



# THE 2022 SCALEUP INSTITUTE FEMALE FOUNDER INDEX



Female founded scaleups continue to grow in numbers while also demonstrating deep resilience through the pandemic. The ScaleUp Institute's ScaleUp Female Founder Index shows that the number of scaleups that have crossed the £10.2m turnover and/or £5.1m in assets threshold and have at least one female founder now stands at 261 - representing a 34.5% increase on the number since our 2020 Index. Their collective turnover is £14bn - more than 41% greater compared to 2020 - and the total number of people employed by these businesses is 64,995. They have also attracted £5bn in investment.

The recent update to the Rose Review highlights that more women are forming businesses and our Index shows more are scaling - the demographic makeup of the Index is increasingly wide-ranging; nearly four in ten female-founded scaleups are businesses that are just 5 to 10 years old; with two in ten over 20 years old.

The diversity of these companies and their founders is remarkable - they range from software to skincare, plant hire to pharmaceuticals, from television post-production to pipeline technology. The ScaleUp Institute's latest survey also highlights the sentiments of female-founded scaleups. When asked about their biggest challenges to growth, these scaleups highlight key barriers around accessing Markets and finding the right Talent and Skills, followed by access to Finance and Growth Capital, showing more needs to be done in connecting them to market opportunities at home and overseas, alongside skills and funding. The landscape for female entrepreneurs is changing and we must all redouble our collective efforts to support the growing numbers of them scaling up.



NO. OF VISIBLE SCALEUPS

261



TOTAL INVESTMENT

£5bn



NO. OF JOBS

64.9k



TOTAL TURNOVER

£14bn

## THEY ARE HIGH-GROWTH

9 in 10



female founded scaleups expect growth in 2022

5 in 10



expecting growth of more than 20% and

3 in 10 more than 50%

## THEY ARE HIGHLY INNOVATIVE

7 in 10



changed business processes; invested in innovation; and developed new products or services

## THEY ARE INTERNATIONAL

5 in 10



are exporting

6 in 10



want or plan to export more in the future

## THEY GIVE OPPORTUNITIES

7 in 10



female founded scaleups provide opportunities to young people in apprenticeships, internships and work experience

“

“This Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, whatever their background, can succeed on merit, so it is fantastic to see a considerable increase in the number of scaleups with female founders.”

**SMALL BUSINESS MINISTER,  
PAUL SCULLY**

“I’m so encouraged by the growth in the number of female founded scaleups and particularly to see them winning public procurement contracts. But we can all give further support as consumers by buying women-built products and services. By championing them and helping them to thrive, we’ll boost the British economy while encouraging tomorrow’s female entrepreneurs to dream bigger and scale their businesses.”

**SAHAR HASHEMI OBE  
CO-FOUNDER  
BUY WOMEN BUILT**

“I’m thrilled to see the numbers of female-founded scaleups continue to grow and how far we have come since the first Index was published in 2018. It also highlights the importance of access to talent and skills, markets, and funding to boost the revenues and potential of many more female-founded businesses - and create a more productive, inclusive and high-growth economy.”

**SHERRY COUTU CBE,  
SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR**

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Resilience and growth:** the number of visible female-founded scaleups has increased by **34.5% since 2020** with a **41% increase in aggregate turnover** and attracting **£5bn in investment**.
- The **significant £5bn of investment** raised is driven by: £2.7bn investment into female co-founded **Rothsay Life** and, excluding that, a **168 per cent increase to £2.3bn** of investment into the wider scaleup female founder community since 2020.
- A **UK-wide phenomenon: two-thirds (65%)** of female founded scaleups remain outside of London and they are widely distributed: the top three regions for numbers of female-founder scaleups outside of London and the South East are the **Midlands, South West and Yorkshire and Humber**. Whilst **Scotland's** female-founder scaleups account for **10% of aggregate turnover** and **28% of all employment**.

### Female founders scale multi years:

**Three in ten** companies have been scaling throughout the past five years at least. They include fashion business **ME+EM**; plant hire company **Plantforce**; life sciences software company **Trakcel**; fintechs **Lendable** and **Starling Bank**; and gin maker **Warner's Distillery**. To scale continuously over at least a five year period is a remarkable achievement.

• **New entries** to this year's Index include high profile names including **Elisabeth Murdoch's Locksmith Animation** and brands such as **Ooni** and **111Skin**.

• Seven companies in the Index have held **IPOs** in the past two years: **Team17 Digital**, **MADE**, **PensionBee**, **TC BioPharm**, **finnCap**, **Darktrace** and **Seraphine**.

• **Elvie**, the women's healthtech company founded by **Tania Boler**, is in the top ten of the Index both for the amounts of **Innovate UK** grants it has received and for the

amount of equity finance it has raised; it is a great example of how access to **Innovate UK** support helps to generate further private sector investment.

• **Female founders are solving global and societal issues:** **BIMA** provides insurance and healthcare access across Asia and Africa, **Dare** is an energy company helping the world to reach a renewable future, faster and **Nutley's Kitchen Gardens**, dedicated to the kitchen gardener - both novice and old-hand and focused on sustainability.

• **Female founders are creating international businesses:** **Dr Jun Zhang's Atmos International** is a global leader in pipeline leak detection; **Vickie Peggs' Universally Speaking** is one of the world's longest running and most experienced specialist providers for the global gaming industry.

## KEY SECTORS

42%

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

22%

INDUSTRIALS

21%

GENERAL SERVICES



19%

TECHNOLOGY/IP/  
LIFE SCIENCES

14%

RETAIL

12%

LEISURE &  
ENTERTAINMENT

8%

CREATIVE

6%

SUPPLY CHAINS

3%

BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT &  
INFRASTRUCTURE



TOP REGIONS  
OUTSIDE OF  
LONDON

TOP REGION BY TURNOVER  
**SCOTLAND**  
**£1.37bn**

TOP REGION BY EMPLOYMENT  
**SCOTLAND**  
**18.2K**

TOP REGION BY FUNDING RAISED  
**SOUTH EAST**  
**£143m**

TOP REGION BY GRANTS WON  
**SOUTH WEST**  
**£2.99m**

TOP REGIONS BY EXPORTS  
**NORTH WEST**  
**£71.3m**

## TOP FUNDERS

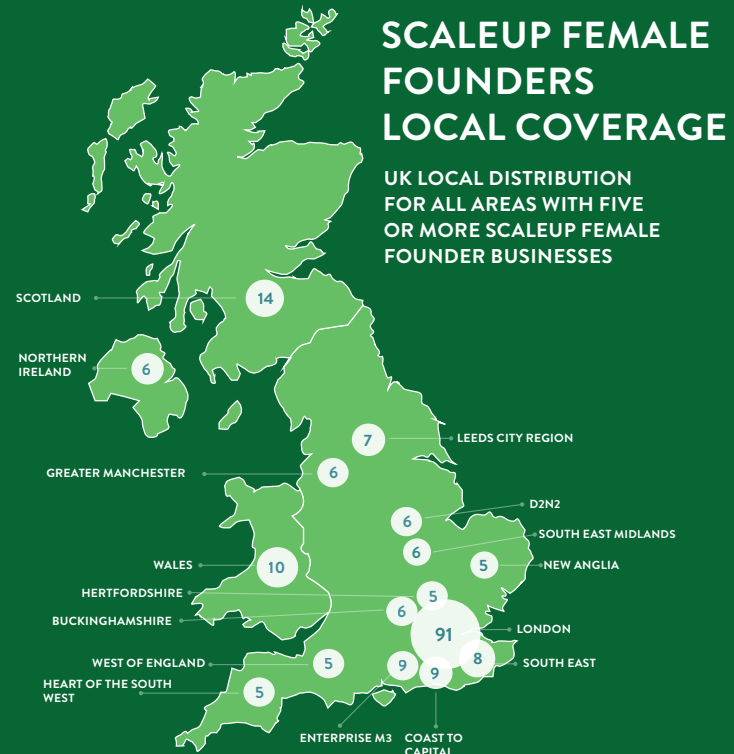
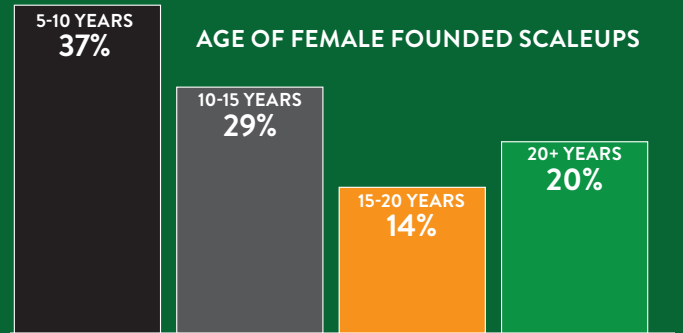
BY NUMBER OF FUNDRAISINGS FOR DEALS INTO SCALEUPS AND SCALING BUSINESSES WITH AT LEAST ONE FEMALE FOUNDER

FUNDER	SCALEUPS	PIPELINE	TOTAL
BUSINESS ANGEL(S)	31	3	34
CROWDCUBE	16	3	19
BGF	12	2	14
OCTOPUS VENTURES	7	5	12
NOTION CAPITAL	10	0	10
BALDERTON CAPITAL	2	4	6
AMADEUS CAPITAL PARTNERS	2	3	5
INDEX VENTURES	5	0	5
SUMMIT PARTNERS	5	0	5
ALBIONVC	5	0	5
E.VENTURES (EUROPE)	4	0	4
KKR TMT GROWTH	4	0	4
MOBEUS	4	0	4
NEW ENTERPRISE ASSOCIATES (NEA)	4	0	4
SANTANDER CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL	4	0	4
VITRUVIAN PARTNERS	2	2	4
WINTON INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT	4	0	4

“We are delighted to maintain our position as the leading institutional investor into women-led scaleup businesses, significantly increasing both the number of companies we’ve backed, and the total amount of capital invested.

“We have worked hard to make BGF welcoming and supportive to the widest and most diverse range of entrepreneurs; and increased our involvement with partners working with businesses coming through earlier investment rounds to boost the number of women led businesses in our pipeline.”

**CATE POULSON, HEAD OF BGF TALENT NETWORK AND A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF SCALEUP INSTITUTE**



“It is well known that diversity is good for business and that diverse businesses deliver better performance. As the UK’s economic development bank, the British Business Bank aims to break down barriers by improving access to finance for entrepreneurs, so that more female founders across the UK may achieve their business goals and, in doing so, contribute to the country’s economic growth and prosperity. Whilst there is clearly much more to do to level the playing field, I’m proud that the Bank’s programmes continue to support female founders in scaling their businesses.”

**CATHERINE LEWIS LA TORRE, CEO, BRITISH BUSINESS BANK**

## TOP ADVISORS

BY NUMBER OF VISIBLE SCALEUPS ADVISED

BDO	ERNST & YOUNG
RSM UK AUDIT	AZETS AUDIT SERVICE
KPMG	PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS
HAINES WATTS	PKF FRANCIS CLARK
MOORE KINGSTON SMITH	MAZARS

## PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

**8**  
FEMALE FOUNDER SCALEUPS

**26**  
CONTRACTS

**£8m**  
VALUE

Eight female founded scaleups won 26 contracts worth £8m in value. Local Government has awarded most contracts and Central Government is the largest buyer by value of contracts. The global organisational development consultancy Q5, of which Sharon Rice-Oxley is a founder and partner, is the top company by both contract value and number of contracts won.

COMPANY	NO. OF AWARDS	REGION	SECTOR
Q5	7	LONDON	MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY SERVICES
BOARD INTELLIGENCE	7	LONDON	COLLABORATION SOFTWARE, SAAS
MORNINGSIDE	3	EAST MIDLANDS	HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS AND PHARMACEUTICALS
LET ME PLAY	3	LONDON	EDUCATION
DARKTRACE	2	EAST OF ENGLAND	SECURITY SOFTWARE
COATE WATER CARE	2	SOUTH WEST	CARE HOMES
CHAMPIONS (UK)	1	EAST MIDLANDS	CREATIVE BRAND AGENCY
AWESOME MERCHANDISE	1	YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER	CUSTOM MERCHANDISE

The three key barriers identified by female-founded scaleups to enable better collaboration and engagement are:

Complex procurement processes

Finding out about opportunities to bid





Time to win a contract

“Every year I’m increasingly encouraged by the number of women starting, forming and scaling successful businesses, and every year brings with it more reasons to celebrate. In the last year, according to the ScaleUp Female Founder Index, the total investment in female-founded scaling businesses stands at £5bn, with 9 out of 10 of these companies looking forward to further growth in 2022. Of course there’s always more to be done and while the levels of investment are impressive, we still see that demystifying the financial jargon remains the main barrier to encouraging the confidence to scale. It’s something which we at finnCap Group are particularly focused on, and we’re proud to be playing a role in helping fuel better growth for our most ambitious female leaders.”

**SAM SMITH, CEO, FINCAPP**

## SCALING PIPELINE

There are 68 female-founded visible scaling companies that are growing at 10%-19.99%; they have crossed the £10.2m turnover and/or £5.1m in assets threshold and have at least one female founder. These companies have an aggregate turnover of £4.2bn, employ 21,250 people, and have attracted £291m of investment. This scaling pipeline shows encouraging evidence for the future of female-founded scaleups.

 <b>NO. OF PIPELINE SCALING COMPANIES</b> <b>68</b>	 <b>TOTAL TURNOVER</b> <b>£4.2bn</b>
 <b>NO. OF JOBS</b> <b>21.5K</b>	 <b>TOTAL INVESTMENT</b> <b>£291m</b>

## 8 FEMALE FOUNDED SCALEUPS RECEIVING INNOVATE UK GRANTS TOTALING £6.6M

Among the top eight recipients include a new company to this year’s Index: the online educational platform Century UK founded by Priya Lakhani, and Dorchester-based automation technology specialist Loop Technology.

COMPANY	DESCRIPTION
Loop Technology	Industrial automation technology and robotics
Trakcel	Integrated cellular orchestration solutions for precise management, control and tracking of cell & gene therapy products
Frog Bikes	Designs and manufactures bikes for children
APS Biocontrol	Management of bacterial diseases in agriculture and food processing
Elvie	Develops, designs, and manufactures tech for women, such as an electric wearable breast pump and a kegel trainer
Atmos International	Develops pipeline leak and theft detection technology for the oil & gas sector
CenturyUK	Develops an online educational platform that allows data on teaching & learning patterns to be efficiently collected & analysed by educators & institutions
Warner’s Distillery	A gin farm, producing small batch dry gin

“We are thrilled to see these highly innovative founders achieving even greater success this year, which bodes well for a future in which everyone realises their potential. With half the founders looking to Innovate UK, we are committed to providing the funding and, through Innovate UK EDGE, wraparound support, to accelerate their R&D and scaling journeys. Congratulations to the founders and we wish them and future cohorts every success.”

**MAXINE ADAM, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, BUSINESS GROWTH AT INNOVATE UK**

“The analysis for this year’s Female Founders Index highlights the depth and breadth of women led businesses in the UK. We must celebrate the successes of these businesses and the investment they’ve received including through the public markets – to inspire and support others to start and grow their companies, making a positive impact on the economy.”

**UMERAH AKRAM, HEAD OF PRIVATE MARKETS, LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE**

## SCALEUP STORIES



**ELVIE**



**LOOP TECHNOLOGY**



**OONI**



**WBCo**

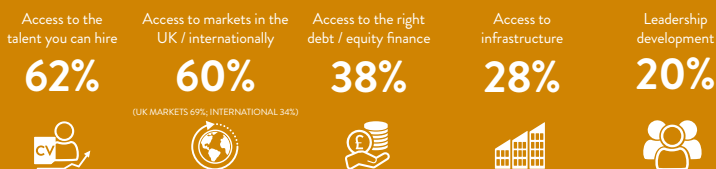
READ MORE INSPIRING SCALEUP STORIES AT :  
[SCALEUPINSTITUTE.ORG.UK/SCALEUPS/](https://scaleupinstitute.org.uk/scaleups/)

## BARRIERS TO GROWTH FOR FEMALE FOUNDED SCALEUPS

As identified in the recent ScaleUp Institute survey by 144 female founded scaleups, generating £380m in turnover and employing 2,926 people. They are across all sectors with strong representation from the Creative, Manufacturing & Engineering and Professional Services sectors.

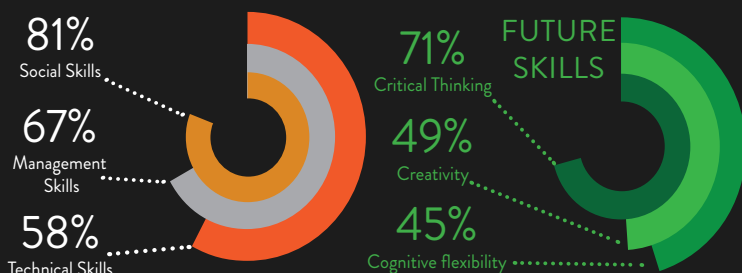
Female-founded scaleups identify similar barriers to growth to their scaleup peers. Challenges around Access to Markets - and for female-founded scaleups this particularly means domestic customers - and Access to Talent are ranked significantly higher than other factors as the significant barriers to growth.

### THE TOP THREE ISSUES FOR FUTURE GROWTH HOLDING FEMALE FOUNDED SCALEUPS BACK:



### ACCESS TO TALENT & SKILLS

The three top skills that female-founded scaleups are seeking from graduates and school leavers are:

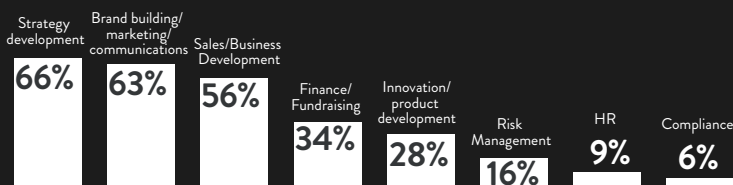


Female-founded scaleups value critical thinking as the most important future skill, but only three in ten are confident of finding these skills in the future workforce.

While they are more confident of finding creativity skills (six in ten), again only three in ten are confident of finding cognitive flexibility skills in the future workforce.

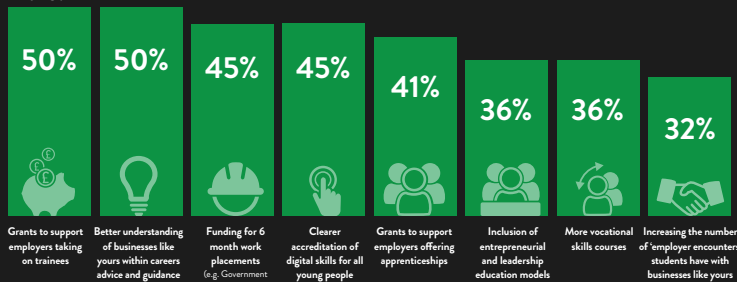
### Leadership Capacity

They want to build out their top teams and boards with individuals with Strategy Development and Brand building / marketing / communications skills



### What they want more from the education system:

For the next generation entering the workforce they would like to see more:



### ACCESS TO FINANCE



8 in 10

female founded scaleups use external finance - a similar rate to their scaleup peers



5 in 10

do not feel confident about having the right amount and type of funding in place.



4 in 10

female founded scaleups use or plan to use equity finance in 2022.



5 in 10

feel that most funding and business advice is provided in London / the South East

### Key barriers are:

Lack of knowledge of investors and/or finance

Terms and conditions of finance

Giving up control

*"This is an incredible piece of research from the ScaleUp Institute. It's encouraging to see not only the growth of scale-ups in the U.K., but brilliant to see the volume being either founded or led by women. The increase in turnover of these scale-ups further demonstrates that business profitability is directly impacted by having women on leadership teams."*

*"We wholeheartedly support and champion the need for leadership representation for branding, marketing and communications disciplines within scale-up businesses, as highlighted by this research as a barrier to success. By investing in marketing and advertising, scale-up businesses can really open themselves up to the next stage of strategic growth, reach new audiences and fulfil their potential. At GroupM, we are delighted to partner with the ScaleUp Institute to help bring the power of advertising to scale-up and emerging brands within the U.K."*

**KATIE GROSVENOR, CHIEF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT & GROWTH OFFICER AT GROUPM U.K.**

### GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Half of the female-founded scaleups are looking for specific funding support for innovation.

50%

Innovation and R&D support from Innovate UK / Public funding

49%

General business support from local or national government

43%

Growth Hubs and LEPs



## ACCESS TO MARKETS

**6 IN 10**

PRIMARILY SELL TO OTHER BUSINESSES OR GOVERNMENT (B2B)



**4 IN 10**

SELL DIRECT TO CONSUMERS (B2C) 2X MORE THAN THEIR PEERS



55%

31%



CORPORATES GOVERNMENT SELLING TO / PART OF A SUPPLY CHAIN

35%

27%



CORPORATES GOVERNMENT ASPIRATIONS TO SELL TO

BARRIERS TO WORKING WITH

GOVERNMENT AND LARGE CORPORATES



COMPLEX PROCUREMENT PROCESS

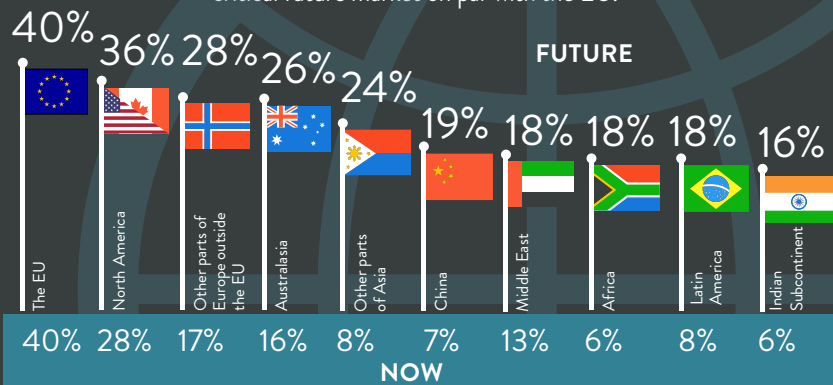


TIME TAKEN TO WIN A CONTRACT



FINDING OUT ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES TO BID

**5 in 10** female founded scaleups are exporting (compared to 6 in 10 for all scaleups). The EU is a key market for female founded scaleups, but growth opportunities are also seen across emerging markets in other parts of Europe outside the EU; Australasia; and other parts of Asia. North America is seen as a critical future market on par with the EU.

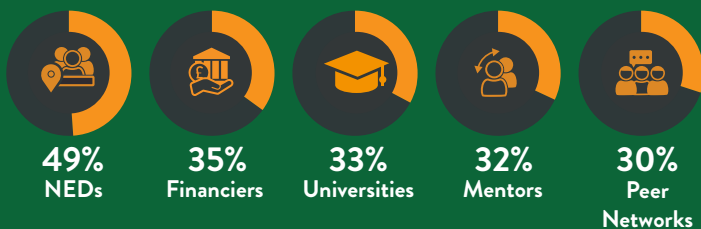


To help them fulfil their exporting ambitions female-founded scaleups want:



## LOCAL RESOURCES TO HELP THEM SCALE

Access to non-executive directors (NEDs) is the local external resource that female-founded scaleups are most keenly seeking.



“The data and insights from the 2022 Scaleup Female Founder Index show significant improvements across the business landscape. It’s encouraging to see more women who have started businesses are now scaling them to £10m+ turnover companies, creating truly global offerings. These positive signs across the UK’s female business community highlight that we are making progress, but with plenty of scope for growth. It’s clear that these changes are helping to make our future workforce more diverse and inclusive, whilst being powered by female leaders.”

ERIN PLATTS, HEAD OF EMEA & PRESIDENT OF THE UK BRANCH, SILICON VALLEY BANK

## RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND IDENTIFICATION



**7 in 10**

Female Founded scaleups want to be relationship managed and they are happy to be identified on a public record

“It is inspiring to see the growing number of female founded scaleups across the country and particularly exciting that more than 1 in 10 of them are in the food and drink sector. At Scotland Food and Drink, we are passionate supporters of scaleups in an industry which is crucial to the success of our economy.”

LUCINDA BRUCE-GARDYNE, CHAIR OF SCOTLAND FOOD & DRINK

“Getting more funding to female entrepreneurs and unlocking their untapped potential continues to be a priority across our industry as demonstrated in the Rose Review, and I am delighted see the numbers of female founded scaleups continue to grow, increasing by 34.5% since 2020. Data shows that more women than ever are starting new businesses and we must harness this potential, and that means more financial institutions committing to delivering change and funding. We also need more direct support for female owned businesses across the UK including imaginative solutions to the challenges posed by women’s caring responsibilities so that even more women have the opportunity to scale their businesses.”

JULIE BAKER, HEAD OF ENTERPRISE, NATWEST GROUP