

TRADE EFFECTS ON GENDERED LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of trade reform on gendered labour markets outcomes in South Africa between 1996 and 2011. The main concern is that trade reform may have differential effects on local labour market outcomes of men and women, as well as for skilled and unskilled workers in South Africa. To identify the effects of trade reforms on these outcomes, we utilise a fixed effects model. Using regional data drawn from the South African population censuses and national tariff data for a sample of 234 municipalities, we find that trade reform has a negative effect on labour market outcomes of both men and women. However, the negative effect on labour force participation of men is significantly larger than that of women. This suggests that trade reforms contribute to narrowing the gender gap in labour force participation. The analysis further finds disproportionate trade effects on the labour force participation of unskilled female workers compared to their counterparts. Within the manufacturing sector we find differential trade effects across genders and skill-levels. Gender-bias effect of trade is driven by gender-specific sector composition of employment.

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