

**STATISTICAL RELEASE**  
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**Statistics of civil cases for debt**  
**(Preliminary)**

**December 2018**

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## Key results for December 2018

**Table A – Key figures for the month of December 2018**

Actual estimates	December 2018	% change between December 2017 and December 2018	% change between October – December 2017 and October – December 2018	Annual % change between 2017 and 2018
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	30 066	-20,0	-11,2	-6,4
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 672	-15,1	-2,7	-5,7
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	240,9	-14,2	-7,6	-2,5

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 6,4% in 2018 compared with 2017.

The largest contributions to the 6,4% decrease were civil summonses relating to:

- money lent (contributing -2,2 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing -2,2 percentage points); and
- services (contributing -1,0 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 5,7% in 2018 compared with 2017.

The largest negative contributions to the 5,7% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -3,9 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing -1,2 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,0 percentage point) – see Tables 7 and 8.

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt was 2,5% lower in 2018 compared with 2017. The largest contributors to the 2,5% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -4,0 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -1,1 percentage points) – see Tables 7 and 8.

In 2018, 215 852 civil judgements for debt amounting to R3 850,4 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R1 006,4 million or 26,1%);
- 'other' debts (R853,6 million or 22,2%); and
- services (R780,1 million or 20,3%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

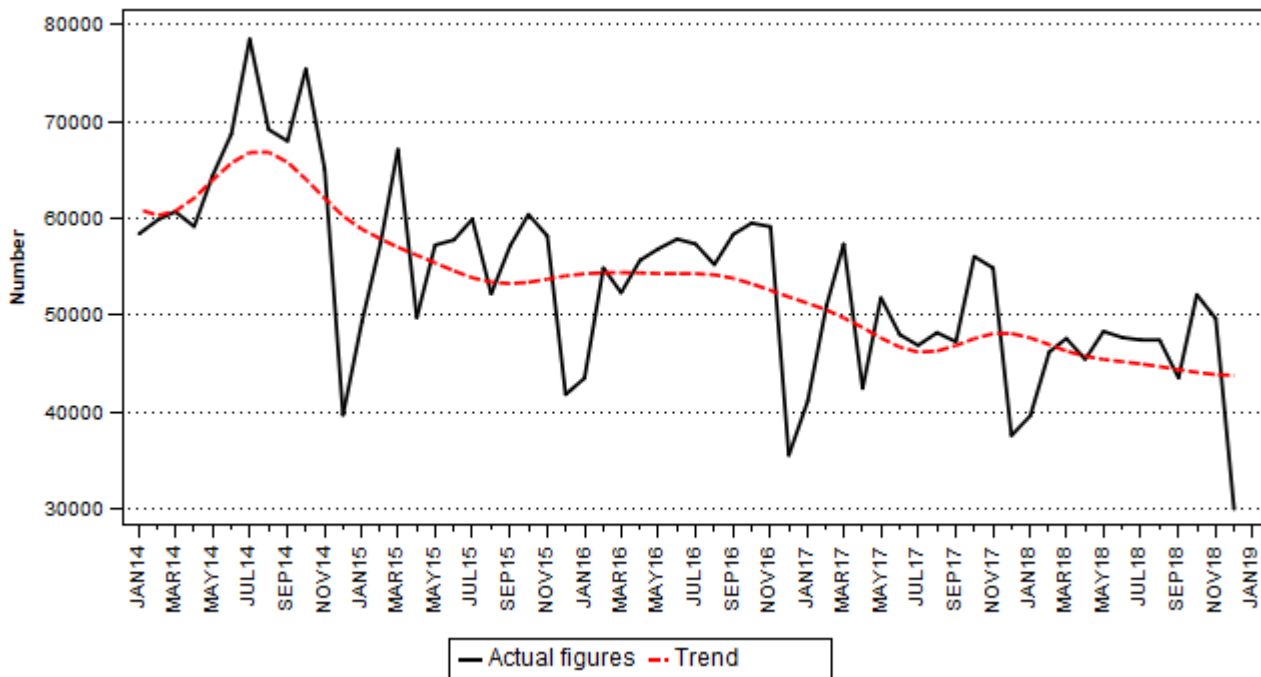
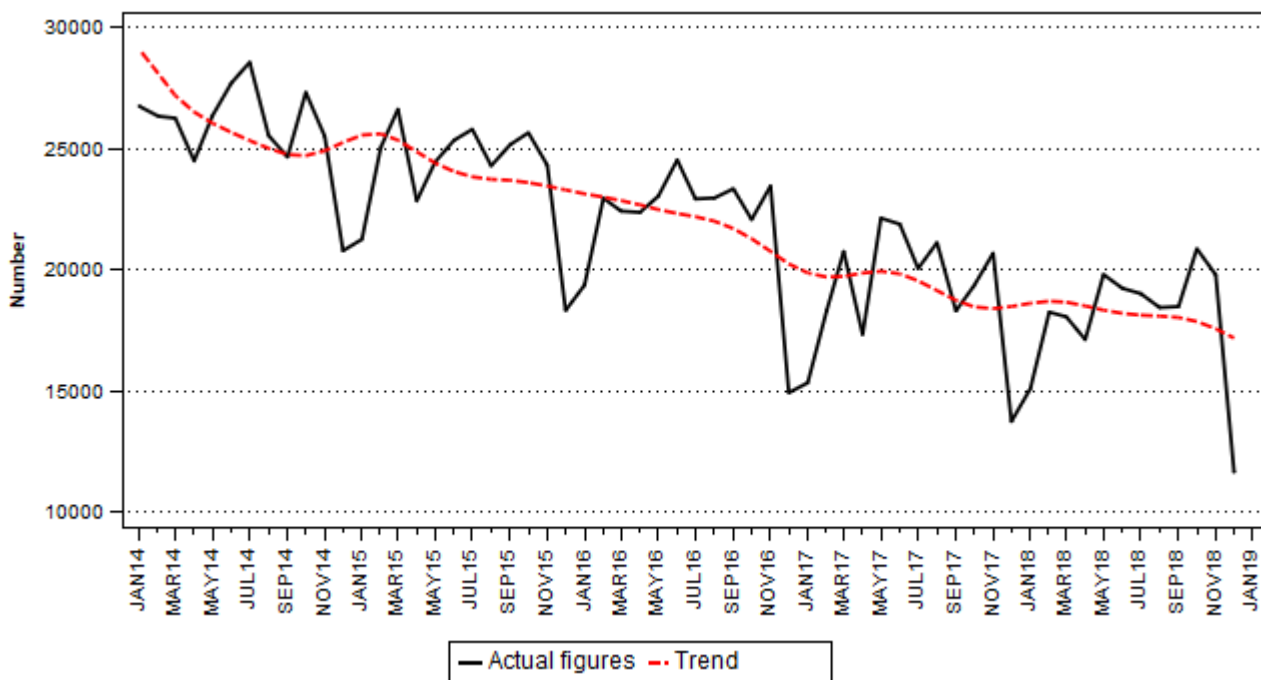


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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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			
		2018	Dec-17	1/ Nov-18	1/ Dec-18	2018	Dec-17	1/ Nov-18	1/ Dec-18
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>586 044</b>	<b>41 039</b>	<b>56 868</b>	<b>32 376</b>	<b>509 320</b>	<b>35 034</b>	<b>49 331</b>	<b>27 106</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		59 072	48 692	46 693		50 519	41 962	39 511
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	31 242	2 483	2 764	1 720	22 554	1 859	2 008	1 188
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	20 535	1 245	1 845	1 386	16 165	943	1 462	1 098
	Services - Professional	67 710	5 319	6 009	3 586	59 552	4 664	5 279	3 060
	Services - Other	96 159	6 717	8 956	5 732	81 888	5 716	7 711	4 759
	Rent	30 772	2 196	3 026	1 708	23 335	1 679	2 428	1 238
	Money lent	118 482	7 496	11 340	6 208	110 814	6 942	10 696	5 813
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	69 323	4 745	6 035	3 581	63 565	4 332	5 457	3 206
	Other debts	111 080	7 402	9 685	6 145	100 306	6 578	8 559	5 514
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>545 303</b>	<b>37 603</b>	<b>49 660</b>	<b>30 066</b>	<b>478 179</b>	<b>32 713</b>	<b>43 600</b>	<b>25 876</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		54 481	43 670	43 632		46 448	38 308	37 356

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2018	Dec-17	1/ Nov-18	1/ Dec-18	2018	Dec-17	1/ Nov-18	1/ Dec-18	
<b>Number of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	13 611	858	1 310	753	10 322	603	1 005	567
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	6 549	381	575	358	5 631	333	489	283
	Services - Professional	34 167	2 056	3 175	1 772	31 679	1 732	2 985	1 616
	Services - Other	36 368	2 243	3 496	2 211	32 174	1 965	3 139	1 938
	Rent	21 172	1 057	2 136	1 106	17 823	858	1 780	924
	Money lent	41 397	2 987	3 616	2 310	37 387	2 667	3 258	2 068
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	23 050	1 860	1 884	1 371	20 133	1 614	1 605	1 151
	Other debts	39 538	2 307	3 601	1 791	36 468	2 099	3 369	1 616
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>215 852</b>	<b>13 749</b>	<b>19 793</b>	<b>11 672</b>	<b>191 617</b>	<b>11 871</b>	<b>17 630</b>	<b>10 163</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		18 766	17 606	16 023		16 737	15 728	14 374

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2018	Dec-17	1/ Nov-18	1/ Dec-18	2018	Dec-17	1/ Nov-18	1/ Dec-18	
<b>Value of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	219 134	15 124	22 965	12 336	119 206	7 516	12 371	7 181
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	129 503	8 602	13 331	6 449	111 578	8 082	11 437	5 038
	Services - Professional	239 683	16 099	22 210	12 148	215 296	14 406	20 392	10 812
	Services - Other	540 377	35 374	55 812	31 175	439 953	29 428	46 769	26 412
	Rent	373 679	27 505	40 102	25 963	277 197	22 087	28 604	20 969
	Money lent	1 006 433	82 255	81 587	69 402	907 665	75 423	72 769	62 797
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	488 045	39 348	35 291	26 557	430 140	35 924	29 252	24 462
	Other debts	853 576	56 416	53 708	56 889	565 110	45 445	41 048	50 922
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>3 850 430</b>	<b>280 723</b>	<b>325 006</b>	<b>240 919</b>	<b>3 066 145</b>	<b>238 311</b>	<b>262 642</b>	<b>208 593</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		356 141	302 231	302 056		299 739	246 529	259 307

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 2017 and the fourth quarter of 2018**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2017	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2018	% change between Oct – Dec 2017 and Oct – Dec 2018	Difference between Oct – Dec 2017 and Oct – Dec 2018
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	148 530	131 851	-11,2	-16 679
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	53 786	52 331	-2,7	-1 455
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	976,3	902,3	-7,6	-74,0

**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 2017 and the fourth quarter of 2018 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	-1,2	-0,4	-0,9
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,0	0,0	-0,1
Services - Professional	-1,4	-0,4	-2,0
Services - Other	-1,8	1,6	1,0
Rent	-0,7	0,8	0,1
Money lent	-1,8	-2,0	-1,6
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-1,9	-1,6	-1,9
Other debts	-2,5	-0,7	-2,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>-11,2</b>	<b>-2,7</b>	<b>-7,6</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 October to December 2017, 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 2017	Actual estimates December 2018	% change between December 2017 and December 2018	Difference between December 2017 and December 2018
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	37 603	30 066	-20,0	-7 537
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	13 749	11 672	-15,1	-2 077
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	280,7	240,9	-14,2	-39,8

**Table 7 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between 2017 and 2018**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates 2017	Actual estimates 2018	% change between 2017 and 2018	Difference between 2017 and 2018
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	582 743	545 303	-6,4	-37 440
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	229 006	215 852	-5,7	-13 154
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	3 948,5	3 850,4	-2,5	-98,1

**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 2017 and 2018 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	-0,6
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,1	-0,1	-0,1
Services - Professional	-0,6	-0,7	-0,5
Services - Other	-0,4	0,4	1,2
Rent	-0,2	1,3	0,5
Money lent	-2,2	-3,9	-4,0
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-2,2	-1,2	-1,1
Other debts	-0,1	-1,0	2,1
<b>Total</b>	<b>-6,4</b>	<b>-5,7</b>	<b>-2,5</b>

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 2017, 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
2017	Dec	6 850	2 203	384	1 956	7 041	1 146	14 575	1 888	1 560	<b>37 603</b>
2018	Jan	6 312	3 035	586	2 312	7 128	1 678	14 999	1 899	1 707	<b>39 656</b>
	Feb	8 192	3 608	801	3 278	7 521	1 888	16 875	2 259	1 798	<b>46 220</b>
	Mar	8 202	3 446	651	3 249	8 353	2 093	17 527	2 058	2 036	<b>47 615</b>
	Apr	7 784	3 546	507	3 239	7 737	1 892	16 210	2 547	2 001	<b>45 463</b>
	May	8 089	3 981	778	3 198	9 222	2 269	16 442	2 378	1 979	<b>48 336</b>
	Jun	7 016	4 209	763	3 935	8 951	2 141	16 032	2 503	2 155	<b>47 705</b>
	Jul	8 825	3 495	596	3 425	9 351	1 932	15 648	2 228	1 958	<b>47 458</b>
	Aug	8 355	2 949	641	2 938	9 994	1 887	16 629	2 103	1 959	<b>47 455</b>
	Sep	7 411	2 731	505	2 720	8 998	1 910	15 325	2 127	1 817	<b>43 544</b>
	Oct	9 406	3 091	933	3 085	11 267	2 320	17 819	2 122	2 082	<b>52 125</b>
	Nov	9 785	3 571	746	3 552	10 539	1 964	15 407	2 114	1 982	<b>49 660</b>
Dec	4 830	1 737	268	2 304	5 272	1 449	11 487	1 229	1 490	<b>30 066</b>	

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
2017	Dec	2 311	1 409	238	1 329	2 311	658	3 575	891	1 027	<b>13 749</b>
2018	Jan	1 738	2 247	284	1 910	2 919	708	3 494	779	1 020	<b>15 099</b>
	Feb	2 355	2 611	409	1 992	3 775	661	3 925	1 401	1 125	<b>18 254</b>
	Mar	3 141	2 324	360	1 839	3 736	518	3 761	1 233	1 148	<b>18 060</b>
	Apr	2 768	1 790	217	1 686	3 737	716	3 874	1 187	1 149	<b>17 124</b>
	May	3 639	2 405	416	1 823	4 684	741	3 866	1 063	1 167	<b>19 804</b>
	Jun	2 917	2 595	313	2 108	4 591	703	3 774	1 052	1 182	<b>19 235</b>
	Jul	3 382	1 732	263	1 923	4 447	944	4 009	1 188	1 130	<b>19 018</b>
	Aug	2 834	1 637	313	1 968	5 155	890	3 597	817	1 233	<b>18 444</b>
	Sep	2 649	1 595	236	1 717	5 055	817	4 282	982	1 150	<b>18 483</b>
	Oct	2 985	1 853	395	2 146	5 748	844	4 477	1 087	1 331	<b>20 866</b>
	Nov	2 894	2 028	329	1 814	6 169	862	3 553	1 023	1 121	<b>19 793</b>
Dec	2 208	859	210	694	2 037	860	3 090	646	1 068	<b>11 672</b>	

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
2017	Dec	65 295	30 452	2 864	21 973	33 524	12 241	87 845	21 737	4 792	<b>280 723</b>
2018	Jan	41 641	39 039	2 615	27 666	39 368	11 274	72 582	27 316	6 535	<b>268 036</b>
	Feb	56 659	46 144	4 346	27 455	47 848	13 211	97 031	35 023	7 659	<b>335 376</b>
	Mar	74 656	45 858	4 088	27 347	42 710	9 780	90 418	26 384	7 558	<b>328 799</b>
	Apr	70 875	33 123	2 609	20 375	42 732	13 499	85 918	28 688	8 079	<b>305 898</b>
	May	78 913	40 113	7 774	24 135	58 491	15 277	73 192	23 335	7 438	<b>328 668</b>
	Jun	63 234	41 702	4 215	32 411	51 923	13 953	90 076	27 407	6 669	<b>331 590</b>
	Jul	74 915	34 322	3 959	23 890	41 316	15 472	99 869	157 305	7 788	<b>458 836</b>
	Aug	74 691	33 048	4 018	26 721	48 945	15 458	69 193	18 628	9 303	<b>300 005</b>
	Sep	62 469	31 388	2 920	21 812	42 706	14 675	87 495	19 452	8 050	<b>290 967</b>
	Oct	75 849	47 070	4 544	24 783	49 987	15 821	87 495	20 048	10 733	<b>336 330</b>
	Nov	75 507	38 691	3 346	22 775	63 258	13 554	78 521	23 363	5 991	<b>325 006</b>
Dec	65 392	25 529	3 009	10 129	28 238	16 435	62 417	23 842	5 928	<b>240 919</b>	

1/ Latest two 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 December 2018 was 83,7%. The improved collection rate for November 2018 was 84,2%.
<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 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: <a href="#">Click to download seasonal adjustment for civil cases for debt.</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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