

**STATISTICAL RELEASE**  
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**Statistics of civil cases for debt**  
**(Preliminary)**

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## Key results for May 2018

**Table A – Key figures for the month of May 2018**

Actual estimates	May 2018	% change between May 2017 and May 2018	% change between March – May 2017 and March – May 2018
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	48 359	-6,7	-6,7
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	19 845	-10,3	-8,6
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	328,9	-18,4	-6,8

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 6,7% in the three months ended May 2018 compared with the three months ended May 2017.

The largest negative contributions to the 6,7% decrease for civil summonses issued were:

- promissory notes (contributing -2,5 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -2,3 percentage points);
- services (contributing -1,8 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,1 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 8,6% in the three months ended May 2018 compared with the three months ended May 2017.

The largest negative contributions to the 8,6% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

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

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 6,8% in the three months ended May 2018 compared with the three months ended May 2017.

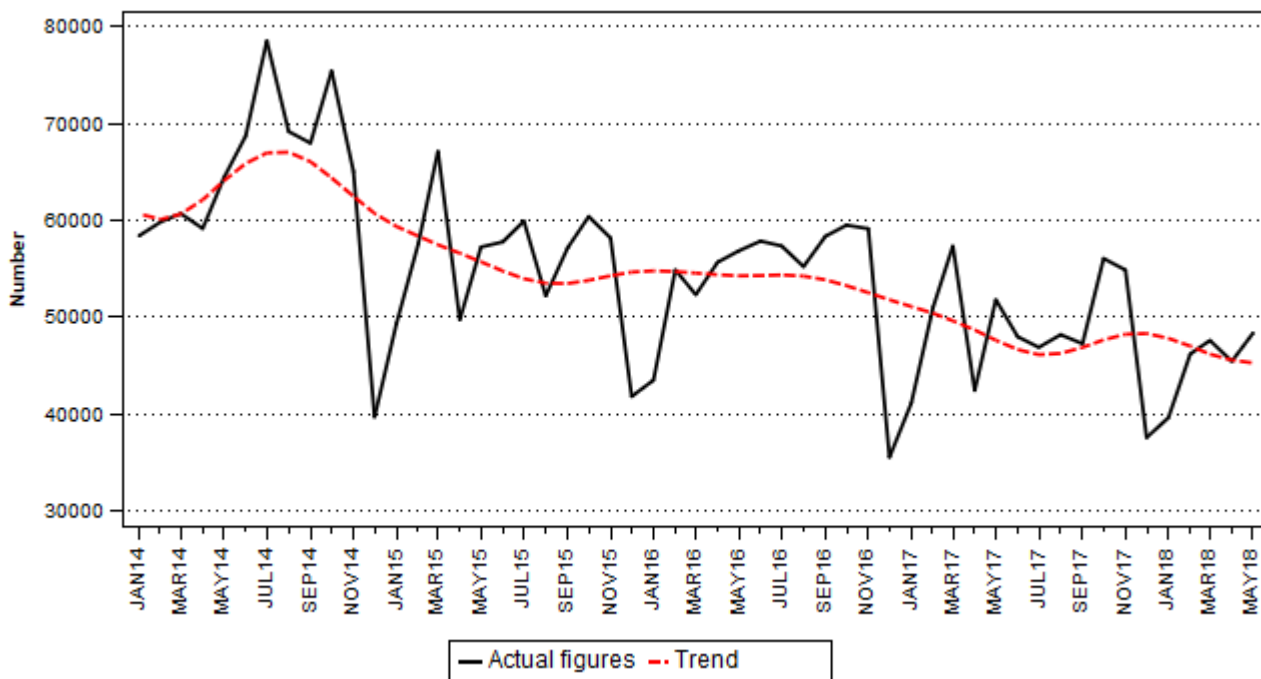
The largest negative contributions to the 6,8% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -7,7 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing -1,1 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -0,3 of a percentage point) – see Tables 4 and 5.

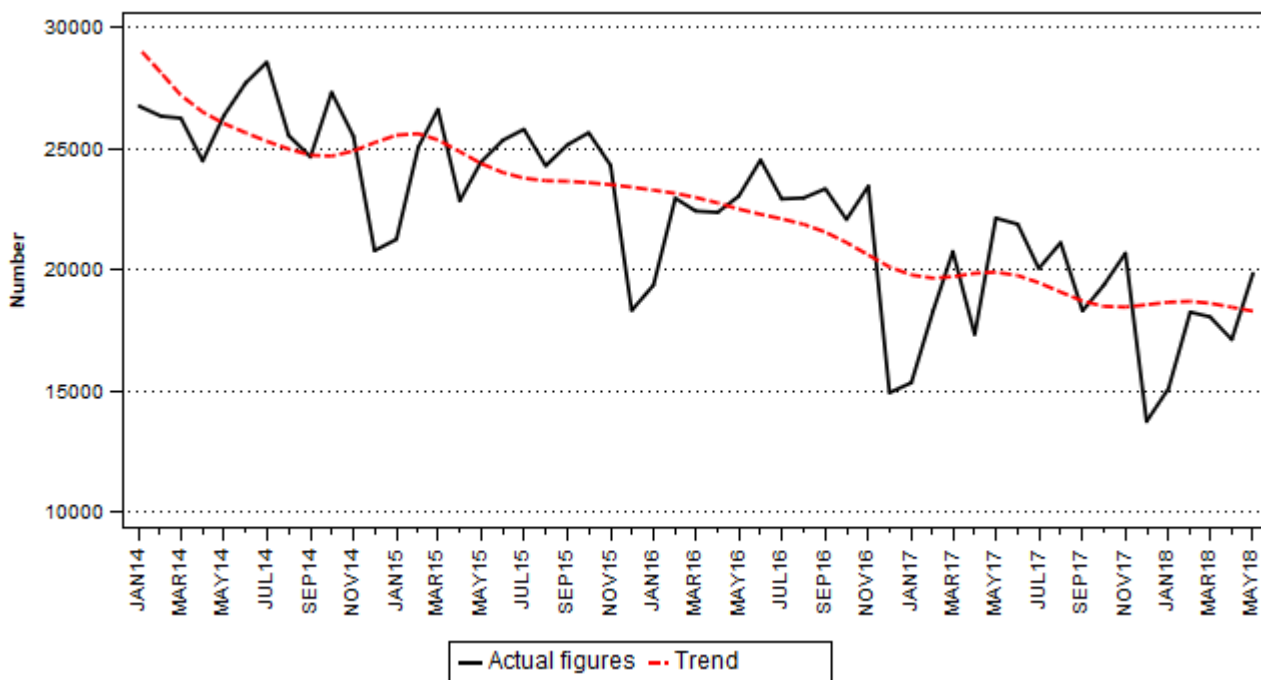
In May 2018, 19 845 civil judgements for debt amounting to R328,9 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R92,1 million or 28,0%);
- services (R71,7 million or 21,8%); and
- 'other' debts (R60,6 million or 18,4%) – 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	May-17	1/ Apr-18	1/ May-18	2017	May-17	1/ Apr-18	1/ May-18
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>639 355</b>	<b>57 721</b>	<b>48 419</b>	<b>51 325</b>	<b>548 538</b>	<b>49 988</b>	<b>41 740</b>	<b>44 416</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		54 849	47 420	48 007		48 356	41 188	41 980
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	34 961	3 245	2 517	2 564	25 426	2 379	1 720	1 833
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	21 233	1 891	1 626	1 721	16 778	1 509	1 263	1 361
	Services - Professional	71 206	6 514	5 806	5 959	62 068	5 717	5 174	5 089
	Services - Other	98 488	9 353	8 228	8 178	83 660	7 944	7 023	6 758
	Rent	31 726	3 014	2 680	2 574	23 540	2 260	1 984	1 942
	Money lent	131 098	11 464	9 901	11 018	123 147	10 820	9 367	10 268
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	82 316	7 108	5 492	5 906	75 454	6 431	5 032	5 517
	Other debts	111 715	9 222	9 213	10 439	98 973	8 139	8 469	9 536
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>582 743</b>	<b>51 811</b>	<b>45 463</b>	<b>48 359</b>	<b>509 046</b>	<b>45 199</b>	<b>40 032</b>	<b>42 304</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		49 191	44 482	44 744		43 276	39 266	39 218

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2017	May-17	1/ Apr-18	1/ May-18	2017	May-17	1/ Apr-18	1/ May-18	
<b>Number of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	14 897	1 539	1 091	1 360	11 296	1 200	787	1 070
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	6 829	616	497	613	5 912	531	419	535
	Services - Professional	35 673	3 292	2 627	3 142	32 574	3 059	2 419	2 899
	Services - Other	35 552	3 388	2 744	3 586	31 207	2 924	2 372	3 209
	Rent	18 112	1 725	1 663	1 918	15 155	1 443	1 374	1 618
	Money lent	50 369	5 246	3 334	3 686	46 408	4 860	2 992	3 342
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	25 826	2 356	1 628	1 826	22 218	2 062	1 388	1 567
	Other debts	41 748	3 966	3 540	3 714	38 438	3 714	3 231	3 399
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>229 006</b>	<b>22 128</b>	<b>17 124</b>	<b>19 845</b>	<b>203 208</b>	<b>19 793</b>	<b>14 982</b>	<b>17 639</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		20 663	17 451	18 002		18 371	15 484	15 769

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item	Total				Private Persons				
	2017	May-17	1/ Apr-18	1/ May-18	2017	May-17	1/ Apr-18	1/ May-18	
<b>Value of civil judgements</b>	Goods sold - Open account	243 233	23 319	17 335	21 480	115 847	12 036	8 216	11 802
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	133 486	12 905	10 655	15 020	115 030	11 004	8 503	12 235
	Services - Professional	258 424	21 175	20 545	20 588	229 419	19 225	16 787	18 270
	Services - Other	493 962	49 945	44 264	51 106	405 530	40 937	35 537	45 307
	Rent	351 978	35 354	32 193	29 208	243 565	24 109	23 138	22 647
	Money lent	1 163 947	136 746	85 064	92 135	1 064 361	125 184	77 547	84 022
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	533 411	52 031	34 636	38 749	463 911	44 704	29 267	33 384
	Other debts	770 054	71 452	61 206	60 567	627 839	58 292	50 387	47 771
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>3 948 495</b>	<b>402 927</b>	<b>305 898</b>	<b>328 853</b>	<b>3 265 502</b>	<b>335 491</b>	<b>249 382</b>	<b>275 438</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		377 339	331 166	310 370		308 324	266 369	254 030

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 2017 and the three months ended May 2018**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Mar – May 2017	Actual estimates Mar – May 2018	% change between Mar – May 2017 and Mar – May 2018	Difference between Mar – May 2017 and Mar – May 2018
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	151 615	141 437	-6,7	-10 178
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	60 211	55 029	-8,6	-5 182
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 033,5	963,6	-6,8	-69,9

**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 2017 and the three months ended May 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	-0,7	-0,5	-0,3
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,4	0,1	0,9
Services - Professional	-0,5	-1,2	-0,2
Services - Other	-1,3	0,7	1,2
Rent	-0,1	1,2	-0,3
Money lent	-2,3	-6,3	-7,7
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-2,5	-1,6	-1,1
Other debts	1,2	-1,1	0,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>-6,7</b>	<b>-8,6</b>	<b>-6,8</b>

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 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 May 2017	Actual estimates May 2018	% change between May 2017 and May 2018	Difference between May 2017 and May 2018
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	51 811	48 359	-6,7	-3 452
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	22 128	19 845	-10,3	-2 283
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	402,9	328,9	-18,4	-74,0

**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	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
	Apr	7 784	3 546	507	3 239	7 737	1 892	16 210	2 547	2 001	45 463
	May	8 089	3 975	778	3 231	9 222	2 269	16 438	2 378	1 979	48 359

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	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
	Apr	2 768	1 790	217	1 686	3 737	716	3 874	1 187	1 149	17 124
	May	3 639	2 408	416	1 862	4 684	741	3 865	1 063	1 167	19 845

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	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
	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	24 320	58 491	15 277	73 192	23 335	7 438	328 853

1/ Latest two months are preliminary.



## Explanatory notes

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>	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.
	<b>2</b>	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.
<b>Purpose of the survey</b>	<b>3</b>	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.
<b>Scope of the survey</b>	<b>4</b>	This survey covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of civil cases recorded;</li> <li>• number of civil summonses issued for debt;</li> <li>• number of civil judgements recorded for debt; and</li> <li>• value of civil judgements recorded for debt.</li> </ul>
<b>Statistical unit</b>	<b>5</b>	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.
<b>Survey methodology and design</b>	<b>6</b>	The survey is conducted by email, fax and telephone each month from 203 magistrates' offices.
<b>Collection rate</b>	<b>7</b>	The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for May 2018 was 85,7%. The collection rate for April 2018 was 86,2%.
<b>Seasonal adjustment</b>	<b>8</b>	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: <a href="#">Click to download seasonal adjustment for civil cases for debt.</a>
<b>Trend cycle</b>	<b>9</b>	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.
<b>Unpublished statistics</b>	<b>10</b>	In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.
<b>Symbols and abbreviations</b>	<b>11</b>	R/D Refer to drawer Stats SA Statistics South Africa * Revised figures

## Glossary

<b>Acknowledgement of debt</b>	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.
<b>Bills</b>	Bills are statements of charges for services rendered or for amounts owed.
<b>Cases recorded</b>	Includes civil debt and non-debt cases recorded.
<b>Civil judgements</b>	Civil judgements are decisions taken in a civil matter or a dispute between two people or parties.
<b>Civil summonses</b>	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.
<b>Consent judgements</b>	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.
<b>Default judgements</b>	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.
<b>Instalment sale transaction</b>	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.
<b>Litigants</b>	Litigants are people who take part in court proceedings, usually against each other, like a debtor and a creditor.
<b>Litigants referred</b>	Litigants referred relates to a case where the parties have been referred to another instance/court.
<b>Open account transaction</b>	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.
<b>Other services</b>	'Other services' refers to municipal services (except outstanding assessment rates), plumbers, builders, mechanics, panel beaters and electricians.
<b>Other debts</b>	'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.
<b>Plaintiff</b>	Plaintiff is a person/party in a civil case who asks the court for judgement against another person.
<b>Professional services</b>	Professional services refer to medical doctors, dentists, advocates, attorneys, auditors, accountants, architects, engineers, hospital services, etc.
<b>Promissory note</b>	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.
<b>Reference month</b>	Reference month refers to one calendar month.
<b>Refer to drawer (R/D) cheques</b>	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.

