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Understanding wealth lending

Strategies for growing your financial portfolio

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WS Global CIO Office

Wealth lending has quietly become one of the most powerful – yet often underappreciated – tools in modern wealth management. For high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), it offers a flexible way to unlock liquidity without needing to sell long-term investments or disrupt estate planning structures.

Whether it's for acquiring real estate, bridging short-term cash needs, investing in private opportunities, or rebalancing a portfolio, wealth lending allows investors to use their existing assets as collateral for strategic borrowing.

In this article, we will delve into the fundamentals of wealth lending and its role as a powerful extension of a investor's overall investment strategy to grow wealth in the long run.

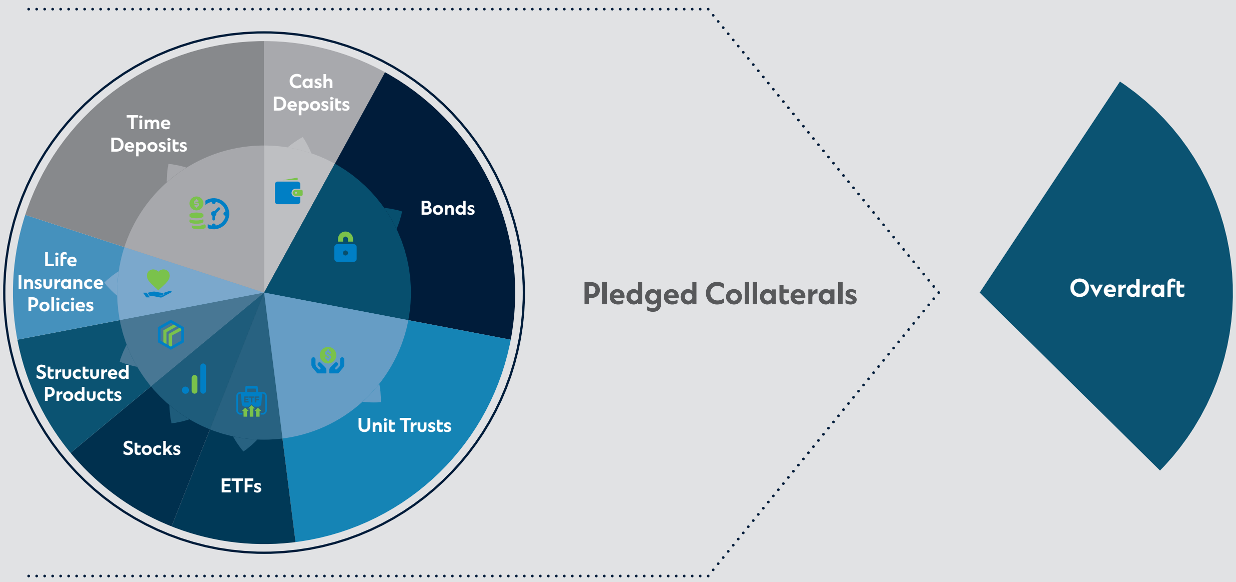
Understanding wealth lending

Wealth lending – also known as securities-based or Lombard lending - is a form of secured lending wherein investors use their existing investments, such as stocks, mutual funds, bonds, structured products, and alternatives, as collateral to avail an overdraft or line of credit.

Rather than selling assets to raise capital, investors can borrow against the value of their holdings, gaining liquidity while remaining invested. The agreements are privately negotiated and tailored to the requirements of the borrower. The credit limit under this arrangement is determined by a range of factors, including the type of assets offered as collateral and the assets held in the portfolio with the syndicating bank. Furthermore, such facilities enjoy bespoke credit terms and competitive interest rates.

In recent years, wealth lending has evolved from a niche product into a core component of portfolio and balance sheet management, especially as private banks shift toward holistic, advisory-led service models.

Fig. 1
Wealth lending



Source: Standard Chartered

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While the specifics will always vary in each situation, we highlight what are often the most common features of wealth lending below:

- A wide range of financial assets, which may include multi-currency deposits, mutual funds, ETFs, stocks, bonds, life insurance products and structured products, are often commonly accepted as collateral.

- Lending can often be multi-currency in nature, which provides flexibility for international transaction needs.

- While there is usually a minimum portfolio size to be used as collateral, there is no minimum loan balance or fixed tenor mandates. This solution allows for flexible repayments on interest accrued on the utilised line of credit and not on the total facility limit. It provides competitive lending rates for larger and high-quality portfolios.

- Borrowed funds can be used for a variety of purposes, including personal liquidity, pursuing investment opportunities or business needs.

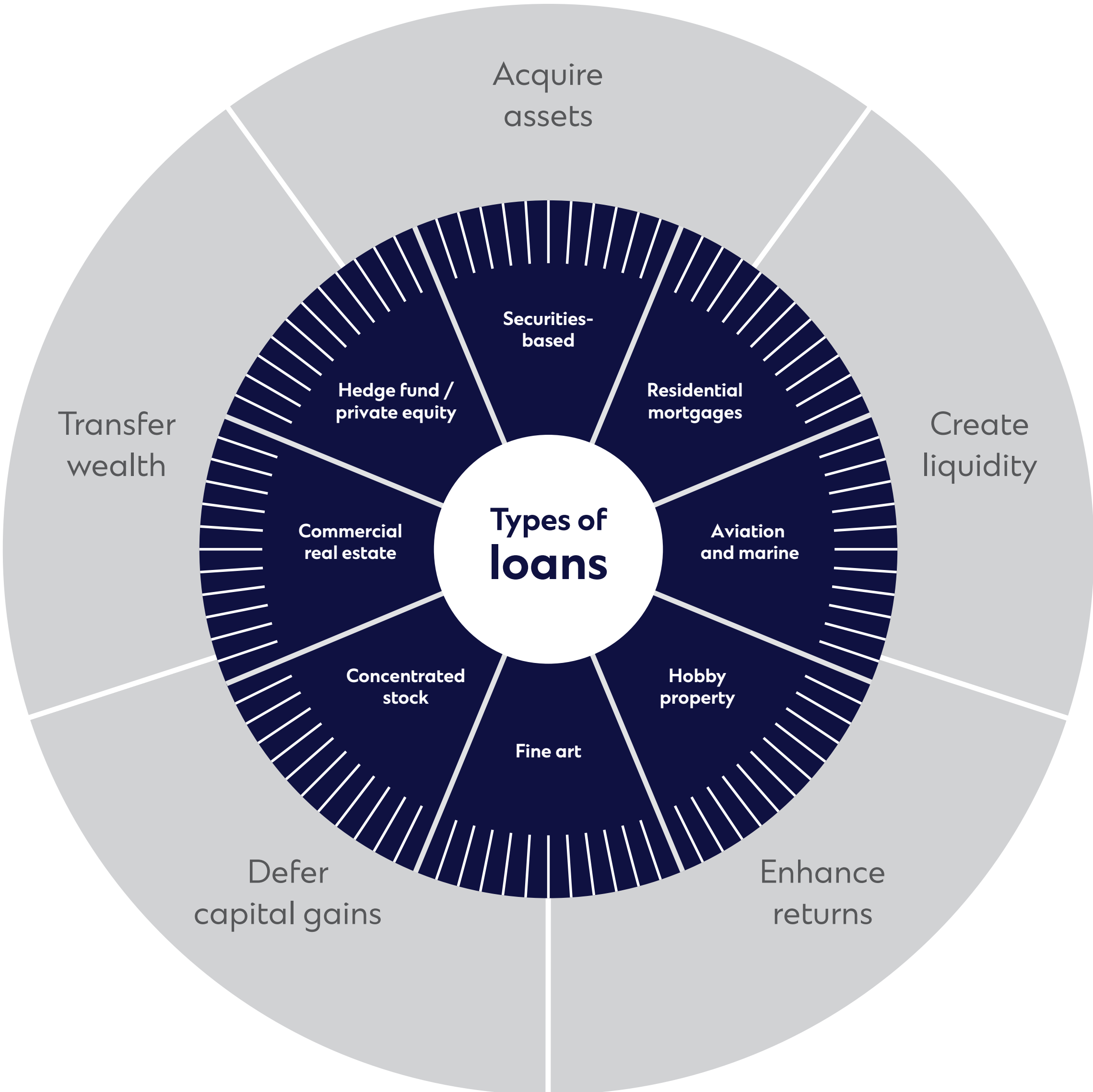
- When the value of collateral falls below a predefined threshold, a margin call will be triggered. This can be resolved either by topping up the collateral or by partially repaying the loan.

- Solutions can be tailored to the needs of the affluent and internationally mobile investors by offering global coverage through wealth hubs across geographies.

Why consider wealth lending?

Wealth lending is a powerful tool that extends flexibility, liquidity and strategic financial positioning to investors. The solution allows affluent individuals and businesses to optimise return on investments while also managing risks and costs.

Fig. 2
Why wealth lending?



Source: Standard Chartered, Goldman Sachs

Liquidity without liquidation

Wealth lending enables affluent investors to access liquidity without selling long-term investments. For individuals with a preference for buy and hold investment strategy, this means they can raise capital while maintaining market exposure. This is particularly valuable in jurisdictions like the UK, where the sale of appreciated assets could trigger capital gains tax or disrupt strategic asset allocations. By borrowing against their portfolio, one can preserve both investment performance and limit any unintended tax implications.

Speed, flexibility, and opportunity

Unlike traditional credit facilities, wealth lending can be pre-approved and swiftly drawn upon, offering a high degree of responsiveness. This speed matters when investors need immediate liquidity to seize investment opportunities that are time sensitive. The line of credit is typically revolving and interest-only, offering flexibility that aligns with the irregular cash flow cycles of entrepreneurs and business owners.

Strategic use of leverage

For sophisticated investors, wealth lending is not just a liquidity tool but a means of deploying leverage strategically. By using borrowed funds to reinvest in higher-yielding opportunities, diversify across asset classes, or fund expansion in private businesses, investors can enhance returns without eroding core capital. The growing role of portfolio-based credit as a balance sheet optimisation strategy among ultra-high-net-worth individuals, especially in Asia and the Middle East, has been increasingly acknowledged.

Succession planning and wealth structuring

In the context of estate planning, wealth lending provides a discreet and capital-efficient way to transfer wealth or fund intergenerational goals. Investors can use loans to finance trust contributions, pay life insurance premiums, or facilitate intra-family share buyouts – all without divesting core assets. This ability to fund legacy plans while retaining ownership and control is particularly relevant to family offices and entrepreneurs preparing for succession.

The digital-first and artificial intelligence transformation

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) are set to become transformative forces in the evolution of wealth lending, particularly in how high-net-worth (HNW) portfolios are managed over the next five to ten years. As private banks increasingly integrate real-time data analytics and AI-driven credit models, the process of assessing, monitoring, and optimising lending against investment portfolios will become faster, more precise, and more personalised. This will allow for dynamic lending decisions based on live market data, portfolio volatility and changing risk profiles—enabling access to liquidity more efficiently while maintaining prudent leverage levels.

AI will also play a growing role in predictive risk management, flagging early signs of concentration risk, margin deterioration, or systemic shifts, and prompting timely rebalancing or loan restructuring. For advisors, digital platforms powered by AI will enable holistic, scenario-based simulations—illustrating how wealth lending interacts with investment performance, tax exposures, and long-term estate plans. This enhanced transparency and customisation can significantly elevate confidence in using leverage strategically.

Ultimately, digitalisation will shift wealth lending from a reactive financing tool to an integrated component of wealth architecture—seamlessly aligned with portfolio goals, life events, and multi-generational planning. Institutions that invest in smart, secure lending infrastructure and data-driven advisory tools will be best positioned to serve the next generation of HNW individuals who expect immediacy, control, and insight.

Growing your portfolio

Wealth lending is a strategic financing solution aimed to unlock unique opportunities to optimise and protect wealth. This section presents use cases that showcase the benefits of this customised lending solution.

1. Amplify investment positions

Wealth lending can be used to amplify investments, which can in turn translate to a profitable proposition provided the markets move favourably.

Consider two scenarios:

	Scenario A without wealth lending	Scenario B with wealth lending
Investment	An investor makes an investment of USD 100,000 in mutual funds which provides 4% dividend income and 2% capital gains per year.	The investor leverages wealth lending solutions and avails a loan to the extent of 70% of the capital (USD 70,000) and uses the same to amplify the investment position. Essentially, the investment in mutual funds under this scenario is now USD 170,000. Assume an illustrative interest rate of 2.5% per year on the loan amount.
Returns generated	The investor earns USD 4,000 (4%) as dividends and USD 2,000 (2%) as capital gains translating to a total annual return of **USD 6,000**.	The investor earns USD 6,800 (4%) as dividends and USD 3,400 (2%) as capital gains translating to a total annual return of USD 10,200. The interest to be paid on USD 70,000 amounts to USD 1,750 (2.5%), the net annual return stands at **USD 8,450** for the year.
Wealth lending optimizes ROI	Investment: **USD 100,000** Dividend income: **USD 4,000** Capital gains: **USD 2,000** Interest paid: **N.A.** Total/net returns: **USD 6,000**	Investment: **USD 170,000** Dividend income: **USD 6,800** Capital gains: **USD 3,400** Interest paid: **USD 1,750** Total/net returns: **USD 8,450**

Source: Standard Chartered

The increase in returns from USD 6,000 to USD 8,450 demonstrates the benefit of leveraging a portfolio to amplify the investment position for achieving optimised returns, provided markets remain favourable.

2. Enhance the portfolio diversification with cross-currency lending

Cross-currency lending is a financing arrangement where an individual borrows in one currency while holding assets or income streams in another. In private banking, this strategy is often used by HNWIs with internationally diversified portfolios or business interests spanning multiple jurisdictions. For example, an individual with substantial investments in Singapore dollars might obtain a loan in Japanese yen, benefiting from lower borrowing costs in Japan's low-interest-rate environment. The borrowed funds could then be deployed into global investments, property, or business expansion, without the need to sell existing holdings.

The primary benefit of cross-currency lies in its flexibility and ability to unlock capital efficiently. It enables investors to access liquidity while preserving long-term investment positions, potentially avoiding market timing risks associated with asset sales. When combined with disciplined portfolio construction, borrowing in different currencies can also serve as a means of diversifying funding sources and tapping into opportunities across global markets. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals seeking to balance assets, liabilities and income across multiple currencies.

However, cross-currency lending is not without its risks. The most significant is foreign exchange risk, as fluctuations in currency values can affect repayment amounts and overall financing costs. Movements in interest rates, changes in collateral value, and market volatility may also impact loan performance.

When managed prudently, cross-currency lending can enhance portfolio diversification, improve capital efficiency, and support long-term wealth growth—making it a sophisticated tool for globally minded investors.

3. Fund insurance premium through wealth lending

Wealth lending solutions can be used to fund life insurance policies. Under this arrangement, the borrower can directly borrow against insurance policy itself or other assets in the portfolio and use the funds to pay the premium. This provides liquidity while also maintaining the protection plan. With premium financing facility, the borrower can benefit from higher liquidity by reducing the initial capital outlay or increasing the coverage by injecting additional funds.

Let's understand this with a simple example. Assume Mr. X wants to purchase a life insurance policy with annual premium of USD 500,000.

	Scenario A without wealth lending	Scenario B with wealth lending
Purchasing a life insurance policy	Mr. X sells existing investments worth USD 500,000 and pays the premium. Liquidation triggers capital gains tax and reduces the investment base. The investor also loses out on future market growth.	Mr. X uses the premium financing facility to borrow USD 500,000 secured against his insurance policy and wealth portfolio. Under this arrangement, the bank pays the insurance premium directly to the insurer. To service this facility, Mr. X pays an interest. Assuming that the interest rate is 4%, the interest on the loan works out to be USD 20,000. By leveraging wealth lending, Mr. X's portfolio remains invested and continues to grow, potentially offsetting the interest cost on the premium financing facility.
Funding insurance premium through wealth lending preserves wealth	Liquidity preserved: **No** Investment growth: **No** Interest cost: **No**	Liquidity preserved: **Yes** Investment growth: **Yes** Interest cost: **Yes**

Source: Standard Chartered

Risk considerations

While wealth lending offers flexibility and liquidity, they also expose you to several risks. Risk assessment becomes integral to ensure alignment with risk tolerance levels and ensure sufficient liquidity to manage repayment and market volatility.

Collateral value fluctuation

The investment portfolio's value that has been pledged as collateral may fall due to market fluctuations. In the event of market drawdowns, the value of your collaterals falls and triggers a margin call. Any failure to top-up collateral or repay part of the loan could lead to forced liquidation of assets at unfavourable prices.

Leverage risk

Borrowings used to amplify investment can magnify both gains and losses. In extreme market events, severe losses could lead to loss of invested capital and collateral.

Interest rate risk

Portfolio loans/line of credit often have variable interest rates. Rising rates increase borrowing costs, which can erode return on investment.

Liquidity risk

Lack of liquidity in stressed markets can lead to missed interest and margin call payments and sale of assets at a loss.

Currency risk

Loan or collateral in different currencies can be affected by adverse forex movements. This can increase the loan obligation or trigger margin calls.

Regulatory risk

Changes in regulations may lead to revisions in the eligibility criteria of assets as collateral, which can affect the terms of the loan or trigger early repayment requirements.

Conclusion

In an increasingly complex and fast-moving financial landscape, the ability to access liquidity without compromise is a competitive advantage.

Wealth lending provides that advantage – allowing HNW investors to stay invested, remain agile, and seize opportunities as they arise. When integrated thoughtfully into a broader wealth strategy, it becomes much more than a credit facility – it's a strategic enabler of long-term wealth creation, preservation, and control. As private investors continue to demand greater flexibility and sophistication in managing their wealth, the role of wealth lending will only grow in importance – not just as a financing tool, but as a core pillar of modern wealth management.

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