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Statistical release

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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

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Key results for December 2015

Table A – Key figures for the month of December 2015

Actual estimates	December 2015	% change between December 2014 and December 2015	% change between Oct – Dec 2014 and Oct – Dec 2015	Annual % change between 2014 and 2015
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	41 841	5,3	-11,0	-12,8
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	18 324	-11,8	-7,2	-6,8
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	297,5	0,8	1,9	7,2

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 12,8% in 2015 compared with 2014.

The largest contributions to the 12,8% decrease were civil summonses relating to:

- money lent (contributing -4,5 percentage points);
- services (contributing -2,9 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,8 percentage points) – see Tables 7 and 8.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 6,8% in 2015 compared with 2014.

The largest negative contributions to the 6,8% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing -2,4 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -1,9 percentage points); and
- ‘other’ debts (contributing -1,6 percentage points) – see Tables 7 and 8.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt was 7,2% higher in 2015 compared with 2014.

The largest contributions to the 7,2% increase were the value of judgements relating to:

- promissory notes (contributing 2,1 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing 2,1 percentage points); and
- services (contributing 1,6 percentage points) – see Tables 7 and 8.

In 2015, 289 037 civil judgements for debt amounting to R4 397,8 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- ‘other’ debts (R1 229,1 million or 27,9%);
- money lent (R1 172,1 million or 26,7%); and
- services (R806,3 million or 18,3%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

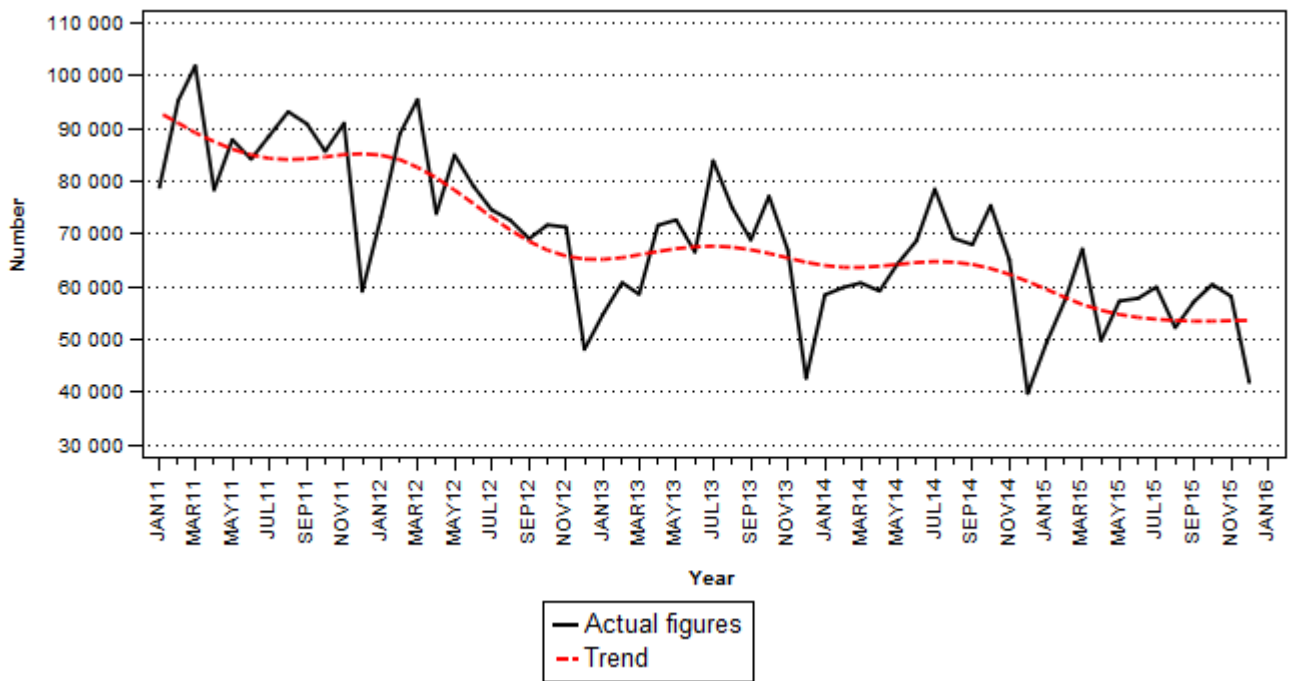
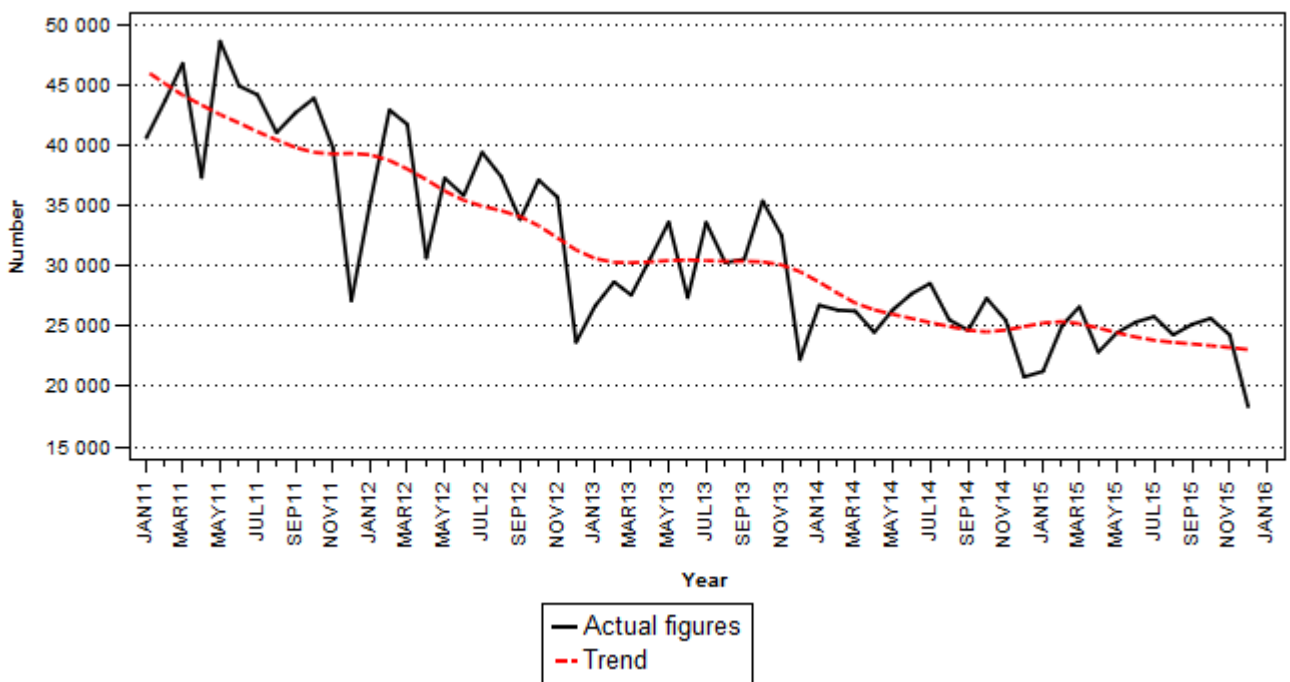


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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			
		2015	Dec-14	1/ Nov-15	1/ Dec-15	2015	Dec-14	1/ Nov-15	1/ Dec-15
Cases recorded	Actual figures	733 514	44 884	62 945	44 158	623 802	39 207	55 146	38 078
	Seasonally adjusted		65 316	60 510	64 487		57 138	53 322	55 579
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	43 664	2 829	3 541	2 772	32 616	2 116	2 640	1 884
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	23 011	2 148	1 798	1 440	18 234	1 751	1 448	1 144
	Services - Professional	84 964	4 791	8 517	5 584	73 636	4 239	7 529	4 785
	Services - Other	110 042	6 653	9 786	7 209	90 635	5 609	7 731	5 770
	Rent	29 255	2 510	2 494	2 007	22 558	2 019	1 940	1 586
	Money lent	164 531	9 347	13 725	10 057	153 342	8 938	12 704	9 357
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	89 682	4 535	7 899	5 927	83 701	4 039	7 462	5 506
	Other debts	123 254	6 906	10 411	6 845	111 399	6 190	9 602	6 074
	Total - Actual figures	668 403	39 719	58 171	41 841	586 121	34 901	51 056	36 106
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		57 390	55 291	60 835		52 120	49 458	54 291

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2015	Dec-14	1/ Nov-15	1/ Dec-15	2015	Dec-14	1/ Nov-15	1/ Dec-15
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	18 545	1 341	1 573	1 232	13 804	1 006	1 161	927
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	7 426	577	579	502	5 752	436	497	422
	Services - Professional	50 913	3 383	4 641	3 018	44 324	2 935	4 173	2 717
	Services - Other	42 221	3 098	3 824	2 686	35 776	2 746	3 227	2 201
	Rent	17 851	1 174	1 406	1 419	14 517	909	1 105	1 136
	Money lent	69 713	5 171	5 218	4 005	63 786	4 901	4 624	3 585
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	27 604	2 264	2 094	1 639	23 763	1 995	1 733	1 397
	Other debts	54 764	3 777	4 971	3 823	50 056	3 513	4 442	3 383
	Total - Actual figures	289 037	20 785	24 306	18 324	251 778	18 441	20 962	15 768
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		26 427	22 845	23 196		23 502	19 662	19 980

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2015	Dec-14	1/ Nov-15	1/ Dec-15	2015	Dec-14	1/ Nov-15	1/ Dec-15
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	275 495	19 658	24 347	16 725	157 824	12 540	14 312	9 585
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	104 326	6 707	9 991	7 198	89 527	5 268	9 024	6 484
	Services - Professional	285 325	23 033	26 660	16 232	230 346	20 519	23 780	14 354
	Services - Other	521 021	32 375	52 975	36 305	400 078	27 202	42 118	26 922
	Rent	304 315	16 761	30 991	19 339	213 394	10 801	19 708	15 079
	Money lent	1 172 061	81 915	92 446	77 927	1 052 905	79 366	82 093	67 592
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	506 174	36 322	42 034	43 991	422 857	30 390	36 656	36 670
	Other debts	1 229 098	78 481	102 966	79 771	841 493	59 698	70 100	54 656
	Total - Actual figures	4 397 815	295 252	382 410	297 488	3 408 424	245 784	297 791	231 342
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		364 362	352 523	365 696		300 953	278 218	281 115

1/ Preliminary.

Table 4 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the fourth quarter of 2014 and the fourth quarter of 2015

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2014	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2015	% change between Oct – Dec 2014 and Oct – Dec 2015	Difference between Oct – Dec 2014 and Oct – Dec 2015
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	180 145	160 398	-11,0	-19 747
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	73 597	68 277	-7,2	-5 320
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 044,8	1 064,3	1,9	19,5

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 fourth quarter of 2014 and the fourth quarter of 2015 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	-1,8	-0,4	0,2
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-1,9	-0,3	0,3
Services - Professional	-0,5	-0,6	-0,2
Services - Other	-0,6	0,0	1,9
Rent	-1,9	1,1	2,0
Money lent	-4,4	-4,3	-1,1
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	1,8	-1,3	1,7
Other debts	-1,7	-1,4	-3,0
Total	-11,0	-7,2	1,9

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 October to December 2014, 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 December 2014	Actual estimates December 2015	% change between December 2014 and December 2015	Difference between December 2014 and December 2015
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	39 719	41 841	5,3	2 122
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	20 785	18 324	-11,8	-2 461
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	295,3	297,5	0,8	2,2

Table 7 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between 2014 and 2015

Actual estimates	Actual estimates 2014	Actual estimates 2015	% change between 2014 and 2015	Difference between 2014 and 2015
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	766 850	668 403	-12,8	-98 447
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	310 185	289 037	-6,8	-21 148
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	4 101,0	4 397,8	7,2	296,8

Table 8 – Contribution of the different kinds of debts to the change in total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between 2014 and 2015 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	-1,1	-0,3
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,5	0,0	0,4
Services - Professional	-1,1	-0,8	0,4
Services - Other	-1,8	-1,6	1,2
Rent	-1,3	0,1	0,7
Money lent	-4,5	-1,9	2,1
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-1,2	0,1	2,1
Other debts	-1,0	-1,6	0,7
Total	-12,8	-6,8	7,2

1/ The contribution (percentage points) is calculated by multiplying the annual percentage change of each kind of debt with the percentage contribution to the total number or value of cases recorded during January to December 2014, divided by 100. Due to rounding off, contributions might not add up to the total.

Table 9 – 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
2014	Dec	7 799	2 266	420	2 578	7 701	3 329	12 097	1 533	1 996	39 719
2015	Jan	7 140	4 573	836	3 513	8 559	2 831	17 487	2 363	2 032	49 334
	Feb	8 706	5 058	854	4 090	8 512	3 285	21 552	3 182	2 315	57 554
	Mar	11 105	5 267	758	3 774	9 790	3 322	26 436	3 976	2 681	67 109
	Apr	8 783	3 847	695	3 207	8 538	2 618	16 889	2 989	2 180	49 746
	May	11 421	4 303	723	3 844	8 002	3 810	19 956	2 972	2 205	57 236
	Jun	10 617	5 205	959	3 314	10 012	2 839	18 966	3 471	2 383	57 766
	Jul	10 353	5 406	843	4 302	9 882	2 618	20 210	3 699	2 594	59 907
	Aug	9 021	4 586	763	4 330	8 050	2 635	17 535	3 023	2 266	52 209
	Sep *	9 108	4 882	727	4 195	9 065	3 373	20 049	* 3 418	2 327	* 57 144
	Oct	10 180	5 430	750	4 361	9 651	3 471	20 896	3 209	2 438	60 386
	Nov	10 506	4 398	735	4 880	8 794	2 864	20 261	3 513	2 220	58 171
Dec	7 353	2 826	682	3 151	8 094	2 115	14 235	1 740	1 645	41 841	

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

* Revised.

Table 10 – 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
2014	Dec	3 339	2 104	225	2 342	3 333	1 131	5 350	1 264	1 697	20 785
2015	Jan	2 852	2 905	321	2 882	3 409	1 205	4 214	1 666	1 801	21 255
	Feb	3 567	3 949	412	2 689	3 559	1 607	5 806	1 591	1 870	25 050
	Mar	4 342	3 578	486	2 653	3 874	1 641	6 259	1 696	2 082	26 611
	Apr	3 287	2 714	500	2 704	3 527	1 241	5 595	1 410	1 864	22 842
	May	3 267	2 943	368	3 475	3 070	1 523	6 300	1 596	1 897	24 439
	Jun	3 869	3 987	407	2 758	3 691	1 631	5 480	1 605	1 908	25 336
	Jul	4 603	3 318	445	2 627	3 921	1 455	6 032	1 542	1 845	25 788
	Aug	4 109	2 620	438	2 855	3 284	1 234	6 246	1 667	1 832	24 285
	Sep	3 830	2 832	488	2 871	4 416	1 324	6 062	1 381	1 950	25 154
	Oct	4 264	3 220	412	3 056	3 892	1 010	6 541	1 785	1 467	25 647
	Nov	4 163	2 966	458	2 600	4 106	1 027	5 938	1 580	1 468	24 306
Dec	3 147	1 454	306	2 030	3 031	1 003	5 053	1 059	1 241	18 324	

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

* Revised.

Table 11 – 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
2014	Dec	57 430	26 458	1 736	39 417	34 484	12 296	92 523	23 160	7 748	295 252
2015	Jan	35 749	39 694	4 390	32 879	37 581	12 314	71 538	28 996	9 362	272 503
	Feb	60 494	62 150	3 894	41 807	39 312	23 497	87 033	35 345	9 539	363 071
	Mar	121 088	58 993	3 709	31 817	45 096	21 926	106 877	23 272	12 546	425 324
	Apr	62 810	47 176	4 018	28 057	39 357	11 619	88 888	28 653	11 625	322 203
	May	74 314	44 532	3 974	48 534	33 327	16 938	100 285	28 835	11 255	361 994
	Jun	81 962	57 301	2 859	26 175	46 373	21 593	91 115	56 095	21 578	405 051
	Jul	86 915	49 682	4 954	30 311	46 133	19 282	104 086	68 679	13 939	423 981
	Aug	95 531	39 286	4 036	33 695	35 588	15 174	105 061	38 913	14 162	381 446
	Sep *	53 835	54 304	6 480	28 910	51 247	16 280	105 994	* 42 981	17 924	* 377 955
	Oct	76 353	52 076	3 667	35 954	45 980	14 400	104 905	37 194	13 860	384 389
	Nov	71 399	47 573	4 916	35 697	55 776	14 894	100 029	41 485	10 641	382 410
Dec	61 750	25 351	2 698	24 175	36 816	13 727	104 642	19 770	8 559	297 488	

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

* Revised.

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 mail, fax and telephone each month from 203 magistrates' offices.
Collection rate	7	The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for December 2015 was 87,2%. The collection rate for November 2015 was 86,2%.
Trend cycle	8	Smoothed seasonally adjusted and trend estimates are generated using the X-11 Seasonal Adjustment Programme.
Publications	9	Users may also wish to refer to the following publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bulletin of Statistics</i> issued quarterly. • <i>South African Statistics</i> issued annually.
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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