

# Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report

Based on the United Nations Global Survey  
on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation **2023**



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# Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report 2023

Based on the United Nations Global Survey on Digital  
and Sustainable Trade Facilitation



UNECE



UNITED NATIONS  
UNCTAD

# FOREWORD

Amidst the persistent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical turbulence, high inflation and supply chain disruption, international trade has suffered from increased trade costs and uncertainties. Nevertheless, countries have been steadfast in their pursuit of a seamless and efficient trading environment by simplifying and digitalizing formalities in international trade.

This report presents the results of the fifth UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. It brings together information from countries worldwide pertaining to the implementation of a wide range of trade facilitation measures, going beyond the scope of measures included in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The report endeavours to foster a forward-looking approach to trade facilitation for countries and development partners, facilitating a deeper comprehension and monitoring of progress, supporting evidence-based public policies, sharing good practices, and identifying emerging needs for capacity-building and technical assistance.

The fifth Global Survey builds upon the earlier editions, which were undertaken as a key initiative under the Joint United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRC) Approach to Trade Facilitation by five UNRCs for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Western Asia (ESCWA), with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) joining as a full partner from this fifth iteration. It underscores the significance of trade digitalization not solely in enhancing regulatory compliance and reducing illicit financial flows, but also as an effective means of mitigating trade disruptions arising from recent crises. The fifth Global Survey continues to pay special attention to sectors and groups with special needs, namely the agricultural sector, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and women traders, as international trade is one of the key means of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the Survey has expanded over time to encompass an extensive array of trade facilitation measures capable of bolstering sustainable and resilient international trade, including measures related to trade finance facilitation, trade facilitation in times of crisis, trade facilitation for e-commerce and trade facilitation and wildlife protection.

Against this backdrop, we hope that this report and the associated interactive database at [unftsurvey.org](http://unftsurvey.org) will prove instrumental in making trade more accessible, cost-effective, resilient and sustainable through the application of technology and innovation to international trade procedures.

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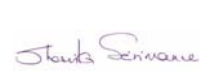
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The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), an intergovernmental body serviced by the ECE, and the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT), a knowledge community supported by ESCAP and ECE, greatly facilitated data collection in the ECE region.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's interconnected world, trade can serve as a driver of economic growth and sustainable development if the appropriate policies are implemented. According to the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database, many regions worldwide still face high trade costs. The lingering effects of the COVID-19 crisis continue to hinder international trade, while geopolitical conflicts have introduced further disruptions to global supply chains, and high inflation contributes to increased trade costs and uncertainties. While in 2021 global merchandise trade volumes displayed a strong recovery from the contraction it suffered in 2020 due to the pandemic, trade growth slowed down in 2022, and sluggish growth is projected to continue into 2023. In this regard, trade facilitation plays a critical role in supporting sustainable development by enabling more efficient and transparent trade procedures, enhancing the resilience of global supply chains and decreasing overall trade costs.

This report presents the findings of the 2023 UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, highlighting the progress made across 163 countries. The analysis is based on 60 trade facilitation measures, classified into four groups: "General Trade Facilitation", "Digital Trade Facilitation", "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" and "Other Trade Facilitation." It is further categorized into 11 subgroups covering both binding and non-binding WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) measures as well as measures beyond the scope of the WTO TFA. The report highlights that significant trade cost reductions could be achieved by implementing paperless and cross-border paperless trade measures, surpassing the impact of conventional trade facilitation measures.

The Survey found that the global average trade facilitation implementation rate of 31 general and digital trade facilitation measures stands at 69%. Despite continued disturbances in international trade, significant progress was observed in making more efficient trade facilitation over the past two years, with the overall implementation rate increased by almost 6 percentage points between 2021 and 2023 for the common countries that participated in both Surveys. Substantial progress was also observed among countries with special needs, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs). This growth is particularly impressive, given the significant challenges and trade disruptions caused by a variety of supply chain shocks in this period.

Implementation rates still vary significantly between world regions. Developed Economies showed the highest regional implementation rate in the Survey, with 85% implementation of the 31 common "General" and "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures. South-East and East Asia recorded the highest scores among developing economies with 77%, followed by the South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region at 73%, and Latin America and the Caribbean at 71%. On the other hand, some regions are lagging behind, with Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific Islands regions showing the two lowest regional implementation scores at 57% and 42%, respectively. Countries with special needs – LDCs, Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – have significantly lower than global average implementation rate despite steady progress made, requiring specific and adequate support.

"Digital Trade Facilitation" measures have shown improvements, particularly 'paperless trade facilitation' which stands at 70%. However, the implementation level of 'cross-border paperless trade' remains low at 47%, with significant challenges remaining in enabling the electronic exchange and legal recognition of trade-related data and documents across borders. The Survey findings suggest that adopting international standards and harmonizing legal and technical frameworks through closer intergovernmental cooperation on cross-border paperless trade is an essential step in building greater interoperability between national systems.

When expanding the analysis to include a broader range of 40 trade facilitation measures, including the “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” measures, the Survey shows a lower level of implementation: the global average implementation rate stands at 65%, a decrease of 4 percentage points compared to the 31 general and digital trade facilitation measures. It points to insufficient adoption of sustainable trade facilitation measures lacking support for women traders and other groups and sectors with special needs.

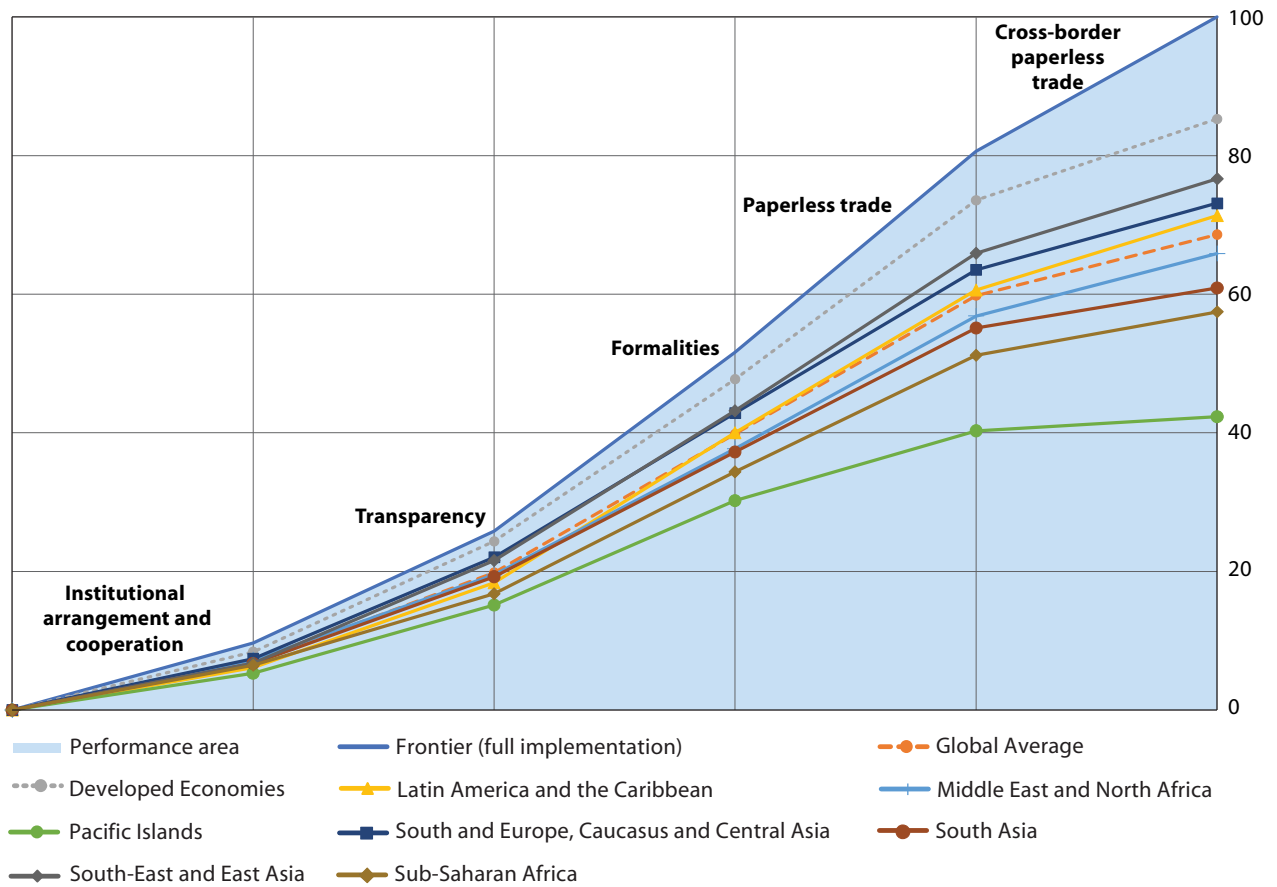
Based on the Survey data collected, a trade cost model is developed and estimated to assess and quantify the potential trade cost reduction associated with different types of trade facilitation reform scenarios. The model ranges from partial implementation of only binding provisions in the WTO TFA to an ambitious digital trade facilitation agenda characterized by the full implementation of the cross-border paperless trade measures in the Survey. Empirical evidence shows that full digital trade facilitation implementation beyond the WTO TFA commitments could cut average trade cost globally by nearly 14%, almost 7 percentage points more than what could be expected from meeting the binding and non-binding requirements of the WTO TFA.

Trade facilitation may be seen as a step-by-step process, advancing through various groups of measures included in the Survey – i.e., enhancing the institutional arrangement, establishing transparency, implementing efficient trade formalities and developing paperless trade systems. Subsequently, the focus will shift toward electronic exchange of trade data and documents across borders, with emphasis on their secure use by authorized stakeholders along the international supply chain (see the following figure). Countries need to collaborate harmoniously in the development and implementation of legal and technical protocols required for the seamless exchange of regulatory and commercial data as well as documentation within and between countries. Regional trade agreements, including the PACER Plus in the Pacific Islands region, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Africa and the ASEAN Single Window Agreement, are excellent venues for fostering improved digital trade cooperation. Other targeted initiatives promoting digital trade facilitation, such as the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and E-business (UN/CEFACT) and the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, play an important role in facilitating more integrated digital trading systems.

All these efforts towards making trade facilitation more transparent and efficient should also ensure that they support achieving sustainable and inclusive development by catering to the needs of groups with special needs, namely SMEs, agricultural sector and women. Empowering these groups with the necessary resources and support will enhance their ability to engage in trade and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable trade environment. As the current implementation rates indicate, there is significant room for improvement in this regard. Countries are, therefore encouraged to develop trade facilitation strategies in a more comprehensive and inclusive manner. In addition, continued and sustained efforts should be made to strengthen the capacity of countries to contribute to recovery and prepare adequately for future crises.

This report should be read in conjunction with the upcoming regional reports on the results of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023, which will become available at <https://untfsurvey.org/>

## Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org), 2023.

Note: The figure shows global cumulative trade facilitation implementation scores for different regions in the five sub-groups of trade facilitation measures included in the Survey. Scores are based on the equally weighted implementation of 31 trade facilitation measures, but the number of measures varies in the five sub-groups. Full implementation of all measures = 100.



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# ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEO	Authorized Economic Operator
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASW	ASEAN Single Window
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least Developed Country
LLDC	Landlocked Developing Country
MOU	Memorandums of Understanding
NTMs	Non-Tariff Measures
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SADC	South African Development Community
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
TIID	Trade, Investment and Innovation Division
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNNExT	United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport for Asia and the Pacific
UNRC	United Nations Regional Commission
WTO	World Trade Organization





# Introduction

## 1.1. Background and objectives

The importance of reducing trade costs is widely acknowledged, as it serves as a fundamental enabler for economies to actively participate in regional and global value chains. Reducing trade costs and barriers to trade is crucial for realizing the benefits of trade, as lower trade costs incentivize countries to deepen trade with one another and allow more stakeholders to thrive in the global economy. A growing literature has also noted trade's potential to enhance growth and sustainable development through climate-smart trade facilitation.<sup>1</sup> Yet, this requires a concerted effort to build an enabling environment through proactive and inclusive trade policies.

According to the latest data from the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database, many regions worldwide still face high trade costs (table 1). This is particularly true for trade among the selected economies in Sub-Saharan Africa (233% average tariff equivalent on the value of goods traded), North Africa (157%) and South Asia (161%). On the contrary, trading costs among the three largest economies in the Europe-3 and those between China, the Republic of Korea and Japan are significantly lower with 42% and 58% tariff-equivalent, respectively.

The lingering effects of the COVID-19 crisis continue to hinder international trade, while geopolitical conflicts have introduced further disruptions to global supply chains, and high inflation contributes to increased trade costs and uncertainties. While global merchandise trade volumes

<sup>1</sup> ESCAP, 2021. The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2021: Accelerating climate-smart trade and investment for sustainable development.


**Intra- and extra-regional comprehensive trade costs (excluding tariff costs)**

Region	ASEAN-4	East Asia-3	South Asia-4	Latin America-4	North Africa-3	Sub-Saharan Africa-3	Western Asia-3	Europe-3	North America
ASEAN-4	74.9% (-0.6%)	78.6% (3.2%)	129.6% (-1.0%)	151.7% (-0.3%)	211.0% (-12.5%)	217.9% (7.4%)	181.2% (7.5%)	105.3% (-0.2%)	101.9% (-1.2%)
East Asia-3	78.6% (3.2%)	58.0% (10.0%)	129.3% (5.0%)	110.9% (1.5%)	173.7% (3.8%)	167.7% (4.9%)	162.2% (2.1%)	85.6% (1.0%)	78.1% (1.7%)
South Asia-4	129.6% (-1.0%)	129.3% (5.0%)	160.7% (36.5%)	187.1% (-3.4%)	163.7% (-17.8%)	212.6% (4.3%)	168.7% (3.2%)	117.4% (3.4%)	120.3% (2.2%)
Latin America-4	151.7% (-0.3%)	110.9% (1.5%)	187.1% (-3.4%)	102.8% (6.3%)	214.4% (-19.6%)	304.1% (7.0%)	226.0% (-1.7%)	113.6% (1.4%)	92.4% (-1.3%)
North Africa-3	211.0% (-12.5%)	173.7% (3.8%)	163.7% (-17.8%)	214.4% (-19.6%)	157.1% (-19.5%)	308.5% (20.4%)	139.2% (7.5%)	143.0% (6.1%)	229.8% (35.3%)
Sub-Saharan Africa-3	217.9% (7.4%)	167.7% (4.9%)	212.6% (4.3%)	304.1% (7.0%)	308.5% (20.4%)	232.8% (28.1%)	227.8% (11.9%)	153.8% (21.4%)	177.0% (8.3%)
Western Asia-3	181.2% (7.5%)	162.2% (2.1%)	168.7% (3.2%)	226.0% (-1.7%)	139.2% (7.5%)	227.8% (11.9%)	95.1% (15.5%)	152.0% (4.1%)	152.9% (-1.1%)
Europe-3	105.3% (-0.2%)	85.6% (1.0%)	117.4% (3.4%)	113.6% (1.4%)	143.0% (6.1%)	153.8% (21.4%)	152.0% (4.1%)	41.8% (-2.7%)	76.3% (0.3%)
North America	101.9% (-1.2%)	78.1% (1.7%)	120.3% (2.2%)	92.4% (-1.3%)	229.8% (35.3%)	177.0% (8.3%)	152.9% (-1.1%)	76.3% (0.3%)	30.2% (2.1%)

Source: ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database, updated July 2023. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database>

Note: Trade costs may be interpreted as tariff equivalents. Percentage changes in trade costs between 2010-2015 and 2016-2021 are in parentheses.

ASEAN-4: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand; East Asia-3: China, Japan and the Republic of Korea; South Asia-4: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; Latin America-4: Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay; North Africa-3: Morocco, Egypt and Sudan; Sub-Saharan Africa-3: Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana; Western Asia-3: Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia; North America: Canada and the United States of America; Europe-3: Germany, France and United Kingdom.

displayed a strong recovery after the pandemic, trade growth faced setbacks in 2022, and sluggish growth is projected to continue in 2023.

Non-tariff measures (NTMs) are estimated to contribute more than twice as much to trade costs compared to tariffs, making NTMs crucial to address these sources for further trade cost reductions.<sup>2</sup> This is particularly true for environmental goods, which are more heavily burdened by trade barriers than carbon-intensive

fossil fuels.<sup>3</sup> Approaches to reducing trade barriers are multifaceted and can include improving transport infrastructure and services as well as simplifying regulatory procedures and documentation requirements to improve the ease of trade. Trade facilitation covers a wide range of border procedures, from increased transparency to electronic exchange of data about shipments. Trade facilitation, including paperless and cross-border paperless trade, plays a critical role by enabling more efficient and transparent trade

<sup>2</sup> ESCAP, 2019. The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2019: Navigating Non-tariff Measures towards Sustainable Development.

<sup>3</sup> ESCAP 2021. The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2021: Accelerating climate-smart trade and investment for sustainable development.



procedures. By doing so, it helps to enhance the resilience of global supply chains and decrease overall trade costs, particularly in developing countries. It also benefits SMEs, for which the costs of trading can be disproportionately high. The importance of trade facilitation is evidenced by the continued and concerted effort by countries worldwide to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and by regional initiatives, such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>4</sup>

Against this backdrop, this report presents a comprehensive overview of the results from the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023. Furthermore, the potential impacts of implementing trade facilitation measures are assessed based on a trade cost model, highlighting the potential benefits of greater implementation of these measures.

## 1.2. Survey instrument and methodology

The fifth UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (hereafter referred to as “the Survey”) builds upon the original instrument (formerly known as the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation). Under the Joint UNRCs Approach to Trade Facilitation, and following extensive discussions at the Global Trade Facilitation Forum 2013,<sup>5</sup> it was decided that the regional surveys should be conducted at the global level jointly by all UNRCs. Since 2015, the UNRCs have systematically collected and analysed information on the implementation of trade facilitation measures around the world. In 2023, UNCTAD became a full partner to the Survey.

The 2023 Survey includes 60 trade facilitation measures, which are classified into four groups and 11 sub-groups (table 2). The first group, “General Trade Facilitation”, includes many WTO TFA measures with sub-groups of ‘transparency’,

‘formalities’, ‘institutional arrangement and cooperation’ and ‘transit facilitation’. The second group, “Digital Trade Facilitation” measures, includes ‘paperless trade’ and ‘cross-border paperless trade’. The third group of “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” measures includes ‘trade facilitation for SMEs’, ‘agricultural trade facilitation’ and ‘women in trade facilitation’ sub-groups. The fourth group, “Other Trade Facilitation”, comes with two sub-groups: ‘trade finance facilitation’, and ‘trade facilitation in times of crisis’. ‘Trade facilitation for e-commerce’ and ‘trade facilitation and wildlife protection’ measures were pilot-tested in the Survey in 2023.

The Survey takes into consideration the final list of commitments made in the WTO TFA and additional trade facilitation measures, especially digital and sustainable ones, ensuring that trade facilitation is not only efficient but also beneficial for all stakeholders. Most “Digital Trade Facilitation” measures, particularly for ‘cross-border paperless trade’, are not specifically featured in the WTO TFA. In addition, most “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” measures are not specifically included in the WTO TFA, except for some of the ‘agricultural trade facilitation’ measures. The “Other Trade Facilitation” group was added in light of trade finance’s key role in facilitating trade flows as well as the challenges posed by crises to the global trade and supply chain, also noting the rising importance of cross-border e-commerce and the increasing need to combat illegal wildlife trade.

Following the introduction to the Survey instrument and methodology, a global overview of the implementation of trade facilitation measures across the developed economies and seven developing regions as well as groups of countries with special needs is provided in Section 2. This is followed by a closer look at the implementation levels of various groups and sub-groups of trade facilitation measures in Section 3. Section 4 applies a trade cost model to examine the impact of trade facilitation on trade costs. Finally, Section 5 highlights the key findings and proposes a way forward for advancing trade facilitation.

<sup>4</sup> For details, see <https://www.unescap.org/kp/cpta>

<sup>5</sup> The Global Trade Facilitation Forum was organized jointly by all the UNRCs in Bangkok in November 2013.


**Grouping of trade facilitation measures and correspondence with TFA articles**

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
General Trade Facilitation	Transparency	Publication of existing import-export regulations on the Internet	1.2
		Stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)	2.2
		Advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation	2.1
		Advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods	3
		Independent appeal mechanism	4
	Formalities	Risk management	7.4
		Pre-arrival processing	7.1
		Post-clearance audits	7.5
		Separation of release from final determination of Customs duties, taxes, fees and charges	7.3
		Establishment and publication of average release times	7.6
		TF measures for authorized operators	7.7
		Expedited shipments	7.8
		Acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export or transit formalities	10.2.1
	Institutional arrangement and cooperation	National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body	23
		National legislative framework and/or institutional arrangements for border agencies cooperation	8
		Government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities	
		Alignment of working days and hours with neighbouring countries at border crossings	8.2(a)
		Alignment of formalities and procedures with neighbouring countries at border crossings	8.2(b)
	Transit	Transit facilitation agreement(s)	
		Limit the physical inspections of transit goods and use risk assessment	10.5
Supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation		11.9	
Cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit		11.16	
Digital Trade Facilitation	Paperless trade	Automated Customs System	
		Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies	
		Electronic Single Window System	10.4
		Electronic submission of Customs Declarations	
		Electronic application and issuance of import and export permit	
		Electronic submission of Sea Cargo Manifests	
		Electronic submission of Air Cargo Manifests	

Table 2. (continued)

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
Digital Trade Facilitation (continued)		Electronic application and issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin	
		E-Payment of Customs Duties and Fees	7.2
		Electronic application for Customs refunds	
	Cross-border paperless trade	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	
		Recognised certification authority	
		Electronic exchange of Customs Declaration	
		Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin	
		Electronic exchange of Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Certificate	
	Paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit		
Sustainable Trade Facilitation	Trade facilitation for SMEs	Trade-related information measures for SMEs	
		SMEs in AEO scheme	
		SMEs access Single Window	
		SMEs in National Trade Facilitation Committee	
		Other special measures for SMEs	
	Agricultural trade facilitation	Testing and laboratory facilities available to meet SPS of main trading partners	7.9
		National standards and accreditation bodies to facilitate compliance with SPS	
		Electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates	
		Special treatment for perishable goods	
	Women in trade facilitation	TF policy/strategy to increase women's participation in trade	
TF measures to benefit women involved in trade			
Women's membership in the National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar bodies			
Other Trade Facilitation	Trade finance facilitation	Single Window facilitates traders access to finance	
		Authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance	
		Variety of trade finance services available	
	Trade facilitation in times of crisis	Agency in place to manage trade facilitation in times of crisis and emergencies	
		Online publication of emergency trade facilitation measures	
		Coordination between countries on emergency trade facilitation measures	
		Additional trade facilitation measures to facilitate trade in times of emergencies	
		Plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises	
	Trade facilitation for e-commerce	Trade facilitation measures for cross-border e-commerce	
	Trade facilitation and wildlife protection	Electronic exchange of CITES permits/certificates	

A three-step approach was adopted to developing the dataset (box 1). Data was collected between January and July 2023. Based on the data collected, each of the measures included in the Survey was rated as “fully implemented”, “partially implemented”, “on a pilot basis”, “not implemented” or “don’t know (see annex 1 for the

definition of the various stages of implementation). A score of 3, 2, 1 or zero was assigned to each of the four implementation stages to calculate implementation rates for individual measures across countries, regions or groupings. Further details and examples on the calculation of implementation rates are available online.<sup>6</sup>



### A three-step approach to data collection and validation

**Step 1. Data submission by experts:** The Survey instrument was sent by the UNRCs and UNCTAD to trade facilitation experts (in Governments, the private sector and academia) to gather preliminary information. The questionnaire was also made publicly available online and disseminated with the support of the Survey partners, including the ASEAN, CAREC, PIFS, UN/CEFACT and the UNNExT.

**Step 2. Data verification by the UNRCs Secretariat:** The UNRCs and UNCTAD cross-checked the data collected in Step 1. Desk research and data sharing among UNRCs, UNCTAD and the Survey partners were carried out to further check the accuracy of data. Face-to-face or telephone interviews with key informants were arranged to gather additional information when needed. The outcome of Step 2 was a consistent set of responses per country.

**Step 3. Data validation by national Governments:** The UNRCs and UNCTAD sent the completed questionnaire to each national Government to ensure that the country had the opportunity to review the dataset and provide any additional information. The feedback from national Governments was incorporated in order to finalize the dataset.

The Survey covers 163 countries, which are divided into the following eight groups:

**Developed economies** (33 countries): Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

**Latin America and the Caribbean** (26 countries): Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador,

Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

**Middle East and North Africa** (15 countries): Bahrain, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen.

**Pacific Islands** (11 countries): Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

<sup>6</sup> For more details on the calculation of the scores and the methodology, see <https://www.untfsurvey.org/about>

**South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia** (18 countries): Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

**South Asia** (8 countries): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

**South-East and East Asia** (14 countries): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

**Sub-Saharan Africa** (38 countries): Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi,

Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## 1.3. Utilization of report and data

To make the Survey as transparent and useful as possible, regional and global datasets have been made available online on the dedicated website at [unfsurvey.org](https://unfsurvey.org). Use of the data by researchers, and policy analysts and policymakers to advance understanding of the impact of different trade facilitation measures and derive evidence-based policy advice is strongly encouraged. Stakeholders interested in submitting information that may help to further improve or expand the dataset may contact the focal points listed on the dedicated website. Subject to the availability of resources, the UNRCs, UNCTAD and other willing partners will endeavour to conduct the Survey on a biennial basis.





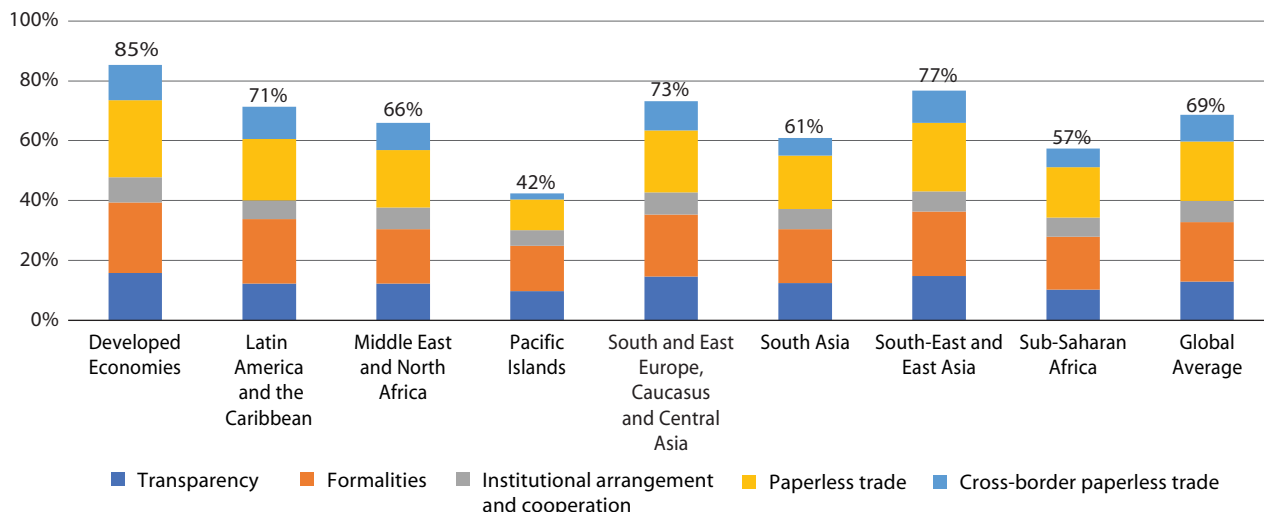
# Trade facilitation implementation: Overview

Figure 1 shows the average trade facilitation implementation rates of 31 measures by region and includes five sub-groups of measures under “General” and “Digital Trade Facilitation.” The implementation rates of trade facilitation measures for individual regions and countries are provided in annex 2. There are significant variations in the level of implementation across regions and between individual economies. For example, in the Pacific Islands, the implementation rate ranges from 19% in Nauru to 71% in Vanuatu, while in Latin America and the Caribbean region, it ranges from 47% in Saint Lucia to 88% in Mexico.

When looking at specific countries, the highest overall implementation rates are found in the Netherlands (98%), Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore (all at 97%), Belgium (96%), the Republic of Korea and Saudi Arabia (both at 95%). Among the developing regions, South-East and East Asia is led by Singapore (97%) and the Republic of Korea (95%). Mexico (88%) leads Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by Peru (87%). The Middle East and North Africa region is led by Saudi Arabia (95%), followed by Qatar (89%). South and East Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia are led by Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation (both at 87%). India (94%) has the highest implementation rate in South Asia.

**Figure 1**

**Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures around the world**



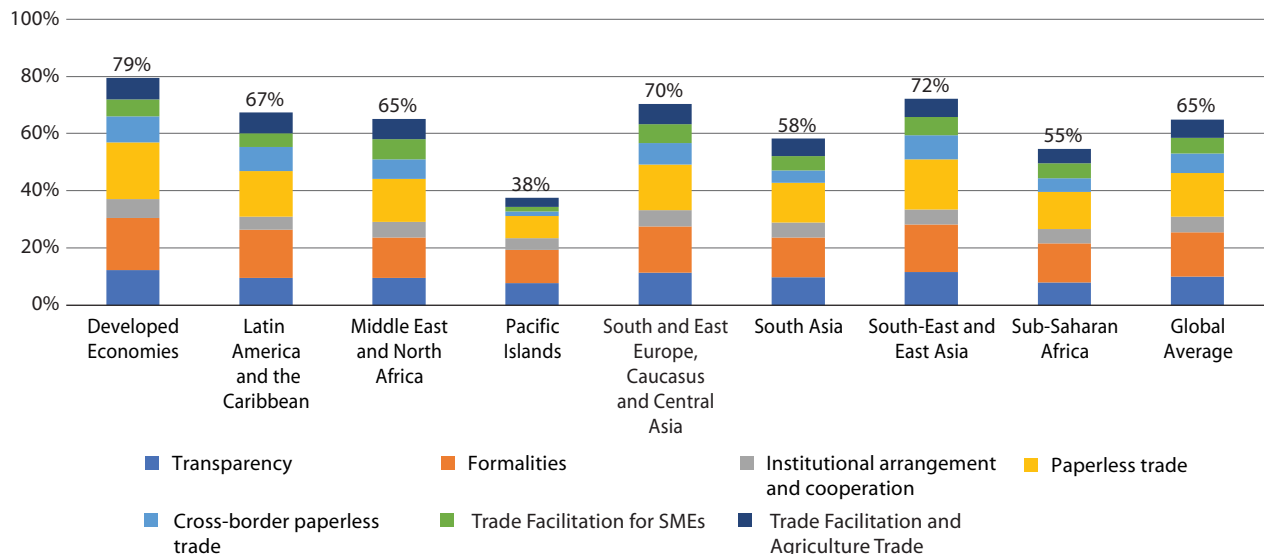
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](https://unfssurvey.org)

When broadening the analysis to a set of 40 measures that includes some measures from the “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” group, all regions show lower implementation rates than when considering the 31 core measures (figure 2).

This disparity can be attributed to the relatively lower implementation rates of nine “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” measures covering ‘trade facilitation for SMEs’, and ‘agricultural trade facilitation.’

**Figure 2**

**Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures around the world, including additional sustainable measures**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](https://unfssurvey.org)



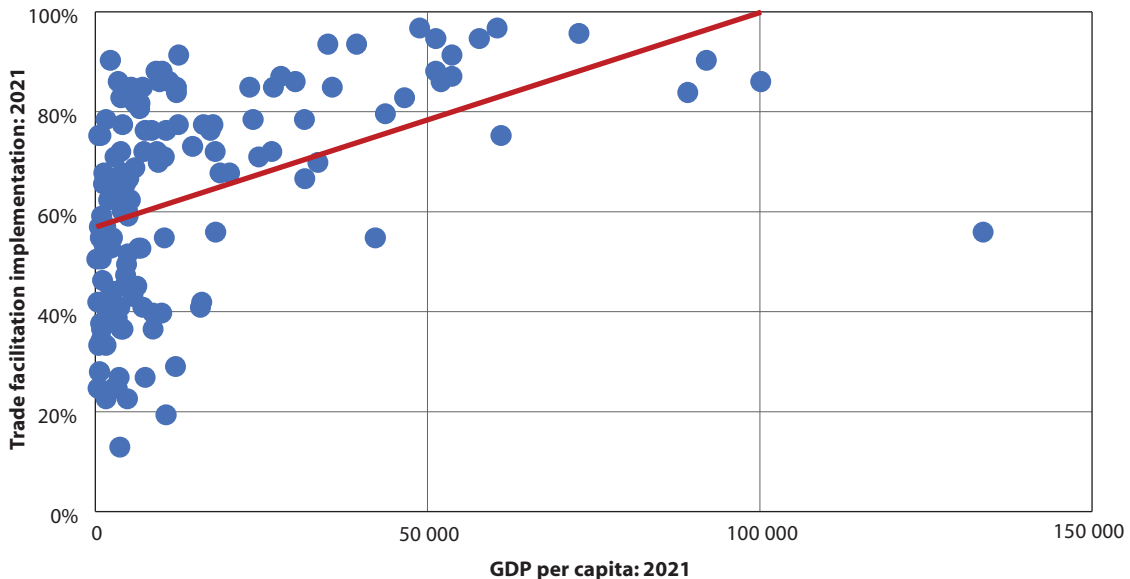
In most cases, advanced economies tend to perform better in trade facilitation than developing economies. However, this is not always the case.

As shown in figure 3, 54 out of 90 (or 60%) countries with a GDP per capita below US\$ 10,000 have achieved implementation rates of more than 50%.



Figure  
3

### Average trade facilitation implementation rates and GDP per capita



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org); World Bank World Development Indicators, accessed 2023.

## 2.1. Implementation in countries with special needs

The data presented in figure 4 shows the implementation rates of the 31 “General” and “Digital Trade Facilitation” measures across 163 economies in the developed countries, seven developing regions, and three groups of countries with special needs – Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (see annex 3 for the list of countries in each grouping).<sup>7</sup>

According to the 2023 Survey, the global average trade facilitation implementation rate of the 31 core “General” and “Digital Trade Facilitation” measures stands at 69% overall. Implementation rates still vary greatly between regions of the world. Developed Economies showed the best performance in the Survey, with an 85% implementation rate of the 31 core “General” and “Digital Trade Facilitation” measures. South-East and East Asia recorded the highest score among Developing Economies with 77%, followed by the South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region at 73% and Latin America and the Caribbean at 71%.

<sup>7</sup> Among the 60 measures surveyed across UNRCs, three measures – Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests, Alignment of Working Days and Hours with Neighbouring Countries at Border Crossings, and Alignment of Formalities and Procedures with Neighbouring Countries at Border Crossings – are excluded when calculating the overall score as they are not relevant to all countries surveyed. Four transit facilitation measures are also excluded for the same reason. In addition, Sustainable Trade Facilitation and Other Trade Facilitation are excluded, as these were not included in the original Survey for comparability.

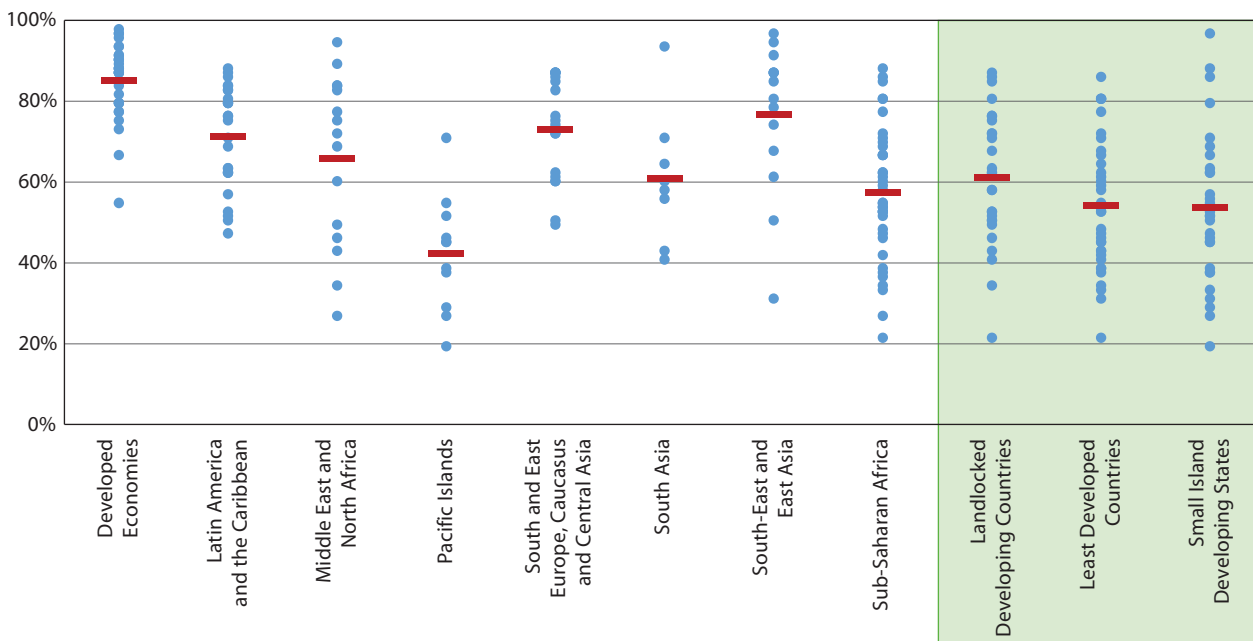
On the other hand, some regions are still catching up, with the Sub-Saharan Africa and Pacific Islands regions showing the two lowest regional implementation scores at 57% and 42%, respectively. A partial explanation for this finding relates to geographical limitations, with many countries in these regions facing extra challenges for trade facilitation due to their size, remoteness or lack of access to sea-trading routes. Further, in both regions, implementation of ‘paperless trade’ and ‘cross-border paperless trade’ measures in particular remains low. The measures in these sub-groups can require a high degree of cooperation between trading partners in order to be considered “fully implemented.” Therefore, the establishment of more regional trade agreements and trade facilitation initiatives can be a catalyst for improved digital trade cooperation.

range between 53% and 61%, which is significantly lower than the global average implementation rate of 69%. Connectivity barriers, such as poor infrastructure, geographic factors that inhibit trade facilitation or lack of capacities caused by multiple factors, put these countries at a disadvantage. LDCs in particular, are the most vulnerable segment of the international community, with poor infrastructure and limited capacities and resources. LLDCs lack direct access to the sea, which makes trade logistics more complex and expensive. For SIDS, high communication and logistics costs may hinder their ability to participate in international trade. Therefore, it is important for the international community to support the efforts of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS towards improving trade facilitation by addressing their specific needs and providing them with technical assistance and capacity-building support.

Figure 4 shows that the average implementation rates for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS are similar and

**Figure 4**

**Average trade facilitation implementation rates by region and in countries with special needs**



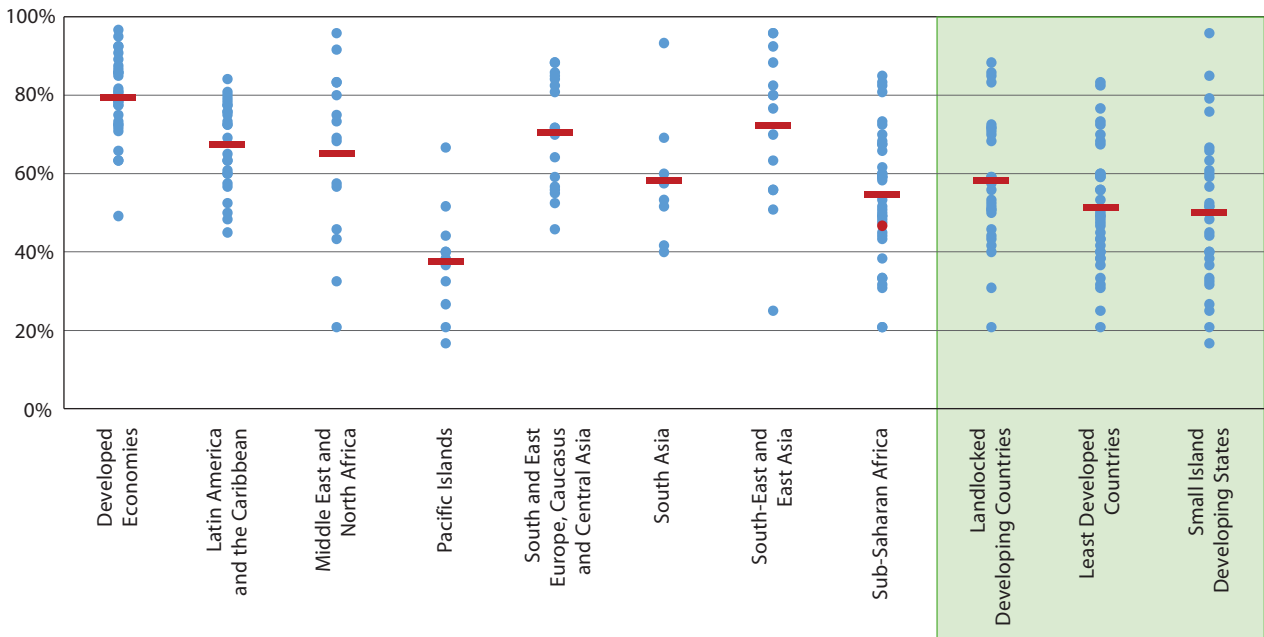
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfctsurvey.org](https://unfctsurvey.org)

Note: The red bars in the figure represent the average implementation rates for each group of countries, while the blue dots show the implementation rates for individual economies within each group.

Figure 5 introduces an additional nine measures from the “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” group, specifically ‘trade facilitation for SMEs’ and ‘agricultural trade facilitation’, expanding the scope beyond the initial 31 measures to 40 measures. This addition of nine measures to the dataset lowers the global average implementation rate to 65% (-4 percentage points). This downward trend is found in all regions, to varying degrees. The degree to which the implementation rate

decreases is significant for Developed Economies, which shed almost 6 percentage points when factoring in “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” measures. The Pacific Islands and South-East and East Asia countries decrease by 5% and 4%, respectively. This finding highlights the need for more attention to ‘agricultural trade facilitation’ and ‘trade facilitation for SMEs’ measures, fostering more inclusive and sustainable trade practices.

**Average trade facilitation implementation rates by measure and in countries with special needs, including additional sustainable measures**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untdf.org](https://untdf.org)

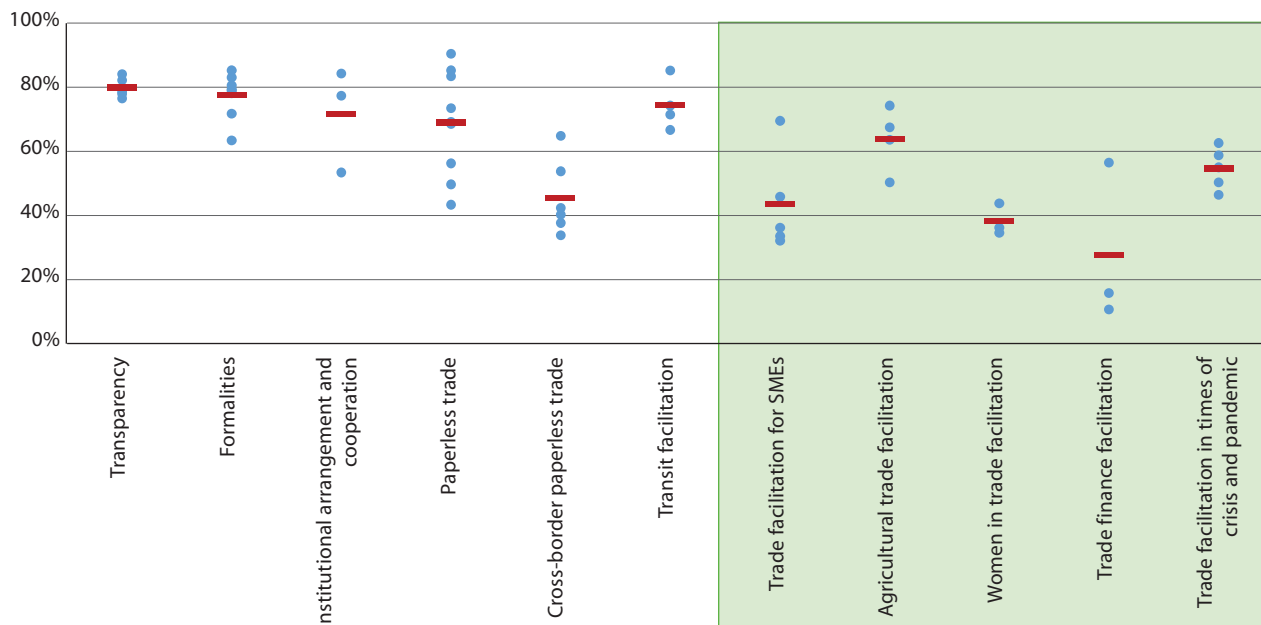
## 2.2. Most and least implemented trade facilitation measures

While progress has been made in various areas, there is still room for improvement. Indeed, when it comes to ‘trade finance facilitation’ and ‘women in trade facilitation,’ implementation rates stand at 28% and 38% respectively, making them the least implemented sub-groups covered in the Survey (figure 6). Trade finance facilitation has a particular

impact on SMEs, which in many cases lack the resources necessary to participate in international trade and digitalize their trade processes. Firms that are able to export are, on average, more profitable than those limited to domestic markets, making access to trade finance imperative to achieving more inclusive trade. Similarly, ‘women in trade facilitation’ is crucial, with its significance contributing to the broader goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by enhancing women’s participation and contribution in trade facilitation.



Implementation rates of different groups of trade facilitation measures



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](http://untfsurvey.org)

Table 3 offers insights into the progress of implementing trade facilitation measures within each sub-group examined in the Survey. According to figure 6 and table 3, the sub-group ‘transparency’ has witnessed the highest level of implementation, with an implementation rate of 80%. Among the measures in this sub-group, the ‘stakeholders’ consultation on new draft regulations’ measure has been the most widely implemented, with 95% of the countries having it implemented, at least on a pilot basis. Full implementation has been achieved in nearly 64% of the countries.

After ‘transparency’ measures, ‘formalities’ and ‘transit facilitation’ measures exhibit the highest rates of implementation, at 78% and 74%, respectively. Within the ‘formalities’ sub-group, measures implemented by most of the countries are ‘risk management’ (96%), ‘post-clearance audits’ (96%), and the ‘separation of release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees

and charges’ (94%). However, there is still room for improvement in measures such as the ‘establishment and publication of average release times’, which currently stands at 84% (table 3). In the ‘transit facilitation’ sub-group, the majority of measures boast implementation rates surpassing 70%. Measures such as ‘limiting physical inspections of transit goods and utilizing risk assessment’ exhibit an 85% implementation rate, while ‘cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit’ stands at 74%, and ‘transit facilitation agreements’ at 71%. Nevertheless, there remains potential for enhancement in the measure ‘supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation,’ which currently has an implementation rate of 67%. Overall, the Survey results signify positive advances in trade facilitation, with significant strides in ‘formalities’ and ‘transit facilitation’ measures. To build on this, targeted efforts should enhance ‘supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation,’ optimizing trade processes and outcomes.


**Most and least implemented measures**

Sub-group	Most implemented (% of countries)		Least implemented (% of countries)	
	Measure	Implemented fully, partially and on a pilot basis (%) / full implementation (%)	Measure	Implemented fully, partially and on a pilot basis (%) / full implementation (%)
Transparency	Stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)	95.1 / 63.8	Advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods	88.3 / 57.7
Formalities	Risk management	96.3 / 60.7	Establishment and publication of average release times	84.0 / 32.5
Institutional arrangement and cooperation	National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body	93.9 / 68.1	Government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities	66.3 / 31.3
Transit facilitation	Limit the physical inspections of transit goods and use risk assessment	77.9 / 60.7	Supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation	70.6 / 32.5
Paperless trade	Automated Customs System	98.8 / 76.1	Electronic Application for Customs Refunds	56.4 / 25.2
Cross-border paperless trade	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	82.8 / 37.4	Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin	54.6 / 5.5
Trade facilitation in SME policy framework	Trade-related information measures for SMEs	84.7 / 44.2	SMEs in AEO scheme	42.3 / 20.2
Trade facilitation and agriculture trade	Special treatment for perishable goods	88.3 / 47.9	Electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates	67.5 / 27.0
Women in trade facilitation	Women membership in the National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar bodies	65.6 / 12.9	TF policy/strategy to increase women's participation in trade	50.9 / 11.7
Trade finance facilitation	Variety of trade finance services available	74.2 / 28.2	Authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance	16.6 / 3.1
Trade Facilitation in times of crisis and pandemic	Coordination between countries on emergency TF measures	76.7 / 28.8	Plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises	62.0 / 23.3
Trade facilitation for e-commerce	TF measures for cross-border e-commerce	57.1 / 6.7		
Trade facilitation and wildlife protection	Electronic application, issuance and exchange of eCITES	28.8 / 0.0		

Next in line is the sub-group ‘institutional arrangement and cooperation,’ the sub-group as a whole has an average implementation rate of 72% among the included countries. The measure for the establishment of a ‘National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) or similar body’ has been implemented by 94% of countries, while the measure for ‘government agencies delegating controls to Customs authorities’ only has been implemented by 66% of countries.

Globally, the implementation level for ‘paperless trade’ is 70%. However, the implementation rates vary significantly depending on the specific measures considered. For example, the levels of implementation for ‘automated Customs systems’ and ‘Internet connection availability to Customs and other trade control agencies’ are at 90% and 85%, respectively, whereas the ‘electronic application for Customs refunds’ measure is only at 43%. The implementation level for ‘cross-border paperless trade’ is significantly lower at 47% compared to measures in other sub-groups. The measure ‘laws and regulations for electronic transactions’ has been implemented by most of the countries within this sub-group (83%), whereas only 37% of countries have fully implemented this measure. The disparity between the most and least implemented measures in this sub-group is quite significant, with the measure ‘electronic exchange of Certificates of Origin’ implemented by 55% of countries, while only 6% have achieved full implementation. Cross-border paperless trade measures remain difficult to achieve full implementation as readiness of partner countries also has an impact on a country’s ability to satisfy these requirements. This highlights the need for closer intergovernmental cooperation on cross-border paperless trade in order to build greater interoperability between national systems.

The “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” group aligns trade facilitation with sustainable development goals for inclusive economic growth and increased opportunities for sectors and groups with special needs. In this group, measures in ‘agricultural trade facilitation’ have been relatively well implemented, with an average of 64% implementation of these

measures. However, the implementation of measures to enhance opportunities for SMEs and women remains low at 43% and 38%, respectively. This indicates that there is still an insufficient presence of policies and initiatives addressing inclusiveness in trade facilitation around the world.

The average implementation of ‘trade finance facilitation’ measures is only 28%. The Survey yielded limited data for these indicators, which partially explains this low implementation rate. This finding suggests a lack of awareness among trade policy and facilitation specialists regarding trade finance processes, highlighting significant room for improvement in this area.

‘Trade facilitation in times of crisis’ is better implemented at 55%. The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented disruptions in global trade. Immediate policy responses, such as the ‘presence of an agency to manage trade facilitation in times of crises and emergencies,’ and ‘online publication of emergency trade facilitation measures,’ have been implemented to some extent to maintain global supply chains, especially for essential goods. Countries implemented short-term and emergency measures at the beginning of the pandemic. However, with COVID-19’s extended impact and lingering effects on international trade and other crises and emergencies taking place, there has also been an increase in countries adopting long-term resiliency measures.

## 2.3. Progress in implementation between 2021-2023

A total of 163 countries participated in the 2023 Survey, of which 144 countries also participated in the 2021 Survey. Only countries covered in both Surveys are analysed to assess progress in the implementation of trade facilitation measures over the previous two years in order to make the samples comparable.<sup>8</sup>

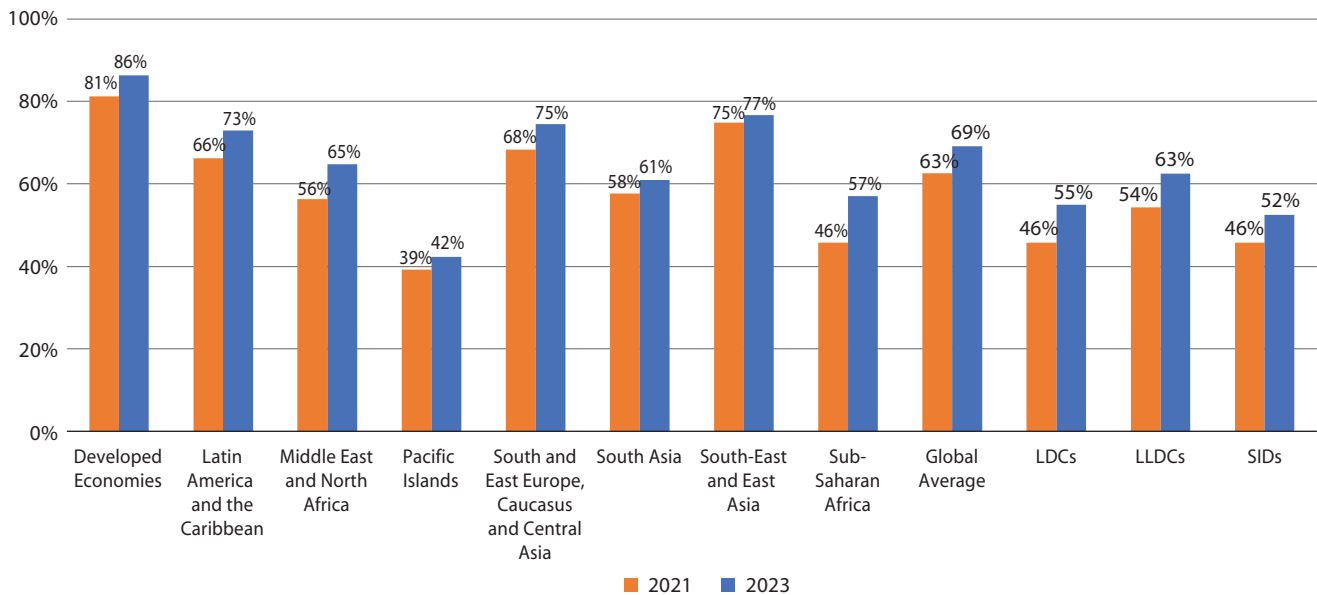
<sup>8</sup> See Annex 4 for details, including country list and comparison of average implementation rates by region using the full (163 countries) and limited (144 countries) datasets.

Figure 7 shows the progress of trade facilitation based on the regional implementation rates between 2021 and 2023. The implementation rate at the global level has increased by 6 percentage points in this period for the common countries that participated in both Surveys. The most progress is observed in Sub-Saharan Africa, where implementation rates have increased by more than 11 percentage points<sup>9</sup> followed by the Middle East and North Africa region (+8 percentage

points). Substantial progress was also observed among countries with special needs, namely LDCs, which increased by 9 percentage points, and LLDCs by 8 percentage points. This progress is particularly impressive, as countries in these groupings face additional challenges due to a lack of infrastructure, including stable access to Internet connection, and a number of factors that may make them more vulnerable to trade shocks and inflationary pressures.



**Trade facilitation implementation rates by region between 2021 and 2023**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untdf.org](https://untdf.org)

Note: Figure 7 is based on 31 general trade facilitation measures of 144 common countries.

The enduring impact of the COVID-19 crisis remains a barrier to international trade. Geopolitical conflicts have compounded disruptions in global supply chains, while high inflation has led to rising trade costs and heightened uncertainties. That said, the Survey finds that there have been some positive knock-on effects from the pandemic in the past few years, as it spurred countries to accelerate their efforts to ensure smoother trade flows and improve their

current trade facilitation practices in the regulatory, institutional and technical spheres. The additional resiliency measures enacted during the pandemic years were a major factor in the strong overall increase in global trade facilitation rates between 2021 and 2023 (an increase of 15 percentage points), and the continued efforts in this area help account for the overall 6 percentage points rise in global trade facilitation implementation between 2021 and 2023.

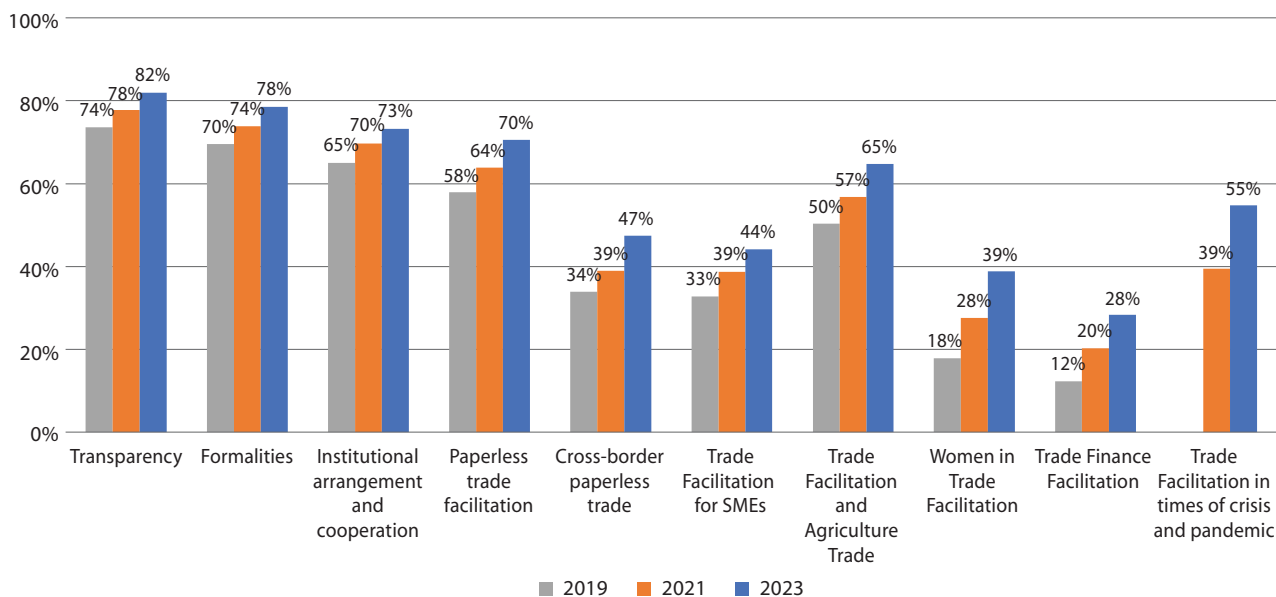
<sup>9</sup> The Sub-Saharan Africa region improved by 11%, with implementation rates in 2021 and 2023 are 46% and 57%, respectively.

Figure 8 shows the improvement between 2019 and 2023 Survey years according to the sub-groups of trade facilitation measures for 128 common countries. Progress has been made across all sub-groups of measures in each consecutive Survey. The most progress has been made in improving “Digital Trade Facilitation” with ‘paperless trade facilitation’ and ‘cross-border

paperless trade’ since 2021, with increase of 6 and 8 percentage points, respectively. The measures under “Digital Trade Facilitation” show the highest level of improvements across all sub-groups, as was the case in the 2021 Survey. This could be due to the continued pursuit of enhancing digital systems and accelerated implementation of paperless trade.<sup>10</sup>



**Progress of global implementation rates of trade facilitation measures, 2019-2023**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

Note: The comparison for 2019-2023 is based on 128 countries, including trade facilitation in times of crisis and pandemic. Based on 2021-2023 (144 countries), implementation rate of trade facilitation in times of crisis is 39% and 54% in 2021 and 2023, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> ESCAP, 2021, Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis and Pandemic: Practices and Lessons from the Asia-Pacific. Available at [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Regional%20report-Trade%20facilitation%20in%20times%20of%20crisis%20and%20pandemic\\_0.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Regional%20report-Trade%20facilitation%20in%20times%20of%20crisis%20and%20pandemic_0.pdf)









# Implementation of trade facilitation measures: A closer look

## 3.1. General trade facilitation measures

### 3.1.1. Transparency

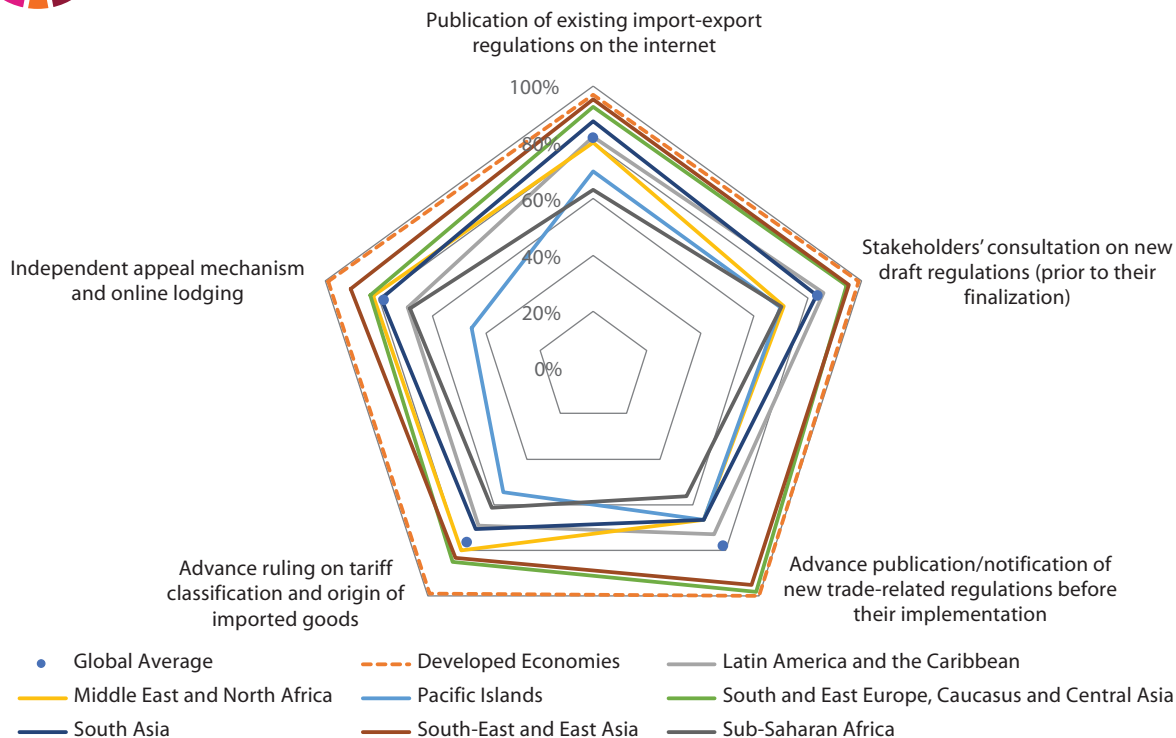
‘Transparency’ comprises five measures related to Articles 1 to 5 of the WTO TFA and Article X of the General Agreement on tariffs and Trade (GATT) on “Publication and Administration of Trade Regulations.” Transparency is of immense importance as an obligation for all members of WTO and stands as a foundational principle of the multilateral trading system. This principle requires that any policies and regulations a country implements, which may impact trade, must be effectively communicated to its trading partners. The key provision governing transparency is outlined in GATT Article X, which addresses the publication and administration of trade regulations.

The global average level of implementation of all five transparency measures exceeds 75% (figure 9). While the Developed Economies (99%), South-East and East Asia (92%), and South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (91%)

have almost fully implemented these measures, the other regions fall under the 80% global average of ‘transparency’ measures. Sub-Saharan Africa (64%) and the Pacific Islands (61%) lag far behind in this category.



**Global implementation of transparency measures in various regions**



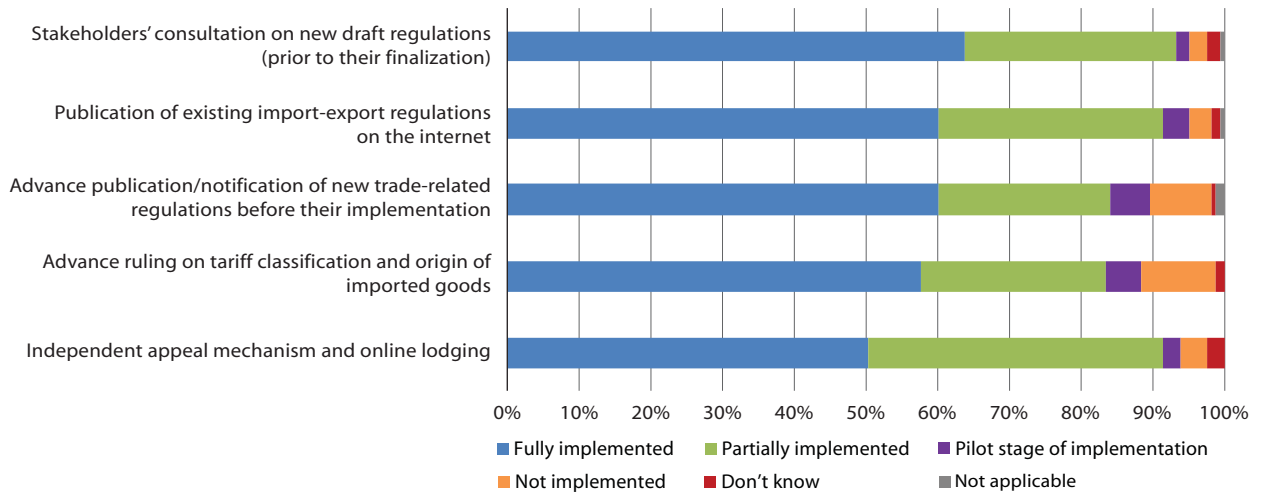
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unftsurvey.org](http://unftsurvey.org)

Figure 10 shows the percentage of countries that have partially or fully implemented the ‘transparency’ measures or that are testing them at a pilot stage. More than 90% of the countries surveyed have introduced measures of ‘stakeholders’ consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)’ as well as ‘publication of existing import-export regulations on the Internet’ and ‘independent appeal

mechanism and online lodging.’ The measure of ‘advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation’ has also been implemented by nearly 90% of the countries. The ‘issuance of advance rulings on tariff classification and origin of imported goods’ is the least implemented ‘transparency’ measure, and it has been implemented by 88% of the countries surveyed.



**State of implementation of transparency measures globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](https://unfssurvey.org)

### 3.1.2. Formalities

The 'formalities' sub-group consists of eight general trade facilitation measures in relation to Articles 7 and 10 of the WTO TFA and GATT Article VII, titled Release and Clearance of Goods.

Figure 11 indicates that most of the countries surveyed have implemented measures to reduce unnecessary formalities that impede trade. There are still significant regional variations in the implementation rates of measures within this sub-group. Challenges persist in the implementation of 'trade facilitation measures for authorized operators', especially in Pacific Islands, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. On another note, Pacific Islands and Sub-Saharan Africa show relatively low implementation rates for the 'establishment and publication of average release times'.

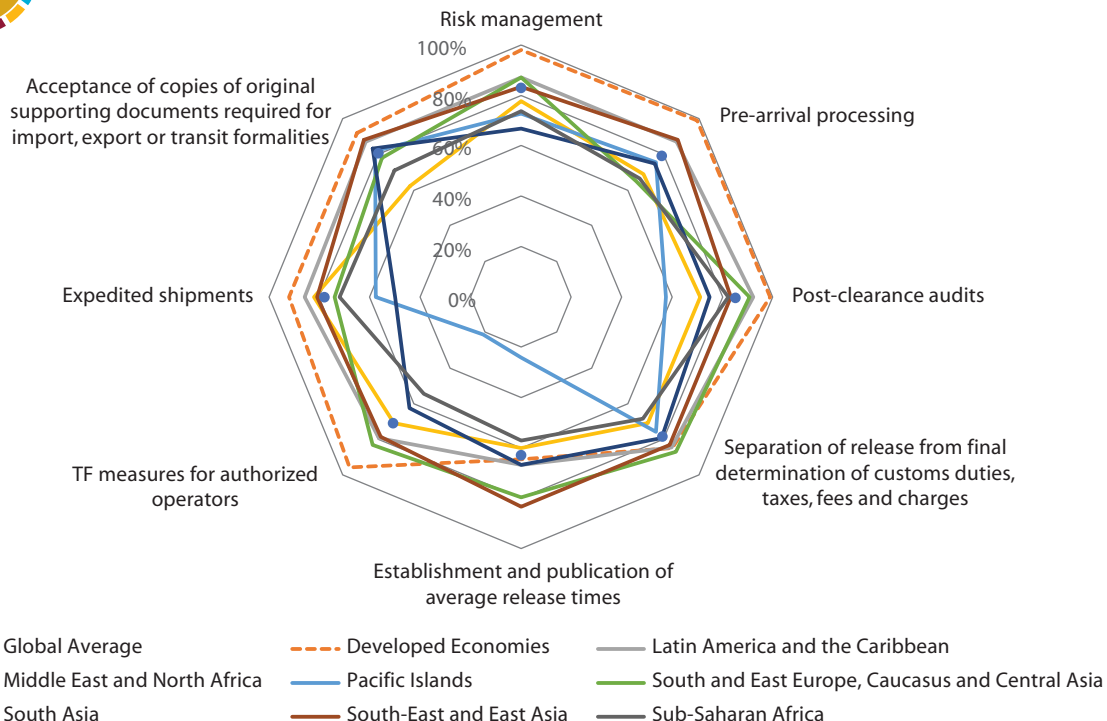
Figure 12 indicates that in 2023, most countries (85%) have achieved at least partial or full implementation rates for measures like 'risk management,' 'post-clearance audits,' and 'acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export, or transit formalities.' As noted above, the 'establishment and publication of average release times' is the

least implemented measure within this sub-group. More than 84% of countries have implemented this measure, at least on a pilot basis. However, full implementation has been achieved in less than 33% of the surveyed economies.

The implementation of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programmes, envisaged in TFA Article 7.7, is by now a common practice across Latin America and increasingly in the Caribbean. However, national AEO programmes vary in terms of their certification requirements, the types of firms that can apply, the benefits granted and their duration, among other variables. Therefore, Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) are important to ensure that a firm that has obtained AEO status in one country can enjoy equivalent benefits in other countries where it operates. In recent years, Latin American countries have concluded several MRAs, especially within their own regional economic integration blocs, and also with key extra-regional partners such as China and the United States. A milestone in this regard was the signing in May 2022 of a Regional MRA between the Customs services of 11 Latin American countries, with additional countries in the process of joining. The scope of the Regional MRA will initially focus on exporting firms certified as AEOs.

**Figure 11**

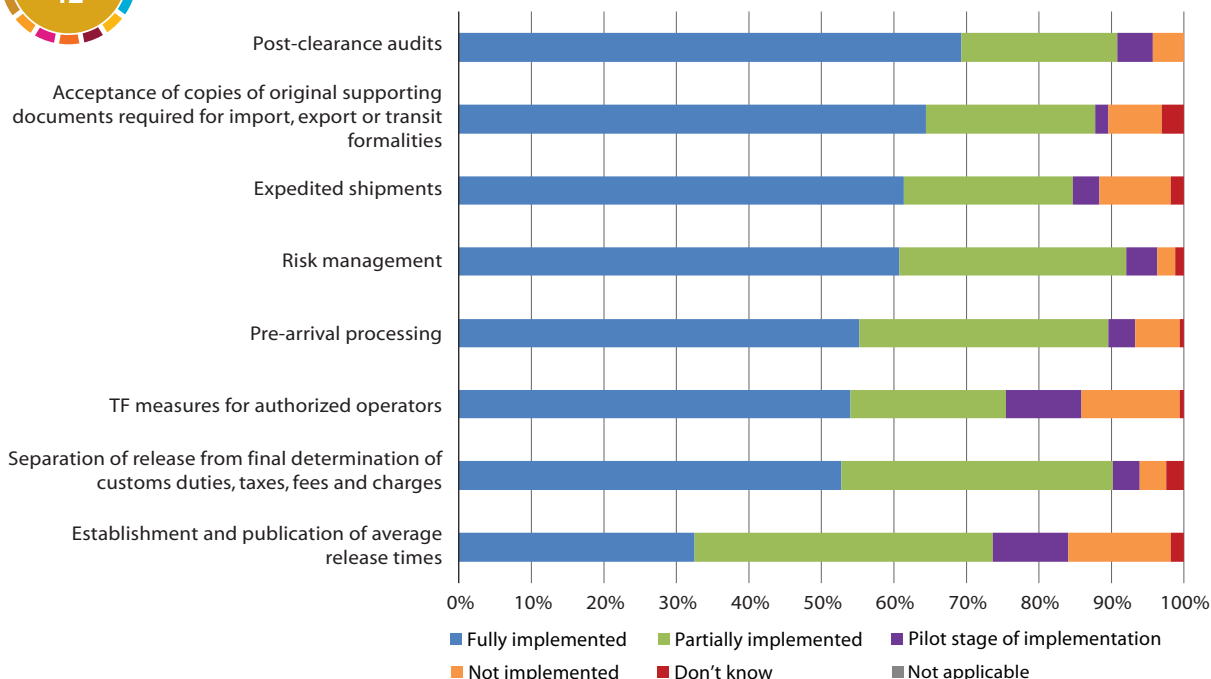
**Global implementation of formalities measures in various regions**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](http://unfssurvey.org)

**Figure 12**

**State of implementation of formalities measures globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](http://unfssurvey.org)

### 3.1.3. Institutional arrangement and cooperation

Institutional arrangements are an organizational framework for efficiently managing governmental activities and coordinating with other border agencies to fulfill their mandate. Three trade facilitation measures featured in the Survey are grouped under ‘institutional arrangement and cooperation.’ These measures are stipulated by Articles 8 and 23 of the WTO TFA that require the establishment of a national trade facilitation body as ensuring cooperation and coordination among trade-related government agencies.

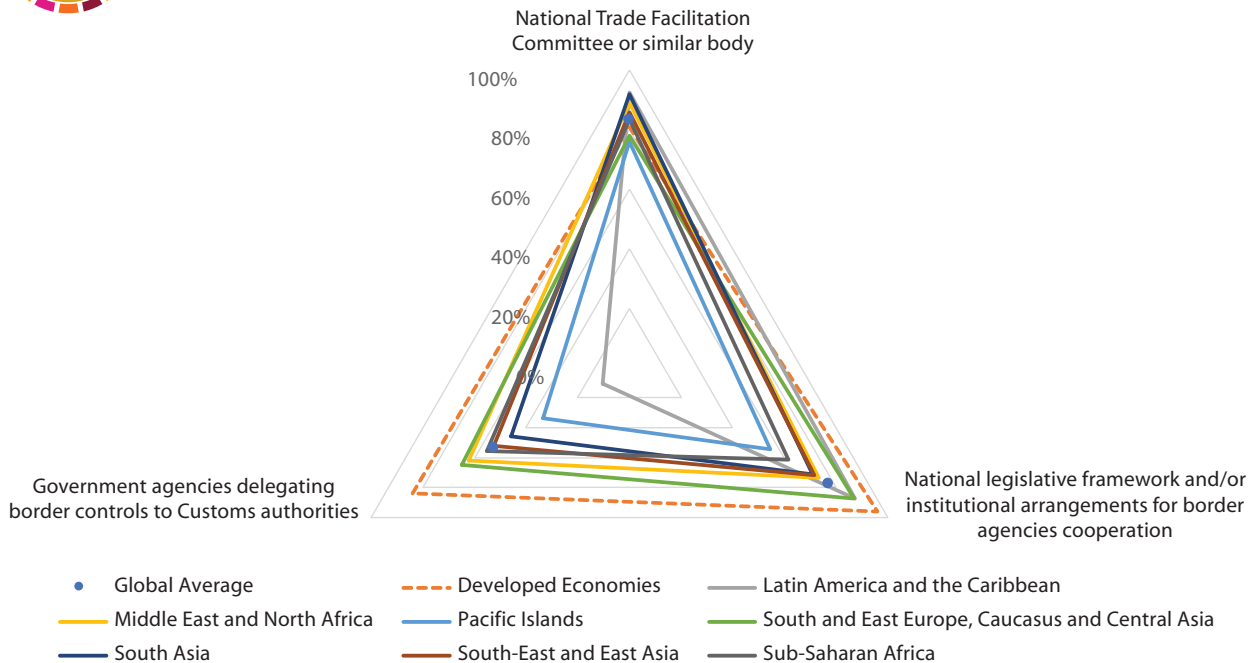
The ‘institutional arrangement and cooperation’ sub-group comprises three trade facilitation

measures highlighted in the Survey. These measures relate to the longstanding recommendation to establish a NTFC that promotes coordination and cooperation among government agencies and other stakeholders involved in trade facilitation activities. In addition, all three measures are specified in various articles of the WTO TFA.

Figure 13 shows that countries have extensively developed national legislative frameworks or institutional arrangements to ensure border agencies cooperation and established NTFCs. In contrast, the measure consisting for government agencies in delegating controls to Customs authorities is not as well implemented, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands.



**Global implementation of institutional arrangement and cooperation measures in various regions**



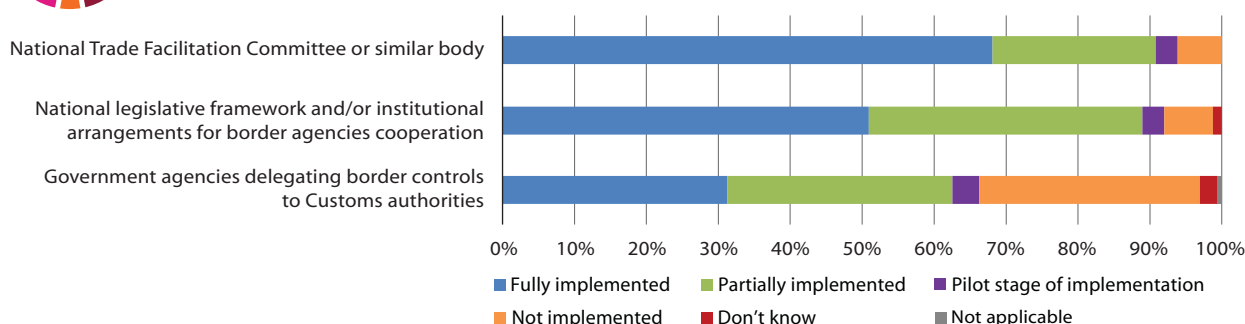
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untds.un.org/](https://untds.un.org/)

More than 90% of the countries surveyed have at least pilot stage implementation of the two following measures: ‘national legislative framework and/or institutional arrangements for border agencies cooperation’ and ‘NTFC or similar body’ measures. It has been observed that an increasing number of countries have fully established an NTFC during the past two years, now amounting to more than 68% of countries with full implementation rates. The role of NTFCs or similar

bodies in the global economic recovery following COVID-19 has been crucial and repeatedly emphasized by the international community.<sup>11</sup> Enhancing the capacity of NTFCs or similar bodies and increasing their visibility are actions countries need to consider. There is still room for progress on the second measure, ‘government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities’, with approximately 66% of countries implementing this measure to some extent (figure 14).



**Figure 14** State of implementation of institutional arrangement and cooperation measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untdsurvey.org](https://untdsurvey.org)

### 3.1.4. Transit

The Survey focuses on four trade facilitation measures that specifically address ‘transit facilitation,’ aligning with the principles outlined in WTO TFA Articles 10 and 11, which emphasize “Freedom of Transit”. The primary objective of these measures is to streamline and simplify the administrative procedures related to transit traffic, allowing for smooth transportation of goods through one or multiple transit countries. These measures hold particular importance for landlocked developing countries, as their goods frequently traverse neighbouring territories during transit.

The global implementation level of ‘transit facilitation’ measures are relatively high, averaging at 74%. Figure 15 illustrates the fact that the global average implementation level for transit measures surpasses 67% for all the measures. Notably, the Developed Economies exhibit

significantly higher implementation levels compared to developing regions, particularly in ‘supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation’ and ‘transit facilitation agreements’. Among these measures, ‘limit the physical inspections of transit goods and utilizing risk assessment’ achieves the highest implementation rate (78% overall and fully implemented by 61% of countries), followed by ‘cooperation between transit-involved agencies’ (72% overall and fully implemented by 47% of countries) (figure 16).

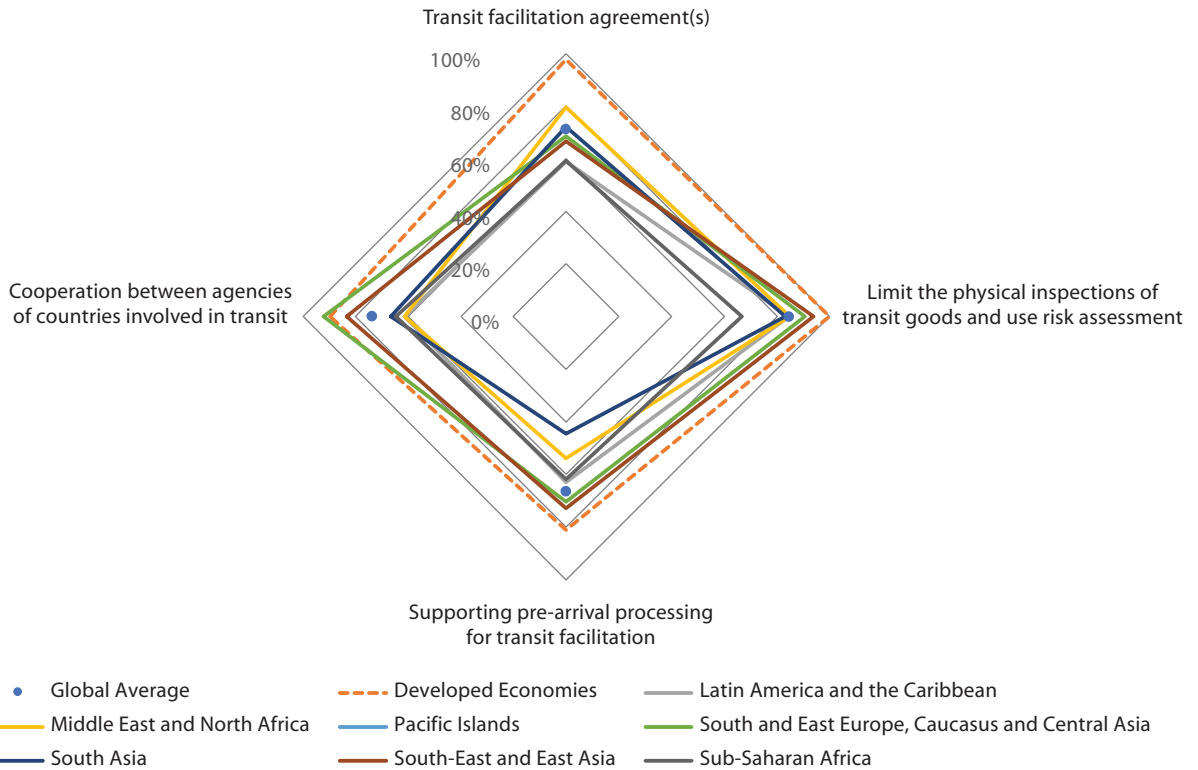
As shown in table 2, many WTO TFA measures correspond with “General Trade Facilitation” measures, covering ‘transparency’, ‘formalities’, ‘institutional arrangement and cooperation’ and ‘transit facilitation’. While many of these measures can also be found in older bilateral or regional trade agreements as well as unilateral trade facilitation action plans, the WTO TFA has proved effective in accelerating the implementation of these measures at the global level (see box 2).

<sup>11</sup> For more information on NTFCs and related initiatives, see UNCTAD at <https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/trade-facilitation/committees-around-world>



**Figure 15**

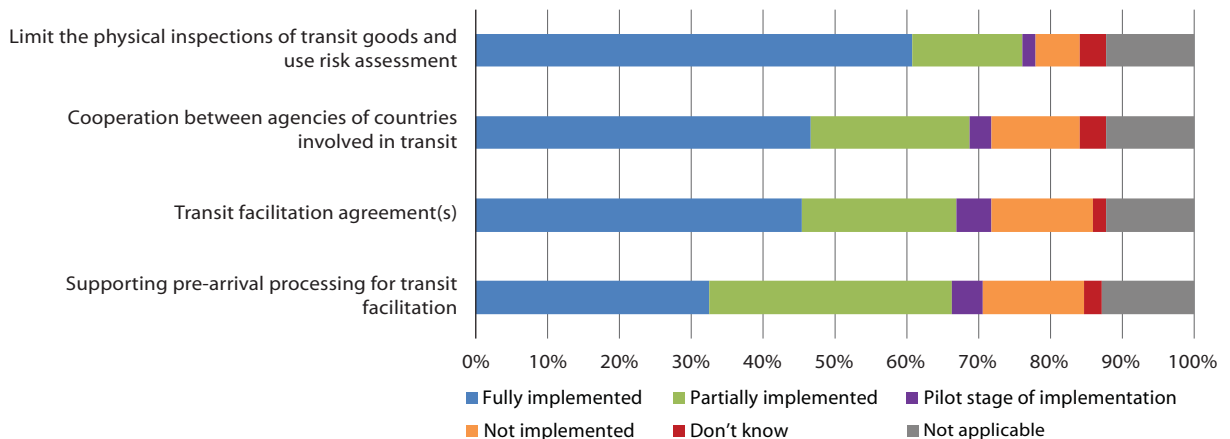
**Global implementation of transit facilitation measures in various regions**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](http://untfsurvey.org)

**Figure 16**

**State of implementation of transit facilitation measures globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](http://untfsurvey.org)


**Box  
2**
**An ex-post analysis on impact of the WTO TFA on trade cost reduction<sup>12</sup>**

Following the entry into force of the WTO TFA in 2017, a recent study evaluated whether the WTO TFA helped reduce trade costs. Using the updated ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost dataset, the study estimated the impact of TFA participation on trade costs. Using a variety of models, robust and statistically significant evidence was found that implementation of the WTO TFA leads to a 1 to 4% on average trade cost reductions. The most substantial reduction in trade cost occurs between OECD and non-OECD economies, with trade cost reduction across models ranging between 3% to 5%. Conversely, South-South trade costs reductions from TFA participation amount to less than 2%, and those between advanced economies are not significant, which is to be expected since these countries were supposed to have achieved full implementation by the time of entry into force.

Participation in regional trade agreements (RTAs), in turn, reduces trade costs by 2 to 10% on average. This is consistent with earlier findings which indicated that trade facilitation provisions in RTAs contribute to reduce trade costs, both among RTA members and also with all trade partners. Multilateral spill overs from trade facilitation measures in RTAs on trade costs are found to exceed any discriminatory effects within three years of an RTA's entry into force, highlighting the complementarity between regional and global trade facilitation initiatives.

## 3.2. Digital trade facilitation

Digital trade facilitation involves using information and communication technologies (ICT) and digital solutions to automate and simplify trade processes. It encompasses two interconnected areas. 'Paperless trade' includes measures that utilize electronic formats, instead of traditional paper-based documentation systems, to expedite trade and reduce related costs. 'Cross-border paperless trade' includes the measures for the next step that enables cross-border mutual recognition and the exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form.

Countries are increasingly testing and utilizing emerging technologies in trade facilitation for efficient trade procedures across borders. For example, some Customs authorities are exploring how emerging technologies including Big Data analytics and Artificial Intelligence, can be used to

speed up clearance processes and improve risk management. Others have enabled blockchain technology for greater transparency and efficiency in tracking goods along all segments of the supply chain. Continued efforts to digitalize trade procedures, which were accelerated by COVID-19, have significantly contributed to improving the efficiency of border controls and trade administration processes for Customs and other relevant agencies. As technology continues to advance and change, there will be new ways to utilize such tools for supporting international trade facilitation.

Achieving cross-border paperless trade is expected to be a complex and long-term undertaking, as it cannot be achieved without close collaboration between countries. Also, to enable efficient trade facilitation, it is essential to implement policies that align national legislation with international standards and trading partners to ensure interoperability.

<sup>12</sup> Based on Duval, Yann and Utoktham, Chorthip (2022), Has the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement helped reduce trade costs? An ex-post analysis. July 2022. Bangkok. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/has-wto-trade-facilitation-agreement-helped-reduce-trade-costs-ex-post-analysis>

### 3.2.1. Paperless trade

Nine trade facilitation measures surveyed are categorized under the ‘paperless trade’ sub-group. These measures involve the utilization of modern ICT in trade procedures, ranging from basic Internet connectivity at border crossings to comprehensive electronic Single Window systems. Many of the measures are identified in Articles 7 and 10 of the WTO TFA and in the text of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.

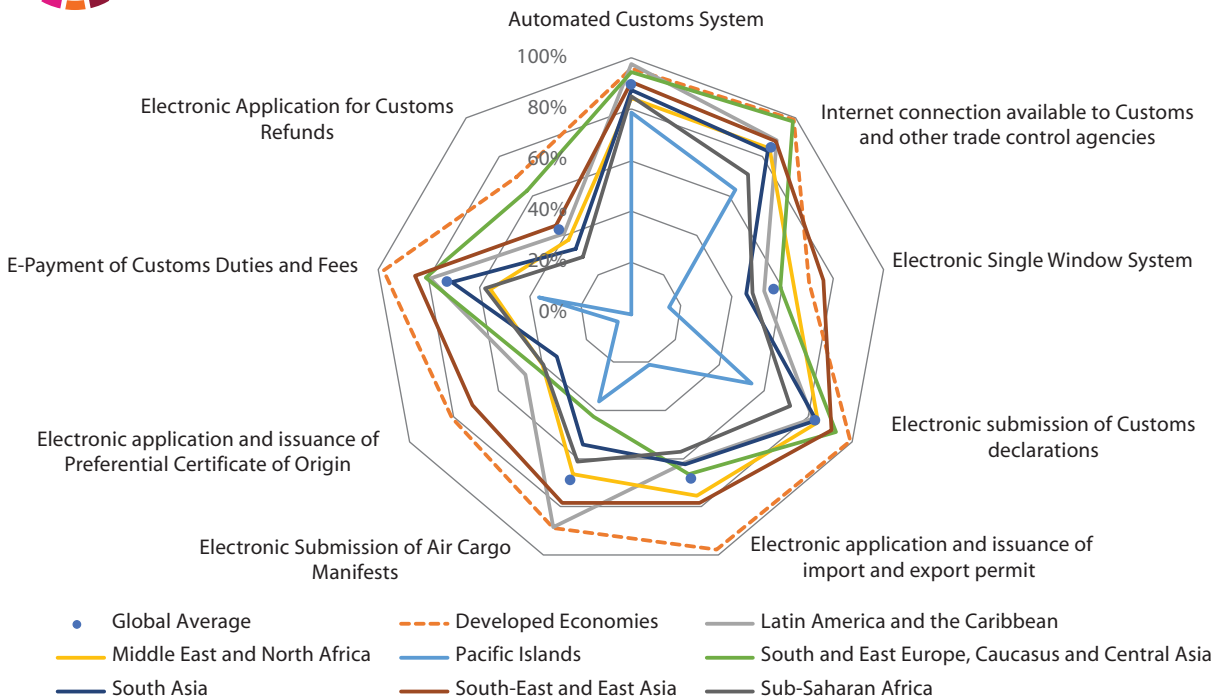
The global implementation level of ‘paperless trade’ measures stands at 69%, but the implementation levels of the nine ‘paperless trade’ measures vary significantly across regions, as depicted in figure 17. The measures of ‘automated Customs systems’ and ‘Internet connection available to Customs and trade control agencies’ show generally high implementation in all regions, with 90% and 85% global implementation rates, respectively. Notably, the Pacific Islands region,

while lagging behind in other ‘paperless trade’ measures compared to other regions, has achieved a commendable score of 79% for the automated Customs system. This can be attributed to the relentless efforts of Pacific Island countries in adopting UNCTAD’s Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World systems and making regional efforts to develop and enhance automated Customs systems. Some of these countries have actively participated in the Europe-funded IMPACT initiative, which focuses on enhancing trade facilitation and Customs procedures through the adoption of modern technology.

The measure ‘electronic application and issuance of preferential certificates of origin’ exhibits the most significant implementation level disparity among all regions. Developed economies demonstrate a relatively high implementation rate of 81%, whereas Pacific Islands report a minimal implementation rate of only 6%.

**Figure 17**

**Global implementation of paperless trade measures in various regions**



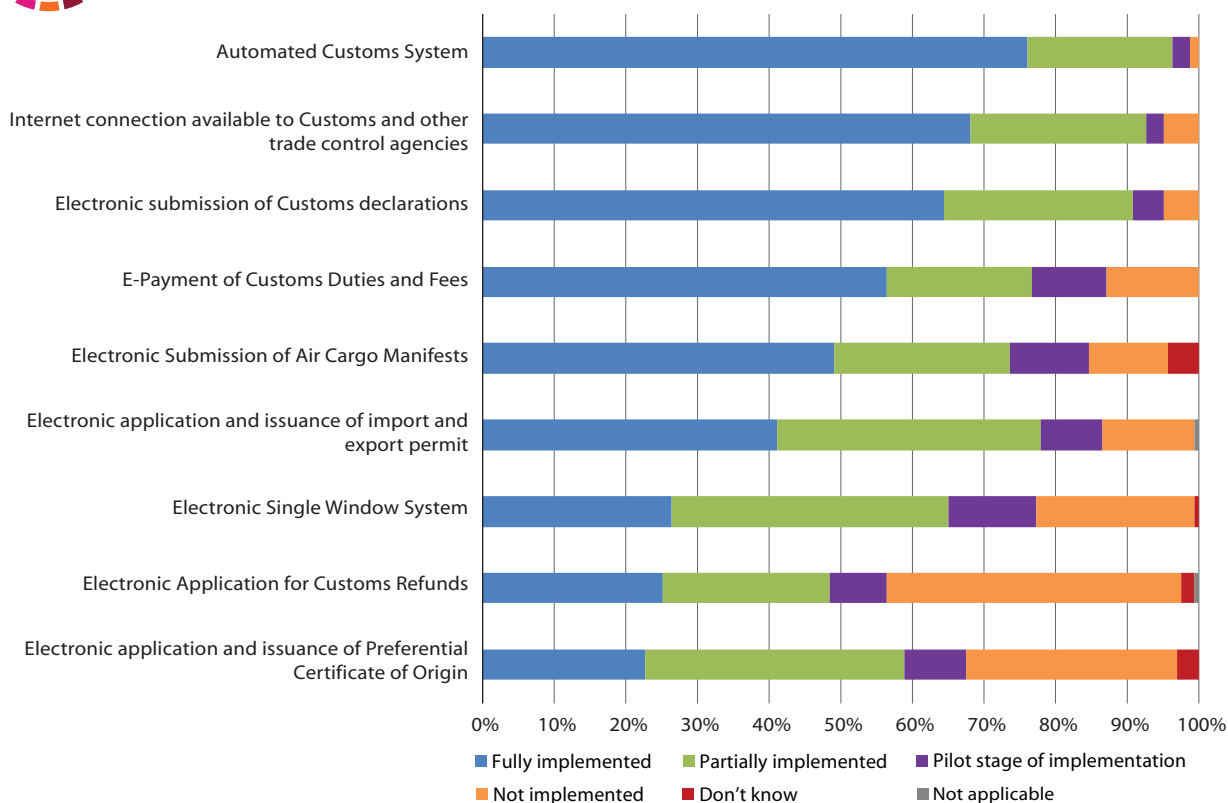
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](https://unfssurvey.org)

It is also important to acknowledge that the TFA encourages economies to adopt ‘paperless trade’ measures without mandating them as obligatory requirements. Consequently, there exists a considerable variation in the implementation rates of these measures, ranging from 43% to 90%. Figure 18 describes the gaps in detail when it comes to the implementation level of the different measures within this sub-group. As illustrated in the figure, the ‘automated Customs System’ exhibits the highest level of implementation at 90%, followed by ‘Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies’ and ‘electronic submission of Customs declarations’ with implementation rates of 85% and 83%,

respectively. Approximately 70% of the countries surveyed have, to some extent, engaged in ‘electronic submission of air cargo manifests,’ ‘electronic Single Window systems’ and ‘electronic application and issuance of import and export permits.’ However, apart from the measure ‘electronic Submission of Air Cargo Manifests,’ implementation of these three measures is mostly partial or on a pilot basis. Conversely, the implementation of ‘electronic application and issuance of preferential certificates of origin’ as well as ‘electronic application for Customs refunds’ are still a challenge for most countries, with implementation rates of 50% and 43%, respectively.

**Figure 18**

**State of implementation of paperless trade measures globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untdfsurvey.org](https://untdf.org)

### 3.2.2. Cross-border paperless trade

The sub-group of ‘cross-border paperless trade’ encompasses six measures, as depicted in figure 19. Among them, ‘law and regulations for electronic transactions’ and ‘recognized certification authority’ serve as fundamental building blocks, facilitating the exchange and legal recognition of trade-related data and documents. These measures not only facilitate interactions among stakeholders within a country but also enable exchanges between stakeholders across the entire international supply chain. The remaining four measures pertain to the exchange of specific trade-related data and documents across borders, which are essential for achieving a comprehensive and fully integrated paperless transformation.

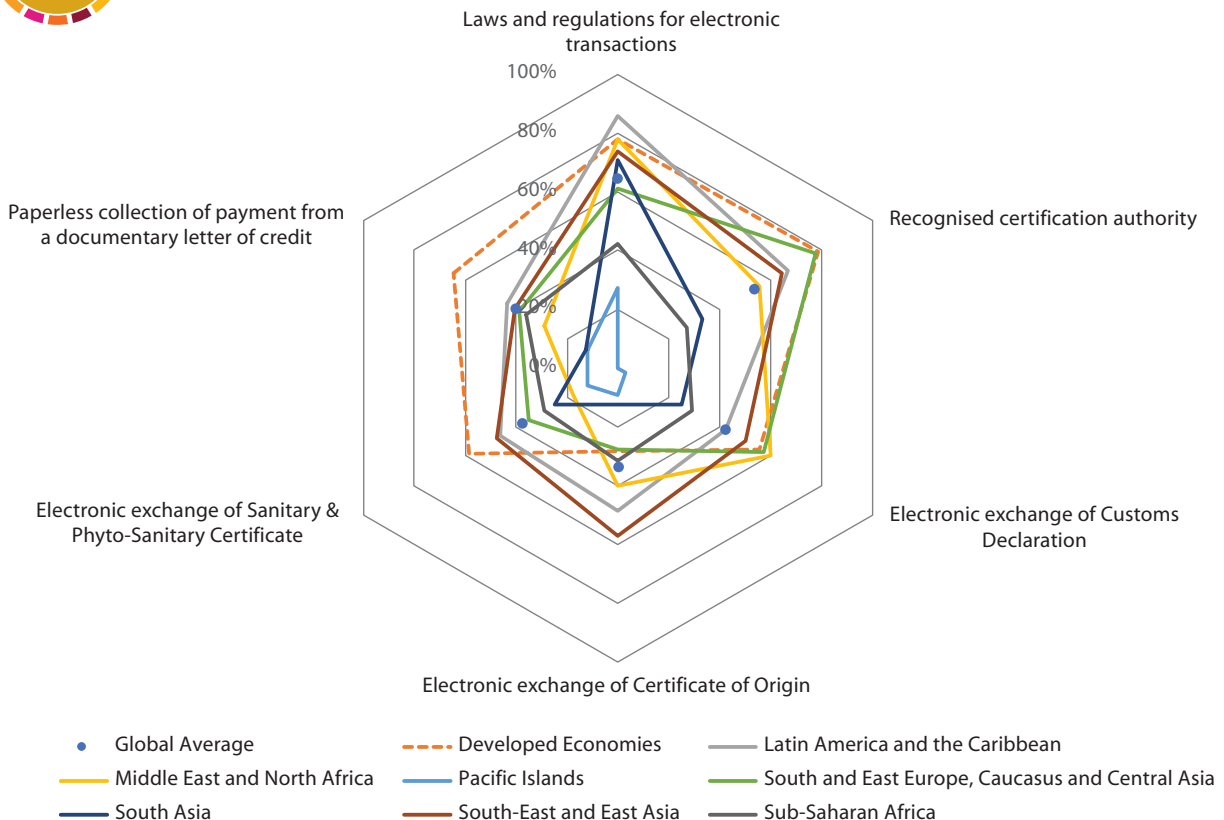
Figure 19 shows the average scores for implementing measures under ‘cross-border

paperless trade’ across regions. At the global level, the implementation of these measures has been comparatively low. In particular, countries in the Pacific Islands and Sub-Saharan Africa regions indicate significant implementation challenges. The measures in this sub-group can require a high degree of cooperation between trading partners to be considered “fully implemented.” Such a level of digital trade cooperation may be achieved thanks to the establishment of more regional trade agreements and facilitation initiatives.

As global leaders in trade facilitation, Australia and New Zealand’s involvement in the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus is a useful venue for building capacities for ‘cross-border paperless trade’ and removing trade barriers in the region. In Africa, the AfCFTA has supported significant developments of member countries in this regard. South-East and East Asia lead the other developing regions, especially in the



**Global implementation of cross-border paperless trade measures in various regions**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untdp.org](https://untdp.org)

exchange of certificates of origin, and sanitary and phytosanitary certificates (SPS). This is partly due to the continued efforts to develop the ASEAN Single Window, which enables the cross-border electronic exchange of Customs declarations, certificates of origin and SPS certificates.

The establishment of laws and regulations for electronic transactions exhibits the highest implementation rate at 65%. The implementation levels of the remaining measures within the same group are considerably lower, falling within a range of 34% to 54%. Notably, developed countries take the lead in implementing cross-border paperless trade. This can largely be attributed to the European Union’s significant emphasis on cross-border trade facilitation. In support of this, the European Union has collaborated with the Republic of Korea and Singapore in establishing digital trade principles in 2022 and 2023, respectively. In Asia and the Pacific, the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific has entered into force in 2021. Under this United Nations treaty, Parties are working to accelerate trade digitalization by enabling the exchange and mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form as well as facilitating interoperability among national and subregional

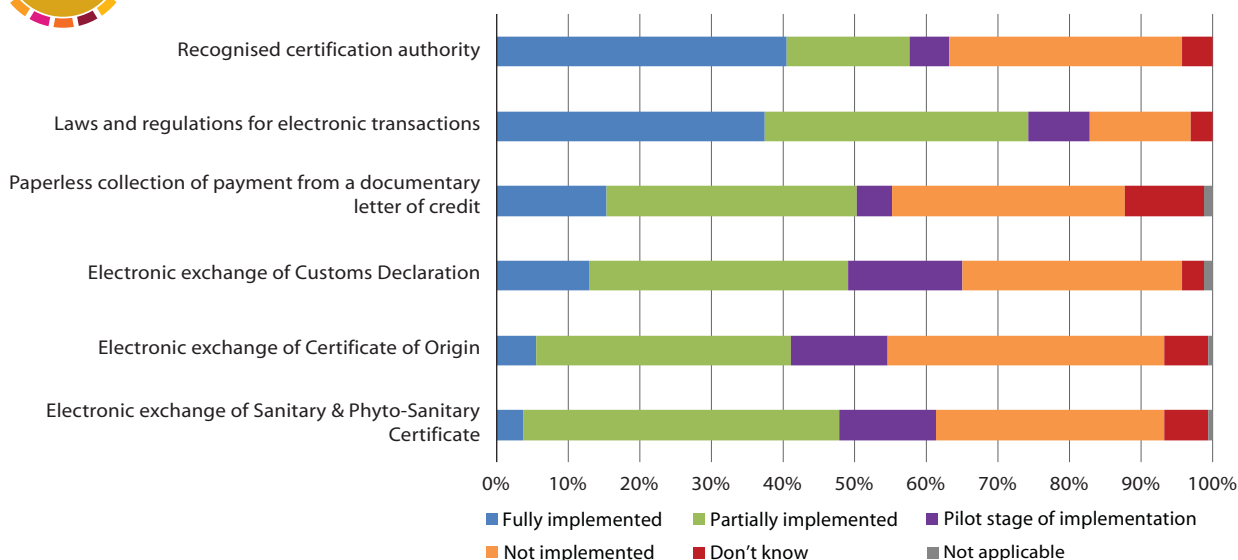
Single Windows and/or other paperless trade systems in Asia and the Pacific.

The UN/CEFACT plays a significant role in developing trade facilitation recommendations, electronic business standards and technical specifications aimed at establishing coherent and interoperable international trade environments. New Zealand also formed a partnership with Chile and Singapore under the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA). These concerted efforts towards an enabling environment for digital trade further promote efficient and seamless cross-border trade procedures.

Figure 20 illustrates the fact that more than 82% of the surveyed countries have initiated efforts to establish ‘laws and regulations for electronic transactions.’ Nevertheless, the full implementation of these measures is currently limited, with only 37% of the countries having achieved this status. Moreover, the measures ‘electronic exchange of Customs declaration’ and ‘recognized certification authority’ are observed in less than 66% of the countries. These factors contribute to the constraints encountered in achieving a fully-fledged electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents, including Customs declarations, certificates of origin and SPS certificates.

**Figure 20**

**State of implementation of cross-border paperless trade measures globally**



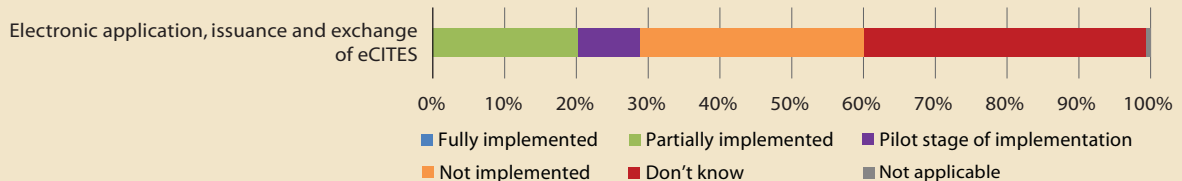
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

**Box  
3**
**Digital processes for trade facilitation and wildlife protection**

A key benefit of digitalization in trade facilitation is its effects on making trade greener by eliminating the need for paper in trade processes. Another area for enhanced cooperation in the realm of environmental protection is the expansion of cooperation in the safe trade of sensitive goods. For example, the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, including toxic, poisonous, explosive, corrosive, flammable, ecotoxic and infectious wastes, are governed by the Basel Convention. Parties are obliged to ensure that such waste is managed and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

Similarly, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, known as CITES, is an agreement between Governments that aims to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plant specimens is regulated for the protection of those species. Electronic permits (eCITES) are an emerging digital solution for improving the implementation of the CITES Convention by simplifying the compliance procedure for trade in these goods. It is also being used as a means of combatting illegal trade.

In the 2023 Survey, the pilot-tested measure, ‘trade facilitation and wildlife protection’, addressed the implementation of the eCITES electronic permit system. The Survey found that there was a low level of implementation of this measure around the world, with implementation on a partial or pilot basis in 29% of countries surveyed, and no country recording full implementation (figure 21).

**Figure  
21**
**Global implementation of measure for eCITES permits**


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)


 Box  
4

### Good practices in paperless and cross-border paperless trade

**Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.** Under the four-year European Union-funded Ready4Trade (R4TCA) project in Central Asia, multiple strategies are being implemented, including the development of national e-commerce strategies by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as collaborative efforts with UNCTAD by Kazakhstan to prepare a comprehensive e-commerce legislation. In addition, all countries are adopting Virtual Border Line Management, and Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are Parties to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, a United Nations treaty dedicated to the cross-border trade digitalization.

Source: <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Session%202.8%20Elena%20Boutrimova%20-%20Ready4Trade%20Central%20Asia%20and%20sustainable%20trade.pdf>

**FIATA (International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations).** FIATA encourages the participation of all TMS's (Transport Management Systems) and eBL (electronic Bill of Lading) providers, and other software providers in adopting their solution to offer this new service to their customers. The solution aims to reduce fraud risks by recording each document on an immutable ledger. This ensures that all stakeholders interacting with the document can verify its authenticity at any time. Stakeholders can either scan the QR code at the document's top right or directly upload the PDF on FIATA's verification page to access the document audit trail. This trail will certify the document's validity, the identity of its issuer and the integrity of its content.

Source: <https://fiata.org/digital-bill-of-lading/>

**Jordan.** As of December 2022, Jordan has become the latest member of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) ePhyto Hub, enabling seamless electronic exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates, and the first country in the world to introduce a version in Arabic. The new system will make sure that phytosanitary certifications can be exchanged quickly, accurately, and affordably. This will help businesses save time and money while boosting Jordan's economic competitiveness.

Source: <https://www.tradefacilitation.org/article/jordan-launches-electronic-phytosanitary-certification/>

**Oman.** The Royal Oman Police (ROP) Directorate General of Customs offers the Bayan system, an online single window/one-stop service, to help trading communities and other stakeholders clear products easily, quickly, and conveniently. Customers in the trade community can access a coordinated perspective of the government through the Bayan system, which also streamlines their administrative and logistical procedures.

Source: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/oman-customs-regulations>

**Saudi Arabia.** On 16 June 2023, Saudi Arabia announced the second phase of the implementation of an E-invoicing system by the Zakat, Tax, and Customs Authority (ZATCA) in Saudi Arabia. This project seeks to modernize and streamline invoicing processes in Saudi Arabia, leveraging digital solutions to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and compliance in tax-related activities.

Source: [https://zatca.gov.sa/en/MediaCenter/News/Pages/news\\_1063.aspx](https://zatca.gov.sa/en/MediaCenter/News/Pages/news_1063.aspx)

**Southern African Development Community (SADC).** The electronic Certificate of Origin (eCoO) implementation is a significant milestone in the Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP) supported by the European Union, and GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit/German Corporation for International Cooperation) under the "Cooperation for the Enhancement of SADC




**Box  
4**
*(continued)*

Regional Economic Integration” (CESARE) programme. The eCoO replaces the manual SADC Certificate of Origin by introducing online applications and real-time tracking, resulting in improved efficiency. Thanks to advanced security features, like online authenticity verification and optical watermarking, it effectively reduces fraud at border posts.

Source: <https://www.sadc.int/latest-news/sadc-electronic-certificate-origin-be-launched-7th-september-2022>

**Viet Nam.** In 2022, Viet Nam introduced a national plan known as the Digital Transformation of the Customs Sector by 2025. This plan encompasses three primary objectives – the overhaul of the national digital Customs system, the integration of the National Single Window and ASEAN Single Window – to a unified Customs IT system, and the establishment of a centralized database for import and export goods to benefit Customs and business stakeholders. As part of this policy, there is a strong emphasis on researching various emerging technologies, including Big Data, Intelligent Analytics, Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence, with the aim of gradually implementing these systems in digital trade processes.

Source: <https://english.luatvietnam.vn/decision-no-749-qd-ttg-on-approving-the-national-digital-transformation-program-until-2025-with-a-vision-184241-doc1.html>

### 3.3. Sustainable trade facilitation

In our interconnected world, governments are confronted with new regulatory challenges as they address trade disruptions while striving to ensure that the benefits of international trade are accessible to all, especially in the context of digital trade. The digital trade environment presents opportunities for specific sectors and groups to gain improved access to global markets and supply chains. However, it also has the potential to exacerbate inequalities among individuals, businesses, and regions. To ensure sustainable and inclusive trade facilitation and to align trade facilitation with the objectives of sustainable development in the digital era, “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” has become a vital pillar of the Survey since 2017. This approach encompasses measures under three sub-groups: ‘trade facilitation for SMEs,’ ‘agricultural trade facilitation’ and ‘women in trade facilitation.’ By focusing on these aspects, efforts can be made to promote equitable trade practices and opportunities for

all, fostering inclusive economic growth and development.

The Survey shows that while ‘agricultural trade facilitation’ measures have been comparatively well-implemented, the implementation of trade facilitation measures aimed at SMEs and women traders face big challenges, with average implementation rates of 43% and 38%, respectively. Many SMEs face difficulties in embracing the digital transformation due to limited capabilities and financial resources, hindering their effective utilization of digital tools. Gender inequalities further compound the challenges, creating unique barriers for women and obstructing their integration into international trade. Barriers include issues like physical and sexual harassment, concerns about personal safety, bribery, corruption, time-consuming trade procedures and extensive documentary requirements. Given their importance in achieving the sustainable and inclusive development of economies, particularly in times of crisis, trade facilitation strategies should be designed in a more holistic and inclusive manner.

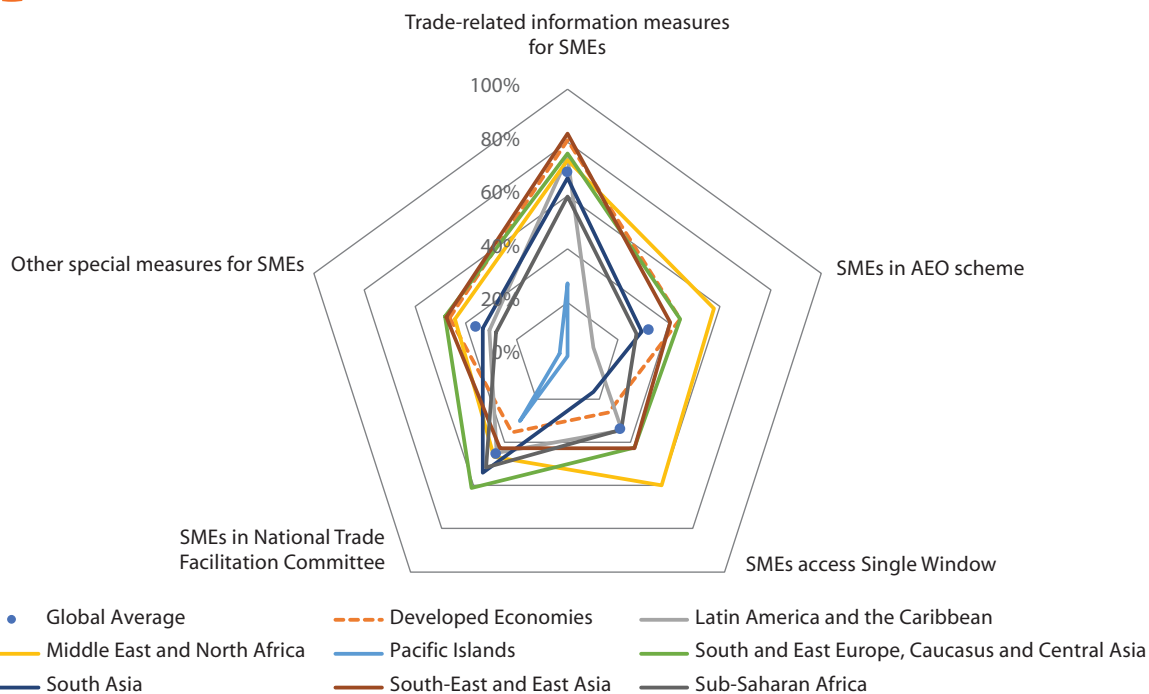
### 3.3.1. Trade facilitation for SMEs

Figure 22 shows the average scores for implementing the ‘trade facilitation for SMEs’ measures across regions. The implementation of measures in this sub-group is relatively low and varies widely across regions. The Survey finds that

the Middle East and North Africa region has the highest overall implementation rate of measures targeted for SMEs, with particularly strong implementation of trade-related information measures for SMEs is top implemented for MENA. (see box 6 for good practices).



**Global implementation of trade facilitation for SMEs measures in various regions**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](http://untfsurvey.org)

Digitalizing trade systems has advantages in making trade more efficient, environmentally friendly, and more resilient. However, there are some up-front transition costs involved in this process, including the acquisition of technology for use in digital trade and the associated training costs. SMEs already face barriers to entering global markets, often due to their limited economy of scale and relative lack of connections compared to their larger competitors. Thus, it is important that their needs be considered by governments when crafting trade policy. Making the right conditions for SMEs to compete in the global market can be achieved by removing barriers and

providing tailored assistance. One means of reducing costs is by ensuring that deferred duty payments are available to SMEs as a way of limiting the number of bank transactions incurred and the associated transaction fees. The Survey also assesses whether countries address knowledge barriers by providing trade-related information to SMEs. This can include education or awareness campaigns, training activities or other programmes tailored for SMEs to access trade related information and understanding trade procedures. The Survey also measures whether these programmes and activities are systematically developed in consultation with SME

associations and representatives, as their inclusion brings valuable insights into the needs of small businesses entering international trade.

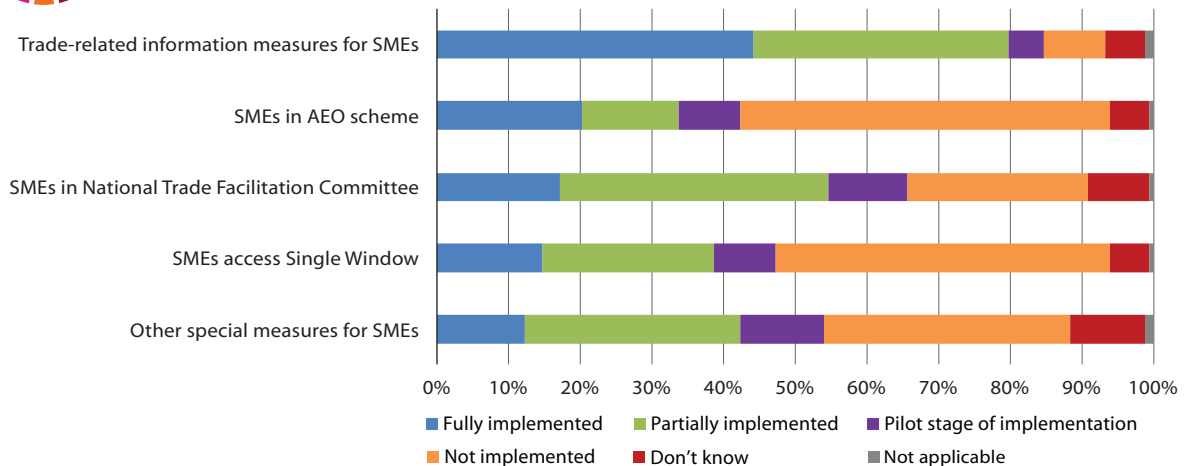
Figure 23 illustrates that while approximately 85% of countries surveyed have implemented ‘trade-related information measures for SMEs’ to varying degrees, support for SMEs in trade facilitation still lacks wide implementation, as is evident from the results of the remaining measures in this sub-group. The measure concerning SMEs in their NTFCs’ has been implemented to some extent by almost 66% of countries, but for 48% of these countries this measure has only been implemented on a partial or pilot basis. Specific measures aimed at addressing the challenges faced by SMEs in trade, such as providing facilities for SMEs to access Single Window systems,

enabling SMEs to join the AEO scheme and implementing other special measures tailored for SMEs (such as deferred duty payment options or dedicated action plans for trade facilitation), are being undertaken on a limited scale.

Although there has been a significant increase in the number of AEO Mutual Recognition Agreements signed in recent years, the position of SMEs in relation to AEO certification has been recognized as unique and deserving of attention. The entry barriers for SMEs to obtain AEO certification may pose disadvantages to their participation and dilute the benefits that AEO status offers. To address these problems, there is a clear need to enhance training and support for SMEs for their involvement in AEO programmes.



**State of implementation of trade facilitation for SMEs measures globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

**Box  
5**

**Trade facilitation for e-commerce and SMEs**

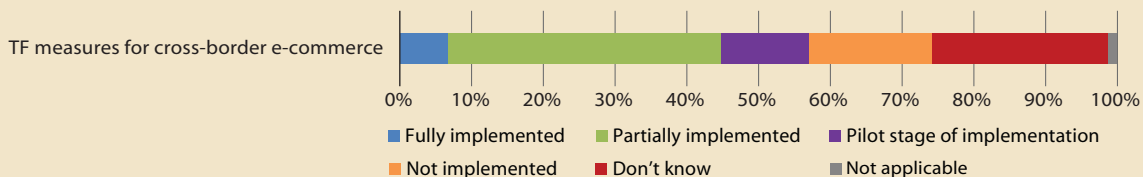
Electronic commerce (e-commerce) is becoming increasingly vital in international trade as it has become a dominant means of conducting business transactions around the world. However, there are challenges in harmonizing regulations governing e-commerce across nations, as current regulations have not kept pace with the rapid expansion of e-commercial activities. The WTO E-commerce Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) brings countries together to synchronize digital trade processes and enhance cross-border paperless trade. Since its inception in 2017, 89 WTO members have participated in working group discussions, and recent negotiations on e-commerce in May 2023 delved into crucial issues such as data flow, data localization and e-commerce development in trade.<sup>13</sup>

The growing utilization of e-commerce in the global economy offers not only efficiency gains but also potential for sustainable trade facilitation. This is particularly beneficial for SMEs seeking to engage in international trade. With appropriate government support, e-commerce presents an opportunity for SMEs to integrate into global supply chains, making trade more equitable and sustainable. Policymakers can implement targeted programmes or policies to assist SMEs in harnessing the opportunities provided by e-commerce.

In the 2023 Survey, the pilot-tested ‘trade facilitation for e-commerce’ measure assesses whether countries have implemented a national strategy on cross-border e-commerce and a *de minimis* regime. Notably, 57% of countries have either fully or partially implemented or pilot-tested these measures, demonstrating their commitment to digital trade development (figure 24). However, there is room for improvement, not only in the specific areas indicated in the measure but also in the broader scope discussed in this report regarding the relevance of “Digital Trade Facilitation” and its contribution to sustainable trade.

**Figure  
24**

**State of implementation of “trade facilitation for e-commerce” measure globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

<sup>13</sup> Source: WTO Joint Initiative on E-Commerce. See [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/ecom\\_e/joint\\_statement\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/ecom_e/joint_statement_e.htm)


 Box  
6

**Good practices on trade facilitation for SMEs**
**Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.**

This project implements selected activities of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Cross Border Trade Initiative (CBTI) programme, funded by the European Union. It aims to facilitate small-scale trade across borders in targeted countries, leading to increased revenue collection, improved security and higher incomes for small-scale cross-border traders. The project focuses on enhancing institutional capacity, data collection and monitoring to promote cross-border trade flows between the targeted countries.

Source: <https://eutradesupport.comesa.int/small-scale-cross-border-trade-initiative/>

**Iraq.** The European Union-funded SAAVI project (Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-Food Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy) in Iraq is specifically designed to empower SMEs in the agriculture and agri-food value chain. With half of the funding dedicated to SMEs, the project aims to strengthen their position in the market while fostering trade policy improvements. SAAVI plays a crucial role in supporting SMEs' growth, stabilization and sustainable job creation.

Source: <https://www.iraq-businessnews.com/tag/strengthening-the-agriculture-and-agri-food-value-chain-and-improving-trade-policy-in-iraq-saavi/>

**Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR).** The **ASEAN Regional Integration Support (ARISE Plus Lao PDR)** programme, which spans four years, aims to foster the integration of the Lao PDR economy into global production chains. It provides targeted support both to the public and private sectors, with a specific focus on assisting smallholders and SMEs, particularly in the wood processing and coffee sectors. The programme's main objectives include promoting sustainable growth, job creation and reducing vulnerability in the Lao PDR. To achieve these goals, it emphasizes enhancing regional integration, maximizing trade opportunities and market linkages, and facilitating participation in global value chains within the selected sectors.

Source: <https://www.t4dlaos.org/eu-itc-project/>

**Sri Lanka.** Funded by GIZ, the trade facilitation project for SMEs aims to enhance the international trade competitiveness of Sri Lankan SMEs, particularly in secondary growth centres. It seeks to achieve this by automating the issuance of Certificates of Origin, streamlining selected trade procedures and introducing online payment solutions. The project also focuses on simplifying export procedures and improving transparency through the Sri Lanka Trade Information Portal (SLTIP). In addition, it aims to promote private sector involvement in trade facilitation reforms by developing an NTFC monitoring tool. The ultimate goal is to increase the participation of rural SMEs in international trade, contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in Sri Lanka.

Source: <https://open.intracen.org/projects/XM-DAC-45001-B986>

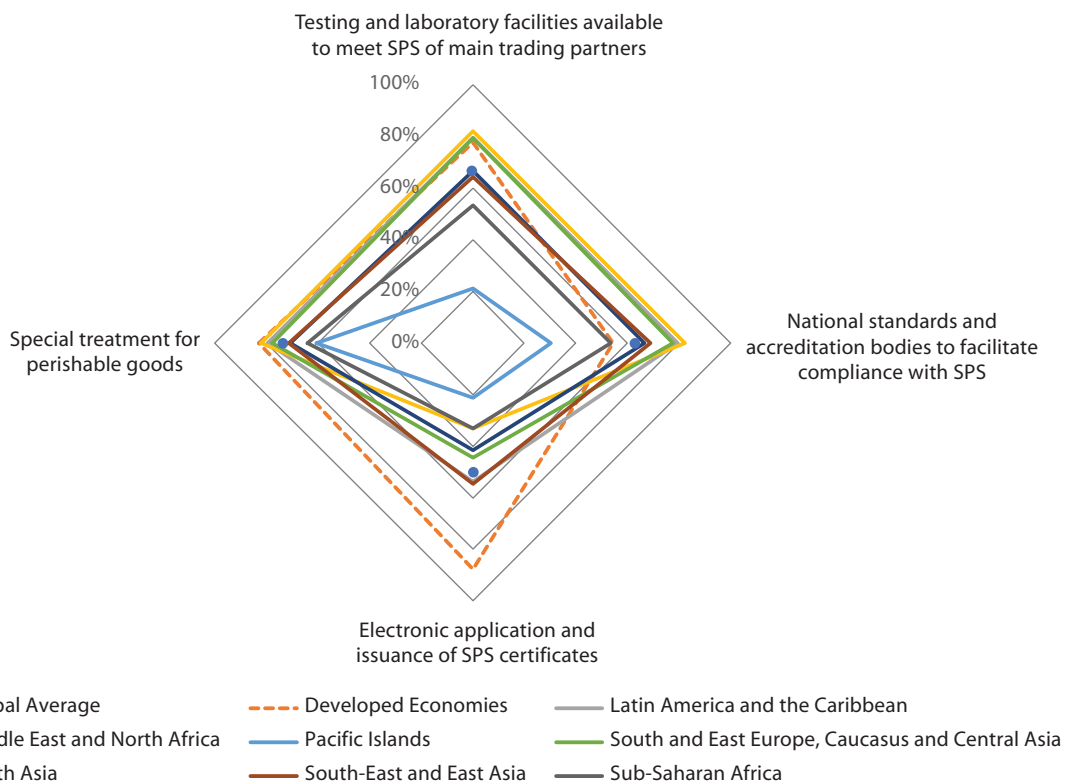
### 3.3.2. Agricultural trade facilitation

To enhance the positive impact of trade facilitation on sustainable development, it is crucial to target the agricultural sector, which comprises a considerable number of small-scale traders and SMEs. Measures within this sub-group generally show better implementation compared to other measures under “Sustainable Trade Facilitation,” except for the measure concerning the ‘electronic

application and issuance of SPS certificates’ (figure 25). In 2023, Developed Economies have shown a high implementation rate for this measure (88%), however, a large gap is observed, with the next highest score of 55% in the South-East and East Asia region. However, Developed Economies fall behind other regions for the measure on ‘national standards and accreditation bodies to facilitate compliance with SPS’ where only 55% of countries have implemented this measure.



**Global implementation of agricultural trade facilitation measures in various regions**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](http://untfsurvey.org)

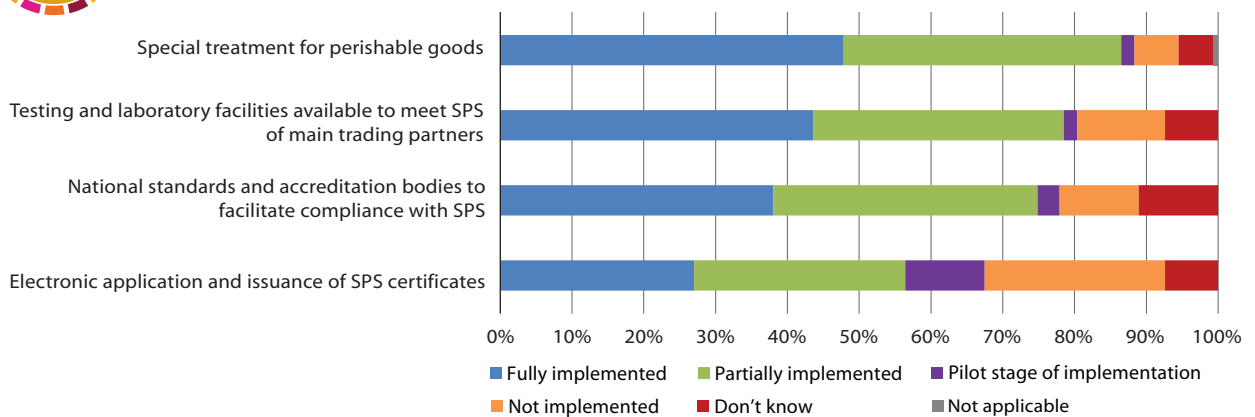
Agriculture serves as a core industry for Pacific Island economies, however, the Pacific Island economies are still lagging in implementing other measures within this sub-group. Addressing these areas will be crucial to fully harness the potential of trade facilitation in promoting sustainable development in the region.

Figure 26 shows that many of the countries surveyed have, to some extent, implemented the measures under ‘agriculture trade facilitation’ (see box 7 for good practices). Priority treatment of perishable goods is a core obligation provided by Article 7.9 of the TFA. More than 88% of the

countries have implemented this measure, at a minimum, on a pilot basis. Border procedures, such as meeting SPS standards and testing methods, are also critical for agricultural products. Therefore, ‘national standards and accreditation bodies to facilitate compliance with SPS standards’ as well as ‘testing and laboratory facilities available to meet SPS requirements of main trading partners’ measures have been implemented at least on a pilot basis in more than 77% of the countries surveyed. The ‘electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates’ is particularly challenging, with full implementation of this measure at approximately 27%.



**State of implementation of agricultural trade facilitation measures globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untdf.org](https://untdf.org)


 Box  
7

### Good practices on agricultural trade facilitation

**China, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia.**

The three-year Partnership for enhancing export capacity of Africa to China aims to enhance economic and trade cooperation between China and Africa by participating in the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo (CAETE) and using the Distribution, Trading, and Processing Centre (DTPC) in China's Hunan Province. It supports selected African countries, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia, to increase agricultural and food product exports to China and attract sustainable Chinese investment, contributing to job creation and poverty reduction.

*Source:* <https://intracen.org/file/partnershipforenhancingexportcapacityofafricatochinaflyerfinalpdf>

**Peru.** With the support from the Republic of Korea's international cooperation agency (KOICA), the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism of Peru (MINCETUR) has been implementing since December 2019 two systems into the country's electronic single window for international trade (VUCE): Peru Marketplace and e-PYMEX. They provide a host of specialized services to exporting and importing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), including assistance in connecting with potential clients abroad and online tracking of their export shipments. MINCETUR guarantees the confidentiality of all information recorded and transmitted through these systems by the enterprises, and that this information and/or documentation will be used only for the purposes for which it has been provided. To ensure the necessary trust between potential buyers and sellers, Peru's Exports and Tourism Promotion Board (PromPeru) validates the data of all Peruvian export enterprises which are registered in the Peru Marketplace and e-PYMEX systems. The latter has specialized modules to assist exporting MSMEs in the agricultural and textile sectors in optimizing all aspects of their respective value chains.

*Source:* [https://www.vuce.gob.pe/Paginas/ProyectoVuce2\\_0.aspx](https://www.vuce.gob.pe/Paginas/ProyectoVuce2_0.aspx) and <https://www.perumarketplace.com/>

**Republic of Korea.** The Republic of Korea and the United States of America have initiated the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhytos) with the support of the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency (APQA) of the Republic of Korea. This digital operation involves the use of ePhytos developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization's International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). As part of this effort, the Republic of Korea is transitioning from traditional paper phytosanitary certificates to ePhytos when conducting plant product trade with the United States of America. Similarly, the Republic of Korea has also engaged in the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhytos) with the Netherlands.

*Source:* <https://www.ippc.int/en/news/republic-of-korea-implements-new-trade-tool-with-digital-ephyto-plant-health-certificates/>

**Uganda.** With the Strengthening Agribusiness Resilience and Competitiveness (STAR) programme, KOICA (the Korea International Cooperation Agency) and ITC have entered grant arrangements to enhance the natural disaster resilience and competitiveness of farming households and agribusinesses in Uganda, with a particular focus on women farmers in Northern and North-eastern Uganda. The initiative aims to bolster the resilience of smallholder farmers, especially women, in the face of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change and environmental degradation. The Star project will be implemented in several districts, including Abim, Agago, Kaabong, Karenga, Kitgum, Kotido, Lamwo, Lira, Oyam and Pader.

*Source:* <https://climateaction.africa/farmers-agribusinesses-uganda-receive-funding/>



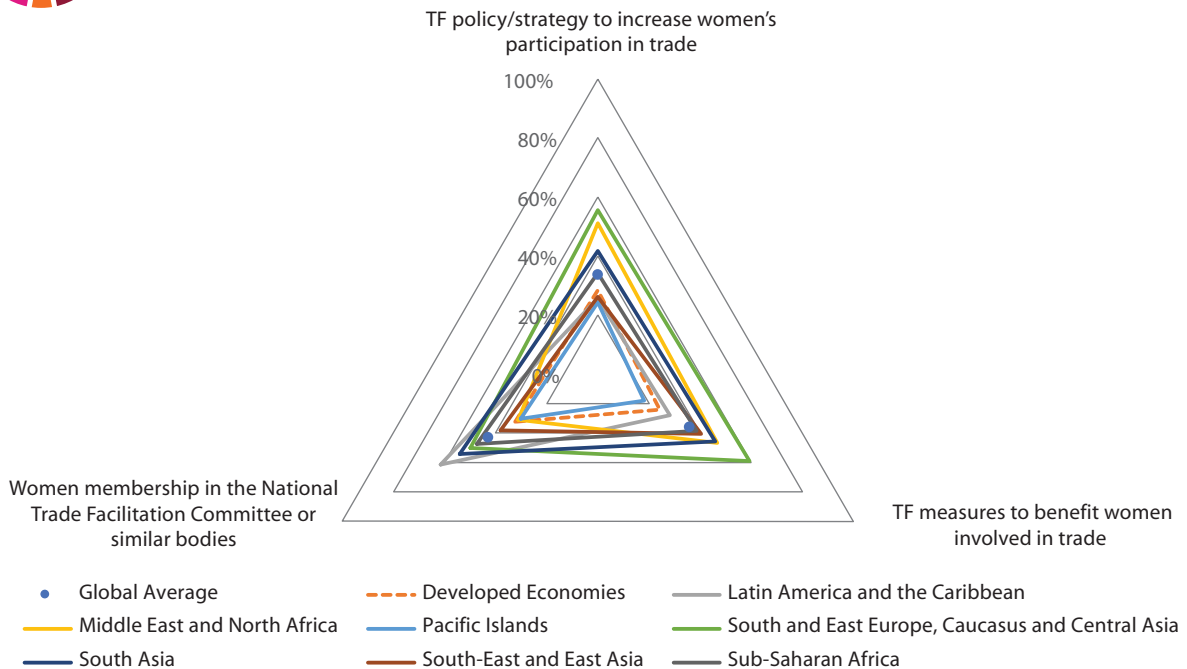
### 3.3.3. Women in trade facilitation

Empowering women to actively participate in international trade is important for inclusivity and gender equality. Measures under the ‘women in trade facilitation’ encompass various initiatives, such as including women in the membership of NTFCs or similar bodies, crafting trade facilitation policies that specifically consider the needs of women traders and implementing trade facilitation

measures that benefit women involved in trade. For example, training programmes for digital trade and e-commerce can be established to ensure equal access for women to trade opportunities and related jobs.<sup>14</sup> Figure 27 reveals that the global average level of implementation of these three measures remains quite limited, with a 38% overall implementation rate. Developed economies also face significant challenges in implementing measures under this sub-group.



**Global implementation of women in trade facilitation measures in various regions**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

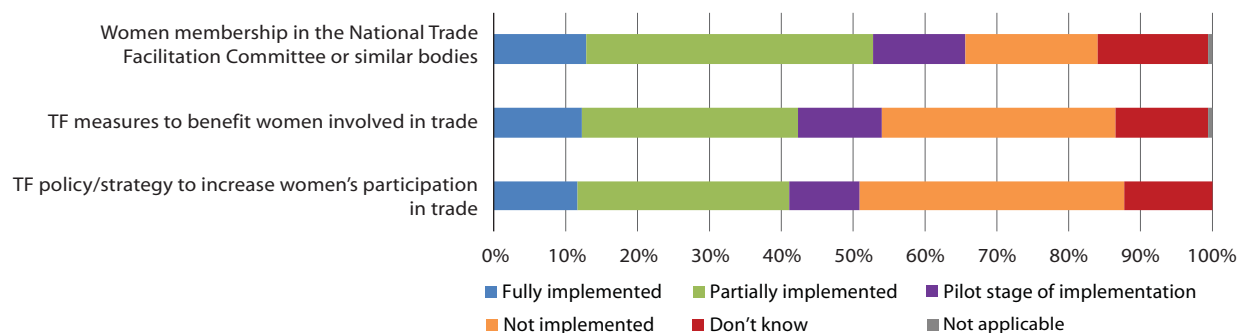
<sup>14</sup> For more policy recommendations, see UNCTAD “E-commerce from a gender and development perspective” at [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditc2023d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditc2023d1_en.pdf)

Figure 28 shows that just over 65% of the countries have implemented the measure on ‘women membership in NTFC’. The measures regarding ‘trade facilitation policy/strategy to increase women’s participation in trade’ and ‘TF measures to benefit women involved in trade’ are only implemented in approximately 51% and 54% of countries respectively. Implementation of all three measures is mostly on a partial and pilot basis, while full implementation is very limited, with none of the three measures achieving overall implementation rates of more than 13%. There is a strong indication that the vast majority of

government policies around the world do not adequately consider the barriers faced by women in trade. Addressing gender inequality in trade facilitation proves challenging as these disparities are not explicitly acknowledged in trade procedures. A comprehensive range of solutions is necessary to reduce gender disparities in trade facilitation. To improve the situation, there are a number of good practices taking place (box 8) and a list of policy recommendations from UNCTAD can support countries to integrate a gender perspective into trade facilitation reforms.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 28**

**State of implementation of women in trade facilitation globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

<sup>15</sup> Integrating a gender perspective into trade facilitation reforms. Available at <https://unctad.org/publication/integrating-gender-perspective-trade-facilitation-reforms>


 Box  
8

### Good practices in women in trade facilitation

**Ghana.** The Ghana Trade and Gender Subcommittee was established by Ghana NTFC with the primary goal of forming a technical working group dedicated to integrating gender perspectives into trade policies and their successful execution within the nation. The subcommittee was founded to achieve the following objectives: firstly, fostering ongoing discussions, enhancing responsibility, and overseeing the effects of Trade Facilitation policies and endeavours on female traders; secondly, boosting the involvement of women to ensure an all-encompassing and enduring fulfillment of the Trade Facilitation mission; and thirdly, showcasing the benefits derived from advancing gender equality within the NTFC.

*Source:* <https://tradefacilitation.de/en/news/tackling-gender-issues-through-the-trade-lens/#:~:text=Ghana%20established%20the%20Trade%20and,regional%20and%20national%20gender%20assessments>

**New Zealand-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (NZ-UK FTA).** The New Zealand-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (NZ-UK FTA) is a good example of placing significant emphasis on gender equality. This agreement encompasses a wide range of aspects, such as digital inclusion in digital trade, diversity in financial services, gender equality in the workplace and cooperative efforts aimed at promoting women's full and equal participation in trade activities. The agreement also focuses on improving women's access, particularly in sectors where they are under-represented. Moreover, an inclusive trade sub-group committee has been established to facilitate the effective implementation of these gender equality initiatives within the framework of the NZ-UK FTA.

*Source:* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-new-zealand-fta-chapter-25-trade-and-gender-equality/chapter-25-trade-and-gender-equality-web-version>

**Republic of Gambia.** The JSF programme (Jobs, Skills and Finance programme) employs a three-pronged approach to empower women by enhancing their relevant skills and abilities. In the finance component, it adopts a market systems approach to foster targeted financial services and products for women and youth, exemplified by capacity-building initiatives on financial literacy. Moreover, the programme focuses on education and skill training for women through collaborations with TVETs (Technical and Vocational Education and Training and local training providers). This effort aims to enhance the quality and accessibility of vocational training schemes offered to women and youth, aligning with Cash for Work (C4W) opportunities. A notable example is the successful implementation of the Farmer Business School, which significantly improves the livelihood of women in the region.

*Source:* <https://www.unCDF.org/article/7663/jobs-skills-and-finance-for-youth-and-women-in-the-gambia-programme>

**SheTrades South America.** The SheTrades South America project is designed to empower women from four distinct perspectives. First, the programme offers customized training programmes aimed at enhancing women's capacities in export-import procedures, market access, trade regulation compliance and Customs procedures. Second, the initiative provides female entrepreneurs with access to critical market intelligence, trade opportunities and up-to-date information on trade-related regulations. Third, the programme facilitates networking opportunities by connecting women traders with potential buyers and strategic partners. Last, SheTrades South America actively engages in advocacy efforts to promote policies and measures that create a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs.

*Source:* <https://www.shetrades.com/outlook/home>

### 3.4. Implementation of digital vs. sustainable trade facilitation

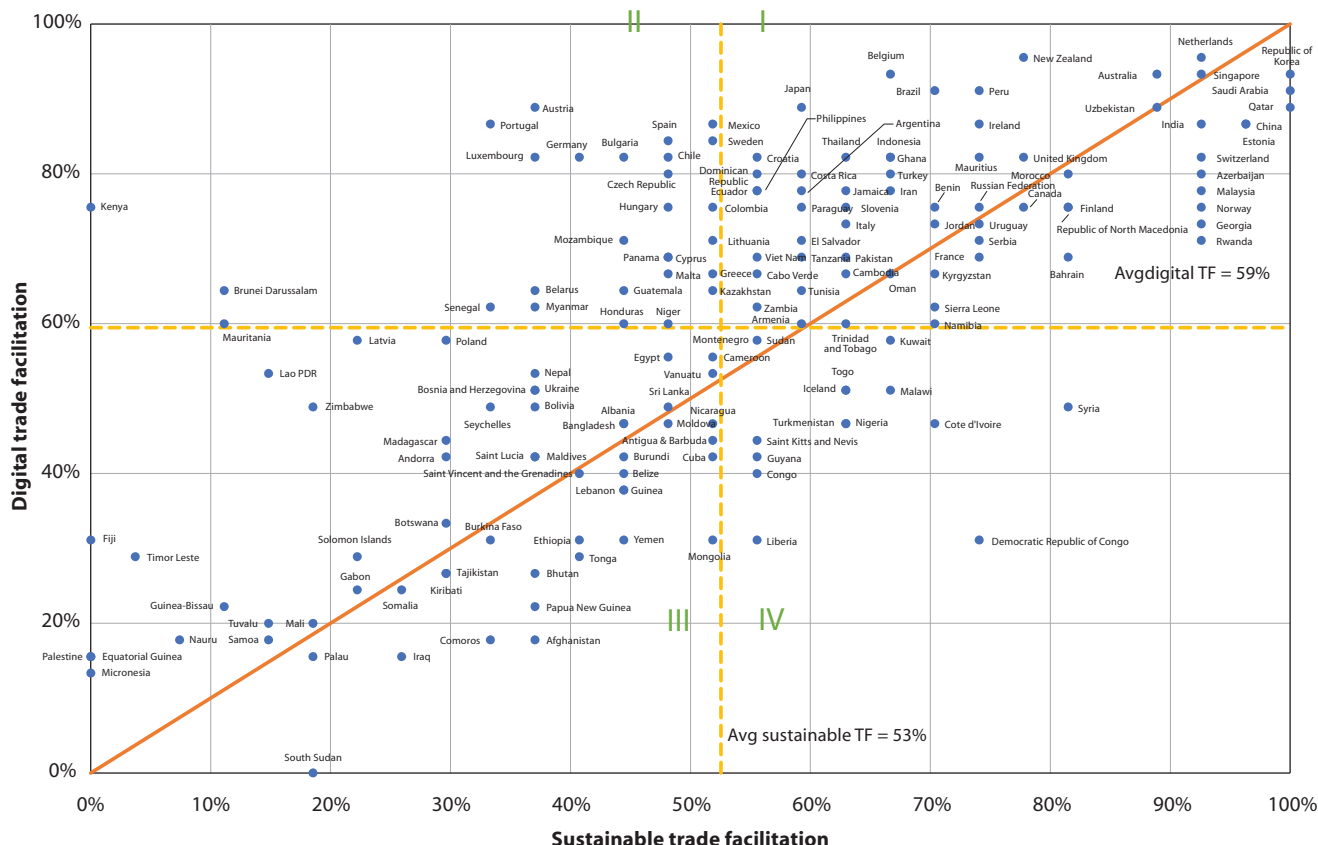
Digitalization and sustainability are two interconnected aspects of trade facilitation. Achieving cross-border paperless trade through digital transformation is vital for sustainability, as it ensures more efficient and environmentally-friendly trade practices. At the same time, sustainable trade facilitation is essential to fully capitalize on the developmental benefits derived from trade facilitation reforms. Given the inherent link between

“Digital Trade Facilitation” and “Sustainable Trade Facilitation,” it becomes necessary to compare how countries have been implementing measures in these two groups.

Figure 29 presents the global average implementation rates for digital and sustainable measures at 59% and 53%, respectively. Notably, countries with higher implementation rates for “Digital Trade Facilitation” have generally also excelled in “Sustainable Trade Facilitation”, indicating a highly positive correlation between the two groups. Developed countries, on the whole, outperform less advanced countries in both digital and sustainable dimensions. Most developed

**Figure 29**

**Implementation of digital and sustainable trade dimensions of trade facilitation**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](http://untfsurvey.org)

Note: For the sake of comparability, the study calculates implementation rate of sustainable trade facilitation by using data from two sub-groups, namely, ‘Trade facilitation for SMEs’ and ‘Agricultural trade facilitation’. Data for ‘women in trade facilitation’ are not adequate enough for an analysis, therefore excluded from calculating the implementation rate of the Sustainable Trade Facilitation group in this section. The rate of implementation is computed only if level of implementation (0-3) is available for all questions associated with both aforementioned sub-groups. For digital trade facilitation implementation, DK and NA are treated as zero and the rate of implementation is calculated for all countries.

nations find themselves in quadrant I, where the implementation rates for digital and sustainable measures surpass the average. On the other hand, most least developed countries fall into quadrant III, where the implementation rates for both aspects are below average. Some developing countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar are among the best performers in sustainable trade facilitation, while the Republic of Korea and Singapore are performing well in both groups.

The overall findings underscore the significance of integrating digitalization and sustainability in trade facilitation efforts to achieve more effective and inclusive trade practices.

## 3.5. Other trade facilitation

### 3.5.1. Trade finance facilitation

Trade finance has long played a vital role in driving the growth of international trade. It has been crucial in integrating importers and exporters into global supply chains, both at the regional and global levels. Recognizing its crucial contribution as a facilitator of international trade transactions, trade finance was fully integrated into the 2021 Survey in collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

A significant trade finance gap – that is, unmet demand, projected to exceed US\$2 trillion annually – continues to hinder full inclusion in international trade, disproportionately affecting SMEs in developing nations. The pandemic further exacerbated the situation, making access to trade finance even more challenging and expensive. Addressing this issue requires focusing on several potential solutions including reducing transaction costs for traders by establishing accessible trade finance channels, and enhancing trade facilitation and logistics efficiency. Reducing the trade finance gap, and ensuring that financing reaches those who most need it, will require new sources of capital to support trade financing, the application of technology to fully digitalize trade and trade financing, and to enable the delivery of financing solutions to underserved market segments. New

solutions such as “Deep Tier Supply Chain Finance”<sup>16</sup> which targets SME suppliers at the farthest reaches of global supply chains can have a transformative effect, along with policy and regulatory measures mitigating systemic obstacles to the flow of trade finance, such as due diligence and compliance requirements as well as capital reserve requirements which adversely impact banks’ capacity to deliver more trade financing.

Caution should be exercised when interpreting results related to trade finance measures in the Survey, as it revealed high “don’t know” rates. This indicates that trade facilitation experts and officials involved in the Survey were often unfamiliar with trade finance matters. However, data indicates that trade finance services are available, to some extent, in around 70% of the countries with available data (figure 30). It is worth noting that trade finance and its variants are specialist forms of financing, not especially well understood even among senior finance experts. It is therefore not surprising to find that trade facilitation specialists are unfamiliar with trade finance and supply chain finance. This suggests a significant opportunity for impactful awareness-raising and potentially transformative technical assistance, to connect trade financing more significantly into mature practices in trade facilitation.

The implementation of ‘blockchain-based supply chain projects covering trade finance’ and ‘single Window facilities for trader access to finance’ is limited, with less than 7% of countries reporting full implementation (figure 31). Customs authorities are taking the lead in developing Single Window systems to simplify trade procedures and expedite clearance, but they may not cover financing payments for international trade transactions as that falls outside their mandate.

The Single Window system, which electronically links various agencies with distinct roles, may not readily connect financial institutions (such as banks) and authorities (like Foreign Exchange Authorities) in many countries. The Survey results emphasize the need for improved coordination and collaboration between border agencies and entities involved in developing financial and

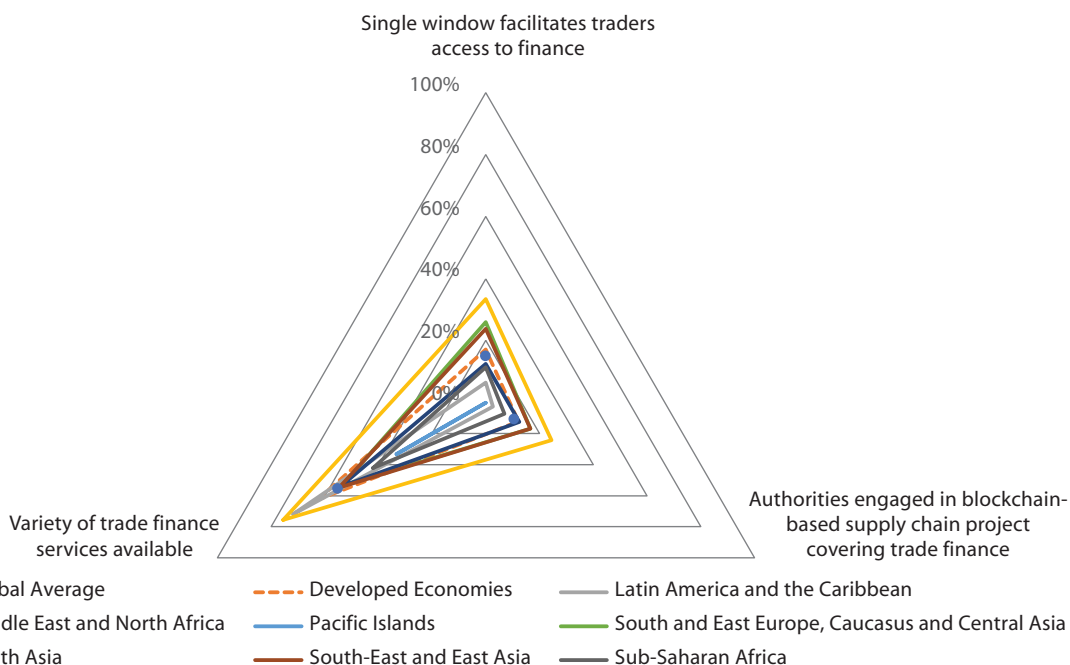
<sup>16</sup> ADB, <https://www.adb.org/publications/deep-tier-supply-chain-finance>

payment services in support of international trade. This should include traditional providers such as banks, public sector entities such as export credit agencies, and multilateral development banks with specialist trade financing programs in place. Financial Technology (FinTech) firms targeting trade and supply chain financing solutions can also be usefully integrated into Single Window and other trade facilitation programs. Financing also

plays an important and growing role in supporting sustainable and climate-positive trade, with innovative sustainable finance practices, products and solutions gaining traction in the market, with the potential to further assist in the narrowing of the global trade finance gap. Illustrative good practices, as noted in box 9, could help to address these challenges.

**Figure 30**

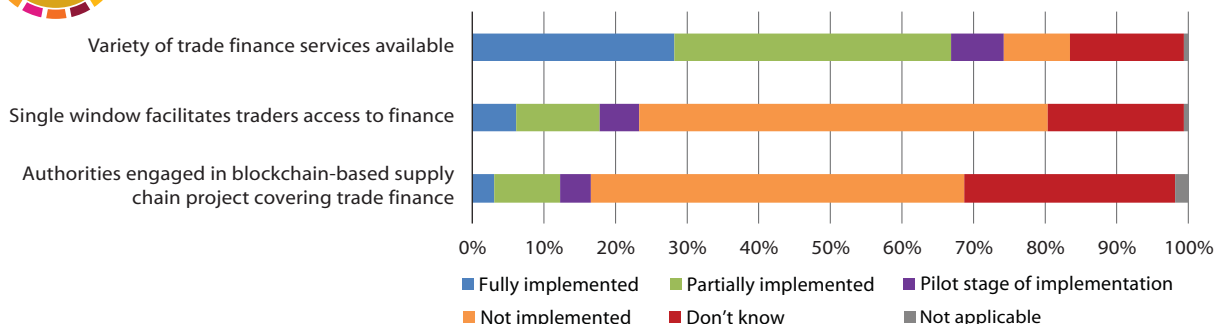
**State of implementation of trade finance facilitation measures in various regions**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at untfsurvey.org

**Figure 31**

**State of implementation of trade finance facilitation measures globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at untfsurvey.org


 Box  
9

### Good practices in trade finance facilitation

**Japan, Singapore and Thailand.** Thailand's Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry and Banking (JSCCIB) is spearheading a project that involves integrating the National Digital Trade Platform (NDTP), a blockchain-based system. This platform combines the technologies of Japan's TradeWaltz and Singapore's Networked Trade Platform (NTP). The main objective of NDTP is to digitalize trade processes, leading to faster imports and exports, while also facilitating improved access to trade finance for SMEs. In its initial phase, NDTP focuses on the digitalization of various trade documents, such as purchase orders, invoices and packing lists, utilizing internationally recognized UN/CEFACT standards.

*Source:* <https://www.digitalizetrade.org/projects/thailands-jsccib-pilots-blockchain-based-national-digital-trade-platform-ndtp>

**Singapore and United Arab Emirates.** Singapore's Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) of Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) have collaborated with commercial partners DBS Bank (The Development Bank of Singapore Limited), Emirates NBD (National Bank of Dubai) and Standard Chartered to successfully conclude the world's first cross-border digital trade financing pilot. The pilot utilized IMDA's TradeTrust framework to facilitate the seamless transfer of electronic records between jurisdictions that have adopted the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (MLETR). This framework harmonizes the legal recognition of digital documents, including electronic bills of lading (eBLs), across both jurisdictions.

*Source:* <https://www.digitalizetrade.org/projects/worlds-first-digital-trade-financing-pilot-between-mletr-harmonised-jurisdictions-ie>

### 3.5.2. Trade facilitation in times of crisis

Global supply chains' vulnerability was laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused severe disruptions in global trade. Emerging out of the pandemic, it has been widely acknowledged that ensuring the continuity of trade is essential for protecting livelihoods and ensuring a steady supply of essential goods and services. Governments, border agencies, logistics companies and traders have been exploring ways to utilize existing trade and transport facilitation measures to keep goods flowing across borders. The crisis encouraged implementation and enhancement of relevant trade facilitation measures, particularly in terms of digitalizing trade procedures. This drive has continued in the current post-pandemic period (see box 10 for good practices).

A sub-group of questions focusing on 'trade facilitation in times of crisis' was included in the

2021 Survey, in response to COVID-19. In recognition of the continued importance of trade resilience and preparedness, these measures are also included in the 2023 Survey. This sub-group encompasses a set of five measures aimed at addressing both immediate crisis responses and long-term resilient strategies (figure 32).

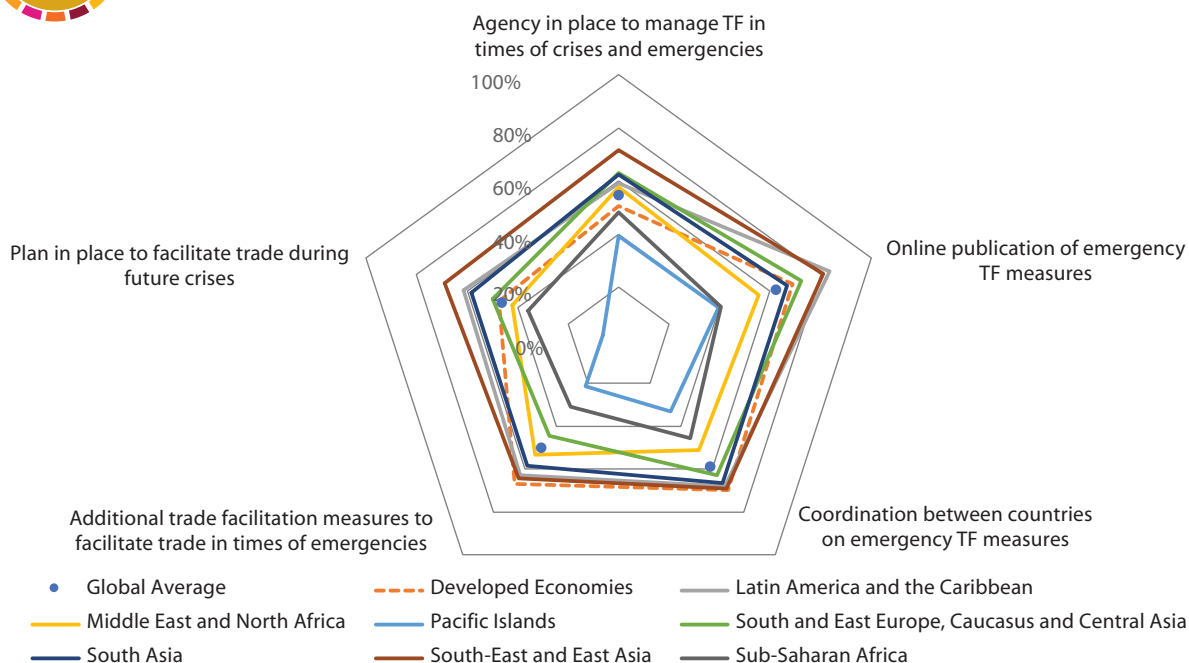
Based on available data, most countries have, to some extent, implemented the following measures for managing trade facilitation during times of crisis and emergencies: 'fostering coordination between countries on emergency trade facilitation measures (77%)'; 'publishing emergency trade facilitation measures online (76%)'; and 'having agencies in place to handle trade facilitation (74%)' (figure 33). However, when it comes to long-term preparedness for future crises, only 38 countries have confirmed having a plan in place to facilitate trade during such situations, while another 63 countries have begun exploring, partially or on a pilot basis, how to ensure a

resilient recovery and readiness for future crises. A significant lesson learnt from the COVID-19 is the importance of improving resource allocation to better prepare for future crises beyond COVID-19.

Making such plans should be a policy priority for countries that have not yet taken steps in this direction.

**Figure 32**

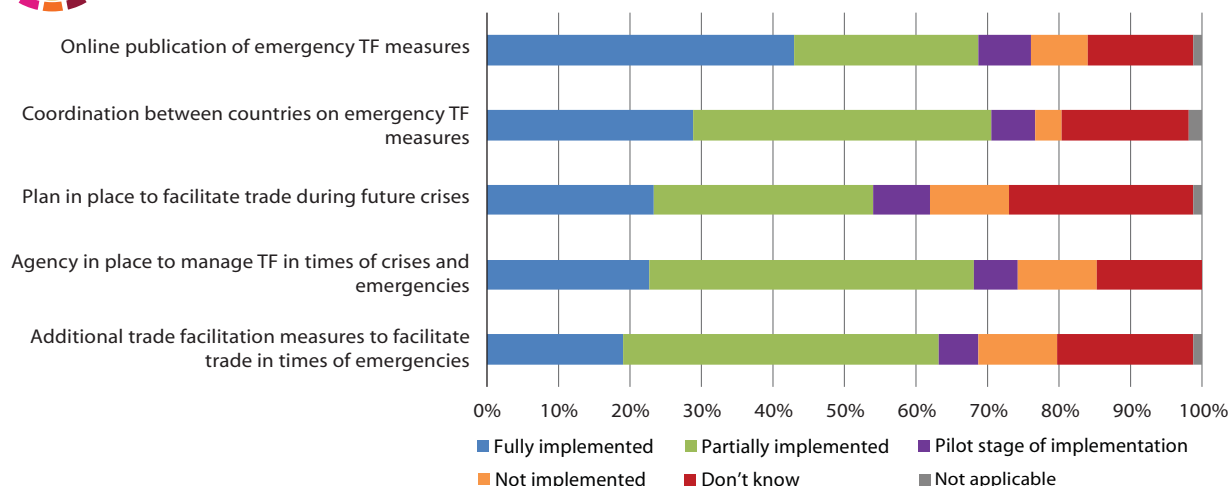
**State of implementation of trade facilitation in times of crisis measures in various regions**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at untfsurvey.org

**Figure 33**

**State of implementation of trade facilitation in times of crisis measures globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at untfsurvey.org



**Box  
10****Good practices in trade facilitation in times of crisis**

**ASEAN.** In November 2022, ASEAN extended the validity of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that facilitated collaboration among ASEAN members to mitigate supply chain disruptions and ensure the free flow of essential goods during the COVID 19 pandemic. The extension is effective until 30 November 2024 with aim of enhancing the seamless flow of essential goods within the region.

*Source:* <https://asean.org/asean-extends-mou-on-essential-goods/>

**Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA).** The Green Corridors/Green Lanes initiative, established during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the flow of essential goods, has been extended even after the COVID-19 outbreak. Traders carrying essential goods continue to receive priority passage within the western Balkans, reducing waiting times and trade costs for businesses. Efforts are ongoing to extend the initiative to crossings with neighbouring European Union Member States.

*Source:* <https://cefta.int/what-we-do/cross-cutting-trade-areas/green-lanes/>

**The Philippines.** The Philippine Trade Facilitation Committee (PTFC) Roadmap 2022-2028 includes assessments of the pre-COVID-19 trade facilitation scenarios as well as the impact of and response to COVID-19. The roadmap suggests more streamlined procedures prioritizing the clearance and release of perishable goods by the Bureau of Customs, in coordination with other border agencies that have limited duration during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this is to be made permanent and in accordance with international standards and best practices.

*Source:* <https://www.dof.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/PTFC-ROADMAP-SEP20.pdf>

**UNCTAD.** UNCTAD provides a policy brief that outlines a 10-point action plan comprising tangible measures to strengthen international trade and transport facilitation in times of pandemic. These measures include ensuring uninterrupted shipping, keeping ports open, facilitating cross-border transport, and addressing several other aspects to enhance global trade and transport facilitation during pandemics. The plan's versatility also renders it applicable to various future crises.

*Source:* [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/presspb2020d3\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/presspb2020d3_en.pdf)



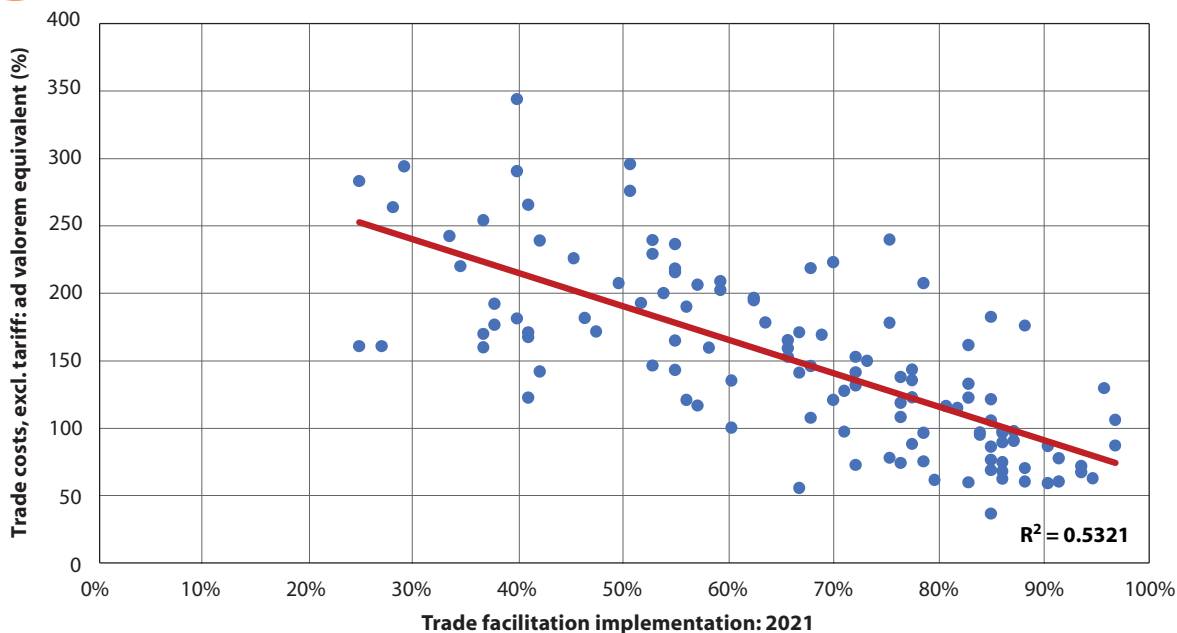


# Impact of trade facilitation on trade costs

In this section, the Survey data is used to estimate the impact on trade costs of improvements in trade facilitation, with a particular focus on the impact of digital trade facilitation. As shown in figures 34 and 35, strong correlations exist between the implementation of trade facilitation in the countries surveyed, and their levels of trade costs and logistics performance. However, a more careful empirical analysis is necessary to quantify how trade facilitation implementation may have an impact on trade costs and assess statistical significance of the impacts. Following presentation of a trade cost model and related methodological considerations, empirical results and a counterfactual analysis are conducted to evaluate the impact of alternative trade facilitation reform scenarios.

**Figure 34**

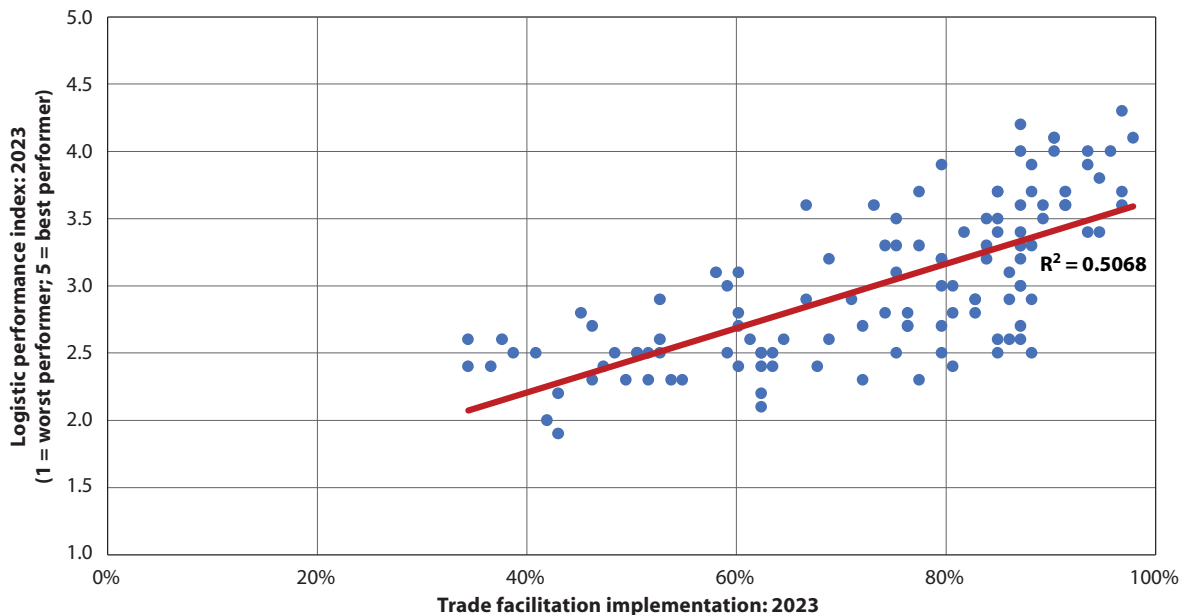
**Trade facilitation implementation and trade costs**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](https://unfssurvey.org) and; ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost database. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database>

**Figure 35**

**Trade facilitation implementation and logistics performance**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](https://unfssurvey.org) and; World Bank's Logistics Performance Index. Available at <https://lpi.worldbank.org>

## 4.1. Model and data

International trade costs are multi-faceted and affected by many factors, including geographical factors (distance, contiguity, land-lockedness), cultural factors (common official/unofficial language, colonial relationships, and formerly

same country), trade policies (regional trade agreements or tariffs) and availability of hard trade infrastructure (e.g., ports). In addition, trade facilitation measures and their implementation also affect trade costs. Accordingly, building upon Arvis et al. (2016), the following trade cost model is specified:

$$\ln(\tau_{ij}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln(\text{gtariff}_{ij}) + \beta_2 \ln(\text{dist}_{ij}) + \beta_3 (\text{contig}_{ij}) + \beta_4 (\text{comlang\_off}_{ij}) \\ + \beta_5 (\text{comlang\_ethno}_{ij}) + \beta_6 (\text{colony}_{ij}) + \beta_8 (\text{comcol}_{ij}) + \beta_8 (\text{smctry}_{ij}) \\ + \beta_8 (\text{rta}_{ij}) + \beta_{10} (\text{landlocked}_{ij}) + \beta_{11} \ln(\text{LSCI}_i) + \beta_{12} \ln(\text{TF}_i) + D_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Table 4 summarizes variable definitions, data treatment (if any), data sources, and expected signs of trade of trade cost factors. Trade facilitation implementation is computed based on 31 general and digital trade facilitation measures in the 2023 Survey.<sup>17</sup> The model also includes

partner fixed effect ( $D_j$ ) and robust and clustered standard errors by country pair to take care of cross-country heterogeneity. The model is estimated across a cross-section of 106 reporting countries using ordinary least squares.



**Data source, definition, treatment, source and expected sign**

Variable	Definition	Data treatment	Source	Expected Sign
$\tau_{ij}$	Comprehensive trade costs.	Average of 2019-2021	World Bank-ESCAP Trade Cost Database	
$\text{gtarif } f_{ij}$	Geometric average tariff factor (1+rate) that each reporting country (i) charges to its trade partner (j) and vice versa, which can be expressed by $\text{gtarif } f_{ijt} = \sqrt{\text{tarif } f_{ijt} \times \text{tarif } f_{ijt}}$	Average of 2019-2021	World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS)	+
$\text{dist}_{ij}$	Geographical distance between country i and j.	No treatment	CEPII	+
$\text{contig}_{ij}$	Dummy variable of contiguity equal to 1 if country i and j share a common border and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	-
$\text{comlang\_of } f_{ij}$	Dummy variable of common official language equal to 1 if country i and j use the same common official language and 0 otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	-

<sup>17</sup> Survey data for 2021 were updated based on the information collected in 2023. This is to ensure it corresponds with data from the ESCAP-World Bank trade cost database, of which the latest data year is 2019-2021.

**Table 4.** (continued)

Variable	Definition	Data treatment	Source	Expected Sign
<i>comlang_ethno<sub>ij</sub></i>	Dummy variable of common language equal to 1 if a language is spoken by at least 9% of the population in both countries and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–
<i>colony<sub>ij</sub></i>	Dummy variable equal to 1 if country i and j were ever in colonial relationship and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–
<i>comcol<sub>ij</sub></i>	Dummy variable equal to 1 if country i and j had a common colonizer after 1945 and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–
<i>smctry<sub>ij</sub></i>	Dummy variable equal to 1 if country i and j were or are the same country and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–
<i>rta<sub>ij</sub></i>	Dummy variable equal to 1 if country i and j are members of the same regional trade agreement and zero otherwise.	Latest definition in 2021	Egger, P. H. and Larch, M. (2008)	–
<i>landlocked<sub>ij</sub></i>	Dummy variable equal to 1 if either country i or j is landlocked and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	+
<i>LSCI<sub>i</sub></i>	Average scores of liner shipping connectivity index of country i.	Data gaps filled/ average 2019-2021	UNCTAD	–
<i>TFI<sub>i</sub></i>	Percentage of TF implementation of country i, modelled as: (a) overall TF ( <i>tfi<sub>i</sub></i> ); or (b) general TF ( <i>generaltf<sub>i</sub></i> ) + digital TF ( <i>pxbptf<sub>i</sub></i> ).	0.0001 replacement	Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation	–

Source: United Nations ESCAP.

CEPII = *Le Centre d'Études Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales*, ESCAP = Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, N/A = not applicable, TF = trade facilitation, UNCTAD = United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Note: Where available, the average of the most recent data from 2019 onward is used in the estimation. Percentage of trade facilitation implementation of 2021 is used as trade cost data is up to 2021. Data filling for liner shipping connectivity (LSCI) is required to ensure inclusion of landlocked economies. Port countries are used as proxies for landlocked countries' portal performance. For the trade facilitation components, zeros are replaced by 0.0001 to prevent observations being omitted from the estimation.

## 4.2. Empirical results

Table 5 summarizes estimation results from two versions of the trade cost model. In model (1), the overall level of trade facilitation implementation (“overall TFI”) is considered, based on 31 main trade facilitation measures. In model (2), “overall TFI” is divided into two groups of trade facilitation measures: General trade facilitation (transparency, formality, and institutional arrangement and cooperation measures) and Digital trade facilitation (paperless and cross-border paperless trade measures).

The results show that trade policies (tariffs and regional trade agreements), trade-related infrastructure (LSCI), and trade facilitation are all statistically significant and have the expected impact on trade costs. Table 5 shows that a 10% change in tariffs leads to a reduction of trade costs by more than 6%, on average. In contrast, a 10% progress in overall trade facilitation implementation results in the reduction of more than 3% of trade costs. Such reduction is three times the trade cost reduction compared to the effect of a 10% improvement in hard infrastructure, such as maritime connectivity (almost 1%).



Empirical results on trade cost models

Dependent variable: ln <sub>tij</sub>	Beta coefficient		Standardized beta	
	(1) overall TFI	(2) General TFI + Paperless TFI	(1) overall TFI	(2) General TFI + Paperless TFI
ln_tariff	0.660*** [8.829]	0.667*** [8.914]	0.0849*** [8.829]	0.0857*** [8.914]
ln_dist	0.203*** [51.56]	0.202*** [51.01]	0.410*** [51.56]	0.407*** [51.01]
contig	-0.0811*** [-4.514]	-0.0836*** [-4.687]	-0.0322*** [-4.514]	-0.0332*** [-4.687]
comlang_off	-0.0460*** [-3.462]	-0.0530*** [-3.896]	-0.0376*** [-3.462]	-0.0434*** [-3.896]
comlang_ethno	-0.0123 [-0.952]	-0.00449 [-0.340]	-0.0102 [-0.952]	-0.00371 [-0.340]
colony	-0.169*** [-10.72]	-0.169*** [-10.77]	-0.0597*** [-10.72]	-0.0598*** [-10.77]
comcol	-0.0743*** [-6.120]	-0.0684*** [-5.659]	-0.0467*** [-6.120]	-0.0430*** [-5.659]
smctry	-0.0783** [-2.537]	-0.0750** [-2.447]	-0.0195** [-2.537]	-0.0187** [-2.447]
landlocked_ij	0.234*** [25.89]	0.229*** [24.67]	0.263*** [25.89]	0.258*** [24.67]
rta	-0.0833*** [-12.68]	-0.0841*** [-12.75]	-0.0982*** [-12.68]	-0.0991*** [-12.75]
ln_lsci_i	-0.0887*** [-26.59]	-0.0903*** [-27.09]	-0.199*** [-26.59]	-0.202*** [-27.09]
ln_tfi_i	-0.347*** [-32.29]		-0.247*** [-32.29]	
ln_generaltf_i		-0.175*** [-12.62]		-0.115*** [-12.62]
ln_pxbptf_i		-0.129*** [-13.51]		-0.147*** [-13.51]
Constant	1.173*** [23.97]	0.819*** [16.72]		
Observations	10,239	10,239	10,239	10,239
R-squared	0.637	0.633	0.637	0.633
Reporter fixed effect	No	No	No	No
Partner fixed effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted R-squared	0.632	0.628	0.632	0.628

Source: United Nations ESCAP, based on data from untfsurvey.org and ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost database, available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database>

Note: Presents regression estimates of Equation [1] using data specified in Table 4.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05 and \* p<0.1; t-stats. in square parentheses.

### 4.3. A counterfactual analysis

The study further investigates trade cost reduction when a country improves a set of trade facilitation measures. This study conducts counterfactual simulations to identify the potential effects of three “cases” of trade facilitation measures in trade cost reduction as follows:

- Case 1: Binding measures under the WTO TFA.
- Case 2: Binding and non-binding measures under the WTO TFA.
- Case 3: Binding and non-binding measures under the WTO TFA, together with digital trade facilitation measures beyond coverage of the WTO TFA (WTO TFA+).

The following two scenarios are considered for each case:

- Scenario 1: Partially implemented trade facilitation measures in each case. All countries whose trade facilitation measures are either not implemented or are implemented on a pilot basis take action to achieve at least partial implementation.
- Scenario 2: Fully implemented trade facilitation measures in each case. All countries whose trade

facilitation measures have not achieved full implementation take action to achieve full implementation.

Table 6 provides a summary of the simulation results at the global level. Model 1 shows partially implementing only binding measures results in limited trade costs reduction of less than 2%; while full implementation of only binding measures results in less than 4% in trade cost reduction. Expanding the coverage of implementation to both binding and non-binding measures under the WTO TFA result in higher rate of trade cost reduction, almost 3% and 7% for partial and full implementation, respectively. Under a WTO TFA+ case where digital trade facilitation measures not included in the WTO TFA are additionally implemented, the average trade cost reductions increase to nearly 8% and 14% for partial and full implementation, respectively.

Table 6 also features estimates of the global average trade cost reductions associated with implementation of two different groups of trade facilitation measures, i.e., general trade facilitation measures and digital trade facilitation measures.



**Table 6** Expected trade cost reduction from alternative trade facilitation reforms

Global: trade costs model	WTO TFA (binding only)		WTO TFA (binding + non-binding)		WTO TFA+ (binding + non-binding + other paperless and cross-border paperless trade)	
	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
<b>Model 1</b>						
Overall trade facilitation	-1.43%	-3.71%	-2.88%	-6.72%	-7.54%	-13.66%
<b>Model 2</b>						
General trade facilitation measures	-1.18%	-2.93%	-1.92%	-4.53%	-2.32%	-5.11%
Digital trade facilitation measures	–	–	-0.77%	-1.45%	-4.94%	-7.88%

Source: United Nations ESCAP, based on data from untfsurvey.org and ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost database, available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database>

Note: There are no digital trade facilitation measures that are classified as WTO TFA binding measures.

WTO TFA = World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement.



In Model 2, both scenarios of partial and full implementation indicate that the largest trade cost reduction is from implementing digital trade facilitation measures that go beyond the requirements of the WTO TFA. Such ambitious digital trade facilitation reforms bring about, on average, a 5% to 8% additional reduction in trade costs, depending on whether they are partially or fully implemented.

Figure 36 shows the trade cost reductions that may be expected in different world regions. Trade cost reductions are more noticeable when digital trade facilitation implementation, i.e., paperless and cross-border paperless trade measures, are implemented. While the global average trade cost reduction would reach nearly 14% when digital

trade facilitation measures are fully implemented along with WTO TFA binding and non-binding measures, the potential trade cost reduction across regions ranges from around 7% in Developed Economies to 26% in Pacific Islands. For these reductions to fully materialize, however, countries should greatly strengthen cooperation on trade digitalization to ensure electronic data and documents in national paperless trade systems can be effectively exchanged and legally recognized by their trade partners. Such cooperation may need to be developed and supported through a variety of dedicated bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements, such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.

**Figure 36**

**Impact of trade facilitation implementation on trade costs globally**



Source: United Nations ESCAP, based on data from untfsurvey.org and ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost database, available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database>





# Conclusion and the way forward

This report presents data on the implementation of trade facilitation from 163 economies around the world. The Survey covers the implementation of general trade facilitation measures, including many of those featured in the WTO TFA, with the addition of digital trade facilitation measures and sustainable trade facilitation measures catering to the special needs of SMEs, the agricultural sector and women as well as other measures supporting inclusive and resilient trade.

Based on the set of 31 “General” and “Digital Trade Facilitation” measures, the Survey finds that the global average implementation rate stands at 69%. The global average implementation rate of these measures has increased by approximately 6 percentage points when compared with the 2021 Survey results for the common countries that participated in both Surveys.<sup>18</sup> The “General Trade Facilitation” group of measures, which aim to improve transparency, reduce unnecessary formalities and build institutional frameworks for trade facilitation, are generally well-implemented around the world. This reflects the strong commitment from countries to implement the WTO TFA.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The evolution is calculated based on the common 144 countries that participated in both the 2021 and 2023 Surveys. The average implementation rate of those 144 countries in 2021 and 2023 was 64% and 70%, respectively.

<sup>19</sup> A total of 17 of the 31 common measures discussed in this report can be directly related to TFA commitments (both binding and non-binding). This implies that the minimum implementation rate that an economy would need to achieve to be fully compliant with the TFA stands at almost 55% (17/31=54.8%).

The “Digital Trade Facilitation” measures on paperless and cross-border paperless trade are implemented to a lesser extent, although strong progress has been made since 2021, with their implementation increasing by 6 and 8 percentage points, respectively. That said, the global average implementation level of ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’, at just 47%, remains substantially lower than the other general and digital trade facilitation measures considered in the Survey. For most developing countries, establishing paperless systems still remains a challenge. Developed countries also face their own challenges in making their systems interoperable with partner countries to facilitate cross-border paperless trade.

Results from the trade cost model estimations presented in this report confirm that digitalization offers great potential for reducing trade costs. Implementation of digital trade facilitation measures beyond the WTO TFA commitments could cut the average trade cost by nearly 14%, nearly twice the trade cost reduction that could be expected from only meeting the requirements of the WTO TFA. It is in the interest of all countries to work together and develop the regulatory framework and technical protocols needed for the seamless exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form along the international supply chain. Regional trade agreements, including the PACER Plus in the Pacific Island region, the AfCFTA in Africa, and the ATIGA and other ASEAN agreements are excellent venues for fostering improved digital trade cooperation. Other multilateral targeted initiatives promoting digital trade facilitation, such as UN/CEFACT and the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, play an important role in facilitating more integrated digital trading systems.

Figure 37 shows the implementation of trade facilitation as a step-by-step process, based on the groups of measures assessed in the Survey.<sup>20</sup> The initial stage of trade facilitation involves setting

up institutional arrangements to prioritize and coordinate the implementation of relevant measures. The subsequent step is to increase transparency in trade processes by widely sharing information on existing laws, regulations and procedures, while also seeking input from stakeholders when developing new ones. The next stage focuses on designing and implementing simpler and more efficient trade formalities. Initially, these streamlined processes may rely on paper documents, but they can be further enhanced through the integration of information and communication technologies, eventually leading to the development of paperless trade systems.

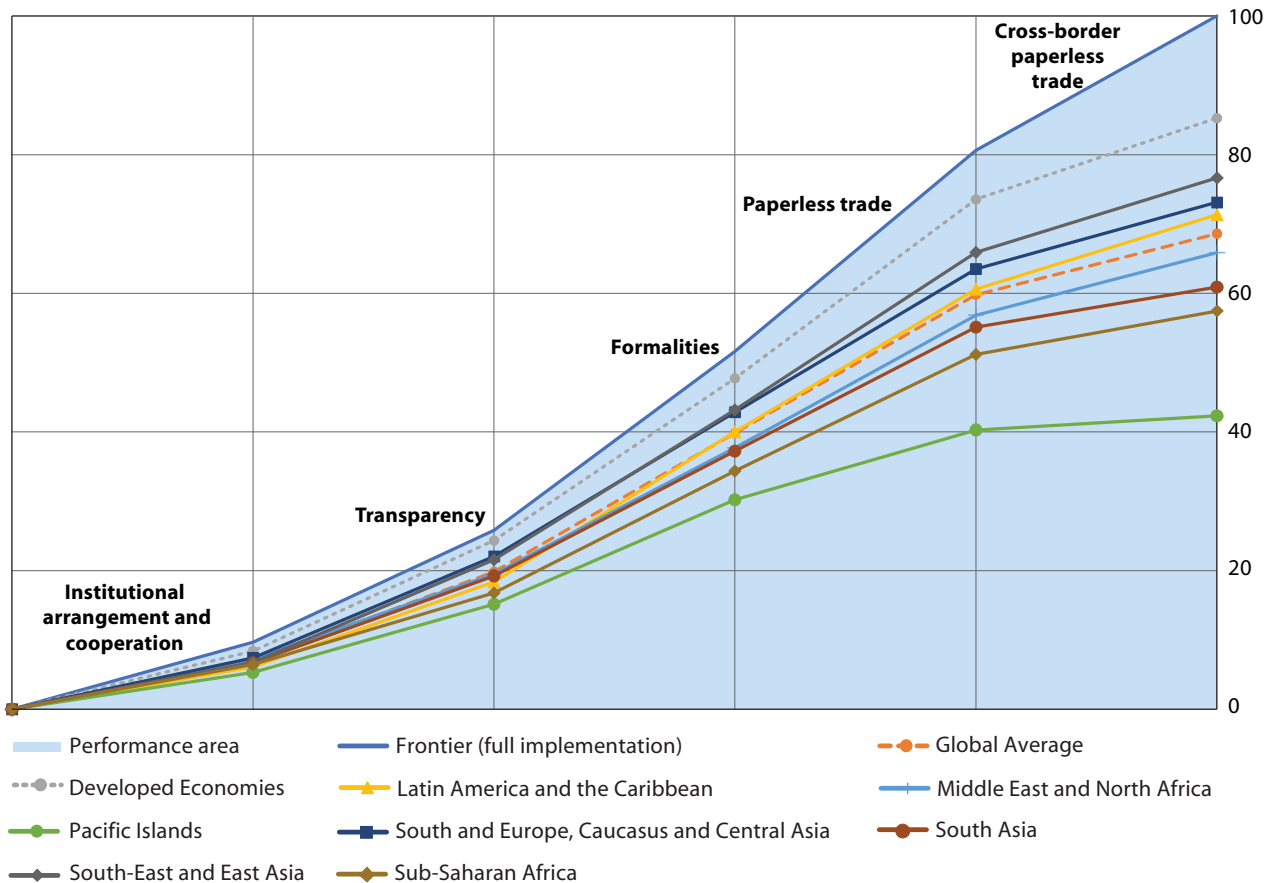
When expanding the scope to include a broader range of 40 trade facilitation measures, which encompasses some measures in the “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” group, the Survey records lower implementation rates in all regions. The implementation of inclusive measures to promote SMEs and the participation of women in trade remain very low. SMEs represent a substantial portion of the global market, particularly in developing economies, yet trade facilitation measures tailored to SMEs are insufficient. They continue to encounter significant obstacles that disproportionately hinder their participation in international trade. Insufficient access to digital infrastructure, a lack of IT skills and limited financial resources pose major challenges for SMEs. To achieve sustainable trade facilitation, it is crucial to prioritize building the capacity of SMEs and consider their specific needs in trade facilitation policies. Empowering SMEs with the necessary resources and support will enhance their ability to engage in trade and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable trade environment.

Similarly, there is a lack of awareness regarding the importance of gender-inclusive policies in trade facilitation. Providing support to guide women traders in understanding trade procedures, establishing guidelines for standards bodies to

<sup>20</sup> This step-by-step process is based on, and generally consistent with the UN/CEFACT step-by-step approach to moving trade facilitation towards a Single Window environment. In practice, however, trade facilitation measures are often very much interrelated across borders. It is not necessary to implement all measures in one category before moving to the next and, as explained in UNNEXt Brief No.17 (see <https://unnex.unescap.org>). Much time and cost can be saved by adopting a more integrated approach based on a long-term vision.



**Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

Note: Figure 37 shows global cumulative trade facilitation implementation scores for different regions for five sub-groups of trade facilitation measures included in the Survey. The scores are based on the equally weighted implementation of 31 trade facilitation measures, but the number of measures varies in each of the five sub-groups. Full implementation of all measures = 100.

ensure equitable representation of both genders' interests, and encouraging women's active participation and decision-making in trade facilitation and standards-related activities could yield substantial benefits. This approach could lead to increased exports and provide women with enhanced income opportunities. Given the significance of these specific groups in achieving sustainable and inclusive development, trade facilitation strategies should be designed in a more comprehensive and inclusive manner.

Trade finance facilitation also has room for improvement, with only a 28% average global implementation rate. Awareness of trade finance processes appears to be limited among trade policy and trade facilitation specialists. Therefore, trade facilitation policymakers need to work together with stakeholders in the financial sector to see how trade finance can be made more easily available and integrated into trade facilitation implementation strategies, including Single Window development plans.

Lastly, results of the recently added ‘Trade facilitation in times of crisis’ group show that countries are beginning to take note of the importance of long-term measures for building resiliency to pandemics and other crises. Sustained efforts should be made to further

enhance cooperation, make trade information transparent and strengthen countries’ capacity to contribute to recovery and prepare adequately for future crises. This includes the current climate crisis, in which trade facilitation certainly has a mitigating role to play.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, (2021. Asia-Pacific trade and investment report 2021: accelerating climate-smart trade and investment for sustainable development. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/kp/APTIR2021>.

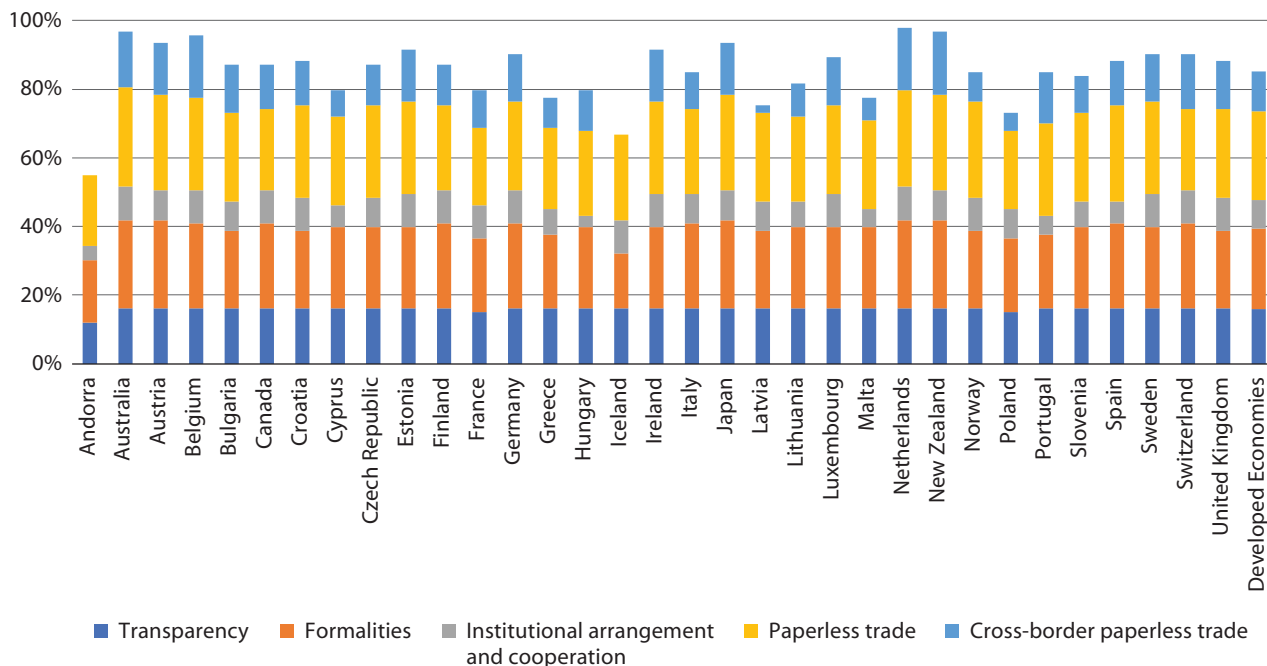
## Annexes

### Annex 1. Definitions of the various stages of implementation

Stage of implementation	Coding/Scoring
<p><b>Full implementation.</b> The trade facilitation measure implemented is in full compliance with commonly-accepted international standards, recommendations and conventions such as the Revised Kyoto Convention, UN/CEFACT Recommendations or the WTO TFA. It is implemented in law and practice and it is available to essentially all relevant stakeholders nationwide, and supported by adequate legal and institutional frameworks as well as adequate infrastructure and financial and human resources. A TFA provision that is included in the commitments given under Notifications of Category A may generally be considered as a measure that is fully implemented by the country, with a caveat that the provision will be implemented by a LDC member within one year of the TFA agreement coming into force. If a country registers a positive response for all sub-questions concerning a given trade facilitation measure, that measure should be considered fully implemented.</p>	3
<p><b>Partial implementation.</b> A measure is considered to be partially implemented if at least one of the following is true: (1) the trade facilitation measure is in partial – but not in full – compliance with commonly-accepted international standards, recommendations and conventions; (2) the country is still in the process of rolling out the implementation of the measure; (3) the measure is being used but on an unsustainable, short-term or ad-hoc basis; (4) the measure is implemented in some – but not all – targeted locations (such as key border crossing stations); or (5) some – but not all – targeted stakeholders are fully involved.</p>	2
<p><b>Pilot stage of implementation.</b> A measure is considered to be at the pilot stage of implementation if, in addition to meeting the general attributes of partial implementation, it is available only to a very small portion of the intended stakeholder group (or at a certain location), and/or is being implemented on a trial basis. When a new trade facilitation measure is at the pilot stage of implementation, the old measure is often continuously used in parallel to ensure that the service is still provided even when there has been a disruption with the new measure. This stage of implementation also includes relevant rehearsals and preparation for the full implementation.</p>	1
<p><b>Not implemented.</b> A measure has not been implemented at this stage. However, this stage may still include initiatives or efforts towards implementation of the measure. For example, under this stage, (pre)feasibility studies or planning for the implementation can be carried out, and consultation with stakeholders on the implementation may be arranged.</p>	0

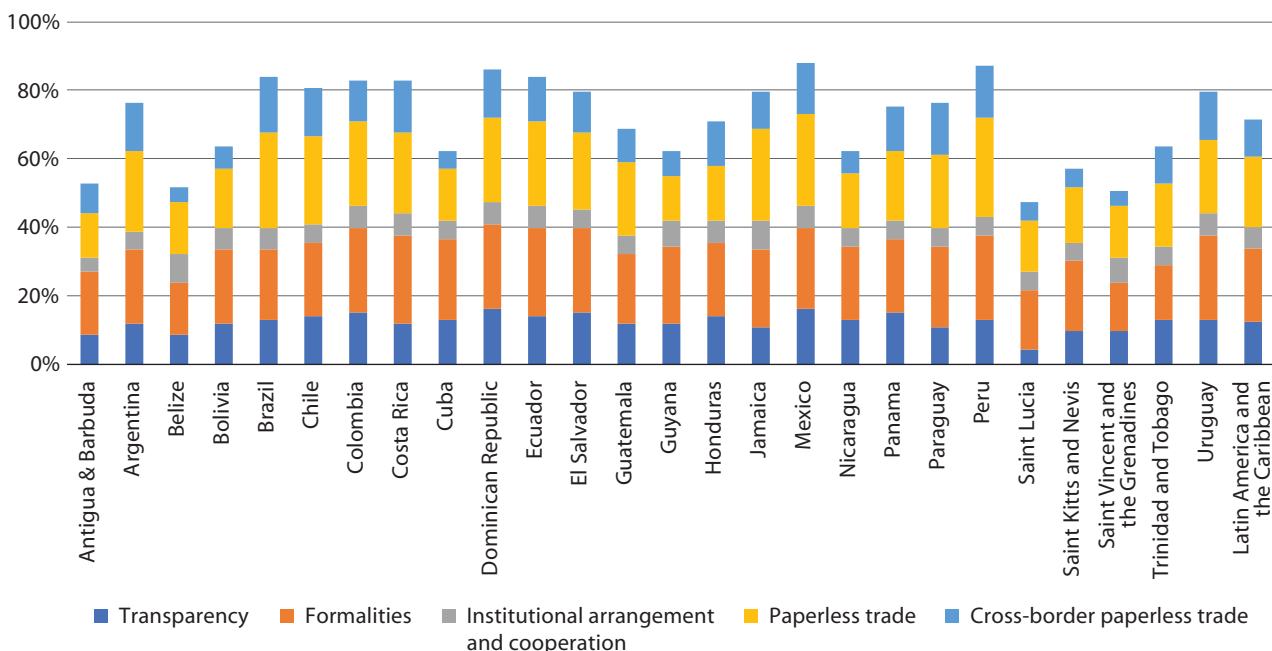
## Annex 2. Trade facilitation implementation by countries in different groups (%)

### Annex Figure 1. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in developed economies



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

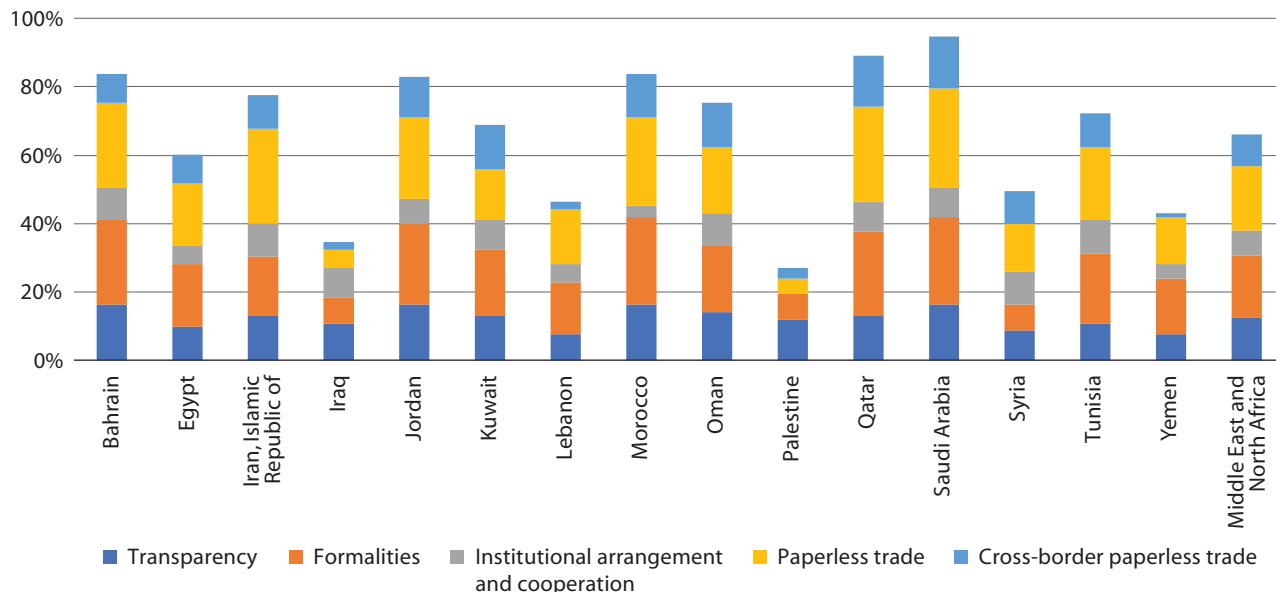
### Annex Figure 2. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untfsurvey.org](https://untfsurvey.org)

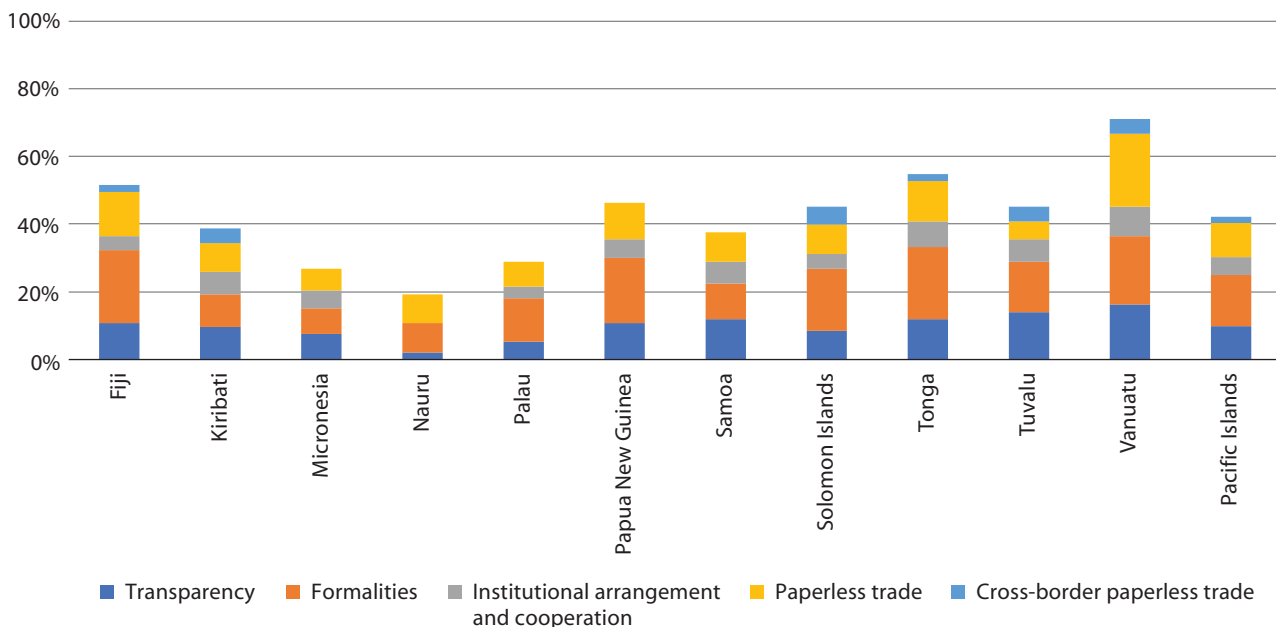


**Annex Figure 3. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in the Middle East and North Africa**



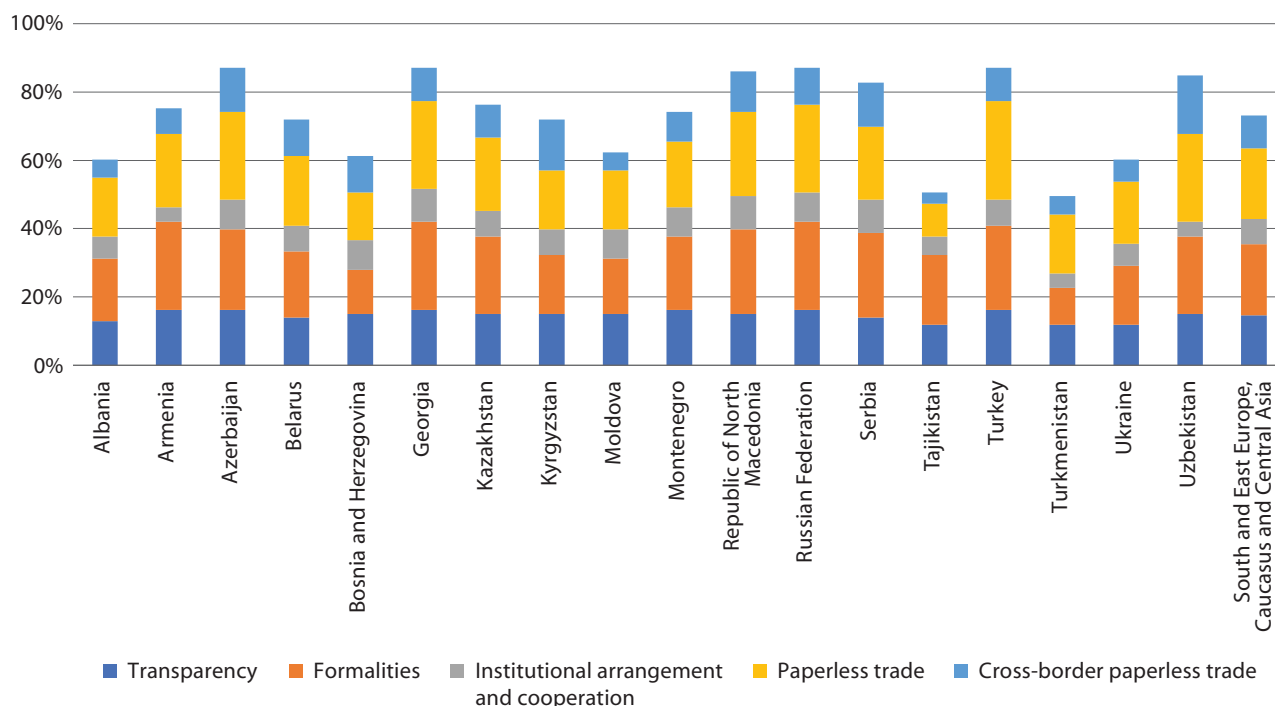
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023. Available at [untsurvey.org](https://untsurvey.org)

**Annex Figure 4. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in the Pacific Islands**



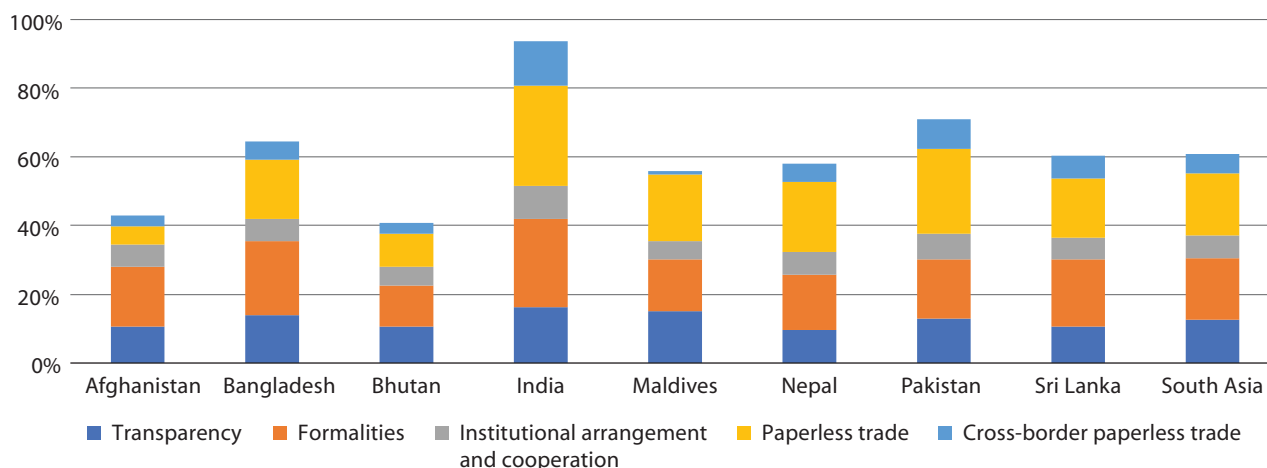
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untsurvey.org](https://untsurvey.org)

**Annex Figure 5. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia**



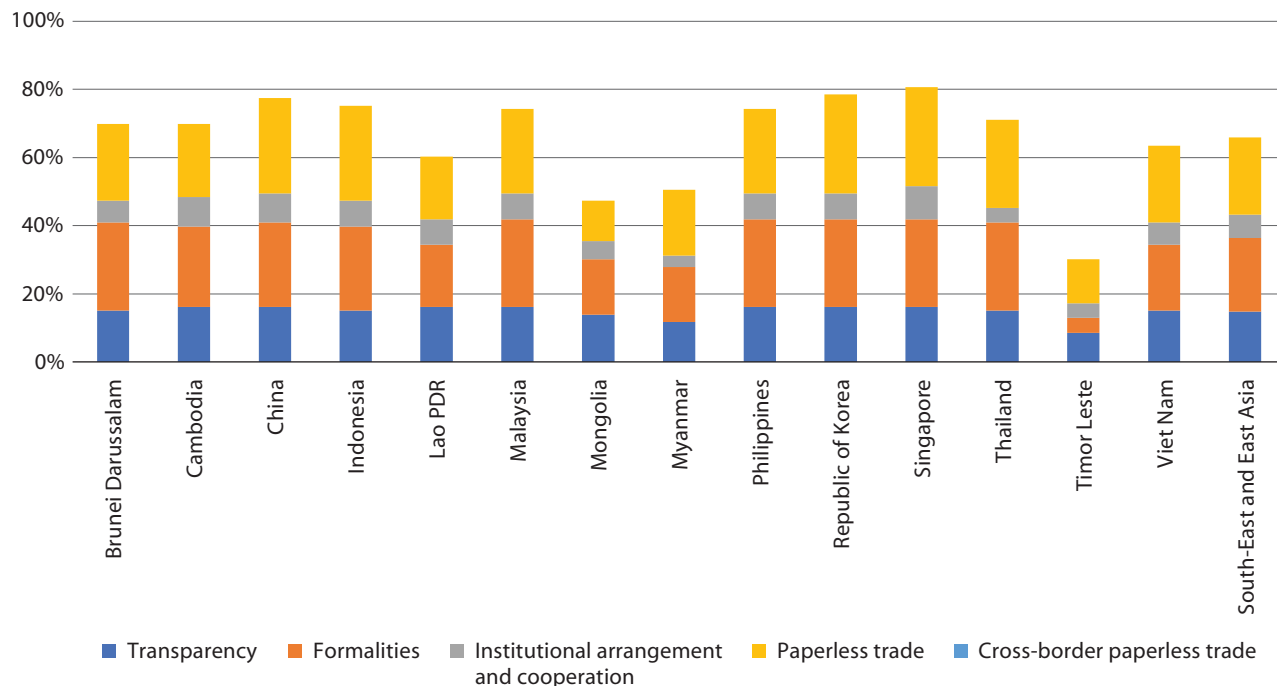
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at [unfssurvey.org](https://unfssurvey.org)

**Annex Figure 6. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in South Asia**



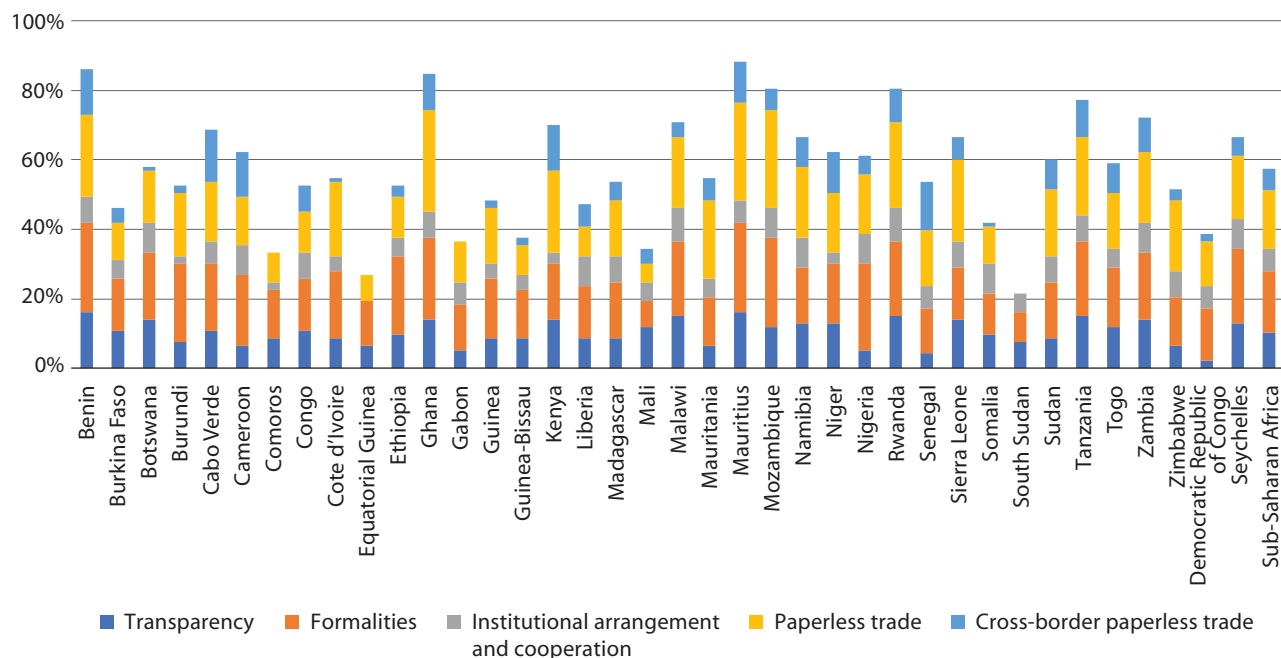
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [unfssurvey.org](https://unfssurvey.org)

**Annex Figure 7. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in South-East and East Asia**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untdf.org](https://untdf.org)

**Annex Figure 8. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in Sub-Saharan Africa**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2023. Available at [untdf.org](https://untdf.org)

### Annex 3. Groupings of countries with special needs

The following countries are included in the three groups of countries with special needs considered in the Survey.<sup>22</sup>

**Least Developed Countries (36):** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Timor Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, Yemen and Zambia.

**Landlocked Developing Countries (27):** Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mali, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Paraguay, Republic of North Macedonia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

**Small Island Developing States (28):** Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Mauritius, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

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<sup>22</sup> More details are available at <http://unohrlls.org/>

## Annex 4. Trade facilitation implementation: Full dataset versus limited dataset

To track the progress made by countries in implementing trade facilitation measures since 2021, the analysis was limited to 144 countries that participated in both the 2021 and 2023 surveys (annex table 1).

It was also checked whether the implementation rates of these 144 countries are a good representation of the entire dataset (163 countries). Annex table 1 shows that the difference is minor, indicating that these 144 countries were good representatives of the results of the 2023 Survey.

**Annex Table 1. Breakdown of countries that participated in the 2021 and 2023 Surveys**

Developed Economies		Latin America and the Caribbean		South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia		South-East and East Asia	
1	Andorra*	1	Antigua & Barbuda	1	Albania	1	Brunei Darussalam
2	Australia	2	Argentina	2	Armenia	2	Cambodia
3	Austria	3	Belize	3	Azerbaijan	3	China
4	Belgium	4	Brazil	4	Belarus	4	Indonesia
5	Bulgaria	5	Chile	5	Bosnia and Herzegovina	5	Lao PDR
6	Canada	6	Colombia	6	Georgia	6	Malaysia
7	Croatia	7	Costa Rica	7	Kazakhstan	7	Mongolia
8	Cyprus	8	Cuba*	8	Kyrgyzstan	8	Myanmar
9	Czechia	9	Dominican Republic	9	Republic of Moldova	9	Philippines
10	Estonia	10	Ecuador	10	Montenegro	10	Republic of Korea
11	Finland	11	El Salvador	11	North Macedonia	11	Singapore
12	France	12	Guatemala	12	Russian Federation	12	Thailand
13	Germany	13	Guyana	13	Serbia	13	Timor-Leste
14	Greece	14	Mexico	14	Tajikistan	14	Viet Nam
15	Hungary	15	Panama	15	Turkey		
16	Ireland	16	Paraguay	16	Ukraine		
17	Italy	17	Peru	17	Uzbekistan		
18	Japan	18	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines				
19	Lithuania	19	Trinidad and Tobago				
20	Luxembourg*	20	Uruguay*				
21	Malta	21	Saint Kitts and Nevis*				
22	Netherlands						
23	New Zealand						
24	Norway						
25	Poland						

Annex Table 1. (continued)

Developed Economies		Pacific Islands		South Asia		Sub-Saharan Africa	
26	Portugal	1	Fiji	1	Afghanistan	1	Botswana
27	Spain	2	Kiribati	2	Bangladesh	2	Burkina Faso*
28	Sweden	3	Micronesia	3	Bhutan	3	Burundi*
29	Switzerland	4	Nauru	4	India	4	Cabo Verde*
30	United Kingdom	5	Palau	5	Maldives	5	Cameroon
		6	Papua New Guinea	6	Nepal	6	Comoros
Middle East and North Africa		7	Samoa	7	Pakistan	7	Congo
		8	Solomon Islands	8	Sri Lanka	8	Cote d'Ivoire
1	Bahrain*	9	Tonga			9	Equatorial Guinea*
2	Egypt	10	Tuvalu			10	Ethiopia
3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	11	Vanuatu			11	Gabon
4	Iraq					12	Guinea
5	Jordan					13	Guinea-Bissau
6	Lebanon*					14	Kenya*
7	Morocco					15	Madagascar
8	State of Palestine*					16	Malawi
9	Saudi Arabia					17	Mauritania
10	Syrian Arab Republic					18	Mauritius
11	Tunisia					19	Mozambique
						20	Namibia
						21	Niger*
						22	Nigeria*
						23	Senegal
						24	Sierra Leone
						25	Somalia
						26	South Sudan
						27	Sudan
						28	Rwanda*
						29	Togo
						30	Tanzania
						31	Zambia
						32	Zimbabwe
						33	Tunisia

\* These countries participated in the 2023 and 2021 Surveys but not in the 2019 Survey.

