

## **Now You See Me, Now You Don't**

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**Purpose:** The Cyfenter Development Partnership findings aim to inform and develop inclusive policies and practices within the mainstream enterprise support for under-represented groups in enterprise in Wales. The purpose of this paper is to present the cumulative data findings gathered on Women's Enterprise in Wales both at pre and post-start stage of business development. The importance of this data is underpinned by the scale of the sample; 1,935 women respondents and its freshness. The data was collected between 2002 and 2005 and focused on four key factors that impact on entrepreneurship creation and development; Access to Finance and Grants, Moving from Benefits into Self-Employment, Sustainability and Growth and Design for Diversity, previous smaller scale research had identified these factors as significant. Cyfenter findings provide large scale Welsh empirical data which contribute to the UK and EU picture of Women's Enterprise and informs inclusive policies and practices within the mainstream enterprise support provision.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The methodology of the Cyfenter Development Partnership research involved three rounds of data collection using an Action research framework, which took place between 2002 and 2005 and involved eight under-represented groups (Women, Lone Parents, Young People, 50+, Minority Ethnic Groups, Refugees, Disabled People and Welsh Speakers) in enterprise in Wales, plus a control group. Research instruments such as questionnaires, case studies, focus groups, one-to-one interviews and consultation seminars were used for data collection. The variety of research instruments served the purpose of facilitating inclusion and to maximise participation from research respondents.

**Findings:** The overall cumulative findings of the three rounds of data collection show a total gender representation of 48% female and 52% male at pre-start stage, compared to 36% female and 64% at the post-start stage of business development. The empirical data relating to Women as an under-represented group show that of the 1,935 respondents, 711 were at the pre-start stage whilst 1,224 had reached the post-start stage of business development. One of the limitations of the study is the lack of longitudinal data; this has now been taken up in a follow up study that focuses on sustainability and growth of business run by the under-represented groups in enterprise in Wales. The depth of the research findings on the design for diversity theme is limited and requires further investigation.

**Implications:** The impact of the study and its findings affect policy makers, mainstream enterprise support providers, women entrepreneurs, researchers at a Wales, UK and EU levels. The qualitative element of Action Research provides in-depth insight into Women Entrepreneurs' experiences in terms of needs and proposed solutions which can inform to develop inclusive policies and practices within the mainstream enterprise support provision.

**Originality/Value:** Individually the key issues of access to finance, moving from benefits into self-employment, and growth and sustainability in relation to women's enterprise have been widely researched at UK and EU level. However, this is the first time that these topics have

been researched jointly together with the additional element of design for diversity, which provides valuable empirical data to mainstream enterprise support.

**Key Words:** female entrepreneurship, mainstream, enterprise support, representation

## Introduction

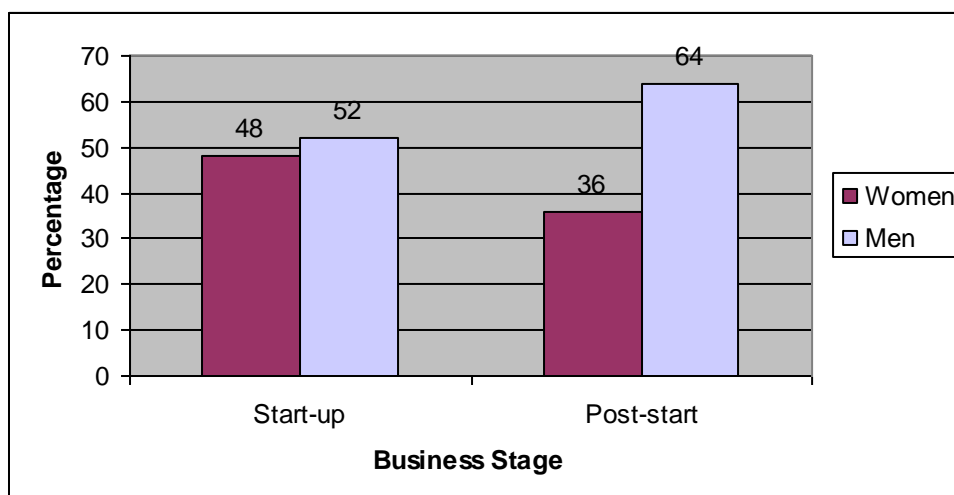
To start any new business is a major undertaking for anyone. It involves a whole range of interwoven actions from initial concept through to planning and the launch. At each stage there will be issues and barriers to overcome and many of these require resilience and determination. If you fall into one of the 'under represented groups' in terms of start-ups then both the barriers and the degree of determination needed to succeed can be higher.

Cyfenter is a Development Partnership funded jointly by the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) and the Equal programme of the European Structural Fund. The overall aim of the Cyfenter Development Partnership is to influence and develop mainstream business support policies and practices and enterprise support for under-represented groups of entrepreneurs which will enable them to start-up new enterprises. From 2002 to 2005, the Cyfenter research team has undertaken action-based research with 4,945 research participants. The research programme has focused on eight groups who are underrepresented in terms of business enterprise: Women, Lone parents, 18-30 Year olds, Over 50s, Minority ethnic groups, Refugees, Disabled people and Welsh speakers, comparing them to a control group of white males aged 31-49 (who do not fit into any of the above groups).

The collection of primary data has been via questionnaires, focus groups, 1-2-1 interviews over the telephone, case studies and face-to-face interviews, with the aim of identifying barriers and drivers to starting a business and of course potential solutions to these barriers. This paper concentrates on the empirical data gathered from the questionnaires.

Detailed analysis has also been undertaken to assimilate the findings of the research under four broad themes aimed at capturing the essential issues for each group. These themes are Access to Finance and Grants, Sustainability and Growth, From Benefits to Self-Employment and Design for Diversity. This final theme refers to the process by which business support is tailored to individual needs to make it fully accessible to all groups. This paper is a profile of the cumulative findings of the Cyfenter research for "Women", assessing the key factors and issues both before and after they have started their business.

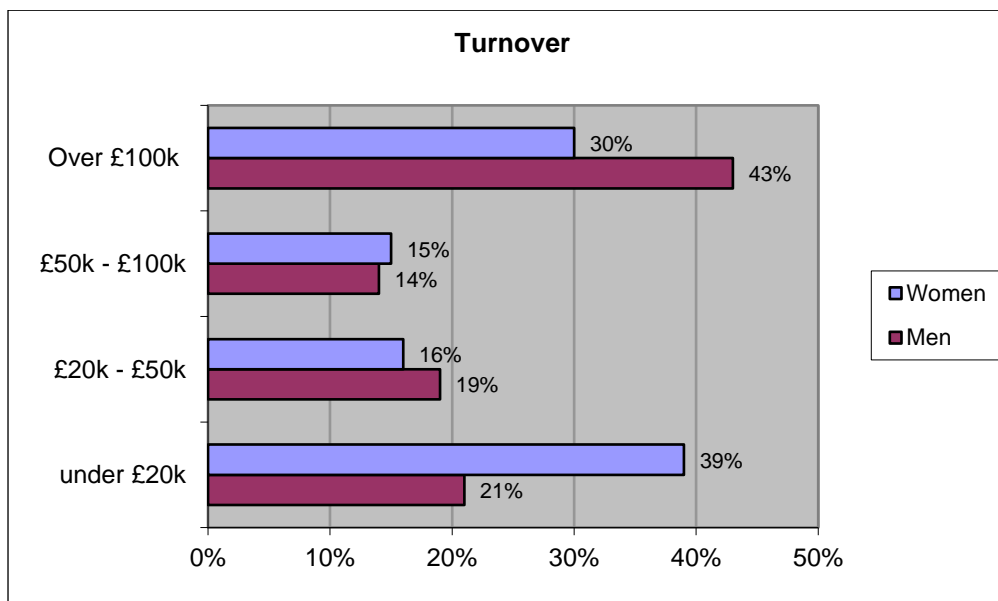
During the research period covered by the Cyfenter Development Partnership a total of 1,935 women respondents participated in the three rounds of data collection. The aggregated data findings show that 711 (37%) of them were at the pre-start stage of business, whilst 1,224 (63%) had reached the post-start of business development. In terms of ownership of business and gender representation the findings show that at start-up 48% are women and 52% men out of a total of 1,479 respondents whereas at post-start 36% are women and 64% are men out of a total of 3,419 respondents. This shows a significant statistical decrease of 12% in women representation in the post-start stage of business development which poses the question what might have happened to their businesses. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Gender representation in business start-up and post-start**

At the pre-start stage, the largest percentage of women (31%) were aged between 31 and 40, compared to 21% of men in that age range. 12% were aged 18-30, compared to 16% men and in the Over 50 range, 21% were women compared to 28% men. These figures would suggest that the most likely age for women to start firms is between 31 and 40, whilst the likelihood of them engaging in new firm activity falls in later life. These observations are repeated when examining the age profile of women who have started businesses. Here, the largest group (29%) are again aged 31-40, compared to 25% men, and 27% are over 50, compared to 34% men.

Of women already in business, 22% had been trading for less than one year, compared to 20% of men; 15% between one and two years, compared to 14% for men; 36% for two to four years, compared to 31% of men; and 25% for over four years, compared to 33% of men. A similar proportion of women ran their businesses from home to men, the percentages being 40% and 36% respectively. Half of both female and male run firms in the sample are run from separate premises, with the balance using a mixture of the two. Figure 2 illustrates the turnover of post-start businesses. The significant differences between the turnover reported by women and men occur in the under £20k and the over £100k categories. These differences appear to paint a picture of lots of small companies run by women with low turnover at the one end of the spectrum. At the other, to correlate with the high percentage of businesses run by women that 'survive,' there is quite a high proportion with turnover greater than £100k (although this is much lower than for male run firms).



**Figure 2 - Turnover of post-start businesses**

## Literature Review

Even though the economic impact of women is considerable, in both developed and developing countries, there is still limited knowledge concerning their business activities (OECD, 2004). As a consequence the OECD (2000) has undertaken work to develop an understanding of this important area of activity and to bring this to the attention of researchers and policy makers (OECD, 2004). Additionally, women's entrepreneurship has tended to be neglected both professionally and by academic studies (Brush and Hisrich, 1999). This has been apparent due to women having a lower participation rate in entrepreneurship than men and they have chosen to start and manage businesses in different industries and sectors to men (Dúchenaut, 1997; Franco and Winqvist, 2002; Reynolds and White, 1997). Those industries chosen by women to run their businesses have primarily included education, retail and service industries (OECD, 2004) and these have until recently been perceived to be less important for economic growth than manufacturing and high technology industries. There have been few studies that have estimated the economic importance of women and entrepreneurship (OECD, 2004). The Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003) has provided statistics on women entrepreneurs. It was found that there were more than 821,000

women entrepreneurs in Canada and they contributed more than 18,109 million Canadian dollars annually to the economy (Statistics Canada, 2003). In fact, the number of women entrepreneurs increased by 208% compared with a 38% increase for men between 1981 and 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003). For the year 2000 SMEs owned by women had an average of 311,289 Canadian dollars in sales in comparison with 654,294 in sales for businesses owned by men (Statistics, Canada). Compared to the United Kingdom (UK) in 1999 women represented 26% of the 3.2 million people who were self employed which gives a number of around 824,659 (Carter, et al, 2001).

Further to the statistics reported for women entrepreneurship in developed countries data on women owning businesses in developing countries shows that, for example, out of a sample of 118 women entrepreneurs owning companies in Zambia (ILO, 2003c), with some interviewees owning more than one company, they provided employment for 1,013 people including 973 full-time staff. There was an average of 8.2 full-time staff per firm. Additionally, 128 women entrepreneurs were interviewed in Tanzania (ILO, 2003b) and they provided 752 full-time posts with an average number of people per firm of 5.9. Finally, 123 women entrepreneurs were interviewed in Ethiopia (ILO, 2003a) and they provided employment for 852 people including 596 full-time employees. A study by Saavedra (2001) on women self-employed in Latin American economies found that self employment represented an important option although women who worked in the self employment sector earned less than women working in the salaried sector. Linked to self employment and economic development in these countries is the informal sector (Heemskerk, 2003).

At the level of the firm it has been shown that there are significant differences as to where men and women establish businesses (Brush, et al, 1999) since women are likely to start in the service sector especially education, healthcare and retail (OECD, 2004). With regard to the developed countries women in the small business sector are a fast growing group (Brush, et al, 1999). One reason for this is that women tend to start from a small base rate and firms owned by women when compared with men in the European Union are more likely to have no employees (Franco, et al, 2002). It has been reported that research in entrepreneurship has been either gender neutral or gender biased and has therefore paid little attention to women entrepreneurs' specific needs (Brush, 1992; Brush, et al, 1999). This is despite the fact that the research body on women's entrepreneurship is still growing (OECD, 2004). As a consequence women's entrepreneurship has been mainly marginalised in entrepreneurship research (OECD, 2004).

According to the OECD (2004) there are three important questions regarding women's entrepreneurship and these are: (i) what are the causes for the differences between women's entrepreneurship and men's entrepreneurship and how do they affect the entrepreneurial process? (ii) why are these differences still apparent in most countries? (iii) why are these differences persistent despite work undertaken on gender equality? One way to embark upon considering these questions is to consider the supply and demand side of women's entrepreneurship. The demand side can be developed as three major framework conditions to gender equality. These are market sources, family policy and political and institutional framework (van der Lippe and van Dijk, 2002; George and Baker, 2004).

With regard to the reasons for starting a business research has found no significant differences between women and men (OECD, 2004). Although there have been disagreements regarding scientific rigour and sample sizes there only appears to be minor differences (Carter, Anderson and Shaw, 2001). This includes specific reasons to start such as motivational factors and personality characteristics such as risk taking. Contrary to this there appear to be differences in growth motivation between women and men since women have lower growth ambitions. This has been found in Sweden (Wiklund, Davidsson and Delmar, 2003) and the United States (Carter, 1997). For women there will be additional factors that affect them such as parental leave arrangements and the availability of childcare facilities (van der Lippe, et al, 2002).

Concerning obstacles to women's entrepreneurship, such as the lack of role models in entrepreneurship, in a longitudinal survey of labour market experience from the United States Dunn and Holtz-Eakin (1995) found that fathers influenced sons and mothers influenced daughters. As a result a son was more likely to become self employed if the father was than was a daughter. Other obstacles may arise due to legal and cultural issues and due to these in countries like Bangladesh it is difficult for women to save money to start a business (de Groot, 2001). There may also be competing demands on time and the lack of free time has been identified from studies in a number of countries (de Groot, 2001). Major obstacles to women starting new firms are sex discrimination and external finance. Generally, women have lower financial assets than men. As a result women will have to secure more resources than men to

develop a business since they have less capital. The area of study investigating the greater difficulties for women than men in securing finance for a similar business opportunity has been developed in the women's entrepreneurship literature (Brush, 1992; Carter and Rosa, 1998; Carter, et al, 2001). Four areas have been identified as posing problems for women with regard to financing. These are that (i) the relationship between women entrepreneurs and financial institutions can suffer due to gender discrimination, (ii) financing for a business may be problematic because women may find it difficult to access informal financial networks, (iii) the collateral for external financing may be difficult for women and (iv) women may find it difficult to find the initial capital to start a new business (Carter, et al, 2001). Research undertaken in developed countries shows that there is still a barrier to women accessing external finance although this is decreasing as financial institutions consider women entrepreneurs in terms of an income source (Kay, et al, 2003). Micro financing has been considered to be a solution to overcome women's problems in obtaining finance, although research has revealed that the expectations relating to micro financing may not be realised (Milgram, 2001). Another problem faced by women entrepreneurs appears to be difficulty in achieving growth particularly for sales (Du Rietz and Henrekson, 2000). Since the ability of women entrepreneurs to attract venture capital and attain growth is considered important in the United States it is now an area for systematic research (Gatewood, et al, 2003). It is these types of obstacles that have been considered in the Cyfenter research.

## Methodology

The Cyfenter Action Research work plan had three distinct rounds of data collection which had both a quantitative and qualitative element. Each of the three Action Research rounds were divided into four stages outlined above, and although the key research instruments used throughout the three rounds of data collection were consistent, the method of data collection was adjusted upon reflection after an evaluation of each research round's outcomes.

For the purpose of this paper, the methodology section will reflect the methodology used in the third round of data collection, as it is representative of the cumulative experience and adjustments made from the previous two rounds and was identified by the partnership to illustrate the "best practice" methodology example out of the three rounds of data collection.

There were eight groups of under-represented people made up of women, lone parents, young people (18-30s), Over 50s, minority ethnic groups, refugees, disabled people and Welsh speakers. For comparison purposes in addition there was also a control group not specifically identified as "under-represented". This group composed white, non-lone parents, between 30 and 50, non-disabled, non-ethnic minority and non-Welsh speaking males.

Given that the empirical sample did not provide enough data on refugees this group was addressed through qualitative data methods.

*Stage I - Questionnaire* – the key purpose of this research tool was to gather a statistically robust and reliable amount of quantitative and qualitative data. During the third round of data collection the questionnaire was completed via telephone, which was identified as being able to achieve a higher level of response rate than the postal option. In addition, the questionnaire stage was also used to identify the respondents that were willing to participate in the further stages of the Action Research programme.

*Stage II - One-to-One Interviews* – the key purpose of this research tool was to gain more insight into the issues concerning under-represented entrepreneurs at both pre and post-start stages of business development. Again, the third round of data collection was conducted by telephone.

*Stage III - Regional Focus groups* - The third stage of the Action Research work programme was to conduct Focus Groups. These were organised by Region (North Wales, Mid Wales, West Wales and South Wales) as well as by specific URG groups. The Focus Groups, like the one-to-one interviews, provided key insight into the expectations, experiences and desired solutions held by the under-represented groups. This focus group data gives freshness, depth and breadth to this qualitative data, which becomes significant in its own right and its value to inform enterprise policy development and implementation, must not be underestimated.

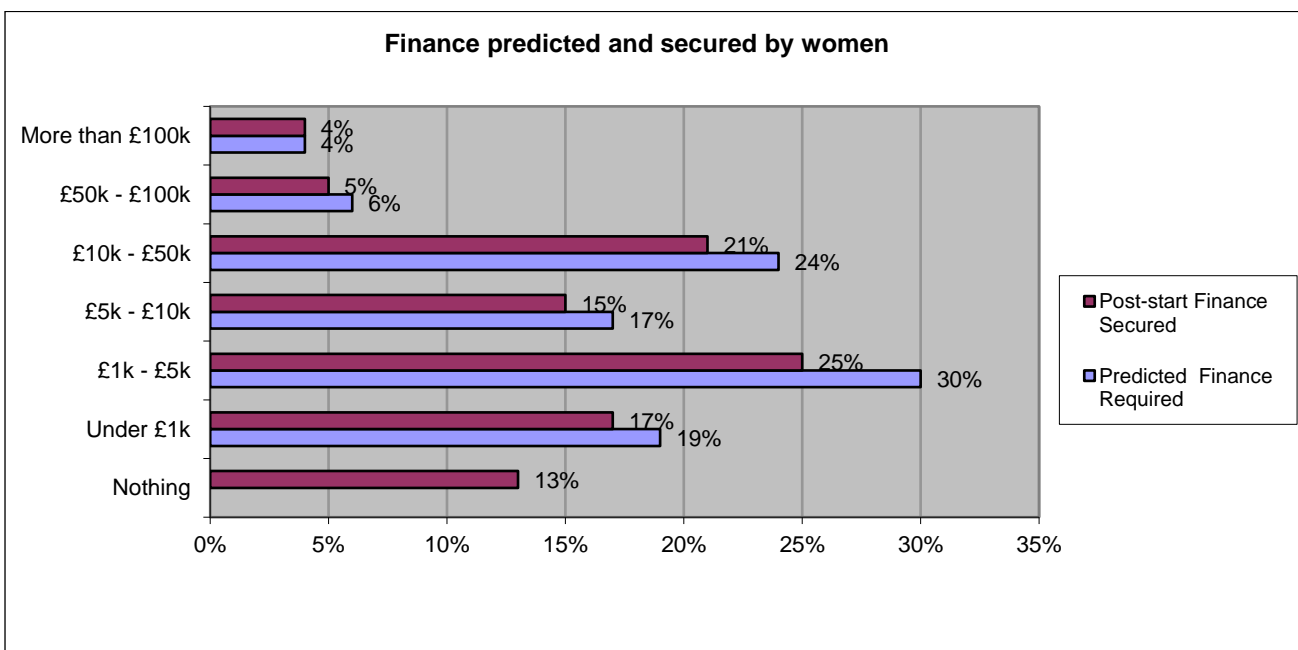
*Stage IV - Dissemination seminar and final consultation* – As a means to ensure that the Action Research loop is fully closed, the findings from each three research rounds were drafted into a pre-final draft report and put to a final consultation at a seminar with research respondents, policy makers, public and private business support providers, partnership partners and other relevant stakeholders. The results of this final consultation were dovetailed into a pre-final draft report and a set of final reports were published (see [www.cyfenter.co.uk](http://www.cyfenter.co.uk)).

**Access to finance**

*“Had to prepare a very long business plan. He didn’t read it. Just asked what the house was worth. Very slow process”*

Finance is always the mostly commonly cited barrier to starting a business and the Cyfenter research has looked at this issue for both pre and post-start under-represented groups throughout its period of investigation. The Cyfenter research team asked the pre-start interviewees how much money they thought they would require to start their business. 16% of women were not sure, compared to only 12% of men. Interestingly this difference is statistically significant, perhaps suggesting that the two genders differ in their knowledge of financial requirements for undertaking business. For those who did give an estimate of their financial requirements, they are remarkably similar between men and women across the whole range with only one exception. In the £10k-£50k range, 13% of women identified this amount, compared to 26% of men. Again this is a statistically significant difference, with one possible explanation being related to difference in scale of new firms being planned. There is some evidence that women tend to grow businesses from a small base and they survive longer as a result, although remain smaller than those started by men. For those still at the pre-start stage who had been able to raise finance, women had raised a far higher proportion than men from personal savings (42%, compared to 31%) and from friends and family (15%, compared to 7%).

The proportions raising finance from bank loans and grants were similar between men and women. Again, this further emphasises the message from the previous analysis and earlier findings from the Cyfenter research. Women who had already started their businesses were asked who they had approached for finance. By far the highest proportion had approached commercial banks (17%, compared to 23% of men). The next most popular organisation to have been approached was the Welsh Development Agency with 13% of women (and men) saying that they had tried to raise finance from the Agency. The principal means by which both women and men said that they knew about these organisations were very similar, being through their own 'general knowledge' and by recommendation from family and friends. Women in business were also asked two finance related questions. Firstly, how much finance they predicted they would need to start up and secondly how much they had actually secured. As Figure 3 below illustrates, very similar proportions of people interviewed fell into each of the numerical categories. There was a slight fall in the percentage actually achieving finance as expected.



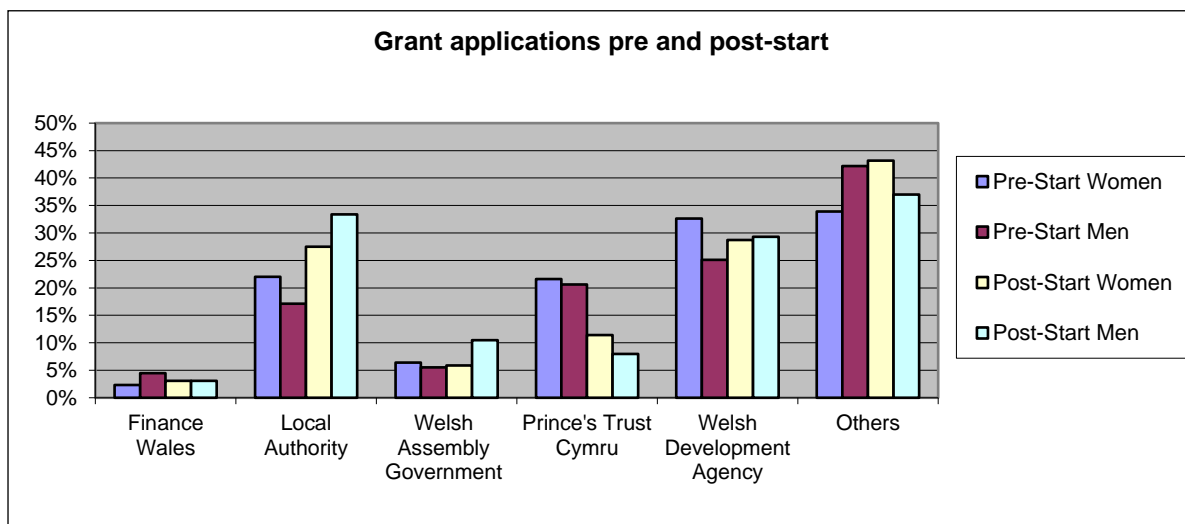
**Figure 3 - Finance Predicted and secured by women**

22% of those women who had started thought that they would need further finance to keep their business going, compared to 23% of men. At the pre-start stage this figure was identical for women at 22%, with 24% of men believing that they would need more money. At the post-start stage of business development 42% of women thought they would require further finance to expand, compared to 51% of men, which adds further to the comments above. For those at the pre-start stage these figures were 23% for women and 24% for men.

## Grants

*"...they don't give grants to people who already live in the area and want to stay in the area but to people who just moved there for the grant"...*

Women who participated in the Cyfenter research were more likely than men to have applied for grants. At the pre-start stage, 31% of women had applied, compared to 26% of men. However, at the post-start stage, they are equally as likely to have applied, with 27% in each group respectively. Figure 4 shows the organisations to which people made grant applications at both the pre and post-start stages of business development. The highest percentages of applications were to the Welsh Development Agency, Prince's Trust Cymru and the Local Authority, although there are no statistically significant differences between the percentages of women and men applying to these organisations.



**Figure 4 - Grant applications pre and post-start**

Examining those at the pre-start stage who had made grant applications and had heard the outcome, 66% were successful (compared to 57% success for men). The highest proportion of these successful grants (19% for women, compared to 10% for men), were from the Welsh Development Agency. This was followed by the Prince's Trust (17%, compared to 26% for men) and the Local Authority (16% compared to 12% for men). At the post-start stage, 65% of women who had ever applied were successful (compared to 68% of men). The most common reasons given at the pre-start stage for grant applications by women (and men) not being successful related primarily to not fitting the criteria for the grants and to something they described as 'poor administration' (the way the grants are administered).

The research findings show that in response to questions about the ease with which grants were applied for, 47% of women at the pre-start stage (compared to 35% of men) described the process as either quite difficult or difficult. At the post-start stage, 38% of women, compared to 42% of men, described the process in the same way. There is clearly a continuing issue here of clarity and accurate advice with regard to the suitability, eligibility and capacity of the under-represented group when it comes to applying for grants.

## From Benefits to Self-Employment

*"The Enterprise Allowance Scheme was good"*

*"Everyone should be allowed to stay on benefits when starting up"*

As a policy device, mechanisms for assisting people off benefits and into self-employment have received growing attention over the last few years. However, the group of people currently on benefits will naturally be concerned about the loss of regular income. 63% of women at the pre-start stage (compared to 53% of men) are concerned about moving off benefits if they actually start a business. Perhaps not surprisingly this is one of the highest measures of 'concern' for all the under-represented groups. Once the business has actually started the level of 'concern' about moving off benefits falls to 46% for women, compared to 43% for men.

There were no marked differences in the percentages of women and men in receipt of benefit both at the pre and post-start stages of business development. For the pre-start group there is comparable information on the major concerns these people have about moving from benefits and they all reflect to some degree the loss of income and the standard of living that accompanies that income. The main concerns were:

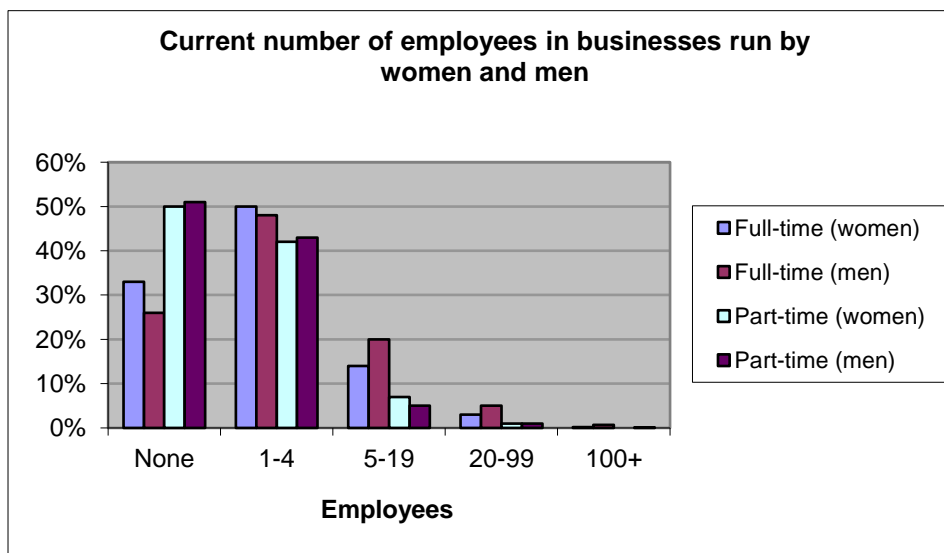
- Loss of stable income 68% (70% for men)
- Economic hardship 44% (47% for men)
- Loss of benefits 38% (38% for men)

61% of women had sought advice from the Job Centre on how benefit entitlement would change with self-employment compared with 69% of men.

## Growth and Sustainability

*"The fear of employing someone is stopping me from growing"*

Planning for the future growth and sustainability of the business is a crucial part of the pre-start phase. When asked if they had plans to expand the business by employing more staff, 54% of women (compared to 66% of men) at the pre-start stage had that intention. At the post-start stage, 33% of women had plans to employ more staff, compared to 44% of men. Figure 5 illustrates the current split between full and part-time workers in these post-start businesses. In terms of employment, of those women who responded, 50% employ 1-4 full time staff, 33% employ no staff and 14% employ 5-19 staff full-time. Also, 43% employ 1-4 part-time staff, although 51% employ no part-time staff.



**Figure 5 - Current number of employees in businesses run by women and men**



Of the women already in business, 22% had been trading for less than one year, compared to 20% of men; 15% between one and two years, compared to 14% for men; 36% for two to four years, compared to 31% of men; and 25% for over four years, compared to 33% of men.

## **Design for Diversity**

*"Both my advisors are men. They seem to look at me in a certain way! They were a lot older and they made assumptions. Need someone to say that it is going to be difficult but you can get through it"*

Design for Diversity refers to the process by which business support is tailored to individual needs to make it fully accessible to all groups. The degree of diversity amongst women is further illustrated by the fact that 22% at the pre-start stage and 10% at the post-start stage of women were also lone parents (compared to 4% and 3% respectively of men). This finding is of interest when considering the range of business support measures that people with multiple characteristics might require. Each requires a different recipe of support and the challenge for the Cyfenter partnership is to suggest ways in which this recipe might be achieved.

For the pre-start group of women the most significant barrier that has prevented them from starting up was a lack of start-up finance with 44% quoting this reason, compared to 47% of men. There was also a difference in terms of lack of confidence, with 18% of women quoting this as a reason for not starting a new firm compared to 12% of men. Other concerns such as financial risk and lack of experience were shared by some, but not in any significantly different way to the male group.

On the other hand the key motivators for the women to start did show some differences to the male group. 68% of women quoted 'Independence/Be your own boss' as the primary factor, compared to 65% of men. 41% of women were starting because they had identified an opportunity or good idea, compared to only 32% of men and 34% of women quoted 'the nature of the job or trade', compared to only 26% of men.

The Cyfenter research has been prompted by a need to address at the level of policy, the needs and issues of the under-represented groups. Designing policy and business support to achieve this is one of the outcomes which Cyfenter is set to achieve.

## **Conclusions**

The main findings of this research are that at the pre-start stage, the largest percentage of women (31%) were aged between 31 and 40, compared to only 21% of men in that age range. Of those respondents in the post-start group who disclosed their turnover, 39% were under £20k, compared to 21% of men. For those women who gave an estimate of their financial requirements to start a business, only 13% of women identified the £10k-£50k range, compared to 26% of men. At the post-start stage 42% of women thought they would require further finance to expand, compared to 51% of men. Women who participated in the Cyfenter research were more likely than men to have applied for grants. At the pre-start stage, 31% of the women had applied, compared to 26% of the men. 63% of women at the pre-start stage (compared to 53% of men) are concerned about moving off benefits if they actually start a business. When asked if they had plans to expand the business by employing more staff, 54% of women (compared to 66% of men) at the pre-start stage had that intention. For the pre-start group of women the most significant barrier that has prevented them from starting up was a lack of start-up finance with 44% quoting this reason, compared to 47% of men. 41% of women were starting because they had identified an opportunity or good idea, compared to only 32% of men.

At the post-start stage of business development the overall women gender representation decreases to 36% compared with 48% at the pre-start stage, this is a statistically significant variation of 12%. A closer look at the data findings from the individual under-represented groups regarding gender representation show that the levels of decrease vary between 8% (minority ethnic group) and 20% (lone parents). In order to expand the inquiry and gain further insight into barriers to growth and sustainability of entrepreneurship in Wales a longitudinal study involving a 1,000 respondents from all the under-represented groups of which 46% are women is now under way.

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