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Trade Facilitation and Women's Participation in Trade

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Trade facilitation is not only about making trade faster and more efficient; it is also about making trade **more inclusive**, ensuring that women and men benefit equally from trade opportunities.

Why does gender matter in trade facilitation?

- Limited access to information on trade procedures and requirements.
- Greater exposure to informal payments, harassment, discretionary practices, and the confiscation of goods.
- Lower access to finance, networks, and digital tools.

The role of trade facilitation

- Simplifying procedures and documentation.
- Increase transparency and access to information. Expanding digital services and single windows.
- Reducing opportunities for face-to-face interactions and discretionary practices.



Incorporating a gender perspective into trade facilitation allows for the identification and reduction of barriers that differentially affect women, promoting a more equitable participation in international trade.

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Women in cross-border trade: Case study in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru



PROJECT OBJECTIVE
Advance the inclusion of women in cross-border trade through evidence-based recommendations for trade facilitation.

BORDER AREA
Huaquillas – Peru / Ecuador
Desaguadero – Peru / Bolivia

UN trade & development | UNCTAD

HM Revenue & Customs

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Fields Missions
Domestic consultant conducted two field missions:
Huaquillas - Aguas Verdes (Peru-Ecuador) - Visits to the CEBAF.
Desaguadero (Peru-Bolivia) – Visits to the CEBAF and also to the cities of La Paz, Kasani (Copacabana), and Kelluyo.

Focus Group
14 focus groups were conducted during the two field missions
8 in Desaguadero
6 in Huaquillas - Aguas Verdes

Surveys
352 surveys were completed
179 from Desaguadero (Aymara version of the survey was provided)
173 from Huaquillas - Aguas Verdes

Workshop
Workshop in Lima from May 26 to 29, 2025.
The main findings were analyzed, the recommendations were discussed, and action proposals were developed for approval by the National Trade Facilitation Committees.

Roadmap
The activities included in the roadmap was approved in December 2025 during the 4th session of the TFA TT.

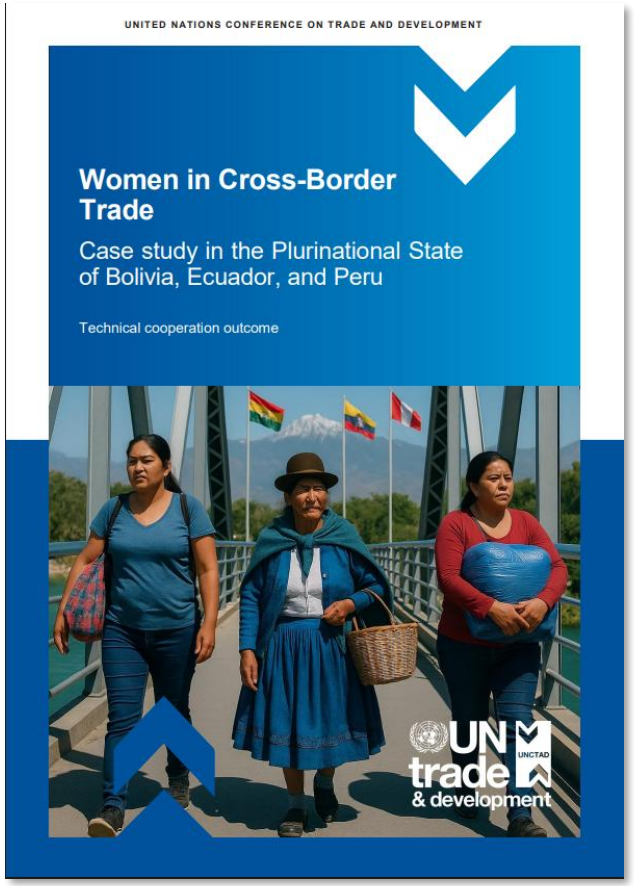
Project Activities

October 2024 to May 2025

UN trade & development (UNCTAD)

HM Revenue & Customs

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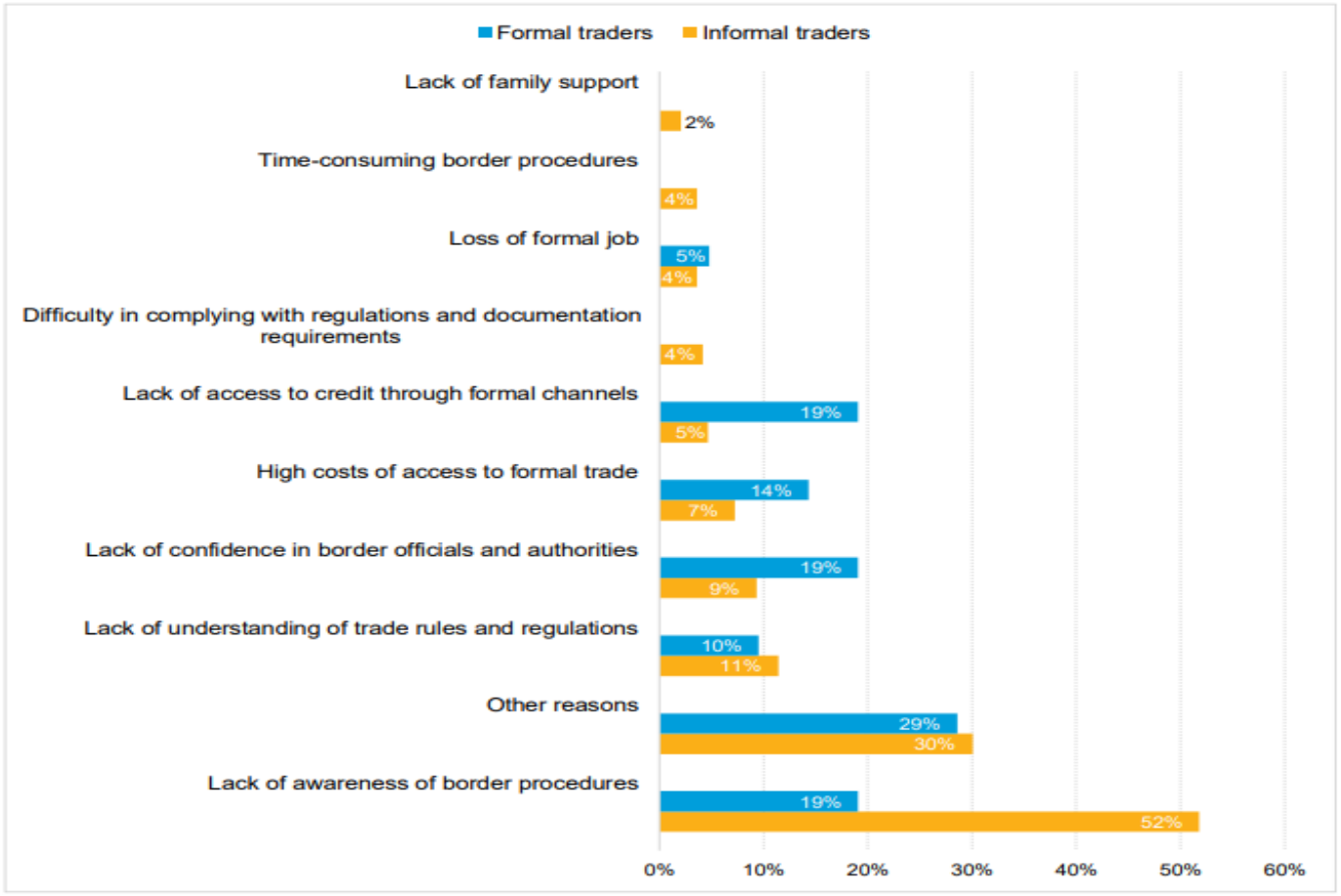
*Published: December 1, 2025

Barriers to women's economic participation in cross-border trade

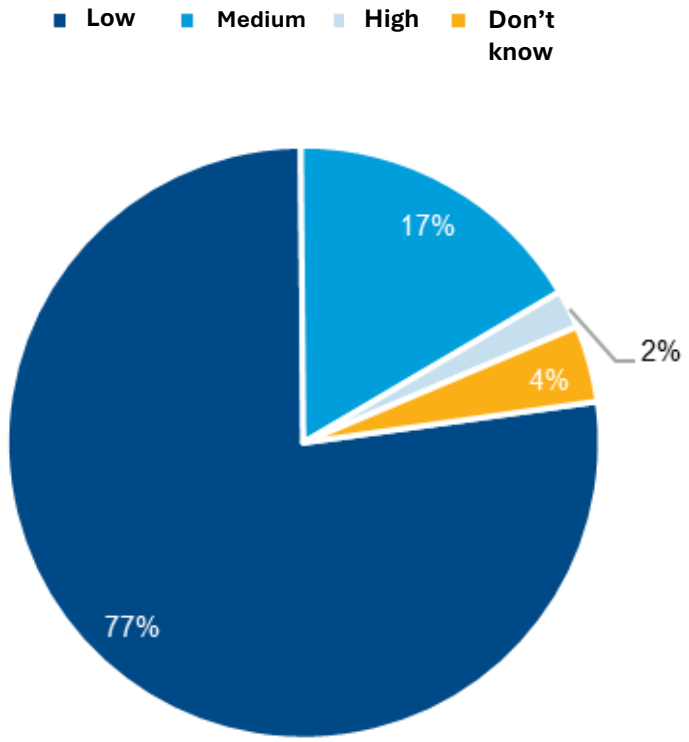
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Regulatory Barriers

Main reasons for choosing informal trade channels over formal ones



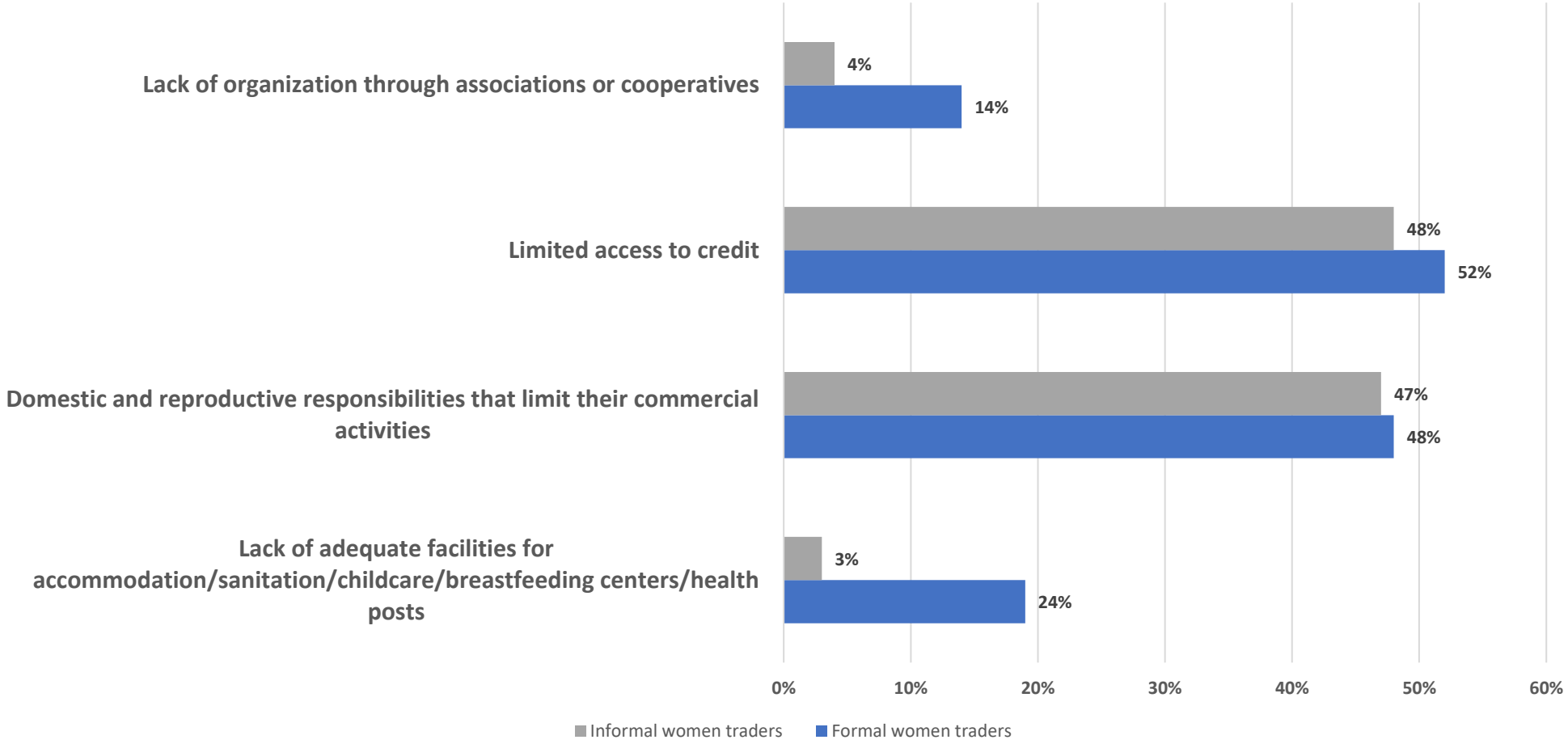
Level of knowledge about simplified trade regimes among women traders, according to officials



Barriers to women's economic participation in cross-border trade

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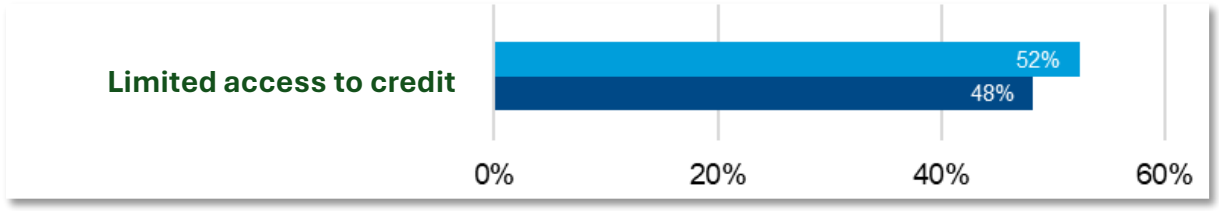
Financial Barriers



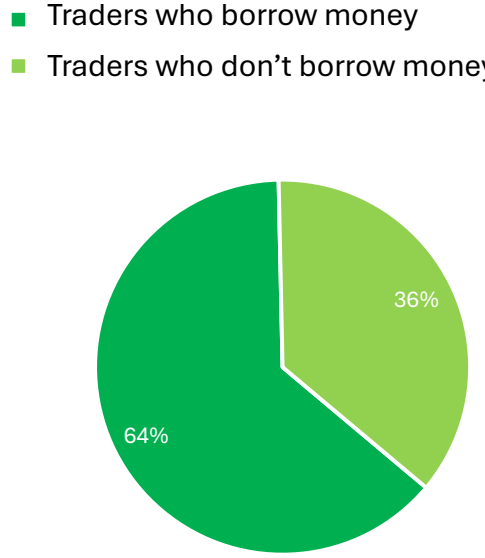
Barriers to women's economic participation in cross-border trade

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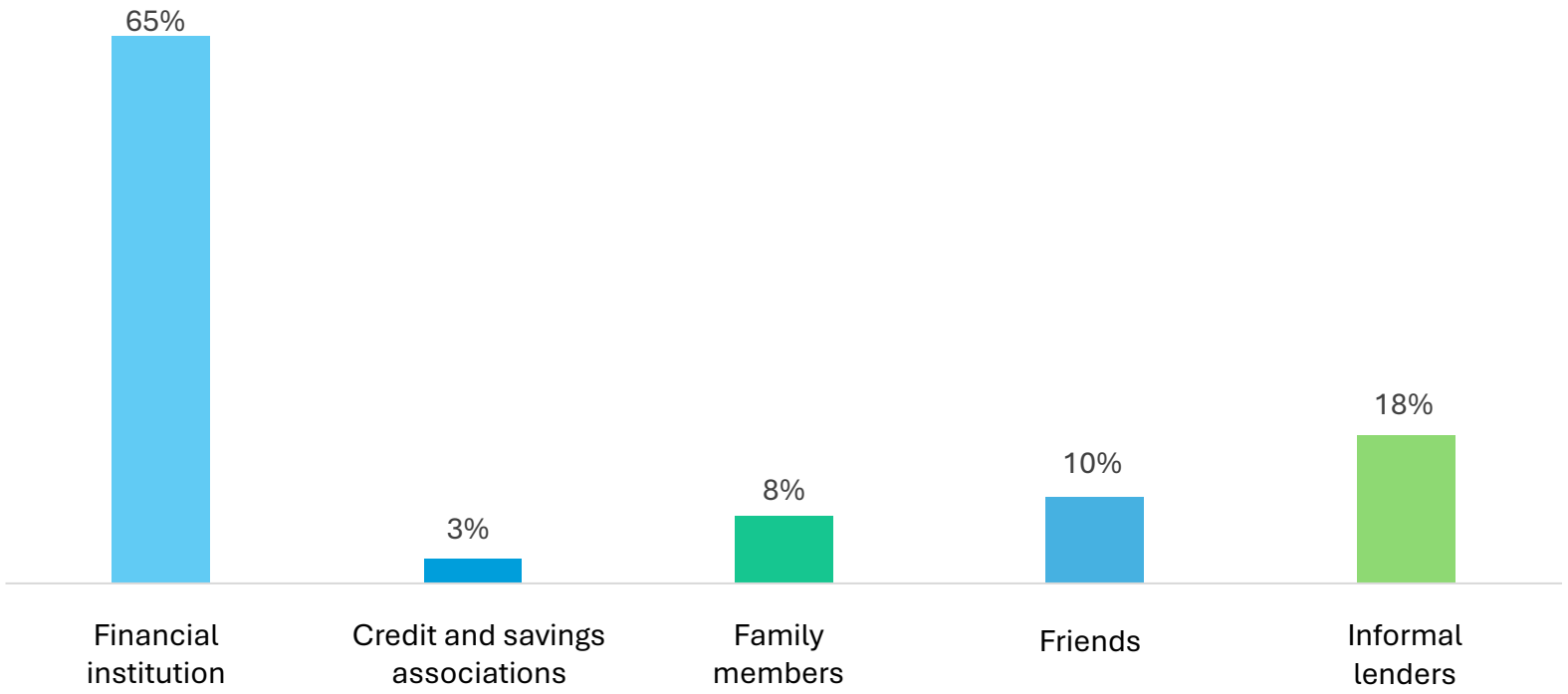
Financial Barriers



Borrowed money



Services

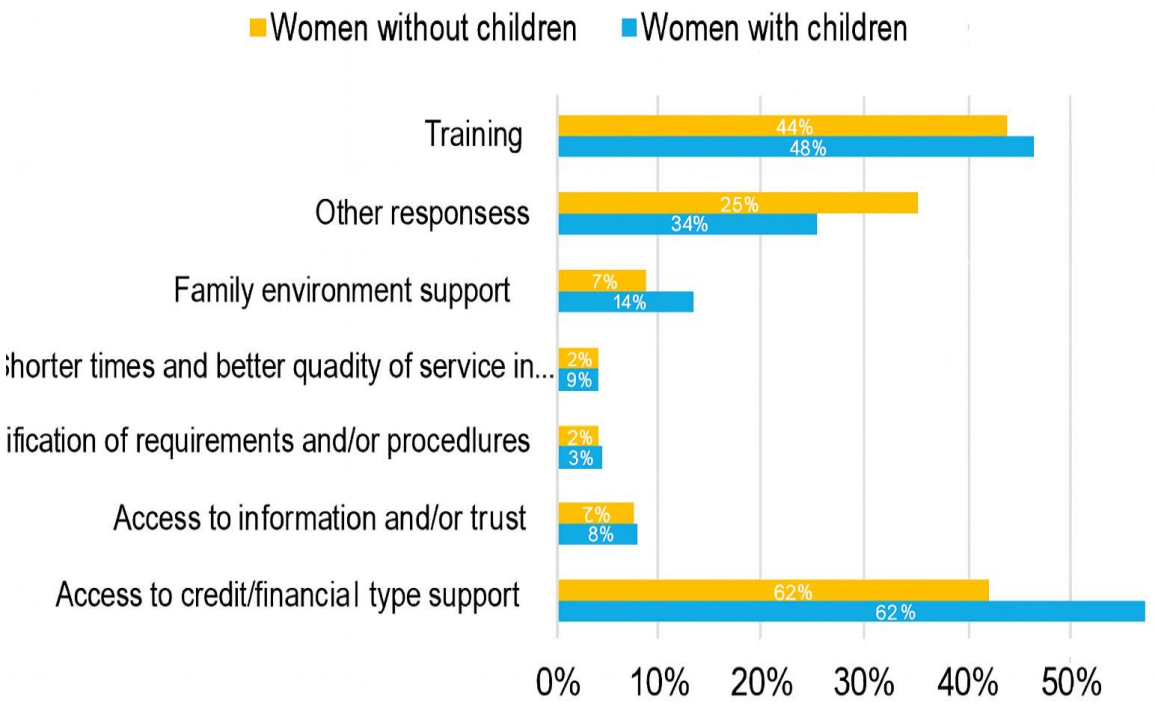


Barriers to women's economic participation in cross-border trade

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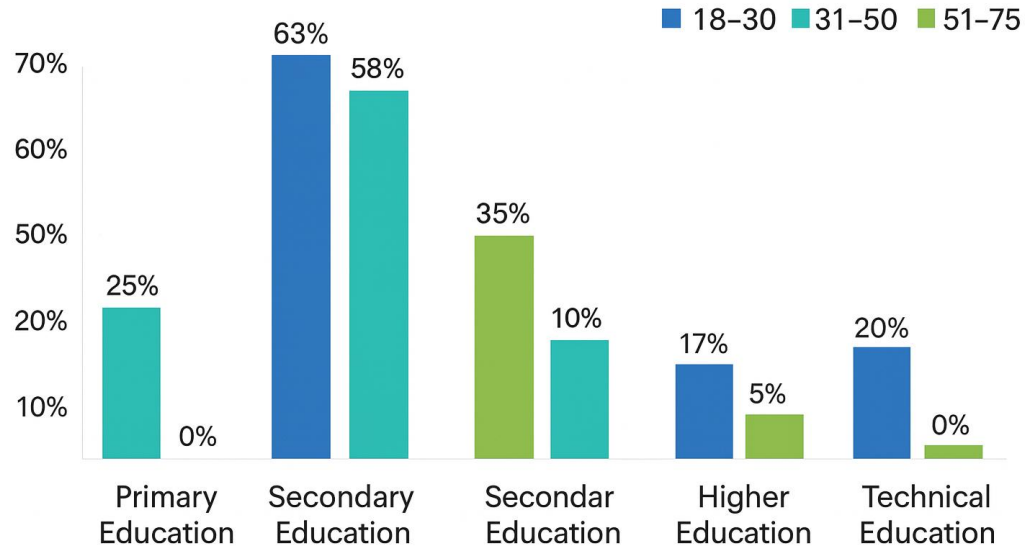
Institutional barriers

Needs of traders depending on whether they are mothers or not



Educational barriers

Highest level of education completed, by age

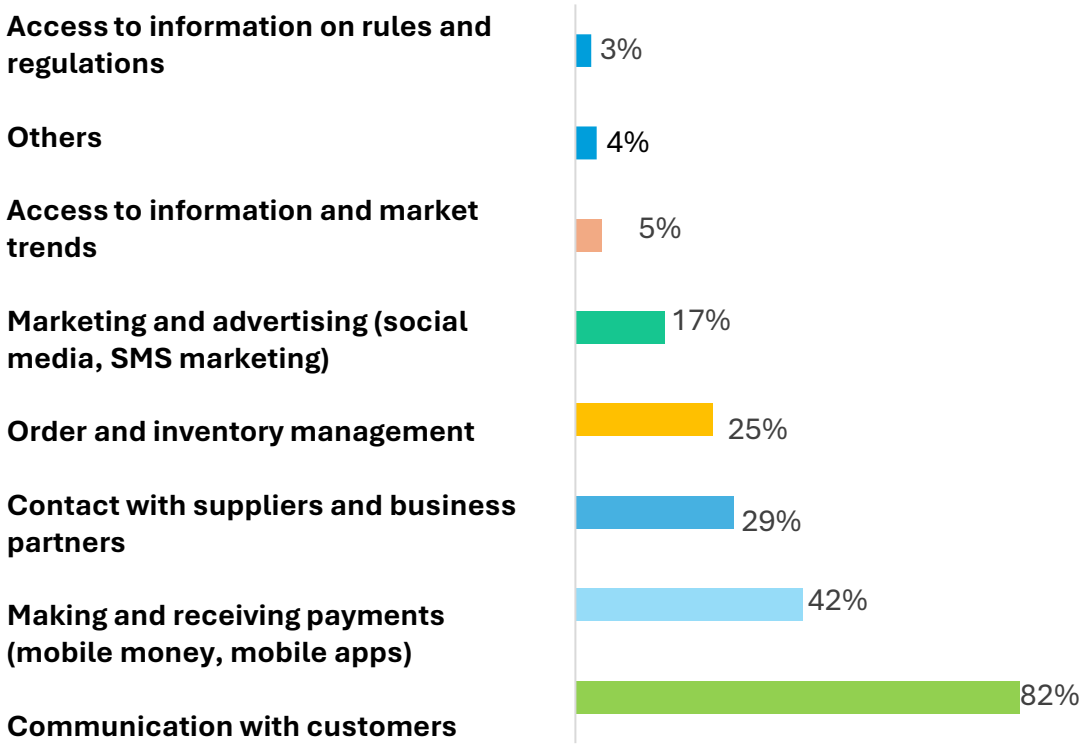


Barriers to women's economic participation in cross-border trade

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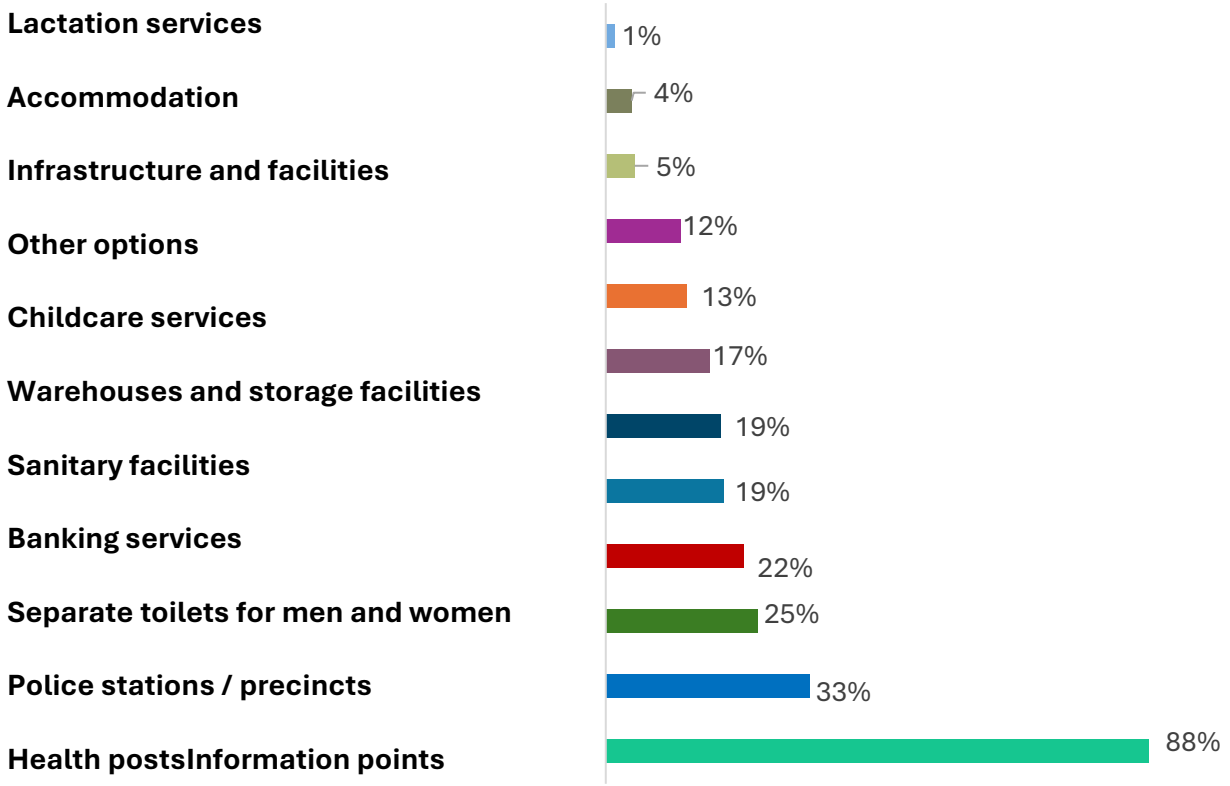
Digital barriers

Use of mobile phone



Inadequate infrastructure

Information points / health posts / police stations and precincts

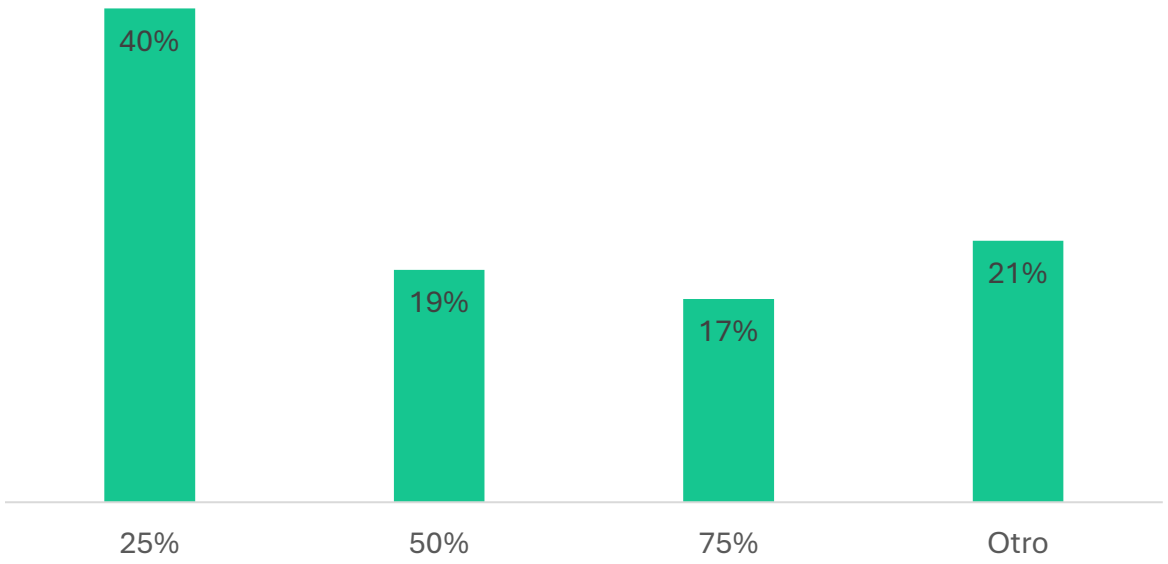


Challenges encountered by women officials

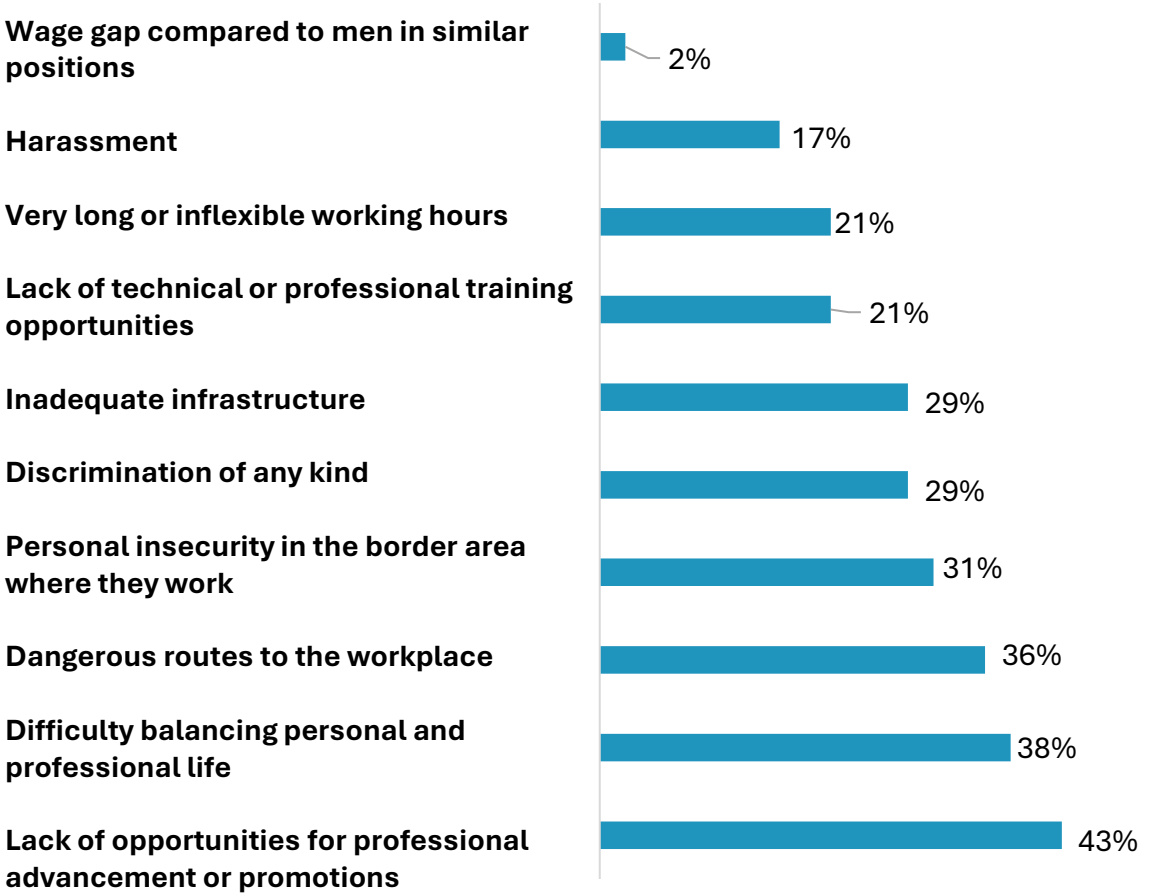
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Representation

Perception of the number of women in border agencies (female officials)



Gender-based discrimination



Recommendations

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Support for Formalization

- Develop simplified printed materials, as well as visual and audio resources, and disseminate them through in-person workshops on simplified trade regimes.
- Create a dedicated section on official websites, accompanied by a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document addressing common trade-related concerns.
- Establish physical information centers, helplines, and materials in local languages.
- Create dialogue spaces and consultation mechanisms for women traders.



Safe Environment for Women

- Training on discrimination and harassment.
- Improvement of border post infrastructure, including the establishment of lactation rooms, gender-separated sanitary facilities, well-maintained roads, and quality public lighting.
- Available and reliable services to assist traders in case of danger



Enhance Existing Assistance

- Conduct a mapping of government agency programs and identify gaps.
- Implement an evaluation system to ensure that services are of high quality and provide the greatest benefit to traders.
- Train border agents on available services to better guide traders.
- Increase the number of training opportunities and improve their dissemination



Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment Through Trade Policy and Trade Agreements

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PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Strengthen the integration of gender consideration into trade policy and trade agreements across APEC economies.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Survey of APEC economies to collect information on policies, data, initiatives and collaboration.
- Capacity-building workshop held in Lima, 19-20 August 2024.
- Exchange of experiences and best practices among APEC economies and international organizations.
- Discussion on gender provisions in trade agreements impact assessment and related initiatives.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Sex-disaggregated data and quality indicators are essential to identify barriers, assess impacts and inform policies.
- Gender provisions in trade agreements are expanding and can support women's economic empowerment.
- Inter-agency coordination, political commitment and adequate resources are critical for effective implementation.
- Trade facilitation, digitalization, acces to information, finance and capacity building are key enablers.



Roadmap

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Proposals for Supporting Women Traders



Hold an in-person seminar to share the results and recommendations of the study.

- Conducted an in-person dissemination seminar to present the study's findings and recommendations and promote awareness of initiatives addressing gender gaps in international trade.
- Held on 3 March 2026 at MINCETUR, the seminar brought together 97 participants from the public and private sectors, including women's trade associations.



In-person informational workshops in border areas, targeting traders

- Topics:
  - Simplified import regimes (Customs)
  - Use of digital tools to pay SUNAT taxes, duties, and customs fees (Customs)
  - Procedures to obtain sanitary permits issued by control authorities and requested through the VUCE portal (Mincetur – Sanitary control authorities)
- Disseminate the institutional websites where this information is available (Customs).



Collect questions and requests made by women traders through the Trade Facilitation Technical Working Groups organized by MINCETUR.

- These Technical Working Groups are held in different regions of the country, including border areas.
- An existing mechanism is used to gather the requests and inquiries submitted by women traders.

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