

Webinar - The State of Women's Entrepreneurship in the MENA Region



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BAHRAIN



Highlights of Women Entrepreneurs in Bahrain

Women in Bahrain are not following global trends:

- **Bahraini women** are more likely than men to recognise good entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Primarily motivated by **wealth creation, impact, and pull opportunities**.
- Show a strong tendency to continue family businesses.
- **Female participation** in entrepreneurship is rising, surpassing men in Total Early-Stage Activity (TEA) and Established Business Ownership (EBO), especially in digital commerce and education.
- **Starting more early-stage enterprises** than men at all levels.
- Place greater emphasis on **sustainability, social & environmental impact**.
- More inclined than men to **use data analytics and confident about AI's future role**.

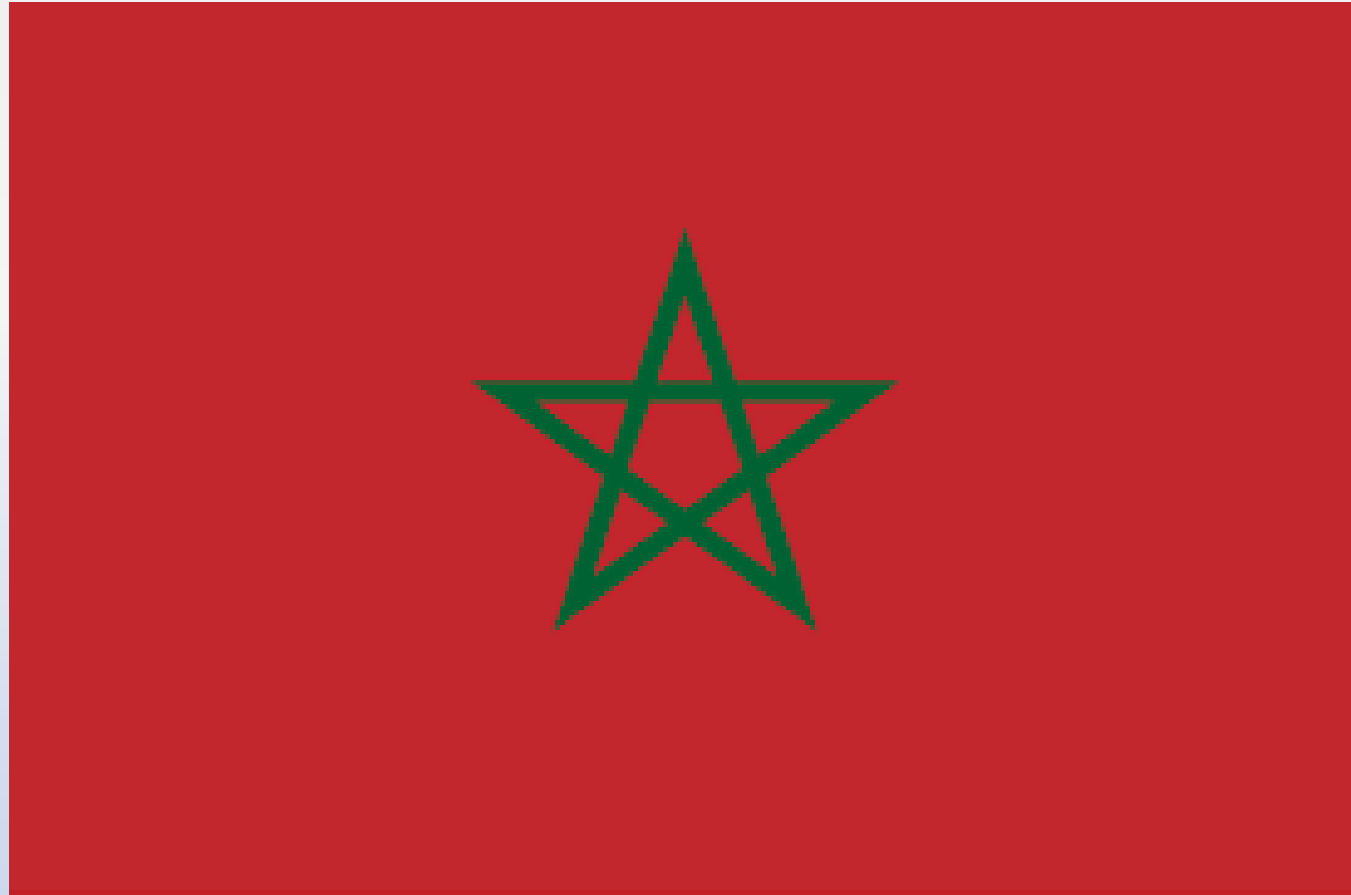
Key Enablers for Advancing Women's Entrepreneurship in Bahrain

- **Expanding Financial Ecosystem:** Increasing avenues for investment, venture funding, and capital mobilization.
- **Integrated Roles:** Emerging models that harmonise family and enterprise contributions.
- **Network Strengthening:** Rapid growth of mentorship platforms, peer-learning, and business associations.
- **Advanced Capacity Building:** Expanding access to specialised training, digital skills, and leadership development.
- **Innovative Market Positioning:** Women leveraging creativity to drive competitiveness in diverse sectors.
- **Ecosystem Expansion:** Stronger engagement from incubators, accelerators, and industry bodies.
- **Entrepreneurial Well-being:** Increasing emphasis on resilience, balance, and sustainable growth.

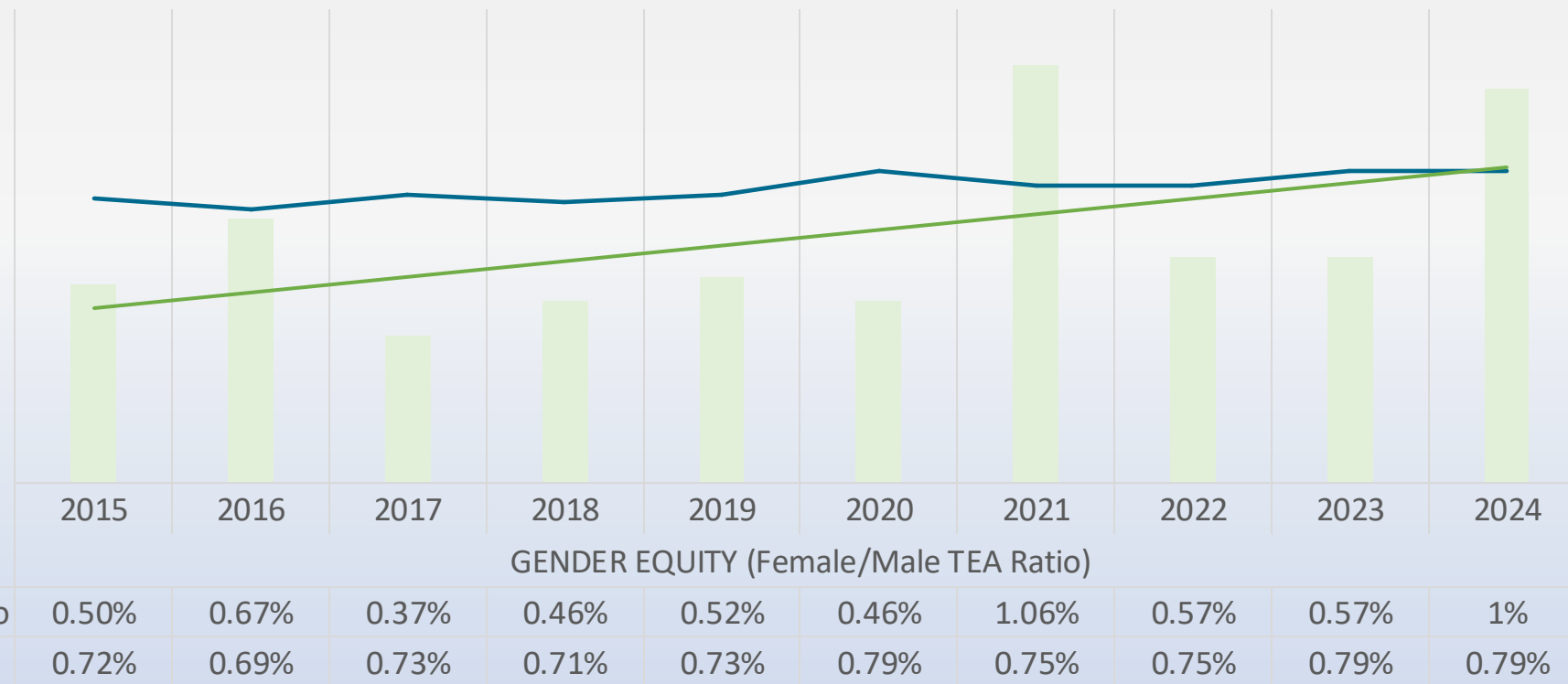
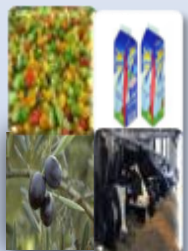
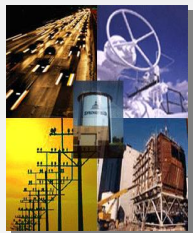
Takeaways and Recommendations

- **Focus on technology:** Women entrepreneurs are leading the growth of enterprise into new areas, including innovative products and internationalisation.
- **Expand access to capital:** Increase visibility for the specific funding mechanisms for women-owned businesses, including programs, grants, and government-backed loans.
- **Prioritise family connections:** Additional research on the impact of caring and family duties on women's enterprises is needed to ensure that women's enterprise sustainability and success is directly related to family sustainability and success.
- **Facilitate education and training:** Women entrepreneurs, but especially older, established women's enterprises, need increased education on issues of internationalisation, sustainability, social enterprise, and digital tools.

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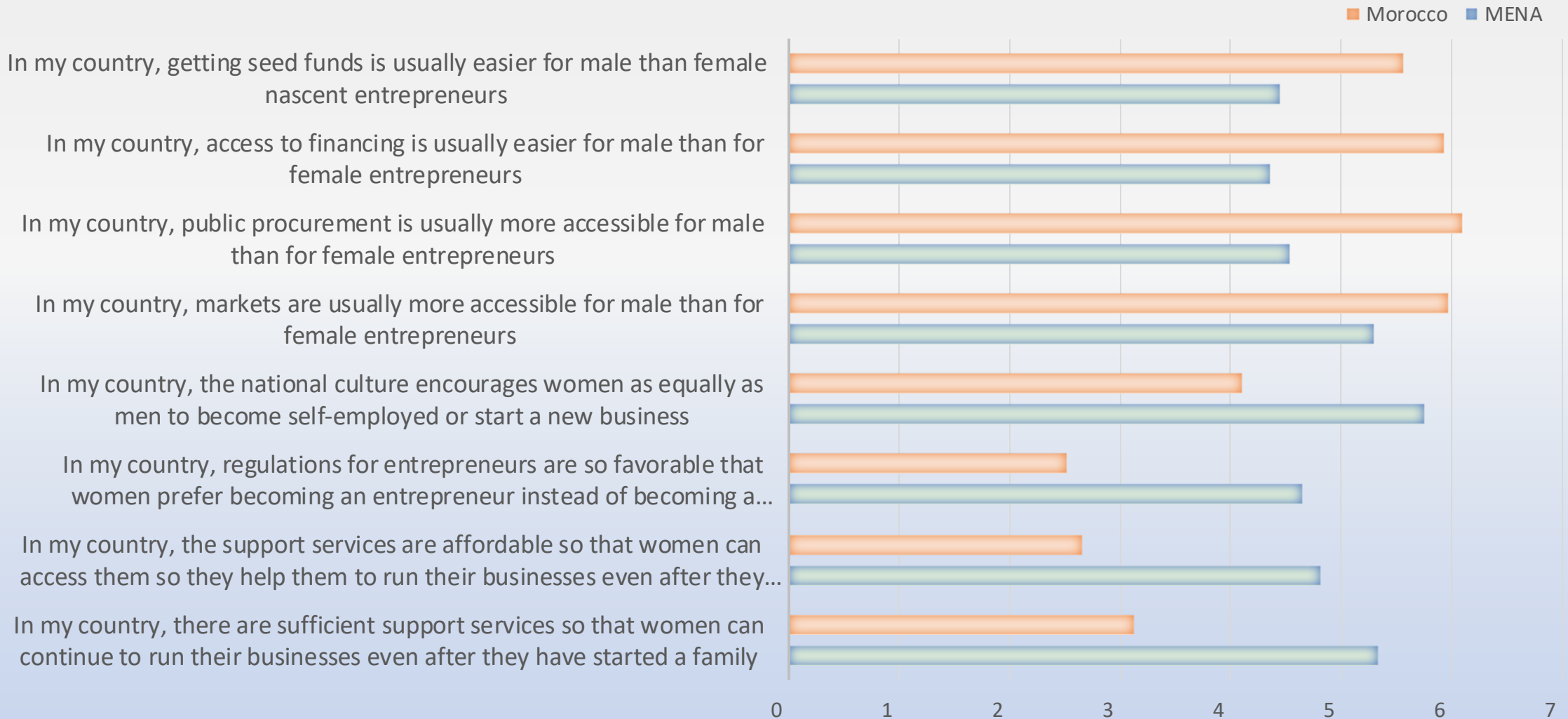


Charting significant temporal improvements...



Source : GEM APS DATA 2015-2024

...But many weak links yet to be strengthened



Paving the Way: A need for a multifaceted approach

Digital Shift

Developing alternative financing and digital financial tools, with accessible digital literacy training in urban and rural areas

1

Beyond Tokenism

Deconstructing myths and stereotypes about women's roles to ensure effective gender mainstreaming

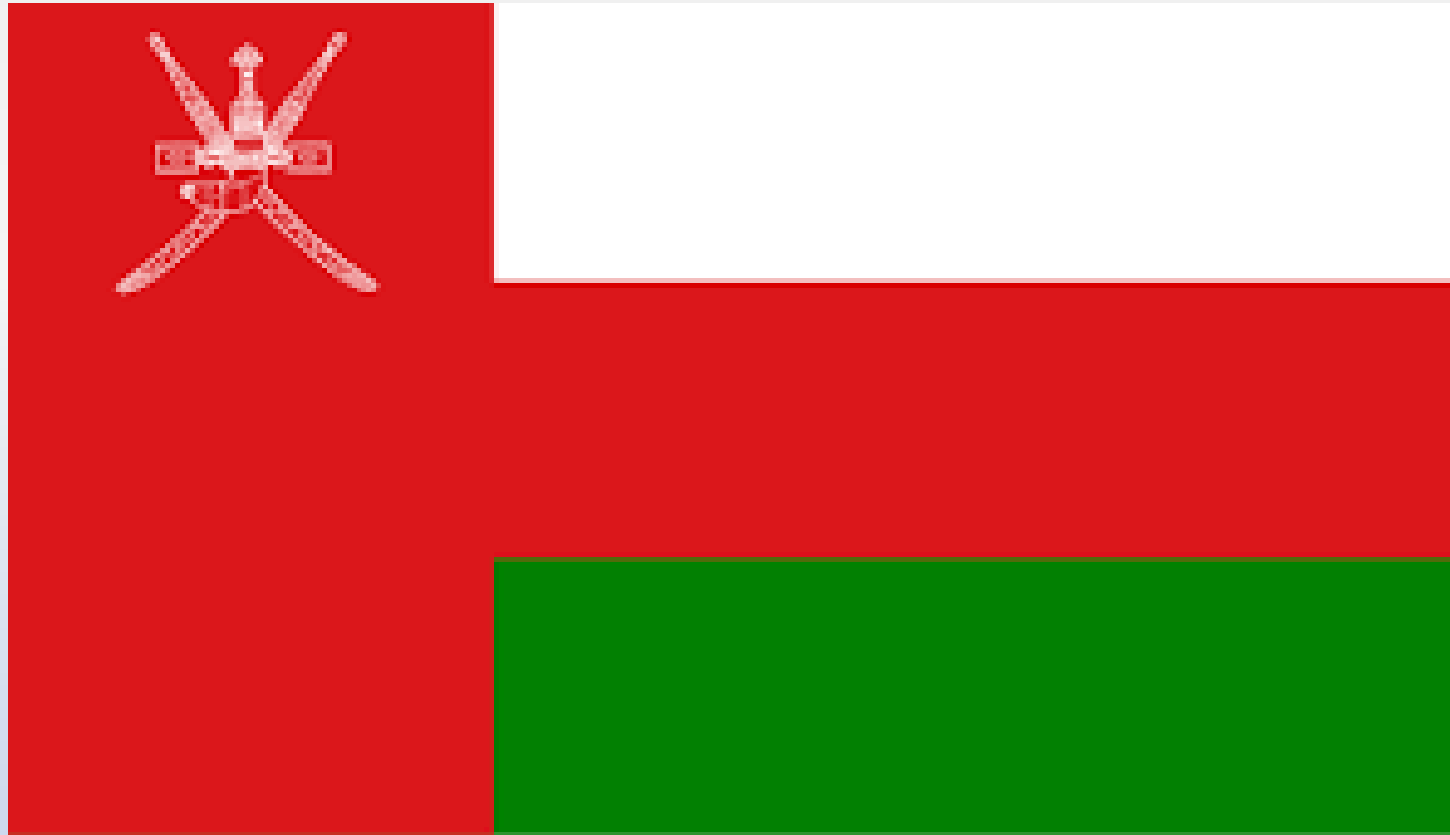
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Idiosyncratic Ecosystem

Redefining women's entrepreneurship support by embracing the complex and interconnected dynamics

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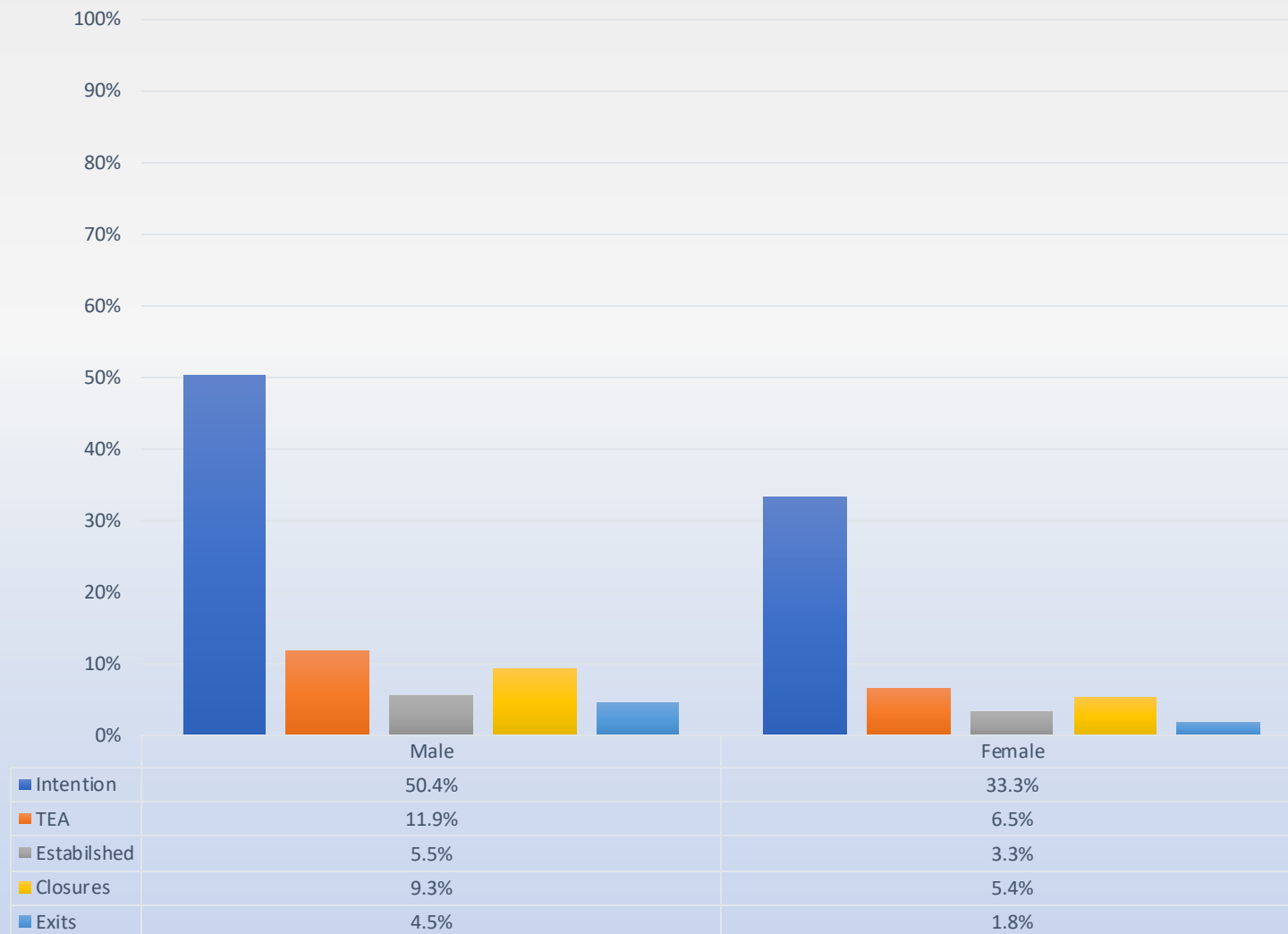
OMAN



An area of ongoing concern in women's entrepreneurship based on GEM research in Oman

- **Gender Disparity:** There is a higher percentage of males involved in all entrepreneurship phases compared to females (e.g. TEA: 11.9% versus 6.5%; EB: 5.5% versus 3.3%; Intention: 50.4% versus 33.3%).
- **Entrepreneurial affiliations** in Oman, showing that 65.3% of males have entrepreneurial affiliations compared to 47.2% of females, indicate a need for targeted interventions to enhance female participation. In addition, men feel more confident in their capabilities (72.6% vs. 67.6% for women).

Phases of the entrepreneurial process in Oman by gender, 2024



A takeaway lesson for policymakers in Oman

- **Strategic support** for women in transforming and business-oriented sector.
- **Policymakers must implement** strategic interventions that support industrial revival, encourage business services, foster innovation and technology adoption, and facilitate business scaling and international expansion.
- **The need for policymakers to support growth-oriented startups**, family-run businesses, and social entrepreneurship to create a sustainable ecosystem.

SAUDI ARABIA



Area of Progress	What's Changed
Early-stage entrepreneurship	23.2% of Saudi women now engage in startup activity—top global ranking
Established business ownership	EBO rose to 14% in 2023 (from <4%)—women matching men's rates
Entrepreneurial intentions & networks	Nearly 50% intend to start a business; 86% know another entrepreneur

Area of Concern	Need for Improvement
Access to Resources	Support is solid, but access to money, tech, and assets remains low.
Bias & Stereotypes	Persistent stereotypes undermine legitimacy and funding prospects.
Institutional/Cultural Hurdles	Guardianship and patriarchal norms continue to limit real autonomy.

Policy Focus	Core Action Items
Fix Resources Access	Gender-specific loans, incubator access, fund women-only investment networks
Institutional Reform	Anti-discrimination laws, simplify licensing, abolish guardian/legal blockers
Care-Sensitive Programs	Flexible support models, childcare solutions, segmented outreach programs
Ecosystem Activators	Support women-led networks and mentorship structures

Thank You





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