

100,000
women



Cherie Blair
FOUNDATION
FOR WOMEN

Gender Stereotypes and their Impact on Women Entrepreneurs

Survey Report Exploring the Experiences of Women
Entrepreneurs in Low and Middle Income Countries

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Front cover image: Felicia Ohikere, Founder and Owner, Lillie’s Pastries and Cherie Blair Foundation for Women alumna (Road to Growth Nigeria), with colleague, 2021



Definitions

Entrepreneurial ecosystem

A term describing what constitutes the web of interconnecting individuals, organisations, institutions, processes and practices that form the space for businesses to operate.

Gender role

A set of behaviours that are generally considered to be acceptable, desirable and appropriate for a person based on their gender, determined by prevailing social norms. In patriarchal systems, the gender roles assigned to women have historically often been understood as of less value than those assigned to men.¹

Gender social norm

An assumed set of social practices that regulate how people are expected to engage with others within a community, based on gender for their behaviour to be considered culturally acceptable.²

Patriarchy

A society or community organised on patriarchal lines. Patriarchal social systems support male domination and privilege which shape the gender social norms and how different norms for women and men are valued. This leads to subordination of and discrimination against women in all aspects of public and private life.³

Gender stereotype

This report uses the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' definition of gender stereotypes: A gender stereotype is a generalised view or preconception about the characteristics or roles that are expected to be innately possessed by, and socially performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives.⁴

Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping is to believe, expect, and/or act upon an expectation of the gender stereotypes prescribed to people because of their gender identity. Such stereotypes, whether overtly hostile (such as "women are



irrational”) or seemingly benign (“women are nurturing”), can be harmful to all people, and as such often perpetuate inequalities. For example, the traditional view of women as care givers means that childcare responsibilities often fall primarily or exclusively on women.⁵

Unequal⁶ division of labour

The division of labour can be understood as the process of allocating work tasks to different people for the purposes of organisation and/or efficiency. In our report, this refers to division of labour in the domestic sphere which is often influenced by gender stereotypes and gender social norms. The unequal division of labour refers to the societal expectations of women to be responsible for unpaid domestic labour, such as housework and childcare, while men are expected to participate in the labour force within the formal economy.⁷




Executive Summary

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women is embarking on a new and ambitious area of work to highlight and tackle the gender stereotypes that shape women's journeys to and through entrepreneurship. We aim to build knowledge and awareness, and collaboratively seek to break down the gender stereotypes holding back women entrepreneurs. We'll work with women entrepreneurs and others who can positively influence their journey to entrepreneurship and address the challenges they face. The first step is this initial research study, aiming to kick-start the conversation and identify concrete calls for action.

This report details analysis of online survey data from 221 women entrepreneurs in 42 low and middle income countries, gathered in July and August 2021. We find that gender stereotypes significantly shape women's journeys to and through entrepreneurship by affecting their aspirations, sources of support, opportunities, access to resources, perceptions, and the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem in multiple ways. They affect different women in different and multiple ways, intersecting with other kind of stereotypes, including age, social class, ethnicity and race.

Key Findings

The findings reveal that whilst the impact and experiences of gender stereotypes are not monolithic, gender stereotypes do affect most women entrepreneurs in number of ways. Our key findings highlight that:



1) Gender stereotypes start early, shape women's journeys to entrepreneurship, and can have a lasting impact on aspirations, confidence and behaviour.

- Women entrepreneurs reported that gender stereotypes were most commonly conveyed in their childhood by family members (75%), in the media (49%), and in education (48%).
- Social approval or disapproval of different careers by family members, teachers, friends and others played a role in the choice of career for many (56%).
- Most respondents (70%) reported knowing a woman entrepreneur when they were children, suggesting that role models have a powerful influence on outcomes.
- Experiencing gender stereotypes in childhood made some women feel like they wouldn't be able to run a business on their own (35%).

2) Experiences and expressions of gender stereotypes are widespread and diverse.

- Gender stereotypes are part of the social background for women entrepreneurs with 96% saying they had directly experienced them in their lives.
- Attitudes towards the division of labour at home and childcare are particularly pertinent with almost half (49%) of respondents saying that family members or friends have told them to focus more on family or children.
- Half of the respondents felt that women don't have equal opportunities as entrepreneurs in their country (49%), whilst others felt they do (44%), suggesting that the impact of location and context could be significant for women.
- Over half felt that institutions relevant for entrepreneurs are biased in favour of men (55%) with far fewer not feeling this (22%).

3) The impact on women's rights and opportunities as entrepreneurs is significant.

- Overall, the majority (70%) of respondents said that gender stereotypes have negatively affected their work as an entrepreneur.
- Six in ten (61%) said they believe that gender stereotypes impact their business growth and affect how seriously they are taken as business owners (63%).
- Half believe that gender stereotypes impact how confident they are in the future of their businesses (53%) and their business profitability (49%).



- Nearly a quarter (23%) of the women entrepreneurs had experienced gender stereotypes or discriminatory remarks whilst trying to access finance for their business.
- In addition to gender, women entrepreneurs experienced intersecting discrimination or stereotypes based on factors including age (37%), social class (29%), and ethnicity (22%).


4) Encouraging women to start, sustain or grow their businesses requires a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem and increasing visibility of successful women entrepreneurs.

- The majority of women said that a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem would have encouraged them to start their own business (72%), along with seeing more successful women entrepreneurs represented in adverts and TV or on social media (68%).
- Three in five (58%) said that seeing more women in leadership positions in their own community or country would have further encouraged them to start their own business.
- Nearly half the respondents reported that having more supportive family or friends would have further encouraged them to start their own business (48%).

Key Recommendations

The initial insights here show that achieving gender equality in entrepreneurship involves dismantling the gender stereotypes that affect women entrepreneurs' lives and businesses. To date, this issue hasn't received the attention that is needed to create change. It requires long-term, collective action in multiple, intersecting areas and commitment from individuals and organisations alike who shape entrepreneurial ecosystems. And for this to be done in close collaboration with women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries and organisations that work with them.

We recommend readers of this report and all stakeholders take action within three themes of activity:



1) Increase understanding of how gender stereotypes shape women's lives, including entrepreneurship, economic participation, division of unpaid care work, and empowerment.

Our recommendations here include ensuring a personal and an organisational focus on learning; actively engaging in solution-focused conversations; pinpointing the problems and root causes through further research; and ensuring that data gathering and analysis is disaggregated by gender and other intersecting factors.

2) Raise awareness about how gender stereotypes shape the realisation of rights and equal opportunities, such as those related to economic participation and entrepreneurship. Campaign and advocate with others to deconstruct gender stereotypes and promote gender equality.

Our recommendations here include initiating targeted awareness raising; promoting role models; demonstrating leadership and commitment to gender equality; and advocating for the implementation of laws, policies and programmes to tackle gender stereotypes.

3) Take concrete measures to prevent and eliminate gender stereotypes and their negative impacts, both in private and public spheres.

Our recommendations include establishing policies, goals and targets to tackle gender stereotypes; supporting skills for empowerment; addressing gender stereotypes in education; promoting and enabling shared care; implementing existing laws and policies which seek to address gender stereotypes; and dismantling gender stereotypes in media.



Introduction

“ Gender stereotypes affect most women entrepreneurs with whom I work ... We cannot achieve gender equality in entrepreneurship and economic justice if we do not dismantle gender stereotypes. ”

Ngo Hong Diep, Chief Operating Officer,
WISE Vietnam

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women has been working with women entrepreneurs since 2008. We have directly supported over 175,000 women across more than 100 countries.

Insights we've gained from our work with women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries indicate that gender stereotypes are widespread and affect many aspects of their lives and future opportunities. They affect both women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ecosystems as a whole in multiple ways. Gender stereotypes are detrimental to women's economic empowerment and the prosperity of families and their communities as well as the global economy.

Our 'Levelling the Playing Field: What Women Entrepreneurs Want' report found in early 2020 that stereotypes are a regular obstacle to women entrepreneurs. Nearly two thirds of the women who responded to our survey (62%) reported having directly experienced some kind of negative stereotype—mainly that women should prioritise motherhood and domestic duties; 38% had faced the stereotype that 'women are not assertive enough to be successful entrepreneurs'.

The Foundation's 2020 annual audit report 'Women Entrepreneurs: Surviving the Pandemic and Beyond', showed that over half (57%) of the women responding to our survey had been challenged by family members with the stereotype that 'men do not like women who are too strong / business-minded / successful'. 53% had experienced the stereotype from

family members that women should prioritise domestic duties such as caring for their children.

“To rise to the challenges of the twenty-first century, we need to harness our full potential. That requires dismantling gender stereotypes.”
UN Secretary General António Guterres

Yet, when it comes to stereotypes in entrepreneurship, there is little documentation on women’s lived experiences or recent research on the issue. Even when the role of gender stereotypes on women’s entrepreneurship is acknowledged, it is rarely discussed in-depth. It is clear that the issue of gender stereotypes has not been given the serious attention it requires. This is why, after a series of external discussions with other organisations, women entrepreneurs and stakeholders in the sector, desk review and internal discussions, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women decided to undertake this initial inquiry. We are aiming to focus our policy work on seeking to better understand and challenge the multitude of gender stereotypes that hold back women entrepreneurs.

The small scale but important research presented here aims to take stock of key challenges posed by gender stereotypes for women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries, based on their direct responses. The report also seeks to identify the multiple manifestations of gender stereotypes and how these may have shaped their journeys to entrepreneurship.

The Foundation seeks to stimulate a much-needed conversation about how gender stereotypes affect the lives and businesses of women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries. The report also provides suggestions on what can and should be done to stop or reduce their impact. We provide strong recommendations for all stakeholders to use their influence and take concrete and urgent action to challenge and dismantle these stereotypes.

Finally, this report’s findings will be used to inform the Foundation’s wider work, particularly its policy work to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem so it’s easier for women to start and grow businesses. The findings will also be used to shape content for women entrepreneurs, especially our leadership and influencing training.



Methodology

Method

This report is based on responses to an online survey taken by women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries. The data was collected through a SurveyMonkey survey which was shared widely through the Foundation's communications channels and by our partners and their wider networks of women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries. The survey was open for three weeks over July and August 2021. Survey data was exported from SurveyMonkey in an Excel document format, and it was anonymised for analysis.

Survey participants were given the option of not responding to each question. The survey was circulated in English and a total of 260 people responded to it. The final number of responses was reduced to 221 as we removed responses from individuals who answered no to the question 'are you a woman entrepreneur' and who selected that they lived in a country which is classified by the World Bank as 'high income', on the assumption this is likely to be the same country that they run their business and therefore is outside this research criteria.



221

Responses from 221 women entrepreneurs across 42 low and middle income countries

This report was also informed by a desk review of other reports focusing on women's entrepreneurship and/or gender stereotypes. The report was additionally influenced and enriched by direct conversations with women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries, particularly those who joined the Foundation's leadership and influencing training in 2021, as well as with partners and other organisations working in the women's economic empowerment sector. To all these individuals we are hugely indebted.



Scope of the Research

This report is centred on the perspectives and experiences of women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries. Due to the relatively small sample size and the way the questions were formed, the findings are not intended to be generalised to provide a comprehensive view of the impact of gender stereotypes on women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries. Stereotypes are often experienced by women from different backgrounds, countries and cultures, and these gender stereotypes shape multiple areas of their lives from very early on.

Women who responded to this survey are already likely to be interested or aware of gender stereotypes given the fact they chose to dedicate time to respond to the survey around this theme. The women responding to the survey already identify as entrepreneurs and run businesses which indicate that it is likely that they had already overcome or tackled gender stereotypes along the journey to entrepreneurship.

The survey was conducted online in English which itself leads to the exclusion of women entrepreneurs who do not have access to the internet or who do not speak English. This means that the sample is not representative of all women entrepreneurs across low and middle income countries as women in those countries are significantly more likely to lack access to the internet and many will not be proficient English language skills.

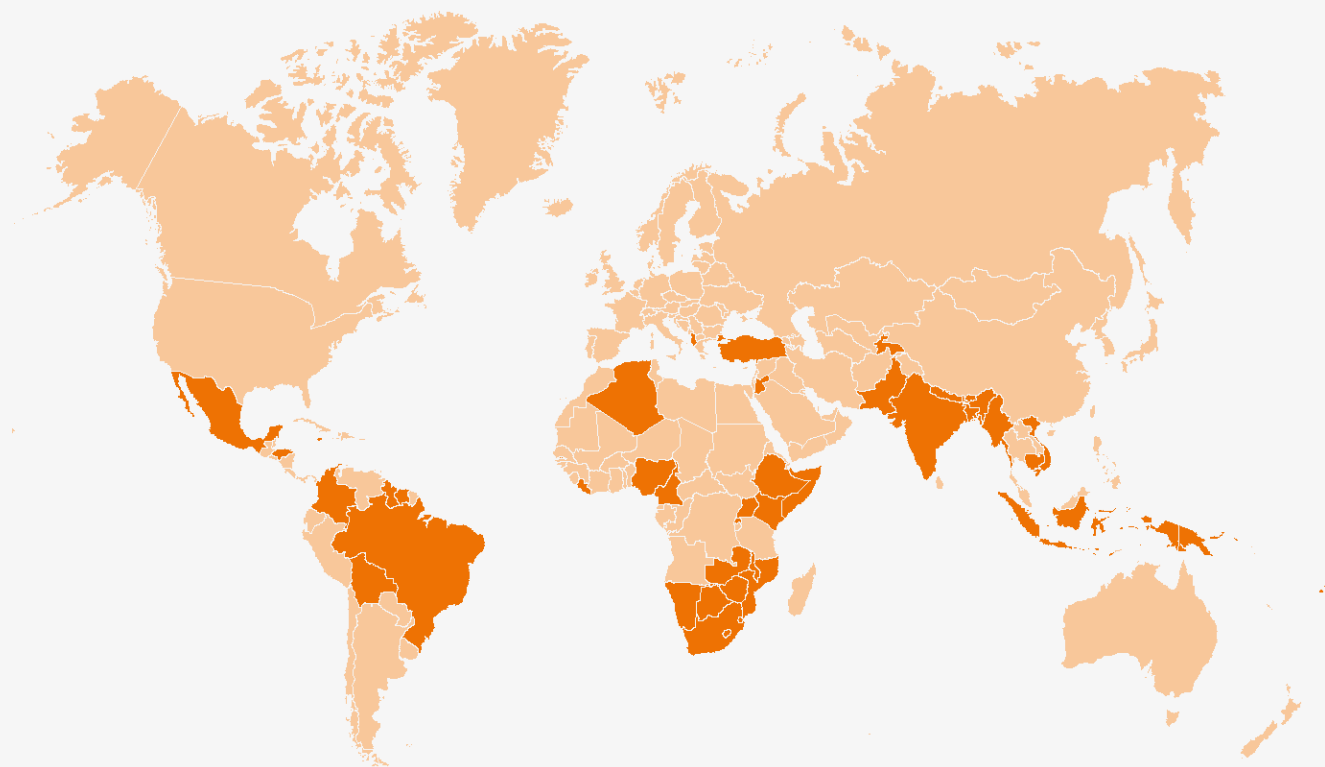
Our report is based on responses from women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries because this is a specific group of women with whom the Foundation works. Yet, we recognise that many of these gender stereotypes are common across the world and fuel discrimination against women across many countries and cultures. For instance, according to the Gender Social Norm Index⁸, covering 75 countries (over 80% of the world's population), close to 90% of people across the world hold some sort of biases against women. We also recognise that gender stereotypes—both overtly negative and seemingly positive—create barriers to gender equality for men and boys and people of all gender identities.

Profile of the Women Responding to Our Survey

Geographical location

The survey was completed by 221 women entrepreneurs from 42 low and middle income countries.

Locations of Respondents



- | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|------------------|------------|
| Albania | Colombia | Jamaica | Namibia | Tajikistan |
| Algeria | Eswatini | Jordan | Nepal | Turkey |
| Bangladesh | Ethiopia | Kenya | Nigeria | Uganda |
| Bhutan | Fiji | Lesotho | Pakistan | Vietnam |
| Bolivia | Gambia | Liberia | Papua New Guinea | Zambia |
| Botswana | Guyana | Malawi | Rwanda | Zimbabwe |
| Brazil | Honduras | Mexico | Somalia | |
| Cambodia | India | Mozambique | South Africa | |
| Cameroon | Indonesia | Myanmar | Suriname | |



Age

Nearly 70% of the women responding to our survey were between 25 and 44 years old, 36% respondents were aged 35-44 years, whilst 33% of the women were 25-34 years old. Only 8% of the respondents came from young women (15-24 years of age) whilst 17% of the responses were submitted by women between 45 and 54 years of age. The rest of the responses (6%) were submitted by women who were over 55 years old.

Business ownership

Most respondents (61%) reported that they have one business whilst 25% reported that they are running more than one business currently. Nearly one in ten (10%) reported that they were about to launch their own business within the next 6 months whilst the rest (5%) reported that they had run their businesses in the past.

Industries

The women entrepreneurs responding to our survey run their businesses in a wide range of sectors. The most common sectors are fashion and textiles (13%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (11%), education (9%) and food and beverage manufacturing (9%), professional services/consulting (9%) and manufacturing (6%).

Findings

1 Childhood – Gender Stereotypes and How They Shape the Journey to Entrepreneurship

Gender stereotypes can strongly shape children’s choices, opportunities and freedoms by narrowing their set of acceptable behaviours. In addition to immediate impacts and restrictions, gender stereotypes experienced in the early years have an impact on many areas of later life, including career choices and opportunities in the area of entrepreneurship.

According to research studies, children are conscious of gender by the age of two⁹. This shows that early intervention in tackling and dismantling gender stereotypes is critical. It remains important to understand the ways gender stereotypes shape early childhood and the impacts this has on their later lives.

76%

76% heard or experienced a gender stereotype before age 18

1.1 Gender Stereotypes Affect Children Early-on and Shape Their Future Choices

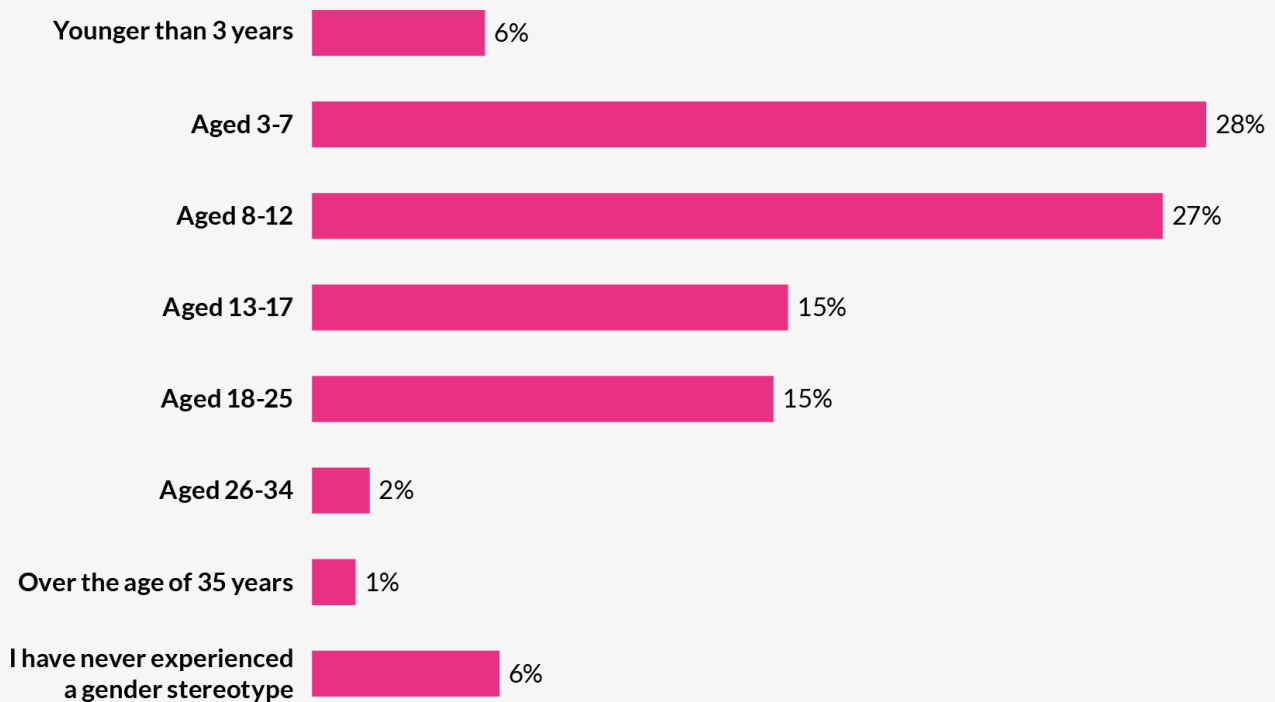
Key finding: gender stereotypes start alarmingly early and are most commonly conveyed by family members.

Our survey reveals that most women entrepreneurs were exposed to gender stereotypes at a very early age.

- Out of the 218 women who responded to this question, 76% recalled hearing or experiencing a gender stereotype before the age of 18.

- 28% of respondents had experienced their first gender stereotype aged three to seven years old whilst 27% had experienced their first gender stereotype when they were between eight and 12 years old.
- 15% of respondents reported that they had experienced their first gender stereotype aged 13-17 years.
- 6% of respondents told us that they had experienced their first gender stereotype when they were younger than three years old.


When did you first experience or hear – directly or indirectly – a gender stereotype about women and girls?



Given the fact that children learn and are exposed to gender stereotypes early, it is not surprising that they start viewing certain professions, activities or characteristics as ‘male’ or ‘female’ early on. Preventing the emergence and exposure to gender stereotypes in childhood is critical to stop the negative impact of gender stereotypes later in life.

1.2 Sources of Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are expressed and reflected in multiple ways including in the private lives and attitudes of family and friends, through educational systems, through media and advertisements, through practices of



companies, religious institutions and other organisations, and they are reflected also through countries' laws and policies.

We asked survey respondents to list all the sources of gender stereotypes experienced in their childhood.

Survey respondents who had experienced gender stereotypes most commonly reported that they had heard the stereotypes from family.

- The majority (75%) reported experiencing gender stereotypes by family members.
- Women reported (49%) the second most common source of gender stereotypes they experience in childhood to be media such as newspapers, TV programmes, radio programmes, cartoons or books.
- This was followed by teachers or other staff in educational settings or educational materials (48%).
- 39% said friends were a source of stereotypes that they had experienced as a child.
- 37% reported that a religious leader or a representative of a faith or belief community had been a source of gender stereotypes.
- 25% reported advertising as having been a source of gender stereotypes.
- 11% reported that gender stereotypes were heard from staff or volunteers at a youth club, sports activity or another hobby.

1.3 Different Types of Gender Stereotypes

Key finding: most commonly heard stereotypes relate to domestic behaviour or division of domestic labour, such as that women should be taking care of children or men should be the main providers of the household.

Gender stereotypes are expressed in many areas of life, including expected personality and characteristics, domestic roles and responsibilities, sexuality and social interactions, career choice and physical appearance. It is critical to remember that also seemingly positive stereotypes—such as that women are caring or men are good at sciences—can have a negative impact by restricting the individual's choices and opportunities to behave differently to the socially accepted, stereotypical gender norms.

As part of our survey, we asked women entrepreneurs what kind of gender stereotypes they had experienced or heard most as a child.

- The most common gender stereotypes experienced in childhood related to the behaviour or **division of domestic labour**. 41% of respondents reported that they most commonly experienced gender



stereotypes relating to this, such that women should be taking care of children or men should be the main providers of the household.

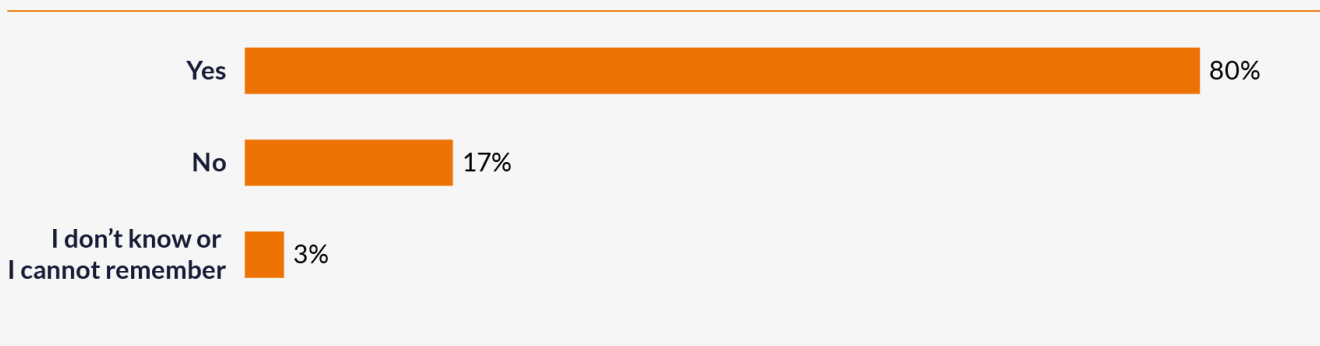
- 17% identified gender stereotypes relating to **personality traits** as those most commonly experienced as a child. These relate to gender stereotypes such as that women and girls are not brave or that men and boys are competitive.
- 11% identified gender stereotypes relating to **physical appearance** as those most commonly heard or experienced as a child.
- Gender stereotypes relating to **leadership and decision making** both in the home and more widely—such as that men make better leaders than women—were most commonly experienced by 11% of the women entrepreneurs who responded to our survey.
- Finally, gender stereotypes relating to **occupational or educational choices**—for example that girls shouldn't be as educated as boys or that men should be soldiers or doctors—were experienced most commonly by 9% of respondents.

1.4 The Influences on Career Choices and Journeys to Entrepreneurship

Key finding: women reported receiving equal encouragement and opportunities to study to their male siblings and peers, yet the opinions of family play a significant role in career choices.

Parents and wider family play an important role in shaping children's educational and career choices and opportunities through a system of expectations, values, attitudes and opportunities that they convey to children.

In my early years, I was given the same opportunities and encouragement for studying and education as male siblings / relatives / friends / classmates



- One of the most positive findings arising from our survey is that nearly four in five women (79%) reported that they were given the same



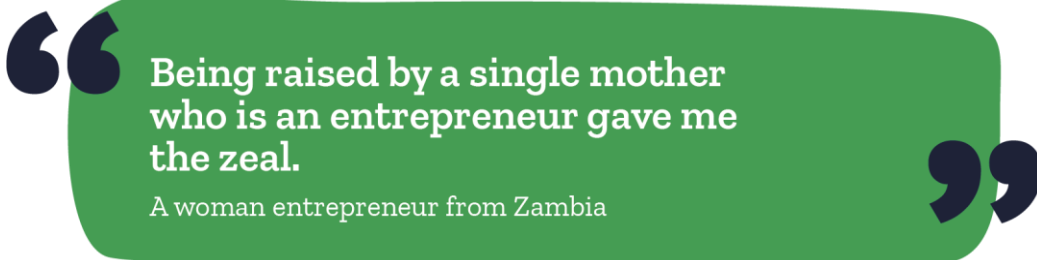
opportunities and encouragement for studying as their male siblings, relatives, friends or classmates.

- 17% told us that they were not given the same opportunities and encouragement as their male counterparts.
- 3% didn't remember or know whether this was the case or not.

As part of the survey, the Foundation also sought to identify whether the opinions of family, teachers or friends affected the choice of career for women responding to our survey.

- 56% responded that social approval or disapproval of different careers by family members, teachers, friends or other influential figures in their life played a role in their choice of career.
- 36% responded the social approval or disapproval of the family members, teachers, friends or other influential figures didn't have an impact at all.
- 8% responded that they didn't know, or they cannot remember whether this was the case or not.

1.5 The Power of Women Entrepreneurs as Role Models in Childhood



Knowing and seeing women working as entrepreneurs can inspire others to follow in their footsteps. Research indicates that having role models in areas where women are underrepresented can help to address gender barriers affecting women's career choices by encouraging the participation of women in the underrepresented sectors and roles.¹⁰

In our survey, we asked women entrepreneurs to respond to the following statement: “In my early years, I knew of at least one woman entrepreneur who was running her own business.”

- Most respondents (70%) reported knowing a woman entrepreneur when they were children whilst 22% reported that they didn't know of any women entrepreneurs as children.
- 8% didn't know or couldn't remember whether they knew of any women entrepreneurs in their early years.

1.6 The Lasting Impact of Gender Stereotypes in Childhood

Key finding: the impact of gender stereotypes on women's journeys to entrepreneurship is significant. For instance, nearly half of the women reported that gender stereotypes made them work harder and want to prove people wrong about what they can do.

As part of our survey, we asked women entrepreneurs to tell us how their experiences of gender stereotypes in childhood impacted their ability and aspiration to become an entrepreneur. The impact was significant as these stereotypes made many respondents work harder, undermined their confidence and limited their educational opportunities.

“ I was made to believe that entrepreneurship for women is a hobby, not a serious business. Something that I can do to pass time while simultaneously not compromising on my maternal responsibilities. ”


A woman entrepreneur from India

- Nearly half of the women (48%) reported that gender stereotypes made them work harder and want to prove people wrong about what they can do.
- 35% reported that gender stereotypes experienced in childhood made them feel like they wouldn't be able to run a business on their own.

35%

35% said gender stereotypes experienced in childhood made them feel they couldn't run a business on their own

- 31% said that they struggled to believe in themselves and their ability to run a successful business due to gender stereotypes that limited



their aspirations. At the Foundation our evidence concurs with wider research that self-esteem and confidence is vital to business success for women entrepreneurs. Starting without this belief therefore can only make the journey harder.

- 29% said that they were made to feel like they shouldn't be entering entrepreneurship as a career choice because it would either be too difficult or inappropriate for a woman.
- 15% said that stereotypes meant that they were not able to stay in education or study the subjects they would have liked or that would have helped them as entrepreneurs. Earlier in this report, we can see that most women reported having equal opportunities to education than their male siblings and peers, yet this finding shows that gender stereotypes are shaping the nature and length of the education many women and girls are able to get.
- 22% reported that gender stereotypes they experienced in childhood didn't have an impact on their ability or aspiration to become entrepreneurs.

“ Gender stereotypes blocked the spirit of pioneering in me. I was made to think that there are certain things I cannot do. ”
A woman entrepreneur from Zimbabwe

These findings show that exposure to and experience of gender stereotypes have various short-term and long-term consequences on the lives of many women entrepreneurs. Gender stereotypes can shape how and by whom entrepreneurship happens and what resources, opportunities and career choices are availed to people. Gender stereotypes can restrict how people see and value themselves as they shape how individuals are expected to act, speak and behave.

For women entrepreneurs to be able to fulfil their potential as entrepreneurs, provision of opportunities to boost decision making power and confidence as well as leadership skills remains important. The Foundation provides women entrepreneurs with multiple opportunities for mentoring, business skills development, and leadership and influencing training which have proved impactful to strengthen those critical skills.



“ Gender stereotypes made me wish I was a man.
A woman entrepreneur from Nigeria”

2 Early Years of Entrepreneurship – Tainted by Gender Stereotypes


Early stages of business development and entrepreneurship can be tainted by challenges for women entrepreneurs. Accessing finance remains a key obstacle to women entrepreneurs which undermines the opportunities to start and grow businesses. According to the Foundation’s latest annual audit report published in March 2021, 36% of the 125 women entrepreneurs who responded to the survey reported that lack of access to finance was the main challenge they faced as an entrepreneur. In addition, social expectations and gender stereotypes can shape women’s opportunities as entrepreneurs by limiting access to knowledge and information, access to markets, undermining self-esteem and confidence, and fuelling women’s disproportionate share of unpaid care work on top of their entrepreneurial activities.

“ My dad was excited and supportive, my mum asked me to go and marry.
A woman entrepreneur from Nigeria”

2.1 The Decision to Become an Entrepreneur

Key finding: most commonly, entrepreneurship emerges as a career choice in teenage years or in early adulthood.

As part of our survey, the Foundation sought to learn more about the early stages of entrepreneurship and the ways families, colleagues and friends responded to women’s first intentions to start running businesses.



The findings show that most women decided to run their own business when they were either late teenagers or in their early adulthood.

- 41% of respondents said that they first considered running their own businesses between ages of 15-25 and 36% when they were 26-35 years. Therefore nearly 80% consider entrepreneurship before 35 years of age.
- Only 5% first considered running their own business when they were under 15 years and only 17% when they were aged 36 or older.

We also asked women entrepreneurs how old they were when they started running their first business.


- 7% of respondents reported starting their first business when they were under 18 years old whilst 27% reported starting their first business when they were 18-25.
- 41% started their first business aged 26-35 and 19% reported starting their first business aged 36-45.
- Only 6% started their first business after the age of 46.

2.2 Early Support and Encouragement for Women Entrepreneurs

Key finding: around half of the women entrepreneurs received supportive and encouraging reactions from family, friends and colleagues to their plans to start a business, but a significant number faced either opposition or concern or did not tell others about their plans in the first place.

Individual choices to become entrepreneurs can be influenced and shaped by reactions from family members. Thus, we asked women entrepreneurs what the primary reaction from close family was when they first informed them of their plans to start a business.

- More than half (51%) of respondents received a supportive and encouraging reaction from their close family members when they first told them of their plans to start a business.
- Yet, there is another, bleaker side to the picture as well: 18% of the respondents didn't tell their family members about their plans to start a business as they were concerned how family members would react.

- 
- 15% reported that their close family members were concerned whilst 10% reported that their family members opposed the idea.

“My brothers were supportive but it was really difficult for my mum to accept it and still difficult for my husband.
A woman entrepreneur from Nigeria”

The first reactions to women’s entrepreneurial plans from friends and colleagues seem to be very similar to those from close family.

- 49% of respondents reported that the primary reaction from their friends and colleagues was support and encouragement.
- 17% said they didn’t tell their friends and colleagues due to being concerned about how they would react.
- 18% reported that the primary reaction from friends and colleagues was concern.
- 12% said that friends and colleagues opposed the idea.

3 Expressions of Gender Stereotypes

“Someone told me that women would not last long in the business as we like to spend.
A woman entrepreneur from Brazil”

As part of our survey, we were keen to learn more about how gender stereotypes are expressed through early stages of entrepreneurship to where the women entrepreneurs’ businesses stand today. Prevailing entrepreneurial models and entrepreneurial ecosystems often favour men and are shaped by gender stereotypes about who can and can’t be a successful entrepreneur.

For this reason, we asked women entrepreneurs to tell us whether they had experienced or heard certain gender stereotypes relating to their businesses. We also asked them to identify the source of this gender stereotype or discriminatory remark and tell us whether it was heard or experienced from family members or friends, business acquaintances, potential investors, customers or staff members. The results, while not unexpected, are concerning in terms of the prevalence and origins of a

range of gender stereotypes that impact the perceptions about women entrepreneurs' capabilities, their perceived gender roles and the intersections with other assumptions about what it means to be a woman.

3.1 Background Social Context for Women Entrepreneurs

Key finding: nearly half of respondents felt that women don't have equal opportunities as entrepreneurs in their country. Over half felt that institutions relevant for entrepreneurs in their countries are biased in favour of men.

Our survey sought to understand better women entrepreneurs' own perceptions of the state of gender equality and gender roles in their countries or communities to offer some background context of their everyday life experiences.

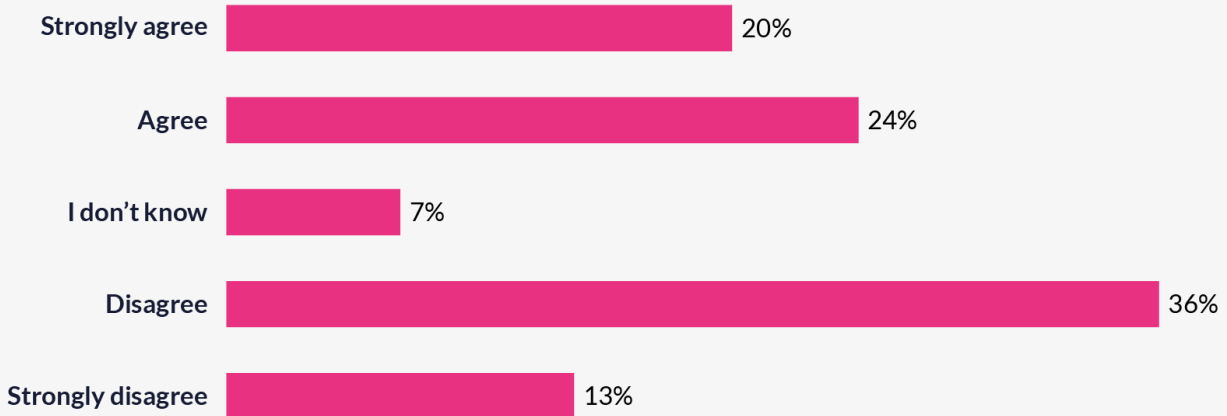
49%

Nearly half felt that women don't have equal opportunities as entrepreneurs in their country

We asked women their views on the statement "Women and men have equal opportunities as entrepreneurs in my country."

- Nearly half of the respondents (49%) disagreed with the statement overall, with 36% responding that they disagree and 13% saying that they strongly disagree.
- 44% agreed with this statement overall, with 20% responding that they strongly agree and 24% responding that they agree.
- 7% answered that they did not know.

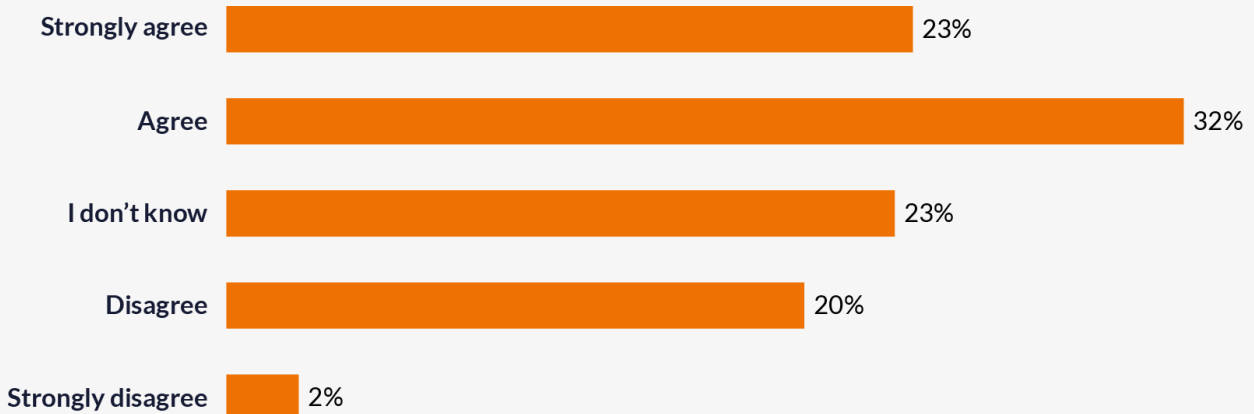
Women and men have equal opportunities as entrepreneurs in my country



We also asked women entrepreneurs their views on whether institutions and networks relevant for entrepreneurs—such as banks, financial institutions and business associations—in their countries are biased in favour of men.

- 55% either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.
- 22% said they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.
- 23% reported that they didn't know.

Institutions and networks relevant for entrepreneurs – such as banks, financial institutions and business associations – in my country are biased in favor of men



3.2 Stereotypes as Everyday Life Experiences

Key finding: nearly all women had directly experienced gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes are commonly heard and experienced by women entrepreneurs as a part of everyday life.

- 96% of the women entrepreneurs responding to the Foundation's survey reported that they had experienced or heard gender stereotypes in their life.
- 42% reported that they experienced gender stereotypes very often whilst 39% responded they have experienced gender stereotypes occasionally.
- 15% said that they had only experienced gender stereotypes very rarely whilst 4% had never heard or experienced gender stereotypes.

96%

96% have experienced or heard gender stereotypes in their life

3.3 Division of Unpaid Labour

Key finding: gender stereotypes relating to the division of labour at home and childcare are particularly pertinent for women entrepreneurs.

In our previous reports and engagement with women entrepreneurs, women have regularly raised the issue of the gender stereotypes around childcare and family duties. For instance, in our annual audit report published in March 2021¹¹, 53% of the respondents had experienced the gender stereotype from family members that women should prioritise domestic duties such as caring for their children. The UN High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment found that unpaid care is one of the biggest barriers to women's economic empowerment.¹² Our research focussed on women entrepreneurs concurs with this. The global community has committed to recognise and value the unpaid care through the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal Target 5.4 which highlights the critical importance of addressing unpaid care work for the realisation of gender equality more widely.



“ I was told that what I was asking was too much for a woman-led business. ”
A woman entrepreneur from Fiji

Further exacerbating this structural barrier, the global pandemic has led to an increase of unpaid care work due to lockdowns and other COVID-19 related restrictions including home schooling and increasing amount of care at home for the sick and elderly. Across the globe, this increased unpaid care work has been disproportionately shouldered by women. The value of unpaid care work was estimated to be a huge USD \$10.8 trillion even before the pandemic.¹³

In our new survey, we explored further these gender norms around the division of labour at home and expectations of women in the area of unpaid care work and childcare.

- Almost half (49%) of respondents told us that their family members or friends have told them to focus more on family or children.
- 8% had heard this comment from business acquaintances, 7% from customers, and 6% from investors, funders or banks.
- 4% had heard the comment from their own staff members.
- Most positively, 44% of the women had never heard this comment.

49%

Almost half had family members or friends tell them to focus more on family or children

3.4 Discriminatory Views about Women's Abilities

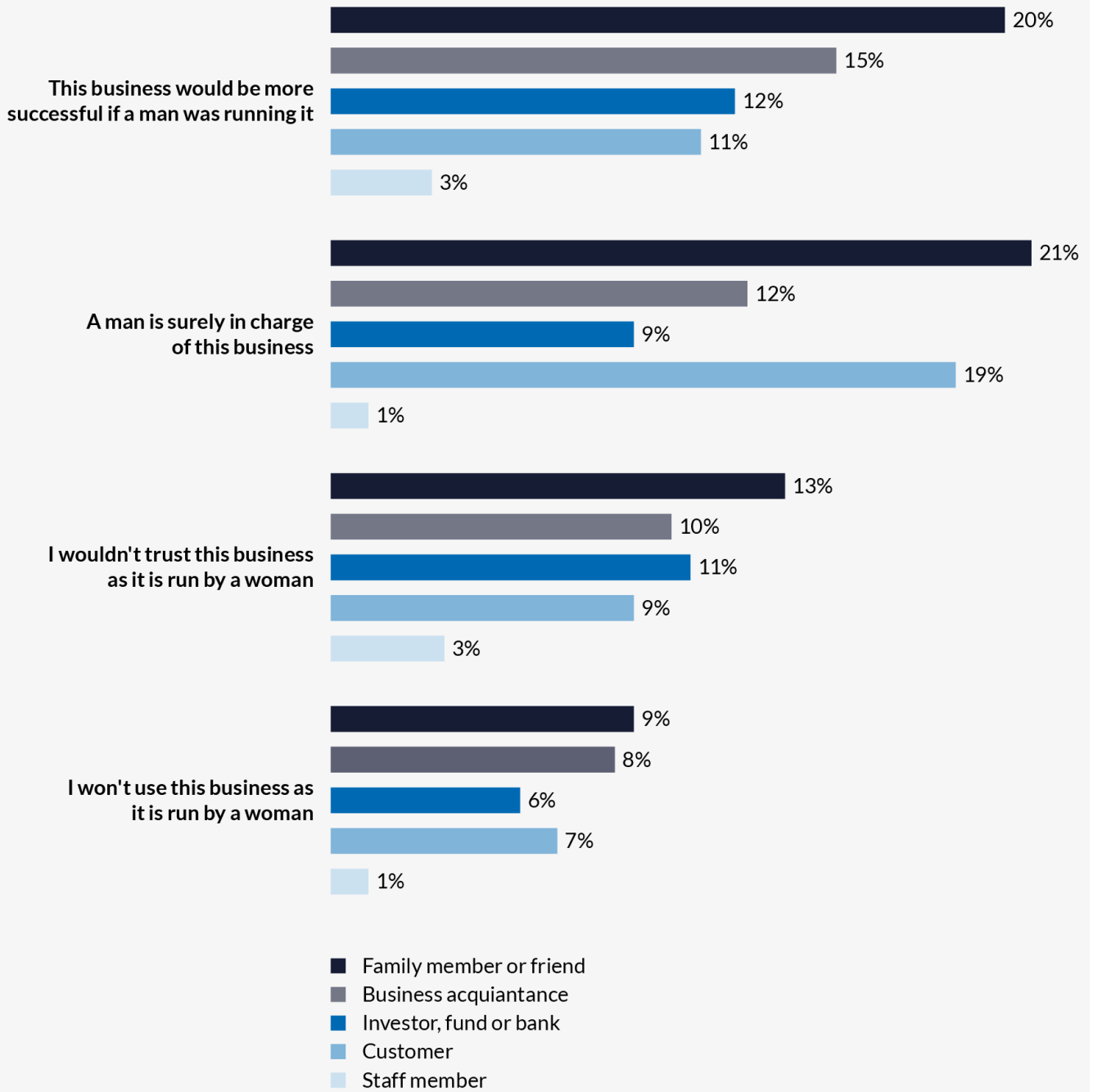
Key finding: suspicions about women-owned businesses are still a challenge experienced by some women entrepreneurs.

We asked women entrepreneurs about several specific stereotypical remarks that relate to negative perceptions of women-owned businesses,



as in the figure below. The answers reveal that these are still a reality faced by a significant minority of women entrepreneurs responding to the survey.

Have you ever heard or experienced any of the following gender stereotypes and, if so, what was the source of the gender stereotype?





4 The Impact of Gender Stereotypes on Women's Businesses

Gender stereotypes can affect both women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ecosystems as a whole in multiple ways. They reinforce barriers for women to reach their full potential in various areas of their lives, including in entrepreneurship and economic participation. Gender stereotypes affect individuals, conditions, institutions and resources that enable entrepreneurship to flourish as they shape opportunities, access to resources and knowledge and skills, perceptions and aspirations.

As part of our survey, the Foundation sought to gather more information about the reported impact of gender stereotypes on women entrepreneurs' lives and businesses.

4.1 Gender Stereotypes Negatively Affect Women's Entrepreneurship

Key finding: gender stereotypes have an impact on most women's work as entrepreneurs though do not affect all respondents to the same extent.

We asked women entrepreneurs whether they think gender stereotypes have negatively affected their work as an entrepreneur. Overall, 70% said that gender stereotypes have negatively affected their work as an entrepreneur at least a little bit.

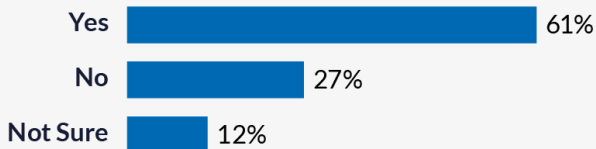
- The most common answer to this question was that gender stereotypes had negatively affected their work as entrepreneurs to some extent: 31% of respondents said this.
- 28% said they had done so a little bit.
- 11% said they had done so significantly.
- 30% of respondents reported that gender stereotypes had not affected their work as an entrepreneurs at all.

We asked respondents to identify how gender stereotypes impact specific areas of their businesses and future aspirations as entrepreneurs. The findings show that:

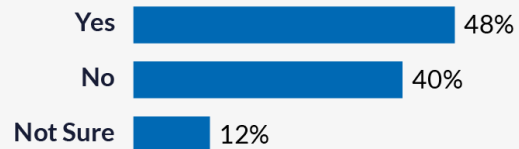
- 63% believe that gender stereotypes affect how seriously they are taken as business owners.
- 61% believe that gender stereotypes impact their business growth.
- 53% said gender stereotypes affect how confident they are in the future of their businesses.
- 49% said they believe that gender stereotypes affect profitability.

Do you believe that gender stereotypes around what women can achieve and the roles they should play in society and business environments impact...

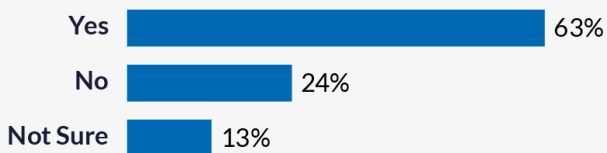
... how big you think you can grow your business?



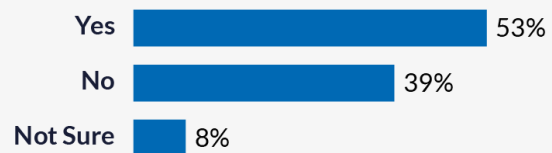
... how profitable your business is?



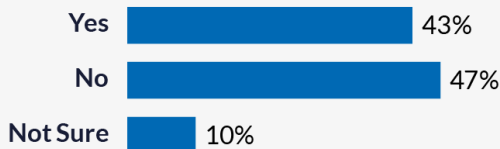
... how seriously people take you as a business owner?



... how confident you are in the future success of your business?



... whether you want to keep your business running?



4.2 A Barrier to Accessing Finance

Key finding: nearly a quarter of the women entrepreneurs had experienced gender stereotypes or discriminatory remarks whilst trying to access finance for their business.

“ My friend who acted as angel investor was telling me that he has doubts on investing in woman founders because usually women are not that good at managing business. ”
A woman entrepreneur from Indonesia

Access to finance remains the foremost challenge that the women entrepreneurs in contact with the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women report experiencing. For instance, only 16% of respondents to our 2020 annual audit survey reported that they had secured an investment or a loan from banks, whilst just 6% had been able to access a business loan from a financial services company.¹⁴

In this study focusing on gender stereotypes, we wanted to explore whether women entrepreneurs had directly experienced gender stereotypes or discriminatory remarks on the grounds of gender whilst trying to access finance.

- It's concerning that nearly a quarter of the women (23%) reported that they had experienced gender stereotypes or discriminatory remarks on the grounds of gender whilst trying to access finance.
- 15% reported they were not sure.
- 62% reported that they had not. This is higher than we expected based on previous evidence but may be linked to the relatively small number of survey responders.

“ In the early stages when the business was starting and didn't have the 'numbers' (economics, social media, sales, etc.) they saw it was primarily a woman (me) making all the decisions, they hesitated and suggested I have more men in my team. ”
A woman entrepreneur from Colombia



Intersecting Stereotypes

Key finding: gender stereotypes intersect with other stereotypes that affect women's opportunities in entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries are a hugely diverse and heterogenous group whose identities and realisations of rights are shaped by various intersectional factors such as age, ethnicity, race, disability, social class, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status and geographical location. They face different stereotypes based on the intersection of these factors and some groups and individuals are disproportionately affected by the intersection of stereotypes and discrimination on the grounds of various factors.

We asked women entrepreneurs to tell us what factors affected the stereotypes or discrimination they faced that undermined their ability or opportunities as entrepreneurs. Gender was the most common factor, with 54% saying this. This was followed by 37% saying age, 29% social class, 22% ethnicity, 15% race, 15% faith or belief background, 7% sexual orientation or gender identity¹⁵, and 4% disability. Only 15% of respondents reported having never experienced discrimination or stereotypes as entrepreneurs based on any of the above factors.


Other factors that individual respondents mentioned as a ground for discrimination or stereotypes included civil status, mental health issues and nationality.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Experiences of Gender Stereotypes

Key finding: the COVID-19 pandemic has affected gender stereotypes and unequal divisions of labour in different ways.

“ COVID-19 has broken the stereotype of who should be the breadwinner. It has opened opportunity for every gender but without active awareness on the struggles of women in business in the Pacific, this will all be an uphill battle always. ”

A woman entrepreneur from Fiji



The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated gender inequality across the world. The impact of the pandemic on domestic duties and responsibilities has been significant, with it being widely reported that women are bearing the brunt of additional childcare, domestic and other household responsibilities.¹⁶ This highly gendered global trend is reflected in our recent annual audit research ¹⁷ in which 78% of the women responding reported that the pandemic had a gendered impact on the roles and responsibilities in their household.

During the pandemic, women and girls have been more likely than men to take on additional roles of childcare and home schooling or serve as caregivers for the sick and elderly. Consequently, they have had less time for paid work such as running their business, education or career advancement, which reinforces economic inequalities.

“ Much of the care work/responsibilities become the sole responsibility for women. This makes it harder for women to participate in economic activities that will benefit them and their families. ”
A woman entrepreneur from South Africa

The respondents to our gender stereotypes survey were asked to explain in their own words whether the COVID-19 pandemic has affected gender stereotypes and gender roles in their own family, community or country.

- Of the 129 women who responded to this open-ended question, 67% indicated in their answers that COVID-19 had affected gender stereotypes and gender roles in their family, community or country.
- The analysis of open responses from 23% demonstrated that COVID-19 had not affected the gender roles or had done it to a lesser extent.
- 10% were not sure or were not clear in their answers whether the pandemic had affected the gender roles in their own family, community or country.

Whilst looking more carefully at the answers to this open-ended question, it is clear that the impact of COVID-19 on gender roles was rather mixed. Many respondents highlight the pandemic's negative impact on women, captured vividly by one woman entrepreneur who said that 'the pandemic has been a crushing blow to a majority of women whether at home, in the workplace or in business'. Many also raised concerns about the increased unpaid care work and domestic responsibilities during lockdowns.

67%

67% said COVID-19 affected gender stereotypes and gender roles in their family, community or country

Yet, some respondents also highlighted that the pandemic has required men and women to revise the views or practices around division of labour as more women have been forced into work to meet the financial demands of the family.

It is evident from the answers that women continue to be responsible for the majority of domestic work in the midst of the pandemic. But some answers also indicate that there have been changes in attitudes towards women's entrepreneurship. This was captured by a woman entrepreneur from Fiji who said that 'Now that more people are being laid off work, men have been more accepting of women entrepreneurs mainly because they are earning money for the family'.

“ COVID-19 pandemic affected gender roles in my family in the sense that my husband lost his job and I had to take up the responsibility of providing the home needs. ”
A woman entrepreneur from Nigeria

5 What Would Encourage Women to Start Their Own Businesses?

Deeply entrenched challenges within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, often rooted in gender stereotypes, continue to stymie women entrepreneurs' ability to start and sustain successful businesses. Progress towards fully empowering women entrepreneurs remains too slow. As this report has highlighted, gender stereotypes often affect women's journeys to entrepreneurship and undermine their confidence, access to resources, access to knowledge and skills, opportunities and motivations to set up and sustain successful businesses.

“The prevalence of gender stereotypes is why there is a push for women's economic freedom and gender equality in business. Women are also fighting for equal pay. Patriarchy and cultural and ethnic norms hold women back from participating equally in business. Also corruption has hampered the progress of women in business.”

A woman entrepreneur from South Africa

In order to address gender stereotypes faced by women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries, it is vital to understand their views on what could help and support them along their journey to entrepreneurship.

Suggestions From Women Entrepreneurs

Key finding: encouraging women to start, sustain and grow their businesses requires a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem and increasing visibility of successful women entrepreneurs.

We asked women entrepreneurs what things, besides practical support such as finance and mentoring, would have further encouraged them to start their own business.



- 72% said that a more **supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem** would have encouraged them to start their own businesses. This is an important call for policy makers and the private sector alike to work with women entrepreneurs to shape and influence the organisations, institutions, processes and practices that form the space for businesses to operate.

68%

68% said seeing more successful women entrepreneurs in adverts and TV or on social media would have encouraged them to start businesses

- According to 68%, seeing **more successful women entrepreneurs represented in adverts and TV or on social media** would have encouraged them to start their own business. This illustrates the powerful role media can play in shaping gender stereotypes and norms and increasing women's visibility. The work with media in the area of gender stereotypes remains critical especially given the concerning findings from recent analysis by the Unstereotype Alliance and Kantar¹⁸ focusing on advertising. This found that progressive depictions of women in advertising have actually slowed down during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 64% responded that living in a **society that looks up to and supports women entrepreneurs** would have further encouraged them. This finding has been shared by previous studies on women's leadership. For instance, the regional study from the Wilson Center on women's leadership in the Middle East and North Africa showed the importance of promoting women's leadership through policies in the labour force such as affordable childcare support. In the interviews conducted with women leaders in the region, almost every respondent stressed the importance of providing support for women with familial responsibilities¹⁹.
- 58% said that **seeing more women in leadership positions** in their own community or country would have further encouraged them to start their own business. This is reflective of the lack of women's access to leadership positions and their visibility as leaders globally. According to recent UN Women data it will take another 130 years until gender equality at the top leadership level will be achieved.²⁰ This draws attention to the importance of increased political commitment and the need to create more gender-balanced political environments to increase women's access to leadership positions at all levels.



- As highlighted earlier in this report, the women entrepreneurs responding to this survey had experienced gender stereotypes most commonly from their family members and friends. Thus, it is sensible that further support from family would help women entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurship journey. In our survey, 48% reported that having **more supportive family or friends** would have further encouraged them to start their own business.
- Also, 37% responded that more support from teachers to study relevant subjects would have helped them.
- 8% responded that there wasn't anything that would have further encouraged them to start their own business.



Calls for Action

This section includes recommendations addressing all stakeholders—national governments and public institutions, private sector stakeholders including financial providers and banks, multilateral institutions and civil society—on ways to tackle gender stereotypes that are affecting women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries.

The proposed recommendations are based on the feedback from women entrepreneurs, our organisational experience and track record of working with women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries, and numerous informal conversations with other actors working in the sphere of women's economic empowerment. A light literature review has also informed the development of these recommendations.

Tackling Gender Stereotypes is a Shared Problem

Evidently, tackling gender stereotypes relating to entrepreneurship requires hard work in multiple areas. These include education, media, and the general entrepreneurial ecosystem with all its institutions, policies, processes and practices that interconnect and form the space for businesses to operate.

That is why the work to tackle gender stereotypes should involve multiple stakeholders. These stakeholders should recognise gender stereotypes as a root cause for much of the discrimination that women—and women entrepreneurs—face and understand their serious impact on the lives of women entrepreneurs.

We encourage readers to consider how they can take action based on these recommendations, to share them widely and to encourage others to do the same.

We Can Each Personally Make a Difference

The work to tackle gender stereotypes must start with individuals and it is an area in which we all have work to do. We encourage readers to self-reflect and identify the ways in which gender stereotypes shape their own views and practices.

This personal reflection should aim to:

- Increase self-awareness of our own biases, stereotypes and values, and how these influence our actions and engagement with other people.
- Better understand the opportunities we each have to promote gender equality and tackle gender stereotypes both in personal and professional life.
- Create concrete personal commitments on tackling gender stereotypes, for instance by questioning the gendered division of labour within our own families and workplaces, or being a voice in our own homes, workplaces and communities to push for concrete action to tackle gender stereotypes.

“Someone told me the fact that you are female means you won't have the stomach to accept certain business trends such as pricing and competition. Leave it to men who know their way around.”

A woman entrepreneur from Zambia

Policy Recommendations

Key recommendation 1: increase understanding of the ways gender stereotypes shape women entrepreneurs' lives, including entrepreneurship, economic participation, division of unpaid care work and empowerment.

1.1 Start with learning. Explore and increase your personal and your organisational understanding of how gender stereotypes affect women's journeys to entrepreneurship and ensure intersectional analysis of the challenges women face whilst working as entrepreneurs.



- 1.2 Start conversations.** Be part of, facilitate and provide platforms for action-oriented policy conversations about women's leadership and empowerment, entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, and the importance of deconstructing gender stereotypes in these areas. Listen to women entrepreneurs and ensure that their voice is fully included in these conversations.
- 1.3 Pinpoint the problems and root causes.** As gender stereotypes in entrepreneurship remain an underexplored area, undertake further research on how gender stereotypes impact and fuel the gender gap in entrepreneurship and bring forward successful practices to tackle gender stereotypes. Further research is particularly needed to focus on how gender stereotypes shape and influence the values and actions of different actors within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- 1.4 Disaggregate data.** What gets measured gets addressed. Gather data disaggregated by gender and other intersecting factors that fuel discrimination in economic participation and entrepreneurship. Include questions about gender roles, gender stereotypes and biases as part of wider programmatic and other data gathering. Use this data to increase understanding of how gender stereotypes and social norms shape entrepreneurship, to inform relevant policy-making processes, programmes and other initiatives. This means recognising that deconstructing gender stereotypes can take a long time, so it is important to ensure long-term commitment to this work.

Key recommendation 2: raise awareness about gender stereotypes—particularly how they shape the realisation of rights and equal opportunities such as those related to economic participation and entrepreneurship. Campaign and advocate with others to deconstruct gender stereotypes and promote gender equality.

- 2.1 Initiate targeted awareness raising.** Provide public support and funding to programmes and campaigns targeting the elimination of gender stereotypes, for example through advocacy and awareness raising campaigns. As the Foundation works with women entrepreneurs, we urge stakeholders to support and devise campaigns that tackle gender stereotypes in career orientation and those embedded in entrepreneurial ecosystems and in entrepreneurship.
- 2.2 Promote role models.** Showcase and celebrate successful women entrepreneurs and their work through media and other communication channels to increase the visibility of women entrepreneurs' contribution to the economy, their communities and families and to promote their rights. Use hooks such as the Global Entrepreneurship Week in November, Women Entrepreneurship Day on 19th November,



International Women's Day 8th March, or the annual Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises Day on 27th June to highlight the tremendous contributions, resilience and work of successful women entrepreneurs across the world.

2.3 Demonstrate your leadership and commitment to gender equality.

Strengthen high-level advocacy efforts – both alone and with others – and policy commitments to tackle stereotypes affecting gender equality in entrepreneurship and women's economic empowerment.

2.4 Advocate for the implementation of laws, policies and programmes to tackle gender stereotypes. Urge different stakeholders at the national and local level, both in public and private sectors, to implement policies, laws and programmes that promote gender equality, eliminate gender stereotypes and promote gender balance in entrepreneurship.

Key recommendation 3: Take concrete measures to prevent and eliminate gender stereotypes and their negative impacts, both in private and public spheres.

3.1 Establish policies, goals and targets to tackle gender stereotypes. We

encourage the private sector and other stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem to learn about the ways in which gender stereotypes affect their work at different levels and establish policies, goals and targets as to how they seek to address these challenges. These initiatives should also be complemented with the establishment of accountability mechanisms to ensure that the implementation of the initiatives will be effectively monitored.

3.2 Support skills for empowerment. Design, promote and support programmes that support women entrepreneurs in their journey to entrepreneurship and help to mitigate the challenges they face that are rooted in gender discrimination and stereotypes. These initiatives can include mentoring and training programmes for women entrepreneurs—such as those facilitated by the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women—which help to increase business management skills, grow women's business networks and strengthen confidence and leadership skills. In order to have a sustained change, it is important to invest both in technical or 'hard' skills as well as 'soft' skills relating to leadership, communication and influencing opportunities. Explore how and when to bring in boys and men to support and champion training and wider work.

3.3 Address gender stereotypes in education. Our survey highlights that gender stereotypes prevail in many educational settings. We welcome



the positive finding of this report that many women reported equal opportunities and encouragement to education when they were young. Yet, it remains critical to ensure that educational materials are free from any stereotypes, and that children and young people are exposed to a diversity of roles for all genders and are actively encouraged to reject and challenge gender stereotypes. We urge all stakeholders to put in place initiatives to engage with young people to promote diverse and progressive choices in career orientation and to encourage and support aspiring young women entrepreneurs in the early stages of their entrepreneurship careers.

3.4 Promote and enable shared care. Recognise and redistribute women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work through adoption of gender-intentional policies, social protection systems and support packages that promote shared domestic responsibilities. Support campaigns and programmes that seek to challenge stereotypes relating to domestic division of labour and unpaid care work and promote progressive and diverse participation and roles for women and men in both private and public spheres. Concrete policies and programmes to provide childcare to allow women to participate more effectively remain critical.

3.5 Implement existing laws and policies. There is a legal normative framework to address gender stereotypes embedded in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We make a strong global call for governments across the world to step up the work to eliminate gender stereotypes. We call upon the governments and all stakeholders to strengthen the implementation of existing laws and policies contributing towards elimination of gender stereotypes and where needed, create new laws, policies and practices in this area.

3.6 Dismantle gender stereotypes in media. This report draws attention to the powerful role media can have in fuelling—or deconstructing—gender stereotypes. Thus, addressing this remains critical and we urge media organisations to increase gender-sensitive and gender-transformative content and progressive depictions of a diversity of people and their roles in society—especially women, to stop objectifying representations of women and girls, and to celebrate and raise visibility of the work of women and women entrepreneurs in particular.

3.7 Adapt ways of working and share best practice. Identify best practices to address gender stereotypes and learn and adapt successful models and approaches to your organisation's work. Furthermore, increase sharing and exchange of these best practices to deconstruct gender stereotypes in entrepreneurship. Capturing and presenting



these best practices in a public, centralised manner could help different stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem to find effective tools and approaches for this work.

3.8 Listen to and work with women entrepreneurs. The work to address gender stereotypes should include consultation with and support to women's rights organisations and associations and organisations representing women entrepreneurs. We also urge all stakeholders to be intentional in consulting and strengthening engagement and business and other interactions with women entrepreneurs.

3.9 Engage men and boys. As part of the work around tackling gender norms and gender stereotypes, recognise that they often have a harmful impact on men, boys and people of all genders as well, especially those who do not conform to prevailing perceptions of masculinity and gender norms.



Conclusion:

The Time to Tackle Gender Stereotypes in Entrepreneurship is Now

This report, based on the responses of 221 women entrepreneurs in 42 low and middle income countries, provides much-needed initial analysis on the ways in which gender stereotypes shape women's journeys to entrepreneurship and affect their lives more widely.

The survey responses of women entrepreneurs show that deep-rooted gender stereotypes emerge early and create different obstacles undermining their opportunities and ability to start and grow their businesses. According to the World Economic Forum, at the current rate of change it will be 268 years before we close the economic gender gap—66 years longer than the 2019 estimate.²¹ Strengthened efforts to tackle gender stereotypes are urgently needed to make progress in increasing the economic participation of women and women's entrepreneurship. This is first and foremost an issue of gender justice and women's rights as recognised by the global community with the adoption of articles 5 and 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), focusing on elimination of gender stereotypes.

It is also a critical issue because of the significant positive role that women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship has on communities, families and economies at large. For instance, according to the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's research with the Boston Consulting Group in 2019, up to \$5 trillion could be added to the global economy if we closed the gender gap in entrepreneurship.²²

Gender stereotypes and their impact on women entrepreneurs hasn't received the attention it requires. Our research shows that they affect most women entrepreneurs responding to our survey in a number of ways.



With this report, the Foundation seeks to initiate wider conversations about how gender stereotypes affect the lives of women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries. We recognise that this area needs further research. We need to ensure that in addition to the critical first step of hearing women entrepreneurs' voices through research such as this survey, we also need to undertake further research to understand how gender stereotypes shape and influence the practices of different stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. This is important as many women reported that a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem would have encouraged them to start their own businesses.

Addressing gender stereotypes in entrepreneurship will be a difficult and long process but one which will be transformational as it progresses. This work requires long-term, collective action in multiple areas and commitment from individuals and key stakeholders alike shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystems, in close collaboration with women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries and organisations that work with them. Our policy recommendations for the concrete action can be found on page 43 of this report.

The efforts should focus on:


- Increasing understanding of how gender stereotypes shape all of our lives—particularly girls' and women's choices and lives including women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.
- Raising awareness about gender stereotypes and their impact—how they shape realisation of rights and opportunities such as those related to economic participation, unpaid care work and entrepreneurship. This awareness raising work should be complemented by advocacy to challenge stereotypes that hold women back and advocacy and campaigning to promote women's equal economic participation and redistribution of unpaid care work.
- Taking concrete measures and eliminate gender stereotypes and their negative impact both in private and public spheres. This work should focus also on actively promoting women's economic empowerment and to ensuring the that the voice of women and women entrepreneurs is shaping policy processes and discussion in this area.

We firmly believe that just as gender stereotypes are reflected in the actions and engagements of individuals and institutions operating and shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystem, it is these individuals and institutions who have the responsibility to shape and deconstruct the gender stereotypes that hold women (and often men) back.



Endnotes

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- ³ Adapted from UN Women Training Centre. (2020). *Self-Learning Booklet: Understanding Masculinities and Violence Against Women and Girls*. UN Women. [Online]. Available at: www.trainingcentre.unwomen.org/RESOURCES_LIBRARY/Resources_Centre/masculinities%20booklet%20.pdf [Accessed 25 October 2021].
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- ⁶ In our research we referred to 'traditional division of labour', but going forward we will refer to unequal division of labour because we recognize that a traditional division of labour is not necessarily unequal.
- ⁷ Adapted from Chevalier, S. (2012). Material Cultures of Home. In Smith, Susan J. (Ed.) *International Encyclopaedia of Housing and Home*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, pp. 222-230, and Encyclopaedia Britannica (2017). *Division of Labour*. [Online]. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available at: www.britannica.com/topic/division-of-labour. [Accessed 25 October 2021].
- ⁸ UNDP (2020). *Tackling Social Norms, A Game Changer for Gender Inequalities*. UNDP. [Online]. Available at: www.hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hd_perspectives_gsni.pdf [Accessed 6 September 2021].
- ⁹ Martin, C., and Ruble, D. (2004). Children's Search for Gender Cues: Cognitive Perspectives on Gender Development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13(2), in The Fawcett Society



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¹² UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (2016). *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment*. UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.https://www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/empowerwomen/resources/hlp%20briefs/unhlp%20full%20report.pdf?la=en&vs=2916>. [Accessed 25 October 2021].

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¹⁴ Cherie Blair Foundation for Women (2021). *Women Entrepreneurs: Surviving the Pandemic and Beyond - Annual Audit of Women Entrepreneurs in Low and Middle Income Countries*. Cherie Blair Foundation for Women. [Online]. Available at: www.cherieblairfoundation.org/app/uploads/2021/03/cherie-blair-foundation-for-women-annual-audit-2020-report.pdf. [Accessed 13 September 2021].

¹⁵ This report gathered data using sexual orientation and gender identity as a one broad category, as used in current UN discourse (for example: UN Human Rights Council (2019). *Data collection and management as a means to create heightened awareness of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity*. [Online]. Available at www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SexualOrientationGender/Pages/ReportOnData.aspx.) Yet, we recognise that sexual orientation and gender identity are distinctive identity areas of individuals and not the same. As the report from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights explains, gender identity reflects a deeply felt and experienced sense of one's own gender; sexual orientation refers to a person's physical romantic and/or emotional attraction towards other people. (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020). *Born Free and Equal: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristic in International Human Rights Law*. [Online]. Available at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Born_Free_and_Equal_WEB.pdf. [Accessed 7 November 2021].

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