

Policy Insights on Women and Trade: United Kingdom



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Street address: ITC
54-56, rue de Montbrillant
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Postal address: ITC
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Telephone: +41-22 730 0111

Fax: +41-22 733 4439

E-mail: itcreg@intracen.org

Internet: <http://www.intracen.org>

Policy Insights on Women and Trade:

United Kingdom

About the paper

The United Kingdom has made huge strides domestically in making trade policy work for women, while also leveraging its foreign development funding to advance inclusive policymaking beyond its borders. This publication highlights how the country can further incorporate gender concerns into trade policy, strengthen gender-disaggregated data collection, provide more tailored finance and skills programmes for women, and use international tools to encourage developing economies to do the same.

The report is based on the findings of the SheTrades Outlook tool in the United Kingdom, which collected and analysed data from 15 public- and private-sector organizations.

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For more information, contact: Judith Fessehaie at womenandtrade@intracen.org

For more information on SheTrades Outlook, see: <https://outlook.shetrades.com/home>

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Foreword

Trade can offer businesses with ample opportunities for exchanging knowledge, boosting sales and revenue, and improving incomes. The realities of trade, however, often vary dramatically for businesses depending not just on factors such as size and location, but on whether the firm is led by men or by women. And what can get in the way of both major ecosystem changes and shorter-term competitiveness improvements often comes down not just to political will, cultural norms, and individual mindsets, but to data.

Since we first opened our doors over 60 years ago, ITC has seen firsthand how data is vital not just for firms to plan their production and export strategies, but for policymakers to have a fuller sense of the hurdles that hold people back from chasing their business dreams. Data can help counter and even disprove past assumptions about how policies work in practice, showing how many economic frameworks, rules, and norms do not affect people and firms equally. It can also shine a light on best practices that may have otherwise languished in the dark, inspiring and informing change.

That's been the ethos of the SheTrades Outlook methodology, which has now been rolled out in over 64 countries, and which has served as the basis for deeper collaboration with policymakers in finding solutions that fully serve the needs of women entrepreneurs and business leaders. This work has led to concrete changes on the ground, with proven results—and at a time when the fight for equal opportunities for women and men is becoming harder, supporting evidence-based policymaking is more important than ever. That is our goal at ITC, both across our work supporting SMEs around the world, and within our SheTrades Initiative, our flagship programme on women and trade that is now celebrating its 10th year.

As a major trading nation, the United Kingdom has built a strong track record in championing women's economic empowerment through trade, both domestically and in its development strategies abroad. This report offers an in-depth analysis of the United Kingdom's business and policy environment, highlighting successful innovations that have helped more women take part in economic activity and reap the benefits, while also noting areas for further development. ITC stands ready to support the United Kingdom Government as it continues its efforts to ensure that trade creates opportunities for all, leaving no one behind.



Pamela Coke-Hamilton

Executive Director
International Trade Centre

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Acronyms

Unless otherwise specified, all references to dollars (\$) are to United States dollars. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

DBT	Department for Business and Trade
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITC	International Trade Centre
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
WTO	World Trade Organization



Executive summary

Women's economic empowerment is a key objective for the United Kingdom, both domestically and globally. The United Kingdom has made progress in promoting women's economic empowerment across its nations and regions, particularly through national and devolved approaches to its business environment and trade policy.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom has actively championed trade and gender at the international level, including through its leadership in and the former UK Ambassador's co-chairing of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender as well as the SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme.

SheTrades Outlook has made it possible to track the country's progress on the trade and gender equality and identify opportunities for more inclusive policies. The key findings across six pillars are summarized below:

Domestically, the United Kingdom has made great strides in promoting an inclusive policy ecosystem for women:

- **Trade policy:** The United Kingdom Government has incorporated gender provisions in trade policy and agreements, conducted impact assessments of trade agreements on protected groups, including gender, used gender indicators in projects and programmes, collected gender-disaggregated data on companies, established a trade and gender focal point, and trained the Department for Business and Trade staff on gender issues.
- **Legal and regulatory framework:** Laws in the United Kingdom guarantee equal rights to inheritance, ownership, and credit, provide protection from gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, and mandate gender-responsive budgeting.
- **Business environment:** National institutions provide business support services, incubators, and accelerator programmes, and help desks and grievance redress mechanisms to support entrepreneurs and exporters. The United Kingdom Government regularly publishes information about procurement tenders and processes and changes in Customs rules online. It has adopted a

public procurement policy scheme that awards scoring to social value considerations including workforce equality and opportunity.

- **Access to skills:** National institutions offer upskilling programmes for workers and entrepreneurs and training on trade regulations.
- **Access to finance:** Financial and national institutions offer digital financial services, give financial support to women-led businesses to participate in trade fairs, and provide trade finance schemes to facilitate trade.
- **Work and society:** Domestic laws guarantee that men and women can work in the same industries and perform the same tasks. The United Kingdom Government also regularly collects gender-disaggregated data on time-use.

The country's progress on trade and gender goes beyond national policies. Globally, through the SheTrades Commonwealth+ Programme, the United Kingdom has:

- Promoted inclusive trade policies in 12 developing countries;
- Co-created the SheTrades Outlook tool for trade and gender policymaking and supported the SheTrades Outlook Network, a platform that connects government officials working on trade and gender to access international expertise, peer learning, and technical assistance;

Opportunities for reform

Key opportunities for reform include:

- **Mainstreaming gender into trade policy** by making consultation processes more accessible for women, adopting a standard definition of a women-owned/led business, and providing training on gender issues to Customs officials.
- **Adopting inclusive frameworks** such as incorporating trade issues in the UK Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023-2027, implementing the single window electronic interface, and promoting women's participation in public procurement.
- **Establishing monitoring mechanisms** including mandating the collection of gender-disaggregated data across national institutions and agencies and financial institutions, and encouraging the collection of gender-disaggregated data on complainants of trade malpractices, vendors in public procurement, and beneficiaries of market access training and business support services.
- **Implementing targeted initiatives** such as providing targeted training on business and export skills and offering incentives for women to participate in skills programmes, raising awareness of women-led/women-owned businesses and SMEs on leveraging UK's free trade agreements and trade policy, developing financial instruments, including venture capital tailored for women-led businesses, and mainstreaming gender in business innovation programmes and projects.
- **Encouraging wider use** of SheTrades Outlook by WTO Members, and continuing official development assistance investments in women and trade while leveraging the SheTrades Outlook Network to build local capacity for inclusive policy design and implementation in developing countries.

About the SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme

Timeframe



Objective

To increase economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries and other developing economies by enabling the increased participation of women-owned businesses in international trade. The Programme is funded by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) under the framework of the SheTrades Initiative.

Activities

- Provide governments with the tools, information, and capacity to implement gender-responsive policies. Also offer a platform for governments to work collectively and share best practices, including through SheTrades Outlook and in-country technical assistance on policy reform.
- Provide direct support to women-owned businesses. Build their competitiveness and their capacity to participate in trade through intensive training, mentoring, and coaching.
- Work with business support organizations to improve the service offering for women entrepreneurs.

About SheTrades Initiative

ITC's SheTrades Initiative is a global platform that empowers women to engage in business, creating value for both them and their communities. The initiative ensures that the right capacities and conditions are present to foster inclusive and sustainable trade.

SheTrades delivers activities and training that improve women traders' ability to do business successfully. At the same time, the initiative works to remove inequalities that hinder women's participation in trade and fosters a better trade environment for all.



CHAPTER 1

SheTrades Outlook: Turning data into opportunity

What is SheTrades Outlook?

SheTrades Outlook is an innovative, evidence-based policy tool co-designed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Kingdom under the SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme. It identifies policies, laws, or programmes that contribute to or prevent women's participation in the economy and in trade.

This first-of-its-kind tool is based on 55 indicators. These are grouped under six interlinked pillars: Trade Policy, Business Environment, Legal and Regulatory Framework, Access to Skills, Access to Finance, and Work and Society.

SheTrades Outlook is based on data collected by consultants from 20 national institutions and organizations on average per country. Data are collected through interviews guided by semi-structured questionnaires. Examples of institutions surveyed include ministries of trade, education, finance, technology, and women's affairs; public procurement authorities; customs authorities; central banks; national statistics offices; business associations; chambers of commerce; and other trade support institutions.

SheTrades Outlook also uses reliable, publicly available, and recently updated databases from the Inter-Parliamentary Union; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the United Nations Statistics Division; the World Bank; and the World Economic Forum. Additionally, national

experts have identified an average of three good practices per country.

As of 2025, SheTrades Outlook has been rolled out in 64 countries in all geographic regions and of different levels of economic development.

SheTrades Outlook in the United Kingdom

Twelve national institutions were interviewed for the data collection. Institutions were chosen based on their strategic objectives and relevance for the six pillars of the initiative. The institutional survey was conducted in 2023. This policy brief presents the latest available data and includes information on initiatives and policies introduced by the United Kingdom Devolved Governments and the private sector, since 2023.

The SheTrades Outlook indicator scores range from zero to one. The United Kingdom performed the highest in the Legal and Regulatory Framework (0.95) category. This was followed by Work and Society (0.76), Trade Policy (0.70), Business Environment (0.70) and Access to Skills (0.62). It performed the lowest in Access to Finance (0.45).

Detailed information on the scores under each pillar is presented below. This includes strengths, bottlenecks, and gaps identified in the data.

Figure 1

SheTrades Outlook indicator scores



Source: SheTrades Outlook. See: <https://outlook.shetradet.com/country-profiles/59/compare-to/5>.

Box 1 Experiences in advancing inclusive trade

Women's economic empowerment is a key objective for the United Kingdom Government, both domestically and globally. Unlocking women's full economic potential is central to achieving ambitions on inclusive growth and open, free, and fairer trade, as it boosts competitiveness, fuels innovation, and strengthens business resilience.

On the international level, the United Kingdom has been a driving force in advancing the trade and gender agenda at the World Trade Organization (WTO) under the former UK Ambassador's co-chairing of the [Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender](#). Under this co-chairing, the group has made significant progress to implement the [Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment](#), secure gender equality commitments in WTO ministerial outcomes such as the [Abu Dhabi Declaration](#) at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference, and published a joint [Co-Chair Statement on Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Trade Growth Through Gender Equality and Building a Gender-Responsive WTO](#). The group also developed tools like the [Compendium of Financial Inclusion Initiatives for Women Entrepreneurs](#) with the MSME Informal Working Group, the WTO Secretariat and ITC.

The group has also launched the [WTO's International Prize for Gender Equality in Trade](#), facilitated high-level dialogues, and supported the WTO Secretariat with organising the [2025 WTO Symposium on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment](#). The group's 2025–2026 Work Plan sets a roadmap for deeper integration of gender considerations in global trade policy and future ministerial outcomes.

Domestically, the United Kingdom has set ambitious targets to achieve the highest sustained growth in the Group of 7, as outlined in its [Plan for Change](#). Its [Trade Strategy 2025](#), [Modern Industrial Strategy 2025](#), and [Small Business Plan 2025 \(Backing your Business\)](#) envision a dynamic economy with a world-class business environment that leverages open and free trade to drive growth in frontier industries and supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

By prioritizing gender-responsive policies and creating opportunities for women for meaningful growth, the United Kingdom is not only advancing its own economic objectives but also demonstrating best practices for other countries seeking to align inclusive growth with these strategies.

The United Kingdom has made major contributions to women's economic empowerment globally, particularly through the ITC's [SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme](#). This initiative drives economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries and beyond by increasing the participation of women-led and women-owned businesses in international trade, including with the United Kingdom.

As part of the programme, the United Kingdom co-created SheTrades Outlook with ITC in 2019, a trade and gender tool adopted by 64 countries to date, including the United Kingdom in 2023. It is becoming a primary tool for countries to track progress on the trade and gender agenda and identify opportunities for more inclusive policies.

Building on insights from SheTrades Outlook, the United Kingdom and ITC have provided technical assistance to 19 countries. Twelve have developed gender-responsive trade and trade-related policies as a result of the support. ITC technical assistance includes reviewing policy drafts, incorporating gender considerations, conducting stakeholder consultations, and building the capacity of policymakers to integrate gender into trade policy, public procurement, and free trade agreements.

Together, these efforts advance the United Kingdom's strategic priorities on women's economic empowerment and trade, deliver targeted investments towards gender equality, and contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5.

This policy brief presents results from SheTrades Outlook in the United Kingdom, providing evidence on women's participation in trade and identifying opportunities for more inclusive policies. The findings can inform domestic policymaking, guide future investments, and support the design of gender-responsive strategies that enhance competitiveness and business resilience.

At the same time, they showcase the United Kingdom's approach as a best-practice example, offering opportunities for peer learning and inspiration for other countries seeking to integrate gender into trade and industrial policy. By leveraging these insights, policymakers and stakeholders can strengthen inclusive growth and advance the United Kingdom's commitments to gender equality, sustainable development, and global trade leadership.



CHAPTER 2

Results: Strengths and challenges

Trade policy

Consultation process

Initiatives or mechanisms are in place to include women's associations/organizations in consultation processes



Women's associations/organizations participate in consultation processes



Trade and gender-related concerns are included in policies and agreements

Policy or action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment includes trade-related concerns



Trade agreements or regional economic integration agreements include gender provisions



Assessment, monitoring and evaluation

Ex-ante and ex-post gender impact assessments of trade agreements are carried out



Trade policy uses gender indicators



Gender-disaggregated data

Law or regulation mandates the collection of gender-disaggregated data



Gender-disaggregated data is collected on companies



Women's participation in strategic roles

Women are represented in ministerial and parliamentary positions



Capacity building on gender issues

Trade Ministry staff receive training on gender issues



A gender focal point focusing on trade and gender issues has been established



TRADE POLICY



The trade policy pillar focuses on the inclusiveness of trade policies, agreements, and practices. It includes the adoption of gender-responsive practices in trade and trade-related institutions.

The performance of the United Kingdom in this pillar is medium. This results from:

- Including women's business associations in consultation processes
- Mainstreaming gender in trade policy and agreements
- Undertaking impact assessments of trade agreements that consider gender alongside other protected characteristics
- Using gender indicators in projects and programmes
- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on companies
- Establishing a trade and gender focal point and conducting training for Department for Business and Trade (DBT)¹ staff on gender issues.

However, there are opportunities for improvements, such as:

- Including trade-related concerns in the UK Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023-2027
- Adopting an internationally recognized definition of a women-owned or women-led business
- Mandating the collection of gender-disaggregated data across all government agencies and departments

What works?

To inform inclusive trade policymaking, the Welsh Government commissioned qualitative research to explore the challenges faced by women exporters in Wales when accessing international markets. The study aimed to identify key barriers and examine potential solutions to support greater participation of women in global trade. The findings highlighted a range of recommendations, spanning practical interventions to more strategic measures. These recommendations are being taken forward by the Welsh Government, including efforts to increase knowledge and insight into the engagement of women entrepreneurs with export support services.

Similarly, the Scottish Government also commissioned a research project on the gender export gap to better understand what difference greater participation of women in exporting could make towards wider trade and economic targets, and how the Scottish Government could encourage and support that. The [Gender Export Gap research report](#) found that if women-led SMEs exported at the same rate as male-led exporters it could increase total turnover by between £2.1 billion and £6.3 billion over one year and between £3.4 billion and £10.3 billion over two years. The Report also provides a series of recommendations for the Scottish Government including raising awareness of exporting opportunities, including more women in trade missions, increasing the exposure of women's networks and collating gender-segregated data for exporting. In order to implement these recommendations, the Scottish Government has established the Gender Export Gap Working Group along with delivery partners and policy leads. The group will report and its progress in the next Vision for Trade Annual Report.

The DBT's Trade and Gender Equality team holds ad hoc meetings and a regular Trade and Gender Equality Policy Insights Forum with women-owned businesses, academics, and experts to inform trade policy. The DBT also launches 'Call for Input' before negotiating free trade agreements, with submissions accepted online or by e-mail.

The United Kingdom has made progress on advancing gender equality through trade agreements. In SheTrades Outlook, the levels of gender responsiveness in trade accords are rated as 'limited', 'evolving', or 'advanced'. The United Kingdom is party to 40 free trade agreements.

As of 2023, 18 of 36 evaluated trade agreements involving the United Kingdom demonstrated an evolving approach to gender responsiveness. The United Kingdom Government has signed three new agreements since 2023 – the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the United Kingdom–Ukraine digital trade agreement, and the United Kingdom–India free trade agreement.

All three agreements incorporate gender provisions and highlight the Government's efforts to promote women's economic empowerment through trade. For instance, the 2025 United Kingdom–India free trade agreement includes



a chapter on Trade and Gender Equality. This enables the partner countries to cooperate on gender equality to support women's access to and equitable participation in trade.

To assess the impact of trade agreements on protected groups, including gender, the United Kingdom conducts ex-ante impact assessments on all newly negotiated Free Trade Agreements signed post-Brexit, with the expectation that these will be covered in the ex-post evaluation published five to 10 years after the entry into force of the agreement. Previously, the ex-ante impact assessments have examined the gendered effects of trade on women as workers by analysing the proportion of women and men in major exporting sectors and estimating how employment in these sectors is likely to rise or fall as a result of the trade agreement.

The United Kingdom's Devolved Governments also contribute to promoting gender equality through trade policy. For instance, the Welsh Government has established the [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act \(2015\)](#) which requires public bodies to think about the long-term impact of their decisions. The Act establishes seven wellbeing goals that the Welsh Government promotes during trade negotiations. Moreover, the Welsh Government also undertakes an analysis of trade agreements to assess the impact on the seven goals. So far, the Welsh Government has analysed the Australia, New Zealand, and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Gender-disaggregated data are collected on companies. The Office for National Statistics produces datasets on businesses and employment and collects data on women-led exporting companies. The National Survey of Registered Business and the Longitudinal Small Business Survey gather gender-disaggregated data on company ownership. The Office for National Statistics also collects gender-disaggregated data on employment and senior management.

Additionally, the Department for Business and Trade commissioned the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation Research to develop its Trade in Employment database, which will include breakdowns by gender, age, and skills.

The DBT staff have received training on trade and gender equality issues. Topics include women's participation in trade through their multiple roles, barriers to trade for women, and the gendered impacts of trade.

The DBT has a Trade and Gender Equality team that operates as the primary gender focal point in trade. They develop, negotiate and implement policy to achieve more gender-equitable trade outcomes. This includes cooperating with international partners and promoting gender equality in multilateral forums, such as the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender.

The United Kingdom's progress on trade and gender goes beyond national policies. Globally, through the SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme, the United Kingdom has promoted inclusive trade policies in 12 developing countries. In Ghana, for instance, the programme supported the development of a gender-responsive policy on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and the National Export Development Strategy. In Sri Lanka, it helped institutionalize regular data collection and progress tracking on trade and gender in the mandate of the Export Development Board.

The United Kingdom has also supported the creation of the SheTrades Outlook Network, which connects government officials working on trade and gender across countries that have onboarded the tool. The platform serves as a gateway for in-country stakeholders to access international expertise, peer learning, and technical assistance – for instance, on practical ways to integrate gender into trade agreements and policies.

Through regular workshops and peer-to-peer exchanges, government focal points share experiences, learn from global best practices, and strengthen their capacity to design and implement gender-responsive policies while improving data collection to monitor progress.

Where is more progress needed?

Gender-disaggregated data is collected for individuals participating in consultations on trade agreements, but not for organizational respondents. To strengthen inclusiveness, the DBT could establish a formal mechanism to engage women's business associations in consultations and collect gender-disaggregated data on organizational representatives to better monitor participation.

The United Kingdom's action plan for building a more representative and effective approach to tackling conflict, the [UK Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023-2027](#), does not address trade or entrepreneurship. This presents an opportunity to expand its scope. Integrating women's economic empowerment and gender-responsive trade policies into the action plan could strengthen the United Kingdom's gender strategy and provide a model for linking gender equality with inclusive economic growth.

The Office for National Statistics could consider mandating all government agencies and departments to collect gender-disaggregated data.

There is also an opportunity for the United Kingdom to adopt an internationally recognized definition of women-led or women-owned businesses, as outlined in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) [International Workshop Agreement 34: Women's entrepreneurship - Key definitions and general criteria](#).^{2,3} Using such a standard definition would enable national institutions to better target beneficiaries of women's economic empowerment programmes and monitor their impacts.

Furthermore, adopting the agreement would allow the United Kingdom to contribute to the collection of comparable data on women's entrepreneurship at regional and international levels.

Legal and regulatory framework

Signing, ratification and enforcement of key international conventions

Country has ratified the CEDAW and CEDAW optional protocol

Country has ratified and enforced ILO Conventions 100, 111, and 183

Gender-responsive budgeting approach

Government uses gender-responsive budgeting approach

Laws that facilitate access to productive resources

Law provides women and men with equal rights to property and access to financial services

Laws that facilitate access to the labour market

Law mandates non-discrimination in employment based on gender, protection from sexual harassment and equal remuneration for work of equal value

Paid parental leave policies

Maternity leave benefit is mandated

Paternity leave benefit is mandated

Childcare and education support and facilities

Parents receive childcare and education support

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



This pillar evaluates a country's adoption of laws and regulations protecting and promoting women's rights. It also covers laws and policies that encourage women's entry into, and continuity and advancement in, labour markets. An example would be laws that help women combine work with childcare responsibilities. More than 50% of the data for this pillar were sourced from the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law project; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Information System on International Labour Standards.

The United Kingdom has the highest performance in this pillar. The United Kingdom has ratified international conventions and the establishment of national laws that provide men and women equal inheritance and ownership rights, as well as access to credit. There are also laws against gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. Further, the United Kingdom Government has adopted a gender-responsive budgeting approach. Moreover, the Devolved Governments in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have powers to legislate and implement policies on gender equality within their respective areas of competence.

What works?

Internationally, the United Kingdom has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention's Optional Protocol, and ILO Conventions 100 (equal remuneration) and 111 (non-discrimination in employment and occupation).

The United Kingdom Government has also ratified ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment. The United Kingdom played a leading role in negotiating the contents of the Convention. The Convention provides for the first internationally agreed definition of violence and harassment in the world of work, including of gender-based violence. Through ratifying the Violence and Harassment Convention, the United Kingdom agreed to uphold these provisions in line with its domestic approaches. This included supporting

the Equality and Human Rights Commission to develop a statutory Code of Practice on workplace harassment, as well as preparing practical guidance for employers on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace.

Domestically, the United Kingdom Government has enacted legislation to ensure women and men have equal inheritance and property rights. It also guarantees equal access to credit and prohibits discrimination in opening bank accounts. In the workplace, the country has laws preventing gender-based discrimination and protecting against sexual harassment, as well as legislation ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.

The purpose of the Public Sector Equality Duty is to make sure that the public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions think about how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect of their day-to-day business. The United Kingdom Government is committed to protecting and upholding the Public Sector Equality Duty, including ensuring that the duty is met by all parties exercising public functions. This means that they must consider and keep reviewing how they promote equality in all their functions including: decision-making; internal and external policies; procuring goods and services; the services they provide; recruitment; promotion; and performance management of employees.

The United Kingdom Government also supports work-life balance and family well-being through policies such as 1–2 weeks of parental leave for fathers and a range of childcare and education services. For example, in England, government funded childcare is available for three and four-year-olds and provides up to 15 hours per week for all eligible families, or up to 30 hours for eligible working families.

In Scotland, government funded childcare is available for three to five-year-olds with up to 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare a year. This is around:

- 22 hours a week if used all year
- 30 hours a week if used only during school term time
- Some two-year olds can get funded early learning and childcare.



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In Wales, eligible working parents can receive up to 30 hours of government funded early education and childcare for up to 48 weeks a year for three and four-years olds.

Where is more progress needed?

The United Kingdom could ratify ILO Convention 183 on maternity protection to further strengthen support for working women. Women are entitled to take up to 52 weeks of Statutory Maternity Leave; the first 26 weeks are known as 'Ordinary Maternity Leave' and the last 26 weeks as 'Additional Maternity Leave'. Women may also be entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay which is paid for a maximum of 39 weeks. For the first six weeks, it is paid at a weekly rate

equal to 90 percent of the woman's average weekly earnings, with no upper limit. For the remaining 33 weeks, it is paid at the lower of either the standard rate (£187.18 in 2025/26) or 90 percent of the woman's average weekly earnings. Aligning maternity leave policies with ILO Convention 183 by providing full pay could enhance women's economic security, support their continued workforce participation, and reinforce the country's commitment to gender equality.

Women often face the disproportionate burden of caring responsibilities across all spectrums, including childcare and looking after elderly relatives. There is also an opportunity for the United Kingdom Government to put in place policies and working practices that support and balance these demands.

Business environment

Representation of women business associations

Women's business associations are represented at the national level



Women-led businesses participate in activities conducted by chambers of commerce

missing data

Business start-ups

Support services are available when establishing a company



National institutions implement incubator/accelerator programmes



Access to trade and customs information

Help and information desks are available at government offices to assist companies in complying with national regulations and export/import requirements



Information on changes in customs procedures and trade regulations are announced in a timely manner



Public procurement

Information on public procurement process, vendors and transactions are available



Preferential scheme on public procurement for women-led businesses is implemented



Reporting and monitoring unfair practices in trade

Means exist for women and men to report complaints on wrong doing on trade regulations or procedures



Trade facilitation and gender-responsive framework in customs

Single-window electronic interface is available



Gender-sensitive guidelines by the World Customs Organization or other national monitoring framework is implemented



Border-level customs agents and officials receive training on gender-sensitive practices



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT



A business ecosystem conducive to resilient growth is essential throughout the business cycle. This pillar focuses on the inclusiveness of the business ecosystem and covers the industry bodies supporting women's entrepreneurship. It also assesses the ease and cost of establishing and running a business, trading across borders, and accessing information and public procurement markets.

The United Kingdom has a medium-high score in this pillar. This is due to the existence of women's business associations in the country, the availability of business support services, incubators and accelerator programmes, and the establishment of help desks and grievance redress mechanisms. Information about procurement tenders and changes in Customs rules is published online. The United Kingdom has also adopted a social value model in public procurement which includes gender equality considerations.

Opportunities for improvement exist, however, such as:

- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on suppliers in public procurement
- Providing training on gender issues to Customs officials
- Fully implementing a single window electronic interface
- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on beneficiaries of support services when establishing a company

What works?

Women's business associations have a national presence across the United Kingdom. For example, the Organization of Women in International Trade serves as a key voice for women in business and trade at the national level.

Business support services are available when establishing a company in the United Kingdom. The Department for Business and Trade implements **several schemes** that support the establishment of a firm by providing information on taxes, exporting, and business development. For instance, the DBT recently launched a new **Business Growth Service** to make it easier and quicker for businesses across the country to get the help, support, and advice they need to start, scale, and succeed.

This support will also be integrated with locally led delivery through **Growth Hubs** across the country that provide local businesses with advice and support on scaling up, management, innovation, exporting, and understanding regulation. The United Kingdom Government also offers a **business support helpline** that provides support on:

- starting a company
- running and growing a business
- selling overseas from the United Kingdom
- investing and expanding in the United Kingdom

The Scottish government also provides support services when establishing a business. In 2024, the Scottish government provided funding to the South of Scotland Enterprise to operate a pre-start pilot which offered specialist, place-based coaching and support services to potential founders, particularly women and other under-represented communities. This pre-start pilot was developed based on a 2023 Scottish Government report called **Pathways: Women in Entrepreneurship**. The report undertook data analysis and stakeholder engagement to better understand women's entrepreneurship in Scotland and provided recommendations to address under-representation in business. In 2025-2026, the Scottish government is providing additional funding to continue the pilot and also launch a similar pilot in the Highlands and islands.

The DBT has also launched a **Trade and Gender Equality webpage**, a dedicated site that helps women in trade find the resources and support they need to expand their businesses. The site collates information on the United Kingdom's commitments in free trade agreements, programmes available for women in trade across all regions of the country, and a resource for women to report gender-related barriers in trade.

DBT's Business.gov.uk hosts an export enquiry form through which businesses can access the Export Support Service which includes a number of support offers. The Export Support team provides support, including connecting businesses to relevant partners, depending on their needs. DBT also offers a network of International Trade Advisers that support businesses to sell overseas by providing face to face and practical support and strategic guidance.

In addition, DBT's International Markets Advisers support UK SMEs by providing market-specific, in-country guidance. It provides one-to-one consultations, connections with potential buyers and distributors, and introductions to the Overseas Referral Network via the Export Support Directory. The Export Support Directory are private sector service providers that help businesses with commercial issues such as local accountants, legal experts, sector specialists, translation or HR services.

Finally, DBT has also developed more than 140 practical guides for businesses on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Australia and New Zealand FTAs.

Incubator and accelerator programmes are also available for women-led start-ups such as The Pitched Investment Platform. DBT's Global Entrepreneur Programme supports international female founders of high growth tech businesses to establish in the United Kingdom and operates across the United Kingdom Government's industrial strategy sectors. [We are Radikal](#) and [We in Social Tech](#) are also incubator programmes for women entrepreneurs in the country. Another initiative designed for women entrepreneurs is the Women's International Network Programme, which aims to increase the participation of women-owned and women-led businesses in international trade through tailored support.

Updated information on customs procedures and trade regulations is published online 90 days before implementation. Information can be accessed at the [Exporting Goods from the United Kingdom](#) and [Importing Goods into the United Kingdom](#) pages on government website. Updates are also available on the [His Majesty's Revenue and Customs website](#).

There are mechanisms to report trade barriers through the DBT's [Report a Trade Barrier](#) tool. His Majesty's Revenue and Customs also collects gender-disaggregated information on the Customs workforce and publishes an annual pay gap report.

Public bodies advertise contracts above a certain threshold on [Contracts Finder](#). The United Kingdom Government also uses a [Social Value Model](#) launched in 2020 to promote supplier diversity, including women-led businesses. Contracting authorities allocate at least 10% of the quality score in tenders to social value criteria, requiring bidders to outline plans for tackling workforce inequality and ensuring equal opportunity.

The United Kingdom Government could further strengthen gender-responsive public procurement by introducing measures such as quotas or targets for women-led businesses and by including women-owned businesses in subcontracting plans. Adopting these measures would ensure that women and men can equally bid for, win, and supply to government contracts. The ITC policy guide, developed through the SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme, [Making Public Procurement Work for Women](#), provides recommendations on reshaping public procurement to improve women's participation.

Where is more progress needed?

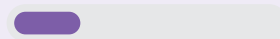
The United Kingdom Government should consider creating a gender-disaggregated database of registered suppliers. This could help map women's participation in government procurement and ensure that women-led businesses are notified of smaller tender opportunities. The United Kingdom Government could also collect gender-disaggregated data on people reporting trade malpractices to better understand women's needs and inform trade policy improvements.

Additionally, there is an opportunity for His Majesty's Revenue and Customs to fully implement the single window electronic interface to integrate all customs procedures and authorities and provide training for border-level customs agents on gender-sensitive practices.

Access to skills



Education and literacy



Law mandates compulsory education



Gender disaggregated data on adult literacy

missing data

Skills programmes for workers and entrepreneurs



Enrolment rate in technical and vocational programmes (female/male ratio)



Skills training programmes for workers are conducted



Business skills training for MSME owners are conducted



Training to facilitate access to markets are conducted



Targeted support and capacity building programmes for women



National institutions provide targeted support and capacity building programmes for women



Access to ICT and business innovation support



Policies and programmes are in place to support women's business innovation



Access to internet



ACCESS TO SKILLS



Better access to education is essential to build necessary skills and reduce the imbalance of opportunities between men and women. It is also vital to break the vicious cycle of poverty. This pillar focuses on measures designed to enhance women's abilities and business-related skills. One objective is to close the education gap. Another is to equip women with the capacity to compete and succeed in international markets and occupations traditionally dominated by men.

The United Kingdom has medium performance in this pillar. National institutions offer upskilling programmes for workers and entrepreneurs and training on trade regulation. There are business innovation programmes that target women. However, there is an opportunity to provide targeted support to women's business associations, incentives for women-led businesses to participate in training.

What works?

The United Kingdom Government invests in building skills and supporting career advancement at home, creating a foundation for broader economic growth that can be replicated internationally through its Official Development Assistance. Domestically, the Department for Education implements the [Skills for Life](#) programme, offering flexible, free bootcamps across the country that fast-track adult learners to the interview stage for vacancies in key sectors, including digital, technical, construction, logistics, and green skills.

The [National Careers Service](#) complements this by providing a database of free online learning courses for lifelong learning. The government recently created Skills England, an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions. Skills England will provide guidance on the country's current and future skills needs. It will set direction on the national skills agenda and ensure targeted training to drive growth and reduce economic activity.

The National Careers service's Find a Course product helps people find courses and training that are funded by the Department for Education. The government is also bringing forward a new growth and skills offer, which will offer greater flexibility to employers and learners and support the skilled workforce needed to deliver the Industrial Strategy. To promote people's participation in training workshops and programmes,

the government has announced it will reintroduce targeted means-tested maintenance grants by the end of this Parliament, and committed to increasing maintenance loans in line with forecast inflation every academic year. Further, care leavers will automatically become eligible to receive the maximum rate of maintenance loan.

The government is also planning to introduce the Lifelong Learning Entitlement from academic year 2026/27 to help people study flexibly in a way that suits their needs. To go further, the government will consult on including "break points" within degrees, so students can gain recognised qualifications as they progress through higher education.

Moreover, Skills England will work in partnership with employers to support clearer navigation of the skills system. The Department for Work and Pensions will work with employers to fill vacancies by finding the right people with the right skills or setting them on a path to grow the necessary skills.

In addition, at the Devolved Government level, in England, the government is bringing together Jobcentre Plus services with the National Careers Service to create greater awareness and focus on skills and careers as well as better join-up between employability and careers provision. The new Jobs and Careers Service will support people into work; help people to progress in work, including through boosting their skills and making informed choices about their careers.

Entrepreneurs and business owners have access to targeted support as well. The [Help to Grow](#) programme provides leadership training and mentoring on topics such as strategy, innovation, employee engagement, and creating a tailored business plan. Designed for flexibility, it accommodates participants' work and personal commitments, with 90% of the programme funded by the United Kingdom Government and delivered in partnership with the Small Business Charter.

The [United Kingdom Business Academy](#) provides free skills, capability, and knowledge training to help United Kingdom businesses grow. Training courses include topics such as starting a business, scaling, digital skills and finance, etc. The Business Academy platform also organizes webinars with experts and partners from DBT, business support organisations such as Growth Hubs as well as private sector businesses. The platform will also launch a video on demand service in early 2026.



The [Kick Off in Business](#) initiative offers free, one-week online courses on grants and loans, tax and expenses, business planning, business proposals, and sales strategies, helping people start a business or become self-employed.

In addition to this, the Business Academy delivers over 500 webinars a year to 12,000+ companies on a wide variety of trade and business-related subjects. The programme is aimed at small and medium-sized companies. Topics range from foundational international sales skills to sector-specific webinars, market access events, and the benefits of free trade agreements.

The Organization of Women in International Trade UK, a non-profit business network, provides advocacy, knowledge-sharing, training and capacity-building activities to strengthen women-led SMEs' access to global markets and international opportunities. It is also promoting an inclusive trade ecosystem by encouraging the use of gender-disaggregated data in policymaking and implementation.

The University of Warwick and the Chartered Institute of Export & International Trade implement the Women in Trade Hub UK. It provides mentoring and networking opportunities for women to increase their participation in international trade. For instance, Women in Trade Hub UK has launched an online forum to connect women in trade. It is also creating a centralised resource hub that provides information on resources, funding, opportunities, and training for women.

The [Digital Exporting Programme](#) offers free support to the United Kingdom's goods and services exporters at every stage of their exporting journey. As part of this, the DBT delivers a dedicated initiative to support and encourage more women-founders and women-led businesses to sell and scale internationally across the globe as well as secure appropriate finance. The Office for National Statistics also collects gender-disaggregated data on internet usage, which helps inform digital skills programmes and initiatives.

There are programmes and policies that support business innovation, including some targeting women. For instance, the [UK Research and Innovation Challenge Fund](#) holds competitions for research, development, and feasibility studies to create new supply chains and markets, with winning companies receiving innovation funding.

Similarly, Innovate UK offers Smart Grants to SMEs developing disruptive technological innovations, Innovation Loans of up to £150 million (\$203 million) over three years, and grants of up to £80 million (\$108 million) over three years. The Women in Innovation programme addresses the stark underrepresentation of women in business and innovation. Innovate UK has invested over £11 million in more than 200 Women in Innovation award winners and built a thriving network of 10,500+ women business leaders. Purple plaques to recognise and celebrate award winners have been unveiled at schools, colleges and universities across the United Kingdom to inspire future generations.

Most notably, across all Innovate UK awards, the proportion of successful women-led applications has risen from one in seven to one in three.

Internationally, the country builds on these efforts through the SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme. The programme equips women in developing countries with skills and knowledge to access global markets, covering areas such as export strategies, public procurement, e-commerce, and essential soft skills. It also provides sector-specific upskilling in industries including agribusiness, information technology and business process outsourcing, tourism, and textiles and apparel.

By linking domestic skills development with international support, the United Kingdom leverages its experience and expertise to create a multiplier effect, promoting women's economic empowerment and inclusive trade globally.

Where is more progress needed?

There is an opportunity for the United Kingdom Government to provide more targeted support to women-led businesses and women's business associations. National institutions can consider offering incentives to women to increase their participation in training and workshops.

The United Kingdom Government could organize new training on public procurement processes to ensure that women understand the rules and are better prepared to participate. While the Government Commercial Organisation and the Government Commercial Function have a comprehensive offering of learning and development and capability programmes, they do not specifically target women in procurement.

Access to finance

Access to financial services

Digital financial services are available



There is access to formal financial resources (female/male ratio)



Financial inclusion strategies and programmes

Financial inclusion strategy or programme is implemented



Financial support for women-led businesses and women's business associations

Women-led businesses receive financial support to participate in trade fairs



Fiscal and trade finance schemes

Financial institutions are mandated to report gender-disaggregated data



Fiscal schemes are available to facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities



Trade finance schemes are available in the country to facilitate trade



Financial instruments and other financing opportunities

Financial instruments are available to support entrepreneurial opportunities



Venture capital financing opportunities are available to support women entrepreneurs



ACCESS TO FINANCE



This pillar focuses on women's access to formal financial services. It also determines whether governments – alone or in partnership with the private sector – have developed innovative solutions to promote financial inclusion for women. Examples include removing or modifying bank requirements for physical collateral or verifiable cash flow so that women can access finance more easily.

This is the lowest performing pillar for the United Kingdom. This is related to several factors, including:

- The availability of digital financial services
- Providing trade finance schemes to facilitate trade

There are opportunities for improvement, however, such as implementing financial literacy programmes, mandating the collection of gender-disaggregated financial data, providing financial instruments targeting women to support entrepreneurial activities and providing financial support to participate in trade fairs, and offering venture capital financing opportunities to women-led businesses.

What works?

The United Kingdom supports women's access to finance, creating a foundation domestically and amplifying impact internationally. Digital financial services – including mobile and online banking, international money transfers, and peer-to-peer lending – are widely accessible.

Domestically, the United Kingdom has developed a [National Financial Inclusion Strategy](#), which was published in November 2025. The strategy includes interventions across six key areas: digital inclusion and access to banking, savings, insurance, access to credit, tackling problem debt, and financial education. The three themes of mental health, accessibility, and economic abuse were also included to ensure that the specific barriers faced by people affected by these issues are reflected. The government announced the creation of a Financial Inclusion Committee in late 2024 to advise on its development, which focuses on ensuring access to banking, savings, affordable credit, and insurance for underserved groups. National institutions also provide short- and medium- to long-term trade finance to help exporters access the capital needed for international markets.

The British Business Bank recently committed £130 million (\$173 million) for investment in women-led funds through its programmes, supporting the aims of the [Invest in Women Taskforce](#). The Bank has also set up a dedicated, female-majority Invest in Women Committee to identify and recommend suitable funds from the pipeline, ensuring greater focus and visibility. It has also introduced new initiatives which focus on diversity and inclusion across the investment ecosystem. This includes £150 million for Community ENABLE Funding, designed to provide sustainable capital to Community Development Finance Institutions that serve underserved communities, including minority- and women-led businesses. Another example is the £400 million Investor Pathways Capital initiative which will back diverse and emerging fund managers, targeting greater representation across venture capital and ensuring more inclusive access to early-stage equity markets. In parallel, the Diverse Angel Syndicate Programme will support the growth of diverse angel syndicates, broadening participation in early-stage investment and creating a more representative pipeline of investors and founders.

Under the [Small Business Plan 2025](#) (backing your business), the DBT will support access to finance for SMEs through start-up loans, committing to the British Business Bank's [Growth Guarantee Scheme](#), expanding finance options, boost the availability of early-stage equity finance, and work with private lenders on personal guarantees.

The Organization of Women in International Trade UK organized a Pitch Award in 2025 recognising high-potential female founders. They were then presented to Swiss international investors.

HM Treasury launched the Women in Finance Charter in 2016 to improve the representation of women in senior leadership positions in financial services. According to the most recent Women in Finance Charter Annual Review (April 2025), the Charter has around 450 signatories, covering about 1.3 million employees across the sector, and women in senior leadership roles in financial services has increased from 27% in 2016 to 36% in 2025.



Information on financial resources for women is also widely available in the United Kingdom. For instance, the Invest in [Women Hub](#) is an online platform for women-led businesses seeking access to finance, networks, and resources. It includes a database of verified financial service providers, knowledge resources, and free online financial literacy training.

Internationally, the SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme equips women entrepreneurs in developing countries with financial support to participate in trade fairs, missions, and other business-to-business events. By linking domestic programmes with Official Development Assistance-supported initiatives, the United Kingdom creates a multiplier effect that strengthens women-led businesses' participation in trade globally.

Where is more progress needed?

The country could further enhance women's access to finance through targeted financial literacy programmes. Building on initiatives such as the [Investing in Women Code](#), which promotes female entrepreneurs' access to tools, resources, and finance while collecting gender-disaggregated data, the United Kingdom Government could mandate financial institutions to track gender-disaggregated usage of financial instruments.

There is an opportunity to provide financial support to women-led businesses to participate in trade fairs and international trade missions and enable them to build networks overseas.

Projects such as the British Business Bank's Growth Guarantee Scheme and Start Up Loans – with 40% of beneficiaries being women – provide critical support. Venture capital initiatives including British Patient Capital and the Regional Angels Programme offer funding for high-growth enterprises. These financial instruments and venture capital programmes could be further tailored to specifically target women entrepreneurs, enhancing their participation in both domestic and international markets.

Work and society

Women's opportunities in the labour market

Women are allowed to work in the same industries and perform the same tasks as men



Estimated annual earned income, US\$ PPP (female-male ratio)



Labour force participation rate (female-male ratio)

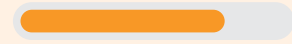


Female share of employment in managerial positions (%)



Time spent on unpaid work

Time-use on unpaid domestic chores and care work (male-female ratio)



WORK AND SOCIETY



This pillar addresses the subconscious or conscious gender biases that prevent women from participating equally in the economy. This includes existing patterns of job segregation and the interventions set up by governments to address these biases. The United Kingdom had a medium-high score in this pillar.

What works?

Women in the United Kingdom face no legal restrictions in accessing the same industries or performing the same tasks as men. Gender-disaggregated data are collected to monitor equality in the workforce, including annual time-use surveys. According to 2024 data, women on average spent 64 minutes more than men on unpaid domestic and care work in March 2024, highlighting the persistent gender gap in unpaid responsibilities alongside formal employment.

Where is more progress needed?

The United Kingdom has an opportunity to strengthen women's representation in managerial positions. In 2024, women held only 41% of managerial roles, highlighting the need for targeted measures to promote gender balance in leadership.

Potential approaches include leadership development programmes for women, mentorship and sponsorship initiatives, flexible work arrangements to support career progression, and the adoption of voluntary or mandatory gender targets for managerial positions across the public and private sectors. Implementing such measures could enhance women's participation in decision-making and drive more inclusive economic growth.



CHAPTER 3

Recommendations

The way forward

The United Kingdom aims to become a leading global economy by attracting investments in frontier industries and scaling up its SMEs. Ensuring that women actively participate in this pursuit is essential to the country's economic success.

Based on the SheTrades Outlook results, the United Kingdom has made progress in promoting women's economic empowerment in several areas, such as business environment and trade policy. Policymakers are mainstreaming gender in trade agreements and consider gender alongside all protected characteristics in overall impact assessments. National institutions have established support services, incubators, and help desks to encourage more women to engage in business and trade.

Beyond the domestic arena, the United Kingdom helps developing economies leverage trade and business for women's economic empowerment. It has funded the SheTrades Commonwealth+ Programme since 2018.

These efforts, including the former UK Ambassador's co-chairing of the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender, have established the UK as a credible global champion.

Domestic reform opportunities

The results highlight areas where further progress is needed, particularly in the access to skills and finance pillars. Policymakers could provide targeted information, technical support, and tailored financial instruments to women-led businesses in the United Kingdom to strengthen their participation in business and trade. Additional improvements are also needed in trade policy and domestic frameworks governing trade, entrepreneurship, and gender to ensure a more inclusive and enabling environment for businesswomen.

Mainstreaming gender into trade policy

- Improve outreach to ensure women's business associations are engaging in consultation processes when developing trade policies and agreements.
- Adopt the internationally recognized definition of a women-owned business specified in ISO International Workshop Agreement 34: Women's entrepreneurship – Key definitions and general criteria.
- Raise national institutions' awareness of the importance of a standard definition in implementing projects, programmes, and initiatives on women's economic empowerment.
- Provide training on gender issues to Customs officials.

Inclusive frameworks

- Incorporate trade issues in the United Kingdom Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023-2027.
- Fully implement the single window electronic interface to facilitate trade.
- Consider publishing information on smaller tenders and notifying women-led SMEs about relevant public procurement opportunities.

Monitoring mechanisms

- Mandate the collection of gender-disaggregated data across national institutions and agencies.
- Mandate financial institutions to collect gender-disaggregated data.
- Collect gender-disaggregated data on:
 - complainants of trade malpractices
 - vendors in public procurement
 - beneficiaries of market access trainings and business support services

Targeted initiatives

- Provide targeted training on business and export skills and offer incentives for women to participate in skills programmes.
- Partner with banks and financial institutions to provide women-led businesses with financial support to participate in trade fairs and international trade missions.
- Ensure venture capital access for women entrepreneurs.

Strengthening international leadership on trade and gender

While significant progress has been made, opportunities remain for the United Kingdom to further assert its leadership on trade and gender, expand inclusive practices, and ensure that women entrepreneurs fully benefit from both domestic and international trade opportunities.

The country can continue to maintain its engagement at the WTO by continuing to be an active member of the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender and facilitating the exchange of best practices among Geneva-based government officials. It can actively promote the integration of gender considerations across negotiations and encourage wider use of SheTrades Outlook by WTO Members – more than one-third of which already use the tool.

Building on the achievements of the SheTrades Commonwealth+Programme, the SheTrades Outlook Network offers a strategic opportunity to strengthen the in-country capacity in developing countries, support policymakers in implementing gender-responsive trade policies through targeted technical assistance, and foster peer learning among implementers. This can include knowledge transfer, practical workshops, and tailored guidance to ensure that lessons from early adopter countries inform broader national strategies.

Equally critical is supporting robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for inclusive policies, using SheTrades Outlook data in country-level inclusive growth diagnostics and strategies, and conducting pioneering studies that demonstrate how gender-responsive trade policies drive economic outcomes, generating evidence to guide future interventions and investments.

Sustaining progress and expanding support to new countries and sectors can help maintain momentum and create pathways for future investments from the United Kingdom that further enhance women's participation in international trade. By combining these international initiatives with domestic reforms, the United Kingdom can reinforce its position as a global leader in gender-inclusive trade and business practices, enabling women to contribute meaningfully to economic growth both at home and abroad.

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Endnotes

- 1 The Department for International Trade merged with parts of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in 2023 to form the DBT. Data for this brief were collected from the Department for International Trade before the institutional change. For consistency, this brief refers to the DBT throughout, while all data cited correspond to information collected from the Department for International Trade.
- 2 Women-owned business: A business that is more than 50% owned by one or more women and whose management and control lie with at least one woman. Otherwise, firms are defined as men-owned.
- 3 Women-led business: A business managed by a woman and at least 25% owned by one or more women. Its management and control lie with at least one woman and if there is a board of directors, at least 33% of its members are women. Otherwise, firms are defined as men-led.

#SheTrades

Her success. Our future.

The International Trade Centre's SheTrades Initiative is a global platform that empowers women to engage in business, creating value for both them and their communities. The Initiative ensures that the right capacities and conditions are present to foster inclusive and sustainable trade.

SheTrades delivers activities and training that improve women traders' ability to do business successfully. At the same time, the Initiative works to remove inequalities that hinder women's participation in trade and foster a better trade environment for all.

