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GOVERNMENT BODIES ARE THE LARGEST MAJOR DEBT CLAIMANTS

In the past two years government bodies in Northern Ireland accounted for a larger proportion of debt judgments than lenders, according to figures released today (August 2) by Registry Trust.

Registry Trust is the non-profit organisation which collects judgment information throughout the British Isles and Ireland. In Northern Ireland it collects information on defaults and small claims judgments, and High Court judgments. Judgments affect the credit rating of both businesses and consumers.

Governmental organisations took to court 34 percent of judgments issued for the top 50 claimants during 2016 and 2017; lenders accounted for 33 percent. Housing organisations were responsible for 13 percent of the volume; utility companies made up just five percent.

The top 50 claimants are the 50 entities responsible for the largest value and volume of judgments during 2016 and 2017 combined. The top 50 accounted for 71 percent of the total value and 60 percent of the volume of judgments; personal claimants have been excluded.

Debt Management, part of the Department for Communities, issued more judgments (1,926) than any other entity during the period. Registering 796 and 666 judgments, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Abbey Insurance Brokers claimed the second and third most judgments.

A large year-on-year increase in the number of judgments from non-traditional, sub-prime and other lenders (non-banks and non-credit unions) was an outstanding feature of the top claimants statistics; lenders other than banks and credit unions registered an additional 429 judgments during 2017, 87 percent more than in the year before.

Lenders were responsible for 75 percent (£14.6m) of the total value of debt judgments made by the top claimants.

The two biggest claimants (by value), Ulster Bank and the PRA Group, who claimed for £4.2m and £3.2m respectively, accounted for half of this figure. Debt Management was the third largest claimant (by value), it accounted for £1.8m worth of judgments.

"This is the first time that public domain judgment information about claimants has been published in the British Isles, if not in the world" said Malcolm Hurlston CBE, chairman of Registry Trust. "It adds to our understanding of the importance of judgment information.

Governmental bodies work to different standards in pursuing smaller debts since they feel an obligation to recover, whereas the private sector gives more weight to the profitability of the course of action.

“People who act on the basis of judgment information will benefit from taking the nature of the claimant more into account. This applies mainly to credit reference agencies and their lender clients but also borrowers and members of the public who consult the registers to judge whom it is safe to do business with.”

Registry Trust received 31,204 requests to search the register for Northern Ireland online at www.truonline.org.uk during 2017. TrustOnline allows anyone to search for judgments and similar information registered against consumers and businesses in any jurisdiction across the British Isles and Ireland. “It is a unique benefit for consumers to be able to check the debt record of any person or business with which they may be transacting,” said Mr Hurlston. “I would hesitate before transacting with any business which had a judgment on its record.”

-Ends-

Top 50 claimants categories by volume of judgments 2016 & 2017

- Government Body – 2,354 (34 percent of the volume of judgments)
- Lenders – 2,257 (33 percent)
- Other – 1,029 (15 percent)
- Housing – 878 (13 percent)
- Utility – 344 (five percent)

Top 50 claimants categories by value of judgments 2016 & 2017

- Lenders - £14.6m (75 percent of the total value of judgments)
- Government Body - £2.4m (12 percent)
- Other - £1.3m (six percent)
- Housing - £889,668 (five percent)
- Utility - £431,923 (two percent)

Top individual claimants by category (volume) 2016 and 2017 combined

Government Body

- Debt Management: 1,926 judgments
- The Registrar of Companies: 204
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust: 81

Lenders

- **Banks**
 - Santander Consumer UK: 98
 - Bank of Ireland: 17
 - Ulster Bank: 11
- **Credit Unions**
 - Newington Credit Union: 203
 - Lurgan Credit Union: 177
 - Cloughfern Community Credit Union: 71

- **Other lenders**
 - PRA Group: 599
 - Skyline Direct: 297
 - Amigo Loans: 236

Housing

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive: 796
- Apex Housing Association: 82

Utility

- Power Northern Ireland: 255
- Northern Ireland Water: 81
- Morgan Fuels Northern Ireland: 8

Other

- Abbey Insurance Brokers: 666
- Asset Collection and Investigations: 174
- The Performing Right Society: 128

Top individual claimants by category (value) 2016 and 2017 combined

Lenders

- **Banks**
 - Ulster Bank: £4.6m worth of judgments
 - Santander Consumer UK: £561,269
 - Bank of Ireland: £312,182
- **Credit Unions**
 - Lurgan Credit Union: £498,146
 - Newington Credit Union: £424,039
 - Dromara & Drumgooland Credit Union: £193,158
- **Other lenders**
 - PRA Group UK: £3.2m
 - Amigo Loans: £1.1m
 - Volkswagen Financial Services: £915,083

Government Body

- Debt Management: £1.8m
- CITB Northern Ireland: £199,935
- Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland: £145,978

Housing

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive: £787,611
- Apex Housing Association: £102,057

Utility

- Power Northern Ireland: £207,040
- Morgan Fuels Northern Ireland: £122,582
- Northern Ireland Water: £102,301

Other

- Abbey Insurance Brokers: £298,556
- The Performing Right Society: £221,892
- Kingstar Corporation Limited: £129,903

Biggest increase in judgments by volume (2017 compared with 2016)

- Abbey Insurance Brokers 618 (up 570)
- PRA Group 453 (up 307)
- The Registrar of Companies 172 (up 140)

- Amigo Loans 175 (up 114)
- Skyline Direct 177 (up 57)

Biggest increase in judgments by value (2017 compared with 2016)

- PRA Group £2.7m (up £2.3m)
- Amigo Loans £829,170 (up £583,274)
- Abbey Insurance Brokers £278,372 (up £258,188)
- Governor and Company of Bank of Ireland £206,447 (up £206,447)
- Santander £370,042 (up £178,815)

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Notes for editors

All figures are in reference to the top 50 claimants during 2016 and 2017 (in terms of volume and value of judgments) and not to all debt judgments recorded in Northern Ireland during this period. The top individual claimants accounted for 71 percent of the value and 60 percent of the volume of all claims. Personal claimants have been excluded.

Debt Management is part of the Department for Communities. Its role is to recover overpaid benefits; make deductions from benefits for rent, rates and electric bill debts; recover Social Fund loans; recover Discretionary Support loans; and to recover benefits as a result of personal injury claims, together with any associated health services charges.

Registry Trust is a non-profit company established in 1985. In England and Wales, it is the Registrar for Judgments, Orders and Fines, appointed by the Lord Chancellor. It maintains public records of judgment and decree information for most jurisdictions in the British Isles and Ireland. These records are an important factor in avoiding debt and in supporting responsible lending decisions, which in turn underpin a modern and stable economy. Registry Trust holds a public register of Northern Ireland judgments. It collects details of undefended default, small claims and High Court judgments directly from the Northern Ireland Courts Service with its agreement.

Registry Trust provides its licensed credit reference agencies with regular updates on outstanding judgment debts. This information affects the ability of all enterprises to borrow.

Judgments can be removed from the register if paid in full within one calendar month of the issue date and Registry Trust is informed, but will otherwise remain registered for six years. If fully paid outside the one calendar month, the defendant can apply to have the judgment marked as 'satisfied', which can be taken into account in future credit rating. Failure to pay within one month is a concerning signal.

Anyone may search for entries against a named person or business at a stated address or a corporate body in the British Isles and the Republic of Ireland by visiting Registry

Trust's website www.trustonline.org.uk or by writing to Registry Trust, 153–157 Cleveland Street, London W1T 6QW.

To view the full set of annual statistics, visit www.trustonline.org.uk/press.