

Monthly barometer

TRENDS IN ROAD FREIGHT PRICES IN FRANCE



April 2026 | 

upply

HISTORIC RISE IN ROAD TRANSPORT PRICES IN FRANCE

Road transport prices in France jumped 8% month-on-month in April 2026, reaching unprecedented levels. This development is explained by the surge in fuel prices, which is driving the transport market into a logic of radical transformation.

The impact of the conflict in the Middle East on the global economy in general and on the French economy in particular is beginning to manifest itself very concretely. Beyond the immediate consequences on fuel prices, linked to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the crisis is causing a clear downward correction in growth prospects.

STAGNATION OF THE FRENCH ECONOMY

The French economy experienced a month of April 2026 marked by stagnation in activity and persistent inflation, confirming fears of a lasting slowdown. According to INSEE, GDP stalled in the first quarter, with zero growth (0.0%), after a timid rebound of +0.2% at the end of 2025. But above all, the business climate index lost 3 points to settle at 94 ([see indicators p.7](#)). You have to look back to the Covid period to see lower scores, which reflects the concern of the economic community. Companies surveyed by the Banque de France anticipate a slowdown in industry and a stabilisation in services and construction, in a context of increased uncertainty linked to geopolitical tensions, largely determined by the situation in the Middle East.

Household consumption, the traditional driver of growth, remains sluggish (-0.1% in the first quarter of 2026), hampered by declining purchasing power. Indeed, inflation has started to rise again. Over a year, consumer prices rose by 2.2% in April 2026, after +1.7% in March, due to the surge in energy prices (+14.3% following +7.4%). The increases in the minimum wage (+2.4% on June 1st) and pensions are not enough to compensate for the rise in prices, particularly that of fuels, directly affected by the global energy crisis.

OIL SHOCK

The blockage of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital artery through which 20% of the world's oil normally passes, is causing a reduction in exports from the Gulf countries (11 million fewer barrels/day). The compression of global supply raises fears of shortages, in Europe and especially in Asia, which are heavily dependent on hydrocarbons from the Middle East.

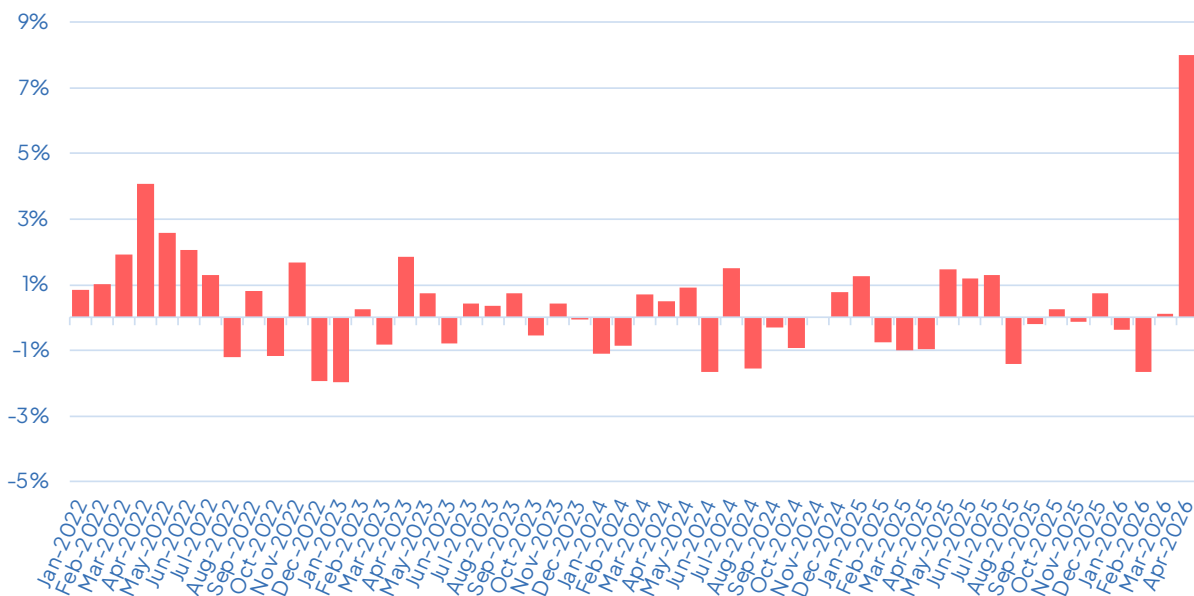
Moreover, this supply shock has caused a surge in barrel prices worldwide. Brent crude nearly reached \$120 at the end of April, an increase of almost 50% since the beginning of the year. Analysts now anticipate sustained high oil prices, between \$150 and \$200 per barrel if the blockade persists. This situation risks exacerbating stagflation and weighing on the already fragile economic recovery.

UNPRECEDENTED INCREASE IN TRANSPORT PRICES IN FRANCE

In this context, road transport prices in France saw a drastic increase in April, correcting the stagnation observed in March. They jumped 8.0% in just one month.

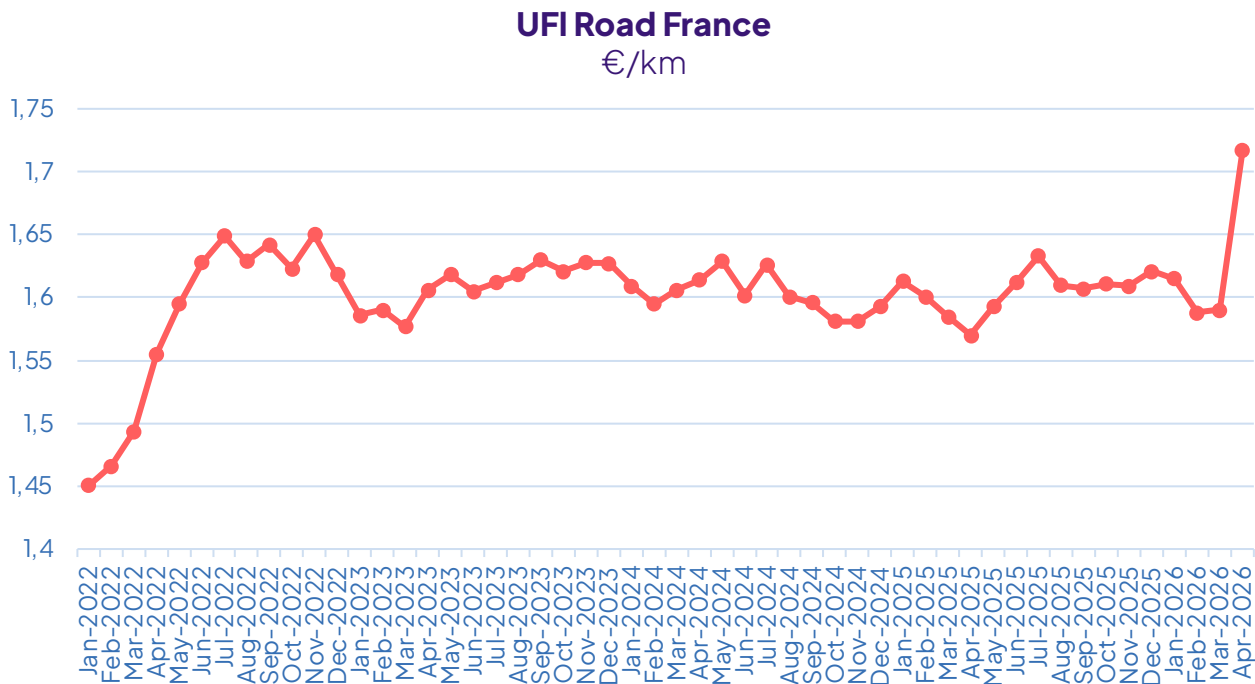
Since the UFI index was created, such a month-on-month increase had never been observed. The increase in April 2026 exceeded by almost 4% that established in April 2022, after the outbreak of the war between Russia and Ukraine.

UFI Road France
Month-on-Month Evolution (%)



Source | Uply Freight Index – Road France

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that transport prices also set a new record: €1.717 per kilometre driven. Driving in France has never been so expensive. For the past three years, prices have fluctuated in a range between €1.550 and €1.650/km. But we must face the facts: the conflict in the Middle East is causing a real shock that is shifting the transport market into a new era. Transport prices could rise further in the coming months, indexed to oil price increases fuelled by upcoming shortages in Asia.

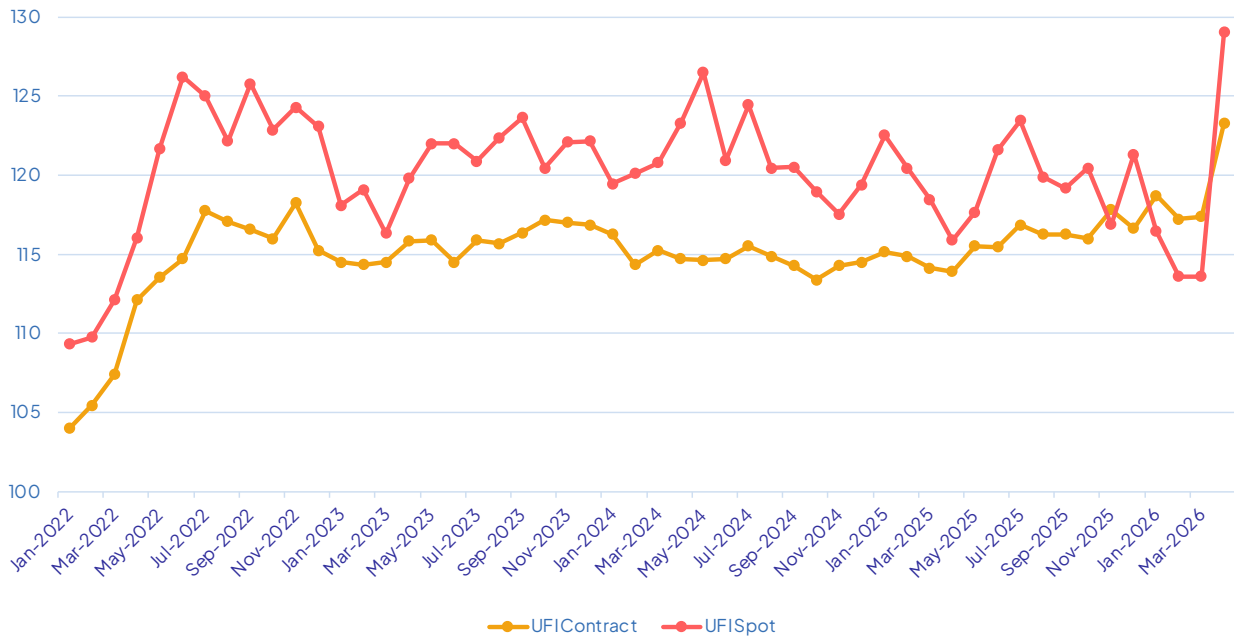


Source | Uply Freight Index - Road France

Since the beginning of the year, the price of professional diesel has reached unprecedented highs, with a CNR index of 269.49 in April (see p.7). For carriers, already weakened by narrow profit margins, this increase represents an immediate cash flow shock, with operating costs becoming unsustainable for many. In order to take into account this exceptional situation, the CNR now publishes its diesel indices on a fortnightly basis rather than monthly, in order to allow carriers to apply the variations as soon as possible when an indexation clause is applicable. This is a cash flow issue that is firmly negotiated!

However, it appears that at this stage it is easier to pass on the increase in fuel costs to the spot market, which is inherently more volatile, than to the contract market.

UFI Contract and UFI Spot Base 100: January 2019



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

- **The CONTRACT index**, which measures contract prices between shippers and carriers on the French market, increased by 5% in April and by 0.1% in March. This indicates a lower increase than that of costs (2.5% in April and 6.8% in March, according to the CNR Long Distance Articulated Unit index). Profit margins and cash flow are therefore under severe pressure. According to the latest economic survey from the FNTR 78% of road transport company managers report a deteriorating economic situation.
- **The SPOT index** represents the reference price index in France for non-regular transport. In April 2026, it recorded the strongest increase ever registered since the index's inception: +13,6%. In just one month, the index halted the continuous erosion observed since the last quarter of 2025. It has moved back above the Contract Index and exceeded its maximum level reached in May 2024.

Fundamentally, market conditions have not changed from one month to the next: the decline in volumes to be transported in France, as well as the decline in international activity, particularly in Germany and the Nordic countries, remain relevant. How then can we explain a surge in transport prices that is greater than that of costs on the spot market? Carriers may be betting everything on this segment, as their survival is threatened.

On the other hand, the irregular transport segment is largely supplied by cabotage carried out by foreign carriers: France is the second largest European market and represents 12.4 billion tonne-kilometres. The Polish, Lithuanian and Spanish fleets share almost two-thirds of the volumes (64%). The massive support from the governments of these countries towards their carriers certainly explains their strong performance recorded in April.

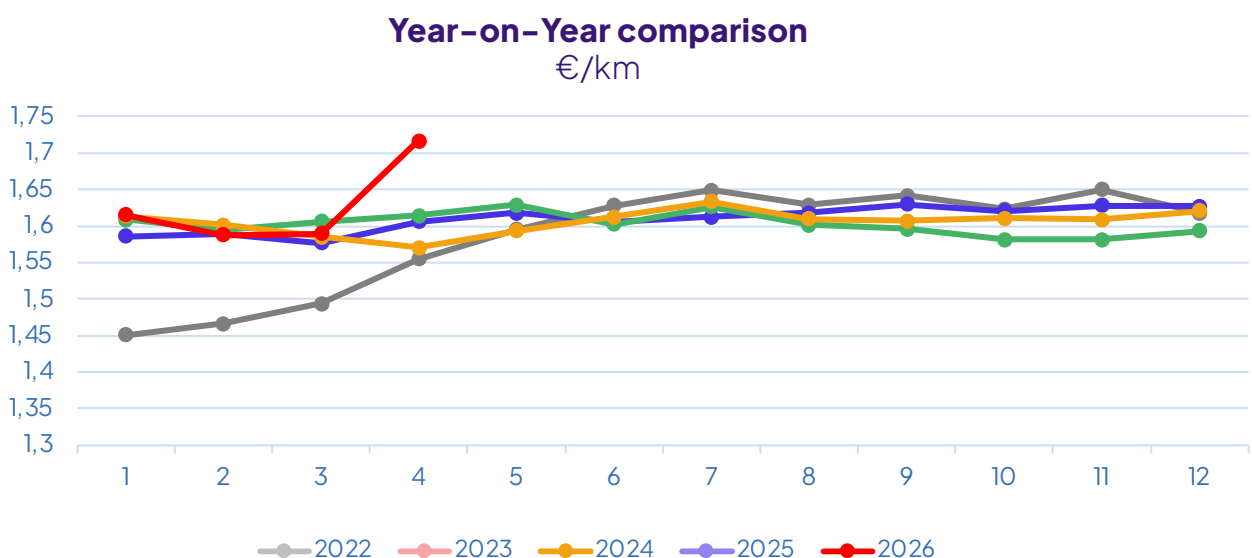
DISPARATE AID

In a context of budgetary constraints, the French government has implemented support measures for carriers, and in particular a system of direct aid, the terms of which are being challenged by industry organisations. Professionals in the sector are demanding immediate and concrete solutions: simplification of aid, freezing of charges, and above all, stabilisation of energy prices to avoid a collapse of the sector.

Poland and Spain, which occupy respectively first and third place in the ranking of European road transport fleets have put in place more significant support measures. The Polish and Spanish governments have notably applied VAT reductions to apply a rate of 8% on diesel (compared to normal rates of 23% in Poland and 21% in Spain). This boost in Poland has been extended until May 31, 2026, with a possible extension to June 30. Both countries also apply reduced excise duties. Finally, some Spanish autonomous communities such as Catalonia, Madrid, or Valencia have maintained or strengthened their local aid to compensate for the increase in costs, in particular through toll subsidies or direct aid to transport SMEs.

ELECTRIFICATION OF ROAD TRANSPORT: AN URGENT NEED REVEALED BY THE DIESEL CRISIS

In April 2026, transport prices appeared to have changed their reference scale. The shock is not of the same nature, but as with the end of the Covid crisis, we are witnessing a resurgence of inflation. But since then, prices never returned to pre-Covid levels. Today, the scenario of permanently more expensive oil is also on the table, which could produce the same effect.



Source | Uply Freight Index - Road France

It is in this context that the Prime Minister, Sébastien Lecornu, presented on April 10, 2026 a new stage in the French energy strategy, with a series of announcements aimed at accelerating the electrification of uses, including in road freight transport. France proposes up to €100,000 per vehicle subject to European manufacture and a five-year holding period. A boost aimed at reaching 50% electric sales by 2030, whereas the market struggled to exceed 2% in 2025.

This transition is not only ecological: it is becoming economically viable. With these subsidies, the break-even point for an electric truck drops to 85,000 km/year, compared to 120,000 km previously. Energy and maintenance savings (up to €15,000/year) are finally attracting carriers, despite a high initial investment.

Faced with volatile oil prices, electrification is no longer a green option, but an economic necessity.

KEY INDICATORS

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

INDICATORS	April 2026	March 2025	Evolution M / M-1	April 2025	Evolution over 12 months
Insee Business climate Index	94.0	97.2	-3.3 %	97.1	-3.2 %
CNR Commercial Diesel Index	269.49	248.08	+8.6 %	177.44	+51.9 %
CNR's Long Haul semi trailer truck Index	182.03	177.55	+2.5 %	161.83	+12.5%



Author

William Béguerie

Road Transport Expert for Upply



THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS PLATFORM THAT BOOSTS SUPPLY CHAIN ACTORS' EFFICIENCY

Upply, the Tech Platform serving freight transport professionals, **designs and develops digital solutions** to assist supply chain professionals in leveraging the full potential of digitalization for their business.

© All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any material form, including photocopying or electronic storage, without prior written permission from Upply. This report is based on factual information obtained from several public sources. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information, Upply disclaims any liability for any loss or damage caused by reliance on the information contained in this report. The opinions expressed here are those of the author as of the date of publication and are subject to change without notice.