

The WTO and the World Bank, at a virtual event organised on 30 July, presented the a new released publication titled “ [Women and Trade: The role of trade in promoting gender equality](#) ”.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provoked a deep economic recession and women risk losing some really hard-won progress towards greater gender equality because of this crisis. In this scenario, gaining a better understanding of how women are affected by trade is essential to help policy makers to identify the potential opportunities that trade can provide for women and businesses and guide them in integrating such elements in their national trade policies and strategies in order to harness these opportunities. Recommendations include: lowering tariff and non-tariff barriers on goods produced and consumed largely by women, further opening trade in services, and helping women traders and small enterprises benefit from market opportunities through trade facilitation measures and greater availability of trade finance.

The publication explores the challenges and current barriers that women face in participating in world trade, as well as trends pointing to opportunities for the further empowerment of women, namely the rise in services, the expansion of global value chains and the growing digital economy. An analysis is made on how women benefit from trade in different ways to men in terms of wages, welfare gains and the quality and quantity of jobs available to them. Data are extracted from a dataset which provides labour data broken down by gender at the industry level for 72 countries and on a database on explicit gender-related provisions in regional trade agreements.

The report finds that firms engaged in international trade employ a higher percentage of women (33%), compared to non-exporting firms (24%). It also features findings on how trade increases wages, improves working conditions and is linked to higher levels of gender equality. The report highlights the need for complementary policies aimed at increasing opportunities for women in education, increasing access to finance, and enhancing information technology skills to maximize the gains from trade for women. In addition, collective efforts are required from governments, international organizations and the private sector to promote the role of trade in improving gender equality.

An analysis is also provided in the report of the occupational segregation that characterises the most competitive areas of business, where women are usually less represented than men. For instance, the study mentions the Kenyan tourism industry, a sector contributing more than 8 percent to the GDP of the country and almost exclusively male-dominated.

The webcast of the virtual launch event is available [here](#) .