



WORLD TRADE  
ORGANIZATION

Technical Barriers  
to Trade Agreement

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# 10 KEY RESULTS FROM 2020

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## **Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement**

The Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement aims to ensure that regulations, standards, testing and certification procedures followed by WTO members do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade.

## **Annual Review of TBT Agreement**

The WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade conducts an annual review of the implementation of the TBT Agreement. The information in this brochure is based on the 2020 review.

## **About the WTO**

The World Trade Organization is the international body dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible, with a level playing field for all its members.

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### **Disclaimer**

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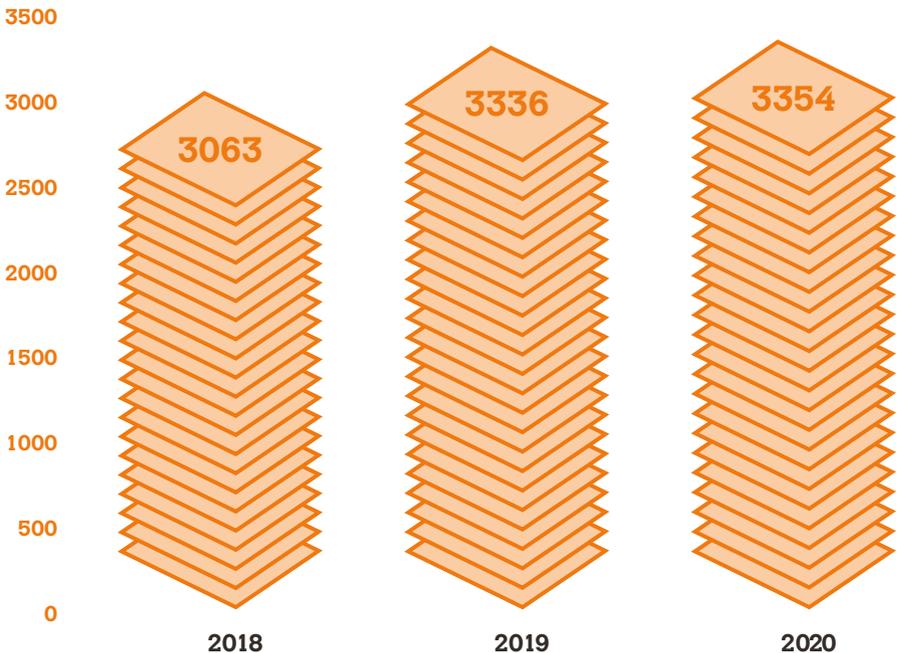
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1

**WTO members submitted more than 3,000 notifications** about product requirements for traded goods to the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee in 2020. Notifications are a form of advance notice. They provide an opportunity for the WTO membership to comment on the draft measures before they enter into force. Typically, they are about health or safety requirements or measures taken to protect the environment. More than 3,000 notifications have been submitted annually to the TBT Committee for the past three years, illustrating WTO members' commitment to increasing transparency about trade measures affecting industrial and agricultural products.

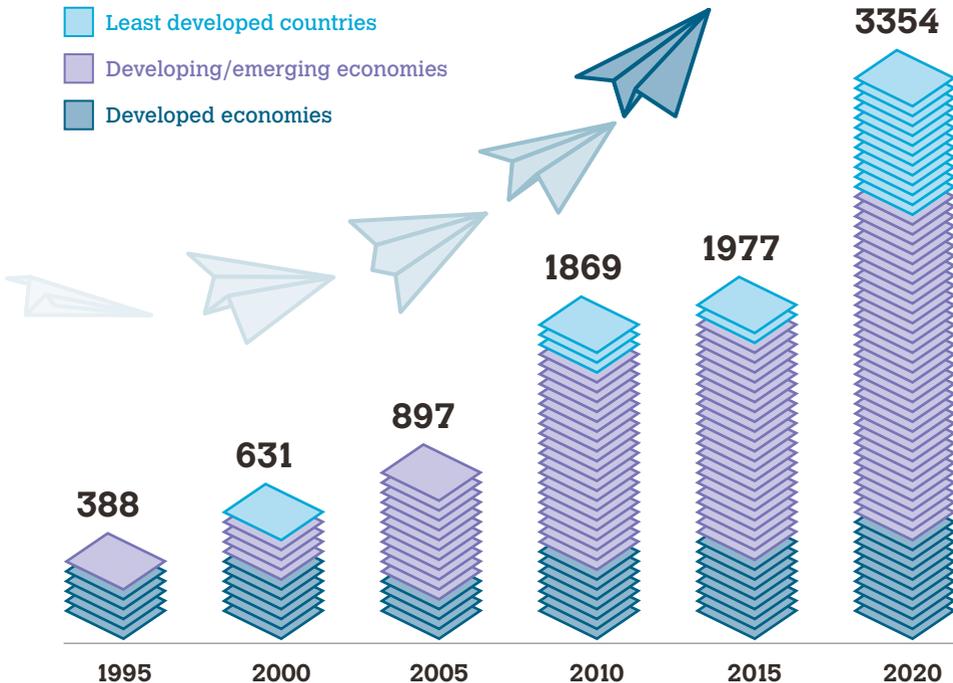
## Number of TBT notifications per year



## 2

Since 1995, **the number of notifications submitted to the TBT Committee has grown by an average of 11% per year.** This is mostly due to more active participation by developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs), especially in the last five years.

### Number of notifications per year by development status

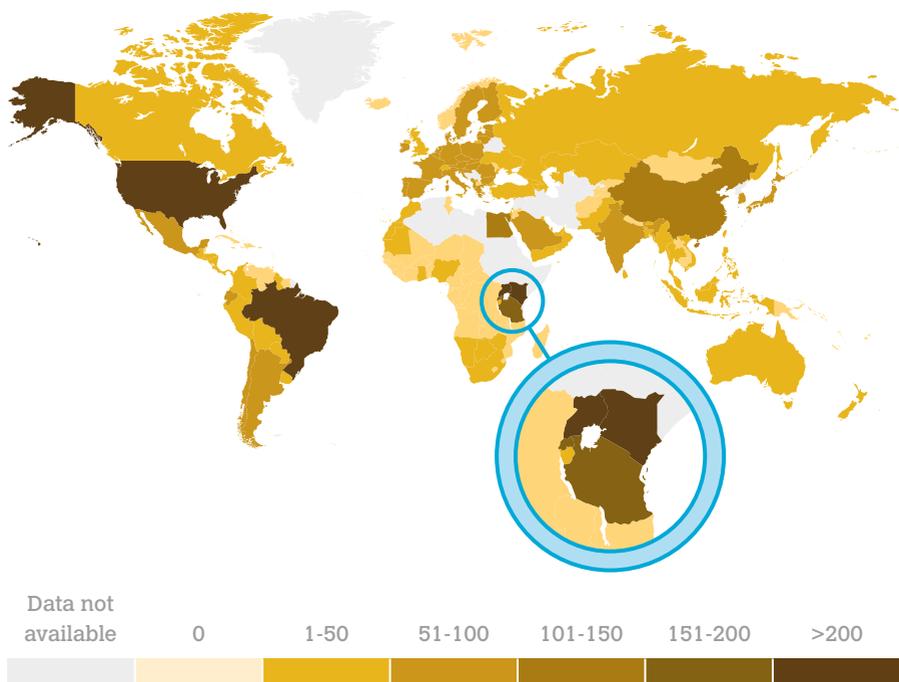


## 3

**The east African region – specifically Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda – has some of the highest levels of notifications.**

Together, these four countries (three of which are LDCs) were responsible for 26% of the notifications submitted in 2020. The measures notified by these four countries mainly concerned food and beverages.

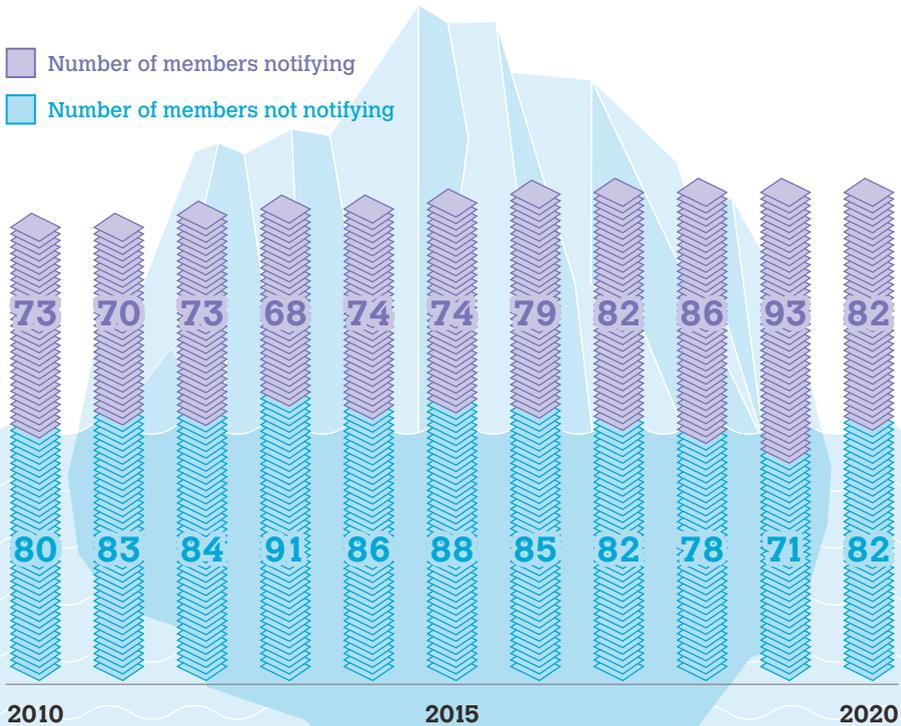
### Number of notifications by member in 2020



## 4

**Approximately half of the WTO membership regularly notifies the WTO** about new regulations or changes to old ones. An even higher level would help to shed more light on members' upcoming changes in product requirements. This would also increase the predictability of the trading environment and help avoid unexpected costs and delays – especially important for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

### Number of members submitting notifications per year

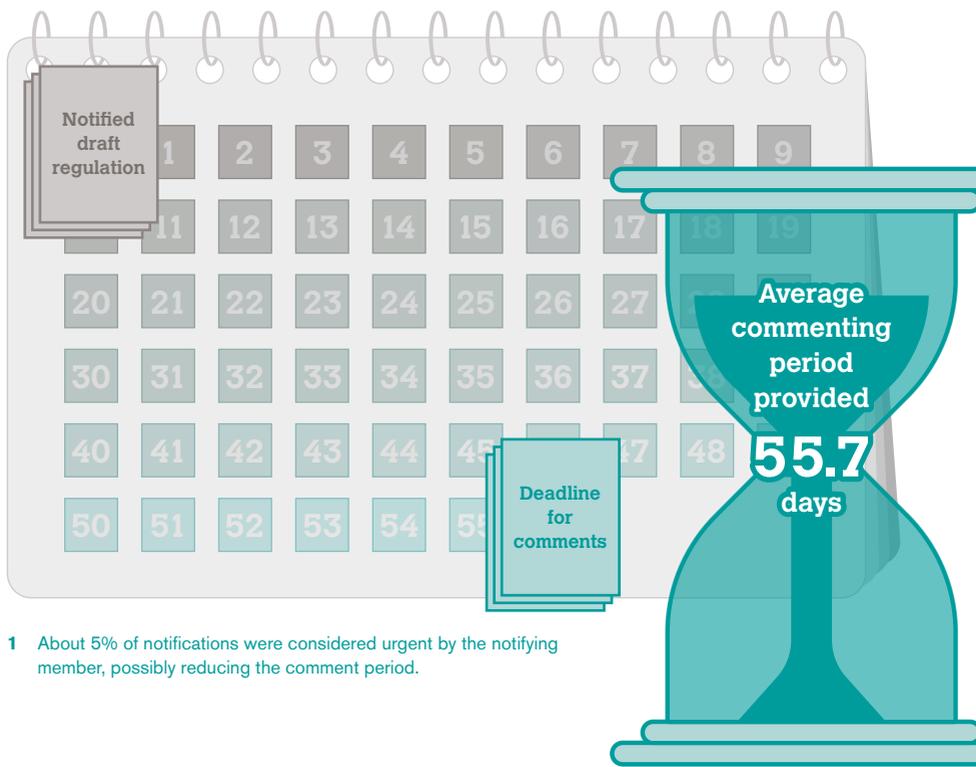


5

## About two-thirds of notifications submitted to the WTO in 2020 allowed, on average, 56 days for members to comment.

This period is an important opportunity for members to exchange views on regulations in the pipeline, giving them the chance for consultations to clarify issues that may result from the proposed regulation.<sup>1</sup>

### Time-period for members to comment on notifications

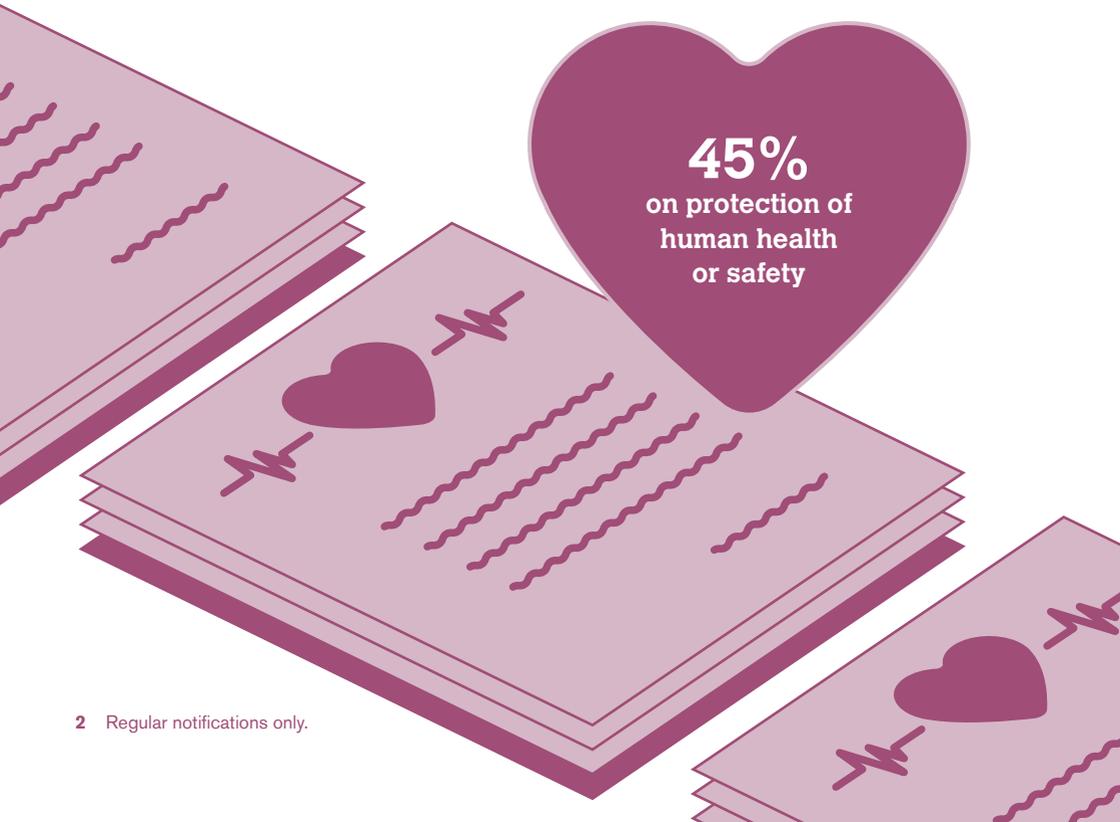


<sup>1</sup> About 5% of notifications were considered urgent by the notifying member, possibly reducing the comment period.

# 6

**Protection of human health or safety was at the heart of almost half – 45% – of all notified regulations in 2020.<sup>2</sup>** Over 100 TBT notifications dealt with measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Notifications on protection of health



<sup>2</sup> Regular notifications only.

## 7

The WTO's main tool to disseminate TBT notifications and enhance transparency on standards and regulations is ePing, an online alert system.

**By the end of 2020, ePing had more than 12,000 users**, with private and public sector users roughly equal.

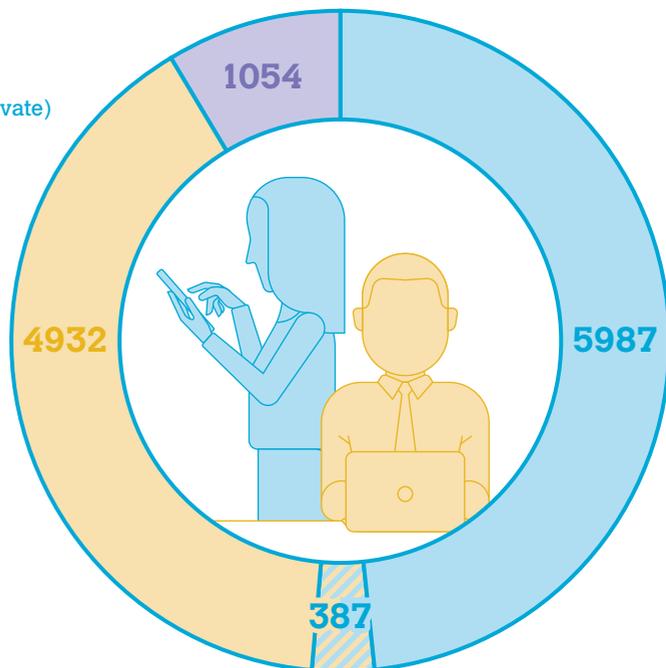
 ePing users by sector

Public

Private

Mixed (Public/Private)

Other

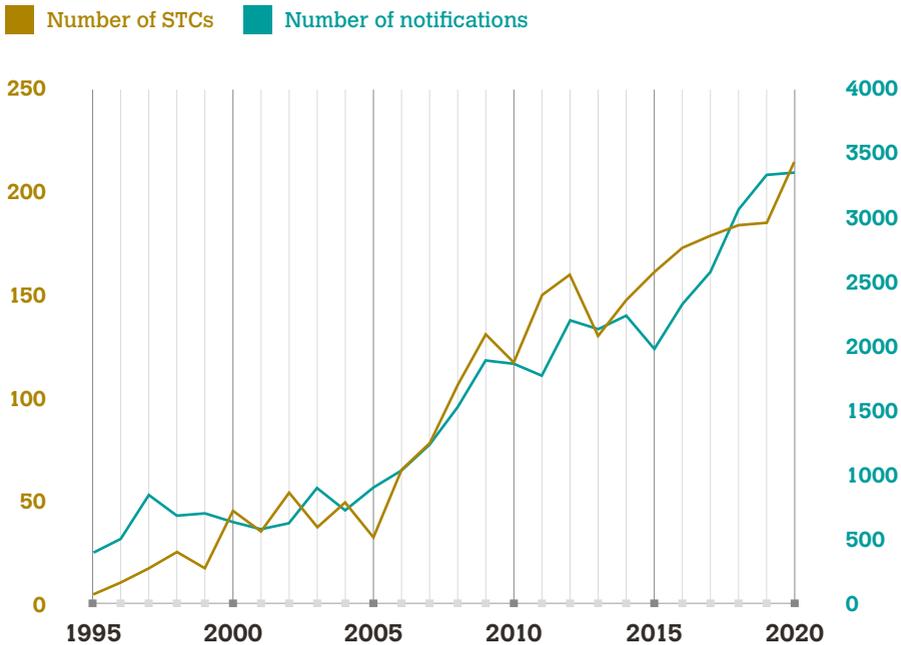


## 8

## The number of trade concerns raised by WTO members at the TBT Committee has grown by 26% per year, on average.

Discussion of these concerns often allows members to reduce trade tensions before a measure enters into force and helps avoid escalation to a formal dispute. Concerns are usually raised in response to notifications, ranging from simple requests for clarification to concerns about potential inconsistencies with the TBT Agreement.

### Specific trade concerns (STCs) and notifications raised/submitted per year



## 9

**In 2020, a record number of new trade concerns – 57 – were discussed** at the TBT Committee, despite the disruptions arising from the pandemic. eAgenda, an online tool for raising and responding to trade concerns, ensured that the discussion of trade concerns could continue when in-person meetings were put on hold.

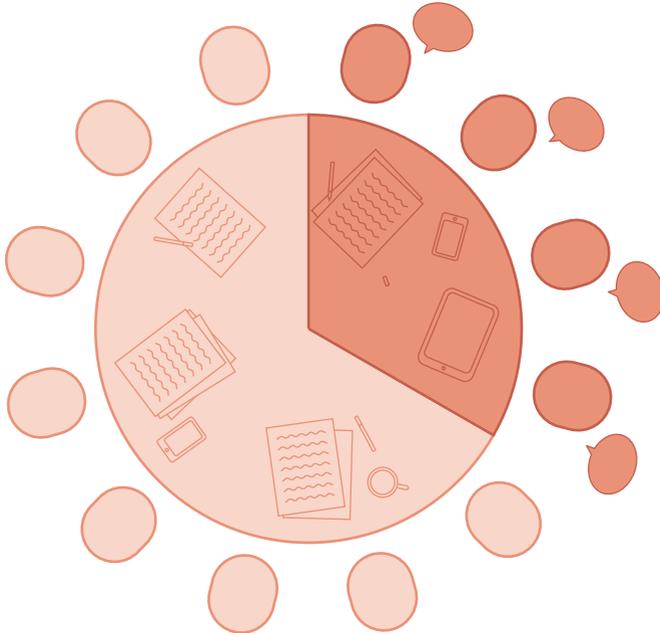
Number of new specific trade concerns raised per year



# 10

About one-third of the WTO membership, **57 members, participated in discussions on trade concerns in 2020**. This is an increase on the 45 who took part in 2019.

## Participation in discussions on trade concerns



## Further information

Further information about the implementation of the TBT Agreement is available in the [2020 Annual Review \(G/TBT/45\)](#).



“Technical Barriers to Trade” – a new publication in the WTO Agreements Series – provides an overview of the purpose and scope of the TBT Agreement, the types of measures it covers, and the key principles of the Agreement. It can be downloaded from the [WTO website](#).

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World Trade Organization  
Rue de Lausanne 154  
CH-1211 Geneva 21  
Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 739 51 11  
Email: [publications@wto.org](mailto:publications@wto.org)  
[www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)

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