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New Data From Equifax Shows January Credit Card Debt Down From a Year Ago

Consumers Continued to Demonstrate Discipline During Holiday Shopping Season

ATLANTA, April 4, 2013 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- While consumers are used to big credit card bills in January after the holiday shopping frenzy, Americans this year reduced their total credit card debt compared to the same period in 2012. Total consumer credit card debt was \$603.4 billion in January 2013, down 0.85 percent from January of the previous year, according to new Credit Trends Report data from Equifax Inc. (NYSE:EFX). By comparison, the total consumer credit card debt declined between January 2011 and January 2012 by 1.56 percent.

The trend of consumers trimming their credit card balances is playing out to different degrees in different geographies. Houston, a city where the economy and job market have remained strong, is the only top-25 metropolitan area where consumers increased their credit card debt. Consumers in Houston's metro area had \$11.4 billion in credit card debt in January 2013, an increase of 1.23 percent compared to the year before. On the other end of the spectrum, the largest declines in credit card debt were in Detroit and Phoenix, where totals fell 2.21 percent and 2.05 percent, respectively.

Not only have consumers reduced their credit card bills, they also have not accessed as much of the credit available to them. Credit card utilization – the percentage of the credit limit that people have used – has declined during the past two Januaries. Credit card utilization was 21.97 percent in January 2013, down from 22.62 percent in January 2012 and 24.09 percent in January 2011. The declines occurred in all of the top 25 metro areas, as well as the country as a whole.

"These new reports, along with other data we have examined on credit scores and total consumer debt, tell the story that consumers continue to be disciplined in their borrowing," said Trey Loughran, president of the Personal Solutions division at Equifax. "It is particularly interesting to look at January data, as that month always has the highest consumer credit card debt totals, with many consumers experiencing a bit of a 'hangover' from holiday spending. We expect this 'disciplined consumer' trend to continue for a while. Even as the economy improves, people remain cautious about taking on new debt."

TOTAL U.S. CREDIT CARD DEBT				Jan 2011 v. Jan 2012	Jan 2012 v. Jan 2013
Top 25 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs)	January 2011	January 2012	January 2013	% Change	% Change
1 New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island NY-NJ-CT-PA	\$52,049,081,986	\$51,887,555,900	\$51,431,659,577	-0.31%	-0.88%
2 Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County CA	\$37,543,322,595	\$35,946,295,511	\$35,319,851,567	-4.25%	-1.74%
3 Chicago-Gary-Kenosha IL-IN-WI CMSA	\$21,554,753,529	\$21,384,783,258	\$21,116,067,609	-0.79%	-1.26%
4 Washington-Baltimore DC-MD-VA-WV CMSA	\$22,548,736,797	\$22,565,868,827	\$22,528,242,885	0.08%	-0.17%
5 San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose CA CMSA	\$18,677,013,387	\$18,182,119,475	\$17,893,826,509	-2.65%	-1.59%
6 Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City PA-NJ- DE-MD CMSA	\$14,642,953,720	\$14,641,503,032	\$14,554,882,950	-0.01%	-0.59%
7 Dallas-Fort Worth TX CMSA	\$13,208,239,127	\$13,100,022,735	\$13,043,298,963	-0.82%	-0.43%
8 Boston-Worcester-Lawrence MA-NH-ME-CT CMSA	\$14,253,203,562	\$14,239,615,096	\$13,985,685,508	-0.10%	-1.78%
9 Houston-Galveston-Brazoria TX CMSA	\$11,239,167,949	\$11,295,826,955	\$11,434,254,772	0.50%	1.23%
10 Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint MI CMSA	\$10,770,617,161	\$10,323,896,149	\$10,095,356,244	-4.15%	-2.21%
11 Atlanta GA MSA	\$11,186,237,336	\$10,882,353,378	\$10,744,135,904	-2.72%	-1.27%
12 Miami-Fort Lauderdale FL CMSA	\$9,214,649,481	\$8,845,064,238	\$8,783,202,879	-4.01%	-0.70%
13 Phoenix-Mesa AZ MSA	\$8,539,934,707	\$8,234,029,819	\$8,065,255,492	-3.58%	-2.05%
14 Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton WA CMSA	\$10,217,194,189	\$10,013,526,153	\$9,944,715,282	-1.99%	-0.69%
15 Minneapolis-St. Paul MN-WI MSA	\$7,545,848,164	\$7,475,135,470	\$7,399,329,117	-0.94%	-1.01%
16 San Diego CA MSA	\$7,470,151,338	\$7,280,307,956	\$7,244,652,058	-2.54%	-0.49%
17 Denver-Boulder-Greeley CO CMSA	\$7,412,480,320	\$7,316,736,923	\$7,249,127,878	-1.29%	-0.92%
18 Cleveland-Akron OH CMSA	\$6,117,463,694	\$5,859,716,480	\$5,746,559,370	-4.21%	-1.93%
19 Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater FL MSA	\$6,184,713,505	\$5,982,701,312	\$5,908,088,463	-3.27%	-1.25%
20 St. Louis MO-IL MSA	\$5,781,782,402	\$5,742,739,960	\$5,670,229,968	-0.68%	-1.26%
21 Portland-Salem OR-WA CMSA	\$5,448,017,480	\$5,367,865,297	\$5,333,402,427	-1.47%	-0.64%
22 Pittsburgh PA MSA	\$4,956,953,589	\$4,924,717,177	\$4,880,112,669	-0.65%	-0.91%
23 Las Vegas NV-AZ MSA	\$4,077,189,290	\$3,846,738,846	\$3,800,176,730	-5.65%	-1.21%
24 Sacramento-Yolo CA CMSA	\$4,649,107,376	\$4,472,582,307	\$4,407,236,315	-3.80%	-1.46%
25 Orlando FL MSA	\$4,358,930,394	\$4,201,445,973	\$4,151,730,438	-3.61%	-1.18%

U.S. Credit Card Utilization Rates

Top 25 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs)	January		
	January 2011	2012	January 2013
1 New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island NY-NJ-CT-PA	23.12%	21.59%	20.88%
2 Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County CA	26.08%	23.61%	22.71%
3 Chicago-Gary-Kenosha IL-IN-WI CMSA	23.88%	21.57%	20.80%
4 Washington-Baltimore DC-MD-VA-WV CMSA	24.88%	23.31%	22.65%
5 San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose CA CMSA	22.96%	20.28%	19.36%
6 Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City PA-NJ-DE-MD CMSA	22.56%	21.65%	21.00%
7 Dallas-Fort Worth TX CMSA	27.56%	24.25%	23.58%
8 Boston-Worcester-Lawrence MA-NH-ME-CT CMSA	21.61%	20.36%	19.79%
9 Houston-Galveston-Brazoria TX CMSA	26.06%	24.26%	23.71%
10 Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint MI CMSA	23.20%	21.74%	21.06%
11 Atlanta GA MSA	27.68%	26.20%	25.19%
12 Miami-Fort Lauderdale FL CMSA	28.42%	26.04%	25.25%
13 Phoenix-Mesa AZ MSA	26.57%	24.33%	23.54%
14 Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton WA CMSA	25.63%	24.22%	23.44%
15 Minneapolis-St. Paul MN-WI MSA	21.58%	20.70%	20.01%
16 San Diego CA MSA	26.44%	23.83%	23.01%
17 Denver-Boulder-Greeley CO CMSA	24.51%	22.33%	21.60%
18 Cleveland-Akron OH CMSA	22.19%	20.75%	20.05%
19 Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater FL MSA	25.21%	23.64%	23.07%
20 St. Louis MO-IL MSA	23.23%	21.78%	21.09%
21 Portland-Salem OR-WA CMSA	24.27%	22.74%	22.12%
22 Pittsburgh PA MSA	20.53%	19.64%	18.99%
23 Las Vegas NV-AZ MSA	28.07%	25.86%	25.05%
24 Sacramento-Yolo CA CMSA	25.90%	23.53%	22.52%
25 Orlando FL MSA	26.56%	24.88%	24.14%

About Equifax

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Equifax is a global leader in consumer, commercial and workforce information solutions, providing businesses of all sizes and consumers with information they can trust. We organize and assimilate data on more than 500 million consumers and 81 million businesses worldwide, and use advanced analytics and proprietary technology to create and deliver customized insights that enrich both the performance of businesses and the lives of consumers.

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