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STATISTICAL RELEASE

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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

August 2023

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Key results for August 2023

Table A – Key figures for the month of August 2023

Actual estimates	August 2023	% change between August 2022 and August 2023	% change between June – August 2022 and June – August 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	41 709	2,2	-0,5
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	12 030	2,7	1,5
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	329,9	6,2	9,4

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 0,5% in the three months ended August 2023 compared with the three months ended August 2022.

The largest negative contributors to the 0,5% decrease in civil summonses issued were:

- money lent (contributing -2,2 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -0,8 of a percentage point).

Promissory notes made the largest positive contribution (contributing 1,5 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 1,5% in the three months ended August 2023 compared with the three months ended August 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 1,5% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing 4,3 percentage points);
- services (contributing 1,6 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing 1,5 percentage points).

Money lent made the largest negative contribution (contributing -4,0 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 9,4% in the three months ended August 2023 compared with the three months ended August 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 9,4% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing 5,1 percentage points);
- services (contributing 3,2 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing 2,2 percentage points) – see Table 5.

In August 2023, 12 030 civil judgements for debt amounting to R329,9 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R96,6 million or 29,3%);
- services (R69,0 million or 20,9%); and
- 'other' debts (R68,6 million or 20,8%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

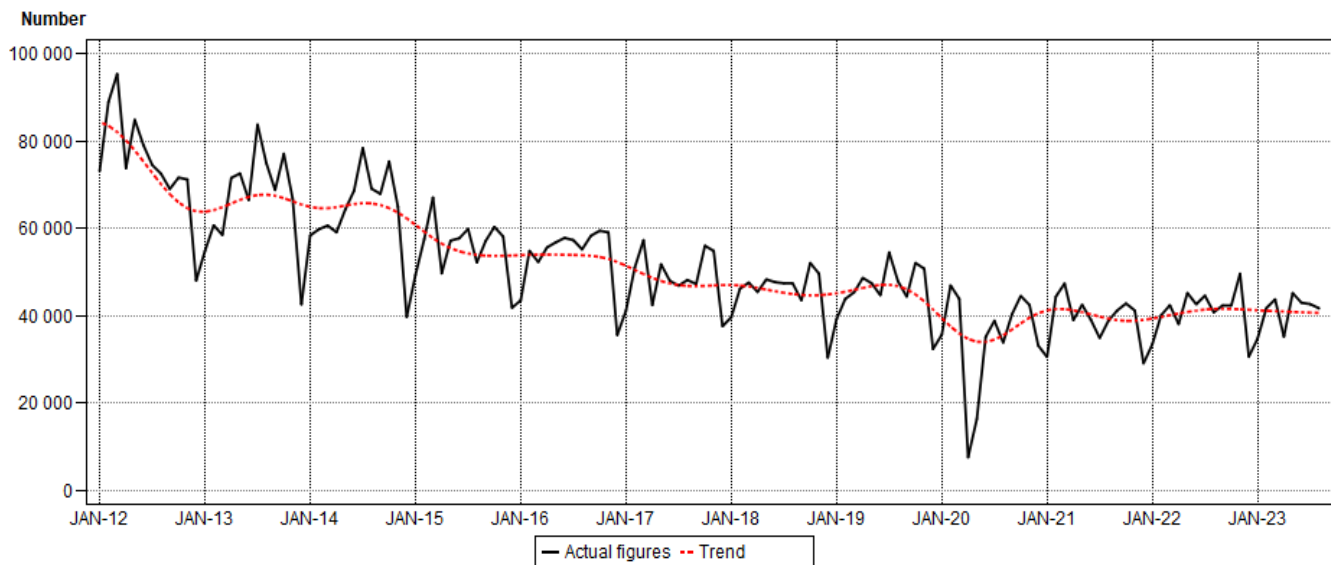


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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			
		2022	Aug-22	1/ Jul-23	1/ Aug-23	2022	Aug-22	1/ Jul-23	1/ Aug-23
Cases recorded	Actual figures	514 325	43 413	44 089	42 714	440 408	35 852	34 913	35 693
	Seasonally adjusted		40 233	43 087	40 714		32 847	34 187	33 379
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	23 286	1 669	1 685	1 662	14 645	1 021	1 028	947
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 867	985	1 052	993	11 954	742	814	639
	Services - Professional	56 911	4 733	6 239	5 324	46 262	3 857	4 357	3 804
	Services - Other	73 225	7 006	5 892	6 401	62 348	5 973	4 960	5 423
	Rent	25 280	1 903	2 205	1 818	18 118	1 329	1 503	1 205
	Money lent	121 161	9 807	9 232	8 822	113 762	9 178	8 525	8 156
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	45 229	2 849	4 706	3 952	41 607	2 570	4 159	3 737
	Other debts	132 399	11 841	11 673	12 737	119 165	10 746	9 844	11 407
	Total - Actual figures	492 358	40 793	42 684	41 709	427 861	35 416	35 190	35 318
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		38 761	41 522	39 776		33 336	34 667	33 275

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Aug-22	1/ Jul-23	1/ Aug-23	2022	Aug-22	1/ Jul-23	1/ Aug-23
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	7 147	571	660	508	4 555	328	317	238
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	5 230	366	309	213	4 167	307	232	168
	Services - Professional	21 161	2 170	2 267	2 355	17 970	1 904	1 714	1 792
	Services - Other	24 638	2 002	1 898	2 328	21 605	1 758	1 668	2 044
	Rent	10 712	887	1 025	880	7 990	693	752	659
	Money lent	32 148	2 862	2 417	2 521	28 679	2 626	2 136	2 338
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	11 637	982	1 333	1 113	10 470	924	958	1 035
	Other debts	22 010	1 874	2 722	2 112	19 210	1 584	1 911	1 853
	Total - Actual figures	134 683	11 714	12 631	12 030	114 646	10 124	9 688	10 127
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		10 826	12 879	11 267		9 347	10 403	9 266

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Aug-22	1/ Jul-23	1/ Aug-23	2022	Aug-22	1/ Jul-23	1/ Aug-23
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	163 474	12 109	19 547	15 031	70 273	4 542	4 509	3 909
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	153 418	11 519	8 326	6 998	121 713	9 452	5 918	5 291
	Services - Professional	223 539	22 374	29 968	22 579	163 199	18 092	18 132	15 044
	Services - Other	447 767	42 508	36 628	46 401	379 058	36 855	30 622	40 330
	Rent	355 745	30 203	31 425	29 898	261 772	20 940	24 340	22 134
	Money lent	1 034 851	94 391	97 508	96 583	967 961	88 462	91 838	92 181
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	416 381	42 555	43 912	43 749	370 656	38 182	36 153	38 488
	Other debts	627 446	54 963	69 727	68 622	512 980	47 305	51 406	54 785
	Total - Actual figures	3 422 621	310 622	337 041	329 861	2 847 612	263 830	262 918	272 162
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		283 695	317 381	301 669		236 821	260 786	249 383

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 August 2022 and the three months ended August 2023

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Jun – Aug 2022	Actual estimates Jun – Aug 2023	% change between Jun – Aug 2022 and Jun – Aug 2023	Difference between Jun – Aug 2022 and Jun – Aug 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	128 049	127 382	-0,5	-667
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	36 357	36 914	1,5	557
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	908,4	993,6	9,4	85,2

Table 5 – Contribution of the different kinds of debt to the change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended August 2022 and the three months ended August 2023 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	-0,5	-0,1	1,2
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,3	-2,1	-2,9
Services - Professional	1,7	0,9	0,9
Services - Other	-0,8	0,7	2,3
Rent	-0,1	0,5	-0,2
Money lent	-2,2	-4,0	0,8
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	1,5	1,5	2,2
Other debts	0,2	4,3	5,1
Total	-0,5	1,5	9,4

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 from June to August 2022, 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 August 2022	Actual estimates August 2023	% change between August 2022 and August 2023	Difference between August 2022 and August 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	40 793	41 709	2,2	916
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 714	12 030	2,7	316
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	310,6	329,9	6,2	19,3

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	
2022	Aug	7 033	3 323	325	2 782	8 122	2 259	12 815	2 507	1 627	40 793
	Sep	7 941	2 737	538	2 231	8 318	1 715	14 601	2 658	1 625	42 364
	Oct	8 109	2 905	627	2 303	8 275	2 178	13 851	2 544	1 560	42 352
	Nov	10 318	3 390	463	2 483	10 934	1 900	14 812	3 591	1 753	49 644
	Dec	7 259	2 627	426	1 450	5 856	994	8 300	2 244	1 456	30 612
2023	Jan	5 929	2 289	226	2 239	7 652	2 000	10 458	2 414	1 574	34 781
	Feb	8 085	3 583	535	2 663	7 860	1 803	13 088	2 454	1 687	41 758
	Mar	10 472	3 326	577	2 070	7 387	1 940	13 736	2 579	1 679	43 766
	Apr	8 307	2 722	286	1 353	6 537	1 437	11 143	1 836	1 583	35 204
	May	10 243	2 775	577	1 812	8 030	1 883	15 079	3 010	1 805	45 214
	Jun	10 394	2 649	373	2 258	6 827	1 660	14 099	2 747	1 982	42 989
	Jul	9 434	2 643	545	2 623	6 117	1 691	14 552	3 249	1 830	42 684
	Aug	9 678	2 217	488	2 275	6 966	1 740	13 540	3 103	1 702	41 709

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	
2022	Aug	2 508	1 074	123	1 379	1 446	771	2 244	898	1 271	11 714
	Sep	2 792	817	120	1 099	1 104	561	2 414	1 007	1 170	11 084
	Oct	2 925	987	210	1 100	1 237	525	2 215	754	1 090	11 043
	Nov	2 509	1 088	311	1 607	1 362	398	2 529	1 091	1 248	12 143
	Dec	1 574	887	62	811	1 045	325	1 835	1 005	1 025	8 569
2023	Jan	1 739	1 044	139	849	1 057	384	2 130	1 521	1 015	9 878
	Feb	2 557	1 245	184	826	1 518	359	2 106	760	1 109	10 664
	Mar	2 326	1 120	175	622	1 352	671	3 061	1 043	1 169	11 539
	Apr	2 224	1 046	186	722	1 104	379	2 719	707	1 073	10 160
	May	2 995	993	201	1 229	1 176	353	3 488	746	1 206	12 387
	Jun	2 747	874	195	1 401	1 118	624	3 116	976	1 202	12 253
	Jul	2 599	740	209	1 069	1 039	549	4 030	1 260	1 136	12 631
	Aug	2 670	701	198	746	1 405	510	3 152	1 477	1 171	12 030

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	
2022	Aug	80 404	25 292	2 161	25 576	48 822	16 780	83 850	16 494	11 243	310 622
	Sep	91 455	22 358	1 997	18 654	43 461	9 992	74 974	18 322	9 612	290 825
	Oct	89 021	22 811	2 929	21 239	49 796	11 352	93 229	19 080	7 151	316 608
	Nov	73 682	24 375	7 457	30 096	47 946	7 580	105 194	24 549	13 288	334 167
	Dec	57 645	19 558	1 109	12 588	37 464	5 755	62 864	11 058	5 381	213 423
2023	Jan	48 201	23 145	2 715	17 834	41 083	6 105	59 324	24 540	4 736	227 681
	Feb	71 239	26 228	2 548	20 787	55 818	6 367	78 357	15 896	7 331	284 572
	Mar	61 558	24 352	2 314	12 695	61 358	15 708	91 994	16 891	9 394	296 265
	Apr	74 130	27 959	2 422	17 584	39 905	12 650	65 687	15 301	7 228	262 865
	May	96 915	32 086	3 204	22 883	50 094	6 182	95 649	21 852	11 895	340 761
	Jun	87 902	24 636	3 690	26 244	46 216	11 052	90 188	25 969	10 839	326 736
	Jul	80 322	25 666	3 902	23 351	42 213	11 147	111 543	29 700	9 197	337 041
	Aug	78 404	24 411	3 360	15 779	55 587	10 376	106 620	25 324	9 999	329 861

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 August 2023 was 80,3%. The improved collection rates for June and July 2023 were 82,3% respectively.
Rounding-off of figures	8	Where figures have been rounded off, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and the totals.
Seasonal adjustment	9	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: Click to download seasonal adjustment for civil cases for debt February 2022.
Trend cycle	10	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	11	In some cases, Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.
Symbols and abbreviations	12	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 a 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 refer to municipal services (except outstanding assessment rates), plumbers, builders, mechanics, panel beaters and electricians.
Other debts	Other debts refer 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	A 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	A 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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