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Statistics of civil cases for debt
(Preliminary)

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Key results for May 2017

Table A – Key figures for the month of May 2017

Actual estimates	May 2017	% change between May 2016 and May 2017	% change between March – May 2016 and March – May 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	51 811	-8,9	-8,0
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	22 128	-3,9	-11,2
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	402,9	17,3	1,0

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 8,0% in the three months ended May 2017 compared with the three months ended May 2016.

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

- services (contributing -4,0 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -2,1 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,2 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 11,2% in the three months ended May 2017 compared with the three months ended May 2016.

The largest contributors to the 11,2% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing -5,6 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -4,2 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,5 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 1,0% in the three months ended May 2017 compared with the three months ended May 2016.

The largest positive contributors to the 1,0% increase were the value of judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing 4,9 percentage points);
- rent (contributing 1,6 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing 1,6 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

In May 2017, 22 128 civil judgements for debt amounting to R402,9 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R136,7 million or 33,9%);
- 'other' debts (R71,5 million or 17,7%); and
- services (R71,1 million or 17,7%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

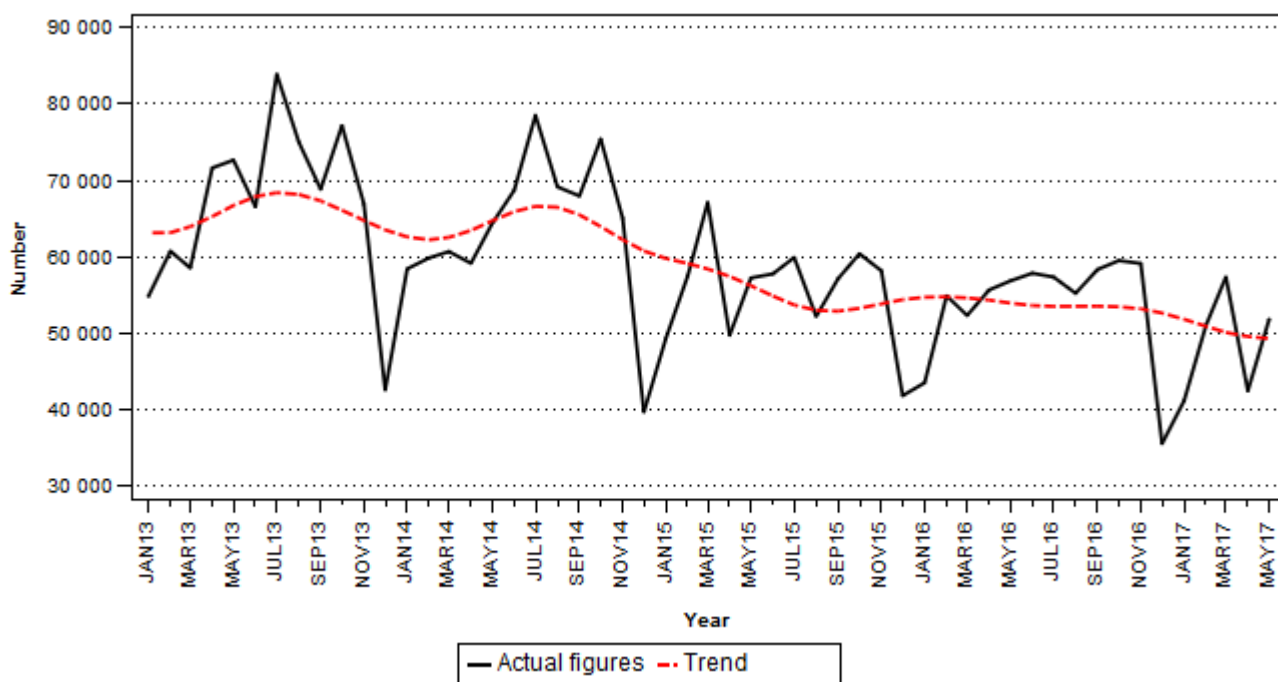
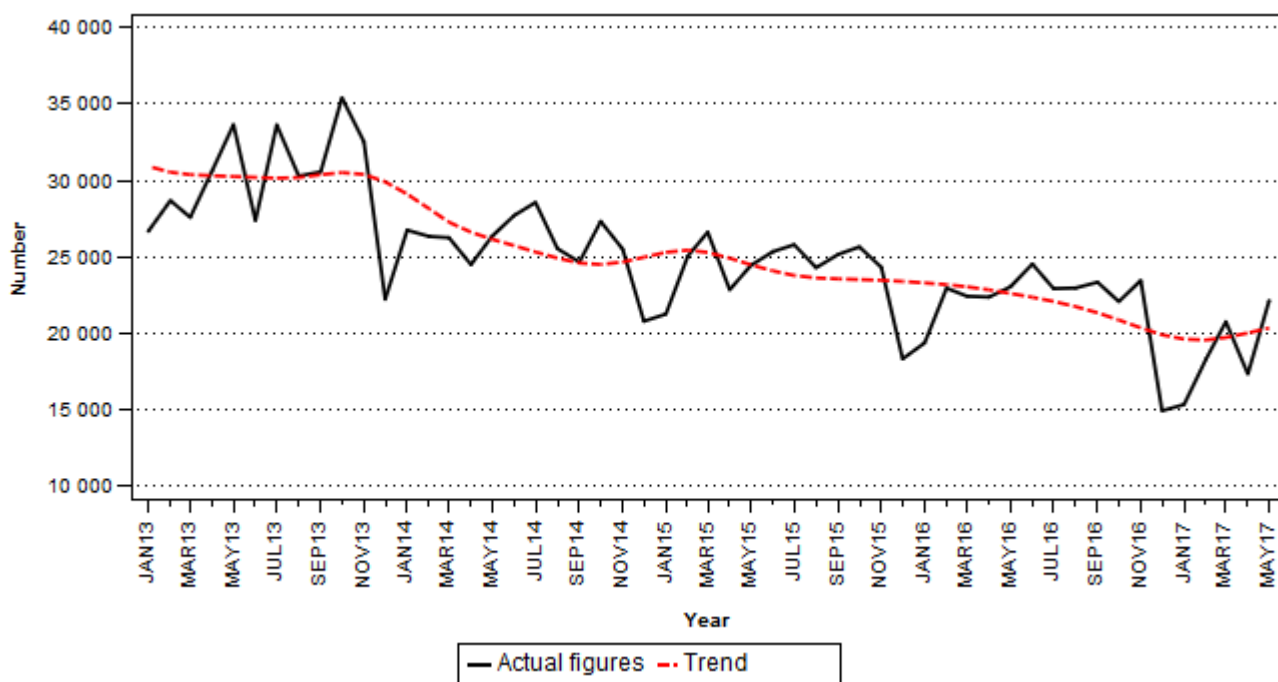


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



**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	May-16	1/ Apr-17	1/ May-17	2016	May-16	1/ Apr-17	1/ May-17
Cases recorded	Actual figures	700 485	61 246	45 183	57 721	602 530	51 615	37 068	49 988
	Seasonally adjusted		58 102	51 250	53 350		49 625	41 413	46 923
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	39 656	3 786	2 517	3 245	29 919	2 948	1 832	2 379
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	21 886	1 778	1 818	1 891	16 506	1 380	1 470	1 509
	Services - Professional	83 019	8 216	5 570	6 514	72 241	7 188	4 916	5 717
	Services - Other	106 305	9 820	8 085	9 353	89 744	8 281	6 887	7 944
	Rent	31 195	2 689	2 254	3 014	24 197	2 139	1 500	2 260
	Money lent	155 809	13 631	9 316	11 464	145 604	12 987	8 754	10 820
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	90 564	7 055	5 724	7 108	84 008	6 546	5 117	6 431
	Other debts	117 781	9 871	7 174	9 222	103 779	8 548	6 364	8 139
	Total - Actual figures	646 215	56 846	42 458	51 811	565 998	50 017	36 840	45 199
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		54 277	48 626	48 976		47 510	42 246	42 827

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2016	May-16	1/ Apr-17	1/ May-17	2016	May-16	1/ Apr-17	1/ May-17
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	17 058	1 609	1 044	1 539	12 948	1 207	809	1 200
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	7 068	537	568	616	6 039	449	489	531
	Services - Professional	44 011	4 035	2 661	3 292	39 091	3 570	2 426	3 059
	Services - Other	41 276	4 002	2 315	3 388	35 567	3 525	1 991	2 924
	Rent	18 296	1 494	1 266	1 725	15 162	1 243	1 060	1 443
	Money lent	60 447	5 071	4 038	5 246	55 379	4 588	3 782	4 860
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	25 021	2 244	1 981	2 356	21 461	1 902	1 761	2 062
	Other debts	51 152	4 042	3 459	3 966	45 458	3 564	3 307	3 714
	Total - Actual figures	264 329	23 034	17 332	22 128	231 105	20 048	15 625	19 793
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		22 630	19 876	21 384		19 646	17 804	19 108

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2016	May-16	1/ Apr-17	1/ May-17	2016	May-16	1/ Apr-17	1/ May-17
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	253 299	19 499	15 494	23 319	131 337	10 499	8 141	12 036
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	96 673	8 998	8 899	12 905	83 906	8 154	7 240	11 004
	Services - Professional	243 371	21 205	18 407	21 175	208 795	17 940	16 360	19 225
	Services - Other	542 398	50 279	29 599	49 945	432 972	40 641	24 291	40 937
	Rent	322 885	25 452	23 137	35 354	224 770	19 553	15 429	24 109
	Money lent	1 139 611	99 312	92 311	136 746	1 029 219	90 972	84 012	125 184
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	434 549	42 688	35 126	52 031	363 747	34 121	30 579	44 704
	Other debts	989 698	76 088	51 711	71 452	722 123	51 531	45 041	58 292
	Total - Actual figures	4 022 484	343 521	274 684	402 927	3 196 869	273 411	231 093	335 491
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		336 867	328 159	372 418		260 517	282 199	304 938

1/ Preliminary.

Table 4 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended May 2016 and the three months ended May 2017

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Mar – May 2016	Actual estimates Mar – May 2017	% change between Mar – May 2016 and Mar – May 2017	Difference between Mar – May 2016 and Mar – May 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	164 841	151 615	-8,0	-13 226
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	67 817	60 211	-11,2	-7 606
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 022,8	1 033,5	1,0	10,7

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 three months ended May 2016 and the three months ended May 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	-1,0	-1,2	-0,4
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,0	-0,3	0,4
Services - Professional	-2,4	-2,9	0,2
Services - Other	-1,6	-2,7	-1,0
Rent	0,0	0,3	1,6
Money lent	-2,1	-1,0	4,9
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	0,3	0,8	1,6
Other debts	-1,2	-4,2	-6,1
Total	-8,0	-11,2	1,0

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 March to May 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 May 2016	Actual estimates May 2017	% change between May 2016 and May 2017	Difference between May 2016 and May 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	56 846	51 811	-8,9	-5 035
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	23 034	22 128	-3,9	-906
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	343,5	402,9	17,3	59,4

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	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	2 185	18 837	2 409	2 136	51 046
	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

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	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	925	4 211	765	1 099	18 312
	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

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
2016	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	14 398	81 496	15 697	6 533	283 505
	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

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 May 2017 was 86,2%. The improved collection rate for April 2017 was 85,7%.
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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