

Title: Jobs, AI, and Trade

Speaker: Dr. Franziska Ohnsorge, World Bank

Area: Economics

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Abstract:

Productivity gains from the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) could be substantial for the 15 percent of South Asian workers who are in jobs with strong complementarities with AI and who tend to be highly educated, experienced workers. Demand for AI skills has grown rapidly, and jobs requiring these skills command a wage premium of nearly 30 percent relative to other white-collar jobs. Only 7 percent of South Asia's jobs are highly exposed to AI without being complementary to its use, and are thus at risk of automation—well below the 15 percent exposure in other emerging markets. Moderately educated, young workers are the most vulnerable to job displacement. The introduction of Generative AI has already reduced monthly job listings by around 20 percent for the most exposed and most substitutable white-collar occupations. The largest relative job losses have occurred in the business services and information technology sectors, and among upper-middle-skilled and entry-level workers. Carefully sequenced tariff cuts, especially in conjunction with broader free trade agreements, would encourage private investment and job creation in trade-related activities, which disproportionately employ South Asia's younger and higher-skilled workers and have accounted for most of South Asia's employment growth over the past decade. This could particularly benefit manufacturing, where elevated tariffs on production inputs currently diminish competitiveness.

Speaker Profile:



Franziska Ohnsorge is the World Bank Chief Economist for South Asia. In this role, she is responsible for leading the research program on key economic issues in South Asia to inform the policy debate and World Bank lending. Before starting this position, she was the Manager at the Development Economics Vice Presidency where she spearheaded the flagship [Global Economic Prospects](#) report. Prior to joining the World Bank, Franziska Ohnsorge worked in the Office of the Chief Economist of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and at the

International Monetary Fund. Her research has been featured in peer-reviewed journals as well as policy publications and has covered a wide range of topics in international macroeconomics and finance, including debt and financial crises, inflation and monetary policy, as well as growth and informal labor markets. Her work has been widely cited, including in the Economist, the Wall Street Journal, and the Financial Times. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto.

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