

STATISTICAL RELEASE
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Statistics of civil cases for debt
(Preliminary)

February 2019

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Key results for February 2019

Table A – Key figures for the month of February 2019

Actual estimates	February 2019	% change between February 2018 and February 2019	% change between December 2017 – February 2018 and December 2018 – February 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	44 015	-4,8	-8,2
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	16 559	-9,3	-5,3
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	278,2	-17,0	-10,7

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 8,2% in the three months ended February 2019 compared with the three months ended February 2018.

The largest contributors to the 8,2% decrease in civil summonses issued were:

- services (contributing -2,9 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -2,1 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -1,7 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 5,3% in the three months ended February 2019 compared with the three months ended February 2018.

The largest negative contributions to the 5,3% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -2,5 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing -2,2 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -0,7 of a percentage point) – see Tables 4 and 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 10,7% in the three months ended February 2019 compared with the three months ended February 2018.

The largest negative contributions to the 10,7% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -3,9 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing -3,1 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -2,7 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

In February 2019, 16 559 civil judgements for debt amounting to R278,2 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R76,8 million or 27,6%);
- services (R68,9 million or 24,8%); and
- 'other' debts (R48,9 million or 17,6%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

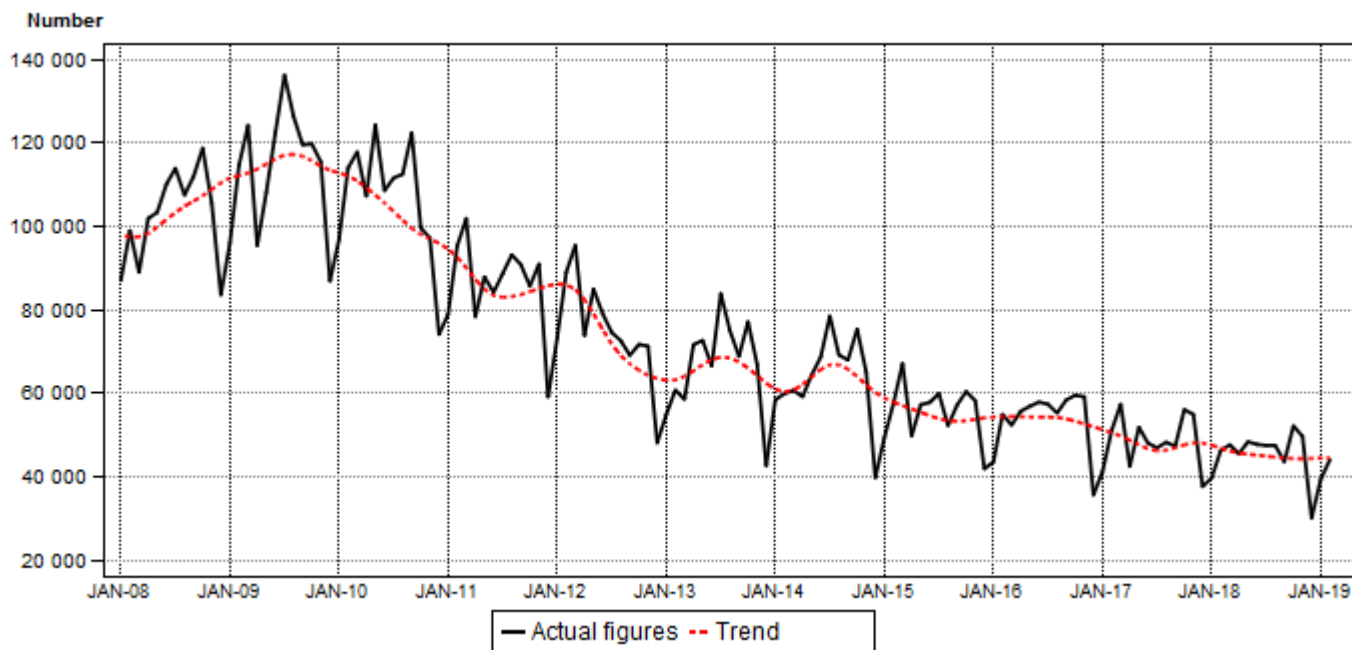
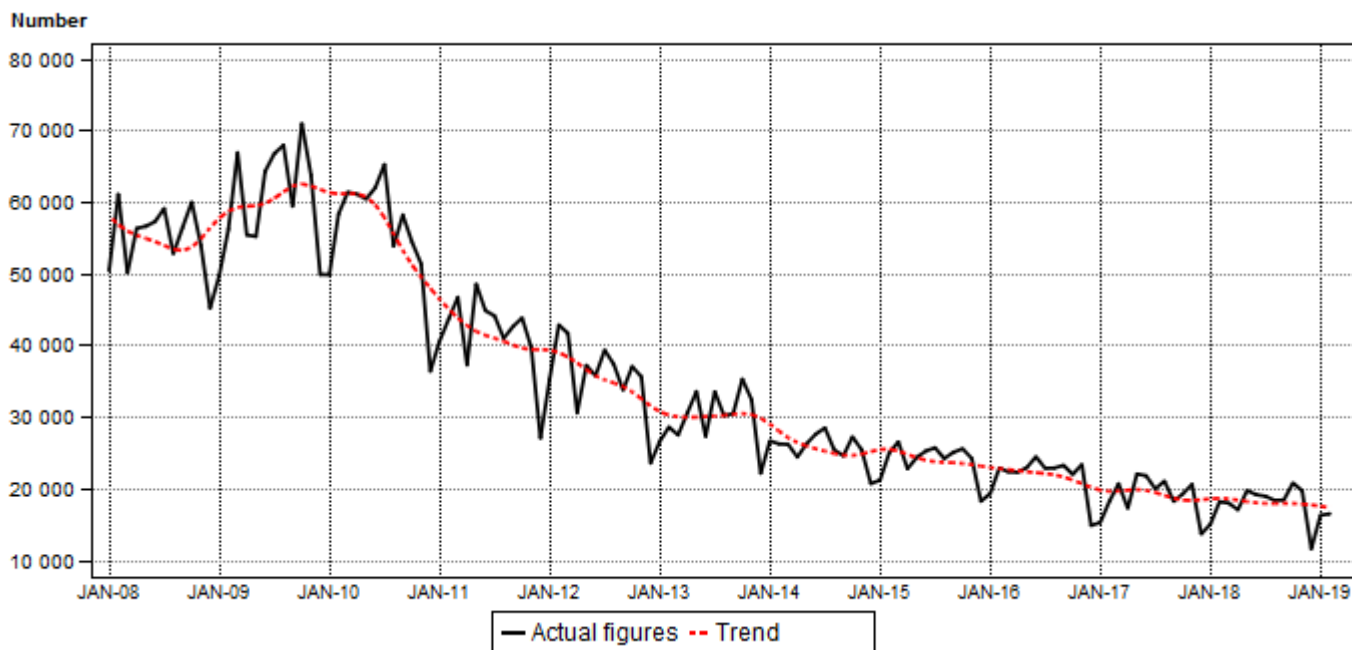


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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			
		2018	Feb-18	1/ Jan-19	1/ Feb-19	2018	Feb-18	1/ Jan-19	1/ Feb-19
Cases recorded	Actual figures	586 044	51 289	40 678	46 057	509 320	44 483	35 175	39 489
	Seasonally adjusted		51 793	47 906	46 525		44 930	41 135	39 994
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	31 242	2 543	2 054	2 760	22 554	1 830	1 401	1 998
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	20 535	1 850	1 763	1 594	16 165	1 410	1 399	1 240
	Services - Professional	67 710	5 475	5 296	5 131	59 552	4 898	4 694	4 458
	Services - Other	96 159	7 969	7 034	7 690	81 888	6 733	5 984	6 453
	Rent	30 772	2 432	2 545	2 537	23 335	1 717	2 012	1 896
	Money lent	118 482	10 378	7 944	10 407	110 814	9 795	7 421	9 734
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	69 323	6 140	4 990	5 189	63 565	5 688	4 676	4 698
	Other debts	111 080	9 433	7 636	8 707	100 306	8 498	6 697	7 709
	Total - Actual figures	545 303	46 220	39 262	44 015	478 179	40 569	34 284	38 186
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		46 207	45 581	44 004		40 550	40 382	38 178

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2018	Feb-18	1/ Jan-19	1/ Feb-19	2018	Feb-18	1/ Jan-19	1/ Feb-19	
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	13 611	1 072	1 103	1 171	10 322	821	853	905
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	6 549	584	547	481	5 631	526	472	411
	Services - Professional	34 167	2 999	2 523	2 678	31 679	2 816	2 333	2 485
	Services - Other	36 368	2 842	2 491	2 892	32 174	2 491	2 177	2 566
	Rent	21 172	1 748	1 311	1 466	17 823	1 533	1 043	1 223
	Money lent	41 397	3 936	3 031	3 418	37 387	3 566	2 783	3 112
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	23 050	2 123	1 714	1 648	20 133	1 897	1 483	1 415
	Other debts	39 538	2 950	3 639	2 805	36 468	2 698	3 460	2 593
	Total - Actual figures	215 852	18 254	16 359	16 559	191 617	16 348	14 604	14 710
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		19 364	19 159	17 555		17 258	17 138	15 547

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2018	Feb-18	1/ Jan-19	1/ Feb-19	2018	Feb-18	1/ Jan-19	1/ Feb-19	
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	219 134	15 645	15 302	17 338	119 206	8 065	9 037	9 944
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	129 503	9 686	10 964	7 387	111 578	8 964	9 193	6 892
	Services - Professional	239 683	19 966	21 453	20 372	215 296	18 599	20 207	18 306
	Services - Other	540 377	43 877	34 759	48 531	439 953	34 101	29 558	38 367
	Rent	373 679	30 976	25 148	24 764	277 197	22 709	19 503	17 818
	Money lent	1 006 433	101 554	75 038	76 838	907 665	93 924	68 224	69 755
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	488 045	45 996	29 205	34 082	430 140	43 053	25 272	30 394
	Other debts	853 576	67 676	58 689	48 910	565 110	48 441	48 444	38 913
	Total - Actual figures	3 850 430	335 376	270 558	278 222	3 066 145	277 856	229 438	230 389
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		348 194	328 093	290 084		296 357	277 376	246 203

1/ Preliminary.

Table 4 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended February 2018 and the three months ended February 2019

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Dec 2017 – Feb 2018	Actual estimates Dec 2018 – Feb 2019	% change between Dec 2017 – Feb 2018 and Dec 2018 – Feb 2019	Difference between Dec 2017 – Feb 2018 and Dec 2018 – Feb 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	123 479	113 343	-8,2	-10 136
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	47 102	44 590	-5,3	-2 512
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	884,1	789,7	-10,7	-94,4

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 three months ended February 2018 and the three months ended February 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	-0,6	0,5	0,1
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,1	-0,3	-0,3
Services - Professional	-1,7	-1,5	-0,2
Services - Other	-1,2	1,0	0,4
Rent	0,0	-0,7	-1,1
Money lent	-1,1	-2,5	-3,9
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-1,7	-2,2	-3,1
Other debts	-2,1	0,2	-2,7
Total	-8,2	-5,3	-10,7

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 December 2017 to February 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 February 2018	Actual estimates February 2019	% change between February 2018 and February 2019	Difference between February 2018 and February 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	46 220	44 015	-4,8	-2 205
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	18 254	16 559	-9,3	-1 695
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	335,4	278,2	-17,0	-57,2

Table 7 – 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	Feb	8 192	3 608	801	3 278	7 521	1 888	16 875	2 259	1 798	46 220
	Mar	8 202	3 446	651	3 249	8 353	2 093	17 527	2 058	2 036	47 615
	Apr	7 784	3 546	507	3 239	7 737	1 892	16 210	2 547	2 001	45 463
	May	8 089	3 981	778	3 198	9 222	2 269	16 442	2 378	1 979	48 336
	Jun	7 016	4 209	763	3 935	8 951	2 141	16 032	2 503	2 155	47 705
	Jul	8 825	3 495	596	3 425	9 351	1 932	15 648	2 228	1 958	47 458
	Aug	8 355	2 949	641	2 938	9 994	1 887	16 629	2 103	1 959	47 455
	Sep	7 411	2 731	505	2 720	8 998	1 910	15 325	2 127	1 817	43 544
	Oct	9 406	3 091	933	3 085	11 267	2 320	17 819	2 122	2 082	52 125
	Nov	9 785	3 571	746	3 552	10 539	1 964	15 407	2 114	1 982	49 660
	Dec	4 830	1 737	268	2 304	5 272	1 449	11 487	1 229	1 490	30 066
2019	Jan	6 426	2 512	487	2 846	8 654	1 706	13 032	1 844	1 755	39 262
	Feb	7 570	3 184	568	3 086	8 147	1 925	15 337	2 256	1 942	44 015

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

Table 8 – 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	Feb	2 355	2 611	409	1 992	3 775	661	3 925	1 401	1 125	18 254
	Mar	3 141	2 324	360	1 839	3 736	518	3 761	1 233	1 148	18 060
	Apr	2 768	1 790	217	1 686	3 737	716	3 874	1 187	1 149	17 124
	May	3 639	2 405	416	1 823	4 684	741	3 866	1 063	1 167	19 804
	Jun	2 917	2 595	313	2 108	4 591	703	3 774	1 052	1 182	19 235
	Jul	3 382	1 732	263	1 923	4 447	944	4 009	1 188	1 130	19 018
	Aug	2 834	1 637	313	1 968	5 155	890	3 597	817	1 233	18 444
	Sep	2 649	1 595	236	1 717	5 055	817	4 282	982	1 150	18 483
	Oct	2 985	1 853	395	2 146	5 748	844	4 477	1 087	1 331	20 866
	Nov	2 894	2 028	329	1 814	6 169	862	3 553	1 023	1 121	19 793
	Dec	2 208	859	210	694	2 037	860	3 090	646	1 068	11 672
2019	Jan	2 322	1 354	220	1 480	5 132	779	3 354	617	1 101	16 359
	Feb	2 833	1 403	322	2 452	3 408	869	3 343	758	1 171	16 559

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

Table 9 – 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	Feb	56 659	46 144	4 346	27 455	47 848	13 211	97 031	35 023	7 659	335 376
	Mar	74 656	45 858	4 088	27 347	42 710	9 780	90 418	26 384	7 558	328 799
	Apr	70 875	33 123	2 609	20 375	42 732	13 499	85 918	28 688	8 079	305 898
	May	78 913	40 113	7 774	24 135	58 491	15 277	73 192	23 335	7 438	328 668
	Jun	63 234	41 702	4 215	32 411	51 923	13 953	90 076	27 407	6 669	331 590
	Jul	74 915	34 322	3 959	23 890	41 316	15 472	99 869	157 305	7 788	458 836
	Aug	74 691	33 048	4 018	26 721	48 945	15 458	69 193	18 628	9 303	300 005
	Sep	62 469	31 388	2 920	21 812	42 706	14 675	87 495	19 452	8 050	290 967
	Oct	75 849	47 070	4 544	24 783	49 987	15 821	87 495	20 048	10 733	336 330
	Nov	75 507	38 691	3 346	22 775	63 258	13 555	78 520	23 363	5 991	325 006
	Dec	65 392	25 529	3 009	10 129	28 238	16 435	62 417	23 842	5 928	240 919
2019	Jan	61 948	28 611	3 670	17 303	42 169	14 067	83 221	13 616	5 953	270 558
	Feb	67 923	24 947	3 505	28 958	49 874	15 633	63 147	17 402	6 833	278 222

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 February 2019 was 83,7%. The collection rate for January 2019 was 84,7%.
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.

