

STATISTICAL RELEASE
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Statistics of civil cases for debt
(Preliminary)

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Key results for March 2019

Table A – Key figures for the month of March 2019

Actual estimates	March 2019	% change between March 2018 and March 2019	% change between January – March 2018 and January – March 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	45 375	-4,7	-3,8
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	17 247	-4,5	-1,5
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	276,2	-16,0	-11,1

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 3,8% in the first quarter of 2019 compared with the first quarter of 2018.

The largest negative contributions to the 3,8% decrease for civil summonses issued were:

- services (contributing -1,6 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing -1,5 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,3 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 1,5% in the first quarter of 2019 compared with the first quarter of 2018.

The largest negative contributions to the 1,5% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- promissory notes (contributing -1,2 percentage points);
- rent (contributing -0,9 of a percentage point); and
- money lent (contributing -0,5 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 decreased by 11,1% in the first quarter of 2019 compared with the first quarter of 2018.

The largest negative contributions to the 11,1% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing -6,0 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -3,3 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -2,1 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

In March 2019, 17 247 civil judgements for debt amounting to R276,2 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R74,9 million or 27,1%);
- services (R51,4 million or 18,6%); and
- 'other' debts (R46,5 million or 16,8%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

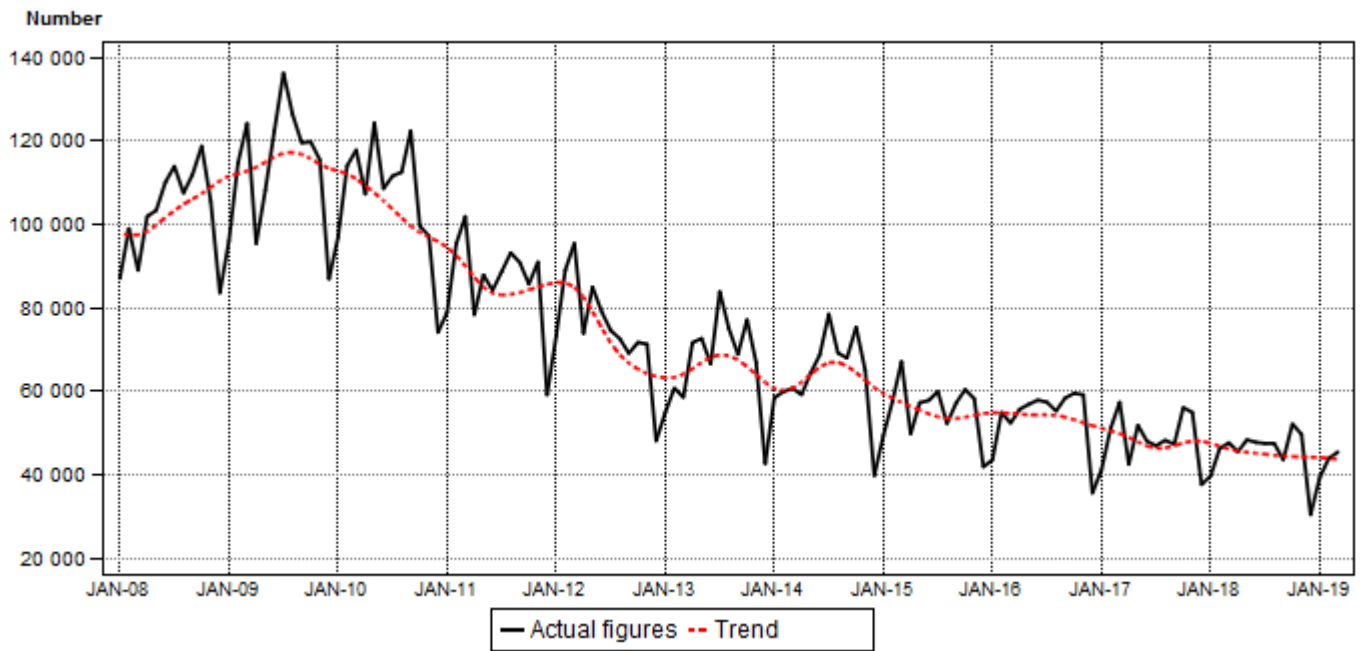
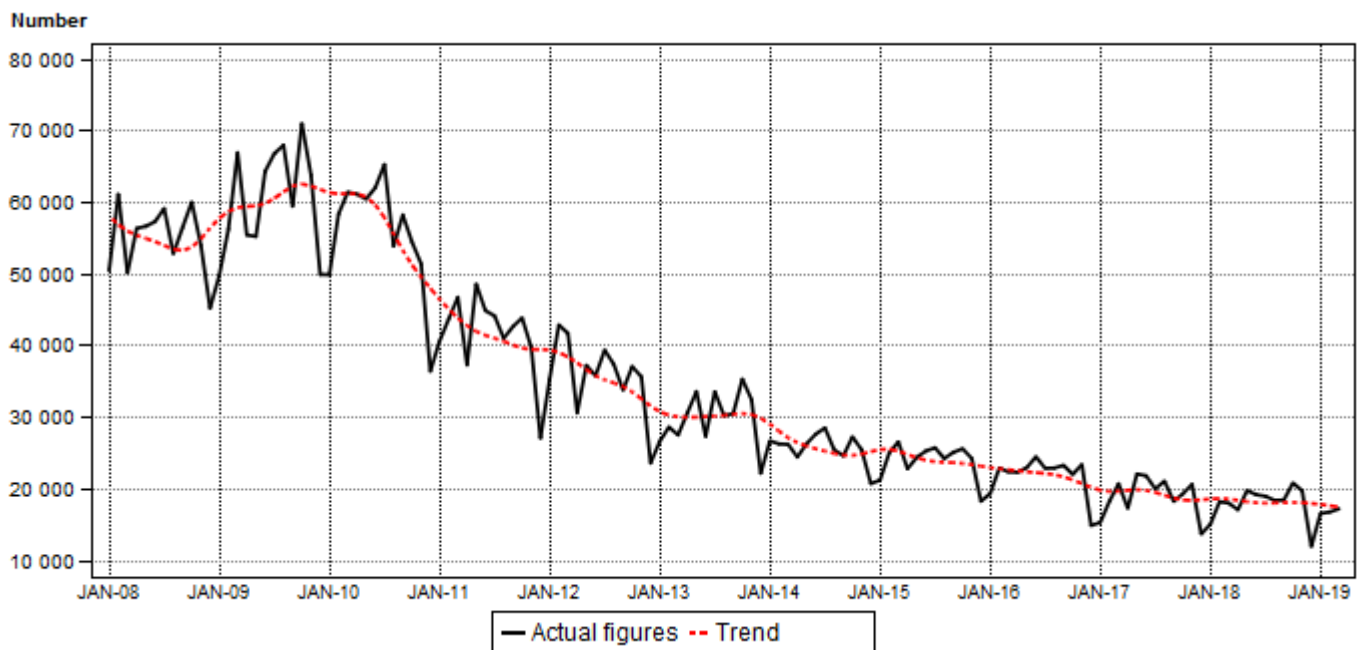


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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			
		2018 *	Mar-18	1/ Feb-19	1/ Mar-19	2018 *	Mar-18	1/ Feb-19	1/ Mar-19
Cases recorded	Actual figures	585 888	50 412	45 920	46 984	509 164	44 176	39 355	40 260
	Seasonally adjusted		52 561	46 227	44 585		46 477	39 635	37 846
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	31 279	2 754	2 844	2 737	22 591	1 999	2 081	1 963
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	20 557	1 531	1 517	1 574	16 187	1 200	1 163	1 211
	Services - Professional	67 739	6 300	5 102	5 398	59 581	5 717	4 429	4 697
	Services - Other	96 203	8 147	7 634	7 844	81 932	6 883	6 400	6 580
	Rent	30 821	2 777	2 508	2 342	23 384	1 950	1 868	1 783
	Money lent	118 543	9 799	10 379	10 603	110 875	9 234	9 706	9 923
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	69 346	6 527	5 178	5 504	63 588	6 112	4 687	5 025
	Other debts	111 124	9 780	8 718	9 373	100 350	8 738	7 720	8 254
	Total - Actual figures	545 612	47 615	43 880	45 375	478 488	41 833	38 054	39 436
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		49 957	43 824	42 755		43 851	37 927	36 945

1/ Preliminary.

* Revised.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2018 *	Mar-18	1/ Feb-19	1/ Mar-19	2018 *	Mar-18	1/ Feb-19	1/ Mar-19	
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	13 668	1 260	1 213	1 240	10 379	997	946	969
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	6 565	579	538	660	5 647	496	468	592
	Services - Professional	34 194	2 826	2 675	2 573	31 706	2 607	2 482	2 371
	Services - Other	36 404	2 946	2 956	2 740	32 210	2 599	2 629	2 424
	Rent	21 191	1 654	1 397	1 600	17 842	1 380	1 154	1 331
	Money lent	41 492	3 491	3 615	3 472	37 482	3 204	3 309	3 149
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	23 083	2 033	1 605	1 954	20 166	1 803	1 372	1 687
	Other debts	39 576	3 271	2 819	3 008	36 506	2 955	2 607	2 722
	Total - Actual figures	216 173	18 060	16 818	17 247	191 938	16 041	14 967	15 245
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		19 143	17 757	17 571		16 775	15 670	15 225

1/ Preliminary.

* Revised.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2018 *	Mar-18	1/ Feb-19	1/ Mar-19	2018 *	Mar-18	1/ Feb-19	1/ Mar-19	
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	219 512	17 049	17 831	18 540	119 583	10 217	10 423	11 413
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	129 657	11 262	7 873	12 615	111 733	10 354	7 379	11 677
	Services - Professional	239 960	19 556	20 414	15 218	215 574	17 222	18 348	13 584
	Services - Other	540 977	40 481	49 707	36 148	440 554	33 051	39 543	31 078
	Rent	373 847	27 978	24 235	29 861	277 365	18 817	17 289	23 692
	Money lent	1 007 514	86 596	78 355	74 877	908 746	79 298	71 272	69 633
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	488 391	47 120	33 433	42 436	430 486	41 801	29 744	39 894
	Other debts	854 056	78 757	49 318	46 516	565 590	57 797	39 321	36 627
	Total - Actual figures	3 853 914	328 799	281 166	276 211	3 069 631	268 557	233 319	237 598
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		324 337	289 872	260 603		264 812	241 675	227 148

1/ Preliminary.

* Revised.

Table 4 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the first quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2019

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2018	Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2019	% change between Jan – Mar 2018 and Jan – Mar 2019	Difference between Jan – Mar 2018 and Jan – Mar 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	133 491	128 470	-3,8	-5 021
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	51 413	50 665	-1,5	-748
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	932,2	828,9	-11,1	-103,3

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 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 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	0,0	0,7	0,6
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,0	0,1	0,2
Services - Professional	-1,0	-1,1	-0,2
Services - Other	-0,6	0,7	0,5
Rent	0,1	-0,9	-0,7
Money lent	0,5	-0,5	-3,3
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-1,5	-1,2	-2,1
Other debts	-1,3	0,7	-6,0
Total	-3,8	-1,5	-11,1

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 2018, 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 2018	Actual estimates March 2019	% change between March 2018 and March 2019	Difference between March 2018 and March 2019
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	47 615	45 375	-4,7	-2 240
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	18 060	17 247	-4,5	-813
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	328,8	276,2	-16,0	-52,6

Table 7 – Number of civil summonses issued for debt by province

Period		Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa
2018	Mar	8 202	3 446	651	3 249	8 353	2 093	17 527	2 058	2 036	47 615
	Apr	7 784	3 546	507	3 239	7 737	1 892	16 210	2 547	2 001	45 463
	May	8 089	3 981	778	3 198	9 222	2 269	16 442	2 378	1 979	48 336
	Jun	7 016	4 209	763	3 935	8 951	2 141	16 032	2 503	2 155	47 705
	Jul	8 825	3 495	596	3 425	9 351	1 932	15 648	2 228	1 958	47 458
	Aug	8 355	2 949	641	2 938	9 994	1 887	16 629	2 103	1 959	47 455
	Sep	7 411	2 731	505	2 720	8 998	1 910	15 325	2 127	1 817	43 544
	Oct	9 406	3 091	933	3 085	11 267	2 320	17 819	2 122	2 082	52 125
	Nov	9 785	3 571	746	3 552	10 539	1 964	15 407	2 114	1 982	49 660
	Dec *	4 823	2 053	268	2 304	5 272	1 449	11 487	1 229	1 490	30 375
2019	Jan	6 427	2 464	487	2 846	8 654	1 706	13 032	1 844	1 755	39 215
	Feb	7 570	3 129	568	3 006	8 147	1 925	15 337	2 256	1 942	43 880
	Mar	6 730	3 065	835	3 692	8 503	1 800	16 654	2 061	2 035	45 375

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

* Revised.

Table 8 – Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt by province

Period		Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa
2018	Mar	3 141	2 324	360	1 839	3 736	518	3 761	1 233	1 148	18 060
	Apr	2 768	1 790	217	1 686	3 737	716	3 874	1 187	1 149	17 124
	May	3 639	2 405	416	1 823	4 684	741	3 866	1 063	1 167	19 804
	Jun	2 917	2 595	313	2 108	4 591	703	3 774	1 052	1 182	19 235
	Jul	3 382	1 732	263	1 923	4 447	944	4 009	1 188	1 130	19 018
	Aug	2 834	1 637	313	1 968	5 155	890	3 597	817	1 233	18 444
	Sep	2 649	1 595	236	1 717	5 055	817	4 282	982	1 150	18 483
	Oct	2 985	1 853	395	2 146	5 748	844	4 477	1 087	1 331	20 866
	Nov	2 894	2 028	329	1 814	6 169	862	3 553	1 023	1 121	19 793
	Dec *	2 204	1 184	210	694	2 037	860	3 090	646	1 068	11 993
2019	Jan	2 318	1 599	220	1 480	5 132	779	3 354	617	1 101	16 600
	Feb	2 833	1 651	322	2 463	3 408	869	3 343	758	1 171	16 818
	Mar	2 473	1 280	257	2 216	4 453	683	3 705	1 032	1 148	17 247

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.

* Revised.

Table 9 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt by province (R'000)

Period		Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa
2018	Mar	74 656	45 858	4 088	27 347	42 710	9 780	90 418	26 384	7 558	328 799
	Apr	70 875	33 123	2 609	20 375	42 732	13 499	85 918	28 688	8 079	305 898
	May	78 913	40 113	7 774	24 135	58 491	15 277	73 192	23 335	7 438	328 668
	Jun	63 234	41 702	4 215	32 411	51 923	13 953	90 076	27 407	6 669	331 590
	Jul	74 915	34 322	3 959	23 890	41 316	15 472	99 869	157 305	7 788	458 836
	Aug	74 691	33 048	4 018	26 721	48 945	15 458	69 193	18 628	9 303	300 005
	Sep	62 469	31 388	2 920	21 812	42 706	14 675	87 495	19 452	8 050	290 967
	Oct	75 849	47 070	4 544	24 783	49 987	15 821	87 495	20 048	10 733	336 330
	Nov	75 507	38 691	3 346	22 775	63 258	13 555	78 520	23 363	5 991	325 006
	Dec *	65 384	29 021	3 009	10 129	28 238	16 435	62 417	23 842	5 928	244 403
2019	Jan	61 940	29 612	3 672	17 303	42 169	14 067	83 221	13 616	5 953	271 553
	Feb	67 923	27 286	3 505	29 563	49 874	15 633	63 147	17 402	6 833	281 166
	Mar	52 138	25 605	2 714	20 527	59 093	9 996	86 849	12 763	6 526	276 211

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 2019 was 83,7%. The improved collection rate for February 2019 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.

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