

MONTHLY BAROMETER

# TRENDS IN ROAD FREIGHT PRICES IN FRANCE



December 2025 | 

upply

# ROAD TRANSPORT: A MISLEADING PRICE INCREASE IN DECEMBER

**Road transport prices rose in December on the French domestic market, driven by spot prices during the end-of-year peak season. However, the bad omens are piling up and suggest a difficult start to the year for carriers.**

In France, December 2025 was marked by a persistent political crisis over the state budget for 2026, with a divided Parliament unable to reach an agreement before the end of the year. The government of Sébastien Lecornu, faced with the absence of a clear majority, had to resort to a special law to avoid a total blockage, allowing the State to be provisionally financed in 2026 by carrying over the taxes and expenditures of 2025. This solution, adopted unanimously by Parliament, avoids administrative paralysis but limits new spending, particularly in defence or public investment.

The debates on the social security budget were also tense, with difficult compromises, particularly on the suspension of pension reform. The government has held numerous consultations with social partners and political groups in an attempt to reach agreements, but divisions persist, particularly with the Senate. In his end-of-year wishes, Emmanuel Macron called for compromises to be built from January 2026 onwards to provide the country with a sustainable budget.

Despite this unstable political context, the French economy continued to show signs of resilience. According to the economic outlook published on December 17, 2025 by INSEE, GDP growth should have reached +0.9% in 2025, based on controlled inflation and rising industrial activity, above its long-term average. According to INSEE, the business climate confirmed "its autumnal improvement" in December. The index gained one point for the third consecutive month, reaching its highest level since June 2024.

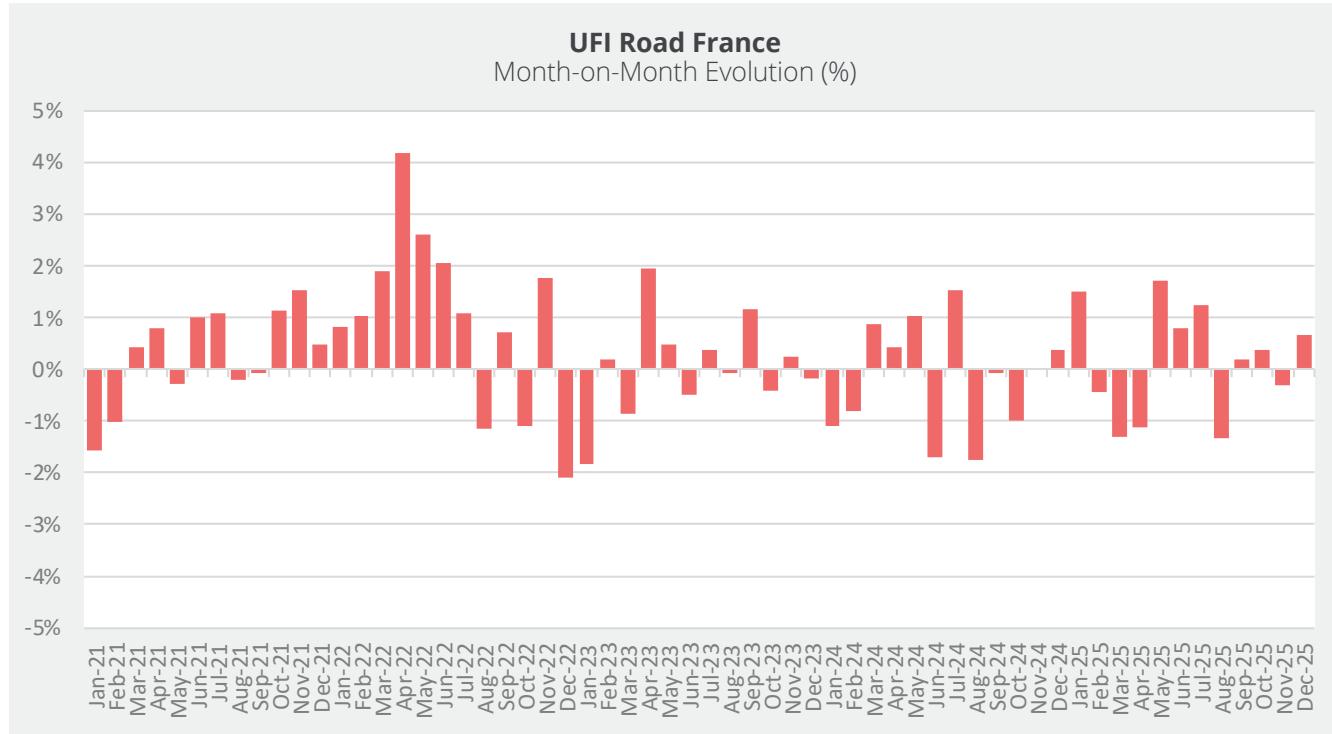
The CAC 40 increased by 10%, driven by a more favourable international environment and solid business results. Despite persistent challenges (unemployment, debt), France maintains its position as 9th global economic powerhouse and was even ranked ahead of the United States and Germany by the prestigious British magazine The Economist in its annual ranking of world economies.

# Prices driven up by the rise in diesel prices

Road freight transport prices in France rose by 0.7% in December 2025 compared to November. For once, they seemed to follow the dynamics of the French economy.

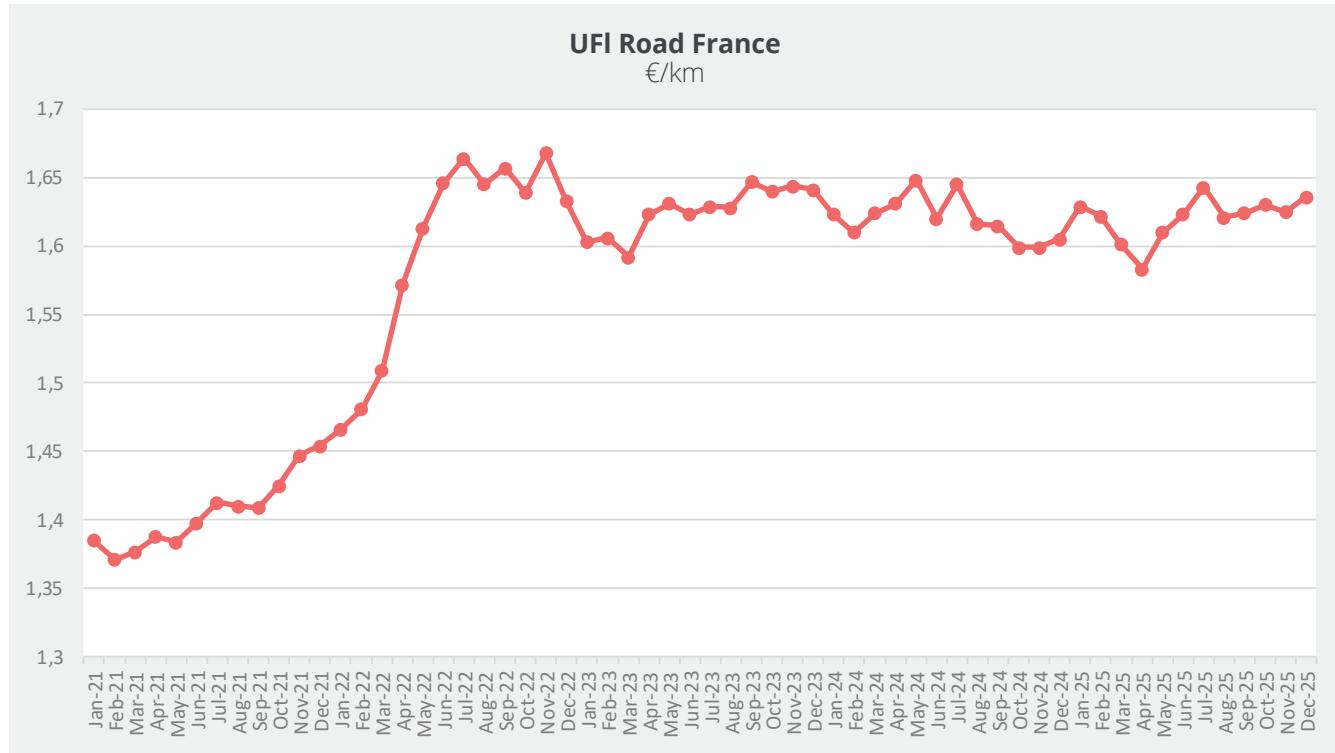
But to assess trends in road transport, it is also necessary to look at variations in the price of professional diesel, which strongly influence costs and therefore prices. Professional diesel fuel prices rose by 4.5% in November and fell by 5.5% in December, pointing to high volatility in the professional market.

This tends to show that the mechanism for passing on variations in the cost of diesel, which occurs with a lag of about one month, was verified in December, with prices following the evolution of costs in November 2025. The CNR LD EA Index showed an increase of 1.1% while it indicated a decrease of -1.3% in December.



Source: [Upply Freight Index – Road France](#)

In December, the average price of transport per kilometre travelled in France was €1.636, registering a slight increase of more than 1 cent. The curve appears to be progressing slightly since August.



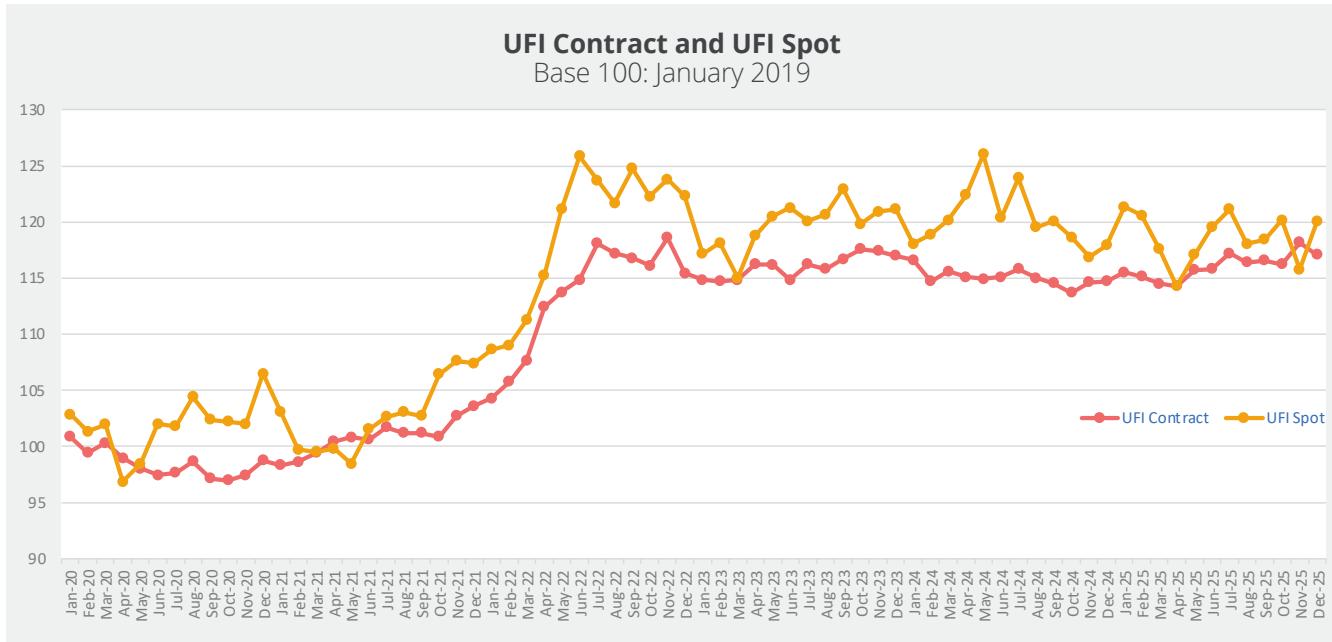
Source | [Upply Freight Index – Road France](#)

## Signs of depression

However, a detailed analysis of the evolution of road transport prices suggests a cautious approach should be taken.

- **The SPOT index**, which represents the reference index for non-regular prices in France, jumped 3.7% in December, correcting the 3.4% drop recorded in November. This does not put an end to the overcapacity of transport on the French market. This simply marks the fact that the market was able to be driven up by a small increase in demand during the first half of the month as the end-of-year holidays approached, then by a small restriction of supply during the second half of December, which corresponds to a period of holidays for drivers all over Europe. This has been reflected in the prices.

- On the other hand, **the CONTRACT index**, which represents contract prices between shippers and carriers on the French market, fell by -0.9% despite the rise in diesel in November, repeating a pattern already observed in October 2025. Although the long-term trend is upward, this movement going against the evolution of diesel cannot be accidental. It is possible that large purchasing groups have obtained price reductions, while road carriers are suffering from a chronic weakness in the volumes to be transported. Indeed, and this is one of the worrying parameters at the moment for transport, current GDP growth does not necessarily mean massive additional volumes. We will see in the coming months whether this movement is confirmed, or whether a recovery in industrial flows and consumption of goods will favour a reversal of the trend.

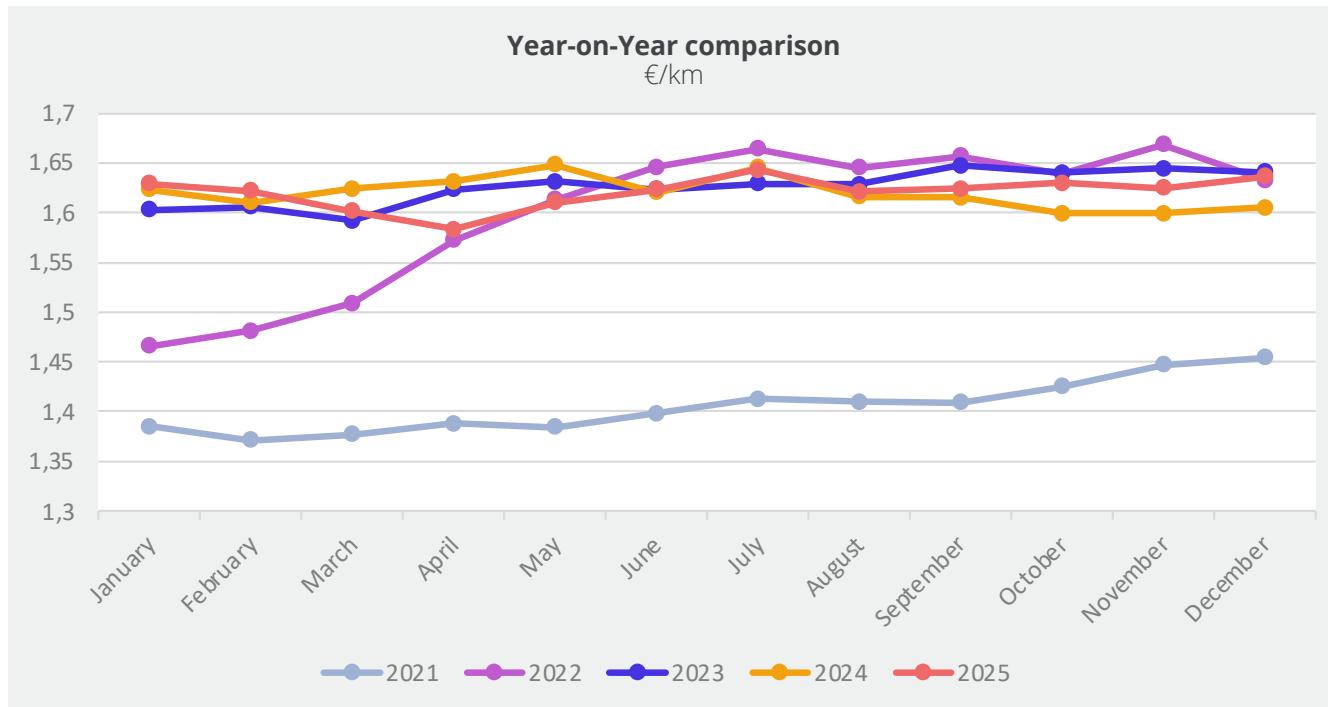


## The outlook for 2026

Concern is running high in the road freight transport sector, as highlighted by the Council for Freight Transport Professionals of OTRE which met on January 13, 2026 to take stock of the sector's economic, regulatory and social issues. Between deviations, blockades and road closures caused by both agricultural movements and recent bad weather, the significant traffic disruptions faced by transport companies have severely impacted their activity, aggravating an already delicate situation in a tense economic context. The concern is not unique to French road transport. Throughout Europe, the industry is seeing a decline in volumes and margins which will inevitably have implications for spot market prices in 2026.

Observing the curves over the period 2021-2025 highlights three phases:

- The year 2021 was marked by the Covid-19 crisis, with the beginnings of a recovery at the end of the year.
- The year 2022 was one of strong economic recovery, marked by rising inflation, which, combined with the outbreak of war in Ukraine, caused transport prices to climb.
- A period of near-stagnation in freight rates since 2023. It is particularly interesting to note that December 2022, 2023 and 2025 coincide, which translates into identical prices three years apart. Yet inflation continued its inexorable course, eroding the margins of carriers. The CNR, in its comments on the evolution of the indices to December 31, 2025, reports an increase over 12 months of 4.4% for equipment, 2.6% for maintenance, 1.5% for travel expenses and 0.7% for salaries.



Source | [Upply Freight Index - Road France](#)

In a context of declining volumes to be transported, rising costs, and stabilising prices, it is highly likely that we will witness a massive wave of carrier consolidation in 2026, even greater than that observed in 2025.

The dangerous situation that the French road freight transport sector is about to go through definitely gives the impression of a misleading price increase in December.

## KEY INDICATORS

Sources | INSEE (base 100 = long-term average), CNR (base 100: December 2000)

INDICATORS	December 2025	November 2025	Evolution M / M-1	December 2024	Evolution over 12 months
Insee Business climate Index	98.7	97.7	+1.0%	95.0	+3.9%
CNR Commercial Diesel Index	181.52	192.03	-5.5%	188.57	-3.7%
CNR's Long Haul semi trailer truck Index	163.09	165.29	-1.3%	162.55	+0.3%



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