Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report

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

2025



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Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report 2025

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

ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ECA
UNECE
United Nations ECLAC
United Nations ESCWA
UN trade & development UNCTAD

FOREWORD

International trade continues to face a complex landscape shaped by geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty and the growing impacts of climate change. At the same time, rapid technological advancement and the expansion of digital trade are transforming the way goods move across borders. In this dynamic environment, the advancement and digitalization of trade procedures have become essential for enhancing resilience, reducing costs and supporting sustainable development.

This report presents the results of the sixth United Nations (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 aims to foster a forward-looking and inclusive approach to trade facilitation among countries and development partners, deepening the collective understanding and monitoring of progress, strengthening the foundation for evidence-based policymaking, fostering the exchange of innovative and effective practices, and identifying emerging priorities for capacity-building, technical assistance, and international cooperation.

The sixth Global Survey builds on the earlier editions, which were undertaken as a key initiative under the Joint United Nations Regional Commissions Approach to Trade Facilitation by the five regional commissions for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Western Asia (ESCWA), with United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as a full partner.

In this edition, new measures are introduced to capture progress in emerging areas, namely e-commerce and green trade facilitation, reflecting the growing emphasis on sustainability and the digital economy. The Global Survey continues to pay special attention to sectors and groups with special needs such as the agricultural sector, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and women traders, as international trade remains a key means towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We hope that this report and the associated interactive database at untfsurvey.org will continue to serve as valuable tools in advancing efforts to make trade more efficient, inclusive and sustainable through the strategic application of technology and innovation, and cooperation to international trade procedures.

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Staff members from the UN regional commissions and UNCTAD who directly contributed to the data collection, validation and preparation of the global report include the following: Moukaila Mouzamilou Takpara, Josephine Hazvinei Nyakatawa and Neijwa Mohammed Abdu from ECA; Jie Wei and Maria Teresa Pisani from ECE; Silvère Dernouh, Chorthip Utoktham, Soo Hyun Kim and Yann Duval from ESCAP; Sebastian Herreros from ECLAC; Adel Al Ghaberi from ESCWA; and Clariesse Chan-Proeller and Poul Hansen from UNCTAD.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the global economy navigates an increasingly complex and dynamic trade landscape, the pursuit of more efficient, inclusive and sustainable trade has never been more critical. Trade costs remain persistently high in many developing regions, limiting their participation in regional and global value chains. Amid heightened disruptions and rapid digital transformation, new opportunities are emerging to reduce costs and enhance resilience. Realizing these opportunities, however, requires effective trade facilitation policies that promote interoperability, foster trust and advance sustainability objectives.

This report presents the findings of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2025, analyzing the progress made across 174 countries in implementing 62 trade facilitation measures. The measures are classified into 12 sub-groups covering both binding and non-binding World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) measures as well as measures beyond the scope of WTO TFA, focusing on digital and sustainable trade facilitation.

In 2025, the global average trade facilitation implementation rate stands at 71% – calculated based on a set of 31 "General" and "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures. While international trade has continued to be burdened by disruptions, measurable improvements have been achieved between 2023 and 2025 (an increase of 5 percentage points). Substantial progress has also been observed among countries with special needs, particularly least developed countries (LDCs) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).

Despite such progress, implementation rates still vary significantly among world regions and economies. South-East and East Asia recorded the highest rates among developing regions, at 79%, followed by the South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region, at 77%, and Latin America and the Caribbean, at 70%. On the other hand, some regions are lagging, with the Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific Islands regions showing the two lowest regional implementation scores, at 62% and 45%, respectively. Countries with special needs – LDCs, LLDCs, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – continue to exhibit implementation rates below the global average, despite steady progress made in recent years, underscoring the need for targeted and sustained support.

Significant challenges remain in enabling the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents across borders. The implementation rate of "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures has improved since 2023, particularly for 'paperless trade', reaching 72% in 2025. However, the implementation level of 'cross-border paperless trade' remains low, at 49%.

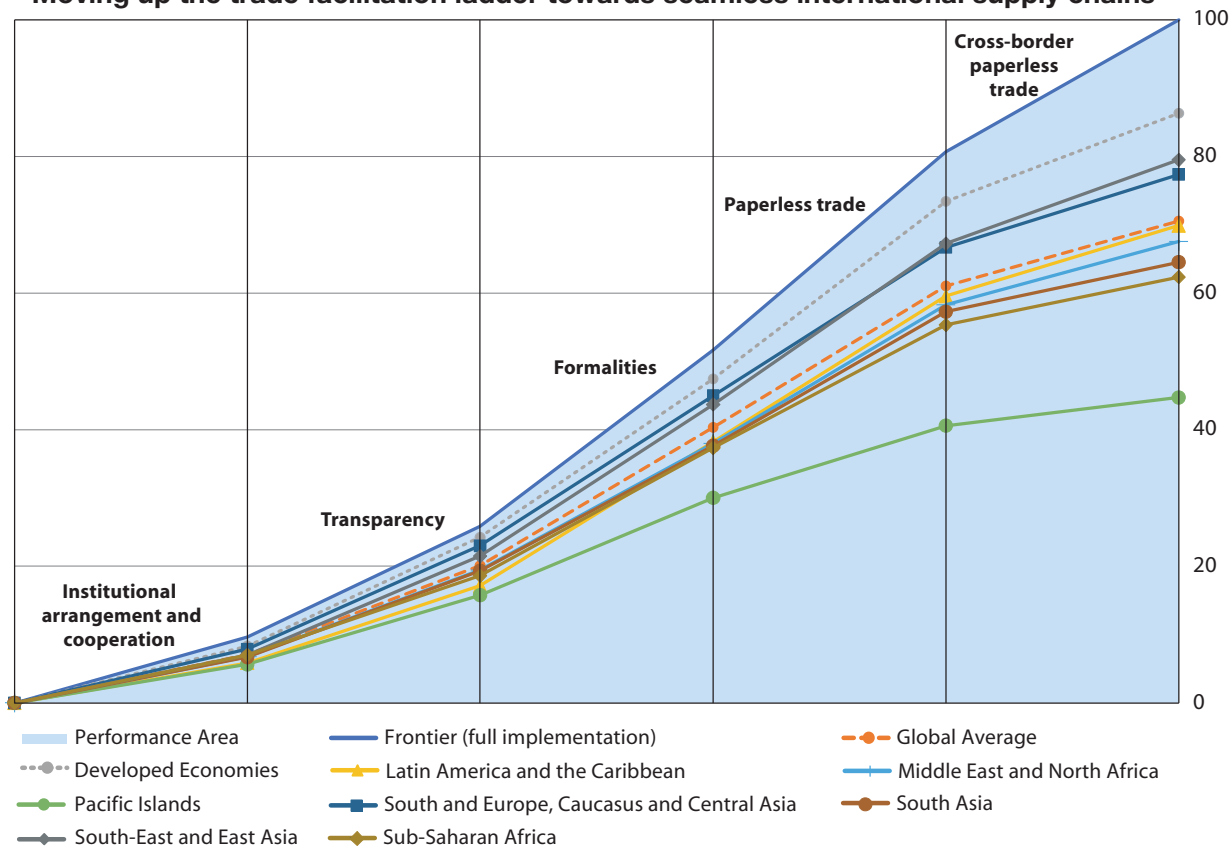
Adoption of trade facilitation measures aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and sectors with special need also remains insufficient. When expanding the analysis to include a broader range of 40 trade facilitation measures, including "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" measures, average levels of implementation across all regions fall. The global average implementation rate also falls to 68%, 3 percentage points lower compared to the rate calculated based on 31 "General" and "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures.

Specialized trade facilitation frameworks addressing digital commerce and environmental sustainability remain at an early stage of development. Global average implementation of 'trade facilitation for e-commerce' measures stands at 36%. Implementation of 'green trade facilitation' measures stands at 23%, the lowest implementation rate among all sub-groups in the Survey.

Significant trade cost reductions can be achieved by implementing 'paperless trade' and 'cross-border paperless trade' measures, with these measures surpassing the impact of conventional trade facilitation measures. Survey data were used to estimate a trade cost model that quantifies the impact of trade facilitation reforms on trade cost reduction. Simulations based on the model show that full digital trade facilitation implementation could cut the average trade cost globally by more than 11%, almost 6 percentage points more than what could be expected from achieving full implementation 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 – namely, enhancing the institutional arrangement, establishing transparency, implementing efficient trade formalities and developing paperless trade systems. Subsequently, the focus is shifting towards cross-border electronic exchange of trade data and documents, with emphasis on ensuring their secure and trusted use by authorized stakeholders throughout international supply chains (see figure below). Achieving this requires closer collaboration among countries in developing and operationalizing the legal and technical protocols necessary for the seamless exchange of regulatory and commercial information within and across borders. Regional and interregional initiatives – such as the ASEAN Single Window in Asia, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Africa and the PACER Plus Agreement in the Pacific Islands region – continue to serve as key platforms for advancing cooperation. Other targeted initiatives promoting trade digitalization, such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA) and UN/CEFACT policy recommendations and standards for trade facilitation and e-business, play a crucial role in fostering more integrated digital trading systems.

Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Ongoing efforts to facilitate international trade to make it more transparent and efficient must also ensure alignment with sustainable and inclusive development objectives. Particular attention should be given to addressing the needs of SMEs, women traders and other groups with special needs to ensure that the benefits of digital and paperless trade are broadly shared. Empowering these stakeholders with the necessary resources, digital capabilities and institutional support would strengthen their participation in trade. Current implementation rates suggest that significant progress and support are still needed in this regard. Countries are, therefore, encouraged to adopt more comprehensive and inclusive trade facilitation strategies while sustaining capacity-building efforts that enhance resilience and support innovation. Such strategies should include implementation of measures to reduce the negative impact of trade processes on the environment and account for the rapidly growing digital economy.

Additional reports and the complete dataset of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2025 is available at https://untfsurvey.org/.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEO	authorized economic operator
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
BIS	Bank for International Settlements
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CEPA	UAE-Jordan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CPTA	Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	gross domestic product
GTFP	Global Trade Facilitation Programme
IT	information technology
ICT	information and communications technologies
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
LDC	least developed country
LLDC	landlocked developing country
NAMRA	Namibia Revenue Agency
NIDA	National Identification Agency
PDCC	Central American Digital Trade Platform
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPS	sanitary and phyto-sanitary
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
UNCTAD	United Nations Trade and Development
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER



Introduction

1.1. Background and objectives

Reducing trade costs remains a critical priority for enabling economies to integrate effectively into regional and global value chains. Lower trade costs not only facilitate deeper economic integration between countries, but they also create opportunities for a broader range of stakeholders to participate meaningfully in international trade. Recent analysis has highlighted the transformative role of digital trade and investment as effective means for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with growing adoption of digitization in trade of goods and services offering pathways to economic growth, inclusivity and environmental sustainability. However, to realize these benefits deliberate policy action is required to create an enabling environment through forward-looking and inclusive trade policies.

Regions across the world continue to face substantial trade costs, as shown by the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database (table 1). This is particularly evident in trade among selected economies in Sub-Saharan Africa (224% average tariff equivalent on the value of goods traded), North Africa (143%) and South Asia (215%). In contrast, trading costs among the three largest economies in Europe-3 and those between China, the Republic of Korea and Japan remain significantly lower at 42% and 57% tariff-equivalent, respectively.

These persistently high trade costs are compounded by geopolitical tensions and supply chain vulnerabilities that continue to create uncertainty in international trade, while shifting global economic

Table 1

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

Region	ASEAN-4	East Asia-3	South Asia-4	LAC-4	NAF-3	SSA-3	Western Asia-3	EU-3	North America
ASEAN-4	71% (-5.9%)	76% (-3.2%)	128% (-4.6%)	151% (-1.0%)	186% (-16.4%)	219% (6.5%)	179% (1.7%)	105% (0.3%)	101% (-2.2%)
East Asia-3	76% (-3.2%)	57% (3.2%)	130% (4.1%)	109% (-3.0%)	152% (-10.3%)	166% (2.7%)	159% (-2.4%)	85% (-0.2%)	79% (1.2%)
South Asia-4	128% (-4.6%)	130% (4.1%)	215% (75.7%)	190% (-3.1%)	156% (-22.8%)	203% (-6.4%)	167% (-1.6%)	118% (2.5%)	119% (0.2%)
LAC-4	151% (-1.0%)	109% (-3.0%)	190% (-3.1%)	106% (5.4%)	182% (-25.7%)	313% (6.6%)	222% (-6.2%)	116% (2.0%)	93% (-1.3%)
NAF-3	186% (-16.4%)	152% (-10.3%)	156% (-22.8%)	182% (-25.7%)	143% (-19.4%)	186% (-26.9%)	134% (0.3%)	100% (-27.8%)	125% (-33.7%)
SSA-3	219% (6.5%)	166% (2.7%)	203% (-6.4%)	313% (6.6%)	186% (-26.9%)	224% (15.9%)	220% (2.9%)	153% (10.9%)	177% (4.8%)
West Asia-3	179% (1.7%)	159% (-2.4%)	167% (-1.6%)	222% (-6.2%)	134% (0.3%)	220% (2.9%)	94% (3.8%)	151% (0.6%)	147% (-6.8%)
EU-3	105% (0.3%)	85% (-0.2%)	118% (2.5%)	116% (2.0%)	100% (-27.8%)	153% (10.9%)	151% (0.6%)	42% (-1.0%)	77% (1.5%)
North America	101% (-2.2%)	79% (1.2%)	119% (0.2%)	93% (-1.3%)	125% (-33.7%)	177% (4.8%)	147% (-6.8%)	77% (1.5%)	31% (3.5%)

Source: ESCAP, ESCAP-World Bank trade cost database, updated August 2025. 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 2012–2017 and 2018–2023 are in parentheses.

ASEAN-4: Indonesia; Malaysia; 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; West Asia-3: Jordan; Lebanon; and Saudi Arabia; North America: Canada and the United States; Europe-3: Germany; France; and the United Kingdom.

dynamics and environmental imperatives add complexity. Despite these challenges, the acceleration of trade digitalization and the implementation of paperless trade systems offer effective pathways to enhance supply chain resilience and reduce trade costs.

Non-tariff measures continue to impose substantial burdens on international trade, contributing significantly more to trade costs than traditional tariffs.[1] In response to these cost challenges, trade digitalization offers dual benefits by simultaneously reducing trade costs and environmental impacts; research indicates that fully digitalizing trade procedures in the Asia-Pacific region could reduce CO2 emissions by 13 million tons while cutting trade costs significantly.[2] Addressing trade barriers requires multifaceted approaches, such as enhancing transport infrastructure and services, streamlining regulatory procedure and simplifying documentation requirements. Trade facilitation

[1] UNCTAD, *Key Statistics and Trends in Trade Policy: The Importance of Unilateral Trade Preference* (United Nations, 2023).

[2] ESCAP, UNCTAD and UNIDO, *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2023/24: Unleashing Digital Trade and Investment for Inclusive and Sustainable Development* (United Nations publication, 2023).

encompasses a comprehensive range of border procedures, from strengthening transparency mechanisms to enabling electronic exchange of shipment data.

Trade facilitation, particularly through paperless and cross-border paperless trade systems, functions as a fundamental mechanism for streamlining and enhancing transparency in trade procedures. These measures strengthen supply chain resilience while substantially reducing trade costs. Developing countries and small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) gain significant benefits from digitalization given their disproportionate burden from trading expenses. The sustained global commitment to implementing the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) is complemented by regional frameworks, such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA), which is a dedicated UN treaty for advancing trade digitalization.[3]

In this context, the present report provides a detailed analysis of findings from the sixth UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2025. Additionally, a trade cost model is employed to quantify the potential impact of various trade facilitation reform scenarios, demonstrating the substantial benefits that can be achieved through comprehensive implementation of these measures.

1.2. Survey instrument and methodology

The sixth UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (hereafter called "the Survey") 2025 builds on the original instrument (formerly known as the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation). Under the joint regional commissions approach to trade facilitation and following extensive discussions at the Global Trade Facilitation Forum 2013,[4] it was decided that the regional surveys should be conducted at the global level jointly by all the regional commissions. Since 2015, the regional commissions have systematically collected and analyzed information on trade facilitation implementation worldwide. UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) joined as a full partner in the Survey in 2023.

The 2025 Survey covers 62 trade facilitation measures, which are classified into four groups and 12 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, "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" includes 'trade facilitation for SMEs', 'agricultural trade facilitation', and 'trade facilitation and women' sub-groups. The fourth group, "Other Trade Facilitation" comes with three sub-groups: 'trade facilitation for e-commerce', 'green trade facilitation' and 'trade finance for trade facilitation'. The last three sub-groups were added to the Survey to reflect the evolving trade landscape and address emerging trade priorities.

The overall scope of the Survey goes beyond the measures included in the WTO TFA incorporating additional trade facilitation measures that are particularly relevant for digital and sustainable trade. Most 'paperless trade' and 'cross-border paperless trade' measures are not specifically featured in the WTO TFA, although their implementation would in many cases support better implementation of the Agreement. Similarly, 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

[3] For details, see https://www.unescap.org/kp/cpta

[4] The Global Trade Facilitation Forum was organized jointly by the regional commissions in Bangkok in November 2013.

Table 2

Grouping of trade facilitation measures and correspondence with trade facilitation agreement articles

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
General Trade Facilitation	Transparency	Online publication of import-export regulations	1.2
		Stakeholder consultation on draft regulations	2.2
		Advance publication/notification of trade regulations	2.1
		Advance rulings on import tariff classification and origin	3
		Independent appeal mechanism	4
	Formalities	Risk management	7.4
		Pre-arrival processing	7.1
		Post-clearance audits	7.5
		Separating release from final Customs duties determination	7.3
		Establishment and publication of average release times	7.6
		Trade facilitation measures for authorized operators	7.7
		Expedited shipments	7.8
		Acceptance of copies for trade formalities	10.2.1
	Institutional arrangement and cooperation	National committee on trade facilitation	23
		National legislative framework for border agency cooperation	8
		Agencies delegating border controls to Customs	
		Alignment of working days/hours with neighbouring economies at borders	8.2(a)
		Alignment of formalities/procedures with neighbouring economies at borders	8.2(b)
	Transit facilitation	Transit facilitation agreement(s)	
		Limit physical inspections/Use risk assessment for transit goods	10.5
		Pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation	11.9
		Cooperation between agencies of economies involved in transit	11.16
Digital Trade Facilitation	Paperless trade	Automated Customs System	
		Internet access for Customs and border agencies	
		E-Single Window System	10.4
		E-Submission of Customs declarations	
		E-Submission and issuance of import/export permits	
		E-Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests	
		E-Submission of Air Cargo Manifests	
		E-Application/issuance of Preferential Certificates of Origin	
		E-Payment of Customs duties	7.2
		E-Application for Customs refunds	

Table 2. *(continued)*

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
Digital Trade Facilitation *(continued)*	Cross-border paperless trade	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	
		Legal framework for digital authentication	
		Electronic exchange of Customs declaration	
		Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin	
		Electronic exchange of Sanitary & Phyto-Sanitary Certificate	
		Paperless collection of payment from letters 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 committee(s) on trade facilitation	
		Other special measures for SMEs	
	Agricultural trade facilitation	SPS testing and laboratory facilities	7.9
		SPS national standards and accreditation bodies	
		E-Application/issuance of SPS certificates	
		Special treatment for perishable goods	
	Trade facilitation and women	Trade facilitation policy/strategy for women's participation	
		Trade facilitation measures benefiting women	
		Women membership in national committee(s) on trade facilitation	
Other Trade Facilitation	Trade facilitation for e-commerce	Legal framework to facilitate cross-border e-commerce	
		Customs duties waived on small value shipments	
		Immediate release procedures for e-commerce goods	
		AEO program for cross-border e-commerce	
		E-Submission of Customs declarations by postal operators/express carriers	
	Green trade facilitation	Facilitation of sustainability reporting for traded goods	
		Trade facilitation of green and climate-smart goods	
		eCITES application/issuance/exchange	
		Facilitation of legitimate trade in waste	
	Trade finance for trade facilitation	Single Window facilitates traders access to finance	
		Authorities engaged in emerging tech project(s) covering trade finance	
		Variety of trade finance services available	

considering the critical role of trade finance in facilitating trade flows, and the rising importance of cross-border e-commerce along with the increasing need to reduce environmental impact while promoting trade in green goods.

Following the introduction to the Survey instrument and methodology, a global overview of trade facilitation implementation across Developed Economies, seven developing regions and countries with special needs is provided in section 2. A closer look at the implementation levels of various groups and sub-groups of trade facilitation measures is given in section 3. A trade cost model to examine the impact of trade facilitation on trade costs has been applied for discussion in section 4. Finally, key findings are highlighted and a way forward for advancing trade facilitation is proposed in section 5.

A three-step approach was used to develop the dataset (box 1). Each measure included in the Survey was rated as either "fully implemented", "partially implemented", "on a pilot basis", "not implemented", "don't know" or "not applicable" (see annex 1 for definitions of the various implementation stages). To calculate implementation rates across countries, regions and groupings, scores of 3, 2, 1, or 0 were assigned to the implementation stages. Further details and examples on calculating implementation rates are available online.[5]

Box 1

A three-step approach to data collection and validation

Step 1. Data submission by experts: The regional commissions sent the Survey instrument to trade facilitation experts in governments, the private sector and academia to gather preliminary information. The questionnaire was made publicly available online and, where relevant, distributed to national trade facilitation authorities and regional trade facilitation partners or organizations.

Step 2. Data verification by the secretariats of the regional commissions: The regional commissions cross-checked the data collected in Step 1. Desk research and data-sharing among regional commissions and Survey partners were conducted to verify data accuracy. In cases in which additional information was needed, interviews with key informants were arranged. This step produced a consistent set of responses per country.

Step 3. Data validation by national governments: The regional commissions sent the completed questionnaire to each national government for review, ensuring countries could verify the dataset and provide additional information. Government feedback was then incorporated to finalize the dataset.

[5] For more details on the calculation of the scores and the methodology, see https://www.untfsurvey.org/about

The Survey covers 174 countries, which are divided into the following eight groups:

Developed Economies (34 countries): Andorra; Australia; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Canada; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Poland; Portugal; the Republic of Korea; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; the United Kingdom; and the United States.

Latin America and the Caribbean (27 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; Suriname; Trinidad and Tobago; and Uruguay.

Middle East and North Africa (16 countries): Bahrain; Egypt; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Iraq; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Libya; Morocco; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; the State of Palestine; Syrian Arab Republic; Tunisia; and Yemen.

Pacific Islands (12 countries): Fiji; Kiribati; Marshall Islands; Micronesia (Federated States of); Nauru; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; and Vanuatu.

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

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

South-East and East Asia (13 countries): Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Indonesia; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Mongolia; Myanmar; Philippines, Singapore; Thailand; Timor-Leste; and Viet Nam.

Sub-Saharan Africa (45 countries): Angola; Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi, Cabo Verde; Cameroon; the Central African Republic; Comoros; Congo; Côte d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Equatorial Guinea; Eswatini; Ethiopia; Gabon; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Kenya; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mozambique; Namibia; Niger; Nigeria; Rwanda; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Somalia; South Africa; South Sudan; Sudan; United Republic of Tanzania; Togo; Uganda; Zambia; and Zimbabwe.

1.3. Utilization of report and data

To ensure transparency and accessibility, regional and global datasets are available online at untfsurvey.org. Researchers, policy analysts and policymakers are strongly encouraged to use the data to advance understanding of trade facilitation impacts and develop evidence-based policy recommendations. Stakeholders wishing to improve or expand the dataset may contact the focal points listed on the website. Resource permitting, the regional commissions, UNCTAD and other partners aim to conduct the Survey biennially.

CHAPTER



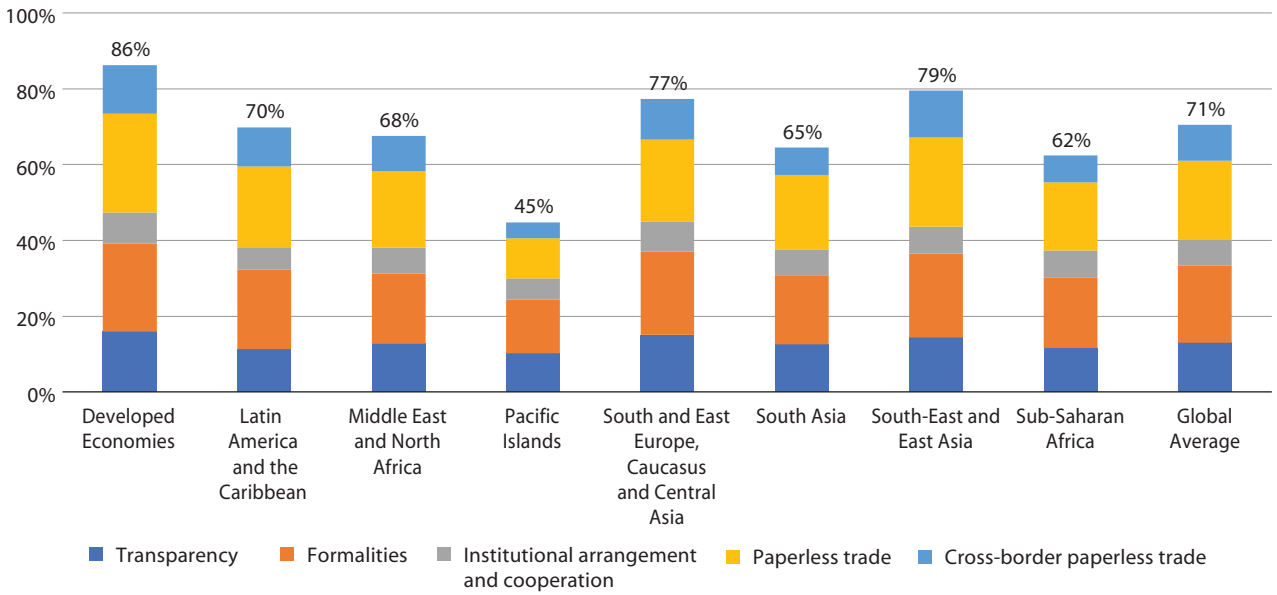
Trade facilitation implementation: overview

The Survey examines trade facilitation implementation rates across 31 measures, covering five sub-groups under the "General" and "Digital Trade Facilitation" groups (figure 1). Implementation rates for individual regions and countries, detailed in annex 2, vary significantly based on economic capacity, infrastructure development level and policy priorities across the 174 economies surveyed. Within the Pacific Islands, implementation rates span from 19% in Nauru to 77% in Vanuatu, while in Latin America and the Caribbean, the spectrum is even wider, ranging from 24% in Suriname to 87% in Peru.

At the country level, the Netherlands leads globally with a 98% implementation rate, closely followed by a cluster of high performers, Australia, Austria, New Zealand, Qatar and Singapore (all achieving 97%), Saudi Arabia (96%), and Japan and the Republic of Korea (both at 95%). Clear regional leaders have emerged among developing economies: Singapore (97%) leads in South-East and East Asia; Peru (87%) and Costa Rica (86%) set the pace in Latin America and the Caribbean; Qatar (97%) and Saudi Arabia (96%) are the top performers in the Middle East and North Africa; Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan (both at

Figure 1

Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures by region



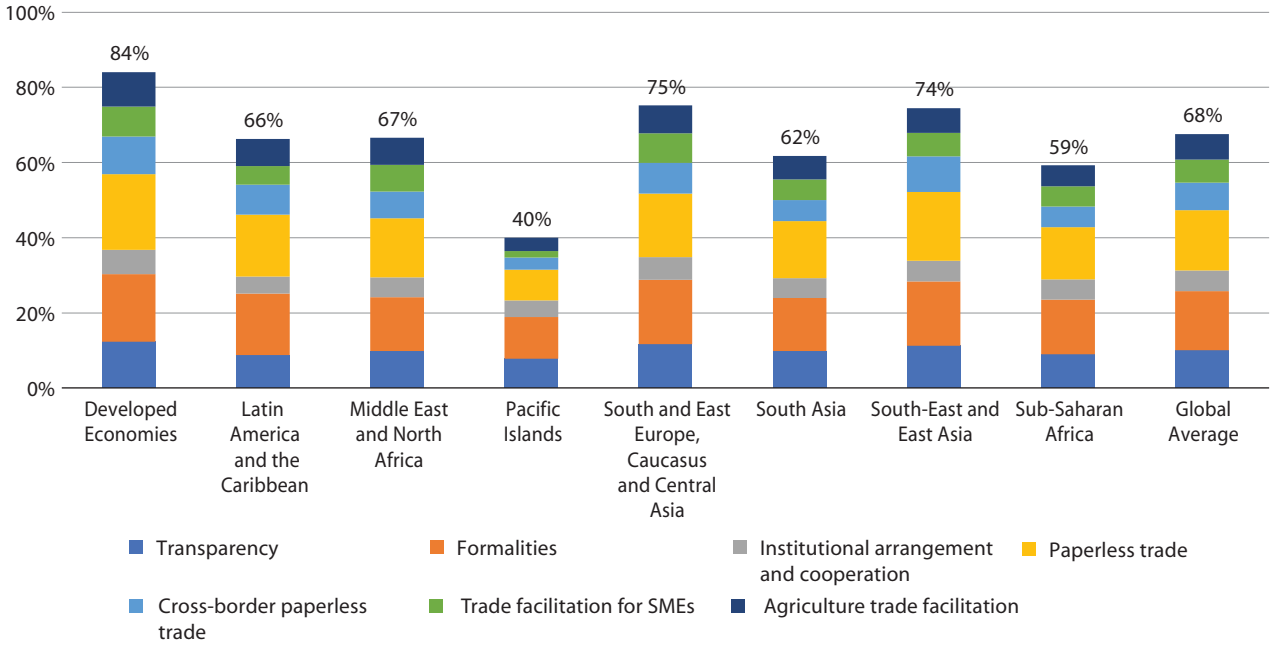
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

92%) achieve the highest rates in South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia; India leads in South Asia, at 94%; while Rwanda (91%) and Ghana (88%) have recorded a strong performance in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Expanding the analysis to encompass 40 measures by incorporating nine additional "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" measures reveals a consistent decline in implementation rates across all regions (figure 2). The global average decreases from 71% to 68%, with notable drops in South-East and East Asia and the Pacific Islands (both regions declined by 5 percentage points), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (4 percentage points). These reductions stem primarily from the lower implementation levels of measures addressing 'trade facilitation for SMEs' and 'agricultural trade facilitation', which lag the core trade facilitation measures, highlighting persistent challenges in making trade more inclusive for smaller economic actors and the agricultural sector.

Figure 2

Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures by region, including additional sustainable measures

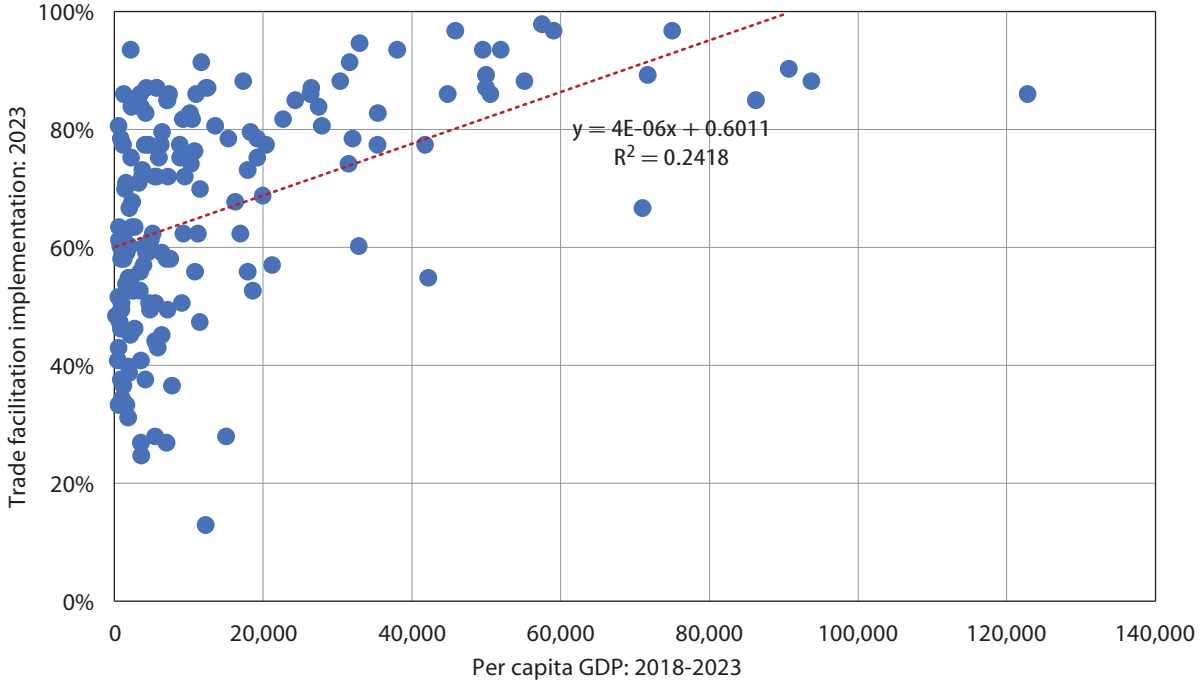


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

The relationship between economic development and trade facilitation implementation indicates that financial resources, while helpful, are not determinative of success (figure 3). Although a positive correlation exists between gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and implementation rates, the R^2 value of 0.2418 indicates that economic capacity accounts for less than a quarter of the variation in performance. Among the 174 countries analyzed, approximately 65% of those with GDP per capita below $10,000 have achieved implementation rates exceeding 50%, indicating that strategic policy choices can overcome resource constraints. Notable examples are Benin ($1,244 per capita, 86% implementation), India ($2,172 per capita, 94% implementation), and Rwanda ($865 per capita, 78% implementation), which outperform several higher-income countries. Conversely, some high-income countries, such as Iceland ($71,031 per capita, 67% implementation) and Kuwait ($32,848 per capita, 60% implementation) lag, suggesting that institutional commitment and policy prioritization matter more than wealth alone in advancing trade facilitation reforms.

Figure 3

Trade facilitation implementation rates and gross domestic product per capita



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org; World Bank World Development Indicators. Available at https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators. Accessed in 2025.

2.1. Implementation in countries with special needs

Figure 4 shows the implementation rates for 31 core trade facilitation measures spanning "General" and "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures across 174 economies, encompassing developed countries, seven developing regions and three country groupings with special needs – least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).[6, 7]

The 2025 Survey reveals a global average implementation rate of 71% for the 31 core measures. Substantial disparities persist across regions, with Developed Economies leading at 86%. Among developing regions, the highest implementation is South-East and East Asia, at 79%, followed by South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, at 77%, and Latin America and the Caribbean, at 70%. Middle East and North Africa reach 68%, while South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa record 65% and 62% respectively, and the Pacific Islands has recorded the lowest regional rate, at 45%.

[6] Detailed country classifications are provided in annex 3.

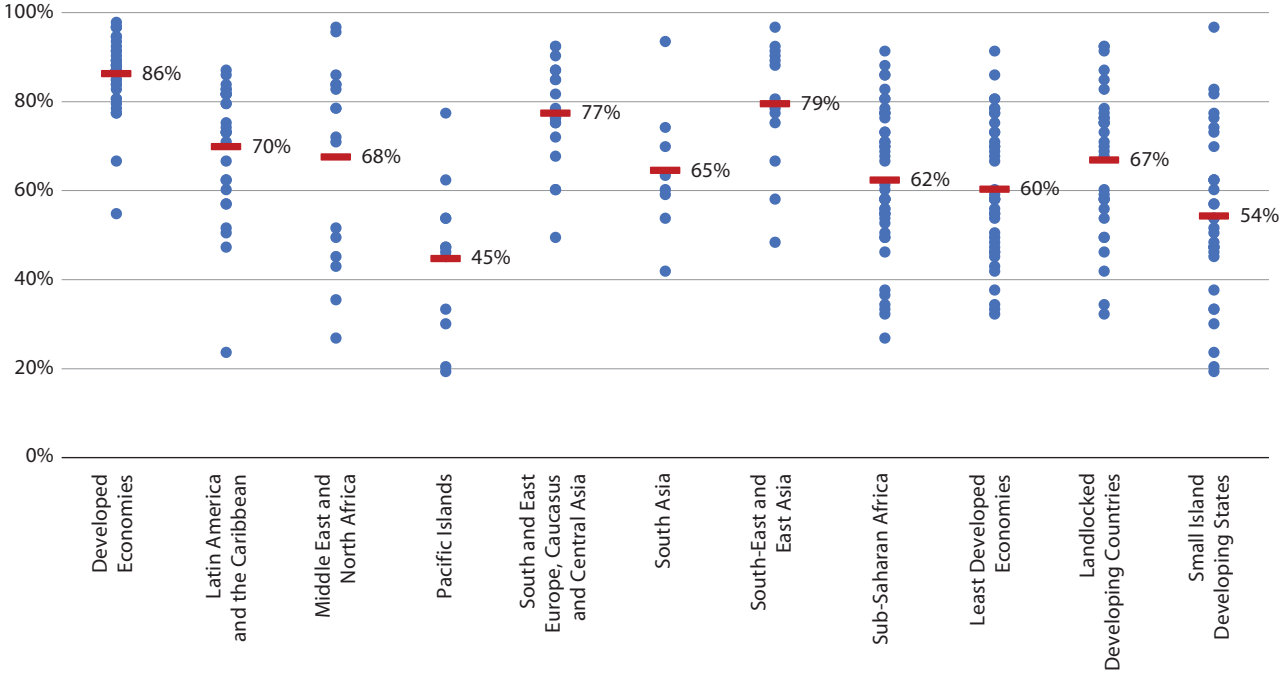
[7] Among the 62 measures surveyed across regional commission, three measures – 'electronic submission of Sea Cargo Manifests', 'alignment of working days and hours with neighbouring countries at border crossings' and 'alignment of formalities and procedures with neighbouring countries at border crossings' – are excluded when calculating the overall score, as they are not relevant to all the 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.

Sub-Saharan Africa and Pacific Islands face particular implementation challenges, recording 62% and 45% respectively–significantly below the global average of 71%. These regions encounter unique challenges: limited infrastructure; geographic isolation across islands and vast territories; and, in some cases, landlocked status that complicates trade logistics. Implementation of 'paperless trade' and 'cross-border paperless trade' measures remain especially challenging in these regions, as these sub-groups require substantial technical infrastructure and coordination with trading partners to achieve full implementation. Enhanced regional cooperation through trade agreements and dedicated trade facilitation initiatives could accelerate progress, particularly in building the interoperable digital systems necessary for cross-border paperless trade.

The implementation rates for the three country groupings with special needs are 60% for LDCs, 67% for LLDCs and 54% for SIDS – all of which are below the global average of 71%. These countries face compounded challenges: infrastructure deficits; geographical constraints; and limited institutional capacities that create systematic disadvantages in trade facilitation. LDCs constitute the most vulnerable segment of the international community, constrained by inadequate infrastructure and scarce financial and human resources. LLDCs face the additional burden of lacking direct sea access, substantially making trade logistics more complex and increasingly costly. SIDS in addition face elevated communication and transportation costs, which impede their integration into global trade networks. Supporting these countries requires targeted international cooperation that addresses their distinct challenges through tailored technical assistance and capacity-building programmes.

Figure 4

Average trade facilitation implementation rates by region and country groupings

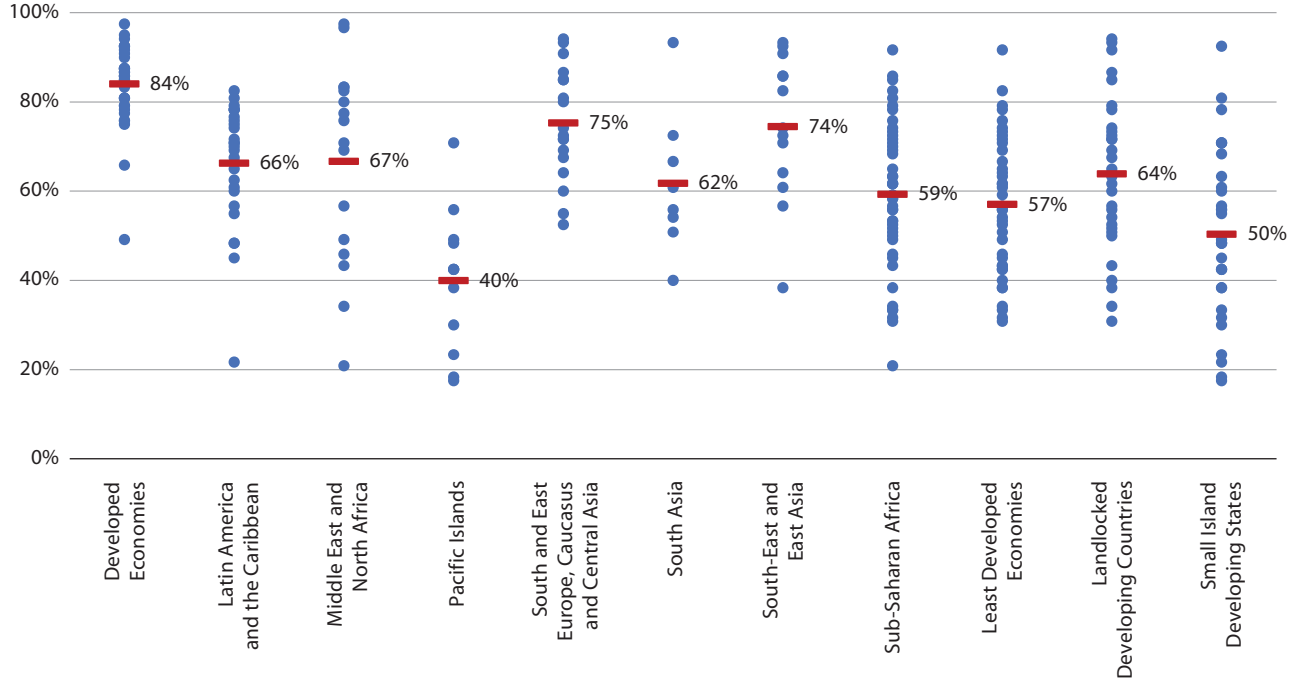


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

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.

Expanding the analysis to 40 measures by incorporating nine additional "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" measures – specifically 'trade facilitation for SMEs' and 'agricultural trade facilitation' – reduces the global average implementation rate to 68%, a decline of 3 percentage points from the 31-measure baseline. All regions experience decreased implementation rates when these inclusive trade measures are factored in, though the magnitude varies considerably (figure 5). Developed Economies decline by 2 percentage points to 84%, while more substantial declines occur in Pacific Islands and South-East and East Asia, each falling by 5 percentage points to 40% and 74%, respectively. Other regions show smaller declines: Latin America and the Caribbean (4 percentage points), Sub-Saharan Africa (3 percentage points) and Middle East and North Africa (1 percentage point). These consistent declines across all regions underscore the persistent challenges in implementing measures that specifically support SMEs and agricultural trade, highlighting critical gaps in making trade facilitation truly inclusive and sustainable.

Figure 5 **Average trade facilitation implementation rates by region and country groupings, including additional sustainable measures**



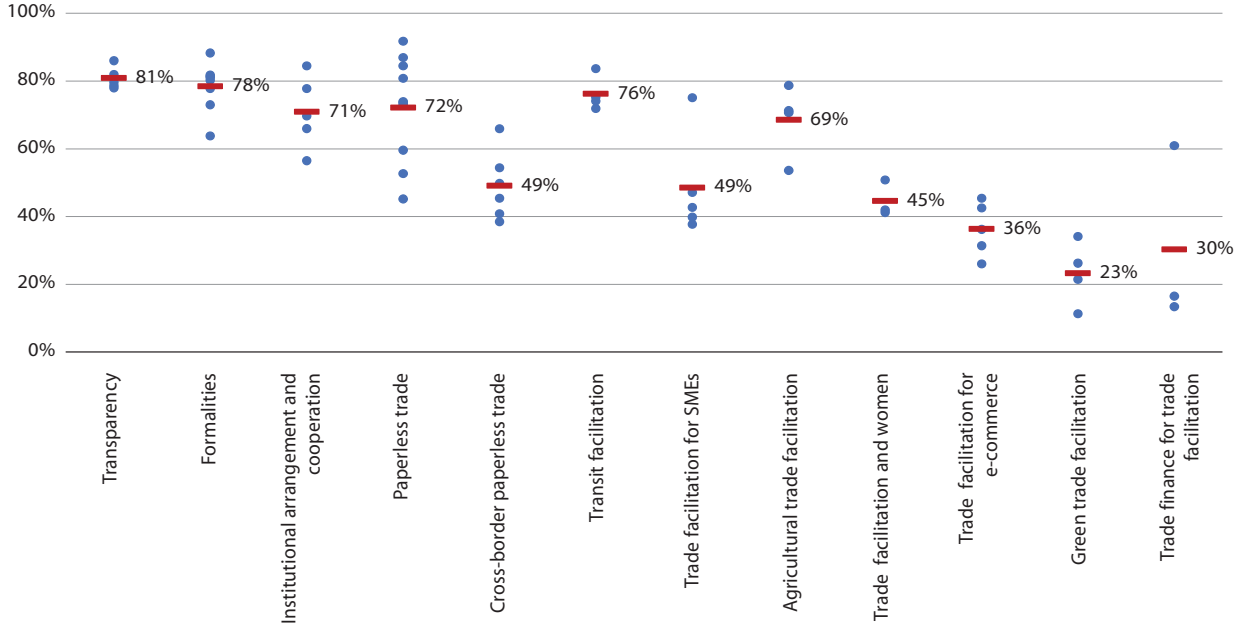
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

2.2. Most and least implemented trade facilitation measures

While progress has been made across various areas, significant implementation gaps persist in critical sub-groups. The lowest implementation rates are recorded for 'green trade facilitation' and 'trade finance for trade facilitation' at 23% and 30%, respectively, highlighting fundamental challenges in sustainable and inclusive trade (figure 6). Low implementation of trade finance measures hits SMEs especially hard, which often lack the resources necessary to participate in international trade and digitalize their processes. As firms that successfully export are, on average, more profitable than those limited to domestic markets, inadequate access to trade finance creates barriers to inclusive economic growth.

Similarly, the limited implementation of 'green trade facilitation' measures (23%) indicates that governments have yet to establish comprehensive frameworks for facilitating environmentally sustainable trade. The low adoption of systems for sustainability reporting, climate-smart goods facilitation and electronic CITES permits suggests that environmental considerations remain poorly integrated into trade facilitation infrastructure. Additionally, the implementation rates for 'trade facilitation for e-commerce', at 36%, and 'trade facilitation and women', at 45%, continue to lag other sub-groups, underscoring persistent gaps in digital commerce support and gender-inclusive trade policies. These gaps in emerging priority areas indicate that stronger policy focus must be on sustainable, digital, and inclusive dimensions of trade facilitation to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Figure 6 Average implementation rates of trade facilitation sub-groups



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Note: Differences between figures 6 and 17 reflect the inclusion in figure 6 of measures not applicable to certain country groups (e.g., landlocked or sea-locked economies), whereas figure 17 covers only measures comparable across all countries.

Tables 3 and 4 provide comprehensive insights into the most and least implemented trade facilitation measures within each sub-group examined in the Survey. The highest rate is recorded for the 'transparency' sub-group, with an overall implementation rate of 81% (figure 6). Within this category, 'online publication of import-export regulations' emerges as the most widely adopted measure, implemented at least partially by 98% of countries, though full implementation remains at 56% (table 3).

The implementation rate for 'formalities' is 78%, however there is a significant variation across measures. 'Post-clearance audits' has the highest implementation rate, at 96% (table 3), whereas 'establishment and publication of average release' which is lowest at 83%, and only 35% for full implementation (table 4). The overall implementation rate for 'transit facilitation' has reached 76%, similarly showing disparities among the measures: the implementation rate for 'limiting physical inspections/use of risk assessment for transit goods' is 78% (table 3), whereas for 'pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation', it is 73%, with just 39% for being fully implemented (table 4).

The implementation rate for 'institutional arrangement and cooperation' averages 71% across included countries. While the 'national committee on trade facilitation' has been adopted by 93% of the countries (table 3), the implementation rate for 'alignment of formalities/ procedures with neighbouring economies at borders' is only 66% (table 4), highlighting challenges in cross-border coordination.

The implementation rate for 'paperless trade' is 72% globally, though significant variation exists across measures. For 'automated Customs systems', the implementation rate indicates near-universal adoption, at 99% (table 3), yet the rate for 'electronic application for Customs refunds' lags at 62%, with full implementation at 24% (table 4). The implementation of 'cross-border paperless trade' faces greater challenges; the overall implementation rate is 49%. Although 85% of the countries have established 'laws and regulations for electronic transactions' (table 3), only 37% have fully implemented them. 'Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin' exemplifies this implementation gap – 59% partial implementation but only 10% full implementation (table 4) – showing how partner countries' readiness affects whether systems can work together across borders.

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. Within these measures, the implementation rate for 'agricultural trade facilitation' is 69%, substantially higher that the rate for 'trade facilitation for SMEs' (49%) and 'trade facilitation and women' (45%). This disparity reveals insufficient policy attention to inclusive trade facilitation, particularly for economically marginalized groups and gender equality initiatives.

Emerging priority areas show the lowest implementation rates. For 'trade facilitation for e-commerce' the average rate is 36%, while for 'green trade facilitation', the lowest rate across all sub-groups, is only at 23%. The implementation rate for 'trade finance for trade facilitation' has reached 30%, and the measure 'variety of trade finance services available' is at 80% for partial implementation, but only 33% for full implementation (table 3). The limited survey responses in this area suggest inadequate integration between trade facilitation and trade finance policy communities, indicating substantial room for improvement.

Table 3

Most implemented measures by trade facilitation sub-group

Sub-group	Most implemented (% of countries)	
	Measure	Implemented fully, partially and on a pilot basis (%) / full implementation (%)
Transparency	Online publication of import-export regulations	97.7 / 55.7
Formalities	Post-clearance audits	96.0 / 75.3
Institutional arrangement and cooperation	National committee on trade facilitation	92.5 / 70.1
Paperless trade	Automated Customs System	99.4 / 79.3
Cross-border paperless trade	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	84.5 / 37.4
Transit facilitation	Limit physical inspections/Use risk assessment for transit goods	78.2 / 61.5
Trade facilitation for SMEs	Trade-related information measures for SMEs	87.4 / 54.6
Agricultural trade facilitation	Special treatment for perishable goods	92.5 / 54.0
Trade facilitation and women	Women membership in national committee(s) on trade facilitation	71.3 / 20.1
Trade facilitation for e-commerce	Customs duties waived on small value shipments	58.6 / 24.7
Green trade facilitation	Facilitation of legitimate trade in waste	47.7 / 10.9
Trade finance for trade facilitation	Variety of trade finance services available	79.9 / 32.8

Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Table 4

Least implemented measures by trade facilitation sub-group

Sub-group	Least implemented (% of countries)	
	Measure	Implemented fully, partially and on a pilot basis (%) / full implementation (%)
Transparency	Advance publication/notification of trade regulations	88.5 / 62.6
Formalities	Establishment and publication of average release times	82.8 / 35.1
Institutional arrangement and cooperation	Alignment of formalities/procedures with neighbouring economies at borders	66.1 / 31.6
Paperless trade	E-Application for Customs refunds	62.1 / 23.6
Cross-border paperless trade	Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin	59.2 / 9.8
Transit facilitation	Pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation	73.0 / 38.5
Trade facilitation for SMEs	SMEs access Single Window	54.0 / 16.7
Agricultural trade facilitation	E-Application/issuance of SPS certificates	70.1 / 31.6
Trade facilitation and women	Trade facilitation policy/strategy for women's participation	58.0 / 16.7
Trade facilitation for e-commerce	AEO program for cross-border e-commerce	31.6 / 20.1
Green trade facilitation	Trade facilitation of green and climate-smart goods	19.0 / 4.0
Trade finance for trade facilitation	Authorities engaged in emerging tech project(s) covering trade finance	20.1 / 4.6

Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

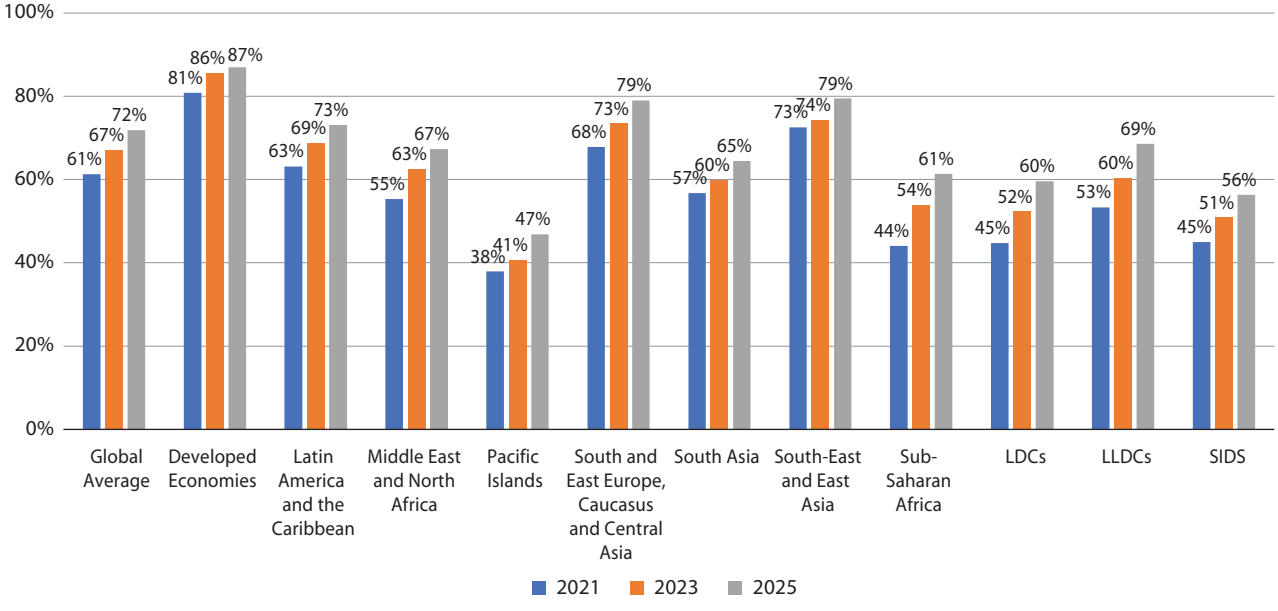
2.3. Progress in implementation between 2021 and 2025

The 2025 Survey encompasses 174 participating countries, including 144 that also contributed to the 2021 and 2023 Surveys. To ensure comparability across the six-year period, the progress analysis is focused exclusively on the countries that participated in all three Survey rounds, enabling a consistent assessment of trade facilitation implementation trends.[8]

Regional implementation rates depicted in figure 7 demonstrate sustained progress across the 144 common countries from 2021 to 2025. Global implementation has risen 5 percentage points since 2023, reaching 72% in 2025 – an increase from 61% to 72% over the six-year period. Sub-Saharan Africa leads recent progress with a 7 percentage point gain since 2023,[9] bringing its total improvement since 2021 to an impressive 17 percentage points. Pacific Islands and the South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region each advanced 6 percentage points over the past two years. Countries with special needs show particularly robust improvement: LLDCs increased by 9 percentage points since 2023 (reaching 69%), while LDCs gained 8 percentage points (reaching 60%), and SIDS rose 5 percentage points (reaching 56%). These gains are noteworthy given the structural challenges these countries face, including infrastructure limitations, connectivity barriers and heightened vulnerability to economic shocks and trade disruptions.

Figure 7

Progress in trade facilitation implementation by region and country groupings, 2021–2025



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.
Note: Figure 7 is based on 31 "General Trade Facilitation" measures of 144 common countries.

[8] See annex 4 for details, including country list and comparison of average implementation rates by region using the full (174 countries) and limited (144 countries) dataset.
[9] The Sub-Saharan Africa region improved by 11%, with implementation rates in 2021 and 2023 of 46% and 57%, respectively.

The implementation rate of global trade facilitation implementation advanced by 5 percentage points between 2023 and 2025, maintaining solid progress despite mounting global challenges. This continued improvement – achieved amid intensifying geopolitical tensions, persistent supply chain disruptions and elevated trade costs – demonstrates the resilience of trade facilitation reforms. The gains in implementation reflect the maturation of digital infrastructure investments initiated in earlier years and the institutionalization of streamlined border procedures across regions.

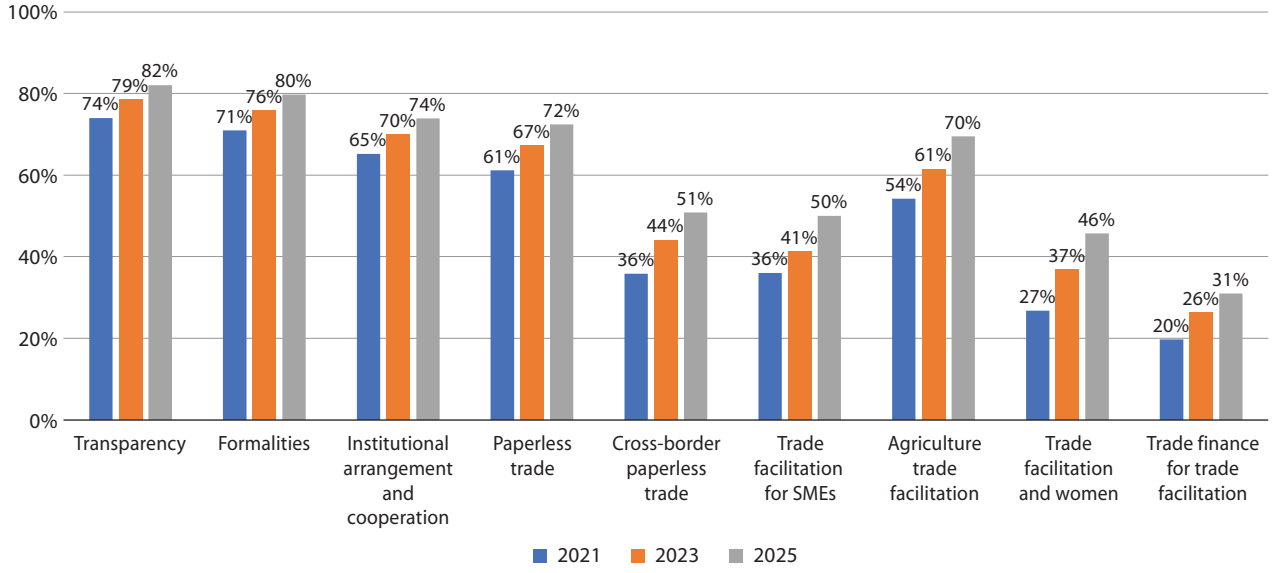
Particularly noteworthy is the performance among countries encountering structural disadvantages: since 2023, the implementation rate attained by LDCs have advanced by 8 percentage points, LLDCs have gained 9 percentage points, and Sub-Saharan Africa has improved by 7 percentage points. These strong gains show that targeted support programmes are working, even as these countries address multiple development priorities. The consistent upward trajectory across all regions indicates that trade facilitation has evolved from crisis response in 2021 to strategic priority in national competitiveness agendas in 2025.

Figure 8 shows the progress across trade facilitation sub-groups for the 144 common countries between 2021 and 2025. Consistent advancement is evident across all measured areas, with particularly strong gains in "Sustainable Trade Facilitation". 'Trade facilitation for SMEs', 'agricultural trade facilitation' and 'trade facilitation and women' each advanced 9 percentage points since 2023, representing the highest growth rates among all sub-groups. These gains mark a significant acceleration from the 2021–2023 period, when these measures lagged digital trade facilitation.

Implementation of "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures has maintained steady progress, increasing for 'paperless trade' by 5 percentage points and for 'cross-border paperless trade' by 7 percentage points since 2023. While these improvements remain substantial, the shift in momentum towards inclusive trade measures suggests that countries are increasingly prioritizing SME participation, agricultural sector integration and gender equality in their trade facilitation strategies. This rebalancing indicates a maturation of trade facilitation priorities, moving beyond foundational digital infrastructure to address inclusive and sustainable development objectives.

Figure 8

Progress in trade facilitation implementation by sub-group, 2021–2025



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.
Note: Figure 8 comparison is based on 144 common countries.

CHAPTER



Implementation of trade facilitation measures: a closer look

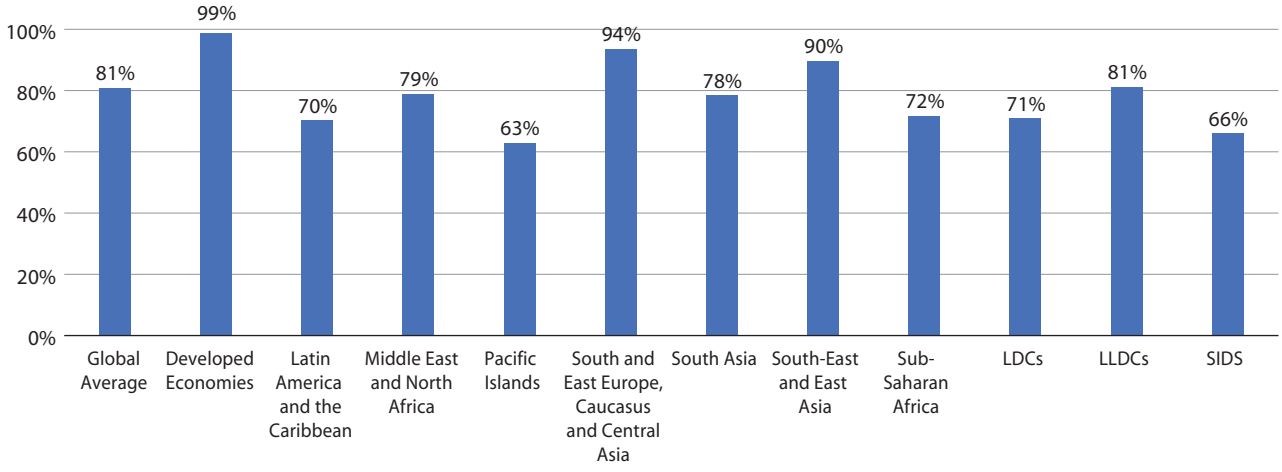
3.1. General trade facilitation measures

3.1.1. Transparency

The ‘transparency’ sub-group 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”. As a foundational principle of the multilateral trading system and a core obligation for all WTO members, transparency is of crucial importance. This principle requires that the policies and regulations a country implements that may affect 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 average global level of implementation of all five 'transparency' measures is 81% (figure 9). Developed Economies (99%), South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (94%) and South-East and East Asia (90%) have almost fully implemented these measures; the implementation rate for the remaining regions fall below the global average. Middle East and North Africa (79%), South Asia (78%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (72%) show moderate implementation levels, while Latin America and the Caribbean (70%) and Pacific Islands (63%) lag further in this category. Among countries in special situations, LLDCs match the global average at 81%, while LDCs (71%) and SIDS (66%) show lower implementation rates, reflecting capacity constraints these countries typically encounter.

Figure 9 **Global implementation of 'transparency' measures in various regions**

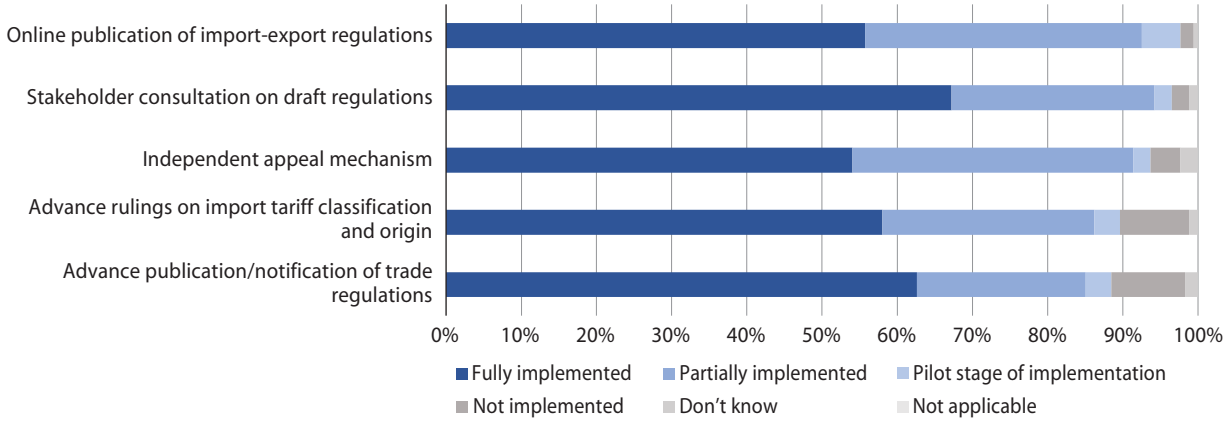


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

As shown in figure 10, nearly 98% of the countries surveyed have introduced the measure 'online publication of import-export regulations', making it the most implemented 'transparency' measure. Following closely, 'stakeholder consultation on draft regulations' has been implemented by 97% of countries, while the implementation rate for 'independent appeal mechanism' has reached 94%. The measure 'advance rulings on import tariff classification and origin' has been implemented by 90% of the countries. The 'advance publication/notification of trade regulations' is the least implemented 'transparency' measure, with an implementation rate of 89% of the countries surveyed.

Figure 10

State of implementation of 'transparency' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

While many countries have implemented advance rulings, some are leveraging digital innovation to enhance these transparency measures further. In 2024, the Namibia Revenue Agency (NamRA) launched the Electronic Advance Ruling Tool (e-ART) as part of its digitization strategy to enhance trade facilitation and reduce reliance on paper-based processes.[10] The system enables traders to obtain legally binding advance rulings on tariff classification and the origin of goods prior to shipment, improving predictability and reducing delays in customs clearance. Alongside this, NamRA introduced the e-Tariff platform, a user-friendly online database that provides real-time access to tariff schedules, trade agreements and duty calculations. Together, these initiatives improve transparency, lower compliance costs and support traders, including SMEs, in making informed decisions.

3.1.2. Formalities

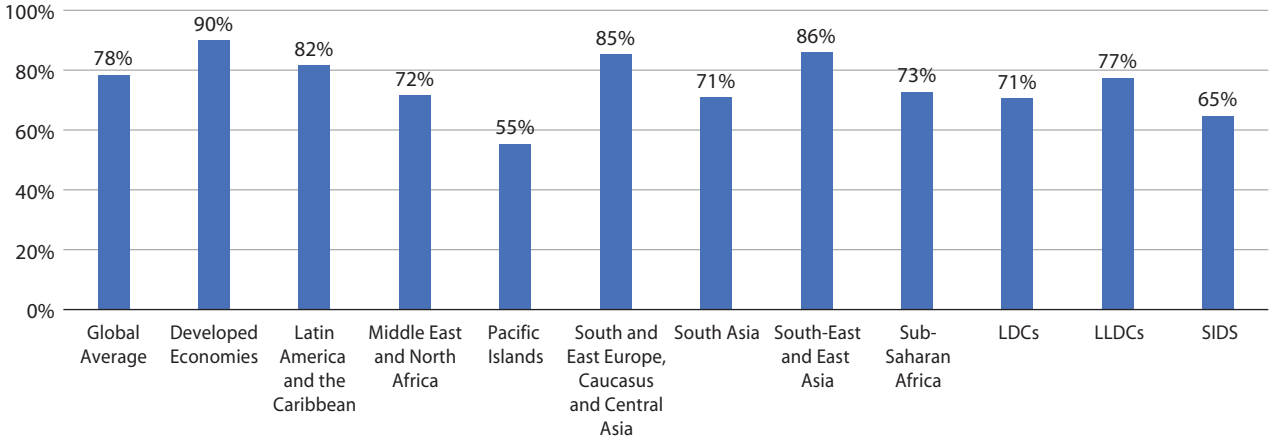
The 'formalities' sub-group consists of eight general trade facilitation measures covered under Section I "release and clearance of goods" of the WTO TFA (Articles 7-10) and GATT Article VIII on "fees and formalities connected with importation and exportation". The global average level of implementation of these measures is 78%; the implementation rates are relatively consistent across most regions and country groups, ranging from 71% to 90% (figure 11).

Developed Economies lead with an implementation rate of 90%, followed by South-East and East Asia (86%) and South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (85%). Latin America and the Caribbean (82%), all of which exceed the global average. Just below the global average, several regions and groups cluster closely together: LLDCs, at 77%; Middle East and North Africa, at 72; Sub-Saharan Africa, at 73%; South Asia and LDCs, both at 71%. Island States constitute the notable exception: Pacific Islands lag considerably, at 55%, representing a 23 percentage point gap with the global average, and SIDS, at 65%, face similar implementation challenges, confirming the unique constraints island states encounter with trade formalities.

[10] UNCTAD, Status and outlook for national trade facilitation committees, technical note (2024). Available at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2025d6_en.pdf.

Figure 11

Global implementation of 'formalities' measures in various regions



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Figure 12 indicates that in 2025, the highest implementation rates are achieved for 'post-clearance audits' (96%), 'risk management' (95%) and 'pre-arrival processing' (95%). Six out of eight measures have been implemented by at least 90% of countries when including partial and pilot stage implementation. However, two measures show notably lower implementation rates: 'trade facilitation measures for authorized operators' at 86% and 'establishment and publication of average release times' (83%), which is the least implemented measure within this sub-group. For this latter measure, full implementation has been achieved in only 35% of the economies surveyed, suggesting it requires significant technical capacity or resources to implement the measures effectively.

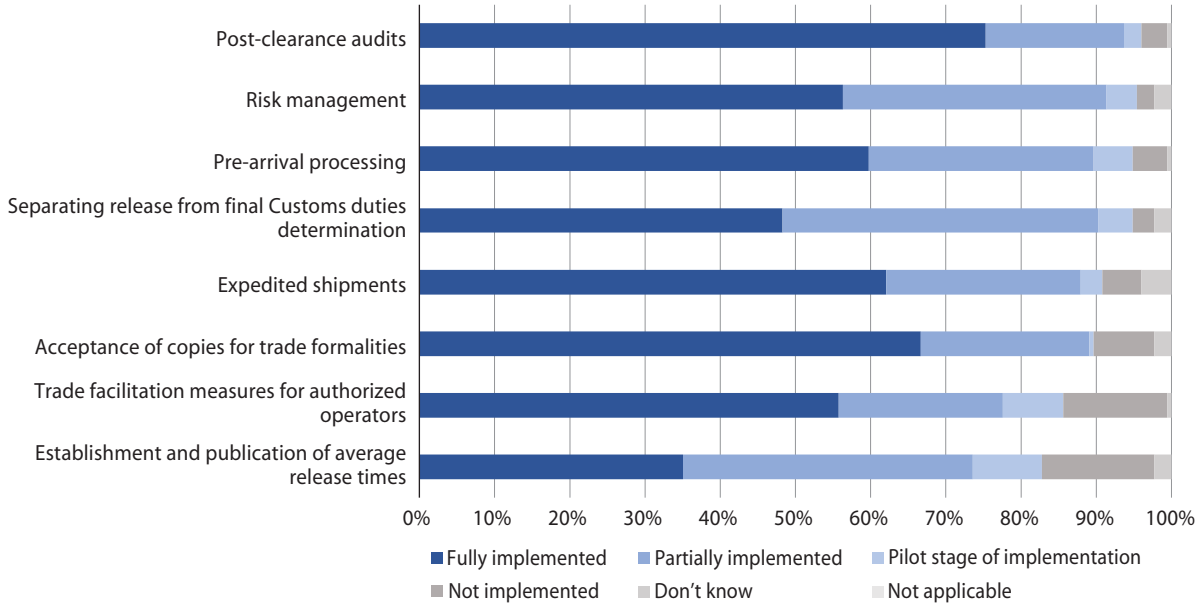
While risk management shows high global implementation rates, countries continue to strengthen these systems through targeted reforms and international cooperation. Mongolia has made notable progress in advancing its trade facilitation agenda through sustained engagement with the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland (SECO)-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP).[11] Building on initial cooperation during 2022–2023, the Mongolian Customs General Administration successfully developed and adopted a risk-based customs control strategy, integrating new mandates for sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) controls. This reform led to a 30% increase in the effectiveness of risk management, strengthening border operations and contributing to more predictable trade flows.

Subsequently, Mongolia was confirmed as a full-fledged GTFP beneficiary country in February 2024. After initial stakeholder consultations, a project road map (2024–2027) was developed, with a strong focus on consolidating and expanding reforms. Priority areas include strategic planning, performance measurement, stakeholder consultations, integrity, AEO and the implementation of a time release study. These areas reflect the country's commitment to institutional modernization and alignment with international best practices.

[11] WCO, SECO-WCO GTFP Phase II kicks off in Mongolia with an initiation mission, 11 July 2024. Available at https://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2024/july/seco-wco-gtfp-phase-ii-kicks-off-in-mongolia-with-an-initiation-mission.aspx?p=1.

Figure 12

State of implementation of 'formalities' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Box 2

Measuring trade facilitation: the role of the World Customs Organization Time Release Study

The World Customs Organization (WCO) Time Release Study[12] is an internationally recognized tool that measures the time required for the release and clearance of goods, from arrival to physical release, to identify bottlenecks and enhance border procedures. Increasingly applied by Customs administrations in cooperation with stakeholders across land, air, and maritime modes. The Time Release Study functions as a performance assessment tool and an instrument for policy and operational improvements. It also supports WTO members in meeting obligations under Article 7.6 of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, which calls for the periodic consistent measurement and publication of average release times. Key benefits are evaluating overall performance, pinpointing supply chain bottlenecks, assessing policy impacts, advancing trade facilitation, fostering coordinated border management and supporting Single Window implementation.

[12] See https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/time-release-study/wco-time-release-study-guide—version-4-2025.pdf?db=web.

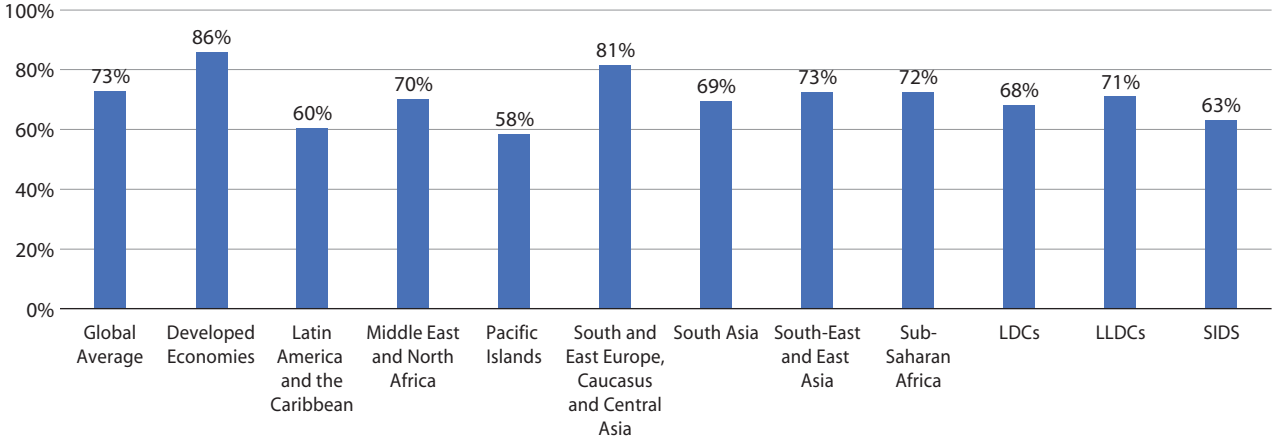
3.1.3. Institutional arrangement and cooperation

These measures aim to ensure coordinated implementation of trade facilitation reforms through enhanced cooperation among government agencies and with trading partners, recognizing that efficient trade facilitation requires not only individual agency improvements but also systematic inter-agency and cross-border coordination. The sub-group 'institutional arrangement and cooperation' comprises five trade facilitation measures, including those related to Articles 8 and 23 of the WTO TFA. These measures focus on establishing effective organizational frameworks for trade facilitation, including the establishment of a national trade facilitation committee (Article 23), developing national legislative frameworks for border agency cooperation (Article 8), delegating border controls to Customs authorities, and aligning working hours and procedures with neighbouring economies at borders (Article 8.2).

The global average implementation rate for 'institutional arrangement and cooperation' measures is 73% (figure 13).[13] Developed Economies lead with an implementation rate of 86%, followed by South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, at 81%. The rate for South-East and East Asia matches the global average of 73%, while the rates for Sub-Saharan Africa (72%), LLDCs (71%), Middle East and North Africa (70%), South Asia (69%) and LDCs (68%) cluster closely around the global average. Latin America and the Caribbean (60%), SIDS (63%) and Pacific Islands (58%) show lower implementation rates, indicating challenges in establishing institutional frameworks for trade facilitation coordination in these regions.

Figure 13

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



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

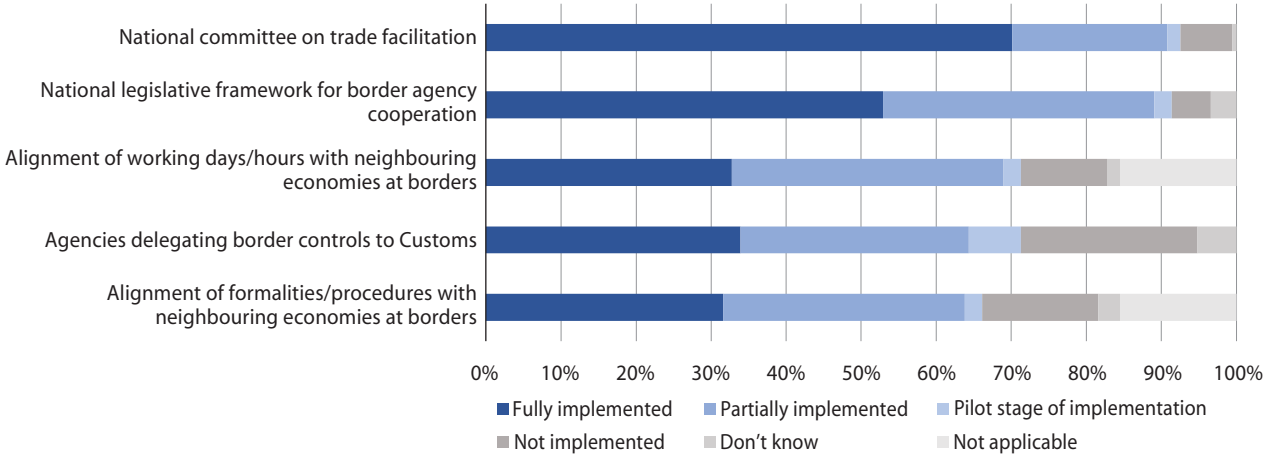
[13] Calculated based on three of the five measures in this sub-group that are applicable to all countries, ensuring comparability across regions. Excluded are 'alignment of working days/hours with neighbouring economies at borders' and 'alignment of formalities/procedures with neighbouring economies at borders'.

Figure 14 shows that countries have made modest progress in establishing institutional frameworks for trade facilitation. The two most implemented measures, with rates that exceed 90%, are 'national committee on trade facilitation' and 'national legislative framework for border agency cooperation'. However, full implementation remains more limited, with these measures fully implemented in 70% and 53% of countries, respectively.

In contrast, measures requiring cross-border coordination or delegation of authority report considerably lower implementation rates. The 'alignment of working days/hours with neighbouring economies at borders' and 'agencies delegating border controls to Customs' have reached an implementation rate of 71%, while the rate for 'alignment of formalities/procedures with neighbouring economies at borders' lags, at 66%. Full implementation for these three measures remains particularly low at 33%, 34% and 32%, respectively, suggesting that while countries readily establish national frameworks, practical coordination across agencies and borders presents greater challenges.

Figure 14

State of implementation of 'institutional arrangement and cooperation' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Despite these challenges, some countries have successfully implemented innovative cross-border coordination mechanisms. El Salvador and Guatemala integrated Customs and immigration operations at the Anguiatú – La Ermita land border crossing,[14] a key step to strengthen regional integration and facilitate bilateral trade. Under this new model, officials from both countries operate jointly on one side of the border, streamlining transit procedures and reducing duplication of controls. The initiative is expected to deliver several benefits, such as shorter waiting times for cargo, round-the-clock border operations, lower logistics costs, simplified procedures and stronger institutional coordination. This initiative forms part of broader regional efforts to modernize border management, advance trade facilitation and enhance competitiveness within the Central American region.

[14] Aduana News, El Salvador and Guatemala inaugurate integrated customs and immigration operations at the Anguiatú-La Ermita border crossing, 18 June 2025. Available at https://aduananews.com/en/el-salvador-y-guatemala-inauguran-operaciones-aduaneras-y-migratorias-integradas-en-el-paso-fronterizo-anguiatu-la-ermita/.

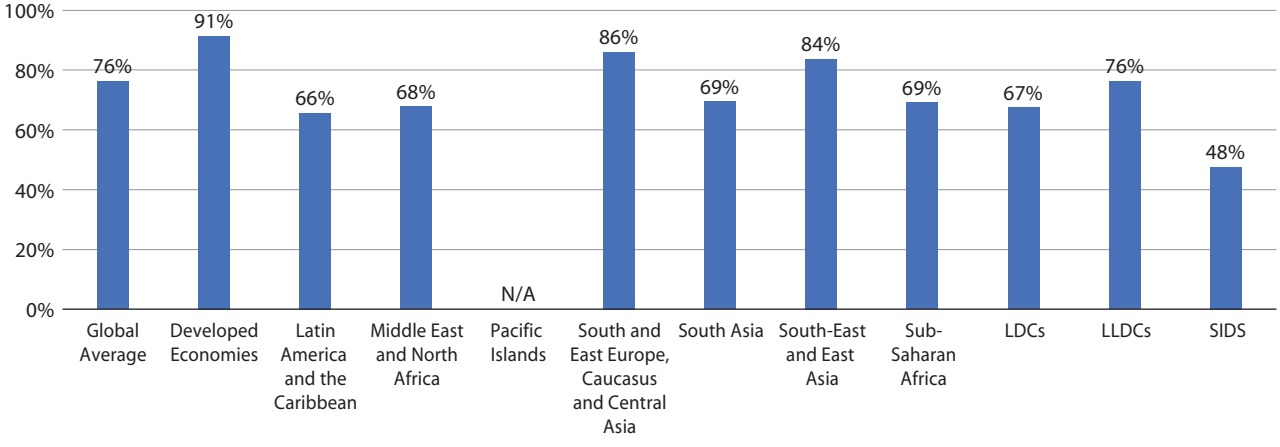
3.1.4. Transit facilitation

Four trade facilitation measures in the Survey cover 'transit facilitation', corresponding to WTO TFA Articles 10 and 11 on "freedom of transit". These measures aim to reduce administrative barriers and facilitate the movement of goods through transit territories, encompassing transit agreements, limitation of physical inspections through risk assessment, pre-arrival processing for transit goods and cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit. Such measures are particularly critical for LLDCs because their trade depends on efficient transit through neighbouring countries to reach international markets.

As illustrated in figure 15, the global implementation rate for 'transit facilitation' measures is at 76%, though significant regional variations exist. Developed Economies have attained the highest implementation rate, at 91%, followed by South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (86%) and South-East and East Asia (84%). The rates for LLDCs (76%), South Asia (69%), Sub-Saharan Africa (69%), Middle East and North Africa (68%), LDCs (67%), Latin America and the Caribbean (66%) and SIDS (48%) are below the global average, suggesting that transit facilitation remains challenging among these regions and country groups. Notably, the Pacific Islands show no applicable data for this sub-group, reflecting the limited relevance of transit measures for island nations that typically serve as origin or destination points rather than transit territories.

Figure 15

Global implementation of 'transit facilitation' measures in various regions

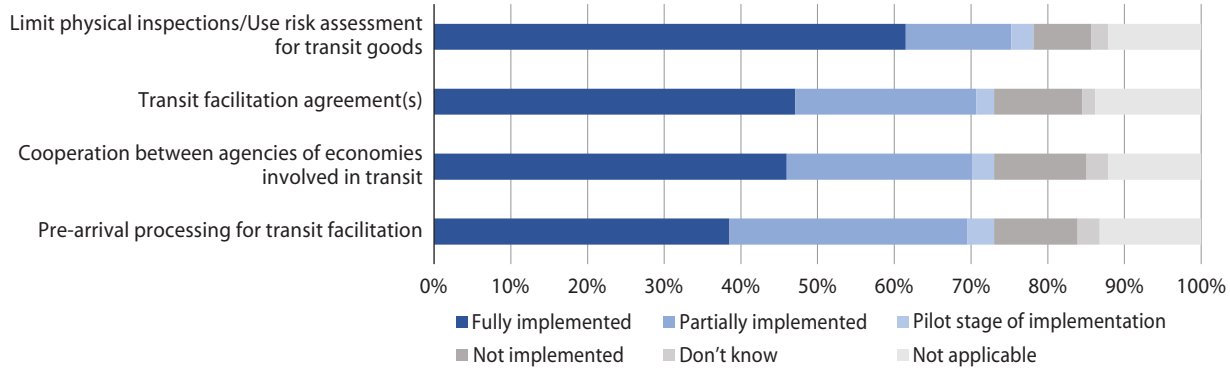


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Figure 16 reveals that relatively consistent implementation rates have been attained across all four 'transit facilitation' measures, ranging from 73% to 78%. The measure 'limit physical inspections/use risk assessment for transit goods' is leading with a 78% implementation rate and has the highest full implementation rate, at 61%. For the other three measures – 'transit facilitation agreement(s)', 'cooperation between agencies of economies involved in transit', and 'pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation' – the implementation rates are approximately 73%, but with notably lower full implementation rates of 47%, 46% and 39%, respectively. This pattern suggests that while countries recognize the importance of transit facilitation and have initiated relevant measures, achieving full implementation remains challenging, particularly for pre-arrival processing, which requires sophisticated systems and inter-agency coordination.

Figure 16

State of implementation of 'transit facilitation' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Despite these implementation challenges, some regions have developed comprehensive transit frameworks that demonstrate the potential of coordinated approaches. The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) adopted the Agreement on a Unified System of Customs Transit between EAEU and Third Countries to Ensure Seamless Freight Transportation.[15] The Agreement establishes the legal basis for future treaties with third countries and aims to improve transportation logistics, lower overhead business costs and enhance regional connectivity. Key measures of the Agreement are the use of a unified electronic transit declaration, harmonized enforcement of customs duties and taxes, simplified procedures for authorized economic operators (AEOs) and navigation seals to track goods across Customs territories. This integrated approach illustrates how transit facilitation agreements can evolve beyond basic coordination to encompass digital systems, harmonized procedures and advanced tracking technologies, providing a model for other regions seeking to enhance their transit capabilities. An example is the SPECA roadmap for digitalization along the Trans-Capsian Corridor (box 4).

[15] See https://eec.eaeunion.org/en/news/soglashenie-o-edinoy-sisteme-tamozhennogo-tranzita-eaes-i-tretikh-stran-obespechit-besshovnost-gruzo/

Box 3

ASYHUB Maritime: digitalizing maritime trade data exchange

ASYHUB Maritime, developed under the "Digitizing Global Maritime Trade" project, is an open and standardized digital solution that facilitates the seamless exchange of customs and shipping data among public and private sector stakeholders. By enabling the transmission of information between ASYCUDAWorld and ship data providers prior to the arrival of goods, ASYHUB Maritime provides Customs administrations with enhanced end-to-end supply chain visibility. This early access to trade information allows for pre-arrival processing, significantly reducing clearance times and improving the overall efficiency of border operations.

The platform offers three methods for submitting manifests and bills of lading: automated transfer from shipping systems, upload of structured files (such as XML or Excel), and manual data entry. These submission options enable early processing of goods declarations prior to arrival, allowing Customs administrations to process and clear consignments more efficiently, thereby reducing bottlenecks, enhancing predictability for traders and strengthening overall supply chain resilience.

The platform was successfully piloted in Cambodia at Sihanoukville Port in March 2024 and Phnom Penh Port in April 2024.[16] The pilots demonstrated the system's capacity to integrate with existing Customs procedures and port operations, validating its ability to support streamlined cargo clearance and trade facilitation. Building on this success, ASYHUB Maritime is being implemented in Albania, Jordan, Sri Lanka and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, serving as a scalable and adaptable solution for maritime trade digitalization.

Box 4

SPECA roadmap for digitalization along the Trans-Capsian Corridor

At the 2023 Heads of States Summit of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA),[17] participating countries endorsed the Roadmap for the Digitalization of Multimodal Data and Document Exchange along the Trans-Caspian Corridor, developed with support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Grounded in UN standards and legal frameworks, the Roadmap's implementation plan was adopted in 2025 to advance digital connectivity and trade facilitation across the region.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, SPECA experts received training on the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) standards–interoperable and normative tools for seamless data exchange consolidated in the UN/CEFACT Package of Standards for Data Exchange. As part of the Roadmap rollout, three pilot projects were launched to digitalize railway consignment notes (eCMR) along key corridors and facilitate port-to-port data exchange in line with the CMR Convention and the eCMR Protocol. For instance, UNECE and Azerbaijan's Ministry of Digital Development and Transport agreed on a national roadmap to operationalize eCMR by the end of 2025.

The UN/CEFACT Package of Standards, released in 2024, has since informed not only the SPECA Roadmap but also all 27 EU Member States under the EU Electronic Freight Transport Information (eFTI) Regulation (Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/2024). This alignment is especially significant given that trade between the EU and Central Asia has increased by 38.8 percent over the past decade.

Building on this momentum, UN/CEFACT is developing a new policy recommendation to strengthen digital connectivity–particularly for landlocked developing countries–by promoting scalable, "soft infrastructure" solutions that enhance multimodal interoperability, lower trade costs, and accelerate the green transition in transport and trade.

[16] UNCTAD, *2024 ASYCUDA Report* (United Nations publication, 2024).
[17] UNECE, https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Roadmap-Digitalization-Trans-CaspianCorridor_Eng.pdf

3.2. Digital trade facilitation

Digital trade facilitation leverages information and communications technologies (ICT) and digital solutions to automate and streamline trade procedures, reducing costs and accelerating the movement of goods across borders. This encompasses two interconnected sub-groups. One is 'paperless trade', which comprises measures that replace traditional paper-based documentation with electronic systems, and therefore, enhances the efficiency of Customs controls and trade administration processes while lowering the cost of doing business. The other is 'cross-border paperless trade', which advances this digitalization by establishing the institutional arrangements and operational mechanisms necessary for mutual recognition and exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form between countries.

Digital trade facilitation is the area in which the most significant acceleration in trade reform is occurring. Countries are rapidly adopting technological solutions that require substantial implementation time but ultimately deliver transformative and measurable benefits for cross-border trade. These emerging technologies generate substantial reductions in trade transaction costs and processing times and at the same time significantly enhance the accuracy and security of trade procedures. The available multiplicity of digital solutions provides countries with an unprecedented array of tools to modernize their trade facilitation infrastructure. These technologies are being deployed across various aspects of trade procedures, each offering distinct advantages in streamlining and securing international trade flows.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning enhance trade procedures through advanced risk assessment and automated customs classification, predictive analytics for trade compliance, and intelligent document processing and verification. These technologies reduce clearance times, minimize manual inspections and eliminate human errors. Blockchain technologies enable digital trade documents, such as electronic bills of lading, and certificates of origin, alongside smart contracts for trade finance, cutting document processing costs through elimination of intermediaries, reducing fraud, and enabling instant verification across multiple parties simultaneously. Digital identity and authentication systems support digital trader identities and AEO programmes, advanced e-signatures and digital certificates, and secure cross-border data exchange authentication.

3.2.1. Paperless trade

The 'paperless trade' sub-group encompasses ten trade facilitation measures that leverage ICT to digitalize trade procedures. These measures range from foundational requirements, such as automated Customs systems and Internet connectivity at border agencies, to more advanced implementations, such as electronic Single Windows, e-payment systems and electronic submission of various trade documents. Several measures align with specific WTO TFA provisions, particularly Article 7.2 on electronic payment and Article 10.4 on Single Window systems, while the broader set of measures reflects the comprehensive digitalization agenda outlined in the CPTA. The UN/CEFACT has also developed relevant policy recommendations and standards to support the implementation of measures on paperless trade.

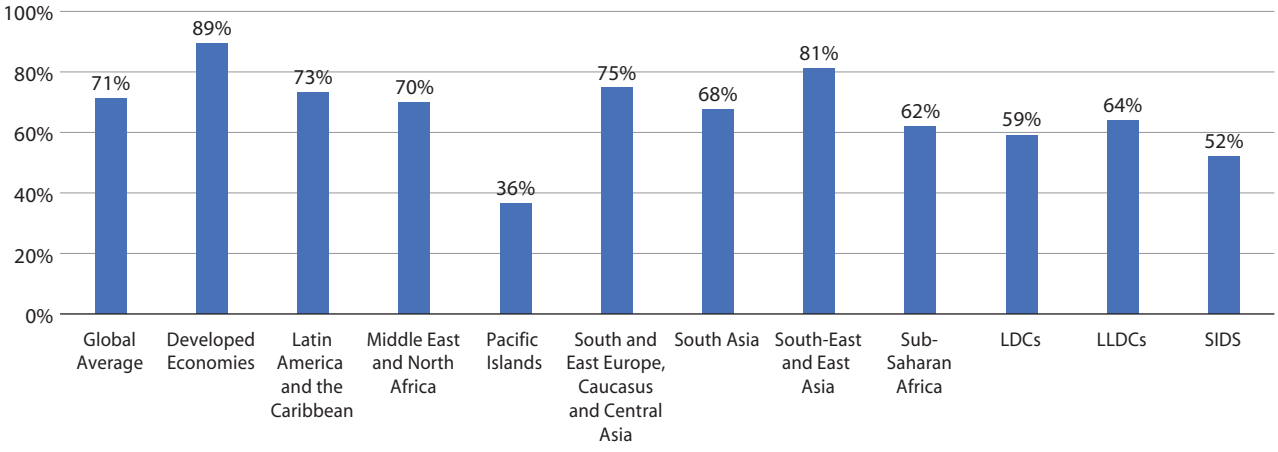
As shown in figure 17, the global implementation rate for 'paperless trade' measures is 71%,[18] with considerable variation across regions. Developed Economies lead significantly with an 89% implementation rate, followed by South-East and East Asia (81%). South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (75%) and

[18] Calculated based on nine of the ten measures in this sub-group that are applicable to all countries, ensuring comparability across regions. The measure 'e-submission of Sea Cargo Manifest' is excluded for calculation.

Latin America and the Caribbean (73%) perform slightly above the global average, while the rates for Middle East and North Africa (70%) and South Asia (68%) remain close to it. LLDCs at 64% and Sub-Saharan Africa at 62% lag, followed by LDCs at 59%. The Pacific Islands notably have attained a low implementation rate, at 36%, indicating substantial digital infrastructure gaps in these economies. This wide disparity – spanning 53 percentage points between the highest and lowest performing regions – underscores the uneven progress in trade digitalization globally.

Figure 17

Global implementation of 'paperless trade' measures in various regions

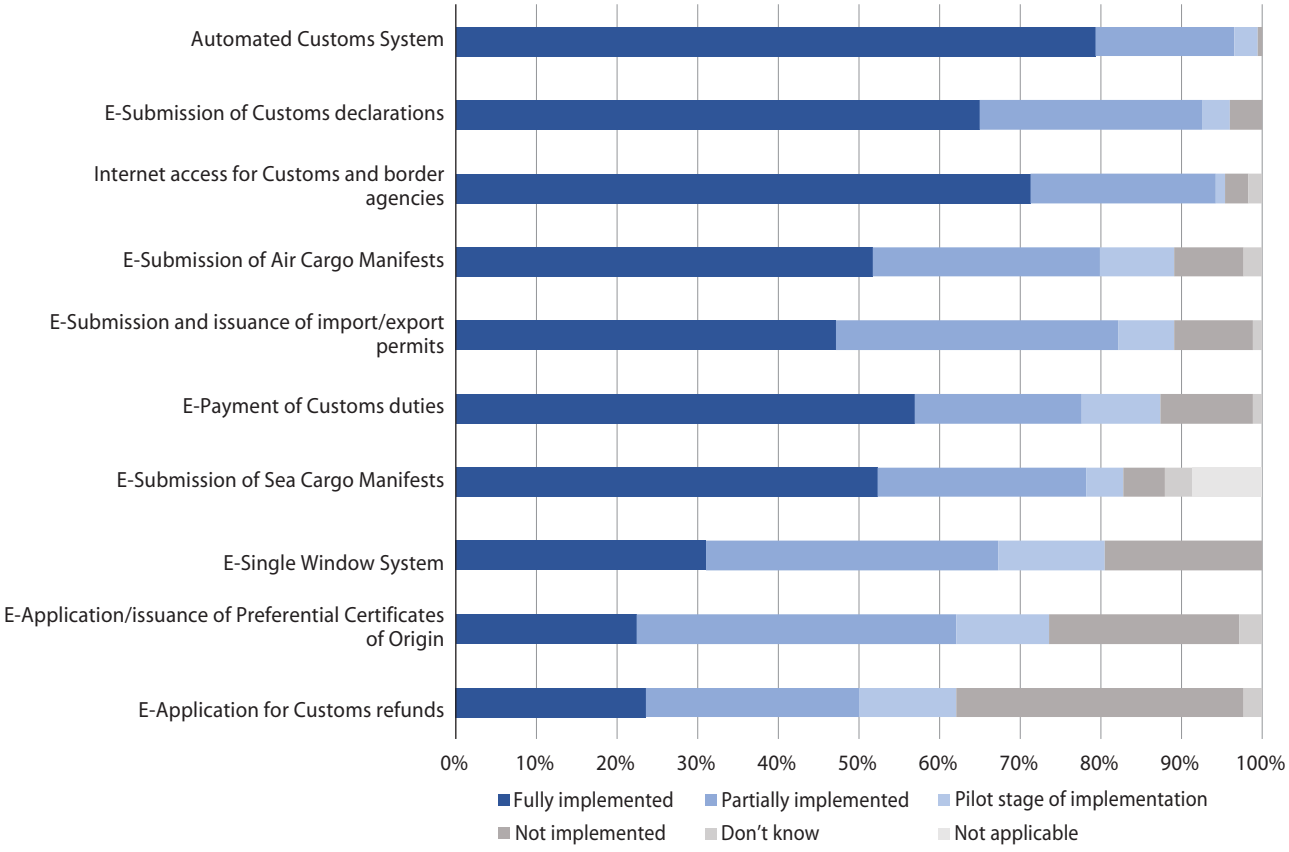


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Figure 18 reveals significant variations in the implementation of 'paperless trade' measures. The most widely implemented measure has been 'automated Customs System', achieving a 99% implementation rate across surveyed countries, followed by 'e-submission of Customs declarations' (96%) and 'internet access for Customs and border agencies' (95%). In contrast, the lowest implementation rate has been recorded for 'e-application for Customs refunds', at 62%, followed by 'e-application/ issuance of Preferential Certificates of Origin', at 74%. Notably, while the 'e-Single Window System' has been implemented by 80% of countries, only 31% have achieved full implementation – a 49 percentage point gap that suggests significant challenges in completing these complex, multi-agency integration projects. Similarly, for 'e-application/ issuance of Preferential Certificates of Origin' shows that the full implementation rate is 22% despite 74% overall adoption. This pattern indicates that while countries readily adopt basic digital infrastructure, such as automated systems and Internet connectivity, they face substantial challenges in implementing more complex paperless trade measures that require inter-agency coordination, legal frameworks and sophisticated technical integration.

Figure 18

State of implementation of 'paperless trade' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Box 5

Good practices in paperless trade facilitation

Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Land Port Authority has introduced the Bhomra e-Port Management System,[19] marking a step toward modernizing border management and harmonizing trade processes countrywide. By replacing paper-based procedures with a digital platform, the system enhances efficiency, reduces delays and streamlines cross-border operations in line with international best practices. The reform is part of advancing trade facilitation objectives and the broader vision of a "Smart Bangladesh".

Ecuador. Ecuador Customs and five other border agencies integrated 11 new and four enhanced trade e-services into the National Single Window (VUE). This initiative streamlined electronic submission of trade documents, reducing duplication and improving transparency. As a result, average processing times fell by 59%, with procedures that once took 2–16 days are now completed in just 0.5–3 days.[20] The initiative lowers costs, increases predictability and strengthens competitiveness, while advancing national commitments to digitalization.

Estonia. Estonia requires business-to-business e-invoices (EN16931 compliant), as of 1 July 2025, when requested by the recipient. Legislation is underway to make e-invoicing mandatory for all value-added taxpayers by 2027.[21] EN16931 is the European standard on e-invoicing, supporting UN/CEFACT Cross Industry Invoice and the OASIS Universal Business Language. 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.

Iraq. The Government of Iraq and UNCTAD replaced manual Customs clearance with the ASYCUDAWorld digital Customs management system in 2021. In phase one of the project, ASYCUDAWorld was introduced, and in the second phase, relevant government agencies were connected into a Single Window system. Early results showed a 120% year-on-year increase in import transaction values (Q1 2024) and a 215% increase in Customs revenue at Baghdad International Airport (Jan–May 2024).[22] Since the launch, more than 2,800 declarants have submitted approximately 65,600 declarations, demonstrating strong business sector compliance and adaptation to the new digital processes.

Rwanda. The National Identification Agency (NIDA) of Rwanda[23] launched registration for the country's first digital identity system, issued as a smart card, virtual ID and unique identification number. Incorporating iris, fingerprint and facial data, the system enables secure authentication for services, such as banking, government programmes, and mobile registration, while improving privacy and accuracy. Supported by electronic transaction laws and expanding digital payments, it also facilitates e-signatures and online payments, reducing reliance on physical documents and wet signatures.

[19] Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, Bhomra e-Port marks significant milestone towards 'Smart Bangladesh, 4 July 2024. Available at https://www.tradefacilitation.org/2024/07/bhomra-e-port-transition-marks-significant-milestone-towards-smart-bangladesh/.

[20] Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, Advanced digitalization initiatives boost Ecuador's trade competitiveness, 6 August 2024. Available at https://www.tradefacilitation.org/2024/08/alliance-digitalisation-initiatives-boost-ecuadors-trade-competitiveness/.

[21] Unified Post Group, Mandatory E-voices in Estonia. How will this affect Lithuanian businesses? 4 February 2024. Available at https://www.unifiedpostgroup.com/news/mandatory-e-invoices-in-estonia-how-will-this-affect-lithuanian-businesses.

[22] UNCTAD, Iraq: trade and government revenue get boost from digital customs, 30 July 2024, Available at https://unctad.org/news/iraq-trade-and-government-revenue-gets-boost-digital-customs.

[23] NIDA, NIDA launched the digital ID. Available at https://www.nida.gov.rw/news-details/nida-launched-the-digital-id.

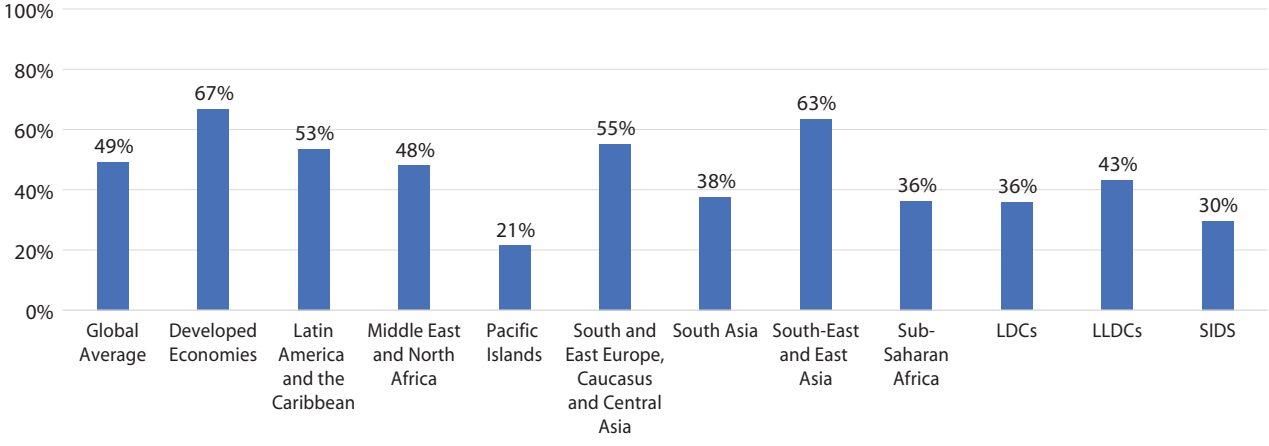
3.2.2. Cross-border paperless trade

The 'cross-border paperless trade' sub-group comprises six measures designed to enable seamless electronic exchange and legal recognition of trade documents across international borders. Two foundational measures – 'laws and regulations for electronic transactions' and 'legal framework for digital authentication' – establish the necessary legal infrastructure for electronic documents to be recognized and accepted across jurisdictions. The other four measures focus on implementing specific cross-border exchanges: Customs declarations: certificates of origin; SPS certificates and paperless letters of credit. Together, these measures represent the evolution from national paperless systems to internationally integrated digital trade ecosystems, requiring not only technical interoperability, but also mutual recognition frameworks and harmonized legal standards between trading partners.

Figure 19 reveals that the global implementation rate for 'cross-border paperless trade' measures are at only 49%, the lowest among all sub-groups examined. Developed Economies (67%) and South-East and East Asia (63%) lead the implementation efforts, though their rates remain modest compared to their performance in other trade facilitation areas. The rates for South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (55%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (53%) slightly exceed the global average, while for Middle East and North Africa, it is at 48%. LLDCs show a 43% implementation rate, while South Asia (38%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (36%) show limited progress, and the rate for LDCs is also at 36%. For the Pacific Islands, the implementation rate is minimal, at 21%. The 46 percentage point gap between the highest and lowest performing regions, combined with the overall low implementation rates, underscores that cross-border paperless trade remains the most challenging aspect of trade facilitation.

Figure 19

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



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Pacific Islands have shown notable progress regarding the implementation of 'cross-border paperless trade' measures, as it has doubled from 10% in 2023 to 21% in 2025. This improvement reflects the combined impact of several regional initiatives: the continued implementation of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations with its dedicated e-Learning platform and capacity-building programmes, the UNCTAD IMPACT project (2021–2025) supporting 15 Pacific countries to establish National Single Windows, and the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy (2020–2025), led by the World Bank.

South-East and East Asia shows the second-highest progress towards implementing 'cross-border paperless trade' among all regions, advancing from 53% in 2023 to 63% in 2025. This growth is primarily driven by the continued expansion of the ASEAN Single Window, which enables cross-border electronic exchange of trade documents among Member States. Other Asian regions have also made steady progress, supported by the CPTA. Since entering into force in 2021, this United Nations treaty has 15 Parties working to establish mutual recognition of electronic trade documents and achieve interoperability between their national Single Windows and paperless trade systems, laying the foundation for a digitally integrated trade ecosystem across Asia and the Pacific.

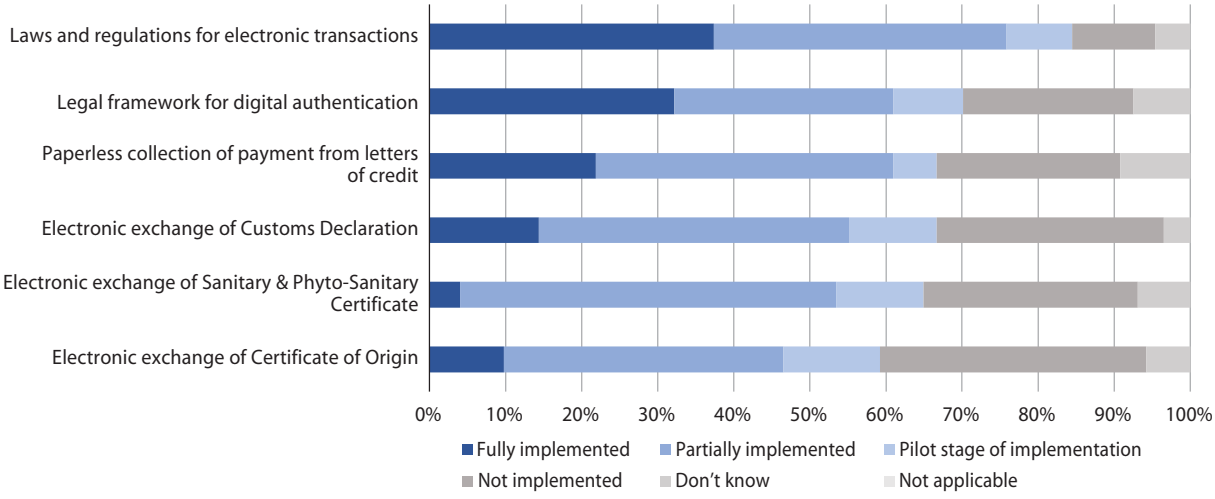
Figure 20 shows that while foundational legal frameworks are being developed, the actual implementation of cross-border document exchange remains limited. The measure being implemented the most is 'laws and regulations for electronic transactions', at 84%, followed by 'legal framework for digital authentication', at 70%. These foundational measures are essential for enabling cross-border paperless trade, as demonstrated by recent bilateral initiatives. The UAE-Jordan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) entered into force on 15 May 2025,[24] marking the first CEPA between two Arab countries and a milestone in regional trade integration. Building on existing regional framework agreements and aligned with WTO and WCO standards, CEPA introduces measures to streamline cross-border trade, including advanced Customs rulings and adoption of international best practices. It also promotes cooperation through a planned mutual administrative assistance agreement for AEO programmes, enhancing supply chain security, risk-based targeting and expedited clearance for trusted traders.

Progress made for the four measures involving actual cross-border exchanges has been modest: the implementation rate for 'paperless collection of payment from letters of credit' is 67%, 'electronic exchange of Customs declaration' (67%), 'electronic exchange of sanitary and phyto-sanitary certificate' (65%) and 'electronic exchange of certificate of origin' (59%). Notably, full implementation rates remain low across all measures, with the exchange of SPS certificates, achieving only 4% full implementation, while even the most advanced measure – laws and regulations for electronic transactions – is at just 37%. This pattern reveals a critical implementation gap – while countries are establishing the legal foundations for cross-border paperless trade, translating these frameworks into operational systems for document exchange remains a significant challenge; most countries are at partial or pilot implementation stages.

[24] PWC, First Arab-Arab CEPA: driving a new era of intra-Arab trade
The UAE-Jordan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement ("CEPA") comes into force, 2025.
Available at https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/tax/me-tax-legal-news/2025/the-uae-jordan-comprehensive-economic-partnership-agreement-CEPA-enters-into-force.html.

Figure 20

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



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

However, some regional initiatives are showing that comprehensive implementation is achievable. Regional integration blocs in Latin America and the Caribbean have advanced in the electronic exchange of trade data and documents. Notable is the Central American Digital Trade Platform (PDCC), an interoperable IT system linking Customs, immigration, SPS and Single Window processes across Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Officially launched by the Council of Ministers of Economic Integration, PDCC enhances coordination between public and private institutions and streamlines export, import, and transit procedures within and beyond the region.

Developed with European Union support and administered by the secretariat of Central American Economic Integration, PDCC includes 71 functionalities that have been adopted by countries according to their needs and national reality.[25] The platform delivers greater transparency, traceability and security in trade operations, and time and cost savings, supporting a paperless trade environment in Central America.

[25] Invest in El Salvador, Launch of Central American Digital Trade Platform, 28 November 2023. Available at https://investinelsalvador.gob.sv/lanzan-la-plataforma-digital-de-comercio-centroamericana/.

Box 6

Harmonizing digital trade standards through the KTDDE Framework

In April 2024, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Digital Standards Initiative (DSI) launched the Key Trade Documents and Data Elements (KTDDE) Framework,[26] a comprehensive model designed to advance end-to-end supply chain digitalization. Developed over 18 months of analysis, the framework consolidates 36 key trade documents into a single integrated structure, accompanied by an interactive key trade data glossary. A joint ICC DSI-UNECE Call to Action for Digital Trade was also launched during the 42nd UN/CEFACT Forum in 2024. These initiatives marked a significant breakthrough in digital trade by identifying that less than 200 key data elements are utilized across all vital trade documents, with many shared across multiple documents.

The KTDDE Framework was created in direct response to the growing complexity of global supply chains in which fragmentation in standards and practices has hindered interoperability and slowed progress towards achieving a digital transformation. By establishing a common framework, the KTDDE initiative provides a pathway to harmonized standards, including the UN/CEFACT standards such as the Buy-Ship-Pay Reference Data Model, and can serve as a reference point for governments, standards-setting bodies and industry stakeholders seeking to digitalize cross-border trade.

The framework was developed under the guidance of the KTDDE Working Group of the ICC DSI Industry Advisory Board (IAB), drawing on contributions from international standards developers, regulators, United Nations agencies and industry practitioners across multiple sectors and supply chains. The multi-stakeholder approach reflects the shared objective of building a globally interoperable trade ecosystem. The KTDDE Framework is a critical step towards laying the groundwork for greater scalability, interoperability, and resilience in global supply chains.

3.3. Sustainable trade facilitation

In our interconnected world, governments face complex regulatory challenges in managing trade disruptions. At the same time, they must ensure that the opportunities and benefits of international trade are shared inclusively, especially in the digital trade environment. Digital trade presents opportunities for sectors and groups with special needs to gain improved access to global markets and supply chains, yet it also has the potential to widen inequalities among individuals, businesses and regions. To mainstream trade facilitation and align it with sustainable development goals in the digital era, “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” has become a fundamental pillar of the UN Global Survey since 2017. This group encompasses measures under three sub-groups: ‘trade facilitation for SMEs’, ‘agricultural trade facilitation’ and ‘trade facilitation and women’, each of which addresses barriers that prevent full participation in international trade and fosters inclusive economic growth and development.

The Survey reveals that while ‘agricultural trade facilitation’ measures have been comparatively well-implemented globally, at 69%, through enhanced SPS testing facilities and standards bodies, digitalization of certification processes remains incomplete. ‘Trade facilitation for SMEs’ and ‘trade facilitation and women’ measures face substantial challenges, with implementation rates of 49% and 45%, respectively. Many SMEs struggle with digital transformation due to limited capabilities and financial resources, hindering their effective utilization of digital instruments. Gender inequalities compound these challenges, creating unique barriers for women, including physical and sexual

[26] Internation Chamber of Commerce, Key trade documents and trade element (April 2024). Available at https://dsi.iccwbo.org/_files/ugd/8e49a6_9f8444133fc64fc9b59fc2eaaca2888e.pdf.

harassment, personal safety concerns, bribery, corruption, time-consuming trade procedures and extensive documentary requirements that obstruct their integration into international trade.

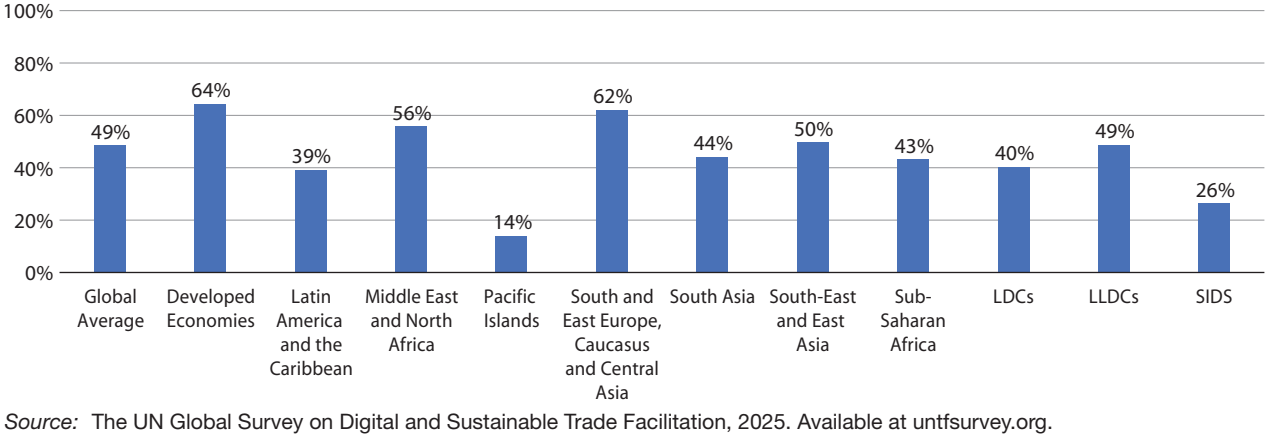
While countries increasingly establish inclusive governance structures and adopt targeted support measures, implementation often remains partial or pilot-based. Given their importance in achieving sustainable and inclusive development of economies, particularly in times of crisis, trade facilitation strategies should be designed in a more holistic and inclusive manner.

3.3.1. Trade facilitation for SMEs

SMEs constitute the backbone of most economies, but they remain significantly underrepresented in international trade. They face disproportionate barriers to entering global markets compared to larger enterprises, often due to their limited economies of scale and relative lack of connections compared to their larger competitors. These barriers include complex regulatory requirements, high compliance costs and challenges accessing trade-related information. Making the right conditions for SMEs to compete in the global market can be achieved by removing barriers and providing tailored assistance. To assess progress in this area, the Survey includes five specific measures aimed at facilitating SME participation in trade, recognizing that supporting SME integration into global value chains is essential for inclusive and sustainable development.

The global implementation rate for 'trade facilitation for SMEs' measures is 49%, revealing significant gaps in supporting small businesses in international trade (figure 21). Developed Economies lead in this regard, with a 64% implementation rate, followed by South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (62%) and Middle East and North Africa (56%). The rates for South-East and East Asia (50%) slightly exceed the global average, while for South Asia (44%), Sub-Saharan Africa (43%), and Latin America and the Caribbean (39%) fall below it. The rate for Pacific Islands shows particularly limited implementation, at just 14%, indicating minimal targeted support for SMEs in trade facilitation. The rate for LLDCs notably match the global average at 49%, while for LDCs and SIDS, the rate indicates limited implementation, at 40% and 26%, respectively. The relatively low implementation rates across all regions – with even the best-performing region achieving only 64% – underscore that despite widespread recognition of the economic importance of SMEs, translating this recognition into concrete trade facilitation measures remains a significant challenge globally.

Figure 21 **Global implementation of 'trade facilitation for SMEs' measures in various regions**

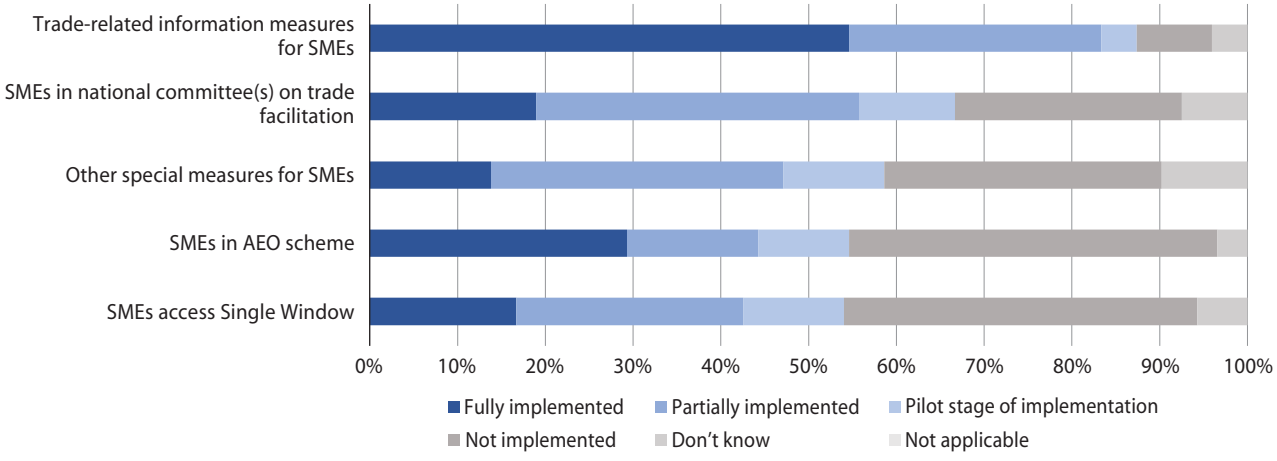


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Figure 22 shows that while 'trade-related information measures for SMEs' has been implemented by 87% of countries (with 55% achieving full implementation), the implementation rates for the remaining measures indicate significant gaps in SME support. For the measure 'SMEs in national committee(s) on trade facilitation', the implementation rate has reached 67% and only 19% for being fully implemented. More targeted support measures show even lower implementation rates: 'other special measures for SMEs' (59%), 'SMEs in AEO scheme' (55%), and 'SMEs access Single Window' (54%). Notably, for these last two critical measures – which directly facilitate SME participation in simplified trade procedures – less than 30% of countries have achieved full implementation; most countries are at partial or pilot stages. This pattern indicates that while countries readily provide information to SMEs, integrating them into core trade facilitation systems and providing tailored support remains limited.

Figure 22

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



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Some countries, however, are developing comprehensive frameworks to address these gaps. The National Strategy for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (2021–2027)[27] developed by Bulgaria exemplifies a holistic approach to SME trade facilitation, aligned with European Union priorities. It seeks to make the country's SMEs more competitive, innovative, sustainable, digitally advanced and export-oriented. The strategy sets six priority areas, applying a strong focus on digitalization and skills to enable SMEs to adapt to technological and market shifts.

Key measures are supporting the digitalization of SMEs through the adoption of ICT solutions, promoting the digital transformation of industrial SMEs to reduce energy intensity and enhance production efficiency, advancing skills development in ICT, digitalization and cybersecurity, facilitating intellectual property registration to support digital and green transitions and improving access to markets and public procurement through enhanced transparency measures. The strategy is implemented through annual action plans, which

[27] See https://depp.oecd.org/policies/BGR1483.

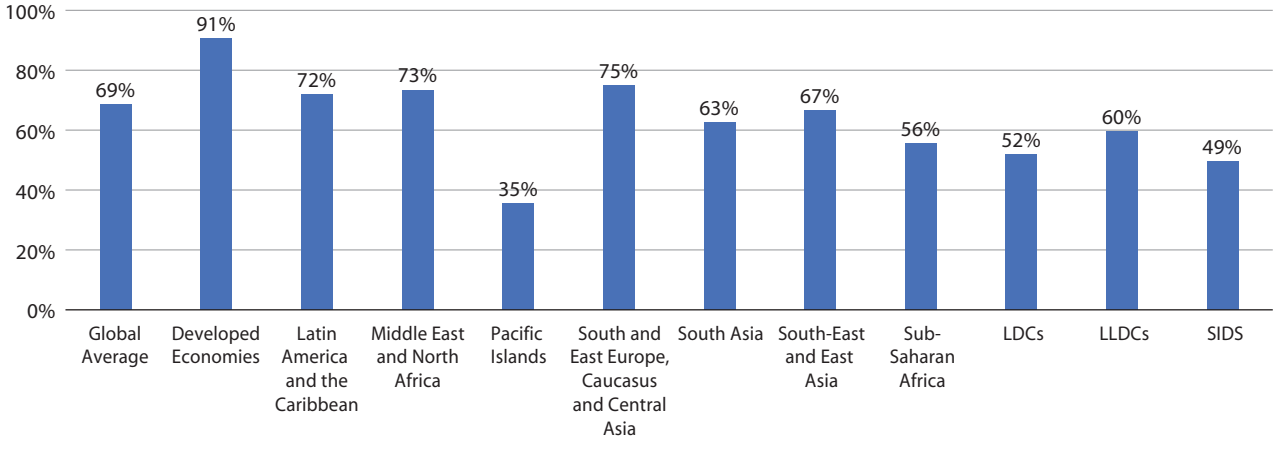
outline complementary initiatives to foster innovation, increase competitiveness in high-tech and knowledge-intensive sectors, promote regional equality and strengthen SME integration into the European Union and global markets.

3.3.2. Agricultural trade facilitation

Agriculture continues to be central to livelihoods in developing countries, as a large proportion of rural populations depend on agricultural activities. According to UNCTAD, more than 50% of the world's population depends on biodiversity for their livelihoods, and 80% of the world's poor live in rural areas and rely directly on these resources.[28] Trade facilitation measures targeting the agricultural sector can reduce transaction costs along supply chains, enhance market access for small-scale farmers and contribute to food security and poverty reduction. The Survey includes four measures addressing 'agricultural trade facilitation', which focus on SPS requirements – testing facilities, national standards bodies, electronic SPS certificates and special treatment for perishable goods. These measures are particularly critical as agricultural products face unique trade barriers because of their perishable nature and stringent health and safety requirements, making efficient border procedures essential for maintaining product quality and market access.

The global implementation rate for 'agricultural trade facilitation' measures is 69% (figure 23). Developed Economies lead with an implementation rate, at 91%, aided by comprehensive procedures for managing agricultural trade. While most of the rates for most of the regions are clustered around the global average, the rates for four regions lag: South-East and East Asia, at 67%; South Asia, at 63%; Sub-Saharan Africa, at 56% and Pacific Islands, at just 35%. For LLDCs, the rate is 60%, while LDCs and SIDS face more significant challenges in this regard and the rates are 52% and 49%, respectively. The below-average performance of these lagging regions and groups of economies is particularly problematic as many of these countries rely heavily on agricultural exports for foreign exchange earnings. This suggests that inadequate SPS infrastructure and procedures may be limiting their ability to access international markets and achieve food security objectives.

Figure 23 **Global implementation of 'agricultural trade facilitation' measures in various regions**



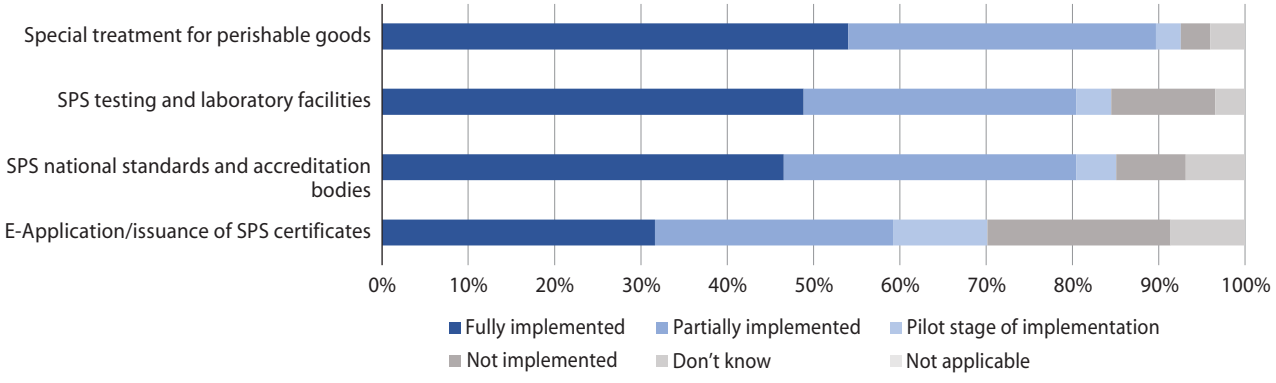
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

[28] UNCTAD, Briefing on achieving biodiversity goal through trade, 28 January 2025, Available at https://unctad.org/meeting/briefing-achieving-biodiversity-goals-through-trade .

Figure 24 reveals that for three of the four 'agricultural trade facilitation' measures, relatively high implementation rates have been achieved. The rate for 'special treatment for perishable goods' is the highest, at 93%, followed by the rates for 'SPS national standards and accreditation bodies' (85%) and 'SPS testing and laboratory facilities' (84%). Meanwhile, the rate for 'e-application/issuance of SPS certificates' lags considerably, at 70% and only 32% for full implementation. This pattern suggests that while countries have established the physical infrastructure and procedures for agricultural trade, such as laboratories, standards bodies and special handling procedures, the digitalization of SPS certification processes remains challenging. The relatively low full implementation rates across all measures, despite high overall implementation, indicates that many countries are still operating with partial or pilot-stage systems, potentially limiting the efficiency gains that comprehensive agricultural trade facilitation could deliver.

Figure 24

State of implementation of 'agricultural trade facilitation' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Recognizing these implementation gaps, some regions have carried out coordinated efforts to strengthen their SPS systems. Under a 3-year, $7 million project funded by the European Union, member countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) undertook comprehensive efforts to strengthen their biosecurity and plant health systems.[29] Between 2022 and 2025, participating countries (Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) carried out phyto-sanitary capacity evaluations with technical guidance from the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat. These evaluations provide a structured diagnostic of national phyto-sanitary systems, enabling countries to identify institutional, legal and technical gaps that constrain their ability to prevent and manage plant pests and diseases.

The process has resulted in 11 national phyto-sanitary strategies with costed plans, timelines and defined institutional responsibilities. Eight countries have begun to update their phyto-sanitary legislation and align their regulatory frameworks with international standards, including those set by IPPC. This alignment is

[29] FAO, Landmark IPPC project put African countries on the path for better trade, 18 July 2025. Available at https://www.ippc.int/en/news/landmark-ippc-project-put-african-countries-on-the-path-for-better-trade/.

expected to enhance compliance with global trade requirements, reduce pest-related trade disruptions and facilitate greater market access for agricultural exports. This initiative has also placed a strong emphasis on inclusivity and sustainability. Gender and youth considerations were integrated throughout the phyto-sanitary capacity evaluations process, ensuring that the strategies not only strengthen technical capacity but also promote broader participation in plant health governance. This approach underscores the commitment of COMESA to build resilient, inclusive and internationally recognized phyto-sanitary systems that safeguard agriculture, protect biodiversity and support regional and global trade.

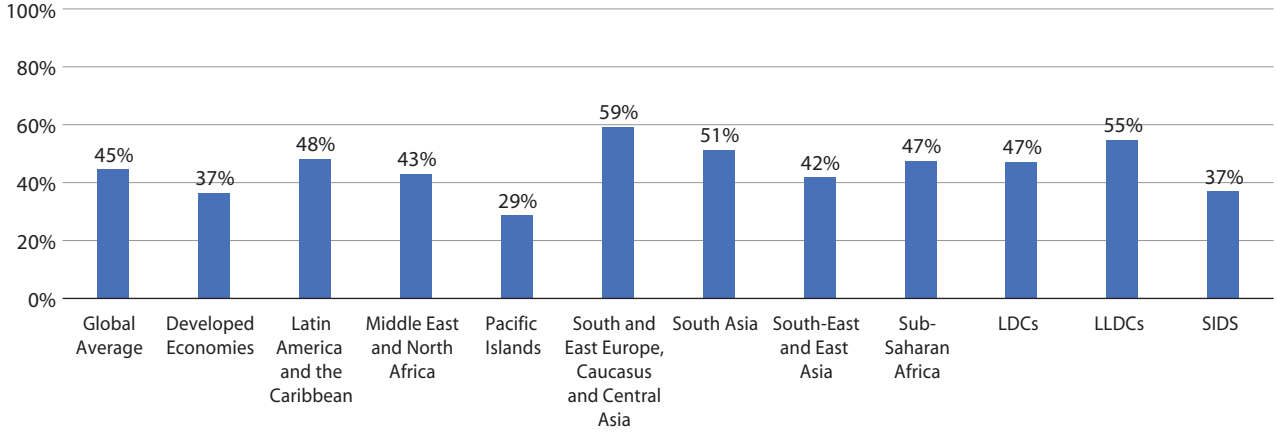
3.3.3. Trade facilitation and women

Women traders face distinct barriers in cross-border trade, including, for example, limited access to trade information, financial services and professional networks, alongside safety concerns at border crossings and cultural constraints. Despite representing a significant share of informal cross-border traders in many developing countries, women are under-represented in formal trade systems and decision-making bodies. The Survey includes three measures to assess whether countries have established mechanisms to address these gender-specific challenges and promote women's participation in trade facilitation governance. As recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 on gender equality, removing these barriers is essential for achieving inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction.

As shown in figure 25, the global implementation rate for the 'trade facilitation and women' measures is 45%. It is highest in the South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region, at 59%. Implementation varies considerably across regions. The lowest-performing regions in this regard are Pacific Islands, at 29%, and South-East and East Asia, at 42%. Notably, Developed Economies have recorded a relatively low implementation, at 37%, lagging many developing regions. Additionally, the rates for LDCs and LLDCs outperform the global average, at 47% and 55%, respectively. This unusual pattern suggests that gender-specific trade facilitation measures may not be prioritized even in countries with otherwise advanced trade systems, possibly reflecting broader gaps in mainstreaming gender considerations into trade policy frameworks.

Figure 25

Global implementation of 'trade facilitation and women' measures in various regions



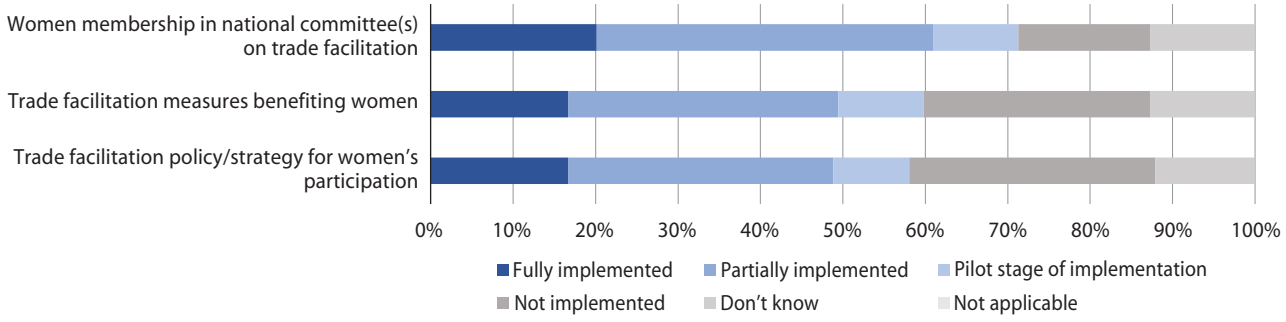
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org

Figure 26 reveals that while the 'women membership in national committee(s) on trade facilitation' has attained the highest implementation rate at 71%, full implementation rates for the three measures are critically low. The implementation rates for the other two measures, 'trade facilitation measures benefiting women' (60%) and 'trade facilitation policy/strategy for women's participation' (58%) are even lower. Most concerning is that full implementation remains at just 20% for 'women membership in national committee(s) on trade facilitation' and only 17% for the other two measures. This stark gap between overall and full implementation suggests that while countries may nominally include women in trade facilitation governance or adopt basic measures, comprehensive gender-responsive policies and meaningful participation mechanisms remain largely undeveloped.

Some countries are, however, demonstrating how structured approaches can advance gender-inclusive trade facilitation. The National Trade Facilitation Committee of Ghana, with support from the World Bank Group, established a trade and gender sub-committee in 2021 to integrate gender perspectives into trade facilitation and support women in cross-border trade.[30] The sub-committee has led awareness campaigns at national, regional and international forums, launched the Gender Champions Initiative in 2025, sensitized stakeholders on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade and trained SMEs in digital trade. It also has partnered with the WCO and the Gender Unit of the Ghana Revenue Authority to deliver capacity-building workshops. In 2025, Ghana received the WTO International Prize for Gender Equality in Trade for its Inclusive Trade Facilitation Project, which aligns with the sub-committee's gender equality objectives. Its 2025 workplan includes expanding the Gender Champions Initiative, promoting digital trade and innovation among SMEs, engaging cross-border women traders nationwide, and strengthening collaboration with women's associations in agribusiness, trade, logistics and shipping.

Figure 26

State of implementation of 'trade facilitation and women' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

[30] UNCTAD, Status and outlook for national trade facilitation committees, technical note (2024). Available at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2025d6_en.pdf.

3.4. Implementation of digital versus sustainable trade facilitation

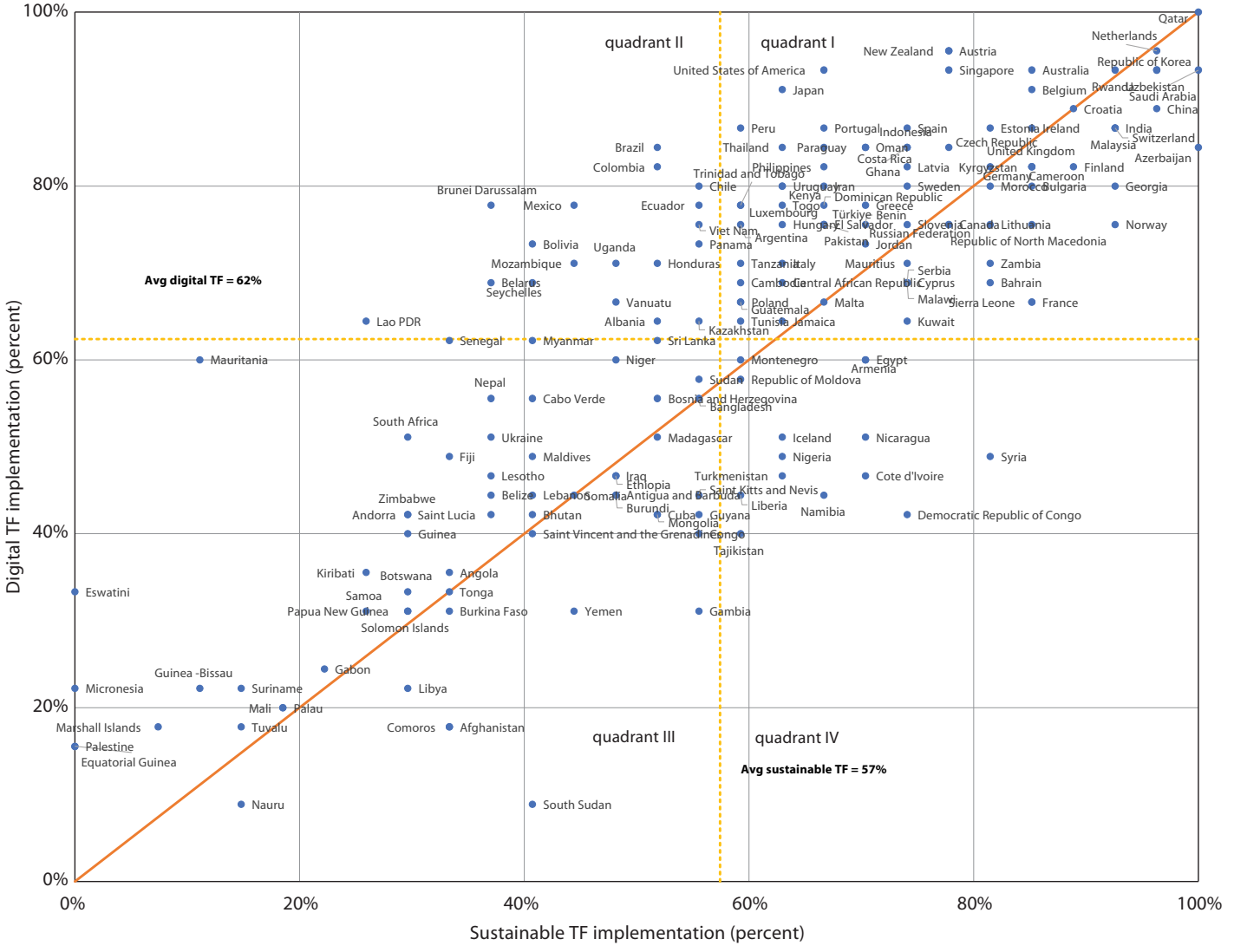
Digital transformation and sustainability represent two complementary dimensions of trade facilitation. The transition to cross-border paperless trade through digitalization is fundamental to sustainability, fostering more streamlined and environmentally responsible trade processes. Simultaneously, sustainable trade facilitation remains essential to fully leverage the developmental benefits derived from trade facilitation reforms. The close relationship between "Digital Trade Facilitation" and "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" requires examining the comparative progress of countries in implementing measures across these two groups.

Figure 27 presents the global average implementation rates for "Digital Trade Facilitation" and "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" measures, at 62% and 57%, respectively. Countries demonstrating a strong performance of the "Digital Trade Facilitation" group tend to achieve similar success in the "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" group, revealing a strong positive correlation between these two dimensions. Most countries are concentrated in quadrants I and III, confirming this positive relationship. Moreover, it is observed that most developed countries are classified in quadrant I in which the implementation rates for "Digital" and "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" measures surpass the average, while least developed countries fall into quadrant III.

Notably, Qatar demonstrates an exemplary performance in both dimensions, placing it in quadrant I, while Saudi Arabia shows a strong performance in "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" measures. In the "Digital Trade Facilitation" sphere, New Zealand and the Netherlands have achieved particularly high implementation rates, positioning them among the global leaders in trade digitalization efforts. The overall findings underscore the significance of integrating digitalization and sustainability in trade facilitation efforts to achieve more effective and inclusive trade practices.

Figure 27

Implementation of digital and sustainable trade dimensions of trade facilitation



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Notes: For the sake of comparability, the implementation rate of "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" is calculated by using data from two sub-groups, namely 'trade facilitation for SMEs' and 'agricultural trade facilitation'. Data for 'trade facilitation and women' are not adequate for an analysis and, therefore, are 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.

3.5. Other trade facilitation

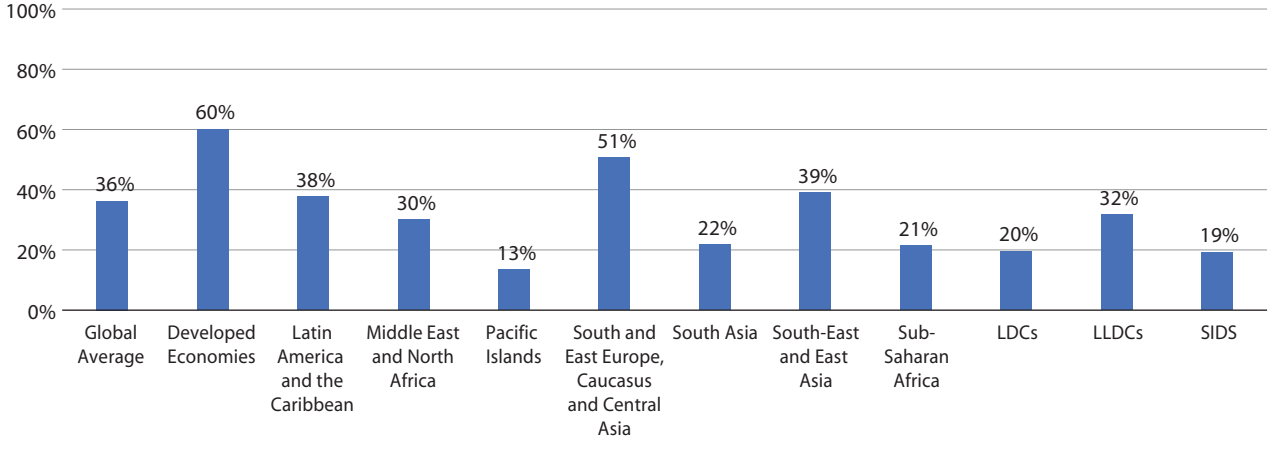
3.5.1. Trade facilitation for e-commerce

E-commerce has transformed global trade patterns, as cross-border digital transactions are increasing exponentially and reshaping how businesses, particularly SMEs, access international markets. E-commerce enables smaller enterprises to overcome traditional barriers to trade and connect to global value chains, though regulatory fragmentation and inconsistent digital infrastructure create challenges for seamless cross-border transactions. The Survey includes five measures assessing countries' readiness for e-commerce trade facilitation, examining legal frameworks for cross-border e-commerce, Customs duties on small value shipments, immediate release procedures for e-commerce goods, AEO programmes for cross-border e-commerce and e-submission of customs declarations by postal operators and express carriers.

The global average implementation rate for 'trade facilitation for e-commerce' measures is 36% (figure 28). Developed Economies lead significantly in this regard with an implementation rate of 60%, followed by South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, at 51%. There is considerable variation among the regions, with implementation rates ranging from 13% to 61%. The three lowest-performing regions are Pacific Islands (13%), Sub-Saharan Africa (21%) and South Asia (22%). The implementation rate for LLDCs is 32%, which is below the global average, while LDCs and SIDS face even greater challenges based on their implementation rates of 20% and 19%, respectively. These disparities suggest that digital infrastructure gaps and varying levels of e-commerce readiness create a significant divide between developed and developing regions in facilitating cross-border digital trade. The particularly low implementation rates among LDCs and SIDS underscore the urgent need for targeted capacity-building and infrastructure development to ensure these resource-constrained economies are not left behind in the digital trade economy.

Figure 28

Global implementation of 'trade facilitation for e-commerce' measures in various regions

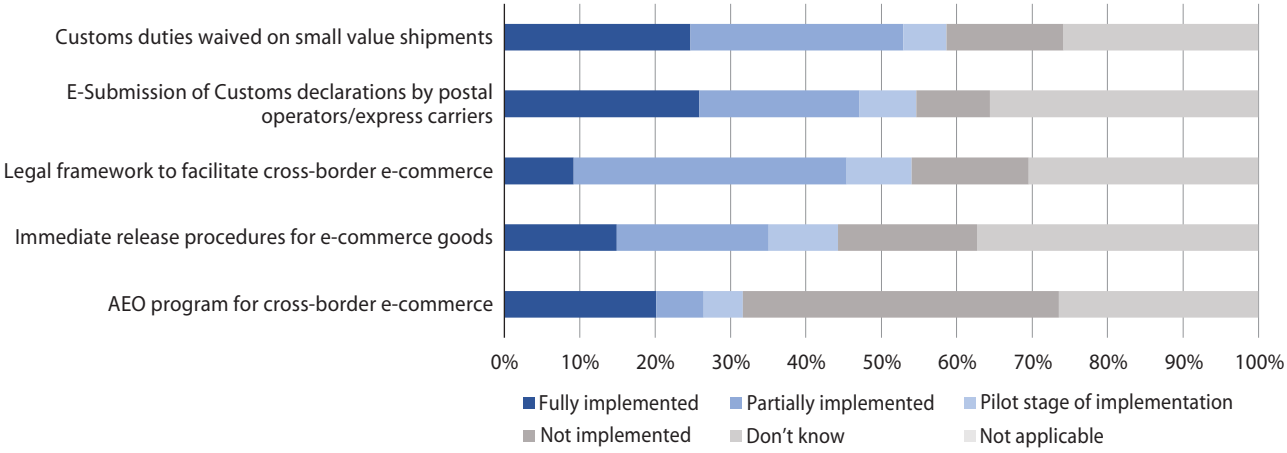


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Figure 29 reveals significant variations in the implementation of 'trade facilitation for e-commerce' measures globally. The most implemented measure is 'customs duties waived on small value shipments' (59%), followed by 'legal framework to facilitate cross-border e-commerce' and 'e-submission of Customs declarations by postal operators/ express carriers' (54% and 55%, respectively). The least implemented measure is the 'AEO program for cross-border e-commerce', at only 32%. Notably, while the legal framework measure shows 54% overall implementation, only 9% of countries have fully implemented it, indicating that most countries are still developing or piloting their regulatory frameworks. This pattern suggests that countries are prioritizing foundational facilitation measures like de minimis thresholds over more complex programmes requiring specialized infrastructure and inter-agency coordination, such as AEO schemes for e-commerce operators.

Figure 29

State of implementation of 'trade facilitation for e-commerce' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Box 7

Instant payment systems driving e-commerce growth in Latin America

The growth of digital payments has been a transformative driver of e-commerce expansion in Latin America. The region has gone through significant shifts in payment preferences. In Colombia, e-commerce has maintained double-digit growth since 2019, with a notable milestone reached in Q2 2024 when direct debits from bank accounts overtook cards as the dominant e-commerce payment method for the first time. This shift reflects the accelerating adoption of alternative payment methods, digital wallets, such as Nequi, which has 25 million users in Colombia alone.[31]

Central banks across the region have responded by developing instant payment ecosystems that facilitate seamless trade. Pix, a system in Brazil that was launched in November 2020, processes more than 2 trillion reais ($338 billion) in transactions monthly and has set expansion plans for June 2025 with Pix Automático, which will enable automated recurring payments for services, including

[31] Ebanx, Bre-B kicks off in Colombia. Here's what you need to know, 16 July 2025. Available at https://insights.ebanx.com/en/bre-b-kicks-off-in-colombia/.

Box 7. *(continued)*

e-commerce subscriptions.[32] This feature alone is projected to handle $30 billion in e-commerce spending within two years, primarily by bringing new customers into the market who previously lacked access to credit cards Bre-B, launched in mid-2025 in Colombia, registered almost 3 million payment keys in its first day of operation, offering 24/7 instant payments with a 20-second processing time.

These instant payment systems have significantly reduced barriers to digital trade. By eliminating the need for merchants to partner with multiple banks and enabling immediate settlement, they have made e-commerce accessible to smaller merchants while reducing transaction costs. The interoperability mandated by these systems ensures that businesses can reach all consumers regardless of their financial institution, while features, such as QR codes and simple payment keys (phone numbers, emails or IDs) simplify the purchasing process. This infrastructure has proven particularly beneficial for SMEs and cross-border trade, supporting the broader digitalization throughout Latin America and facilitating more inclusive participation in digital commerce.

Box 8

iSOKO: a regional digital solution for inclusive trade facilitation

iSOKO is a comprehensive digital platform designed to facilitate cross-border trade for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, with a particular focus on addressing the time poverty faced by women traders.[33] Rolled out through partnerships between Trademark Africa and African states apex business organisations, with initial funding from Global Affairs Canada, the platform addresses critical challenges that traders at the bottom of the trade pyramid face in a rapidly digitizing economy: finding buyers and sellers across borders; understanding market prices; connecting with essential supply chain partners; and managing business operations effectively.

Through a free-to-use mobile application, web platform and USSD interface for those without smartphones, iSOKO provides an integrated solution across four key modules. The marketplace module (used by 70.48% of users) enables traders to list products and services, with more than 19,495 listings spanning agriculture (50%), crafts (25%), textiles (15%) and services (10%). The bookkeeping module (11.70% usage) provides essential financial management tools, allowing traders to track sales, manage inventory and build credit histories. The logistics services module (10.56% usage) facilitates cost-effective movement of goods, while the trade information module (7.26% usage) delivers critical market trends and regulatory information.

Since its launch in March 2023, the platform has onboarded more than 95,000 users across the five East African countries, with Kenya hosting 24,235 users, United Republic of Tanzania, 23,085, Rwanda, 17,274, Uganda 14,994, and Burundi, 14,411. The platform has demonstrated significant economic impact, generating average cost savings of $22 per trader and increasing transaction values by an average of 2.5% in 2023 compared to off-platform transactions. As a user in Nairobi put it, “iSOKO app is user friendly and has features that have simplified my work as a seller. Posting products and navigating the platform has been made easy and very efficient. Through the iSOKO application, most visitors have turned into customers, and my brand visibility has improved.”

[32] Andre Romani, New feature of Brazil’s Pix system to draw $30 million in e-commerce payment, Reuters, 28 January 2025. Available at https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/new-feature-brazils-pix-system-draw-30-billion-e-commerce-payments-2025-01-28/

[33] Trademark Africa, Trade facilitation report: driving African trade through digitalization (December 2024). Available at https://atdf.trademarkafrica.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/TRADE_Facilitation_report_B5-v1.13.pdf.

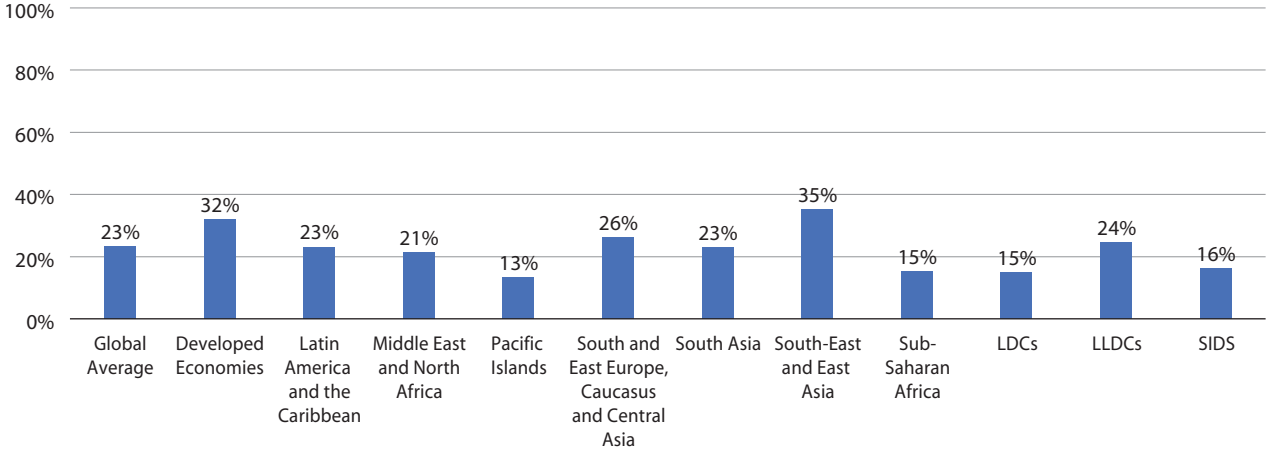
3.5.2. Green trade facilitation

'Green trade facilitation' addresses the critical intersection of trade policy with environmental protection, focusing on how trade systems can support climate objectives while managing environmental risks and promoting sustainable commerce. As global trade increasingly intersects with climate commitments, facilitating trade in green goods while ensuring proper environmental safeguards becomes essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This new sub-group, introduced to the 2025 Survey, encompasses four measures that examine countries' implementation of sustainability reporting for traded goods, facilitation of green and climate-smart goods, eCITES systems for endangered species protection and frameworks for legitimate waste trade management.

As shown in figure 30, the global average implementation rate for 'green trade facilitation' measures is 23%. The rate is highest in the South-East and East Asia region, at 35%, followed by Developed Economies at 32%. The relatively low implementation rates across all regions, ranging from 13% to 36%, indicate that green trade facilitation remains an emerging area requiring concerted global efforts for development. The three lowest-performing regions are Pacific Islands (13%), Sub-Saharan Africa (15%) and Middle East and North Africa (21%). For LLDCs, the rate is 24%, slightly below the global average, while for SIDS and LDCs, their rates of 16% and 15%, respectively, indicate that they face greater challenges. This uniformly limited progress suggests that integrating environmental considerations into trade facilitation frameworks is at an early stage worldwide, requiring enhanced international cooperation and green technology transfer to support these economies in adopting sustainable trade practices.

Figure 30

Global implementation of 'green trade facilitation' measures in various regions

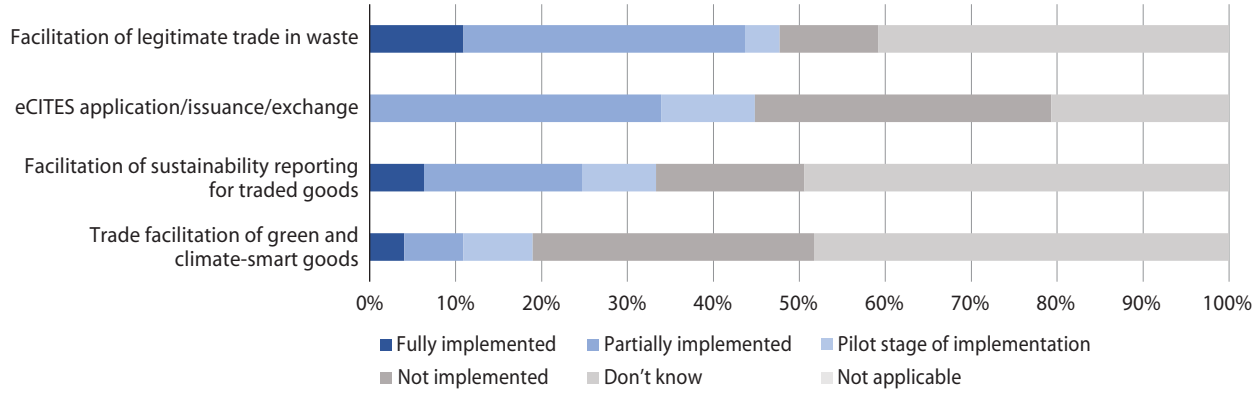


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Figure 31 reveals that the levels of implementation of 'green trade facilitation' measures vary globally. The most implemented measure is 'facilitation of legitimate trade in waste' (48% when including full, partial and pilot implementation), followed by 'eCITES application/issuance/exchange' (45%). The least implemented measure is 'trade facilitation of green and climate-smart goods', at only 19%. Strikingly, while the eCITES measure shows a 45% overall implementation, no countries have achieved full deployment of it, with all progress occurring at partial or pilot stages. Similarly, only 11% of countries have fully implemented waste trade facilitation despite its higher overall rate. This pattern indicates that while countries are initiating green trade measures, they face significant challenges in achieving comprehensive implementation. Furthermore, data collection for this sub-group have proven to be challenging, particularly for 'facilitation of sustainability reporting for traded goods' and 'trade facilitation of green and climate-smart goods'.

Figure 31

State of implementation of 'green trade facilitation' measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Despite these implementation challenges, successful models are emerging that demonstrate the potential of digital systems for environmental trade facilitation. The e-permitting system for CITES of Morocco, which is integrated with the PortNet platform (the National Single Window for Foreign Trade), received widespread praise for its efficiency and effectiveness.[34] The Africa Regional Workshop on Electronic CITES Permitting Systems emphasized the importance of using the recently updated CITES e-permitting toolkit during the design phase of any e-permitting system. To ensure greater interoperability and effective collaboration between countries, the toolkit provides updated advice on the use of common information exchange formats, protocols and standards, as well as information on new developments in the use of electronic documents for Parties implementing eCITES, or for Parties developing and implementing pilot projects on e-permitting systems.

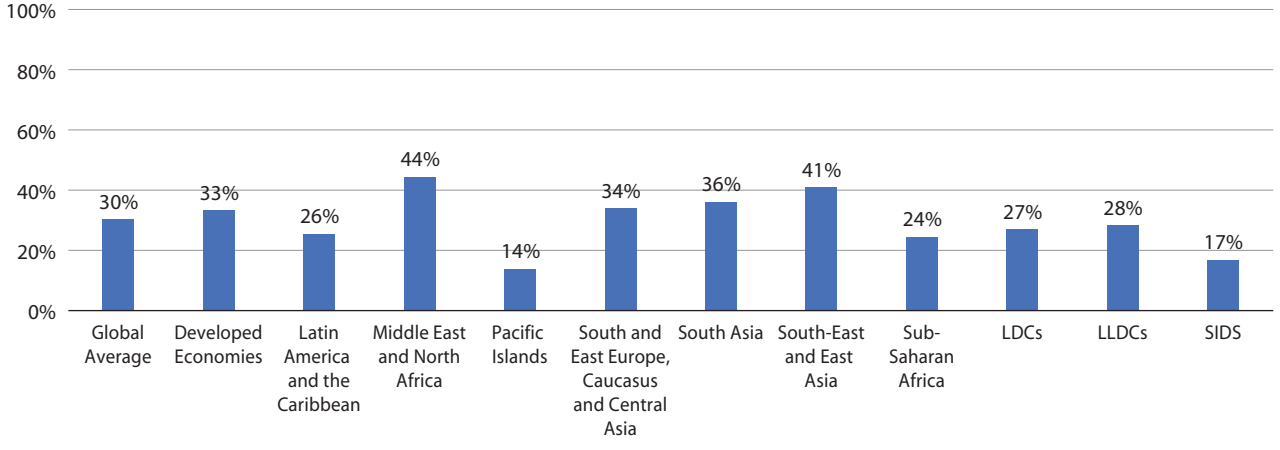
[34] CITES, Boosting digitalization: African CITES Parties urged to modernize permitting systems to support legal and traceable trade and combat wildlife crime, 15 November 2024. Available at https://cites.org/eng/news/ecites-africa-regional-workshop-nairobi-2024.

3.5.3. Trade finance for trade facilitation

Trade finance is fundamental to international commerce, enabling businesses, particularly SMEs, to manage payment risks and cash flow gaps that arise from cross-border transactions. Beyond its traditional role in facilitating imports and exports, trade finance increasingly intersects with digital transformation and sustainable development objectives, making its integration with trade facilitation systems more critical than ever. While Survey data collection has improved compared to previous years, responses reveal that most 'trade finance for trade facilitation' measures remain genuinely unimplemented rather than unknown. This reflects persistent institutional separation, as traditional trade facilitation actors still view financial services as beyond their core mandate, highlighting the need for enhanced cross-sectoral coordination to leverage the interconnectedness of goods and financial flows.

As shown in figure 32, the global average implementation rate for 'trade finance for trade facilitation' is 30%, with Middle East and North Africa, and South-East and East Asia leading at 44% and 41%, respectively. Beyond these leading regions, the rates for other Asian regions and Developed Economies range just above the global average (33%), while the remaining regions surveyed fall below it. The three lowest-performing regions in this regard are Pacific Islands (14%), Sub-Saharan Africa (24%), and Latin America and the Caribbean (26%). The implementation rates for LLDCs and LDCs are 28% and 27%, respectively, just below the global average, while SIDS face significant challenges implementing trade finance for trade facilitation measures, based its implementation rate of only 17%. These disparities likely reflect differences in financial sector development, banking infrastructure and the degree of integration between trade facilitation agencies and financial service providers across regions.

Figure 32 **Global implementation of 'trade finance for trade facilitation' measures in various regions**

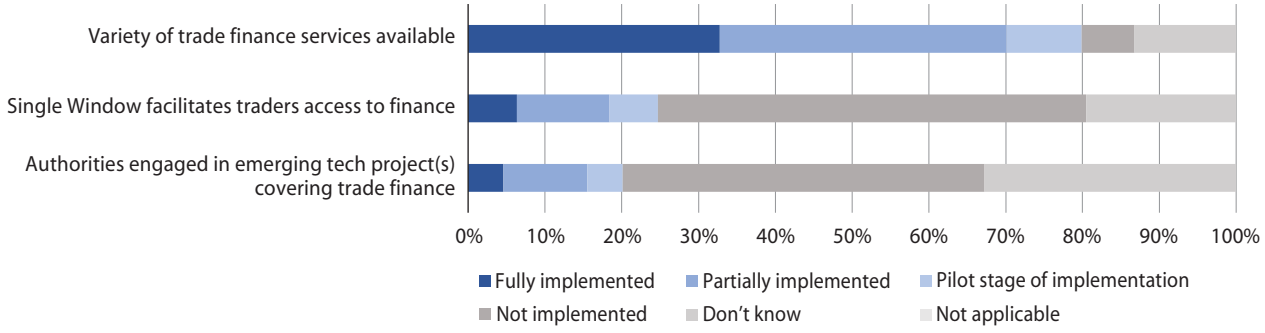


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Figure 33 reveals stark disparities in the implementation of 'trade finance for trade facilitation' measures. For the Survey's three measures in this sub-group, the implementation rate is 80% (including full, partial and pilot stages) for 'variety of trade finance services available', while for 'Single Window facilitates traders access to finance', the rate is only 25% and for 'authorities engaged in emerging tech project(s) covering trade finance', it is only 20%.

Notably, while trade finance services show 80% overall implementation, only 33% of countries have fully implemented these services. This pattern reflects a fundamental disconnect: financial services for trade exist in most countries, but their integration with trade facilitation systems remains limited. Customs authorities leading Single Window development typically focus on simplifying trade procedures and expediting clearance, but they fail to incorporate financing and payment functions as these fall outside their traditional mandate, highlighting the persistent institutional separation between trade facilitation agencies and financial service providers.

Figure 33 **State of implementation of 'trade finance for trade facilitation' globally**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Financial technology companies offering innovative trade and supply chain financing solutions are valuable partners for integration with Single Window and related trade facilitation initiatives. Additionally, financing mechanisms increasingly support environmentally sustainable and climate-conscious trade, with emerging green finance instruments and solutions showing promise in tackling the persistent global trade finance gap while advancing sustainability objectives.

The findings underscore the continued necessity for enhanced collaboration between trade facilitation authorities and institutions providing financial and payment services for international commerce. Such collaboration should encompass established financial institutions, such as banks, governmental bodies, including export credit agencies, and multilateral development banks operating specialized trade finance programmes. One such initiative is Project Agorá[35] under which more than 40 private financial institutions, convened by the Institute of International Finance, have joined the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) and leading central banks to explore how tokenization can make wholesale cross-border payments more efficient, addressing such challenges as regulatory divergence, technical incompatibilities and high costs. The initiative highlights the importance of public-private collaboration in shaping financial infrastructure.

[35] BIS, Private sector partners join Project Agorá, 18 September 2025. Available at https://www.bis.org/about/bisih/topics/fmis/agora.htm

CHAPTER

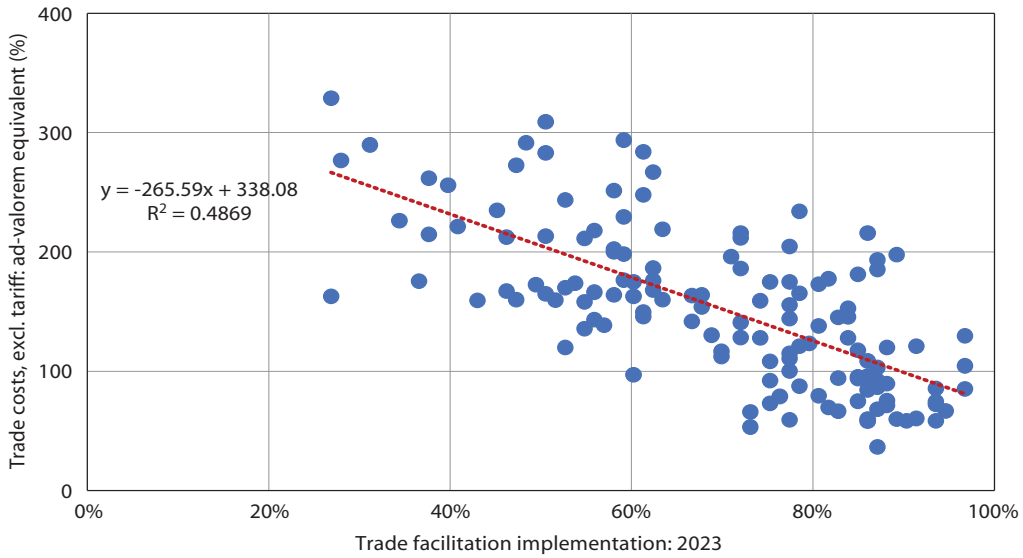


Impact of trade facilitation on trade costs

For this section, the Survey data are used to estimate the impact of trade facilitation improvements on trade costs, with a particular focus on digital trade facilitation. As shown in figures 34 and 35, strong correlations exist between trade facilitation implementation in surveyed countries and their levels of trade costs and logistics performance. More rigorous empirical analysis is needed, however, to quantify the impact of trade facilitation implementation on trade costs and assess the statistical significance of these impacts. Following presentation of the trade cost model and related methodological considerations, empirical results and a counterfactual analysis are presented to evaluate the impact of alternative trade facilitation reform scenarios.

Figure 34

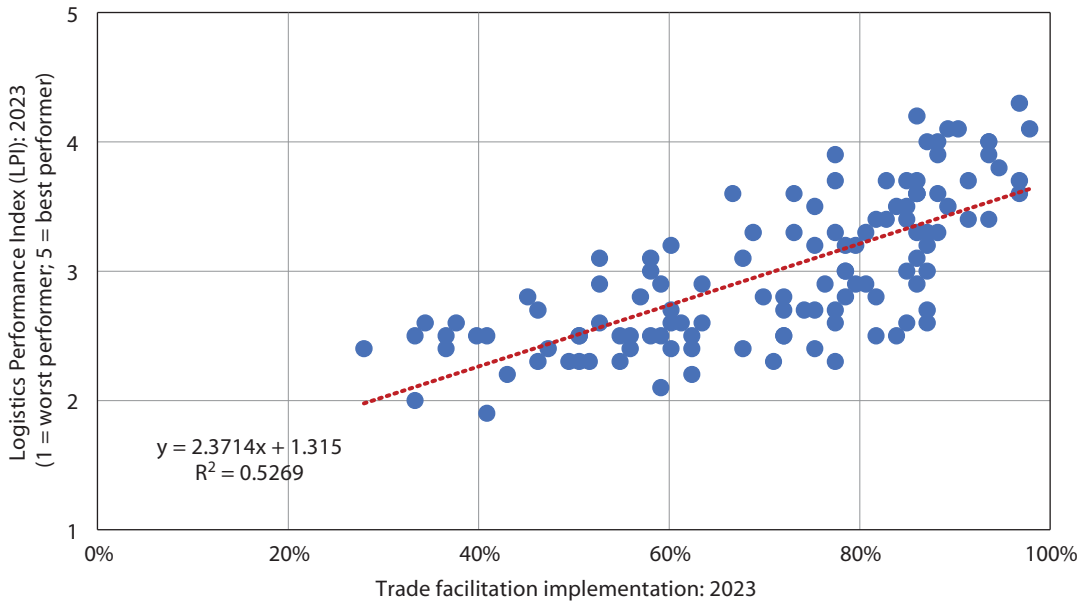
Trade facilitation implementation and trade costs



Sources: ESCAP, based on data from untfsurvey.org; and ESCAP, ESCAP-World Bank trade cost database, updated August 2025. Available at https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database.

Figure 35

Trade facilitation implementation and logistics performance



Sources: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org; and ESCAP, ESCAP-World Bank's Logistics Performance Index. Available at https://lpi.worldbank.org.

4.1. Model and data

International trade costs are multi-faceted and influenced by numerous factors, including geographical factors (distance, contiguity and landlockedness), cultural factors (common official or unofficial language, colonial relationship and formerly same country), trade policies (regional trade agreements and tariffs), and availability of hard trade infrastructure (such as ports). Trade facilitation measures and the implementation of them also significantly affect trade costs. Building on an article on trade costs in the developing world in 2016,[36] the following trade cost model is specified:

$$\ln(\tau_{ij}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln(gtariff_{ij}) + \beta_2 \ln(dist_{ij}) + \beta_3 (contig_{ij}) + \beta_4 (comlang_off_{ij}) + \beta_5 (comlang_ethno_{ij}) + \beta_6 (colony_{ij}) + \beta_7 (comcol_{ij}) + \beta_8 (smctry_{ij}) + \beta_9 (rta_{ij}) + \beta_{10} (landlocked_{ij}) + \beta_{11} \ln(LSCI_i) + \beta_{12} \ln(TF_i) + D_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Table 5 gives a summary of variable definitions, data treatment (if any), data sources, and expected signs of trade cost factors. Trade facilitation implementation is computed based on 31 "General" and "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures from the 2025 Survey.[37] The model also includes partner fixed effects (Dj) and robust and clustered standard errors by country pair to address cross-country heterogeneity. The model is estimated across a cross-section of 119 reporting countries using ordinary least squares.

Table 5

Data source, definition, treatment and expected sign

Variable	Definition	Data treatment	Source	Expected sign
τ_{ij}	Comprehensive trade costs.	Average of 2021–2023	World Bank-ESCAP Trade Cost Database	
$gtarif\ f_{ij}$	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 $gtarif\ f_{ij} = \sqrt{tarif\ f_{ij} \times tarif\ f_{ij}}$	Average of 2021–2023	WITS Database	+
$dist_{ij}$	Geographical distance between countries i and j.	No treatment	CEPII	+
$contig_{ij}$	Dummy variable of contiguity equal to 1 if countries i and j share a common border and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–
$comlang_of\ f_{ij}$	Dummy variable of common official language equal to 1 if countries i and j use the same common official language and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–

[36] Jean-françois Arvis, and others, Trade costs in the developing world: 1995–2010, *World Trade Review*, vol. 15, No. 3 (2015) pp. 451–474.

[37] Survey data for 2023 were updated based on the information collected in 2025 to ensure it corresponds with data from the ESCAP-World Bank trade cost database, of which the latest data year is 2021–2023.

Table 5. *(continued)*

Variable	Definition	Data treatment	Source	Expected sign
$comlang_ethno_{ij}$	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	–
$colony_{ij}$	Dummy variable equal to 1 if countries i and j were ever in colonial relationship and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–
$comcol_{ij}$	Dummy variable equal to 1 if countries i and j had a common colonizer after 1945 and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–
$smctry_{ij}$	Dummy variable equal to 1 if countries i and j were or are the same country and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	–
rta_{ij}	Dummy variable equal to 1 if countries i and j are members of the same regional trade agreement and zero otherwise.	Latest definition in 2023	Egger, P. H. and Larch, M. (2008)	–
$landlocked_{ij}$	Dummy variable equal to 1 if either countries i or j is landlocked and zero otherwise.	No treatment	CEPII	+
$LSCI_i$	Average scores of liner shipping connectivity index of country i.	Data gaps filled/ average 2021–2023	UNCTAD	–
TFI_i	Percentage of TF implementation of country i, modelled as: (a) overall TF (tfi_i); or (b) general TF (generaltf_i) + digital TF (pxbptf_i).	0.0001 replacement if value is zero	Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation	–

Source: ESCAP.

Notes: CEPII, Centre d'études prospectives et d'informations internationals; N/A, not applicable; TF, trade facilitation. Where available, the average of the most recent data from 2021 onward is used in the estimation. Percentage of trade facilitation implementation of 2023 is used as trade cost data are up to 2023. 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 6 gives a summary of estimation results from two versions of the trade cost model. Model (1) considers the overall level of trade facilitation implementation ("overall TFI") based on 31 main trade facilitation measures. Model (2) divides "overall TFI" into two groups: "General Trade Facilitation" ('transparency', 'formalities', and 'institutional arrangement and cooperation' measures); and "Digital Trade Facilitation" ('paperless trade' 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 6 shows that a 10% reduction in tariffs leads to a reduction of trade costs by more than 6%, on average. Similarly, a 10% improvement in overall trade facilitation implementation reduces trade costs by more than 3%. This reduction is three times greater than the effect of a 10% improvement in hard infrastructure, such as maritime connectivity (almost 1%).

Table 6

Empirical results on trade cost models

DEPENDENT VARIABLES: ln_ctcij	overall TFI	General TFI + Paperless TFI	overall TFI	General TFI + Paperless TFI
ln_tariff	0.995*** [12.09]	1.002*** [12.02]	0.120*** [12.09]	0.120*** [12.02]
ln_dist	0.198*** [49.94]	0.197*** [49.87]	0.397*** [49.94]	0.397*** [49.87]
contig	-0.0947*** [-4.791]	-0.0948*** [-4.800]	-0.0378*** [-4.791]	-0.0379*** [-4.800]
comlang_off	-0.0207 [-1.528]	-0.0222 [-1.633]	-0.0177 [-1.528]	-0.0190 [-1.633]
comlang_ethno	-0.0152 [-1.143]	-0.0139 [-1.040]	-0.0132 [-1.143]	-0.0120 [-1.040]
colony	-0.189*** [-12.76]	-0.189*** [-12.78]	-0.0672*** [-12.76]	-0.0673*** [-12.78]
comcol	-0.0713*** [-6.052]	-0.0708*** [-6.018]	-0.0472*** [-6.052]	-0.0469*** [-6.018]
smctry	-0.0440 [-1.298]	-0.0422 [-1.246]	-0.0113 [-1.298]	-0.0109 [-1.246]
landlocked_ij	0.276*** [30.04]	0.273*** [28.79]	0.299*** [30.04]	0.296*** [28.79]
rta	-0.0811*** [-12.58]	-0.0815*** [-12.64]	-0.0966*** [-12.58]	-0.0971*** [-12.64]
ln_lsci_i	-0.0840*** [-27.43]	-0.0844*** [-27.54]	-0.213*** [-27.43]	-0.214*** [-27.54]
ln_transparency_i				
ln_formalities_i				
ln_institution_i				
ln_tfi_i	-0.337*** [-24.18]		-0.190*** [-24.18]	
ln_generaltf_i		-0.173*** [-8.601]		-0.0835*** [-8.601]
ln_pxbptf_i		-0.145*** [-11.43]		-0.118*** [-11.43]
Constant	1.330*** [18.06]	1.249*** [15.09]		
Observations	10,844	10,844	10,844	10,844
R-squared	0.622	0.621	0.622	0.621
Reporter FE	No	No	No	No
Partner FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted R-squared	0.617	0.616	0.617	0.616

Sources: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org; and ESCAP, ESCAP-World Bank's Logistics Performance Index. Available at https://lpi.worldbank.org.

Note: Presents regression estimates of equation [1] using data specified in table 5. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05 and * p<0.1; t-stats. in square parentheses.

4.3. A counterfactual analysis

In this section, the trade cost reduction resulting when a country improves a set of trade facilitation measures is further investigated. Counterfactual simulations are conducted 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 where 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 where trade facilitation measures have not achieved full implementation take action to achieve full implementation.

Table 7 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 1%; while full implementation of only binding measures results in less than 3% in trade cost reduction. Expanding the coverage of implementation to both binding and non-binding measures under the WTO TFA results in higher rates of trade cost reduction, 2% and 5% for partial and full implementation, respectively. Under a WTO TFA+ case in which "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures not included in the WTO TFA are additionally implemented, the average trade cost reductions reach nearly 6% and 11% for partial and full implementation, respectively.

Table 7 also features estimates of the global average trade cost reductions associated with implementation of two different groups of trade facilitation measures, namely "General Trade Facilitation" measures and "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures.

Table 7

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
Model 1						
Overall trade facilitation	-0.94%	-2.86%	-2.00%	-5.44%	-5.55%	-11.41%
Model 2						
General trade facilitation measures	-0.78%	-2.37%	-1.34%	-3.80%	-1.67%	-4.31%
Digital trade facilitation measures	0.00%	0.00%	-0.55%	-1.19%	-4.00%	-7.18%

Sources: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org; and ESCAP, ESCAP-World Bank's Logistics Performance Index. Available at https://lpi.worldbank.org.

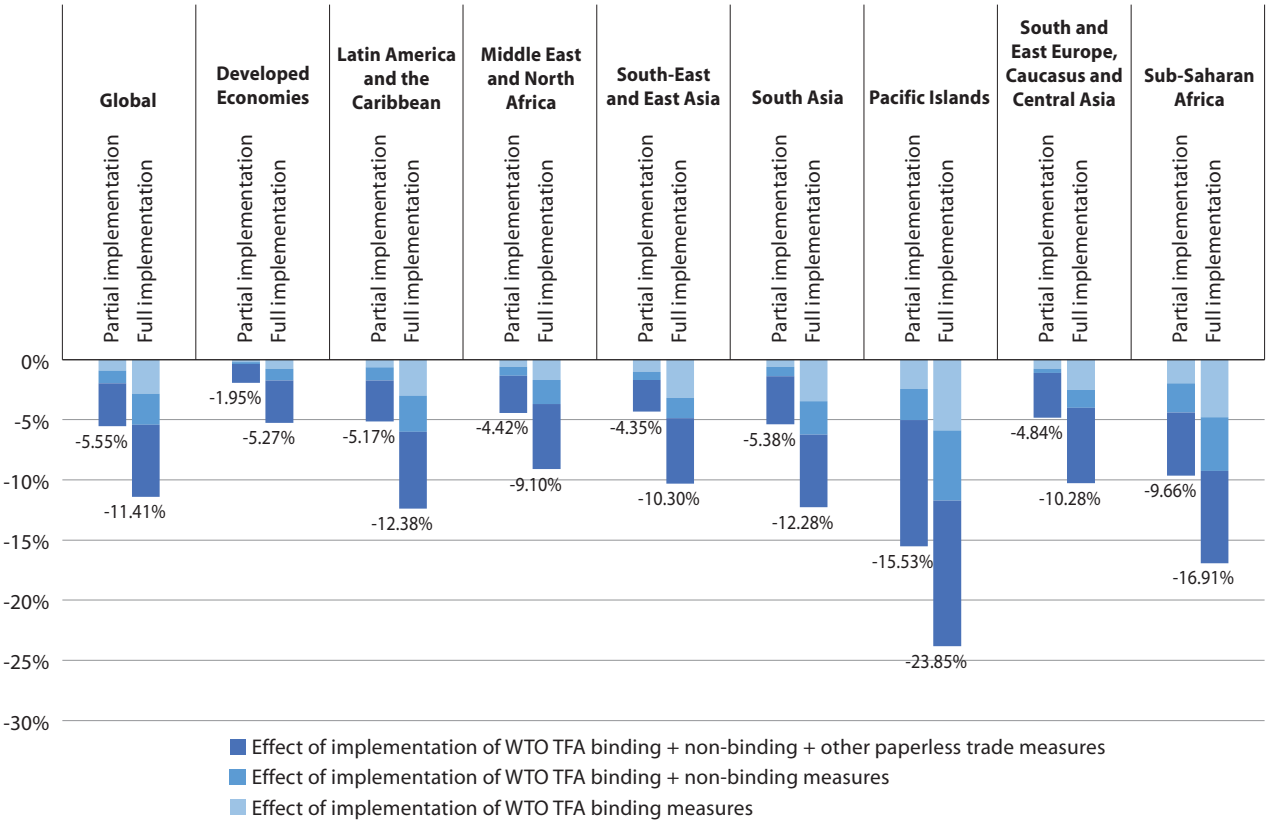
Note: No digital trade facilitation measures are classified as WTO TFA binding measures.

In Model 2, both scenarios of partial and full implementation indicate that the largest trade cost reduction comes from implementing "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures that extend beyond WTO TFA requirements. Such ambitious digital trade facilitation reforms generate, on average, an additional 4% to 7% reduction in trade costs, depending on the level of implementation.

Figure 36 shows the trade cost reductions expected in different world regions. Trade cost reductions are particularly significant when "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures – 'paperless trade' and 'cross-border paperless trade' – are implemented. While the global average trade cost reduction would reach 11% when "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures are fully implemented alongside WTO TFA binding and non-binding measures, the potential trade cost reduction across country groups and regions ranges from approximately 5% in Developed Economies to 24% in Pacific Islands. To realize these reductions, however, countries must substantially strengthen cooperation on trade digitalization to ensure electronic data and documents in national paperless trade systems can be effectively exchanged and legally recognized by trade partners. Such cooperation should be developed and supported through various dedicated bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements, such as the CPTA and implementation of global standards, such as the UN/CEFACT policy recommendations and standards on trade facilitation and e-business.

Figure 36

Impact of trade facilitation implementation on trade costs globally



Sources: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org; and ESCAP, ESCAP-World Bank's Logistics Performance Index. Available at https://lpi.worldbank.org.

CHAPTER



Conclusion and the way forward

This report provides an analysis of trade facilitation implementation data from 174 economies worldwide. The sixth Survey encompasses "General Trade Facilitation" measures, including numerous provisions featured in the WTO TFA, alongside "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures and "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" initiatives that address the specific requirements of SMEs, the agricultural sector and women traders. Additionally, it includes measures for 'trade facilitation for e-commerce', which is very important for SMEs and women entrepreneurs, and 'green trade facilitation', an emerging priority crucial for the environmental sustainability of international trade.

Analysis of the 31 "General" and "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures reveals a global average implementation rate of 71%. An increase of approximately 5 percentage points is noted compared to the 2023 Survey results for countries participating in both iterations.[38] The "General Trade Facilitation" measures, designed to enhance transparency, streamline formalities and strengthen institutional frameworks for trade facilitation, demonstrate robust implementation globally. This widespread progress underscores countries' sustained commitment to fulfilling WTO TFA obligations.[39]

[38] The evolution is calculated based on the common 144 countries that participated in the 2021, 2023, and 2025 Surveys. The average implementation rate of those 144 countries in 2021 and 2023 was 61% and 67%, respectively.

[39] A total of 17 of the 31 common measures discussed in this report can be directly related to WTO 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 WTO TFA stands at almost 55% (17/31=54.8%).

Implementation of "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures for 'paperless' and 'cross-border paperless trade' continues to lag other categories, despite notable advances since 2023, with increases of 5 and 7 percentage points, respectively. Nevertheless, the global average implementation rate for 'cross-border paperless trade' is at only 51%, significantly below other "General" and "Digital Trade Facilitation" measures assessed in the Survey. Establishing paperless systems remains a persistent challenge for most developing economies. These economies, for their part, face challenges in achieving interoperability between their systems and those of partner countries to enable seamless cross-border paperless trade.

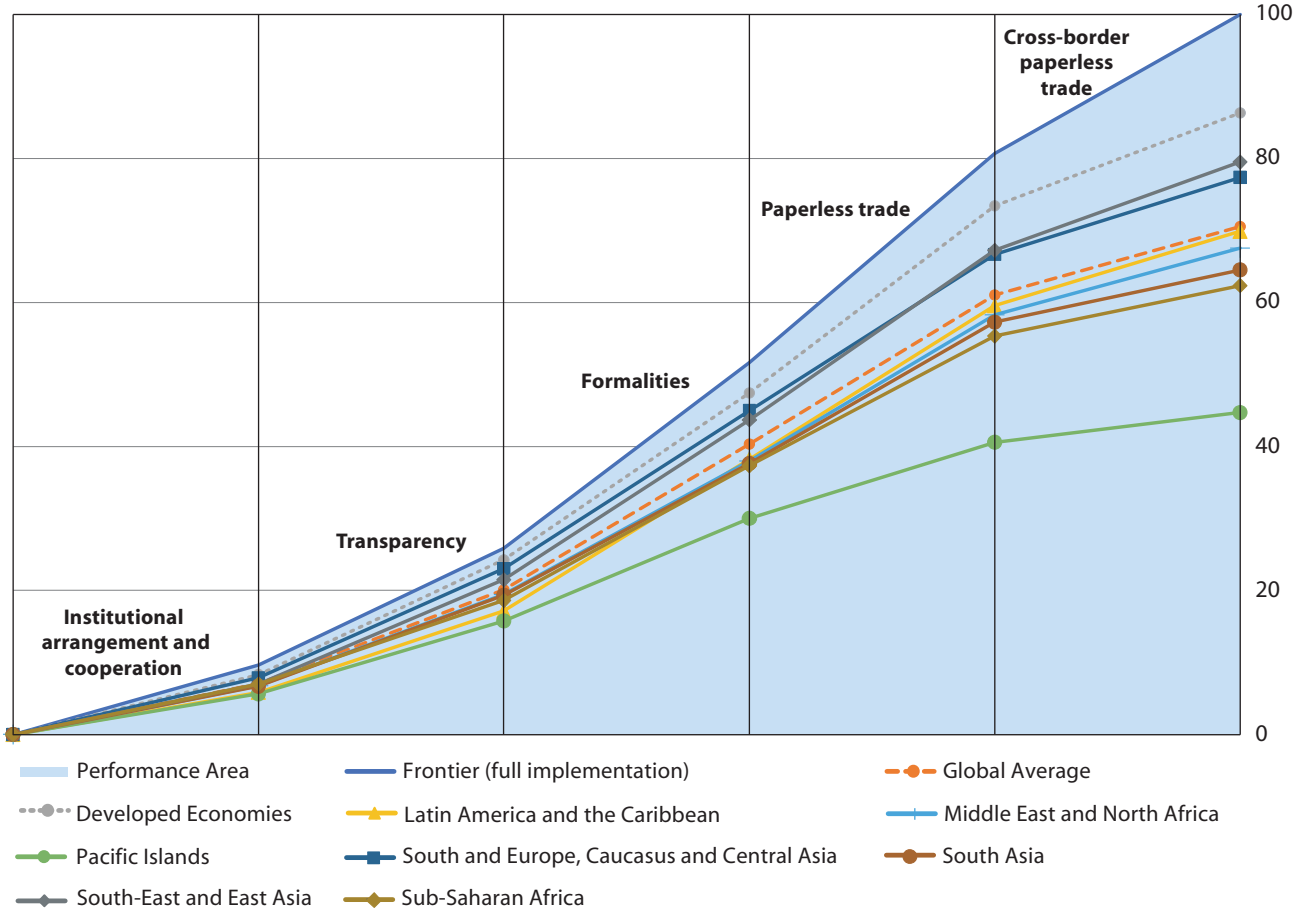
Estimations made through trade cost models demonstrate the substantial impact of digitalization on trade cost reduction. Implementing digital trade facilitation measures that extend beyond WTO TFA requirements could reduce average trade costs by more than 11%, representing more than double the reduction achievable through WTO TFA compliance alone. All economies would benefit from collaborative efforts to develop the regulatory frameworks and technical protocols essential for the seamless exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form across international supply chains. Regional trade agreements, such as the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations in the Pacific Islands, AfCFTA in Africa, and the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement along with other ASEAN agreements provide critical platforms for advancing cooperation in digital trade cooperation. Additionally, specialized multilateral initiatives, such as UN/CEFACT policy recommendations and standards on trade facilitation and e-business, particularly its latest work on interoperability, digital connectivity and transparency along the global supply chain, and the CPTA, contribute significantly to developing integrated digital trading ecosystems.

Figure 37 illustrates trade facilitation implementation as a progressive process, structured according to the groups of measures examined in the Survey.[40] The foundational phase requires establishing institutional arrangements to prioritize and coordinate implementation of trade facilitation measures. Subsequently, transparency must be increased through comprehensive dissemination of information on existing laws, regulations, and procedures, while incorporating stakeholder consultation in policy development. The following phase emphasizes the design and implementation of streamlined and more efficient trade formalities. While these reformed processes may initially depend on paper-based documentation, integration of ICT facilitates the transition towards fully paperless trade systems.

When the analysis encompasses a broader range of 40 trade facilitation measures, including measures in the "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" group, the Survey reveals lower implementation rates across all regions. Despite SMEs constituting a significant share of the global economy, particularly in developing countries, the implementation of trade measures that address their specific requirements – along with those supporting women traders – has not been sufficient. These enterprises face persistent barriers, including limited digital infrastructure access, insufficient IT capabilities and constrained financial resources. Achieving sustainable trade facilitation requires prioritizing capacity-building for SMEs and women traders, integrating their specific needs into policies and providing targeted support to strengthen their participation in global trade.

[40] 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://unnext.unescap.org). Much time and cost can be saved by adopting a more integrated approach based on a long-term vision.

Figure 37 **Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains**



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

Notes: This figure 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.

Attention directed towards gender-inclusive policies in trade facilitation continues to be insufficient despite their critical role in inclusive development. Supporting women traders in understanding trade procedures, establishing guidelines for standards bodies that ensure balanced gender representation and promoting women's active participation in trade facilitation decision-making processes could generate significant benefits. Such measures would facilitate increased export opportunities and improved income generation for women traders. Recognizing the critical role of inclusive approaches in achieving sustainable development, trade facilitation strategies must be more comprehensive and inclusive.

Significant gaps in 'trade finance for trade facilitation' persist, with a global average implementation rate of only 30%. Limited understanding of trade finance mechanisms continues among trade policy and facilitation professionals. Consequently, trade facilitation policymakers must collaborate with financial sector stakeholders to enhance the accessibility of trade finance and ensure its integration into trade facilitation implementation strategies, including Single Window development plans.

'Trade facilitation for e-commerce' also requires substantial improvement, with a global implementation rate of only 36%. While digital trade has transformed how businesses access international markets, significant gaps persist in regulatory frameworks and infrastructure supporting cross-border e-commerce. Policymakers should prioritize the development of comprehensive legal frameworks, addressing de minimis thresholds, and establishing specialized procedures for e-commerce goods to ensure that SMEs and emerging digital enterprises can effectively participate in the global digital economy.

Finally, 'green trade facilitation' represents an emerging priority area; currently its global implementation rate is low, at 23%. As trade systems increasingly intersect with climate commitments, countries face challenges in integrating environmental safeguards while promoting trade in green and climate-smart goods. Enhanced international cooperation on sustainability reporting, eCITES implementation, and frameworks for legitimate waste trade is essential to ensure that trade facilitation supports rather than undermines global environmental objectives.

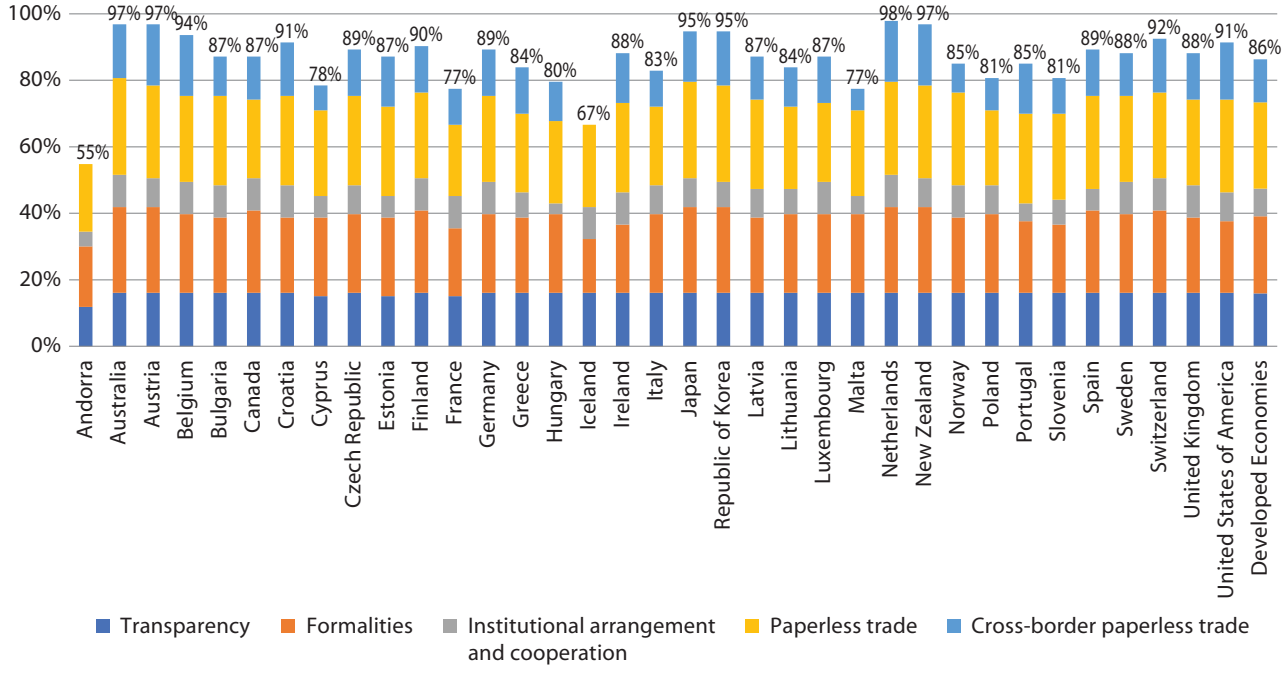
Annexes

Annex 1. Definitions of the various stages of implementation

Stage of implementation	Coding/Scoring
Full implementation: 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 Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA); it is implemented in law and in practice; it is available to essentially all relevant stakeholders nationwide, supported by adequate legal and institutional framework, as well as adequate infrastructure and financial and human resources. (a TFA provision included in the Notifications of Category A commitments may generally be considered as a measure which is fully implemented by the country, with a caveat that the provision will be implemented by a least-developed country member within one year after entry into force of the TFA agreement). If a country registers positive responses for all sub-questions concerning a given trade facilitation measure, that measure should be considered fully implemented.	3
Partial implementation: 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 practiced 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.	2
Pilot stage of implementation: 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 (or at) a very small portion of the intended stakeholder group (location) and/or is being implemented on a trial basis. When a new trade facilitation measure is under the pilot stage of implementation, the old measure is often continuously used in parallel to ensure the service is provided in case of disruption of new measure. This stage of implementation also includes relevant rehearsals and preparation for the full-fledged implementation.	1
Not implemented: 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 or planning of implementation can be carried out, and consultation with stakeholders on the implementation may be arranged.	0
Don't know: a measure is considered to be at the "don't know" stage of implementation if it cannot be determined due to insufficient information, lack of clarity, or absence of direct involvement. This classification may also apply in cases where relevant information is not publicly available, access to implementation details is limited or restricted, or the implementation of the measure falls under the jurisdiction or mandate of another agency or authority.	DK
Not applicable: a measure is considered to be at the "not applicable" stage of implementation if it cannot be assessed for its stage of implementation due to contextual or structural limitations. This classification applies in cases where the necessary infrastructure, administrative arrangements, or operational settings required for implementation do not exist (for example, maritime-related measures in landlocked countries).	NA

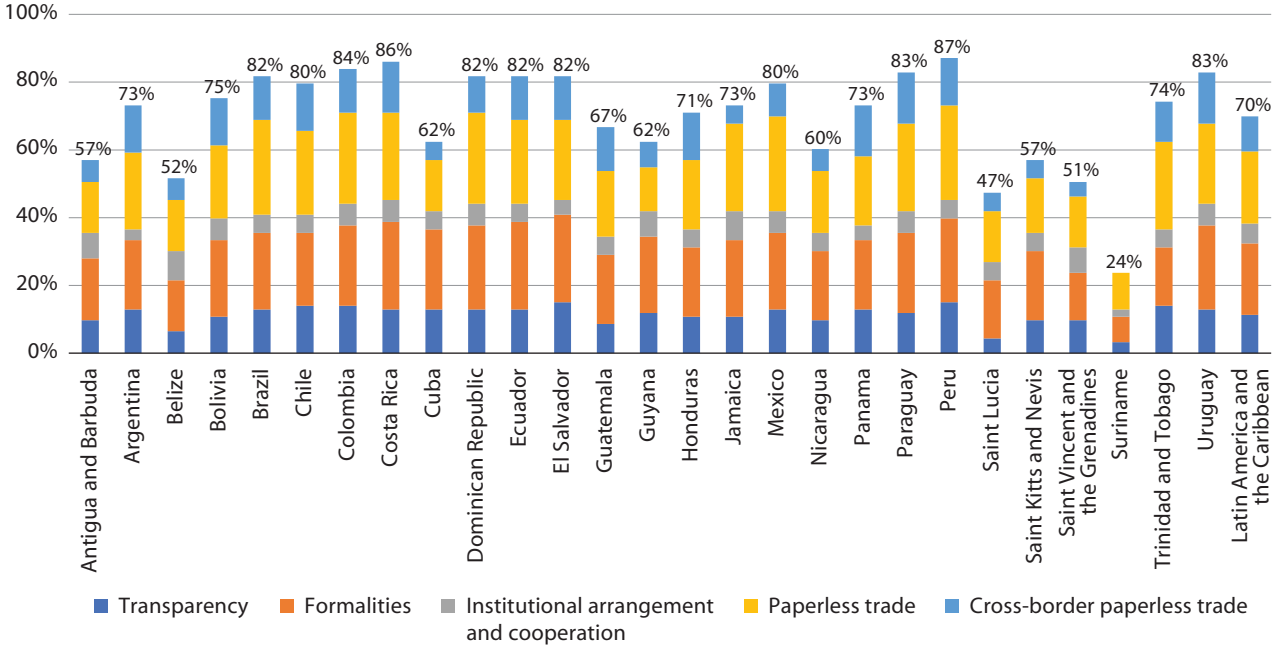
Annex 2. Trade facilitation implementation by countries in different groups (%)

Annex figure 1. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in Developed Economies



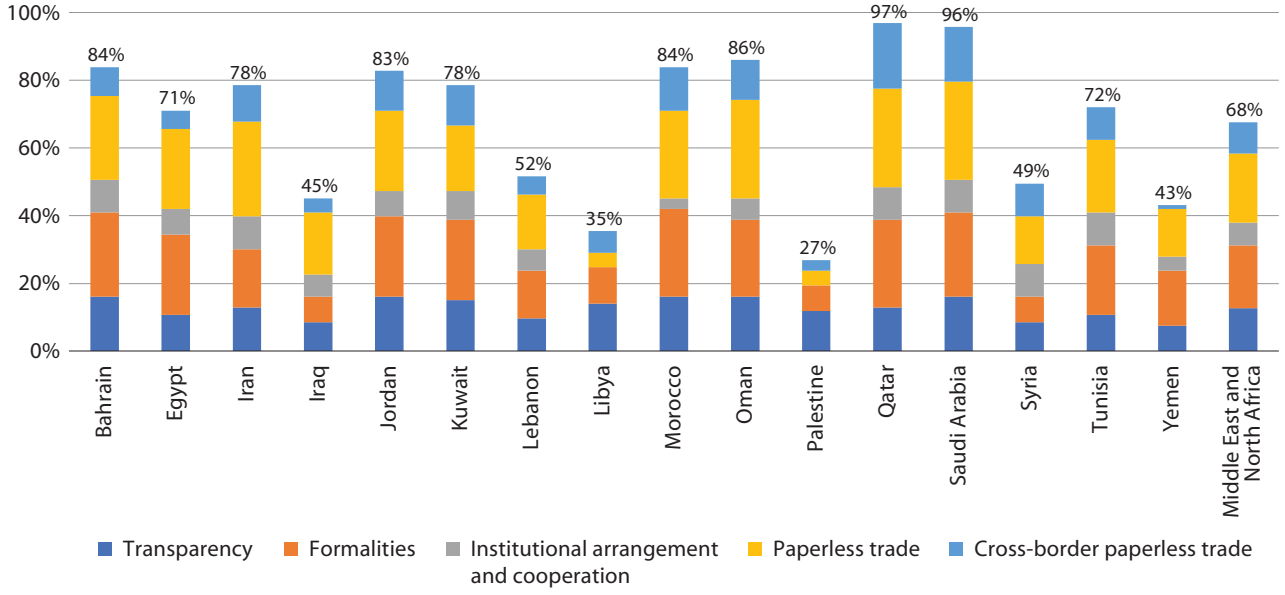
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

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



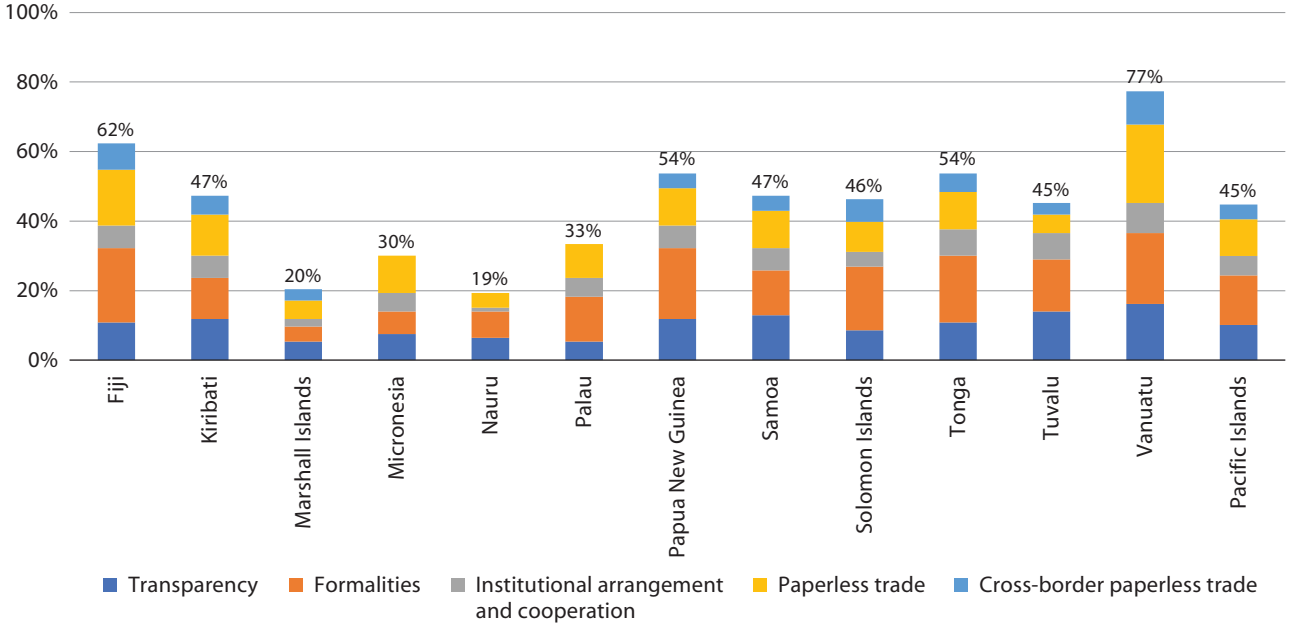
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

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



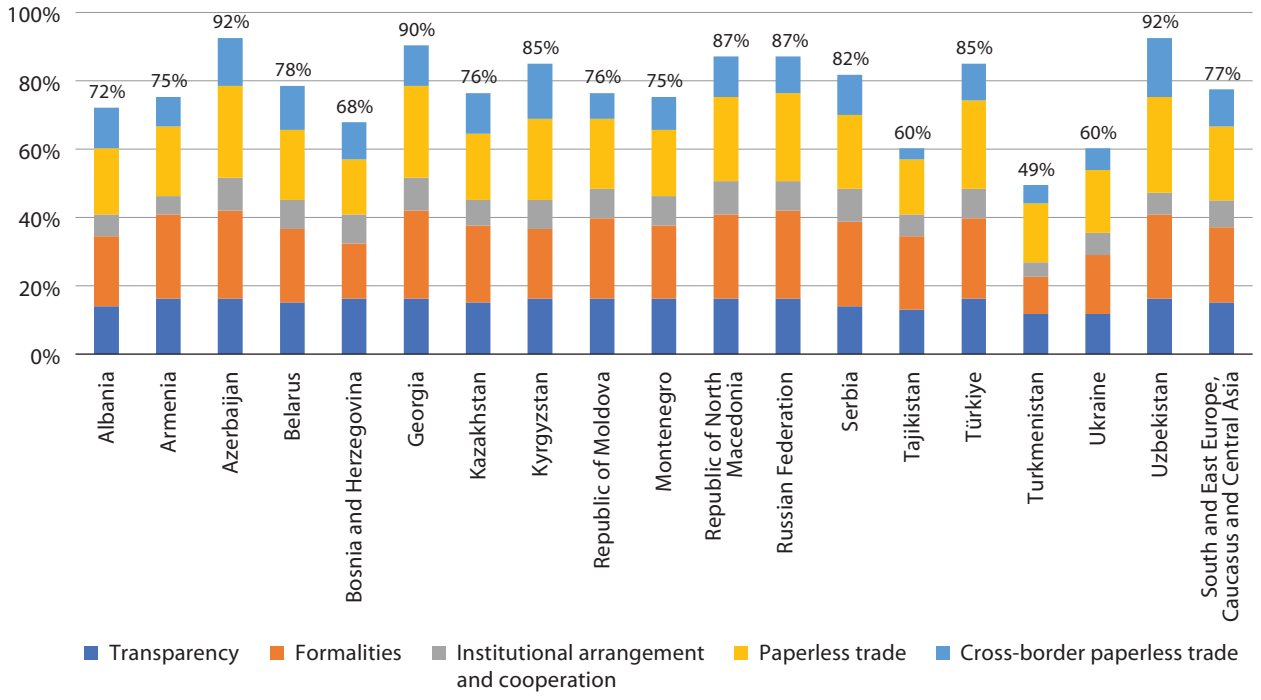
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

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



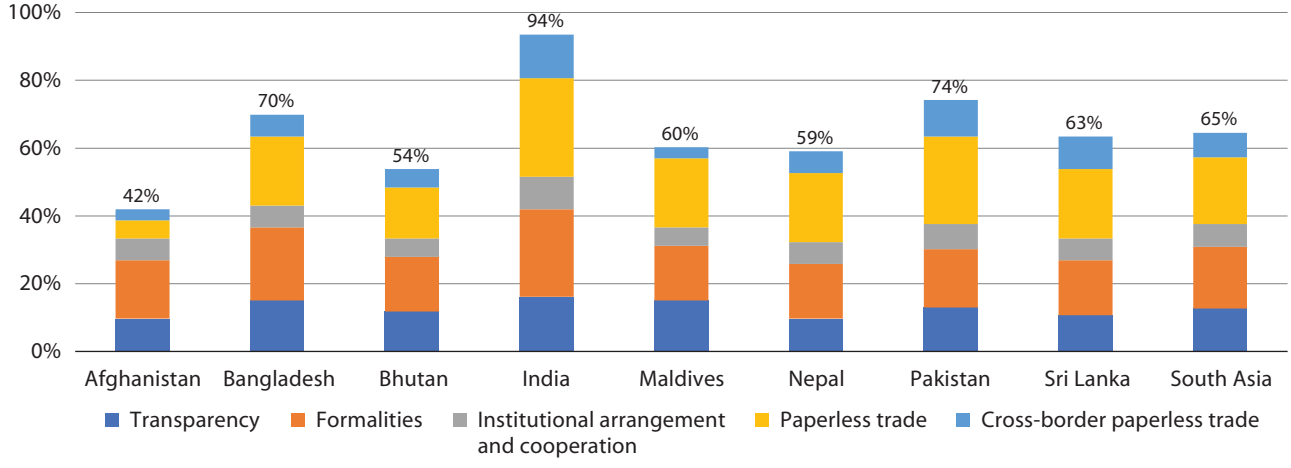
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

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



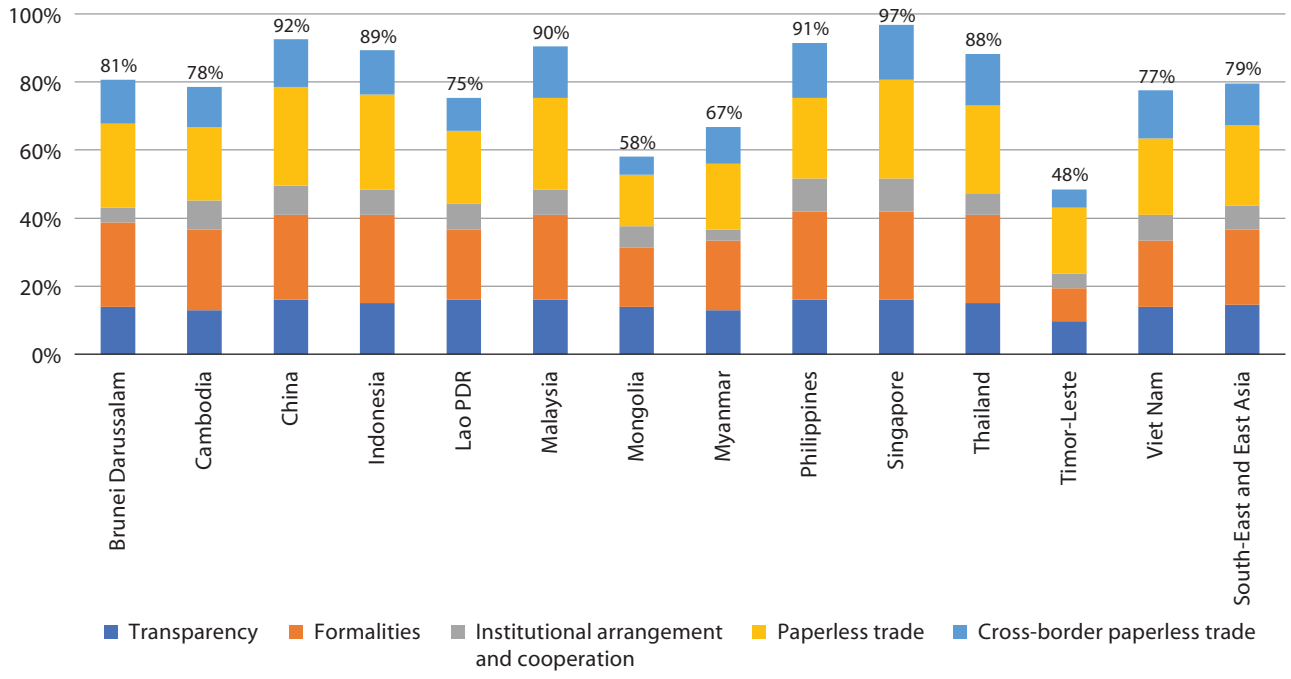
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

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



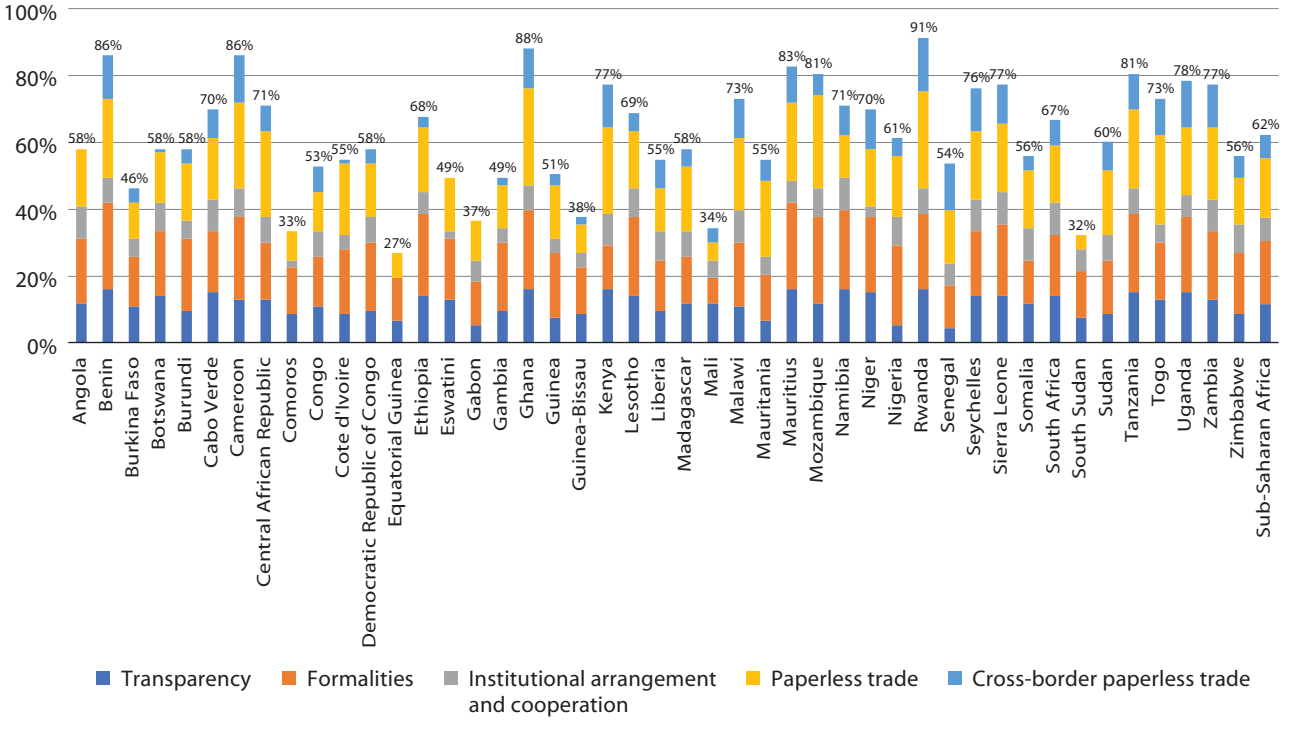
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.org.

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, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.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, 2025. Available at untfsurvey.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.[41]

Least developed countries (40): Afghanistan; Angola; Bangladesh; Benin; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cambodia; the Central African Republic; Comoros; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Ethiopia; Gambia; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Kiribati; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mozambique; Myanmar; Nepal; Niger; Rwanda; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Solomon Islands; Somalia; South Sudan; Sudan; United Republic of Tanzania; Timor-Leste; Togo; Tuvalu; Uganda; Yemen; and Zambia.

Landlocked developing countries (31): Afghanistan; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bhutan; Bolivia; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; the Central African Republic; Eswatini; Ethiopia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Lesotho; Malawi; Mali; Republic of Moldova; Mongolia; Nepal; Niger; Paraguay; the Republic of North Macedonia; Rwanda; South Sudan; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Uganda; Uzbekistan; Zambia; and Zimbabwe.

Small Island Developing States (31): Antigua and Barbuda; Belize; Cabo Verde; Comoros; Cuba; Dominican Republic; Fiji; Guinea-Bissau; Guyana; Jamaica; Kiribati; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Mauritius; Micronesia (Federated States of); Nauru; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Samoa; Seychelles; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Suriname; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Tuvalu; and Vanuatu.

[41] 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 the 144 countries that participated in the 2021, 2023 and 2025 Surveys (annex table 1). It was also checked whether the implementation rates of these 144 countries are a good representation of the entire dataset (174 countries). Annex table 1 shows that the difference is minor, indicating that these 144 countries were good representatives of the results of the 2025 Survey.

Annex Table 1. Breakdown of countries that participated in the 2021, 2023 and 2025 Surveys

Developed Economies (31)		Latin America and the Caribbean (21)		South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (17)		South-East and East Asia (13)	
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 People's Democratic Republic
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	Czech Republic	9	Dominican Republic	9	Moldova (Republic of)	9	Philippines
10	Estonia	10	Ecuador	10	Montenegro (Republic of)	10	Singapore
11	Finland	11	El Salvador	11	North Macedonia	11	Thailand
12	France	12	Guatemala	12	Russian Federation	12	Timor-Leste
13	Germany	13	Guyana	13	Serbia	13	Viet Nam
14	Greece	14	Mexico	14	Tajikistan		
15	Hungary	15	Panama	15	Turkey		
16	Ireland	16	Paraguay	16	Ukraine		
17	Italy	17	Peru	17	Uzbekistan		
18	Japan	18	Saint Kitts and Nevis				
19	Lithuania	19	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines				
20	Luxembourg	20	Trinidad and Tobago				
21	Malta	21	Uruguay				
22	Netherlands						
23	New Zealand						
24	Norway						
25	Poland						

Annex Table 1. *(continued)*

Developed Economies	
26	Portugal
27	Republic of Korea
28	Spain
29	Sweden
30	Switzerland
31	United Kingdom

Middle East and North Africa (11)	
1	Bahrain
2	Egypt
3	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
4	Iraq
5	Jordan
6	Lebanon
7	Morocco
8	Palestine (State of)
9	Saudi Arabia
10	Syrian Arab Republic
11	Tunisia

Pacific Islands (11)	
1	Fiji
2	Kiribati
3	Micronesia (Fedeated State of)
4	Nauru
5	Palau
6	Papua New Guinea
7	Samoa
8	Solomon Islands
9	Tonga
10	Tuvalu
11	Vanuatu

South Asia (8)	
1	Afghanistan
2	Bangladesh
3	Bhutan
4	India
5	Maldives
6	Nepal
7	Pakistan
8	Sri Lanka

Sub-Saharan Africa (32)	
1	Burkina Faso
2	Botswana
3	Burundi
4	Cabo Verde
5	Cameroon
6	Comoros
7	Congo
8	Cote d'Ivoire
9	Equatorial Guinea
10	Ethiopia
11	Gabon
12	Guinea
13	Guinea-Bissau
14	Kenya
15	Madagascar
16	Malawi
17	Mauritania
18	Mauritius
19	Mozambique
20	Namibia
21	Niger
22	Nigeria
23	Rwanda
24	Senegal
25	Sierra Leone
26	Somalia
27	South Sudan
28	Sudan
29	Tanzania
30	Togo
31	Zambia
32	Zimbabwe

