

STATISTICAL RELEASE

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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

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Key results for February 2017

Table A – Key figures for the month of February 2017

Actual estimates	February 2017	% change between February 2016 and February 2017	% change between December 2015 – February 2016 and December 2016 – February 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	51 056	-7,0	-8,9
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	18 297	-20,3	-20,2
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	283,0	-21,6	-17,4

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt decreased by 8,9% in the three months ended February 2017 compared with the three months ended February 2016.

The largest negative contributions to the 8,9% decrease were civil summonses relating to:

- services (contributing -4,7 percentage points);
- goods sold (contributing -2,7 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -1,4 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 20,2% in the three months ended February 2017 compared with the three months ended February 2016.

The largest contributions to the 20,2% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- services (contributing -6,3 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing -5,7 percentage points); and
- money lent (contributing -3,5 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

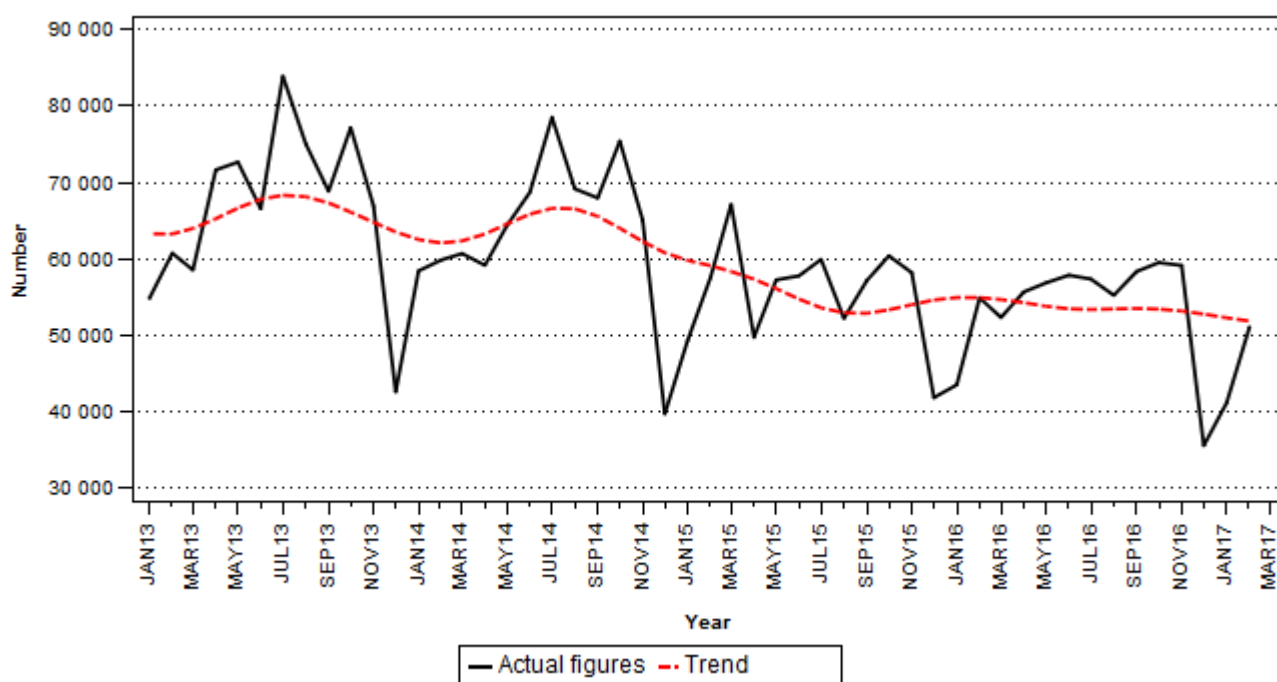
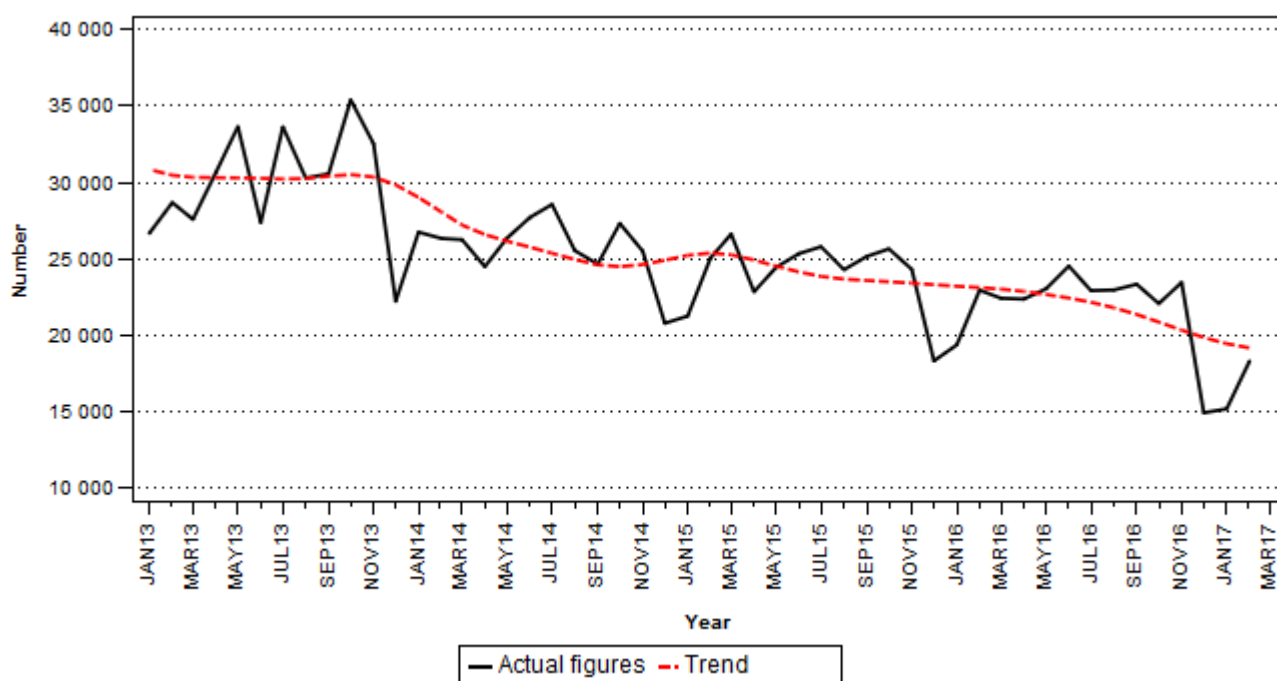
The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 17,4% in the three months ended February 2017 compared with the three months ended February 2016.

The largest negative contributions to the 17,4% decrease were the value of judgements relating to:

- 'other' debts (contributing -9,7 percentage points);
- services (contributing -3,5 percentage points); and
- promissory notes (contributing -1,7 percentage points) – see Tables 4 and 5.

In February 2017, 18 297 civil judgements for debt amounting to R283,0 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R83,9 million or 29,6%);
- 'other' debts (R56,7 million or 20,0%); and
- services (R55,1 million or 19,5%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt**Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded 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			
		2016	Feb-16	1/ Jan-17	1/ Feb-17	2016	Feb-16	1/ Jan-17	1/ Feb-17
Cases recorded	Actual figures	700 485	58 873	44 566	53 859	602 530	48 673	38 509	45 481
	Seasonally adjusted		60 353	55 024	56 185		49 875	47 913	46 495
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	39 656	3 511	2 364	2 395	29 919	2 720	1 725	1 636
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	21 886	2 570	1 458	1 702	16 506	1 241	1 169	1 338
	Services - Professional	83 019	7 154	5 028	5 900	72 241	6 439	4 246	5 148
	Services - Other	106 305	9 325	6 642	7 840	89 744	7 433	5 582	6 633
	Rent	31 195	2 547	1 866	2 287	24 197	2 011	1 438	1 631
	Money lent	155 809	11 644	10 458	13 044	145 604	10 484	9 865	12 356
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	90 564	8 054	5 856	7 055	84 008	7 652	5 369	6 541
	Other debts	117 781	10 081	7 490	10 833	103 779	9 283	6 369	9 727
	Total - Actual figures	646 215	54 886	41 162	51 056	565 998	47 263	35 763	45 010
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		55 849	50 533	51 930		48 030	44 077	45 574

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2016	Feb-16	1/ Jan-17	1/ Feb-17	2016	Feb-16	1/ Jan-17	1/ Feb-17
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	17 058	1 439	938	1 178	12 948	1 082	691	864
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	7 068	498	498	596	6 039	412	436	526
	Services - Professional	44 011	4 094	2 807	3 014	39 091	3 680	2 399	2 712
	Services - Other	41 276	3 660	2 178	2 856	35 567	3 143	1 869	2 456
	Rent	18 296	1 532	989	1 389	15 162	1 288	805	1 164
	Money lent	60 447	4 883	3 738	4 112	55 379	4 426	3 433	3 748
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	25 021	2 169	1 592	2 066	21 461	1 767	1 359	1 770
	Other debts	51 152	4 672	2 448	3 086	45 458	4 185	2 204	2 764
	Total - Actual figures	264 329	22 947	15 188	18 297	231 105	19 983	13 196	16 004
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		21 462	17 929	19 278		18 646	15 747	16 814

1/ Preliminary.

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

Item		Total				Private Persons			
		2016	Feb-16	1/ Jan-17	1/ Feb-17	2016	Feb-16	1/ Jan-17	1/ Feb-17
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	253 299	23 860	12 065	16 498	131 337	11 867	6 774	7 883
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	96 673	6 433	8 117	8 535	83 906	5 800	7 489	7 842
	Services - Professional	243 371	24 127	18 664	18 065	208 795	21 172	15 527	16 012
	Services - Other	542 398	51 544	28 521	37 040	432 972	42 135	23 468	30 683
	Rent	322 885	24 859	19 441	23 465	224 770	17 612	13 140	15 472
	Money lent	1 139 611	92 941	70 364	83 891	1 029 219	82 874	65 083	77 935
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	434 549	34 573	29 949	38 788	363 747	28 043	24 953	32 450
	Other debts	989 698	102 637	49 985	56 681	722 123	72 166	36 520	46 235
	Total - Actual figures	4 022 484	360 974	237 106	282 963	3 196 869	281 669	192 954	234 512
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		351 077	298 359	280 124		259 797	239 133	242 706

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 February 2016 and the three months ended February 2017

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Dec 2015 – Feb 2016	Actual estimates Dec 2016 – Feb 2017	% change between Dec 2015 – Feb 2016 and Dec 2016 – Feb 2017	Difference between Dec 2015 – Feb 2016 and Dec 2016 – Feb 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	140 252	127 797	-8,9	-12 455
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	60 640	48 419	-20,2	-12 221
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	935,2	772,1	-17,4	-163,1

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 February 2016 and the three months ended February 2017 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	-1,8	-1,3	-1,4
Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	-0,9	-0,1	0,5
Services - Professional	-2,3	-3,5	-1,1
Services - Other	-2,4	-2,8	-2,4
Rent	-0,8	-1,8	-0,7
Money lent	0,3	-3,5	-0,9
Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	-1,4	-1,5	-1,7
Other debts	0,4	-5,7	-9,7
Total	-8,9	-20,2	-17,4

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 December 2015 to February 2016, 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 February 2016	Actual estimates February 2017	% change between February 2016 and February 2017	Difference between February 2016 and February 2017
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	54 886	51 056	-7,0	-3 830
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	22 947	18 297	-20,3	-4 650
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	361,0	283,0	-21,6	-78,0

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
2016	Feb	10 083	4 413	656	4 331	8 300	2 514	19 548	2 732	2 309	54 886
	Mar	9 812	4 316	773	4 062	8 978	2 948	16 805	2 785	1 849	52 328
	Apr	9 217	4 721	1 041	4 192	8 481	3 458	19 974	2 474	2 109	55 667
	May	10 618	4 456	1 096	4 731	8 957	3 228	18 601	2 911	2 248	56 846
	Jun	11 126	4 543	907	4 100	9 376	3 005	20 179	2 466	2 150	57 852
	Jul	10 303	4 898	824	3 822	8 730	3 498	20 196	2 783	2 291	57 345
	Aug	10 070	4 200	1 040	4 079	8 760	2 939	19 001	2 724	2 413	55 226
	Sep	9 301	4 234	816	3 942	10 863	3 267	20 526	2 811	2 579	58 339
	Oct	9 612	4 831	800	4 239	9 961	3 280	21 508	2 868	2 399	59 498
	Nov	10 398	4 717	899	4 411	10 014	3 276	19 791	3 151	2 467	59 124
	Dec	5 768	2 145	509	2 851	5 978	1 243	13 343	2 009	1 733	35 579
2017	Jan	6 630	3 224	554	3 356	5 507	2 178	16 203	1 541	1 969	41 162
	Feb	8 707	3 749	811	3 309	8 903	2 195	18 837	2 409	2 136	51 056

1/ Latest two 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
2016	Feb	4 763	2 760	442	2 247	3 341	932	5 594	1 490	1 378	22 947
	Mar	4 108	2 604	319	2 653	3 720	1 380	4 994	1 284	1 356	22 418
	Apr	3 521	2 501	422	2 642	3 913	1 626	4 901	1 482	1 357	22 365
	May	5 054	2 516	396	2 474	3 955	1 275	4 774	1 376	1 214	23 034
	Jun	4 089	3 796	458	3 288	3 867	1 557	4 842	1 163	1 465	24 525
	Jul	4 380	2 719	441	2 940	3 702	1 673	4 525	1 090	1 449	22 919
	Aug	4 387	2 279	358	2 934	4 369	1 303	4 465	1 191	1 674	22 960
	Sep	4 222	2 286	397	2 488	4 611	1 174	5 323	1 241	1 594	23 336
	Oct	4 082	2 617	445	2 208	4 171	1 297	4 461	1 254	1 537	22 072
	Nov	4 165	2 613	254	2 676	4 208	1 493	5 309	1 148	1 584	23 450
	Dec	2 147	1 240	410	1 319	2 698	715	4 416	943	1 046	14 934
2017	Jan	2 541	2 201	226	1 657	2 034	659	3 768	1 048	1 054	15 188
	Feb	3 370	2 019	292	1 788	3 843	910	4 211	765	1 099	18 297

1/ Latest two 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
2016	Feb	80 249	48 557	9 865	26 294	35 541	13 735	96 530	37 966	12 237	360 974
	Mar	73 597	51 422	3 985	35 333	45 669	12 418	96 545	29 566	13 435	361 970
	Apr	60 953	37 659	4 941	32 688	42 409	14 659	84 791	30 406	8 823	317 329
	May	69 161	48 619	3 479	31 696	49 649	13 814	88 538	30 278	8 287	343 521
	Jun	58 989	50 694	3 018	33 334	49 813	12 863	81 022	42 028	13 228	344 989
	Jul	73 486	44 276	3 499	30 868	49 064	14 912	90 018	28 057	10 745	344 925
	Aug	61 855	45 098	3 643	35 048	55 705	14 182	86 036	26 621	17 503	345 691
	Sep	78 808	41 589	3 452	35 587	57 559	10 480	102 167	22 420	11 500	363 562
	Oct	73 547	54 538	3 721	27 805	47 126	11 085	86 080	23 224	13 072	340 198
	Nov	83 923	48 625	2 543	42 330	42 096	14 584	97 217	23 216	15 991	370 525
	Dec	42 778	34 684	3 662	18 302	38 753	10 860	73 189	24 034	5 811	252 073
2017	Jan	42 093	44 928	3 266	21 097	27 757	9 980	55 036	24 055	8 894	237 106
	Feb	67 812	35 384	3 094	19 788	39 303	13 856	81 496	15 697	6 533	282 963

1/ Latest two 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	<p>This survey covers:</p> <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	<p>The statistical unit for collection of information is a magistrate's office. Magistrates' offices include the small claims courts.</p> <p>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.</p>
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 February 2017 was 84,2%. The improved collection rate for January 2017 was 85,7%.
Seasonal adjustment	8	<p>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:</p> <p>Click to download seasonal adjustment for civil cases for debt.</p>
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	<p>R/D Refer to drawer</p> <p>Stats SA Statistics South Africa</p> <p>* Revised figures</p>

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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