

Gendering Global Trade Governance through Canada-UK Trade Relations

About the project

Gender equality is emerging as a policy norm in global trade governance. Due to their role as gender champions and their commitment to using trade as a lever for gender equality, Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) are uniquely positioned to provide leadership on the global gender and trade agenda. In the current political context, this entails:

- formulating domestic trade policies that identify and mitigate the gender-differential impacts of international trade, and harnessing the potential of international trade to contribute to gender equality domestically and through the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals;
- developing best practices for the formulation, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of gender chapters/sections and gender non-discrimination provisions in free trade agreements (FTAs) that can serve as the new international legal standard on gender and trade;
- agenda-setting in international policy dialogue, developing indicators and reporting practices, and formulating, implementing, monitoring and enforcing gender clauses in multilateral trade agreements.

To enable evidence-based policy-making in these areas, the knowledge synthesis report summarizes the state of academic knowledge on the gender and trade nexus. It also identifies trends in gender and trade initiatives currently being undertaken across global economic governance through a combination of qualitative and quantitative social science research methods. These methods include a literature review, document analysis, descriptive statistics, and participant observation in June to November 2018.

Key findings

- Mainstream economics literature largely focuses on how trade affects men and women in terms of wages and labour force participation.
- Feminist economics widens the scope of analysis by including how trade affects women in their roles as unpaid labourers and on the interactions between trade and gender norms.
- Feminist international political economy approaches further consider how gender power relations operate globally, within national borders and households, and how these power relations both affect and are affected by trade policies. This approach reveals the complex and multifaceted ways that trade is gendered, and to what effect.
- There is a need for additional scholarship on concrete trade negotiations, agreements and gender impact assessment tools across political economy.
- We develop an original dataset composed of gender and trade initiatives since 1991, which were coded along several variables. We identified 77 gender and trade initiatives and coded them along 32 dimensions, revealing important points of convergence and gaps in coverage.
- The literature review and analysis of trade initiatives both point to the need to develop and deploy gender-based impact assessments of trade agreements. We offer an overview of frameworks proposed by private consultancy firms, civil society groups, academic experts, and trade-focused organizations, and outline a number of issues that should be considered by governments wishing to develop impact assessments.
- We suggest additional action in the areas of implementation, monitoring, enforcement, knowledge exchange, and more. ■

Policy implications

- **Gender-Based Impact Assessments:** Canada and the UK can set the gold standard for gender-based impact assessment. They can do so through assessing the wider context in which trade agreements are negotiated, the technical capacity of trading partners to engage in gender impact assessment, and the application of gender impact assessment to entire free trade agreements. Gender impact assessments should be sensitive to intersectionality and consider men and women in their multiple roles as workers, consumers, agricultural producers, providers of unpaid care work, and users of services.
- **Gender-Based Implementation, Monitoring and Enforcement of Trade Rules:** Invite independent third parties to conduct robust ex post (after the fact) assessments of the gender impacts of trade agreements at regular intervals. The assessment should take into account the productive economy (the production of goods) as well as household-based work, social reproductive work (such as the raising of children) and leisure activities, and monitor the entire agreement/policy to identify unforeseen, adverse gender impacts.
- **Knowledge Exchange and Transfer:** Engage and share knowledge with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of trade policies. Stakeholders can include business, organized labour, civil society actors (including women's organizations), academics, and representatives from related policy areas (including social service providers). Share knowledge with the international organizations and businesses involved in sponsoring gender and trade initiatives globally.
- **Driving Progressive Social Change Globally:** Exercise effective leadership in international public policy-making.
 - Encourage trade partners and international organizations to take a global view, and to

expand gender and trade initiatives beyond a select number of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Women in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and women in advanced economies need to be included.

- Focus on mitigating the adverse impacts of trade liberalization, particularly on the informal economy, social reproduction, care work or unpaid labour. Greater attention should also be paid to the feminization of labour, gender wage gaps, the quality of employment, and the precariousness of entrepreneurship, particularly, but not only, in the global south. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Read the full report](#)

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