

18. Obstacles to entrepreneurship by gender

Entrepreneurs face a range of obstacles when starting their business and growing it. If appropriate support has to be designed, knowing the gender differences in the perception and or experience of barriers is useful. This section looks at obstacles to entrepreneurship by gender, as reported by three official statistics sources. In a context of international comparisons, the perception of obstacles may be affected not only by the previous experience of the respondents (typically, individuals with entrepreneurial experience tend to be more aware of the difficulties if starting up or growing an enterprise) but also by cultural factors.

Definitions

Start-up difficulties record multiple answers to the question “What did you find difficult when starting up your enterprise?”, where respondents choose among a list of given options.

Obstacles to business growth record multiple answers to the question “Which of the following obstacles are serious problems for the growth of your business?”; respondents choose among given options.

Obstacles to business success record multiple answers to the question “Which is the biggest obstacle to the success of your business”; respondents choose among given options.

Comparability

Eurostat FOBS (see previous section): The aggregate “EU” consists of the following 14 countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia and Slovak Republic.

Canada: The Statistics Canada triennial Survey on Financing of Small and Medium Enterprises launched in 2001, measures the demand and sources for financing of Canadian SMEs, including data on the application process, firm profiles and demographic characteristics of SME ownership by gender. The most recent survey (2007) covered about 15 000 responding firms operating in that year with fewer than 500 employees and less than USD 50 million in revenue (target population). Results cover seven industry

groupings, five employment sizes, six geographic regions and start-ups compared with established firms.

A male (female) ownership is defined as a 100% male (female) ownership, hence excluding the 1 to 50, or the 51 to 99% categories of ownership for both genders. The survey question “Which of the following obstacles are serious problems for the growth of your business?” applies to all SMEs under investigation

United Kingdom: Since 2003, the UK governmental department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) conducts an *Annual Small Business Survey*. Between December 2007 and February 2008, 7 783 UK SME businesses with 1 to 249 employees were interviewed by telephone. The main purpose of the survey is to gauge the needs and concerns of small businesses and identify the barriers that prevent them from fulfilling their potential.

Highlights

There are no major differences in the way women and men business owners perceive obstacles either to start-up a business or to grow it. The types of obstacles identified as more relevant by men and women are the same across different surveys: when starting up, these include legal and administrative matters, developing contacts with customers and access to finance; subsequently, the obstacles to success come from the level of competition and of business costs, and the state of the economy. While overall the share of women facing a given obstacle is slightly superior than that of men, in a number of cases the pattern is reversed.

Sources

Eurostat, *Factors of Business Success*.

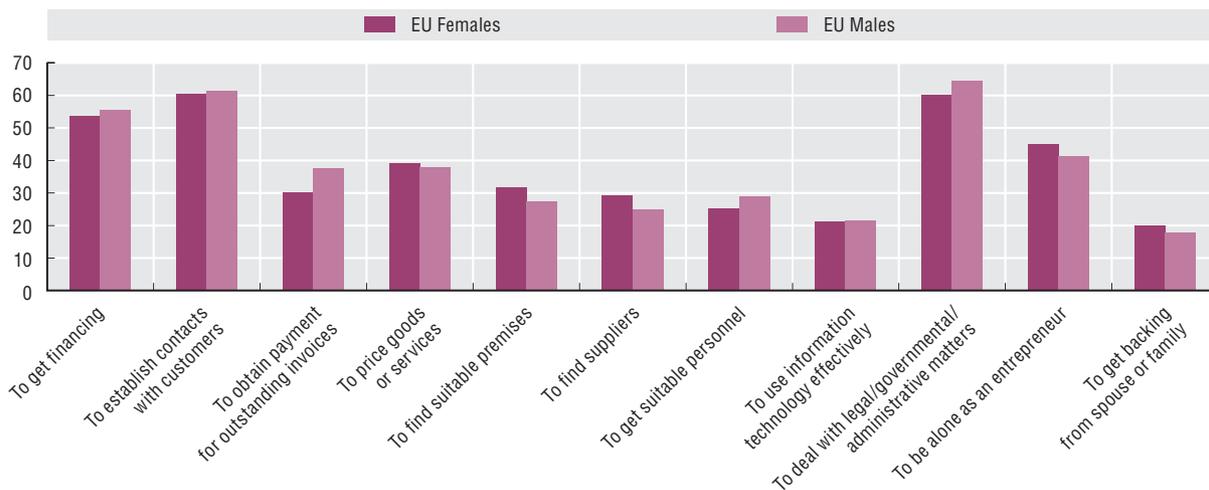
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/european_business/special_sbs_topics/factors_business_success

Statistics Canada 2007, *Survey of Financing of Small and Medium Enterprises*.

UK Annual Small Business Survey, BERR-Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (Institute for Employment Study), 2007.

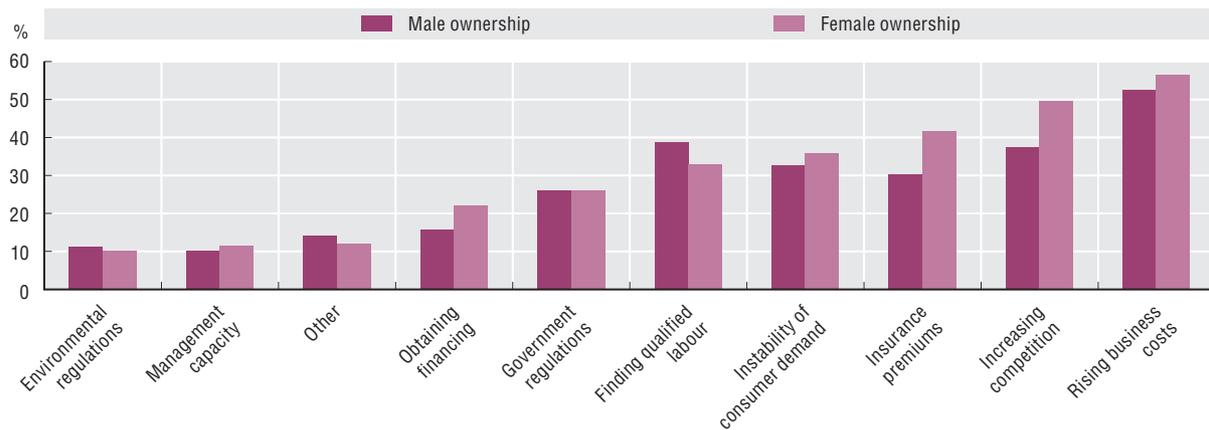
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Figure 18.1. Start-up difficulties by gender, 14 EU countries, 2005



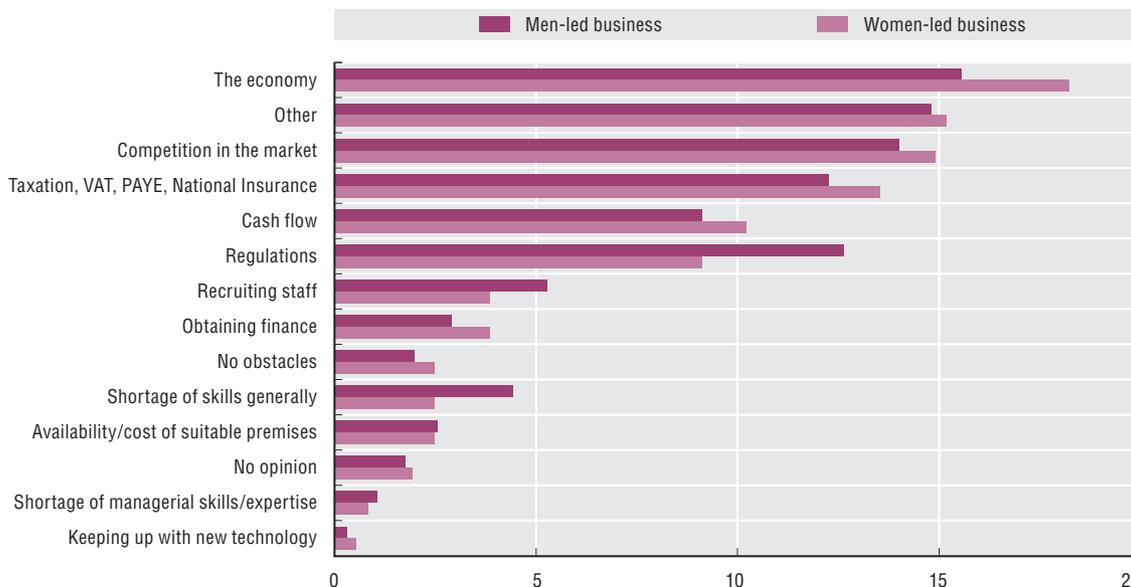
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Figure 18.2. Obstacles to business growth by gender, Canada, 2007

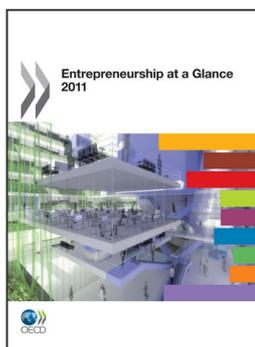


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Figure 18.3. Obstacles to business success by gender, United Kingdom, 2007



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