



Department for  
Business & Trade

# The UK's Approach to Trade and Gender Equality

Symposium on Digital Inclusion and  
Sustainable Development

Session 3: 8th October 2025


Mainstreaming Gender in Global Trade Policies and Practices



# Opportunities of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

## The Role of Trade Policy:

- ❑ **Leverage trade policy to promote gender equality and empower women economically**
- ❑ **Ensure evidence-based decision-making for effective interventions**
- ❑ **Foster collaboration to share best practices, generate innovative solutions, and remove barriers for women in trade**
- ❑ **Implement targeted actions to unlock the economic benefits of gender equality in trade**



Only 2.8% of all equity investment went to all-women founder teams



### Trade barriers for women include:

- Challenges in securing financial resources
- Limited access to professional networks
- Restricted opportunities for skill development
- Bias and negative societal perceptions
- Disproportionate caregiving responsibilities



# Evidence of the Differing Impacts of Trade

## Women as Workers

- Fewer women work in sectors supported by trade. In the UK, 41% of trade supported jobs were occupied by women in 2020<sup>1</sup>.
- Women are paid almost 20% more in trade-supported jobs than other jobs<sup>2</sup>.
- Women make up around 86% of people who are economically inactive due to care work<sup>3</sup>.



## Women-owned Businesses and Entrepreneurs

- In 2023, 15% of SMEs were women-led while 44% were men-led<sup>4</sup>.
- Women-led businesses have fewer and shallower professional networks, which are important for enabling access to capital and sharing market information<sup>5</sup>.
- In the UK, only around 3% of all UK equity investment went to all-women founder teams in 2023<sup>6</sup>.



## Women as Consumers

- Women drive approximately 80% of all consumer spending in OECD countries<sup>7</sup>.
- Women with children represent three-quarters of all single-parent households in developed countries<sup>8</sup>.
- Women-led households have on average lower incomes and are more likely to consume imports<sup>9</sup>.





# UK Approach to Trade and Gender Equality in FTAs

## 1. Signalling

Reflects shared priorities and overarching objectives of both parties

## 2. Thematic Weaving

Embeds gender-specific provisions throughout the agreement to maximise impact

## 3. Cooperation

Encourages joint initiatives, knowledge exchange, and best practice sharing

## 4. Institutional Mechanisms

Establishes a framework for coordination, cooperation, and monitoring progress over time



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## UK: Advancing Gender Equality in Bilateral FTAs

The UK is committed to advancing gender equality and women's economic empowerment through our FTAs and trading relationships. We have successfully included a number of gender provisions in our recently concluded FTAs:



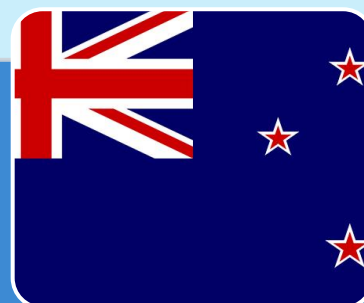
**Japan CEPA**  
Trade and  
Women's Economic  
Empowerment  
Chapter  
[2020]



**EEA/EFTA Women's  
Economic  
Empowerment and  
Trade Article, TSD  
Chapter  
[2021]**



**Australia FTA**  
Trade and Gender  
Equality  
Chapter  
[2021]



**New Zealand FTA**  
Trade and Gender  
Equality  
Chapter  
[2022]



**India CETA**  
Trade and Gender  
Equality  
Chapter  
[2025]

We also have ongoing negotiations with Switzerland and the GCC



# FTA Implementation

## UK-New Zealand FTA: Trade and Gender Equality Chapter

- **Exchange of information** on developing frameworks for analysing gender-disaggregated data and gender-focused analysis of trade policies
- Research on the impact of trade on **women as consumers**
- **Networking dinner for Women Business Leaders in Tech and Innovation** – June 2024

## UK-Australia FTA: Trade and Gender Equality Chapter

- **Exchange of information** on policies, programmes, and multilateral priorities
- Overview of our **approaches to analysis** and building the **evidence** base
- Agreement on a structured **work plan** for future cooperation

## UK-Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein FTA: Women's Economic Empowerment Section

- **Exchange of information** on programmes and initiatives
- Insights from working with Japan on implementation
- Overview of **UK approach to analysis** and building the **evidence** base

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News story

### Statement on the UK - Japan Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar

The UK and Japan hosted a hybrid seminar for Japanese women entrepreneurs, investors, and business owners seeking to increase trade and investment with the UK.

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UK-Japan Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar – July 2024  
UK-Japan Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar – Feb 2025  
UK-Japan Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar Osaka, Kansai – Aug 2025

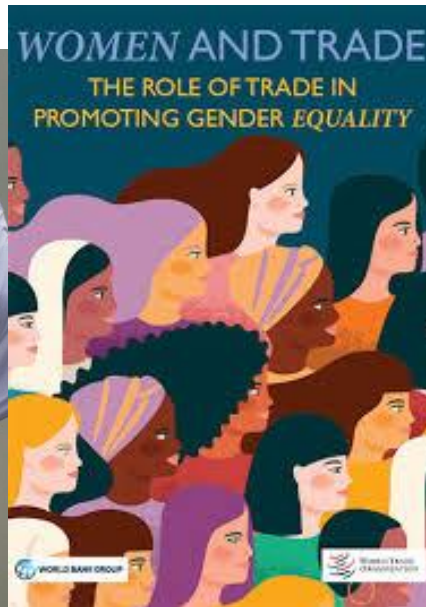


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# Multilateral Engagement



Trade for Women





# UK Initiatives to support women

## Invest in Women Taskforce (DBT)

Created an investment fund of £255m to accelerate investment in women-led businesses, the largest of its kind worldwide.

## Investing in Women Code (DBT)

To improve women entrepreneurs' access to tools, resources, and finance.

## Digital Exporting Programme – Female Founders

To address challenges faced by female business leaders through digital channels

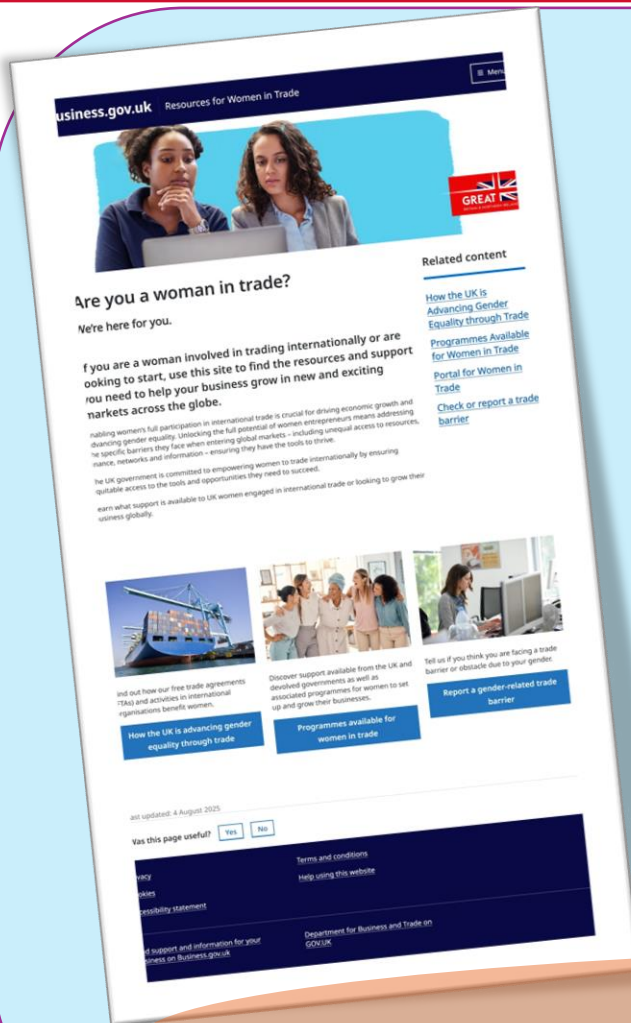
## Women's Internal Network (WIN Programme)

To address the additional challenges female business leaders face when doing business overseas

## Employment Rights Bill

Delivery of the Employment Rights Bill (which is currently being considered in the UK Parliament) will strengthen protections for pregnant workers and new mothers, improve access to flexible working and introduce 'day 1 rights' to unpaid parental leave, paternity leave, and bereavement leave.

<https://www.business.gov.uk/campaign/trade-gender-equality/>





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# The End

**Thank you for Listening**

**Questions?**

**Joseph.odiori@businessandtrade.gov.uk**

**WOMEN AND TRADE**