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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

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Key results for April 2021

Table A – Key figures for the month of April 2021

Actual estimates	April 2021	% change between April 2020 and April 2021	% change between February – April 2020 and February – April 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	38 967	416,6	32,9
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 769	115,8	14,7
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	308,7	178,2	40,4

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt increased by 32,9% in the three months ended April 2021 compared with the three months ended April 2020.

The largest contributors to the 32,9% increase in civil summonses issued were:

- 'other' debts (contributing 12,6 percentage points);
- services (contributing 6,1 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing 5,0 percentage points); and
- money lent (contributing 4,6 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 14,7% in the three months ended April 2021 compared with the three months ended April 2020.

The largest positive contributors to the 14,7% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing 7,3 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing 5,1 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing 1,9 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 40,4% in the three months ended April 2021 compared with the three months ended April 2020.

The largest contributors to the 40,4% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing 10,2 percentage points);
- rent (contributing 9,6 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing 9,0 percentage points) – see Table 5.

In April 2021, 11 769 civil judgements for debt amounting to R308,7 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R86,2 million or 27,9%);
- 'other' debts (R57,7 million or 18,7%); and
- services (R55,7 million or 18,1%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

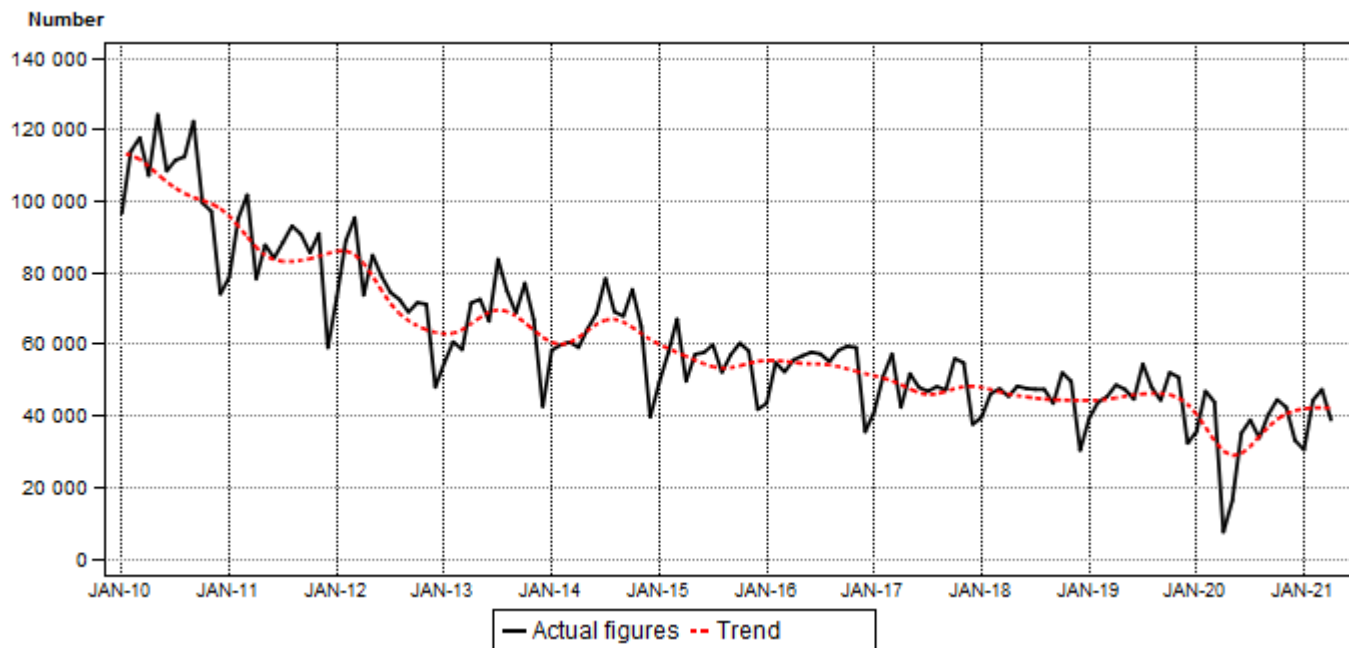
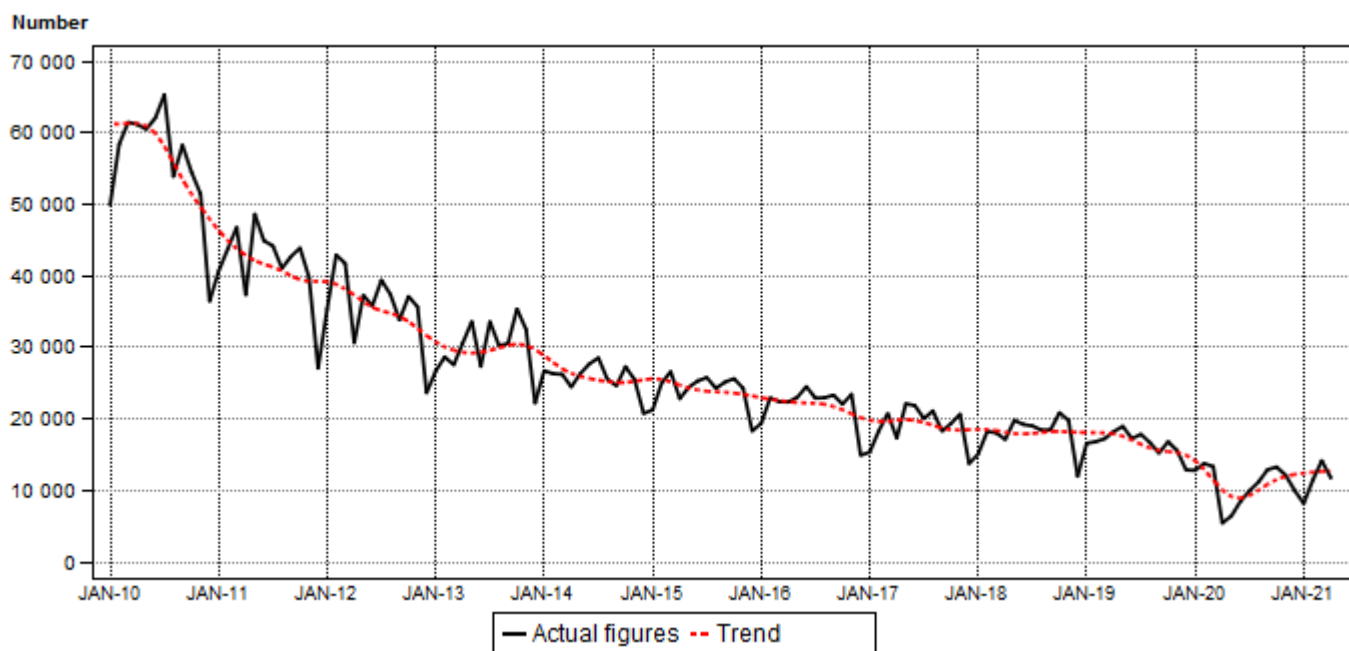


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



Risenga Maluleke
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			
		2020	Apr-20	1/ Mar-21	1/ Apr-21	2020	Apr-20	1/ Mar-21	1/ Apr-21
Cases recorded	Actual figures	451 691	8 419	49 170	41 720	400 702	7 261	43 603	37 265
	Seasonally adjusted		8 874	45 426	43 739		7 457	40 410	38 810
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	21 933	580	2 121	1 742	15 671	435	1 282	1 236
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 879	203	1 608	1 189	13 022	156	1 495	1 100
	Services - Professional	47 911	1 157	4 430	4 184	42 984	961	3 768	3 672
	Services - Other	63 941	826	6 113	5 943	56 770	708	5 277	5 264
	Rent	25 506	481	3 055	2 293	19 452	337	2 161	1 791
	Money lent	105 308	2 484	10 902	9 512	100 399	2 312	10 414	9 096
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	50 761	302	6 258	4 214	48 420	257	6 078	4 068
	Other debts	88 563	1 510	12 929	9 890	79 872	1 322	11 779	9 041
	Total - Actual figures	418 802	7 543	47 416	38 967	376 590	6 488	42 254	35 268
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		8 076	43 201	41 242		6 972	38 771	37 330

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2020	Apr-20	1/ Mar-21	1/ Apr-21	2020	Apr-20	1/ Mar-21	1/ Apr-21
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	8 801	443	1 057	779	6 068	318	500	523
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	4 576	193	517	452	3 830	147	449	388
	Services - Professional	20 860	731	2 294	1 808	18 983	628	2 079	1 504
	Services - Other	24 350	728	2 531	2 155	21 717	605	2 215	1 948
	Rent	11 727	360	1 419	988	9 360	260	1 049	769
	Money lent	27 443	1 257	2 929	2 667	24 796	1 124	2 725	2 460
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	9 381	534	1 034	764	8 488	497	940	692
	Other debts	22 574	1 208	2 383	2 156	20 599	1 130	2 170	1 918
	Total - Actual figures	129 712	5 454	14 164	11 769	113 841	4 709	12 127	10 202
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		5 835	13 698	12 344		5 099	11 654	10 784

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2020	Apr-20	1/ Mar-21	1/ Apr-21	2020	Apr-20	1/ Mar-21	1/ Apr-21
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	190 039	5 931	19 852	17 694	79 072	2 270	7 607	8 440
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	141 631	3 671	14 929	17 971	114 990	2 240	12 454	15 138
	Services - Professional	201 414	4 454	18 265	16 388	175 906	3 859	15 236	11 098
	Services - Other	457 434	11 939	46 216	39 326	382 066	8 976	37 593	33 491
	Rent	309 535	6 521	50 008	33 247	217 148	5 177	34 089	23 098
	Money lent	797 650	43 064	93 091	86 231	747 713	41 691	88 627	81 095
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	311 985	19 727	36 157	40 102	271 527	18 458	32 001	35 759
	Other debts	463 155	15 626	65 937	57 699	393 270	13 824	56 768	48 627
	Total - Actual figures	2 872 843	110 933	344 455	308 658	2 381 692	96 495	284 375	256 746
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		123 859	312 229	343 725		104 872	261 648	278 474

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 2020 and the three months ended April 2021

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Feb – Apr 2020	Actual estimates Feb – Apr 2021	% change between Feb – Apr 2020 and Feb – Apr 2021	Difference between Feb – Apr 2020 and Feb – Apr 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	98 374	130 776	32,9	32 402
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	32 560	37 350	14,7	4 790
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	660,6	927,2	40,4	266,6

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 2020 and the three months ended April 2021 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	0,6	0,6	2,9
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,8	1,1	2,5
Services - Professional	2,0	4,3	2,5
Services - Other	4,1	3,0	2,2
Rent	3,2	1,9	9,6
Money lent	4,6	5,1	10,2
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	5,0	-0,3	1,5
Other debts	12,6	-1,0	9,0
Total	32,9	14,7	40,4

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 2020, 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 2020	Actual estimates April 2021	% change between April 2020 and April 2021	Difference between April 2020 and April 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	7 543	38 967	416,6	31 424
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	5 454	11 769	115,8	6 315
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	110,9	308,7	178,2	197,8

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	
2020	Apr	1 335	785	66	486	971	1 327	1 331	90	1 152	7 543
	May	2 350	1 416	419	1 563	3 082	894	4 343	894	1 423	16 384
	Jun	6 583	2 229	544	1 831	7 090	1 911	11 296	2 141	1 536	35 161
	Jul	9 642	3 105	405	1 929	5 209	2 032	12 911	1 990	1 631	38 854
	Aug	5 834	2 209	381	2 224	4 998	2 290	12 774	1 705	1 440	33 855
	Sep	7 984	3 031	719	2 327	5 884	1 831	14 454	2 551	1 554	40 335
	Oct	8 377	3 232	462	2 706	7 198	2 659	15 472	2 773	1 676	44 555
	Nov	8 701	2 675	472	2 276	6 460	2 978	15 165	2 094	1 656	42 477
Dec	6 646	2 746	337	1 852	6 443	2 256	9 463	2 027	1 390	33 160	
2021	Jan	5 886	2 370	395	2 141	6 175	1 641	9 158	1 367	1 408	30 541
	Feb	9 001	1 857	503	3 315	8 459	2 598	15 046	2 075	1 539	44 393
	Mar	9 973	2 710	625	2 961	7 731	2 148	16 375	3 218	1 675	47 416
	Apr	8 293	2 819	513	2 635	5 198	1 990	13 482	2 305	1 732	38 967

1/ Latest three 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	
2020	Apr	1 011	417	17	263	1 689	311	604	186	956	5 454
	May	827	849	126	934	972	270	1 156	258	1 021	6 413
	Jun	1 233	1 001	232	1 291	1 412	417	1 247	533	1 098	8 464
	Jul	1 788	941	212	1 372	1 637	481	1 581	876	1 065	9 953
	Aug	1 860	1 333	200	1 482	1 637	675	2 341	617	1 035	11 180
	Sep	2 317	1 419	242	1 522	1 948	813	2 438	1 084	1 120	12 903
	Oct	2 771	1 071	320	1 559	2 316	589	2 502	995	1 161	13 284
	Nov	2 521	1 158	150	1 390	1 753	576	2 611	803	1 171	12 133
Dec	2 118	1 128	142	1 029	1 645	449	1 823	575	1 099	10 008	
2021	Jan	1 404	978	247	1 078	1 171	352	1 531	339	1 084	8 184
	Feb	2 156	1 065	175	1 301	1 887	802	2 168	776	1 087	11 417
	Mar	2 670	1 049	242	1 473	1 947	887	3 220	1 541	1 135	14 164
	Apr	2 141	989	200	1 572	1 809	642	2 196	1 054	1 166	11 769

1/ Latest three 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	
2020	Apr	20 915	10 900	333	3 527	27 668	5 603	25 945	12 948	3 094	110 933
	May	12 411	11 318	813	10 907	22 969	4 989	40 124	8 415	4 569	116 515
	Jun	21 057	15 705	2 720	24 400	22 942	8 074	44 553	9 296	4 951	153 698
	Jul	42 027	18 144	2 656	22 593	37 153	17 387	50 738	16 688	5 879	213 265
	Aug	49 537	25 738	1 653	22 914	43 266	10 570	82 227	13 249	6 598	255 752
	Sep	60 331	27 232	2 927	17 588	55 453	12 828	93 865	36 018	5 766	312 008
	Oct	72 756	28 295	3 808	24 096	64 810	8 279	94 396	31 051	5 924	333 415
	Nov	71 842	21 836	1 874	19 813	41 539	9 567	110 779	22 445	11 987	311 682
Dec	61 393	28 704	1 969	14 077	37 072	10 501	86 167	14 016	9 301	263 200	
2021	Jan	36 125	15 555	4 372	13 875	19 819	7 887	64 267	13 821	6 364	182 085
	Feb	60 806	21 005	2 721	27 429	42 899	15 324	77 693	18 107	8 093	274 077
	Mar	69 027	21 207	5 942	20 962	48 240	16 546	130 397	24 480	7 654	344 455
	Apr	59 052	18 834	4 451	25 398	47 331	15 367	99 525	28 928	9 772	308 658

1/ Latest three months are preliminary.

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	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.
Purpose of the survey	3	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.
Scope of the survey	4	This survey covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of civil cases recorded; • number of civil summonses issued for debt; • number of civil judgements recorded for debt; and • value of civil judgements recorded for debt.
Statistical unit	5	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.
Survey methodology and design	6	The survey is conducted by email, fax and telephone each month from 203 magistrates' offices.
Collection rate	7	The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for April 2021 was 79,3%. The improved collection rates were 82,8% for March 2021 and 83,7% for February 2021.
Seasonal adjustment	8	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: Click to download seasonal adjustment for civil cases for debt. Note: Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown, additive outlier adjustments and transitory change adjustments were performed. The methodology will be reviewed as more data points are added to the time series.
Trend cycle	9	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.
Unpublished statistics	10	In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.
Symbols and abbreviations	11	R/D Refer to drawer Stats SA Statistics South Africa * Revised figures

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.
Cases recorded	Includes civil debt and non-debt cases recorded.
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 debt he owes without defending the action.
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.
Instalment sale transaction	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.
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.
Other services	'Other services' refers to municipal services (except outstanding assessment rates), plumbers, builders, mechanics, panel beaters and electricians.
Other debts	'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.
Plaintiff	Plaintiff is a person/party in a civil case who asks the court for judgement against another person.
Professional services	Professional services refer to medical doctors, dentists, advocates, attorneys, auditors, accountants, architects, engineers, hospital services, etc.
Promissory note	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.
Reference month	Reference month refers to one calendar month.
Refer to drawer (R/D) cheques	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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