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STATISTICAL RELEASE

P0041

Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

March 2021

Embargoed until:
20 May 2021
09:00

ENQUIRIES:
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FORTHCOMING ISSUE:
April 2021

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE:
17 June 2021



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Key results for March 2021

Table A – Key figures for the month of March 2021

Actual estimates	March 2021	% change between March 2020 and March 2021	% change between January – March 2020 and January – March 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	47 272	7,7	-3,4
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	14 198	6,4	-15,3
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	344,5	20,1	-0,2

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 3,4% in the first quarter of 2021 compared with the first quarter of 2020.

The negative contributors to the 3,4% decrease in civil summonses issued were:

- money lent (contributing -3,4 percentage points);
- services (contributing -3,3 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,2 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 15,3% in the first quarter of 2021 compared with the first quarter of 2020.

The largest contributors to the 15,3% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing -5,4 percentage points);
- services (contributing -4,3 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -1,9 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 0,2% in the first quarter of 2021 compared with the first quarter of 2020.

The largest negative contributors to the decrease were services (contributing -3,8 percentage points) and promissory notes (contributing -3,5 percentage points), while rent (contributing 4,1 percentage points) was the largest positive contributor – see Table 5.

In March 2021, 14 198 civil judgements for debt amounting to R344,5 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R93,0 million or 27,0%);
- 'other' debts (R65,9 million or 19,1%); and
- services (R64,5 million or 18,7%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

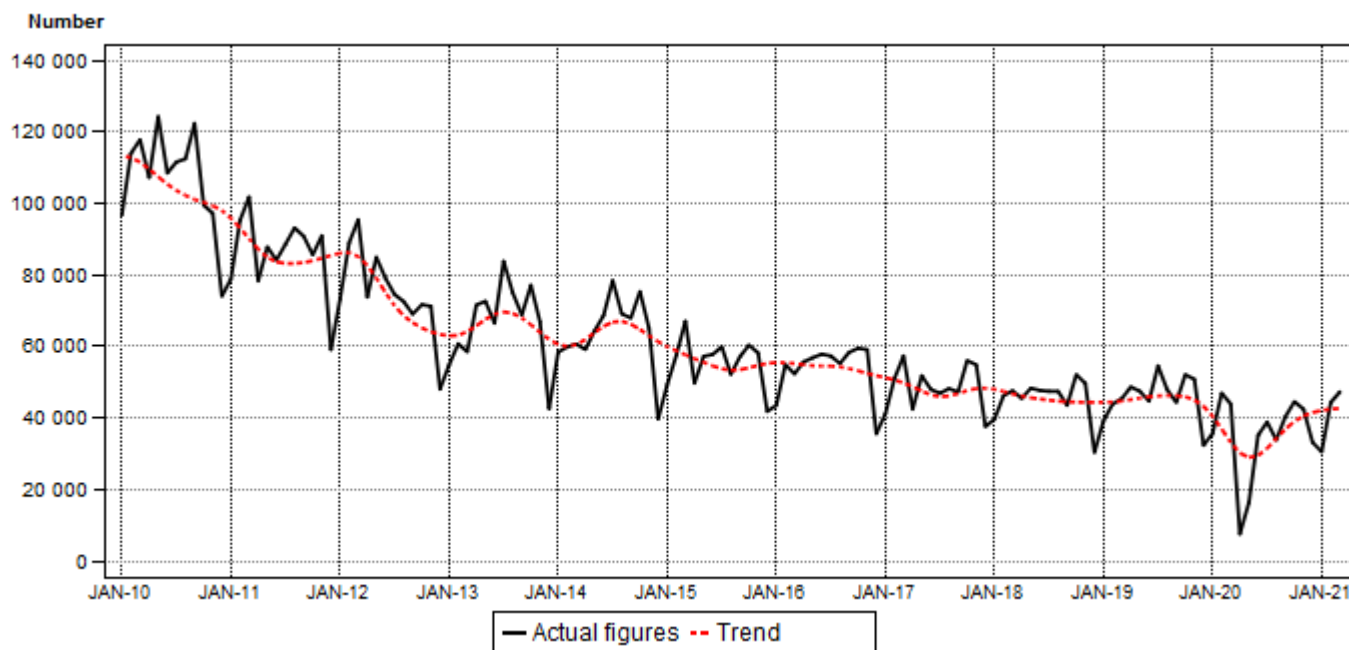
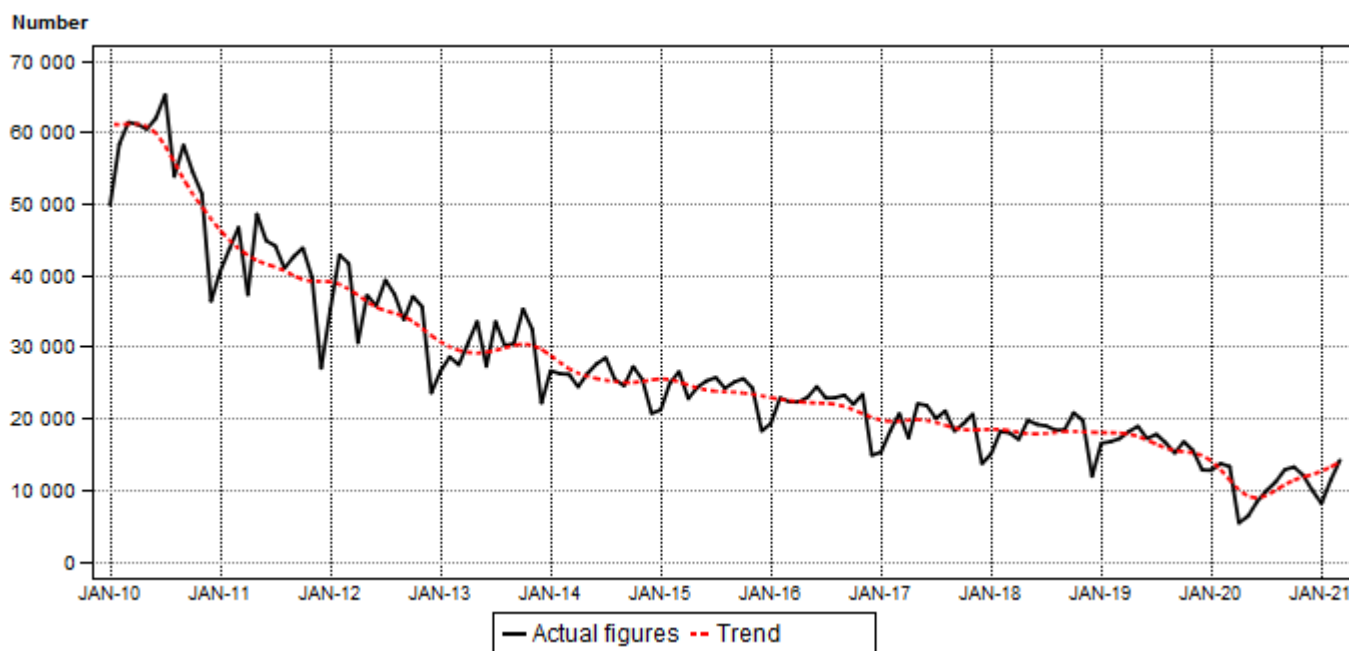


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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			
		2020	Mar-20	1/ Feb-21	1/ Mar-21	2020	Mar-20	1/ Feb-21	1/ Mar-21
Cases recorded	Actual figures	451 691	46 493	46 756	49 228	400 702	41 550	42 375	43 686
	Seasonally adjusted		44 503	46 182	45 836		39 757	41 663	40 688
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	21 933	2 448	2 071	2 123	15 671	1 790	1 466	1 284
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 879	1 674	1 340	1 608	13 022	1 521	1 203	1 495
	Services - Professional	47 911	4 879	4 524	4 370	42 984	4 478	4 076	3 726
	Services - Other	63 941	6 648	6 877	6 112	56 770	5 996	6 110	5 279
	Rent	25 506	2 443	2 904	3 060	19 452	1 912	2 473	2 164
	Money lent	105 308	11 031	10 255	10 851	100 399	10 608	9 698	10 364
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	50 761	5 088	6 188	6 255	48 420	4 891	5 977	6 075
	Other debts	88 563	9 665	10 194	12 893	79 872	8 676	9 295	11 749
	Total - Actual figures	418 802	43 876	44 353	47 272	376 590	39 872	40 298	42 136
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		40 828	43 751	43 274		37 133	39 735	38 838

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2020	Mar-20	1/ Feb-21	1/ Mar-21	2020	Mar-20	1/ Feb-21	1/ Mar-21
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	8 801	982	723	1 067	6 068	714	478	510
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	4 576	408	468	521	3 830	349	399	453
	Services - Professional	20 860	2 092	2 068	2 294	18 983	1 946	1 823	2 078
	Services - Other	24 350	2 481	2 136	2 532	21 717	2 245	1 857	2 216
	Rent	11 727	1 192	924	1 423	9 360	1 002	719	1 053
	Money lent	27 443	2 433	2 489	2 943	24 796	2 211	2 210	2 740
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	9 381	1 002	755	1 034	8 488	916	683	940
	Other debts	22 574	2 757	1 854	2 384	20 599	2 595	1 681	2 171
	Total - Actual figures	129 712	13 347	11 417	14 198	113 841	11 978	9 850	12 161
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		12 900	12 115	13 792		11 415	10 450	11 695

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2020	Mar-20	1/ Feb-21	1/ Mar-21	2020	Mar-20	1/ Feb-21	1/ Mar-21
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	190 039	16 896	20 838	19 867	79 072	6 549	7 955	7 622
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	141 631	13 215	13 596	14 972	114 990	11 024	10 982	12 497
	Services - Professional	201 414	19 069	21 960	18 257	175 906	16 651	16 922	15 220
	Services - Other	457 434	50 106	37 136	46 253	382 066	42 541	29 198	37 631
	Rent	309 535	24 404	31 164	50 011	217 148	17 729	19 971	34 092
	Money lent	797 650	76 360	79 429	93 031	747 713	71 998	72 626	88 629
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	311 985	43 494	29 872	36 157	271 527	39 403	25 688	32 001
	Other debts	463 155	43 274	40 082	65 945	393 270	37 518	35 014	56 776
	Total - Actual figures	2 872 843	286 818	274 077	344 493	2 381 692	243 413	218 356	284 468
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		266 869	283 470	314 066		229 698	229 179	261 265

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 2020 and the first quarter of 2021

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2020	Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2021	% change between Jan – Mar 2020 and Jan – Mar 2021	Difference between Jan – Mar 2020 and Jan – Mar 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	126 478	122 166	-3,4	-4 312
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	39 920	33 799	-15,3	-6 121
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	802,4	800,7	-0,2	-1,7

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 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 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	-0,9	-1,5	0,4
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,3	0,0	-0,4
Services - Professional	-2,0	-0,9	-0,2
Services - Other	-1,3	-3,4	-3,6
Rent	0,9	-1,5	4,1
Money lent	-3,4	-0,8	0,6
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	0,6	-1,9	-3,5
Other debts	2,9	-5,4	2,5
Total	-3,4	-15,3	-0,2

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 2020, 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 2020	Actual estimates March 2021	% change between March 2020 and March 2021	Difference between March 2020 and March 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	43 876	47 272	7,7	3 396
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	13 347	14 198	6,4	851
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	286,8	344,5	20,1	57,7

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	
2020	Mar	9 234	2 662	507	2 436	9 781	2 181	12 889	2 419	1 767	43 876
	Apr	1 335	785	66	486	971	1 327	1 331	90	1 152	7 543
	May	2 350	1 416	419	1 563	3 082	894	4 343	894	1 423	16 384
	Jun	6 583	2 229	544	1 831	7 090	1 911	11 296	2 141	1 536	35 161
	Jul	9 642	3 105	405	1 929	5 209	2 032	12 911	1 990	1 631	38 854
	Aug	5 834	2 209	381	2 224	4 998	2 290	12 774	1 705	1 440	33 855
	Sep	7 984	3 031	719	2 327	5 884	1 831	14 454	2 551	1 554	40 335
	Oct	8 377	3 232	462	2 706	7 198	2 659	15 472	2 773	1 676	44 555
	Nov	8 701	2 675	472	2 276	6 460	2 978	15 165	2 094	1 656	42 477
Dec	6 646	2 746	337	1 852	6 443	2 256	9 463	2 027	1 390	33 160	
2021	Jan	5 886	2 370	395	2 141	6 175	1 641	9 158	1 367	1 408	30 541
	Feb	9 001	1 857	503	3 315	8 419	2 598	15 046	2 075	1 539	44 353
	Mar	9 930	2 710	625	2 959	7 632	2 148	16 375	3 218	1 675	47 272

1/ Latest three 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	
2020	Mar	2 333	1 258	273	1 064	3 714	741	2 139	730	1 095	13 347
	Apr	1 011	417	17	263	1 689	311	604	186	956	5 454
	May	827	849	126	934	972	270	1 156	258	1 021	6 413
	Jun	1 233	1 001	232	1 291	1 412	417	1 247	533	1 098	8 464
	Jul	1 788	941	212	1 372	1 637	481	1 581	876	1 065	9 953
	Aug	1 860	1 333	200	1 482	1 637	675	2 341	617	1 035	11 180
	Sep	2 317	1 419	242	1 522	1 948	813	2 438	1 084	1 120	12 903
	Oct	2 771	1 071	320	1 559	2 316	589	2 502	995	1 161	13 284
	Nov	2 521	1 158	150	1 390	1 753	576	2 611	803	1 171	12 133
Dec	2 118	1 128	142	1 029	1 645	449	1 823	575	1 099	10 008	
2021	Jan	1 404	978	247	1 078	1 171	352	1 531	339	1 084	8 184
	Feb	2 156	1 065	175	1 301	1 887	802	2 168	776	1 087	11 417
	Mar	2 705	1 049	242	1 474	1 945	887	3 220	1 541	1 135	14 198

1/ Latest three 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	
2020	Mar	53 710	35 791	5 099	18 461	55 668	11 796	77 297	22 607	6 389	286 818
	Apr	20 915	10 900	333	3 527	27 668	5 603	25 945	12 948	3 094	110 933
	May	12 411	11 318	813	10 907	22 969	4 989	40 124	8 415	4 569	116 515
	Jun	21 057	15 705	2 720	24 400	22 942	8 074	44 553	9 296	4 951	153 698
	Jul	42 027	18 144	2 656	22 593	37 153	17 387	50 738	16 688	5 879	213 265
	Aug	49 537	25 738	1 653	22 914	43 266	10 570	82 227	13 249	6 598	255 752
	Sep	60 331	27 232	2 927	17 588	55 453	12 828	93 865	36 018	5 766	312 008
	Oct	72 756	28 295	3 808	24 096	64 810	8 279	94 396	31 051	5 924	333 415
	Nov	71 842	21 836	1 874	19 813	41 539	9 567	110 779	22 445	11 987	311 682
Dec	61 393	28 704	1 969	14 077	37 072	10 501	86 167	14 016	9 301	263 200	
2021	Jan	36 125	15 555	4 372	13 875	19 819	7 887	64 267	13 821	6 364	182 085
	Feb	60 806	21 005	2 721	27 429	42 899	15 324	77 693	18 107	8 093	274 077
	Mar	69 202	21 207	5 942	20 907	48 158	16 546	130 397	24 480	7 654	344 493

1/ Latest three 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, ejection 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 2021 was 80,8%. The improved collection rate for February 2021 was 83,3%.
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. Note: Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown, additive outlier adjustments and transitory change adjustments were performed. The methodology will be reviewed as more data points are added to the time series.
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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