

REGISTER RECORDS FALL IN JUDGMENTS

County court judgments against consumers in England and Wales fell last year, according to statistics released today by Registry Trust, the public interest company which was founded in 1985 to run the Registry of County Court Judgments on behalf of the Lord Chancellor.

Consumer judgments have been declining rapidly from a peak of 1,817,611 in 1991 to 610,383 in 2004. This is mainly owing to the growing reluctance of creditors to use judgments for purposes of record rather than to aid recoveries.

In 2004 the number of consumer judgments fell by 3.3 percent compared with the previous year. Commenting on the figures, the chairman of Registry Trust, Malcolm Hurlston, said:

“The Registry of County Court Judgments plays an important part in Britain’s successful credit industry. It provides the single most important source of information to support responsible lending.

“The number of judgments was artificially buoyed in 2004 by the DVLA issuing judgments against road tax defaulters. This substantially affected the number in the fourth quarter. However it is by no means certain whether these judgments will have the same value for lenders and we are considering whether they can be distinguished.

“Without the additional DVLA judgments, the decline in personal judgments would have been closer to twenty percent.”

Commercial judgments once again fell but not as sharply. These have been less affected in the past by creditor trends. The number of commercial judgments fell by 5.2 percent to 161,882 in 2004, a clear sign of a firm economy.

Combined judgments, satisfactions and cancellations (both consumer and commercial) stood at 961,159 for 2004.

Judgment information, according to industry estimates, prevents some £0.5 billion of bad debt a year. The importance of the information has not been affected by the falling numbers.¹

From April 2006 the register of county court judgments is to become part of a combined register of fines and judgments, which will include in addition high court judgments. The credit world has expressed concern about the reported plans of the Department of Constitutional Affairs to tender the work, given the importance of judgment information to good lending, the needs of the credit economy and the uncontested success of Registry Trust as a public interest company.

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Notes for editors:

Registry Trust maintains a public record of judgment and decree information from most jurisdictions in the British Isles. It is an important factor in avoiding debt and in assisting responsible lending decisions, which in turn play an important role in supporting a modern and stable economy.

Anyone may search any name and address in Great Britain by sending £4.50 to Registry Trust, 173-175 Cleveland Street, London W1T 6QR.

Alternatively, a search form can be downloaded from Registry Trust's website. www.registry-trust.org.uk

¹ *County Court Judgments: The Contribution of Consumer Judgments to Risk Assessment and Responsible Lending* published by Registry Trust Limited June 2002