Traffic trends among UIC member companies in the first half of 2024

Provisional results

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https://uic.org/com/enews/article/traffic-trends-among-uic-member-companies-in-the-first-half-of-2024#:~:text=In%20the%20first%20half%20of%202024%2C%20rail%20passenger%20volumes%20increased,levels%20for%20the%20first%20time

1. Summary

In the first half of 2024, rail passenger volumes increased across all UIC regions, driving overall growth of 10% compared to the first half of 2023. For the first time, global passenger volumes finally reached pre-COVID-19 levels. This result was primarily achieved thanks to a strong rebound in traffic recorded by China Railways and, to a lesser extent, by European companies.

In contrast, rail freight trends show stagnation or decline compared to 2023 for most companies. The decline is more pronounced for companies based in Europe, with an average decrease estimated at around -9% for the EU-27 region compared to 2023. However, Indian Railways stands out as an exception, with freight transport volumes estimated to grow by 6.5%.

NB Not all railways took part in the survey. The overview of the railway market presented here is therefore limited.

2. Passenger traffic trends

The growth in the first half of 2024 reflects the general trend of recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic (figures 1 and 3). For the first time, global passenger traffic levels have reached those observed in 2019. Some companies, mostly based in Europe, had already regained pre-pandemic traffic levels in 2023, such as SNCF (France) [1], FSI (Italy), PKP (Poland), MAV (Hungary), SBB (Switzerland), BDZ (Bulgaria), TCDD (Turkey), or SV SRBIJA VOZ (Serbia). Some Asian and African companies also demonstrated strong resilience, including Korail (South Korea), THSRC (Chinese Taipei), ONCF (Morrocco), and SNTF (Algeria).

For other companies, the recovery has been slower, but by 2024, traffic volumes finally surpassed 2019 levels. This is the case in Asia for China Railways with +15% in 2024 compared with 2023 and KTM (Malaysia, +8%), as well as AMTRAK (+15%) in the United States [2], and RENFE (Spain, +9%) and CP (Portugal, +18%) in Europe.

However, for some companies, growth is evident in 2024, but traffic levels have not yet returned to those of 2019. This is particularly the case for Indian Railways [3], KTZ (Kazakhstan), EJR (Japan), DSVN (Vietnam), Sydney Trains (Australia), as well as for some European companies such as DB (Germany) [4], NS (Nederland), SNCB (Belgium), CD (Czech Republic) or CFR CALATORI (Romania).

3. Freight traffic trends

After a sharp decline in rail freight transport in 2023, the global trend across all regions has stabilized at around -0.8% compared to the first half of 2023 (figures 2 and 3). A slight decline was recorded for AAR (USA, -1%) [5] and China Railways (-2.2%), while a sharper drop was observed for KTZ (Kazakhstan) at -6%. In Europe, the decline was even steeper, with -

8% for DB (Germany) [4], -12% for FS (Italy), -24% for PKP (Poland) and -12% for CD (Czech Republic). However, SNCF (France) [1] remained stable compared to the first half of 2023.

Some companies saw a significant recovery compared to 2023, particularly African companies (+11.4%). Indian Railways, for its part, demonstrated sustained growth (+6.5%) [3], continuing a positive trend since 2020.

For more detailed information, please consult the monthly and quarterly reports on passenger, freight and train traffic, available online via the UIC web application for UIC statistics correspondents: https://stats.uic.org/login.aspx

Quarterly reports are also available on the extranet: https://extranet.uic.org/en/file/281516

The list of companies participating in monthly data collections and presented in the graphs can be found on extranet:

https://extranet.uic.org/en/file/281515

Annual data is available from Railisa: https://uic-stats.uic.org/select/

References:

[1]

https://www.groupe-sncf.com/medias-publics/2024-07/pr-sncf-group-2024-half-year-results.pdf?VersionId=l5uo1RPCFG_bjzq2H.9Rah7wo44J_96F

[2]

 https://www.railway.supply/en/amtrak-sets-a-record-for-passenger-traffic-in-the-2024-fiscal-year/

[3]

https://www.financialexpress.com/business/railways-railways-passenger-revenues-stagnate-over-the-last-decade-growth-below-nominal-gdpnbsp-3388672/

[4]

https://zbir.deutschebahn.com/2024/en/interim-group-management-report-unaudited/development-of-business-units/business-units-in-the-integrated-rail-system/db-regional-business-unit/development-in-the-first-half-of-2024/

[5]

https://www.aar.org/data-center/

Passenger.kilometres (millions, first halves 2019-2024)
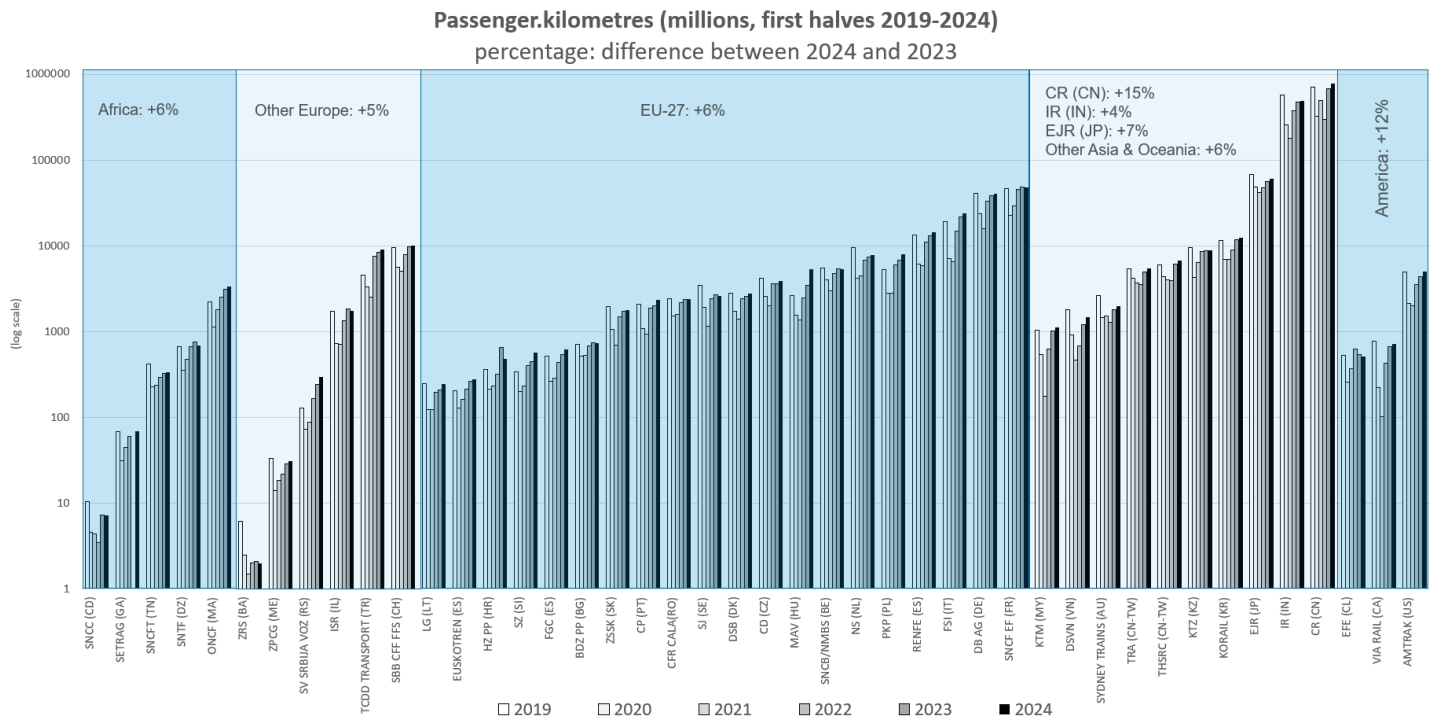percentage: difference between 2024 and 2023

Figure 1: Passenger-kilometres (millions) for 2019 (white bar), 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 (grey bars) and 2024 (black bar). The y axis is a logarithmic scale. Railway companies are grouped by region, with percentage values showing the average change between 2023 and 2024.
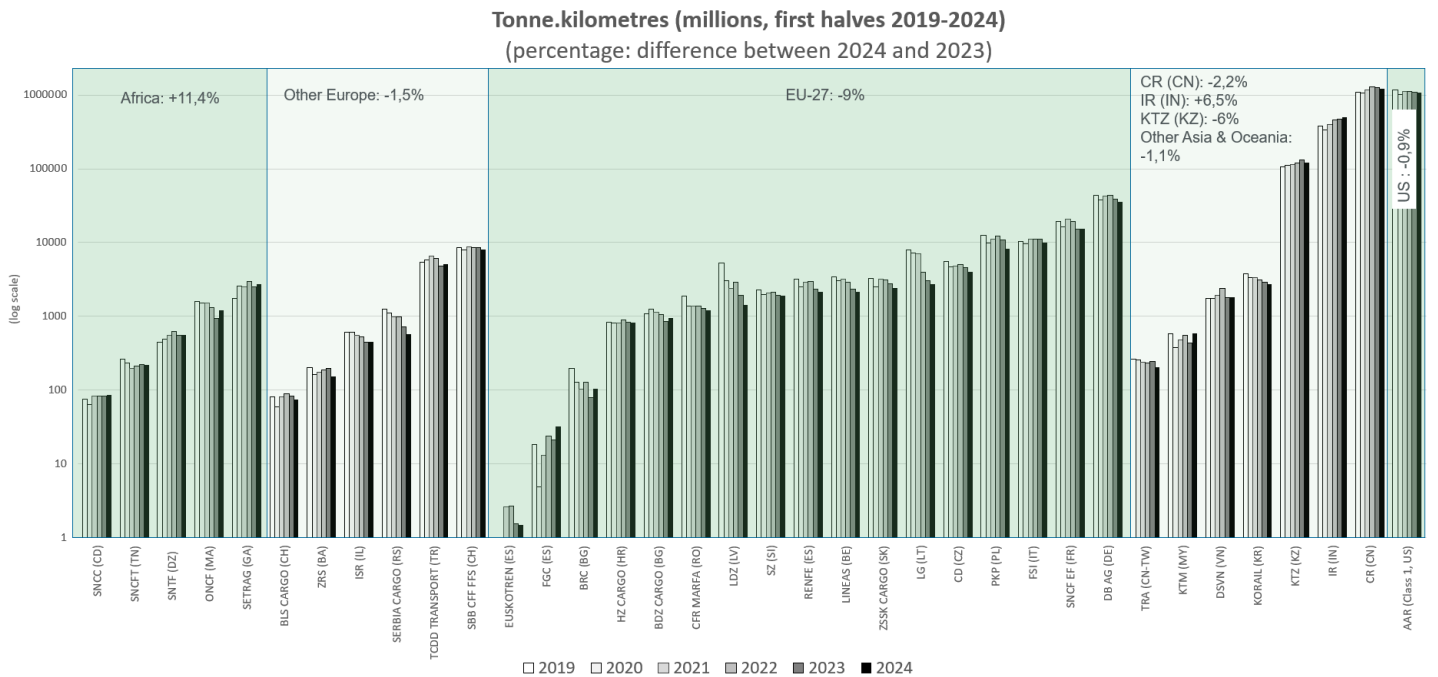

Tonne.kilometres (millions, first halves 2019-2024)
(percentage: difference between 2024 and 2023)

Figure 2: Freight traffic (tonne-kilometres in millions), with the key being the same as for Figure 2. The y axis is also a logarithmic scale. AAR data only relates to traffic carried by Class 1 companies in the United States.

Passenger.kilometres Index
January 2019-June 2024
Reference: January 2019 = 100

Tonne-kilometres Index
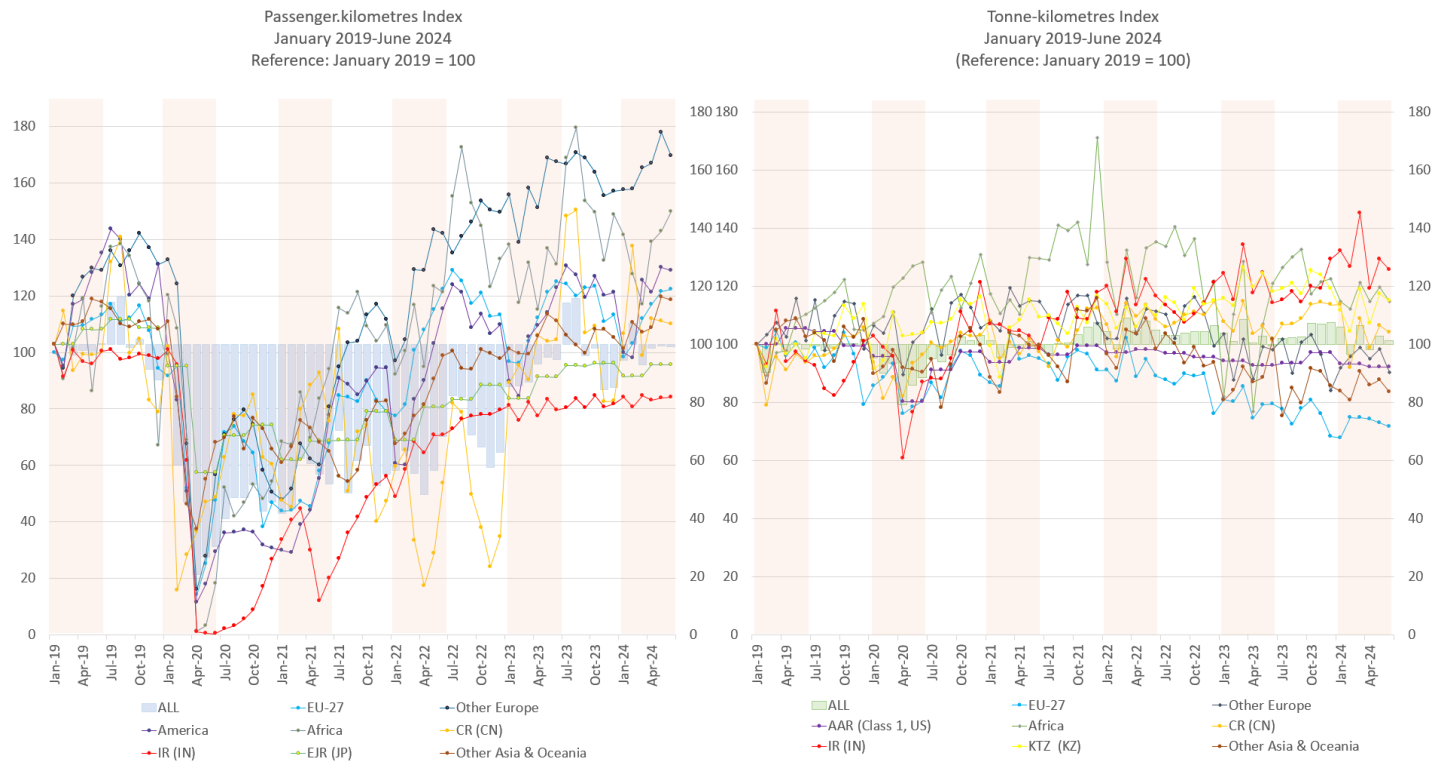January 2019-June 2024
(Reference: January 2019 = 100)

Figure 3: The left-hand graph shows the monthly passenger traffic index for the January 2019 to June 2024 period. The base reference (100) for the index is January 2019. Data available for some UIC railway members has been combined and is presented by region: "EU-27", "Other Europe", "Africa", "America", "Other Asia & Oceania" plus China Railways (CR), Indian Railways (IR) and East Japan Railways (EJR). The list of railways included in the aggregates, e.g. "EU-27", is shown in Figure 1. The right-hand graph shows the same data but for freight traffic. The aggregates of UIC railway members, for which data is available, are represented by region: "EU-27", "Other Europe", "Africa" and "Other Asia and Oceania" (see Figure 2 for the list of railways), plus China Railways (CR), Indian Railways (IR), Kazakhstan Railways (KTZ) and Class 1 companies from the Association of American Railroads in the US. EJR and AAR data was originally provided by quarter, and has therefore been adjusted to the month by month scale used in both graphs. Data from Indian Railways has been calculated using monthly passengers/tonnes carried, multiplied by the mean distance covered by one passenger/tonne.