

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | Monday, May 04, 2026

naamsa RELEASES APRIL 2026 NEW VEHICLE SALES STATS DOMESTIC DEMAND HOLDS THE LINE AMID SOFTENING EXPORTS

PRETORIA: Monday, May 04, 2026: South Africa's new vehicle market extended its positive domestic performance into April 2026, with domestic demand continuing to anchor overall industry activity despite a progressively uncertain global backdrop. The latest outcome reflects a market still benefiting from earlier cyclical support, even as external shocks continue to reshape the operating environment.

Aggregate domestic new vehicle sales in April 2026 reached 47,979 units, the best April performance since 2013, representing an increase of 5,512 units, or 13,0%, compared to the 42,467 vehicles sold in April 2025. In contrast, export volumes decreased to 30,939 units, a contraction of 4,0% relative to the 32,229 units shipped in April 2025.

The April performance largely reflects momentum built over preceding months, supported by improved financing conditions, and firmer sentiment. However, these supportive factors are now being confronted by headwinds in the macro-environment, characterised by elevated energy prices, looming rising inflation expectations, and a reversal in the interest rate outlook.

Overall, out of the total reported industry sales of 47,979 vehicles, an estimated 43,716 units, or 91,1%, represented dealer sales, an estimated 5,1% represented sales to the vehicle rental industry, 2,2% to industry corporate fleets, and 1,6% to government sales.

The April 2026 new passenger car market at 34,414 units recorded an increase of 4,301 units, or 14,3%, compared to the 30,113 new cars sold in April 2025. Car rental sales accounted for 5,7% of new passenger vehicles sold during the month. Domestic sales of new light commercial vehicles (bakkies and mini-buses) at 10,966 units during April 2026 recorded a gain of 973 units, or 9,7% compared to the 9,993 units sold in April 2025.

Sales in the medium and heavy commercial vehicle segments reflected a positive performance during April 2026. Medium commercial vehicle sales at 687 units recorded a 10,5% increase compared to the 622 units sold in April 2026, while heavy trucks and buses, at 1,912 units, reflected a 9,9% increase compared to the 1,739 units sold in April 2025.

Exports remained under pressure in April 2026, with vehicle export sales reaching 30,939 units, down 1,290 units, or 4.0%, compared to the 32,229 units exported in the corresponding month last year. While ongoing geopolitical developments and their impact on key destination markets continue to weigh on export performance, the April decline was largely driven by the LCV segment, which contracted sharply by 42.9% due to the phased rollout of new-model production by a key exporter.

MACRO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES

April 2026 marked a clear inflection point in the macroeconomic environment. The escalation of geopolitical tensions in the Middle East triggered a sharp repricing in global energy markets, with oil prices moving structurally higher and introducing a broad-based cost shock across energy-intensive sectors.

For South Africa, where road transport underpins the majority of freight activity, higher fuel prices are directly transmitted into supply chain costs, distribution margins, and ultimately consumer prices. In the vehicle market, these pressures feed through to the total cost of ownership, placing additional strain on demand in an environment characterised by tightening credit conditions and increasingly constrained real disposable incomes.

While inflation remained relatively contained at 3.1% year-on-year in March 2026, this reading precedes the full impact of the recent fuel price shock. The April CPI print, due in May 2026, will be the first to reflect these effects more comprehensively. Forward-looking indicators suggest a meaningful acceleration in inflation over the coming quarters, with fuel and transport costs acting as the primary transmission channels.

Concurrently, the monetary policy outlook has shifted materially. Market expectations have moved from anticipating further easing, reflecting the inflationary risks associated with elevated energy prices.

Notwithstanding this increasingly challenging macroeconomic backdrop, and despite the disruption from multiple public holidays during the month, new vehicle sales in April remained resilient, underscoring underlying demand support and the continued replacement cycle within the market.

FUEL LEVY RELIEF EXTENSION: A CRUCIAL LIFELINE FOR CONSUMER RESILIENCE

naamsa welcomes the decision by the Minister of Finance, Mr Enoch Godongwana, to extend and deepen the temporary fuel levy relief beyond its initial 5 May 2026 expiry. Announced on 28 April, the extension provides a critical, time-bound buffer for consumers, businesses, and the automotive sector against what would otherwise have been a destabilising spike in fuel costs. The relief package for May and June 2026 includes three measures: the extension of the R3.00 per litre petrol levy reduction to 2 June; an additional 93 cents per litre diesel levy relief for May, effectively reducing the diesel levy to zero (a total relief of R3.93 per litre); and a phased withdrawal from 3 June, with partial relief maintained before a full return to statutory levels on 1 July 2026.

For the automotive sector, the extension is significant in stabilising consumer and dealer confidence. Consumer confidence improved to -7 index points in Q1 2026, its strongest level since late 2024, while new vehicle dealer confidence reached a 13-year high of 67 index points. These gains were underpinned by expectations of easing cost-of-living pressures and improving real disposable incomes. Absent the levy



relief, a sharp fuel price increase would have reversed these gains, delivering a negative shock at a critical point in the market recovery cycle.

The decision to reduce the diesel levy to zero is particularly consequential for the commercial vehicle segment. Medium and heavy commercial vehicles, central to freight, infrastructure delivery, and logistics, are highly sensitive to fuel costs, which constitute a primary component of operating expenditure. Elevated and volatile diesel prices increase the hurdle rate for fleet investment and can delay replacement cycles. By easing diesel costs, the intervention supports operating margins in the transport sector and helps sustain demand for commercial vehicles.

However, while the relief measures ease short-term pressures, they do not fully offset the broader impact of elevated global oil prices. The underlying cost environment remains challenging, and its effects are expected to persist beyond the duration of the intervention.

naamsa will continue to monitor evolving macro-financial conditions and their implications for new vehicle demand closely, and commits to providing the industry, government, and the public with timely, data-grounded assessments of the sector's performance and outlook as the environment continues to develop.

STATEMENT ENDS

ABOUT THE SA AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

- the automotive industry contributes 5.2% to GDP [3.2% manufacturing and 2.0% retail];
- in 2024, the export of vehicles and automotive components reached a record amount of R268.8 billion, equating to 14.7% of South Africa's total exports;
- the industry accounts for 22.6% of the country's manufacturing output;
- vehicles and components are exported to 155 international markets;
- the manufacturing segment employs ~115,000 people; and
- combined with multiplier effects, the industry sustains 498,000 jobs across the formal economy.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- Since 2021, **naamsa** introduced associate membership with tangible benefits including industry data access and visibility;
- **naamsa** represents 42 companies manufacturing, assembling, distributing and importing new vehicles;
- Our vision is to be the most credible and respected automotive industry thought leader and partner for a globally competitive and transformed South African auto sector;
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