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Statistics of civil cases for debt
(Preliminary)

March 2017

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Key results for March 2017

Table A – Key figures for the month of March 2017

Actual estimates	March 2017	% change between March 2016 and March 2017	% change between January – March 2016 and January – March 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	57 290	9,5	-0,8
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	20 682	-7,7	-16,1
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	354,7	-2,0	-12,1

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 0,8% in the first quarter of 2017 compared with the first quarter of 2016.

The largest negative contributions to the 0,8% decrease were civil summonses relating to:

- services (contributing -3,4 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -2,0 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -0,5 of a percentage point) – see Tables 4 and 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 16,1% in the first quarter of 2017 compared with the first quarter of 2016.

The largest contributions to the 16,1% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing -6,0 percentage points);
- services (contributing -5,2 percentage points); and
- money lent (contributing -1,8 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 12,1% in the first quarter of 2017 compared with the first quarter of 2016.

The largest negative contributions to the 12,1% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing -8,3 percentage points);
- services (contributing -2,8 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,2 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

In March 2017, 20 682 civil judgements for debt amounting to R354,7 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (113,0 million or 31,9%);
- 'other' debts (R69,4 million or 19,6%); and
- services (R67,1 million or 18,9%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

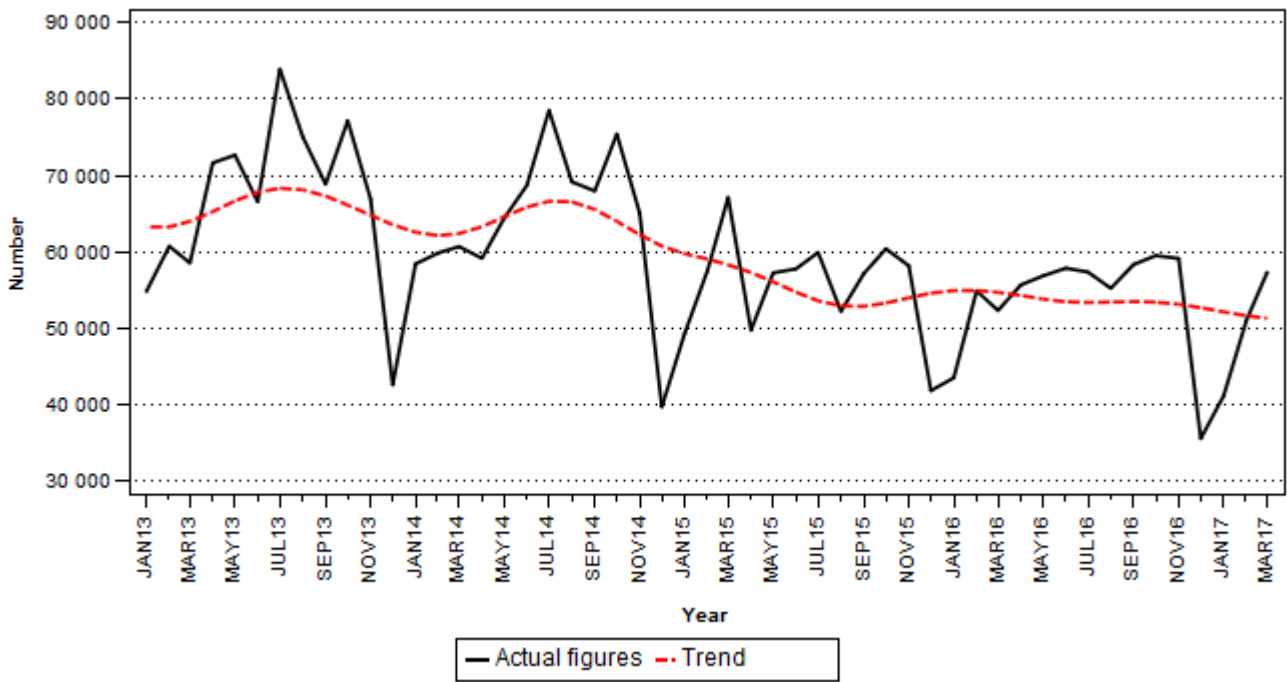
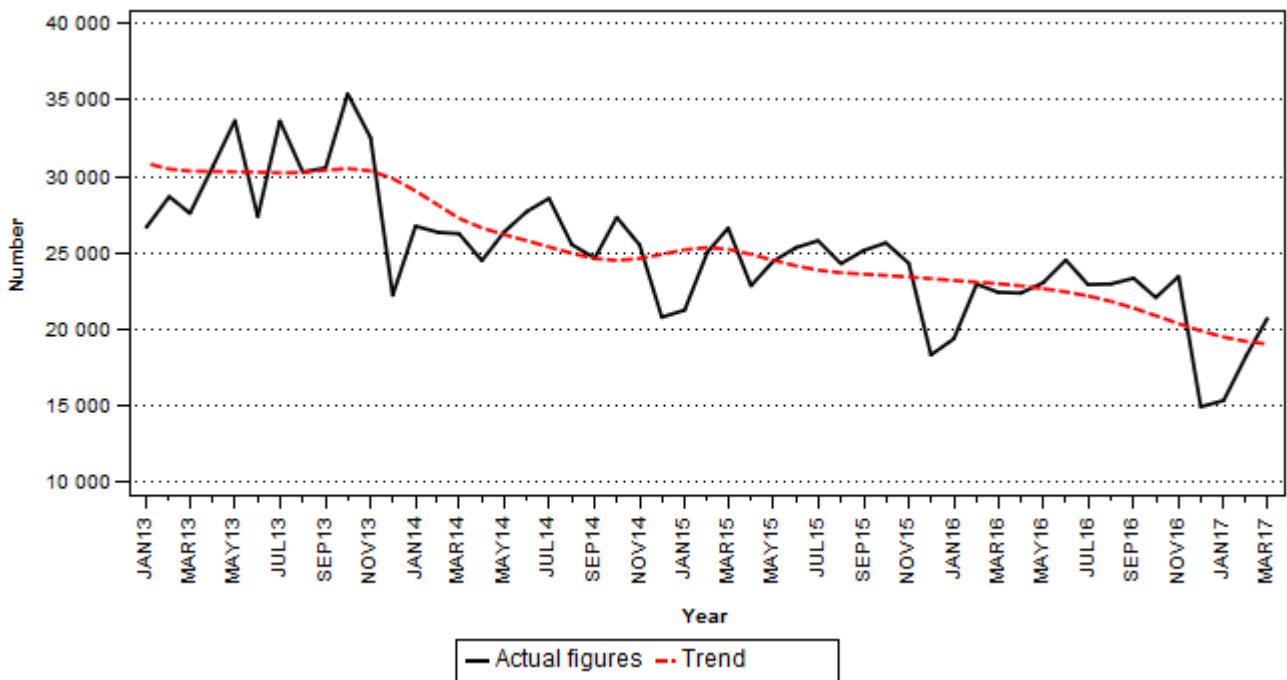


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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	Mar-16	1/ Feb-17	1/ Mar-17	2016	Mar-16	1/ Feb-17	1/ Mar-17
Cases recorded	Actual figures	700 485	57 662	53 857	60 224	602 530	49 966	45 479	51 259
	Seasonally adjusted		58 907	55 898	52 940		51 629	46 170	45 125
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	39 656	3 340	2 395	3 145	29 919	2 516	1 636	2 260
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	21 886	1 817	1 702	1 724	16 506	1 444	1 338	1 365
	Services - Professional	83 019	7 055	5 900	6 678	72 241	6 090	5 148	5 883
	Services - Other	106 305	9 625	7 840	9 137	89 744	8 364	6 633	7 696
	Rent	31 195	2 988	2 287	2 953	24 197	2 226	1 631	2 169
	Money lent	155 809	11 662	13 044	13 459	145 604	10 974	12 356	12 712
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	90 564	6 658	7 055	8 939	84 008	6 186	6 541	8 326
	Other debts	117 781	9 183	10 833	11 255	103 779	8 331	9 727	9 988
	Total - Actual figures	646 215	52 328	51 056	57 290	565 998	46 131	45 010	50 399
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		54 417	51 870	51 105		47 367	45 492	44 494

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2016	Mar-16	1/ Feb-17	1/ Mar-17	2016	Mar-16	1/ Feb-17	1/ Mar-17
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	17 058	1 561	1 178	1 410	12 948	1 218	864	1 089
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	7 068	512	596	444	6 039	422	526	369
	Services - Professional	44 011	3 662	3 014	3 334	39 091	3 255	2 712	3 101
	Services - Other	41 276	3 322	2 856	3 156	35 567	2 881	2 456	2 755
	Rent	18 296	1 476	1 389	1 501	15 162	1 200	1 164	1 266
	Money lent	60 447	5 127	4 112	4 984	55 379	4 745	3 748	4 655
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	25 021	1 994	2 066	2 105	21 461	1 714	1 770	1 813
	Other debts	51 152	4 764	3 086	3 748	45 458	4 278	2 764	3 401
	Total - Actual figures	264 329	22 418	18 297	20 682	231 105	19 713	16 004	18 449
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		22 791	19 360	18 861		19 966	16 954	16 824

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2016	Mar-16	1/ Feb-17	1/ Mar-17	2016	Mar-16	1/ Feb-17	1/ Mar-17
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	253 299	22 828	16 498	20 232	131 337	12 379	7 883	10 438
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	96 673	7 634	8 535	6 291	83 906	5 886	7 842	5 256
	Services - Professional	243 371	22 329	18 065	23 051	208 795	19 088	16 012	20 273
	Services - Other	542 398	43 255	37 040	44 061	432 972	33 223	30 683	35 384
	Rent	322 885	27 982	23 465	33 990	224 770	19 966	15 472	20 878
	Money lent	1 139 611	107 225	83 891	112 973	1 029 219	95 050	77 935	106 635
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	434 549	45 942	38 788	44 662	363 747	37 717	32 450	38 979
	Other debts	989 698	84 775	56 681	69 400	722 123	61 406	46 235	57 931
	Total - Actual figures	4 022 484	361 970	282 963	354 660	3 196 869	284 715	234 512	295 774
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		342 547	277 009	308 638		270 409	244 212	259 314

1/ Preliminary.

Table 4 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the first quarter of 2016 and the first quarter of 2017

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2016	Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2017	% change between Jan – Mar 2016 and Jan – Mar 2017	Difference between Jan – Mar 2016 and Jan – Mar 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	150 739	149 508	-0,8	-1 231
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	64 734	54 321	-16,1	-10 413
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	999,7	878,4	-12,1	-121,3

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 first quarter of 2016 and the first quarter of 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	-1,0	-1,3
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,7	-0,1	0,1
Services - Professional	-1,5	-2,9	-0,8
Services - Other	-1,9	-2,3	-2,0
Rent	-0,5	-1,0	0,1
Money lent	2,6	-1,8	-0,2
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	0,7	-1,0	0,4
Other debts	1,8	-6,0	-8,3
Total	-0,8	-16,1	-12,1

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 January to March 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 March 2016	Actual estimates March 2017	% change between March 2016 and March 2017	Difference between March 2016 and March 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	52 328	57 290	9,5	4 962
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	22 418	20 682	-7,7	-1 736
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	362,0	354,7	-2,0	-7,3

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	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	1 969	41 162
	Feb	8 707	3 749	811	3 309	8 903	2 195	18 837	2 409	2 136	51 056
	Mar	10 515	4 635	1 040	3 941	8 972	2 482	20 565	2 661	2 479	57 290

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	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	3 922	1 048	1 054	15 342
	Feb	3 370	2 019	292	1 788	3 843	910	4 211	765	1 099	18 297
	Mar	4 019	2 876	539	2 175	3 577	934	3 997	1 265	1 300	20 682

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

* Revised

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
2016	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	58 734	24 055	8 894	240 804
	Feb	67 812	35 384	3 094	19 788	39 303	13 856	81 496	15 697	6 533	282 963
	Mar	71 623	55 846	6 302	26 937	46 972	11 637	95 561	26 632	13 150	354 660

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

* Revised

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 March 2017 was 83,7%. The collection rate for February 2017 was 84,2%.
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.

