



BANK LENDING SURVEY

2024 Q2

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July 2024

MONETARY POLICY DEPARTMENT

General Notes

The Bank Lending Survey (BLS) questionnaire aims to collect the commercial banks' opinions related to developments in the past three months on credit supply and demand, and their expectations for the next three months. The BLS provides a summary of commercial banks' perceptions on the changes in credit supply conditions, - illustrated by credit standards, terms and conditions and approved loans -, and on the changes for loan demand from both enterprises and households. This analysis is based on the aggregate responds from all banks in the banking systems.

BLS questionnaire in principle follows the ECB's framework, but it is modified allowing for some changes that reflect the specifications and features of Albanian credit market. The time series of BLS indicators are tested for seasonality, following the relevant statistical methods. The time series displaying seasonality are adjusted for this effect and have replaced the existing series accordingly. For more detailed information on BLS questionnaire, a glossary of terms, a short description on the importance of this survey, some methodological aspects and the time series for analysis purpose, please follow the link:

https://www.bankofalbania.org/Monetary_Policy/Surveys_11282/Bank_Lending_Survey/

The terminology used in this analysis is detailed in the glossary at the end of the material.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

Banks' lending policies framework for enterprises remained largely unchanged in the second quarter of 2024. Credit standards to enterprises were broadly unchanged from the previous quarter, while overall terms and conditions on new loans to enterprises were eased. Lower costs of funds and balance sheet constraints were key factors that prompted banks' decisions in lowering analogously the margins on loans to enterprises. Banks' risk perceptions on macroeconomic situation and its potential impact on firms' balance sheets improved further this quarter, yielding a neutral overall impact on lending framework. For the second consecutive quarter, loans' approval rate increased, driven by positive economic developments and optimistic outlooks in certain sectors of the economy.

Enterprises' demand for loans increased, in line with expectations of the previous quarter, both in terms of firms' size and the loan' purpose of use. On banks' view, for the first time after seven quarters, general level of interest rates and the domestic macroeconomic situation spurred the loan demand from enterprises. High levels of liquidity owned by enterprises did not curb the high demand for loans, both in meeting the liquidity needs and in financing the planned investments.

Banks' lending policies for households tightened in 2024 Q2, in line with the expectations of a quarter ago, but were reported as such only by one bank of the system. This bank's risk perception on the borrowers' creditworthiness was one of the main factors that urged the tightening of credit standards for households in this quarter. While the overall terms and conditions for households remained broadly unchanged, banks eased slightly credit terms and conditions in consumer loans, by increasing the loans' size. The competitive environment in which banks operate remains the key element backing the easing of credit terms and conditions in this segment. Additionally, banks' assessments of borrowers' creditworthiness enabled them to approve a higher number of loan requests during the second quarter. Loan demand from households was notably high during this period, particularly for house purchases.

In 2024 Q3, banks expect to follow an unchanged lending policy framework for firms, both in terms of enterprise size and loan' purpose of use. On the other side, banks expect to adopt a more conservative approach toward lending to households in the third quarter, expressed in tighter credit standards for housing purchase and consumer loans. On the other hand, banks expect a higher loan demand from all economic agents. Enterprises' loan demand is expected to remain high, both in terms of enterprise size and loans' purpose of use. Households' loan demand is also expected to remain high, for meeting consumption needs and financing house purchases.

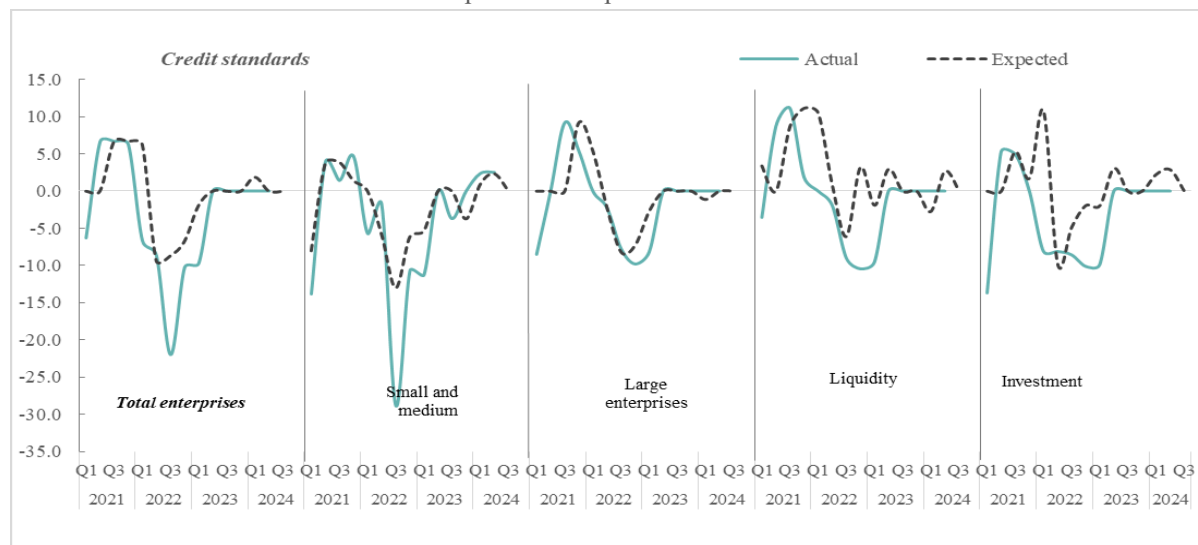
CREDIT SUPPLY CONDITIONS AND DEMAND FOR LOANS

1. LOANS TO ENTERPRISES

1.1. Credit standards

Credit standards for enterprises remained unchanged in 2024 Q2. Unchanged credit standards were reported both for investment loans, as well as for those in meeting the liquidity needs. According to the size of the enterprise, credit standards eased somewhat for the small and medium-sized enterprises and remained unchanged for large enterprises.

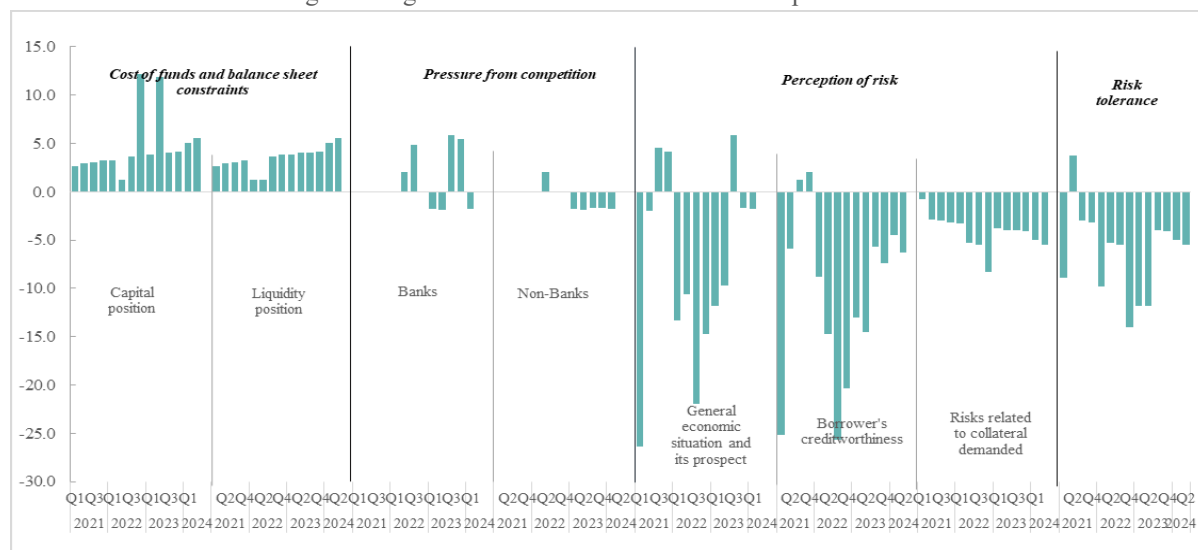
Chart 1. Credit standards for loans to enterprises and expectations for the next three months¹



¹: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate eased credit standards, whereas negative ones indicate tightened credit standards. Source: Bank of Albania.

On the easing side of credit standards were reported lower cost of funds and balance sheet constraints. On the tightening side of credit standards remained the factors related to risk perception on borrowers' creditworthiness and collateral required. At the same time, banks displayed a lower risk tolerance.

Chart 2. Factors contributing to changes in credit standards for total enterprises²



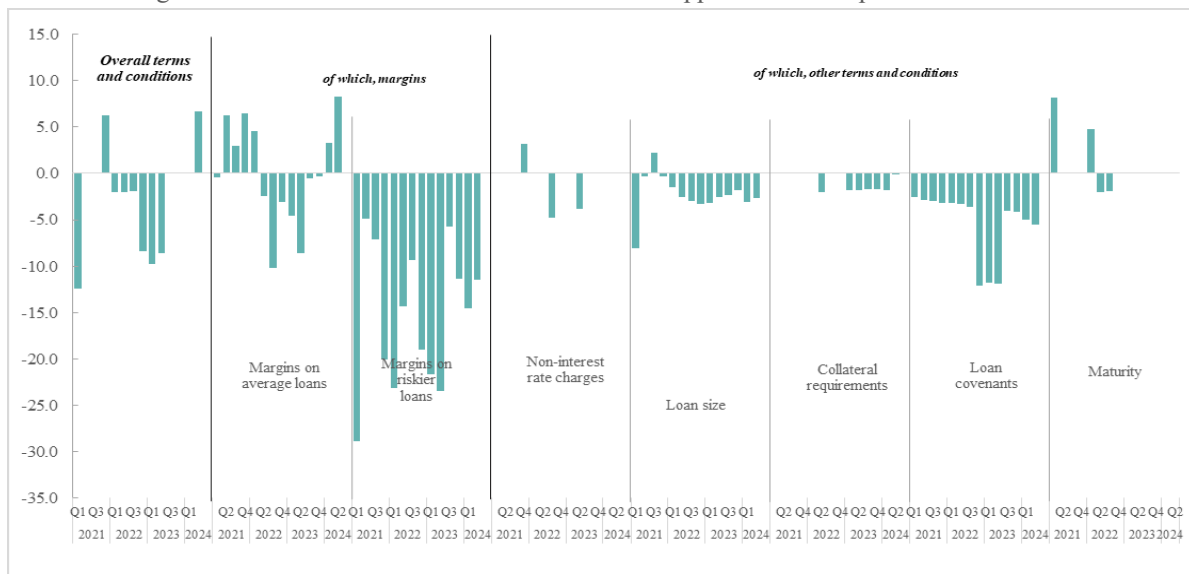
²: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate that the factor contributed to the easing of credit standards, whereas negative ones to the tightening of credit standards. Source: Bank of Albania.

In the third quarter of 2024, credit standards are expected to remain unchanged, both in terms of enterprises size and in terms of loan purpose of use: to finance investments or to cover liquidity needs (*Chart 1*).

1.2. Terms and conditions

Overall terms and conditions on new loans to enterprises eased in the second quarter. The easing of credit terms and conditions for new loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as to large enterprises, was achieved due to lower margins on average loans. On the other hand, banks reported higher margins on riskier loans and applied higher loan covenants. Other non-price term and conditions displayed minimal changes.

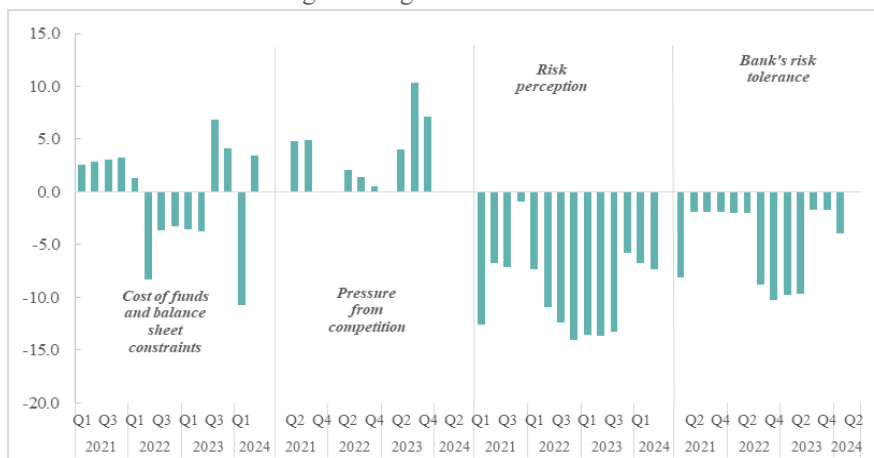
Chart 3. Change in overall terms and conditions on new loans approved to enterprises³



³: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate eased terms and conditions, whereas negative ones tightened terms and conditions. Source: Bank of Albania.

Lower costs of funds and balance sheet constraints had an easing impact on credit terms and conditions. On the tightening side of terms and conditions was reported the risk perception by banks. Other factors had a neutral impact on credit terms and conditions.

Chart 4. Factors contributing to changes of terms and conditions for loans to enterprises⁴



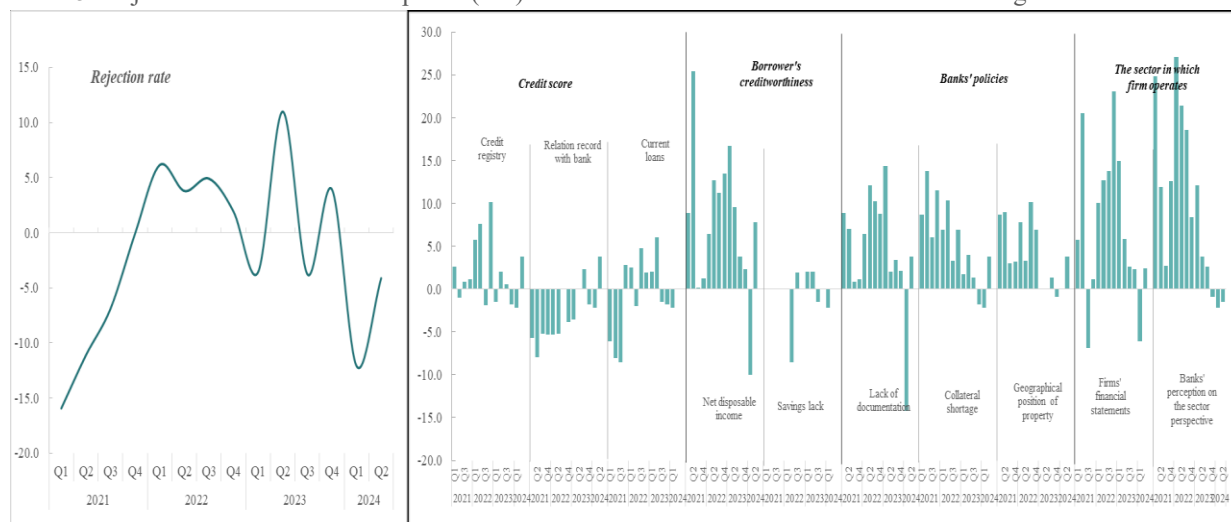
⁴: Positive values indicate that the factor contributed to the easing of terms and conditions, whereas negative ones to the tightening of terms and conditions.

Source: Bank of Albania.

1.3. Loan approval rates

Bank reported higher loan approval rate for enterprises in the second quarter. The lower rejection rate was underpinned by the lower risk perceived by banks on the sector where enterprises operate. On the other hand, net disposable income had an increasing impact on loan rejection rate for enterprises this quarter. Other factors displayed minimal changes.

Chart 5. Rejected loan ratio for enterprises (left) and the factors behind banks' decision making⁵

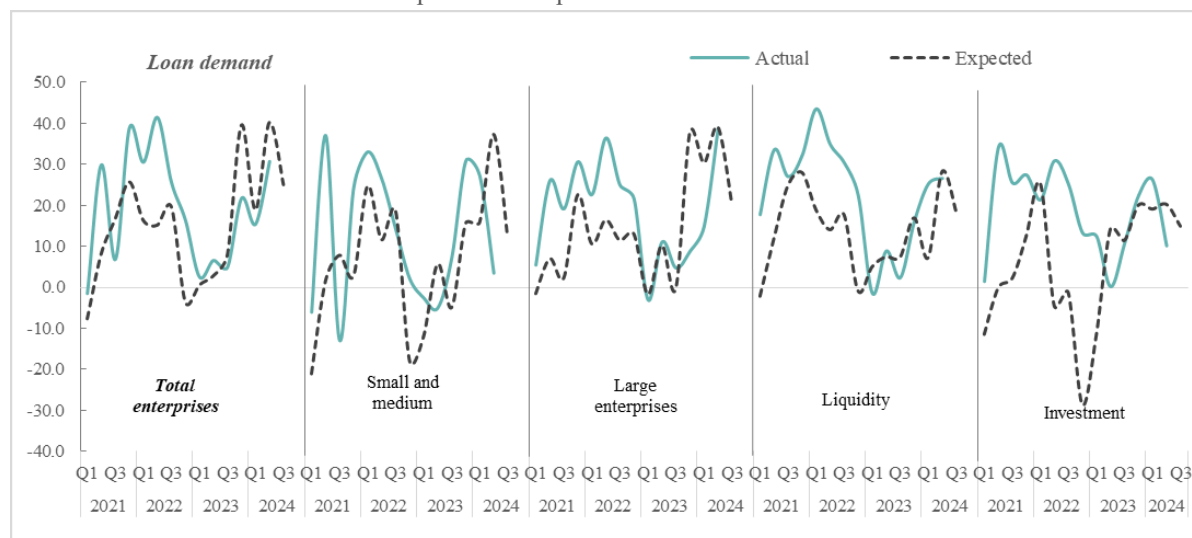


⁵: Positive values show an increase in rejection rates to the total loan application (left-hand chart). Also, positive values indicate that the factor has contributed to an increase of rejection rate (right-hand chart), while the negative ones to their reduction
Source: Bank of Albania.

1.4. Demand for loans

Loan demand from enterprises was higher in the second quarter of 2024, as well. Higher loan demand was reported both in terms of enterprise' size and loans' purpose of use. However, the highest net positive balances were reported for loans to large enterprises and for loans used in meeting short-term liquidity needs.

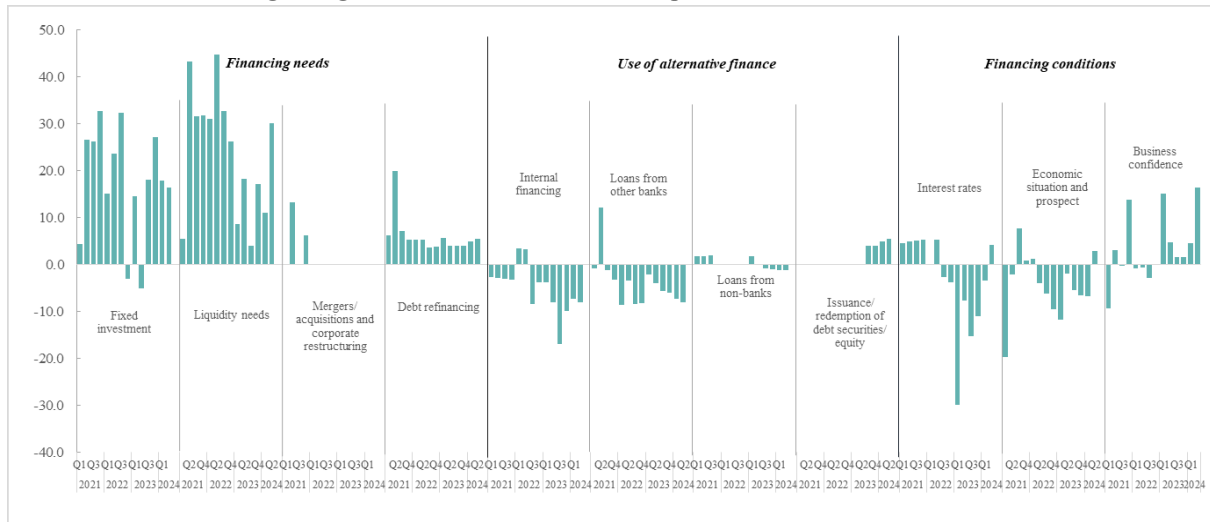
Chart 6. Current loan demand of enterprises and expectations over the next three months⁶



⁶: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate an increase in loan demand, whereas negative ones a decrease in loan demand.
Source: Bank of Albania.

Higher needs for financing working capital and investments contributed to the increase of loan demand. Banks also reported that business confidence, the overall interest rates and the domestic macroeconomic situation had a positive impact on loan demand. On the other hand, the use of internal financing sources and loans from other banks were reported as factors discouraging the loan demand of enterprises in the second quarter.

Chart 7. Factors affecting changes in the loan demand of enterprises⁷



⁷: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate that the factor has contributed to an increase of loan demand, while the negative ones to a decrease of loan demand.

Source: Bank of Albania.

Loan demand from enterprises is expected to remain high in the third quarter of the year, both for financing investments and for covering liquidity needs. Even in terms of enterprise size, the demand for loans is expected to be higher, for small and medium-sized enterprises, as well for large enterprises. (*Chart 6*).

2. LOANS TO HOUSEHOLDS

2.1. Credit standards

Credit standards for loans to households tightened somewhat in 2024 Q2, dictated only by one bank of the system. Credit standards were tightened for both consumer loans and house purchase loans.

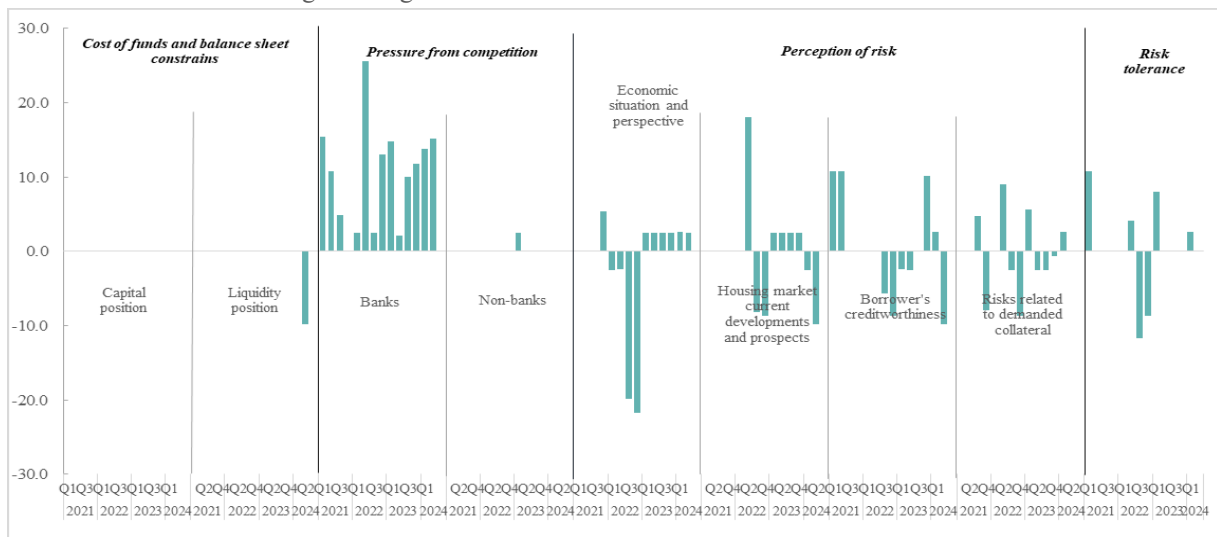
Chart 8. Change in credit standards for loans to households and expectations for the next three months⁸



⁸: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate eased credit standards, whereas negative ones indicate tightened credit standards. Source: Bank of Albania.

Factors contributing on the tightening side of credit standards for households were the risk perception on borrowers' creditworthiness, on housing market current developments and prospects, as well higher cost of funds from banks' liquidity position. All these factors were reported to have a tightening effect on credit standards by only one bank. On the other hand, the increased pressure from competition in the banking system continues to contribute on the easing side of credit standards for households.

Chart 9. Factors contributing to changes of credit standards on loans to households⁹



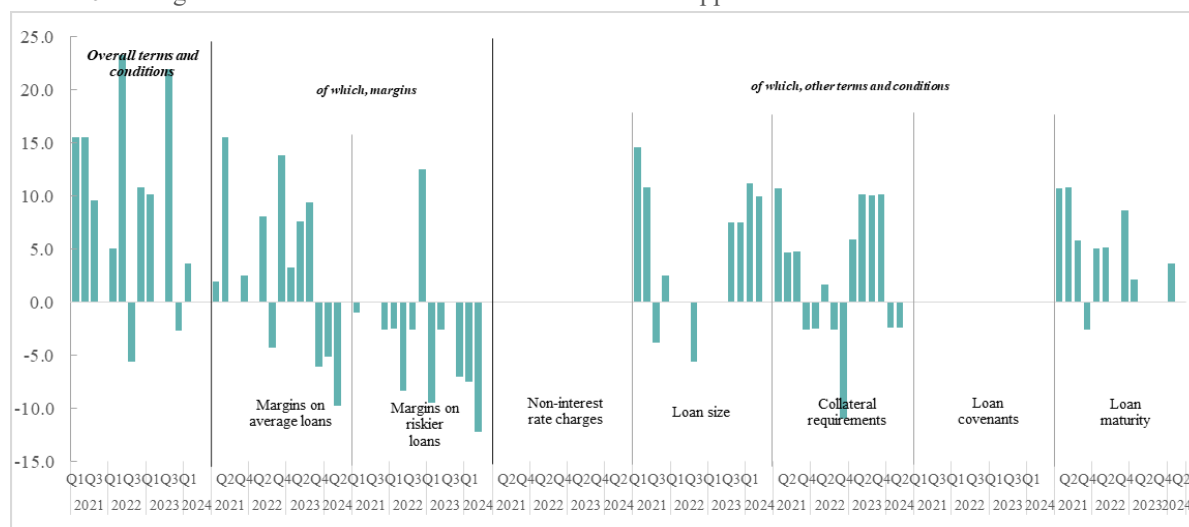
⁹: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate that the factor contributed to the easing of credit standards, whereas negative ones to the tightening of credit standards. Source: Bank of Albania.

Credit standards for households are expected to remain tighten, even in the third quarter of 2024, both in loans for house purchase and those for financing consumption¹ (*Chart 8*).

2.2. Terms and conditions

Overall terms and conditions for households' loans remained unchanged in the second quarter of the year. Overall terms and conditions on loans for house purchase were reported slightly tightened, while those for financing consumption were reported as eased. On the easing side of overall terms and conditions was reported a higher loan size. On the contrary, the higher margins set by the banks and the higher collateral requirements (in house purchase loans) had a tightening effect on overall terms and conditions for households' loans.

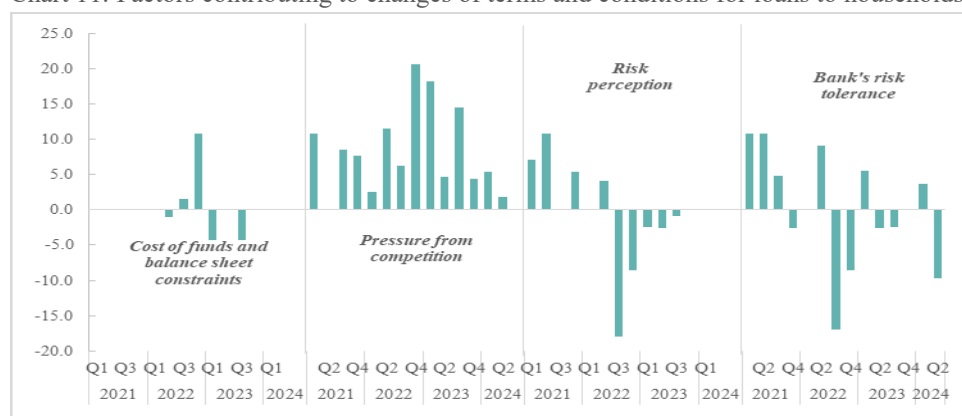
Chart 10. Change in overall terms and conditions on new loans approved to households¹⁰



¹⁰: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate eased terms and conditions, whereas negative ones tightened terms and conditions. Source: Bank of Albania.

The factor that contributed on the easing side of terms and conditions for households loans was higher pressure from competition in the banking system. The perception of risk was reported to have a tightening impact on overall terms and conditions for households.

Chart 11. Factors contributing to changes of terms and conditions for loans to households¹¹



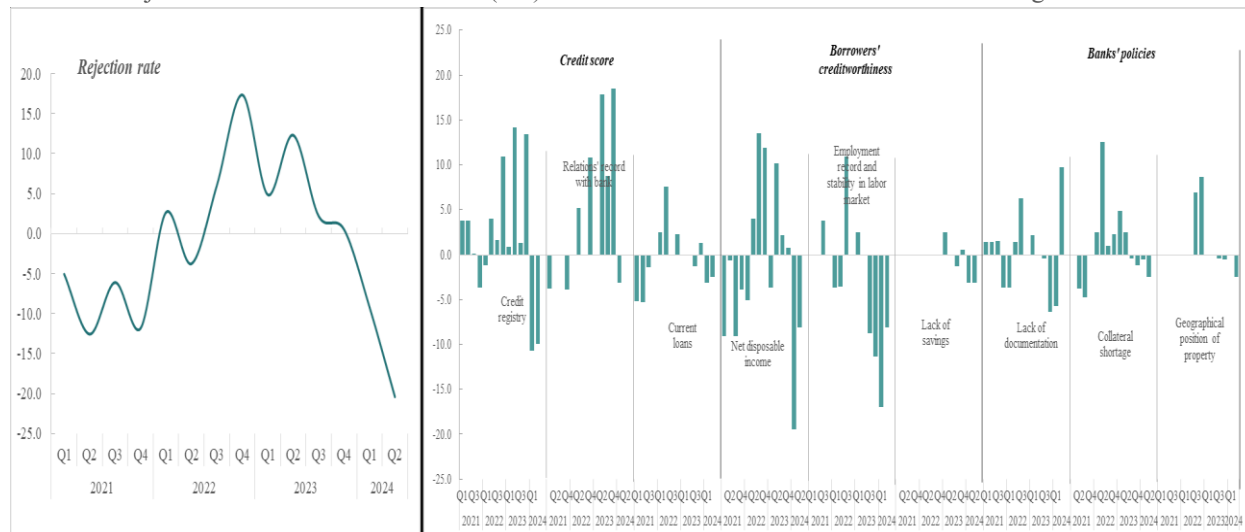
¹¹: Positive values indicate that the factor contributed to the easing of terms and conditions, whereas negative ones to the tightening of terms and conditions. Source: Bank of Albania.

¹ Only one bank expressed a net tight in credit standards for the next quarter.

2.3. Loan approval rate

The households' loan approval rate increased in 2024 Q2. The lower rejection rate in this quarter was driven by almost all indicators related to the borrower's creditworthiness, the banks' policy framework, as well as the credit score. The only factor that contributed upwards to the rejection rate was the lack of documentation at the time of loan application by households.

Chart 12. Rejected loan ratio for households (left) and the factors behind banks' decision making¹²



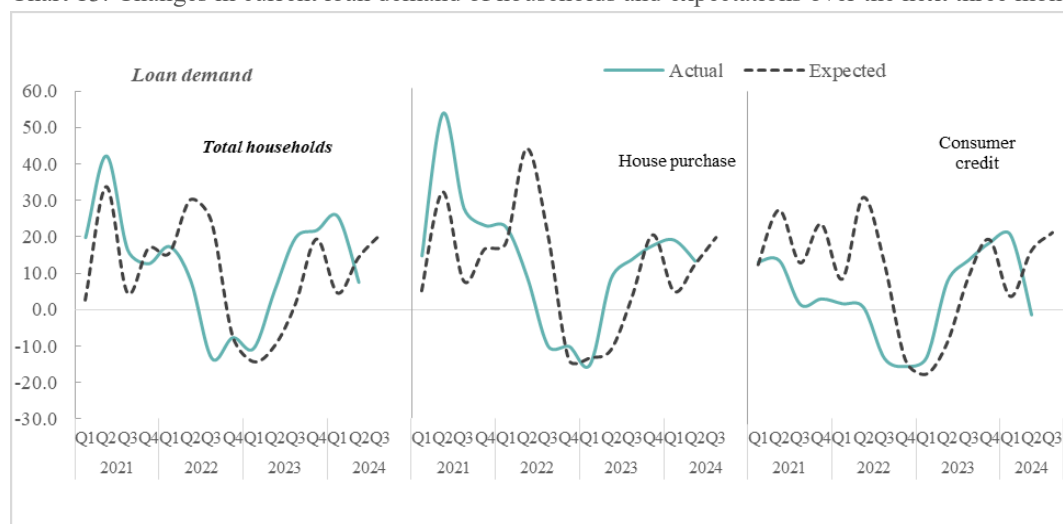
¹²: Positive values show an increase in rejection rates to the total loan application (left-hand chart). Also, positive values indicate that the factor has contributed to an increase of rejection rate (right-hand chart), while the negative ones to their reduction.

Source: Bank of Albania.

2.4. Demand for loans

Loan demand from households was perceived to be higher in the second quarter, mainly for house purchase purpose.

Chart 13. Changes in current loan demand of households and expectations over the next three months¹³



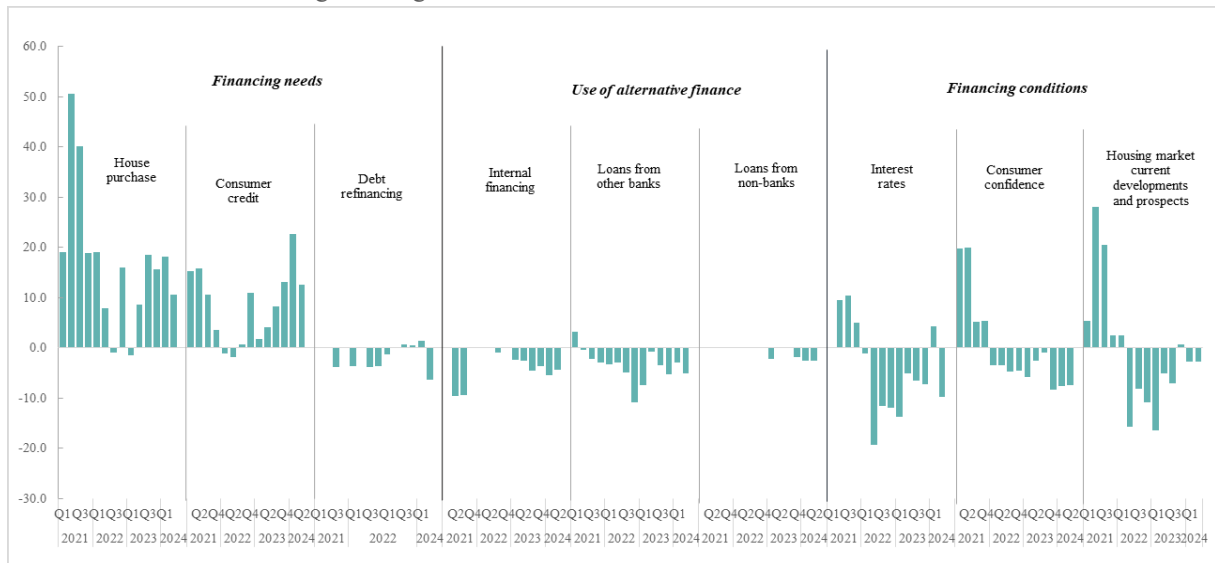
¹³: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate an increase in loan demand, whereas negative ones a decrease in loan demand.

Source: Bank of Albania.

The higher needs in financing consumption and house purchases were the main factors that led to higher loan demand in this quarter. Whereas, the overall level of interest rates, the use of alternative finance,

consumer confidence and housing market current developments and prospects contributed to lower loan demand.

Chart 14. Factors contributing to changes in the loan demand of households¹⁴



¹⁴: Calculated as net percentages. Positive values indicate that the factor has contributed to an increase of loan demand, while the negative ones to a decrease of loan demand.

Source: Bank of Albania.

In 2024 Q3, banks expect higher loan demand from households for all purposes: financing the consumption needs and house purchases ([Chart 13](#)).

Dictionary of the Bank Lending Survey

The dictionary of the Bank Lending Survey is compiled in order to assist the designated banking experts when filling out the survey. It consists of the basic terminology used in the Bank Lending Activity of the Bank of Albania, as revised in May 2018. This revision aims to further approximate the Survey with the international practices particularly those of the European Central Bank. Consequently, in cases when an explicit explanation has not been laid out in the Albanian legislation, the terminology of the BLS has been adopted with that of the ECB.

Consumer confidence. This indicator is based on individuals' perception on the current situation and their expectations on main economic and financial indicators. Consumer confidence is a combination of past, present and future assessments on the financial standing of individuals, based on their outlook regarding the political and economic situation. These assessments guide their decision-making for investing on residential properties and long-term consumer goods. In theory, the improvement of consumer confidence is accompanied by an increase in the demand for loans.

Enterprises. According to the provisions laid down in the Law No. 8957, dated 17.10.2002, as amended, "On small and medium-sized enterprises", the term business or enterprises refers to all entities that are involved in an economic activity (i.e., production, sale of goods and services), despite their legal form. In this context, businesses represent small and medium-sized enterprises. This category also includes self-employed people, family businesses who are involved in craftsmanship and other activities, as well as companies and association regularly engaged in economic activities. State enterprises and non-residential businesses are excluded from the Survey.

Marketing campaigns. This indicator is one of the factors that affects both credit demand and supply. Marketing campaigns should be considered a factor with an impact on credit supply only in cases when there is changes to the loans' terms and conditions. In other cases (when the loans' terms and conditions do not undergo changes through marketing campaigns) this indicator is grouped under the factors with an impact on credit demand. In such cases, the interviewed should put the marketing campaign undertaken by them under the category of "Other factors", respectively when answering Questions 6 and 12, which identify the factors with an impact on credit demand from households and enterprises.

Households/consumers. In compliance with the Law No. 9902, dated 17.04.2008, as amended, "On consumer protection", consumer means any person who purchases and uses goods and services in order to meet individual needs, unrelated to commercial activity or to exercising his/her profession. This law categorizes non-profit organisations as consumers as well.

Non-bank Institutions. Generally, non-bank institutions are non-monetary financial corporations. They include insurance companies and pension funds, financial aids and other financial intermediaries.

Capital. Pursuant to Law No. 9662, dated 18.12.2006 "On banks in the Republic of Albania", and Regulation No. 69 of the Bank of Albania, dated 18.12.2014, for the approval of Regulation "On the

regulatory capital of the Bank of Albania,” this term refers to the regulatory capital² required for covering credit risk, market risk and operational risk.

Credit demand³. Credit demand refers to the gross demand for loans by households and enterprises, including requests to extend the maturity of existing loans. This term reflects households’ and enterprises’ needs for financing using bank loans, whether or not this need will translate in an actual loan. When filling out the Survey, each bank should assess the developments in credit demand (for both households and enterprises), compared to the previous quarter and independent from price performance.

Collateral. According to the provisions laid down in the Law No. 9662, dated 18.12.2006 “On banks in the Republic of Albania”, and Regulation No. 62, dated 14.09.2011 of the Bank of Albania, this concept means the tools utilised by banks that ensure that the borrower’s obligation is carried out accordingly. Real estate, securities and the compensating balance may be used as collateral, where the latter consists of the minimal amount that the borrower is obligated to hold in its own bank account.

Non-interest commissions. These are various payments that could be part of the loan price, such as commissions on circulating credit, taxes on credit administration (i.e., the costs of preparing documentation) and payments on credit investigation, guarantee and insurance.

Cost of funds and balance sheet restrictions. The level of bank capital and the cost related to providing the capital required by regulators, may hinder growth in the lending activity. For a specific capital level, supply of credit may be affected by both the liquidity position of banks, as well as its ability to raise capital in the market. A bank may forgo or be less willing in granting a loan, when it perceives that it will be unable to expand the capital required for this purpose. Furthermore, risk related to non-performing loans may be reflected not only on bank’s risk perception, but also on the increase in the cost of funds and balance sheet restrictions.

Loans. This term shall mean as it is referred to in Law No. 9662 dated 18.12. 2006 “On banks in the Republic of Albania”. For the purpose of this Survey, credit includes all loans or credit lines of enterprises; loans granted to households for house purchases; consumer loans; as well as other types of loans granted to households. It must be emphasized that this term refers to loans granted to Albanian residents, excluding interbank and non-resident loans.

Consumer credit and other loans. Consumer credit includes any type of loan disbursed by banks to households with the purpose of purchasing goods and services for their own consumption, in accordance with the definitions laid out in Decision No. 48, dated 01.07.2015 of BoA for the approval of Regulation “On consumer credit and mortgages” and Law No. 9902, dated 17.04.2008, “On consumer protection”, as amended. Examples that illustrate this credit category are loans granted for purchasing cars, house furniture and other consumer goods, vacation travels etc. Overdraft and credit card loans are usually included under this category as well. Loans of this category may have a collateral or not.

Loans for house purchases. This term refers to the loans granted to households by banks for purchasing, constructing or reconstructing a residential real estate pursuant to Decision No. 48, dated 01.07.2015 of BoA for the approval of Regulation “On consumer credit and mortgages”. This type of real estate includes houses, buildings, apartments or the land on which the house will be constructed.

² The capital calculated for banking supervisory purposes, including various categories of capital and reserves, as well as other elements, which are stipulated by the Bank of Albania by sub-legal acts.

³ For the purpose of this Survey, the term used for credit is equivalent to the term used for loan.

Credit terms and conditions. The credit terms and conditions refer to the terms and maturity of the approved loan, as determined in the credit contract, on which the bank and borrower have reached an agreement. They generally consist of the margin over the reference interest rate, the size of loan, the conditions over bank's approach and other conditions in the form of fees, commission, non-interest costs, collateral or guarantees, loan restrictions and maturity of approved loan. The credit terms and conditions depend on the borrower's report, and they might change in a parallel or independent way, depending on credit standards. For example, the higher financing costs or the deterioration of economic perspective may bring about a restriction of the credit standards, as well as a tightening of conditions on those loans that the bank and its clients are willing to approve. Alternatively, banks may adjust only the contract terms/conditions laid out in the credit contract (such as: the increase of margins against the reference rates) requested to compensate for additional costs/risk and to keep credit standards unchanged.

Loan covenants. The covenants of a credit contract consist of an agreement or legal specification, according to which the borrower (typically an enterprise) pledges to undertake or stops undertaking additional measures, in order to meet the entirety of conditions when granting a loan. As such, covenants in the credit agreement are part of the credit terms and conditions.

Enterprise size. The size of enterprise is laid down in Law No. 8957 "On small and medium-sized enterprises", dated 17.10.2002, as amended. The provisions laid down in this law stipulate two criteria when determining the enterprise size: the number of employees and annual revenue. The category of large enterprises include those enterprises with over 250 employees and over ALL 250 million annual revenue. The rest of enterprises are categorised in the group of small and medium enterprises.

Margin above the market reference rate. This indicator specifies the difference between the loan's interest rate as applied by the bank and the reference rate (which could be the yield on T-bills, Repo, Euribor, Libor, etc). The margin is determined on the basis of loan's characteristics. It reflects the differences between the loan's interest rate applied by the bank, which depends on the cost of the bank's financing, and the borrower's risk, as well as bank's perception on the political and economic situation domestically. Simply put, the margin reflects changes in the bank's interest rate independently from changes in market rates.

Maturity. Loan maturity refers to initial maturity - the lifespan of a loan as agreed upon between the two parties i.e., the borrower and the bank.

Risk perception and risk tolerance. Risk perception refers to the bank's judgements about the current and expected developments on the key economic indicators, the present situation of the enterprise or industry and its perspective, the borrower's solvency, and the required collateral (demand factors). Contrarily, risk tolerance refers to bank's tolerance regarding its lending policy, which could vary depending on changes in the strategy adopted by the bank (supply factors). Banks' perception on current risk and their tolerance towards risk may change in the same direction or in opposite directions.

Collateral coverage ratio. The ratio of the sum lent against the market value of the collateral placed for this loan. This indicator refers mainly to loans used to finance real estate.

Refinancing/restructuring and debt renegotiation. This concept is included in the survey as a factor which affects credit demand. It refers to the term on credit refinancing, restructuring and renegotiation, as laid down in the Regulation of the Bank of Albania No. 62, dated 14.09.2011 "On credit risk management from banks and branches of foreign banks", which consists of the alleviations that the

bank provides to borrowers experiencing financial difficulties. These includes facilitations to the contract's conditions related to the maturity, principal payment and interest rate; the use of collateral to partially settle the loan; or the substitution of the primary borrower with a secondary borrower. This factor will impact credit demand only when changes to the contract do occur, followed by the extension of initial maturity or increase of the loaned sum.

Credit restructuring does not include cases when the method of borrower's financing switches from a bank loan to instruments of credit securities in the capital market. Meanwhile, credit restructuring in the form of loans obtained from another institution is to be classified as a factor under "loans from non-banks".

Credit standards. Credit standards are the internal guidelines or the loan approval criteria adopted by the bank. They have been set out prior to the negotiation of the terms and conditions of the loan, as well as prior to the current decision on the approval or refusal of the loan. The standards determine the type of loans which the bank considers desirable or undesirable, the sectoral and geographical priorities, and the collateral to be considered acceptable and unacceptable etc. Credit standards lay out the characteristics of the borrower (e.g.: balance sheet conditions, income state, age, employment status) necessary to grant a loan. Credit standards may vary depending on changes to the cost of funds; bank's balance sheet; competitiveness; bank's risk perception; risk tolerance and regulatory amendments.

Loan application status. In theory, loan applications consist of the formal loan request, as well as any other non-formal request for credit which has not reached the official credit loan application status. If the information on non-formal loan requests cannot be secured, then the bank should respond based on the size of formal loan requests. Loan applications are reported as changed not only from new clients, but also from existing clients. However, applications from existing clients should be included only when the size of an existing loan increases or a new loan is granted.

Loan rejection refers to cases when loan applications have been refused. This indicator is calculated as the ratio of the turned-down loans to the total loans applications for that quarter. Loan rejections do not include cases when the borrower withdraws the loan application due to unfavourable bank's conditions.

Current and expected developments in the housing market. This term is one of the factors that affects both credit demand and supply. It includes banks' or individuals' perception on the expected developments in housing prices. In Question 8, 3b this factor refers to the risk related to the requested collateral. In Question 12, 3.c it refers to expected developments in the housing market, including an increase (decrease) of demand for house loans, due to an expected increase (decrease) of the purchasing costs of a house and/or perceived return from a real estate investment.