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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

December 2019

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Key results for December 2019

Actual estimates	December 2019	% change between December 2018 and December 2019	% change between October – December 2018 and October – December 2019	Annual % change between 2018 and 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	32 377	6,6	2,4	1,1
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	12 867	7,3	-14,0	-7,4
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	268,6	9,9	5,0	-3,1

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt increased by 1,1% in 2019 compared with 2018.

The main positive contributors to the 1,1% increase were civil summonses relating to:

- money lent (contributing 3,5 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing 0,6 of a percentage point); and
- 'other' debts (contributing 0,6 of a percentage point).

Services (contributing -3,3 percentage points) was the largest negative contributor – see Tables 7 and 8.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 7,4% in 2019 compared with 2018.

The largest contributors to the 7,4% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- promissory notes (contributing -2,7 percentage points);
- services (contributing -2,6 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,2 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -1,1 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 3,1% lower in 2019 compared with 2018. The largest negative contributor to the decrease was 'other' debts (contributing -5,3 percentage points) – see Tables 7 and 8.

In 2019, 200 166 civil judgements for debt amounting to R3 736,3 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R1 048,7 million or 28,1%);
- services (R793,4 million or 21,2%); and
- 'other' debts (R648,6 million or 17,4%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

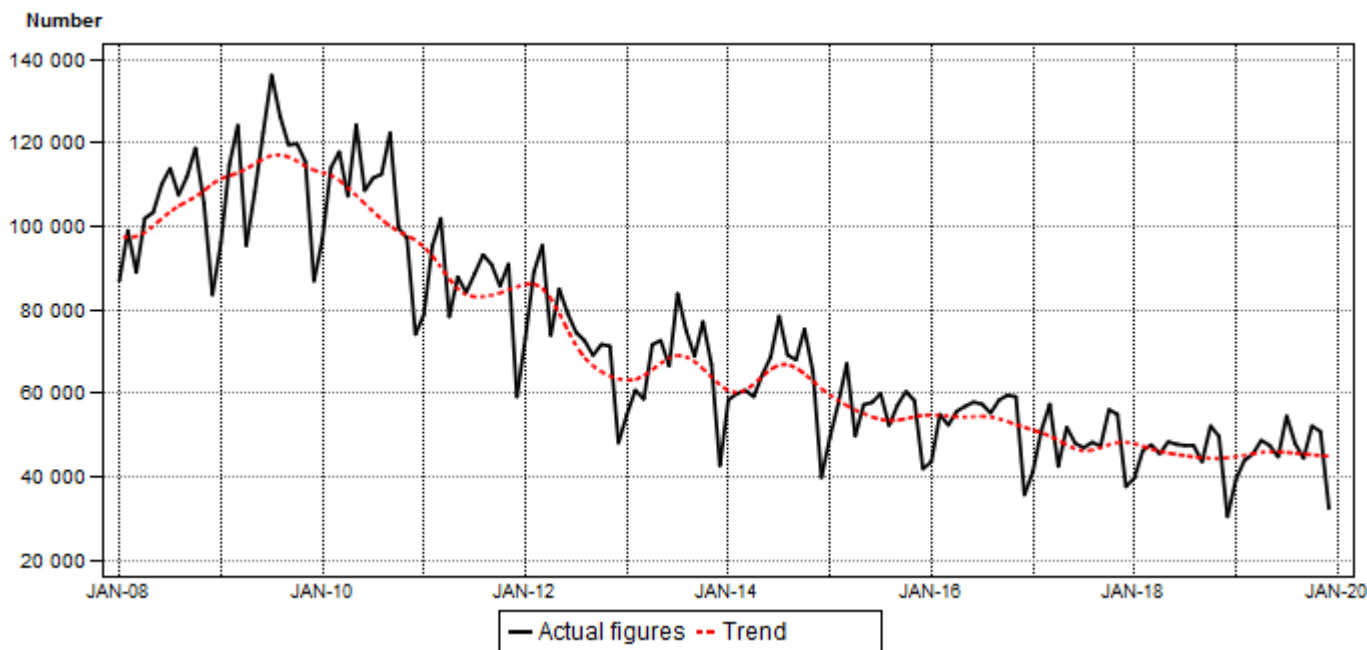
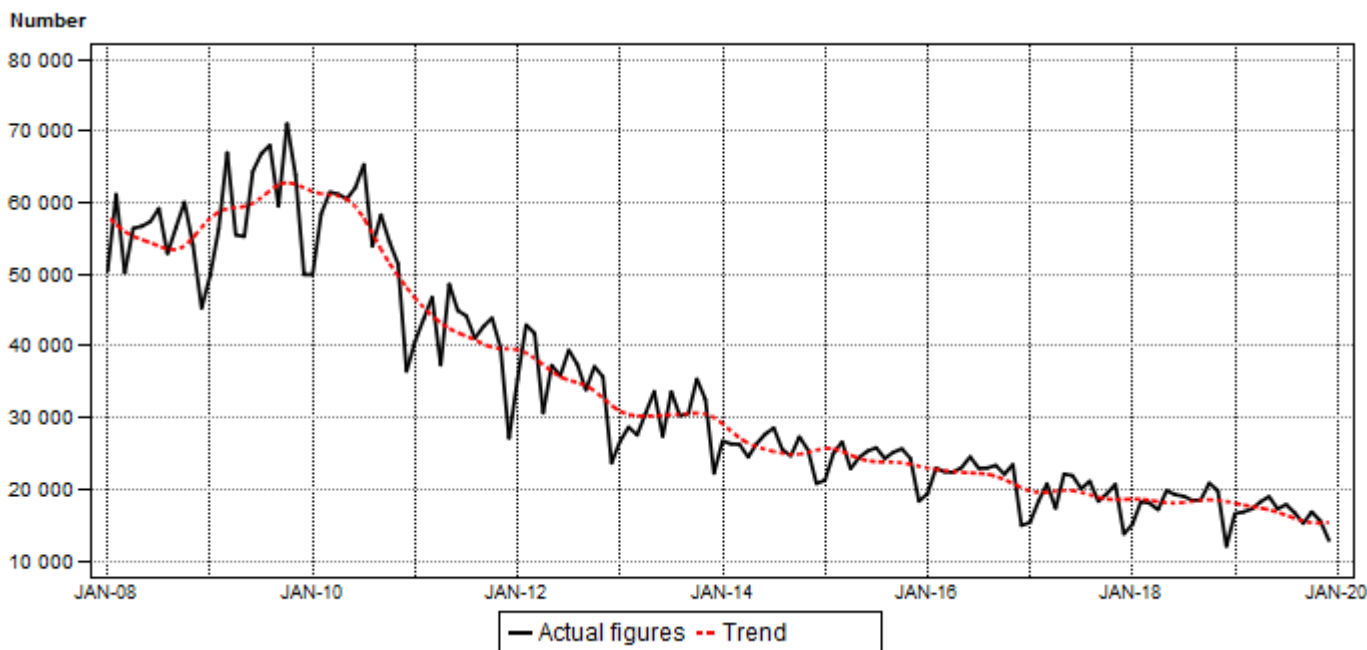


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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			
		2019	Dec-18	1/ Nov-19	1/ Dec-19	2019	Dec-18	1/ Nov-19	1/ Dec-19
Cases recorded	Actual figures	573 505	32 220	52 275	34 073	501 837	26 950	45 352	29 868
	Seasonally adjusted		46 487	46 643	47 559		39 218	40 674	42 104
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	32 869	1 757	2 748	1 846	24 773	1 225	2 093	1 387
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	17 827	1 408	1 315	1 101	14 851	1 120	1 111	935
	Services - Professional	61 914	3 615	5 913	3 420	54 906	3 089	5 299	3 011
	Services - Other	84 337	5 776	7 155	4 849	72 858	4 803	6 014	4 293
	Rent	29 859	1 757	2 822	2 019	23 382	1 287	2 241	1 550
	Money lent	137 744	6 269	13 235	8 165	129 914	5 874	12 377	7 735
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	72 484	3 604	7 140	4 729	67 528	3 229	6 802	4 369
	Other debts	114 445	6 189	10 462	6 248	102 355	5 558	9 414	5 436
	Total - Actual figures	551 479	30 375	50 790	32 377	490 567	26 185	45 351	28 716
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		44 059	46 358	44 877		38 179	41 500	39 898

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2019	Dec-18	1/ Nov-19	1/ Dec-19	2019	Dec-18	1/ Nov-19	1/ Dec-19	
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	14 253	810	1 047	873	10 594	624	741	620
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	6 276	374	403	360	5 488	299	345	294
	Services - Professional	29 978	1 799	2 437	1 657	27 459	1 643	2 185	1 465
	Services - Other	35 194	2 247	2 782	2 400	31 643	1 974	2 402	2 220
	Rent	18 799	1 125	1 513	1 376	15 527	943	1 269	1 190
	Money lent	41 327	2 405	3 187	2 636	37 645	2 163	2 753	2 381
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	17 343	1 404	1 223	1 048	15 511	1 184	1 150	933
	Other debts	36 996	1 829	2 981	2 517	34 197	1 654	2 749	2 336
	Total - Actual figures	200 166	11 993	15 573	12 867	178 064	10 484	13 594	11 439
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		16 421	14 982	16 950		14 763	13 207	15 487

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2019	Dec-18	1/ Nov-19	1/ Dec-19	2019	Dec-18	1/ Nov-19	1/ Dec-19	
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	246 154	12 714	25 585	11 273	136 662	7 558	10 759	5 709
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	139 841	6 603	14 450	7 670	120 869	5 193	12 422	5 912
	Services - Professional	236 936	12 425	27 495	15 971	209 228	11 090	24 955	12 990
	Services - Other	556 418	31 775	48 458	52 145	464 934	27 013	36 866	47 155
	Rent	376 750	26 131	38 400	31 177	271 115	21 137	26 856	26 379
	Money lent	1 048 737	70 483	92 483	74 724	962 684	63 878	85 044	69 926
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	482 897	26 903	42 266	35 248	425 567	24 808	39 536	29 804
	Other debts	648 602	57 369	55 396	40 378	532 742	51 402	46 067	33 134
	Total - Actual figures	3 736 335	244 403	344 533	268 586	3 123 801	212 079	282 505	231 009
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		305 189	325 070	326 970		259 109	272 945	277 373

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 2018 and the fourth quarter of 2019

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2018	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2019	% change between Oct – Dec 2018 and Oct – Dec 2019	Difference between Oct – Dec 2018 and Oct – Dec 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	132 160	135 288	2,4	3 128
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	52 652	45 261	-14,0	-7 391
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	905,7	951,1	5,0	45,4

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 2018 and the fourth quarter of 2019 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	0,3	-0,1	0,7
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-1,2	-0,5	0,7
Services - Professional	-1,1	-2,6	1,1
Services - Other	-2,5	-3,2	0,7
Rent	0,0	-1,0	0,6
Money lent	3,7	-1,2	1,9
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	1,7	-4,0	1,3
Other debts	1,5	-1,5	-2,1
Total	2,4	-14,0	5,0

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 2018, 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 2018	Actual estimates December 2019	% change between December 2018 and December 2019	Difference between December 2018 and December 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	30 375	32 377	6,6	2 002
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 993	12 867	7,3	874
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	244,4	268,6	9,9	24,2

Table 7 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between 2018 and 2019

Actual estimates	Actual estimates 2018	Actual estimates 2019	% change between 2018 and 2019	Difference between 2018 and 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	545 612	551 479	1,1	5 867
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	216 173	200 166	-7,4	-16 007
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	3 853,9	3 736,3	-3,1	-117,6

Table 8 – Contribution of the different kinds of debts to the change in total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between 2018 and 2019 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	0,3	0,3	0,7
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,5	-0,1	0,3
Services - Professional	-1,1	-2,0	-0,1
Services - Other	-2,2	-0,6	0,4
Rent	-0,2	-1,1	0,1
Money lent	3,5	-0,1	1,1
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	0,6	-2,7	-0,1
Other debts	0,6	-1,2	-5,3
Total	1,1	-7,4	-3,1

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 2018, 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
2018	Dec	4 823	2 053	268	2 304	5 272	1 449	11 487	1 229	1 490	30 375
2019	Jan	6 427	2 464	487	2 846	8 654	1 706	13 032	1 844	1 755	39 215
	Feb	7 570	3 129	568	3 006	8 147	1 925	15 337	2 256	1 942	43 880
	Mar	6 730	3 065	835	3 692	8 503	1 800	16 654	2 061	2 035	45 375
	Apr	7 187	3 186	646	3 022	10 048	2 782	17 253	2 483	2 069	48 676
	May	7 265	3 746	725	3 145	9 303	2 675	16 212	2 432	1 956	47 459
	Jun	7 317	3 754	711	3 274	8 213	2 179	15 139	2 151	1 975	44 713
	Jul	9 252	3 832	774	3 216	11 076	2 662	18 660	2 818	2 261	54 551
	Aug	7 831	3 323	546	3 027	8 995	2 314	17 868	2 212	1 826	47 942
	Sep	7 212	3 119	560	2 667	8 636	2 459	15 818	1 973	1 936	44 380
	Oct	9 879	3 826	687	3 129	9 770	2 712	17 711	2 478	1 929	52 121
	Nov	8 087	3 689	613	3 985	9 706	2 054	18 575	2 164	1 917	50 790
Dec	6 876	2 295	451	1 822	6 989	1 448	9 454	1 456	1 586	32 377	

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
2018	Dec	2 204	1 184	210	694	2 037	860	3 090	646	1 068	11 993
2019	Jan	2 318	1 599	220	1 480	5 132	779	3 354	617	1 101	16 600
	Feb	2 833	1 651	322	2 463	3 408	869	3 343	758	1 171	16 818
	Mar	2 473	1 280	257	2 216	4 453	683	3 705	1 032	1 148	17 247
	Apr	2 484	1 524	262	2 453	4 987	783	3 761	803	1 183	18 240
	May	3 200	2 127	318	2 361	4 312	943	3 296	1 195	1 221	18 973
	Jun	2 213	1 785	318	3 163	4 324	731	2 739	884	1 092	17 249
	Jul	2 744	1 658	463	1 785	4 909	1 040	2 931	1 118	1 213	17 861
	Aug	2 724	1 602	442	1 890	4 143	880	2 863	871	1 276	16 691
	Sep	2 147	1 241	283	2 649	3 899	735	2 413	739	1 120	15 226
	Oct	3 188	1 573	259	2 091	3 826	737	2 838	986	1 323	16 821
	Nov	2 503	1 799	307	1 922	3 704	760	2 768	697	1 113	15 573
Dec	2 143	1 011	208	1 537	3 565	573	1 886	852	1 092	12 867	

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
2018	Dec	65 384	29 021	3 009	10 129	28 238	16 435	62 417	23 842	5 928	244 403
2019	Jan	61 940	29 612	3 672	17 303	42 169	14 067	83 221	13 616	5 953	271 553
	Feb	67 923	27 286	3 505	29 563	49 874	15 633	63 147	17 402	6 833	281 166
	Mar	52 138	25 605	2 714	20 527	59 093	9 996	86 849	12 763	6 526	276 211
	Apr	63 775	32 847	4 800	31 593	45 766	12 953	83 183	15 976	7 528	298 421
	May	72 314	36 751	3 280	26 065	63 211	15 087	92 893	25 640	6 870	342 111
	Jun	50 371	28 644	4 389	27 475	75 331	15 082	93 955	14 793	5 708	315 748
	Jul	62 252	35 695	4 871	23 859	72 248	20 435	107 556	23 062	8 836	358 814
	Aug	63 038	28 396	4 564	25 392	61 788	14 840	95 555	25 268	9 700	328 541
	Sep	50 935	25 909	5 540	28 753	60 945	13 709	98 527	20 770	7 603	312 691
	Oct	79 753	34 181	4 085	29 641	60 750	10 738	93 195	15 867	9 750	337 960
	Nov	63 406	39 414	5 676	28 955	53 279	15 062	116 307	15 865	6 569	344 533
Dec	66 209	24 268	3 252	14 339	44 665	10 959	75 920	22 621	6 353	268 586	

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, ejection 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 2019 was 84,2%. The collection rate for November 2019 was 81,8%.
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.

