

Driving Female Entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan



5 Dec 2024

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Topics

Methodology, data sources and assumptions

Female entrepreneur baseline and value at stake

Summary of survey insights on barriers to female entrepreneurship

Prioritised interventions to address key barriers to female entrepreneurship

Recap of context and objectives...

The World Bank with supporting partners has identified Uzbekistan to run pilots with as part of the WE Finance Code

These pilots aim at establishing **a fact base and baseline about the barriers and drivers of female entrepreneurship, and consequently identify potential solutions for public and private partners**

In this context, the objectives of this research were to:

- Run the research, including defining right segmentation of businesses and **survey potential and current female entrepreneurs across sub-set of prioritised countries**
- **Run analytics and analyses on the data collected and supplementary research to synthesise findings**
- **Recommend a set of solutions** to drive entrepreneurship for public and private partners

... and agreed approach

To answer these questions, we focused on the following approach and deliverables:

1. **Business segmentation and research insights based on quantitative survey and select ethnographic interviews**, to understand current barriers, decision journey and advantages for female entrepreneurs across selected countries
2. **Economic baseline of the size of the opportunity** to identify value potential of selected initiatives
3. **Insights and analytics on cross-country and in-country findings** to enable the definition of fact-based hypotheses
4. **Recommendations on potential solutions** and actions across selected countries to improve female entrepreneurship throughout

During the engagement, we have leveraged proprietary surveys, reports and entrepreneur interviews, as well as collaborated extensively with in-country teams and McKinsey experts



Data, survey and interviews

~9000

Proprietary survey responses collected and analysed

20

Female entrepreneur interviews completed

60+

Data sources gathered to develop economic baseline and size value at stake

World Bank, OECD, Asian Development Bank, National Statistics Agencies, IFC, WEF, African Development Bank, European Union, VISA



McKinsey experts

19

In-country experts consulted

7

Global policy and political economic experts consulted



Country teams

4

Regional TTLs engaged

16

Country TTLs engaged

25

Working sessions completed

Objectives of the economic baseline and value at stake

The economic baseline and value at stake presented in this paper are estimated figures intended to illustrate the current state of female entrepreneurship in each country and the potential value that could be realized over the next 10 years. These estimates serve as advocacy tool for the bank to promote initiatives aimed at enhancing female entrepreneurship

Economic Baseline:

In establishing the economic baseline, we have included informal businesses (businesses that are not formally registered with government authorities) to ensure a comprehensive representation of female entrepreneurship in each country

However, due to the inherently limited information available on informal sectors, our approach involved using available data where possible. In cases where data was unavailable, we employed reasonable but conservative assumptions, which were triangulated with existing data sources and insights from in-country experts

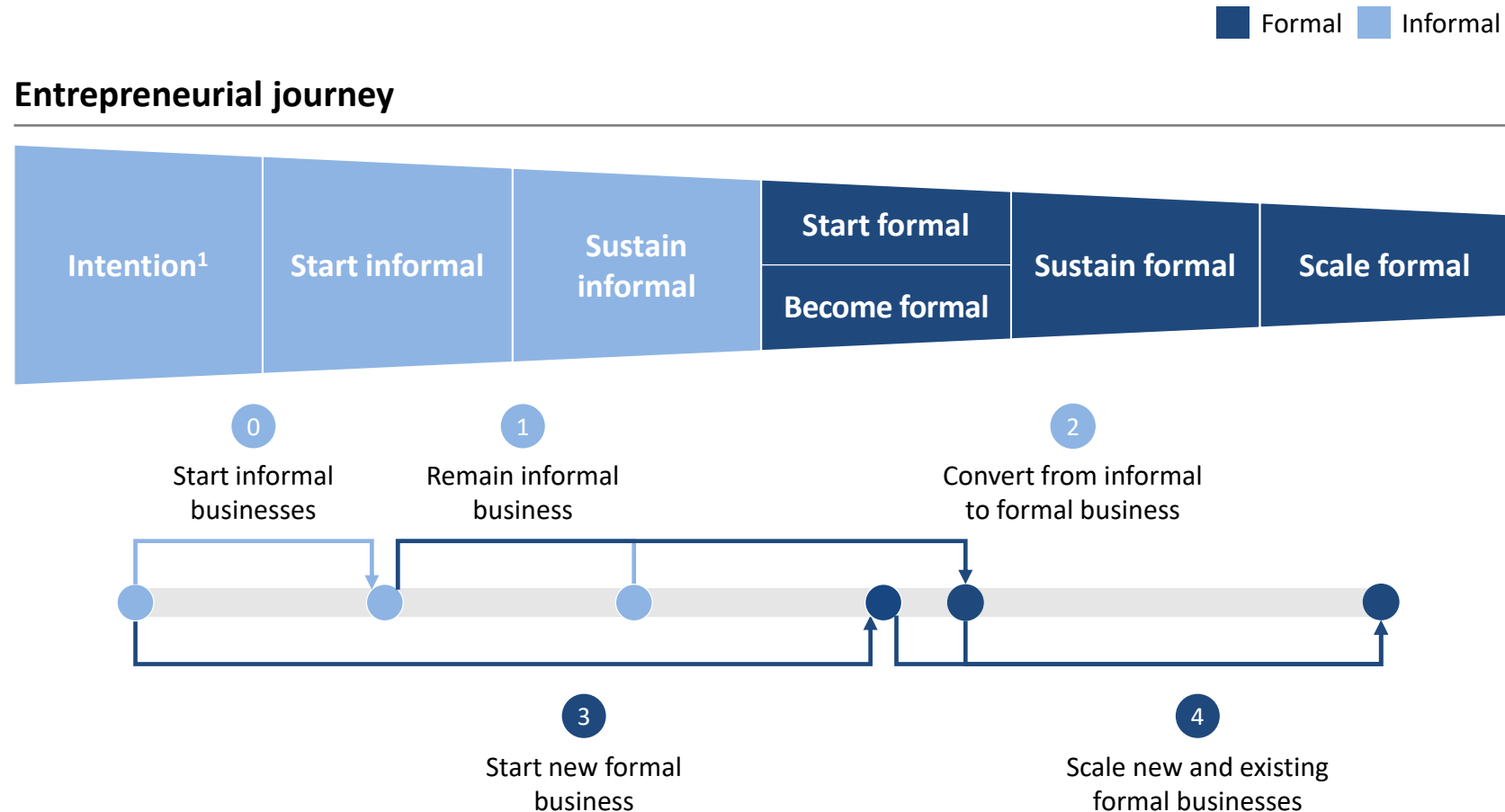
Value at Stake:

The figures representing the value at stake are intended to provide an order of magnitude of the potential economy opportunity over a 10-year period. These values are designed to support the business case and justify the initiatives outlined in the final report. They serve as a means to advocate for necessary changes by demonstrating the significant value that could potentially be achieved

We acknowledge that the numbers presented are not precise and should be interpreted as indicative rather than exact figures. The estimates provided are intended to guide discussions and decision-making processes rather than serve as definitive financial projections

While every effort has been made to ensure credibility, the figures should be viewed as directional insights rather than precise metrics

The value at stake sizes the impact of different paths females take on their entrepreneurial journey



1. Intention of setting up a business in the next 3 years;
2. Running a business that is less than 5 years old;
3. Running a business that is older than 5 years;
4. Running a business with a turnover of >250m UZS per month – regardless of age

Assumption on impact

- 0 **Start informal business**, while we will see businesses starting informal sector, we haven't sized this for value at stake
- 1 **A portion of informal businesses will remain informal**
- 2 **Convert share of informal businesses to formal** increasing their GDP contribution per female-led MSME from benefits of formalization (productivity, revenue and cost improvements)
- 3 **Start new formal female-led MSMEs** on parity with the number of male-led MSMEs
- 4 **Scale new and existing formal businesses** so GDP contribution per female-led MSME on parity with GDP contribution of each male-led MSME

Value at stake estimated from formalising businesses, starting and scaling formal businesses in parity to men

Value add - informal Value add - formal Value loss Value at stake

Drivers	Value at stake	Calculation
Path 0: Start informal business: While we will see businesses starting informal sector, we haven't sized this for value at stake		Not sized
Path 1: Remain informal business: A portion of businesses will remain informal		Not sized
Path 2: Convert informal businesses to formal: Value-add from informal businesses registering leading to increased productivity from support such as access to funding, government support		$\text{Total number of female-led informal MSMEs} \times \text{\% of informal female-led MSMEs that convert to formal} \times \text{Increase in GDP contribution from formalization}$
Path 3: Start new formal businesses: Value-added from creating new female-led businesses (to reach parity with male-led number) operating at current value of women-led businesses		$\# \text{ of new female-led formal MSMEs, by bringing them at par to men} \times \text{Current avg. GDP contribution of formal female MSMEs}$
Path 4: Scale new and existing formal businesses: Value-added from all women-led businesses (new and existing) scaling to produce the same GDP contribution as male-led businesses		$\text{Total number of female-led formal MSMEs} \times \text{Difference in avg. GDP contribution of male and female formal MSMEs} \times \text{\% restriction on scaling due to women's overrepresentation in less productive sectors}$
TOTAL value-added: Value created from women starting and running businesses at the same rate as men		
Cannibalisation (female business owners): Value lost from new female owners no longer participating in their current employment		$\text{Number of new female-led businesses} \times \text{Loss of GDP through cannibalization} \times \text{\% of active working population (female)}$
Cannibalisation (employees): Value lost from employees who are working in new female-led businesses and so no longer participate in their current employment		$\text{Number of new female-led businesses} \times \text{Avg. number of employees per MSME} \times \text{\% of active working population (total)} \times \text{Loss of GDP from cannibalisation}$
Cannibalisation of market share: Value lost from new female-led businesses taking market share from pre-existing businesses		$\text{Value created through growing the business} \times \text{Factor for value that is cannibalized from incumbents}$
TOTAL: Total potential opportunity from women starting and running businesses at the same rate as men		

Key takeaways

- The value at stake methodology for formal businesses is consistent with previous approaches (Rose Review and JPM Review)
- In addition, this approach sizes the value-add from converting a share of informal businesses to formal businesses due to the significant informal sector contribution to economy
- Value add is measured by increase in GDP contribution which driven by two factors:
 - Number of female-led businesses
 - Scale (GDP per businesses) including productivity, revenue and cost
- Value loss is estimated from cannibalisation (from both the labour market and commercial markets that these business operate)
- New and remaining informal businesses are recognised but not sized

Scope and purpose of the survey

We conducted two surveys: (1) Non-entrepreneur survey and (2) Entrepreneur survey

- 1) **Non-entrepreneurship survey** focuses on barriers women face to start a business
- 2) **Entrepreneurship survey:** focuses on existing entrepreneurs and their barriers they face to sustain and scale their businesses, as well as the potential interventions they would find helpful

The survey **deep dives into four topics:** Funding, Skills, Professional support networks and Balancing personal commitments

A 90% confidence interval has been employed to assess the significance between variables (e.g., women and men)

The survey insights were also **triangulated** through **female entrepreneur interviews, existing literature** and **in-country experts**

We have worked with the World Bank teams including, We-Fi secretariat, Segmentation team (including CCX) and Enterprise survey teams **to align on survey questions, segmentation, and answer responses**

Survey methodology

Online distribution methodology has been used to run surveys among entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs.

Survey data has been collected using four distribution channels: a) online consumer panels¹; b) specialised b2b panels²; c) social media recruitment via Facebook and Instagram³; d) phone interviews

The **benefits of our sampling approach** are:

- 1) **Global consistency:** every participant responds to the same materials (in their local language)
- 2) **Lack of bias created by local providers** in selecting and recruiting participants
- 3) **Lack of bias in interviewing/suggesting** certain answers to consumers
- 4) **Short fieldwork and data processing time**

The sampling approach is based on **convenience sampling** (a non-probability sampling method with participants selection is based on their availability and ease of access).

On average, **~250 responses** have been collected per market, with a **min of 100 responses per gender** to ensure the validity of the analysis. Any **statistically significant differences between women and men have been highlighted**, based on a 90% confidence interval.

To minimise sampling bias, **quotas has been introduced** to ensure representation of **different sub-groups** of population across gender, age, region and socio-economic status, as well as business size and type of business.

Sampling has been **overweighed towards larger businesses** (small to mid-size), and **formal businesses**; with **informal businesses being on average ~25% of sample size** (Informal businesses have been identified based Question asked. Is your business registered with government authorities?; and triangulated with other questions e.g., How hard or easy was the process of registering your business?)

1. Online databases of consumers collected by global platforms such as Dynata, TGM, Borderless Access
2. Online databases of employees/business owners collected by global platforms such as IRB, TGM, Borderless Access
3. Facilitated by global providers (Potloc)

The survey approach has been designed to **provide globally comparable learnings in fast and approachable way**

While reviewing the results, please, be aware of the following limitations:

- 1) Bias towards **online active population**
- 2) Bias towards more **urban population** (that has been balanced by quota)
- 3) Bias towards **more formal businesses** (balanced by min quota on informal)
- 4) Bias towards more entrepreneurs in **services and IT** sectors
- 5) **No quotas have been put on industries** so there is possibility of bias towards certain industries in the sample

The survey responses were also **triangulated** through **female entrepreneur interviews, existing literature and in-country experts**

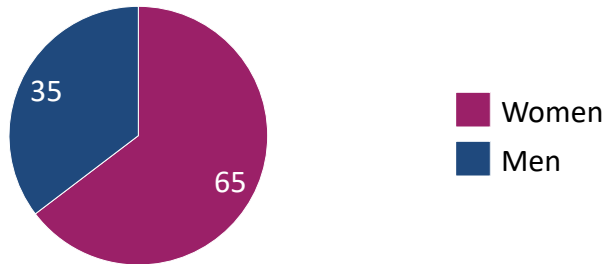
Two complementary surveys were conducted to gather insights from female and male non-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs across Uzbekistan

	Survey 1: Non-entrepreneurs		+	Survey 2: Entrepreneurs	
Number of respondents per gender	Gender	# of respondents		Gender	# of respondents
	Women	549		Women	85
	Men	300		Men	126
	Total	849		Total	211
Criteria for selection of respondents	Between 18 and 65 years of age			Between 18 and 65 years of age	
	Resident of Uzbekistan			Resident of Uzbekistan	
				Currently [runs and owns] a business with fewer than 250 employees	
Objectives	Understand intention to start a business, reasons for and barriers to starting a business, including required skills to do so			Understand barriers to a business' success and scaling, as well as potential interventions that could help overcome these barriers	

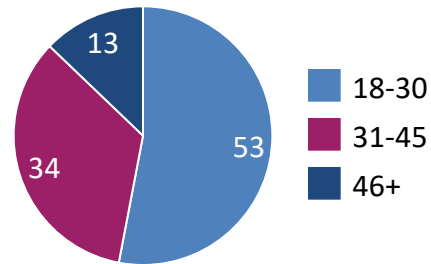
Survey 1: The non-entrepreneur survey respondents constitutes a diverse sample in line with the established segment quotas, totalling 849 responses

Category split of the surveyed population % of responses

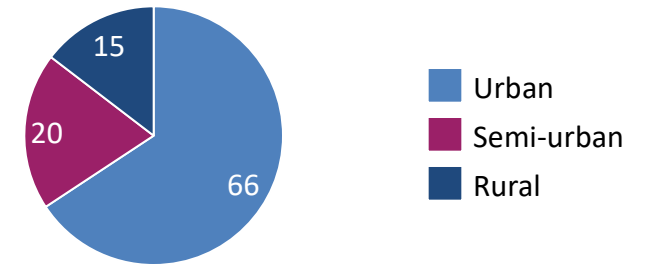
Gender



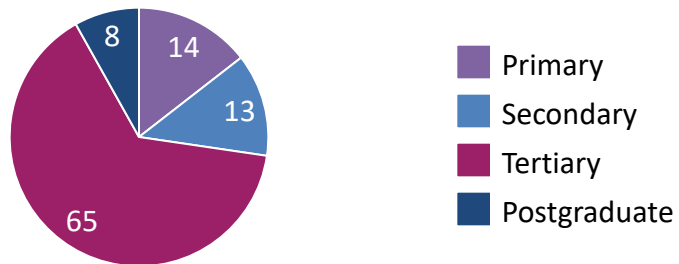
Age



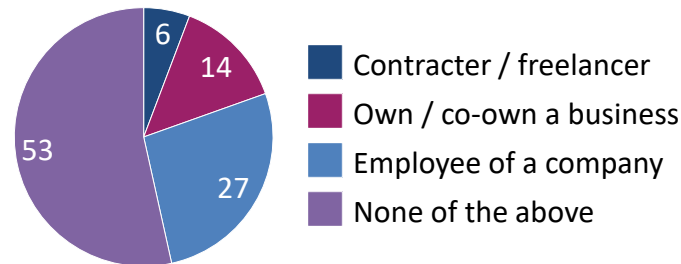
Region



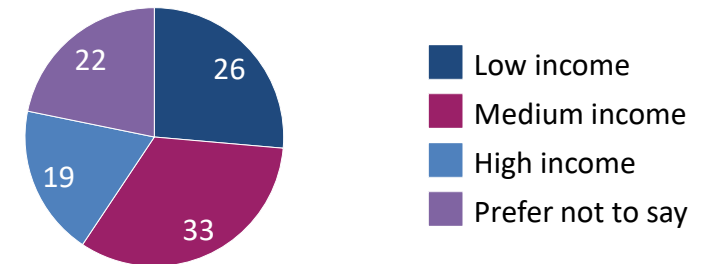
Education



Professional role



Household Income¹

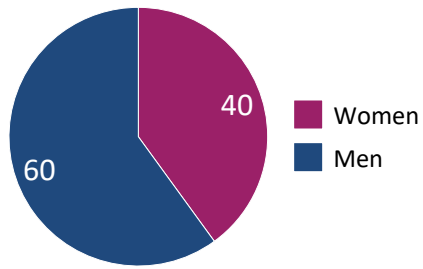


1. Low income is less than UZS 10mil; Medium Income is UZS 10mil – UZS 80mil; High income is more than UZS 80mil (all before tax)

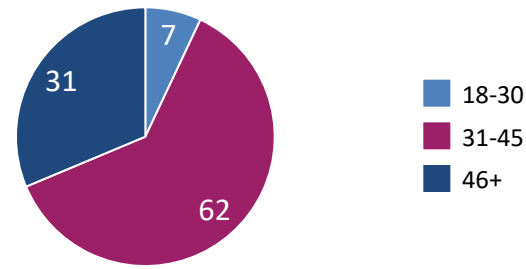
Survey 2: The Entrepreneur survey respondents constitutes a diverse sample in line with the established segment quotas, totalling 189 responses

Category split of the surveyed population % of responses

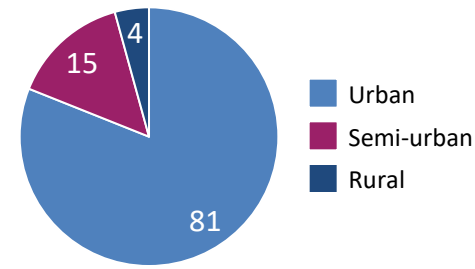
Gender



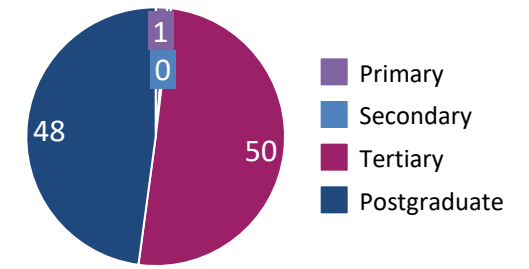
Age



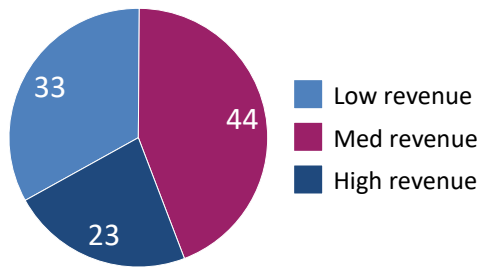
Region



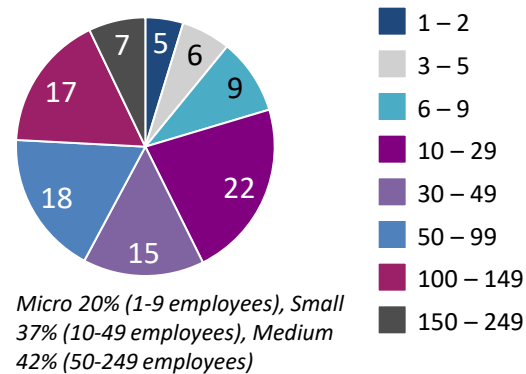
Education



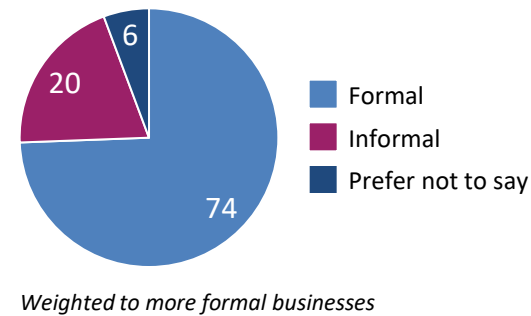
Revenue (last month)¹



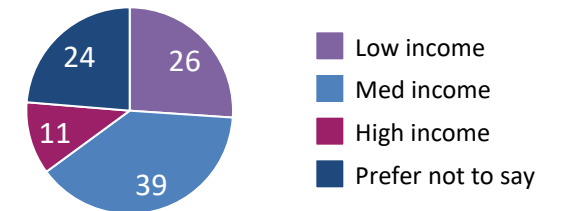
Size of business (by employees)



Formality



Household Income²



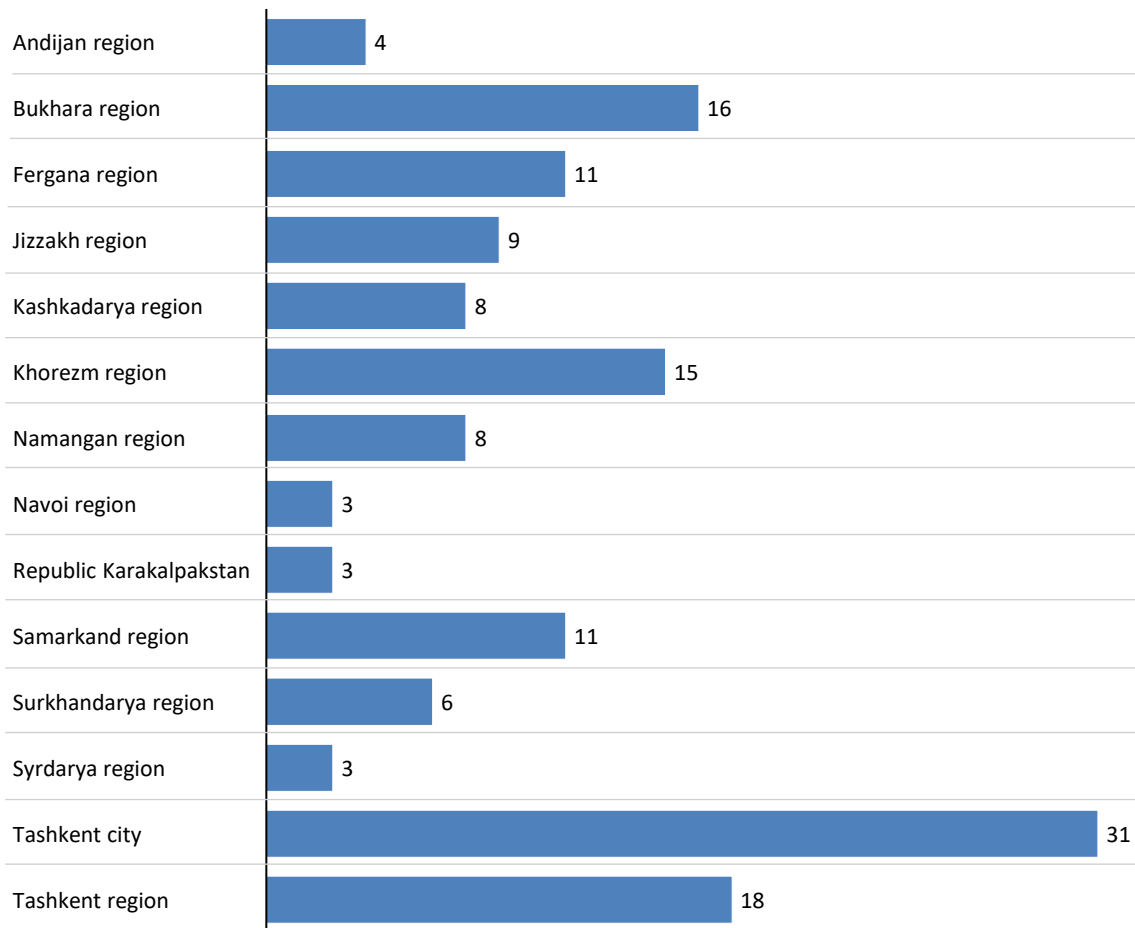
1. Low revenue is less than UZS 12.5mil; Medium Income is UZS 12.5mil – UZS 62.5mil; High income is more than UZS 62.5mil (all monthly before tax)

2. Low income is less than UZS 80mil; Medium Income is UZS 80mil – UZS 320mil; High income is more than UZS 320mil (all yearly before tax)

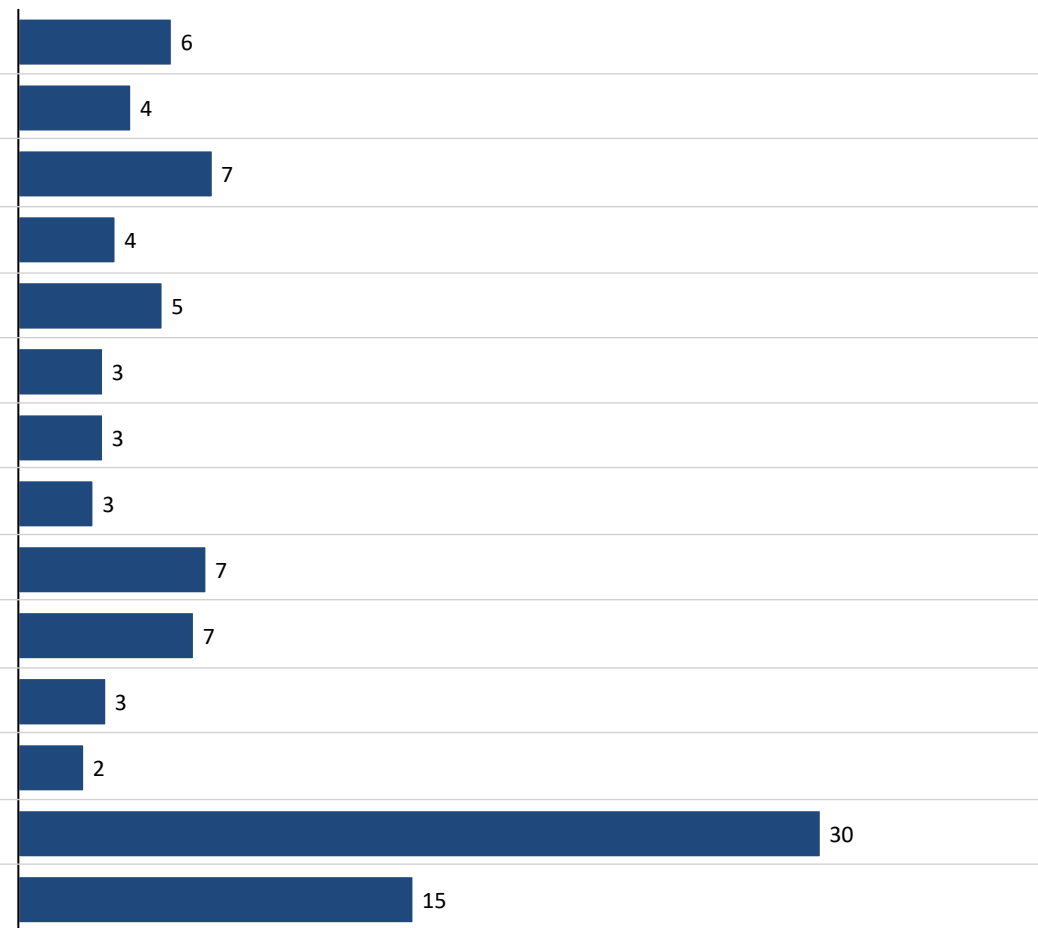
Entrepreneur and Non-entrepreneur survey respondents by region

Question asked: In which region is your business based, i.e. where do you have your office? If you work from home, please, indicate the region you reside in

Entrepreneurship survey, % (alphabetical)



Non-entrepreneurship survey, % (alphabetical)



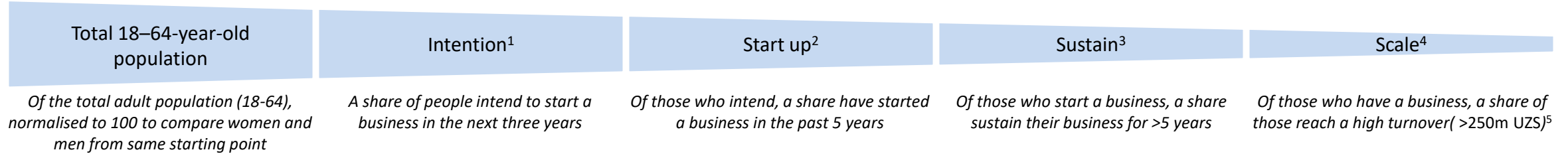
How to interpret the entrepreneurial journey and how it was calculated

Population and conversion rate at each stage, % of total population³

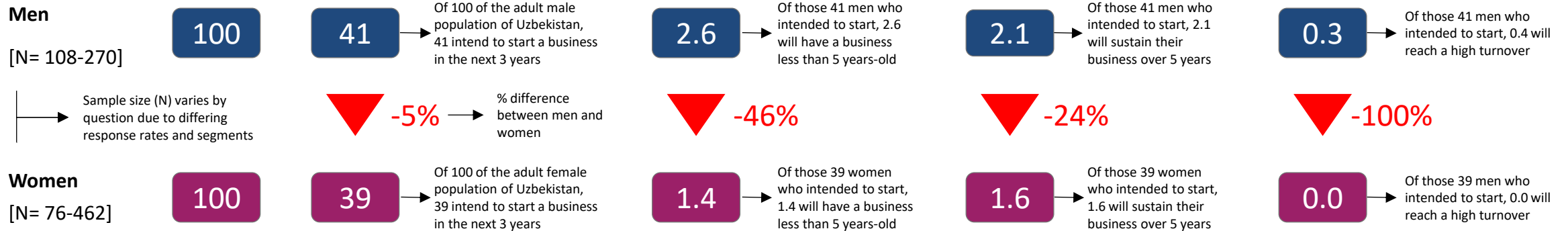
NOTE THIS FUNNEL CAPTURES A POINT-IN-TIME

Entrepreneurial journey

▼▲ Difference women vs. men ■ Share of population (indexed to 100) in each stage of business



How to interpret the funnel



How the funnel was calculated

Non-entrepreneurship survey: Estimated based on survey respondents that said 'I am planning to start my own business in the next three years'

Entrepreneurship survey: Estimated based on survey respondents that own businesses that are less than 5 years old and have monthly revenue < 250m UZS per month

Entrepreneurship survey: Estimated based on survey respondents that own businesses that are more than 5 years old and have monthly revenue < 250m UZS per month

Entrepreneurship survey: Estimated based on survey respondents that have monthly revenue > 250m UZS, approximately 15-20% of startups successfully scale to this range

1. Intention of setting up a business in the next 3 years;
2. Running a business that is less than 5 years old;
3. Running a business that is older than 5 years;
4. Running a business with a turnover of >250m UZS per month – across all ages

5. Varies by country

Source: McKinsey Consumer Survey (non-entrepreneur and entrepreneur sample), October 2024

Topics

Methodology, data sources and assumptions

Female entrepreneur baseline and value at stake

Summary of survey insights on barriers to female entrepreneurship

Prioritised interventions to address key barriers to female entrepreneurship

The economic baseline was formed from government reports and public databases for each country; difference in GDP contribution for men vs. women triangulated with McKinsey survey data

VALIDATED AND PRESSURE TESTED WITH ALL COUNTRY TTLS.

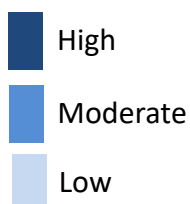
\$ USD

Data	Source	Sector	Uzbekistan
Number of MSMEs (#)	Government reports, Press ADB	Formal	401k [Govt Stats]
		Informal	531k [IFC]
Share of female-led MSMEs (%)	Government reports, ADB, World Bank, IADB	Formal	29% [Govt Stats]
		Informal	44% [Assumption ¹]
Number of female-led MSMEs (#)	Calculated	Formal	117k
		Informal	233k
Country GDP (\$)	World Bank	Total	\$91bn [WB]
Share of GDP from MSMEs (%)	World Bank, Government reports, EU, OECD, ADB	Formal	43% [Government Stats]
		Informal	10% [IMF]
Baseline GDP contribution of MSMEs (\$)	Calculated	Formal	\$39bn
		Informal	\$9bn
Avg. GDP contribution per MSME (\$)	Calculated	Formal	\$97k
		Informal	\$17k
Difference in Avg. GDP contribution-men/women (%)	McKinsey Entrepreneurship Survey, WEF, World Bank	Minimum	35%
		Maximum	55%
Avg. GDP contribution per female-led MSME (\$)	Calculated	Formal	\$70k - \$80k
		Informal	\$12k - \$14k

Data confidence:

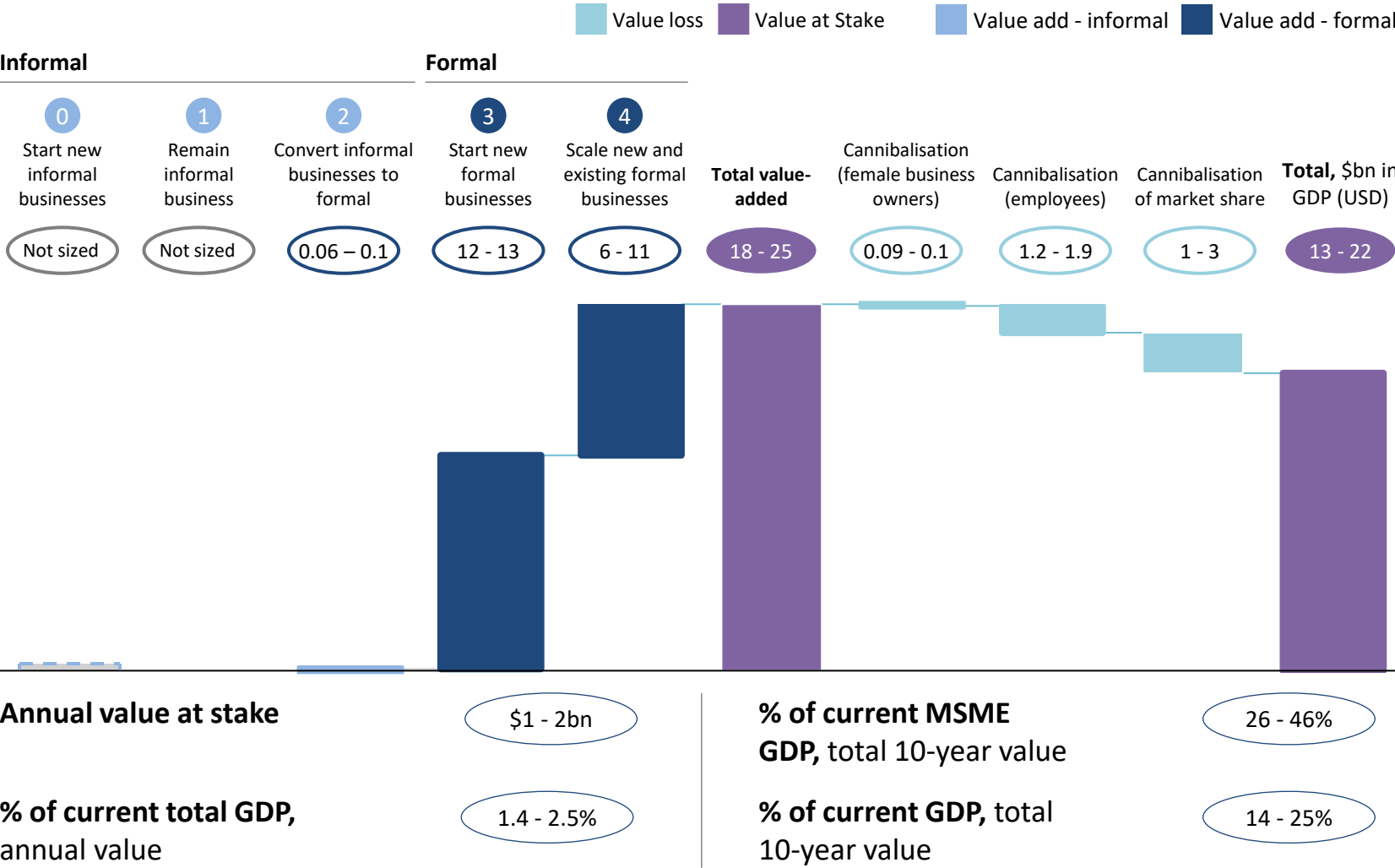


Impact on value at stake:



1. No data available for the share of informal firms led by women so a 1.5x formal ownership assumption applied as an estimate based on an average multiplier ratio of 1.43 across countries;

Initial estimate suggests \$13 - 22bn value at stake from driving female entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan over next 10 years; 26 - 46% of MSME GDP



Key assumptions

- 0 **Start new informal businesses:** While the interventions might encourage women to start more informal businesses – *this has not been sized for purposes of analysis*
- 2 **Convert informal to formal business** (23k – 35k MSMEs)
 - Assumes **10-15% of businesses convert** from informal to formal and
 - Assumes **20-30% profitability improvement** (GDP uplift) for businesses that formalise
- 3 **Start new formal businesses** (167k MSMEs) assumes closing gender gap of male vs. female entrepreneurs in formal sector (30% women, 70% men)
- 4 **Scaling new and existing formal businesses**
 - Assumes **closing the profit contribution gap between male and female-led businesses**, estimated to be between 35% and 55%
 - Furthermore, the projected **contribution uplift** is adjusted **downward by 25-35% to adjust for sector mix changes required** to close the contribution gap

Note: Avg. profit difference used as a proxy for GDP contribution difference between men and women
 Source: McKinsey Consumer Survey (Entrepreneur sample), October 2024, Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan, IMF, World Bank, IFC

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Female entrepreneur baseline and value at stake

Summary of survey insights on barriers to female entrepreneurship

Prioritised interventions to address key barriers to female entrepreneurship

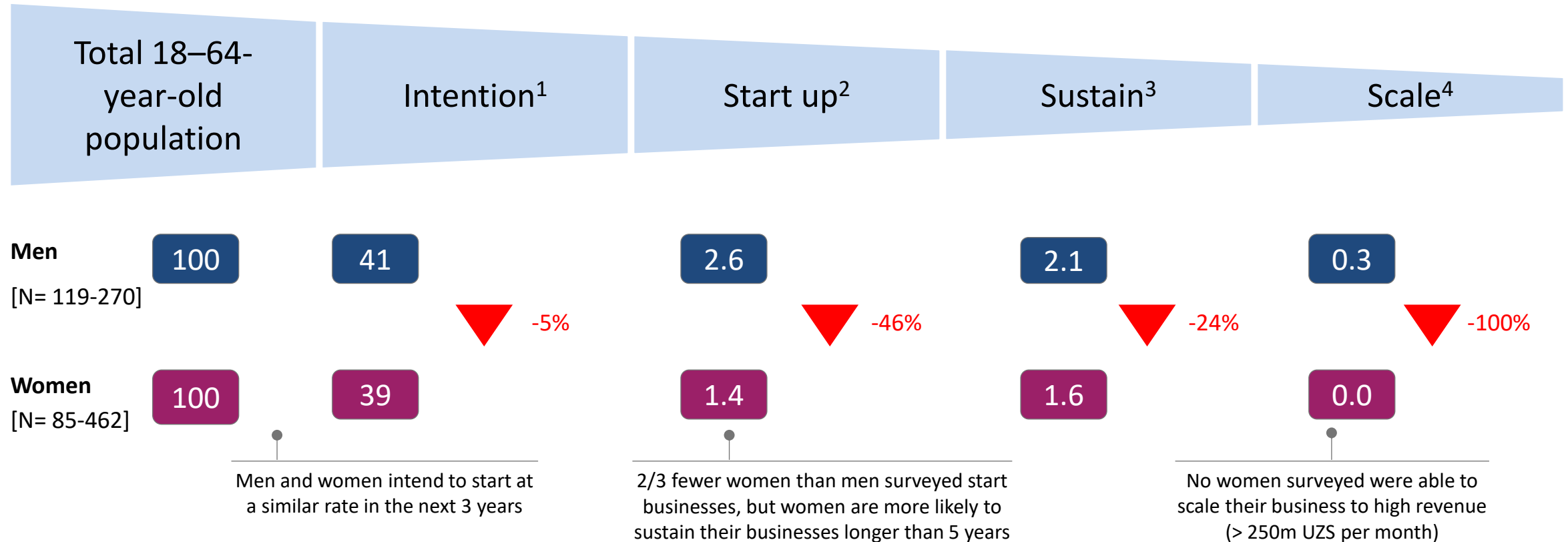
1/2 fewer surveyed women start new business and don't scale at the same rate as men

Population and conversion rate at each stage, % of total population

NOTE THIS FUNNEL CAPTURES A POINT-IN-TIME

▼▲ Difference women vs. men ■ Share of population (indexed to 100) in each stage of business

Entrepreneurial journey






1. Intention of setting up a business in the next 3 years;
2. Running a business that is less than 5 years old;
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4. Running a business with a turnover of >250m UZS per month – regardless of age

Source: McKinsey Consumer Survey (non-entrepreneur and entrepreneur sample), October 2024

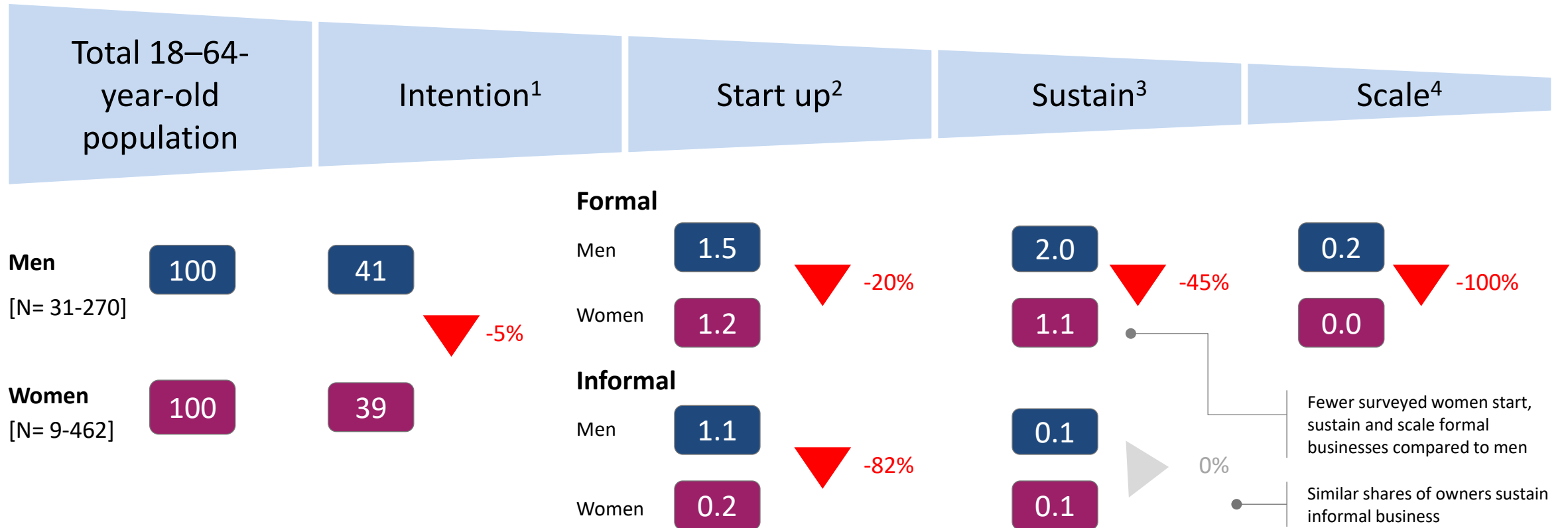
When sustaining, fewer surveyed women formalise their business compared to men

Population and conversion rate at each stage, % of total population

NOTE THIS FUNNEL CAPTURES A POINT-IN-TIME


 Difference women vs. men
  Share of population (indexed to 100) in each stage of business

Entrepreneurial journey



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BARRIERS | SUMMARY: There are 6 key barriers that influence women's ability to start and scale businesses relative to men

Barriers	Intention	Start up (Formal or Informal business)	Sustain	Scale
A Low awareness and access to funding options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both men and women rate funding as top 2 barrier to starting business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38% women business owners rate funding as top 3 barrier to starting and scaling business (<i>similar as men</i>) When starting out, women felt unheard or misunderstood by banks, didn't feel they would get funding and didn't know where to find potential investors 2X more women than men felt they would not get funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.7X more women can't find investment products to suit their needs vs. men. They also feel unheard/ misunderstood and that investor are not interested in their business ideas 	
B Perceived skill and knowledge gap to start and run a business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women rate skill gap to starting business (<i>similar as men</i>) Women perceive business planning, financial management and self-confidence as key gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 1/3rd of men and women rate not having knowledge to run the business and not having ability to develop skill sets as a key barrier to running their business, 44% women rate confidence More women perceive lower communication and negotiation, networking, delegation and leadership skills compared to men; difference with men more pronounced during scaling up Women are underrepresented in high productivity sectors, esp. energy, utilities 		
C Lack of professional networks and mentorship		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 38% of women say they have one or mentors' mentors vs. 52% for men 1.5X more women mention they need more mentoring and coaching to grow their business, the top intervention for growth 		
D High caring responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~2X surveyed women mentioned care responsibilities as reason to not starting business vs. men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 43% of women spend their time are highly involved in daily activities vs. only 17% of men - with difference more pronounced for women scaling up and 38% women vs. 27% men spend 16+ hrs/week on childcare 59% women said care programmes would be a key intervention to grow their business 		
E Lack of ambition to scale			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9% of women say that they don't wish to grow their business vs. only 3% men 	
F Difficulty meeting government requirements		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men and women business owners find meeting government requirements as top 5 barriers to doing business, with 45-50% of entrepreneurs find the process of registration difficult 		

BARRIERS | INTENT: Top barriers for women intending to start a business are perceived skill gap, funding and perceived risk of failure

Question asked: You mentioned that you have never considered starting your own business or considered starting your own business but have not started it yet. Why is that? Please, select all that apply

Top 5

X Positive significance

X Negative significance

Barriers ranked in top 3 for women respondents

% of responses

Women
[N = 428]

Men
[N = 241]

Gap Women
vs. Men

Key insights

Skill: I lack the skills and knowledge necessary to start a business	20	16	4%
Funding: I don't know how I would fund my own business	18	24	-6%
Fear of failure: I am afraid that if I started a business, it would fail	12	16	-4%
Financial Risk: It is too big of a financial risk to start my own business	10	10	-1%
No business idea: I don't have a strong business idea	9	10	-1%
Care responsibility: It would interfere with caring for my children/parents/household	9	5	4%
Economy: The economy is not right to start a business right now	9	12	-3%
Self-confidence: I am afraid to start a business on my own	8	8	0%
Time: I don't have time to start my own business as I am too busy in my current job	7	7	0%
Support: I don't have support from my family and close friends to start my own business	6	7	-1%
Clients: I don't know where I would find potential clients	6	4	2%
Mentorship: There are no mentorship/coaching programmes to help me start	6	6	0%
Professionally content: I love my current career and wouldn't want to change it	4	3	0%
Benefits: I am worried about losing employee benefits if I start my own business	3	1	2%
Not interested: Starting a business just doesn't appeal to me	2	1	0%
Stress: Having my own business will be too stressful	1	2	-2%

Women rate skills, funding and fear of failure as key reasons for not starting business

More men than women stated funding and state of economy as the key barriers to starting up

More women than men rated their care responsibilities as a barrier for starting up (4pp difference)

Lack of roles models to inspire and instil more confidence in women to start business

"Show success stories of women so men also value achievements of women and society sees it is normal for women to start business"
- Female entrepreneur, Uzbekistan

BARRIERS | START UP, SUSTAIN & SCALE: Both men and women rate finding reliable suppliers and government requirements as key barriers, women rate confidence and funding next barriers

Question asked: Thinking about your business today, how important or unimportant are the following barriers?

X Positive significance
 X Negative significance
 X Significant
 X Key barriers
 ■ Top 5

Barriers for women

% of responses coded 5 (Important) or 6 (Extremely important)

	Women [N = 85]	Men [N = 126]	Gap Women vs. Men
Suppliers: I can't find reliable suppliers for my business	47	38	9%
Confidence: I lack confidence in my abilities to run my own business	44	34	9%
Govt requirements: I struggle to fulfil government requirements as an entrepreneur	40	40	0%
Funding: I have difficulty securing funding for my business	38	34	4%
Economy: The state of the country economy is not good for business owners	38	33	5%
Location: I am unable to secure a location for my business	38	31	7%
Skills: I don't have the opportunity to build the skills I need (e.g. business planning, networking)	36	37	-1%
Family support: My family and friends do not support me, e.g. they don't approve of my career choice	36	30	6%
Network: I have limited professional networks e.g.; I don't know people who could help me build or develop a business	35	34	1%
Market access: I don't have access to markets to distribute or sell my products	35	39	-4%
Care: I struggle to balance my responsibility as a business owner with my personal commitments (e.g., childcare)	35	40	-4%
Knowledge: I don't have knowledge required to run the business (e.g., industry or market knowledge)	34	32	2%
Prejudice: People assume that I shouldn't be running a business or that I'm not able to run one effectively because of my gender, religion, ethnicity or other personal	33	33	0%
Value proposition: I do not have a compelling / unique value proposition	31	36	-5%
Spousal support: My spouse does not support me, e.g. they don't approve of my career choice	28	35	-7%
Labour: I am not able to attract or hire the right talent	28	39	-11%
Travel: I struggle to travel around my country and internationally	27	37	-9%

Key insights

B Perceived skill and knowledge gap

Registration was so hard. Had to ask 100 people what I needed to do
- Female entrepreneur, Uzbekistan

F Difficulty meeting government requirements

It's not easy to get a loan in Uzbekistan, not because of gender but because of the high interest
- Female entrepreneur, Uzbekistan

A Low awareness and access to funding options

It's harder for a woman to run a business because if my child gets sick, I can't think of anything else"
- Female entrepreneur, Uzbekistan



D High care responsibilities

How hard or easy was the process of registering your business? %

	Women	Men
Easy or very easy	49	54
Difficult or very difficult	46	45

INTERVENTIONS: Women find access to markets, care programmes, technical training, entrepreneur training, travel and role-models most helpful interventions to make them successful

Question asked: There are different interventions that could help you and your business to become more successful. Can you evaluate each intervention on how helpful it would be to you and business?

 Significant  Top 5

Successful or helpful interventions % of responses coded 5 or 6 (helpful)	Women [N = 85]	Men [N = 126]	Gap Women vs. Men
Market: Access to market opportunities and inclusion within the global value chain	61	65	-4%
Care programs: Programmes providing child or elder care	59	57	2%
Entrepreneur training: More accessible training programmes to improve entrepreneurial skills	59	61	-2%
Technical training: More accessible training programmes to improve technical skills require	59	67	-9%
Travel: Programmes facilitating business travel within your country and abroad	58	63	-5%
Role-models: More visible role-models that you can relate to	56	62	-5%
Financial training: Training programmes on business financial literacy	56	67	-10%
Parental leave: Tailored maternity and paternity packages for entrepreneurs	55	56	-1%
Digital network: Digital / online support networks	55	65	-10%
Networking events: Accessible networking events e.g., not in the evenings	55	59	-3%
Childcare: Subsidised and accessible childcare	55	52	4%
Mentorship: Mentorship and coaching programme for business owners	54	61	-7%
Funding: Dedicated funding/ more affordable funding solutions for female entrepreneurs	53	60	-7%
Registration: Access to resources and advice to fulfil government formalities for registration	53	65	-12%
Public information: Improved publicly available reporting on entrepreneurship	53	61	-8%
Physical networks: Networks of entrepreneurs close to you	52	66	-14%
Legal protection: Legal protection against domestic violence, sexual assault and femicide	47	56	-8%
Tax: Tax benefits for entrepreneurs in the early stages of starting a business	44	64	-21%
Adult care: Subsidised and accessible care for elderly or vulnerable adults	38	61	-23%

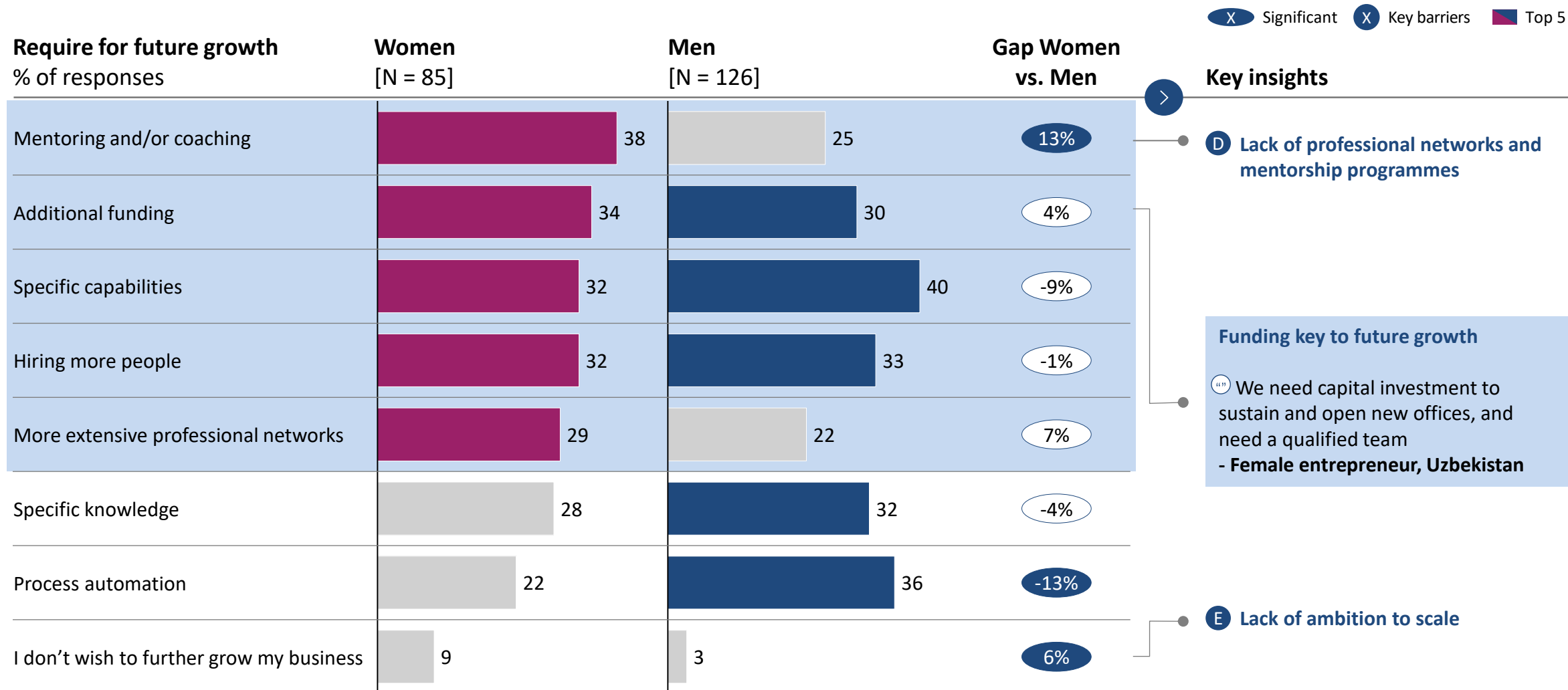


Key insights

- More **women want access to markets and travel**, which would help scale their businesses
- Women also **care about programmes providing childcare**, which could help alleviate care responsibilities
- Women also value **building technical skills and entrepreneurial skills**, which would help build more confidence and provide an environment supporting women led business to further grow

INTERVENTIONS | FUTURE GROWTH: More women want support with mentorship and coaching vs. men; 9% of women show lack of interest in growing business further

Question asked: Is there anything that you would require to grow your business further? Please, select all that apply



Topic

Methodology, data sources and assumptions

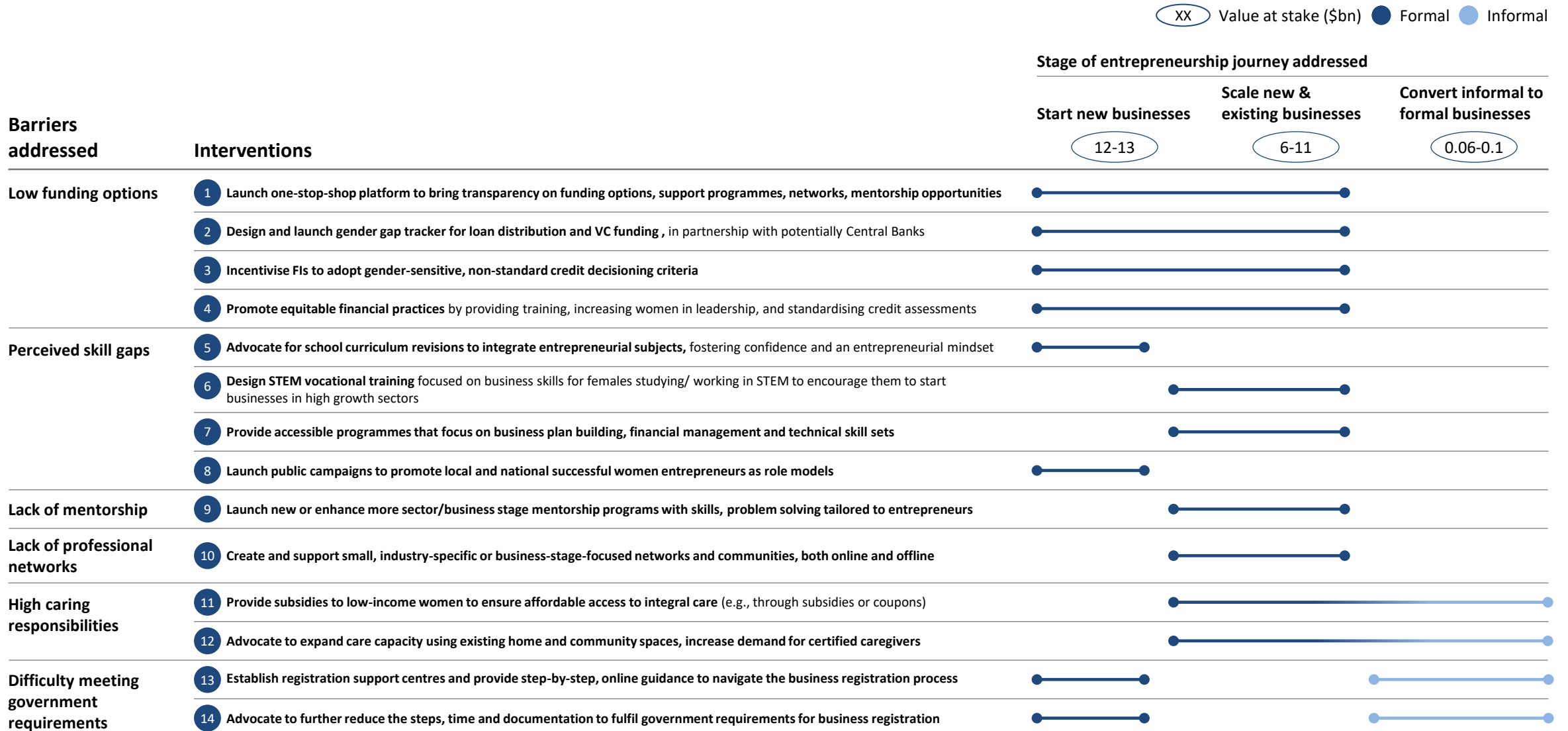
Female entrepreneur baseline and value at stake

Summary of survey insights on barriers to female entrepreneurship

Prioritised interventions to address key barriers to female entrepreneurship

Appendix: Detailed survey insights

Highly preliminary list of interventions that could help overcome the barriers and provide a path for more females to start and scale businesses




Preliminary list of interventions to discuss and refine (1/5)

 Potential accountable lead
  Potential for We-Fi/MDBs to take a lead role

Barriers addressed	Proposed interventions	Description	Go-to-market	Leader & contributions	Rationale
Low funding options #2 barrier for both men and women	1 Launch one-stop-shop platform to bring transparency on funding options, support programmes, networks, mentorship opportunities	Aggregator of all available information/ resources to female entrepreneurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding sources (e.g. Women's Entrepreneurship Development Fund, grants from We-Fi, EBRD Women in Business) Networking opportunities Educational material Government benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital platform personalised to the needs of the entrepreneur (e.g. section on my.gov.uz) Publicised through government channels, social media, financial institutions and business networks Targeted at women starting up and existing female entrepreneurs looking for funding to scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector / local /banking association Financial institutions, VCs, accelerators, angel investors Non-profits Technology company (e.g., powered by Google or Bing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38% women business owners rate funding as top 3 barrier When starting up women said they didn't know where to find investors
	2 Design and launch gender gap tracker for loan distribution and VC funding , in partnership with potentially Central Banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with financial institutions to monitor and report their funding decisions, detailing both the value and volume of funds awarded, non-performing loans and funding decisions by gender Breakdown available data through online dashboard available to public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government announcement Government platform to submit and showcase funding data Annual award of best-in-class institutions The CBU pilot of standardized digital platforms for reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WE Finance code Central Bank Investment funds and FIs MDBs Industry associations to rank and assess FIs efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 31% of women felt unheard or misunderstood by banks when starting up 24% of women felt it was unlikely they would get funding when starting up
	3 Incentivise FIs to adopt gender-sensitive, non-standard credit decisioning criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide assistance and incentives to FIs in incorporating gender-sensitive variables and non-traditional data points (e.g., invoices, repayment behaviours, psychometric assessments) to assess creditworthiness Initiative helps meet needs of underserved segments (e.g., young women with low credit history, women lacking collaterals) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial institution to pilot and track uptake of the innovative offers, and share lessons learned Provide incentive and capacity to FIs that participate in the programme Products marketed through the digital platform proposed in initiative #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Bank Lead financial institutions per country pilots the effort We-Finance code , MDBs Other FI to follow Partner organisations (e.g. data providers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34% women felt investors were not interested in their business ideas, when scaling "It's not easy to get a loan in Uzbekistan because of the high interest" – Female entrepreneur, Uzbekistan

Preliminary list of interventions to discuss and refine (2/5)

 Potential accountable lead
  Potential for We-Fi/MDBs to take a lead role

Barriers addressed	Proposed interventions	Description	Go-to-market	Leader & contributions	Rationale
Low funding options #2 barrier for both men and women	4 Promote equitable financial practices by providing training, increasing women in leadership, and standardising credit assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement specialised training programs for commercial and credit officers to heighten awareness and mitigate unconscious biases Enhance women's representation in leadership roles and on boards to foster diverse and inclusive decision-making environments Standardise creditworthiness assessment tools to ensure fair and equitable evaluation processes across all applicants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial institutions to pilot and track uptake of these innovative offers Incentivise FIs that participate in the programme Market products through the digital platform proposed in initiative #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector Leading financial institutions (public or private) pilots the effort Other partner FI banks to follow Private specialised training organisations on unconscious biases MDBs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26% of women felt unheard or misunderstood by banks when scaling 20% of women felt that investors didn't trust their business knowledge / skill when starting up
Perceived skill gaps	5 Advocate for school curriculum revisions to integrate entrepreneurial subjects , fostering confidence and an entrepreneurial mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate entrepreneurship subjects into the high school and universities curriculum, provide teacher training, establish mentorship programs Implement practical assessments to foster innovation and business skills among students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform the curriculum for entrepreneurial education include high school students, teachers and educators, educational institutions, and local women entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector Educational institutions and authorities Non-profit organizations Parents and Community Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills #1 barrier identified, when starting out Business planning women's worst perceived skill - women intending to start 59% of women said entrepreneurship training top intervention
	6 Design STEM vocational training focused on business skills for females studying/ working in STEM to encourage them to start businesses in high growth sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesign existing training curriculum to include comprehensive business skills tailored specifically for women pursuing education or careers in high-productivity industries such as technology Training curriculum designed based on sector analysis to identify skill needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver through online training programs, physical locations, and strategic partnerships Targeted at women interested in entrepreneurship, women in universities pursuing new gen courses (e.g. Tech, IT, digital) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational and training institutions Public sector Non-profit organizations Corporate partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5pp fewer women are in high productivity sectors vs. men

Preliminary list of interventions to discuss and refine (3/5)

 Potential accountable lead
  Potential for We-Fi/MDBs to take a lead role

Barriers addressed	Proposed interventions	Description	Go-to-market	Leader & contributions	Rationale
Perceived skill gaps	7 Provide accessible programmes that focus on business plan building, financial management and technical skill sets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer affordable training sessions on business plan development, industry-specific skills, and financial management (e.g., securing loans or venture capital funding) Complement trainings programmes with additional support on funding options and further mentorship opportunities (e.g., in partnership with Fis and mentorship and coaching organisations and mentors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider providing free online courses for greater accessibility Integrate to #1 Technical training programs targeted at young women (18-30 years), entrepreneurial skills for women with start-ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central and local government World Bank / We-Fi Industry associations Local government Online learning platforms Community centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrepreneurial, technical and financial training top 3, 4 and 7 interventions Building plans top perceived skill gap to starting a business
	8 Launch public campaigns to promote local and national successful women entrepreneurs as role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct public campaigns to spotlight successful female entrepreneurs Create role models that inspire new entrepreneurs Increase societal awareness to normalise female business ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaigns targeted at young women (18-30 years), with start-ups, interested in entrepreneurship, the community (mahalla) and families Feature through social media, print media and public transport Partner with high-influence women to share stories of successful female entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government agencies Industry partners Media partners Female entrepreneurs NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.5x more women than men have a high level of responsibility for the household - more pronounced for women scaling “Show success stories so men and society value women achievements and sees it is normal for women to start business” – Female Entrepreneur
Lack of mentorship	9 Launch new or enhance more sector/business stage mentorship programs with skills, problem solving tailored to entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand existing and create more local/ sector wise mentorship programmes e.g. TalpynUp with associations Pair entrepreneurs with experienced business owners to work on specific business problem for specific duration of time Provide personalised guidance and knowledge on market opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital campaign to encourage mentor volunteers Accessible sessions for those with caring responsibilities mentors + mentees Subject focus per meeting to impart specific knowledge Targeted at women in rural and semi-urban areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIs and investors Public sector Corporate partners Non-profit organizations Female business leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring and coaching the top requirement for future growth, 38% of women 54% women rated mentorship helpful intervention

Preliminary list of interventions to discuss and refine (4/5)

 Potential accountable lead
  Potential for We-Fi/MDBs to take a lead role

Barriers addressed	Proposed interventions	Description	Go-to-market	Leader & contributions	Rationale
Lack of professional networks	10 Create and support small, industry-specific or business-stage-focused networks and communities, both online and offline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing digital and physical networks to ensure they meet needs of existing entrepreneurs (e.g. networks focused by industry or stage of business) Set up communities of support within industries and similar business topics Gap analysis required by region/ sector to identify potential local & regional physical networks that need to be developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with existing digital platforms Host forums, webinars, mentorship opportunities, resources Accessible sessions (e.g., flexible timing) for those with caring responsibilities mentors + mentees, targeted to women with start-ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry associations Networking organisations Public agencies Technology platforms NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55% women rated networking as helpful intervention
High caring responsibilities	11 Provide subsidies to low-income women to ensure affordable access to integral care (e.g., through subsidies or coupons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate women's access to existing care programs and services that provide integral care e.g., education, nutrition, health Provide subsidies and incentives for low-income women to make more affordable and accessible e.g., vouchers, programs for free emergency nannies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted at women in underserved communities Offered through partnerships (e.g. healthcare facilities, nutrition services), digital platforms (e.g. telehealth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector Non-profit organizations Business communities Opportunity for private institutions such as FIs to support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care was rated top 5 barrier for medium size businesses, 48% of women indicated helpful ~2X surveyed women mentioned care responsibilities as reason to not starting business vs. men
	12 Advocate to expand care capacity using existing home and community spaces, increase demand for certified caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create more local capacities of care services by leveraging community spaces and homes Create more certified caregivers e.g., subsidise certifications, promote flexible shifts and stable job opportunities Create more capacity at home e.g., initiatives for financing appliances, cooking stoves to reduce time of women in domestic care, positive masculinity training to spouses To build on existing programs (e.g. Promoting Early Childhood Development project) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with existing facilities and community spaces Promote in schools Targeted at caregivers, community health workers, public care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector Local healthcare providers Business communities Non-profit organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care programmes #2 intervention - 59% women rated as helpful 55% of women rated subsidised childcare as helpful

Preliminary list of interventions to discuss and refine (5/5)

 Potential accountable lead
  Potential for We-Fi/MDBs to take a lead role

Barriers addressed	Proposed interventions	Description	Go-to-market	Leader & contributions	Rationale
Difficulty meeting government requirements	13 Establish registration support centres and provide step-by-step, online guidance to navigate the business registration process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish registration support centres or online services to provide free guidance to women entrepreneurs Provide step-by-step and simplified guidance and assistance to navigate the registration process e.g., infographics, videos Help with paperwork and compliance with government requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with government agencies and local economic development offices Utilize e-learning platforms for online training and workshops on business registration Informative campaigns to explain processes (online and offline channels) Targeted at young women (18-30 years) running small businesses in rural or underserved areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government agencies Industry associations Financial institutions, e.g. banks, microfinance institutions Non-profit organizations Technology and service providers, app developers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government requirements top 5 barrier, ~45% said was difficult to register “Registration was so hard, I had to ask 100 people what I needed to do” – Female entrepreneur, Uzbekistan
	14 Advocate to further reduce the steps, time and documentation to fulfil government requirements for business registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote further policy reforms to simplify and expedite government procedures for businesses (e.g. business registration on my.gov.uz) Enhance transparency and efficiency in government services to reduce bureaucratic delays Enhance online business services to streamline registration and service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with government agencies to identify and implement necessary policy changes Provide training for government officials to ensure effective implementation of reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government agencies Policy makers Business associations Tax authorities Training providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Est. 26% of surveyed businesses are informal

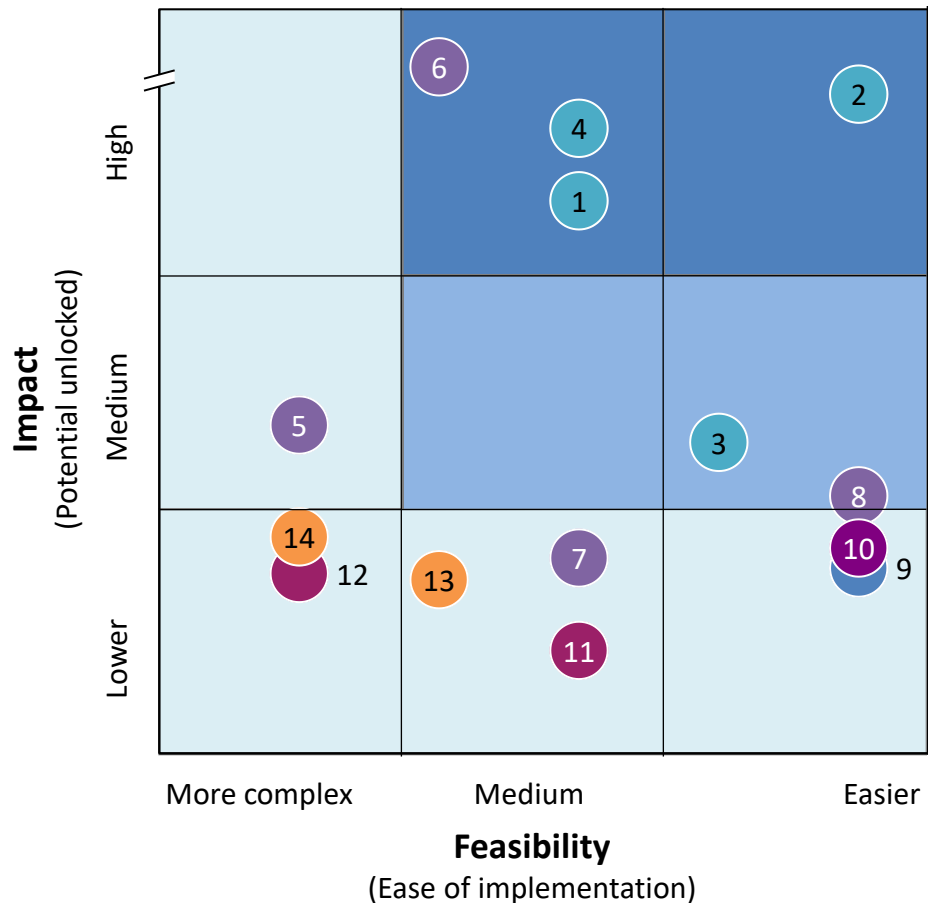
Survey-based prioritisation of interventions with highest potential impact

Barriers addressed		Potential Uzbekistan impact, Bn \$	Feasibility	Rationale
Low funding options	1 Launch one-stop-shop platform to bring transparency on funding options, support programmes, networks, mentorship opportunities	0.9	MEDIUM	Requires ownership, ongoing maintenance and managing multiple third parties
	2 Design and launch gender gap tracker for loan distribution and VC funding , in partnership with potentially Central Banks	1.1-1.6	HIGH	Requires ownership, ongoing maintenance and managing multiple third parties
	3 Incentivise FIs to adopt gender-sensitive, non-standard credit decisioning criteria	0.5-0.7	MEDIUM-HIGH	Requires commitment, funding and product design
	4 Promote equitable financial practices by providing training, increasing women in leadership, and standardising credit assessments	1.0-1.5	MEDIUM	Training and standardising tools simple to implement. Women on boards/leadership more complex
Perceived skill gaps	5 Advocate for school curriculum revisions to integrate entrepreneurial subjects, fostering confidence and an entrepreneurial mindset	0.5-0.7	LOW	Long time to implement and difficult to change curriculum
	6 Design STEM vocational training focused on business skills for females studying/ working in STEM to encourage them to start businesses	2.0-2.9	MEDIUM - LOW	Requires funding and to be accessible
	7 Provide accessible programmes that focus on business plan building, financial management and technical skill sets	0.2-0.3	MEDIUM	Lower time, cost and stakeholders to implement public campaigns
	8 Launch public campaigns to promote local and national successful women entrepreneurs as role models	0.2-0.3	HIGH	Lower time, cost and stakeholders to implement public campaigns
Lack of mentorship	9 Launch new or enhance more sector/business stage mentorship programs with skills, problem solving tailored to entrepreneurs	0.3-0.4	HIGH	Lower cost, expand existing programmes
Lack of professional networks	10 Create and support small, industry-specific or business-stage-focused networks and communities, both online and offline	0.3-0.4	HIGH	Leverage existing digital platforms
High caring responsibilities	11 Provide subsidies to low-income women to ensure affordable access to integral care (e.g., through subsidies or coupons)	0.1-0.2	MEDIUM	Existing programmes but complexity with training and maintaining quality of care
	12 Advocate to expand care capacity using existing home and community spaces, increase demand for certified caregivers	0.2-0.4	LOW	Requires funding and demand from caregivers
Difficulty meeting government requirements	13 Establish registration support centres and provide step-by-step, online guidance to navigate the business registration process	0.2-0.3	MEDIUM - LOW	Ensuring access to existing resources but requires complex stakeholder engagement
	14 Advocate to further reduce the steps, time and documentation to fulfil government requirements for business registration	0.3-0.5	LOW	Requires government commitment and funding, as well as process, technology and people changes
Total		8-12		

Uzbekistan prioritisation interventions to drive female entrepreneurship

● Funding ● Skills ● Mentorship ● Networks ● Care ● Government

Initiatives prioritization



Phase 1: Transparent and equitable funding, and influence in STEM industry choices

- 1 Launch one-stop-shop platform to bring transparency on funding options, support programmes, networks, mentorship opportunities
- 2 Design and launch gender gap tracker for loan distribution and VC funding, in partnership with potentially Central Banks
- 4 Promote equitable financial practices by providing training, increasing women in leadership, and standardising credit assessments
- 6 Design STEM vocational training focused on business skills for females studying/ working in STEM to encourage them to start businesses in high growth sectors

Phase 2: Gender-sensitive funding options and promotion of successful female entrepreneurs

- 3 Incentivise FIs to adopt gender-sensitive, non-standard credit decisioning criteria, by offering to market their products on WSME platforms
- 8 Launch public campaigns to promote local and national successful women entrepreneurs as role models

Phase 3: Incentivise skills building, care and advocate for registration

- 5 Advocate for school curriculum revisions to integrate entrepreneurial subjects, fostering confidence and an entrepreneurial mindset
- 7 Provide accessible programmes that focus on business plan building, financial management and technical skill sets
- 9 Launch new or enhance more sector/business stage mentorship programs with skills, problem solving tailored to entrepreneurs
- 10 Create and support small, industry-specific or business-stage-focused networks and communities, both online and offline
- 11 Provide subsidies to low-income women to ensure affordable access to integral care (e.g., through subsidies or coupons)
- 12 Advocate to expand care capacity using existing home and community spaces, increase demand for certified caregivers
- 13 Establish registration support centres and provide step-by-step, online guidance to navigate the business registration process
- 14 Advocate to further reduce the steps, time and documentation to fulfil government requirements for business registration