

# Precision insights: Factors

Updated July 2026

## Highlights

- **We balance out our factor convictions amid macro and market volatility**, with higher conviction in momentum and quality.
- **We see merit in keeping some cyclical in portfolios** but bring value down to a mixed view, given the uncertain policy backdrop.

## Factor selectivity: identifying differentiated sources of return

We outline our current views on equity style factors, updated to reflect the latest macro and microeconomic developments.

Click through to explore our precision factor views in detail.

| Factor                                                                                                               | View                                                                                | Outlook                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b><u>Minimum volatility</u></b> |  | Despite heightened geopolitical risk and elevated bond volatility, two-way volatility in equities continues to be relatively contained at the headline level, underscoring our negative view.                                  |
|  <b><u>Momentum</u></b>           |  | Momentum continues to stand out this year as the second-strongest performing factor YTD – we maintain our conviction despite recent technical pullbacks, viewing these as healthy corrections.                                 |
|  <b><u>Quality</u></b>            |  | We increase our conviction in the quality factor for two reasons: we see an opportunity in quality stocks after April's indiscriminate selling, and an uncertain policy backdrop reinforces our preference for a quality core. |
|  <b><u>Size</u></b>               |  | We reduce our conviction in the size factor at the global level and hold a more balanced view on European size, with a preference for mid-caps over small.                                                                     |
|  <b><u>Value</u></b>              |  | We moderate our conviction on value, with a continued regional preference for Europe, in line with our BlackRock Systematic colleagues.                                                                                        |

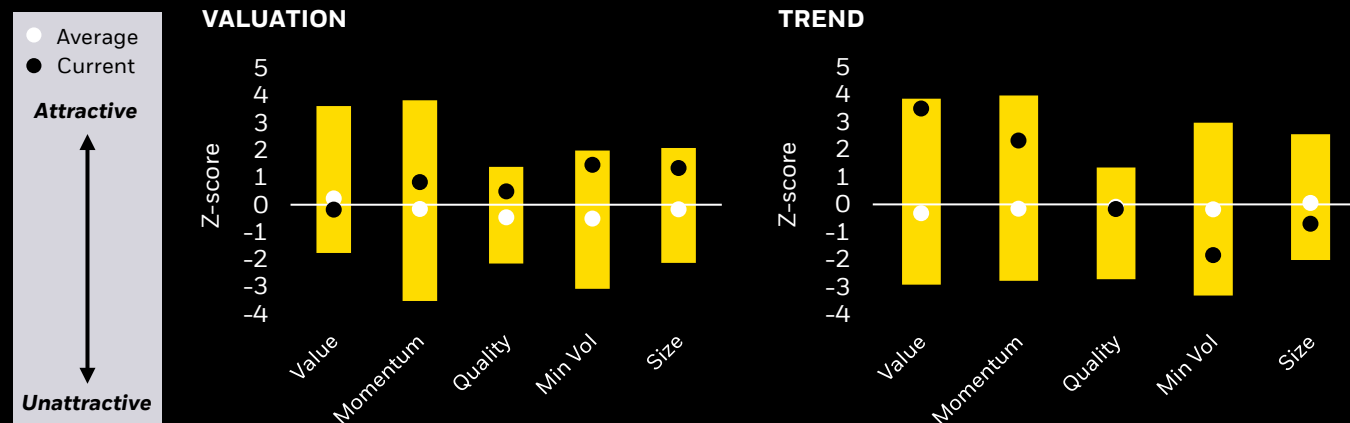
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## A systematic framework underpinning our views on factors across regions

Style factors are defined by their unique tilts or biases, which should be taken into consideration when assessing their attractiveness in a given environment. Factor maps help identify favourable entry points for single factors based on 'valuation' and 'trend' scores: this puts current valuations into historical context, using an expanding time window on a z-score basis to compare each factor with its own history. Valuation scores offer an equal-weighted average of z-scores based on an index's historical book/price (B/P), cash earnings/price (CE/P), and forward earnings/price (E/P), relative to the benchmark. Trend scores are based on equal-weighted z-scores for 6- and 12-month excess returns.

**Factor maps may provide insights into whether factors in different regions are cheap or expensive, and whether they have a strong or weak price trend. This approach forms the basis of our factor views.**

**Figure 1: Global factor valuation and trend scores**



Source: BlackRock, MSCI, as of 30 June 2026. For illustrative purposes only. Historical data for the period 31/01/1997-30/06/2026. The valuation score is an equal-weighted average of z-scores for an index's historical B/P, CE/P, and forward E/P, relative to its parent index. The trend score is an equal weighted z-score of 6m and 12m excess returns. The z-score is calculated on an expanding time window.

**Figure 2: Five-year annualised performance of factor indices, July 2026**

|           |                                          | 2021   | 2022    | 2023   | 2024   | 2025   | 2026 YTD |
|-----------|------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| MINVOL    | MSCI World Minimum Volatility Index      | 14.26% | -9.79%  | 7.42%  | 10.87% | 10.54% | 1.53%    |
|           | MSCI USA Minimum Volatility Index        | 20.43% | -9.67%  | 9.14%  | 15.38% | 7.31%  | 2.55%    |
|           | MSCI Europe Minimum Volatility Index     | 13.26% | -19.08% | 15.81% | 5.02%  | 26.80% | 5.54%    |
| MOMENTUM  | MSCI World Momentum Index                | 14.64% | -17.79% | 11.75% | 30.15% | 21.33% | 19.86%   |
|           | MSCI USA Momentum Index                  | 12.64% | -17.87% | 8.98%  | 31.99% | 17.34% | 26.96%   |
|           | MSCI Europe Momentum Index               | 21.06% | -14.26% | 11.94% | 19.94% | 28.35% | 7.73%    |
| QUALITY   | MSCI World Sector Neutral Quality Index  | 23.42% | -19.16% | 25.83% | 16.81% | 15.49% | 11.29%   |
|           | MSCI USA Sector Neutral Quality Index    | 26.65% | -20.67% | 30.44% | 21.98% | 12.55% | 11.01%   |
|           | MSCI Europe Sector Neutral Quality Index | 17.71% | -17.53% | 19.10% | -2.14% | 24.30% | 5.66%    |
| SIZE      | MSCI World Mid Cap Equal Weighted Index  | 12.99% | -18.24% | 15.77% | 6.34%  | 20.73% | 8.06%    |
|           | MSCI USA Mid-Cap Equal Weighted Index    | 25.65% | -18.30% | 15.91% | 13.14% | 7.69%  | 9.07%    |
|           | MSCI Europe Mid Cap Equal Weighted Index | 11.74% | -23.78% | 18.63% | -1.09% | 33.85% | 7.87%    |
| VALUE     | MSCI World Enhanced Value Index          | 20.04% | -9.89%  | 19.31% | 5.09%  | 39.39% | 30.83%   |
|           | MSCI USA Enhanced Value Index            | 28.21% | -14.76% | 13.39% | 6.45%  | 31.85% | 41.13%   |
|           | MSCI Europe Enhanced Value Index         | 18.30% | -10.80% | 18.13% | 3.33%  | 52.76% | 12.84%   |
| BENCHMARK | MSCI World Index                         | 21.82% | -18.14% | 23.79% | 18.67% | 21.09% | 10.89%   |
|           | MSCI USA Index                           | 16.30% | -15.06% | 19.89% | 1.79%  | 35.41% | 7.82%    |
|           | MSCI Europe Index                        | 26.45% | -19.85% | 26.49% | 24.58% | 17.31% | 11.03%   |

**The figures shown relate to past performance. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of current or future results.**

Index performance returns do not reflect any management fees, transaction costs or expenses. Indices are unmanaged and one cannot invest directly in an index. Source: BlackRock and Bloomberg, as of 15 July 2026.

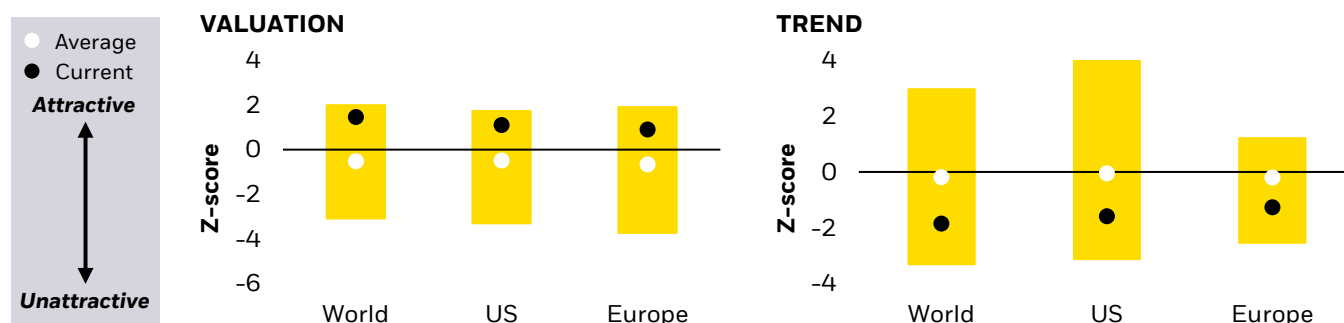


## Minimum volatility

**We maintain a less constructive view on the minimum volatility factor across all regions.** Despite heightened geopolitical risk and elevated bond market volatility, two-way equity volatility has remained relatively contained, reinforcing investors' preference for cyclical earnings exposure over defensives. The factor is experiencing one of its weakest periods on record, with the beta-neutral minimum volatility factor down 26.6% since June 2025 and sitting in its deepest drawdown in more than 20 years, reaching -33.7% at its trough in early June.<sup>1</sup> This reflects persistent leadership from higher-beta and AI-linked stocks, while traditional defensive subsectors – including regulated utilities, food & staples retailing, household products and telecoms – have struggled to participate in the current earnings cycle.<sup>2</sup>

Although the factor has cheapened, according to our factor maps framework below, we don't believe the fundamental backdrop supports a contrarian allocation yet; it continues to rank poorly on trend and earnings momentum, hence we hold a weak view at a global level. The factor's historical profitability advantage has eroded materially, with the median ROE spread over high-volatility stocks falling to just 223bps, versus a long-run average of 722bps, removing one of its most durable structural supports.<sup>3</sup> While the valuation premium has compressed to 27.8%, from a historical median of 52.8%, this largely reflects price weakness rather than improving fundamentals.<sup>4</sup>

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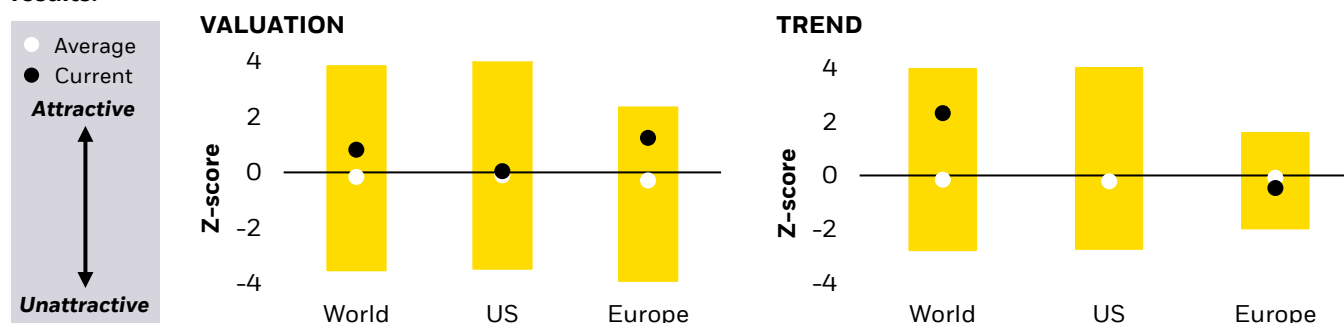


## Momentum

**We maintain a positive view on momentum amid an unusually stable late-cycle backdrop and continued AI investment,** creating an environment where the factor has thrived. Despite the recent momentum unwind – among the deepest since 2001, driven by AI concerns, geopolitical risk and energy-related disruptions – momentum is still only second to value in year-to-date performance across both US and global markets.<sup>5</sup> US momentum has outperformed its European peer since late March, as easing Middle East tensions have supported a tech-led relief rally.<sup>6</sup> Even so, European high-momentum stocks have outperformed low-momentum stocks by an annualised 40% YTD – the strongest outperformance in two decades.<sup>7</sup>

Momentum currently provides exposure to the AI theme, where the average European portfolio remains underweight. Its largest industry tilts – semiconductors, tech hardware and capital goods<sup>8</sup> – reflect our conviction AI trades, aligned with AI infrastructure, energy and transportation themes. According to our factor maps framework below, valuations have improved, driven by fundamentals, including rising earnings expectations since February.<sup>9</sup> In fact, unlike in past cases, recent rallies have mostly been driven by surging near-term earnings estimates, making momentum one of the cheaper factors on a P/E basis.<sup>10</sup> Although risks remain, given the potential for leadership shifts, demand has been strong: \$11B has been added to momentum ETPs globally in 2026, making it the second-most popular factor after value.<sup>11</sup>

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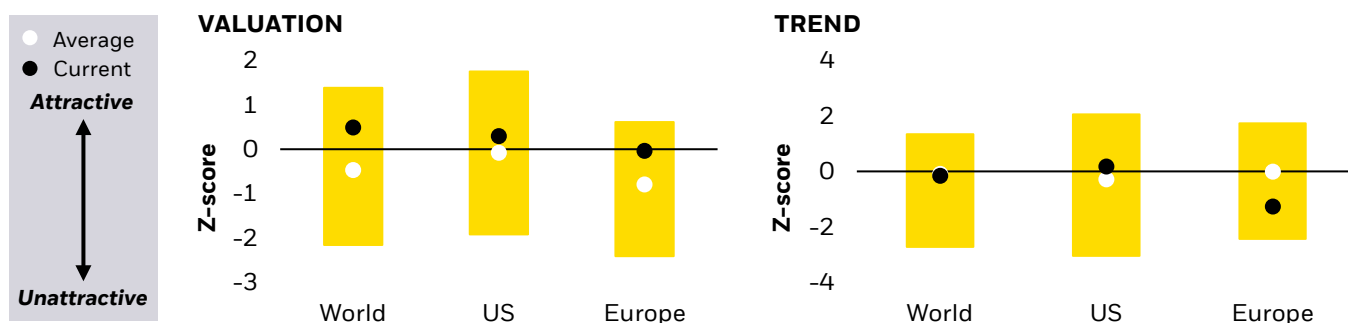
Source for top & bottom charts: BlackRock, MSCI, as of 30 June 2026. For illustrative purposes only. Historical data for the period 31/01/1997-30/06/2026. The valuation score is an equal-weighted average of z-scores for an index's historical B/P, CE/P, and forward E/P, relative to its parent index. The trend score is an equal weighted z-score of 6m and 12m excess returns. The z-score is calculated on an expanding time window.

## Quality

**We increase our conviction in the quality factor amid a volatile market backdrop**, where companies with resilient balance sheets and reliable earnings and cash flows remain a useful core exposure. Despite being a pain trade year-to-date, the attractive valuation rerating has become harder to ignore. Based on our factor maps below, world quality's current valuation score (+0.49) screens as attractive versus the historical average (-0.47).<sup>12</sup> We prefer European quality over US exposure, given the former's larger valuation discount (see chart below).<sup>13</sup> Our Fundamental Equity team notes that within European quality, valuations sit at the lowest level in 40 years, outside of periods of economic recovery.<sup>14</sup>

Quality exposure may provide a fundamental anchor in equity sleeves when used alongside momentum, potentially acting as a hedge for a reversal in the AI trade. Studies of the sharpest momentum reversals in the past 100 years shows that previous laggards (i.e. low momentum/quality stocks) didn't just outperform in those episodes, they appreciated in absolute terms.<sup>15</sup> Regionally, while US quality has continued to lead across the last two years, with a particularly wide one-year gap versus Europe (+19.9% versus +6.8%),<sup>16</sup> we think the European opportunity remains compelling due to the wider disconnect in valuations. Following outflows in May, global quality factor ETPs have recorded two consecutive months of buying, with net inflows now at c.\$1B year-to-date.<sup>17</sup>

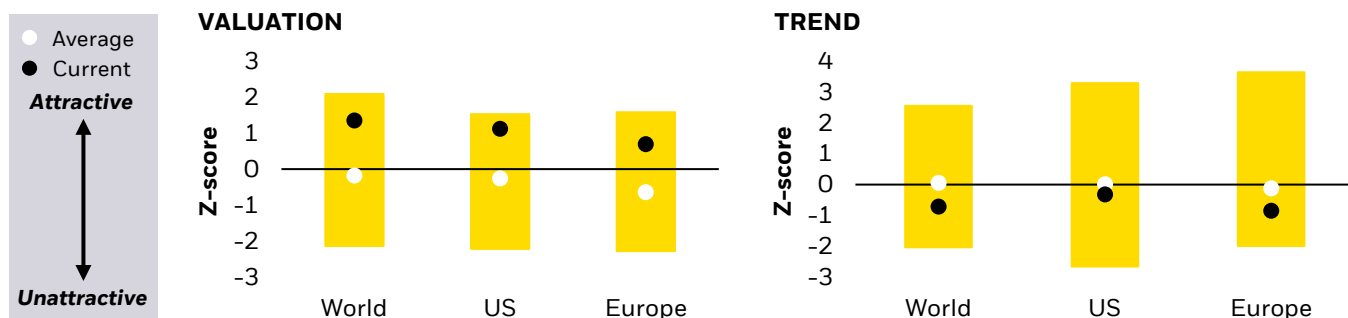
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## Size

**We maintain a negative view on the size factor, driven primarily by our preference for US large caps over small caps.** We have a more balanced view on European size, with a preference for mid-caps over small. In the US, fundamental dispersion continues to favour larger companies. EPS revisions have increased by only 4.8% YTD for small caps, compared with 6.5% for Big Tech and 27.7% for the remainder of the technology sector.<sup>18</sup> This earnings revision gap is reinforced by a structurally weaker quality profile, with approximately 31% of small-cap companies remaining unprofitable and balance sheets exhibiting materially higher leverage.<sup>19</sup> The US small-cap equity beta to the 10-year US Treasury (UST) yield is also close to its most negative level in three decades,<sup>20</sup> leaving it particularly vulnerable to interest rate rises, with the 10-year (UST) yield around 4.5% and potentially moving higher, in our view.<sup>21</sup> In Europe, pockets of the mid-cap universe continue to exhibit resilient earnings momentum, yet the combination of moderating macro momentum and tighter European Central Bank policy supports a mixed stance on size overall, in our view.

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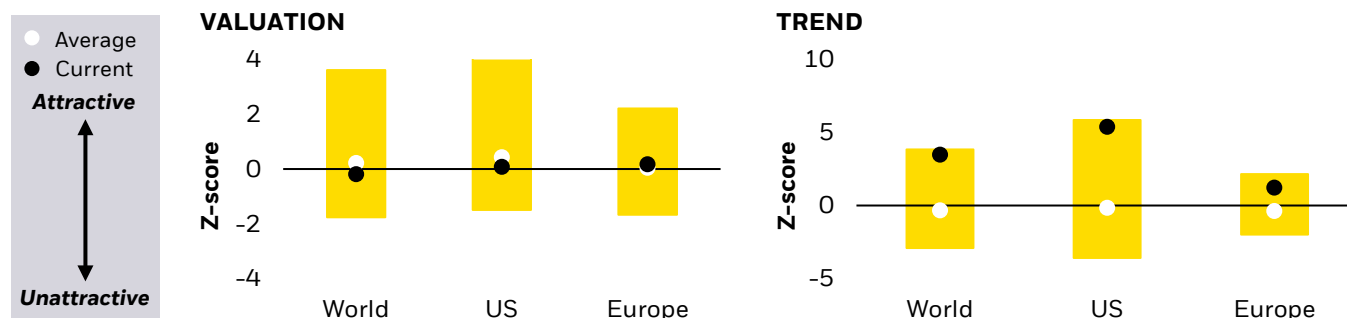


## Value

We moderate our stance on value to mixed at the global level, with a regional preference for Europe, where our factor maps valuations score is most attractive, despite its weaker trend score versus the US. Value is now the strongest-performing equity factor globally year-to-date. In the US, it has benefited from a combination of resilient nominal economic growth, broadening earnings revisions across cyclical sectors and a macro environment that has remained more inflationary than anticipated. Within the global value universe, energy, materials and financials have all delivered positive forward EPS revisions despite stable-to-lower earnings multiples,<sup>22</sup> highlighting that performance has been driven by improving fundamentals, rather than valuations. Relative to US value, the European value index has slightly higher quality exposure (+0.03 standard deviations) and a materially stronger large-cap bias (+0.50 standard deviations), suggesting the factor is less exposed to traditional value traps while offering a more attractive combination of inexpensive valuations and robust fundamentals.<sup>23</sup>

Looking ahead, however, we see a less supportive policy backdrop. Value has historically exhibited its strongest relative performance during easing cycles, whereas the recent repricing towards a higher-for-longer policy path reduces the scope for further macro-driven outperformance, in our view. This, together with the factor's substantial year-to-date gains, leads us to moderate conviction despite fundamentals remaining constructive. Our factor maps framework reinforces this view: European value still offers a stronger cross-sectional valuation opportunity, while US value screens as expensive versus European value and US factor peers, despite a strong trend score.<sup>24</sup>

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## Views from the BlackRock Systematic Strategy Team

**Momentum remains the team's most overweight factor**, supported by rotation signal cohorts. Despite recent volatility driven by geopolitics, AI disruption and policy uncertainty, the factor has remained resilient. **The overweight in momentum** has remained broadly unchanged since the March 2026 rebalance, with macroeconomic and market-based regime indicators still supportive, alongside additional support from sentiment and price-based signals. Fundamental insights have also become modestly more supportive of the factor, as turnover and market retracements have helped to refresh stock leadership and core valuation measures.

**Value remains an overweight**, with attractive regime and trend characteristics supporting the position. Fundamental insights remain less supportive of the factor, but have improved in recent months, reinforcing the position. Positive recent price trends, economic regime impulses and investor positioning insights are among the strongest supporting signals.

**Low volatility remains an underweight**, as weaker signals from economic and faster-moving regime insights – which have adopted a more pro-risk stance – more than offset supportive fundamental characteristics. **Size is also an underweight**, primarily driven by sentiment signals, with other regime metrics remaining less supportive, despite some offset from rates-based regime signals. **Quality remains neutral**, with little change in signals across the different cohorts.

Note: BlackRock Systematic Active Equities and BlackRock EMEA iShares employ different factor definitions and methodologies. As both sets of views are presented in this piece, they have been clearly distinguished to avoid ambiguity.

## Notes

**1,2,3,4** Source: Bloomberg Intelligence, 2 July 2026.

**5,6,7,16,18,20,21,22** Source: Bloomberg, as of 30 June 2026.

**8** Source: Bloomberg, as of 30 June 2026. Based on the MSCI World Momentum Index, which next rebalances in September 2026.

**9,10,12,13,24** Source: BlackRock, MSCI, as of 30 June 2026. For illustrative purposes only. Historical data for the period 31/01/1997–30/06/2026. The valuation score is an equal-weighted average of z-scores for an index's historical B/P, CE/P, and forward E/P, relative to its parent index. The trend score is an equal weighted z-score of 6m and 12m excess returns. The z-score is calculated on an expanding time window.

**11,17** Source: BlackRock and Markit, as of 30 June 2026.

**14** Source: BlackRock Fundamental Equities and Bloomberg, as of 30 June 2026.

**15** Source: Goldman Sachs research, as of 16 May 2026.

**19** Source: Barclays Equity Factor Insights, as of 8 June 2026.

**23** Source: Bloomberg, as of 21 July 2026.

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