



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa, ISibalo House, Koch Street, Salvokop, Pretoria, 0002
www.statssa.gov.za, info@statssa.gov.za, Tel +27 12 310 8911

STATISTICAL RELEASE

P0041

Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

May 2023

**Embargoed until:
20 July 2023
09:00**

ENQUIRIES:
Joyce Essel-Mensah
Tel: 082 888 2374

FORTHCOMING ISSUES:
June 2023

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE:
17 August 2023



Contents

Key results for May 2023	2
Table A – Key figures for the month of May 2023	2
Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt.....	3
Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt.....	3
Detailed results: Tables	4
Table 1 – Number of civil cases recorded and summonses issued for debt: Total and private persons	4
Table 2 – Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons	5
Table 3 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons (R'000)	5
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 2022 and the three months ended May 2023.....	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 2022 and the three months ended May 2023	6
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...	6
Table 7 – Number of civil summonses issued for debt by province	7
Table 8 – Number of civil default and consent judgements for debt by province	7
Table 9 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt by province (R'000).....	7
Explanatory notes	8
Glossary	9
General information	10
Technical enquiries	10

Key results for May 2023

Table A – Key figures for the month of May 2023

Actual estimates	May 2023	% change between May 2022 and May 2023	% change between March – May 2022 and March – May 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	45 250	0,0	-1,2
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	12 543	1,8	1,8
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	341,5	8,3	10,8

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 1,2% in the three months ended May 2023 compared with the three months ended May 2022.

The largest negative contributors to the 1,2% decrease in civil summonses issued were:

- money lent (contributing -3,4 percentage points); and
- goods sold (contributing -1,7 percentage points).

'Other' debts made the largest positive contribution (contributing 4,8 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 1,8% in the three months ended May 2023 compared with the three months ended May 2022. The largest positive contributor was 'other' debts (contributing 6,0 percentage points) and the largest negative contributor was goods sold (contributing -3,5 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 10,8% in the three months ended May 2023 compared with the three months ended May 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 10,8% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing 7,9 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing 5,2 percentage points).

Goods sold (contributing -2,0 percentage points) was the largest negative contributor – see Table 5.

In May 2023, 12 543 civil judgements for debt amounting to R341,5 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R111,2 million or 32,6%);
- services (R66,9 million or 19,6%); and
- 'other' debts (R65,0 million or 19,0%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

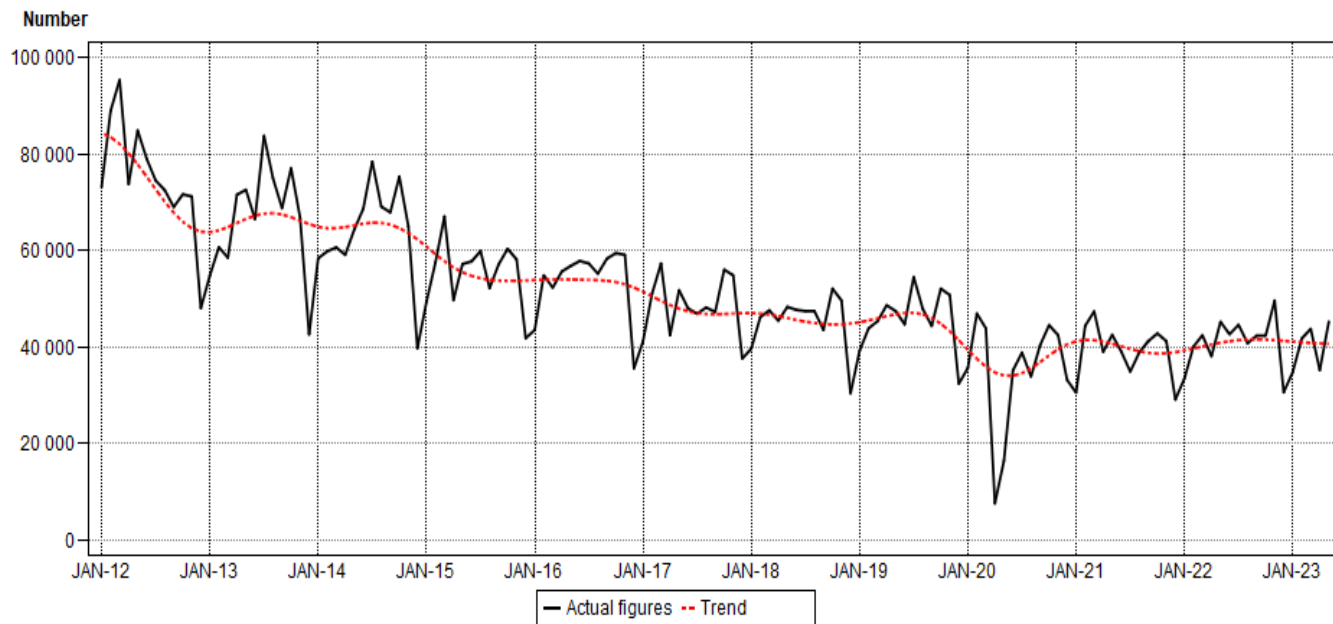


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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	May-22	1/ Apr-23	1/ May-23	2022	May-22	1/ Apr-23	1/ May-23
Cases recorded	Actual figures	514 325	47 054	36 467	46 391	440 408	40 562	30 492	38 562
	Seasonally adjusted		46 116	43 408	41 168		39 289	36 299	33 660
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	23 286	2 722	1 444	2 320	14 645	1 699	875	1 455
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 867	1 482	1 035	1 256	11 954	1 278	810	914
	Services - Professional	56 911	5 229	4 347	5 394	46 262	4 068	3 220	3 689
	Services - Other	73 225	6 670	4 104	5 857	62 348	5 712	3 480	5 023
	Rent	25 280	2 345	1 933	2 336	18 118	1 641	1 384	1 697
	Money lent	121 161	10 780	7 707	9 502	113 762	10 294	7 076	8 783
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	45 229	4 369	3 950	4 388	41 607	4 076	3 474	3 842
	Other debts	132 399	11 646	10 684	14 197	119 165	10 409	9 081	12 407
	Total - Actual figures	492 358	45 243	35 204	45 250	427 861	39 177	29 400	37 810
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		43 988	41 377	40 159		38 761	35 152	34 089

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2022	May-22	1/ Apr-23	1/ May-23	2022	May-22	1/ Apr-23	1/ May-23
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	7 147	716	490	552	4 555	479	275	318
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	5 230	605	291	325	4 167	453	219	250
	Services - Professional	21 161	1 998	1 497	1 997	17 970	1 717	1 165	1 519
	Services - Other	24 638	2 133	1 595	2 293	21 605	1 785	1 400	2 045
	Rent	10 712	1 147	757	960	7 990	854	505	705
	Money lent	32 148	2 968	2 211	2 783	28 679	2 644	1 954	2 511
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	11 637	1 034	1 019	1 037	10 470	791	791	794
	Other debts	22 010	1 726	2 300	2 596	19 210	1 437	1 666	1 962
	Total - Actual figures	134 683	12 327	10 160	12 543	114 646	10 160	7 975	10 104
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		11 504	12 590	10 654		9 723	10 298	8 690

1/ Preliminary.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		2022	May-22	1/ Apr-23	1/ May-23	2022	May-22	1/ Apr-23	1/ May-23
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	163 474	14 661	12 002	12 798	70 273	7 317	4 816	4 276
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	153 418	17 897	8 216	12 645	121 713	14 604	6 401	10 168
	Services - Professional	223 539	22 872	15 299	21 287	163 199	16 938	9 822	13 793
	Services - Other	447 767	35 218	28 965	45 594	379 058	29 102	24 826	35 966
	Rent	355 745	48 151	30 232	31 931	261 772	34 318	20 154	19 281
	Money lent	1 034 851	92 651	86 467	111 213	967 961	87 655	83 873	104 928
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	416 381	34 728	25 807	40 990	370 656	29 088	22 784	37 571
	Other debts	627 446	49 200	55 877	65 027	512 980	39 190	43 841	52 854
	Total - Actual figures	3 422 621	315 378	262 865	341 485	2 847 612	258 212	216 517	278 837
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		307 048	306 371	321 725		253 379	248 615	259 854

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 2022 and the three months ended May 2023

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Mar – May 2022	Actual estimates Mar – May 2023	% change between Mar – May 2022 and Mar – May 2023	Difference between Mar – May 2022 and Mar – May 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	125 776	124 220	-1,2	-1 556
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	33 640	34 242	1,8	602
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	812,5	900,6	10,8	88,1

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 2022 and the three months ended May 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	-1,1	-1,1	-0,2
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,6	-2,4	-1,8
Services - Professional	0,5	0,1	0,1
Services - Other	-0,9	0,4	0,0
Rent	0,1	-1,5	-1,4
Money lent	-3,4	0,1	7,9
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-0,6	0,2	1,0
Other debts	4,8	6,0	5,2
Total	-1,2	1,8	10,8

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 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 May 2022	Actual estimates May 2023	% change between May 2022 and May 2023	Difference between May 2022 and May 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	45 243	45 250	0,0	7
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	12 327	12 543	1,8	216
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	315,4	341,5	8,3	26,1

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	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	1 456	30 612	
2023	Jan	5 929	2 289	226	2 239	7 652	2 000	10 458	2 414	1 574	34 781
	Feb	8 085	3 583	535	2 663	7 860	1 803	13 088	2 454	1 687	41 758
	Mar	10 472	3 326	577	2 070	7 387	1 940	13 736	2 579	1 679	43 766
	Apr	8 307	2 722	286	1 353	6 537	1 437	11 143	1 836	1 583	35 204
	May	10 243	2 830	577	1 812	8 017	1 883	15 079	3 010	1 799	45 250

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	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	1 025	8 569
2023	Jan	1 739	1 044	139	849	1 057	384	2 130	1 521	1 015	9 878
	Feb	2 557	1 245	184	826	1 518	359	2 106	760	1 109	10 664
	Mar	2 326	1 120	175	622	1 352	671	3 061	1 043	1 169	11 539
	Apr	2 224	1 046	186	722	1 104	379	2 719	707	1 073	10 160
	May	2 995	1 132	201	1 229	1 184	353	3 488	746	1 215	12 543

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	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	37 464	5 755	62 864	11 058	5 381	213 423
2023	Jan	48 201	23 145	2 715	17 834	41 083	6 105	59 324	24 540	4 736	227 681
	Feb	71 239	26 228	2 548	20 787	55 818	6 367	78 357	15 896	7 331	284 572
	Mar	61 558	24 352	2 314	12 695	61 358	15 708	91 994	16 891	9 394	296 265
	Apr	74 130	27 959	2 422	17 584	39 905	12 650	65 687	15 301	7 228	262 865
	May	96 915	32 727	3 204	22 883	50 154	6 182	95 649	21 852	11 918	341 485

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 May 2023 was 77,8%. The improved collection rates for March and April 2023 were 77,8% and 77,3% respectively.
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.

General information

Stats SA publishes approximately 300 different statistical releases each year. It is not economically viable to produce them in more than one of South Africa's 11 official languages. Since the releases are used extensively, not only locally but also by international economic and social-scientific communities, Stats SA releases are published in English only.

Stats SA has copyright on this publication. Users may apply the information as they wish, provided that they acknowledge Stats SA as the source of the basic data wherever they process, apply, utilize, publish or distribute the data; and also that they specify that the relevant application and analysis (where applicable) result from their own processing of the data.

Advance release calendar

An advance release calendar is disseminated on www.statssa.gov.za.

Stats SA products

A complete set of Stats SA publications is available at the Stats SA Library and the following libraries:

National Library of South Africa, Pretoria Division
National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Division
Natal Society Library, Pietermaritzburg
Library of Parliament, Cape Town
Bloemfontein Public Library
Johannesburg Public Library
Eastern Cape Library Services, Qonce
Central Regional Library, Polokwane
Central Reference Library, Mbombela
Central Reference Collection, Kimberley
Central Reference Library, Mmabatho

Stats SA also provides a subscription service.

Electronic services

A large range of data is available via online services. For more detail about our electronic services, contact Stats SA's user information service at (012) 310 8600.

You can visit us on the internet at: www.statssa.gov.za.

Technical enquiries

Onica Mushwana Telephone number: (012) 310 4897
Email address: onicama@statssa.gov.za

Joyce Essel-Mensah Telephone number: 082 888 2374
Email address: joycee@statssa.gov.za

General enquiries

User information services Telephone number: (012) 310 8600
Email address: info@statssa.gov.za

Orders/subscription services Telephone number: (012) 310 8619
Email address: millies@statssa.gov.za

Postal address Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001

Produced by Stats SA