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STATISTICAL RELEASE

P0041

Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

May 2021

**Embargoed until:
15 July 2021
09:00**

ENQUIRIES:
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FORTHCOMING ISSUE:
June 2021

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE:
19 August 2021

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Key results for May 2021

Table A – Key figures for the month of May 2021

Actual estimates	May 2021	% change between May 2020 and May 2021	% change between March – May 2020 and March – May 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	42 893	161,8	90,7
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	13 825	115,6	57,9
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	287,8	147,0	82,6

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt increased by 90,7% in the three months ended May 2021 compared with the three months ended May 2020.

The largest contributors to the 90,7% increase in civil summonses issued were:

- 'other' debts (contributing 27,2 percentage points);
- services (contributing 20,7 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing 19,3 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing 12,7 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 57,9% in the three months ended May 2021 compared with the three months ended May 2020.

The largest contributors to the 57,9% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing 25,2 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing 11,1 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing 8,4 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 82,6% in the three months ended May 2021 compared with the three months ended May 2020.

The largest contributors to the 82,6% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing 20,6 percentage points);
- money lent (contributing 20,3 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing 15,4 percentage points) – see Table 5.

In May 2021, 13 825 civil judgements for debt amounting to R287,8 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R70,1 million or 24,3%);
- services (R59,6 million or 20,7%); and
- 'other' debts (R58,6 million or 20,4%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

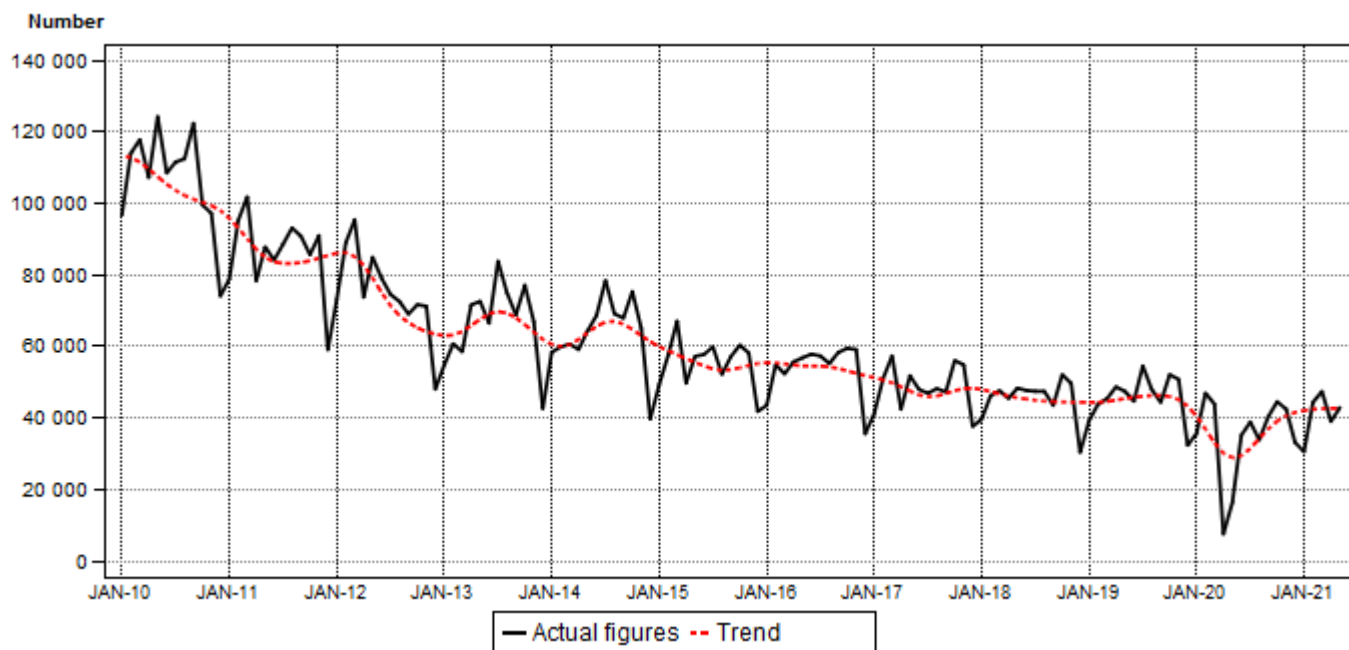
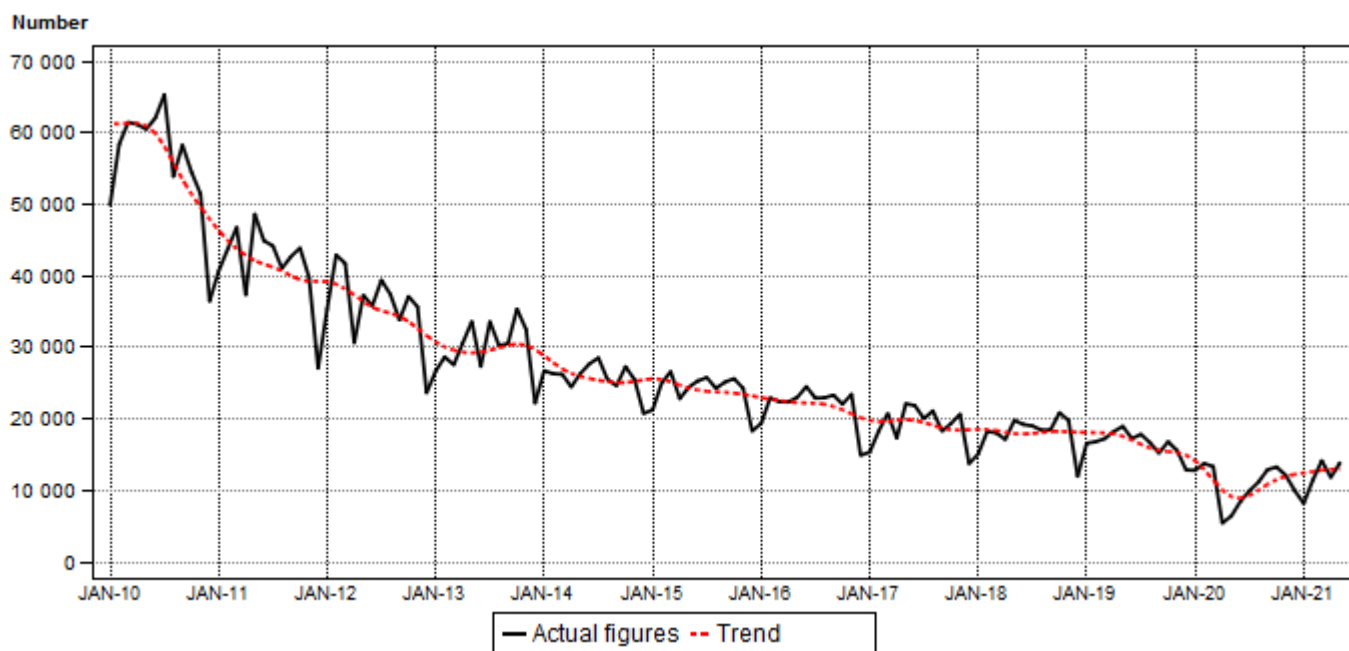


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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			
		2020	May-20	1/ Apr-21	1/ May-21	2020	May-20	1/ Apr-21	1/ May-21
Cases recorded	Actual figures	451 691	17 398	41 765	44 543	400 702	15 117	37 311	39 447
	Seasonally adjusted		17 726	43 855	45 099		15 847	39 076	41 467
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	21 933	1 176	1 748	2 148	15 671	881	1 243	1 486
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 879	628	1 184	1 396	13 022	491	1 095	1 208
	Services - Professional	47 911	2 489	4 188	4 672	42 984	2 192	3 676	4 058
	Services - Other	63 941	2 218	5 944	6 907	56 770	1 888	5 271	6 109
	Rent	25 506	1 168	2 299	2 569	19 452	872	1 796	1 988
	Money lent	105 308	4 163	9 509	10 370	100 399	3 894	9 088	9 792
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	50 761	1 389	4 252	4 879	48 420	1 298	4 106	4 696
	Other debts	88 563	3 153	9 889	9 952	79 872	2 747	9 040	8 939
	Total - Actual figures	418 802	16 384	39 013	42 893	376 590	14 263	35 315	38 276
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		16 554	41 451	43 079		14 428	37 504	38 644

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2020	May-20	1/ Apr-21	1/ May-21	2020	May-20	1/ Apr-21	1/ May-21
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	8 801	568	785	787	6 068	402	531	568
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	4 576	357	454	450	3 830	288	390	389
	Services - Professional	20 860	1 041	1 786	3 463	18 983	900	1 508	3 163
	Services - Other	24 350	1 178	2 164	2 371	21 717	1 000	1 959	2 157
	Rent	11 727	557	1 011	1 213	9 360	400	792	1 008
	Money lent	27 443	1 412	2 691	2 293	24 796	1 240	2 484	2 068
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	9 381	382	786	800	8 488	343	717	711
	Other debts	22 574	918	2 159	2 448	20 599	795	1 921	2 274
	Total - Actual figures	129 712	6 413	11 836	13 825	113 841	5 368	10 302	12 338
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		6 207	12 384	13 419		5 178	10 863	11 898

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2020	May-20	1/ Apr-21	1/ May-21	2020	May-20	1/ Apr-21	1/ May-21
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	190 039	8 809	17 833	18 299	79 072	3 866	8 598	9 754
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	141 631	10 120	17 949	13 430	114 990	8 196	15 116	10 864
	Services - Professional	201 414	9 946	16 221	20 555	175 906	8 665	11 116	15 735
	Services - Other	457 434	18 350	39 322	39 092	382 066	12 031	33 495	31 731
	Rent	309 535	13 076	32 974	40 328	217 148	7 804	22 800	32 204
	Money lent	797 650	25 996	86 673	70 067	747 713	23 367	81 367	66 323
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	311 985	11 164	38 524	27 342	271 527	9 363	34 758	20 708
	Other debts	463 155	19 054	57 981	58 641	393 270	17 067	48 981	52 767
	Total - Actual figures	2 872 843	116 515	307 477	287 754	2 381 692	90 359	256 231	240 086
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		116 424	341 001	282 502		89 580	277 081	233 717

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 2020 and the three months ended May 2021

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Mar – May 2020	Actual estimates Mar – May 2021	% change between Mar – May 2020 and Mar – May 2021	Difference between Mar – May 2020 and Mar – May 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	67 803	129 310	90,7	61 507
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	25 214	39 817	57,9	14 603
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	514,3	939,1	82,6	424,8

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 2020 and the three months ended May 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	2,7	2,5	4,7
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	2,5	1,8	3,8
Services - Professional	7,0	14,6	4,2
Services - Other	13,7	10,6	8,6
Rent	5,7	6,1	15,4
Money lent	19,3	11,1	20,3
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	12,7	2,8	5,1
Other debts	27,2	8,4	20,6
Total	90,7	57,9	82,6

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 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 May 2020	Actual estimates May 2021	% change between May 2020 and May 2021	Difference between May 2020 and May 2021
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	16 384	42 893	161,8	26 509
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	6 413	13 825	115,6	7 412
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	116,5	287,8	147,0	171,3

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	
2020	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	8 459	2 598	15 046	2 075	1 539	44 393
	Mar	9 973	2 706	625	2 961	7 731	2 148	16 375	3 210	1 675	47 404
	Apr	8 293	2 817	513	2 633	5 257	1 990	13 482	2 296	1 732	39 013
	May	9 291	3 055	676	3 535	7 509	1 542	12 958	2 682	1 645	42 893

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	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	2 670	1 049	242	1 473	1 947	887	3 220	1 533	1 135	14 156
	Apr	2 141	989	200	1 541	1 916	642	2 196	1 045	1 166	11 836
	May	3 760	1 237	160	1 792	1 824	629	2 438	819	1 166	13 825

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	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	69 027	21 207	5 942	20 962	48 240	16 546	130 397	23 862	7 654	343 837
	Apr	59 052	18 834	4 451	25 062	47 587	15 367	99 525	27 828	9 771	307 477
	May	62 042	23 081	2 714	26 618	43 891	16 066	84 463	20 609	8 270	287 754

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 May 2021 was 78,3%. The improved collection rates were 80,8% for April 2021 and 83,3% for March 2021.
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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