

# Household debt at record high, topping pre-recession peak

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. household debt reached a record high in the first three months of this year, topping the previous peak reached in 2008, when the financial crisis plunged the economy into a deep recession.

Americans have stepped up borrowing over the past three years, yet the nature of what Americans owe has changed since the Great Recession. Student and auto loans make up a larger proportion of household debt, while mortgages — the epicenter of the financial crisis — and credit card debt remain below pre-recession levels. Those changes suggest households are still cautious about taking on debt to fuel day-to-day consumption.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York said Wednesday that household debt, which also includes home equity lines of credit, stood at \$12.73 trillion in the first quarter. That's above the \$12.68 trillion outstanding in the fall of 2008, the previous record.

The figure isn't adjusted for inflation or population size.

Even with debt levels back to record heights, analysts note that household borrowing appears more sustainable now than it did nearly a decade ago. Interest rates are lower, and lenders are much more focused on credit-worthy borrowers.

"This record debt level is neither a reason to celebrate nor a cause for alarm," Donghoon Lee, research officer at the New York Fed said. "The debt and its borrowers look quite different today."

Measured as a percentage of the overall U.S. economy, household debt is still smaller than in 2008. It is equivalent to 67 percent of the economy now, compared with 85 percent nine years ago.

Americans also appear to be better able to handle the loans they've taken out. The percentage of all household debt that is seriously delinquent — meaning payments are 90 days or more overdue — is 3.4 percent. That's down

from the post-recession peak of 8.7 percent in early 2010.

Just 203,000 Americans declared bankruptcy in the first three months of this year, the lowest in the 18 years that the New York Fed has tracked the data.

Still, there were some areas of concern. Auto loans have ballooned 44 percent to \$1.17 trillion since the last peak in household debt nine years ago. And a greater percentage of those loans have fallen 90 days or more overdue: 3.8 percent now, up from 3.3 percent two years ago. Still, that's down from a recent peak of 5.3 percent in late 2010.

Student loans are also a potential trouble spot: They topped \$1.3 trillion in the first quarter, soaring by 120 percent since 2008. Nearly 11 percent of that debt is 90 days overdue or more. The Fed estimates that the true figure could be double that amount, because many borrowers are able to defer loan payments while they continue their studies or if they are unemployed.

# DRUGS: Investigations are ongoing and additional charges are likely

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probation after pleading guilty April 4 to one felony count of methamphetamine possession and a misdemeanor count of marijuana delivery. He told Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge Jon Lieuallen at the time the business was struggling to stay open.

Police at Thur's Smoke Shop seized "substantial quantities of marijuana and marijuana extract (dabs) packaged for sale," Roberts stated, and arrested owner Thurman, 28, and his employee, Cody K. Servi, 26, for delivery of controlled substances and unlawful possession of marijuana products.

And police at the home on 11th Street arrested Michael Hamilton, 27, for possession of controlled substances, delivery of controlled substances, endangering the welfare of a minor and frequenting a place where controlled

substances are used. Roberts also said officers seized "quantities of illicit drugs and drug paraphernalia" at the home, which is one block from a day care center and less than three blocks from the Pendleton Early Learning Center.

An employee at Thur's on Wednesday afternoon said the business was closed and a member of the Oregon State Police crime lab stood nearby, smiled and said nothing. The employee declined to comment about the police activity in the business, which smelled like marijuana.

Thur's cannot legally sell the drug. The city planning commission on Thursday, May 25, will consider Thurman's zoning application for a recreational marijuana business in Pendleton.

Circuit court records show Thurman in 2012 in Wasco County pleaded guilty to possession of marijuana and careless driving

and pleaded no contest to driving under the influence of intoxicants. The court dismissed the case in 2014 after Thurman completed a drug and alcohol treatment program.

Servi in 2015 faced a charge of possession of less than an ounce of marijuana in Umatilla County, but court records show the state dismissed the case.

Roberts stated personnel from the Pendleton Police Department, Oregon State Police, Umatilla County District Attorney's Office, FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration assisted the local anti-drug task force.

He added the investigations are ongoing and additional charges are likely, as are more arrests, after forensic testing and the district attorney's office reviews the cases and presents them to a grand jury.

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# SCHOOL: Co-enrollment agreement will go into effect during the summer term

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nity colleges to a four-year institution.

"In Eastern Oregon, we figure out how to get things done," Insko said.

In an interview after the ceremony, Mary Jeanne Kuhar, BMCC vice president of instruction, explained how the agreement came together and the practical effects it would have on students.

Prior to the agreement, students needed to register and enroll at EOU and BMCC separately if they wanted to transfer or attend both institutions.

After receiving input from students, the two sides started discussing how to ease the transfer process in January.

As it was, BMCC was already EOU's largest source of transfers. According to Kuhar, in an average term, 28 students transferred to EOU and 32 were co-enrolled at both schools using the old method.

What they came up with is a co-enrollment program — any student that filled out a special joint application would be admitted to both EOU and BMCC simultaneously. For co-enrolled students, once they feel that their WORK is done at BMCC, they can start taking classes at Eastern without having to restart the application process.

Additionally, both schools will roll out "fast track transfer" opportunities for several programs — anthropology/sociology, biology, business, computer

## BMCC makes several programming changes

Blue Mountain Community College's co-enrollment agreement with Eastern Oregon University isn't BMCC's only programming development.

Mary Jeanne Kuhar, BMCC vice president of instruction, said the introduction of BMCC's veterinary technician program has been postponed to give officials more time to develop it.

Kuhar said BMCC wants more time to look at the two other Northwest community colleges that offer the program — Portland Community College, Central Oregon Community College in Bend and Yakima Valley Community College in Washington — and any partnership opportunities they could offer.

The new program was set to debut in the fall, where it would be housed in the Pendleton campus' new FARM building. Kuhar estimated it would take about \$500,000 to start the program.

While the vet tech program awaits its start, the school's paraeducation program is nearing its end.

Kuhar said the paraeducation program, which educates and trains educational assistants and paraprofessionals, was experiencing declining enrollment and no longer aligned with either the jobs at local school districts or education programs at four-year universities.

The remaining paraeducation students will finish out the term and will receive counseling on their future options.

BMCC will also revive its hospitality certificate program after a year-long hiatus.

According to Casey White-Zollman, BMCC vice president of communications, the program was originally deactivated because of a lack of interest.

With interest in the program returning, White-Zollman said BMCC hopes to reactivate the program in the fall.

The hospitality certificate program prepares students for careers in hotel and gaming management.

science, fire services administration, physical activity and health, and psychology.

Students in a fast track transfer program who complete an associate of transfer degree with a minimum 2.25 GPA in one of those programs will gain automatic admittance to EOU and transfer scholarship opportunities.

The programs at both schools will be tightly coordinated to ensure that a BMCC transfer won't have to repeat courses once they get to EOU. The partnership also promises to better coordinate services like financial aid and academic advising.

The co-enrollment agreement will go into effect during the summer term.

# INVERSION: Used Life Alert to call for help

Continued from 1A

onto the padded board and strapped his feet to the device in his bedroom. He tipped back and let gravity do its job. In a flash, he flipped 180 degrees.

"It threw me back," Taylor said.

When all safety features are enacted, users control inversion tables with arm movements. Taylor's bad eyesight had prevented him from reading the instructions in depth and he didn't watch the Blu-ray disc that came with the unit because he only had a DVD player. If he had done either, he would have connected a tether strap that controls the desired angle of rotation.

The retired truck driver and sheet metal worker attempted to rock back around and couldn't.

"I realized I was really in trouble," he said.

His orange cat, Pest, wandered around the apartment but wasn't in the mood to help. However, Taylor wore a Life Alert help button around his neck on a black string. After a few minutes of panicked inversion, he pressed the button and told the operator he was stuck.

Two paramedics and a police officer sped to Taylor's Hermiston Avenue apartment, not knowing exactly what they would find.

"We received a 9-1-1 call," said Hermiston paramedic Chris Wrathall. "Initially, we went to the front door and heard someone yelling inside."

The front door was secured with a deadbolt. The paramedics peered in the windows, wanting to assess the situation before damaging a door or window. Wrathall said he didn't see Taylor at first as he looked through the bedroom window, but finally spotted the older man off to the right near a wall.

"I had to look at an angle to see him," Wrathall said. "And there he was on an inversion table."

The paramedics assessed Taylor through the window and determined that the man's condition wasn't life threatening.

"He was talking to us and he wasn't turning purple," Wrathall said.

They decided they had time to call the apartment complex's maintenance person to let them inside. Before he arrived, however, Taylor started complaining

of a bad headache and began sweating profusely. Hermiston Police Sgt. Kelly Parsons forced the front door open with his shoulder. Soon, a relieved Taylor was upright.

He decided to share the details of his encounter, hoping his experience could help someone else. He advises using the safety strap and not getting on the device when alone. He's not giving up on the inversion table, though.

"I love the damn thing," Taylor said.

After his harrowing upside-down experience, he called the manufacturer to report the incident. The operator, he said, scolded him for not reading the instructions.

A phone call and emails to the Teeter company by the *East Oregonian* in a quest for more details about benefits and safety weren't returned.

Taylor said he feels gratitude to his rescuers.

"The next morning, I called the fire department and thanked them," Taylor said. "Then I called the police department."

Contact Kathy Aney at [kaney@eastoregonian.com](mailto:kaney@eastoregonian.com) or call 541-966-0810.



In this 2014 photo, the Athena PGG farm supply store was preparing to close its doors. It was purchased this week by the Athena Mainstreet Association.

# ATHENA: PGG building closed in 2014

Continued from 1A

of community meetings to collect input on the building's future use and raise awareness about the impending renovation.

The association will have to embark on a new fundraising campaign to restore the building.

"It's going to be really, really expensive," Vorhauer-Flatt said.

The group wants to restore the building's façade to bring it closer to how it looked originally.

Additionally, the interior of the building needs to be cleaned up after a problem with the furnace caused soot to be blown into the building.

The association is keeping an eye on the Oregon Legislature to see if it will continue to fund an Oregon Parks and Recreation grants program that the nonprofit would be eligible for, since it is a member of the Oregon Main Street program. Under the program, similar restoration projects received

sizable grants in Pendleton, Weston, La Grande, Enterprise and across the rest of the state.

PGG shuttered its retail division in 2014, closing its stores in Pendleton, Hermiston, Athena and Milton-Freewater, before members decided to dissolve the farmers' co-op entirely last year. PGG's flagship store in Pendleton remains vacant.

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## Little Darlings!

This special section will be filled with photos of and messages for adorable little darlings from Umatilla County. Families will want to keep this special keepsake for their child and family for years to come.

Olivia,  
I loved you from the very start.  
You stole my breath, embraced my heart.  
Our life together has just begun.  
You're part of me, my little one.  
*Love, Mom*

## PUBLISHES:

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## DEADLINES:

June 08, 2017

Send in, or drop by, a full color high resolution photo, your child's name and a message to your child today!

Little Darlings

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