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More than Half of All Seniors Have Never Checked Their Credit Report

A recent survey discovered that more than half of all those over the age of 60, 51.4%, say they have never checked their credit reports.

The survey, which was conducted by InCharge Institute of America, a national non-profit organization specializing in personal financial education and credit counseling, also found that 42% of 18 to 29 year olds have never checked their credit, compared to more than one-third, or 35%, of the general public.

Recent studies have found that seniors are at high risk of being rejected for credit and having damaged credit reports because of fraudulent activity. According to a March 2003 study conducted by the American Association of Retired Persons, Federal Trade Commission data shows that 22% of all identity theft victims are over age 50. Also, a disproportionate amount of seniors, 51% versus 44% of the general population, reported having their stolen information used to commit credit card fraud.

"This is truly alarming. This is just one more example of seniors being victimized, particularly by those who may be more technologically savvy," says Robert Barrett, president and chief executive of InCharge Institute. "At a time when identity theft is considered by the FBI to be the fastest growing crime in America, it is more important than ever to stay on top of this. People simply are not taking this warning seriously."

InCharge Institute Vice President of Education, Rebecca Stiehl urges younger generations to help their parents with the task of checking their credit reports. "Just like we press our parents to go to the doctor, we need to press them about the risks, give them real life examples and provide them with phone numbers. It's just another way we should be making sure our parents' generation stays safe."

BANKRUPTCIES START AT RECORD PACE

The flow of petitions filed with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Albany, NY continued at a record level through the end of Sept., mirroring a national trend.

The court reported 6,530 new cases through the close of business Tuesday, a total that eclipsed the nine-month record of 6,369 petitions set in 1998. Filings have increased for four straight years.

"Mostly, it's credit card debt," said Paula M. Barbaruolo, an attorney who represents consumer debtors for the Albany law firm Orlando & Barbaruolo PLLC. "People are using their credit cards to live, and I don't think they realize how expensive the credit rates are."

Nationwide, a record 1.65 million cases were filed during the 12-month period ending June 30, according to the American Bankruptcy Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based group that tracks bankruptcy data. The ABI does not break out year-to-date data, and numbers for the third quarter of this year will not be available for several weeks.

Samuel Gerdano, ABI's executive director, blamed the filing surge in part on easy access to relatively cheap financing. "Consumers, aided by historic low interest rates, helped make the last recession a shallow one, but at the cost of adding to already high household debt burdens," he said.

Because more people are declaring bankruptcy than ever before, the process is losing some of the stigma that once discouraged filing, said John Heller, Colonie branch manager of Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Central New York, a Syracuse-based nonprofit that helps people with debt problems.

"It's not as bad as it once used to be," he said. "Everybody's doing it."

And unlike the growth in bankruptcies seen in the mid-1990s, Barbaruolo said, a substantial number of filers now have jobs. "I haven't seen a lot of people out of work," she said. "They are employed and they have disposable income, but they don't have enough."

The increase in wage earners filing for bankruptcy is driving significant growth in Chapter 13 bankruptcy cases. Unlike Chapter 7 cases, in which a filer's unsecured debt can be eliminated, Chapter 13 cases require debtors to pay back all or part of their debt through a court-approved plan.

Through the end of August, the number of Chapter 13 cases filed

in Albany increased 10.4 percent. A breakdown of the types of cases filed in September was not immediately available Tuesday.

Business filings, while a fraction of the overall case volume at the Albany court, were also much higher through the end of August, with 112 cases this year versus 83 in 2002.

All of the activity has made life hectic for bankruptcy professionals. Paul Levine, an Albany attorney who serves as a court-appointed trustee in Chapter 7 cases, joked that he was too swamped to analyze why filings are up.

"I don't really know what the trends are because I'm so busy opening new cases," said Levine, who is president of the Capital Region Bankruptcy Bar Association. (JEREMY BOYER, Business writer, Wed, Oct. 1, 2003)

MERGED REPORTS

Are you still filling out the 1003 form? Did you know our Mortgage-CreditLink merged program populates and prints the 1003 form? It also has the adverse action notice, the consumers copy of the merged report and several other preprinted forms.

KCB INFORMATION SERVICES

HOURS

Monday - Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm
Consumer credit reports are from Experian.
Business reports are provided from Experian.
Residential Mortgage Credit Reports and Merged Credit Reports may contain information from: the Kewanee Credit Bureau, Experian, TransUnion and/or Equifax.
Criminal Background checks are from the Illinois State Police, Credit Commander or CreditRetriever.
Tenant Screening reports are from Credit Retriever.

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Rake a big pile of leaves every fall and jump in it with someone you love.

When we recall the past, we find it is the simplest things - not the great occasions - that in retrospect give off the greatest glow of happiness. - - Bob Hope