

Powering Jobs Through Women's Entrepreneurship

Women Entrepreneurs Leading the
Way to More and Better Jobs for
Women

Norma Gomez & Felicia Siegrist



Women Entrepreneurs and Jobs for Women: Evidence from Global Firm Data



RESEARCH FOCUS

What is the role of women entrepreneurs in expanding formal employment for women, and which policy levers can unlock their full economic potential?



METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

Cross-country comparative analysis controls for sector, size, and income; distinguishes women-owned firms from women-led firms.



DATA SOURCES AND SCOPE

Analysis uses World Bank Enterprise Surveys with over 109,000 formally registered firms across 168 economies from 2006 to 2025.

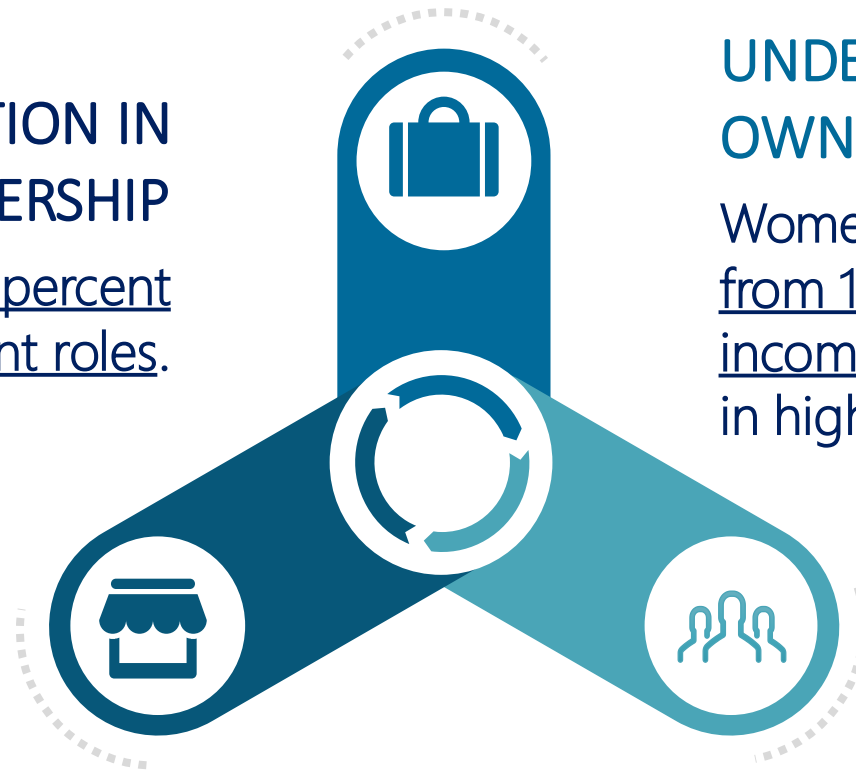
Women are systematically underrepresented as entrepreneurs, top managers, and workers

UNDERREPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP

Women hold only 13 to 20 percent of top management roles.

UNDERREPRESENTATION IN OWNERSHIP

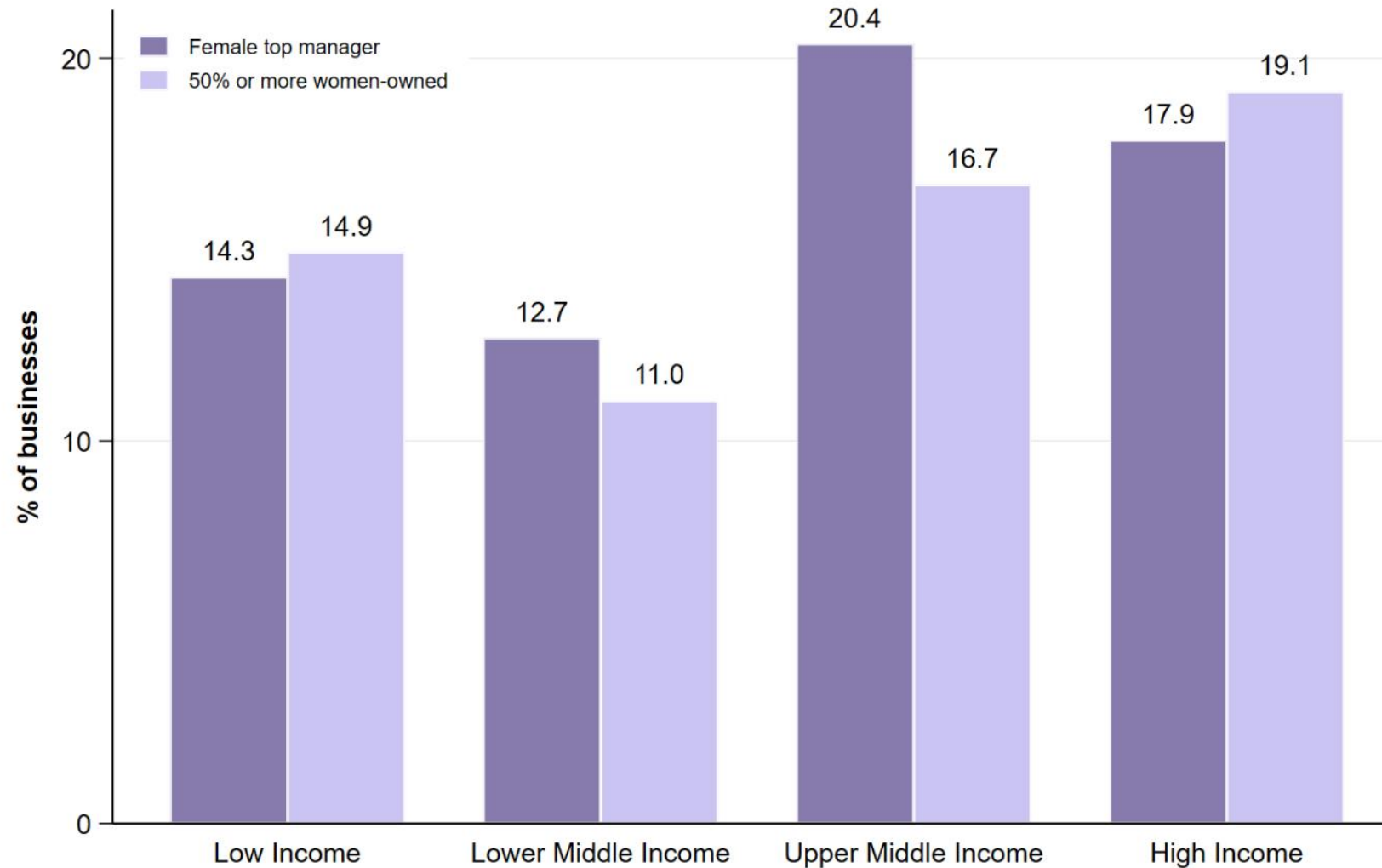
Women's firm ownership ranges from 11 percent in lower-middle-income economies to 19 percent in high-income economies.



WOMEN'S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IS LOW

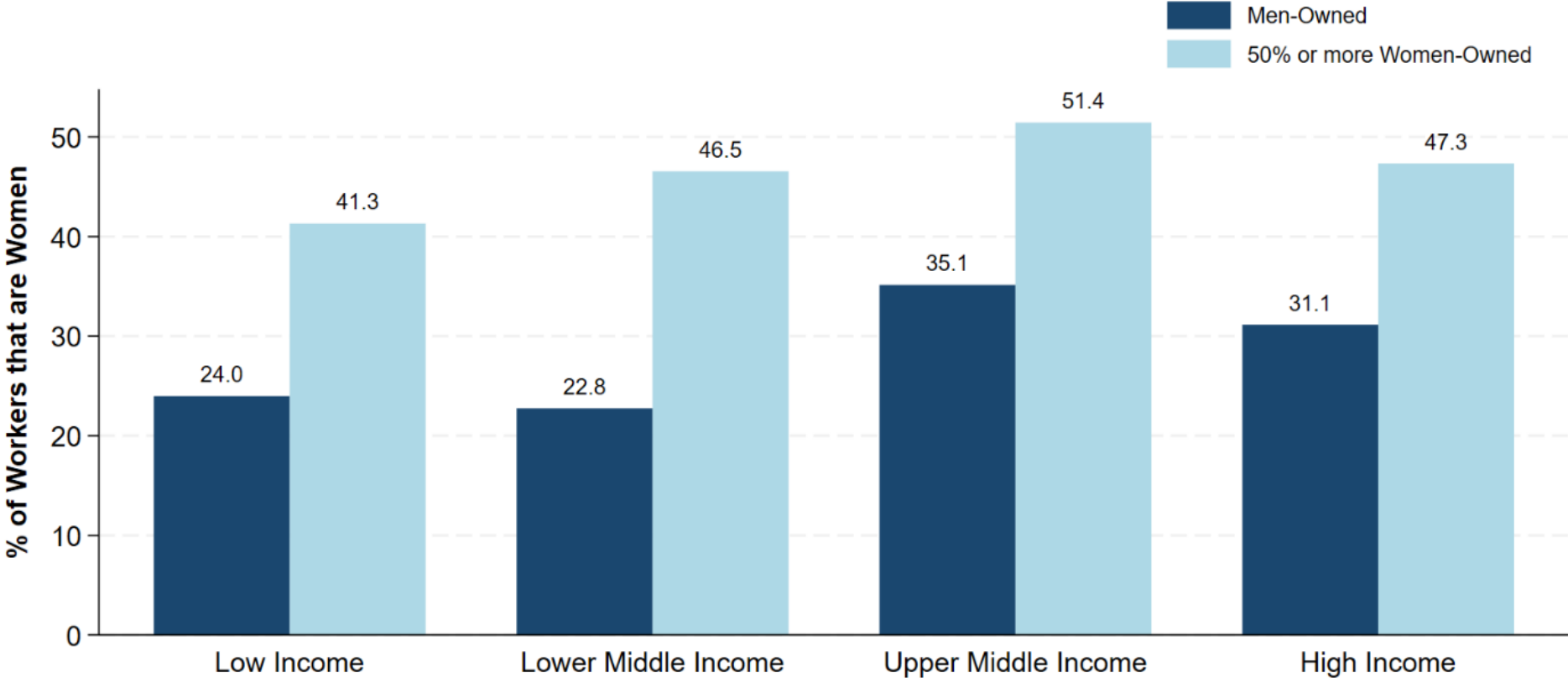
Women account for just 32 percent of full-time formal workers. This figure varies widely by region.

Development alone is not enough



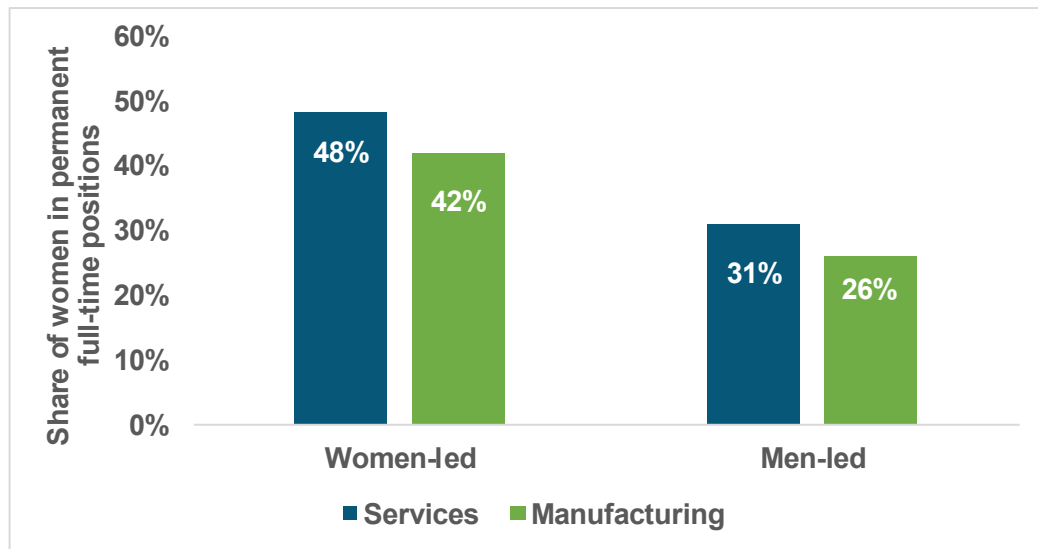
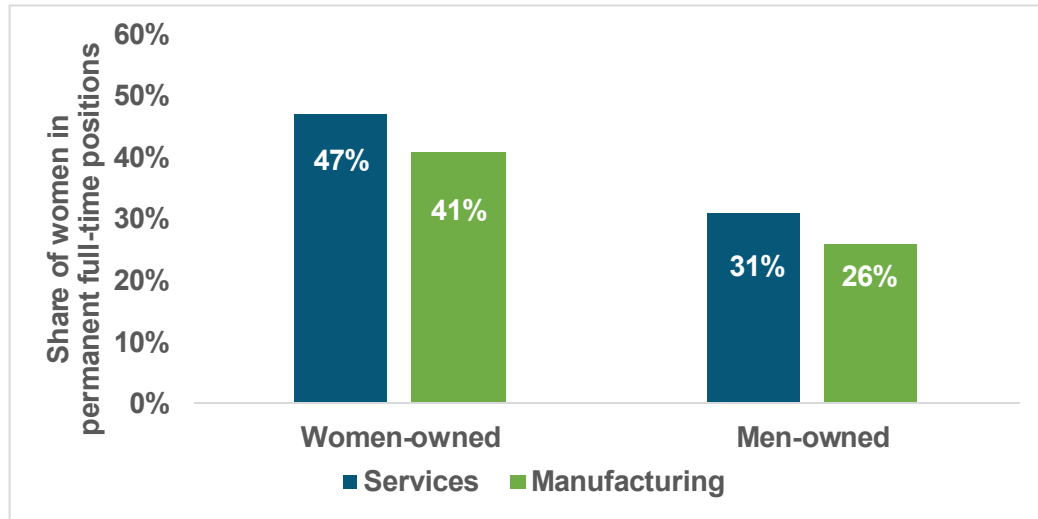
Source: Firms managed and owned by women by income group, World Bank Enterprise Surveys (2006–25) for 168 economies.

Women-owned firms employ significantly more women across all income levels



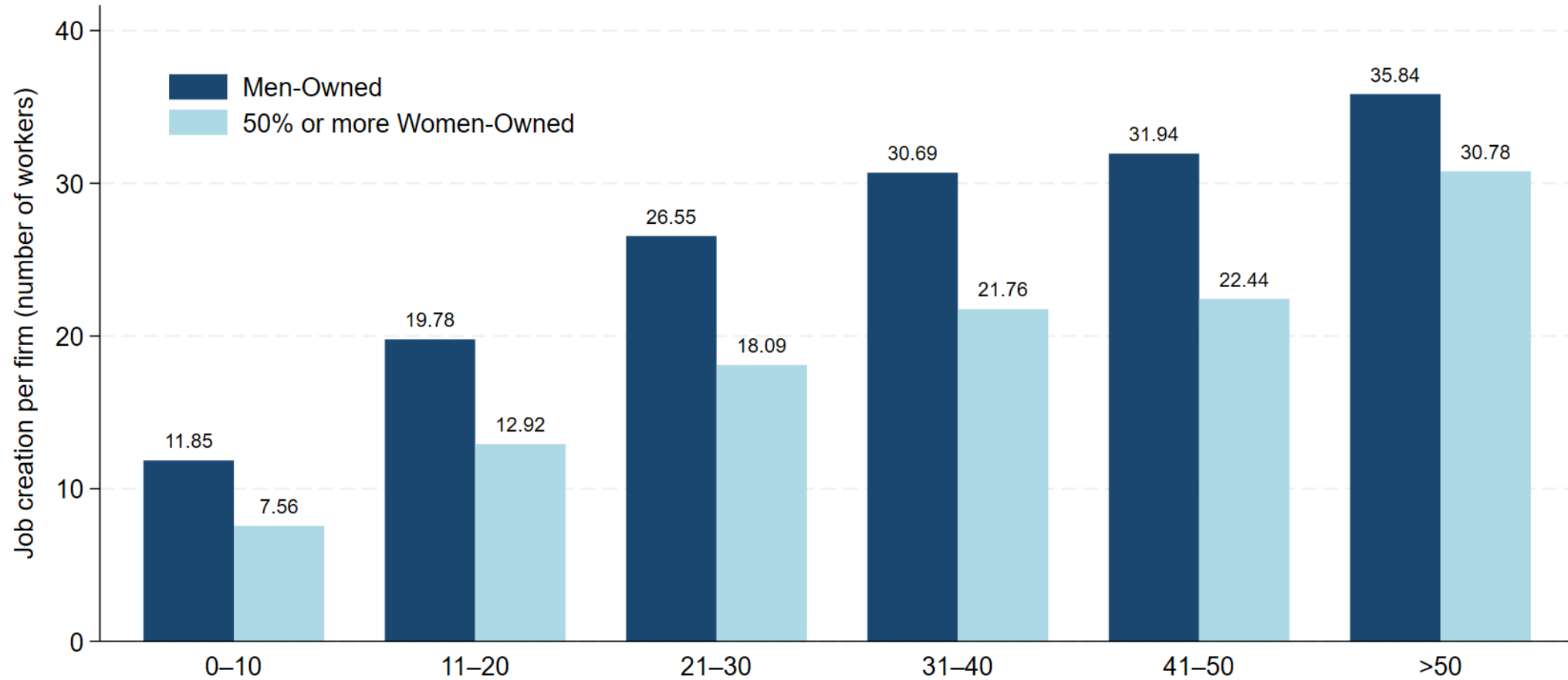
Source: Women Full-time Workers by Gender of Owner and Income Group, World Bank Enterprise Surveys (2006–25) for 168 economies.

...regardless of sector



- Even when controlling for sector, women-owned firms employ higher shares of women in both services (47% vs. 31%) and manufacturing (41% vs. 26%).
- The same relationship holds for firms with a woman as the top manager.

Removing Barriers Could Unlock Job Creation by Women-Owned Firms



Source: Average net job creation per firm, by gender of owner and age of the firm, World Bank Enterprise Surveys (2006–25) for 168 economies.

Policy implications: Unlocking women entrepreneurs' potential

- **Importance of Women Entrepreneurs for Inclusive Job Growth**
 - Supporting women entrepreneurs is vital for inclusive, dynamic labor markets and expanding formal employment for women.
- **Access to Finance**
 - Inclusive financial products, alternative credit assessments, and innovative financing improve women entrepreneurs' growth potential.
- **Skills and Networks Development**
 - Investments in skills training, mentorship, and professional networks close managerial and technical capacity gaps for women-owned firms.
- **Removing Barriers**
 - Addressing legal obstacles, discriminatory norms, and unequal care duties creates an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.

Thank you!



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Women Entrepreneurs Leading the Way to More and Better Jobs for Women

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This Brief explores the role of women entrepreneurs in job creation, focusing on how women-owned firms contribute to women's employment. Using data from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys (WBES) covering formally registered firms across 168 economies over 19 years, the analysis shows that women remain systematically underrepresented as entrepreneurs, top managers, and workers in formal firms with five or more workers. Women-owned firms play a critical role in expanding women's formal employment, hiring about 20 percentage points more women in permanent full-time positions than men-owned firms across income groups, firm sizes, sectors, and regions. In low-income economies, this gap is even more pronounced, with women-owned firms hiring about twice the share of women compared to men-owned firms. This pattern may partly reflect women's concentration in sectors that employ more women, but it persists across all sectors. However, structural barriers such as limited access to finance, training, and markets often constrain women's business performance and job growth, resulting in fewer net jobs per firm compared to men-owned firms. These findings suggest that gender gaps in job creation reflect structural features of labor markets. Removing barriers to women's entrepreneurship could not only unlock additional job growth but also expand women's access to full-time employment.

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