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Statistics of civil cases for debt
(Preliminary)

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Key results for January 2017

Table A – Key figures for the month of January 2017

Actual estimates	January 2017	% change between January 2016 and January 2017	% change between November 2015 – January 2016 and November 2016 – January 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	41 122	-5,5	-5,4
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	15 206	-21,5	-13,6
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	233,8	-15,5	-10,5

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 5,4% in the three months ended January 2017 compared with the three months ended January 2016. The largest negative contributions to the 5,4% decrease were services (contributing -3,4 percentage points) and goods sold (contributing -1,6 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 13,6% in the three months ended January 2017 compared with the three months ended January 2016.

The largest contributions to the 13,6% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing -5,5 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -5,0 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,5 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 10,5% in the three months ended January 2017 compared with the three months ended January 2016.

The largest negative contributions to the 10,5% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

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

In January 2017, 15 206 civil judgements for debt amounting to R233,8 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R71,2 million or 30,5%);
- 'other' debts (R50,0 million or 21,4%); and
- services (R47,2 million or 20,2%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

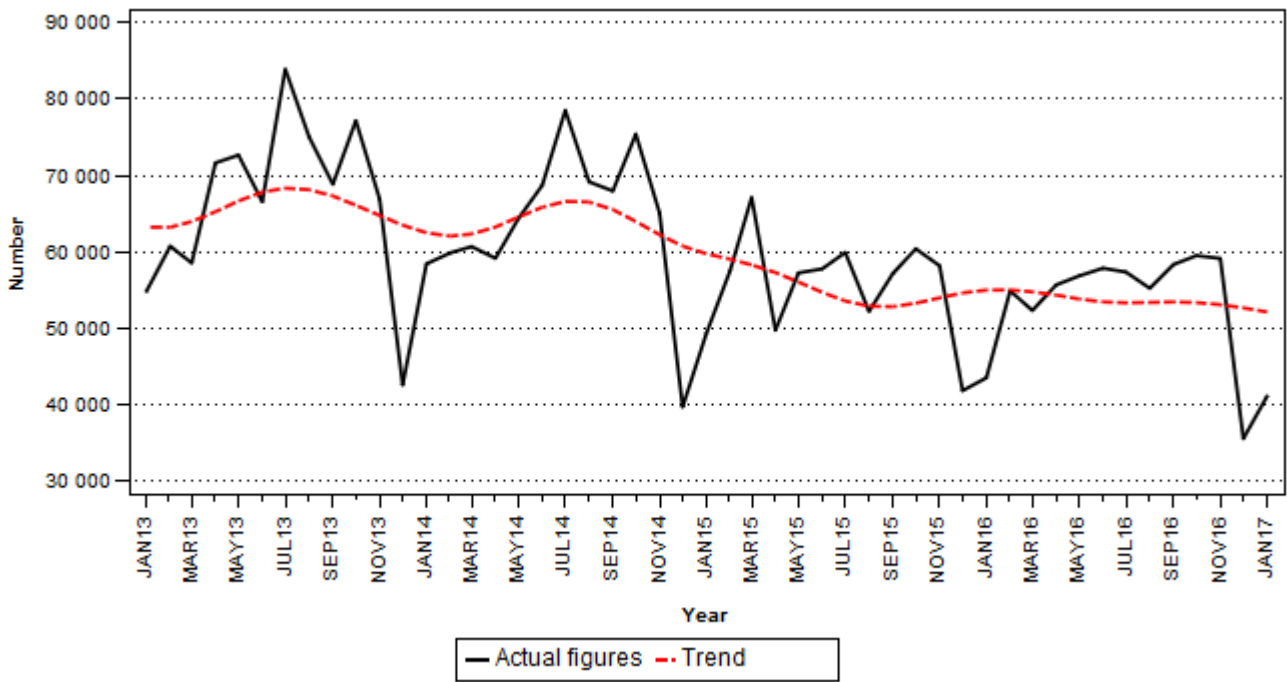
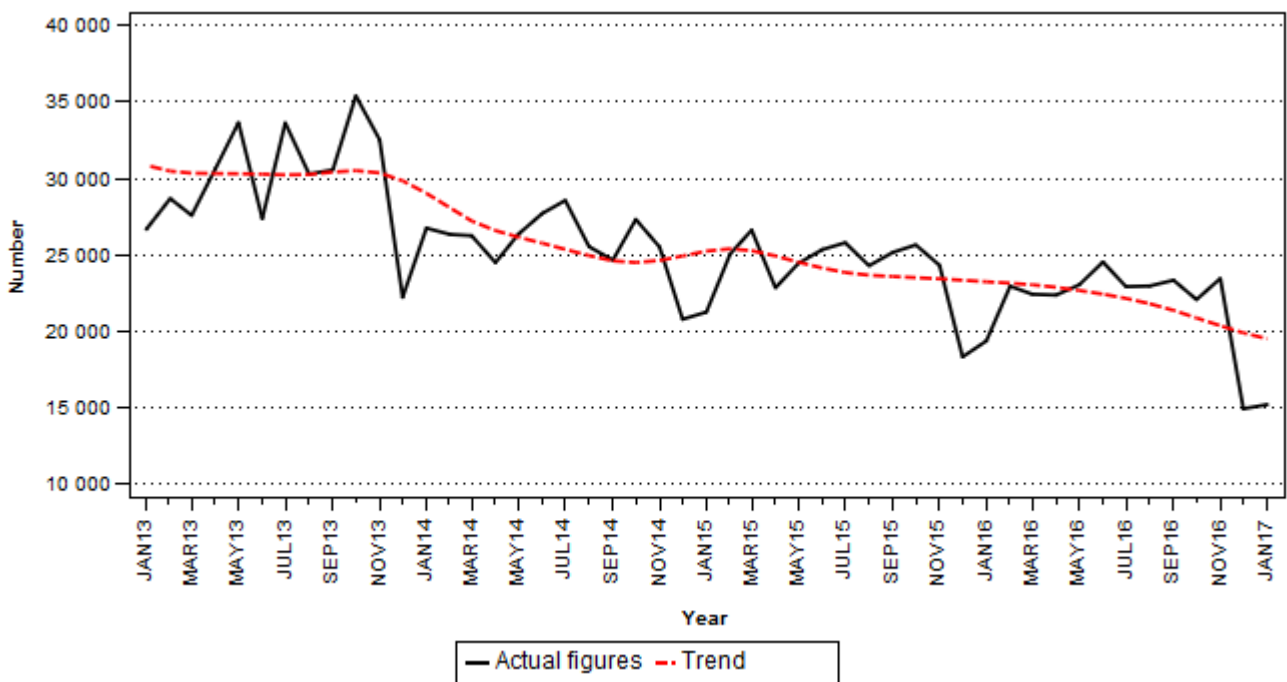


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



PJ Lehohla
Statistician-General

Detailed results: Tables**Table 1 – Number of civil cases recorded and summonses issued for debt: Total and private persons**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2016	Jan-16	1/ Dec-16	1/ Jan-17	2016	Jan-16	1/ Dec-16	1/ Jan-17
Cases recorded	Actual figures	700 485	46 278	38 263	44 571	602 530	39 726	32 649	38 513
	Seasonally adjusted		58 625	55 381	55 123		50 094	48 590	48 206
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	39 656	3 009	2 077	2 366	29 919	2 368	1 456	1 727
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	21 886	1 614	1 173	1 455	16 506	1 209	887	1 166
	Services - Professional	83 019	5 618	4 217	5 029	72 241	4 554	3 554	4 247
	Services - Other	106 305	7 559	6 307	6 648	89 744	5 899	5 337	5 589
	Rent	31 195	2 366	1 629	1 866	24 197	1 886	1 206	1 438
	Money lent	155 809	9 719	8 282	10 432	145 604	8 620	7 697	9 854
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	90 564	6 009	5 115	5 836	84 008	5 520	4 683	5 349
	Other debts	117 781	7 631	6 779	7 490	103 779	6 872	5 695	6 369
	Total - Actual figures	646 215	43 525	35 579	41 122	565 998	36 928	30 515	35 739
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		54 969	51 669	50 418		46 608	44 485	43 873

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2016	Jan-16	1/ Dec-16	1/ Jan-17	2016	Jan-16	1/ Dec-16	1/ Jan-17	
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	17 058	1 197	981	939	12 948	912	713	692
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	7 068	624	482	498	6 039	557	404	436
	Services - Professional	44 011	3 280	2 461	2 806	39 091	2 905	2 025	2 399
	Services - Other	41 276	2 681	2 314	2 178	35 567	2 231	1 959	1 869
	Rent	18 296	1 496	954	989	15 162	1 235	746	805
	Money lent	60 447	4 015	2 943	3 766	55 379	3 588	2 647	3 461
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	25 021	2 343	1 589	1 582	21 461	2 103	1 316	1 349
	Other debts	51 152	3 733	3 210	2 448	45 458	3 310	2 770	2 204
	Total - Actual figures	264 329	19 369	14 934	15 206	231 105	16 841	12 580	13 215
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		23 705	19 398	18 078		20 723	16 630	15 771

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2016	Jan-16	1/ Dec-16	1/ Jan-17	2016	Jan-16	1/ Dec-16	1/ Jan-17	
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	253 299	15 994	14 900	12 067	131 337	8 944	7 684	6 775
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	96 673	7 522	9 288	8 099	83 906	7 141	8 479	7 472
	Services - Professional	243 371	21 855	15 076	18 679	208 795	19 442	12 789	15 548
	Services - Other	542 398	35 001	35 234	28 521	432 972	25 700	27 365	23 468
	Rent	322 885	23 447	17 837	19 441	224 770	17 254	11 334	13 140
	Money lent	1 139 611	69 443	77 669	71 235	1 029 219	60 412	70 572	65 954
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	434 549	31 571	25 117	25 756	363 747	28 198	19 973	20 759
	Other debts	989 698	71 894	56 952	49 985	722 123	48 446	42 126	36 520
	Total - Actual figures	4 022 484	276 727	252 073	233 783	3 196 869	215 537	200 322	189 636
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		359 642	312 416	297 696		276 076	247 535	236 346

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 January 2016 and the three months ended January 2017

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Nov 2015 – Jan 2016	Actual estimates Nov 2016 – Jan 2017	% change between Nov 2015 – Jan 2016 and Nov 2016 – Jan 2017	Difference between Nov 2015 – Jan 2016 and Nov 2016 – Jan 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	143 537	135 825	-5,4	-7 712
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	61 999	53 590	-13,6	-8 409
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	956,6	856,4	-10,5	-100,2

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 January 2016 and the three months ended January 2017 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	-1,3	-1,3	-0,8
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,3	-0,2	0,1
Services - Professional	-2,0	-3,7	-1,2
Services - Other	-1,4	-1,8	-1,2
Rent	-0,4	-0,3	0,2
Money lent	0,2	-0,7	2,3
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-0,2	-0,5	-2,3
Other debts	-0,1	-5,0	-7,7
Total	-5,4	-13,6	-10,5

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 November 2015 to January 2016, 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 January 2016	Actual estimates January 2017	% change between January 2016 and January 2017	Difference between January 2016 and January 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	43 525	41 122	-5,5	-2 403
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	19 369	15 206	-21,5	-4 163
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	276,7	233,8	-15,5	-42,9

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
2016	Jan	7 050	3 004	577	3 678	6 501	2 232	15 769	2 833	1 881	43 525
	Feb	10 083	4 413	656	4 331	8 300	2 514	19 548	2 732	2 309	54 886
	Mar	9 812	4 316	773	4 062	8 978	2 948	16 805	2 785	1 849	52 328
	Apr	9 217	4 721	1 041	4 192	8 481	3 458	19 974	2 474	2 109	55 667
	May	10 618	4 456	1 096	4 731	8 957	3 228	18 601	2 911	2 248	56 846
	Jun	11 126	4 543	907	4 100	9 376	3 005	20 179	2 466	2 150	57 852
	Jul	10 303	4 898	824	3 822	8 730	3 498	20 196	2 783	2 291	57 345
	Aug	10 070	4 200	1 040	4 079	8 760	2 939	19 001	2 724	2 413	55 226
	Sep	9 301	4 234	816	3 942	10 863	3 267	20 526	2 811	2 579	58 339
	Oct	9 612	4 831	800	4 239	9 961	3 280	21 508	2 868	2 399	59 498
	Nov	10 398	4 717	899	4 411	10 014	3 276	19 791	3 151	2 467	59 124
	Dec	5 768	2 145	509	2 851	5 978	1 243	13 343	2 009	1 733	35 579
2017	Jan	6 630	3 224	554	3 356	5 507	2 178	16 203	1 541	1 929	41 122

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
2016	Jan	2 773	1 950	344	1 869	4 108	885	4 417	1 627	1 396	19 369
	Feb	4 763	2 760	442	2 247	3 341	932	5 594	1 490	1 378	22 947
	Mar	4 108	2 604	319	2 653	3 720	1 380	4 994	1 284	1 356	22 418
	Apr	3 521	2 501	422	2 642	3 913	1 626	4 901	1 482	1 357	22 365
	May	5 054	2 516	396	2 474	3 955	1 275	4 774	1 376	1 214	23 034
	Jun	4 089	3 796	458	3 288	3 867	1 557	4 842	1 163	1 465	24 525
	Jul	4 380	2 719	441	2 940	3 702	1 673	4 525	1 090	1 449	22 919
	Aug	4 387	2 279	358	2 934	4 369	1 303	4 465	1 191	1 674	22 960
	Sep	4 222	2 286	397	2 488	4 611	1 174	5 323	1 241	1 594	23 336
	Oct	4 082	2 617	445	2 208	4 171	1 297	4 461	1 254	1 537	22 072
	Nov	4 165	2 613	254	2 676	4 208	1 493	5 309	1 148	1 584	23 450
	Dec	2 147	1 240	410	1 319	2 698	715	4 416	943	1 046	14 934
2017	Jan	2 541	2 201	226	1 657	2 034	659	3 768	1 048	1 072	15 206

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

Table 9 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt by province (R'000)

Period		Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa
2016	Jan	46 639	34 713	2 485	24 477	35 414	11 661	72 696	37 228	11 414	276 727
	Feb	80 249	48 557	9 865	26 294	35 541	13 735	96 530	37 966	12 237	360 974
	Mar	73 597	51 422	3 985	35 333	45 669	12 418	96 545	29 566	13 435	361 970
	Apr	60 953	37 659	4 941	32 688	42 409	14 659	84 791	30 406	8 823	317 329
	May	69 161	48 619	3 479	31 696	49 649	13 814	88 538	30 278	8 287	343 521
	Jun	58 989	50 694	3 018	33 334	49 813	12 863	81 022	42 028	13 228	344 989
	Jul	73 486	44 276	3 499	30 868	49 064	14 912	90 018	28 057	10 745	344 925
	Aug	61 855	45 098	3 643	35 048	55 705	14 182	86 036	26 621	17 503	345 691
	Sep	78 808	41 589	3 452	35 587	57 559	10 480	102 167	22 420	11 500	363 562
	Oct	73 547	54 538	3 721	27 805	47 126	11 085	86 080	23 224	13 072	340 198
	Nov	83 923	48 625	2 543	42 330	42 096	14 584	97 217	23 216	15 991	370 525
	Dec	42 778	34 684	3 662	18 302	38 753	10 860	73 189	24 034	5 811	252 073
2017	Jan	42 093	44 928	3 266	21 097	27 757	9 980	55 036	24 055	5 571	233 783

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 January 2017 was 85,2%. The improved collection rate for December 2016 was 87,2%.
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.

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