



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)

October 2023

**Embargoed until:
14 December 2023
09:00**

ENQUIRIES:
Joyce Essel-Mensah
Tel: (012) 310 8255

FORTHCOMING ISSUES:
November 2023

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE:
18 January 2024



Contents

Key results for October 2023	2
Table A – Key figures for the month of October 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 October 2022 and the three months ended October 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 October 2022 and the three months ended October 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 October 2023

Table A – Key figures for the month of October 2023

Actual estimates	October 2023	% change between October 2022 and October 2023	% change between August – October 2022 and August – October 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	43 617	3,0	-1,6
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 993	8,6	2,2
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	326,9	3,3	5,7

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 1,6% in the three months ended October 2023 compared with the three months ended October 2022. The largest negative contributor to the 1,6% decrease in civil summonses issued was money lent (contributing -3,8 percentage points). Services made the largest positive contribution (contributing 1,4 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 2,2% in the three months ended October 2023 compared with the three months ended October 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 2,2% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing 1,8 percentage points); and
- 'other' debts (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 increased by 5,7% in the three months ended October 2023 compared with the three months ended October 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 5,7% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing 4,0 percentage points); and
- services (contributing 2,9 percentage points) – see Table 5.

In October 2023, 11 993 civil judgements for debt amounting to R326,9 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R102,0 million or 31,2%);
- services (R67,9 million or 20,8%); and
- 'other' debts (R65,8 million or 20,1%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

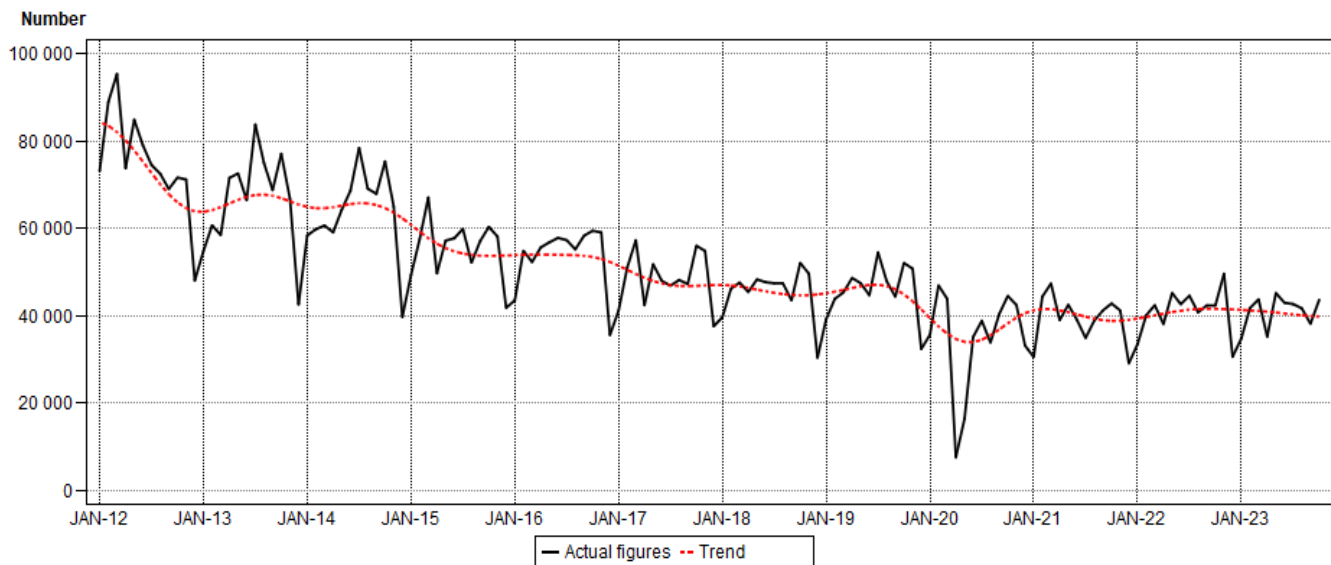


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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	Oct-22	Sep-23 ¹	Oct-23 ¹	2022	Oct-22	Sep-23 ¹	Oct-23 ¹
Cases recorded	Actual figures	514 325	44 620	39 389	44 644	440 408	37 592	32 248	37 836
	Seasonally adjusted		42 996	40 867	40 003		35 421	33 749	33 205
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	23 286	1 575	1 866	1 796	14 645	1 048	1 066	1 023
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 867	1 156	1 093	1 123	11 954	907	868	856
	Services - Professional	56 911	4 648	5 395	6 187	46 262	3 714	3 551	4 334
	Services - Other	73 225	6 115	5 497	6 830	62 348	5 360	4 643	6 066
	Rent	25 280	2 172	1 864	1 824	18 118	1 659	1 236	1 227
	Money lent	121 161	10 749	8 001	9 254	113 762	10 081	7 471	8 541
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	45 229	3 542	3 100	4 006	41 607	3 280	2 794	3 734
	Other debts	132 399	12 395	11 355	12 597	119 165	11 348	10 207	11 176
	Total - Actual figures	492 358	42 352	38 171	43 617	427 861	37 397	31 836	36 957
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		40 591	39 720	39 128		35 853	33 143	32 624

¹ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Oct-22	Sep-23 ¹	Oct-23 ¹	2022	Oct-22	Sep-23 ¹	Oct-23 ¹
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	7 147	468	540	710	4 555	269	293	314
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	5 230	257	200	228	4 167	208	154	176
	Services - Professional	21 161	1 515	1 786	2 041	17 970	1 291	1 239	1 465
	Services - Other	24 638	2 396	2 068	2 140	21 605	2 238	1 801	1 928
	Rent	10 712	902	851	1 169	7 990	717	641	891
	Money lent	32 148	2 499	2 390	2 697	28 679	2 298	2 245	2 447
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	11 637	983	795	832	10 470	935	737	778
	Other debts	22 010	2 023	1 943	2 176	19 210	1 806	1 775	1 875
	Total - Actual figures	134 683	11 043	10 573	11 993	114 646	9 762	8 885	9 874
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		10 920	11 363	9 973		9 537	9 264	8 054

¹ Preliminary.**Table 3 – Value of civil default and consent judgements for debt: Total and private persons (R'000)**

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2022	Oct-22	Sep-23 ¹	Oct-23 ¹	2022	Oct-22	Sep-23 ¹	Oct-23 ¹
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	163 474	14 945	12 219	14 543	70 273	7 037	3 847	3 872
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	153 418	11 444	7 457	6 806	121 713	9 745	5 423	5 354
	Services - Professional	223 539	17 448	25 501	30 828	163 199	11 702	12 347	15 029
	Services - Other	447 767	44 307	50 956	37 098	379 058	39 790	43 499	30 853
	Rent	355 745	36 249	26 115	37 090	261 772	26 368	18 936	26 496
	Money lent	1 034 851	93 723	91 728	101 990	967 961	89 939	89 417	86 928
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	416 381	37 129	35 509	32 795	370 656	34 943	32 186	29 719
	Other debts	627 446	61 363	64 318	65 788	512 980	53 195	56 857	48 529
	Total - Actual figures	3 422 621	316 608	313 803	326 938	2 847 612	272 719	262 512	246 780
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		278 917	302 791	284 258		244 045	245 966	214 824

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 October 2022 and the three months ended October 2023

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Aug – Oct 2022	Actual estimates Aug – Oct 2023	% change between Aug – Oct 2022 and Aug – Oct 2023	Difference between Aug – Oct 2022 and Aug – Oct 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	125 509	123 491	-1,6	-2 018
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	33 841	34 599	2,2	758
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	918,1	970,5	5,7	52,4

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 October 2022 and the three months ended October 2023¹

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

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 from August to October 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 October 2022	Actual estimates October 2023	% change between October 2022 and October 2023	Difference between October 2022 and October 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	42 352	43 617	3,0	1 265
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	11 043	11 993	8,6	950
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	316,6	326,9	3,3	10,3

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
2022	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	2 775	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

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	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	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

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	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	32 086	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

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 October 2023 was 82,8%. The collection rate for September 2023 was 78,3%.
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 a 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	A 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	A 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 12 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, utilise, 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 details 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: (012) 310 8255 / 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