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## **STATISTICAL RELEASE**

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# Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

April 2022

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## Key results for April 2022

**Table A – Key figures for the month of April 2022**

Actual estimates	April 2022	% change between April 2021 and April 2022	% change between February – April 2021 and February – April 2022
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	38 174	-2,2	-7,7
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	10 305	-12,9	-11,3
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	240,6	-21,8	-13,1

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 7,7% in the three months ended April 2022 compared with the three months ended April 2021.

The main contributors to the 7,7% decrease in civil summonses issued were:

- promissory notes (contributing -2,7 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -2,5 percentage points);
- rent (contributing -1,7 percentage points); and
- services (contributing -1,2 percentage points) – see Table 5.

### The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 11,3% in the three months ended April 2022 compared with the three months ended 2021.

The largest contributors to the 11,3% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

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

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 13,1% in the three months ended April 2022 compared with the three months ended April 2021.

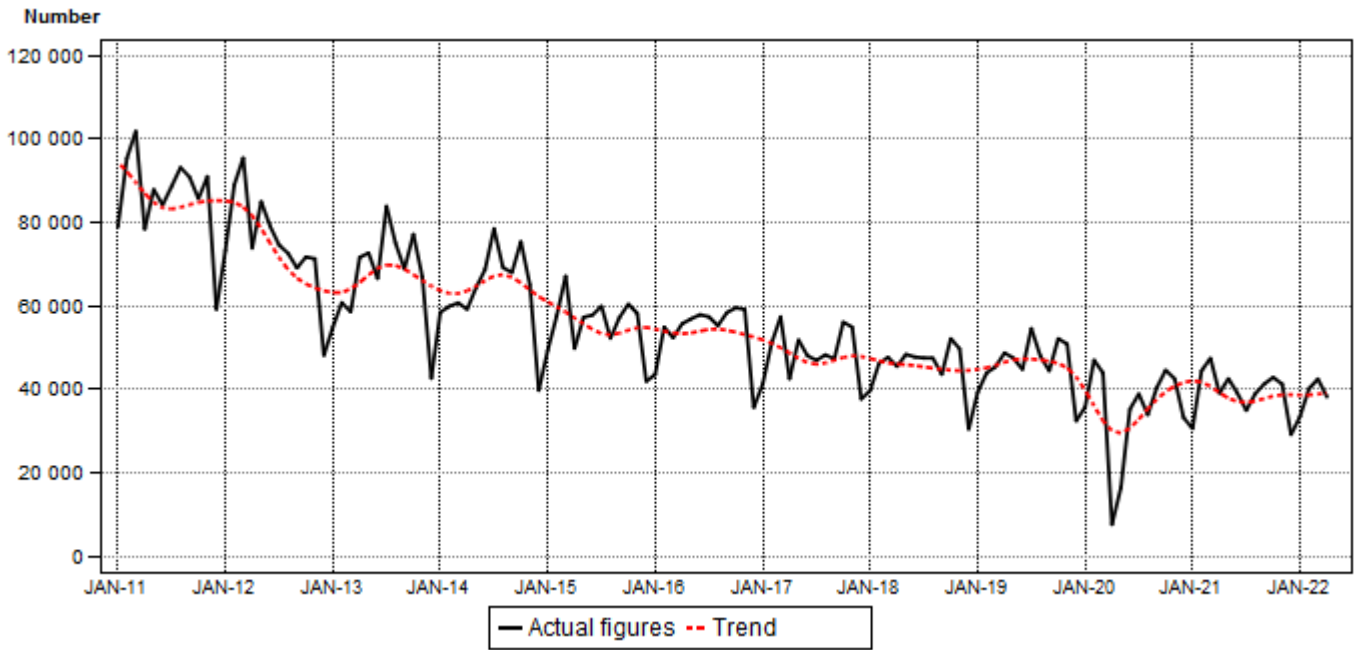
The largest contributors to the 13,1% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- rent (contributing -3,7 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -3,7 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -2,8 percentage points); and
- services (contributing -1,3 percentage points) – see Table 5.

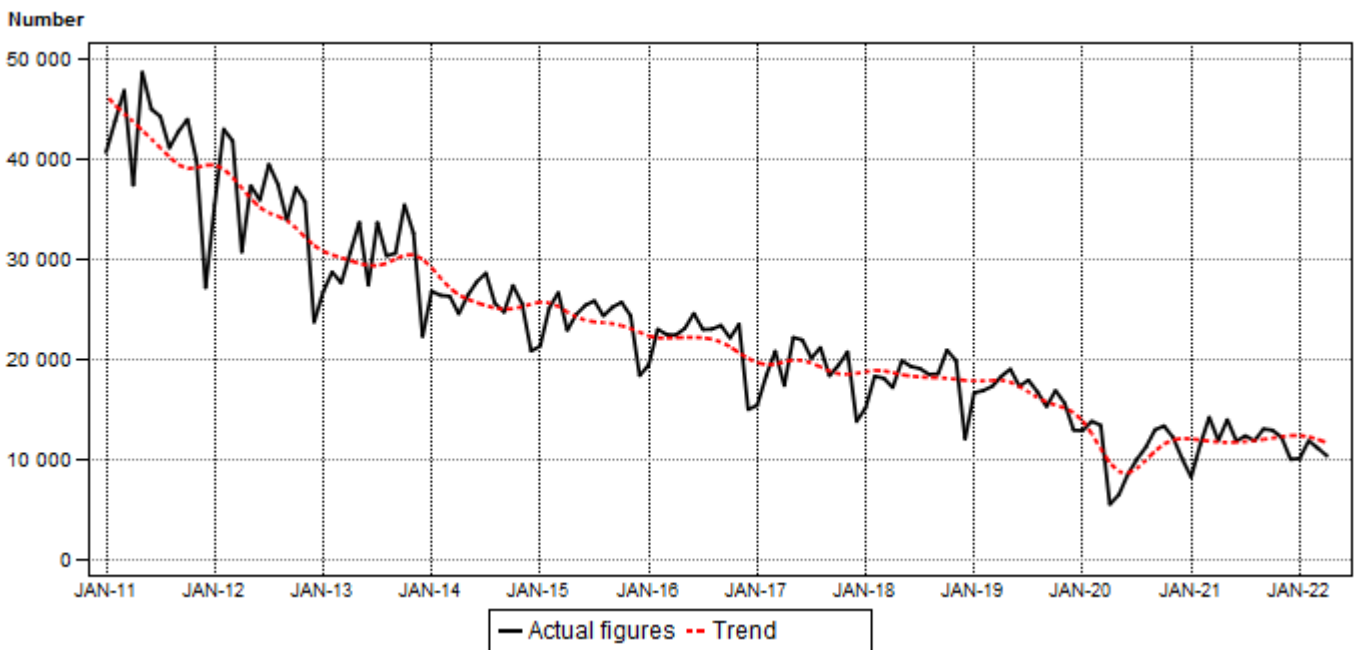
In April 2022, 10 305 civil judgements for debt amounting to R240,6 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R68,0 million or 28,3%);
- services (R45,9 million or 19,1%); and
- 'other' debts (R36,3 million or 15,1%) – 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			
		2021	Apr-21	1/ Mar-22	1/ Apr-22	2021	Apr-21	1/ Mar-22	1/ Apr-22
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>494 845</b>	<b>41 765</b>	<b>44 668</b>	<b>39 960</b>	<b>436 556</b>	<b>37 311</b>	<b>38 743</b>	<b>34 540</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		41 093	39 249	43 152		36 360	33 711	36 949
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	22 874	1 748	2 152	2 040	15 198	1 243	1 492	1 333
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	15 644	1 184	1 249	1 370	13 175	1 095	953	1 128
	Services - Professional	48 261	4 188	4 471	4 639	41 729	3 676	3 714	3 793
	Services - Other	71 257	5 944	5 968	4 892	60 342	5 271	4 981	4 041
	Rent	27 753	2 299	2 264	1 803	21 361	1 796	1 642	1 257
	Money lent	116 700	9 509	10 936	10 223	108 854	9 088	10 381	9 655
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	59 140	4 252	4 779	3 887	56 487	4 106	4 500	3 628
	Other debts	109 473	9 889	10 603	9 320	99 171	9 040	9 495	8 270
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>471 102</b>	<b>39 013</b>	<b>42 422</b>	<b>38 174</b>	<b>416 317</b>	<b>35 315</b>	<b>37 158</b>	<b>33 105</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		38 916	35 277	41 165		34 767	31 375	35 357

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2021	Apr-21	1/ Mar-22	1/ Apr-22	2021	Apr-21	1/ Mar-22	1/ Apr-22
<b>Number of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	9 723	785	645	618	6 559	531	438	405
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	5 635	454	510	582	4 762	390	436	440
	Services - Professional	23 496	1 786	1 893	1 440	20 923	1 508	1 572	1 201
	Services - Other	26 540	2 164	1 749	1 897	23 612	1 959	1 429	1 657
	Rent	12 335	1 011	1 068	862	9 900	792	808	593
	Money lent	31 574	2 691	2 376	2 394	28 531	2 484	2 075	1 973
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	10 081	786	734	1 167	9 211	717	679	1 050
	Other debts	23 940	2 159	2 100	1 345	21 607	1 921	1 878	1 084
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>143 324</b>	<b>11 836</b>	<b>11 075</b>	<b>10 305</b>	<b>125 105</b>	<b>10 302</b>	<b>9 315</b>	<b>8 403</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		11 455	8 931	11 887		9 971	7 314	9 803

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2021	Apr-21	1/ Mar-22	1/ Apr-22	2021	Apr-21	1/ Mar-22	1/ Apr-22
<b>Value of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	220 750	17 833	13 461	13 597	103 048	8 598	5 925	4 932
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	204 306	17 949	11 215	14 293	171 819	15 116	8 697	10 782
	Services - Professional	224 848	16 221	19 133	13 771	176 770	11 116	13 312	9 833
	Services - Other	483 619	39 322	42 046	32 177	400 129	33 495	36 455	26 044
	Rent	398 259	32 974	24 718	26 907	295 650	22 800	17 706	17 775
	Money lent	983 153	86 673	60 674	68 019	918 510	81 367	55 723	62 087
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	383 004	38 524	23 879	35 583	340 792	34 758	19 823	29 264
	Other debts	669 111	57 981	62 007	36 252	554 372	48 981	49 364	28 126
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>3 567 050</b>	<b>307 477</b>	<b>257 133</b>	<b>240 599</b>	<b>2 961 090</b>	<b>256 231</b>	<b>207 005</b>	<b>188 843</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		318 635	220 435	282 216		260 257	170 015	227 500

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 2021 and the three months ended April 2022**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Feb – Apr 2021	Actual estimates Feb – Apr 2022	% change between Feb – Apr 2021 and Feb – Apr 2022	Difference between Feb – Apr 2021 and Feb – Apr 2022
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	130 810	120 697	-7,7	-10 113
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	37 409	33 189	-11,3	-4 220
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	925,4	804,6	-13,1	-120,8

**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 2021 and the three months ended April 2022 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	0,4	-1,6	-1,9
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,2	0,5	-0,9
Services - Professional	0,5	-3,3	-0,7
Services - Other	-1,7	-2,5	-0,6
Rent	-1,7	-1,2	-3,7
Money lent	0,2	-0,9	-3,7
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-2,7	0,6	-0,8
Other debts	-2,5	-2,8	-0,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>-7,7</b>	<b>-11,3</b>	<b>-13,1</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 2021, 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 2021	Actual estimates April 2022	% change between April 2021 and April 2022	Difference between April 2021 and April 2022
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	39 013	38 174	-2,2	-839
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 836	10 305	-12,9	-1 531
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	307,5	240,6	-21,8	-66,9

**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	
2021	Apr	8 293	2 817	513	2 633	5 257	1 990	13 482	2 296	1 732	<b>39 013</b>
	May	9 072	3 024	652	3 535	7 507	1 450	12 958	2 682	1 645	<b>42 525</b>
	Jun	8 917	2 973	558	3 027	5 963	2 033	12 140	1 688	1 763	<b>39 062</b>
	Jul	7 021	2 710	725	2 667	4 851	1 756	11 580	1 938	1 659	<b>34 907</b>
	Aug	9 222	1 918	779	3 297	5 385	1 749	12 599	2 199	1 745	<b>38 893</b>
	Sep	8 362	3 041	515	3 309	5 313	2 086	14 337	2 486	1 778	<b>41 227</b>
	Oct	8 313	2 860	521	3 564	6 284	1 985	15 268	2 211	1 818	<b>42 824</b>
	Nov	8 764	3 032	457	3 955	5 186	1 540	13 875	2 671	1 740	<b>41 220</b>
Dec	7 279	2 554	349	2 615	3 495	1 659	7 954	1 721	1 467	<b>29 093</b>	
2022	Jan	6 524	2 508	460	2 604	4 803	1 539	11 160	2 178	1 684	<b>33 460</b>
	Feb	8 115	2 993	466	3 399	6 799	1 888	12 214	2 545	1 682	<b>40 101</b>
	Mar	8 213	3 080	510	2 919	7 633	2 342	13 658	2 301	1 766	<b>42 422</b>
	Apr	7 778	3 308	502	2 681	5 755	1 789	12 341	2 374	1 646	<b>38 174</b>

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	
2021	Apr	2 141	989	200	1 541	1 916	642	2 196	1 045	1 166	<b>11 836</b>
	May	3 816	1 237	159	1 792	1 824	665	2 438	819	1 166	<b>13 916</b>
	Jun	2 422	1 673	164	2 105	1 651	349	1 654	594	1 159	<b>11 771</b>
	Jul	2 143	1 032	257	2 250	1 957	541	1 995	889	1 244	<b>12 308</b>
	Aug	2 066	659	266	1 931	1 620	682	2 640	694	1 243	<b>11 801</b>
	Sep	2 617	937	267	2 064	1 825	716	2 660	620	1 278	<b>12 984</b>
	Oct	2 673	1 020	254	2 256	1 712	648	2 536	517	1 243	<b>12 859</b>
	Nov	2 892	1 425	175	2 125	1 119	483	2 001	617	1 302	<b>12 139</b>
Dec	2 158	1 013	99	1 483	1 249	553	1 613	663	1 122	<b>9 953</b>	
2022	Jan	1 676	1 288	129	1 726	1 687	340	1 550	557	1 085	<b>10 038</b>
	Feb	2 868	1 257	175	1 851	1 348	597	1 814	678	1 221	<b>11 809</b>
	Mar	2 005	766	243	2 036	1 302	637	1 965	916	1 205	<b>11 075</b>
	Apr	2 126	760	104	2 157	1 179	410	1 774	680	1 115	<b>10 305</b>

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	
2021	Apr	59 052	18 834	4 451	25 062	47 587	15 367	99 525	27 828	9 771	<b>307 477</b>
	May	62 817	23 081	2 732	26 618	43 891	16 807	84 463	20 609	8 270	<b>289 288</b>
	Jun	64 074	31 007	3 379	31 247	47 121	8 090	71 969	18 327	13 399	<b>288 613</b>
	Jul	61 900	20 111	4 549	26 797	52 527	10 779	65 016	21 488	13 432	<b>276 599</b>
	Aug	68 741	14 303	4 178	27 880	43 039	12 579	97 814	54 980	12 531	<b>336 045</b>
	Sep	75 269	23 317	4 371	28 592	66 193	13 703	115 558	13 361	16 500	<b>356 864</b>
	Oct	88 759	21 153	3 878	27 577	54 364	13 249	87 711	21 486	11 833	<b>330 010</b>
	Nov	94 672	25 820	5 568	27 259	42 919	7 696	80 047	16 686	11 791	<b>312 458</b>
Dec	79 821	22 018	1 755	21 170	46 803	11 989	63 471	14 607	8 063	<b>269 697</b>	
2022	Jan	48 137	20 494	3 439	28 982	45 395	5 377	70 829	11 212	5 947	<b>239 812</b>
	Feb	86 699	26 031	3 286	26 090	65 365	8 740	65 794	14 494	10 383	<b>306 882</b>
	Mar	51 204	16 296	3 333	26 573	49 998	9 640	69 635	19 668	10 786	<b>257 133</b>
	Apr	59 314	15 686	1 706	27 155	46 932	5 295	66 041	12 474	5 996	<b>240 599</b>

1/ Latest three 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 2022 was 76,8%. The improved collection rate for March 2022 was 78,8%.
<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 United States Census Bureau. 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 February 2022.</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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