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# Statistical release

## P0041

# Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

**June 2012**

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### **Enquiries**

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User Information Services  
Tel: (012) 310 8600

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**Contents**

**Results for June 2012.....2**

**Tables.....4**

Table 1 . Number of civil cases recorded and summonses issued for debt according to business enterprises and private persons.....4

Table 2 . Number of civil cases recorded according to selected magistrates offices.....5

Table 3 . Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons .....6

Table 4 . Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt according to business enterprises and private persons (R000) .....6

Table 5 . Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the second quarter of 2012 and the second quarter of 2011.....7

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 second quarter of 2012 and the second quarter of 2011 .....7

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....7

**Explanatory notes.....8**

**Glossary .....9**

**General information.....10**

## Results for June 2012

**Table A – Key figures for the month of June 2012**

Actual estimates	June 2012	% change between June 2011 and June 2012	% change between April to June 2011 and April to June 2012
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	79 213	-7,9	-6,5
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	34 760	-23,1	-23,3
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	404,5	-15,6	-14,9

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

**A 6,5% decrease in the total number of civil summonses issued for debt was recorded in the second quarter of 2012 compared with the second quarter of 2011. A 7,9% year-on-year decrease was recorded in June 2012 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).**

Categories that had major contributions to the 6,5% decrease were:

- promissory notes and other acknowledgements of debt (contributing -6,1 percentage points);
- other debts (contributing -2,3 percentage points); and
- services (contributing -2,1 percentage points).

The money lent category partially counteracted the decrease and recorded a positive contribution of 4,1 percentage points (see Table 6).

### The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

**The second quarter of 2012 reflected a 23,3% decrease in the total number of civil judgements recorded for debt compared with the second quarter of 2011. A year-on-year decrease of 23,1% was recorded in June 2012 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).**

The categories behind the 23,3% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -10,6 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -4,4 percentage points);
- other debts (contributing -3,7 percentage points); and
- promissory notes and other acknowledgements of debt (contributing -3,2 percentage points) (see Table 6).

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

**There was a 14,9% decrease in the total value of civil judgements recorded for debt in the second quarter of 2012 compared with the second quarter of 2011. A year-on-year decrease of 15,6% was recorded in June 2012 (see Table A and Tables 5 and 7).**

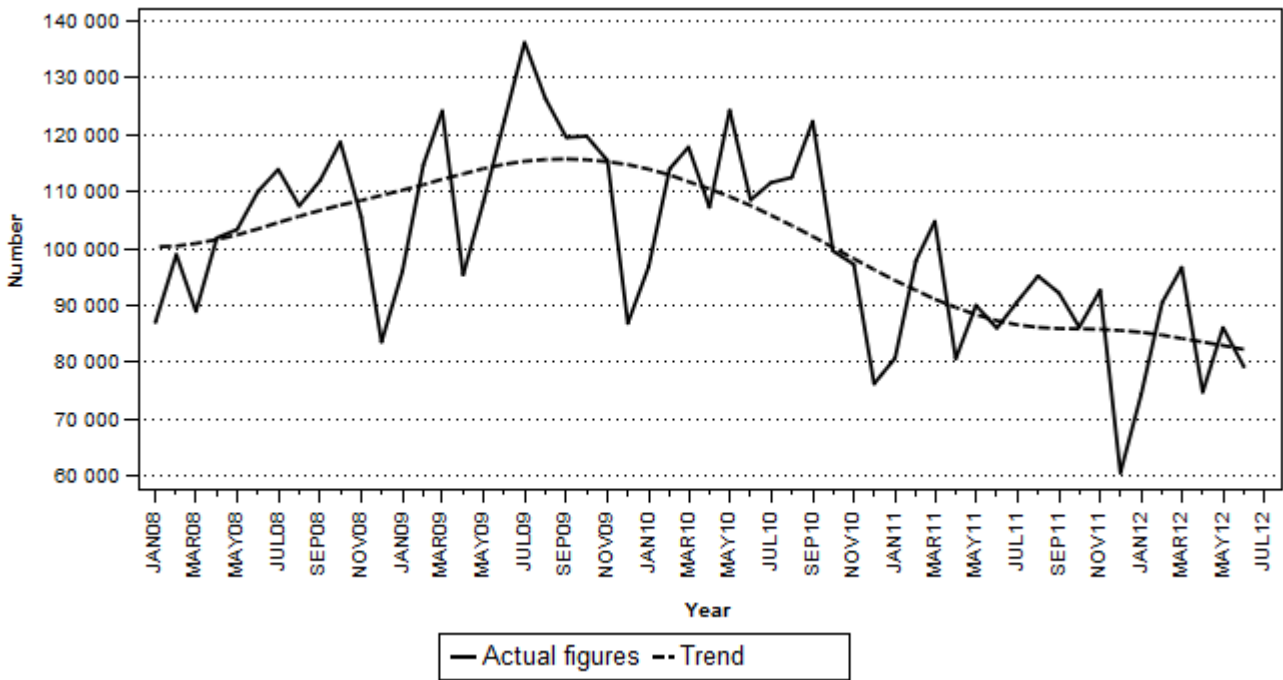
The major contributors to the 14,9% decrease were:

- money lent (contributing -11,3 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -2,3 percentage points);
- services (contributing -1,5 percentage points); and
- promissory notes and other acknowledgements of debt (contributing -1,0 percentage point) (see Table 6).

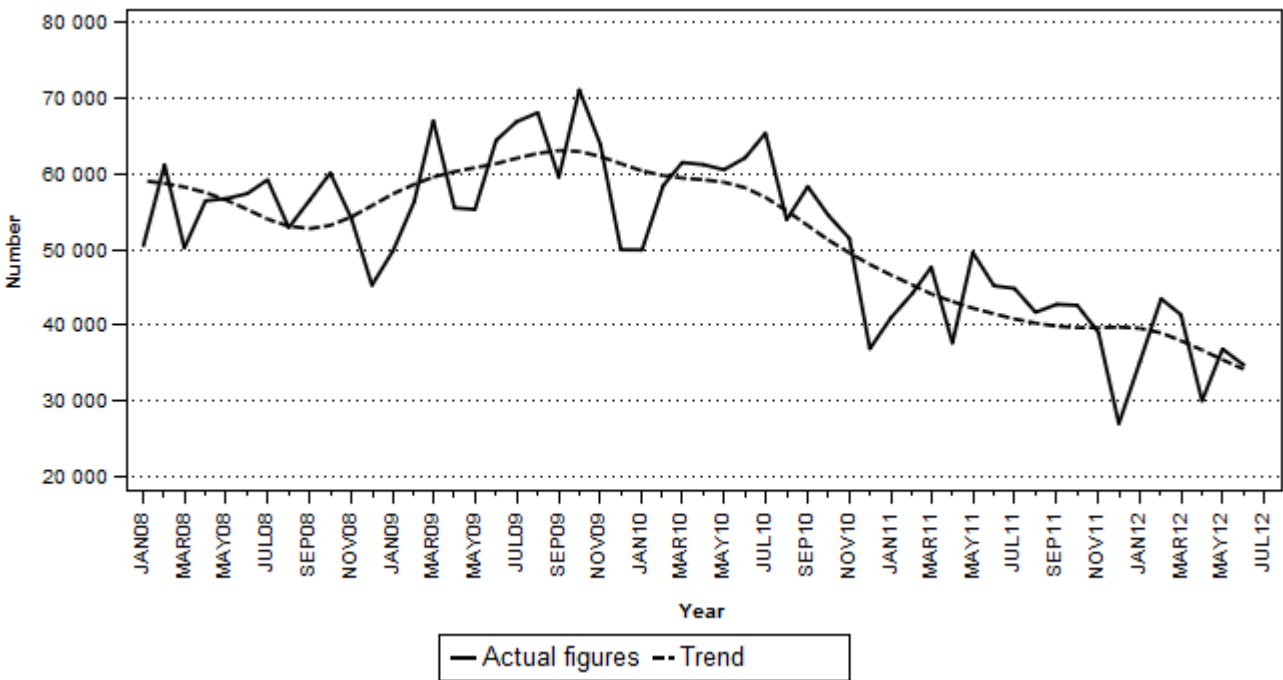
During June 2012, 34 760 civil judgements for debt amounting to R404,5 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the R404,5 million were:

- other debts (R95,8 million or 23,7%);
- money lent (R95,7 million or 23,7%);
- services (R69,8 million or 17,3%); and
- goods sold (R65,8 million or 16,3%) (see Tables 3 and 4).

**Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt**



**Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt**



**PJ Lehohla  
Statistician-General**

## Tables

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

Item		Total				Private persons			
		2011	June 2011	1/ May 2012	1/ June 2012	2011	June 2011	1/ May 2012	1/ June 2012
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>1 228 074</b>	<b>103 794</b>	<b>91 238</b>	<b>84 782</b>	<b>1 074 543</b>	<b>89 155</b>	<b>80 511</b>	<b>74 696</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		100 914	86 082	83 079		87 933	75 167	74 196
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	82 722	5 756	6 061	6 694	63 885	4 372	4 459	4 907
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	24 715	1 711	2 140	1 555	20 451	1 475	1 869	1 328
	Services - Professional	117 707	9 745	9 614	9 467	102 139	8 753	8 699	8 613
	Services - Other	197 580	15 863	16 106	15 080	176 093	14 200	14 527	13 881
	Rent	46 160	3 579	3 247	3 188	36 613	2 875	2 438	2 563
	Money lent	232 578	16 694	19 756	18 847	214 837	15 526	18 707	17 760
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	171 991	17 002	15 088	11 630	151 980	15 764	13 366	9 911
	Other debts	183 793	15 630	14 091	12 752	156 535	14 058	11 671	11 395
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>1 057 246</b>	<b>85 980</b>	<b>86 103</b>	<b>79 213</b>	<b>922 533</b>	<b>77 023</b>	<b>75 736</b>	<b>70 358</b>
<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		85 242	82 414	79 236		76 567	72 062	70 429	

1/ Preliminary.

**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
<b>2010</b>	<b>Year Total</b>	<b>118 066</b>	<b>37 136</b>	<b>15 823</b>	<b>5 246</b>	<b>22 836</b>	<b>90 782</b>	<b>256 134</b>	<b>54 366</b>	<b>33 988</b>	<b>138 594</b>	<b>17 342</b>	<b>64 259</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>Year Total</b>	<b>79 463</b>	<b>60 025</b>	<b>11 782</b>	<b>4 842</b>	<b>16 605</b>	<b>64 927</b>	<b>222 519</b>	<b>47 918</b>	<b>37 724</b>	<b>94 991</b>	<b>14 597</b>	<b>41 547</b>
	January	4 253	2 019	876	293	1 493	6 512	22 549	3 222	2 516	8 018	934	3 585
	February	5 379	3 184	1 197	344	1 805	6 343	28 740	4 472	3 473	9 927	1 563	2 946
	March	6 907	4 548	1 301	419	826	6 034	24 728	4 818	2 831	8 569	1 405	4 354
	April	5 317	3 823	1 423	290	1 581	6 031	19 903	3 398	2 711	7 212	1 016	4 428
	May	5 999	6 607	1 430	351	1 469	6 728	20 295	3 556	2 599	9 172	1 098	4 520
	June	7 480	5 207	975	374	1 325	5 738	17 516	3 829	2 459	8 132	1 368	3 855
	July	7 879	4 502	1 309	549	2 056	6 124	17 611	3 913	3 476	7 393	1 765	3 492
	August	7 482	6 460	1 137	680	1 268	4 909	15 940	4 581	3 251	6 977	1 448	3 982
	September	7 689	5 978	610	578	1 740	4 341	19 759	4 414	3 125	7 876	1 070	3 364
	October	6 220	6 621	588	244	1 141	3 976	12 013	5 438	3 187	8 655	924	2 893
	November	6 482	7 447	627	461	1 171	4 410	13 803	3 987	4 811	8 658	1 435	2 488
December	8 376	3 629	309	259	730	3 781	9 662	2 290	3 285	4 402	571	1 640	
<b>1/ 2012</b>	January	6 626	4 188	264	321	1 251	3 717	9 405	3 477	4 217	7 230	838	1 590
	February	6 421	6 720	345	710	1 269	4 068	12 143	4 107	6 091	7 905	987	2 259
	March	6 674	11 178	160	423	2 006	3 799	10 661	5 089	6 182	7 524	1 115	2 006
	April	6 630	4 986	152	350	1 591	3 374	9 428	3 524	3 944	7 098	1 083	2 194
	May	6 931	4 543	159	537	2 411	3 355	14 658	3 973	2 492	7 892	1 041	1 891
	June	6 655	3 038	125	590	2 048	3 373	10 056	4 548	2 500	9 580	1 079	1 976

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private persons			
		2011	June 2011	1/ May 2012	1/ June 2012	2011	June 2011	1/ May 2012	1/ June 2012
<b>Number of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	56 599	4 858	3 852	4 091	48 208	3 985	3 021	3 425
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	10 636	896	868	938	8 673	704	731	813
	Services - Professional	68 314	6 509	6 001	5 631	63 158	6 061	5 378	5 050
	Services - Other	57 871	5 111	5 086	4 475	50 115	4 444	4 355	3 929
	Rent	25 693	2 126	2 205	2 157	20 599	1 616	1 703	1 636
	Money lent	163 337	14 321	10 170	8 537	158 119	13 718	9 703	7 979
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	44 550	4 163	2 792	3 862	38 545	3 649	2 338	3 285
	Other debts	76 406	7 230	5 897	5 069	67 988	6 474	5 458	4 648
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>503 406</b>	<b>45 214</b>	<b>36 871</b>	<b>34 760</b>	<b>455 405</b>	<b>40 651</b>	<b>32 687</b>	<b>30 765</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		42 548	35 725	32 654		38 312	32 049	28 975

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

Item		Total				Private persons			
		2011	June 2011	1/ May 2012	1/ June 2012	2011	June 2011	1/ May 2012	1/ June 2012
<b>Value of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	522 678	50 189	49 152	46 668	333 611	30 401	22 326	30 873
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	284 150	22 838	16 606	19 166	230 821	18 221	14 165	16 104
	Services - Professional	308 692	30 991	31 585	28 412	264 557	27 557	25 043	23 990
	Services - Other	592 032	52 352	47 130	41 395	444 349	36 921	34 184	30 822
	Rent	374 423	37 411	33 003	32 296	223 786	17 780	21 593	19 362
	Money lent	1 525 895	149 298	110 302	95 734	1 422 619	140 414	103 494	84 371
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	536 585	45 192	35 828	45 048	436 042	37 192	27 154	35 093
	Other debts	1 016 435	91 258	89 887	95 801	728 727	57 849	68 052	63 136
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>5 160 890</b>	<b>479 529</b>	<b>413 493</b>	<b>404 520</b>	<b>4 084 512</b>	<b>366 335</b>	<b>316 011</b>	<b>303 751</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		438 711	416 865	370 563		341 290	311 486	284 197

1/ Preliminary.

**Table 5 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the second quarter of 2012 and the second quarter of 2011**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates April to June 2011	Actual estimates April to June 2012	% change between April to June 2011 and April to June 2012	Difference between April to June 2011 and April to June 2012
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	256 595	240 038	-6,5	-16 557
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	132 469	101 655	-23,3	-30 814
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 327,3	1 128,9	-14,9	-198,4

**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 second quarter of 2012 and the second quarter of 2011 1/**

	Contribution (% points) to the total % change		
	Civil summonses for debt	Number of civil judgements	Value of civil judgements
Goods sold - Open account	0,3	-4,5	-0,4
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,2	0,1	-1,9
Services - Professional	-0,5	-0,9	0,2
Services - Other	-1,6	-0,3	-1,7
Rent	-0,5	0,0	0,2
Money lent	4,1	-10,6	-11,3
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-6,1	-3,2	-1,0
Other debts	-2,3	-3,7	0,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>-6,5</b>	<b>-23,3</b>	<b>-14,9</b>

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 April to June 2011, divided by 100. Due to rounding off, contributions might not add up to the total.

**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 June 2011	Actual estimates June 2012	% change between June 2011 and June 2012	Difference between June 2011 and June 2012
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	85 980	79 213	-7,9	-6 767
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	45 214	34 760	-23,1	-10 454
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	479,5	404,5	-15,6	-75,0



## Explanatory notes

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>	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.
	<b>2</b>	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.
<b>Purpose of the survey</b>	<b>3</b>	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.
<b>Scope of the survey</b>	<b>4</b>	This survey covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of civil cases recorded;</li> <li>• number of civil summonses issued for debt;</li> <li>• number of civil judgements recorded for debt; and</li> <li>• value of civil judgements recorded for debt.</li> </ul>
<b>Statistical unit</b>	<b>5</b>	The statistical unit for collection of information is a magistrates' 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.
<b>Survey methodology and design</b>	<b>6</b>	The survey is conducted by mail, fax and telephone each month from 151 magistrates' offices.
<b>Collection rate</b>	<b>7</b>	The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for June 2012 was 93,4%. Improved collection rate for May 2012 was 90,7%.
<b>Trend cycle</b>	<b>8</b>	Smoothed seasonally adjusted and trend estimates are generated using the X-11 Seasonal Adjustment Programme.
<b>Publications</b>	<b>9</b>	Users may also wish to refer to the following publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bulletin of Statistics</i> issued quarterly; and</li> <li>• <i>SA Statistics</i> issued annually.</li> </ul>
<b>Unpublished statistics</b>	<b>10</b>	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.
<b>Symbols and abbreviations</b>	<b>11</b>	R/D        Refer to Drawer Stats SA    Statistics South Africa TBVC       Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei *            Revised figures

## Glossary

<b>Acknowledgement of debt</b>	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.
<b>Bills</b>	Bills are statements of charges for services rendered or for amounts owed.
<b>Civil judgements</b>	Civil judgements are decisions taken in a civil matter or a dispute between two people or parties.
<b>Civil summonses</b>	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.
<b>Consent judgements</b>	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.
<b>Default judgements</b>	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.
<b>Instalment sale transaction</b>	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.
<b>Litigants</b>	Litigants are people who take part in court proceedings, usually against each other, like a debtor and a creditor.
<b>Litigants referred</b>	Litigants referred relates to a case where the parties have been referred to another instance/court.
<b>Open account transaction</b>	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.
<b>Other services</b>	Other services refers to municipal services (except outstanding assessment rates), plumbers, builders, mechanics, panel-beaters and electricians.
<b>Other debts</b>	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.
<b>Plaintiff</b>	Plaintiff is a person/party in a civil case who asks the court for judgement against another person.
<b>Professional services</b>	Professional services refer to medical doctors, dentists, advocates, attorneys, auditors, accountants, architects, engineers, hospital services etc.
<b>Promissory note</b>	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.
<b>Reference month</b>	Reference month refers to one calendar month.
<b>Refer to drawer (R/D) cheques</b>	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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email: [nthabisengt@statssa.gov.za](mailto:nthabisengt@statssa.gov.za) (technical enquiries)  
[info@statssa.gov.za](mailto:info@statssa.gov.za) (user information services)  
[magdaj@statssa.gov.za](mailto:magdaj@statssa.gov.za) (orders/subscription services)

Postal address: Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001

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