

**STATISTICAL RELEASE**  
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**Statistics of civil cases for debt**  
**(Preliminary)**

April 2017

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## Key results for April 2017

**Table A – Key figures for the month of April 2017**

Actual estimates	April 2017	% change between April 2016 and April 2017	% change between February – April 2016 and February – April 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	42 798	-23,1	-7,2
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	17 533	-21,6	-16,4
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	283,6	-10,6	-11,3

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 7,2% in the three months ended April 2017 compared with the three months ended April 2016.

The largest negative contributors to the 7,2% decrease were civil summonses relating to:

- services (contributing -4,4 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -1,9 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -0,4 of a percentage point) – see Tables 4 and 5.

### The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 16,4% in the three months ended April 2017 compared with the three months ended April 2016.

The largest contributions to the 16,4% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing -6,4 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -6,1 percentage points); and
- money lent (contributing -2,2 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 11,3% in the three months ended April 2017 compared with the three months ended April 2016.

The largest negative contributions to the 11,3% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing -9,5 percentage points);
- services (contributing -2,8 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,4 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

In April 2017, 17 533 civil judgements for debt amounting to R283,6 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R96,6 million or 34,1%);
- 'other' debts (R56,7 million or 20,0%); and
- services (R48,3 million or 17,0%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

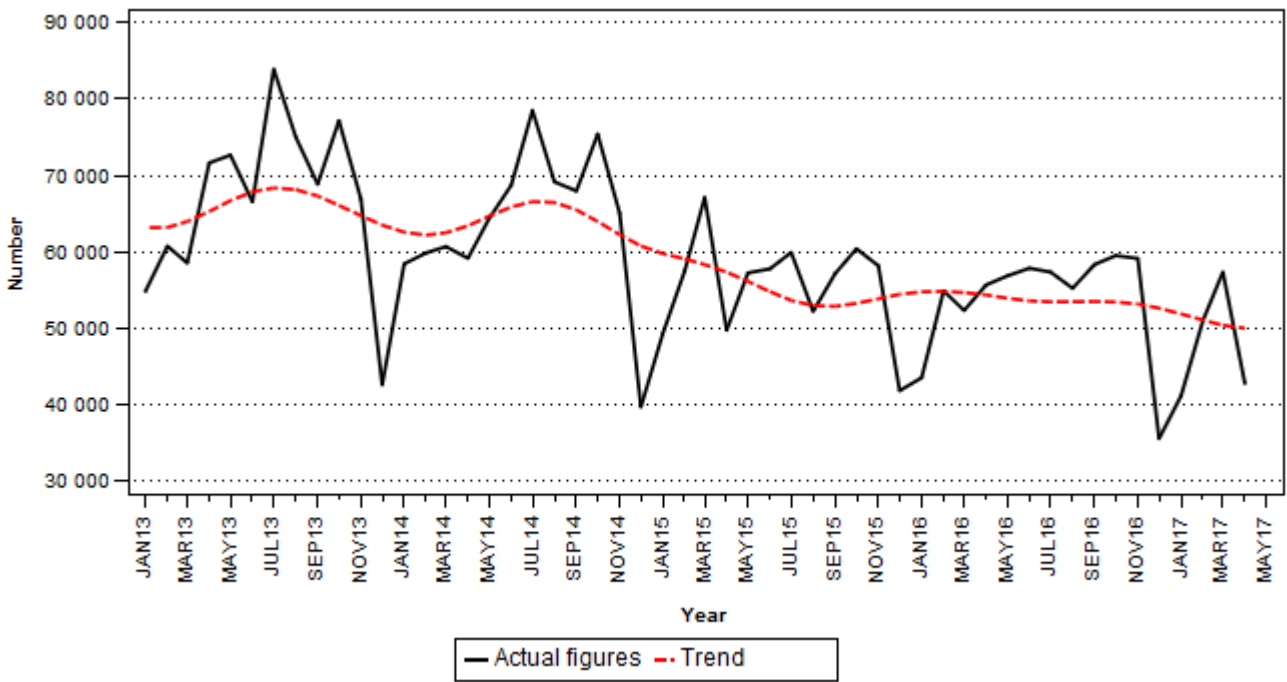
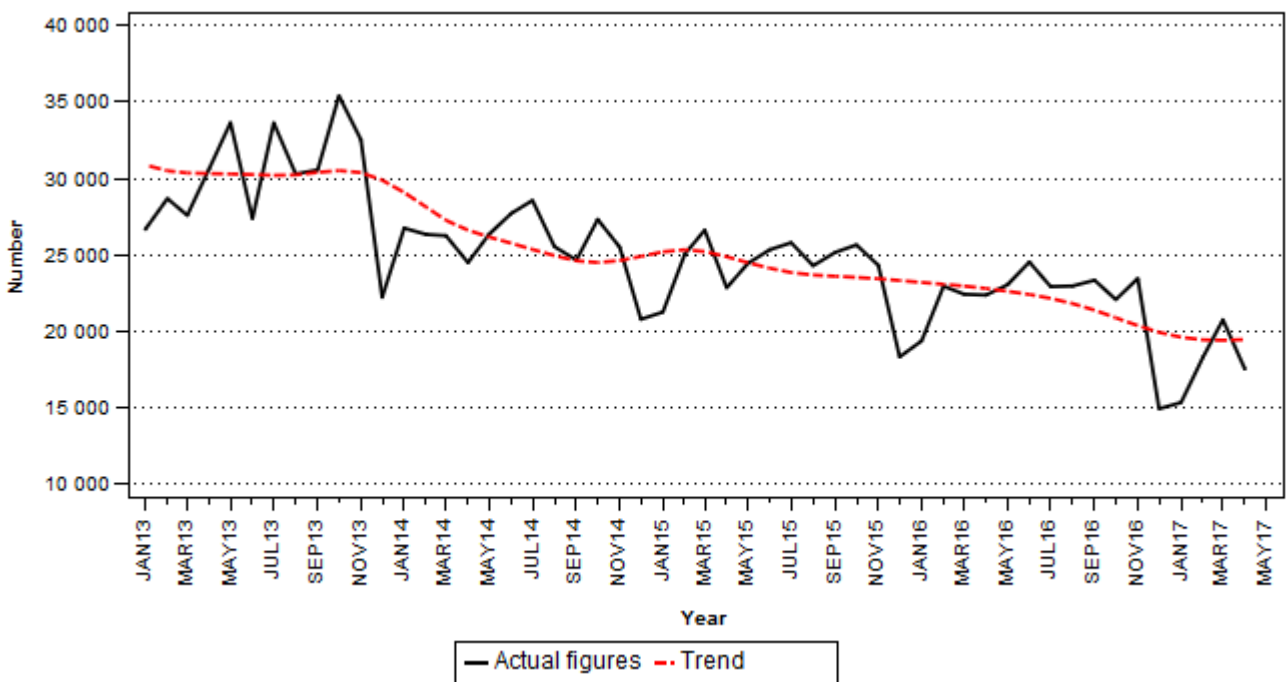


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



PJ Lehohla  
Statistician-General

## Detailed results: Tables

**Table 1 – Number of civil cases recorded and summonses issued for debt: Total and private persons**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2016	Apr-16	1/ Mar-17	1/ Apr-17	2016	Apr-16	1/ Mar-17	1/ Apr-17
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>700 485</b>	<b>61 344</b>	<b>60 280</b>	<b>45 432</b>	<b>602 530</b>	<b>53 674</b>	<b>51 315</b>	<b>37 185</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		59 450	52 444	51 197		52 161	44 532	41 741
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	39 656	3 398	3 143	2 537	29 919	2 542	2 259	1 824
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	21 886	1 819	1 724	1 791	16 506	1 485	1 365	1 435
	Services - Professional	83 019	7 462	6 721	5 578	72 241	6 671	5 926	4 915
	Services - Other	106 305	9 834	9 137	8 110	89 744	8 511	7 696	6 894
	Rent	31 195	2 511	2 953	2 277	24 197	1 981	2 169	1 522
	Money lent	155 809	12 462	13 481	9 473	145 604	11 387	12 733	8 897
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	90 564	7 606	8 934	5 676	84 008	7 134	8 321	5 069
	Other debts	117 781	10 575	11 253	7 356	103 779	9 423	9 986	6 496
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>646 215</b>	<b>55 667</b>	<b>57 346</b>	<b>42 798</b>	<b>565 998</b>	<b>49 134</b>	<b>50 455</b>	<b>37 052</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		54 245	50 521	48 989		47 998	43 880	42 398

1/ Preliminary.

**Table 2 – Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons**

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2016	Apr-16	1/ Mar-17	1/ Apr-17	2016	Apr-16	1/ Mar-17	1/ Apr-17	
<b>Number of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	17 058	1 619	1 409	1 039	12 948	1 215	1 089	797
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	7 068	792	444	504	6 039	695	369	430
	Services - Professional	44 011	3 589	3 376	2 644	39 091	3 165	3 143	2 404
	Services - Other	41 276	3 359	3 157	2 323	35 567	2 954	2 755	1 992
	Rent	18 296	1 343	1 501	1 263	15 162	1 094	1 266	1 056
	Money lent	60 447	4 787	5 011	4 154	55 379	4 294	4 681	3 883
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	25 021	1 676	2 105	1 955	21 461	1 384	1 813	1 728
	Other debts	51 152	5 200	3 748	3 651	45 458	4 717	3 401	3 410
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>264 329</b>	<b>22 365</b>	<b>20 751</b>	<b>17 533</b>	<b>231 105</b>	<b>19 518</b>	<b>18 517</b>	<b>15 700</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		22 719	18 940	19 863		19 869	16 937	17 705

1/ Preliminary.

**Table 3 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons (R'000)**

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2016	Apr-16	1/ Mar-17	1/ Apr-17	2016	Apr-16	1/ Mar-17	1/ Apr-17	
<b>Value of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	253 299	20 895	20 219	15 671	131 337	10 838	10 438	7 989
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	96 673	7 620	6 291	7 980	83 906	6 673	5 256	6 514
	Services - Professional	243 371	17 451	23 316	18 808	208 795	14 403	20 539	16 339
	Services - Other	542 398	40 714	44 061	29 470	432 972	30 944	35 384	24 110
	Rent	322 885	22 797	33 990	23 191	224 770	16 699	20 878	15 318
	Money lent	1 139 611	86 799	113 906	96 647	1 029 219	78 671	107 530	87 644
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	434 549	26 530	44 662	35 125	363 747	21 846	38 979	30 403
	Other debts	989 698	94 523	69 400	56 672	722 123	67 974	57 931	48 724
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>4 022 484</b>	<b>317 329</b>	<b>355 845</b>	<b>283 564</b>	<b>3 196 869</b>	<b>248 048</b>	<b>296 935</b>	<b>237 041</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		347 317	314 936	336 827		271 471	263 097	283 665

1/ Preliminary.

**Table 4 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended April 2016 and the three months ended April 2017**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Feb – Apr 2016	Actual estimates Feb – Apr 2017	% change between Feb – Apr 2016 and Feb – Apr 2017	Difference between Feb – Apr 2016 and Feb – Apr 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	162 881	151 190	-7,2	-11 691
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	67 730	56 596	-16,4	-11 134
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 040,3	922,9	-11,3	-117,4

**Table 5 – Contribution of the different kinds of debt to the change in total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended April 2016 and the three months ended April 2017 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	-1,3	-1,5	-1,5
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,6	-0,4	0,1
Services - Professional	-2,1	-3,4	-0,4
Services - Other	-2,3	-3,0	-2,4
Rent	-0,3	-0,3	0,5
Money lent	0,1	-2,2	0,7
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-0,4	0,4	1,2
Other debts	-0,2	-6,1	-9,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>-7,2</b>	<b>-16,4</b>	<b>-11,3</b>

1/ The contribution (percentage points) is calculated by multiplying the three-monthly percentage change of each kind of debt by the percentage contribution to the total during February to April 2016, divided by 100. Due to rounding off, contributions might not add up to the total.

**Table 6 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the current month and the corresponding month of the previous year**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates April 2016	Actual estimates April 2017	% change between April 2016 and April 2017	Difference between April 2016 and April 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	55 667	42 798	-23,1	-12 869
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	22 365	17 533	-21,6	-4 832
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	317,3	283,6	-10,6	-33,7

**Table 7 – Number of civil summonses issued for debt by province**

Period 1/		Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa
2016	Apr	9 217	4 721	1 041	4 192	8 481	3 458	19 974	2 474	2 109	55 667
	May	10 618	4 456	1 096	4 731	8 957	3 228	18 601	2 911	2 248	56 846
	Jun	11 126	4 543	907	4 100	9 376	3 005	20 179	2 466	2 150	57 852
	Jul	10 303	4 898	824	3 822	8 730	3 498	20 196	2 783	2 291	57 345
	Aug	10 070	4 200	1 040	4 079	8 760	2 939	19 001	2 724	2 413	55 226
	Sep	9 301	4 234	816	3 942	10 863	3 267	20 526	2 811	2 579	58 339
	Oct	9 612	4 831	800	4 239	9 961	3 280	21 508	2 868	2 399	59 498
	Nov	10 398	4 717	899	4 411	10 014	3 276	19 791	3 151	2 467	59 124
Dec	5 768	2 145	509	2 851	5 978	1 243	13 343	2 009	1 733	35 579	
2017	Jan	6 630	3 224	554	3 356	5 507	2 178	16 203	1 541	1 969	41 162
	Feb	8 707	3 749	811	3 309	8 903	2 185	18 837	2 409	2 136	51 046
	Mar	10 515	4 635	1 040	3 941	8 972	2 538	20 565	2 661	2 479	57 346
	Apr	6 835	3 463	618	2 807	7 746	1 954	15 014	2 031	2 330	42 798

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

**Table 8 – Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt by province**

Period 1/		Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa
2016	Apr	3 521	2 501	422	2 642	3 913	1 626	4 901	1 482	1 357	22 365
	May	5 054	2 516	396	2 474	3 955	1 275	4 774	1 376	1 214	23 034
	Jun	4 089	3 796	458	3 288	3 867	1 557	4 842	1 163	1 465	24 525
	Jul	4 380	2 719	441	2 940	3 702	1 673	4 525	1 090	1 449	22 919
	Aug	4 387	2 279	358	2 934	4 369	1 303	4 465	1 191	1 674	22 960
	Sep	4 222	2 286	397	2 488	4 611	1 174	5 323	1 241	1 594	23 336
	Oct	4 082	2 617	445	2 208	4 171	1 297	4 461	1 254	1 537	22 072
	Nov	4 165	2 613	254	2 676	4 208	1 493	5 309	1 148	1 584	23 450
	Dec	2 147	1 240	410	1 319	2 698	715	4 416	943	1 046	14 934
2017	Jan	2 541	2 201	226	1 657	2 034	659	3 922	1 048	1 054	15 342
	Feb	3 370	2 019	292	1 788	3 843	925	4 211	765	1 099	18 312
	Mar	4 019	2 876	539	2 175	3 577	1 001	3 999	1 265	1 300	20 751
	Apr	2 362	2 630	351	2 185	3 386	781	3 662	858	1 318	17 533

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

**Table 9 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt by province (R'000)**

Period 1/		Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa
2016	Apr	60 953	37 659	4 941	32 688	42 409	14 659	84 791	30 406	8 823	317 329
	May	69 161	48 619	3 479	31 696	49 649	13 814	88 538	30 278	8 287	343 521
	Jun	58 989	50 694	3 018	33 334	49 813	12 863	81 022	42 028	13 228	344 989
	Jul	73 486	44 276	3 499	30 868	49 064	14 912	90 018	28 057	10 745	344 925
	Aug	61 855	45 098	3 643	35 048	55 705	14 182	86 036	26 621	17 503	345 691
	Sep	78 808	41 589	3 452	35 587	57 559	10 480	102 167	22 420	11 500	363 562
	Oct	73 547	54 538	3 721	27 805	47 126	11 085	86 080	23 224	13 072	340 198
	Nov	83 923	48 625	2 543	42 330	42 096	14 584	97 217	23 216	15 991	370 525
Dec	42 778	34 684	3 662	18 302	38 753	10 860	73 189	24 034	5 811	252 073	
2017	Jan	42 093	44 928	3 266	21 097	27 757	9 980	58 734	24 055	8 894	240 804
	Feb	67 812	35 384	3 094	19 788	39 303	14 398	81 496	15 697	6 533	283 505
	Mar	71 623	55 846	6 302	26 937	46 972	12 822	95 561	26 632	13 150	355 845
	Apr	49 904	53 495	3 289	25 210	40 619	11 248	68 299	18 508	12 992	283 564

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.



## 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 are included in the monthly survey of civil cases for debt. The monthly survey of 203 magistrates' courts represents approximately 98% of all cases in South Africa.
<b>Survey methodology and design</b>	<b>6</b>	The survey is conducted by email, fax and telephone each month from 203 magistrates' offices.
<b>Collection rate</b>	<b>7</b>	The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for April 2017 was 83,7%. The improved collection rate for March 2017 was 84,2%.
<b>Seasonal adjustment</b>	<b>8</b>	Seasonally adjusted estimates of all categories are generated each month, using the X-12 Seasonal Adjustment Program developed by the US Bureau of the Census, 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. Therefore the month-to-month movements of seasonally adjusted estimates may not be reliable indicators of trend behaviour. The X-12-ARIMA procedure for civil cases for debt is described in more detail on the Stats SA website: <a href="#">Click to download seasonal adjustment for civil cases for debt.</a>
<b>Trend cycle</b>	<b>9</b>	The trend is the long-term pattern or movement of a time series. The X-12-ARIMA Seasonal Adjustment Program is used for smoothing seasonally adjusted estimates to estimate the underlying trend cycle.
<b>Unpublished statistics</b>	<b>10</b>	In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.
<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>Cases recorded</b>	Includes civil debt and non-debt cases recorded.
<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.
<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 debt such as salaries and wages, medical fund debt, sponsored debt, class and tuition debt, tax, assessment rates and property 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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