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Statistics of Civil Cases for Debt

April 2000

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Key figures for the month ended April 2000

Actual estimates

	April 2000	% change between April 1999 and April 2000	% change between February 1999 to April 1999 and February 2000 to April 2000	% change between January 1999 to April 1999 and January 2000 to April 2000
Number of civil summonses for debt	104 537	-13,9	-4,6	-4,1
Number of civil judgements for debt	65 589	-11,0	+8,4	+10,9
Value of civil judgements for debt (R million)	534,7	-10,3	-12,5	-11,9

Seasonally adjusted estimates

	April 2000	% change between March 2000 and April 2000	% change between November 1999 to January 2000 and February 2000 to April 2000
Number of civil summonses for debt	108 664	-18,3	-6,1
Number of civil judgements for debt	70 258	-18,1	-6,7
Value of civil judgements for debt (R million)	573,6	-3,6	+1,6

Key findings for the month ended April 2000

The total number of civil summonses for debt issued lower than a year ago

The total number of civil summonses for debt issued for the three months up to April 2000 decreased by 4,6% (from 406 385 to 387 754) compared with the corresponding period of 1999. Furthermore, the total number of civil summonses for debt recorded for the three months up to April 2000, after seasonal adjustment, decreased by 6,1% compared with the previous three months.

The major contributors to the decrease of 4,6% in civil summonses for debt issued were civil summonses issued in respect of promissory notes, bills, RD cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt (-2,2 percentage points), money lent (-1,4 percentage points) and "other services" (-0,9 of a percentage point).

The total number of civil judgements for debt recorded higher than a year ago

The total number of civil judgements for debt recorded for the three months up to April 2000 increased by 8,4% (from 223 874 to 242 675) compared with the corresponding period of 1999. However, the total number of civil judgements for debt recorded for the three months up to April 2000, after seasonal adjustment, is 6,7% lower than the previous three months.

The major contributors to the increase of 8,4% in civil judgements for debt recorded were civil judgements recorded in respect of "other services" (+4,3 percentage points), promissory notes, bills, RD cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt (+3,2 percentage points), money lent (+0,9 of a percentage point).

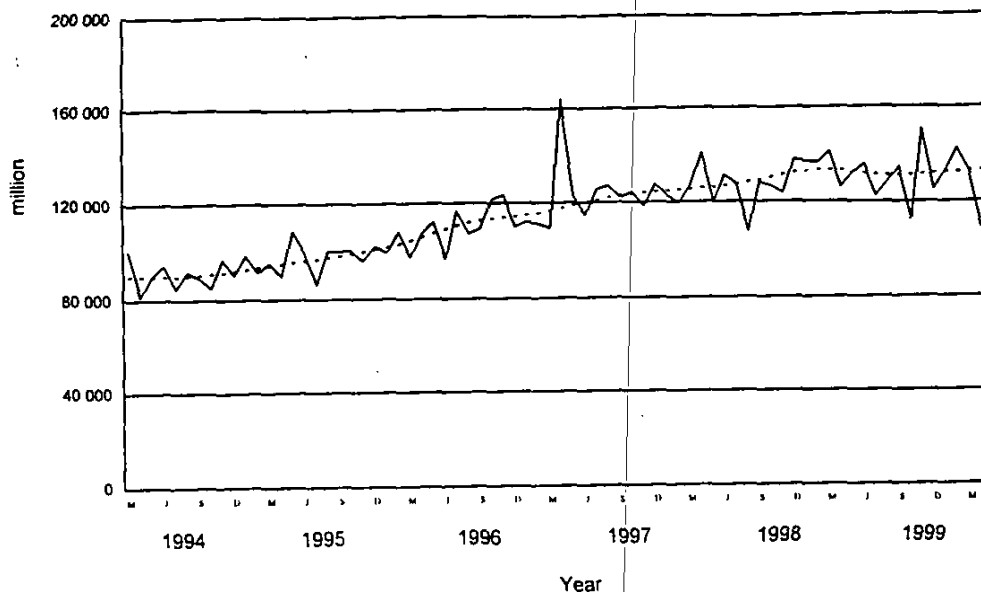
The total value of civil judgements for debt recorded lower than a year ago

The total value of civil judgements for debt recorded for the three months up to April 2000 decreased by 12,5% (from R200,9 to R175,8) compared with the corresponding period of 1999. However, the total value of civil judgements for debt recorded for the three months up to April 2000, after seasonal adjustment, reflected an increase of 1,6% compared with the previous three months.

The major contributors to the decrease of 12,5% in the value of civil judgements for debt recorded were civil judgements recorded in respect of money lent (-8,9 percentage points).

During April 2000, 65 590 civil judgements for debt were issued amounting to R534,7 million. The largest contributors to the R534,7 million were civil judgements relating to money lent (39,3% or R210,2 million), and goods sold on open account (20,5% or R109,8 million).

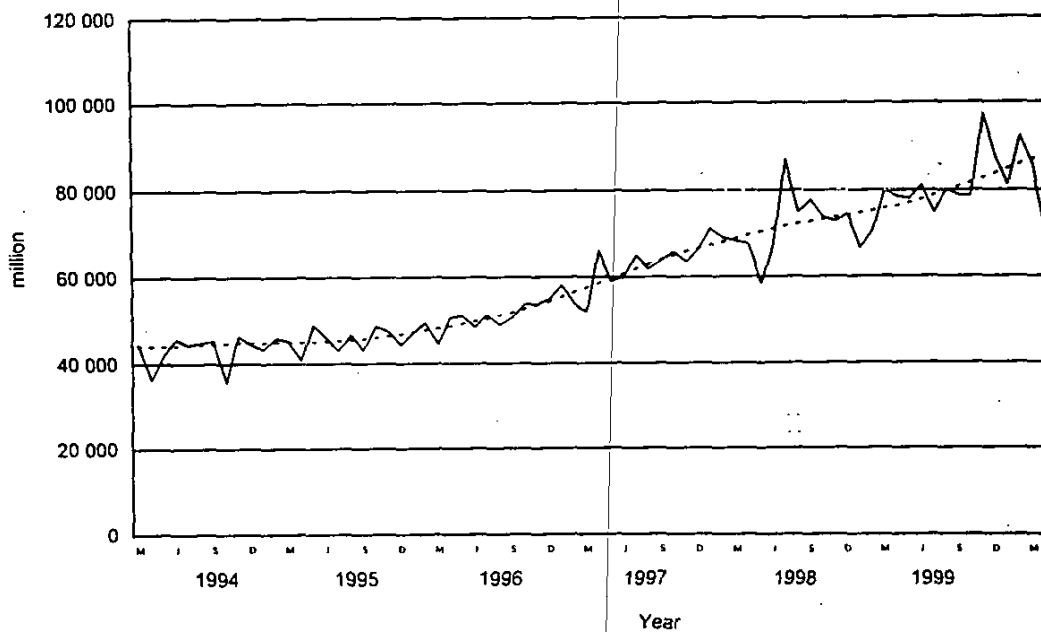
Figure 1 - Civil summonses for debt



Source : Stats SA

— Seasonally adjusted — Trend

Figure 2 - Civil judgements for debt



Source : Stats SA

— Seasonally adjusted — Trend

pp *[Signature]*
 Dr F M Orkin
 Head: Statistics South Africa

Notes

Forthcoming issues

Issue

Expected release date

May 2000

27 July 2000

Purpose of the survey

The Survey of Civil Cases for Debt covers a sample of magistrates' offices in South Africa excluding the former Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC states). This survey collects information regarding civil cases recorded, civil summonses issued, civil judgements recorded in order to provide users with information on the extent of unpaid debt in South Africa. The results of the survey are used by the private and public sectors as an indicator of economic performance.

Contents

	Page
Editorial	
Notes	4
Tables	
Table 1 Number of civil cases recorded and summonses for debt issued according to business enterprises and private persons	6
Table 2 Number of civil cases recorded according to selected magistrates offices	7
Table 3 Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons	8
Table 4 Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons	9
Table 5 Number of small claims courts, litigants referred, summonses issued and hearings: 1990 to 1999 ...	10
Additional information	
Explanatory notes	11
Technical notes	12
Glossary	13
For more information	14

Table 2 - The number of civil cases recorded in selected magistrates offices

Year or month	Cape Peninsula	Port Elizabeth	East-London	Kimberley	Pietermaritzburg	Durban	Johannesburg	East Rand	West Rand	Pretoria	Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark	Bloemfontein
1998	181 024	143 677	27 688	7 915	29 362	110 846	135 470	86 872	47 613	113 826	40 305	22 209
1999	183 828	134 728	39 462	15 786	33 568	118 178	127 479	88 827	46 564	153 977	54 911	29 040
1999 - J	12 520	14 821	4 475	774	2 372	7 524	6 389	5 737	2 312	8 543	4 197	1 338
F	16 758	7 212	1 889	1 266	2 840	9 869	20 995	6 772	4 753	10 529	5 099	2 566
M	17 963	7 700	5 594	1 470	2 791	13 314	13 003	7 606	3 608	14 386	4 282	3 298
A	14 598	11 130	3 018	870	2 692	9 251	9 928	7 216	2 713	8 187	3 516	2 160
M	19 003	15 590	1 753	1 899	3 535	9 182	8 993	7 297	3 758	10 494	4 797	3 305
J	19 674	16 411	4 782	1 044	2 947	9 158	11 020	8 377	3 862	10 513	6 478	2 694
J	16 015	11 566	1 626	1 841	3 054	9 218	10 123	8 409	4 876	10 215	7 121	2 127
A	15 112	11 085	3 892	1 328	2 739	10 273	8 433	8 155	5 221	10 248	5 695	1 711
S	14 367	9 193	4 618	653	2 125	10 730	10 404	8 882	4 026	11 747	3 620	2 402
O	12 648	8 700	2 915	1 706	2 631	11 390	10 994	6 937	4 049	13 102	2 119	2 958
N	14 376	16 092	3 529	1 900	3 298	11 126	10 171	7 248	4 107	34 532	3 588	2 731
D	10 794	5 228	1 371	1 035	2 544	7 143	7 026	6 191	3 279	11 481	4 399	1 750
2000 - J	10 668	11 056	5 408	1 161	2 093	7 620	9 349	7 528	3 221	8 083	4 678	2 417
F	18 081	10 629	3 529	1 840	3 453	12 037	9 665	6 721	3 844	18 499	5 302	3 361
M	21 376	9 636	5 075	1 957	3 244	9 826	12 368	7 719	4 694	10 326	4 610	3 246
A	18 080	4 931	2 405	1 221	2 453	8 514	7 207	6 803	3 206	8 614	2 581	1 230

Table 3 - Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons

Item	Business enterprises and private persons				Private persons			
	1999	1999	2000	2000	1999	1999	2000	2000
	Apr.	Mar.	Apr.	Mar.	Apr.	Mar.	Apr.	Mar.
1. Judgements								
1.1 Goods sold								
1.1.1 Open account	154 385	12 527	13 832	11 144	141 197	11 452	12 975	10 365
1.1.1.3 Instalment sale transactions	19 410	1 576	1 994	1 240	17 842	1 441	1 870	1 155
1.2 Services								
1.2.1 Professional	99 284	7 916	9 603	6 521	95 548	7 558	9 375	6 278
1.2.2 Other	172 270	14 212	18 309	13 144	162 618	13 273	17 570	12 521
1.3 Rent	34 234	2 560	3 420	2 991	27 489	1 975	2 981	2 341
1.4 Money lent	237 531	19 351	21 140	16 718	233 668	19 040	20 728	15 807
1.5 Promissory notes, bills; R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	74 310	4 771	8 694	6 218	69 580	4 306	8 290	5 884
1.6 Other	161 826	10 759	12 739	7 614	151 915	10 247	11 915	7 175
1.7 Total	953 250	73 672	89 731	65 589	899 859	69 292	85 705	61 526
1.7.1 Actual figures		78 601	85 754	70 258		75 007	82 871	66 920
1.7.2 Seasonally adjusted								

Table 4 - Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons

Item	Business enterprises and private persons				Private persons			
	1999	1999	2000	2000	1999	1999	2000	2000
	Apr.	Mar.	Apr.	Mar.	Apr.	Mar.	Apr.	Mar.
1. Judgements								
1.1 Goods sold								
1.1.1 Open account	682 500	48 958	64 545	109 803	470 242	34 894	52 111	97 548
1.1.1.2 Instalment sale transactions	410 259	30 853	37 153	31 211	340 774	28 126	33 518	27 622
1.2 Services								
1.2.1 Professional	203 834	15 381	15 943	10 529	179 121	13 666	14 604	9 364
1.2.2 Other	529 253	48 068	56 006	38 988	446 695	41 508	46 954	32 941
1.3 Rent	256 378	19 590	21 668	21 148	185 702	14 637	16 072	14 930
1.4 Money lent	3 070 082	257 614	226 987	210 199	2 842 060	243 677	207 065	178 769
1.5 Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	643 181	46 038	87 557	34 841	569 021	40 546	81 162	28 474
1.6 Other	1 993 275	129 594	130 499	77 945	1 436 202	109 333	101 352	63 423
1.7 Total	7 788 763	596 096	640 359	534 664	6 469 817	526 387	552 838	453 071

Table 5 - Number of small claims courts, litigants referred, summonses issued and hearings: 1990 to 1999

Year	Small claims courts	Litigants referred	Summonses issued	Hearings
1990	92	16 474	16 551	15 540
1991	103	16 857	19 520	17 814
1992	106	18 906	24 942	23 421
1993	109	19 502	24 929	23 953
1994	111	20 101	25 112	25 356
1995	113	20 154	24 905	25 746
1996	120	21 230	27 463	27 690
1997	115	13 423	25 417	26 622
1998	121	22 546	28 622	27 672
1999	127	34 897	30 592	30 651

Source: Department of Justice

Additional information

Explanatory Notes

Introduction

- 1 Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) conducts a monthly sample survey of civil cases recorded and civil summonses for debt issued in South Africa. This information is obtained from selected magistrates' offices.
- 2 This statistical release reflects the results of civil cases recorded and summonses issued against business enterprises and private persons in a sample of selected magistrates' offices.
- 3 Except for cases recorded, all other information relates to debt cases only, therefore claims for damages, ejection orders and other non-debt cases are excluded.

Scope of the survey

- 4 This survey covers:
 - Number of civil cases recorded.
 - Number of civil summonses for debt issued.
 - Number of civil judgements for debt.
 - Value of civil judgements for debt.
- 5 Small claims courts serve as a forum for the adjudication of money claims against individuals or business enterprises. Only the general public may use the small claims courts and not business enterprises.
- 6 The following actions are excluded from the jurisdiction of small claims courts -
 - claims exceeding R3 000 in value;
 - claims against the state;
 - claims based on cession or the transfer of rights;
 - claims for damages in respect of defamation, malicious prosecution, wrongful imprisonment, wrongful arrest, seduction and breach of promise to marry;
 - claims for the dissolution of a marriage;
 - claims concerning the validity of a will;
 - claims concerning the status of a person in respect of his mental capacity; and
 - claims in which the performance in accordance with a contract is sought, without an alternative claim for payment of damages, except in the case of a claim for rendering an account or transferring movable or immovable property not exceeding R3 000 in value.

Comparability

- 7 The information in respect of magistrates' courts shown in this statistical release refers to debt cases only and is therefore not strictly comparable with the information shown for the small claims courts.
- 8 The jurisdiction limit for civil cases handled by magistrates' offices (R20 000 for liquid assets and R50 000 for non-liquid assets) was increased to R100 000 as from 1 May 1995. A comparison with the period prior to May 1995 must thus be handled with circumspection.

- Statistical unit** 9 The statistical unit for collection of information is a magistrates' office. Magistrates' offices include the small claims courts.
- Survey methodology and design** 10 The largest magistrates' offices in South Africa which account for approximately 95% of all the civil cases in South Africa are included in the monthly sample survey of civil cases recorded and civil summonses for debt issued. The smallest magistrates' offices are not used in the sample. A sample of 152 magistrates offices is drawn using only the number of civil cases recorded as the measure of size.
- 11 The survey is conducted by mail each month from 152 magistrates' offices.
- Seasonal adjustment** 12 Seasonally adjusted estimates of all items are generated each month, using the X-11 Seasonal Adjustment Program developed by US Bureau of the Census Economic Research and Analyses Division, 1968. Seasonal adjustment is a means of removing the estimated effects of normal seasonal variation from the series so that the effects of other influences on the series can be more clearly recognised. Seasonal adjustment does not aim to remove irregular or non-seasonal influences which may be present in any particular month. Influences that are volatile or unsystematic can still make it difficult to interpret the movement of the series even after adjustment for seasonal variations. This means the month-to-month movements of seasonally adjusted estimates may not be reliable indicators of trend behaviour.
- Trend cycle** 13 The trend is the long-term pattern or movement of a time series. The X-11 Seasonal Adjustment Program is used for smoothing seasonally adjusted estimates.
- Publications** 14 Users may also wish to refer to the following publications:
- Bulletin of Statistics issued quarterly.
 - SA Statistics issued annually.
- Unpublished statistics** 15 In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published. The statistics can be made available in one or more of the following ways: computer printout, CD or diskette. Generally a charge is made for providing unpublished statistics.
- Symbols and abbreviations** 16 R/D Refer to Drawer
CD Compact Disc
Stats SA Statistics South Africa
TBVC Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei.
- Technical notes**
- Response rates** The response rate for April was 100%.

Glossary

Acknowledgement of debt	Acknowledgement of debt is a statement by a person/debtor in which he admits that he owes money to an individual or a company or a bank.
Bills	Bills are statements of charges for services rendered or for amounts owed.
Civil judgements	Civil judgements are decisions taken in a civil matter or a dispute between two people or parties.
Civil summonses	Civil summonses are notices to appear before the court of law where a dispute between two parties or people has to be heard, i.e not for a criminal offence.
Consent judgements	Consent judgements refer to where a debtor agrees to subject himself/herself to obey or accept a judgement of a court against him for a debt he owes without defending the action. This usually happens before the debtor signs a binding contract, e.g. a loan agreement.
Default judgements	Default judgements refer to where the court gives a judgement or a ruling against the defendant who is not present in court and was previously given a notice that was ignored, i.e. a judgement was given against a party or an individual while not present in court.
Hearings	Hearings are proceedings in a court where the court listens or hears the submission or presentation in support of their cases where the two parties submitted the evidence in support of their cases.
Instalment sale transactions	Instalment sale transactions relates to where a person buys goods on credit and pays for them in instalments, e.g. every week or month, until he/she settles the debt.
Litigants	Litigants are people who take part in court proceedings, usually against each other, like a debtor and a creditor.
Litigants referred	Litigants referred relates to a case where the parties have been referred to another instance/court.
Open account transaction	Open account transactions are revolving credit, i.e. where an account does not have a final payment date and a person can always take more goods and keep paying as long as he has credit.
Plaintiff	Plaintiff is a person/party in a civil case who asks the court for judgement against another person.
Promissory note	Promissory notes are written notes, signed by one person, in which he promises to pay money to another person, or to the bearer of such a note on a specific date or on demand.
Reference month	Reference month refers to one calendar month.
Refer to drawer (RD) cheques	RD Cheques refer to dishonoured cheques. The drawer is the owner of the cheque. When a person issues a cheque and there is no money in the cheque account, the bank will refuse to pay the bearer. The cheque will be referred back to the drawer.
Small claims courts	Small claims courts refer to courts where claims of R3 000 or less are heard. The presiding officer in these courts is called the commissioner. Litigants in the small claims courts do not have to make use of legal representatives.

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