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Statistics of civil cases for debt
(Preliminary)

December 2016

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Key results for December 2016

Table A – Key figures for the month of December 2016

Actual estimates	December 2016	% change between December 2015 and December 2016	% change between October – December 2015 and October – December 2016	Annual % change between 2015 and 2016
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	34 801	-16,8	-4,3	-3,4
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	15 010	-18,1	-11,3	-8,5
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	253,8	-14,7	-9,4	-8,5

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 3,4% in 2016 compared with 2015.

The largest contributions to the 3,4% decrease were civil summonses relating to:

- money lent (contributing -1,3 percentage points);
- services (contributing -0,9 of a percentage point);
- 'other' debts (contributing -0,8 of a percentage point); and
- goods sold (contributing -0,8 of a percentage point) – see Tables 7 and 8.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 8,5% in 2016 compared with 2015.

The largest negative contributions to the 8,5% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -3,2 percentage points);
- services (contributing -2,7 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,2 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 8,5% lower in 2016 compared with 2015.

The largest contributions to the 8,5% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing -5,5 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing -1,6 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -0,7 of a percentage point); and
- goods sold (contributing -0,7 of a percentage point) – see Tables 7 and 8.

In 2016, 264 405 civil judgements for debt amounting to R4 024,2 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R1 140,0 million or 28,3%);
- 'other' debts (R989,2 million or 24,6%); and
- services (R785,9 million or 19,5%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

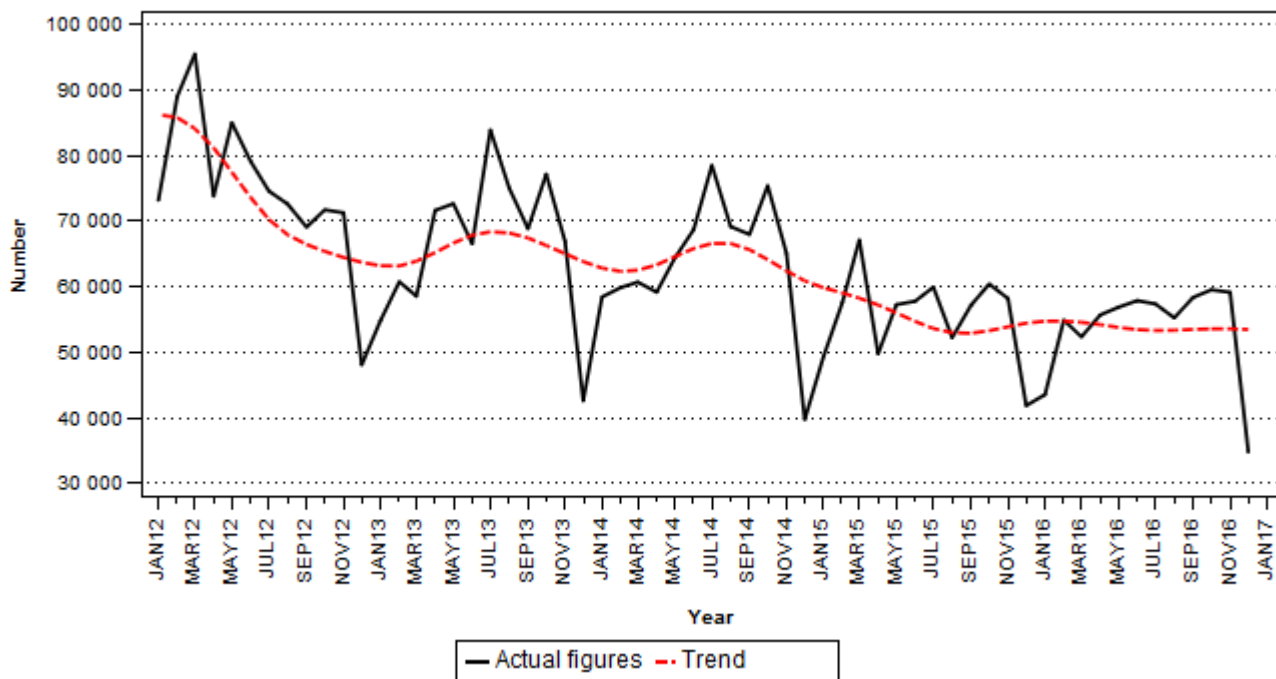
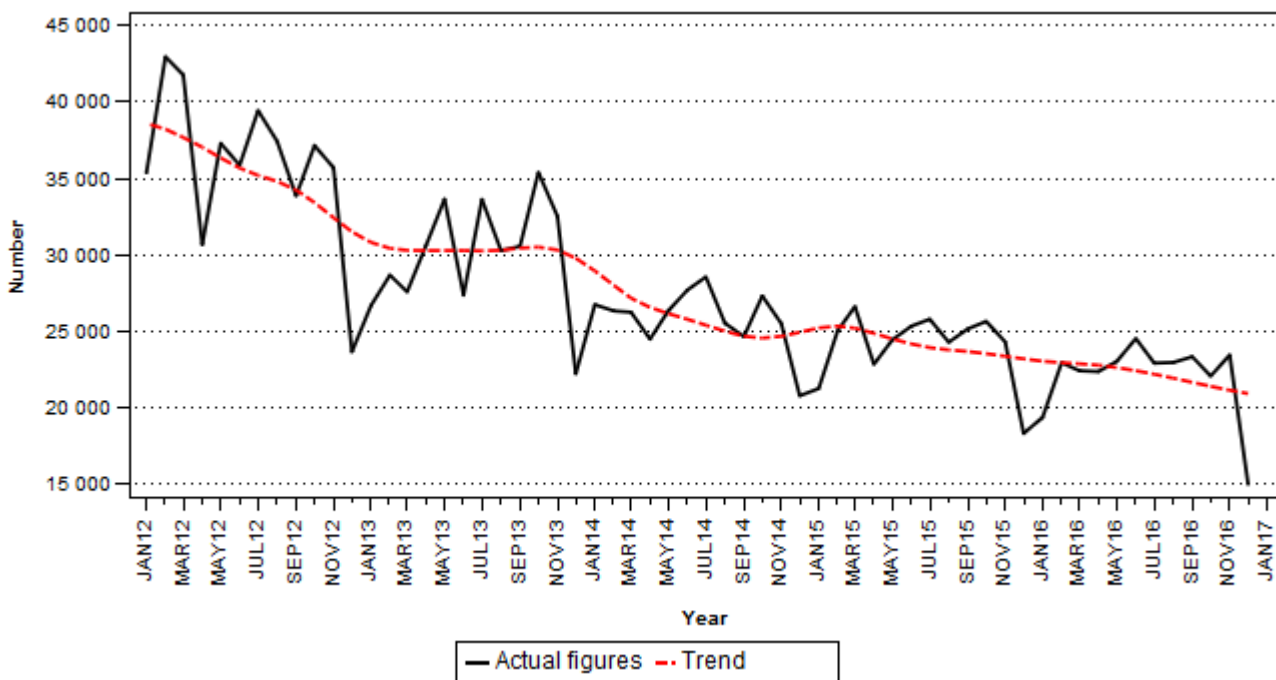


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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	Dec-15	1/ Nov-16	1/ Dec-16	2016	Dec-15	1/ Nov-16	1/ Dec-16
Cases recorded	Actual figures	699 707	44 158	65 619	37 485	601 781	38 078	56 795	31 900
	Seasonally adjusted		63 244	61 826	55 582		53 680	51 984	47 190
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	39 654	2 772	3 028	2 075	29 917	1 884	2 190	1 454
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	21 885	1 440	1 826	1 172	16 505	1 144	1 500	886
	Services - Professional	83 002	5 584	7 627	4 200	72 229	4 785	6 689	3 542
	Services - Other	106 247	7 209	9 646	6 249	89 703	5 770	8 164	5 296
	Rent	31 195	2 007	2 816	1 629	24 197	1 586	2 197	1 206
	Money lent	155 657	10 057	15 051	8 130	145 457	9 357	14 021	7 550
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	90 098	5 927	8 649	4 649	83 543	5 506	7 683	4 218
	Other debts	117 699	6 845	10 481	6 697	103 698	6 074	9 143	5 614
	Total - Actual figures	645 437	41 841	59 124	34 801	565 249	36 106	51 587	29 766
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		60 043	54 650	51 842		52 483	47 914	45 070

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2016	Dec-15	1/ Nov-16	1/ Dec-16	2016	Dec-15	1/ Nov-16	1/ Dec-16
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	17 070	1 232	1 293	993	12 945	927	991	710
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	7 067	502	593	481	6 039	422	511	404
	Services - Professional	44 021	3 018	3 364	2 471	39 099	2 717	2 945	2 033
	Services - Other	41 295	2 686	3 560	2 333	35 579	2 201	3 120	1 971
	Rent	18 314	1 419	2 213	972	15 180	1 136	1 914	764
	Money lent	60 466	4 005	6 114	2 962	55 399	3 585	5 719	2 667
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	25 006	1 639	2 571	1 574	21 445	1 397	2 245	1 300
	Other debts	51 166	3 823	3 742	3 224	45 483	3 383	3 319	2 795
	Total - Actual figures	264 405	18 324	23 450	15 010	231 169	15 768	20 764	12 644
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		23 257	22 290	19 702		19 836	19 616	16 601

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2016	Dec-15	1/ Nov-16	1/ Dec-16	2016	Dec-15	1/ Nov-16	1/ Dec-16
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	254 271	16 725	22 546	15 872	131 361	9 585	12 743	7 708
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	96 610	7 198	8 437	9 225	83 937	6 484	7 025	8 510
	Services - Professional	243 528	16 232	19 709	15 233	208 912	14 354	16 514	12 906
	Services - Other	542 376	36 305	48 993	35 212	432 448	26 922	40 368	26 841
	Rent	323 741	19 339	38 177	18 693	225 849	15 079	28 963	12 413
	Money lent	1 140 005	77 927	113 117	78 063	1 029 630	67 592	104 601	70 983
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	434 443	43 991	45 184	25 011	363 621	36 670	37 360	19 847
	Other debts	989 214	79 771	74 362	56 468	722 670	54 656	59 839	42 673
	Total - Actual figures	4 024 188	297 488	370 525	253 777	3 198 428	231 342	307 413	201 881
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		359 087	328 226	316 493		276 711	275 163	251 564

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 2015 and the fourth quarter of 2016

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2015	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2016	% change between Oct – Dec 2015 and Oct – Dec 2016	Difference between Oct – Dec 2015 and Oct – Dec 2016
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	160 398	153 423	-4,3	-6 975
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	68 277	60 532	-11,3	-7 745
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 064,3	964,5	-9,4	-99,8

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 fourth quarter of 2015 and the fourth quarter of 2016 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	-0,9	-1,1	-0,9
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,2	0,0	0,0
Services - Professional	-2,1	-4,2	-1,2
Services - Other	-1,0	-2,8	-2,1
Rent	0,1	0,4	0,3
Money lent	0,8	-0,1	1,9
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-0,7	0,8	-1,3
Other debts	-0,2	-4,3	-6,2
Total	-4,3	-11,3	-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 during October to December 2015, 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 2015	Actual estimates December 2016	% change between December 2015 and December 2016	Difference between December 2015 and December 2016
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	41 841	34 801	-16,8	-7 040
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	18 324	15 010	-18,1	-3 314
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	297,5	253,8	-14,7	-43,7

Table 7 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between 2015 and 2016

Actual estimates	Actual estimates 2015	Actual estimates 2016	% change between 2015 and 2016	Difference between 2015 and 2016
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	668 403	645 437	-3,4	-22 966
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	289 037	264 405	-8,5	-24 632
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	4 397,8	4 024,2	-8,5	-373,6

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 2015 and 2016 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	-0,5	-0,5
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,2	-0,1	-0,2
Services - Professional	-0,3	-2,4	-1,0
Services - Other	-0,6	-0,3	0,5
Rent	0,3	0,2	0,4
Money lent	-1,3	-3,2	-0,7
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	0,1	-0,9	-1,6
Other debts	-0,8	-1,2	-5,5
Total	-3,4	-8,5	-8,5

1/ The contribution (percentage points) is calculated by multiplying the annual percentage change of each kind of debt by the percentage contribution to the total number or value of cases recorded during January to December 2015, 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
2015	Dec	7 353	2 826	682	3 151	8 094	2 115	14 235	1 740	1 645	41 841
2016	Jan	7 050	3 004	577	3 678	6 501	2 232	15 769	2 833	1 881	43 525
	Feb	10 083	4 413	656	4 331	8 300	2 514	19 548	2 732	2 309	54 886
	Mar	9 812	4 316	773	4 062	8 978	2 948	16 805	2 785	1 849	52 328
	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	2 842	5 978	1 243	12 574	2 009	1 733	34 801

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

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
2015	Dec	3 147	1 454	306	2 030	3 031	1 003	5 053	1 059	1 241	18 324
2016	Jan	2 773	1 950	344	1 869	4 108	885	4 417	1 627	1 396	19 369
	Feb	4 763	2 760	442	2 247	3 341	932	5 594	1 490	1 378	22 947
	Mar	4 108	2 604	319	2 653	3 720	1 380	4 994	1 284	1 356	22 418
	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	1 323	2 698	715	4 488	943	1 046	15 010

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

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
2015	Dec	61 750	25 351	2 698	24 175	36 816	13 727	104 642	19 770	8 559	297 488
2016	Jan	46 639	34 713	2 485	24 477	35 414	11 661	72 696	37 228	11 414	276 727
	Feb	80 249	48 557	9 865	26 294	35 541	13 735	96 530	37 966	12 237	360 974
	Mar	73 597	51 422	3 985	35 333	45 669	12 418	96 545	29 566	13 435	361 970
	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	18 335	38 753	10 860	74 860	24 034	5 811	253 777

1/ Latest two 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 December 2016 was 86,2%. The improved collection rate for November 2016 was 85,7%.
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.
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.

