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STATISTICAL RELEASE P0041

Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

May 2020

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the collection rate for this publication (80,3% in April 2020 and 76,4% in May 2020) is lower than usual. Consequently, revisions may be larger than usual.

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Key results for May 2020

Table A - Key figures for the month of May 2020

Actual estimates	May 2020	% change between May 2019 and May 2020	% change between March – May 2019 and March – May 2020
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	19 392	-59,1	-47,8
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	6 547	-65,5	-53,1
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	123,7	-63,8	-42,8

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown regulations have had an extensive impact on economic activity, including the work performed by the courts.

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 47,8% in the three months ended May 2020 compared with the three months ended May 2019.

The largest contributors to the 47,8% decrease for civil summonses issued were:

- services (contributing -13,7 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -10,5 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -10,1 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -6,9 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 53,1% in the three months ended May 2020 compared with the three months ended May 2019.

The largest contributors to the 53,1% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing -17,7 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing -11,4 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -8,2 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -6,2 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 42,8% in the three months ended May 2020 compared with the three months ended May 2019.

The largest contributors to the 42,8% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -12,6 percentage points);
- services (contributing -8,8 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -7,5 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -4,9 percentage points) see Tables 4 and 5.

In May 2020, 6 547 civil judgements for debt amounting to R123,7 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R27,1 million or 21,9%);
- services (R26,4 million or 21,3%);
- 'other' debts (R22,2 million or 17,9%); and
- goods sold (R19,3 million or 15,6%) see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 - Civil summonses issued for debt

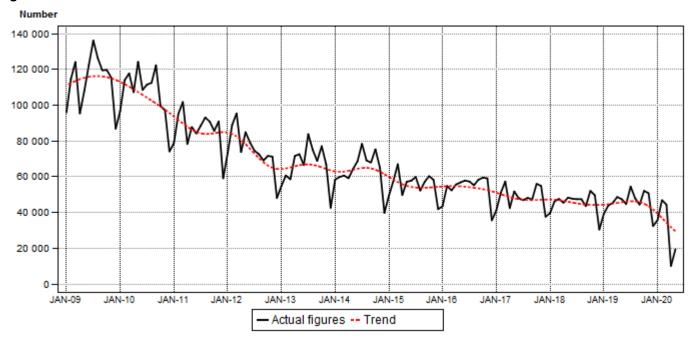
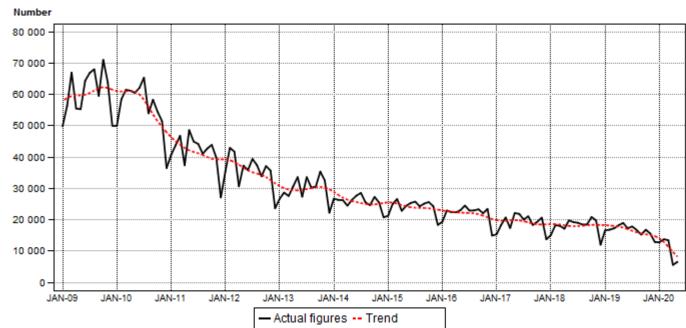


Figure 2 - Civil judgements recorded for debt



Risenga Maluleke Statistician-General

Detailed results: Tables

Table 1 – Number of civil cases recorded and summonses issued for debt: Total and private persons

	16		То	tal			Private	Persons	
	Item	2019	May-19	1/ Apr-20	1/ May-20	2019	May-19	1/ Apr-20	1/ May-20
Cases recorded	Actual figures - Actual figures	573 505	49 424	10 926	20 374	501 837	42 192	9 493	17 825
	Seasonally adjusted - Seasonally adjusted		46 198	11 582	20 451		39 939	10 066	18 079
Civil summonses for	Goods sold - Open account	32 869	2 839	906	1 423	24 773	2 115	739	1 118
debt	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	17 827	1 585	220	544	14 851	1 353	170	405
	Services - Professional	61 914	5 471	1 346	2 618	54 906	4 777	1 132	2 313
	Services - Other	84 337	6 404	1 051	2 410	72 858	5 652	912	2 046
	Rent	29 859	2 295	551	1 148	23 382	1 802	398	845
	Money lent	137 744	12 323	3 554	5 434	129 914	11 560	3 363	5 121
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	72 484	5 883	521	2 323	67 528	5 488	455	2 217
	Other debts	114 445	10 659	1 898	3 492	102 355	9 651	1 550	2 934
	Total - Actual figures	551 479	47 459	10 047	19 392	490 567	42 398	8 719	16 999
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		44 567	10 842	19 296		39 893	9 495	16 901

^{1/} Preliminary.

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

			То	tal			Private	Persons	
	Item	2019	May-19	1/ Apr-20	1/ May-20	2019	May-19	1/ Apr-20	1/ May-20
Number of civil	Goods sold - Open account	14 253	1 094	452	521	10 594	803	324	363
judgements	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	6 276	698	190	310	5 488	639	144	248
	Services - Professional	29 978	2 947	764	1 093	27 459	2 749	662	965
	Services - Other	35 194	3 953	740	1 097	31 643	3 700	620	941
	Rent	18 799	1 705	378	706	15 527	1 449	277	549
	Money lent	41 327	4 078	1 226	1 294	37 645	3 792	1 096	1 135
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	17 343	1 306	591	358	15 511	1 196	551	317
	Other debts	36 996	3 192	1 214	1 168	34 197	2 881	1 136	1 046
	Total - Actual figures	200 166	18 973	5 555	6 547	178 064	17 209	4 810	5 564
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		17 343	5 869	6 220		15 594	5 209	5 262

^{1/} Preliminary.

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

	Maria.		To	tal		Private Persons			
	Item	2019	May-19	1/ Apr-20	1/ May-20	2019	May-19	1/ Apr-20	1/ May-20
Value of civil	Goods sold - Open account	246 154	21 249	6 275	9 098	136 662	10 918	2 437	4 221
judgements	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	139 841	12 620	3 554	10 238	120 869	11 236	2 123	8 427
	Services - Professional	236 936	20 858	4 707	9 406	209 228	18 947	4 108	8 154
	Services - Other	556 418	54 789	11 879	16 971	464 934	47 632	9 089	11 696
	Rent	376 750	31 781	7 294	16 833	271 115	20 849	5 332	10 331
	Money lent	1 048 737	103 999	41 523	27 140	962 684	96 980	40 445	25 389
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	482 897	43 133	18 840	11 810	425 567	39 092	17 313	10 098
	Other debts	648 602	53 682	16 283	22 198	532 742	41 526	14 458	20 276
	Total - Actual figures	3 736 335	342 111	110 355	123 694	3 123 801	287 180	95 305	98 592
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		323 109	122 967	122 631		263 253	103 841	96 329

^{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 2019 and the three months ended May 2020

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Mar – May 2019	Actual estimates Mar – May 2020	% change between Mar – May 2019 and Mar – May 2020	Difference between Mar – May 2019 and Mar – May 2020
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	141 510	73 809	-47,8	-67 701
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	54 460	25 546	-53,1	-28 914
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	916,7	524,1	-42,8	-392,6

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 2019 and the three months ended May 2020 1/

	Contribution (% points) to the % chan	ge in the total
ltem	Civil summonses for debt	Number of civil judgements	Value of civil judgements
Goods sold - Open account	-2,8	-3,1	-3,0
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-1,6	-2,0	-1,2
Services - Professional	-5,4	-7,7	-2,1
Services - Other	-8,3	-10,0	-6,7
Rent	-2,4	-4,6	-4,9
Money lent	-10,5	-11,4	-12,6
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-6,9	-6,2	-4,8
Other debts	-10,1	-8,2	-7,5
Total	-47,8	-53,1	-42,8

^{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 2019, 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 19	Actual estimates May 20	% change between May 19 and May 20	Difference between May 19 and May 20
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	47 459	19 392	-59,1	-28 067
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	18 973	6 547	-65,5	-12 426
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	342,1	123,7	-63,8	-218,4

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	Mpuma- langa	Limpopo	South Africa
	May	7 265	3 746	725	3 145	9 303	2 675	16 212	2 432	1 956	47 459
	Jun	7 317	3 754	711	3 274	8 213	2 179	15 139	2 151	1 975	44 713
	Jul	9 252	3 832	774	3 216	11 076	2 662	18 660	2 818	2 261	54 551
	Aug	7 831	3 323	546	3 027	8 995	2 314	17 868	2 212	1 826	47 942
2019	Sep	7 212	3 119	560	2 667	8 636	2 459	15 818	1 973	1 936	44 380
	Oct	9 879	3 826	687	3 129	9 770	2 712	17 711	2 478	1 929	52 121
	Nov	8 087	3 689	613	3 985	9 706	2 054	18 575	2 164	1 917	50 790
	Dec	6 876	2 295	451	1 822	6 989	1 448	9 454	1 456	1 586	32 377
	Jan	5 309	2 429	323	2 501	8 084	1 924	11 643	1 642	1 792	35 647
	Feb	8 520	2 958	563	3 477	8 482	2 599	16 258	2 393	1 705	46 955
2020	Mar	9 234	2 662	507	2 502	9 781	2 181	13 328	2 408	1 767	44 370
	Apr	2 716	785	66	552	1 981	1 327	1 331	137	1 152	10 047
	May	3 572	1 413	419	1 547	3 277	894	5 906	941	1 423	19 392

^{1/} Latest three months are preliminary.

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

Per	iod 1/	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu- Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpuma- langa	Limpopo	South Africa
	May	3 200	2 127	318	2 361	4 312	943	3 296	1 195	1 221	18 973
	Jun	2 213	1 785	318	3 163	4 324	731	2 739	884	1 092	17 249
	Jul	2 744	1 658	463	1 785	4 909	1 040	2 931	1 118	1 213	17 861
	Aug	2 724	1 602	442	1 890	4 143	880	2 863	871	1 276	16 691
2019	Sep	2 147	1 241	283	2 649	3 899	735	2 413	739	1 120	15 226
	Oct	3 188	1 573	259	2 091	3 826	737	2 838	986	1 323	16 821
	Nov	2 503	1 799	307	1 922	3 704	760	2 768	697	1 113	15 573
	Dec	2 143	1 011	208	1 537	3 565	573	1 886	852	1 092	12 867
	Jan	2 109	1 548	339	1 280	3 452	607	1 477	863	1 139	12 814
	Feb	2 227	1 562	262	1 794	3 225	675	2 129	709	1 176	13 759
2020	Mar	2 333	1 258	273	1 091	3 714	741	2 207	732	1 095	13 444
	Apr	1 115	417	17	290	1 657	311	604	188	956	5 555
	May	966	848	126	498	1 241	270	1 317	260	1 021	6 547

^{1/} Latest three months are preliminary.

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

Per	iod 1/	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu- Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpuma- langa	Limpopo	South Africa
	May	72 314	36 751	3 280	26 065	63 211	15 087	92 893	25 640	6 870	342 111
	Jun	50 371	28 644	4 389	27 475	75 331	15 082	93 955	14 793	5 708	315 748
	Jul	62 252	35 695	4 871	23 859	72 248	20 435	107 556	23 062	8 836	358 814
2019	Aug	63 038	28 396	4 564	25 392	61 788	14 840	95 555	25 268	9 700	328 541
	Sep	50 935	25 909	5 540	28 753	60 945	13 709	98 527	20 770	7 603	312 691
	Oct	79 753	34 181	4 085	29 641	60 750	10 738	93 195	15 867	9 750	337 960
	Nov	63 406	39 414	5 676	28 955	53 279	15 062	116 307	15 865	6 569	344 533
	Dec	66 209	24 268	3 252	14 339	44 665	10 959	75 920	22 621	6 353	268 586
	Jan	53 032	36 607	2 396	17 883	51 439	11 192	58 047	14 948	7 193	252 737
	Feb	56 945	28 008	3 204	22 935	44 930	10 043	71 040	15 339	10 376	262 820
2020	Mar	53 710	35 791	5 099	18 807	55 668	11 796	80 173	22 661	6 389	290 094
	Apr	22 585	10 900	333	3 873	25 019	5 603	25 945	13 002	3 095	110 355
	May	15 427	11 316	813	5 626	24 939	4 989	47 546	8 469	4 569	123 694

^{1/} Latest three months are preliminary.

Explanatory notes

1

Introduction

- 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

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:

- · 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

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 2020 was 76,4% and April 2020 was 80,3%. The improved collection rate for March 2020 was 79,3%.

Seasonal adjustment

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 were performed; the methodology will be reviewed as more data points are added to the time series.

Trend cycle

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 Symbols and abbreviations

10 In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.

R/D Refer to drawer
Stats SA Statistics South Africa
* Revised figures

11

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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