# Makers Survey 2025

Building a thriving, resilient craft community.







## Discover extraordinary craft.

Search our free, online directory of makers to find crafted pieces or commission bespoke work.

→ craftscouncil.org.uk/directory





Makers Survey Report

Introduction	4
01 Overview of findings	8
02 Key findings	13
03 Challenges for makers	19
04 Sales	22
05 Where is the growth opportunity for craft?	30
06 Our call to policymakers	32
07 Work to be done	33
08 Who are Crafts Council?	34
09 Methodology	35

# 'Portfolio makers' represent nimble, creative resilience and entrepreneurship.

Our latest Makers Survey, conducted in September 2024, reveals that craft today is driven by 'portfolio makers' – those who make some, but not all, of their income from craft – sustaining their passion and their practice alongside other kinds of paid work. This could be work related to craft or the broader creative industries, such as delivering education, or it may be entirely unrelated. As more people seek to make an income from craft, we are seeing more people combine this with other income sources to make up a living. Portfolio makers represent nimble, creative resilience and entrepreneurship emerging from very difficult economic times. We celebrate this – and we understand that makers need us to value, include, advocate for and support them at whatever stage they are on their maker journey.

Through the survey, we heard from more than 1,000 makers across a range of craft disciplines, located in villages, towns and cities across the UK, full-time makers, part-time makers and those who make without intention to profit. The survey reveals that most craft businesses are sole traders, micro-enterprises or small-to-medium enterprises, where day-to-day needs often take precedence over long-term growth strategies, meaning makers' ability to invest in their own skill-building is limited. They need accessible, low-cost, bitesized opportunities for professional development to bolster the skills needed to thrive.

Inclusivity and equity are crucial areas for growth, both for our organisation and the community at large. Makers express a strong desire for fairer access to opportunities for those from historically underrepresented backgrounds. Addressing these disparities is an essential component of building a diverse and innovative sector. By creating an environment where all makers feel seen, supported and empowered, we can unlock new dimensions of creativity and collaboration.

Unlike other creative industries, which are often concentrated in urban hubs, the craft community is dispersed and deeply embedded in local communities. This presents a powerful chance to align craft with regional economic agendas, particularly in areas seeking to revitalise local economies. Wherever they are, makers want to connect with other makers to share knowledge, passion and advice, and to find support, resources, opportunities and inspiration. They also want more help to promote, exhibit and sell work in a crowded marketplace.

The new Labour government has set out that it believes craft and creativity must be nurtured as critical sources of socio-economic growth, yet makers face constant threats to this – not least new legislation such as the European Union's (EU) General Product Safety Regulations (GPSR), which has already forced some smaller makers to stop selling into Europe. By focusing on targeted support to help makers of all sizes respond to legislative changes like this that inhibit growth, by nurturing ambition and by fostering partnerships beyond the craft sector, we can chart a path that embraces innovation, and ensure a vibrant, healthy craft ecology.

Members of Young Craft Citizens exploring Crafts Council's collections store. Photo by Jazz Willet.



Having heard what makers tell us they need, Crafts Council is working to develop new resources, to build resilience in the sector and to ensure that makes can thrive. We're undertaking a transformation of our digital presence to make our own large and evolving library of resources easier to access in one place. We also know that, as the national charity for craft, our brand carries a prestige that makers value and want to align with, so we're working to make it easier for makers to benefit from this – for example, platforming our Crafts Council Directory makers more prominently in front of our large social media audiences. We're also building a new membership scheme, launching this summer, which will create a digital home for the craft community, easily accessed wherever makers live and work.

The craft community holds immense potential to contribute economically, culturally and socially. By focusing on accessible training, fostering ambition, strengthening regional ecosystems and embedding inclusion, we can create a future where makers thrive. The Makers Survey has illuminated the sector's challenges, but more importantly, it has revealed pathways to resilience and growth. Through collaboration with makers, policymakers and industry partners, we can ensure that craft remains not only a source of economic vitality but also a cornerstone of cultural pride and creative innovation.

#### **Natalie Melton**

Executive Director, Crafts Council February 2025

## A note of thanks

Crafts Council extends its thanks to everyone who completed the survey and the many organisations in the craft community and beyond who shared the survey with their members and networks.

Thank you to the members of Craft UK for supporting the development of the survey.



Makers Survey Report 8

01

## Overview of findings

The 2024 Makers Survey reveals a vibrant craft sector. It illustrates a community of makers across the UK working in a wide range of craft disciplines, with high levels of education, as well as significant representation of female, disabled and neurodivergent makers. However, the sector faces ongoing economic and market-related challenges that impact its growth and sustainability. Rising operational costs, saturation of low-cost, mass produced items and limited funding opportunities threaten the sector's financial resilience. Furthermore, Brexit and global economic instability have increased barriers to international trade and visibility, particularly within the EU market.

#### Who are makers today?

77%

Female

65%

Aged 50+

21%

Identify as disabled or d/deaf

24%

Identify as neurodivergent

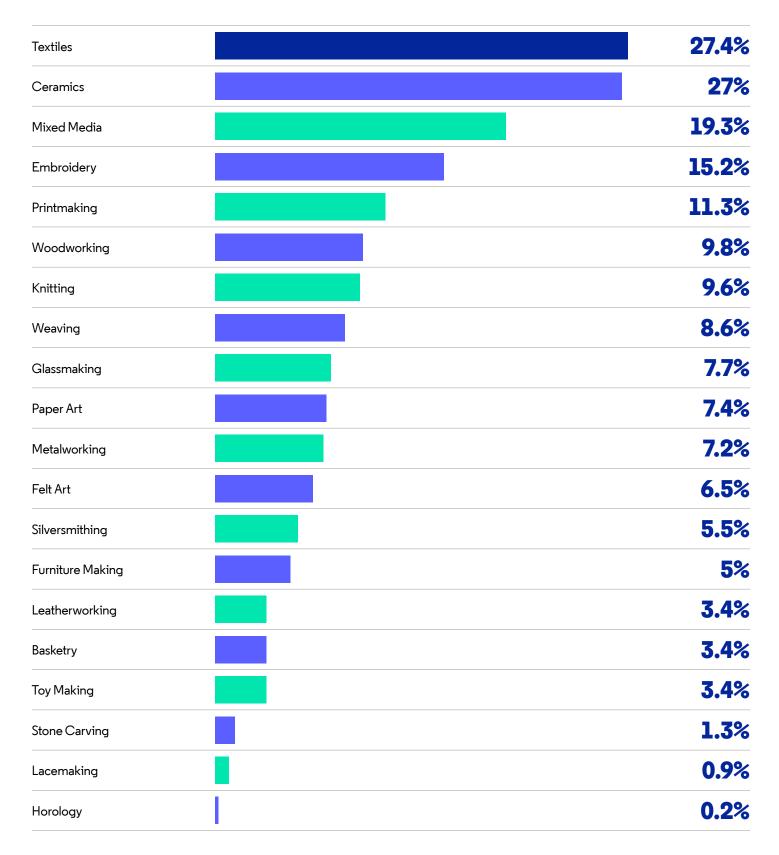
65%

Have an undergraduate degree

47%

Are part-time makers

#### What are makers making?



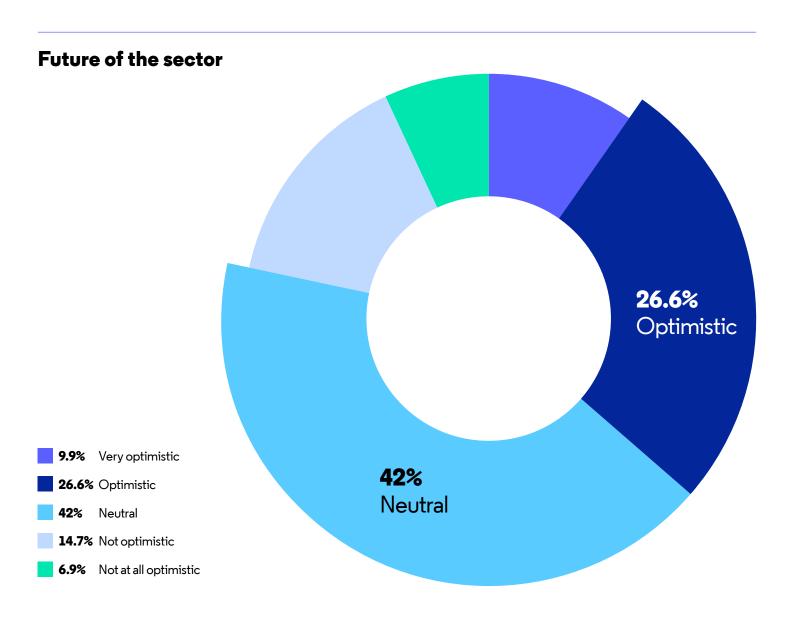
Note: Respondents were able to select more than one type of craft practice.

Makers Survey Report 10

#### Challenges, concerns and opportunities

Respondents identified a large number of challenges and concerns, with a fifth (21.6%) saying that they are not optimistic about the future of the sector as a whole. However, more than a third (36.4%) are optimistic, and the survey highlights opportunities for change, development and training.

This cautious optimism, driven by a growing public appreciation for handmade, unique and sustainable goods, and opportunities provided by digital platforms, reveals an appetite for growth and development. Makers who have successfully leveraged social media and exhibitions report increased visibility and sales, particularly in non-EU markets.



While many makers demonstrate resilience and adaptability, there are disparities in access to resources and opportunities. Crafts Council recognises an opportunity for targeted interventions to address economic pressures, promote visibility and enhance cross-sector institutional support. There is also a demonstrable need for support and investment from other sources to bolster a resilient and thriving crafts sector.

#### What next?

Respondents were asked what more Crafts Council could do, and they suggested we focus on: expanding regional and geographic inclusion; increasing engagement in rural areas and devolved nations; and establishing regional hubs. Educational efforts should advocate for craft education in schools, promote the cultural and economic value of craft, and emphasise the social, mental health and environmental benefits.

Reflecting the rise of portfolio makers, respondents call for more support for those making some of their income from craft. Inclusivity is key, with a focus on reducing financial barriers, supporting diverse craft and underrepresented makers, and engaging communities such as retirees, working-class and non-urban populations.

Reflecting the rise of 'portfolio makers', respondents call for more support for those making some of their income from craft

#### Respondents want:

- → Accessible financial support, including grants and affordable workspaces; help navigating grant applications; financial incentives and targeted funding schemes to enable makers to hire staff and expand with confidence
- Practical support to develop business and marketing skills development, support on pricing, marketing and digital selling
- → Lobbying for government support, affordable studio spaces, fair wages and recognition of craft as an essential industry
- → Improved engagement through better outreach, partnerships with grassroots organisations, more accessible digital platforms and digital promotion platforms, as well as physical platforms
- More cross-sector collaboration
- → Access to incubators and mentorship programmes tailored to craft entrepreneurs, including guidance on scaling operations, navigating markets and sustainable practices.



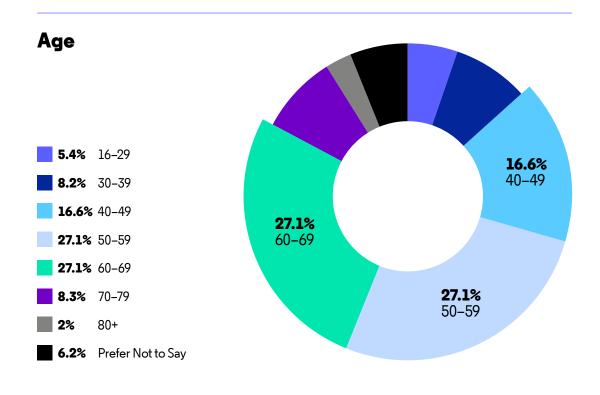


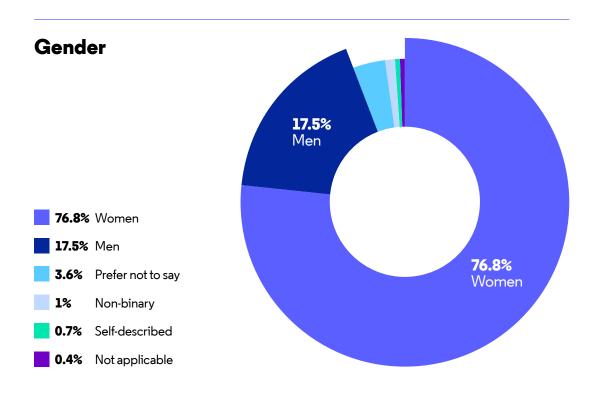
02

#### Key findings

#### **Demographics**

The demographic profile of respondents highlights the need to continue to diversify engagement with makers.





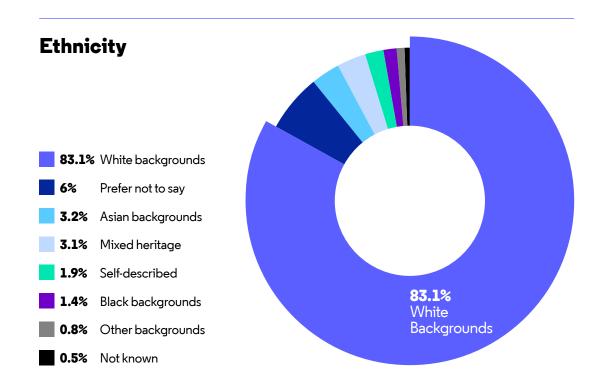
#### Disability and neurodivergence



identify as D/deaf, disabled or having a long-term health condition



identify as neurodivergent



#### **Education**



have undergraduate degrees

28%

have completed postgraduate studies

18%

hold AS or A-Levels

16%

have GCSEs or equivalent

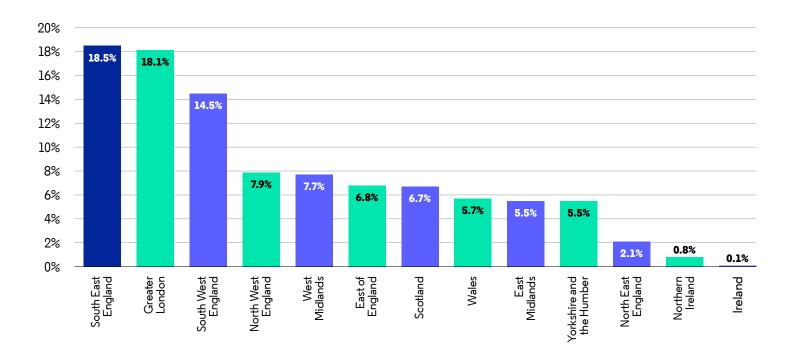
26%

have no formal training in a craft

4%

have completed apprenticeships

#### Location



#### 'Portfolio makers' and career makers

Making plays a multifaceted role in the lives of many makers, with 45.7% identifying as part-time makers, 38.3% as full-time makers and 16% as hobbyists. The prevalence of portfolio makers with income that doesn't come from craft is a key finding, as it demonstrates that the majority of respondents are part-time makers – whether through choice or necessity. While most are part-time, the majority of makers have their own business, highlighting the aspiration and ambition that people have for their craft.

#### Craft educators

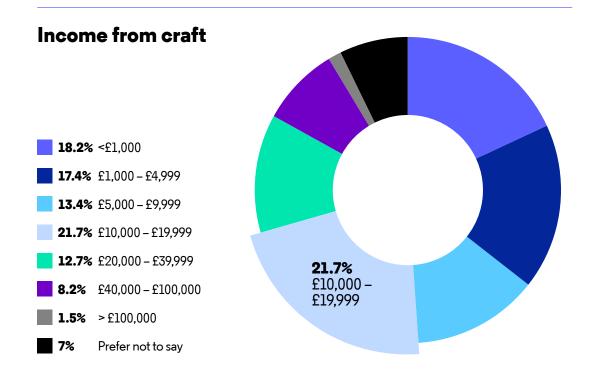
A fifth (20.9%) are community educators and 11.2% are university educators, underscoring the role of craft in both informal and academic education. A smaller proportion, 4.5%, teach crafting in schools, while 6.6% are craft students, reflecting ongoing learning within the sector.

#### More on the 'portfolio maker': income from craft

Most makers operate on modest incomes from craft: half of respondents (49%) earned less than £10,000 from making in the past year, and 70% earned less than £20,000. The average UK wage is around £34,000, and many makers (62.3%) rely on additional income sources from outside the creative industries. The vast majority of craft businesses (94.9%) did not employ anyone on PAYE contracts in the past two years, indicating that most are sole proprietors. Just 0.13% employ 25 or more people.

Two-fifths (41.6%) earn some of their income from making but have another source of income. Among those with an additional source of income, almost two-thirds (62.3%) derive it from outside the creative industries.

Most craft businesses (94.9%) did not employ anyone on PAYE contracts in the past two years





work on their craft full-time

28%

earn none of their income from making

42%

earn some income from making, but have another income

8%

don't earn from making and have no other income source

#### **Turnover**

Almost 37% of respondents reported that their turnover shrunk since they last completed accounts, 22% experienced growth, and 41.4% said their turnover remained the same. This is a very mixed picture, and although some businesses maintained stability and around a fifth experienced growth, more than a third (37%) seeing decline in their turnover presents a worrying picture. Despite craft's recent growth in popularity it is still vulnerable to wider economic pressures.

#### Income brackets of those who work full-time on their craft

of those earning less than £1,000 work full-time on their craft

14%

of those earning £1,000 – £4,999 work full-time on their craft

35%

of those earning £5,000–£9,999 work full-time on their craft 53%

of those earning £10,000–£19,999 work full-time on their craft

**58**%

of those earning £20,000–£40,000 work full-time on their craft 77%

of those earning £40,000–£100,000 work full-time on their craft

of those earning >£100,000 work full-time on their craft

### 03

## Challenges for makers

The craft community faces complex challenges across economic, societal, institutional and market dynamics. Some of the key concerns they reported included:

#### **Economic and financial barriers:**

- → Cost of living crisis: Rising costs impact makers and consumers
- → Funding shortages: Government funding cuts and limited grant opportunities create significant challenges
- → High operational costs: Studio rents, materials, exhibition participation and utilities have risen disproportionately
- → Exhibition costs: High fees for shows and fairs create access barriers and can result in financial losses, especially for new and less established makers
- → Gallery commission rates: makers can struggle with pricing their work to allow for gallery commissions and to maintain profitability

Fibre artist
Cecilia Charlton in her studio, for
Crafts magazine.

Photo by Nina Manandhar.



#### Training, skills and knowledge gaps:

- → Loss of traditional skills: The closure of craft courses and lack of apprenticeships threaten the survival of heritage craft
- Barriers to professional development: Limited access to affordable, high-quality training and mentoring
- → Self-sufficiency expectations: Makers are often required to manage not only the creation of their products but also marketing, sales and business administration

#### Institutional and structural barriers:

- → Policymaking devaluation of craft: A lack of strategic support for craft at government level and in policy as part of broader declining investment in art and culture
- → Inefficient funding models: Many funding opportunities are inaccessible to independent makers or skewed toward specific demographics, such as younger artists
- → Inequity in representation: Regional and social divides, as well as a lack of visibility for minority and underrepresented groups, hinder inclusivity





#### International trade and policy issues:

→ Brexit impact: Increased taxes, tariffs and logistical barriers have made trading with the EU difficult, reducing international sales

→ Global competition: Intellectual property theft and counterfeit handmade goods readily bought from global, digital merchant platforms

#### **Cultural and societal challenges:**

- → Public perceptions: Societal undervaluing of handmade goods and the skills required to produce them results in unrealistic price expectations
- Perception of craft as non-essential: Craft is often viewed as luxury or non-essential, making it less likely to be prioritised in consumer spending
- → Cuts in craft education: The reduction of arts and craft education has made pathways into craft careers harder to access
- → Elitism and accessibility: Craft is often perceived as exclusive, dominated by people with high levels of disposable income
- → Consumer expectations: Buyers often compare handmade items to mass-produced alternatives, expecting similar pricing
- → Digital challenges: Algorithms in online marketplaces and social media channels favour makers that already have high visibility
- Mental health: Financial insecurity, isolation and the pressures of self-employment contribute to stress and burnout among makers

04
Sales

#### Majority of *in-person* sales in the past 12 months

Craft fairs or events	34.6%
Commissions (directly from a client)	30.9%
Running / teaching workshops and courses	20.4%
Exhibitions	19.2%
Someone else's shop front	13.5%
Gallery representation	12.5%
Commissions (via a third party)	6.9%
My own shop front	<b>5</b> %

#### Majority of digital sales in the past 12 months

Own business website	27.3%	Running / teaching digital workshops & courses	2.4%
	17 40		1 10/
Instagram	17.4%	Digital craft fairs or events	1.1%
Online marketplaces	10.9%	Crafts Council Directory	0.5%
Facebook	7.3%	TikTok	0.5%
Digital gallery representation	2.8%	Whatsapp	0.5%
Trade orders	2.5%	Media Advertising	0.4%

Despite the importance of digital platforms for sales and promotion, there remains a strong preference for in-person sales of craft: two-thirds (66.2%) of sales came from physical channels, while only 16.6% were digital

#### **Business** aims

The most commonly identified goal is developing new work (63.2%), followed closely by sales growth (52.0%) and reputation building (50.9%). Notably, 12.2% of respondents have not yet identified a clear goal for their craft practice or business. The most cited needs are visibility and promotion (49.0%) and delivering exhibitions (46.0%), emphasising the importance of public exposure, showcasing and selling work in person as discussed above. Access to funding and finance (31.6%) and new business opportunities (18.4%) are also significant priorities.

#### **Business prospects**

Optimism among makers is mixed, as discussed above. Those who are less optimistic identify challenges such as limited market access, difficulties with standing out in digital and physical marketplaces, rising operational costs, and reduced consumer spending. Systemic issues, including trade barriers post-Brexit, the decline in craft education and a lack of advocacy for mid-career makers, further contribute. Personal factors such as health challenges, balancing multiple roles, and skill gaps in business management also exacerbate pessimism.

The three most commonly identified goals are developing new work (63.2%), sales growth (52.0%) and reputation building (50.9%)

Neutral respondents reflect a mix of resilience and caution, noting the unpredictability of sales and the strain of rising costs, but also highlighting efforts to adapt through skill development, experimentation and balancing creative fulfilment with financial goals.

Conversely, the 39.6% who are more optimistic point to positive trends such as increased sales, effective marketing, and growing consumer appreciation for handmade, sustainable goods. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, are highlighted as key drivers of visibility and sales. Across all groups, resilience, adaptability and sustainable practices emerge as central themes. There is scope to publicise success stories through social media celebrations and case studies to demonstrate that growth and success are possible and inspire others.

#### **Funding**

Over the past 12 months, primary sources of funding for maker businesses were: in-person sales (36.3%), commissions (23.4%), teaching (25.2%), and savings or pensions (23.8%). Minimal funding came from grants, loans and investments, indicating a reliance on direct income streams, as well as a concerning dependence on personal resources not intended to be drawn on for liquidity.

Most respondents (81.2%) said they had not applied for funding for their craft business in the past two years. However, of those who did apply, 40.6% were successful, an extremely high success rate. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (71.4%) who successfully applied for grants, funding or paid residencies say these have been fundamental to their practice.

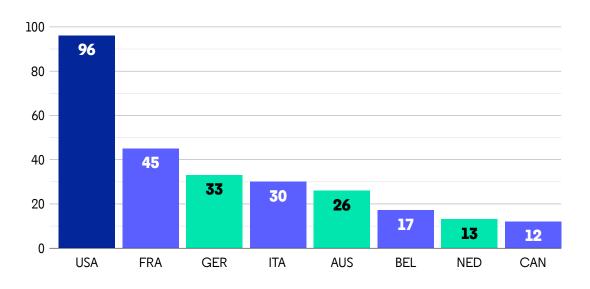
Makers cite several reasons for not applying, including: the administrative burden of applications; a lack of awareness of funding opportunities; a perception of limited funding, coupled with a highly competitive landscape, a range of personal and professional circumstances, such as age, disability, confidence levels, financial situation, and career stage, can act as barriers to applying for funding; negative perceptions of the funding landscape, including a lack of transparency and perceived bias, also deter many makers from applying.

Makers Survey Report 26

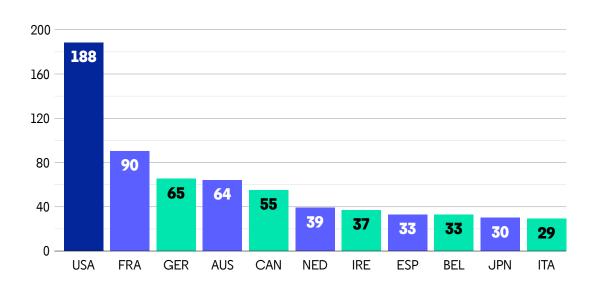
#### International reach

Over two-thirds of respondents (68.4%) have neither shown nor sold their work internationally in the last two years. A quarter (23.5%) have sold work internationally, 12.3% have shown work internationally, and 8.2% have both shown and sold work internationally.

#### International exhibitions



#### International sales



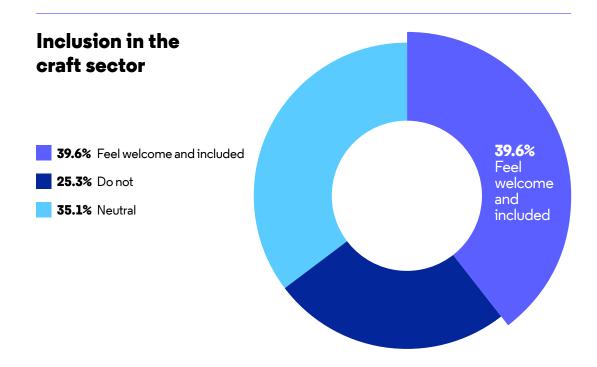
Of those that have shown or sold their work internationally in the past two years, nearly half (47%) indicated that work or sales have remained stable. However, a notable 37% reported decline, and, of those, 22.6% experienced a significant decrease. In contrast, only 16% reported an increase, of which only 4.3% experienced significant growth.

Brexit is the most frequently cited factor for a decline in international opportunities, with respondents reporting a near-collapse of EU market access due to customs charges, increased paperwork, and rising export-related costs. Increased shipping and logistics costs, combined with delays and damaged goods, made exporting fragile and handmade items less viable. The US and non-EU markets emerged as key areas of expansion, as barriers to EU trade pushed respondents to explore alternative international opportunities.

Brexit was the most frequently cited factor for a decline in international opportunities, with respondents reporting a near-collapse of EU market access

#### Inclusivity

Perceptions of inclusion in the craft community vary significantly among respondents. With nearly two-thirds (60.4%) not actively feeling included, there is work to be done.



Jewellery designer and Crafts Council trustee Melanie Eddy, with visitors to Crafts Council's collections store.

Photo by Juno Snowdon.



Christian Ovonlen, winner of the 2022 Brookfield Properties Craft Prize.

Photo by Alun Callender.



05

Where is the growth opportunity for craft?

#### Professional development

Training on teaching in craft

Just under half of respondents (47.3%) did not participate in any professional development activities over the past 12 months.

Professional development activities	
Training on my current craft	23.4%
Attending talks or symposiums	20.4%
	170/
Training on marketing or sales	17%
Training on a new craft	16.9%
Training on business administration	10.2%
Mentoring, apprenticeships or placements	8.2%
Accredited courses or formal education	3.8%

When thinking about professional development activities, respondents were asked about both digital and in-person training and events. For digital engagement, nearly two-thirds (63.3%) preferred video tutorials and more than half (50.6%) liked short workshops, with significant interest in coaching (25.8%), day-long courses (26.6%) and peer learning (20.2%) delivered online. Less popular options include drop-in sessions (13.6%), and only 10.7% wanted week-long intensives online. This highlights a strong preference for flexible, accessible formats that respondents can access online at a time of their choosing.

For in-person engagement, two-thirds of respondents preferred short workshops (65.9%) with more than half asking for day-long courses (57.8%). Nearly a third (29.9%) had interest in coaching or peer learning (27.2%), and more than a fifth (22.7%) expressed interest in week-long intensives. Respondents value hands-on, interactive formats for in-person learning, emphasising short and focused engagements.

#### Agile learning

Education and skills development is a priority, with makers advocating for affordable workshops, mentorship programmes and networking events – as well as promoting craft education in schools, which our Craft School programme does nationally. Though many respondents have undertaken professional development training, they highlighted a lack of depth in some courses. They noted the high cost associated with advanced training or international programmes and limited education opportunities in their local area, especially for more niche forms of craft. Respondents mentioned that lack of time, financial constraints, lack of visibility/promotion, and structural issues such as location or format made it difficult to access professional development opportunities.

In response to this, Crafts Council is exploring adding to our existing library of resources with bite-sized, online training modules on topics such as marketing and sales, business management and adapting to market trends. Tailored specifically to makers, these modules will allow people to learn essential skills at their own pace. We are also exploring new partnerships with companies, institutions and other industry bodies to ensure that makers are equipped with the latest tools and insights.

## 06

## Our call to policymakers

The UK's craft sector deserves better support and funding to reflect and to build on the contribution craft makes to the economy, wellbeing, education, and conveying powerful creative capital on the world stage. People who engaged with creative arts and craft feel happier, more satisfied and are more likely to feel that life is worthwhile than those who did not, according to Anglia Ruskin University study Creating arts and crafting positively predicts subjective wellbeing, published in 2024. The breadth of output from craft is profound, but the practical support for makers from all walks of life needs greater investment.

Generations of cutting craft education has had an impact on young people's options, notably the decline in Design and Technology GCSE take-up. The Government is reviewing the existing national curriculum and statutory assessment system in England, and we call for the reintroduction of craft and 3D making at all educational phases and inclusive access to craft education. Creative skills must be recognised as a valuable part of multiple career pathways.

Rising operational costs, a weak economic environment, limited funding and training opportunities, and persistently low income all threaten craft's resilience. We celebrate the government's recognition of the creative industries as a growth driver for the economy, and call for crafts' contribution to be better recognised and supported. Craft skills and businesses service other creative industries, acting as a critical building block in their success.

Craft powers the creative industries, contributing to economic resilience and social value through sustainable businesses, and improving mental health and wellbeing. We have a craft ecology in this country to be justly proud of – but it is clear from this survey that there is more that needs to be done to ensure that it doesn't just survive, but thrives.

# **07**Work to be done

The 2024 Makers Survey has given Crafts Council a clear sense of how makers engage with us and what support they want from us – shaping our work plans from now and into the future. Almost one-third of respondents (28.7%) said they had not engaged with Crafts Council at all, so we must reach out to more of the craft community. The most common forms of interaction include visiting Crafts Council's website (42.6%) and receiving a newsletter or email communication (33.4%).

#### What should Crafts Council's priorities be?

- Respondents highlighted Crafts Council's most important roles and areas for focus, prioritising outreach, support for makers and investment in the craft sector:
- → Two-thirds (63.3%) said helping wider audiences see and experience the value of contemporary craft should be a top priority
- → For more than a third (38.7%), providing opportunities for business growth for current makers was a top priority
- → 37.3% said improving the knowledge, skills and confidence of future makers was a top priority
- → Whether they make some or all of their income from craft, respondents clearly voiced their need for ongoing professional development; highlighted limited access to and confidence in securing funding; and articulated the importance of Crafts Council being a visible, active champion of craft talent and a driver of new opportunities for them.

08

## Who are Crafts Council?

## Founded in 1972, Crafts Council is the national charity for craft.

We inspire making, empower learning and nurture craft businesses. We believe craft skills and knowledge enrich and uplift us as individuals, and, in doing so, will change our world for the better.

We care for the national Crafts Council Collection, acquired over our 50-year history, sharing this with the public through our Collections Online tool and monthly, bookable Collections Store visits. We loan works from the collections to exhibitions across the UK. We exhibit makers' work at Crafts Council Gallery in London and in partnership with venues around the UK.

#### How do we support makers at all stages of their journey?

- → In 2025 we'll launch a new membership community platform, bringing together a wealth of maker support resources and inspiring content about craft into one powerful space
- → We promote, celebrate and share makers' work on our social channels, helping more people learn and discover craft in all its many facets
- → We promote makers who are selling work and taking commissions through Crafts Council Directory, our free to search database showcasing over 900 makers across a wide range of craft disciplines
- → Our Young Craft Citizens programme, free to 18 to 30-year olds with an active interest in craft, design and making, provides craft workshops, talks, socials and paid work placements
- → Every year we present Collect: the leading international fair for contemporary craft and design, showcasing new works from makers represented by craft galleries across the globe. We support makers without representation to exhibit through Collect Open
- → We undertake research and advocacy, building a rigorous evidence base for policy-makers to understand the value of craft to our economy and society
- → We convene Craft UK, a network of organisations in the craft sector and beyond, to share best practice and foster collaboration

## 09

#### **Methodology**

The Makers Survey was undertaken by FRY Creative in September 2024, with the input of the Crafts Council. FRY Creative reviewed existing materials including the Maker Needs Survey, Directory Membership Survey and *Crafts* Magazine Membership Survey, alongside strategic documents, including evaluation frameworks and funding agreements, to ensure alignment with Crafts Council's strategic priorities.

User testing of a draft survey was conducted in August 2024 with nine individuals from the crafts sector, selected to represent varied demographic and stakeholder groups. Follow up interviews were undertaken with seven users using cognitive testing approaches to identify potential issues with survey comprehension. Interview participants received a £25 voucher for their feedback, which was used to develop the final survey.

This was then disseminated to makers across the UK, including those who already engage with the Crafts Council and those who do not. The survey remained open for three weeks (2–24 September 2024) and was distributed through Craft Council's communication channels and also by a network of craft community organisations. It was open to anyone who defined themself as a maker in the UK. Stakeholder groups who had lower response rates were specifically targeted to ensure that all groups are represented in the findings.

Ceramicist and Crafts Council ambassador Keith Brymer Jones, crafting with young carers.

Photo by Jessica Pierre Ross.





## Stay in the loop.

Subscribe to our free e-newsletters for inspirational craft stories, unmissable craft happenings, funding and learning opportunities.

→ craftscouncil.org.uk/subscribe



