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# Statistical release

## P0041

# Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

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### **Enquiries**

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## Results for April 2013

**Table A – Key figures for the month of April 2013**

Actual estimates	April 2013	% change between April 2012 and April 2013	% change between February to April 2012 and February to April 2013
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	72 003	-3,2	-26,4
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	29 629	-1,0	-27,5
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	388,6	24,4	8,8

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

***The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 26,4% in the three months ended April 2013 compared with the three months ended April 2012. A 3,2% decrease was recorded between April 2012 and April 2013 – see Table A and Tables 5 and 7.***

Categories that contributed to the 26,4% decrease were:

- services (contributing -9,4 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -9,2 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing -5,2 percentage points) – see Table 6.

### The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

***The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 27,5% year-on-year in the three months ended April 2013. A 1,0% decrease was recorded in April 2013 compared with April 2012 – see Table A and Tables 5 and 7.***

The categories which influenced the 27,5% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -16,7 percentage points);
- services (contributing -3,6 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -3,4 percentage points) – see Table 6.

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

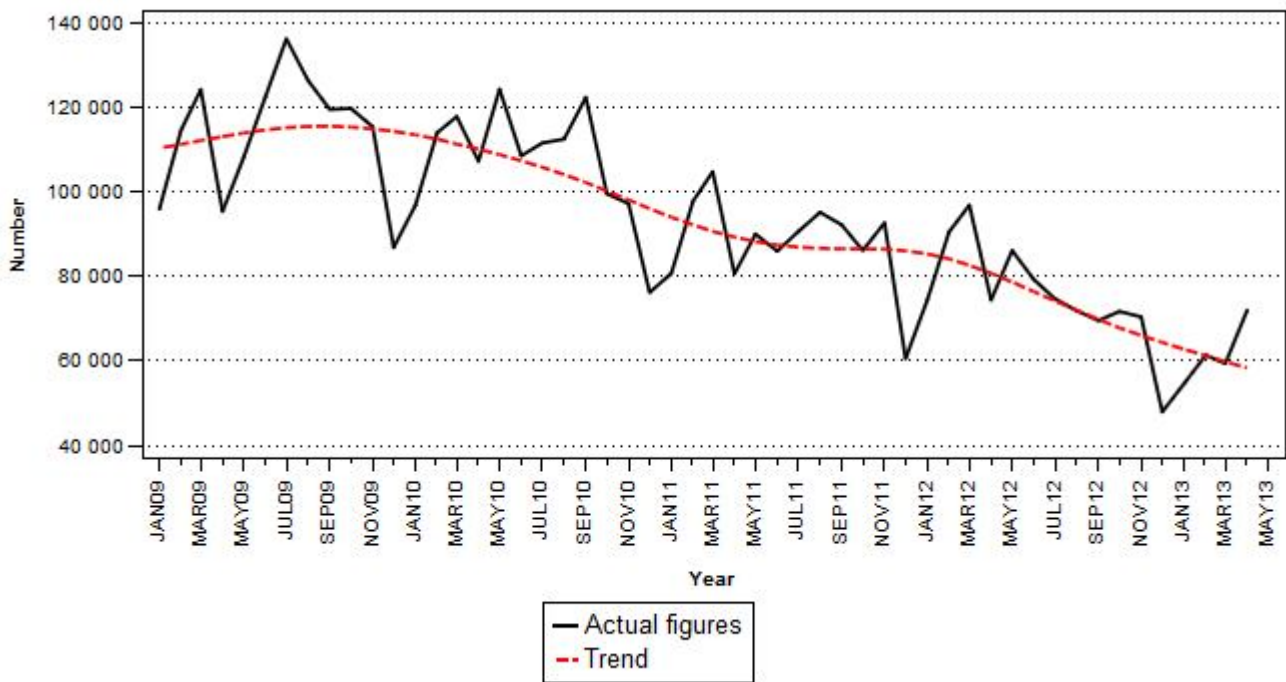
***The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt was 8,8% higher in the three months ended April 2013 compared with the same period of 2012. A positive year-on-year growth of 24,4% was recorded in April 2013 – see Table A and Tables 5 and 7.***

The major contributor to the 8,8% increase was the 'other' debts category (contributing 17,2 percentage points). The increase was partially counteracted by decreases in the money lent category (contributing -3,8 percentage points) and the goods sold category (contributing -3,5 percentage points) – see Table 6.

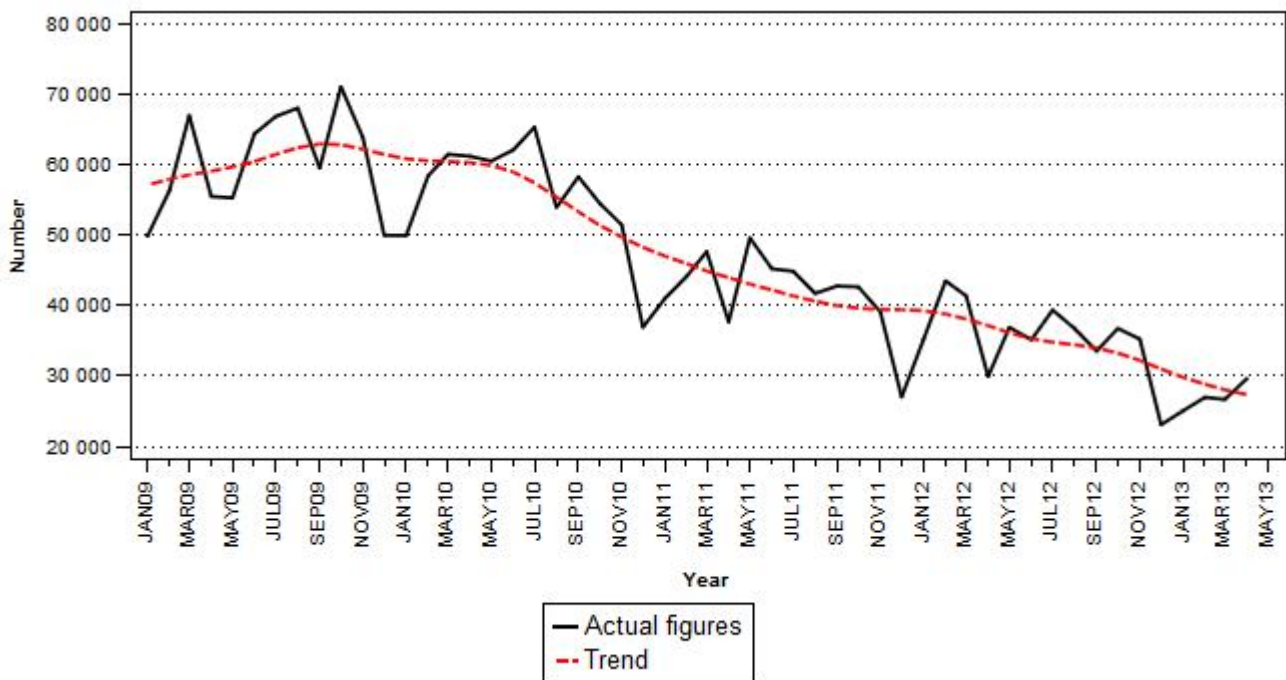
In April 2013, 29 629 civil judgements for debt amounting to R388,6 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R100,9 million or 26,0%);
- services (R94,8 million or 24,4%); and
- 'other' debts (R93,8 million or 24,1%) – 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: Total and private persons**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2012	April 2012	1/ March 2013	1/ April 2013	2012	April 2012	1/ March 2013	1/ April 2013
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>977 066</b>	<b>80 288</b>	<b>65 646</b>	<b>78 010</b>	<b>847 341</b>	<b>71 039</b>	<b>57 141</b>	<b>67 875</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		85 076	57 933	82 439		74 260	49 440	70 668
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	73 272	5 673	5 291	5 790	54 229	4 238	4 067	4 379
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	22 512	1 550	1 929	2 340	18 853	1 369	1 406	1 708
	Services - Professional	104 351	7 728	8 101	9 858	91 458	6 966	7 234	9 002
	Services - Other	161 543	13 952	9 690	11 470	143 468	12 734	8 424	9 891
	Rent	41 859	2 977	3 122	3 803	32 306	2 300	2 558	2 859
	Money lent	223 677	21 076	14 114	17 695	206 727	20 193	13 062	16 729
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	121 720	9 688	8 263	10 273	99 449	8 493	7 260	9 002
	Other debts	158 728	11 754	8 852	10 774	139 386	10 446	8 253	9 765
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>907 662</b>	<b>74 398</b>	<b>59 362</b>	<b>72 003</b>	<b>785 876</b>	<b>66 739</b>	<b>52 264</b>	<b>63 335</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		79 630	51 697	77 138		70 450	44 720	66 908

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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 and Vanderbijlpark	Bloemfontein
<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>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Year Total</b>	<b>72 859</b>	<b>47 774</b>	<b>2 348</b>	<b>7 096</b>	<b>21 344</b>	<b>42 468</b>	<b>131 836</b>	<b>47 547</b>	<b>39 350</b>	<b>92 109</b>	<b>11 895</b>	<b>20 344</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	152	350	1 591	3 374	9 428	3 524	3 944	7 098	1 083	2 194
	May	6 931	4 543	159	537	2 411	3 355	14 658	3 973	2 492	7 892	1 041	1 891
	June	6 655	3 038	125	590	2 048	3 373	10 056	4 548	2 500	9 580	1 079	1 976
	July	5 643	2 626	268	297	2 685	3 332	10 834	4 596	2 144	11 884	911	1 520
	August	6 176	2 522	193	414	2 036	3 427	11 463	3 626	2 342	8 474	1 083	1 908
	September	5 865	1 845	159	649	1 831	3 407	12 486	3 593	2 282	7 439	1 289	1 516
	October	5 343	2 501	197	1 053	1 551	3 642	12 909	4 725	3 018	6 855	603	1 161
	November	5 256	2 663	184	1 150	1 310	3 490	11 312	4 018	2 393	6 770	1 270	1 400
December	4 639	964	142	602	1 355	3 484	6 481	2 271	1 745	3 458	596	923	
<b>2013</b>	January	3 941	1 788	123	209	1 519	2 622	8 551	3 632	1 581	5 478	548	895
	February	4 707	2 359	43	336	1 434	2 798	9 799	4 119	2 167	5 589	1 454	1 224
	1/ March	5 088	2 289	205	260	1 374	4 442	7 800	3 360	1 782	6 092	1 033	1 407
	1/ April	6 817	2 425	105	325	1 675	2 901	10 481	3 689	2 240	6 435	689	1 874

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**Table 3 – Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2012	April 2012	1/ March 2013	1/ April 2013	2012	April 2012	1/ March 2013	1/ April 2013
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	44 082	3 039	2 463	2 629	36 413	2 432	1 958	2 082
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	9 214	689	672	581	7 711	565	552	467
	Services - Professional	59 721	4 617	4 266	4 786	53 796	4 059	3 888	4 360
	Services - Other	53 957	4 029	3 682	4 345	46 716	3 453	3 181	3 713
	Rent	24 403	2 202	1 762	1 761	19 245	1 754	1 446	1 440
	Money lent	133 396	8 936	6 634	7 529	127 428	8 473	6 104	7 124
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	39 428	1 878	2 069	2 702	34 512	1 452	1 809	2 349
	Other debts	62 463	4 525	5 110	5 296	56 788	4 060	4 490	4 847
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>426 664</b>	<b>29 915</b>	<b>26 658</b>	<b>29 629</b>	<b>382 609</b>	<b>26 248</b>	<b>23 428</b>	<b>26 382</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		30 010	25 042	29 648		25 937	22 206	26 015

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**Table 4 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons (R'000)**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2012	April 2012	1/ March 2013	1/ April 2013	2012	April 2012	1/ March 2013	1/ April 2013
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	465 325	33 831	30 971	29 699	256 746	16 404	15 099	14 536
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	174 338	14 246	13 996	11 346	140 403	12 643	12 311	9 433
	Services - Professional	299 848	21 427	19 569	23 055	245 619	16 863	16 017	18 526
	Services - Other	508 675	33 540	38 610	71 715	398 310	26 325	31 895	64 360
	Rent	352 667	27 374	24 572	26 306	212 691	15 941	16 784	19 328
	Money lent	1 290 816	81 188	82 240	100 929	1 191 224	74 861	74 229	90 172
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	443 475	33 160	28 009	31 717	346 698	22 607	22 907	25 402
	Other debts	1 141 752	67 587	156 303	93 835	758 441	52 482	60 267	65 624
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>4 676 896</b>	<b>312 353</b>	<b>394 270</b>	<b>388 602</b>	<b>3 550 132</b>	<b>238 126</b>	<b>249 509</b>	<b>307 381</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		358 855	376 667	451 050		270 724	240 799	353 089

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**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 2013**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates February to April 2012	Actual estimates February to April 2013	% change between February to April 2012 and February to April 2013	Difference between February to April 2012 and February to April 2013
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	261 790	192 697	-26,4	-69 093
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	114 783	83 246	-27,5	-31 537
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 080,1	1 174,7	8,8	94,6

**Table 6 – Contribution of the different kinds of debt 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 2013 1/**

Item	Contribution (% points) to the % change in the total		
	Civil summonses for debt	Number of civil judgements	Value of civil judgements
Goods sold - Open account	-1,0	-3,1	-2,7
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,2	-0,3	-0,8
Services - Professional	-0,2	-1,9	-1,3
Services - Other	-9,2	-1,7	3,7
Rent	0,1	-1,3	-1,0
Money lent	-9,2	-16,7	-3,8
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-2,0	-2,2	-2,6
Other debts	-5,2	-0,3	17,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>-26,4</b>	<b>-27,5</b>	<b>8,8</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 during February to April 2012, 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 2012	Actual estimates April 2013	% change between April 2012 and April 2013	Difference between April 2012 and April 2013
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	74 398	72 003	-3,2	-2 395
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	29 915	29 629	-1,0	-286
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	312,4	388,6	24,4	76,2



## 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, ejectment 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. 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 magistrate's 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 2013 was 90,7%. The improved collection rate for March 2013 was 90,1%.
<b>Trend cycle</b>	<b>8</b>	Smoothed seasonally adjusted and trend estimates are generated using the X-11 Seasonal Adjustment Program developed by the US Bureau of the Census, 1968.
<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 *            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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