SBA Loan Approval Rate: What Published Data Shows

No source here publishes an SBA loan approval rate. The closest figures: in the 2025 Small Business Credit Survey, 42% of financing applicants received…

Published November 7, 2026 · Data as of 2026-03-03 · Sample: Published approval outcomes for small business financing applicants (Federal Reserve Banks, 2025 survey) and bank approval times (FDIC, 2022 survey). No source · 2 sources, every figure sourced

IN SHORT

No source here publishes an SBA loan approval rate. The closest figures: in the 2025 Small Business Credit Survey, 42% of financing applicants received the full amount sought and 22% received none, and 57% of small-bank applicants were fully approved. Three-in-four banks can approve a small, simple loan within five business days (FDIC).

KEY FIGURES

42%

Financing applicants who received the full amount sought [1]

Debt and credit demand section, sentence beginning 'Forty-two percent of applicants'

22%

Financing applicants who received none of the amount sought [1]

Debt and credit demand section, same sentence as the 42% figure

57%

Small-bank applicants who were fully approved [1]

Financing applications and outcomes section, sentence beginning 'Applicants that sought financing at small banks'

29%

Applicants who sought financing at online fintech lenders [1]

2020 survey: 17%

Financing applications and outcomes section, sentence on online fintech lenders over the last five years

60%

Online-lender borrowers who said actual borrowing costs were higher than expected [1]

Financing applications and outcomes section, sentence beginning 'Most applicants that were approved accepted the financing offered'

Three-in-four

Banks that can approve a small and simple loan within five business days [2]

SBLS Findings, paragraph on small business loan approval times

Period: 2025 survey; 2022 bank survey

This report covers what published surveys say about approval outcomes, lender types and decision speed for small business financing. Every number is quoted from a named public source, the Federal Reserve Banks' 2025 Small Business Credit Survey or the FDIC's Small Business Lending Survey.

What share of small business financing applicants get approved?

In the 2025 survey, 60% of firms applied for financing in the 12 months before the survey. Among those applicants, 42% received the full amount sought, 36% received some or most, and 22% received none. The Federal Reserve Banks state that the share of applicants fully approved was steady year over year but remained below prepandemic levels.

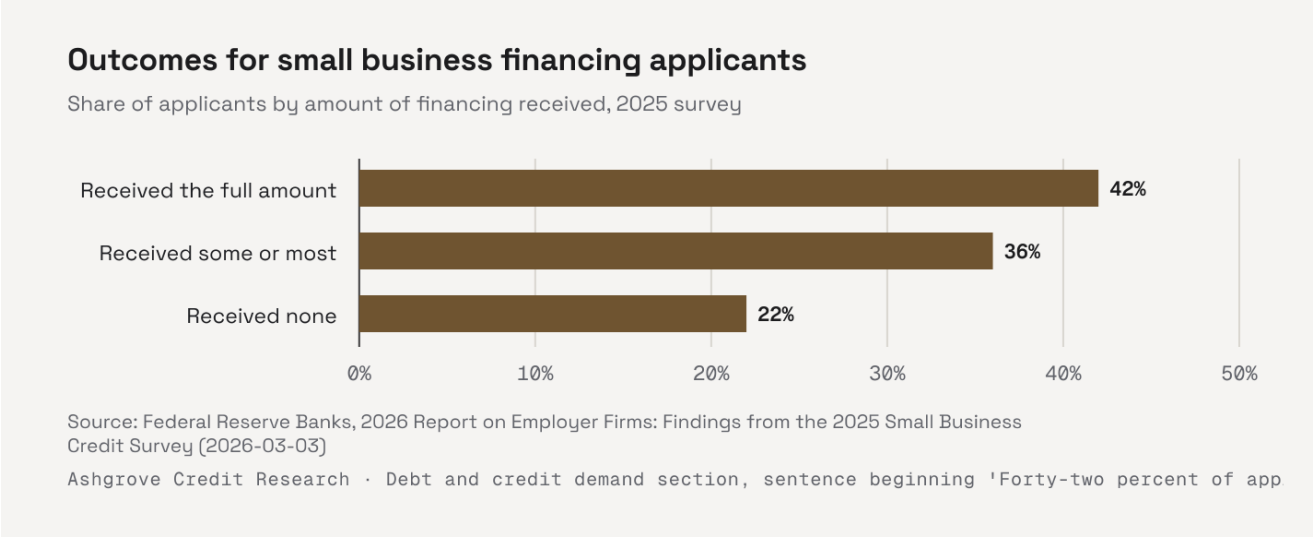


Figure 1 · Outcomes for small business financing applicants — Share of applicants by amount of financing received, 2025 survey

Source: Federal Reserve Banks, 2026 Report on Employer Firms: Findings from the 2025 Small Business Credit Survey (2026-03-03) · Debt and credit demand section, sentence beginning 'Forty-two percent of applicants'

	%
Received the full amount	42%
Received some or most	36%
Received none	22%

Does the approval rate differ by type of lender?

Yes. Applicants that sought financing at small banks were more likely to be fully approved (57%) than those that sought financing from other lenders. The source gives no full-approval percentages for the other lender types. Applicants most often sought financing at large banks, followed by online lenders and small banks. The share seeking financing at online fintech

lenders rose from 17% in the 2020 survey to 29% in the 2025 survey.

How long do banks take to decide?

The FDIC survey measures decision speed, not approval rates. It covers a small and simple loan and a bank's typical small business loan.

Table 1 · Bank approval times for small business loans

Loan type	Approval window	Share of banks
Small and simple loan	Within one business day	Three-in-ten
Small and simple loan	Within five business days	Three-in-four
Typical small business loan	Within 10 business days	Three-in-four

Source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, FDIC Issues 2024 Small Business Lending Survey Report (2024-10-02) · SBLS Findings, paragraph beginning 'Small business loan approval times are fast'

The same paragraph states that more than half of large banks can approve a small and simple loan within one business day.

What do approved borrowers report about cost?

Among approved applicants who borrowed, 60% of those at online lenders said actual borrowing costs were higher than expected, and 4% said they were lower. Borrowers at small banks (37%) and large banks (32%) were less likely to report higher-than-expected costs. For a borrower who qualifies at a bank and can wait for its decision, these figures favor the bank category on cost surprises. For a borrower who has been declined there, the surveys report no measure of outcomes at other lenders beyond the cost figures above.

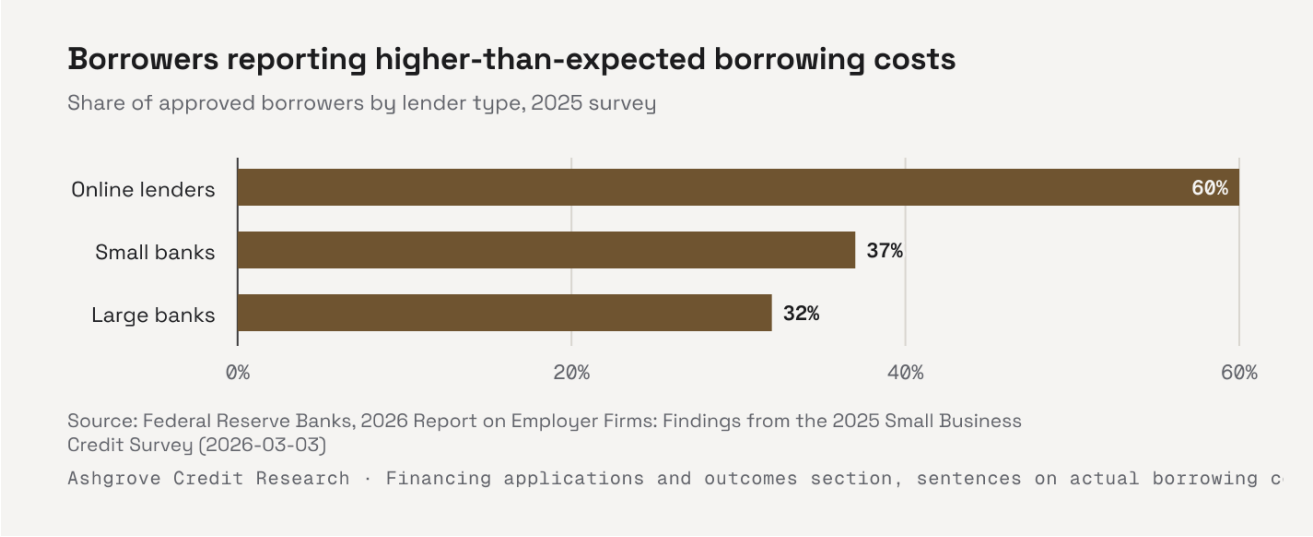


Figure 2 · Borrowers reporting higher-than-expected borrowing costs — Share of approved borrowers by lender type, 2025 survey

Source: Federal Reserve Banks, 2026 Report on Employer Firms: Findings from the 2025 Small Business Credit Survey (2026-03-03) · Financing applications and outcomes section, sentences on actual borrowing costs

	%
Online lenders	60%
Small banks	37%
Large banks	32%

Where does SBA backing appear in these sources?

The FDIC survey states that large banks more often rely on government guarantees, such as those provided by the Small Business Administration, to manage the risk of lending to start-ups. Small banks more often use soft information gained from meeting with applicants. The survey gives no approval rate for guaranteed loans.

What this report does not measure

None of the sources reports an approval rate for SBA 7(a) or any other SBA program, SBA application volumes, denial reasons, or SBA interest rates. The Federal Reserve Banks' outcome figures combine loans, lines of credit and merchant cash advances, so they cannot be read as an SBA rate. They also come from a convenience sample, not a random one. Approval rates, costs and default rates for merchant cash advances are not reported separately in these sources, so this report states none.

Method

This report reproduces figures published by the Federal Reserve Banks and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation without adjustment. Ashgrove Credit Research ran no survey and drew no sample of its own. Each figure is quoted as the publisher states it, and each carries a note giving its location in the source.

The 2025 Small Business Credit Survey was fielded from September 3 to November 14, 2025. It yielded 6,525 responses from a nationwide convenience sample of small employer firms with 1–499 employees across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The FDIC Small Business Lending Survey was conducted in 2022 and published in 2024. About 1,300 of 2,000 sampled banks responded, a 68 percent response rate.

Limits: the Federal Reserve Banks state that the credit survey is not a random sample and that results should be read with awareness of convenience-sample bias. Its outcomes are reported by firms and are not broken out by SBA program. The FDIC survey asks banks, not borrowers, and measures decision speed, not approval rates.

The desk's full methodology: https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/methodology

Sources

[1] **Federal Reserve Banks.** 2026 Report on Employer Firms: Findings from the 2025 Small Business Credit Survey. 2026-03-03. Convenience sample of 6,525 small employer firms (1–499 employees), fielded September 3 – November 14, 2025, weighted to the U.S. small-employer-firm population. https://doi.org/10.55350/sbcs-20260303

[2] **Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.** FDIC Issues 2024 Small Business Lending Survey Report. 2024-10-02. Nationally representative survey of banks conducted in 2022; about 1,300 of 2,000 sampled banks responded. https://www.fdic.gov/news/press-releases/2024/fdic-issues-2024-small-business-lending-survey-report

All 9 figures, charts and tables in this report carry a source with its publisher, title, URL and date.

Cite this report

Quote figures with the title, the date and the URL. This PDF is the stable copy to cite; the web page may be revised, and says so when it is. Figures quoted from another publisher should also be cited to that publisher (see Sources).

APA Ashgrove Credit Research. (2026, November 7). SBA Loan Approval Rate: What Published Data Shows. https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/reports/sba-loan-approval-rate-what-published-data-shows

MLA "SBA Loan Approval Rate: What Published Data Shows." Ashgrove Credit Research, 7 Nov. 2026, ashgrovecreditresearch.com/reports/sba-loan-approval-rate-what-published-data-shows.

PLAIN Ashgrove Credit Research, "SBA Loan Approval Rate: What Published Data Shows", 7 November 2026, covering 2025 survey; 2022 bank survey. https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/reports/sba-

loan-approval-rate-what-published-data-shows (PDF: https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/reports/sba-loan-approval-rate-what-published-data-shows.pdf)

```
@techreport{ashgrovecreditresearch2026sbaloanapprovalratewhatp,
  title        = {SBA Loan Approval Rate: What Published Data Shows},
  author       = {{Ashgrove Credit Research}},
  institution  = {Ashgrove Credit Research},
  year         = {2026},
  month        = {nov},
  url          = {https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/reports/sba-loan-approval-rate-what-published-data-shows},
  note         = {Covers 2025 survey; 2022 bank survey; PDF edition: https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/reports/sba-loan-approval-rate-what-published-data-shows.pdf}
}
```

PUBLISHER	Ashgrove Credit Research
PUBLISHED	November 7, 2026
COVERS	2025 survey; 2022 bank survey
PERMALINK	https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/reports/sba-loan-approval-rate-what-published-data-shows
STABLE COPY (PDF)	https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/reports/sba-loan-approval-rate-what-published-data-shows.pdf

This report is general information produced as described on the methodology page, not advice for your situation. No figure is an offer or a quote. Ashgrove Credit Research places funding requests with a network of funding partners and may be paid by them; that is disclosed at https://ashgrovecreditresearch.com/about.