



INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF RAILWAYS

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UIC publishes the latest Global Rail Sustainability Report on World Sustainable Transport Day

Today, UIC releases the third edition of its Global Rail Sustainability Report, coinciding with the United Nations International Sustainable Transport Day. To mark this symbolic date, UIC is highlighting rail's essential role in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and preparing for the upcoming UN Decade of Action for Sustainable Transport (2026–2035).

Proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2023, the Decade aims to accelerate the transition toward inclusive, efficient, and low-carbon transport systems worldwide. By publishing this report today, UIC is reaffirming its commitment to these global objectives and calls for collective action to strengthen intermodal connectivity, reduce emissions, and promote socially inclusive mobility.

The 2024 Global Rail Sustainability Report brings together the latest transparent UIC data from the Rail Sustainability Index (RSi), the Traction Energy & Emissions Database (TED), and RAIL Information System and Analyses (RAILISA) also providing sector-wide insights, and practical case studies to illustrate rail's role as the backbone of sustainable transport and its broader contribution to responsible employment, communities, and economic development. The data is shared directly from UIC's global membership, demonstrating the remarkable progress and contributions being made by railways across the world.

As part of this, Lia Talarico, Trenitalia International, Chair of the UIC Sustainability Platform, commented: *“Rail is not only the backbone of sustainable mobility, but also a catalyst for climate action, resilience, and inclusive growth. The data, case studies, and innovations shared here reflect our global rail community’s collective drive. But this drive must now translate into action.”*

Some of the headline data in the report:

Around the world:

- **1.17 million km of track worldwide** – 29x the Earth's circumference
- **+7.6% growth** in global railway length since 2004
- **3.8 trillion passenger-km** travelled in 2023
- **12 trillion tonne-km of freight** moved by rail – representing **38% of global inland freight**

A low-emission transport leader:

- Rail carries 7% of global passengers and 6% of freight but produces only ~1% of transport emissions.
- Since 2005 in the EU: Passenger rail CO₂e emissions have decreased by 60% (market-based) and freight rail CO₂e emissions are down 51% (market-based).
- Rail has already surpassed its 2030 target of a 30% absolute emissions reduction.

Strong progress on energy and renewables:

- Energy consumed per passenger-km in the EU is down **26.6%** since 2005.
- An ever-increasing number of participants are setting renewable energy targets, from **53% → 89%** (RSi participants between 2021 and 2023).

Low external costs & superior safety:

- Rail accounts for **just 2%** of the total EU external costs for transport.
- Accident costs for rail: **€2.3 billion** against the **€267 billion** for road transport.
- Noise costs for rail: **€7 billion** vs **€61.5 billion** for road transport.

Evolving processes for an inclusive, fair and resilient rail workforce:

- **Stronger workforce inclusion:** Women now represent **around 20%** of the rail workforce (vs **12–15%** in wider transport), with **100%** of companies¹ implementing formal non-discrimination policies.

¹ of members participating in UIC Rail Sustainability Index

- **Growing focus on decent work:** Nearly all operators have **certified health & safety management systems**, and diversity and inclusion strategies have increased by **20%** since 2022.
- **A major economic but ageing machine:** Rail supports **3.1 million jobs** and contributes **€247 billion** to EU GDP ², yet the **50–59 age group** remains the most represented, highlighting a critical skills renewal challenge.

For more detailed information, please download the report document here: [Global Sustainability Report](#)

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² CER, “The Economic Footprint of Railway Transport in Europe”, 2025