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STATISTICAL RELEASE

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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

July 2023

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Key results for July 2023

Table A – Key figures for the month of July 2023

Actual estimates	July 2023	% change between July 2022 and July 2023	% change between May – July 2022 and May – July 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	42 851	-3,9	-1,1
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	12 631	-0,9	0,8
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	337,2	8,5	9,8

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 1,1% in the three months ended July 2023 compared with the three months ended July 2022.

The largest negative contributors to the 1,1% decrease in civil summonses issued were:

- money lent (contributing -2,5 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,3 percentage points).

'Other' debts made the largest positive contribution (contributing 1,9 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 0,8% in the three months ended July 2023 compared with the three months ended July 2022. The largest positive contributor was 'other' debts (contributing 5,9 percentage points) and the largest negative contributor was money lent (contributing -3,7 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 9,8% in the three months ended July 2023 compared with the three months ended July 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 9,8% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing 5,1 percentage points);
- services (contributing 3,7 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing 2,7 percentage points); and
- money lent (contributing 2,6 percentage points) – see Table 5.

In July 2023, 12 631 civil judgements for debt amounting to R337,2 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R97,5 million or 28,9%);
- 'other' debts (R69,7 million or 20,7%); and
- services (R66,8 million or 19,8%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

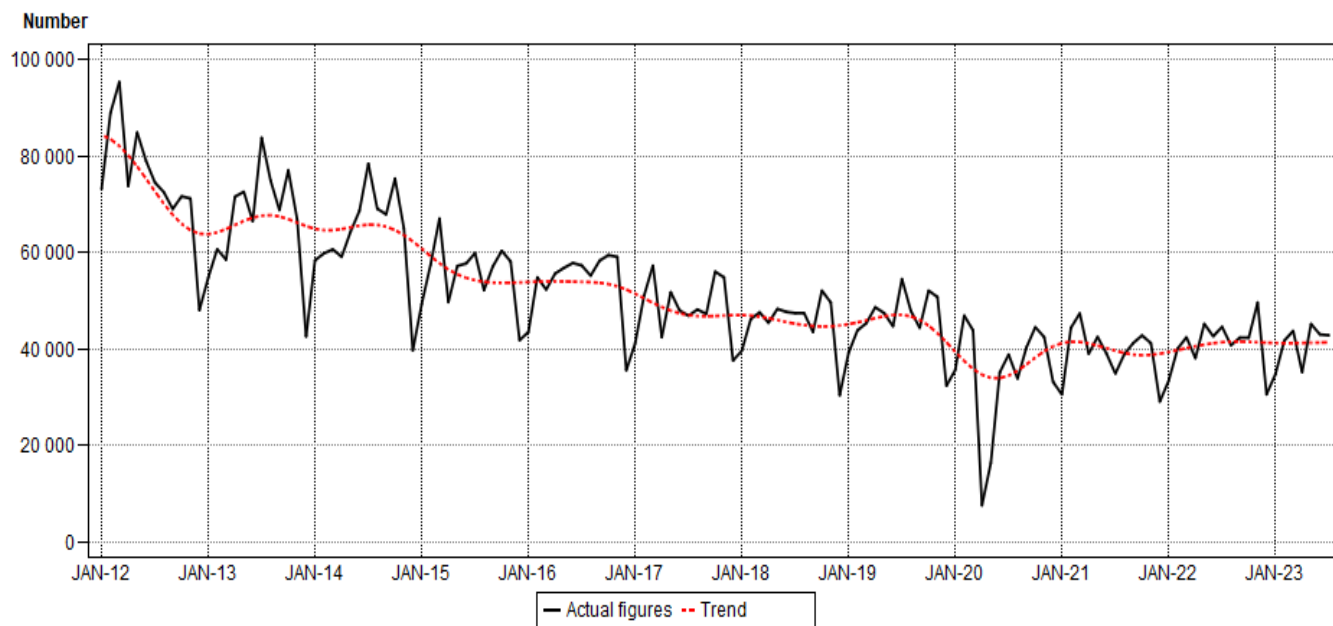


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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	Jul-22	1/ Jun-23	1/ Jul-23	2022	Jul-22	1/ Jun-23	1/ Jul-23
Cases recorded	Actual figures	514 325	46 524	45 353	44 256	440 408	40 426	36 460	35 021
	Seasonally adjusted		47 522	43 752	43 763		41 190	35 314	34 597
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	23 286	1 827	1 949	1 686	14 645	1 110	1 195	1 028
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 867	1 175	1 097	1 052	11 954	921	735	814
	Services - Professional	56 911	5 238	5 564	6 235	46 262	4 328	4 084	4 353
	Services - Other	73 225	6 661	6 707	5 899	62 348	5 747	4 965	4 964
	Rent	25 280	2 189	2 332	2 201	18 118	1 645	1 536	1 499
	Money lent	121 161	10 533	9 640	9 274	113 762	9 799	8 921	8 568
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	45 229	3 687	3 964	4 706	41 607	3 369	3 573	4 159
	Other debts	132 399	13 295	11 781	11 798	119 165	12 297	10 375	9 913
	Total - Actual figures	492 358	44 605	43 034	42 851	427 861	39 216	35 384	35 298
Total - Seasonally adjusted		44 582	41 944	42 106		39 641	34 564	35 024	

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Jul-22	1/ Jun-23	1/ Jul-23	2022	Jul-22	1/ Jun-23	1/ Jul-23
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	7 147	656	593	660	4 555	437	269	317
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	5 230	602	255	309	4 167	547	191	232
	Services - Professional	21 161	2 168	1 916	2 268	17 970	1 896	1 377	1 714
	Services - Other	24 638	2 063	2 227	1 898	21 605	1 792	1 926	1 668
	Rent	10 712	846	967	1 025	7 990	619	663	752
	Money lent	32 148	3 190	2 733	2 417	28 679	2 902	2 462	2 136
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	11 637	1 007	1 025	1 333	10 470	897	871	958
	Other debts	22 010	2 210	2 516	2 721	19 210	2 004	2 136	1 910
	Total - Actual figures	134 683	12 742	12 232	12 631	114 646	11 094	9 895	9 687
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		13 724	11 675	13 064		12 286	9 445	10 500

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Jul-22	1/ Jun-23	1/ Jul-23	2022	Jul-22	1/ Jun-23	1/ Jul-23
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	163 474	12 540	14 686	19 547	70 273	6 324	5 639	4 509
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	153 418	20 371	7 635	8 326	121 713	18 327	5 801	5 918
	Services - Professional	223 539	22 805	19 581	30 165	163 199	17 886	14 885	18 132
	Services - Other	447 767	31 980	52 334	36 628	379 058	26 051	40 671	30 622
	Rent	355 745	31 385	31 471	31 425	261 772	23 868	23 118	24 340
	Money lent	1 034 851	99 864	91 455	97 508	967 961	95 083	87 914	91 838
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	416 381	37 969	44 334	43 912	370 656	32 436	41 308	36 153
	Other debts	627 446	53 801	63 519	69 705	512 980	44 905	54 217	51 383
	Total - Actual figures	3 422 621	310 715	325 015	337 216	2 847 612	264 880	273 553	262 895
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		312 628	335 490	319 674		280 398	276 312	263 463

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 July 2022 and the three months ended July 2023

Actual estimates	Actual estimates May – Jul 2022	Actual estimates May – Jul 2023	% change between May – Jul 2022 and May – Jul 2023	Difference between May – Jul 2022 and May – Jul 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	132 499	131 099	-1,1	-1 400
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	36 970	37 250	0,8	280
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	913,1	1 003,0	9,8	89,9

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 July 2022 and the three months ended July 2023 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	-0,9	-0,5	0,7
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,4	-2,4	-3,0
Services - Professional	1,4	0,3	0,7
Services - Other	-1,1	0,1	3,0
Rent	-0,2	-0,1	-2,0
Money lent	-2,5	-3,7	2,6
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	0,6	1,1	2,7
Other debts	1,9	5,9	5,1
Total	-1,1	0,8	9,8

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 from May to July 2022, 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 July 2022	Actual estimates July 2023	% change between July 2022 and July 2023	Difference between July 2022 and July 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	44 605	42 851	-3,9	-1 754
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	12 742	12 631	-0,9	-111
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	310,7	337,2	8,5	26,5

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	
2022	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	994	8 300	2 244	1 456	30 612
2023	Jan	5 929	2 289	226	2 239	7 652	2 000	10 458	2 414	1 574	34 781
	Feb	8 085	3 583	535	2 663	7 860	1 803	13 088	2 454	1 687	41 758
	Mar	10 472	3 326	577	2 070	7 387	1 940	13 736	2 579	1 679	43 766
	Apr	8 307	2 722	286	1 353	6 537	1 437	11 143	1 836	1 583	35 204
	May	10 243	2 775	577	1 812	8 030	1 883	15 079	3 010	1 805	45 214
	Jun	10 394	2 649	373	2 258	6 827	1 705	14 099	2 747	1 982	43 034
	Jul	9 434	2 643	545	2 623	6 200	1 775	14 552	3 249	1 830	42 851

1/ Latest three 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	
2022	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	325	1 835	1 005	1 025	8 569
2023	Jan	1 739	1 044	139	849	1 057	384	2 130	1 521	1 015	9 878
	Feb	2 557	1 245	184	826	1 518	359	2 106	760	1 109	10 664
	Mar	2 326	1 120	175	622	1 352	671	3 061	1 043	1 169	11 539
	Apr	2 224	1 046	186	722	1 104	379	2 719	707	1 073	10 160
	May	2 995	993	201	1 229	1 176	353	3 488	746	1 206	12 387
	Jun	2 747	874	195	1 401	1 118	603	3 116	976	1 202	12 232
	Jul	2 599	740	209	1 069	1 039	549	4 030	1 260	1 136	12 631

1/ Latest three 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	
2022	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	37 464	5 755	62 864	11 058	5 381	213 423
2023	Jan	48 201	23 145	2 715	17 834	41 083	6 105	59 324	24 540	4 736	227 681
	Feb	71 239	26 228	2 548	20 787	55 818	6 367	78 357	15 896	7 331	284 572
	Mar	61 558	24 352	2 314	12 695	61 358	15 708	91 994	16 891	9 394	296 265
	Apr	74 130	27 959	2 422	17 584	39 905	12 650	65 687	15 301	7 228	262 865
	May	96 915	32 086	3 204	22 883	50 094	6 182	95 649	21 852	11 895	340 761
	Jun	87 902	24 636	3 690	26 244	46 216	9 331	90 188	25 969	10 839	325 015
	Jul	80 322	25 666	3 902	23 351	42 213	11 322	111 543	29 700	9 197	337 216

1/ Latest three 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 July 2023 was 81,8%. The improved collection rate for June 2023 was 81,8%.
Rounding-off of figures	8	Where figures have been rounded off, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and the totals.
Seasonal adjustment	9	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: Click to download seasonal adjustment for civil cases for debt February 2022.
Trend cycle	10	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	11	In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.
Symbols and abbreviations	12	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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