Publication: The Sunday Independent
Page: 11
Title: Motorists face higher costs as fuel prices rise in September
Publish Date: 06 September 2026
AVE: 54314.92
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ECONOMY

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Motorists face higher costs as fuel prices rise in September

ASHLEY LECHMAN

SEPTEMBER will be another month in which consumers will have to navigate steep fuel price increases.

This comes after the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources (DMPR) announced official fuel price adjustments that came into effect on Wednesday.

The DMPR said that petrol (93 and 95 ULP & LRP) increased by R1.34 per litre, while diesel (0.05% sulphur) increased by R2.93 per litre, diesel (0.005% sulphur) increased by R3.14 / R3.15 per litre and Illuminating Paraffin (wholesale) increased by R2.13 per litre.

Geopolitical tensions from the United States (US)-Iran war was one of the main drivers of the price increases, as Brent Crude Oil prices soared above $90 per barrel during the period under review.

Tando Ngibe, senior manager at Budget Insurance, said: "South African motorists have been on a roller coaster ride with fuel prices, and unfortunately, spring is bringing another increase in the cost of getting from point A to point B.

"It really is a case of "win some, lose some" when we consider the latest Household Affordability Index data, which showed that the average household food basket decreased by R50.72 in August 2026, compared with July. While this is a welcome relief for household budgets, the saving can quickly be absorbed by rising costs elsewhere and this time, motorists are being asked to find more money simply to keep their vehicles on the road."

Neil Roets, CEO of Debt Rescue, said that the financial picture for South African consumers is 'incredibly bleak'.

"We at Debt Rescue see first-hand the devastating toll these relentless increases take on already stretched household budgets.

"While the underlying drivers point to distant geopolitical conflicts such as escalating US and Iran tensions pushing global oil prices up, the reality on the ground is intensely personal. When inland 95 petrol jumps to R26.92 and wholesale diesel breaches the R30 mark, we are no longer just talking about the cost of a daily commute. We are looking at a compounding cost of living crisis," Roets said.

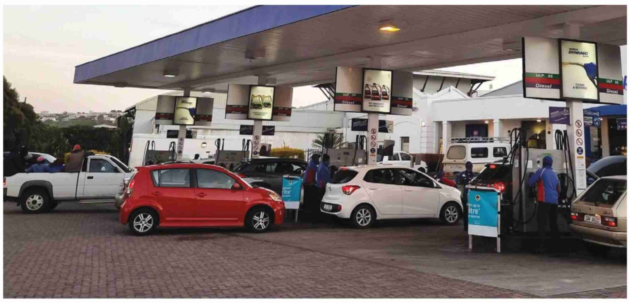
"To put this trajectory into perspective, we only need to look back to January 2026. At the start of the year, inland 95 petrol cost R20.75 a litre, while diesel was just R18.42. From this week, consumers are paying over R6 more per litre for petrol and a staggering R11 more for diesel than they were just eight months ago," Roets added.

He said that this is not merely a squeeze at the pumps.

"Diesel is the lifeblood of our logistics and agricultural sectors, a massive R3 spike in a single month will rapidly cascade into the price of essential goods, staple foods and public transport. The slight strengthening of the rand simply was not enough to buffer consumers against these massive under recoveries, nor the newly increased slate and forecourt wage levies," Roets said.

"I am deeply concerned about how the average South African will absorb this shock. Salaries are fundamentally failing to keep pace with these transport and food inflationary pressures, leaving millions with no choice but to turn to high interest credit just to put food on the table. For those already living on the financial edge, this September increase is financially paralysing. South Africans have reached the end of the road," Roets said.

Hayley Parry, money coach and facilitator at 1Life's Truth About Money, said: "This is going to have an impact on already-stretched South African consumers, who are once again being asked to tighten their belts in a year where we've seen some pretty heavy increases already in the price of petrol, as well as things like electricity, and just the general cost of living really putting a squeeze on consumers."



MOTORISTS face sharp September fuel increases, with diesel rising by up to R3.15 a litre and petrol up by R1.34. | DAVID RITCHIE

Parry said that consumers need to look at how this will affect their finances. She said that this is a time to get creative if you really are feeling the financial pressure.

"There are two levers we can look at: how do we either increase our income or reduce some of our other expenses? Or the expense around your travel costs to and from work.

"For example, you could have some kind of lift club or carpool system with colleagues," she said.

"As always, we advise people to have a look at what kind of unnecessary apps and subscriptions they may be paying for, where they could trim some costs and help cover this increase coming to their cost of living," Parry added.