

# **Accelerators as a Tool for Enhancing Women Entrepreneurship**

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We examine the premise that startup accelerators encourage women's participation in entrepreneurship. We consider specific barriers for women entrepreneurship (e.g., lack of specific entrepreneurial human capital, low-quality business networks, low level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and low legitimacy in the entrepreneurial ecosystem) and specific characteristics of accelerator support (educational component, wide network, mentorship services, and reputation). Based on these specific characteristics, we suggest that accelerators might play an important role in tackling these obstacles and effectively increasing women entrepreneurship. We present evidence on the participation rate of women founders in Israeli accelerators (more than twice their rate in the general population) and identify their characteristics and progress during the acceleration. We then compare the characteristics and progress of women founders to those of men

founders to appreciate the reasons accelerators witness a higher participation rate of women founders. This study has important policy implications both for the use of accelerators as a tool to enhance women entrepreneurship and to implementing successful elements of accelerators in other programs to support women entrepreneurship.