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# Statistical release

## P0041

# Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

**June 2013**

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### **Enquiries**

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User Information Services  
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## Results for June 2013

**Table A – Key figures for the month of June 2013**

Actual estimates	June 2013	% change between June 2012 and June 2013	% change between Apr – Jun 2012 and Apr – Jun 2013
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	65 729	-17,0	-12,1
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	26 600	-24,3	-12,5
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	357,2	-11,5	4,1

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 12,1% in the second quarter of 2013 compared with the second quarter of 2012. A 17,0% decrease was recorded between June 2012 and June 2013 – see Table A and Tables 5 and 7.

Categories that contributed to the 12,1% decrease were:

- money lent (contributing -4,2 percentage points);
- services (contributing -4,0 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing -3,2 percentage points) – see Table 6.

### The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 12,5% in the second quarter of 2013 compared with the second quarter of 2012. A 24,3% decrease was recorded in June 2013 compared with June 2012 – see Table A and Tables 5 and 7.

The categories that influenced the 12,5% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -5,6 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -4,0 percentage points); and
- services (contributing -1,7 percentage points) – see Table 6.

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

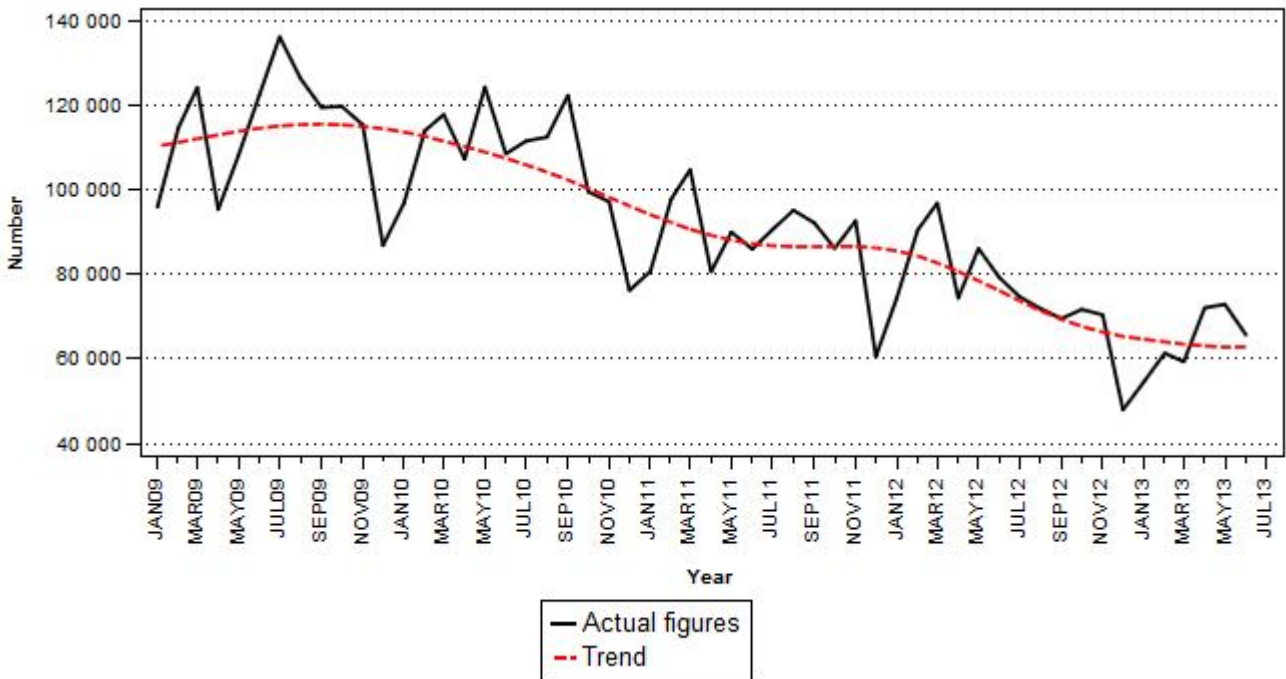
The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt was 4,1% higher in the second quarter of 2013 compared with the same quarter of 2012. A year-on-year decrease of 11,5% was recorded in June 2013 – see Table A and Tables 5 and 7.

The major contributors to the 4,1% increase were the services and the 'other' debts categories (both contributing 3,0 percentage points). The goods sold category (contributing -5,0 percentage points) was a significant negative contributor – see Table 6.

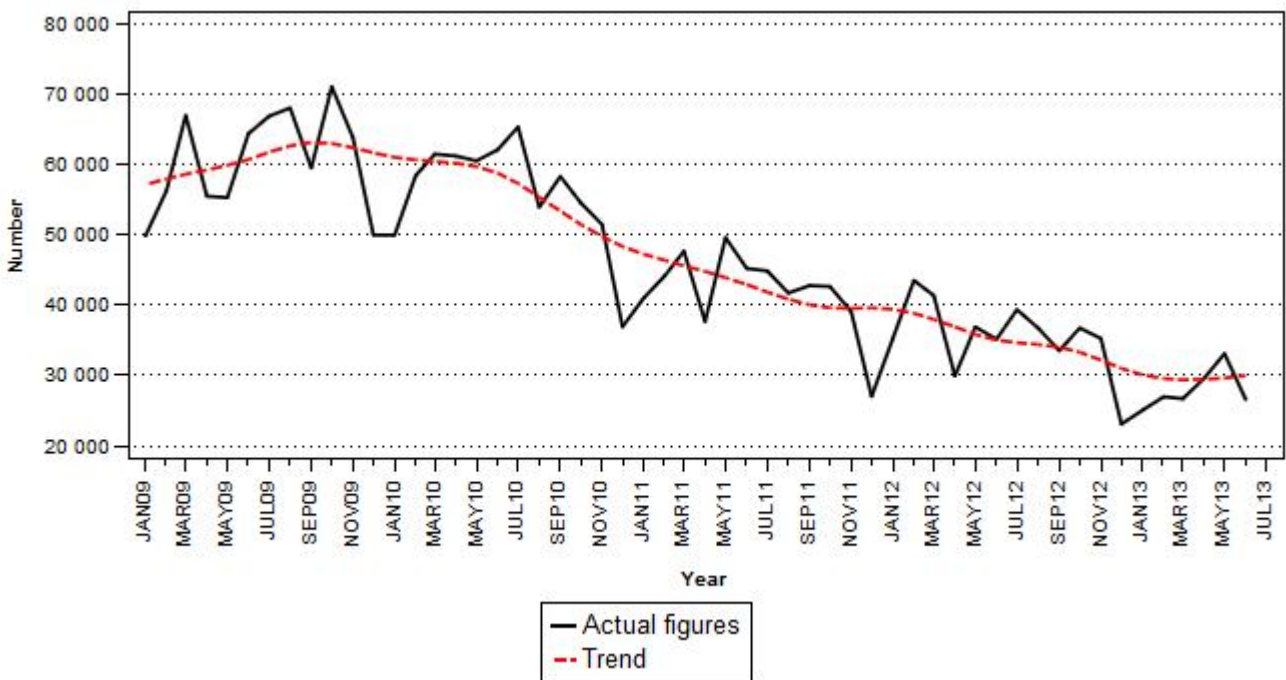
In June 2013, 26 600 civil judgements for debt amounting to R357,2 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- 'other' debts (R94,0 million or 26,3%);
- money lent (R88,2 million or 24,7%); and
- services (R63,6 million or 17,8%) – 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: Total and private persons**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2012	Jun-12	1/ May-13	1/ Jun-13	2012	Jun-12	1/ May-13	1/ Jun-13
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>977 066</b>	<b>84 719</b>	<b>82 811</b>	<b>76 106</b>	<b>847 341</b>	<b>74 717</b>	<b>72 568</b>	<b>67 575</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		81 946	75 647	73 861		72 037	64 827	65 202
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	73 272	6 577	5 714	4 494	54 229	4 798	4 507	3 670
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	22 512	1 548	2 363	1 938	18 853	1 319	1 775	1 482
	Services - Professional	104 351	9 535	9 321	8 523	91 458	8 608	8 424	7 674
	Services - Other	161 543	15 171	12 380	11 022	143 468	13 974	11 244	9 811
	Rent	41 859	3 192	3 651	3 457	32 306	2 497	2 863	2 713
	Money lent	223 677	18 880	16 239	15 737	206 727	17 692	15 508	14 524
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	121 720	11 640	13 474	10 230	99 449	9 920	12 277	8 859
	Other debts	158 728	12 693	9 764	10 328	139 386	11 325	8 828	9 646
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>907 662</b>	<b>79 236</b>	<b>72 906</b>	<b>65 729</b>	<b>785 876</b>	<b>70 133</b>	<b>65 426</b>	<b>58 379</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		77 498	66 592	64 553		67 858	58 887	56 507

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 and Vanderbijlpark	Bloemfontein
<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>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Year Total</b>	<b>72 859</b>	<b>47 774</b>	<b>2 348</b>	<b>7 096</b>	<b>21 344</b>	<b>42 468</b>	<b>131 836</b>	<b>47 547</b>	<b>39 350</b>	<b>92 109</b>	<b>11 895</b>	<b>20 344</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
	July	5 643	2 626	268	297	2 685	3 332	10 834	4 596	2 144	11 884	911	1 520
	August	6 176	2 522	193	414	2 036	3 427	11 463	3 626	2 342	8 474	1 083	1 908
	September	5 865	1 845	159	649	1 831	3 407	12 486	3 593	2 282	7 439	1 289	1 516
	October	5 343	2 501	197	1 053	1 551	3 642	12 909	4 725	3 018	6 855	603	1 161
	November	5 256	2 663	184	1 150	1 310	3 490	11 312	4 018	2 393	6 770	1 270	1 400
December	4 639	964	142	602	1 355	3 484	6 481	2 271	1 745	3 458	596	923	
<b>2013</b>	January	3 941	1 788	123	209	1 519	2 622	8 551	3 632	1 581	5 478	548	895
	February	4 707	2 359	43	336	1 434	2 798	9 799	4 119	2 167	5 589	1 454	1 224
	March	5 088	2 289	205	260	1 374	4 442	7 800	3 360	1 782	6 092	1 033	1 407
	April	6 817	2 425	105	325	1 675	2 901	10 481	3 689	2 240	6 435	689	1 874
	1/ May	6 030	2 970	85	549	1 760	5 427	11 188	3 740	2 294	5 873	1 419	1 339
	1/ June	6 039	2 696	116	350	1 888	5 456	9 217	3 425	2 401	4 473	1 623	994

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**Note**

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) proposes to discontinue the publication of Table 2 in the statistical release. The time series for these magistrates' offices will still be available for download on Stats SA's website. Should you have any comments or enquiries regarding this proposal please contact:

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**Table 3 – Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2012	Jun-12	1/ May-13	1/ Jun-13	2012	Jun-12	1/ May-13	1/ Jun-13
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	44 082	4 168	2 856	2 280	36 413	3 482	2 316	1 698
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	9 214	1 010	637	644	7 711	883	526	490
	Services - Professional	59 721	5 645	5 253	4 684	53 796	5 074	4 794	4 322
	Services - Other	53 957	4 514	5 031	4 148	46 716	3 927	4 465	3 511
	Rent	24 403	2 145	1 685	1 605	19 245	1 653	1 387	1 305
	Money lent	133 396	8 750	8 689	5 942	127 428	8 148	8 272	5 526
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	39 428	3 846	3 301	3 063	34 512	3 271	2 880	2 719
	Other debts	62 463	5 062	5 635	4 234	56 788	4 620	5 205	3 786
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>426 664</b>	<b>35 140</b>	<b>33 087</b>	<b>26 600</b>	<b>382 609</b>	<b>31 058</b>	<b>29 845</b>	<b>23 357</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		34 034	30 884	25 893		30 267	27 668	22 927

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**Table 4 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons (R'000)**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2012	Jun-12	1/ May-13	1/ Jun-13	2012	Jun-12	1/ May-13	1/ Jun-13
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	465 325	46 221	35 683	25 947	256 746	30 775	20 423	12 050
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	174 338	19 381	11 413	8 368	140 403	16 306	10 316	5 796
	Services - Professional	299 848	28 344	24 935	24 940	245 619	23 904	21 322	22 221
	Services - Other	508 675	41 347	54 922	38 645	398 310	30 760	45 725	30 284
	Rent	352 667	32 273	28 177	36 545	212 691	19 413	19 477	26 852
	Money lent	1 290 816	95 454	116 861	88 193	1 191 224	84 355	110 611	75 816
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	443 475	45 039	56 336	40 558	346 698	35 088	45 698	32 221
	Other debts	1 141 752	95 610	97 162	94 035	758 441	62 932	59 914	45 516
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>4 676 896</b>	<b>403 669</b>	<b>425 489</b>	<b>357 231</b>	<b>3 550 132</b>	<b>303 533</b>	<b>333 486</b>	<b>250 756</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		376 215	405 089	333 689		287 145	309 659	237 722

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 2013**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Apr – Jun 2012	Actual estimates Apr – Jun 2013	% change Apr – Jun 2012 and Apr – Jun 2013	Difference between Apr – Jun 2012 and Apr – Jun 2013
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	239 747	210 704	-12,1	-29 043
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	101 946	89 251	-12,5	-12 695
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 129,6	1 175,7	4,1	46,1

**Table 6 – Contribution of the different kinds of debt 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 2013 1/**

	Contribution (% points) to the % change in the total		
	Civil summonses for debt	Number of civil judgements	Value of civil judgements
Goods sold - Open account	-1,0	-3,3	-3,3
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,6	-0,7	-1,7
Services - Professional	0,3	-1,6	-0,8
Services - Other	-4,3	-0,1	3,8
Rent	0,6	-1,5	-0,1
Money lent	-4,2	-5,6	1,8
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-1,0	0,5	1,3
Other debts	-3,2	-0,2	3,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>-12,1</b>	<b>-12,5</b>	<b>4,1</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 during April to June 2012, 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 2012	Actual estimates June 2013	% change between June 2012 and June 2013	Difference between June 2012 and June 2013
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	79 236	65 729	-17,0	-13 507
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	35 140	26 600	-24,3	-8 540
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	403,7	357,2	-11,5	-46,5



## 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, ejectment 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. 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 magistrate's 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 2013 was 94,7%. The improved collection rate for May 2013 was 92,1%.
<b>Trend cycle</b>	<b>8</b>	Smoothed seasonally adjusted and trend estimates are generated using the X-11 Seasonal Adjustment Program developed by the US Bureau of the Census, 1968.
<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 *          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>Cases recorded</b>	Includes civil debt and non-debt cases recorded.
<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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