

Statistical release

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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

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Key results for February 2011

Table A – Key figures for the month of February 2011

| Actual estimates | February 2011 | % change between February 2010 and February 2011 | % change between December 2009 to February 2010 and December 2010 to February 2011 |
|---|---------------|--|--|
| Number of civil summonses issued for debt | 98 677 | -13,5 | -14,1 |
| Number of civil judgements recorded for debt | 44 163 | -24,4 | -22,5 |
| Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million) | 456,5 | -24,3 | -21,3 |

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The three months ended February 2011 reflected a 14,1% decrease in the total number of civil summonses issued for debt compared with the three months ended February 2010. A 13,5% year-on-year decrease was recorded in February 2011 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).

The major contributors to the 14,1% decrease were:

- the money lent category (contributing -5,6 percentage points);
- the goods sold category (contributing -4,1 percentage points);
- the services category (contributing -3,2 percentage points); and
- the 'other debts' category (contributing -2,7 percentage points) (see Table 6).

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 22,5% for the three months ended February 2011 compared with the three months ended February 2010. A 24,4% year-on-year decrease was recorded in February 2011 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).

The main drivers behind the 22,5% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- the money lent category (contributing -12,3 percentage points);
- the promissory notes and other acknowledgements of debt category (contributing -4,6 percentage points); and
- the services category (contributing -4,0 percentage points) (see Table 6).

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

There was a 21,3% decrease in the total value of civil judgements recorded for debt for the three months ended February 2011 compared with the three months ended February 2010. A year-on-year decrease of 24,3% was recorded in February 2011 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).

The major contributors to the 21,3% decrease were:

- the money lent category (contributing -13,1 percentage points); and
- the promissory notes and other acknowledgements of debt category (contributing -5,7 percentage points) (see Table 6).

During February 2011, 44 163 civil judgements for debt amounting to R456,5 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the R456,5 million were:

- money lent (R145,1 million or 31,8%);
- 'other debts' (R93,4 million or 20,5%); and
- services (R73,2 million or 16,0%) (see Tables 3 and 4).

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

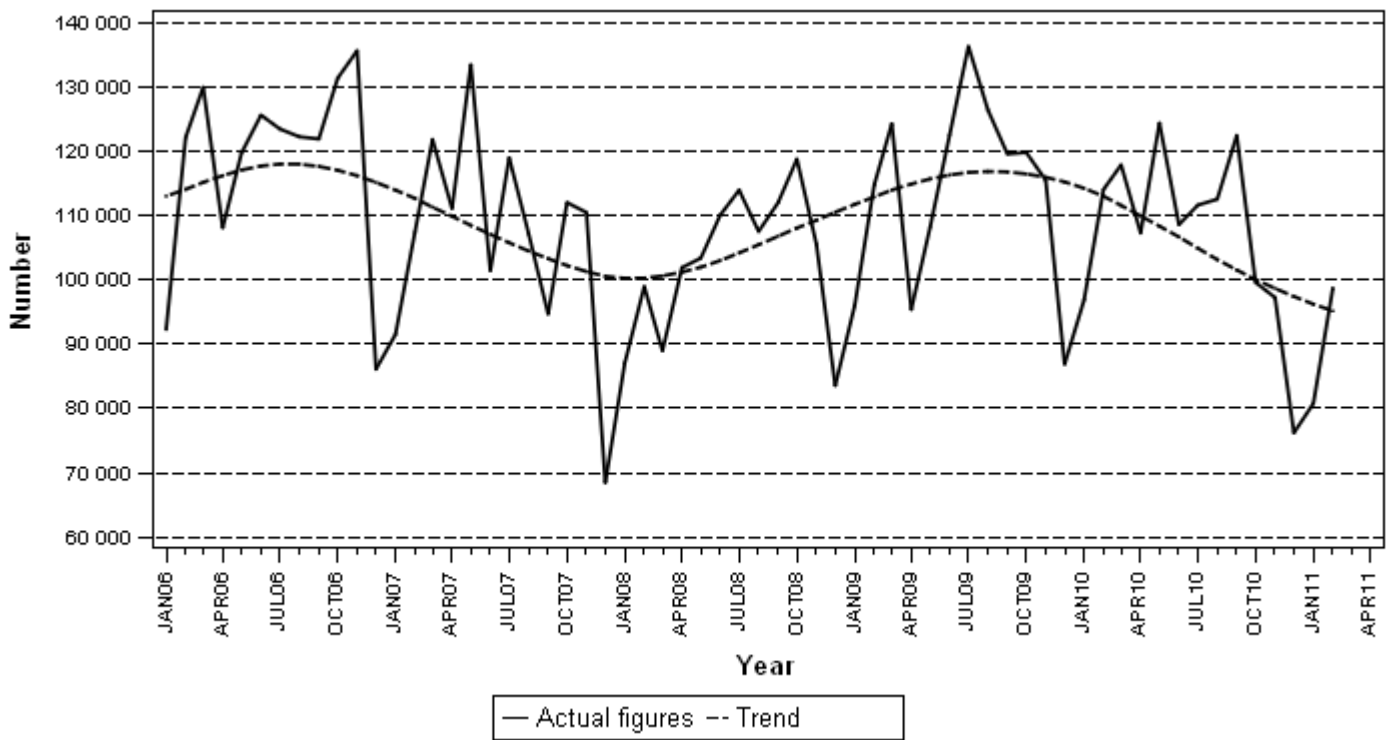
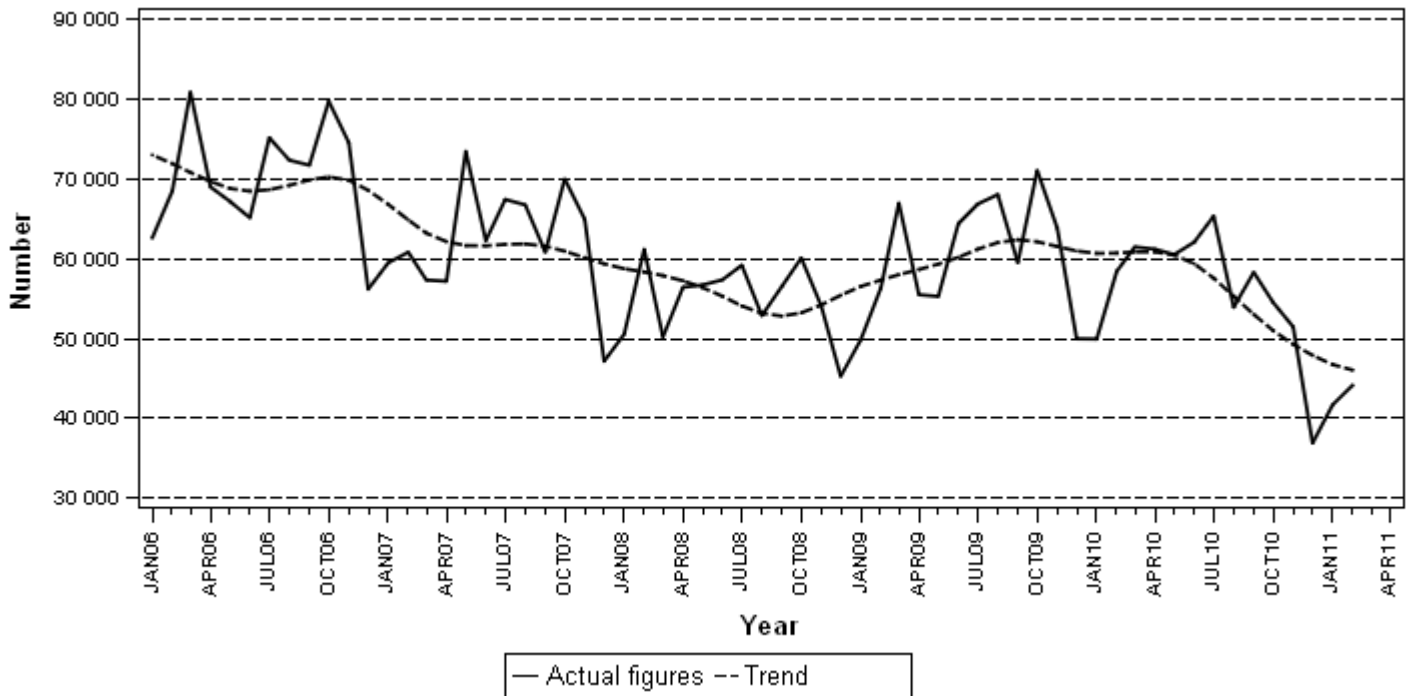


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



PJ Lehohla
Statistician-General

Detailed results: Tables

Table 1 – Number of civil cases recorded and summonses issued for debt according to business enterprises and private persons

| Item | Business enterprises and private persons | | | | Private Persons | | | |
|---|--|----------|---------|----------|-----------------|----------|---------|----------|
| | * 2010 | 2010 | 1/ 2011 | | * 2010 | 2010 | 1/ 2011 | |
| | | February | January | February | | February | January | February |
| 1. Cases recorded | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 Actual figures | 1 469 321 | 133 687 | 93 545 | 113 923 | 1 299 023 | 118 965 | 83 291 | 102 300 |
| 1.2 Seasonally adjusted | | 130 532 | 108 297 | 110 757 | | 114 938 | 96 088 | 98 175 |
| 2. Civil summonses for debt | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 Goods sold | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1.1 Open account | 108 884 | 10 361 | 4 692 | 7 916 | 87 313 | 8 602 | 3 569 | 6 129 |
| 2.1.2 Instalment sale transactions | 31 736 | 3 206 | 1 489 | 1 963 | 27 418 | 2 794 | 1 286 | 1 678 |
| 2.2 Services | | | | | | | | |
| 2.2.1 Professional | 147 619 | 12 649 | 9 365 | 10 224 | 128 120 | 10 756 | 7 999 | 8 643 |
| 2.2.2 Other | 165 477 | 13 626 | 9 960 | 12 566 | 140 491 | 11 698 | 8 455 | 10 454 |
| 2.3 Rent | 52 683 | 4 312 | 2 888 | 3 769 | 43 261 | 3 621 | 2 295 | 3 280 |
| 2.4 Money lent | 314 868 | 31 347 | 19 346 | 25 202 | 298 470 | 30 325 | 18 378 | 24 172 |
| 2.5 Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | 230 272 | 15 769 | 17 282 | 17 869 | 214 984 | 14 460 | 16 615 | 17 143 |
| 2.6 Other debts | 236 788 | 22 751 | 15 733 | 19 168 | 190 156 | 18 623 | 12 758 | 16 373 |
| 2.7 Total | | | | | | | | |
| 2.7.1 Actual figures | 1 288 327 | 114 021 | 80 755 | 98 677 | 1 130 213 | 100 879 | 71 355 | 87 872 |
| 2.7.2 Seasonally adjusted | | 113 071 | 94 938 | 97 316 | | 98 785 | 83 612 | 85 583 |

1/ Preliminary

* Revised

Table 2 – Number of civil cases recorded according to selected magistrates' offices

| Year and month | | Cape Peninsula | Port Elizabeth | East London | Kimberley | Pietermaritzburg | Durban | Johannesburg | East Rand | West Rand | Pretoria | Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark and Meyerton | Bloemfontein |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--|---------------|
| 2009 | Year Total | 134 632 | 43 416 | 18 080 | 8 026 | 21 618 | 91 171 | 260 137 | 54 501 | 38 110 | 152 361 | 24 302 | 40 531 |
| | January | 8 015 | 2 649 | 1 179 | 469 | 1 851 | 7 973 | 22 543 | 3 233 | 2 629 | 8 470 | 1 539 | 4 856 |
| | February | 10 123 | 4 177 | 1 516 | 647 | 2 069 | 7 669 | 19 618 | 7 236 | 2 819 | 11 258 | 3 699 | 3 991 |
| | March | 11 883 | 3 920 | 1 648 | 686 | 2 312 | 6 898 | 24 373 | 5 272 | 2 753 | 11 882 | 1 540 | 5 900 |
| | April | 11 127 | 3 180 | 1 802 | 413 | 1 944 | 7 668 | 19 616 | 4 276 | 2 849 | 10 033 | 1 066 | 6 000 |
| | May | 13 037 | 3 004 | 2 074 | 618 | 2 179 | 8 162 | 20 002 | 4 536 | 3 295 | 20 265 | 1 001 | 6 500 |
| | June | 13 991 | 3 375 | 1 325 | 360 | 2 148 | 8 055 | 17 263 | 4 381 | 2 841 | 12 186 | 881 | 6 000 |
| | July | 10 630 | 2 756 | 1 779 | 467 | 1 911 | 8 085 | 22 212 | 5 041 | 2 659 | 10 005 | 1 658 | 5 435 |
| | August | 10 970 | 2 904 | 1 205 | 353 | 759 | 7 540 | 22 301 | 4 559 | 3 114 | 10 765 | 1 574 | 6 200 |
| | September | 9 700 | 3 093 | 345 | 316 | 2 883 | 7 289 | 27 645 | *4 516 | 3 276 | 13 402 | 924 | 6 800 |
| | October | *6 673 | 2 689 | 939 | 465 | 2 019 | 7 278 | 16 794 | *4 676 | 3 102 | 12 802 | *1 759 | 5 925 |
| | 1/ November | 6 983 | 3 340 | 1 081 | 351 | 1 594 | 7 022 | 19 021 | 3 961 | 2 618 | 11 105 | 1 159 | 4 012 |
| | 1/ December | 4 934 | 2 049 | 930 | 101 | 1 167 | 7 143 | 24 746 | 2 679 | 2 033 | 6 421 | 542 | 2 640 |
| 2010 | Year Total | *118 066 | 37 136 | 15 823 | 5 246 | 22 836 | 90 782 | 256 134 | *54 366 | 33 988 | 138 594 | *17 342 | 64 259 |
| 2011 | 1/ January | 4 253 | 2 019 | 964 | 293 | 1 493 | 6 512 | 22 549 | 3 222 | 2 516 | 8 018 | 934 | 3 585 |
| | 1/ February | 5 379 | 3 184 | 1 197 | 344 | 1 805 | 6 343 | 28 740 | 4 472 | 3 473 | 9 927 | 1 563 | 2 946 |

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* Revised

Table 3 – Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons

| Item | Business enterprises and private persons | | | | Private Persons | | | |
|---|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | * 2010 | 2010 | 1/ 2011 | | * 2010 | 2010 | 1/ 2011 | |
| | | February | January | February | | February | January | February |
| 1. Judgements | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 Goods sold | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1.1 Open account | 67 065 | 5 491 | 3 721 | 4 615 | 57 366 | 4 594 | 3 194 | 4 000 |
| 1.1.2 Instalment sale transactions | 12 394 | 911 | 788 | 814 | 10 259 | 755 | 668 | 664 |
| 1.2 Services | | | | | | | | |
| 1.2.1 Professional | 86 597 | 7 654 | 5 432 | 5 782 | 77 977 | 6 715 | 4 963 | 5 229 |
| 1.2.2 Other | 77 202 | 6 297 | 4 776 | 5 264 | 68 837 | 5 592 | 4 178 | 4 557 |
| 1.3 Rent | 29 007 | 2 286 | 2 088 | 2 055 | 23 848 | 1 814 | 1 720 | 1 588 |
| 1.4 Money lent | 244 032 | 22 803 | 15 683 | 14 958 | 236 581 | 22 504 | 15 297 | 14 574 |
| 1.5 Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | 72 356 | 7 306 | 4 106 | 4 062 | 65 192 | 6 704 | 3 771 | 3 661 |
| 1.6 Other debts | 85 559 | 5 681 | 5 113 | 6 613 | 76 954 | 5 176 | 4 573 | 5 805 |
| 1.7 Total | | | | | | | | |
| 1.7.1 Actual figures | 674 212 | 58 429 | 41 707 | 44 163 | 617 014 | 53 854 | 38 364 | 40 078 |
| 1.7.2 Seasonally adjusted | | 60 659 | 48 297 | 45 723 | | 55 522 | 43 888 | 41 168 |

1/ Preliminary

* Revised

Table 4 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons (R'000)

| Item | Business enterprises and private persons | | | | Private Persons | | | |
|---|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | * 2010 | 2010 | 1/ 2011 | | * 2010 | 2010 | 1/ 2011 | |
| | | February | January | February | | February | January | February |
| 1. Judgements | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 Goods sold | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1.1 Open account | 613 287 | 48 428 | 38 160 | 42 504 | 394 335 | 29 170 | 26 045 | 27 807 |
| 1.1.2 Instalment sale transactions | 354 943 | 31 456 | 24 276 | 22 490 | 274 906 | 25 697 | 21 320 | 17 997 |
| 1.2 Services | | | | | | | | |
| 1.2.1 Professional | 351 311 | 29 428 | 26 294 | 24 628 | 281 299 | 22 972 | 22 430 | 20 969 |
| 1.2.2 Other | 716 644 | 67 799 | 73 125 | 48 619 | 572 184 | 53 826 | 64 967 | 32 281 |
| 1.3 Rent | 448 323 | 28 340 | 23 836 | 31 875 | 298 711 | 19 546 | 15 449 | 18 355 |
| 1.4 Money lent | 2 202 708 | 241 694 | 146 998 | 145 134 | 2 059 059 | 233 354 | 133 343 | 137 975 |
| 1.5 Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | 792 214 | 61 026 | 35 106 | 47 833 | 646 469 | 49 394 | 31 763 | 38 309 |
| 1.6 Other debts | 1 098 153 | 94 894 | 56 777 | 93 377 | 843 748 | 79 218 | 43 062 | 72 157 |
| 1.7 Total | | | | | | | | |
| 1.7.1 Actual figures | 6 577 583 | 603 065 | 424 572 | 456 460 | 5 370 711 | 513 177 | 358 379 | 365 850 |
| 1.7.2 Seasonally adjusted | | 622 457 | 489 253 | 471 018 | | 522 312 | 400 514 | 371 359 |

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Table 5 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended February 2011 and the three months ended February 2010

| Actual estimates | Actual estimates December 2009 to February 2010 | Actual estimates December 2010 to February 2011 | % change between December 2009 to February 2010 and December 2010 to February 2011 | Difference between December 2009 to February 2010 and December 2010 to February 2011 |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Number of summonses for debt | 297 701 | 255 629 | -14,1 | -42 072 |
| Number of judgements for debt | 158 360 | 122 783 | -22,5 | -35 577 |
| Value of judgements for debt (R million) | 1 615,7 | 1 270,8 | -21,3 | -344,9 |

Table 6 – Contribution of the different kinds of debts to the change in total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended February 2011 and the three months ended February 2010 1/

| Item | Contribution (percentage points) to the percentage change in the total number of summonses for debt | Contribution (percentage points) to the percentage change in the total number of civil judgements for debt | Contribution (percentage points) to the percentage change in the total value of civil judgements for debt |
|--|---|--|---|
| Goods sold | | | |
| – Open account | -2,8 | -2,1 | -1,3 |
| – Instalment sale transactions | -1,3 | -0,2 | -1,1 |
| Services | | | |
| – Professional | -2,1 | -3,3 | -0,5 |
| – Other | -1,1 | -0,7 | 1,3 |
| Rent | | | |
| Rent | -0,3 | 0,1 | 0,5 |
| Money lent | | | |
| Money lent | -5,6 | -12,3 | -13,1 |
| Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | | | |
| Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | 1,7 | -4,6 | -5,7 |
| Other debts | | | |
| Other debts | -2,7 | 0,7 | -1,4 |
| Total | -14,1 | -22,5 | -21,3 |

1/ The contribution (percentage points) is calculated by multiplying the three-monthly percentage change of each kind of debt with the percentage contribution to the total number or value of cases recorded during December 2009 to February 2010, divided by 100. Figures have been rounded off.

Table 7 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the current month and the corresponding month of the previous year

| Actual estimates | Actual estimates February 2010 | Actual estimates February 2011 | % change between February 2010 and February 2011 | Difference between February 2010 and February 2011 |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Number of summonses for debt | 114 021 | 98 677 | -13,5 | -15 344 |
| Number of judgements for debt | 58 429 | 44 163 | -24,4 | -14 266 |
| Value of judgements for debt (R million) | 603,1 | 456,5 | -24,3 | -146,6 |

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, excluding the former Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC states). 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, which account for approximately 95% of all the civil cases in South Africa, are included in the monthly survey of civil cases for debt. The smallest magistrates' offices are not used in the sample. A sample of 151 magistrates' offices was drawn using the number of civil cases recorded as measure of size. |
| Survey methodology and design | 6 | The survey is conducted by mail, fax and telephone each month from 151 magistrates' offices. |
| Response rate | 7 | The preliminary response rate for the civil cases for debt survey for February 2011 was 94,0%. Improved response rate for January 2011 was 92,7%. |
| 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>SA Statistics</i> issued annually. |
| Unpublished statistics | 10 | In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published. The statistics can be made available as computer printouts or electronic versions. Generally a charge is made for providing unpublished statistics. |
| Symbols and abbreviations | 11 | R/D Refer to Drawer Stats SA Statistics South Africa TBVC Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei * 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. |
| 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. This usually happens before the debtor signs a binding contract, e.g. loan agreement. |
| 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 debts such as salaries and wages, outstanding medical fund debts, outstanding sponsored debts, outstanding class and tuition debt, outstanding income and salaries, tax, outstanding assessment rates, outstanding money in respect of television maintenance contracts and outstanding money in respect of flat 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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