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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

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Key results for January 2020

Table A – Key figures for the month of January 2020

Actual estimates	January 2020	% change between January 2019 and January 2020	% change between November 2018 – January 2019 and November 2019 – January 2020
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	35 647	-9,1	-0,4
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	12 814	-22,8	-14,7
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	252,7	-6,9	3,0

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 0,4% in the three months ended January 2020 compared with the three months ended January 2019.

The negative contributors to the 0,4% decrease for civil summonses issued were:

- services (contributing -4,4 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -1,1 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -0,2 of a percentage point).

Money lent (contributing 3,5 percentage points) was the largest positive contributor – see Tables 4 and 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 14,7% in the three months ended January 2020 compared with the three months ended January 2019.

The largest contributors to the 14,7% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

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

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 3,0% in the three months ended January 2020 compared with the three months ended January 2019.

The largest positive contributors to the 3,0% increase were the value of judgements relating to:

- services (contributing 3,3 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing 2,2 percentage points).

'Other' debts (contributing -4,9 percentage points) was the largest negative contributor – see Tables 4 and 5.

In January 2020, 12 814 civil judgements for debt amounting to R252,7 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R68,3 million or 27,0%);
- services (R61,6 million or 24,4%); and
- 'other' debts (R32,9 million or 13,0%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

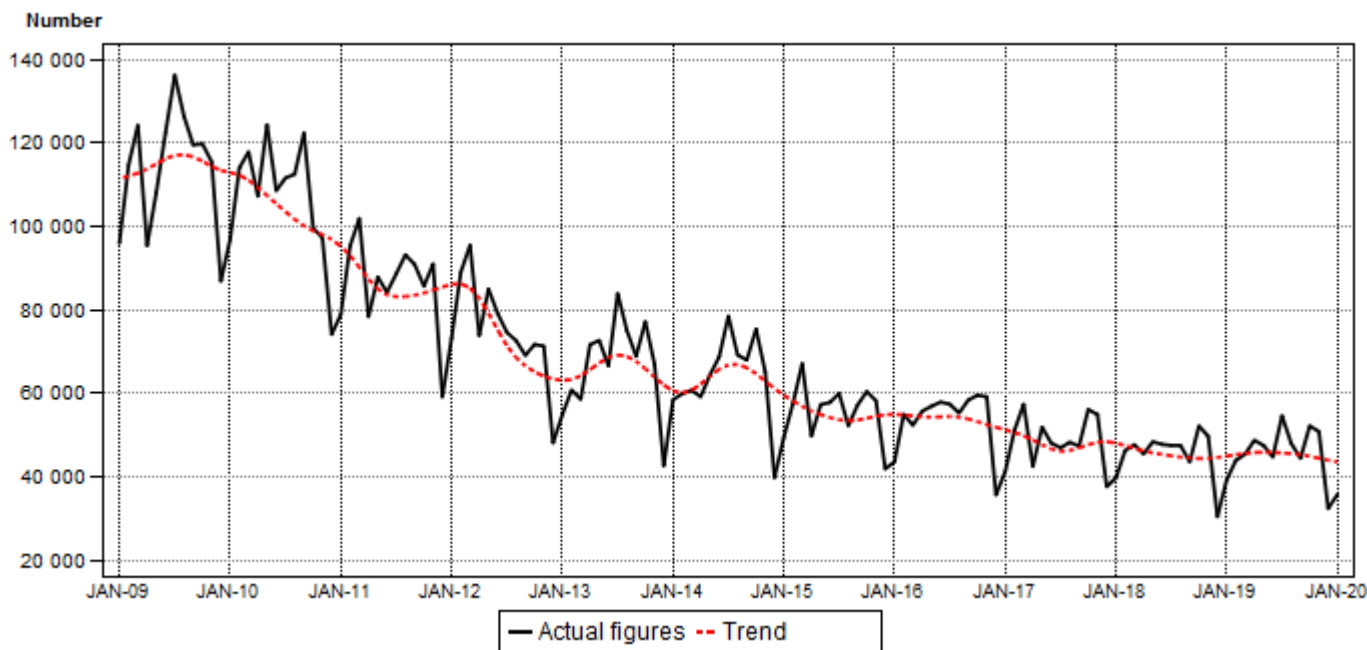
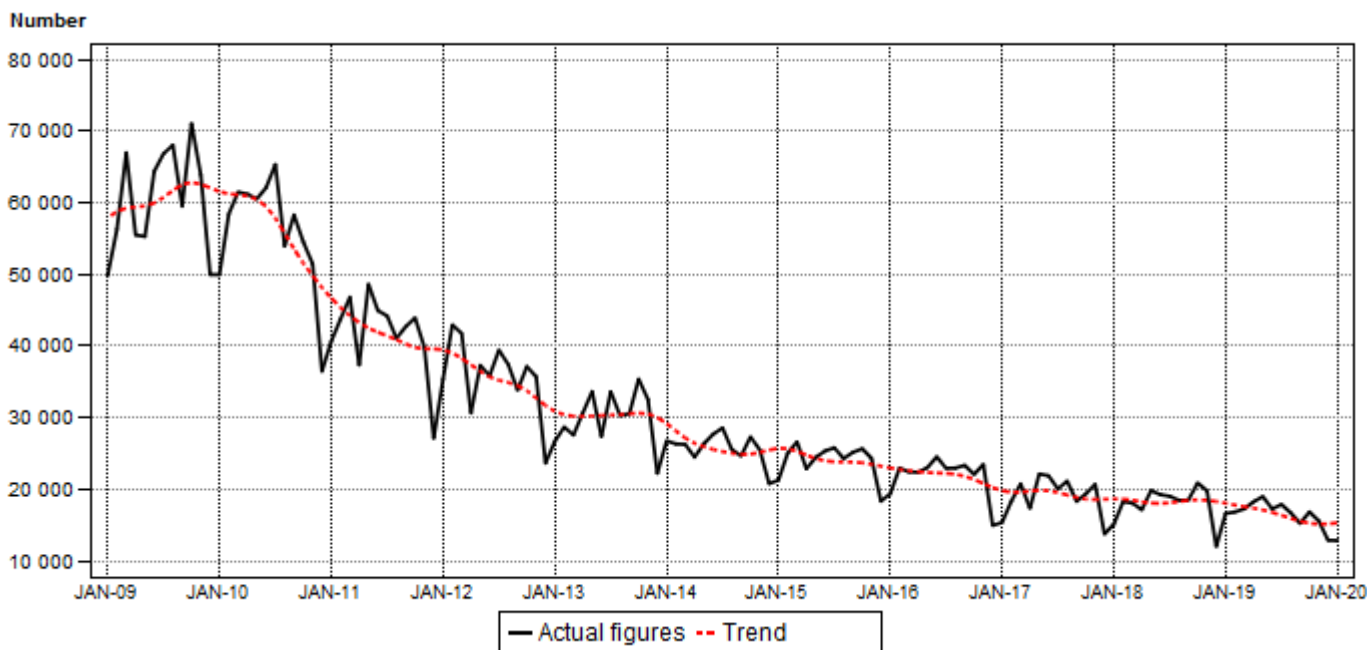


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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	Jan-19	1/ Dec-19	1/ Jan-20	2019	Jan-19	1/ Dec-19	1/ Jan-20
Cases recorded	Actual figures	573 505	40 629	34 073	38 988	501 837	35 125	29 868	34 304
	Seasonally adjusted		48 334	47 473	45 687		41 538	41 693	40 000
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	32 869	2 059	1 846	1 975	24 773	1 406	1 387	1 471
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	17 827	1 755	1 101	1 287	14 851	1 391	935	1 138
	Services - Professional	61 914	5 284	3 420	4 604	54 906	4 682	3 011	4 221
	Services - Other	84 337	7 031	4 849	5 469	72 858	5 980	4 293	4 849
	Rent	29 859	2 536	2 019	2 191	23 382	2 003	1 550	1 645
	Money lent	137 744	7 930	8 165	8 367	129 914	7 407	7 735	8 017
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	72 484	4 988	4 729	4 564	67 528	4 674	4 369	4 338
	Other debts	114 445	7 632	6 248	7 190	102 355	6 693	5 436	6 203
	Total - Actual figures	551 479	39 215	32 377	35 647	490 567	34 236	28 716	31 882
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		46 398	44 674	42 107		40 897	39 943	38 060

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2019	Jan-19	1/ Dec-19	1/ Jan-20	2019	Jan-19	1/ Dec-19	1/ Jan-20	
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	14 253	1 102	873	945	10 594	852	620	732
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	6 276	570	360	434	5 488	495	294	372
	Services - Professional	29 978	2 599	1 657	2 004	27 459	2 409	1 465	1 858
	Services - Other	35 194	2 490	2 400	2 368	31 643	2 176	2 220	2 136
	Rent	18 799	1 359	1 376	1 343	15 527	1 091	1 190	1 135
	Money lent	41 327	3 098	2 636	2 459	37 645	2 850	2 381	2 214
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	17 343	1 733	1 048	983	15 511	1 502	933	882
	Other debts	36 996	3 649	2 517	2 278	34 197	3 470	2 336	2 128
	Total - Actual figures	200 166	16 600	12 867	12 814	178 064	14 845	11 439	11 457
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		19 449	17 000	15 191		17 305	15 472	13 620

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2019	Jan-19	1/ Dec-19	1/ Jan-20	2019	Jan-19	1/ Dec-19	1/ Jan-20	
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	246 154	15 301	11 273	13 614	136 662	9 036	5 709	7 394
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	139 841	11 189	7 670	14 292	120 869	9 419	5 912	12 032
	Services - Professional	236 936	21 443	15 971	17 351	209 228	20 197	12 990	15 238
	Services - Other	556 418	34 756	52 145	44 215	464 934	29 555	47 155	39 426
	Rent	376 750	25 098	31 177	29 622	271 115	19 453	26 379	23 200
	Money lent	1 048 737	75 546	74 724	68 302	962 684	68 732	69 926	63 817
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	482 897	29 477	35 248	32 419	425 567	25 544	29 804	28 854
	Other debts	648 602	58 743	40 378	32 922	532 742	48 499	33 134	27 624
	Total - Actual figures	3 736 335	271 553	268 586	252 737	3 123 801	230 435	231 009	217 585
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		331 829	327 181	312 667		278 233	277 344	263 378

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 2019 and the three months ended January 2020

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Nov 2018 – Jan 2019	Actual estimates Nov 2019 – Jan 2020	% change between Nov 2018 – Jan 2019 and Nov 2019 – Jan 2020	Difference between Nov 2018 – Jan 2019 and Nov 2019 – Jan 2020
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	119 250	118 814	-0,4	-436
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	48 386	41 254	-14,7	-7 132
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	841,0	865,9	3,0	24,9

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 2019 and the three months ended January 2020 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	0,0	-0,7	-0,1
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-1,1	-0,7	0,6
Services - Professional	-0,8	-3,0	0,6
Services - Other	-3,6	-1,4	2,7
Rent	-0,2	-0,8	0,9
Money lent	3,5	-1,7	0,9
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	1,5	-3,7	2,2
Other debts	0,3	-2,7	-4,9
Total	-0,4	-14,7	3,0

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 November 2018 to January 2019, 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 2019	Actual estimates January 2020	% change between January 2019 and January 2020	Difference between January 2019 and January 2020
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	39 215	35 647	-9,1	-3 568
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	16 600	12 814	-22,8	-3 786
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	271,6	252,7	-6,9	-18,9

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	
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	
2020	Jan	5 309	2 429	323	2 501	8 084	1 924	11 643	1 642	1 792	35 647

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	
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	
2020	Jan	2 109	1 548	339	1 280	3 452	607	1 477	863	1 139	12 814

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	
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	
2020	Jan	53 032	36 607	2 396	17 883	51 439	11 192	58 047	14 948	7 193	252 737

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

Explanatory notes

Introduction	1	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Purpose of the survey	3	<p>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.</p>
Scope of the survey	4	<p>This survey covers:</p> <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	<p>The statistical unit for collection of information is a magistrate's office. Magistrates' offices include the small claims courts.</p> <p>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.</p>
Survey methodology and design	6	<p>The survey is conducted by email, fax and telephone each month from 203 magistrates' offices.</p>
Collection rate	7	<p>The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for January 2020 was 85,7%. The collection rate for December 2019 was 84,2%.</p>
Seasonal adjustment	8	<p>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.</p>
Trend cycle	9	<p>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.</p>
Unpublished statistics	10	<p>In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.</p>
Symbols and abbreviations	11	<p>R/D Refer to drawer Stats SA Statistics South Africa * Revised figures</p>

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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