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Statistics of civil cases for debt
(Preliminary)

March 2018

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Key results for March 2018

Table A – Key figures for the month of March 2018

| Actual estimates | March 2018 | % change between March 2017 and March 2018 | % change between January – March 2017 and January – March 2018 |
|---|------------|--|--|
| Number of civil summonses issued for debt | 47 615 | -17,0 | -10,7 |
| Number of civil judgements recorded for debt | 18 060 | -13,0 | -5,5 |
| Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million) | 328,8 | -7,6 | 5,9 |

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 10,7% in the first quarter of 2018 compared with the first quarter of 2017.

The largest negative contributions to the 10,7% decrease for civil summonses issued were:

- money lent (contributing -5,9 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing -2,8 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,4 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 5,5% in the first quarter of 2018 compared with the first quarter of 2017.

The negative contributions to the 5,5% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

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

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 5,9% in the first quarter of 2018 compared with the first quarter of 2017.

The largest positive contributions to the 5,9% increase were the value of judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing 3,9 percentage points);
- rent (contributing 1,0 percentage point); and
- promissory notes (contributing 1,0 percentage point) – see Tables 4 and 5.

In March 2018, 18 060 civil judgements for debt amounting to R328,8 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R86,6 million or 26,3%);
- 'other' debts (R78,8 million or 24,0%); and
- services (R60,0 million or 18,3%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

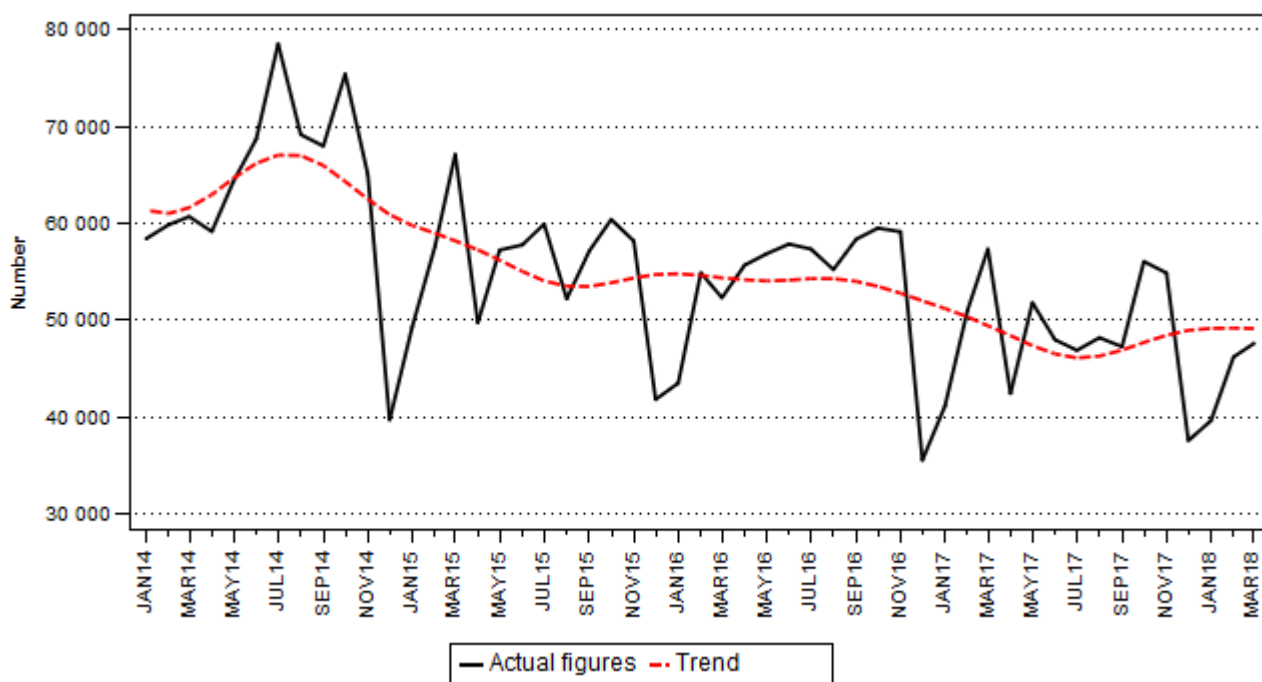
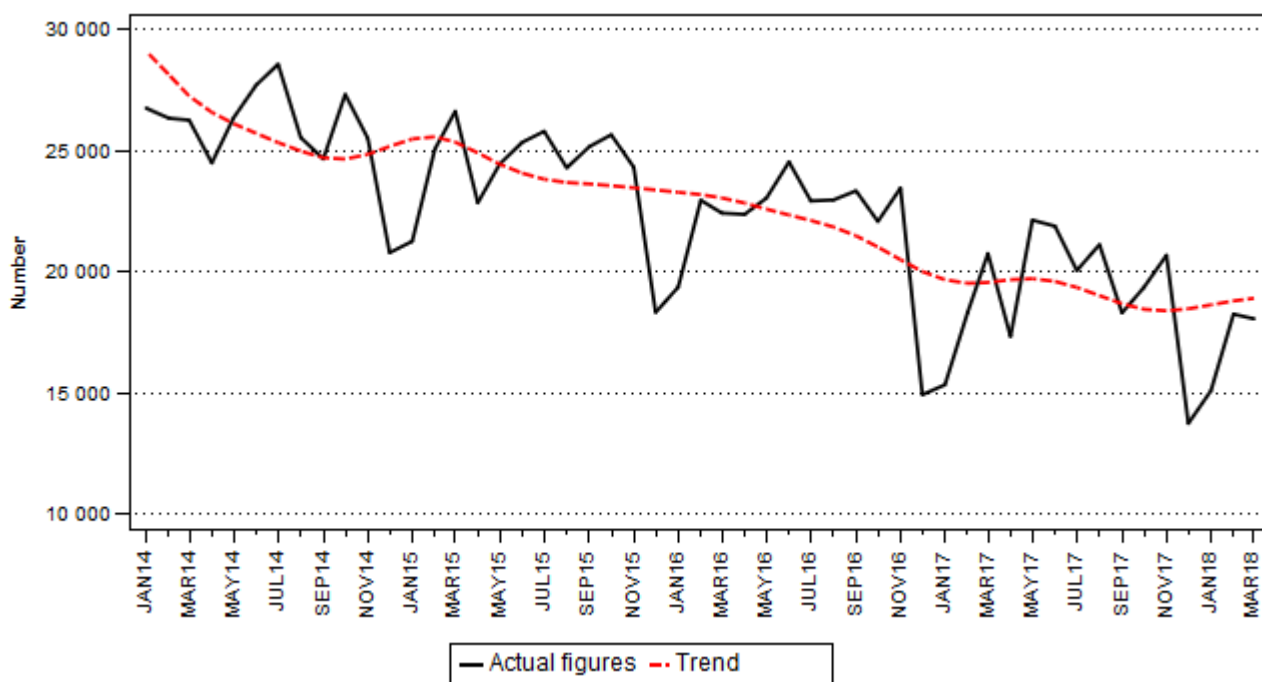


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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 | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | 2017 | Mar-17 | 1/ Feb-18 | 1/ Mar-18 | 2017 | Mar-17 | 1/ Feb-18 | 1/ Mar-18 |
| Cases recorded | Actual figures | 639 355 | 60 279 | 51 289 | 50 412 | 548 538 | 51 315 | 44 483 | 44 176 |
| | Seasonally adjusted | | 52 644 | 52 030 | 53 364 | | 44 567 | 45 363 | 47 442 |
| Civil summonses for debt | Goods sold - Open account | 34 961 | 3 143 | 2 543 | 2 754 | 25 426 | 2 259 | 1 830 | 1 999 |
| | Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions | 21 233 | 1 724 | 1 850 | 1 531 | 16 778 | 1 365 | 1 410 | 1 200 |
| | Services - Professional | 71 206 | 6 721 | 5 475 | 6 300 | 62 068 | 5 926 | 4 898 | 5 717 |
| | Services - Other | 98 488 | 9 137 | 7 969 | 8 147 | 83 660 | 7 696 | 6 733 | 6 883 |
| | Rent | 31 726 | 2 953 | 2 432 | 2 777 | 23 540 | 2 169 | 1 717 | 1 950 |
| | Money lent | 131 098 | 13 481 | 10 378 | 9 799 | 123 147 | 12 733 | 9 795 | 9 234 |
| | Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | 82 316 | 8 934 | 6 140 | 6 527 | 75 454 | 8 321 | 5 688 | 6 112 |
| | Other debts | 111 715 | 11 253 | 9 433 | 9 780 | 98 973 | 9 986 | 8 498 | 8 738 |
| | Total - Actual figures | 582 743 | 57 346 | 46 220 | 47 615 | 509 046 | 50 455 | 40 569 | 41 833 |
| | Total - Seasonally adjusted | | 49 803 | 46 332 | 49 916 | | 43 509 | 40 436 | 43 734 |

1/ Preliminary.

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

| Item | Total | | | | Private Persons | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2017 | Mar-17 | 1/ Feb-18 | 1/ Mar-18 | 2017 | Mar-17 | 1/ Feb-18 | 1/ Mar-18 | |
| Number of civil judgements | Goods sold - Open account | 14 897 | 1 409 | 1 072 | 1 260 | 11 296 | 1 089 | 821 | 997 |
| | Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions | 6 829 | 444 | 584 | 579 | 5 912 | 369 | 526 | 496 |
| | Services - Professional | 35 673 | 3 376 | 2 999 | 2 826 | 32 574 | 3 143 | 2 816 | 2 607 |
| | Services - Other | 35 552 | 3 157 | 2 842 | 2 946 | 31 207 | 2 755 | 2 491 | 2 599 |
| | Rent | 18 112 | 1 501 | 1 748 | 1 654 | 15 155 | 1 266 | 1 533 | 1 380 |
| | Money lent | 50 369 | 5 011 | 3 936 | 3 491 | 46 408 | 4 681 | 3 566 | 3 204 |
| | Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | 25 826 | 2 105 | 2 123 | 2 033 | 22 218 | 1 813 | 1 897 | 1 803 |
| | Other debts | 41 748 | 3 748 | 2 950 | 3 271 | 38 438 | 3 401 | 2 698 | 2 955 |
| | Total - Actual figures | 229 006 | 20 751 | 18 254 | 18 060 | 203 208 | 18 517 | 16 348 | 16 041 |
| | Total - Seasonally adjusted | | 19 451 | 19 210 | 19 183 | | 16 974 | 17 249 | 16 691 |

1/ Preliminary.

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

| Item | Total | | | | Private Persons | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 2017 | Mar-17 | 1/ Feb-18 | 1/ Mar-18 | 2017 | Mar-17 | 1/ Feb-18 | 1/ Mar-18 | |
| Value of civil judgements | Goods sold - Open account | 243 233 | 20 219 | 15 645 | 17 049 | 115 847 | 10 438 | 8 065 | 10 217 |
| | Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions | 133 486 | 6 291 | 9 686 | 11 262 | 115 030 | 5 256 | 8 964 | 10 354 |
| | Services - Professional | 258 424 | 23 316 | 19 966 | 19 556 | 229 419 | 20 539 | 18 599 | 17 222 |
| | Services - Other | 493 962 | 44 061 | 43 877 | 40 481 | 405 530 | 35 384 | 34 101 | 33 051 |
| | Rent | 351 978 | 33 990 | 30 976 | 27 978 | 243 565 | 20 878 | 22 709 | 18 817 |
| | Money lent | 1 163 947 | 113 906 | 101 554 | 86 596 | 1 064 361 | 107 530 | 93 924 | 79 298 |
| | Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | 533 411 | 44 662 | 45 996 | 47 120 | 463 911 | 38 979 | 43 053 | 41 801 |
| | Other debts | 770 054 | 69 400 | 67 676 | 78 757 | 627 839 | 57 931 | 48 441 | 57 797 |
| | Total - Actual figures | 3 948 495 | 355 845 | 335 376 | 328 799 | 3 265 502 | 296 935 | 277 856 | 268 557 |
| | Total - Seasonally adjusted | | 315 212 | 341 909 | 326 780 | | 261 256 | 289 670 | 269 063 |

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 2017 and the first quarter of 2018

| Actual estimates | Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2017 | Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2018 | % change between Jan – Mar 2017 and Jan – Mar 2018 | Difference between Jan – Mar 2017 and Jan – Mar 2018 |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Number of civil summonses issued for debt | 149 554 | 133 491 | -10,7 | -16 063 |
| Number of civil judgements recorded for debt | 54 405 | 51 413 | -5,5 | -2 992 |
| Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million) | 880,2 | 932,2 | 5,9 | 52,0 |

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 2017 and the first quarter of 2018 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 | -0,2 | -0,6 | -0,4 |
| Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions | 0,0 | 0,3 | 0,8 |
| Services - Professional | -0,4 | -1,5 | -0,2 |
| Services - Other | -0,2 | -0,7 | 0,8 |
| Rent | 0,1 | 1,7 | 1,0 |
| Money lent | -5,9 | -4,5 | -1,0 |
| Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt | -2,8 | 0,1 | 1,0 |
| Other debts | -1,4 | -0,4 | 3,9 |
| Total | -10,7 | -5,5 | 5,9 |

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 2017, 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 2017 | Actual estimates March 2018 | % change between March 2017 and March 2018 | Difference between March 2017 and March 2018 |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Number of civil summonses issued for debt | 57 346 | 47 615 | -17,0 | -9 731 |
| Number of civil judgements recorded for debt | 20 751 | 18 060 | -13,0 | -2 691 |
| Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million) | 355,8 | 328,8 | -7,6 | -27,0 |

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 |
|-----------|-------|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| 2017 | Mar | 10 515 | 4 635 | 1 040 | 3 941 | 8 972 | 2 538 | 20 565 | 2 661 | 2 479 | 57 346 |
| | Apr | 6 795 | 3 197 | 618 | 2 807 | 7 746 | 1 954 | 15 012 | 1 999 | 2 330 | 42 458 |
| | May | 9 102 | 4 100 | 808 | 3 355 | 9 295 | 2 358 | 18 167 | 2 530 | 2 096 | 51 811 |
| | Jun | 7 263 | 3 923 | 568 | 3 529 | 8 739 | 2 083 | 17 602 | 2 270 | 2 025 | 48 002 |
| | Jul | 7 914 | 3 368 | 876 | 2 755 | 8 662 | 2 079 | 16 897 | 2 249 | 2 102 | 46 902 |
| | Aug | 8 188 | 3 820 | 913 | 3 724 | 9 297 | 2 282 | 15 858 | 2 269 | 1 857 | 48 208 |
| | Sep | 7 081 | 3 527 | 531 | 3 500 | 9 689 | 2 258 | 16 361 | 2 356 | 1 975 | 47 278 |
| | Oct | 10 612 | 4 025 | 941 | 4 133 | 10 752 | 2 368 | 18 640 | 2 427 | 2 161 | 56 059 |
| | Nov | 9 654 | 4 116 | 748 | 3 737 | 11 055 | 2 139 | 18 751 | 2 550 | 2 118 | 54 868 |
| Dec | 6 850 | 2 203 | 384 | 1 956 | 7 041 | 1 146 | 14 575 | 1 888 | 1 560 | 37 603 | |
| 2018 | Jan | 6 312 | 3 035 | 586 | 2 312 | 7 128 | 1 678 | 14 999 | 1 899 | 1 707 | 39 656 |
| | Feb | 8 192 | 3 608 | 801 | 3 278 | 7 521 | 1 888 | 16 875 | 2 259 | 1 798 | 46 220 |
| | Mar | 8 202 | 3 446 | 651 | 3 249 | 8 353 | 2 093 | 17 527 | 2 058 | 2 036 | 47 615 |

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 |
|-----------|-----|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------|------------|---------|---------------|
| 2017 | Mar | 4 019 | 2 876 | 539 | 2 175 | 3 577 | 1 001 | 3 999 | 1 265 | 1 300 | 20 751 |
| | Apr | 2 475 | 2 309 | 351 | 2 185 | 3 386 | 781 | 3 664 | 863 | 1 318 | 17 332 |
| | May | 4 442 | 2 732 | 480 | 2 594 | 3 954 | 1 006 | 4 610 | 1 048 | 1 262 | 22 128 |
| | Jun | 3 368 | 3 627 | 389 | 2 370 | 3 964 | 1 100 | 4 256 | 1 159 | 1 646 | 21 879 |
| | Jul | 3 314 | 2 584 | 381 | 2 424 | 3 951 | 909 | 4 306 | 930 | 1 252 | 20 051 |
| | Aug | 3 418 | 2 614 | 412 | 2 409 | 4 586 | 985 | 4 460 | 1 025 | 1 210 | 21 119 |
| | Sep | 2 524 | 2 093 | 359 | 1 915 | 4 337 | 914 | 4 010 | 1 052 | 1 102 | 18 306 |
| | Oct | 2 698 | 2 567 | 464 | 2 016 | 4 308 | 674 | 4 443 | 1 053 | 1 133 | 19 356 |
| | Nov | 3 214 | 2 668 | 488 | 2 023 | 4 837 | 831 | 4 227 | 1 207 | 1 186 | 20 681 |
| | Dec | 2 311 | 1 409 | 238 | 1 329 | 2 311 | 658 | 3 575 | 891 | 1 027 | 13 749 |
| 2018 | Jan | 1 738 | 2 247 | 284 | 1 910 | 2 919 | 708 | 3 494 | 779 | 1 020 | 15 099 |
| | Feb | 2 355 | 2 611 | 409 | 1 992 | 3 775 | 661 | 3 925 | 1 401 | 1 125 | 18 254 |
| | Mar | 3 141 | 2 324 | 360 | 1 839 | 3 736 | 518 | 3 761 | 1 233 | 1 148 | 18 060 |

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 |
|-----------|--------|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| 2017 | Mar | 71 623 | 55 846 | 6 302 | 26 937 | 46 972 | 12 822 | 95 561 | 26 632 | 13 150 | 355 845 |
| | Apr | 50 854 | 43 565 | 3 289 | 25 210 | 40 619 | 11 248 | 68 299 | 18 608 | 12 992 | 274 684 |
| | May | 93 019 | 57 820 | 5 662 | 36 927 | 53 567 | 15 437 | 109 482 | 20 889 | 10 124 | 402 927 |
| | Jun | 66 175 | 42 752 | 5 050 | 35 011 | 42 347 | 16 976 | 100 206 | 27 212 | 14 320 | 350 049 |
| | Jul | 75 513 | 42 107 | 3 528 | 28 203 | 48 404 | 15 257 | 117 998 | 21 315 | 11 234 | 363 559 |
| | Aug | 72 344 | 56 148 | 3 477 | 33 413 | 64 052 | 13 728 | 109 487 | 18 897 | 8 456 | 380 002 |
| | Sep | 62 053 | 43 197 | 3 507 | 21 904 | 43 157 | 14 234 | 106 964 | 20 044 | 5 722 | 320 782 |
| | Oct | 59 381 | 52 158 | 4 550 | 25 920 | 58 123 | 10 015 | 108 307 | 20 078 | 6 782 | 345 314 |
| | Nov | 72 121 | 40 185 | 5 575 | 27 027 | 69 361 | 11 174 | 92 519 | 24 124 | 8 214 | 350 300 |
| Dec | 65 295 | 30 452 | 2 864 | 21 973 | 33 524 | 12 241 | 87 845 | 21 737 | 4 792 | 280 723 | |
| 2018 | Jan | 41 641 | 39 039 | 2 615 | 27 666 | 39 368 | 11 274 | 72 582 | 27 316 | 6 535 | 268 036 |
| | Feb | 56 659 | 46 144 | 4 346 | 27 455 | 47 848 | 13 211 | 97 031 | 35 023 | 7 659 | 335 376 |
| | Mar | 74 656 | 45 858 | 4 088 | 27 347 | 42 710 | 9 780 | 90 418 | 26 384 | 7 558 | 328 799 |

1/ Latest two 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 March 2018 was 86,7%. The collection rate for February 2018 was 88,7%. |
| 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. |

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