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STATISTICAL RELEASE

P0041

Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

May 2024

Embargoed until:
18 July 2024
14:00

ENQUIRIES:
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FORTHCOMING ISSUE:
June 2024

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE:
15 August 2024

Dipalopalo tsa Aforikaborwa • Dipalopalo tsa Aforika Borwa • Ezazibalo zaseNingizimu Afrika • Tshitatistika Afrika Tshipembe • Tinhlayo Afrika-Dzonga

Statistieke Suid-Afrika • Dipalopalo tsa Aforika Borwa • Telubalo zaseNingizimu Afrika • EzeeNkcukacha maNani zoMzantsi Afrika • Iimibalobalo zeSewula Afrika

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Key results for May 2024

Table A – Key figures for the month of May 2024

Actual estimates	May 2024	% change between May 2023 and May 2024	% change between Mar – May 2023 and Mar – May 2024
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	36 738	-18,7	-9,2
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 351	-8,4	-0,1
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	288,4	-15,4	-0,8

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 9,2% in the three months ended May 2024 compared with the three months ended May 2023.

The largest negative contributors to the 9,2% decrease in civil summonses issued were:

- money lent (contributing -4,2 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -4,0 percentage points).

Services was the only positive contributor (contributing 0,6 of a percentage point) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased marginally by 0,1% in the three months ended May 2024 compared with the three months ended May 2023.

The largest negative contributors to the 0,1% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing -3,9 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (contributing -1,6 percentage points).

The positive contributors were services (contributing 4,4 percentage points) and rent (contributing 1,5 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 0,8% in the three months ended May 2024 compared with the three months ended May 2023.

The largest negative contributor to the 0,8% decrease was money lent (contributing -7,5 percentage points).

The largest positive contributors were:

- services (contributing 4,2 percentage points);
- promissory notes (contributing 2,0 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing 1,0 percentage point) – see Table 5.

In May 2024, 11 351 civil judgements for debt amounting to R288,4 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R73,6 million or 25,5%);
- services (R69,1 million or 23,9%); and
- 'other' debts (R58,3 million or 20,2%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

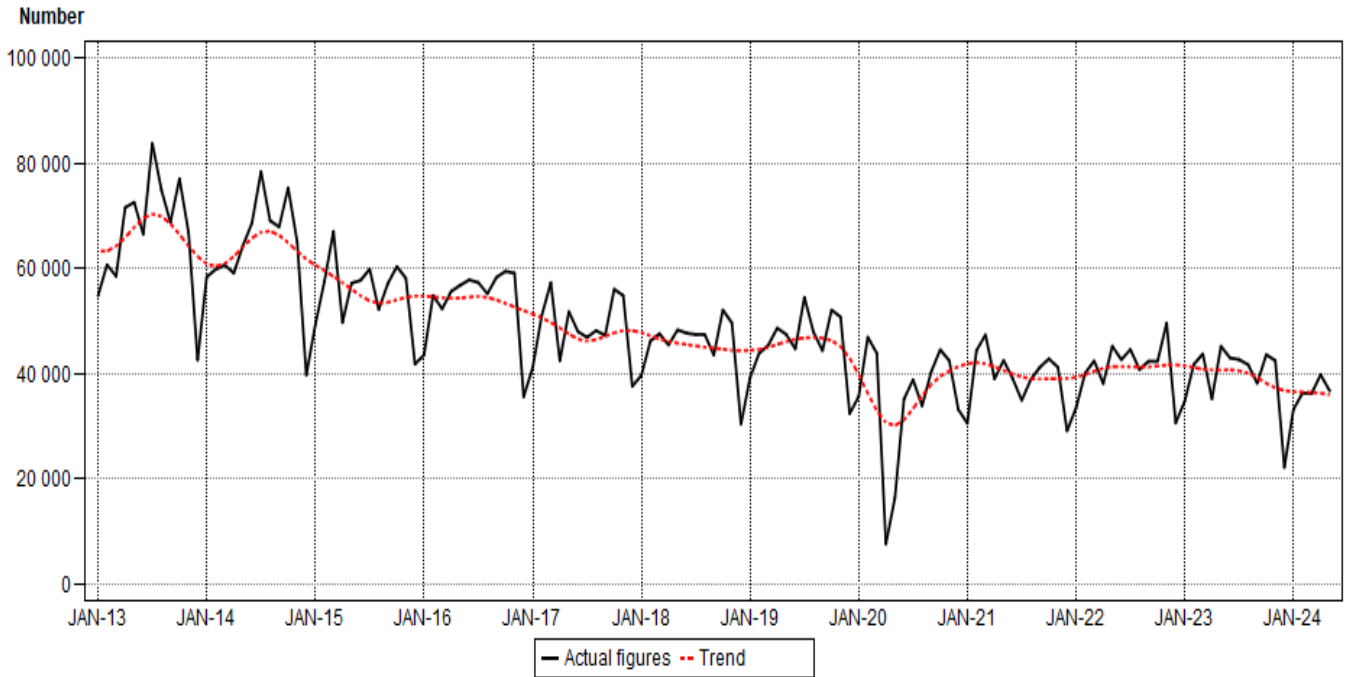
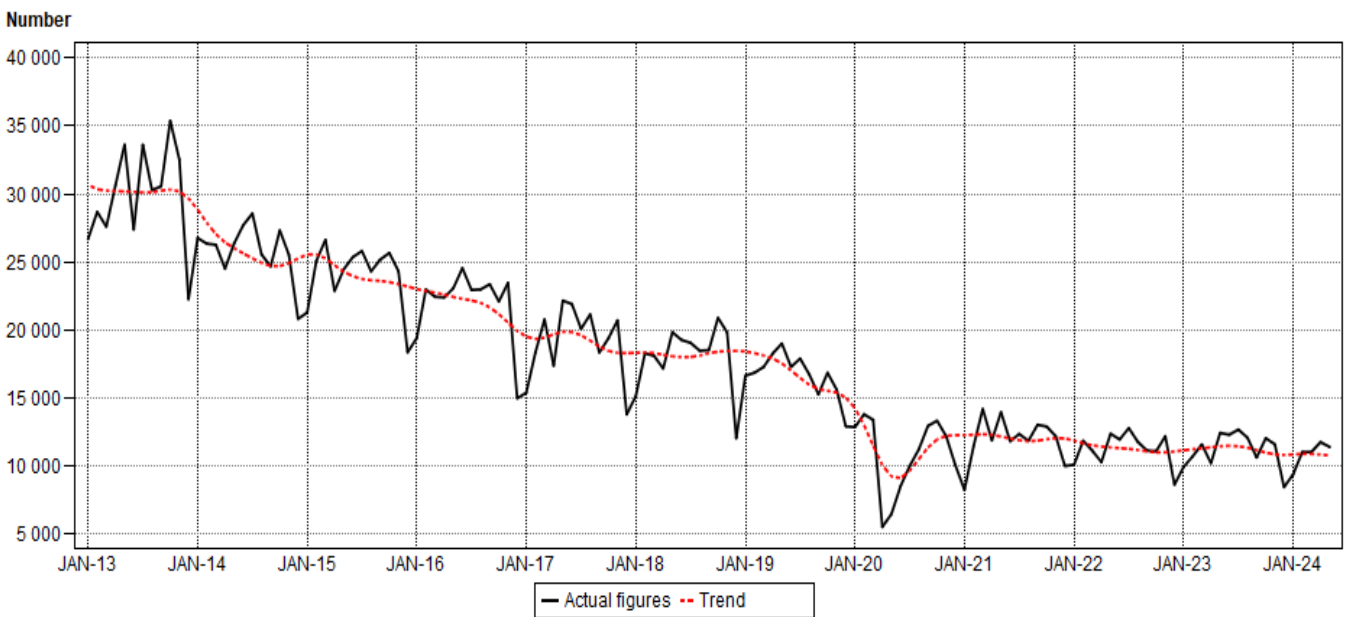


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt




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			
		2023	May-23	Apr-24	May-24	2023	May-23	Apr-24	May-24
Cases recorded	Actual figures	490 651	46 357	40 653	37 567	409 038	38 433	34 806	31 959
	Seasonally adjusted		42 367	37 902	34 746		35 042	32 038	29 456
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	19 892	2 125	1 543	1 588	11 927	1 255	910	927
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	13 520	1 259	1 159	1 243	10 473	917	902	1 034
	Services - Professional	61 258	5 538	4 798	4 394	44 558	3 810	3 585	3 337
	Services - Other	67 928	5 682	7 132	5 498	57 638	4 848	6 252	4 759
	Rent	24 109	2 218	1 732	1 739	16 557	1 578	1 143	1 204
	Money lent	105 109	9 309	8 232	7 326	97 555	8 590	7 565	6 795
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	43 594	4 449	2 920	2 189	39 607	3 901	2 723	1 971
	Other debts	139 111	14 634	12 273	12 761	122 538	12 784	11 060	11 336
	Total - Actual figures	474 521	45 214	39 789	36 738	400 853	37 683	34 140	31 363
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		41 044	36 838	33 894		34 305	31 516	29 052

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2023	May-23	Apr-24	May-24	2023	May-23	Apr-24	May-24
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	6 570	527	561	590	3 399	295	340	305
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	3 053	326	264	301	2 376	250	216	241
	Services - Professional	22 620	1 969	2 165	2 263	16 987	1 492	1 434	1 828
	Services - Other	24 236	2 258	2 142	2 135	21 285	2 010	1 950	1 943
	Rent	10 708	945	912	1 005	7 908	690	674	791
	Money lent	29 247	2 743	2 146	2 029	26 674	2 471	1 971	1 869
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	11 634	1 035	905	880	9 986	792	860	841
	Other debts	25 983	2 584	2 611	2 148	21 397	1 950	2 441	1 970
	Total - Actual figures	134 051	12 387	11 706	11 351	110 012	9 950	9 886	9 788
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		11 165	11 197	10 324		9 106	9 696	9 022

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2023	May-23	Apr-24	May-24	2023	May-23	Apr-24	May-24
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	162 658	12 554	16 400	14 169	52 628	4 108	6 932	5 093
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	95 057	12 733	6 858	7 098	73 549	10 168	4 361	5 121
	Services - Professional	275 554	21 157	28 708	25 673	161 863	13 641	18 951	16 847
	Services - Other	479 682	45 464	41 927	43 377	396 554	35 836	35 548	37 138
	Rent	361 144	31 910	32 320	28 698	256 500	19 260	23 950	22 642
	Money lent	1 068 083	110 909	86 342	73 599	1 010 531	104 624	84 020	70 569
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	448 744	40 903	41 493	37 484	398 584	37 484	39 564	36 040
	Other debts	733 385	65 131	71 527	58 256	592 296	52 958	62 539	49 176
	Total - Actual figures	3 624 307	340 761	325 575	288 354	2 942 505	278 079	275 865	242 626
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		314 760	319 561	275 277		254 357	273 596	226 605

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 2023 and the three months ended May 2024

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Mar – May 2023	Actual estimates Mar – May 2024	% change between Mar – May 2023 and Mar – May 2024	Difference between Mar – May 2023 and Mar – May 2024
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	124 184	112 725	-9,2	-11 459
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	34 086	34 037	-0,1	-49
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	899,9	892,8	-0,8	-7,1

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 2023 and the three months ended May 2024 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	-0,5	0,1	0,7
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,0	-0,2	-0,6
Services - Professional	-1,4	3,3	2,4
Services - Other	2,0	1,1	1,8
Rent	-0,8	1,5	1,0
Money lent	-4,2	-3,9	-7,5
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-4,0	-0,5	2,0
Other debts	-0,2	-1,6	-0,5
Total	-9,2	-0,1	-0,8

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 2023, 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 2023	Actual estimates May 2024	% change between May 2023 and May 2024	Difference between May 2023 and May 2024
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	45 214	36 738	-18,7	-8 476
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	12 387	11 351	-8,4	-1 036
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	340,8	288,4	-15,4	-52,4

Table 7 – Number of civil summonses issued for debt by province

Period	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa	
2023	May	10 243	2 775	577	1 812	8 030	1 883	15 079	3 010	1 805	45 214
	Jun	10 394	2 649	373	2 258	6 827	1 660	14 099	2 747	1 982	42 989
	Jul	9 434	2 643	545	2 623	6 117	1 691	14 552	3 249	1 830	42 684
	Aug	9 672	2 217	488	2 275	6 966	1 740	13 540	3 103	1 702	41 703
	Sep	8 565	1 954	544	2 172	6 391	1 573	12 903	2 277	1 792	38 171
	Oct	9 744	2 758	438	2 630	7 032	1 927	14 103	2 947	2 038	43 617
	Nov	10 581	2 856	403	2 418	6 644	1 625	14 280	1 954	1 723	42 484
Dec	5 298	1 862	296	1 212	3 953	777	5 718	1 736	1 298	22 150	
2024	Jan	12 156	2 125	447	1 170	4 436	1 349	8 256	1 601	1 646	33 186
	Feb	9 270	2 095	438	2 038	6 700	1 807	10 471	1 913	1 562	36 294
	Mar	9 613	2 559	512	2 299	5 608	1 426	10 762	1 748	1 671	36 198
	Apr	9 195	2 785	404	2 581	6 885	1 853	12 262	2 045	1 779	39 789
	May	9 386	2 241	410	2 426	6 081	2 133	9 964	2 229	1 868	36 738

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

Period	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa	
2023	May	2 995	993	201	1 229	1 176	353	3 488	746	1 206	12 387
	Jun	2 747	874	195	1 401	1 118	624	3 116	976	1 202	12 253
	Jul	2 599	740	209	1 069	1 039	549	4 030	1 260	1 136	12 631
	Aug	2 673	701	198	746	1 405	510	3 152	1 477	1 171	12 033
	Sep	2 581	650	141	755	1 028	600	2 763	880	1 175	10 573
	Oct	2 556	786	134	860	1 158	527	3 347	1 356	1 269	11 993
	Nov	2 480	877	115	877	931	399	3 577	1 049	1 242	11 547
Dec	1 704	621	130	505	867	385	2 597	492	1 092	8 393	
2024	Jan	1 827	793	89	478	823	406	2 868	855	1 188	9 327
	Feb	2 378	781	157	879	1 082	487	3 241	785	1 188	10 978
	Mar	2 705	668	144	728	981	405	3 450	766	1 133	10 980
	Apr	2 701	770	74	810	1 156	715	3 409	854	1 217	11 706
	May	2 328	586	209	845	1 288	664	3 282	929	1 220	11 351

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

Period	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa	
2023	May	96 915	32 086	3 204	22 883	50 094	6 182	95 649	21 852	11 895	340 761
	Jun	87 902	24 636	3 690	26 244	46 216	11 052	90 188	25 969	10 839	326 736
	Jul	80 322	25 666	3 902	23 351	42 213	11 147	111 543	29 700	9 197	337 041
	Aug	78 292	24 411	3 360	15 779	55 587	10 376	106 620	25 324	9 999	329 748
	Sep	71 846	21 282	2 393	15 384	42 508	11 085	120 205	18 895	10 203	313 803
	Oct	67 768	18 705	2 433	15 977	56 642	12 759	118 072	21 213	13 369	326 938
	Nov	77 888	24 067	2 049	21 211	32 732	7 444	140 526	22 692	11 387	339 996
Dec	44 935	14 115	1 965	9 298	33 139	11 168	102 153	13 283	7 845	237 901	
2024	Jan	55 396	23 742	1 724	13 722	43 088	6 545	96 160	18 821	10 044	269 241
	Feb	64 383	22 404	2 792	17 208	49 470	9 204	98 301	24 951	11 972	300 685
	Mar	61 824	18 926	1 750	14 726	36 119	8 364	109 931	18 093	9 172	278 906
	Apr	71 895	20 442	2 140	17 095	48 057	13 123	119 083	21 437	12 303	325 575
	May	62 443	17 882	3 921	17 607	47 599	8 711	99 799	19 261	11 130	288 354

Explanatory notes

- Introduction** **1** Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) conducts a monthly 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 selected 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** **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 2024 was 79,3%. The revised collection rate for April 2024 was 84,2%.
- Revised figures** **8** Revised figures are mainly due to late submission of data to Stats SA, or respondents reporting revisions or corrections to their figures. The reasons for routine revisions are outlined in the following schedule. Any unscheduled revisions will be promptly indicated in relevant tables to maintain transparency and accuracy.

Statistical release	Reason for revision	Period subject to revision
May-24	Additional information from respondents	Feb-24 - Apr-24
Jun-24	Additional information from respondents	Mar-24 - May-24
Jul-24	Additional information from respondents	Apr-24 - Jun-24
Aug-24	Additional information from respondents	May-24 - Jul-24
Sep-24	Additional information from respondents	Jun-24 - Aug-24
Oct-24	Additional information from respondents	Jul-24 - Sep-24
Nov-24	Additional information from respondents	Aug-24 - Oct-24
Dec-24	Additional information from respondents	Sep-24 - Nov-24
Jan-25	Additional information from respondents	Oct-24 - Dec-24
Feb-25	Additional information from respondents	Nov-24 - Jan-25
Mar-25	Additional information from respondents	Dec-24 - Feb-25
Apr-25	Additional information from respondents	Jan-25 - Mar-25

- Rounding-off of figures** **9** Where figures have been rounded off, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and the totals.

Seasonal adjustment	10	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	11	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	12	In some cases, Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published.
Symbols and abbreviations	13	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 refer to municipal services (except outstanding assessment rates), plumbers, builders, mechanics, panel beaters and electricians.

Other debts	Other debts refer 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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