” by buying loans at a discount. If they choose to purchase a loan above the \$100 mark, they are penalized on their tests. When demand for loans is very high, it’s not unusual to see higher quality loans trade at that premium level. But when demand levels are more reasonable, and dominated by the CLO buyer, it’s less likely that the market will see many loans trading above par. This scenario can help keep loan prices (and yields) relatively attractive versus high yield bonds that are chased up to and beyond their call prices by yield-hungry investors.

On the flip side, CLO managers do not help their par tests when they purchase deeply discounted loans, or loans typically priced below \$80. Without this lower barrier, it would be easy for CLO managers to improve failing tests by buying loans that might be to more troubled companies. When a loan’s price is heading into this territory, it might be less attractive to CLO managers. This could reduce demand for low-priced loans at least temporarily, which non-CLO managers need to consider as they analyze challenging credits.



Source: S&P/LCD for the period 01/01/2010 through 11/30/2020

**DOWNGRADES AND CCC'S** One of the most important guidelines for CLO managers is the Weighted Average Rating Factor (WARF). This test takes the rating on each loan and converts it to a number, and a portfolio average is then calculated. Those results are compared to the results of other CLO managers, and it's a helpful way to gauge how risky a portfolio might be. It's a critical metric, and continuously evaluated, as ratings change all the time. CLO managers trade the loans in their portfolios to keep these results in line.

This was especially challenging at the start of the pandemic, when the rating agencies quickly downgraded a host of companies facing potential struggles in the ensuing year. Rating agencies were quick to downgrade, but haven't been as fast to upgrade ratings now that conditions have improved. When a loan comes to the market with a lower rating from the start, it's important for managers to consider what that rating's path might be. With most CLOs limited to a CCC bucket of just 7.5%, a loan with a lower single-B rating might seem unattractive to CLO managers, and liquidity could be thinner than for higher-rated loans.

(Continued on the next page.)



**LOAN AND CLO ISSUANCE** CLO portfolios average about \$400 million and contain hundreds of individual loans. Their guidelines generally require them to be as fully invested as possible, since they do not need cash on hand for client redemptions. It's a bit like the chicken and the egg; CLOs need new loans to purchase and companies can only issue new loans if they can find enough investors. Those two types of demand tend to work together, and when there's a lot of CLO issuance, there is typically a bump in new loan issuance to help those portfolios get stocked. Otherwise, CLOs won't be able to form. With forecasts ranging from \$90 - \$120 billion in new CLOs in 2021, we're likely to see loans issued to help offset some of that new demand, and that can have ramifications for the secondary loan market as well.

As the investor base for leveraged loans continues to evolve, managers need to consider how that demand shapes trends in the market. When managing our portfolios, we might want to have more conviction regarding low single-B loans, and further manage that risk through position sizing. Deep credit work remains a critical component of how we manage, but just one of many that influence how we ultimately deliver on each investor's objectives. Acknowledging other market participants, both big and small, helps us remain competitive in the loan market.

**John Bell, VP**  
Portfolio Manager

**Heather Young, VP, CFA**  
Portfolio Manager

**Emily Sweet, VP, CFA**  
Associate Product Manager

**Michael Klawitter, VP, CFA**  
Portfolio Manager

**Christos Maniatis, VP**  
Portfolio Manager (CLO)

**Cheryl Stober, VP**  
Product Manager  
[cstober@loomissayles.com](mailto:cstober@loomissayles.com)

Questions or concerns about the bank loan market? Email Cheryl Stober to learn more.

## DISCLOSURE

### KEY RISKS

Credit Risk, Issuer Risk, Interest Rate Risk, Liquidity Risk, Derivatives Risk, Leverage Risk, Counterparty Risk, Non-US Securities Risk, Prepayment Risk, Extension Risk and Management Risk.

*Investing involves risk including possible loss of principal.*

*Diversification does not ensure a profit or guarantee against a loss.*

*This quarterly report is provided for informational purposes only and should not be construed as investment advice. Any opinions or forecasts contained herein reflect the subjective judgments and assumptions of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect the views of Loomis, Sayles & Company, L.P. Investment recommendations may be inconsistent with these opinions. There can be no assurance that developments will transpire as forecasted and actual results will be different. Data and analysis does not represent the actual or expected future performance of any investment product. We believe the information, including that obtained from outside sources, to be correct, but we cannot guarantee its accuracy. The information is subject to change at any time without notice.*

*All indices are unmanaged and do not incur fees. You cannot invest directly in an index.*

Past market performance is no guarantee of future results.

MALR026577-0131



This material has been provided for information purposes only to investment service providers or other Professional Clients, Qualified or Institutional Investors and, when required by local regulation, only at their written request.

**In the E.U. (outside of the UK and France):** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers S.A. or one of its branch offices listed below. Natixis Investment Managers S.A. is a Luxembourg management company that is authorized by the Commission de Surveillance du Secteur Financier and is incorporated under Luxembourg laws and registered under n. B 115843. Registered office of Natixis Investment Managers S.A.: 2, rue Jean Monnet, L-2180 Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. **Italy:** Natixis Investment Managers S.A., Succursale Italiana (Bank of Italy Register of Italian Asset Management Companies no 23458.3). Registered office: Via San Clemente 1, 20122 Milan, Italy. **Germany:** Natixis Investment Managers S.A., Zweigniederlassung Deutschland (Registration number: HRB 88541). Registered office: Im Trutz Frankfurt 55, Westend Carrée, 7. Floor, Frankfurt am Main 60322, Germany. **Netherlands:** Natixis Investment Managers, Nederlands (Registration number 50774670). Registered office: Stadsplateau 7, 3521AZ Utrecht, the Netherlands. **Sweden:** Natixis Investment Managers, Nordics Filial (Registration number 516405-9601 - Swedish Companies Registration Office). Registered office: Kungsägatan 48 5tr, Stockholm 111 35, Sweden. **Spain:** Natixis Investment Managers, Sucursal en España, Serrano n°90, 6th Floor, 28006 Madrid, Spain. **In France:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers International – a portfolio management company authorized by the Autorité des Marchés Financiers (French Financial Markets Authority - AMF) under no. GP 90-009, and a public limited company (société anonyme) registered in the Paris Trade and Companies Register under no. 329 450 738. Registered office: 43 avenue Pierre Mendès France, 75013 Paris. **In Switzerland:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers, Switzerland Sàrl, Rue du Vieux Collège 10, 1204 Geneva, Switzerland or its representative office in Zurich, Schweizergasse 6, 8001 Zürich. **In the British Isles:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers UK Limited which is authorised and regulated by the UK Financial Conduct Authority (register no. 190258) - registered office: Natixis Investment Managers UK Limited, One Carter Lane, London, EC4V 5ER. When permitted, the distribution of this material is intended to be made to persons as described as follows: **in the United Kingdom:** this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at investment professionals and professional investors only; **in Ireland:** this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at professional investors only; **in Guernsey:** this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at only financial services providers which hold a license from the Guernsey Financial Services Commission; **in Jersey:** this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at professional investors only; **in the Isle of Man:** this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at only financial services providers which hold a license from the Isle of Man Financial Services Authority or insurers authorised under section 8 of the Insurance Act 2008. **In the DIFC:** Provided in and from the as defined by the DFSA. No other Person should act upon this material. Unit L10-02, Level 10, ICD Brookfield Place, DIFC, PO Box 50DIFC financial district by Natixis Investment Managers Middle East (DIFC Branch) which is regulated by the DFSA. Related financial products or services are only available to persons who have sufficient financial experience and understanding to participate in financial markets within the DIFC, and qualify as Professional Clients or Market Counterparties 6752, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. **In Taiwan:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Securities Investment Consulting (Taipei) Co., Ltd., a Securities Investment Consulting Enterprise regulated by the Financial Supervisory Commission of the R.O.C. Registered address: 34F., No. 68, Sec. 5, Zhongxiao East Road, Xinyi Dist., Taipei City 11065, Taiwan (R.O.C.), license number 2018 FSC SICE No. 024, Tel. +886 2 8789 2788. **In Singapore:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Singapore (name registration no. 53102724D) to distributors and institutional investors only. Natixis Investment Managers Singapore is a division of Ostrum Asset Management Asia Limited (company registration no. 199801044D). **In Hong Kong:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Hong Kong Limited to institutional/ corporate professional investors only. **In Australia:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Australia Pty Limited (ABN 60 088 786 289) (AFSL No. 246830) and is intended for the general information of financial advisers and wholesale clients only. **In New Zealand:** This document is intended for the general information of New Zealand wholesale investors only. This is not a regulated offer for the purposes of the Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013 (FMCA) and is only available to New Zealand investors who have certified that they meet the requirements in the FMCA for wholesale investors. Natixis Investment Managers Australia Pty Limited is not a registered financial service provider in New Zealand. **In Latin America:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers S.A. **In Chile:** Esta oferta privada se inicia el día de la fecha de la presente comunicación. La presente oferta se acoge a la Norma de Carácter General Nº336 de la Superintendencia de Valores y Seguros de Chile. La presente oferta versa sobre valores no inscritos en el Registro de Valores o en el Registro de Valores Extranjeros que lleva la Superintendencia de Valores y Seguros, por lo que los valores sobre los cuales ésta versa, no están sujetos a su fiscalización. Que por tratarse de valores no inscritos, no existe la obligación por parte del emisor de entregar en Chile información pública respecto de estos valores. Estos valores no podrán ser objeto de oferta pública mientras no sean inscritos en el Registro de Valores correspondiente. **In Colombia:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers S.A. Oficina de Representación (Colombia) to professional clients for informational purposes only as permitted under Decree 2555 of 2010. Any products, services or investments referred to herein are rendered exclusively outside of Colombia. This material does not constitute a public offering in Colombia and is addressed to less than 100 specifically identified investors. **In Mexico:** Provided by Natixis IM Mexico, S. de R.L. de C.V., which is not a regulated financial entity, securities intermediary, or an investment manager in terms of the Mexican Securities Market Law (Ley del Mercado de Valores) and is not registered with the Comisión Nacional Bancaria y de Valores (CNBV) or any other Mexican authority. Any products, services or investments referred to herein that require authorization or license are rendered exclusively outside of Mexico. While shares of certain ETFs may be listed in the Sistema Internacional de Cotizaciones (SIC), such listing does not represent a public offering of securities in Mexico, and therefore the accuracy of this information has not been confirmed by the CNBV. Natixis Investment Managers is an entity organized under the laws of France and is not authorized by or registered with the CNBV or any other Mexican authority. Any reference contained herein to "Investment Managers" is made to Natixis Investment Managers and/or any of its investment management subsidiaries, which are also not authorized by or registered with the CNBV or any other Mexican authority. **In Uruguay:** Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Uruguay S.A., a duly registered investment advisor, authorised and supervised by the Central Bank of Uruguay. Office: San Lucar 1491, oficina 102B, Montevideo, Uruguay, CP 11500. The sale or offer of any units of a fund qualifies as a private placement pursuant to section 2 of Uruguayan law 18,627.

The above referenced entities are business development units of Natixis Investment Managers, the holding company of a diverse line-up of specialised investment management and distribution entities worldwide. The investment management subsidiaries of Natixis Investment Managers conduct any regulated activities only in and from the jurisdictions in which they are licensed or authorized. Their services and the products they manage are not available to all investors in all jurisdictions. It is the responsibility of each investment service provider to ensure that the offering or sale of fund shares or third party investment services to its clients complies with the relevant national law.

The provision of this material and/or reference to specific securities, sectors, or markets within this material does not constitute investment advice, or a recommendation or an offer to buy or to sell any security, or an offer of any regulated financial activity. **Investors should consider the investment objectives, risks and expenses of any investment carefully before investing.** The analyses, opinions, and certain of the investment themes and processes referenced herein represent the views of the portfolio manager(s) as of the date indicated. These, as well as the portfolio holdings and characteristics shown, are subject to change. There can be no assurance that developments will transpire as may be forecasted in this material. Past performance information presented is not indicative of future performance.

Although Natixis Investment Managers believes the information provided in this material to be reliable, including that from third party sources, it does not guarantee the accuracy, adequacy, or completeness of such information. This material may not be distributed, published, or reproduced, in whole or in part.

All amounts shown are expressed in USD unless otherwise indicated.

**In Canada:** This material is provided by Natixis Canada LP., 145 King Street West, Suite 1500, Toronto, ON M5H 1J8.

**In the United States:** Provided by Natixis Distribution, L.P. 888 Boylston St. Boston, MA 02199. Natixis Investment Managers includes all of the investment management and distribution entities affiliated with Natixis Distribution, L.P. and Natixis Investment Managers S.A.

This material should not be considered a solicitation to buy or an offer to sell any product or service to any person in any jurisdiction where such activity would be unlawful.

This document may contain references to third party copyrights, indexes, and trademarks, each of which is the property of its respective owner. Such owner is not affiliated with Natixis Investment Managers or any of its related or affiliated companies (collectively "Natixis") and does not sponsor, endorse or participate in the provision of any Natixis services, funds or other financial products.

The index information contained herein is derived from third parties and is provided on an "as is" basis. The user of this information assumes the entire risk of use of this information. Each of the third party entities involved in compiling, computing or creating index information, disclaims all warranties (including, without limitation, any warranties of originality, accuracy, completeness, timeliness, non-infringement, merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose) with respect to such information.

# Additional Notes

---

This material has been provided for information purposes only to investment service providers or other Professional Clients, Qualified or Institutional Investors and, when required by local regulation, only at their written request. This material must not be used with Retail Investors.

In the E.U. (outside of the UK and France): Provided by Natixis Investment Managers S.A. or one of its branch offices listed below. Natixis Investment Managers S.A. is a Luxembourg management company that is authorized by the Commission de Surveillance du Secteur Financier and is incorporated under Luxembourg laws and registered under n. B 115843. Registered office of Natixis Investment Managers S.A.: 2, rue Jean Monnet, L-2180 Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Italy: Natixis Investment Managers S.A., Succursale Italiana (Bank of Italy Register of Italian Asset Management Companies no 23458.3). Registered office: Via San Clemente 1, 20122 Milan, Italy. Germany: Natixis Investment Managers S.A., Zweigniederlassung Deutschland (Registration number: HRB 88541). Registered office: Im Trutz Frankfurt 55, Westend Carrée, 7. Floor, Frankfurt am Main 60322, Germany. Netherlands: Natixis Investment Managers, Nederlands (Registration number 50774670). Registered office: Stadsplateau 7, 3521AZ Utrecht, the Netherlands. Sweden: Natixis Investment Managers, Nordics Filial (Registration number 516405-9601 - Swedish Companies Registration Office). Registered office: Kungsgatan 48 5tr, Stockholm 111 35, Sweden. Spain: Natixis Investment Managers, Sucursal en España. Serrano nº90, 6th Floor, 28006, Madrid, Spain. Belgium: Natixis Investment Managers S.A., Belgian Branch, Gare Maritime, Rue Picard 7, Bte 100, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium.

In France: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers International – a portfolio management company authorized by the Autorité des Marchés Financiers (French Financial Markets Authority - AMF) under no. GP 90-009, and a public limited company (société anonyme) registered in the Paris Trade and Companies Register under no. 329 450 738. Registered office: 43 avenue Pierre Mendès France, 75013 Paris.

In Switzerland: Provided for information purposes only by Natixis Investment Managers, Switzerland Sàrl, Rue du Vieux Collège 10, 1204 Geneva, Switzerland or its representative office in Zurich, Schweizergasse 6, 8001 Zürich.

In the British Isles: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers UK Limited which is authorised and regulated by the UK Financial Conduct Authority (register no. 190258) - registered office: Natixis Investment Managers UK Limited, One Carter Lane, London, EC4V 5ER. When permitted, the distribution of this material is intended to be made to persons as described as follows: in the United Kingdom: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at investment professionals and professional investors only; in Ireland: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at professional investors only; in Guernsey: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at only financial services providers which hold a license from the Guernsey Financial Services Commission; in Jersey: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at professional investors only; in the Isle of Man: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at only financial services providers which hold a license from the Isle of Man Financial Services Authority or insurers authorised under section 8 of the Insurance Act 2008.

In the DIFC: Provided in and from the DIFC financial district by Natixis Investment Managers Middle East (DIFC Branch) which is regulated by the DFSA. Related financial products or services are only available to persons who have sufficient financial experience and understanding to participate in financial markets within the DIFC, and qualify as Professional Clients or Market Counterparties as defined by the DFSA. No other Person should act upon this material. Registered office: Unit L10-02, Level 10 ,ICD Brookfield Place, DIFC, PO Box 506752, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

In Japan: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Japan Co., Ltd. Registration No.: Director-General of the Kanto Local Financial Bureau (kinsho) No.425. Content of Business: The Company conducts investment management business, investment advisory and agency business and Type II Financial Instruments Business as a Financial Instruments Business Operator.

In Taiwan: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Securities Investment Consulting (Taipei) Co., Ltd., a Securities Investment Consulting Enterprise regulated by the Financial Supervisory Commission of the R.O.C. Registered address: 34F., No. 68, Sec. 5, Zhongxiao East Road, Xinyi Dist., Taipei City 11065, Taiwan (R.O.C.), license number 2020 FSC SICE No. 025, Tel. +886 2 8789 2788.

In Singapore: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Singapore Limited (company registration no. 199801044D) to distributors and institutional investors for informational purposes only.

In Hong Kong: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Hong Kong Limited to institutional/ corporate professional investors only.

In Australia: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Australia Pty Limited (ABN 60 088 786 289) (AFSL No. 246830) and is intended for the general information of financial advisers and wholesale clients only .

In New Zealand: This document is intended for the general information of New Zealand wholesale investors only and does not constitute financial advice. This is not a regulated offer for the purposes of the Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013 (FMCA) and is only available to New Zealand investors who have certified that they meet the requirements in the FMCA for wholesale investors. Natixis Investment Managers Australia Pty Limited is not a registered financial service provider in New Zealand.

In Latin America: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers S.A.

In Uruguay: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Uruguay S.A., a duly registered investment advisor, authorised and supervised by the Central Bank of Uruguay. Office: San Lucar 1491, Montevideo, Uruguay, CP 11500. The sale or offer of any units of a fund qualifies as a private placement pursuant to section 2 of Uruguayan law 18,627.

In Colombia: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers S.A. Oficina de Representación (Colombia) to professional clients for informational purposes only as permitted under Decree 2555 of 2010. Any products, services or investments referred to herein are rendered exclusively outside of Colombia. This material does not constitute a public offering in Colombia and is addressed to less than 100 specifically identified investors.

In Mexico Provided by Natixis IM Mexico, S. de R.L. de C.V., which is not a regulated financial entity, securities intermediary, or an investment manager in terms of the Mexican Securities Market Law (Ley del Mercado de Valores) and is not registered with the Comisión Nacional Bancaria y de Valores (CNBV) or any other Mexican authority. Any products, services or investments referred to herein that require authorization or license are rendered exclusively outside of Mexico. While shares of certain ETFs may be listed in the Sistema Internacional de Cotizaciones (SIC), such listing does not represent a public offering of securities in Mexico, and therefore the accuracy of this information has not been confirmed by the CNBV. Natixis Investment Managers is an entity organized under the laws of France and is not authorized by or registered with the CNBV or any other Mexican authority. Any reference contained herein to "Investment Managers" is made to Natixis Investment Managers and/or any of its investment management subsidiaries, which are also not authorized by or registered with the CNBV or any other Mexican authority.

The above referenced entities are business development units of Natixis Investment Managers, the holding company of a diverse line-up of specialised investment management and distribution entities worldwide. The investment management subsidiaries of Natixis Investment Managers conduct any regulated activities only in and from the jurisdictions in which they are licensed or authorized. Their services and the products they manage are not available to all investors in all jurisdictions. It is the responsibility of each investment service provider to ensure that the offering or sale of fund shares or third party investment services to its clients complies with the relevant national law.

The provision of this material and/or reference to specific securities, sectors, or markets within this material does not constitute investment advice, or a recommendation or an offer to buy or to sell any security, or an offer of any regulated financial activity. Investors should consider the investment objectives, risks and expenses of any investment carefully before investing. The analyses, opinions, and certain of the investment themes and processes referenced herein represent the views of the portfolio manager(s) as of the date indicated. These, as well as the portfolio holdings and characteristics shown, are subject to change. There can be no assurance that developments will transpire as may be forecasted in this material. The analyses and opinions expressed by external third parties are independent and does not necessarily reflect those of Natixis Investment Managers. Past performance information presented is not indicative of future performance.

Although Natixis Investment Managers believes the information provided in this material to be reliable, including that from third party sources, it does not guarantee the accuracy, adequacy, or completeness of such information. This material may not be distributed, published, or reproduced, in whole or in part.

All amounts shown are expressed in USD unless otherwise indicated.