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# Statistical release

## P0041

# Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

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### **Enquiries**

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User Information Services  
Tel: (012) 310 8600

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## Results for April 2012

**Table A – Key figures for the month of April 2012**

Actual estimates	April 2012	% change between April 2011 and April 2012	% change between February to April 2011 and February to April 2012
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	73 192	-9,2	-8,1
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	29 935	-20,5	-11,3
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	311,5	-18,2	-19,7

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

**An 8,1% decrease in the total number of civil summonses issued for debt was recorded for the three months ended April 2012 compared with the three months ended April 2011. A 9,2% year-on-year decrease was recorded in April 2012 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).**

The major categories that contributed to the 8,1% decrease were:

- promissory notes and other acknowledgements of debt (contributing -6,5 percentage points);
- other debts (contributing -3,0 percentage points); and
- professional services (contributing -1,3 percentage points).

The other services category partially counteracted the 8,1% decrease and recorded a positive contribution of 4,1 percentage points (see Table 6).

### The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

**The three months ended April 2012 reflected an 11,3% decrease in the total number of civil judgements recorded for debt compared with the three months ended April 2011. A year-on-year decrease of 20,5% was recorded in April 2012 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).**

The categories behind the 11,3% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -3,5 percentage points);
- other debts (contributing -3,3 percentage points);
- services (contributing -2,3 percentage points); and
- promissory notes and other acknowledgements of debt (contributing -1,8 percentage points) (see Table 6).

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

**There was a 19,7% decrease in the total value of civil judgements recorded for debt for the three months ended April 2012 compared with the same period of the previous year. A year-on-year decrease of 18,2% was recorded in April 2012 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).**

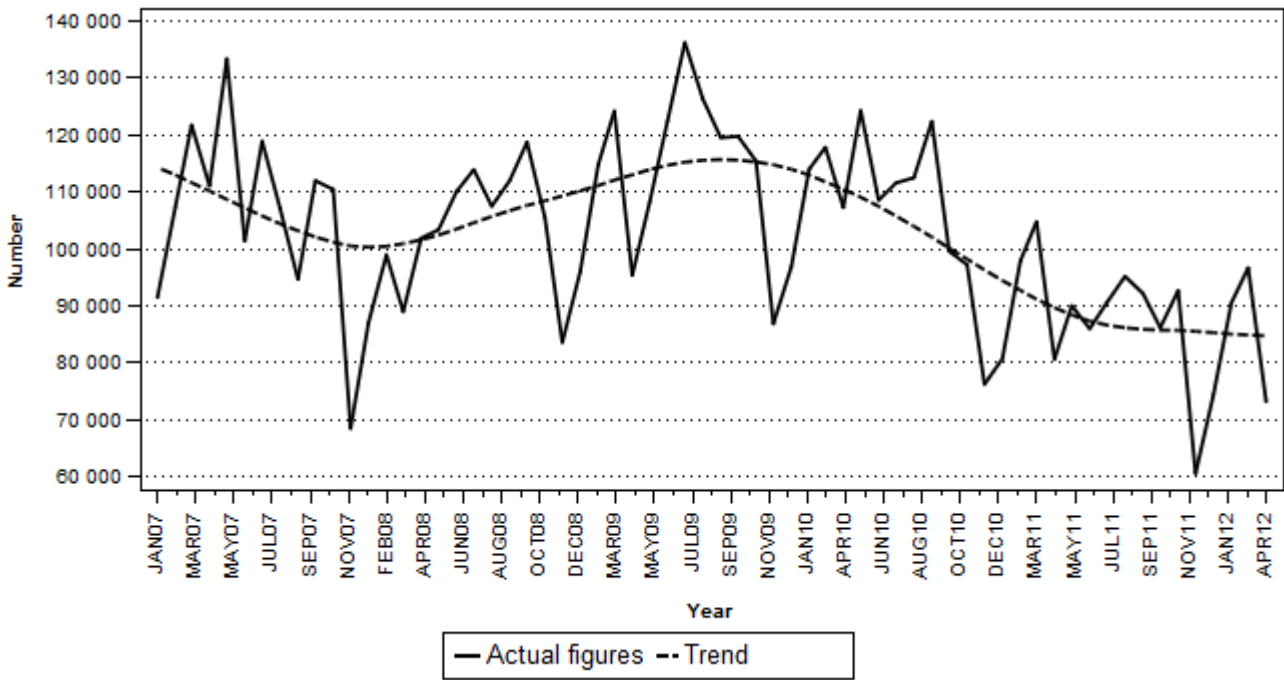
The major contributors to the 19,7% decrease were:

- money lent (contributing -8,0 percentage points);
- other debts (contributing -5,2 percentage points);
- other services (contributing -3,1 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -3,0 percentage points) (see Table 6).

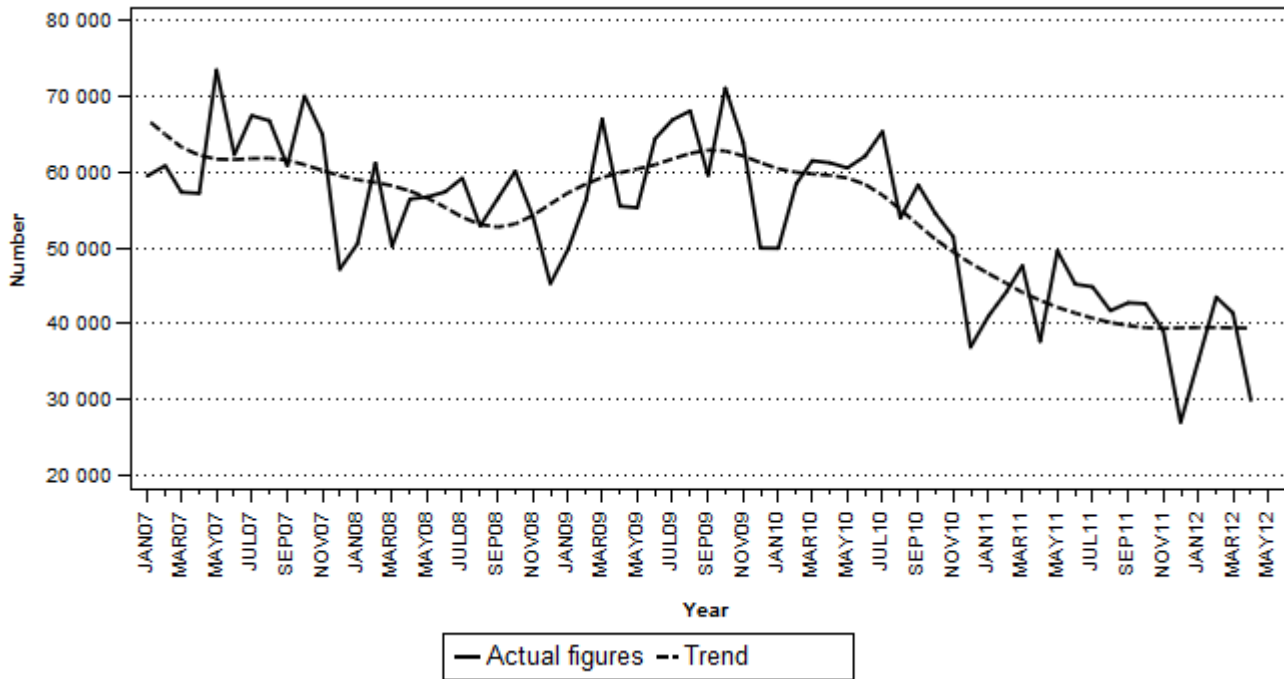
During April 2012, 29 935 civil judgements for debt amounting to R311,5 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the R311,5 million were:

- money lent (R82,1 million or 26,4%);
- other debts (R65,1 million or 20,9%);
- services (R54,0 million or 17,3%); and
- goods sold (R50,8 million or 16,3%) (see Tables 3 and 4).

**Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt**



**Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt**



**PJ Lehohla  
Statistician-General**

**Tables**

**Table 1 – Number of civil cases recorded and summonses issued for debt according to business enterprises and private persons**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		1/ 2011	1/ April 2011	1/ March 2012	1/ April 2012	1/ 2011	1/ April 2011	1/ March 2012	1/ April 2012
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>1 228 074</b>	<b>98 125</b>	<b>101 983</b>	<b>80 596</b>	<b>1 074 543</b>	<b>87 849</b>	<b>91 795</b>	<b>71 309</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		105 832	91 683	86 781		93 888	81 251	76 184
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	82 722	5 831	6 122	5 674	63 885	4 409	4 509	4 227
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	24 715	1 467	1 950	1 568	20 451	1 268	1 684	1 384
	Services - Professional	117 707	8 825	9 567	7 693	102 139	7 664	8 649	6 927
	Services - Other	197 580	14 643	24 439	13 921	176 093	13 032	22 964	12 689
	Rent	46 160	3 415	3 606	3 041	36 613	2 685	2 955	2 364
	Money lent	232 578	17 218	23 634	21 348	214 837	15 889	22 645	20 466
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	171 991	15 749	11 404	9 668	151 980	14 690	9 638	8 478
	Other debts	183 793	13 462	15 945	10 279	156 535	11 706	14 641	9 033
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>1 057 246</b>	<b>80 610</b>	<b>96 667</b>	<b>73 192</b>	<b>922 533</b>	<b>71 343</b>	<b>87 685</b>	<b>65 568</b>
<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		88 449	86 750	80 758		77 862	77 807	71 880	

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**Table 2 – Number of civil cases recorded according to selected magistrates' offices**

Year and Month		Cape Peninsula	Port Elizabeth	East London	Kimberley	Pietermaritzburg	Durban	Johannesburg	East Rand	West Rand	Pretoria	Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark and Meyerton	Bloemfontein
<b>2010</b>	<b>Year Total</b>	<b>118 066</b>	<b>37 136</b>	<b>15 823</b>	<b>5 246</b>	<b>22 836</b>	<b>90 782</b>	<b>256 134</b>	<b>54 366</b>	<b>33 988</b>	<b>138 594</b>	<b>17 342</b>	<b>64 259</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>Year Total</b>	<b>79 463</b>	<b>60 025</b>	<b>11 782</b>	<b>4 842</b>	<b>16 605</b>	<b>64 927</b>	<b>222 519</b>	<b>47 918</b>	<b>37 724</b>	<b>94 991</b>	<b>14 597</b>	<b>41 547</b>
	January	4 253	2 019	876	293	1 493	6 512	22 549	3 222	2 516	8 018	934	3 585
	February	5 379	3 184	1 197	344	1 805	6 343	28 740	4 472	3 473	9 927	1 563	2 946
	March	6 907	4 548	1 301	419	826	6 034	24 728	4 818	2 831	8 569	1 405	4 354
	April	5 317	3 823	1 423	290	1 581	6 031	19 903	3 398	2 711	7 212	1 016	4 428
	May	5 999	6 607	1 430	351	1 469	6 728	20 295	3 556	2 599	9 172	1 098	4 520
	June	7 480	5 207	975	374	1 325	5 738	17 516	3 829	2 459	8 132	1 368	3 855
	July	7 879	4 502	1 309	549	2 056	6 124	17 611	3 913	3 476	7 393	1 765	3 492
	August	7 482	6 460	1 137	680	1 268	4 909	15 940	4 581	3 251	6 977	1 448	3 982
	September	7 689	5 978	610	578	1 740	4 341	19 759	4 414	3 125	7 876	1 070	3 364
	October	6 220	6 621	588	244	1 141	3 976	12 013	5 438	3 187	8 655	924	2 893
1/ November	6 482	7 447	627	461	1 171	4 410	13 803	3 987	4 811	8 658	1 435	2 488	
1/ December	8 376	3 629	309	259	730	3 781	9 662	2 290	3 285	4 402	571	1 640	
<b>1/ 2012</b>	January	6 626	4 188	264	321	1 251	3 717	9 405	3 477	4 217	7 230	838	1 590
	February	6 421	6 720	345	710	1 269	4 068	12 143	4 107	6 091	7 905	987	2 259
	March	6 674	11 178	160	423	2 006	3 799	10 661	5 089	6 182	7 524	1 115	2 006
	April	6 630	4 986	135	350	1 591	3 374	9 428	3 524	3 944	7 098	1 083	2 194

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		1/ 2011	1/ April 2011	1/ March 2012	1/ April 2012	1/ 2011	1/ April 2011	1/ March 2012	1/ April 2012
<b>Number of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	56 599	3 572	3 915	3 081	48 208	2 913	3 282	2 434
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	10 636	698	752	668	8 673	540	639	544
	Services - Professional	68 314	5 098	5 302	4 623	63 158	4 758	4 668	4 068
	Services - Other	57 871	4 020	4 733	4 010	50 115	3 358	4 081	3 431
	Rent	25 693	2 116	2 123	2 124	20 599	1 666	1 663	1 705
	Money lent	163 337	12 754	16 189	9 038	158 119	12 244	15 767	8 582
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	44 550	3 515	2 833	1 853	38 545	2 736	2 445	1 437
	Other debts	76 406	5 883	5 565	4 538	67 988	5 229	5 131	4 085
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>503 406</b>	<b>37 656</b>	<b>41 412</b>	<b>29 935</b>	<b>455 405</b>	<b>33 444</b>	<b>37 676</b>	<b>26 286</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		41 110	39 122	32 885		36 266	36 399	28 712

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**Table 4 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons (R'000)**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		1/ 2011	1/ April 2011	1/ March 2012	1/ April 2012	1/ 2011	1/ April 2011	1/ March 2012	1/ April 2012
<b>Value of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	522 678	35 631	39 647	38 349	333 611	23 552	20 593	17 994
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	284 150	28 157	13 319	12 490	230 821	25 113	11 253	10 691
	Services - Professional	308 692	20 980	26 705	21 369	264 557	17 831	21 407	16 960
	Services - Other	592 032	41 410	38 685	32 653	444 349	31 942	30 608	25 480
	Rent	374 423	23 591	29 659	26 836	223 786	13 507	17 055	15 438
	Money lent	1 525 895	128 351	104 851	82 099	1 422 619	112 918	95 971	75 395
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	536 585	42 557	38 266	32 562	436 042	31 775	29 173	22 167
	Other debts	1 016 435	60 306	69 867	65 148	728 727	47 093	56 990	51 824
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>5 160 890</b>	<b>380 983</b>	<b>360 999</b>	<b>311 506</b>	<b>4 084 512</b>	<b>303 731</b>	<b>283 050</b>	<b>235 949</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		420 822	334 540	347 955		335 268	266 701	263 620

1/ Preliminary.

**Table 5 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended April 2012 and the three months ended April 2011**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates February to April 2011	Actual estimates February to April 2012	% change between February to April 2011 and February to April 2012	Difference between February to April 2011 and February to April 2012
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	283 248	260 378	-8,1	-22 870
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	129 495	114 848	-11,3	-14 647
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 341,0	1 076,5	-19,7	-264,5

**Table 6 – Contribution of the different kinds of debts to the change in total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended April 2012 and the three months ended April 2011 1/**

Item	Contribution (% points) to the total % change		
	Civil summonses for debt	Number of civil judgements	Value of civil judgements
Goods sold - Open account	-0,6	-0,2	-0,2
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,0	-0,2	-2,8
Services - Professional	-1,3	-1,2	0,4
Services - Other	4,1	-1,1	-3,1
Rent	-0,1	0,1	0,0
Money lent	-0,6	-3,5	-8,0
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-6,5	-1,8	-0,9
Other debts	-3,0	-3,3	-5,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>-8,1</b>	<b>-11,3</b>	<b>-19,7</b>

1/ The contribution (percentage points) is calculated by multiplying the three-monthly percentage change of each kind of debt with the percentage contribution to the total number or value of cases recorded during February to April 2011, divided by 100. Due to rounding off, contributions might not add up to the total.

**Table 7 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the current month and the corresponding month of the previous year**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates April 2011	Actual estimates April 2012	% change between April 2011 and April 2012	Difference between April 2011 and April 2012
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	80 610	73 192	-9,2	-7 418
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	37 656	29 935	-20,5	-7 721
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	381,0	311,5	-18,2	-69,5



## Explanatory notes

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>	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.
	<b>2</b>	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.
<b>Purpose of the survey</b>	<b>3</b>	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 and 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.
<b>Scope of the survey</b>	<b>4</b>	This survey covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of civil cases recorded;</li> <li>• number of civil summonses issued for debt;</li> <li>• number of civil judgements recorded for debt; and</li> <li>• value of civil judgements recorded for debt.</li> </ul>
<b>Statistical unit</b>	<b>5</b>	The statistical unit for collection of information is a magistrates' office. Magistrates' offices include the small claims courts.  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 survey of civil cases for debt. The smallest magistrates' offices are not used in the sample. A sample of 151 magistrates' offices was drawn using the number of civil cases recorded as measure of size.
<b>Survey methodology and design</b>	<b>6</b>	The survey is conducted by mail, fax and telephone each month from 151 magistrates' offices.
<b>Collection rate</b>	<b>7</b>	The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for April 2012 was 88,1%. Improved collection rate for March 2012 was 92,1%.
<b>Trend cycle</b>	<b>8</b>	Smoothed seasonally adjusted and trend estimates are generated using the X-11 Seasonal Adjustment Programme.
<b>Publications</b>	<b>9</b>	Users may also wish to refer to the following publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bulletin of Statistics</i> issued quarterly; and</li> <li>• <i>SA Statistics</i> issued annually.</li> </ul>
<b>Unpublished statistics</b>	<b>10</b>	In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published. The statistics can be made available as computer printouts or electronic versions. Generally a charge is made for providing unpublished statistics.
<b>Symbols and abbreviations</b>	<b>11</b>	R/D        Refer to Drawer Stats SA    Statistics South Africa TBVC        Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei *            Revised figures

## Glossary

<b>Acknowledgement of debt</b>	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.
<b>Bills</b>	Bills are statements of charges for services rendered or for amounts owed.
<b>Civil judgements</b>	Civil judgements are decisions taken in a civil matter or a dispute between two people or parties.
<b>Civil summonses</b>	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.
<b>Consent judgements</b>	Consent judgements refer to where a debtor agrees to subject himself/herself to obey or accept a judgement of a court against him for debt he owes without defending the action. This usually happens before the debtor signs a binding contract, e.g. loan agreement.
<b>Default judgements</b>	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.
<b>Instalment sale transaction</b>	Instalment sale transaction 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.
<b>Litigants</b>	Litigants are people who take part in court proceedings, usually against each other, like a debtor and a creditor.
<b>Litigants referred</b>	Litigants referred relates to a case where the parties have been referred to another instance/court.
<b>Open account transaction</b>	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.
<b>Other services</b>	Other services refers to municipal services (except outstanding assessment rates), plumbers, builders, mechanics, panel-beaters and electricians.
<b>Other debts</b>	Other debts refers to all other kinds of outstanding debts such as salaries and wages, outstanding medical fund debts, outstanding sponsored debts, outstanding class and tuition debt, outstanding income and salaries, tax, outstanding assessment rates, outstanding money in respect of television maintenance contracts and outstanding money in respect of flat levies.
<b>Plaintiff</b>	Plaintiff is a person/party in a civil case who asks the court for judgement against another person.
<b>Professional services</b>	Professional services refer to medical doctors, dentists, advocates, attorneys, auditors, accountants, architects, engineers, hospital services etc.
<b>Promissory note</b>	Promissory note is a written undertaking, signed by a person or party, to pay money to another person or to the bearer of such a note on a specific date or on demand.
<b>Reference month</b>	Reference month refers to one calendar month.
<b>Refer to drawer (R/D) cheques</b>	R/D 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.

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email: [nthabisengt@statssa.gov.za](mailto:nthabisengt@statssa.gov.za) (technical enquiries)  
[info@statssa.gov.za](mailto:info@statssa.gov.za) (user information services)  
[magdaj@statssa.gov.za](mailto:magdaj@statssa.gov.za) (orders/subscription services)

Postal address: Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001

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