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# Statistical release

## P0041

# Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

## February 2014

**Embargoed until:  
17 April 2014  
09:00**

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**Forthcoming issue**

March 2014

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**Expected release date**

22 May 2014

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## Key results for February 2014

**Table A – Key figures for the month of February 2014**

Actual estimates	February 2014	% change between February 2013 and February 2014	% change between Dec 2012 – Feb 2013 and Dec 2013 – Feb 2014
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	59 627	-1,8	-1,9
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	26 370	-8,0	-4,6
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	402,7	-1,3	1,8

### The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 1,9% in the three months ended February 2014 compared with the three months ended February 2013. A 1,8% decrease was recorded between February 2013 and February 2014 – see Tables A, 4 and 6.

The main categories that influenced the 1,9% decrease were civil summonses relating to ‘other’ debts (contributing -2,0 percentage points) as well as goods sold and promissory notes (each contributing -0,4 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 by 4,6% in the three months ended February 2014 compared with the three months ended February 2013. A decrease of 8,0% was recorded year-on-year in February 2014 – see Tables A, 4 and 6.

The main categories that influenced the 4,6% decrease were money lent (contributing -4,4 percentage points) and goods sold (contributing -2,5 percentage points) – see Table 5.

### The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

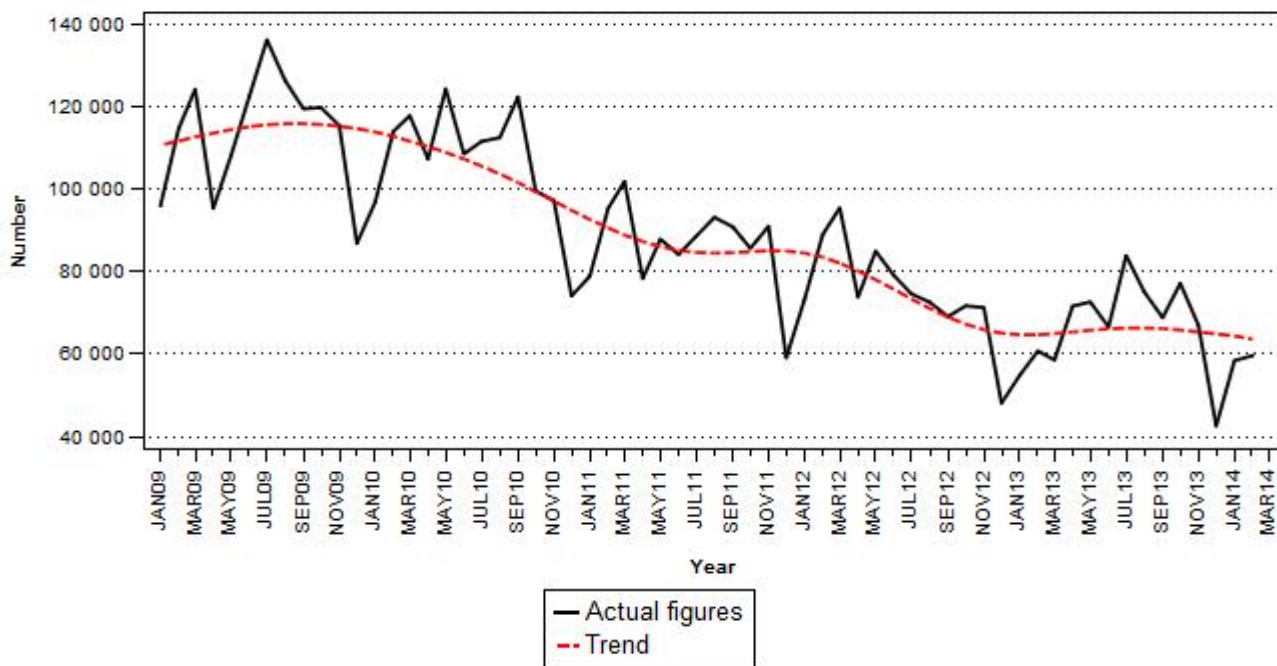
The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt was 1,8% higher in the three months ended February 2014 compared with the three months ended February 2013. A year-on-year decrease of 1,3% was recorded in February 2014 – see Tables A, 4 and 6.

The main categories that contributed to the 1,8% increase were services and ‘other’ debts (contributing 3,0 percentage points and 0,4 of a percentage point respectively) – see Table 5.

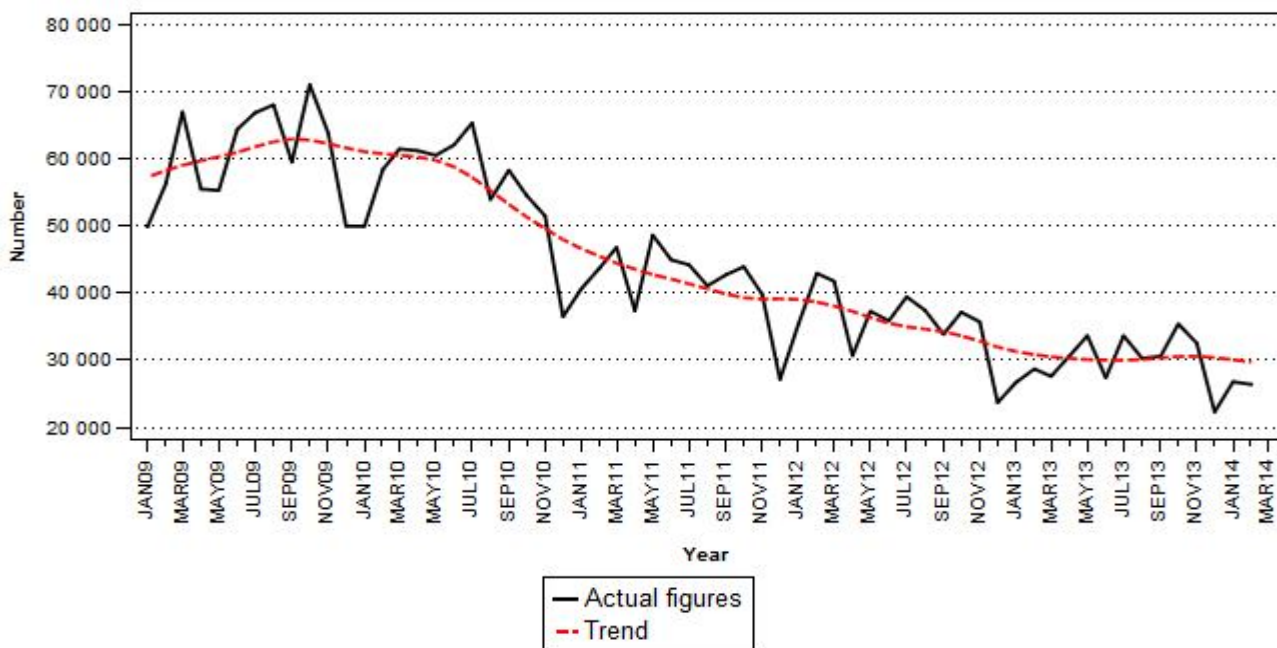
In February 2014, 26 370 civil judgements for debt amounting to R402,7 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- ‘other’ debts (R154,5 million or 38,4%);
- money lent (R83,8 million or 20,8%); and
- services (R70,2 million or 17,4%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

**Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt**



**Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt**



**Please note the following changes in the forthcoming issue:**

From the March 2014 release (published in May 2014) Stats SA will publish provincial data from March 2013 for all three categories: number of summonses for debt, number of judgements for debt and value of judgements for debt.

**PJ Lehohla**  
**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			
		2013	Feb-13	1/ Jan-14	1/ Feb-14	2013	Feb-13	1/ Jan-14	1/ Feb-14
<b>Cases recorded</b>	<b>Actual figures</b>	<b>885 320</b>	<b>65 248</b>	<b>64 010</b>	<b>65 770</b>	<b>771 364</b>	<b>57 381</b>	<b>54 389</b>	<b>58 232</b>
	<b>Seasonally adjusted</b>		66 147	75 836	67 122		57 360	63 790	58 514
<b>Civil summonses for debt</b>	Goods sold - Open account	63 952	5 046	4 944	4 283	50 038	4 033	3 594	3 294
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	25 218	1 491	1 903	1 681	19 245	1 128	1 355	1 283
	Services - Professional	101 681	7 312	7 271	7 582	90 676	6 506	6 269	6 713
	Services - Other	136 141	10 604	9 177	9 663	119 176	9 093	7 952	8 581
	Rent	45 440	3 357	3 251	3 139	36 824	2 665	2 592	2 484
	Money lent	189 729	14 735	14 774	15 566	178 109	14 029	13 872	14 780
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	112 450	8 120	8 084	8 525	98 274	7 337	6 836	7 811
	Other debts	124 497	10 062	8 956	9 188	113 694	9 133	8 244	8 126
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>799 108</b>	<b>60 727</b>	<b>58 360</b>	<b>59 627</b>	<b>706 036</b>	<b>53 924</b>	<b>50 714</b>	<b>53 072</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		60 775	66 929	59 967		53 195	57 823	52 547

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2013	Feb-13	1/ Jan-14	1/ Feb-14	2013	Feb-13	1/ Jan-14	1/ Feb-14
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	30 597	2 764	1 927	2 173	24 387	2 266	1 459	1 704
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	7 832	606	605	581	5 973	459	456	427
	Services - Professional	54 998	4 233	4 555	4 427	50 090	3 791	3 857	3 948
	Services - Other	54 712	3 835	3 784	4 315	47 374	3 080	3 280	3 818
	Rent	21 197	1 506	1 866	1 711	17 602	1 257	1 580	1 432
	Money lent	95 683	8 586	7 024	6 408	88 994	8 106	6 305	5 817
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	34 524	1 989	2 078	2 170	29 935	1 676	1 725	1 791
	Other debts	59 606	5 153	4 922	4 585	53 777	4 696	4 558	4 170
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>359 149</b>	<b>28 672</b>	<b>26 761</b>	<b>26 370</b>	<b>318 132</b>	<b>25 331</b>	<b>23 220</b>	<b>23 107</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		30 619	30 346	28 281		27 116	26 439	24 851

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2013	Feb-13	1/ Jan-14	1/ Feb-14	2013	Feb-13	1/ Jan-14	1/ Feb-14
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	363 467	27 349	26 687	23 868	210 195	15 908	18 841	13 609
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	122 821	8 353	7 222	9 819	99 484	5 129	6 082	8 329
	Services - Professional	278 838	21 908	23 667	22 239	235 212	18 320	18 162	18 407
	Services - Other	591 004	42 490	34 345	47 946	472 529	29 468	28 306	35 800
	Rent	349 318	29 196	25 424	28 071	242 204	22 580	19 239	19 787
	Money lent	1 207 193	96 901	85 344	83 841	1 088 550	90 483	76 653	74 139
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	443 317	26 250	26 301	32 398	363 640	20 878	22 466	26 760
	Other debts	1 412 608	155 654	84 470	154 469	785 061	72 646	58 472	69 194
	<b>Total - Actual figures</b>	<b>4 768 566</b>	<b>408 101</b>	<b>313 460</b>	<b>402 651</b>	<b>3 496 875</b>	<b>275 412</b>	<b>248 221</b>	<b>266 025</b>
	<b>Total - Seasonally adjusted</b>		399 963	384 137	392 711		281 968	293 282	273 311

1/ Preliminary.

**Table 4 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended February 2013 and the three months ended February 2014**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Dec 2012 – Feb 2013	Actual estimates Dec 2013 – Feb 2014	% change between Dec 2012 – Feb 2013 and Dec 2013 – Feb 2014	Difference between Dec 2012 – Feb 2013 and Dec 2013 – Feb 2014
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	163 633	160 497	-1,9	-3 136
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	79 005	75 388	-4,6	-3 617
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	1 004,3	1 022,8	1,8	18,5

**Table 5 – Contribution of the different kinds of debts to the change in total number of civil summonses, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended February 2013 and the three months ended February 2014 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	-0,7	-2,4	-1,6
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	0,3	-0,1	-0,1
Services - Professional	0,6	0,9	1,4
Services - Other	-0,5	2,0	1,6
Rent	-0,1	0,0	0,2
Money lent	1,0	-4,4	-0,4
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-0,4	-0,3	0,2
Other debts	-2,0	-0,3	0,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>-1,9</b>	<b>-4,6</b>	<b>1,8</b>

1/ The contribution (percentage points) is calculated by multiplying the three-monthly percentage change of each kind of debt with the percentage contribution to the total during December 2012 to February 2013, 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, judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the current month and the corresponding month of the previous year**

Actual estimates	Actual estimates February 2013	Actual estimates February 2014	% change between February 2013 and February 2014	Difference between February 2013 and February 2014
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	60 727	59 627	-1,8	-1 100
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	28 672	26 370	-8,0	-2 302
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	408,1	402,7	-1,3	-5,4

## Explanatory notes

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>	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.
	<b>2</b>	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.
<b>Purpose of the survey</b>	<b>3</b>	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.
<b>Scope of the survey</b>	<b>4</b>	This survey covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of civil cases recorded;</li> <li>• number of civil summonses issued for debt;</li> <li>• number of civil judgements recorded for debt; and</li> <li>• value of civil judgements recorded for debt.</li> </ul>
<b>Statistical unit</b>	<b>5</b>	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.
<b>Survey methodology and design</b>	<b>6</b>	The survey is conducted by mail, fax and telephone each month from 203 magistrates' offices.
<b>Collection rate</b>	<b>7</b>	The preliminary collection rate for the civil cases for debt survey for February 2014 was 87,7%. The collection rate for January 2014 was 86,7%.
<b>Trend cycle</b>	<b>8</b>	Smoothed seasonally adjusted and trend estimates are generated using the X-11 Seasonal Adjustment Programme.
<b>Publications</b>	<b>9</b>	Users may also wish to refer to the following publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bulletin of Statistics</i> issued quarterly.</li> <li>• <i>South African Statistics</i> issued annually.</li> </ul>
<b>Unpublished statistics</b>	<b>10</b>	In some cases Stats SA can also make available statistics which are not published. The statistics can be made available as computer printouts or electronic versions. Generally a charge is made for providing unpublished statistics.
<b>Symbols and abbreviations</b>	<b>11</b>	R/D        Refer to Drawer Stats SA    Statistics South Africa *            Revised figures
<b>Changes to the forthcoming issue</b>	<b>12</b>	From the March 2014 release (published in May 2014) Stats SA will publish provincial data from March 2013 for all three categories: number of summonses for debt, number of judgements for debt and value of judgements for debt.



## Glossary

<b>Acknowledgement of debt</b>	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.
<b>Bills</b>	Bills are statements of charges for services rendered or for amounts owed.
<b>Cases recorded</b>	Includes civil debt and non-debt cases recorded.
<b>Civil judgements</b>	Civil judgements are decisions taken in a civil matter or a dispute between two people or parties.
<b>Civil summonses</b>	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.
<b>Consent judgements</b>	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.
<b>Default judgements</b>	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.
<b>Instalment sale transaction</b>	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.
<b>Litigants</b>	Litigants are people who take part in court proceedings, usually against each other, like a debtor and a creditor.
<b>Litigants referred</b>	Litigants referred relates to a case where the parties have been referred to another instance/court.
<b>Open account transaction</b>	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.
<b>Other services</b>	'Other services' refers to municipal services (except outstanding assessment rates), plumbers, builders, mechanics, panel-beaters and electricians.
<b>Other debts</b>	'Other debts' refers to all other kinds of outstanding debts such as salaries and wages, outstanding medical fund debts, outstanding sponsored debts, outstanding class and tuition debt, outstanding income and salaries, tax, outstanding assessment rates, outstanding money in respect of television maintenance contracts and outstanding money in respect of flat levies.
<b>Plaintiff</b>	Plaintiff is a person/party in a civil case who asks the court for judgement against another person.
<b>Professional services</b>	Professional services refer to medical doctors, dentists, advocates, attorneys, auditors, accountants, architects, engineers, hospital services etc.
<b>Promissory note</b>	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.
<b>Reference month</b>	Reference month refers to one calendar month.
<b>Refer to drawer (R/D) cheques</b>	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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