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STATISTICAL RELEASE

P0041

Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

March 2023

**Embargoed until:
18 May 2023
09:00**

ENQUIRIES:
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FORTHCOMING ISSUES:
April 2023

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE:
15 June 2023

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Key results for March 2023

Table A – Key figures for the month of March 2023

Actual estimates	March 2023	% change between March 2022 and March 2023	% change between January – March 2022 and January – March 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	44 960	6,0	4,7
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 431	3,2	-2,9
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	293,8	14,1	0,3

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt increased by 4,7% in the first quarter of 2023 compared with the first quarter of 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 4,7% increase in civil summonses issued were:

- 'other' debts (contributing 5,3 percentage points); and
- services (contributing 1,6 percentage points).

Promissory notes was the largest negative contributor (contributing -2,2 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 2,9% in the first quarter of 2023 compared with the first quarter of 2022.

The largest negative contributors to the 2,9% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- goods sold (contributing -3,3 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -1,2 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 0,3% in the first quarter of 2023 compared with the first quarter of 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 0,3% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- promissory notes (contributing 2,3 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing 1,5 percentage points).

'Other' debts (contributing -1,6 percentage points) and goods sold (contributing -1,5 percentage points) were the largest negative contributors – see Table 5.

In March 2023, 11 431 civil judgements for debt amounting to R293,8 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R88,1 million or 30,0%);
- 'other' debts (R61,8 million or 21,0%); and
- services (R54,9 million or 18,7%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

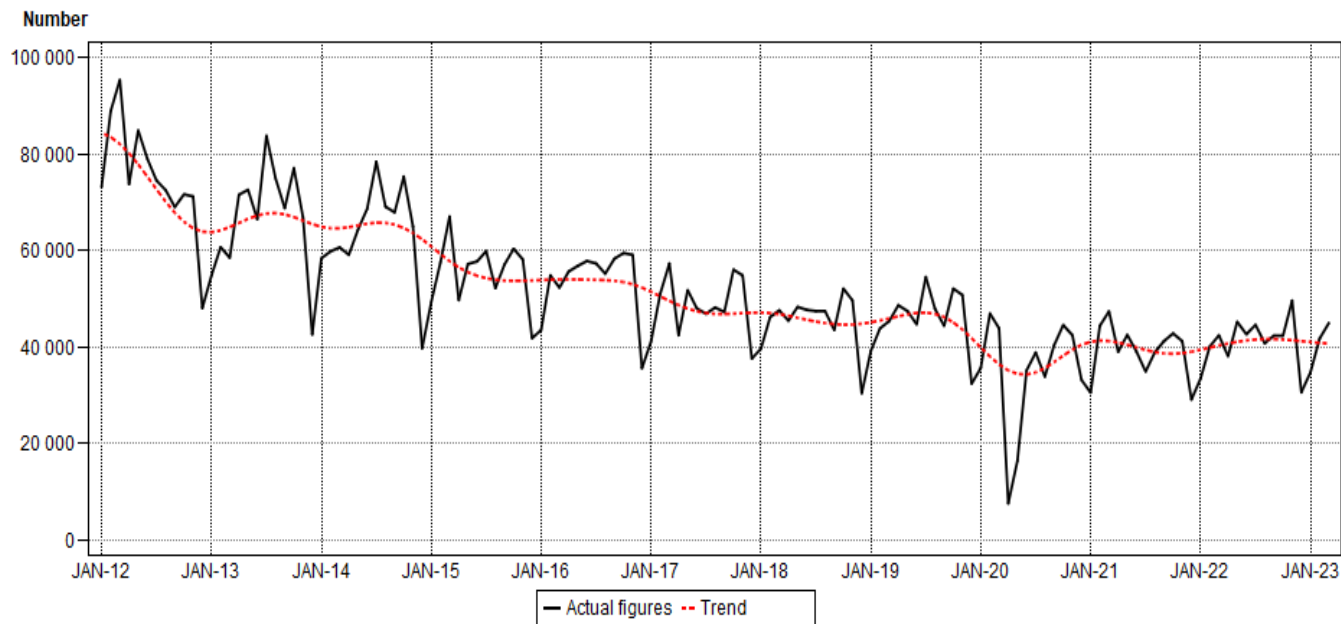
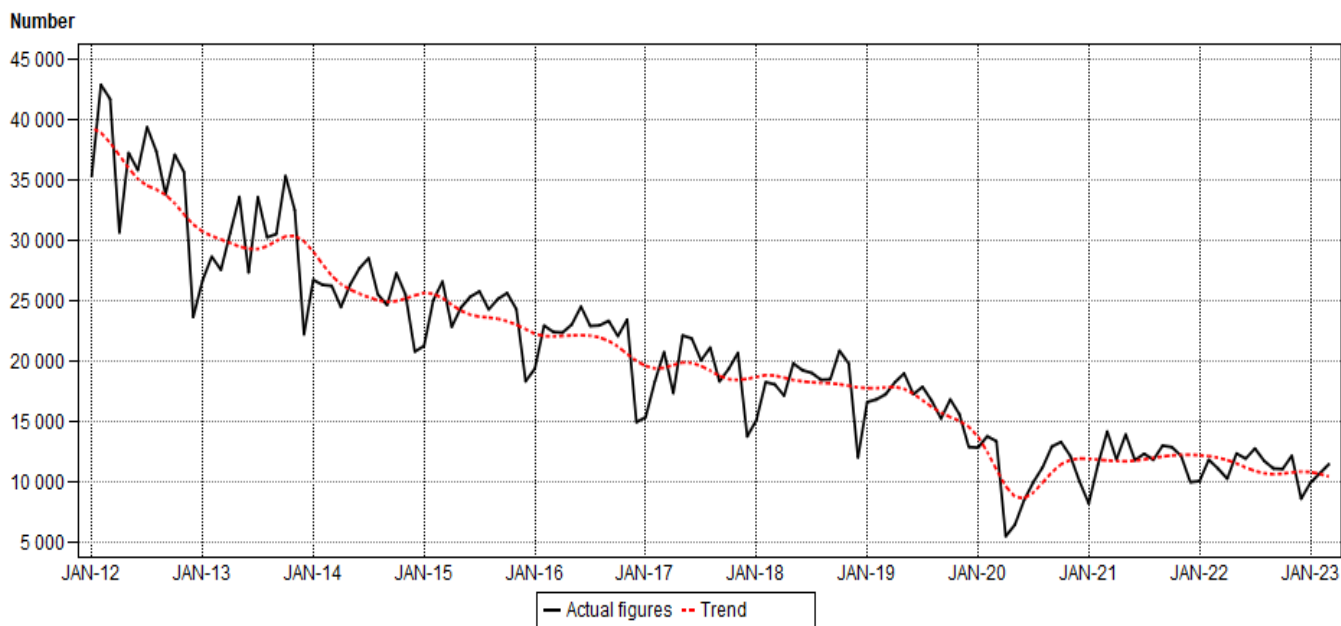


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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			
		2022	Mar-22	1/ Feb-23	1/ Mar-23	2022	Mar-22	1/ Feb-23	1/ Mar-23
Cases recorded	Actual figures	514 313	44 676	43 333	47 329	440 408	38 748	37 468	40 088
	Seasonally adjusted		39 947	42 345	42 406		34 599	36 411	35 794
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	23 283	2 151	1 729	1 957	14 644	1 490	1 125	1 264
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 865	1 248	1 060	1 270	11 953	953	836	1 026
	Services - Professional	56 909	4 470	5 073	5 310	46 261	3 714	4 131	4 232
	Services - Other	73 223	5 967	6 027	6 558	62 347	4 979	5 195	5 608
	Rent	25 277	2 270	2 309	2 508	18 116	1 647	1 664	1 806
	Money lent	121 157	10 940	10 207	10 576	113 760	10 385	9 422	9 994
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	45 232	4 779	3 499	3 997	41 612	4 500	3 216	3 651
	Other debts	132 399	10 607	11 868	12 784	119 167	9 495	10 669	11 393
	Total - Actual figures	492 345	42 432	41 772	44 960	427 860	37 163	36 258	38 974
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		36 191	40 414	39 320		32 179	34 871	34 988

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Mar-22	1/ Feb-23	1/ Mar-23	2022	Mar-22	1/ Feb-23	1/ Mar-23
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	7 147	646	511	554	4 555	438	287	335
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	5 230	510	310	290	4 167	436	257	229
	Services - Professional	21 161	1 892	1 677	1 868	17 970	1 571	1 446	1 421
	Services - Other	24 638	1 750	1 587	1 989	21 605	1 430	1 269	1 701
	Rent	10 712	1 069	783	842	7 990	809	594	643
	Money lent	32 148	2 377	2 582	2 760	28 679	2 076	2 363	2 518
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	11 637	734	1 238	984	10 470	679	1 143	856
	Other debts	22 012	2 100	1 976	2 144	19 212	1 878	1 632	1 711
	Total - Actual figures	134 685	11 078	10 664	11 431	114 648	9 317	8 991	9 414
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		9 186	10 820	9 929		7 673	9 159	8 113

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Mar-22	1/ Feb-23	1/ Mar-23	2022	Mar-22	1/ Feb-23	1/ Mar-23
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	163 474	13 491	12 937	14 610	70 273	5 925	4 853	4 758
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	153 418	11 215	11 170	8 508	121 713	8 697	9 282	6 713
	Services - Professional	223 539	19 105	19 954	19 739	163 199	13 284	14 912	13 544
	Services - Other	447 767	42 080	32 232	35 171	379 058	36 489	23 852	28 136
	Rent	355 745	24 776	33 253	29 168	261 772	17 764	23 723	20 257
	Money lent	1 034 851	60 938	86 111	88 098	967 961	55 987	82 259	83 267
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	416 381	23 879	41 659	36 680	370 656	19 823	38 796	32 552
	Other debts	627 541	62 007	47 256	61 813	513 075	49 364	37 620	49 400
	Total - Actual figures	3 422 716	257 491	284 572	293 787	2 847 707	207 333	235 297	238 627
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		231 169	285 397	279 239		181 313	237 890	232 673

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 2022 and the first quarter of 2023

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2022	Actual estimates Jan – Mar 2023	% change between Jan – Mar 2022 and Jan – Mar 2023	Difference between Jan – Mar 2022 and Jan – Mar 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	115 993	121 492	4,7	5 499
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	32 925	31 974	-2,9	-951
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	804,2	806,2	0,3	2,0

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 2022 and the first quarter of 2023 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	-1,2	-1,4	-0,2
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,2	-1,9	-1,3
Services - Professional	1,3	1,2	1,2
Services - Other	0,3	-1,1	-2,3
Rent	0,2	-1,2	1,5
Money lent	0,8	-0,4	0,7
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-2,2	1,2	2,3
Other debts	5,3	0,7	-1,6
Total	4,7	-2,9	0,3

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 2022, 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 2022	Actual estimates March 2023	% change between March 2022 and March 2023	Difference between March 2022 and March 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	42 432	44 960	6,0	2 528
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 078	11 431	3,2	353
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	257,5	293,8	14,1	36,3

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	
2022	Mar	8 213	3 083	517	2 919	7 633	2 342	13 658	2 301	1 766	42 432
	Apr	7 778	3 309	505	2 681	5 755	1 695	12 341	2 391	1 646	38 101
	May	8 361	3 659	472	3 308	8 286	2 126	13 324	3 621	2 086	45 243
	Jun	7 922	3 399	620	3 114	7 355	2 077	13 279	3 093	1 792	42 651
	Jul	7 727	3 343	421	2 662	9 140	1 955	14 969	2 647	1 741	44 605
	Aug	7 033	3 323	325	2 782	8 122	2 259	12 815	2 507	1 627	40 793
	Sep	7 941	2 737	538	2 231	8 318	1 715	14 601	2 658	1 625	42 364
	Oct	8 109	2 905	627	2 303	8 275	2 178	13 851	2 544	1 560	42 352
	Nov	10 318	3 390	463	2 483	10 934	1 900	14 812	3 591	1 753	49 644
Dec	7 259	2 627	426	1 450	5 856	994	8 300	2 244	1 443	30 599	
2023	Jan	5 929	2 289	226	2 239	7 652	2 000	10 458	2 414	1 553	34 760
	Feb	8 085	3 583	535	2 663	7 860	1 803	13 088	2 468	1 687	41 772
	Mar	11 740	3 339	584	2 034	7 366	1 868	13 736	2 603	1 690	44 960

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	
2022	Mar	2 005	766	246	2 036	1 302	637	1 965	916	1 205	11 078
	Apr	2 126	760	100	2 157	1 179	352	1 774	672	1 115	10 235
	May	2 632	1 033	186	2 271	1 400	600	1 840	1 008	1 357	12 327
	Jun	2 583	1 273	284	2 077	1 287	620	1 992	564	1 221	11 901
	Jul	3 034	1 046	145	1 948	1 256	695	2 560	782	1 276	12 742
	Aug	2 508	1 074	123	1 379	1 446	771	2 244	898	1 271	11 714
	Sep	2 792	817	120	1 099	1 104	561	2 414	1 007	1 170	11 084
	Oct	2 925	987	210	1 100	1 237	525	2 215	754	1 090	11 043
	Nov	2 509	1 088	311	1 607	1 362	398	2 529	1 091	1 248	12 143
Dec	1 574	887	62	811	1 045	325	1 835	1 005	1 027	8 571	
2023	Jan	1 739	1 044	139	849	1 057	384	2 130	1 521	1 016	9 879
	Feb	2 557	1 245	184	826	1 518	359	2 106	760	1 109	10 664
	Mar	2 318	1 074	178	622	1 437	517	3 061	1 044	1 180	11 431

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	
2022	Mar	51 204	16 296	3 691	26 573	49 998	9 640	69 635	19 668	10 786	257 491
	Apr	59 314	15 686	1 636	27 155	46 933	5 011	66 041	11 872	5 996	239 644
	May	98 217	21 145	2 973	29 239	50 136	8 996	71 388	20 450	12 834	315 378
	Jun	72 828	27 652	3 195	27 052	50 610	9 920	73 827	12 184	9 786	287 054
	Jul	97 064	15 767	2 429	27 202	41 498	9 574	91 632	13 852	11 697	310 715
	Aug	80 404	25 292	2 161	25 576	48 822	16 780	83 850	16 494	11 243	310 622
	Sep	91 455	22 358	1 997	18 654	43 461	9 992	74 974	18 322	9 612	290 825
	Oct	89 021	22 811	2 929	21 239	49 796	11 352	93 229	19 080	7 151	316 608
	Nov	73 682	24 375	7 457	30 096	47 946	7 580	105 194	24 549	13 288	334 167
Dec	57 645	19 558	1 109	12 588	37 465	5 755	62 864	11 058	5 476	213 518	
2023	Jan	48 201	23 145	2 715	17 834	41 083	6 105	59 324	24 540	4 936	227 882
	Feb	71 239	26 228	2 548	20 787	55 818	6 367	78 357	15 896	7 331	284 572
	Mar	62 930	21 669	2 413	12 722	66 183	9 136	91 994	16 892	9 847	293 787

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, 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 2023 was 72,4%. The improved collection rate for February 2023 was 78,3%.
Rounding-off of figures	8	Where figures have been rounded off, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and the totals.
Seasonal adjustment	9	Seasonally adjusted estimates of all categories are generated each month, using the X-12 Seasonal Adjustment Program developed by the United States Census Bureau. 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 February 2022.
Trend cycle	10	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	11	In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.
Symbols and abbreviations	12	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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