

PRESS RELEASE

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naamsa RELEASES SEPTEMBER 2026 NEW VEHICLE SALES STATS

SA NEW VEHICLE SALES POWER AHEAD, CLOSING THE THIRD QUARTER ON A HIGH NOTE DESPITE EXPORT PRESSURES

PRETORIA: Thursday, October 01, 2026: As **naamsa** reflects on the new vehicle sales performance at the close of the third quarter, September marked a global financial market recalibration. Higher oil prices amid the escalating conflict added renewed inflation risks with major central banks adjusting monetary policy rates by 25 basis points. In response, the South African Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee increased the repo rate by 25 basis points to 7.25%, resulting in a prime lending rate of 10.75%. At the same time, the SARB revised its inflation outlook upward and maintained a cautious assessment of the economic environment. Despite these macroeconomic headwinds, South Africa's domestic new vehicle market has continued to demonstrate notable resilience, defying expectations amid higher borrowing costs, persistent inflationary pressures, and subdued economic growth.

South Africa's new vehicle market recorded aggregate domestic sales of 61,645 units in September 2026, representing a 12,7% increase compared to the 54,706 units sold during September 2025. Export sales amounted to 31,473 units during the month, reflecting an 18,8% decrease compared to the corresponding month last year.

Of the total reported industry sales of 61,645 vehicles, an estimated 50,171, or 81,4% represented dealer sales, 13,8% sales to the vehicle rental industry, 2,6% government purchases, and 2,2% corporate fleet sales.

The September 2026 new passenger car market registered 44,291 units, reflecting an increase of 14,7% compared to the 38,615 units sold in September 2025. The car rental industry accounted for a sound 18,4% of new passenger vehicle sales during the month.

Domestic sales of new light commercial vehicles, bakkies and minibuses amounted to 14,361 units, representing a 9,6% increase compared to the 13,099 units sold in September 2025.

Medium commercial vehicle sales reached 789 units during September 2026, a gain of 3,4% compared to the 763 units sold in September 2025 while heavy truck and bus sales totalled 2,204 units, a decrease of 25 units compared to the 2,229 units sold in September 2025.

Commenting on this trend, naamsa CEO **Dr Mncane MTHUNZI** said:

“The South African new vehicle market closed the third quarter of 2026 on a remarkably resilient footing, with September sales increasing by 12,7% year-on-year to 61,645 units. This performance is particularly encouraging given the increasingly difficult operating environment facing consumers and businesses, including higher borrowing costs, renewed inflationary pressures and subdued economic growth.”

NEW ENERGY VEHICLES (NEVs): ACCELERATING ADOPTION AND SEGMENT DIVERSIFICATION

South Africa’s New Energy Vehicle (NEV) market continued to demonstrate robust growth and a notable acceleration in consumer adoption. During the first eight months of 2026, cumulative NEV sales reached 18,945 units, already surpassing the 16,703 units recorded during the entire 2025 calendar year by 13.4%, with four months of the year still remaining.

Traditional Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs) continue to lead the NEV market, accounting for 49.6% of total NEV sales year-to-date, followed by Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) at 36.5% and Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) at 13.8%. Significantly, the composition of the market is changing rapidly. Rechargeable vehicles – PHEVs and BEVs combined – now account for just over half of all NEV sales, signalling an important shift from a market historically dominated by conventional hybrid technologies towards increasingly electrified powertrains.

Year-to-date, approximately one in every twenty new vehicles sold in South Africa is now electrified, providing further evidence of the gradual but increasingly visible evolution in consumer preferences towards alternative powertrain technologies. Particularly noteworthy has been the acceleration in rechargeable technologies: by August 2026, PHEV sales had reached 6,919 units, compared with 2,810 units during the whole of 2025, while BEV sales reached 2,622 units compared with 1,088 units for full-year 2025.

Electrification is also beginning to extend beyond the passenger vehicle market, with emerging adoption across the light and medium commercial vehicle segments. While these volumes remain relatively modest, their emergence is strategically important as South Africa’s transition broadens from private mobility into commercial applications.

The trajectory therefore points to an NEV market entering a new phase of development. Sustaining this momentum will increasingly depend on the alignment of consumer support, charging infrastructure, affordable electricity, appropriate standards, expanded model availability and, critically, the localisation of NEV and component manufacturing so that growing domestic demand translates into industrial investment, production and employment.

MACROECONOMIC & MONETARY OUTLOOK

The macroeconomic environment facing South African consumers and businesses became more challenging during September 2026, with renewed energy-driven inflationary pressures weighing on household purchasing power and the broader cost environment. Headline CPI inflation edged higher to 4.4% year-on-year in August, from 4.3% in July, while rising fuel prices and elevated global energy costs continued to influence inflation dynamics, operating costs and consumer spending patterns.

Against this backdrop, the performance of the new vehicle market has been particularly noteworthy. Rather than moving in line with the deterioration in some of the key macroeconomic variables affecting affordability, new vehicle sales have continued to expand at a double-digit pace.

An important part of this resilience can be attributed to the increasingly competitive and diversified structure of the South African new vehicle market. The expansion in the number of brands, models and price points available to consumers has intensified competition and broadened access to mobility. With affordability remaining a central consideration for vehicle buyers, competitive pricing, attractive financing propositions and a wider range of entry-level and value-oriented products are helping to sustain demand even as traditional macroeconomic fundamentals remain constrained.

Importantly, the strength evident in new vehicle sales is increasingly being complemented by an improvement in manufacturing sentiment. The seasonally adjusted Absa Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) increased by 4.9 points to 50.7 in September 2026, moving back above the neutral 50-point threshold after three consecutive months in contractionary territory. The improvement was supported by a strong rebound in new sales orders, while business activity recovered much of the decline recorded during August.

The simultaneous improvement in the PMI and continued expansion in new vehicle sales provides an encouraging counterpoint to the prevailing macroeconomic headwinds. Vehicle sales are providing evidence of sustained consumer and business demand, while the return of the PMI to expansionary territory suggests that this resilience may be beginning to extend into the productive economy. Although it remains too early to conclude that a sustained manufacturing recovery is firmly established, the September indicators point to underlying economic activity performing more strongly than might have been expected from the prevailing inflation, energy-cost and affordability pressures alone.

The challenge will be to convert this resilience into a durable economic recovery. A sustained improvement in household purchasing power, financing conditions, business confidence and manufacturing competitiveness would provide a stronger foundation for continued vehicle-market growth while supporting the investment and production activity necessary to translate domestic demand into broader industrial and economic value creation.

Dr MTHUNZI noted:

“While vehicle purchases remain sensitive to broader economic conditions, the sustained expansion in new vehicle sales demonstrates that the market is performing with notable resilience against prevailing macroeconomic pressures. Increasing competition, greater product diversity, competitive pricing and attractive financing propositions are helping to sustain consumer demand despite continued pressure on household budgets. Encouragingly, the improvement in the PMI alongside double-digit growth in vehicle sales suggests strengthening underlying demand and provides early evidence of looming economic momentum. The automotive industry therefore continues to play an important role in supporting South Africa’s economic activity, investment, manufacturing and employment.”

SA AUTOMOTIVE WEEK: FOCUS TURNS TO e-THEKWINI

With exactly **12 days to go to SA Auto Week 2026**, all roads lead to **eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal**, as the automotive industry prepares to commemorate **five years of SA Auto Week** and its growing role as the sector’s premier platform for shaping the future of mobility and automotive industrialisation in South Africa.

Taking place from **13–16 October 2026**, this milestone edition will convene government, vehicle manufacturers, component manufacturers, retailers, financiers, organised labour, investors and other industry stakeholders around the critical issues shaping the sector’s future including **competitiveness, localisation, transformation, investment, the energy transition, global trade and the resilience of South Africa’s automotive value chain**.

The significance of this year’s gathering is strengthened by the partnership with the **KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government and eThekweni Municipality**, with KwaZulu-Natal serving as the 2026 partner province. The programme will also incorporate the **KwaZulu-Natal Investment Conference**, bringing together automotive industrial policy and the province’s broader investment agenda.

Against a backdrop of changing global trade dynamics, the transition towards New Energy Vehicles, intensifying competition for automotive investment and evolving consumer conditions, **SA Auto Week 2026 must move the industry beyond dialogue towards practical action**. The opportunity is to strengthen South Africa’s position as a globally competitive automotive production base while expanding localisation, investment, exports, transformation and sustainable employment.

The 2026 edition is further supported by a strong network of Anchor and Headline Partners, partners and stakeholders, including Absa, the Automotive Industry Development Centre-Gauteng Province (AIDC-GP), the Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone [TASEZ], Eastern Cape Province, WesBank, Rand Mutual and Automotive Industry Transformation Fund [AITF] whose continued involvement supports the broader objectives of SA Auto Week and the development of South Africa’s automotive industry.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SA AUTO WEEK 2026

The programme will bring together a series of industry, investment, transformation and networking platforms, including:

- **NEV Road Trip**, from **9 - 11 October**, showcasing new energy vehicle technologies and the transition towards cleaner mobility.
- **Transformation Day**, taking place on the **13 October**, powered by the **naamsa Dreams Academy**, focusing on transformation, skills and enterprise development.
- **African Automotive Indaba**, taking place from the **14 - 15 October**, bringing together industry leaders, policymakers, investors and stakeholders to engage on the key issues shaping the sector.
- **naamsa Pavilion and Expo**, showcasing businesses, products, services and capabilities from across the automotive value chain.
- **KwaZulu-Natal Investment Conference**, connecting the province's investment opportunities with automotive manufacturing, logistics, energy and infrastructure priorities.
- **Captains of Industry Dinner powered by Absa**, bringing together senior industry leaders, policymakers and strategic stakeholders for an evening of engagement and connection.
- **naamsa Accelerator Awards powered by WesBank**, recognising organisations and individuals contributing to innovation, transformation and growth across the automotive industry.
- **Automotive Plant Tours**, taking place on **16 October**, providing delegates with a first-hand view of South Africa's automotive manufacturing capabilities.
- **Cars.co.za** proudly returns as our official media partner; and
- For more information on the **SA Auto Week 2026**, visit the **naamsa.co.za** website.

STATEMENT ENDS

ABOUT THE SA AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

- the automotive industry contributes 5.2% to GDP [3.3% manufacturing and 1.9% retail];
- in 2025, the export of vehicles and automotive components reached a record amount of R291.0 billion, equating to 15.6% of South Africa's total exports;
- the industry accounts for 23.8% of the country's manufacturing output;
- vehicles and components are exported to 154 international markets;
- the manufacturing segment employs 113,000 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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