

# **Singapore Banking Monthly**

Interest rates begin declining

### SINGAPORE | BANKING & FINANCE | UPDATE

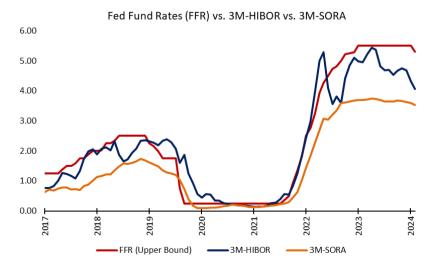
- September's 3M-SORA was down 7bps MoM to 3.53%, the lowest since March 2023, and 6bps lower than the 3Q24 average. We expect the 3M-SORA to decline in tandem with the Fed Rate cuts. 3M-HIBOR was down 24bps MoM in September to 4.07%, a continuation from the decline of 38bps in August.
- Singapore loans growth grew 1.8% YoY in August, a continuation of the 1.9% increase from the previous month. We expect low-single-digit growth for 2024.
   The CASA balance rose slightly to 18.3% (Jul 24: 18.2%).
- Downgrade to NEUTRAL from Overweight. Banks' share price performance was up 11% in September, as they recovered strongly from the impact of the carry trade in the previous month. We are Neutral on banks. NIMs will dip slightly, going into 2H24 and FY25, from the expected rate cuts, but we expect NII to remain stable from the movement of deposits into longer tenures and higher interest-yielding assets. A recovery in loan growth and continued double-digit fee income growth will offset the NII stagnation. Bank dividend yields are attractive at 5.7%, with upside surprises due to excess capital ratios and a push towards higher ROEs. Our preferred bank is UOB due to its higher proportion of fixed deposits which could benefit cost of funds, lower exposure to Hong Kong commercial property and push towards the ASEAN region/non-interest income.

#### 3M-SORA and 3M-HIBOR fall

Singapore interest rates were down 7bps to 3.53% in September, the lowest since March 2023. Furthermore, September's 3M-SORA fell by 17bps YoY and was 6bps lower than the 3Q24 3M-SORA average of 3.59% (2Q24: 3.66%). This is the largest YoY decline since May 2021. We expect the 3M-SORA to decline in tandem with the Fed Rates as rate cuts start to come into effect.

Hong Kong interest rates fell in September. The 3M-HIBOR was down 24bps MoM to 4.07%, a continuation from the decline of 38bps in August. Furthermore, August's 3M-HIBOR dipped by 88bps YoY and was still 29bps lower than the 3Q24 3M-HIBOR average of 4.36% (Figure 1). This is the lowest the 3M-HIBOR has been since April 2023.

Figure 1: Interest rates fall in September



Source: CEIC, PSR

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11 October 2024

# **Neutral (Downgraded)**

# DBS Group Holdings

**NEUTRAL** (Downgraded)

BLOOMBERG CODE

LAST TRADED PRICE

FORECAST DIV

TARGET PRICE

DIVIDEND YIELD

5.58%

TOTAL RETURN

DISS SP

SGD 38.74

SGD 2.16

SGD 38.50

5.58%

4.96%

### **Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp**

## **ACCUMULATE (Maintained)**

BLOOMBERG CODE	OCBC SP
LAST TRADED PRICE	SGD 15.01
FORECAST DIV	SGD 0.87
TARGET PRICE	SGD 15.40
DIVIDEND YIELD	5.80%
TOTAL RETURN	8.39%

# **United Overseas Bank Limited**

#### **ACCUMULATE (Maintained)**

BLOOMBERG CODE	UOB SP
LAST TRADED PRICE	SGD 31.92
FORECAST DIV	SGD 1.90
TARGET PRICE	SGD 34.90
DIVIDEND YIELD	5.95%
TOTAL RETURN	15.29%

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List of Abbreviations:

NIM – Net Interest Margin

SIBOR – Singapore Interbank Offer Rate

SOR – Swap Offer Rate

HIBOR – Hong Kong Interbank Offer Rate DDAV – Derivatives Daily Average Volume

SDAV – Securities Daily Average Value



#### Singapore loan growth at low-single digit

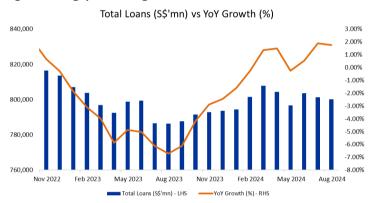
Overall, loans to Singapore residents—which capture lending in all currencies to Singaporeans, rose by 1.8% YoY in August to \$\$800bn. This was a continuation of the 1.9% increase from the previous month. We expect low-single-digit growth for 2024 as loan growth is expected to recover further from the expected rate cuts going into 2H24. Bank are guiding low single digit loans growth in 2024.

Business loans rose by 1.2% YoY in August. Loans to the building and construction segment, the single largest business segment, rose 1.2% YoY to \$\$171bn, the largest increase since January 2023, while loans to the manufacturing segment fell 6% YoY in August to S\$20bn.

Consumer loans grew 2.6% YoY in August to S\$318bn, the eight consecutive YoY increase recorded since December 2023. Housing loans, which comprise ~70% of consumer lending, grew 2.3% YoY in August to \$\$228bn.

Total deposits and balances—which include deposits in all currencies made by nonbank customers—grew by 3.4% YoY in August to S\$1,837bn. In the Current Account and Savings Account, or CASA, the proportion rose slightly to 18.3% (Jul 24: 18.2%) of total deposits or S\$337bn. Notably, the CASA proportion has been ranging between 18.1% and 18.3% since Jan 2024.

Figure 3: Singapore loan growth continues

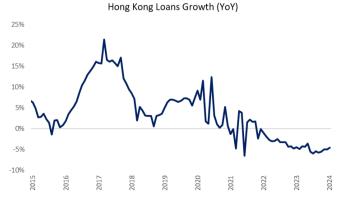


Source: CEIC, PSR

#### Hong Kong loan growth decline continues

Hong Kong's domestic loan growth declined 4% YoY but rose 0.3% MoM in August. The YoY decline was smaller than July's YoY decline of 5%, while YTD24 is down 5%. Loan growth has continuously declined YoY since June 2022 from a decline in mainland-China related lending and weak demand for offshore lending due to lower onshore interest rates.

Figure 4: Hong Kong loan growth continues to contract



Source: CEIC, PSR

Figure 2: Singapore loans growth

2023/2024	Loans growth (YoY)
August 24	1.75%
July 24	1.88%
June 24	0.54%
May 24	-0.26%
April 24	1.50%
March 24	1.37%
February 24	-0.28%
January 24	-1.59%
December 23	-2.44%
November 23	-2.89%
October 23	-4.19%
September 23	-6.11%

Source: CEIC, PSR

#### Securities and derivatives volumes surge

SDAV surged 67% YoY to S\$1,447mn in September (Figure 7) and reached a new high for 2024, while the DDAV grew 35% YoY and 17% MoM. Securities trading saw a substantial increase due to easing monetary policies and China's stimulus measures, which boosted investor confidence and led to portfolio adjustments. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive YoY increase for the DDAV, starting from December 2023. The VIX, a market index that measures the implied volatility of the S&P 500 Index, averaged 17.7 in September, down from 19.3 in the previous month. The decline was due to high volatility in August from the increase in Japan's interest rates, which impacted carry trades globally.

The top four equity index futures turnover rose by 41% YoY in September to 14mn contracts (Figure 8) led by higher trading volumes of FTSE China A50 Index Futures. The FTSE China A50 Index Futures surged 60% MoM, while the FTSE Taiwan Index Futures fell 11% MoM in September.

Figure 5: 12 Months SDAV and DDAV

	SDAV	YoY	DDAV	YoY
	(\$mn)		(mn)	
September 24	1,447	67%	1.45	35%
August 24	1,370	29%	1.13	9%
July 24	1,153	14%	1.04	7%
June 24	1,108	-6%	1.16	13%
May 24	1,270	23%	1.14	16%
April 24	1,212	25%	1.18	23%
March 24	1,190	-2%	1.19	14%
February 24	1,252	13%	1.26	24%
January 24	935	-19%	1.14	5%
December 23	939	0%	1.04	13%
November	952	-23%	1.04	-5%
October	897	-22%	1.07	-13%

Source: SGX, Bloomberg, PSR

Figure 6: Turnover of top four equity index futures contracts surge

No. of contracts	Sep-23	Sep-24	YoY
FTSE China A50 Index Futures	6,571,431	10,500,377	59.8%
Nikkei 225 Index Futures	1,040,619	882,869	-15.2%
MSCI Singapore Index Futures	1,038,866	1,172,701	12.9%
FTSE Taiwan Index Futures	1,304,094	1,451,418	11.3%
Sub-total	9,955,010	14,007,365	40.7%

Source: SGX, Bloomberg, PSR

#### **Singapore Banks Performance**

The three local banks' share price performance were up 11% in September 2024; DBS was the strongest, with an increase of 5%, while OCBC and UOB rose by 4% and 3% respectively (Figure 7). The increase was mainly due to a recovery from the decline in August from the carry trade impact. DBS remains the strongest performer YTD with the an increase of 25% compared to OCBC and UOB, which had increases of 16% and 13%, respectively. DBS continues to perform well, likely due to its FY24 dividend guidance and dividend payout ratio being the highest among the three local banks, while both OCBC and UOB are maintaining their guidance of a dividend payout ratio of 50% with not much clarity on how excess capital will be returned to shareholders.



Figure 7: Banks recover strongly in September 2024

				rmance						
BBG Ticker	Singapore Banks	Last Price (S\$)	Recommendation	Target Price (S\$)	Upside	Div Yield (%)	1 Year (%)	YTD (%)	3 Month (%)	1 Month (%)
DBS SP EQUITY	DBS	37.67	NEUTRAL	38.50	2%	5.3	24.4	25.3	6.3	4.6
OCBC SP EQUITY	OCBC	14.90	NEUTRAL	15.40	3%	5.8	17.9	16.2	4.6	3.8
UOB SP EQUITY	UOB	31.78	ACCUMULATE	34.90	10%	5.4	12.9	13.1	2.7	2.5

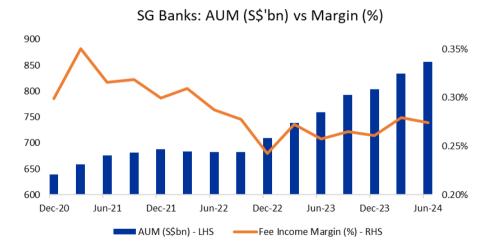
Source: Bloomberg, PSR

#### Stable AUM growth and margin recovery to drive fees

With rate cuts finally kicking in and expectations for more rate cuts in the later part of FY24 and FY25, the three local banks would be looking at fee income to sustain their earnings momentum. Fee income has grown by double digits YoY in the last four quarters (2Q24: 20%, 1Q24: 16%, 4Q23: 22%, 3Q24: 11%), mainly from an increase in wealth management fees, as investor sentiment shifted due to interest rate stagnation. This resulted in demand and funds moving from deposits into investment products, and fee income margin has risen due to the shift to better margin products such as wealth and investment products compared to lower margin products like fixed deposits. AUM also grew 13% YoY to reach a new high (Figure 8), mainly from continued net new money inflows.

We continue to expect the local banks' fee income to grow by double digits and have forecasted YoY growth of ~14% for FY24e, which could add ~S\$340mn to revenue. The growth will be led by a continued move from deposits into higher risk investments as interest rates cuts continue to materialise. While margins have improved, they have yet to reach levels seen during the low-interest rate environment in 2020-2021 (2Q24: 0.27% vs 1Q21: 0.35%). We believe there is even more room for margins to grow as rates trend downwards. As the banks' NII and NIM growth stagnates, we believe fee income will provide the driver for earnings growth in FY24e.

Figure 8: Fee income margins to recover



Source: Companies, PSR

#### **Singapore Banking News**

On 19 September, it was reported that e-commerce and gaming company Sea has partnered four Thai companies, including conglomerate BTS Group Holdings, to apply for a virtual bank licence in Thailand. The other three Thai companies are commercial lender Bangkok Bank, goods manufacturer Saha Group and Thailand Post. Thailand opened applications for virtual banks in March. Sea said it will leverage each of the four companies' "complementary strengths to offer





innovative and compelling digital financial services in Thailand" and will focus on improving access to financial services for underserved segments.

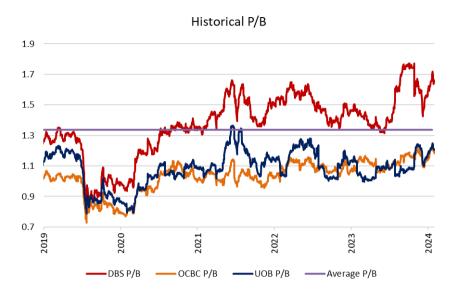
- On 18 September, the Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) and Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) said in a joint statement that bank customers will soon need to use Singpass face verification (SFV) to verify their identities when setting up their digital tokens, in a bid to better protect them against scams. Major retail banks in Singapore will progressively implement this over the next three months. The move will make it more difficult for scammers to take over a customer's digital token by setting it up on their own devices using phished credentials such as an SMS, one-time passwords (OTPs) and bank card information, said ABS and MAS.
- On 12 September, GXS Bank, a digital bank backed by Grab Holdings and Singtel, launched the Boost Pocket. This is a new addition to its GXS Savings Account that offers customers the opportunity to earn higher interest rates on their savings. Boost Pocket combines the benefits of a term deposit with the flexibility of the bank's existing savings products. The Boost Pocket offers a base interest rate, credited daily, and a bonus interest rate that is applied at the end of the chosen tenure. The one-month tenure offers an interest rate of 3.28% per annum, while the three-month tenure offers 3.48% per annum.
- On 6 September, DBS appointed Calvin Ong as its new Singapore consumer banking head. He succeeds Jeremy Soo, who retires at the end of the year. Ong starts his new position on Jan 1, 2025, overseeing the Republic's consumer banking and wealth management (Treasures) platforms. Soo, 62, will stay on as an adviser, leaving his executive duties at the bank after 17 years as head of Singapore consumer banking. Ong, 42, joined DBS in 2007 as a management associate, and is currently head of investment products and advisory at the bank's consumer banking and wealth management group.

#### **Investment Action**

**Downgrade to NEUTRAL.** Banks' share price performance was up in September, as they recovered strongly from the impact of the carry trade in the previous month. DBS was the strongest, with an increase of 5%, while OCBC and UOB rose by 4% and 3% respectively. We are neutral on banks. NIMs will dip slightly, going into 2H24 and FY25, from the expected rate cuts, but we expect NII to remain stable from the movement of deposits into longer tenures and higher interest-yielding assets. Nonetheless, a recovery in loan growth and continued double-digit fee income growth will offset the NII stagnation. Bank dividend yields are attractive at 5.7%, with upside surprises due to excess capital ratios and a push towards higher ROEs.



Figure 9: Banks' 5-year historical P/B



Source: Bloomberg, PSR

Figure 10: Banks' target P/B

	DBS	ОСВС	UOB		
High	1.62	1.50	1.43		
Low	0.81	0.73	0.79		
5-year average	1.17	1.09	1.12		
Current	1.34	1.02	0.97		
Forward target	1.36	1.27	1.17		
TP (S\$)	38.50	15.40	34.90		

Source: Bloomberg, PSR



Figure 11: Peer Comparison – Singapore banks dividend yield the highest regionally

			_			_								Price		
Stock	PSR Recommendation	Market Cap (USDmn)	Yr0	orward P Yr1	'/E Yr2	Yr0	rward P/ Yr1	BV Yr2	Dividend Yr1	Yield (%) Yr2	Yr0	ROE (%) Yr1	Yr2	(Local Currency)	Target Price (S\$)	Llunciale
Singapore	Recommendation	(USDIIII)	110	1112	112	110	1112	112	111	112	110	111	112	Currency)	Price (33)	Upside
DBS	Neutral	83,239	8.6	9.9	10.2	1.4	1.6	1.6	5.9	6.4	16.9	17.1	15.9	37.7	38.50	2%
OCBC	Neutral	52,118	8.4	9.0	9.0	1.1	1.2	1.1	5.9	6.0	13.3	13.5	12.7	14.9	15.40	3%
UOB	Accumulate	41,259	8.5	8.9	8.7	1.1	1.1	1.1	5.6	5.8	13.3	12.9	12.6	31.8	34.90	10%
	Market Cap Weig	•	8.5	9.4	9.5	1.2	1.4	1.3	5.8	6.2	15.0	15.1	14.1	52.0	550	20,0
	a.net dap 11018	,a. ,a. a.	0.0	5	5.5				5.0	0						
<u>Indonesia</u>																
BCA	Non-rated	84,767	23.8	24.0	21.9	4.8	4.9	4.5	2.7	2.9	21.0	21.2	21.2	10500	na	na
MANDIRI	Non-rated	42,938	10.3	11.6	10.4	2.2	2.3	2.1	5.1	5.4	22.4	20.7	21.0	7025	na	na
BNI	Non-rated	13,067	9.6	9.0	7.9	1.3	1.2	1.1	5.2	5.8	14.6	14.2	15.0	5350	na	na
BANK BRI	Non-rated	49,428	14.4	12.4	11.2	2.8	2.3	2.2	6.5	6.9	19.7	19.1	19.8	4980	na	na
BANK BTN	Non-rated	1,314	5.0	5.9	5.2	0.6	0.6	0.6	3.5	3.4	12.4	10.8	11.3	1430	na	na
	Market Cap Weig	hted Average:	17.2	17.1	15.5	3.4	3.4	3.1	4.4	4.7	20.5	20.0	20.3			
<u>Malaysia</u>		_														
AFFIN BANK	Non-rated	1,631	12.0	12.3	10.8	0.4	0.6	0.6	2.7	3.3	3.7	4.6	5.1	2.8	na	na
ALLIANCE BANK	Non-rated	1,591	8.3	9.0	8.4	0.8	0.9	0.8	5.3	5.7	9.9	9.9	10.1	4.3	na	na
AMMB HOLDINGS	Non-rated	3,951	7.5	8.9	8.4	0.7	0.8	0.8	4.8	5.3	10.0	9.3	9.3	5.0	na	na
BANK ISLAM	Non-rated	1,459	9.0	10.3	9.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	5.8	6.1	7.8	7.9	8.3	2.7	na	na
CIMB BANK	Non-rated	20,556	8.9	10.9	10.2	0.9	1.2	1.1	5.7	5.6	10.7	11.1	11.3	8.0	na	na
HONG LEONG BANK	Non-rated	11,118	9.4	9.9	9.2	1.1	1.1	1.0	3.6	3.9	11.8	11.6	11.6	21.4	na	na
MAYBANK	Non-rated	30,308	11.5	12.5	11.9	1.1	1.3	1.3	6.0	6.3	10.4	10.5	10.7	10.5	na	na
PUBLIC BANK	Non-rated	21,160	12.5	12.5	11.9	1.5	1.5	1.4	4.5	4.7	12.7	12.4	12.3	4.5	na	na
RHB	Non-rated	6,417	8.3	9.0	8.5	0.8	0.8	0.8	6.5	6.7	9.4	9.2	9.4	6.1	na	na
	Market Cap Weig	hted Average:	10.5	11.4	10.8	1.1	1.2	1.2	5.3	5.5	10.9	10.9	11.0			
Thailand																
BANGKOK BANK	Non-rated	8,847	7.2	6.7	6.5	0.6	0.5	0.5	4.8	4.9	8.1	7.9	7.8	151.5	na	na
BANK OF AYUDHYA	Non-rated	5,963	6.3	6.2	5.9	0.6	0.5	0.5	3.4	3.7	9.3	8.4	8.3	26.5	na	na
KASIKORNBANK	Non-rated	10,981	7.5	7.7	7.3	0.6	0.6	0.6	4.9	5.3	8.2	8.6	8.7	151.5	na	na
KIATNAKIN BANK	Non-rated	1,266	7.8	10.0	8.6	0.7	0.7	0.6	4.9	5.5	9.2	6.7	7.4	49.5	na	na
KRUNGHTHAI	Non-rated	8,979	7.0	7.1	6.9	0.6	0.7	0.6	4.8	4.9	9.4	9.9	9.7	21.0	na	na
KRUNGHTHAI CARD	Non-rated	3,806	15.4	16.4	15.1	3.1	3.1	2.8	2.6	3.2	21.8	20.0	19.2	48.3	na	na
SCB X PCL	Non-rated	11,279	8.2	9.0	8.5	0.7	0.8	0.8	8.7	9.3	9.3	8.5	9.0	109.5	na	na
SRISAWAD	Non-rated	1,964	11.1	12.2	11.0	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.9	2.6	18.6	16.9	16.4	42.5	na	na
THANACHART BANK	Non-rated	1,644	7.9	7.5	6.9	0.7	0.7	0.7	6.5	6.8	9.6	9.8	10.1	51.3	na	na
TISCO	Non-rated	2,370	10.9	11.3	11.4	1.9	1.8	1.8	8.0	7.9	17.1	15.9	15.6	96.8	na	na
	Market Cap Weig	,	8.2	8.5	8.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	5.4	5.7	10.4	10.0	10.0			

Source: Bloomberg, PSR Extracted as of 2-Oct-24

#### **BANKING & FINANCE SECTOR UPDATE**



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#### **BANKING & FINANCE SECTOR UPDATE**



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