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Equifax's Latest U.S. Consumer Trend Data Indicates Widespread Credit Growth

Delinquency Rates Continue to Improve Across the Board

Auto lending sees largest year-over-year increase

ATLANTA, May 4, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Multiple portfolio metrics indicate that the U.S. credit market is stabilizing and is growing – according to Equifax's monthly *National Credit Trends Report* for March 2011.

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The most recent trend data indicates that sustained new credit growth is underway within a number of markets, with year-over-year increases in the number of auto (23% increase), bankcard (14% increase), consumer finance (5% increase), and home equity (9% increase) loans. According the report issued monthly by Equifax, consumers continue to more consistently pay credit bills on time while simultaneously paying down existing debt, resulting in an increase in the average credit risk score nationally.

Although credit available today represents about half of pre-recession levels in 2006, it is steadily increasing, with 2010 levels exceeding 2009 and that trend is expected to continue for this year (2011 month-to-date new credit is \$51 billion versus 2010 year-to-date new credit of \$45 billion -an increase of more than 13 percent).

Notable findings of the most recent report include:

- Auto - Average loan amounts generated through captive finance companies up 88 percent over 2009 levels.
- First Mortgages - Prime originations (Equifax risk scores of 700 or more) now represent more than 75 percent of all first mortgage originations.
- Consumer Loans - Installment loans now represent 33.9 percent of total consumer loans, representing a 5-year high.
- Bankcards - More than 14% increase in number of new bankcards issued over 2010 levels.
- Retail Card - Notable increase in retail card originations for non-prime (Equifax risk scores less than 660) consumers.
- Home Equity - Trend data indicates a considerable shift toward prime borrowers (lowest risk scores).
- Student Loans - As average student loan amount has declined in response to regulatory changes, data indicates students seeking supplemental credit to finance education.

"Across multiple loan products, we are clearly seeing indicators of sustained credit growth –

most notably within automobile finance and bankcard originations," said Michael Koukounas, Senior Vice President - Special Client Services for Equifax. "Consumer behavior is now fueling much of this improved loan performance as borrowers are more aggressively paying off their outstanding debts, which is positively impacting their credit risk scores and making them more attractive to lenders. If this trend continues, I would expect to see a further loosening of available credit."

Equifax's National Credit Trends Report is released monthly and provides detailed levels of consumer credit information from various vertical markets including: bank and retail credit cards, mortgage, automotive and student loans -- Sourced from its data on more than 585 million consumers and 81 million businesses worldwide.

About Equifax, Inc.

[Equifax](#) is a global leader in commercial and consumer information solutions, leveraging one of the largest sources of business credit intelligence, portfolio management, income, employment and wealth verification, identity authentication/fraud detection and marketing demographic data worldwide.

Through its unique data and analytical insights, powered by proprietary technology, Equifax delivers customized, high-value decisioning solutions to more than 4.4 billion accounts in 81 million businesses and provides millions of individual consumers with information and services to support management of their personal credit information and protection of their identity that are vital to their financial well being. Headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., Equifax Inc. spans four continents and 16 countries, is a member of Standard & Poor's (S&P) 500® Index and its common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol [EFX](#). For more information, please visit www.equifax.com.

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