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## **STATISTICAL RELEASE**

### **P0041**

# Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

December 2022

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## Key results for December 2022

**Table A – Key figures for the month of December 2022**

Actual estimates	December 2022	% change between Dec 2021 and Dec 2022	% change between Oct – Dec 2021 and Oct – Dec 2022	Annual % change between 2021 and 2022
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	30 602	5,2	8,4	4,5
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	8 568	-13,9	-9,1	-6,0
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	213,4	-20,9	-5,3	-4,0

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt in 2022 increased by 4,5% compared with 2021.

The largest positive contributors to the 4,5% increase were civil summonses relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing 4,9 percentage points); and
- services (contributing 2,2 percentage points).

Civil summonses relating to promissory notes (contributing -3,0 percentage points) was the largest negative contributor – see Table 8.

### The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt in 2022 decreased by 6,0% compared with 2021.

Negative contributors to the 6,0% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing -2,9 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -2,1 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,3 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -1,1 percentage points) – see Table 8.

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt in 2022 decreased by 4,0% compared with 2021.

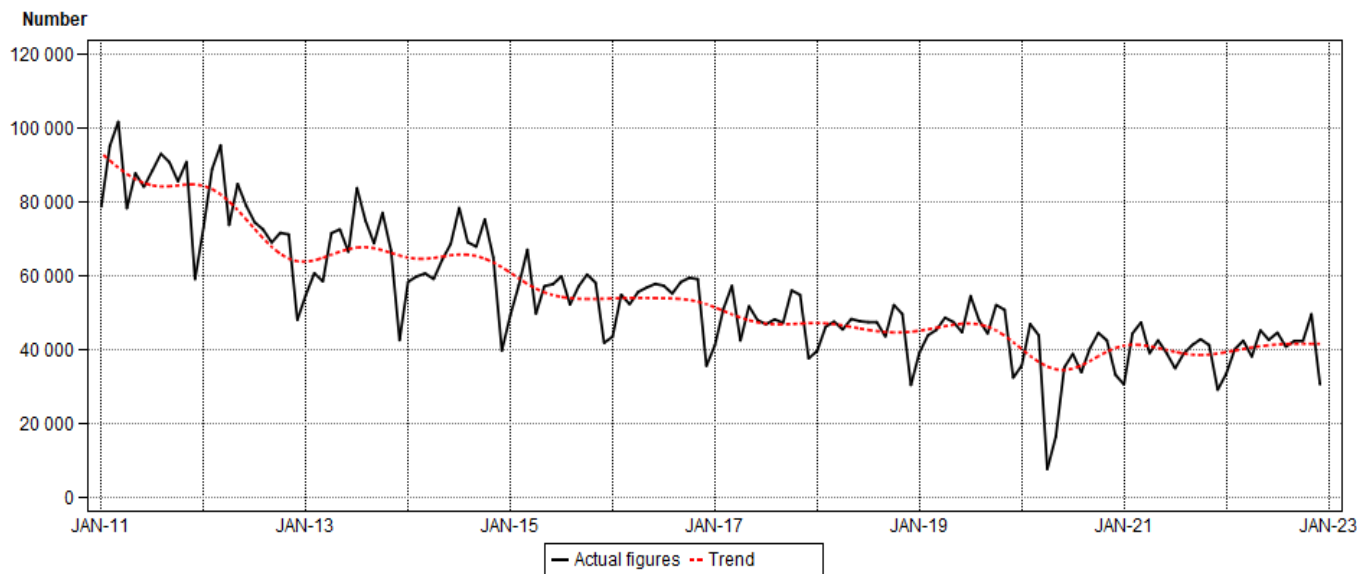
Negative contributors to the 4,0% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- goods sold (contributing -3,0 percentage points);
- rent (contributing -1,2 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,2 percentage points); and
- services (contributing -1,0 percentage point) – see Table 8.

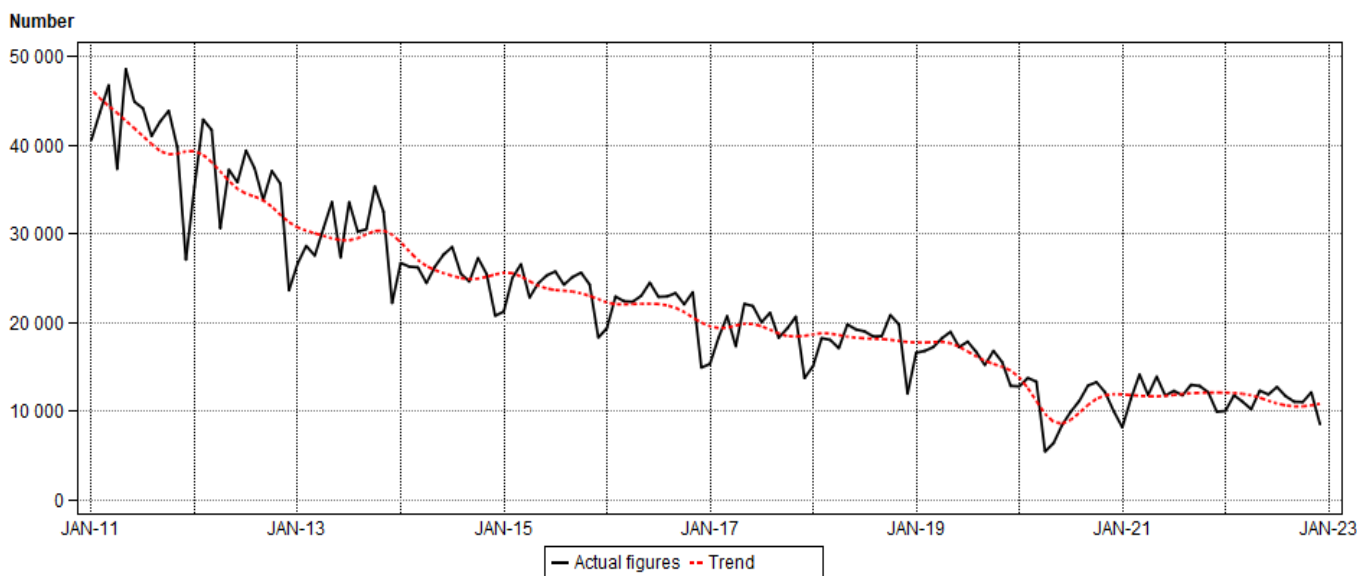
In 2022, 134 682 civil judgements for debt amounting to R3 422,6 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R1 034,7 million or 30,2%);
- services (R671,3 million or 19,6%); and
- 'other' debts (R627,5 million or 18,3%) – 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	Dec-21	1/ Nov-22	1/ Dec-22	2022	Dec-21	1/ Nov-22	1/ Dec-22
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>514 316</b>	<b>30 323</b>	<b>50 933</b>	<b>32 197</b>	<b>440 408</b>	<b>26 301</b>	<b>43 975</b>	<b>27 897</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		39 109	44 660	44 519		34 155	39 230	38 902
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	23 283	1 592	1 873	1 073	14 644	1 036	1 114	687
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 865	784	1 128	1 295	11 953	583	782	1 137
	Services - Professional	56 909	3 070	6 236	3 122	46 261	2 609	5 101	2 530
	Services - Other	73 223	4 055	8 431	3 938	62 347	3 123	7 505	3 462
	Rent	25 277	1 840	2 361	1 950	18 116	1 350	1 652	1 401
	Money lent	121 159	7 590	11 410	8 256	113 760	6 873	10 818	7 816
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	45 233	3 286	3 564	2 738	41 612	3 079	3 328	2 592
	Other debts	132 399	6 876	14 641	8 230	119 167	6 153	13 228	7 480
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>492 348</b>	<b>29 093</b>	<b>49 644</b>	<b>30 602</b>	<b>427 860</b>	<b>24 806</b>	<b>43 528</b>	<b>27 105</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		37 920	42 888	42 345		33 129	37 482	37 277

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Dec-21	1/ Nov-22	1/ Dec-22	2022	Dec-21	1/ Nov-22	1/ Dec-22
<b>Number of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	7 146	664	545	442	4 554	450	287	231
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	5 230	451	304	165	4 167	349	253	115
	Services - Professional	21 161	1 452	1 896	1 432	17 970	1 291	1 540	1 163
	Services - Other	24 639	2 066	2 325	1 659	21 606	1 837	2 109	1 473
	Rent	10 712	824	764	691	7 990	696	586	456
	Money lent	32 146	2 403	2 778	2 138	28 680	2 204	2 494	1 958
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	11 636	571	1 409	609	10 469	513	1 361	528
	Other debts	22 012	1 522	2 122	1 432	19 212	1 381	1 926	1 165
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>134 682</b>	<b>9 953</b>	<b>12 143</b>	<b>8 568</b>	<b>114 648</b>	<b>8 721</b>	<b>10 556</b>	<b>7 089</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		11 480	10 576	11 324		10 183	9 196	9 450

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Dec-21	1/ Nov-22	1/ Dec-22	2022	Dec-21	1/ Nov-22	1/ Dec-22
<b>Value of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	163 474	18 396	16 616	9 837	70 273	8 396	5 755	3 007
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	153 418	21 450	10 488	5 234	121 713	18 571	8 838	3 223
	Services - Professional	223 539	13 582	25 520	13 528	163 199	12 066	14 365	8 711
	Services - Other	447 767	33 447	37 616	25 384	379 058	29 873	32 948	21 621
	Rent	355 745	23 561	25 917	21 119	261 772	19 684	19 046	17 303
	Money lent	1 034 730	85 868	94 993	76 037	967 961	78 985	84 294	71 624
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	416 381	27 609	51 311	20 668	370 656	24 948	48 802	18 469
	Other debts	627 541	45 784	71 706	41 590	513 075	38 365	61 953	29 732
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>3 422 595</b>	<b>269 697</b>	<b>334 167</b>	<b>213 397</b>	<b>2 847 707</b>	<b>230 888</b>	<b>276 001</b>	<b>173 690</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		310 139	288 030	259 854		257 882	245 242	209 635

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 2021 and the fourth quarter of 2022**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2021	Actual estimates Oct – Dec 2022	% change between Oct – Dec 2021 and Oct – Dec 2022	Difference between Oct – Dec 2021 and Oct – Dec 2022
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	113 137	122 598	8,4	9 461
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	34 951	31 754	-9,1	-3 197
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	912,2	864,2	-5,3	-48,0

**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 2021 and the fourth quarter of 2022 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	-1,4	-3,6	-2,0
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,1	-1,8	-3,1
Services - Professional	2,3	-0,6	-0,4
Services - Other	1,5	-1,6	-1,2
Rent	0,1	-1,5	-1,0
Money lent	-0,2	-2,2	0,4
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-3,1	1,8	2,2
Other debts	9,0	0,4	0,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,4</b>	<b>-9,1</b>	<b>-5,3</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 2021, 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 2021	Actual estimates December 2022	% change between December 2021 and December 2022	Difference between December 2021 and December 2022
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	29 093	30 602	5,2	1 509
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	9 953	8 568	-13,9	-1 385
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	269,7	213,4	-20,9	-56,3

**Table 7 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between 2021 and 2022**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates 2021	Actual estimates 2022	% change between 2021 and 2022	Difference between 2021 and 2022
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	471 102	492 348	4,5	21 246
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	143 324	134 682	-6,0	-8 642
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	3 567,1	3 422,6	-4,0	-144,5

**Table 8 – 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 2021 and 2022 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	0,1	-1,8	-1,6
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,2	-0,3	-1,4
Services - Professional	1,8	-1,6	0,0
Services - Other	0,4	-1,3	-1,0
Rent	-0,5	-1,1	-1,2
Money lent	0,9	0,4	1,4
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-3,0	1,1	0,9
Other debts	4,9	-1,3	-1,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>-6,0</b>	<b>-4,0</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 2021, 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
2021	Dec	7 279	2 554	349	2 615	3 495	1 659	7 954	1 721	1 467	29 093
2022	Jan	6 524	2 508	460	2 604	4 803	1 539	11 160	2 178	1 684	33 460
	Feb	8 115	2 993	466	3 399	6 799	1 888	12 214	2 545	1 682	40 101
	Mar	8 213	3 083	517	2 919	7 633	2 342	13 658	2 301	1 766	42 432
	Apr	7 778	3 309	505	2 681	5 755	1 695	12 341	2 391	1 646	38 101
	May	8 361	3 659	472	3 308	8 286	2 126	13 324	3 621	2 086	45 243
	Jun	7 922	3 399	620	3 114	7 355	2 077	13 279	3 093	1 792	42 651
	Jul	7 727	3 343	421	2 662	9 140	1 955	14 969	2 647	1 741	44 605
	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	997	8 300	2 244	1 443	30 602

1/ Latest three 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
2021	Dec	2 158	1 013	99	1 483	1 249	553	1 613	663	1 122	9 953
2022	Jan	1 676	1 288	129	1 726	1 687	340	1 550	557	1 085	10 038
	Feb	2 868	1 257	175	1 851	1 348	597	1 814	678	1 221	11 809
	Mar	2 005	766	246	2 036	1 302	637	1 965	916	1 205	11 078
	Apr	2 126	760	100	2 157	1 179	352	1 774	672	1 115	10 235
	May	2 632	1 033	186	2 271	1 400	600	1 840	1 008	1 357	12 327
	Jun	2 583	1 273	284	2 077	1 287	620	1 992	564	1 221	11 901
	Jul	3 034	1 046	145	1 948	1 256	695	2 560	782	1 276	12 742
	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	322	1 835	1 005	1 027	8 568

1/ Latest three 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
2021	Dec	79 821	22 018	1 755	21 170	46 803	11 989	63 471	14 607	8 063	269 697
2022	Jan	48 137	20 494	3 439	28 982	45 395	5 377	70 829	11 212	5 947	239 812
	Feb	86 699	26 031	3 286	26 090	65 365	8 740	65 794	14 494	10 383	306 882
	Mar	51 204	16 296	3 691	26 573	49 998	9 640	69 635	19 668	10 786	257 491
	Apr	59 314	15 686	1 636	27 155	46 933	5 011	66 041	11 872	5 996	239 644
	May	98 217	21 145	2 973	29 239	50 136	8 996	71 388	20 450	12 834	315 378
	Jun	72 828	27 652	3 195	27 052	50 610	9 920	73 827	12 184	9 786	287 054
	Jul	97 064	15 767	2 429	27 202	41 498	9 574	91 632	13 852	11 697	310 715
	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	37 465	5 634	62 864	11 058	5 476	213 397

1/ Latest three months are preliminary.

## Explanatory notes

<b>Introduction</b>	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.
<b>Purpose of the survey</b>	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.
<b>Scope of the survey</b>	4	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>	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.
<b>Survey methodology and design</b>	6	The survey is conducted by email, fax and telephone each month from 203 magistrates' offices.
<b>Collection rate</b>	7	The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for December 2022 was 78,8%. The improved collection rates for October and November 2022 were 80,3% and 78,8% respectively.
<b>Seasonal adjustment</b>	8	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: <a href="#">Click to download seasonal adjustment for civil cases for debt February 2022.</a>
<b>Trend cycle</b>	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.
<b>Unpublished statistics</b>	10	In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.
<b>Symbols and abbreviations</b>	11	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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