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STATISTICAL RELEASE

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Statistics of civil cases for debt (Preliminary)

April 2023

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Key results for April 2023

Table A – Key figures for the month of April 2023

Actual estimates	April 2023	% change between April 2022 and April 2023	% change between February – April 2022 and February – April 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	35 413	-7,1	0,3
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	10 292	0,6	-1,9
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	263,9	10,1	5,1

The number of civil summonses issued for debt

The total number of civil summonses issued for debt increased by 0,3% in the three months ended April 2023 compared with the three months ended April 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 0,3% increase in civil summonses issued were:

- 'other' debts (contributing 4,7 percentage points); and
- services (contributing 0,7 of a percentage point).

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

The number of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total number of civil judgements recorded for debt decreased by 1,9% in the three months ended April 2023 compared with the three months ended April 2022.

The largest negative contributors to the 1,9% decrease were civil judgements relating to:

- goods sold (contributing -3,5 percentage points);
- services (contributing -1,5 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing -1,5 percentage points).

'Other' debt was the largest positive contributor (contributing 3,6 percentage points) – see Table 5.

The value of civil judgements recorded for debt

The total value of civil judgements recorded for debt increased by 5,1% in the three months ended April 2023 compared with the three months ended April 2022.

The largest positive contributors to the 5,1% increase were civil judgements relating to:

- money lent (contributing 4,5 percentage points);
- 'other' debts (contributing 1,6 percentage points); and
- rent (contributing 1,3 percentage points).

Services (contributing -1,9 percentage points) and goods sold (contributing -1,4 percentage points) were the negative contributors – see Table 5.

In April 2023, 10 292 civil judgements for debt amounting to R263,9 million were recorded. The largest contributors to the total value of judgements were:

- money lent (R87,1 million or 33,0%);
- 'other' debts (R55,9 million or 21,2%); and
- services (R44,7 million or 16,9%) – see Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 1 – Civil summonses issued for debt

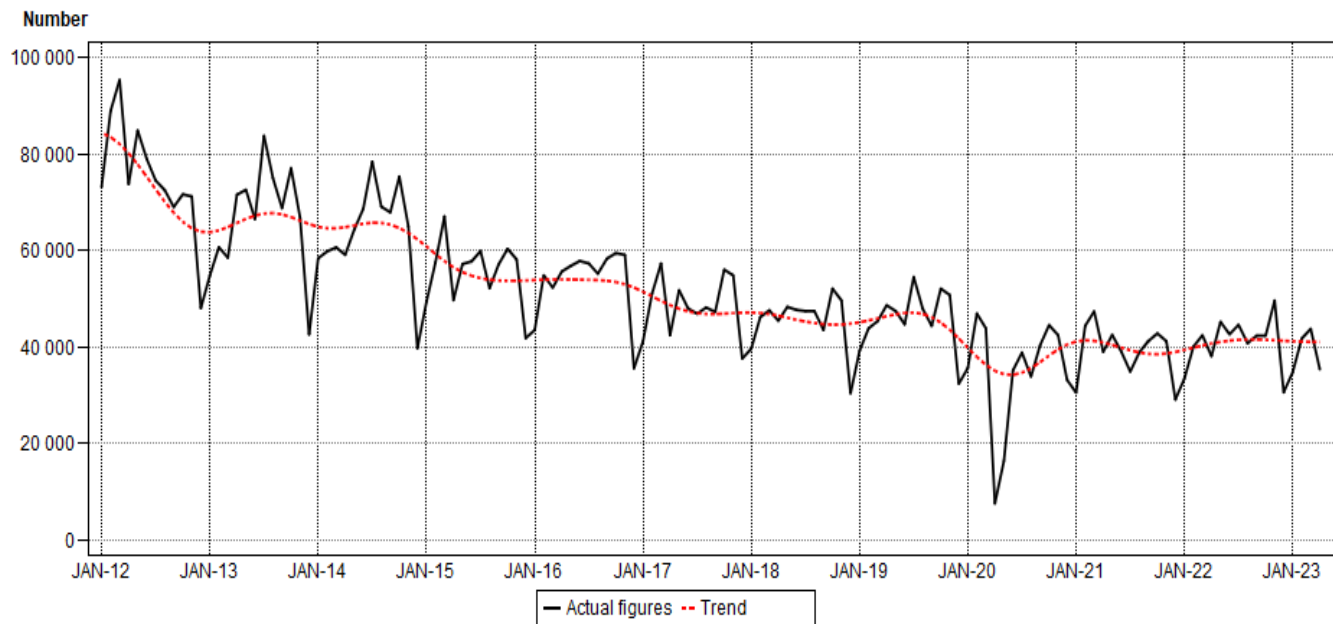


Figure 2 – Civil judgements recorded for debt



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	Apr-22	1/ Mar-23	1/ Apr-23	* 2022	Apr-22	1/ Mar-23	1/ Apr-23
Cases recorded	Actual figures	514 325	39 886	46 162	36 677	440 408	34 456	39 365	30 703
	Seasonally adjusted		43 251	41 794	43 746		37 260	35 344	36 671
Civil summonses for debt	Goods sold - Open account	23 286	2 038	1 740	1 438	14 645	1 329	1 113	869
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	14 867	1 372	1 107	1 035	11 954	1 128	905	810
	Services - Professional	56 911	4 620	5 210	4 338	46 262	3 768	4 200	3 211
	Services - Other	73 225	4 843	6 397	4 193	62 348	3 998	5 506	3 570
	Rent	25 280	1 810	2 257	1 933	18 118	1 263	1 611	1 384
	Money lent	121 161	10 214	10 445	7 745	113 762	9 638	9 903	7 114
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	45 229	3 884	3 923	3 951	41 607	3 627	3 628	3 475
	Other debts	132 399	9 320	12 691	10 780	119 165	8 270	11 366	9 177
	Total - Actual figures	492 358	38 101	43 770	35 413	427 861	33 021	38 232	29 610
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		41 288	39 337	41 582		35 686	34 538	35 412

1/ Preliminary.

* Revised.

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		* 2022	Apr-22	1/ Mar-23	1/ Apr-23	* 2022	Apr-22	1/ Mar-23	1/ Apr-23
Number of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	7 147	611	568	492	4 555	400	348	277
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	5 230	581	285	291	4 167	440	230	219
	Services - Professional	21 161	1 421	1 847	1 509	17 970	1 183	1 403	1 177
	Services - Other	24 638	1 872	1 989	1 647	21 605	1 632	1 787	1 452
	Rent	10 712	860	853	756	7 990	592	663	504
	Money lent	32 148	2 378	2 756	2 278	28 679	1 957	2 531	2 021
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	11 637	1 167	960	1 019	10 470	1 050	829	791
	Other debts	22 010	1 345	2 284	2 300	19 210	1 084	1 882	1 666
	Total - Actual figures	134 683	10 235	11 542	10 292	114 646	8 338	9 673	8 107
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		11 258	10 429	12 682		9 365	8 648	10 530

1/ Preliminary.

* Revised

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

	Item	Total				Private Persons			
		* 2022	Apr-22	1/ Mar-23	1/ Apr-23	* 2022	Apr-22	1/ Mar-23	1/ Apr-23
Value of civil judgements	Goods sold - Open account	163 474	13 389	15 364	12 044	70 273	4 774	4 846	4 859
	Goods sold - Instalment sale transactions	153 418	14 230	8 048	8 216	121 713	10 782	6 639	6 401
	Services - Professional	223 539	13 672	19 947	15 293	163 199	9 767	13 861	9 815
	Services - Other	447 767	32 068	34 414	29 399	379 058	25 935	28 410	25 260
	Rent	355 745	26 721	25 972	30 154	261 772	17 684	17 496	20 077
	Money lent	1 034 851	67 729	87 600	87 112	967 961	61 797	84 342	84 518
	Promissory notes, bills, R/D cheques, credit cards and other acknowledgements of debt	416 381	35 583	35 905	25 807	370 656	29 264	31 662	22 784
	Other debts	627 446	36 252	69 019	55 898	512 980	28 126	54 979	43 862
	Total - Actual figures	3 422 621	239 644	296 269	263 923	2 847 612	188 129	242 235	217 576
	Total - Seasonally adjusted		279 958	284 906	304 918		228 639	236 475	248 079

1/ Preliminary.

* Revised.

Table 4 – Percentage change in the total number of civil summonses and judgements and the value of judgements recorded between the three months ended April 2022 and the three months ended April 2023

Actual estimates	Actual estimates Feb – Apr 2022	Actual estimates Feb – Apr 2023	% change between Feb – Apr 2022 and Feb – Apr 2023	Difference between Feb – Apr 2022 and Feb – Apr 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	120 634	120 941	0,3	307
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	33 122	32 498	-1,9	-624
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	804,0	844,8	5,1	40,8

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 April 2022 and the three months ended April 2023

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

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 February to April 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 April 2022	Actual estimates April 2023	% change between April 2022 and April 2023	Difference between April 2022 and April 2023
Number of civil summonses issued for debt	38 101	35 413	-7,1	-2 688
Number of civil judgements recorded for debt	10 235	10 292	0,6	57
Value of civil judgements recorded for debt (R million)	239,6	263,9	10,1	24,3

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	Apr	7 778	3 309	505	2 681	5 755	1 695	12 341	2 391	1 646	38 101
	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	3 330	577	2 070	7 387	1 940	13 736	2 579	1 679	43 770
	Apr	8 307	2 725	286	1 353	6 537	1 437	11 349	1 836	1 583	35 413

1/ Latest three months are preliminary.

*Revised.

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	Apr	2 126	760	100	2 157	1 179	352	1 774	672	1 115	10 235
	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	1 123	175	622	1 352	671	3 061	1 043	1 169	11 542
	Apr	2 224	1 050	211	722	1 104	379	2 822	707	1 073	10 292

1/ Latest three months are preliminary.

*Revised.

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	Apr	59 314	15 686	1 636	27 155	46 933	5 011	66 041	11 872	5 996	239 644
	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	24 355	2 314	12 695	61 358	15 708	91 994	16 891	9 394	296 269
	Apr	74 130	27 978	2 601	17 584	39 905	12 650	66 547	15 301	7 228	263 923

1/ Latest three months are preliminary.

*Revised

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 April 2023 was 75,9%. The improved collection rates for February and March 2023 were 78,8% 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.

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