

# Gender Export Gap in Scotland: Research Report

WTO Informal Working Group  
on Trade & Gender  
3 July 2025



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



# Context

- **Vision for Trade** – Scotland's international trade strategy, which identifies the levers that can help improve the trading environment for businesses.
- **A Trading Nation** – Scotland's export growth strategy, which promotes Scottish exporters in priority markets.
- Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development International work with entrepreneurs and businesses to help overcome barriers to exporting.
- Business Gateway, the Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and other partner agencies also provide business support.



# Gender Export Gap Research

Informed by findings from the Gender & Trade Workshop in November 2023, the Scottish Government commissioned a research project on the Gender Export Gap to:

1

Make the economic case for addressing a known gender export gap in Scotland (what would the potential economic opportunity be if we closed this gap?)

2

Suggest the most effective avenues to address this gender export gap (what action can Scottish Government take in this area?)

# Part 1: Making the Economic Case

- **Dataset:** UK Longitudinal Small Business Survey (2016-2022)
- **Considered SMEs only:** Fewer than 250 staff and £44 million turnover.
- **No sectoral approach:** Services sector was included as part of the overall study.
- **Definition for Women-led business:** majority-led by women, those where women make up more than 50 per cent of the partners or directors, or where the sole proprietor is a woman.

## KEY FINDINGS



**Confirmed Gender Export Gap in Scotland:** only 15% of Scottish women-led SMEs export, proportion of Scottish male-led SMEs is between 2-9% higher than women-led SMEs.



Overall, the research found that increasing the number of women-led businesses who export in Scotland could increase total turnover between **£2.1 billion [\$2.8 bn] and £6.3 billion [\$8.4bn] over one year** and between **£3.4 billion [\$4.5bn] and £10.3 billion [\$13.8bn] over two years.**

# Part 2: Addressing the Gender Export Gap

- Interviews with 10 women non-exporters, 16 women exporters, 9 delivery agencies, and 5 case studies.

| Challenges to Exporting   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Non-Exporters   | Exporters   | Support Agencies  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of mentoring/networks</li><li>• Caring responsibilities</li><li>• Access to finance</li><li>• Confusing landscape of support</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of awareness to find right support</li><li>• UK leaving the EU</li><li>• Target market disinformation</li><li>• Gender stereotypes</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Negative perception of exporting</li><li>• Cultural barriers</li><li>• Male dominated sectors</li></ul> |

# Recommendations

The Scottish Government published its response to the report, accepting the findings.

Initial focus will be on addressing **six recommendations**:

- |   |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |    |   |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|----|---|
| 1 | Running export awareness campaigns       | 2 | Foundation programme of training and information on e-commerce | 3 | Trade missions for women-led businesses        | 4 | Expansion of existing export advisory services       | 5  | Increasing the international exposure of women's networks |
| 6 | Finance and promoting financial literacy | 7 | Investigating links between exporting and productivity         | 8 | Collating gender-segregated data for exporting | 9 | Mapping exporting support programmes and initiatives | 10 | Aligning policy priorities for women-led SMEs.            |



# Next Steps

The Minister for Business & Employment launched the report 7 February 2025.

Delivering on the report's recommendations is a Programme for Government priority.

The Scottish Government established a working group that will implement these recommendations.

Update on progress in the Vision for Trade Annual Report.



Minister for Business & Employment at Raven Botanicals to [launch gender export gap report](#)

# Questions

- What approaches are members taking in addressing the gender export gap?
- How do members monitor progress on their respective initiatives?

**THANK YOU**

**Contact:**

Monika Dybowski, Head of Free Trade Agreements Coordination  
Directorate for International Trade & Investment, Scottish Government  
Email: [monika.Dybowski@gov.scot](mailto:monika.Dybowski@gov.scot)





# Additional Background Material

[Gender Export Gap in Scotland: Research Report](#)

[Scottish Government's response to Gender Export Gap Report](#)

[Vision for Trade – Scotland's International Trade Strategy](#)

[A Trading Nation – Scotland's Export Strategy](#)

[Pathways: Women in Entrepreneurship Report](#)

[Programme for Government 2025/26](#)



**Scottish Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba