



Crafts Council

Press release

June 2020

CRAFTS COUNCIL SEEKS TO ACCELERATE THE SUCCESS OF THE BRITISH CRAFTS SECTOR POST-COVID-LOCKDOWN

New Market for Craft Report highlights the craft sector's growth value and potential in the UK and USA

The first report¹ to identify and gauge appetite for British craft² for over a decade, the new Crafts Council's Market for Craft Report reveals that our passion for craft has never been greater – 73% of UK adults had bought craft in 2019 – snapping up almost 25 million handcrafted objects. In a significant shift, almost a third (32%) of today's buyers are aged under 35 – making this demographic the biggest buyer of craft today.

The report was implemented by the Crafts Council and eight leading national partners³ among 5,000 UK residents, 1,500 US citizens and 1,700 professional makers and implemented prior to the COVID pandemic. It has subsequently been layered with a further Crafts Council survey carried out among 573 UK-based makers post lockdown. The joint findings are being utilised by the Crafts Council to lobby the government and industry bodies to support the recovery of a creative sector which was predicted to generate over £3 billion for our economy in 2020.

The maturation of the craft market in the UK can be attributed to a number of wider trends that are likely to accelerate as a result of the pandemic – the rise of e-commerce, investment purchases over throwaway objects, and an interest in sustainability and supporting small businesses.

10.3m Brits are buying craft online - a figure that has more than tripled over the last decade. However, the report also showed that the majority of British adults still prefer to buy objects in-person.

The export potential for the UK craft sector is highlighted - 2.5m people in New York and 1.7m in Los Angeles have purchased craft from a UK-based maker, but a further 6.9m across the two locations said that they would be likely to buy UK craft in the future. This represents a sizeable untapped market for exports.

Both UK-based and American buyers enjoy purchasing British jewellery and ceramics the most. Americans also appreciate our glass and woodwork – while here consumers are more likely to be fans of British-made textiles. Jewellery is the most popular discipline by volume overall and objects handcrafted from glass and metal have seen the most sizeable growth in popularity since 2006.



The current pandemic has highlighted the growing craft trend – the BBC’s Great British Sewing Bee has shifted to a prime-time BBC TV slot and attracts audiences of close to 5 million⁵, and sellers of craft supplies for the domestic market are seeing a surge in sales. With 20% of British consumers indicating that they would pay to attend a craft workshop, it is no surprise that such a significant number of people are turning to online tutorials and craft kits to learn a new skill while they have more time at home.

Rosy Greenlees the executive director of the Crafts Council:

“The report provides valuable evidence to understand more about how best to stimulate, support and grow the craft market: who’s buying craft, what they’re buying and why, how big the market is, how routes to market are changing, and what kind of infrastructure can best support it. Our first step will be translating the findings into actionable learnings for the craft sector, helping them build a richer picture of different consumers and their habits and interests in order to help grow sales.

“While the growth in the market is encouraging, the picture is not all positive. A quarter of makers are facing a negative impact from Brexit on their business, and many makers will be in a precarious situation in a post-pandemic world – losing not only their opportunities to sell their work, but also other sources of income – for example, teaching and hosting workshops.”

“The majority of makers reported an annual profit of less than £30,000 from selling their work so, even before the pandemic, it was evident that the industry needs support in becoming economically sustainable. Our more recent COVID maker survey was sombre reading: orders are down by 67% with further losses anticipated and 60% of artists makers have low or zero financial reserves.”

The 100-page Market for Craft report is available via the Crafts Council website and includes in-depth profiling of receptive consumers and buying trends. The national development body will also continue to be in dialogue with craft intermediaries (galleries, fairs, markets, retailers) to better understand evolving needs and to give them a voice. Lobbying government and sector support organisations to help the industry survive and then thrive is top of its agenda, including assisting in the co-ordination of a UK-wide craft export programme to build on the potential of the USA market and to ease barriers, such as shipping costs.

Continues Greenlees: “It’s also important to recognise that the craft market creates opportunities for those who can sometimes be locked out of the employment market. A quarter of the makers we surveyed reported having a disability, which means that craft is enabling people to be both economically active as well as creatively fulfilled.

“Upskilling makers to be equipped for the new world is a priority and the Crafts Council is reviewing our sector training offer with a focus on digital marketing and e-commerce. Alongside this, we will continue to invest in our owned digital



platforms to provide a window to talent and to help artist makers engage with new audiences.”

Key findings from the Market for Craft Report include:

- The under 35-year-old craft buying market has grown by 32% since 2006
- 10.3m of us are buying craft online - a figure that has more than tripled over the last decade. However, the majority of people still prefer to buy in-person
- Online platforms have fuelled much of this growth: in December 2018, Etsy reported that there were 220,000 active sellers in the UK with a further 9,000 makers on Folksy
- Jewellery is the most popular craft discipline to purchase by volume, but glass and metal have seen the most sizeable growth since 2006
- 85% of Americans surveyed would buy a piece of craft compared with 88% here in the UK. 28% have bought from a UK maker and 59% would consider doing so - pointing to considerable potential for growth. There are 10.5m untapped, potential consumers living in New York and LA

To lend context:

- In 2016, the USA was the third largest market for UK craft at an individual country level, accounting for £517m or 11% of total exports of UK craft, with only France and Switzerland recording higher sales
- British craft sales increased from £883m in 2006 to over £3 billion in 2020

-ENDS-

Editor's notes

1. The Crafts Council Market for Craft report was carried out among 5,000 UK-based adults, 1,500 New York City and Los Angeles based adults and 1,600 UK-based professional makers between January and February, 2020 by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre www.mhminsight.com
2. Defining 'craft' as original handcrafted objects by professional artists makers includes ceramics, furniture, jewellery, metalwork, textiles, glass, basketry, paper and many stand-alone unique pieces of work realised using technical expertise in a plethora of materials.
3. Partners: Arts Council of Wales, Contemporary Visual Arts Network, Craft Northern Ireland, Craft Scotland, Crafts Council, Creative Scotland, Creative United, The Goldsmiths' Company, Great Northern Events/Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair. The Department of International Trade assisted with the US arm of the Market for Craft survey.
4. Between 2006 and 2020 the number of people buying craft in England was set to increase from 6.9m to 31.6m people – 73% of the population buy craft in 2020
5. <https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/ratings/sewing-bee-brings-49m-to-bbc1/5149272.article>
6. Jewellery accounts for 7.3m objects purchased in the UK. Sales of objects in glass have grown in England grown by 538% to 3m pieces, while demand for metalwork has grown by 1.9m over the last 14 years

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About the Crafts Council

The Crafts Council is the country's foremost authority on contemporary craft in all its forms. Founded in 1971, its role as guardian and champion of national craft practice has evolved to include exploring and enabling new possibilities, making methods and technologies. It will celebrate its 50th anniversary with an ambitious and exciting year-long and UK-wide programme of activity. Its work is made possible by the support of trusts and foundations, individual patrons, and corporate sponsors, and through public funding by Arts Council England.

www.craftscouncil.org.uk

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