

**Crafts Council**

# Maker needs survey 2021: Findings

## Introduction

Maker needs survey  
April 2022

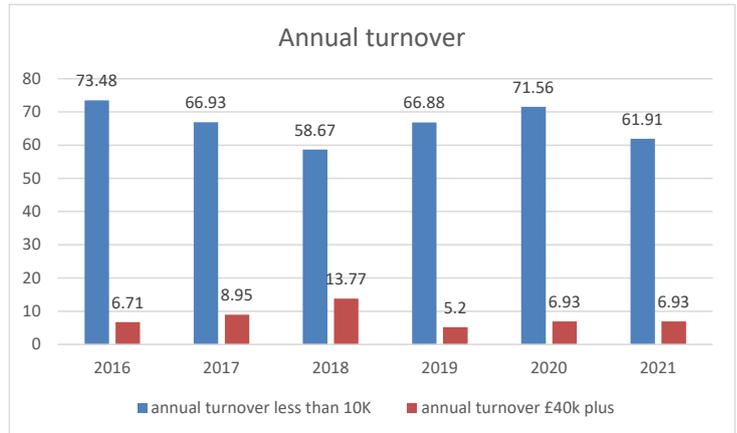
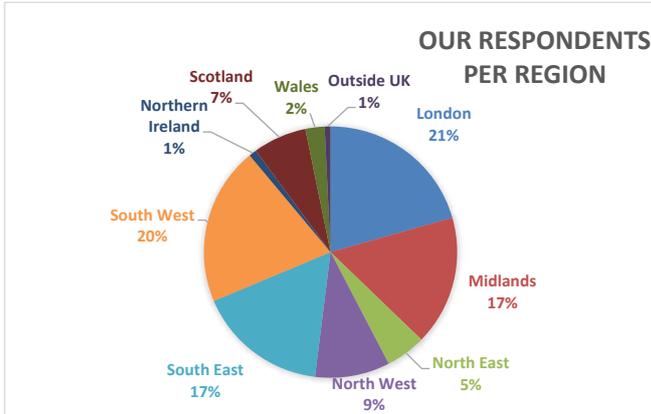
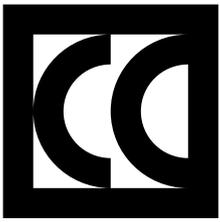
Crafts Council conducted their sixth annual Maker Needs Survey October - December 2021 seeing significant results with 491 completed surveys, a decrease on 2020 (which was expected) though a 318% increase on 2019.

Alongside our standard annual maker needs questions, we included additions linked to the pandemic, the impact of Brexit and, following the many discussions and debates of 2021, questions referencing environmental sustainability.

Since our first survey in 2016 there has been a shift to makers needing funding marketing advice, though working with galleries has remained important to the sector.

## About our respondents

- The majority of those completing our survey classed themselves as 'established' makers\* and were majority white (67%) and female (83%).
- 25% stated they had health diagnosis or disability that impacted their day to day activities.
- Respondents came from across the England, with small numbers replying from Northern Ireland (1%), Scotland (7%), Wales (2%) and further afield (1%).
- Respondents' earnings show a decrease to 62% of those earning less than £10k per year of which only 7% with turnover of more than £40k.
- Ceramics or textiles, made up 47% of the survey respondents.
- \*43% less than 4 years in business, 50% 5 years +, 6% not started a business. 1% closing a business, with 10% of respondents employing staff (increase on 2020 results) \*established makers is those running a craft business for 5 or more years.
- Makers as a rule rely on several outlets for selling/earning income: website, social, fairs, commissions, galleries and to offer services such as teaching.

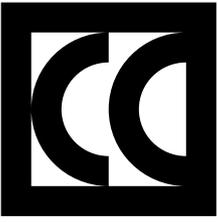


## What respondents told us

- 46% say they rely on my craft business to earn the income they need with 13% not needing to rely on earning income from their craft business.
- 68% request 1:1 mentoring, 75% request funding advice.
- 85% are seeking advice and guidance on being more environmentally sustainable in business with the majority of respondents indicating environmental considerations are important to them.
- 62% request support on IP advice, a significant increase on previous surveys.
- There is still a large desire to work with galleries and 68% asking for advice and support on this theme. And an increase on needing marketing advice (68%)

## The impact of Brexit

- 31st December 2020 UK officially left the EU at the end of the transition period.
- Duties on VAT could be deferred until 31st December 2021
- New online VAT with EUUK trade brought in from 1st July 2021
- Government advice was very top line and complex. Recommendations included to set up a base in in EU. SME's and Micro businesses were greatly affected by the new import duties of VAT, rules of origin and complex documentation and custom requirements. Alongside other craft intermediaries, Crafts Council produced a Brexit resource to unravel these complexities.



## The impact of Brexit

As UK left the free trade agreement with the EU, we were expecting negative reports on Brexit. Crafts Council launched their significant Brexit resource in April 2021, aiming to help the sector navigate the complexities of EUUK trade. 2020 survey results identified 48% export; our 2021 result showed 36% export, of which only 10% export regularly. With over a 10% drop, we can assume the complexities of trading with Europe have made a significant impact. This decline has brought us back to the figures of 2016 survey results, before our exporting training initiatives. This has been backed up by craft intermediaries such as Etsy reporting many of their members have lost confidence and been turning off their online eCommerce for EU trade. DCMS announced: 2017 figures showed that some 40% of craft exports were to the EU but now this has fallen to 28% of total craft exports.

### Survey responses:

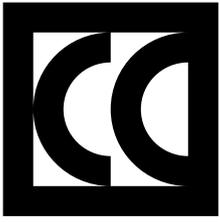
- 36% of respondents say they only sell to the UK, with 17% said their business has not been affected by Brexit; 21% say they no longer export to Europe; 18% say Brexit is still causing challenges and only 31% have sought government or industry advice.

### Challenges facing business post Brexit

- *'Carnet requirements for exhibitions in Europe Increased shipping costs Increased administration Educating European clients on how they deal with VAT'*
- *'Customers are reluctant to buy overseas because of increased costs/fees. Posting to the EU creates a lot of stress, takes more time and therefore makes selling to the EU less profitable.'*

### Solutions post Brexit

- *'I have had to direct a few sales from my own website to Etsy for European sales as the process is simpler doing that way.'*



## The impact of COVID

2021 remained challenging for everyone, as the country went into a second lockdown. Craft Intermediaries and craft businesses events were either cancelled, postponed or delivered online.

- International fairs and events examples: Collect went virtual; LCW and Design Miami Basel postponed until September; Masterpiece cancelled for a second year.
- With many events postponing, activities in September – October competed against each other for audiences.

Across England, support was still in place for businesses with Furlough scheme extended until October 2021 (% decrease per month from July). Other government incentives still present including business rate relief, deferring VAT payments and VAT reduction for hospitality.

In England, shops reopened in April, many craft intermediaries reported a fall in online sales but not seeing a pick up of in-person sales. As restrictions eased, organising events became complicated, for example Manchester International Festival relayed they were re planning and re shaping constantly right up until the event launch. Many organisations and businesses saw gains but many loses, with closures organisational restructures. From big institutions such as the National Theatre to smaller well respected sector galleries such as CAA.

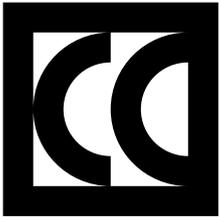
As Autumn came, so did audiences, flocking to events, with so much choice with the usual calendar of events such as LDF, Frieze, Goldsmiths Fair, Handmade in Chelsea; but now competing to the rescheduled events: Art Basel, LCW, Craft Festival and new events: Eye of the Collector.

## Case study: Goldsmiths Fair 2021

Qu: We asked if their audience figures increased, decreased or remained the same since the fair in 2019 and 2020 and whether they felt the results were linked to the rescheduled 2021 Spring events?

- 2019 – 9000 visitors through the door
- 2020 – over 30k visitors on to the new website during the two weeks of the fair
- 2021 – 5000 visitors through the door (timed ticketing)

Goldsmiths Fair didn't put the lower numbers down to the rescheduling of spring events, their presumption was numerous factors including fear of coming into London still, timed ticketing putting people off, holidays having been postponed to the autumn.



Qu: Anecdotal reports reflected that sales have overall not been affected by lower numbers, as those who come, come with intent, did you find there were similar sales figures?

Goldsmiths Fair reported sales figures were definitely down, but those who came, came with intent, so proportionally fewer people, fewer sales but the numbers make sense.

- Average sales per exhibitor: -20%
- Average spend per visitor: +38%
- Average transactional value: +23%

## Market growth

The Market for Craft Report 2020 highlighted the group of the experience economy, and many craft businesses are building on this offer; many translating well online such as Flora Collingwood-Norris or building a strong business out of the pandemic such as Yodomo.

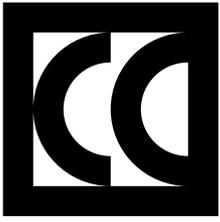
All craft intermediaries and craft business now face the additional challenge to have a good online presence whilst hosting in person experiential events.

### What the survey results told us:

- 56% say general enquiries and Craft Fairs have been negatively impacted over the past 12 months with 43% of hosting workshops have been negatively impacted. There has been a positive impact 42% on using Social Media for their businesses.
- 51% of respondents are happy to do in-person activities, with 19% not happy to do in-person activities and 12% still struggling financially.

### Challenges facing business due to the pandemic

- *'Booking work that gets continually cancelled'*
- *'I am on financial aid at my studio, which finishes in January. I haven't been able to teach in my studio space.'*



## Sustainability

*Sustainability is a broad policy concept in the global public discourse that consists of three main “dimensions” or “pillars”: environmental, economic and social. The original semantic meaning of “sustainability” and “to sustain” refers to the ability to continue over a long period of time*

64% indicated that craft and design can have a positive impact on environmental sustainability:

- Through environmentally conscious practice (developing work that addresses the climate crisis, eg. Recyclable materials, mending)
- Through environmentally conscious business (ensuring that the business’s infrastructure eg. energy consumption, transport alleviates environmental damage)
- Through environmentally conscious business models (circular economy, doughnut economics etc)

With Cop26 taking place in November 2021, the environmental agenda has come to the forefront of many craft businesses. 85% of Crafts Council Maker Needs survey 2021 respondents requested support on how their business can be more environmentally sustainable.

This has been identified through:

- Guidance and resources on how to make my business practices more environmentally and economically sustainable.
- Guidance on how to promote my sustainability credentials.
- Live events and talks tailored for makers specifically around environmental and economical sustainability.

Positive action has already been taking place with established networks supporting specific industries, such as precious metal for jewellery. Crafts Council would like to support the gaps where networks are not established or connections with industry experts have not been made. Our proposal is to start with facilitated round table discussions bringing together craft businesses with industry, to take place in regional areas during 2022/23.

## In supporting craft businesses, Crafts Council will focus on:

- How to work with galleries advice.
- Comprehensive guide for craft businesses to support their overseas trade.
- More accessible resources for trade advice to help regain confidence in the sector.
- Provision of IP advice.
- Provision of more accessible business resources.