

# UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023: Key findings

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**ESCAP**  
Economic and Social Commission  
for Asia and the Pacific



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# UN Global Digital and Sustainable TF Survey

*Joint efforts by United Nations Regional Commissions (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA) and UNCTAD*

## Objectives:

- » Monitor progress on trade facilitation (TF), including paperless trade and forward-looking measures toward SDGs
- » Enable evidence-based policy-making, capacity building and tech assistance



**2012-14:** First regional (Asia-Pacific) surveys conducted



**2017:** 2<sup>nd</sup> global survey; presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Global Aft Review with new partners: ADB, Rep. of Korea



**2019:** 3<sup>rd</sup> global survey - Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. New partnership with ICC



**2023:** 5<sup>th</sup> global survey – UNCTAD became a full partner

**2015:** 1<sup>st</sup> global survey on trade facilitation implementation; presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Review of Aid for Trade in partnership with UNCTAD, ITC, OECD, and subregional orgs.

**2018:** Launch of interactive website:

[UNTFSURVEY.ORG](https://untfsurvey.org)

**2021:** 4<sup>th</sup> global survey, adding additional component on TF measures in time of crisis and epidemic



[UNTFSURVEY.ORG](https://untfsurvey.org)

# Survey Scope: WTO TFA+



60 trade facilitation (TF) measures in 163 countries

1  
**General:** WTO TFA-related measures

+  
2  
**Digital TF:** paperless trade & cross-border paperless trade

+  
3  
**Sustainable TF:** for SMEs, Agriculture, and Women

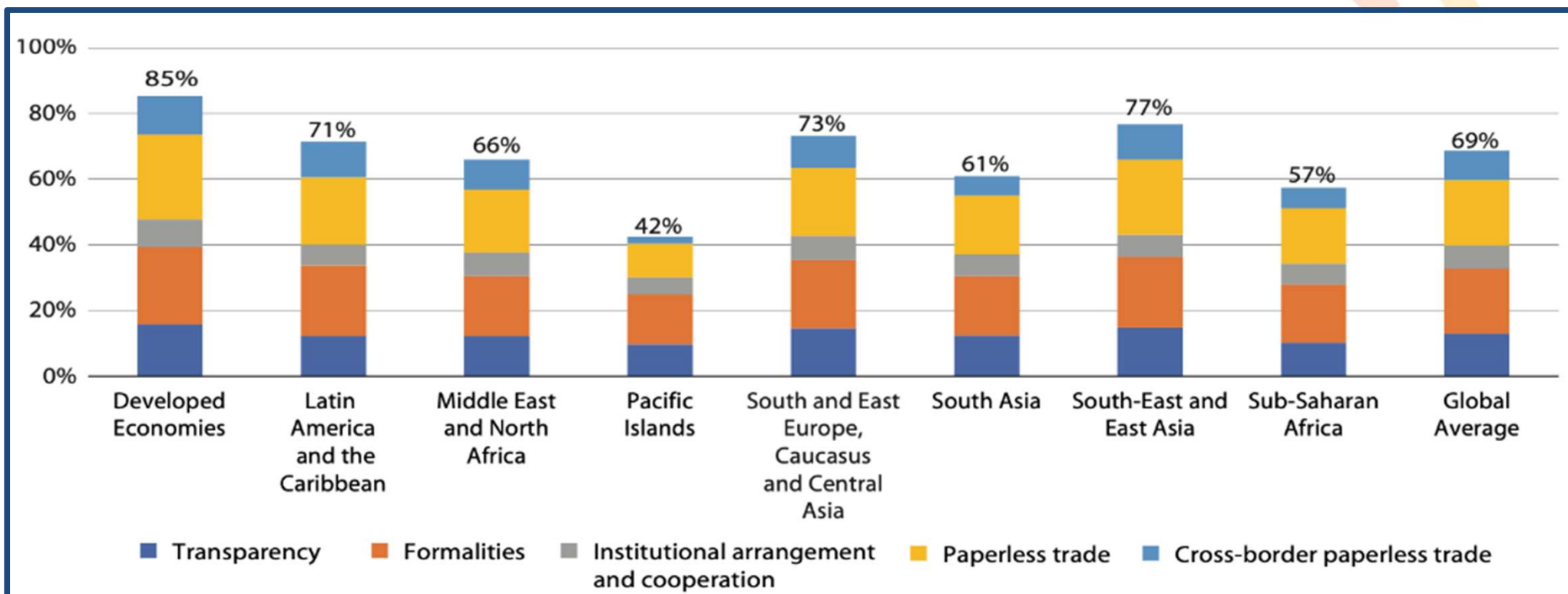
+  
4  
**Other TF:** trade finance, TF in times of crisis



# Implementation varies widely across countries and subregions

- » 2023 global average implementation rate at 69%
- » South-East and East Asia region leading developing regions

Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures around the world



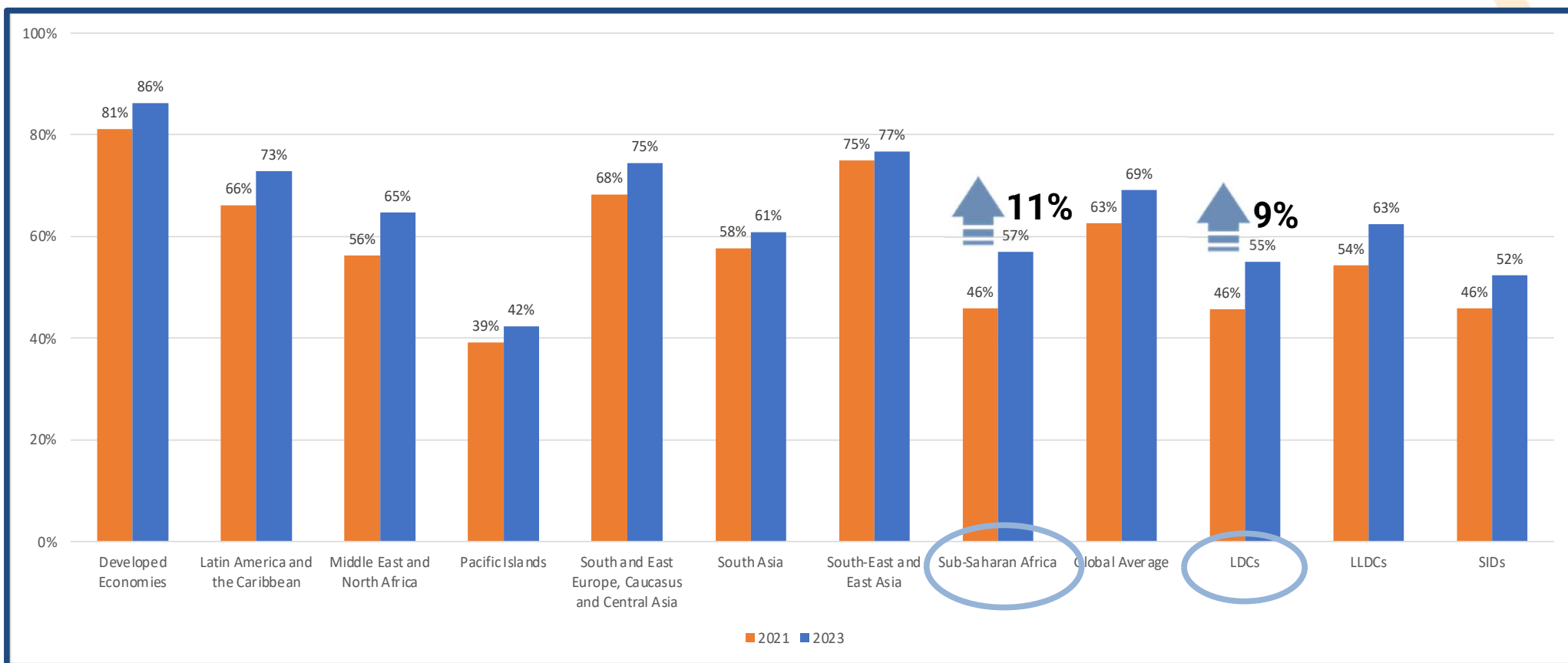
Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023



# Implementation improved in all subregions

- » Global average implementation: increased by 6 percentage points
- » Sub-Saharan Africa and LDCs catching up

Trade facilitation implementation rates by region between 2021 and 2023

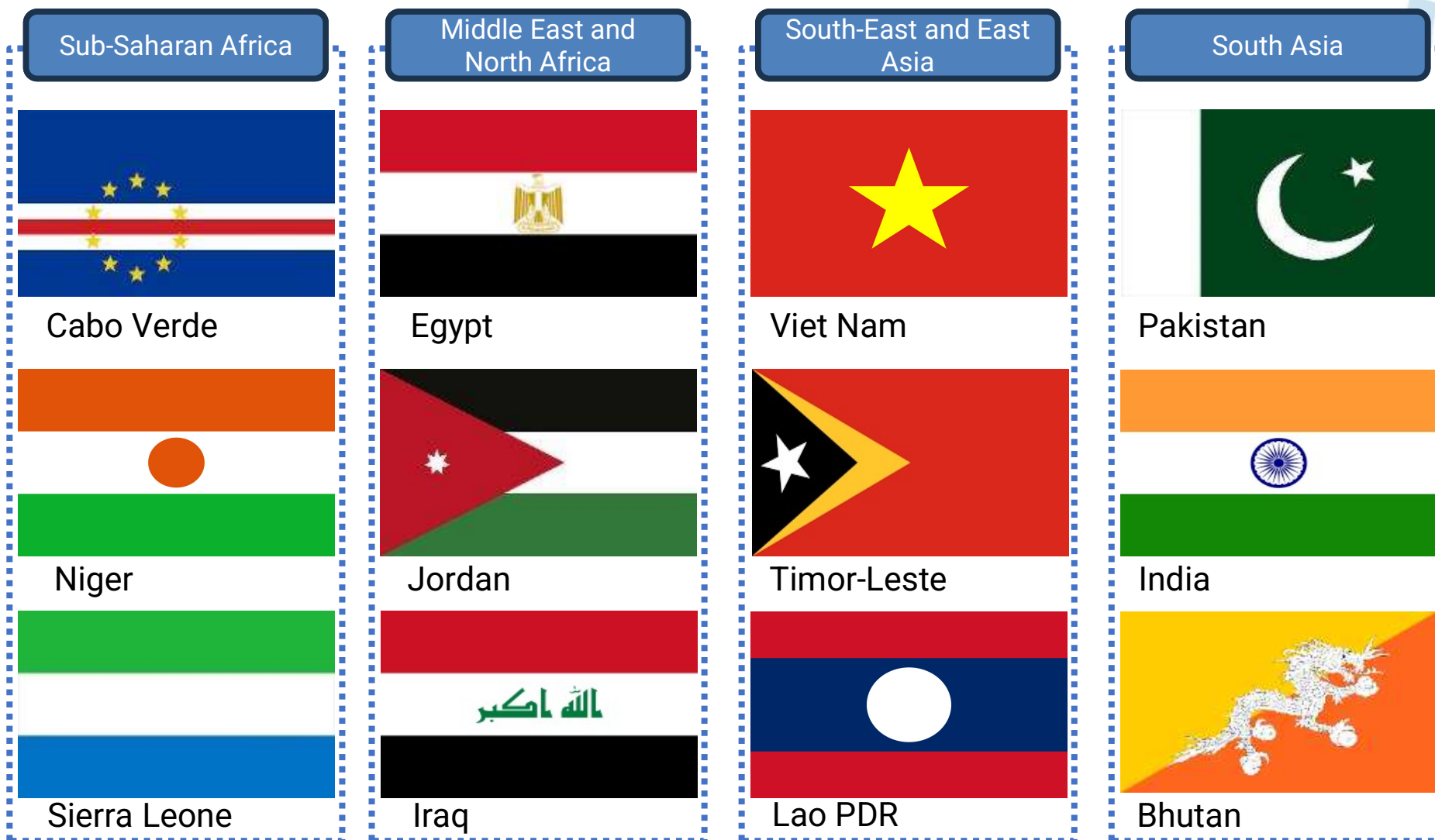


Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023



# Countries with the most progress

» SSA & MENA countries made significant progress



Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023

# Countries with the most progress (continued)



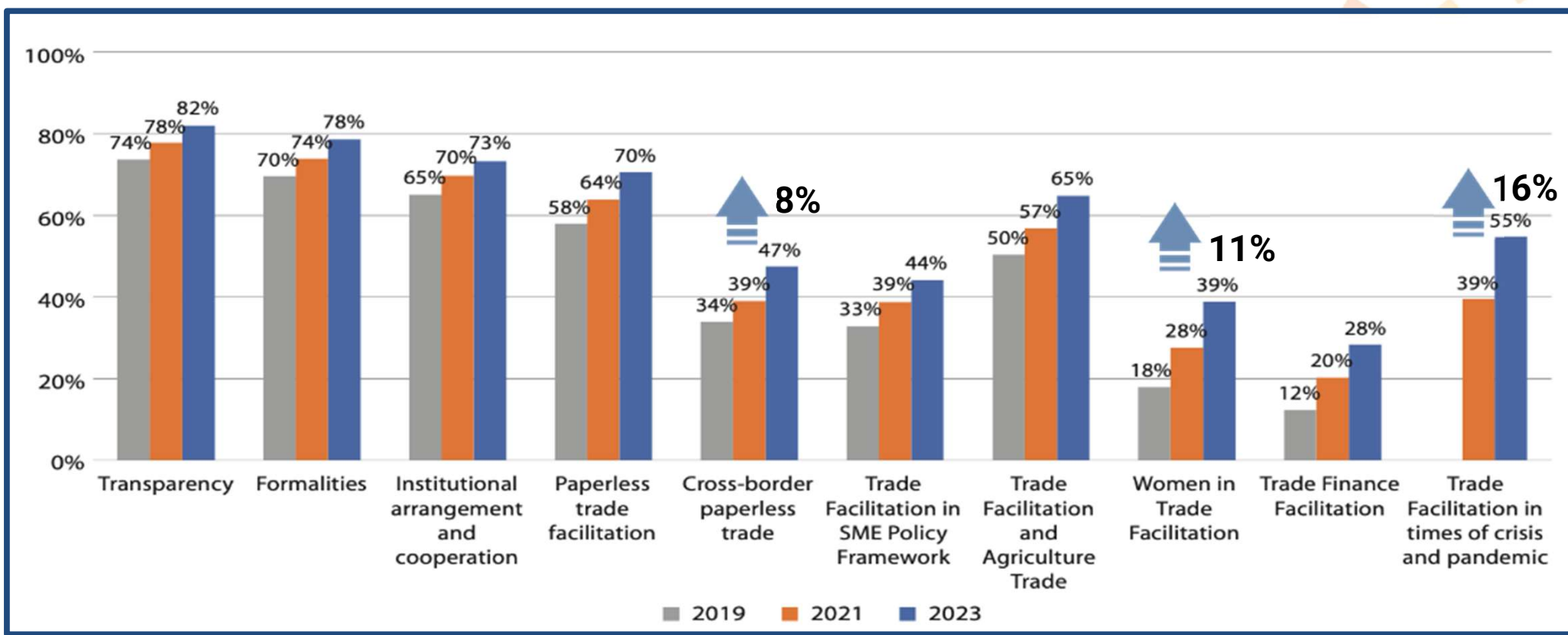
Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023



# Implementation varies across different sub-groups

- » WTO TFA related measures well implemented (>70%)
- » Cross-border paperless trade and sustainable TF measures implementation relatively low, despite good progress made

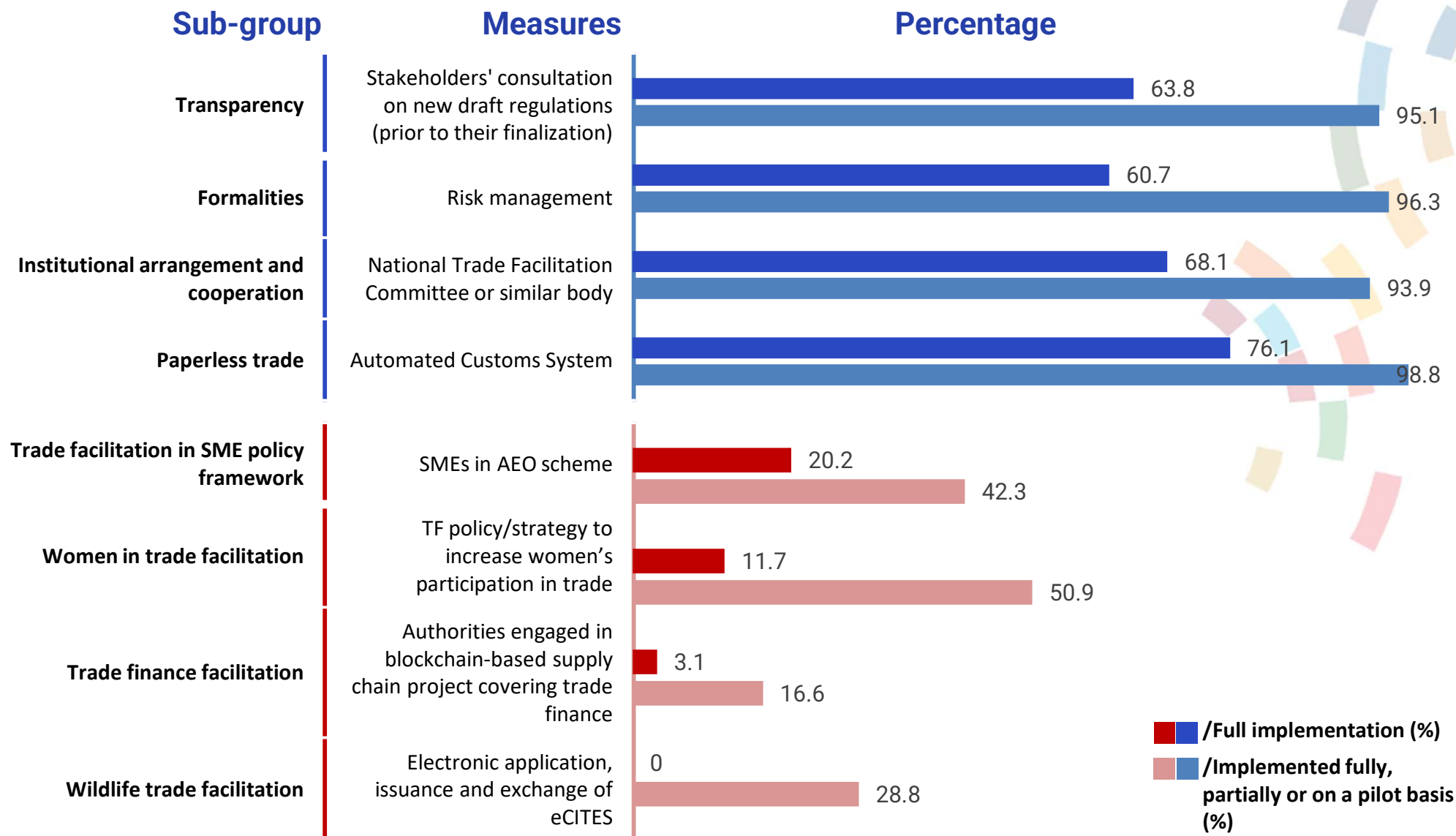
## Progress of global implementation of trade facilitation measures, 2019-2023



Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023



# Top 4 most and least implemented measures



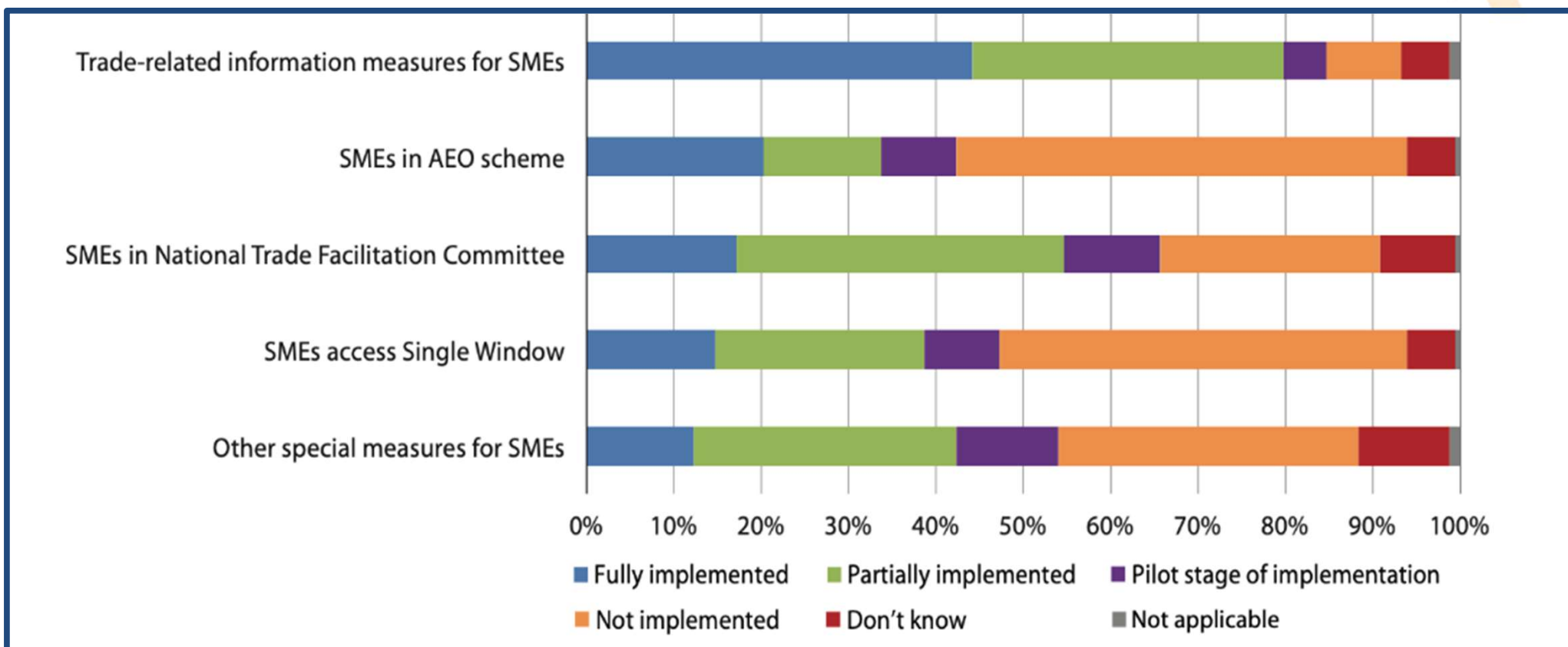
Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023



# Trade facilitation for SMEs

- » Limited implementation overall; Trade information portals more ubiquitous

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



\*Note: In this context, 'percentage' refers to the proportion of countries that have either partially or fully implemented these measures, or are currently in the pilot testing phase for their implementation.

Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023



# Good practices on trade facilitation for SMEs



## Iraq

**Strengthen SMEs' position in the market**

Empower SMEs in the agriculture and agri-food value chain

## Lao PDR

**Focus on SMEs in wood processing and coffee**  
sustainable growth, job creation, and reduced vulnerability

## Sri Lanka

**Enhance the competitiveness of SMEs**  
automating the issuance of CoO, introducing online payment solutions



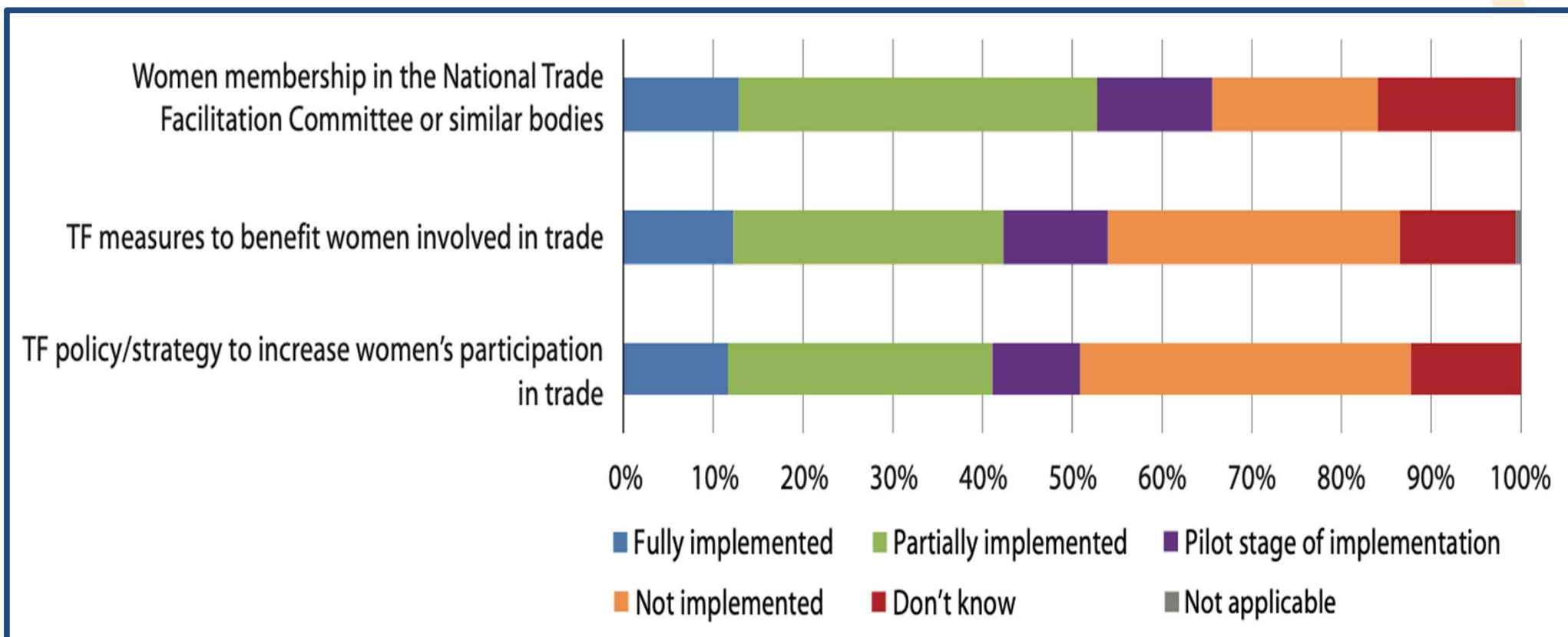
Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023

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# Women in Trade Facilitation

- » Measures that specifically support women in trade facilitation are relatively under-implemented

## State of implementation of women in trade facilitation globally



\*Note: In this context, 'percentage' refers to the proportion of countries that have either partially or fully implemented these measures, or are currently in the pilot testing phase for their implementation.

Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023



# Good practices in women in trade facilitation



## Ghana

**The Ghana Trade and Gender Subcommittee:**  
Established by Ghana NTFC  
Dedicated to integrating gender perspectives into trade policies

## New Zealand-United Kingdom

**NZ-UK FTA includes:**  
gender equality in the workplace  
promoting women's full and equal participation in trade activities

## South America

**The SheTrades South America Project:**  
advocacy efforts to promote policies and measures for a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs

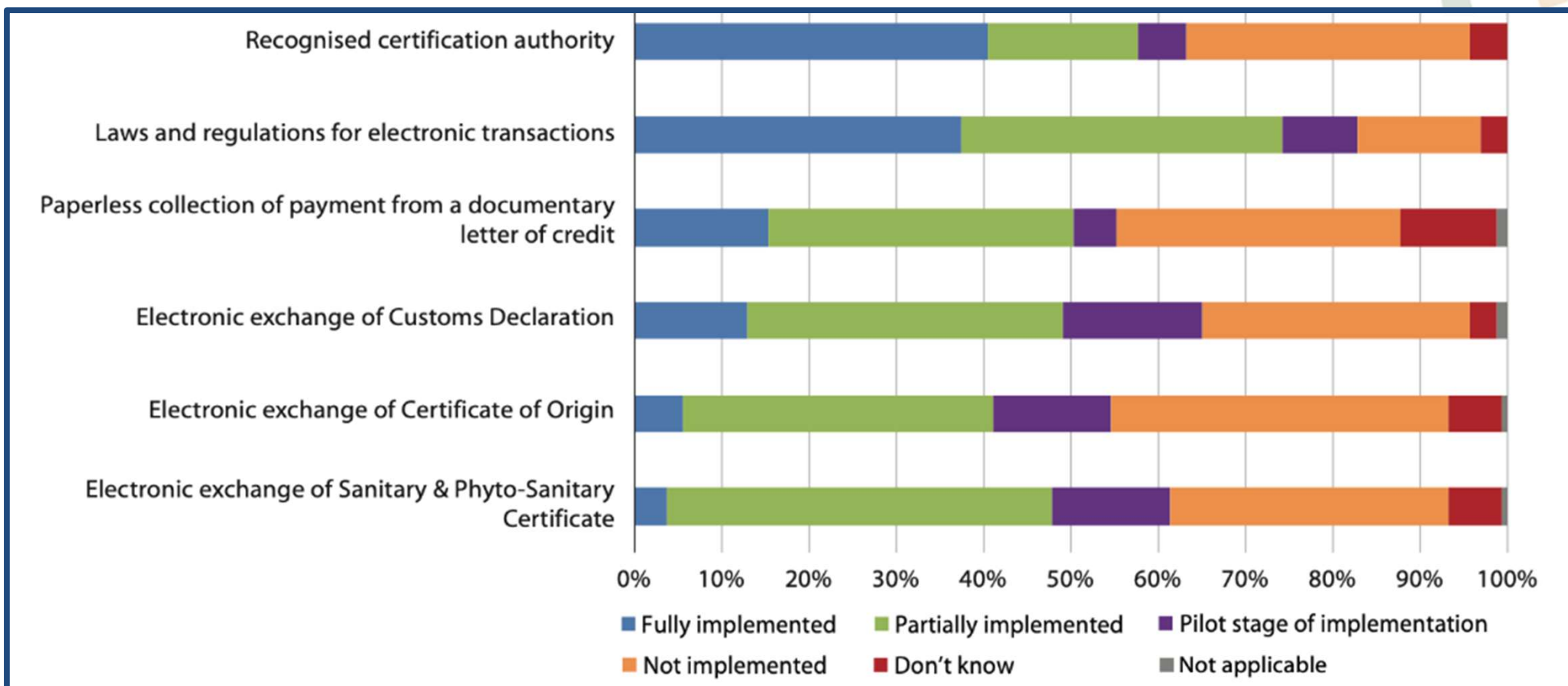


Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023

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# Implementation of cross-border paperless trade measures remains low

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



\*Note: In this context, 'percentage' refers to the proportion of countries that have either partially or fully implemented these measures, or are currently in the pilot testing phase for their implementation.

Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023



# Good practices in cross-border paperless trade



## Central Asia

National e-Commerce strategies and legislation, Virtual Border Line Management, Accession to the UN treaty on cross-border paperless trade facilitation

## FIATA

Transport Management System (TMS) and electronic Bills of Lading (eBL) solutions to reduce fraud risks by recording each document on an immutable ledger

## Oman

Bayan system: online Single Window/one-stop service streamlining administrative and logistical procedures

## SADC

e-CoO implementation with advanced security features

## Viet Nam

National plan including the integration of the National Single Window and ASEAN Single Window



Source: UN Global Survey Report on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2023

[UNTFSURVEY.ORG](https://untfsurvey.org)



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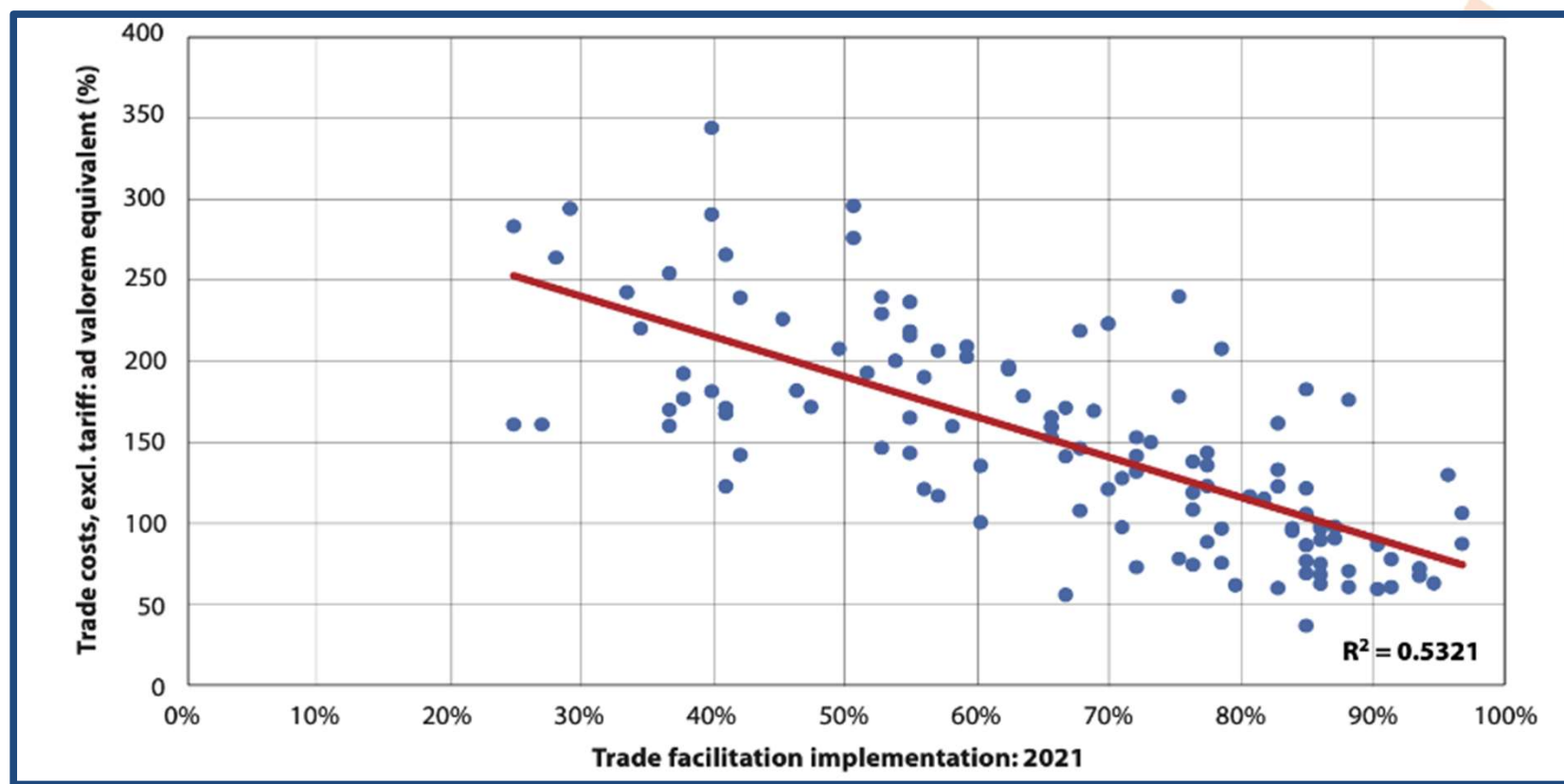
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# Trade facilitation implementation and trade costs

- » Strong correlations exist between the implementation of trade facilitation and levels of trade costs

## Trade facilitation implementation and trade costs



Source: UN Trade Facilitation Survey and ESCAP/World Bank Trade Cost.

# Significant room to cut trade costs through trade digitalization

» Digital trade facilitation can reduce trade costs by 14% globally

Simulation results for trade cost reduction as a result of the WTO TFA Implementation

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



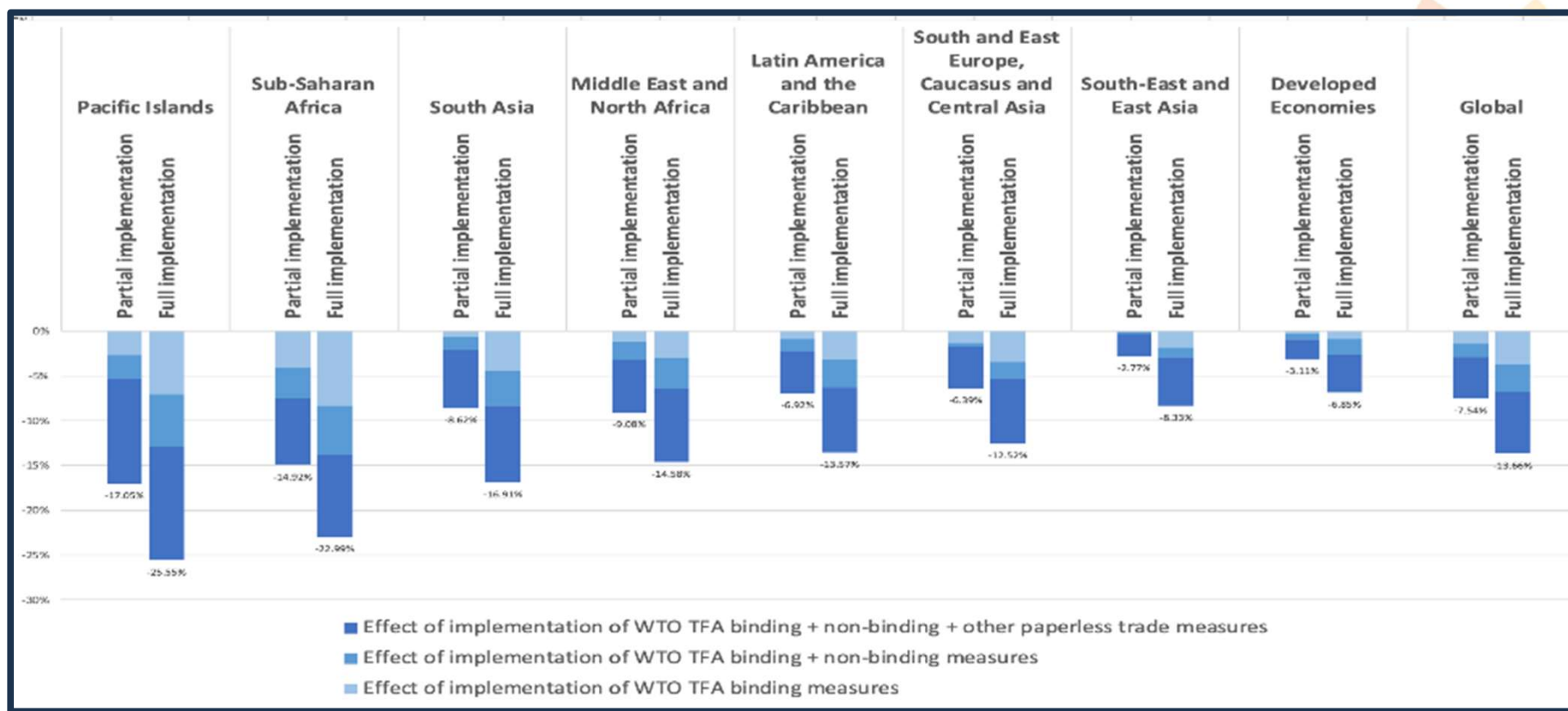
Source: ESCAP, based on data from [www.untfsurvey.org](http://www.untfsurvey.org) and ESCAP/World Bank Trade Cost database.

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# Impact of trade facilitation implementation on trade costs by region

» (cross-border) paperless trade leads to significant cost reductions in all regions/country groups

## Impact of trade facilitation implementation on trade costs globally



Source: ESCAP, based on data from [www.untfsurvey.org](http://www.untfsurvey.org) and ESCAP/World Bank Trade Cost database.

# Conclusion and way forward

## Digital TF

Good progress made in 2021-23; still a long way from full trade digitalization – and reaping the significant trade cost reduction potential

## Sustainable TF

Progress made but implementation still low; More efforts on TF for SMEs and women needed; Next frontier: Green trade facilitation



**Partnership is the key!**





Download the report:

<https://www.untfsurvey.org/report>



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