



Asia-Pacific  
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**Advancing** Free Trade  
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# **Advancing Gender Equality in APEC Customs Administrations Final Report**

**APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures**

April 2023





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APEC Project: SCCP 01 2022

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## List of Acronyms

ACCUs	Air Cargo Control Units
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
CCP-WPDP	Container Control Programme: Women's Professional Development Programme
NZCU	New Zealand Customs Service
OCOSEC	Oceania Customs Organisation Secretariat
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCUs	Port Control Units
PO	Project Officer
SMEs	Small – Medium Sized organisations
SCCP	Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures
WCO	World Customs Organisation
WCO GEOAT	WCO Gender Equality Organisation Assessment Tool
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Executive Summary

Globally, the case for gender equality and women's empowerment has been well made regionally and recognised by Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in *The La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth* in 2019.

The Roadmap, which was endorsed in 2019, seeks to provide guidance and catalyse policy actions to drive greater inclusive economic development and participation of women in the Asia Pacific region. In order to identify and address the systemic barriers that limit the economic empowerment of women of all backgrounds and maximize their economic potential, the Roadmap encouraged the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of sex-disaggregated data. The Roadmap emphasised that everyone has a role to play to promote inclusive growth and contribute to efforts to achieve gender equality.

As such, Customs administrations across the APEC economies play an important role in economic activity and development and can make an important contribution to APEC's goals for gender equality and women's empowerment as presented in the La Serena Roadmap.

APEC's Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) has acknowledged the importance of promoting inclusion and fostering capacity building in the international trading environment as a priority in its current strategic plan. At the 'Gender and Customs' panel discussion held at the Second SCCP Plenary Meeting in August 2021, experts and the SCCP Chair emphasised the need for the SCCP to pursue work on closing gender gaps.

Measurement will be key to achieving gender equality in APEC customs administrations. At present there is no standard set of metrics across APEC customs administrations to understand the current state of gender mainstreaming and to measure progress. Data gaps, especially the dearth of sex-disaggregated data, need to be addressed to allow effective and well-targeted policy interventions.

To address this, a set of metrics to measure gender mainstreaming in APEC customs administrations was proposed by an APEC Funded project led by New Zealand titled 'Gender Mainstreaming in Customs Administrations: A Metrics-based Foundation'. Within the scope of this project, APEC Customs administrations were invited to complete a survey that contained the metrics in December 2022 and January 2023.

The survey results were presented to and discussed by Customs administrations delegates attending the APEC SCCP Workshop on *Advancing Gender Equality in APEC Customs Administrations*, held in Palm Springs 16-17 February 2023 in the margins of the First APEC Senior Officials Meetings (SOM1).

Even though the survey results show customs administrations are male dominated, much work is currently happening to advance gender equality and gender mainstreaming. This collective effort can be further enhanced through implementing the recommendations of participants at the Palm Springs workshop.

The workshop, one of the outputs of the SCCP 01 2022 Project, brought together APEC delegates, experts in the field, and representatives from the private sector, WCO, OCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Workshop participants heard perspectives from experts in the field and learned about different measures implemented by

SCCP members to advance gender equality and diversity in their customs administration. On the second day of the workshop, participants discussed the survey results, and came up with several recommendations.

The recommendations of the Workshop are that:

- Customs administrations continue and expand their gender data collection
- Regular APEC wide surveys on gender mainstreaming are undertaken, overseen by a sub-committee, with opportunities for economies to come together to discuss the results
- The SCCP, in consultation with economies, develop an action plan for gender equality in APEC customs administrations
- The SCCP seeks to champion gender equality across APEC.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the 18 APEC economies that contributed to the survey data and the representatives from customs administrations who participated in the APEC SCCP Workshop on Advancing Gender Equality in APEC Customs Administrations, in Palm Springs, 16-17 February 2023.

We also thank the co-sponsors of this project: Australia, Chile, Peru, The Philippines, United States of America and Thailand, for their kind support and collaboration.

We would also like to acknowledge the input from Johanna Törnström from the World Customs Organization, Carlos Kuriyama from the APEC Policy Support Unit, Denisse Hurtado from the APEC Secretariat, Michelle Bond from the Australia Border Force, and Scott Rennie and the New Zealand Customs Service People and Capability team for their kind assistance and support.

## Introduction

Globally, the case for gender equality and women's empowerment has been well made, so much so that it is an integral part of the United Nation's *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Achieving gender equality will ensure development is stronger and more sustainable<sup>1</sup>.

Recognising the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, APEC launched *The La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth* in 2019; a strategy that builds on decades of previous work and focuses on inclusive economic development and economic participation of women in the Asia-Pacific region<sup>2</sup>.

Gender mainstreaming is the approach to achieving this, as mandated by the United Nations system. Gender mainstreaming aims to achieve gender equality by ensuring women's, as well as men's, concerns and experiences are central to decision-making and implementation of any policy and programme.

Measuring progress is critical to ensuring progress in gender mainstreaming as what is measured and reported on is more likely to be prioritised. Accurate data disaggregated by gender can help improve planning and programming and reveal barriers to achieving success. Data collection processes can also help to stimulate change by raising awareness of issues<sup>3</sup>.

Global organisations have created gender indicators and dashboards to measure and drive progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has created its *Indicators for Gender Equality and Empowerment*<sup>4</sup>; the United Nations has created a *Gender Equality Scorecard*<sup>5</sup>, and APEC created its *Women and Economy Dashboard*<sup>6</sup>.

The importance of measurement is firmly embedded APEC's drive for gender equality. The La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth is clear that "to identify and address the systemic barriers that limit the economic empowerment of women of all backgrounds and maximize their economic potential, we encourage the collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of sex-disaggregated data".

Customs administrations across the APEC economies play an important role in economic activity and development and, as such, can make an important contribution to APEC's goals for gender equality and women's empowerment as presented in the La Serena Roadmap.

APEC's Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) has acknowledged the importance of promoting inclusion and fostering capacity building in the international trading environment as a priority in its current strategic plan. At the 'Gender and Customs' panel discussion held at the Second SCCP Plenary Meeting in August 2021, experts and the SCCP Chair emphasised the need for the SCCP to pursue work on closing gender gaps.

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<sup>1</sup> [UNSDG | Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)

<sup>2</sup> [APEC | The La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth \(2019-2030\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [OECD | Indicators for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – An Introduction](#)

<sup>4</sup> [OECD | Indicators for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – An Introduction](#)

<sup>5</sup> [UNSDG | UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard](#)

<sup>6</sup> [APEC | The APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard 2021](#)

To ensure progress, customs administrations are encouraged to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach where women's, as well as men's views are represented in their decision-making and delivery of customs services.

Measurement will be key to achieving gender equality in APEC customs administrations. At present there is no standard set of metrics across APEC customs administrations to understand the current state of gender mainstreaming and to measure progress. Data gaps, especially the dearth of sex-disaggregated data, need to be addressed to allow effective and well-targeted policy interventions.

To address this, a set of metrics to measure gender mainstreaming in APEC customs administrations was developed by an APEC Funded project led by New Zealand titled 'Gender Mainstreaming in Customs Administrations: A Metrics-based Foundation'. APEC Customs administrations were invited to complete a survey that contained these metrics in December 2022 and January 2023.

The objective of this data collection was to understand the current state of gender mainstreaming in APEC customs administrations. Such data will provide an evidence base for gender-related work in APEC's Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) and provide a baseline to monitor progress on gender equality across APEC economies.

The survey results were presented to and discussed by Customs administrations delegates attending the APEC SCCP Workshop on Advancing Gender Equality in APEC Customs Administrations", held in Palm Springs 16-17 February 2023 in the margins of the First APEC Senior Officials Meetings (SOM1). A summary of the discussion and resulting recommendations to the SCCP and APEC are included in this report.

This report is structured in four sections:

- I. A review of relevant literature about improving gender equality in customs administrations;
- II. Details of the development of the metrics and research methodology;
- III. The survey results; and
- IV. Summary of discussions and recommendations.

## Literature Review

There is limited research or data on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in customs administrations; what has been located is reviewed in this section.

### The case for gender equality in customs work

Women make up around half of the Asia-Pacific population. Without the full participation of women in the economy, a large part of society is underutilized and unrepresented. Women's active participation in all levels of economic activities—including decision-making, leadership, and governance—will accelerate economic growth and development.

The APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard provides a snapshot of 95 indicators, classified in five areas previously identified as priorities by the APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE): 1) access to capital and assets; 2) access to markets; 3) skills, capacity-building, and health; 4) leadership, voice, and agency; and 5) innovation and technology.

The Dashboard includes credible, up-to-date metrics aligning with the PPWE priorities, so policymakers can have a clear picture of gaps and opportunities. The Dashboard supports gender integration across APEC, and its findings have been helpful to provide a snapshot of the progress of women's participation in economic-related activities and women's inclusion in several aspects of life.

Customs administrations have a unique role in ensuring the full participation of women in the economy. Women traders make a significant contribution to local economies but often face significant barriers to starting and growing their businesses. They often lack access to capital, influence, have responsibilities for the care of children and elderly, and face barriers to distribution networks and trade information<sup>7</sup>.

When they trade across borders, USAID research found they face male-dominated environments where they hold little power relative to male customs and border officials. They are often hindered by customs officers who lack sufficient knowledge of rules and procedures and face harassment<sup>8</sup>.

Women traders can be forced to operate in vulnerable and unsafe conditions, with increase costs and barriers. Small scale women traders are particularly marginalised, hampered, or unrecognised. Some border infrastructures do not meet the safety or physical needs of women<sup>9</sup>.

UN Women concluded, from its analysis of border management and gender, that if border institutions integrate a gender perspective and advance gender equality, they are more likely to ensure that the law is applied fairly to everyone crossing a boarder and will less likely discriminate based on the grounds of sex or gender identity. This means hiring a

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<sup>7</sup> [USAID | Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality in Trade Facilitation: The Role of Customs and Border Services](#)

<sup>8</sup> [USAID | Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality in Trade Facilitation: The Role of Customs and Border Services](#)

<sup>9</sup> [USAID | Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality in Trade Facilitation: The Role of Customs and Border Services](#)

representative, diverse workforce that can respond appropriately to the needs of people crossing borders and the local communities that inhabit border areas<sup>10</sup>.

The Oceania Customs Organisations Secretariat (OCOSEC) held a Gender Equality in Customs Administrations in the Pacific workshop in 2019 where barriers to women trading were discussed including lack of understanding or easy access to information, cumbersome customs procedures, and inconsistencies in the application of tariffs and regulation<sup>11</sup>.

Research has also shown that promoting gender equality and diversity in customs administrations reduced incidents and the impact of bribery and corruption. Women are generally less tolerant of corruption and are less likely to accept bribes. Women in leadership positions have been found instead to focus on improving the quality-of-service delivery. There is, however, some debate about these findings given that few women are currently in the networks or roles where bribery and corruption exist<sup>12</sup>.

Research also shows that more diverse customs workforces perform better. Ndonga et al (2021) references studies that show women in leadership positions in customs administrations in Africa were more productive than their male colleagues and served longer. Overall, women employees received better performance appraisals than their male colleagues<sup>13</sup>.

Customs administrations are more likely to support the needs and experiences of women traders if their institutional architectures are designed to address and advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Bribery and corruption may also be reduced, and productivity increased.

### **Gender equality in customs administrations**

The World Customs Organisation (WCO)'s Virtual Working Group on Gender Equality and Diversity completed a global survey of customs administrations in 2022. They found that customs administrations are still male dominated, with women averaging around 38 percent of the workforce worldwide. The number of women is even lower in senior and middle management positions with an average of 28 percent in senior management positions and 34 percent in middle management positions.

They found that while 46 percent of customs administrations reported they had a specific action plan or strategy in place to promote gender equality and diversity, 26 percent did not. Fourteen percent of customs administrations had plans that were under development and the remaining administrations (14 percent) included gender equality and diversity measures within other strategies.

The WCO included survey questions about specific measures that can enable gender equality. Providing opportunities for work-life balance and flexible work is one of these. Fifty-three percent of customs administrations said they offer flexible working hours. Thirty-nine percent said that working remotely was possibly for their employees. Nine percent said that they

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<sup>10</sup> [OSCE | Border Management and Gender](#)

<sup>11</sup> [OCO | OCO Raises Awareness on Gender Equality in Customs Administrations in the Pacific](#)

<sup>12</sup> [WCJ | Integration of Gender Practices and Promotion of Diversity in Customs and Trade: The Case of East and Southern Africa](#)

<sup>13</sup> [WCJ | Integration of Gender Practices and Promotion of Diversity in Customs and Trade: The Case of East and Southern Africa](#)

provide childcare services close to the administration. Forty seven percent, however, said they do not provide any workplace flexibility or that it is under consideration.

Ensuring women are safe at work is critical to ensuring gender equality. The WCO survey found 47 percent of customs administrations have a code of conduct in place and/or a harassment prevention plan that addressed harassment and gender-based violence. Twenty-eight percent have a 24-hour complaint line for customers and the public to report incidents of harassment and/or gender-based violence. Twenty-three percent have staff trained to respond to harassment complaints. Seventeen percent, however, have no measures.

The WCO survey also asked if customs administrations had measures to promote leadership and career development for women and other under-represented groups. Customs administrations in Europe and the Asia Pacific region were most likely to do so, with few opportunities provided by customs administrations in the Middle East and Africa.

Similar results were found regarding the provision of training on gender equality and diversity for customs administration staff. While 32 percent of European customs administrations and 18 percent of Asian Pacific ones did, little training was provided by administrations in the Middle East and Africa.

Focusing on the Asia Pacific region, a group of researchers completed a survey in 2021. They found the average percentage of women customs officers in South-East Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific is 7.4 percent. Almost all director and chief levels were occupied by men with women representing only between two and 12.5 percent of management positions in Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Most women promoted only reach deputy levels<sup>14</sup>.

There is however some progress. Women's engagement in officer ranks in Fiji Customs has grown significantly from 4.3 percent in 1995 to 21.6 percent in 2020, however men still hold the highest ranks.

Some barriers to gender equality were identified in this research. Seventy-two percent of respondents identified social expectations (such as women taking care of the household and children) as the main obstacle to women's advancement in customs administrations. Over 60 percent of women surveyed thought that unconscious biases meant that they were looked over for promotion and ignored in meetings. They thought that male leadership were more valued and respected than female ones. Lack of confidence was also seen as a barrier. Over 50 percent of respondents believe women underestimate their capabilities and experience. Lack of safety and harassment was similarly identified as a barrier. Over 62 percent of respondents identified night shifts and isolated officers as barriers<sup>15</sup>.

**Increasing gender equality in customs administrations** To progress gender equality in customs administrations, the WCO has developed tools to advance gender equality and diversity in customs, such as the WCO Gender Equality Organisational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)<sup>16</sup>. They have also recently released a second edition of their Compendium on Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs which showcases best practice in 12 customs administrations<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> [WCJ | Women in Customs Leadership: Why Does it Matter?](#)

<sup>15</sup> [WCJ | Women in Customs Leadership: Why Does it Matter?](#)

<sup>16</sup> [WCO | WCO releases new Customs tools to advance gender equality and diversity](#)

<sup>17</sup> [WCO | Compendium Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs](#)

The GEOAT is designed to enable customs administrations to assess their policies, practices, and processes to address barriers to gender equality. The WCO also provides training for customs administrations to support their work on gender equality.

Several initiatives can also be identified that have successfully addressed gender equality in customs administrations. One example is the Container Control Programme Women's Network (UNDOC-WCO) established in 2015 to promote women's participation in law enforcement professions<sup>18</sup>. The Network has co-ordinated with domestic authorities to encourage gender equality workplace measures, including gender equality training. These initiatives have contributed to a higher percentage of women engaging in Port Control Units (PCUs) and Air Cargo Control Units (ACCUs)<sup>19</sup>.

Another example is the Container Control Programme – Women's Professional Development Programme (CCP-WPDP). This training programme delivered to 58 emerging women customs leaders from 11 economies across South Asia, South-East Asia, the Pacific, and Australia in 2021 aimed to build leadership and technical skills and international connections. Participants attest that they graduated the programme with more confidence about their ability and determination to progress their customs career<sup>20</sup>.

Based on their research of gender equality in customs administrations, Hong et al (2022) recommends that customs leaders actively promote and support women employees, offer leadership training and mentoring programmes for women, and ensure women are safe in the workplace<sup>21</sup>.

In sum, male-dominated leadership structures can result in non-inclusive decision-making practices and limited leadership opportunities for women. Organisational cultures and processes are often not designed to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Customs officials are not routinely trained to understand biases and their potential impact on customs work, and sexism in the workplace can be a common occurrence. Sexual harassment and abuse of power are a real risk, and reporting systems are often insufficient.

There are, however, a range of actions the leaders of custom administrations can take to progress gender equality including actively promoting and supporting women employees, offering leadership training, and mentoring programmes for women, and ensuring women are safe in the workplace.

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<sup>18</sup> [WCO | Launch of the UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme Women's Network](#)

<sup>19</sup> [WCJ | Get Ready for a New Mindset on Women in Customs Leadership](#)

<sup>20</sup> [WCJ | Reflections on the Container Control Programme - Women's Professional Development Programme: Transforming Women's Leadership in Customs Administrations](#)

<sup>21</sup> [WCJ | Women in Customs Leadership: Why Does it Matter?](#)

## Metrics and survey design and research methodology

The aim of this APEC project is to better understand the current state of gender mainstreaming in APEC customs agencies and to develop a set of metrics to monitor future progress. From data gained, targeted policy interventions to accelerate gender mainstreaming can be identified. This section outlines how such metrics were developed and research were undertaken.

### Developing the gender equality metrics

The first action involved reviewing the data and research currently available, as well as engaging with key experts. This occurred in October and November 2022. The Project Overseer (PO), Shisla Macleod, and contractor, Dr Jo Cribb, met with officials from the World Customs Organization, APEC Policy Support Unit, the APEC Secretariat.

At the same time, the relevant literature was reviewed, and from this a draft set of metrics developed.

The draft metrics were tested with officials and experts and because of feedback substantially edited. While the metrics and consequent survey of APEC customs administrations needed to be comprehensive so to understand the current state of gender mainstreaming, it also needed to be mindful of the data and resource limitations of administrations.

The metrics were condensed into a survey form and APEC customs administrations were invited to reply from early December 2022 to late January 2023. The survey form is appended as Appendix 1.

### The metrics and survey

The first section of the survey establishes a baseline for gender equality in customs administrations. It gathers data on the percentage of women employees, women in leadership roles, women in front line roles and the gender pay gap. These measures can be gathered at frequent intervals over time so to track progress in gender equality in APEC customs administrations.

The second section of the survey seeks to identify the level of commitment to gender equality. It asks customs administrations what gender disaggregated data they routinely gather, what assessments they have completed to determine their progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, what plans they have in place including targets, and what level of resourcing they invest in gender equality. Again, this will provide a baseline from which to track progress over time.

The third and final section considers what gender mainstreaming actions customs administrations have or are taking. It includes a table of actions that are known (from the research and experts) to make the most impact on gender equality. Customs administrations are also asked what actions they have found to be effective in increasing gender equality. From this section, progress will be able to be tracked in terms of the depth and breadth of activities being undertaken by administration, as well as souring insights about best practice. The data in this section can also inform the work programme of SCCP in terms of where administrations may need additional support.

## **Analysis and results**

The results were then analysed, and a summary report drafted. This was circulated to participants of the APEC SCCP Workshop on Advancing Gender Equality in APEC Customs Administrations, held in Palm Springs 16-17 February 2023 before the session.

The researcher presented the findings on the second day of the workshop and representatives from APEC customs administrations discussed the findings and developed recommendations based on the data. The discussions and recommendations are captured in final section of this report.

# Gender Mainstreaming in APEC customs administrations

Survey results were received from 18 economies: Australia, Canada, Chile, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, The Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, the United States of America, and Viet Nam.

The results of the survey are presented in three sections:

- A. The baseline data on gender balance and the gender pay gap in APEC economies' customs administrations
- B. Understanding gender equality in customs administrations
- C. Best practice in gender mainstreaming

## Baseline data on gender balance and the gender pay gap in APEC economies' customs administrations

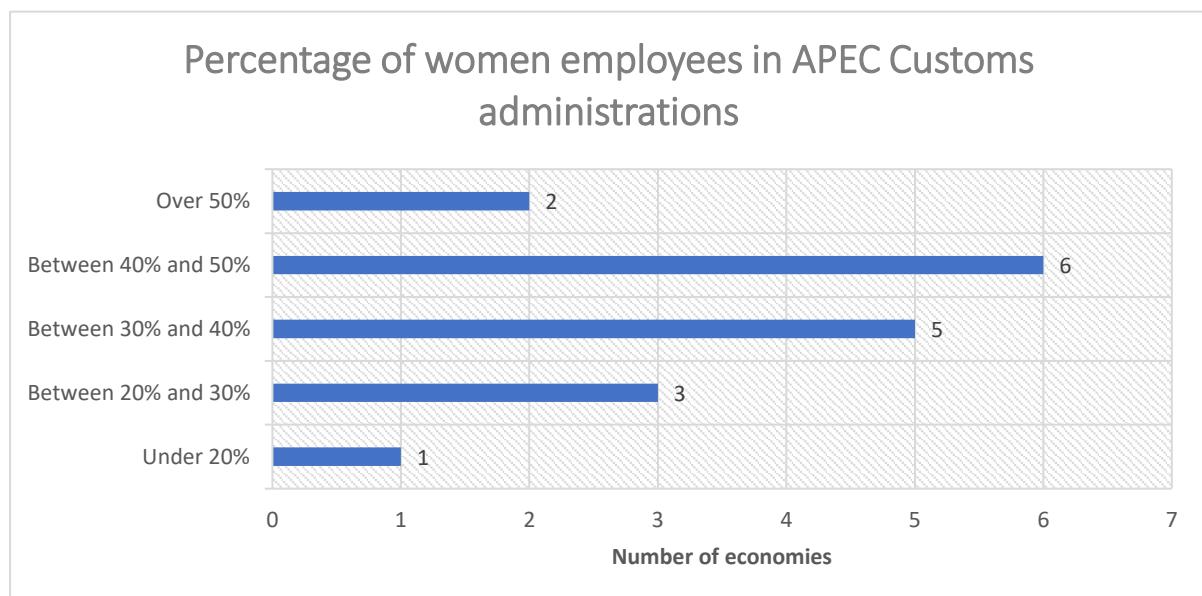
The first section of the survey gathered baseline data on the state of gender equality in APEC economies' customs administrations.

### Percentage of women and men employees

The first question asked what percentage of all employees are male and female. Respondents were asked to disaggregate the data into part-time and full-time employees, as well as permanent and fixed term employees, if such data is available. One economy did not provide this information, and several provided data for permanent, full-time employees only.

The results show that there the percentage of women working in customs administrations varies from 17 percent in the lowest to 54 percent in the highest. The average percentage of women working in customs administrations is 38 percent and the spread looks as such:

Under 20 percent female employees	Between 20-30 percent female employees	Between 30-40 percent female employees	Between 40-50 percent female employees	Over 50 percent female employees
1 economy	3 economies	5 economies	6 economies	2 economies

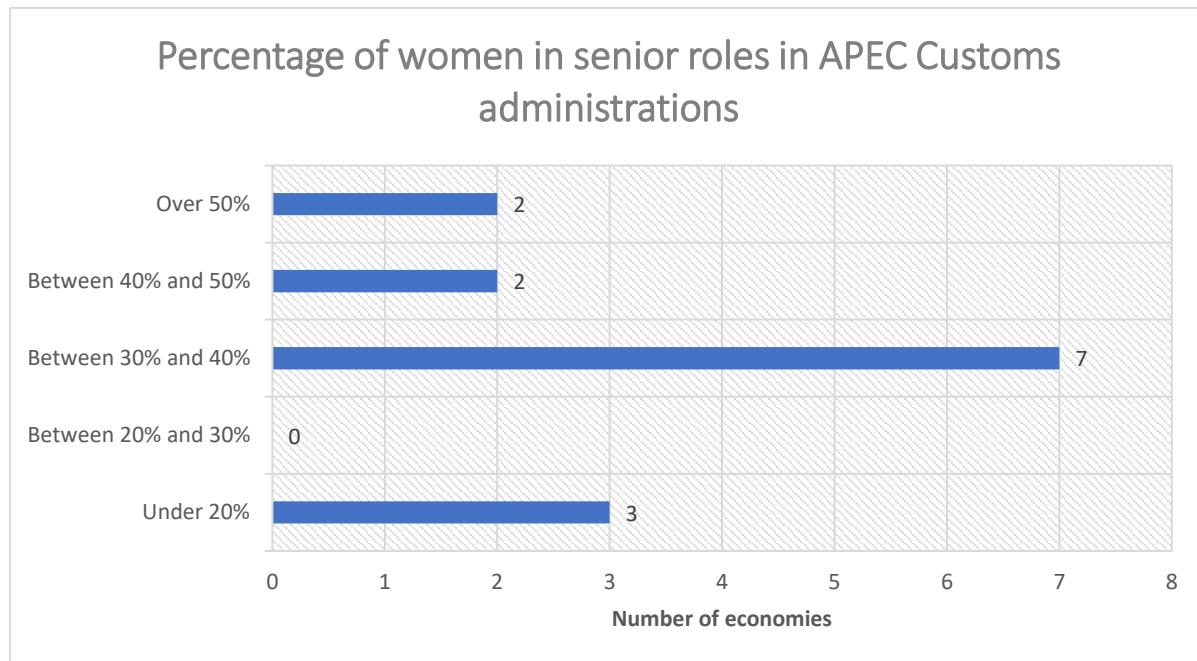


## Percentage of women and men in senior leadership positions

Data was available for 13 economies on the percentage of women and men in senior leadership positions in the top two tiers (tier 1 and 2) of their organisations. The average percentage of women in senior leadership positions was 34 percent with a range of 7 to 68 percent. However, different administrations have different definitions of leadership positions. For example, in New Zealand, the Chief Executive is employed by the Public Service Commission rather than New Zealand Customs, and therefore is not a Customs employee, although in this context they are considered a Tier 1 leader. Through understanding these differences, we will be able to better define the next survey to get more accurate and valuable data.

The spread of the percentage of women in senior leadership roles is as such:

Under 20 percent women in senior leadership roles	Between 20-30 women in senior leadership roles	Between 30-40 women in senior leadership roles	Between 40-50 women in senior leadership roles	Over 50 percent women in senior leadership roles
3 economies	-	7 economies	2 economies	2 economies

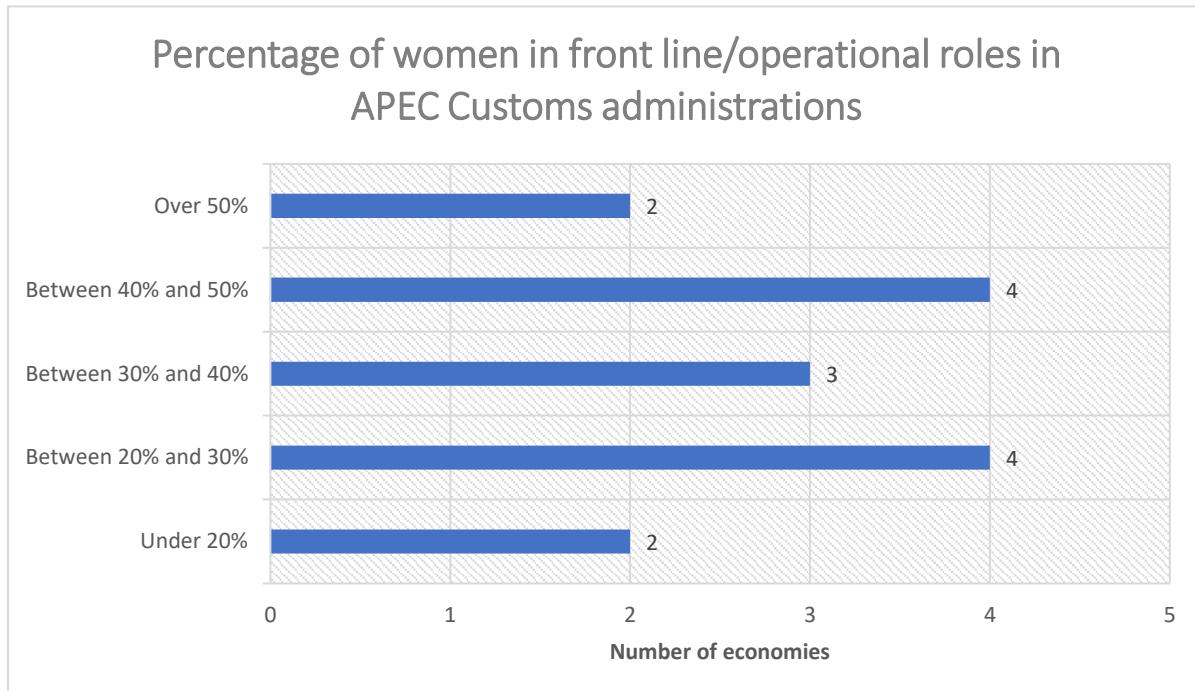


## Percentage of women in front line and/or operational roles

To better understand the composition of customs administrations, data about the percentage of women in front line and operational roles was requested. Fourteen economies provided data. The average percentage was 35, with the range being 15 to 55 percent. Seven economies had a higher percentage of women in leadership roles than in frontline and operational roles. As per above, different economies have different definitions of front line and/or operational roles, so the next survey will include a better definition to increase data accuracy.

Women as a percentage of frontline and operational workers varied by economy as such:

Under 20 percent women in frontline and operational roles	Between 20-30 women in frontline and operational roles	Between 30-40 women in frontline and operational roles	Between 40-50 women in frontline and operational roles	Over 50 percent women in frontline and operational roles
2 economies	4 economies	3 economies	4 economies	2 economies



## Gender pay gaps

The gender pay gap is calculated as the difference between the median man's wage and median woman's wage. It is a measure that indicates both if women and men are paid the same for doing similar work, as well as who holds the highest paying roles in an organisation.

Six economies provided data. Gender pay gaps ranged from less than 1 percent pay gap in favour of women to 16 percent in favour of men. Some economies did not have the data to be able to calculate their gaps; others assumed that because they had fixed pay scales that no pay gaps could exist. Limited data was available by pay grade.

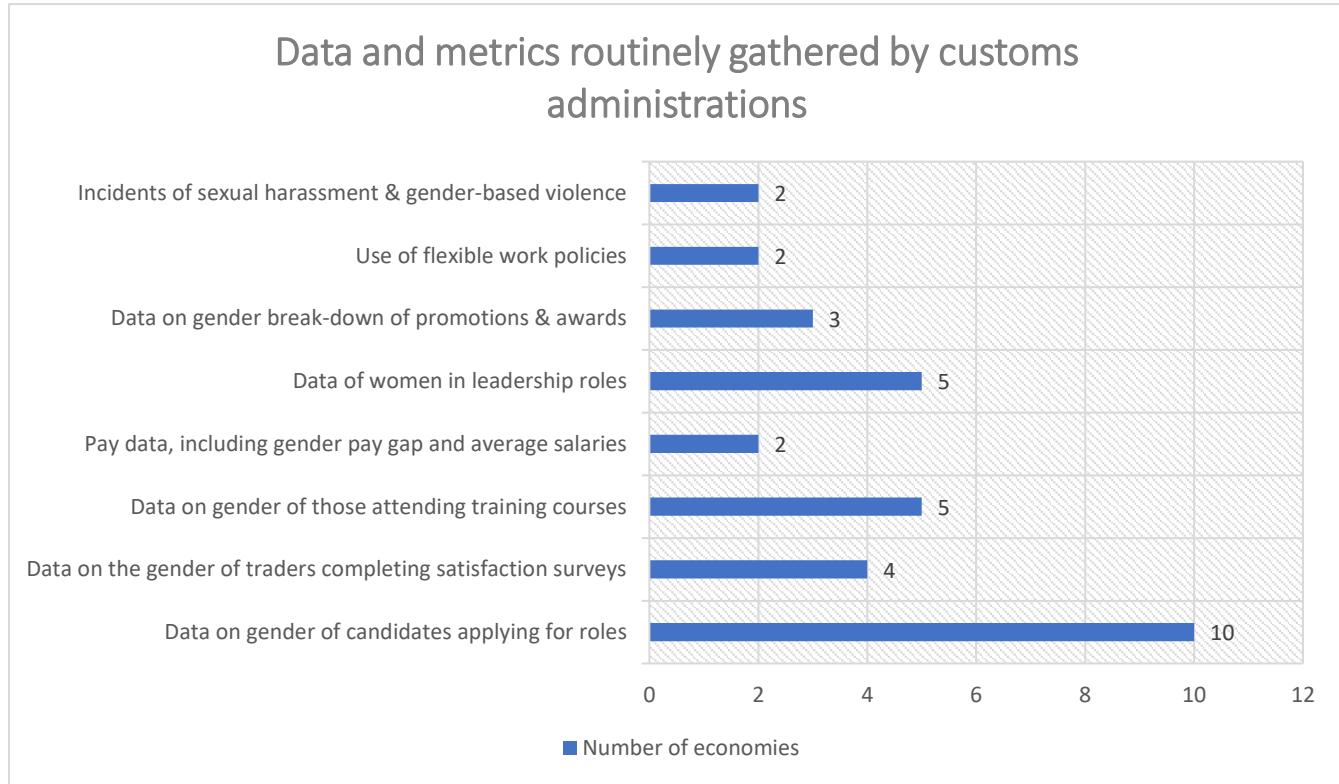
## Understanding gender equality in customs administrations

The second section of the survey gathered data about the approach customs administrations take to gender mainstreaming. It sought data on what metrics are routinely gathered, what strategies are in place and resources allocated to gender mainstreaming.

## Data and metrics routinely gathered by customs administrations

Data on how women experience custom services (as 'clients') as well as data about women as employees of customs administrations is useful. Most economies have gender-disaggregated data on their total employees. Less have data about how their services are experienced by women traders. The range of data routinely collected by custom administrations is outlined in the following table:

Data on gender of candidates applying for roles	Data on the gender of traders completing satisfaction surveys	Data on gender of those attending training courses	Pay data, including gender pay gap and average salaries	Data of women in leadership roles	Data on gender break-down of promotions & awards	Use of flexible work policies	Incidents of sexual harassment & gender-based violence
10 economies	4 economies	5 economies	2 economies	5 economies	3 economies	2 economies	2 economies



## Gender equality assessments

To understand gender equality in organisations, it is useful to complete a diagnosis. From there the key barriers and opportunities for gender mainstreaming can be identified. The survey found:

- Four customs administrations have undertaken no assessments of the gender equality of their organisation.
- Three have undertaken gender analysis of specific policies (for example, their sexual harassment policy).
- Five have undertaken gender analysis or been audited against standards set by a centralised public service agency or regulations for public organisations.
- Six have completed gender diagnostic studies using the Gender Equality Organisation Assessment Tool developed by the World Customs Organisation.

## Gender mainstreaming and equality strategies

Once the barriers and opportunities to achieving gender equality are diagnosed, strategies and implementation plans can ensure progress is made. Effective plans will include clear goals or targets and include processes for monitoring and evaluation.

Fifteen customs administrations have current gender equality action plans:

- Three contribute to domestic plans that have been developed centrally for all public organisations
- Six customs administrations are expected to report annually on progress to their central public service organisation or parliaments
- Three undertake annual internal evaluations of progress

There was also one economy who has a plan focussed on a specific policy (addressing sexual harassment).

## Resources allocated to gender equality

For gender mainstreaming and equality plans to be effective, customs administrations will need to prioritise and resource them.

Nine customs administrations have budgets allocated to gender equality. Two have budgets proposed but not yet approved.

Seven customs administrations tag resources for training on gender mainstreaming, two focus exclusively on preventing sexual harassment. Four have employed specialised staff with expertise in diversity and inclusion to advance their gender equality plans.

Interestingly, one administration pointed they also allocate resources to promote the development of employee's children: "(...) events such as summer camps, creativity camps, craft activities, fire safety sessions, disaster precaution trainings are provided to employees' children."

## Best practice in gender mainstreaming

The final section of the survey aimed to identify what is considered current best practice in gender mainstreaming in customs administrations.

## Current measures taken by customs administrations

On the left-hand column, you will see provisions taken by Customs administrations, and on the righthand column, you will see how many respondents already have this provision in place.

Provision	Number of economies
Provision of flexible work arrangements	15 economies
Provision for pregnant and nursing employees	15 economies
Policies to prevent sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace	15 economies
Access to paid parental leave provisions for women and men, as per domestic policies	15 economies
Provision of a mentoring and sponsorship programme for women employees	12 economies

Appointment of champions of gender equality and diversity	12 economies
Training programmes on sexual harassment and gender-based violence prevention	12 economies
Policies about the use of gender responsive and inclusive language and images in the workplace	11 economies
Gender responsive recruitment policies (such as mandating gender balanced interview panels)	10 economies
A leadership programme to support women into senior leadership roles in your customs agency	10 economies
Policies to ensure equal opportunities for women employees	10 economies
Policies to ensure all women employees have access to development and training opportunities	8 economies
Provision of a gender-based or minority groups network/s	8 economies
Undertaking regular user/ customer satisfaction surveys (to ensure no gender bias in customs work, especially at the border)	8 economies

Most customs administrations have prioritised policies and training to prevent sexual harassment, offering flexible work and support for pregnant and nursing employees, and paid parental leave. Providing a mentoring programme for women employees was also widely supported.

### Most effective measures in promoting gender equality

When asked what actions had been most effective in progressing gender equality in their organisations, Customs administrations concluded:

- Having an effective internal council or commission or advisory group on gender issues can drive change. This body needs to include senior leaders as part of its membership.
- An effective diagnosis of barriers to gender equality is critical, as well as a strategy to address them that is monitored, and its leaders held accountable for progress.
- A proactive communication strategy that addresses stereotypes can be effective.
- A focus on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, including compulsory training and an effective complaints process is critical.
- Mentoring, coaching and an active women's network have worked well.
- A focus on staff training on gender issues, and awareness raising is important.
- Gender responsive recruitment, including mandating gender balanced interview panels and unconscious bias training is key.
- Ensuring flexible work policies are enforced is also important.
- Including gender issues in the performance agreements of senior leaders has also been effective.
- Visibility programs gain most momentum due to increase the level of conversation and awareness surrounding equality.
- Targeted leadership development, mentoring, and networking has been found to enable action.
- Policies that mandate equality and associated practices assist by enabling people practices that are inclusive for our diverse workforce (carer's leave, job shares, gradual return to works, special leave provisions, breastfeeding facilities, etc).

- Using the WCO Gender Equality Organisational Assessment Tool promotes advocacy for gender equality and diversity.

## Case Study: Chile Customs

Increasing gender equality has been a focus for Chile Customs. An Equality and Gender Unit and Gender Board were established in 2020. An equality assessment was completed in 2021.

The assessment considered recruitment and selection for employment, participant in directive and senior leadership positions, career development and access to professional development, the prevention and detection of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and domestic violence, and matters of environmental workplace, health, work balance and quality of life.

In addition, another specific case of encouraging Gender perspective was the training process carried out for prosecutors and actuaries on Customs, called “Gender Perspective in Summary Processes of complaints for mistreatment, harassment, and violence against Women” in the context of internal cases, dictated in November 2022. Results collected were an increase in knowledge and the encouragement of skills to identify behaviors and situations of inequalities, also discrimination by gender reasons.

Gender Equality in Chilean Customs: Goals, development, and challenges



### 2. Equality Assessment - Topics of Diagnosis



1. Recruitment and selection of employment.
2. Participation in a directive and senior leadership positions.
3. Career development.
4. Access to the professional formation.
5. Gaps and compensations best practices.
6. Balance, work conciliation, and joint responsibility
7. Prevention and/or detection of prevent sexual harassment and gender-based violence.
8. Prevention, detection, and treatment of domestic violence.
9. Environmental workplace, health, and quality of life.
10. Infrastructure.
11. Communications.

Gender Board

Source: Chile Aduanas (Customs)

## Case Study: New Zealand Customs Service Gender Pay Gap Action Plan

New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS) approach to reducing the Gender Pay Gap was developed in early 2018. Within the employee lifecycle framework, NZCS identified 24 initiatives that are now mostly embedded and contributing to reducing Pay Gaps. The initiatives are divided into five areas of focus; recruitment, promotion, career development, pay and reporting. They are outlined in the table below:

Reduce the inequities in	Strategies	Status	Measures
Recruitment	Mixed gender panels; unconscious bias training for all selection panels	In Place	Quarterly Reporting of compliance
Recruitment	Develop a tool and advice to allow fair and informed offers for starting salaries and those on promotion	In Place	Quarterly compliance check, and frequency of salary revisions
Recruitment	Further review with Networks and Unions internal and external recruiting processes to attract and select diverse candidates, other Agency approaches, stage of recruitment tracking	In progress	% of women Māori and ethnic Groups in Customs and leadership roles
Recruitment	All final sign offs for appointments need to show % shortlists, unconscious bias training, mixed gender panels and attached salary calculator outcome	In Place	Quarterly Reporting of compliance
Recruitment	Move to at least 50% women on shortlists for all roles	In Place	100% compliance, no. of exemptions
Recruitment	Regular report on representation across Groups	In Place	Pay Gaps across Groups monitored and reported 6 monthly
Promotion	Active encouragement for women to take up permanent and temporary leadership roles via development conversations and Career Development Board feedback	In Place	% of women and ethnicities in leadership roles
Promotion	Unconscious bias and gender pay material for all leaders	In progress	% of leaders who have undertaken the training
Promotion	Aid interview preparation and provide material for those seeking roles in conjunction with Networks, via the LMS	In progress	Report on frequency and effectiveness
Career development	Actively support specific development programmes e.g. Women's Network mentoring assistance	In Place	% of women and ethnicities in leadership roles
Career development	Publicise, make available leadership and other development programmes to those on Parental leave and those working part time	In Place	Nos. of PLWOP and part time staff on courses
Career development	KPIs for Managers developing their staff	In Place	% of women in each leadership level with a development plan
Career development	Flexible by Default policy	In Place	Monitoring of formal requests
Career development	All People Policies reviewed for inclusion and to remove bias in line with Kia Toipoto guidance	In progress	Policies Reviewed
Pay	Change the policy so that rate of annual leave is paid after a career break is unchanged	Completed	Done
Pay	Provide those who take career breaks and Customs approved study leave based on their most recent grade	In Place	Checks done and 100% reviewed
Pay	Moderation of Performance Grades and One off payments before final decisions are determined by Gender and Ethnicity	In Place	Moderation is completed
Pay	Consideration of Assistant Custom Officer low pay claim	Completed	Done
Pay	Conduct Like for Like Analyses across Paybands each year	In Place	% change in mean PG's

Pay	Check the starting salaries of those who have joined in the year for any Pay Gap differences	In Place	mean PG's statistical checks
Reporting	Move to regular open monitoring and reporting on panel and candidate makeup	In progress	Annual monitoring
Reporting	Pay Gap Action plans and material placed on Longroom	In Place	Done
Reporting	Regular open reporting of gender mix of all the Performance Review Discussion outcomes and for any One-Off Payments awarded	In progress	Annual monitoring
Reporting	Regular open reporting of gender and ethnicity mix of secondment, promotions and acting appointments	In Place	Quarterly monitoring

Source: New Zealand Customs Service

## Case Study: Philippine Bureau of Customs

Gender equality is enshrined in Philippine's legal framework including Republic Act No.9170 Magna Carta of Women. All departments and agencies of the government must allocate at least 5% of their annual budget for gender equality initiatives. The 5% annual budget allocation aims to ensure the implementation of programmes advocating gender equality and diversity. All government agencies must establish of a Gender and Development Focal Point System (GDFPS).

For the Bureau of Customs, the Gender and Development Focal Point System is composed of the Executive Committee, with the Commissioner of Customs as its Chairperson, and the Technical Working Group, with members from the Central Office and all the 17 Customs Collection Districts throughout the Philippines.

The Commissioner of Customs, as the Gender and Development Focal Point System Chairperson, is responsible for the issuance of policies, directives, procedural guidelines, and approval of the 5% budget allocation. A Technical Working Group and a Secretariat are also created under the GFPS to ensure that all levels, including executive managerial and rank-and-file personnel are well represented.

The Technical Working Group and the Secretariat are tasked:

- To conduct gender analysis and/or review of sex-disaggregated data,
- Develop agency gender and development plans and programs in response to the gender issues faced by the employees as well as stakeholders,
- Coordinate with the various units of the agency to ensure meaningful participation in gender and development activities and monitor expenditures relative to the 5% allocated funds for gender and development programs.

In 2020, the Philippine Bureau of Customs participated in the remote Gender Equality and Diversity Organizational Assessment based on the WCO Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool or the GEOAT. Customs officers from the Strategic Planning offices, Communications offices, Human Resource and Training offices, and ports and airports served as interviewees. The assessment was helpful in identifying the administration's strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. It provided a clear framework and guide through the WCO GEOAT. The Gender Focal Point System prepared a multi-year workplan wherein the recommendations based on the remote Assessment are programmed for consideration and implementation for the next years.

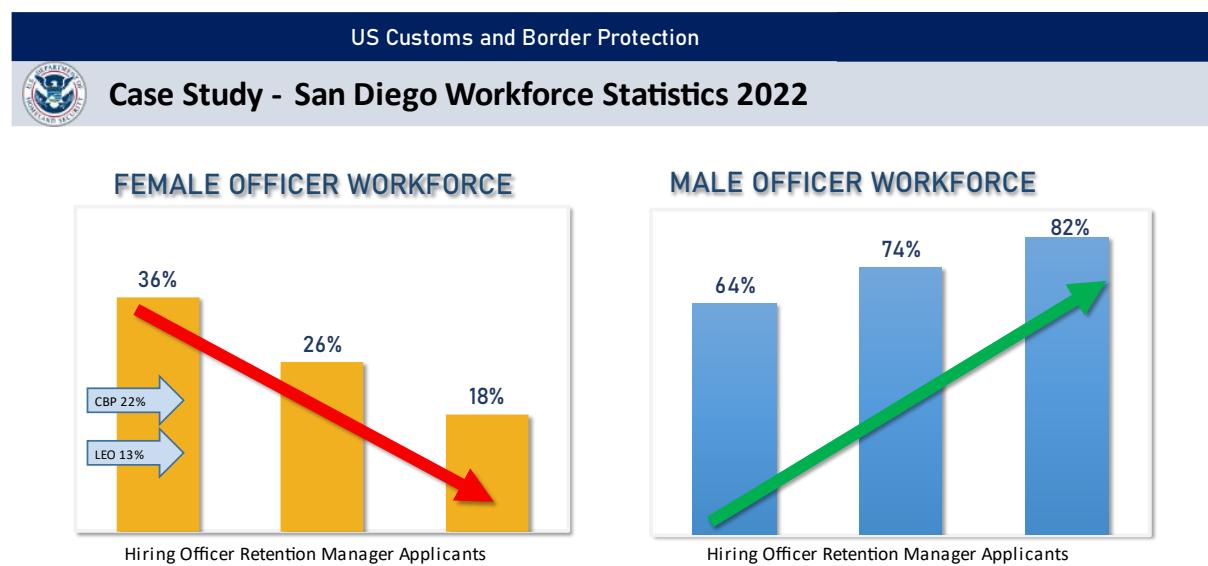


Source: Philippine Bureau of Customs

## Case study: US Customs and Border Protection

US Customs and Border Protection see many benefits of engaging women in frontline law enforcement. Women are more apt to use alternatives to force, are skilled at engaging diverse cultures, and excel at gaining community trust through empathetic and honest interaction. To attract more women to customs, US Customs and Border Protection have joined a domestic initiative to actively recruit females with a goal of achieving 30 percent females in law enforcement by 2030. The initiative is called the 30x30 Pledge to Advance Women in Policing.

The frontline workforce in San Diego is particularly male dominated. In 2019, a conscious effort began to recruit more female uniformed officers. Analysis of progress showed that in 2022, 36 percent of newly hired officers were female, bringing the overall total to 22 percent, more than other law enforcement agencies. However, closer analysis of the data found that attrition for female officers was 10 percent (compared with a male attrition rate of 3.75 percent). Only 18 percent of manager applications came from females.



- Focused efforts on recruiting female officers outpaces the ability to retain females
- Female officer attrition rate is 10% while male officers attrit at 3.75%

Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection San Diego Office

To address this, a dedicated division has been established – the Employee Engagement and Organisational Culture Division – with resources and budget to address gender equality issues. Leadership is working to raise awareness of gender disparity at all levels, holding listening sessions to gather feedback and empowering women to raise their self-confidence. Mentorship and development training is offered, as well as work on policy changes to improve retention and establishing zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

## Discussion and Recommendations

The survey results were discussed by Customs representatives at the APEC SCCP Workshop on Advancing Gender Equality in APEC Customs Administrations. This section summarises that discussion as well as the actions and recommendations that arose from it.

Workshop participants shared how roles in customs administrations across APEC had historically been seen as masculine because of the physical attributes associated with them. There is now an increasing importance placed on a wider range of attributes and the value of diversity in the workplace. However, as many customs administrations appoint from within their ranks, changing the gender composition of the workforce takes time. This is reflected in the survey results that show customs administrations are still dominated by men.

### The importance of recruitment processes

Recruitment processes were seen as a critical. Participants shared how they were careful to select images on promotional material to ensure they showed women, as well as men, customs officers. They also ensured that both women and men represented their administrations at promotional events like job fairs at colleges and universities.

Given the importance of the recruitment of women, it was celebrated that most economies collected data on the gender composition of new recruits. Collecting more in-depth data about who applies for roles could be added to the next iteration of a gender equality survey.

### Building the pipeline of women in customs administrations

Historically, it was noted, men were hired into the roles that more readily lead to promotion and leadership roles. Women may have not felt comfortable or encouraged to apply for roles that would see them promoted. Few apply directly for leadership roles. If they did apply, their applications for certain roles may have been subject to unconscious bias.

Some customs administrations have been particularly active in building the pipeline of women leaders. For example, Singapore has instigated a rotation policy where men and women are able to undertake all roles. This has seen women working in non-traditional areas, like in the canine unit. The result of such policies is that more women can gain experience and confidence in a wider range of roles and be visibly successful in them. This changes the attitudes of all workers about the contribution of women to customs administrations and encourages more women to apply for a wider range of roles and for leadership positions.

Given the importance of promotion to building a strong pipeline of women leaders in customs administrations, it was recommended that a question about the percentage of women promoted each year and actions around building a pipeline of women leaders be included in the next iteration of a gender equality survey.

### The importance of data and metrics

Having good data and metrics was considered a critical starting point to increasing gender equality. Without measurement, it is difficult to understand the status and barriers to gender equality.

The key metrics that customs administrations are encouraged to prioritise collecting were identified as such:

- The number of men and women applying for roles, and percentage of successful applications disaggregated by gender
- A break-down by gender and function, that is what percentage of enforcement staff are women, what percentage are in administration and support roles, what percentage are in revenue collection and so on
- The number of men and women accessing training and professional development opportunities
- The percentage of men and women being promoted at each level of the organisation
- Attrition by gender at each level; that is the proportion of men and women employees leaving the organisation
- Results from employee satisfaction surveys disaggregated by gender

Participants also discussed that as well as these quantitative measures, customs administrations are encouraged to look at gathering qualitative data, such as stories and experiences. It is important to match qualitative and quantitative data to understand the ‘whole picture’, which helps better identify priorities for action. For example, when looking at attrition by gender at each level, economies could also conduct leaving interviews to try to understand the main reasons why women employees are leaving.

Participants concluded and recommended that there should be a standard set of metrics for APEC economies, like the survey completed for this report, and that the survey should be administered at regular intervals. APEC’s SCCP may wish to consider establishing a working group on gender data and metrics to support regular data collection and sharing across APEC economies.

### **The importance of leadership**

The importance of having leadership involved in championing gender equality actions and a focus on inducting new recruits to ensure they valued diversity and inclusion were identified. Having subject matter experts on the staff of custom administrations has proven useful to inform and support action.

Participants also discussed the importance of leadership programmes.

### **Opportunities to share best practice**

Participants acknowledged the importance of forums and spaces to dialogue, such as this “APEC SCCP Workshop on Advancing Gender Equality in APEC Customs Administrations”, to ensure the focus on gender equality is maintains and there are opportunities to learn from the experiences of other economies. In the future, participants recommended that there could be more workshops focusing on specific issues like recruitment and promotion.

### **Recommendations**

Participants were asked to discuss what they thought should be the priorities for future SCCP work on gender equality and mainstreaming in customs administrations.

#### **Recommendation 1: Customs administrations to continue and expand their gender data collection**

Participants agreed that APEC economies could be encouraged and supported to gather more disaggregated gender data and to use that data in planning of interventions to accelerate gender mainstreaming. The data to be collected could include:

- The number of men and women applying for roles, and percentage of successful applications disaggregated by gender
- A break-down by gender and function, that is what percentage of enforcement staff are women, what percentage are in administration and support roles, what percentage are in policy, human resources, and so on
- A break-down by gender and location, to understand whether certain locations tend to be more male orientated and why
- The number of men and women accessing training and professional development opportunities
- The percentage of men and women being promoted at each level of the organisation
- Attrition by gender at each level
- Results from employee satisfaction surveys disaggregated by gender
- Percentage of external funding allocated to female Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs, where applicable. As some customs administrations provide support to small traders, monitoring the gender break-down of the distribution of funds allows analysis of whether unconscious bias is impacting allocation processes.

**Recommendation 2: Regular APEC wide surveys on gender mainstreaming, overseen by a sub-committee**

Participants supported SCCP repeating the survey on gender mainstreaming, at regular intervals, to support information sharing. The next iteration of the survey may include more questions on recruitment and promotion.

The questions on gender pay gap, however, proved hard as there is limited relativities across different pay regimes. There was also some difficulty on questions about senior positions, as economies have different definitions on their ‘top 3 tiers of leadership’. This is something a sub-committee tasked with supporting data collection and knowledge sharing on gender equality could consider.

Regular surveys and reports provide a vehicle for sharing case studies and best practice, with a focus of disseminating actions that have proved successful. Customs administrations may also wish to share their strategic and action plans on gender mainstreaming at future SCCP meetings as part of this exchange.

Participants would welcome the opportunity to meet and workshop the findings, case studies and domestic strategies, as well as specific issues such as recruitment and promotion.

**Recommendation 3: SCCP to develop an action plan for gender equality in APEC customs administrations**

There was wide support for SCCP to develop of an action plan to support gender mainstreaming across customs administrations. The SCCP can consult economies on the key priorities, some of which have already been identified here such as recruitment, promotion, and data collection.

An APEC wide Women in Customs mentoring programme could be included, with opportunities to mentor across economies. Another area the SCCP could help facilitate is creating a Women in Customs network for the region.

#### **Recommendation 4: SCCP to champion gender equality**

Participants supported the SCCP making diversity and inclusion a standing item on its agenda; a recommendation which was adopted by the SCCP in their first meeting of 2023. The SCCP could also advocate for all working groups across APEC to model gender equality.

There is an opportunity to work collaboratively with the World Customs Organisation and the Oceania Customs Organisation, as well as other international players in this space such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Sharing this report at the next WCO policy commission was recommended.

## Conclusions

The *La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth* demonstrates APEC's ambition for gender equality. Measurement and data firmly underpin the Roadmap. Customs administrations in APEC economies play an important role in economies, and as such, increasing gender equality in customs administrations will enhance inclusive growth.

Much work is currently happening in APEC customs administrations to advance gender equality and gender mainstreaming. At the APEC SCCP Workshop on Advancing Gender Equality in APEC Customs Administrations" held in Palm Springs in February 2023, economies shared work they are currently undertaking to enhance gender equality in customs administrations.

This collective effort can be further enhanced through implementing the recommendations of participants at the Palm Springs workshop.

The recommendations are that:

- Custom administrations to continue and expand their gender data collection
- Regular APEC wide surveys on gender mainstreaming are undertaken, overseen by a sub-committee, with opportunities for economies to come together to discuss the results
- The SCCP, in consultation with economies, develop an action plan for gender equality in APEC customs administrations
- The SCCP seeks to champion gender equality across APEC.

## Appendix 1: Gender Mainstreaming Survey



### Gender Mainstreaming in Customs Agencies

Gender equality and women's empowerment have been a longstanding priority for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and many APEC member economies and their customs agencies. To support progress, there needs to be a standard set of metrics across APEC economies' customs agencies to inform future work.

This survey, based on APEC's Women in the Economy Dashboard, the World Customs Organisation Working Group on Gender Equality and Diversity and academic literature, will provide both baseline data for on-going monitoring and in-depth insights to focus future work programmes.

The survey has three sections. In the first section, baseline data about gender mainstreaming in APEC economies' customs agencies is gathered. In the second section, the focus is on your organisation's approach to gender mainstreaming. The third section aims to identify best practice in gender mainstreaming actions and programmes.

Please complete the survey and return to Shisla Macleod [shisla.macleod@customs.govt.nz](mailto:shisla.macleod@customs.govt.nz) before **25 January 2023**.

#### Section 1: Baseline data about women in APEC economies' customs agencies

1. Please state the percentages of women and men employees of your customs agency [disaggregate the data into part-time and full-time employees if such data is available] \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please state the percentages of women and men in senior leadership positions in your customs agency [Tier 1 and 2, please calculate as a percentage of total senior leadership] \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please state the percentage of women currently employed in front-line customs roles in your organisation [as a percentage of all front-line staff]  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Please state your organisation's gender pay gap [calculated as the difference between the median man's wage and the median woman's wage as a percentage, include full remuneration and benefits in the calculation] \_\_\_\_\_
5. Please state the percentage of women and men in the lowest quartile of pay grades  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Section 2: Understanding gender equality in your organisation

- 5 What gender data and metrics are routinely gathered in your organisation? (examples of gender data are the percentage of women candidates applying for roles, percentage of women attending training sessions, percentage of women traders completing surveys about their satisfaction with your Customs service)
  
- 6 What gender equality assessments have been undertaken by your organisation? [Such as an assessment using the World Customs Organisation's *Gender Equality Organisation Assessment Tool*]
  
- 7 Does your organisation have a plan / policy / strategy to promote gender equality in your organisation? [please attach the plan if possible]
  - (a) If so, what targets or goals does it establish?
  - (b) What actions does it contain?
  - (c) How is the plan monitored and reported on?
  
- 8 What resources are allocated in your organisation to gender equality? [include staff positions and budgets]

### **Section 3: Best practice in gender mainstreaming**

- 9 Please indicate which of the following gender mainstreaming actions your organisation provides:

	Yes	No
Provision of flexible work arrangements		
Gender responsive recruitment policies (such as mandating gender balanced interview panels)		
A leadership programme to support women into senior leadership roles in your customs agency		
Policies to ensure equal opportunities for women employees		
Policies to ensure all women employees have access to development and training opportunities		
Policies to prevent sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace		
Training programmes on sexual harassment and gender-based violence prevention		
Provision of a women's or gender-based network/s		
Provision of a mentoring and sponsorship programme for women employees		
Appointment of men as male champions of gender equality and diversity		
Policies about the use of gender responsive and inclusive language and images in the workplace		
Provision for pregnant and nursing employees		

Access to paid parental leave provisions for women and men, as per domestic policies		
Undertaking regular user/ customer satisfaction surveys (to ensure no gender bias in customs work, especially at the border)		

10 What actions have been most effective in progressing gender equality in your organisation?