

Your rights

PPI mis-selling complaints soar

The Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) is being bombarded with complaints about payment protection insurance (PPI) mis-selling. Around 31,000 people complained in the 2008/09 financial year, and 89% of complaints were upheld in favour of the consumer.

Many of the complaints concerned PPI being paid for with a single premium, which means the cost of the insurance is added to the loan and interest is charged on it.

PPI being sold with a credit card was also a common problem, as cardholders who made only the minimum payments each month found they could never repay the cost of the insurance.

In many cases, customers either felt pressurised into buying PPI or didn't realise they had been sold the insurance.

Despite the massive increase in PPI mis-selling complaints, Which? believes

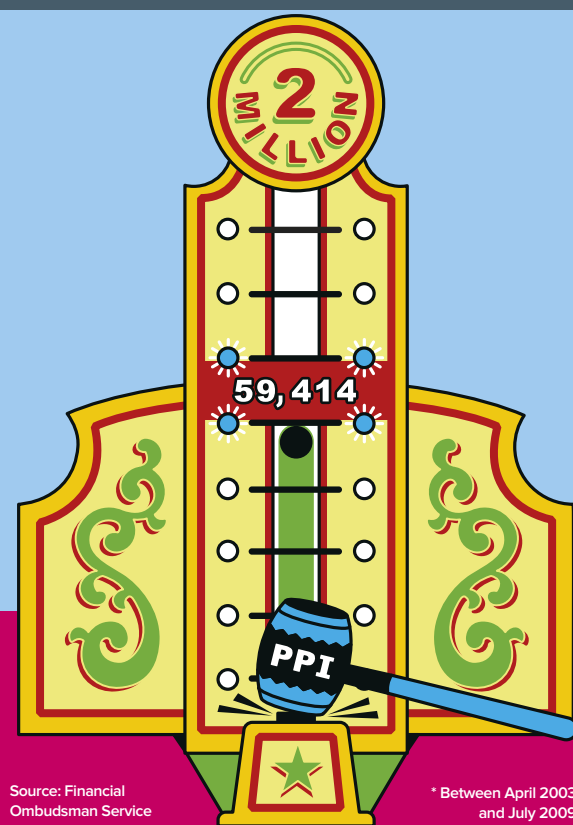
that only a fraction of possible cases have been lodged. The Financial Ombudsman Service only receives complaints that consumers have continued to pursue once they have been rejected by the PPI provider, such as a bank.

Which? personal finance campaigner Lucy Widenka said: 'Our research shows that up to two million people have policies they can never claim on, so the complaints lodged this year are just the tip of the iceberg. Anyone who suspects they have been mis-sold PPI should complain.'

TAKE ACTION

■ If you think you've been mis-sold PPI, contact your provider. For more details on PPI mis-selling and to use our simple online tool to claim, go to www.which.co.uk/ppicclaim.

59,414 PEOPLE HAVE COMPLAINED TO THE FOS ABOUT MIS-SOLD PPI*. OUR RESEARCH SHOWS THAT UP TO 2 MILLION COULD CLAIM



Energy problems rife

According to the latest Which? Switch utilities satisfaction survey, a third of Which? members have had a problem with their energy supplier in the past 12 months. For Npower, the worst performing company, this rises to just under half (45%).

For all suppliers, monthly direct debits being set too high tops the list of common problems, with estimated bills a close second. Just one in six members said they feel loyal to their supplier. See p16 for the full results of the survey.

33%

of consumers have had a problem with their energy supplier

60%

of consumers were not told about price rises before they happened

Websites inspected

Checks on electronics websites in Europe have found that more than half may have broken EU laws on rights to cancel, returning faulty goods, clear price information and contact details.

The Office of Fair Trading and its European equivalents checked

369 websites in 28 countries to see whether they were sticking to the rules designed to protect consumer rights.

The OFT checked 14 sites based in the UK or with UK customers – six will be subject to further investigation.

25%

of European websites are suspected of giving unclear information on total cost

36%

of European websites may have failed to give the correct details on rights

Old electricals pile up

Some consumers are hoarding old electrical goods or chucking them out with their rubbish because they don't know how to recycle them.

In August 2009, we asked 1,007 consumers what they did with old electrical goods – such as irons, video players and hairdryers – and found that only half knew they could recycle them.

73% said they still had old electrical products at home that were broken or no longer used.

Recycle Now estimates that if every home recycled one small electrical item, more than 24,500 tonnes of unwanted products could be turned into new goods.

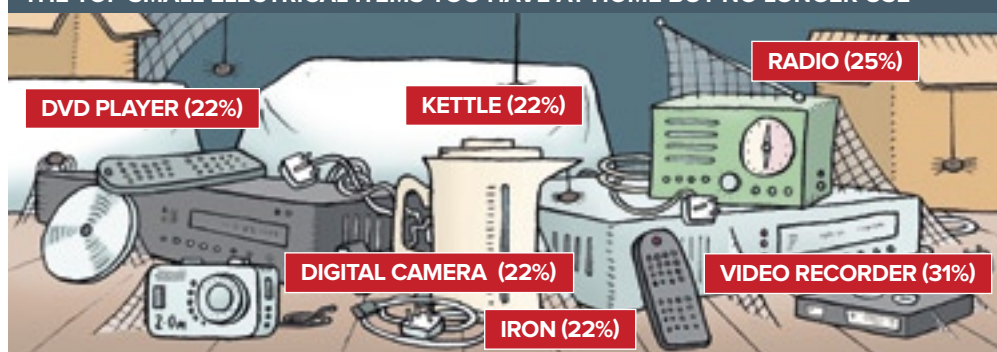
TAKE ACTION!

- Get full survey results and advice on recycling electrical goods at www.which.co.uk/veen.
- Find out where to recycle electrical goods in your area at www.recyclenow.com.

25%
of people threw a small electrical item away in the last two years with the rest of their rubbish

53%
agree that it's easier to throw away small electrical items than it is to recycle them

THE TOP SMALL ELECTRICAL ITEMS YOU HAVE AT HOME BUT NO LONGER USE



Good things should come in small packages

Which? members have been sending in their experiences – and pictures – of retailers and manufacturers going overboard on cardboard, paper and plastic packaging.

Companies selling

medication, software and printer cartridges were among those highlighted as serial overpackaging offenders, while these photos reveal some questionable packaging choices from online retailers. We'll be putting your findings to the companies involved.

LEFT: Phil Hobbs says Screwfix.com told him this was the smallest box it had to deliver a padlock



ABOVE: Alan Thwaite tipped us off about the packaging used by Dabs.com to deliver a 3x2cm memory card

In brief

BANKS CLIMB-DOWN

■ RBS and NatWest have reduced unauthorised overdraft charges. Which? chief executive Peter Vicary-Smith says: 'This is a victory for consumer pressure. But if RBS and NatWest truly want to please their customers, they should admit defeat in the bank charges test case and repay the millions of pounds Which? believes they've been unfairly taking from current account holders for years.'



ISA LIMITS FOR THE OVER 50s

■ If you're aged 50 or over, the maximum amount you can invest in an Isa goes up this month, from £7,200 to £10,200. £5,100 of this can be in a cash Isa (up from £3,600). If you have an Isa already, you'll have to top it up, rather than open a new one. Some fixed-rate Isa providers, including Nationwide, will pay a different rate on the extra sum. A few providers won't accept new money from fixed-rate customers at all, and some, such as Leeds BS, will accept a top-up on the same terms as an earlier deposit. If in doubt, contact your provider directly.

THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE 2010

■ Members have just a few days left to snap up a half-price copy of *The Good Food Guide 2010*. This edition includes over 1,200 reviews, tips for great-value dining across the UK and £50 of money-off vouchers. For your £8.50 copy (normal price £16.99) plus £2.97 p&p, call **01903 828557** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) and quote GFGN1009. The offer is available only by phone, until 30 September 2009. To obtain a copy after that date, call the same number.

