

A socio-economic survey of crafts activity
in England and Wales, 2002–03

Making It in the 21st Century

A summary of the main findings and related trends

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



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THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES
SUPPORTING CREATIVITY

The Crafts Council is the leading body for contemporary crafts in Britain. No other organisation focuses solely on crafts in the same way while providing an historical context and a contemporary direction.

As the national agency for the sector, the Crafts Council promotes and nurtures the growing public interest in contemporary craft. It also supports the output of makers and designers across a range of disciplines through an extensive national and international exhibition and education programme, and business support and training.

Making It in the 21st Century represents a major investment by the Crafts Council in partnership with Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales to the mapping of the sector. This data will now support strategic development across the UK in the coming years.

The selection of the title was intentional — for while many of the 32,000 women and men in the crafts industry think of themselves as makers, designers or craftspeople, they are also entrepreneurs in the truest sense. Whether they work in traditional ways with hand tools or utilise new materials and technologies and sell via the internet, they all embody remarkable individual dynamism and commitment. Their horizons are international and, whether working full-time or a few hours a week, all are passionate about their craft and want the wider public to appreciate the skill and imagination needed to produce an object.

This survey has revealed the high degree of satisfaction and enjoyment to be found in practising a craft — a pursuit well-adapted to balancing a portfolio of other work commitments, or to combining work with raising or caring for a family. Many have also found a lifestyle balance, which not only attracts a stream of young makers but also those tiring of one career and eager to start a more fulfilling phase of their working life.

Combining employment satisfaction and vocational stability with artistic enquiry and business risk, makers provide an illustrative model of the new creative entrepreneurs of the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

This survey is the third by the Crafts Council, following those published in 1983 and 1994 – but it does not include activity in Scotland, which was surveyed separately in 2002. The characteristics and data outlined in this summary are based on 2,083 respondents confirmed to be working professionally as makers, designers or artists during 2002 and 2003. The findings of the main report are now available from www.craftscouncil.org.uk.

Overall, the sector is surprisingly diverse not only in craft type but also in income and business maturity. Key words to describe the sector would be: stability, entrepreneurial spirit, networking, collaboration, portfolio working and lifestyle fulfilment. This is a stimulating mix, enabling a creative industry to push boundaries while generating meaningful employment.

The survey reveals a sector worthy of more support and investigation. In particular the need for new marketing channels, low-cost studio space, generic industry promotion, critical debate and mid-career professional training and development were flagged up by the findings.

We inherited two guiding principles from the 1994 survey. The first was that those studied were working from their own ideas or in collab-

oration with other makers, from original designs. The second was that they took responsibility for all the working processes through to completion. We made no subjective judgements as to quality, other than to ask if makers felt their work to be traditional or contemporary.

In relation to the UK business sector, craft mainly sits at the 'smaller end' of small and medium enterprises (SME), and the many one- or two-person businesses should be correctly called micro-enterprises. However, we identified the same potential for business formation, growth, development, decline and closure as is seen in the broader SME sector and their fellow cultural industries.

What perhaps sets crafts apart from the business sector generally is that, as the survey has also identified, there is a huge drive and dedication among makers to achieve both business success and lifestyle satisfaction. The strength of their entrepreneurial spirit is shown by the high figures for self-employed craft businesses, 87% compared to an overall UK figure of 68% for all businesses in 2001 – a true indication of a greater willingness to be an owner-manager. Yet at the same time there was a strong desire among makers to have a critical debate around

craft, indicating the artistic passion beneath the owner-manager exterior.

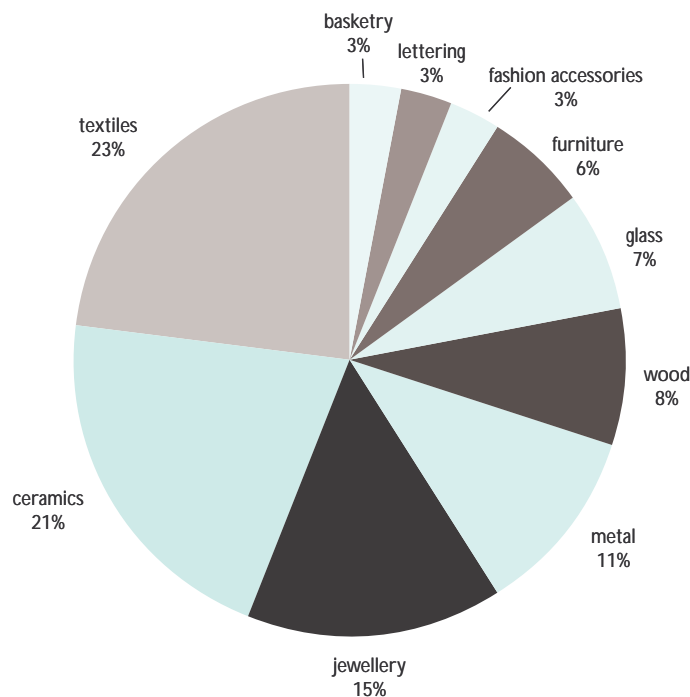
Looking at other comparable sectors of the economy, economic data from the 1994 survey, and the number of makers and their economic value to the economy made in the recent McAuley and Fillis survey (2002) of craft businesses in Scotland, the following estimate can be made:

Some 32,000 makers generate a turnover for England and Wales for 2003 of £826 million, which is greater than the fishing division, the forestry and logging division, the manufacture of motorcycles and bicycles or the manufacture of sports goods.

It is also important to recognise that the sector makes a vital contribution to the wider economy through:

- its role within the creative industries sector
- its contribution to tourist revenues and sustaining rural economies
- its role as a source of innovation and creativity
- its role as a focus for entrepreneurial activity
- its role as a business model for portfolio working (employment at multiple jobs) and indigenous small firm growth.

Percentage of makers by craft type



The findings will be presented under the following headings:

- trends
- people
- business
- profession

TRENDS

Please note: Comparisons are made with Knott's (1994) survey of crafts in the 1990s. Inflation has not been accounted for.

- In line with the 1994 survey, the main sectors are textiles, ceramics, wood, metal and jewellery, though glass and furniture are growing in importance.
- The estimated value of the sector has doubled, based on data from previous surveys (Knott, 1994; McAuley and Fillis, 2004), from £400m in 1994 to £826m today.
- The proportion of self-employed females to males in the crafts has increased since the 1994 survey. It is estimated that 1 in 44 of self-

- employed women may be a maker.
- The number of enterprises trading for ten years or more has increased from 50% to 56%.
- Sole traders have also increased from 76% to 87%, and those working full-time have increased from 54% to 59%. Some 56% of respondents had worked in a previous career, compared with 66% in 1994.
- Portfolio employment (multiple jobs) is now the norm for over a third of the sector.
- There is clear evidence of a well-educated sector with a demand for skills and business training at all levels. In terms of training adopted by the makers, 35% were self-taught, which compares to 57% in the previous survey. The number of respondents having taken a full-time art/design course has increased from 42% to 64%.
- More young people (starting in their twenties) are entering the crafts as both full and part-time makers, particularly females.
- Although the turnover figures for full-time makers show no significant changes, the turnover for part-time makers has increased by 65%.
- The proportion of makers from minority ethnic groups has increased. Makers with disabilities have also increased from 2% to 9%.
- The attitudes of the case studies show that craft continues to be more than a job for many – rather a lifestyle!

PEOPLE

In comparison with the 1994 survey there is substantial stability of results across all craft types and enterprises. Women within the crafts industry still outnumber men; a slight increase of

five percentage points over ten years, with 67% self-employed females against 32% self-employed males. Indeed, crafts is the only cultural industry in the UK where this holds true. Put in perspective, the same gender split across self-employment in the UK shows 73% male against 27% for females, which suggests that 1 in 44 self-employed women may be a maker, compared to 1 in 50 in 1994.

Age

The 'typical' respondent was female and over 50 years. Thirty percent of respondents were aged between 50-59 years. The average age for female craftmakers was 47 years compared with 52 years for men, a slight increase on 1994. Some 27% of the respondents had children under 16, while a further 23% had adult dependants.

MARY BUTCHER

Basket-maker (willow specialist), Kent
I originally trained as a zoologist at Oxford University and went to America to do ecological research and teach. I specialised in spiders — who weave, of course, and the only thing I bought to bring home was a native American basket, although I had never considered baskets before!

In 1977 when I went to buy a basket from a local maker I found he had misunderstood and thought I wanted to be taught how to make baskets! After a fretful first hour I loved it and went back to him once a week for about three years learning the craft.

I didn't really plan a career in the crafts sector, it just happened. I was at home with young children and made one thing after another when I received commissions. I still work like this today. I never thought I would move away from traditional baskets and cradles, but new experiences and opportunities have led me in unexpected ways.

I think the climate for contemporary basket-making is much easier than it was 30 years ago. There is a wider appreciation of a diverse range of work, a market for good quality traditional styles with always fashion to help. Baskets are everywhere, from kitchen drawers in designer kitchens, to sweet pea cones and now the willow coffin which is so ecologically sound. There are exhibitions and conferences, not in abundance compared with



Mary Butcher with 'Willow Scribble Tracing: Lines of Delight' (1999)

other crafts, but in increasing numbers. The Basketmakers Association, the Crafts Council and key individuals in the field foster all these developments.

During the time I have been practising as a basket maker, hand-made has turned the corner from being thought of derogatively to being a term of respect. I think we still have a little way to go with this but we are definitely well on the way to a change in perception about craft. It's still not always easy to persuade people to pay a good price for things. In this situation, I tend to ask them how much an hour they pay their garage mechanic.

I find trying to juggle all the different

aspects of my life as a maker a real challenge. Fitting in bread-and-butter teaching with meeting deadlines for written work and finding diary and headspace to really make with freedom is a constant challenge.

I teach in many places including the Creative Basketry course at the City Lit in London, which is producing many fine contemporary makers, and also at Cambridge University Botanic Garden and at West Dean where I teach a mix of people including professional makers, serious and skilled amateur basket makers and complete beginners. I really enjoy the range of my teaching work.

I've curated exhibitions in the UK and abroad and have written a number of books on baskets — some of which still sell well after many years. At present I am editing a manual for the Basketmakers Association. I've collected for the British Museum, and scholarships from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, The Queen Elizabeth Trust and the British Council have made numerous research projects possible. The most valuable gift for me as a maker is funding, which enables me to stay at home to make or write.

I really enjoy making what I make and have fun and pleasure in doing it. It brings a smile to people's lips at times. My work completely absorbs my mind and, for me, nothing beats either a quiet end of a productive day in the workshop or time spent with friends in the field sharing the same passions and concerns.

Age by gender

The younger the maker, the more likely they were to be female. There are less noticeable differences between the genders in the older age groups (after 50 years of age).

This indicates that the young entrepreneurial spirit is typified by female makers, and is increasing just as the number of business start-ups for the sector has also increased for makers in their 20s. One possible interpretation of this finding is that crafts offers young female makers with children the opportunity to combine working with child rearing.

Portfolio working (makers with multiple jobs)

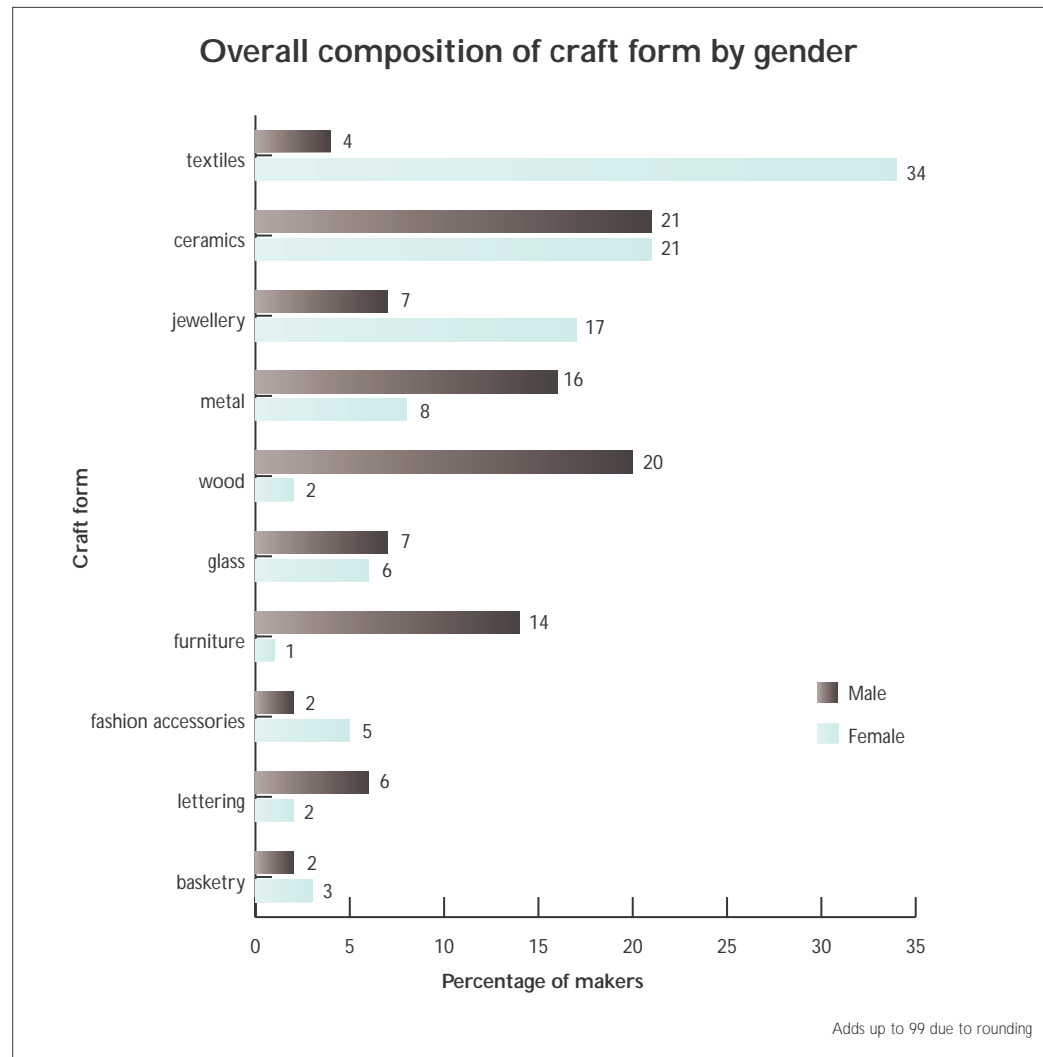
With variable income streams and in common with much of the self-employed sector, portfolio working was undertaken by 37% of respondents. This involved a variety of part-time craft and non-craft employment, but did not seem to affect respondents' overall satisfaction with their lifestyle. Over 35% saw their craftwork as a creative alternative to their other work.

Obviously portfolio working is not just a craft phenomenon, but the sector offers an emotionally attractive and viable economic option for workers looking to switch from full to part-time work. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has also recently identified this trend towards 'liquid lives'. Rather than being struck by the fear of impending retirement, people may feel able to change career into their fifties and beyond.

In this respect the crafts sector could play a significant role in the wider economy and society at large.

Combining making with teaching was particularly widespread, with almost 10% of respondents spending time delivering academic/theoretical teaching in the UK. A very small percentage of makers were employed full-time in a non-craft job (4%), while one in five were working part-time in a non-craft job.

Just over one-third (36%) derive all of their income from selling their own work, while just under one-third (32%) derived 20% or less of their income



from crafts. Over 48% were supported by income from pensions, investments and part-time non-crafts jobs.

Previous careers

Although there is a steady stream of people entering the industry in their twenties, most respondents (56%) had another career before becoming a maker.

For many respondents (26%) this was teaching or lecturing, and the most common reason given for changing was to be creative or fulfil a dream – something they had always wanted to do.

The evidence of training and career profiles indicates entry to the sector by makers commencing a second or third career. For example 74% of the late entry respondents had spent more than five years in other careers, and this is supported by the high average age already identified in the report. This opportunity to start a new

career perhaps also reflects the low cost of market entry into the crafts sector.

Lifestyle and media habits

It is now common to categorise individuals and groups by their lifestyle and media habits, and this was included in the survey.

With a work satisfaction rating of 94%, makers appear to have the work-life balance clearly in their advantage. Furthermore 55% agree that they are contributing to the community, suggesting contentment and integration with local social and economic environment.

Readership habits were as expected for a cultural sector, with the Guardian (35%) being the dominant daily and the Observer (28%) and the Sunday Times (25%) dominating the weekend market. Crafts is the most popular magazine with 19% readers.

In terms of broadcast media, Radio

4 with 51% of listeners in the sample was well ahead of second placed Radio 2 on 11%. Most (63%) were using the internet once a week or more.

Relaxation was important and, in terms of leisure activities, walking was the most popular (28%), while gardening (20%) and reading (16%) were also featured.

As might be expected, makers were also interested in what was going on in the wider cultural sector, and regularly attended arts events, with most (56%) having visited galleries, exhibitions and museums more than five times a year.

The most visited venues were numerous and varied and included the Baltic Centre in Newcastle, Chelsea Crafts Fair in London, National Museum and Gallery Cardiff, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives, and the Royal Academy, Tate Modern and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Geographic Spread

Contrary to expectation, the research identifies that crafts are not primarily a rural occupation. This was identified

in the 1994 survey, and remains the case.

London and the South East are still the most heavily represented regions with 37% of respondents. However, there is substantial non-urban activity forming what could be termed clusters, such as those around Bristol and the South West. In Wales, higher levels of activity were found rural Mid and West Wales. Welsh makers account for 8% of the total number of makers, with 162 businesses.

Cultural Diversity

Over 96% of respondents classified themselves as white, compared with a national figure of 91%. Respondents identified from minority ethnic groups rose to 4% from 1% in 1994.

In comparison with 1994, Asian makers replaced Black and Black Caribbean as the largest group, which reflects the higher percentage of Asians in UK society. The percentage of Chinese respondents slightly declined.

With regard to use of the Welsh language, some 8% of the Welsh sample spoke fluent Welsh with another 17% having less fluency.

Disability

Some 9% responded with recorded disabilities compared from 2% in 1994, but it is suspected that this represents an increased willingness to be listed. Results show that disability had little impact on the ability to generate the full range of craft income. The pattern of income generation closely mirrored that of the makers who recorded no disabilities.

BUSINESS

Craft type

Textiles continue to be the dominant craft type, followed closely by ceramics. Jewellery, wood, metal, glass and furniture were all major areas of activity.

In terms of new business start-ups, ceramics and jewellery were the most favoured craft form, and in Wales lettering and calligraphy replaced furniture in listings of top seven craft businesses.

Within the survey, 63% of makers classified their style or subject of work as contemporary compared with 18% who classified their work as traditional and the remainder a mix of both.

Business set up

The majority of the enterprises were founded in the 1980s (26%) and the 1990s (36%), but include 18% founded after 2000.

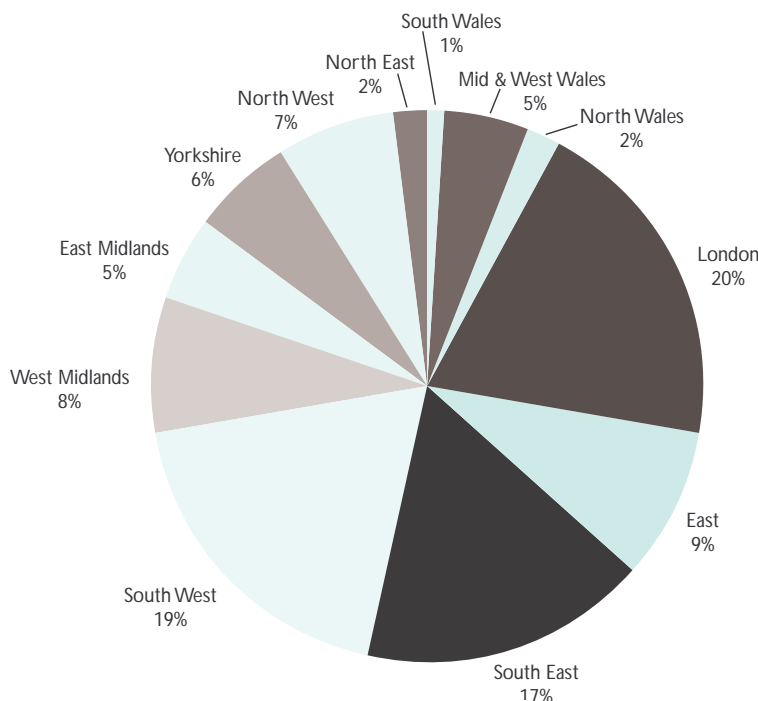
Most are SMEs operating as sole traders or micro-enterprises utilising part-time employees and home workers as necessary. A sizeable 42% are trading from a formal workshop at their home, and 29% from a non-designated space.

Although over 78% enjoyed interacting with other craftspeople, up to 75% also actively preferred working on their own. Over 95% felt that being your own boss was important, suggesting that this was a conscious choice of lifestyle as much as economic necessity.

Age at start up

There has been an interesting increase in younger business entry, with 47% of all makers starting their career as an owner/maker in their twenties. Some 47% of full-time and 37% of part-time makers are now joining the sector in

Distribution of makers by region



Adds to 101 due to rounding

their twenties, compared with 40% of full-time craftswomen and 26% of full-time craftsmen in 1994.

Survival Rates

The sector continues the trend from 1994 of overall business stability and survival, despite fluctuating trading conditions with the decline in the number of tourists and the travel restrictions owing to foot and mouth disease.

Just under 30% of the enterprises have been trading for over 20 years, with the next highest category being 22% trading for less than 5 years.

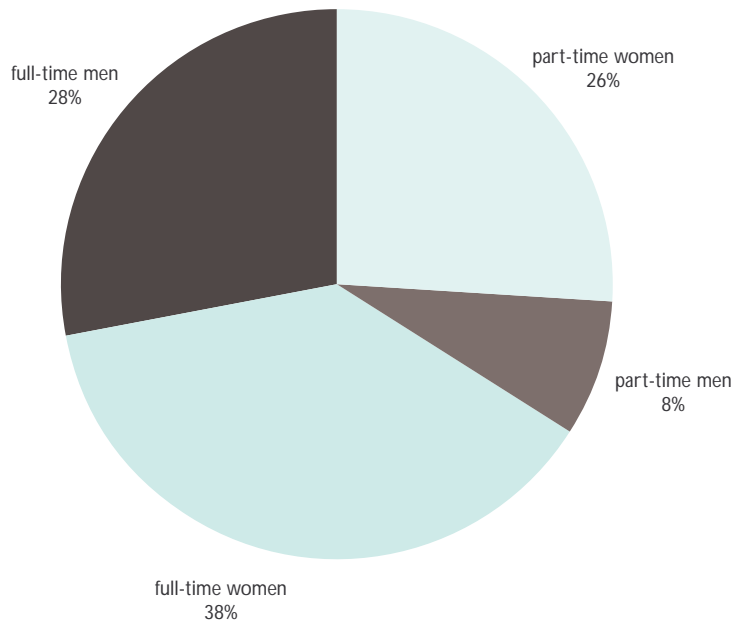
Indeed there has been a rise in business survival for those in business for more than ten years, from 50% in 1994 to 58% in 2004.

This pattern of business birth and survival is consistent with general trends within the SME sector.

Level of Practice

The sector continues the shift towards full-time working identified in 1994, with full-time workers up from 54% to 60%. There was also a 10% move towards sole trader status in relation to 1994.

Percentage of makers by self-employment status



Hours of working

Makers work hard for their craft, with 37% of respondents working over 40 hours per week and more than half (57%) working over 31 hours designing and making. 63% spend ten days a year selling at fairs.

Turnover

As with the 1994 survey, the range in the sector is wide, with wood and textiles showing an ability to produce larger levels of turnover.

On average maker turnover was £25,826, but many respondents (41%) reported a turnover of less than

JOAN CHATTERLEY

Textiles (knitwear)
London

After studying fashion at Derby College of Art and graduating from the Royal College of Art in London with an MA I worked for a short time designing for a company that sold leather jackets. I then decided that I wanted to work with something more colourful and set up my own business designing knitwear — firstly machine and later hand knits.

I started my business in 1976 when there was nowhere to go for help and advice with running a small business. Now the government has set up places like Trade Partners UK and Business Link where people can go to for help. Also, the Crafts Council and UK Fashion Exports (UKFE) are good sources of information and advice.

Hard work has been, and still is, the key to the continued success of my business. When you run your own business, you have to spend most of your time working at it — in the evenings and at weekends, if necessary!

I used to have a studio at Camden Lock



at the time when people came there to buy hand-made goods. Then I had a Friday stall in Covent Garden Craft Market for many years, before setting up my own small shop. I went into wholesaling my knitwear and joined some other British knitters showing in New York. My knits sold to buyers from specialist shops in the USA. This has continued, but it is more difficult now following recent events in America.

98% of my turnover comes from international sales. I go to New York twice a year and show my knitwear to US buyers. I am lucky enough to get a grant from Trade Partners via UKFE to help with costs for the Coterie fashion show. I would like to sell in England too, but there aren't many opportunities to meet buyers if you don't get a place at London Fashion Week. In the past I sold my knits through some small shops in London but these have closed down due to high business rates.

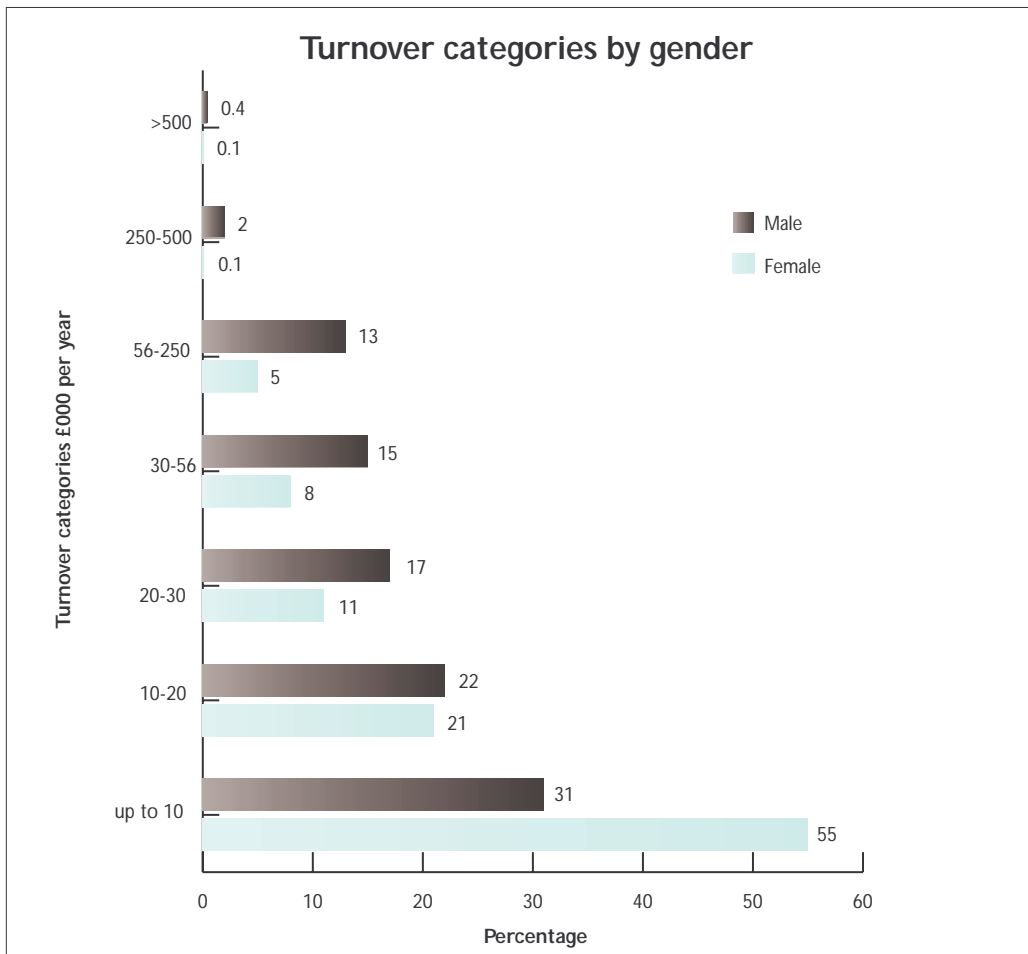
I have exhibited at Chelsea Crafts Fair a couple of times and have also showed at the Country Living Fair at the Business Design Centre. It is difficult sometimes to find the right sort of outlet for my work, as my type of hand knits are both craft and fashion.

I really enjoy selling directly to customers and seeing how pleased they are with my knitwear. Opening my own shop was a real highlight!

Working as I do gives me a sense of achievement and it is great to see someone wearing my designs.

ANDREW WHITLUCK

Jo
Te



£10,000 per annum in 2002. The average turnover for full-time makers was £35,028, compared with an average of £7,891 for part-time makers. The average turnover for all female makers is £18,338 and for all males it is £38,342. It should be noted that the lower figure for female workers includes a much higher percentage of part-time makers than their male counterparts. Sixteen makers reported annual earnings of over £250,000 per annum.

Exporting

The scale and contribution of exports to income varied, but many makers favoured an increased international profile showing an awareness and appreciation of export potential.

Though sales in the UK market were most common, with 90% of enterprises deriving 90-100% of their sales from this market, some 18% of the sector were currently exporting, an increase of 2% over 1994. This includes some of the youngest enterprises, those established since 2000, of which 15% have begun to take the export route to further growth.

PREETI GILANI

Textiles (fashion accessories)
Bedfordshire

I started my business in 1998 with the help of a Crafts Council Setting Up Grant (now the Crafts Council Development Award). I make beautifully hand-crafted textile accessories, hand-dyeing the yarns and then weaving the fabrics to be made into handbags, scarves and shawls.

If I was setting up again there are so many things I'd do differently. I guess the main thing I'd do at the start is focus on one area. At the beginning I was trying to do everything and I didn't have a clue what the product was! I now use one yarn and am getting my fabric and my name known.

Exhibiting at Chelsea Crafts Fair was the jumpstart that I needed to set up my creative practice. Nothing beats being able to take part in Chelsea. In my second year there I took more hand-dyed colours and one-off pieces which attracted the attention of Contemporary Applied Arts, Lesley Craze Gallery and the Crafts Council Shop at the V&A where my work is now sold.

It's my ambition to work with manufac-



turers to produce accessories that look as desirable as my hand-crafted pieces and to sell these to department stores. A couple of years ago I realised that I couldn't make everything by hand if I wanted to grow as a business so I applied successfully to East England Arts for a grant. This funding enabled me to collaborate with a mill in Yorkshire. The buyers I've met so far from Liberty's, Harrods and Selfridges have all

picked up on my hand-made samples so I now have plans to work with the mill to replicate my hand-dyed colours.

My greatest achievement so far has been to stay in business! Financial support from my husband and parents has been the key to my economic survival.

As well as running my own business, I occasionally freelance as a designer for furnishing fabric manufacturers which is more rewarding financially than my own business. As another source of income I also teach BA courses. I find that teaching always challenges me to think about everything I do in my own business, as I try to practise what I preach.

I have a website which has been successful in helping me to reach an international audience. I know that if I updated the images more regularly and invested more time in its development, the website could achieve far more sales, but at the moment I don't have time to concentrate on it as I am juggling running the business with looking after my young family.

The things that I really enjoy about being a textile artist are being creative and having my work appreciated by my audience.

An important indicator of a forward-looking crafts sector was that over 72 % of all respondents indicated they favoured more international contacts. A further 84% agreed with the importance of selling and promoting British work and makers abroad.

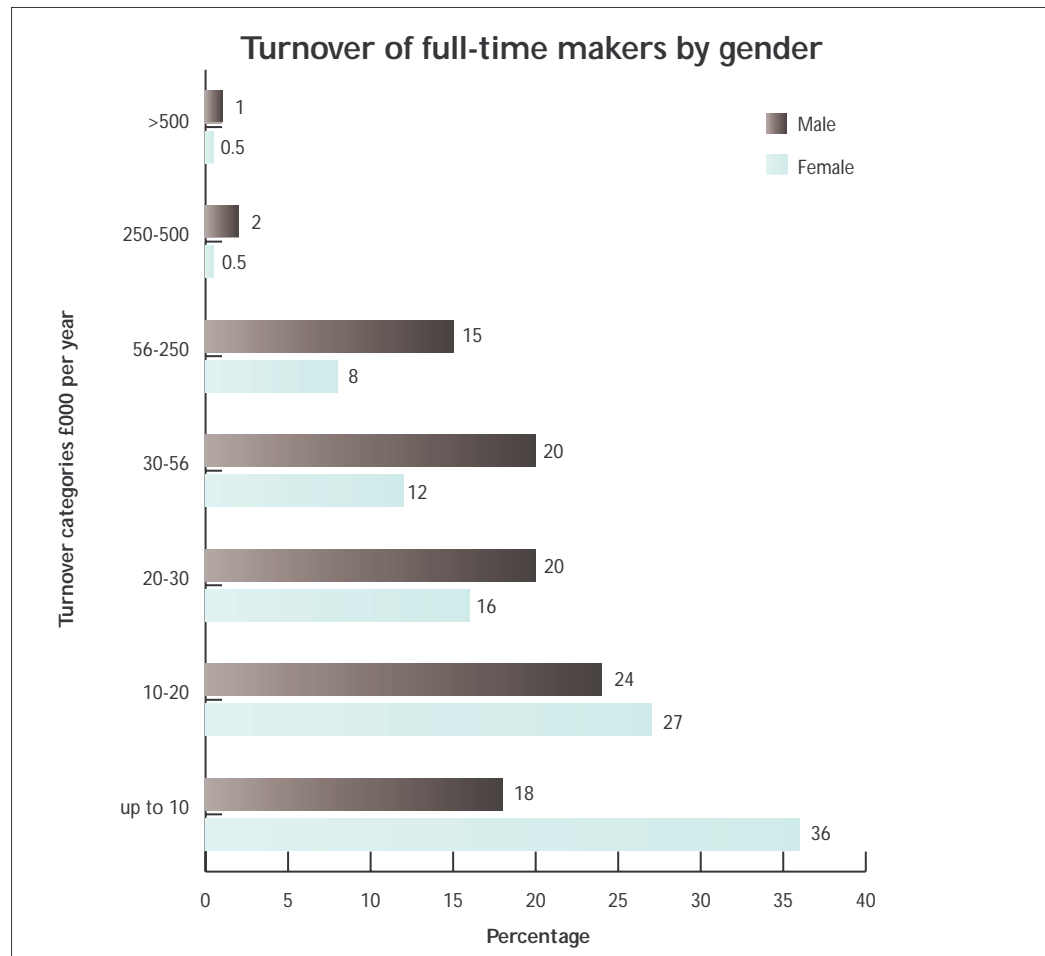
In terms of craft exports, ceramics were exported the most, followed by jewellery and textiles.

Prices

Both full-time and part-time makers of both genders adopted similar selling price ranges for their craftwork.

The most common price range (63%) was between '£51 and £100', which contrasts with nearly 60% of all craftspeople in 1994 selling items in a range between 'under £5 to £20'. Even allowing for inflation of 25% this indicates a much higher (and some would argue more realistic) level of pricing than that reported ten years ago. Additionally most respondents (64%) sold or had been commissioned fewer than 100 pieces in 2002.

Clearly pricing is an individually driven area. However, it is worrying that



FRANK MARTIN
Ceramicist, Somerset

I set up my current gallery and workshop in 2002. I wanted to have a gallery connected to the workshop area to display my own work and work by other local artists. Personal determination was the driving force behind this!

My work is inspired by natural landscapes and objects. My work is in white stoneware, individually crafted and usually hand built, although I also do some wheel-thrown work.

I have always been interested in art and I started out as a watercolour artist. I attended a part-time art course, which was my first introduction to clay. My interest grew and I sought out a college course to develop my studio ceramics skills. I attended Chesterfield College of Art and Design for three years. At the time when I joined the course there were a number of other ceramics students who were highly motivated and inspirational in their work. The course was geared towards enabling students leaving college into starting their own studios. I started my first workshop whilst still at college.

I selected the location of my current gallery and workshop based on the wish for a quiet



place in which to work. Although the gallery's location to attract visitors was an important consideration, I did not want the commitment or distractions of being on the high street.

However, developing sales from my gallery has been hard. Choosing a quieter location has meant that sales have been slow and I have been fortunate that my wife has a secure income to support us during the start up of the workshop.

I am in the process of closing down the gallery and relocating my workshop to larger premises in order to teach from my studio. The workshop is alongside those of two other artists, which will be good for meeting new people.

With the imminent closure of my gallery, I am currently trying to widen the number of craft outlets that sell my work but I am finding getting into new galleries and professional pottery fairs difficult. It seems a closed shop unless you are already well known on the cir-

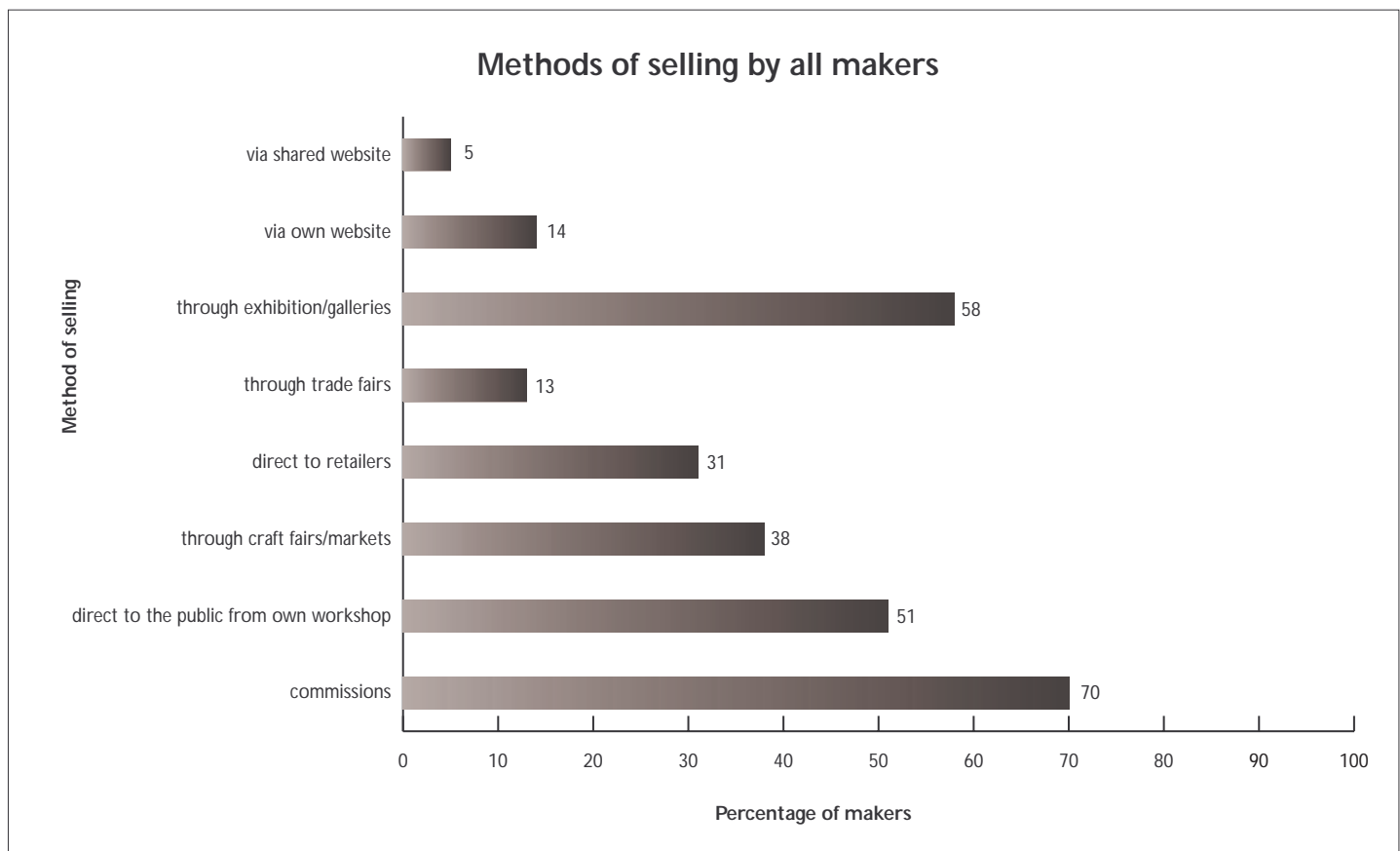
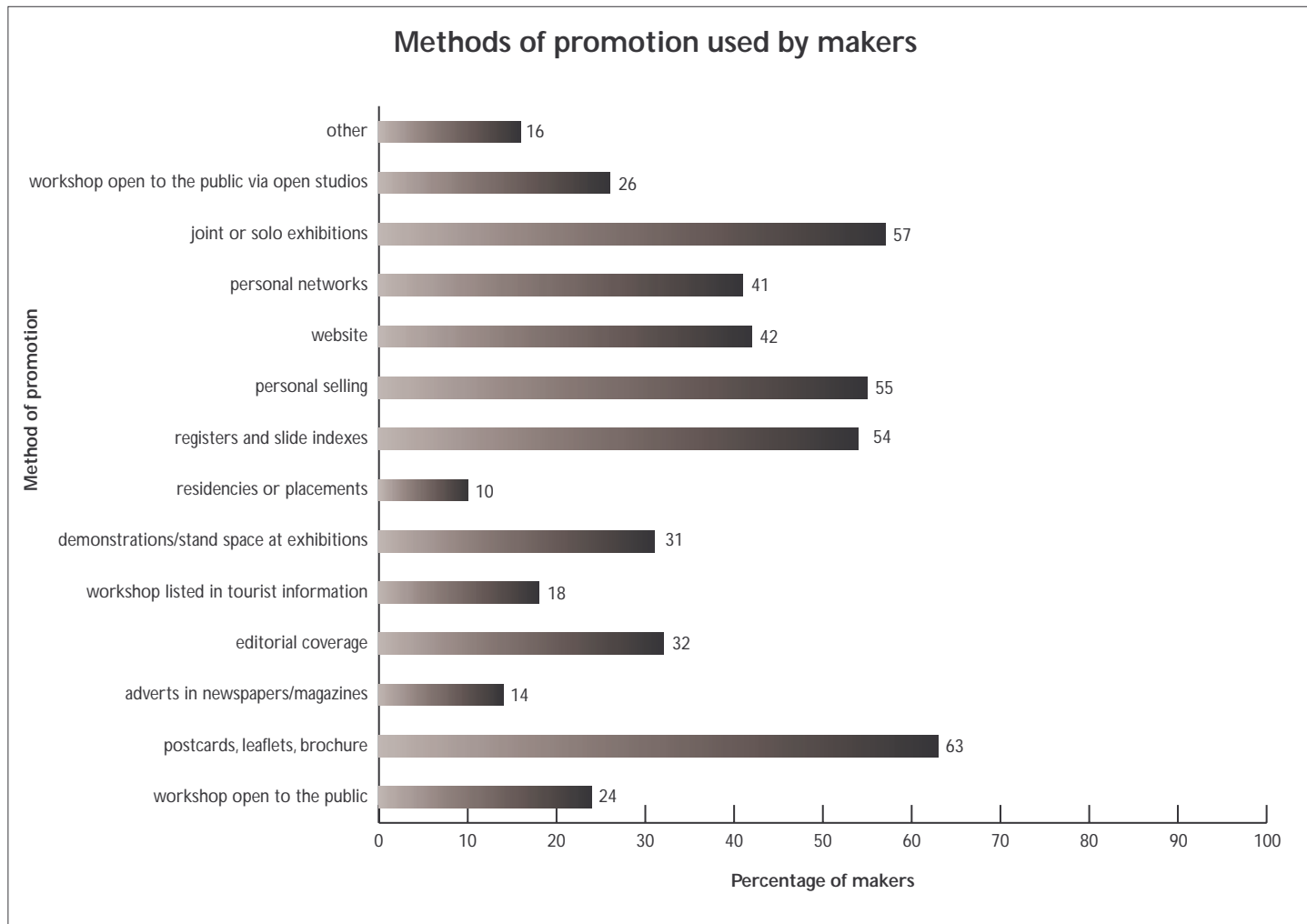
cuit. I continue to visit galleries and network with local contacts and through the Somerset Guild of Craftsmen. I promote my work through local press coverage, leaflets, my web site, demonstrations and talks.

As an elected Board member of the Somerset Guild of Craftsmen, I am helping the Guild in its quest to find and move into new and improved gallery premises and am active in promoting its work.

Highlights of my career as a maker so far include setting up the first stoneware ceramics studio in Colombia and having one of my pots purchased by the V&A.

I have many ambitions for the next few years including developing my new workshop and being able to share my knowledge and skills through teaching others. I am helping another local artist develop a business plan to build and set up a workshop and teaching area. In my own work, I am developing a number of new ideas, which are more sculptural in content, and I hope to establish a sound sales base for my work.

Having my own business as a maker means personal fulfillment, an opportunity to use my creative skills and to work on my own terms.



nearly 30% of the survey agreed they did not know how to price their work. Of this 30% three-quarters were female and one-quarter male. Nevertheless, over half of all respondents indicated that pricing decisions were not a problem.

New Technology

Similar to both the arts sector and other SMEs, use of new technology for business promotion has been widely adopted by the craft sector. It is very much part of everyday business life with 42% of respondents using the web and email for their business promotion.

Over 60% also use the internet more than once a week, and importantly most (72%) recognised the role of websites in promoting and selling crafts, with 70% favouring the web as a support and education tool. As with the rest of the cultural sector, makers are finding that the internet has the potential to become a major marketing and information medium alongside promotional print, editorial and direct sales.

PROFESSION

Despite the low incomes of many, the business attitude and activity of makers show all the requisite ingredients to grow efficient micro-enterprises.

Most (56%) want their business to grow moderately, with a further 15%, particularly the jewellery sector, seeking substantial growth.

Over half saw the importance of developing younger audiences, and over 60% had a clear idea of who to target. An affluent, discerning and educated audience was particularly identified as the ideal market.

Sales

The level of sales and the main market channels echo the 1994 figures. As a method of generating sales, 70% of respondents had sold their work via commissions a figure almost identical to that of 1994. Fifty eight percent of respondents reported exhibition and gallery sales.

More than half of all respondents used print materials (63%), joint or solo exhibitions (57%), and personal selling

LHARNE SHAW

Studio glass, Nottinghamshire

In 1987, as soon as I had completed a Fine Art degree, I became self-employed designing images for print onto textiles and clothing. A year later when my wife, Svafa Einarsdottir completed her glass degree we bought a small kiln, which we kept in the garage. It was two more years before things began to work and our business, Tobias Glass, took shape.

We use kiln-forming techniques to change and create form in glass. In principle we are producing sculptural one off work, although we realised quickly at the beginning that this was unlikely to provide any serious income. So we began making awards for big events, along with architectural work and servicing bent or bespoke shapes in glass for furniture makers and lighting engineers.

In terms of achievement, or perhaps luck, we branched off into producing quite large quantities of glass tableware from some very simple designs. We must have made almost 40,000 pieces over ten years, which we exported worldwide.

In our first year in business we managed to get a rent-free workshop after which we were forced to move and take on commercial rent. While this seems insignificant now, it's very unlikely we would have set up or even continued at that stage without this chain of events.

Blind faith has been quite useful in sustaining our business! Along with a refusal to consider alternative careers and the remarkable fact that work often seems to turn up just in time — if this weren't the case, we would have been forced to call it a day by now. After a few years I also began part-time lecturing and this still provides a small but at least regular income.

We have received funding from Nottingham County Council for a trade show and Business Link has been helpful with advice, expertise and contacts. We have also secured small travel grants for overseas missions from the Crafts



Council and British Council. We are looking at organising design and distribution through factories overseas, but it takes a long time to get things right and it's early days yet.

We have sold through some galleries and numerous retailers including the Conran Shop, Heals at one stage and Purves and Purves, as well as dozens of small design stores and commercial homeware shops in the UK. We contact caterers, hotels and restaurants and keep in touch with event designers and interior specialists.

Although we recognize that buyers have a lot more choice now, at very cheap prices, particularly from the Far East, we feel it is a mistake to compete with such a low-end price. We are looking for shorter chains of supply where we can create more challenging designs or a bespoke product for buyers who need work that is uniquely tied to their own purposes.

Actually making a living from being a maker is the biggest hurdle and this is still the case. There have been strange moments or points in time when the pressure was on and I really couldn't see much beyond that, but things usually work out.

For me as a maker, freedom of choice is a priceless commodity, and the chance to pursue your own path is perhaps the greatest reward.

(55%) to market and sell their work. Registers and slide indexes were used by 54% of makers and reliance on press editorial was also significant.

The major change was the emergence of e-commerce, with just under 19% of makers benefiting from the web, reflecting the growing importance of this channel for both UK and international sales.

Overall there was a desire to sell work direct to the public, and as ten years ago, half achieved sales from

their workshop. However, selling work in a gallery was important to 60%, and most respondents (66%) were using five or fewer retailers to sell their work. Craft fairs were also important and 77% sold their work at five or fewer craft or trade fairs per year.

Who buys?

Commenting on sales since 2001, nearly 90% of respondents identified occasional domestic buyers as the buyers of their work. Serious regional col-

lectors were also reported by 35% of respondents, and 22% had sold to a regional public collection. Some 18% had sold to a significant national or corporate collection, and 19% had sold to a corporate buyer, sometime in the last two years. This is a new source, not identified in 1994.

Constraints to business

Almost half of respondents (47%) feel they could increase production if demand existed. Nevertheless, as with any industry there was a range of constraints that makers felt prevented or hindered them in growing their business.

Perhaps not surprisingly for a creative industry, 45% disliked being a salesperson for their work. Finding outlets for their work was a problem for 26%, and 23% found that their customer base was not growing.

Some 56% reported that they had problems selling their work, and business competency issues such as marketing, selling, finance and low cost workspace were identified by 61%. Just over 40% were worried about the copyright on their work.

Other influences on the ability to increase production were identified by the survey as employing more personnel, having more time and adapting production methods.

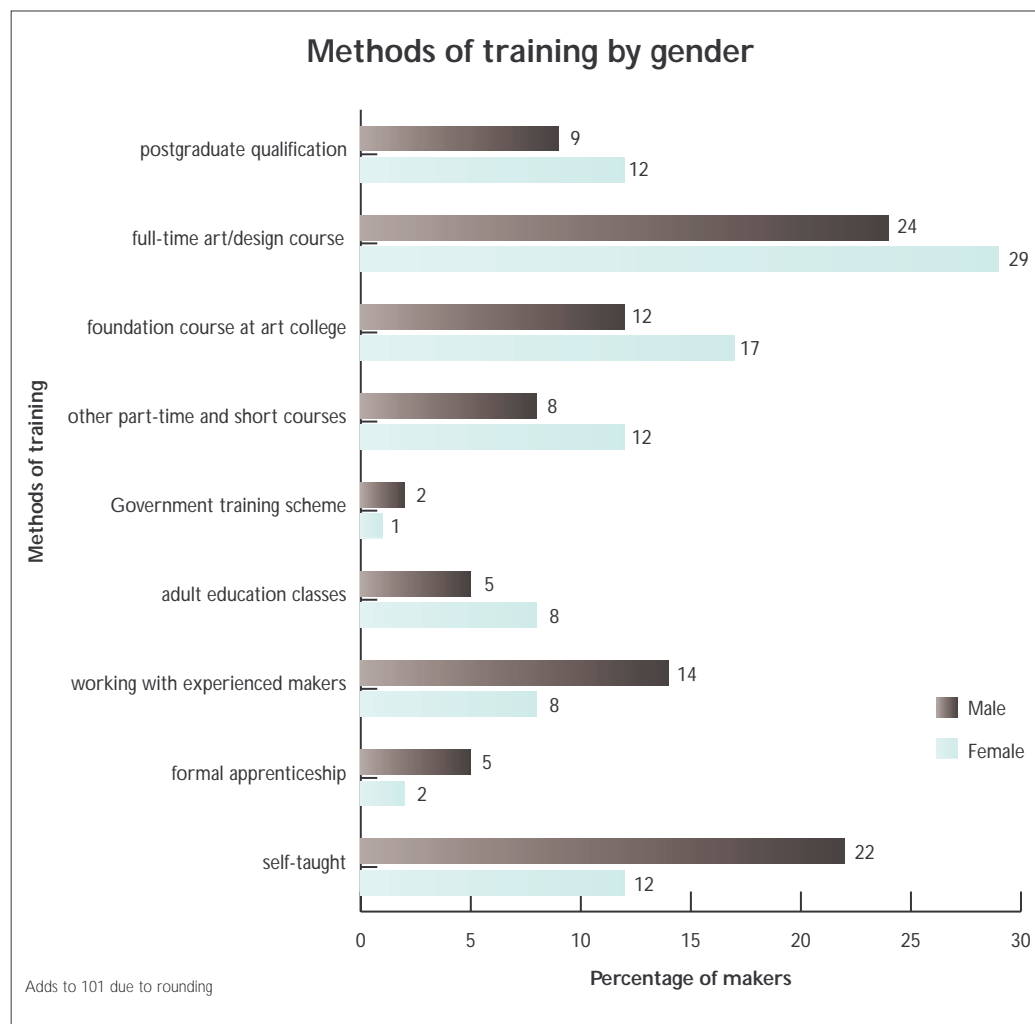
Studio Space

The provision of low cost studio space is clearly an identified need across the craft sector.

With many makers working from home, this issue was bound to provide strong responses, varying from the 33% who agreed their workspace was inadequate to the 48% who expressed that there was a lack of affordable studio space. Indeed, 25% have considered relocating because of inadequate studio space.

Collaboration

Collaboration is one route to expansion, which many respondents (32%) currently use in their business. This involves working directly with other makers or with a manufacturing/production company and thus sharing business costs and knowledge in the



pursuit of higher efficiency. However, 16% have found difficulty in finding suitable manufacturing partnerships.

Of those who are not currently involved in collaborations, 68% are willing to consider combining with others on design, manufacturing and marketing skills.

This willingness to cooperate and develop unique regional business networks could be a business model for a superior marketing and economic performance.

Training and Support

An overwhelming 94% felt it was important to develop their creative and professional practice in terms of formal training, with over 78% seeing advanced craft skills as important.

This is not surprising, reflecting a considerable shift of over 20% since the 1994 survey towards makers with full-time art or design degrees (64%). A third (34%) still indicated that they were 'self-taught' compared with 57% in 1994.

Over 36% had attended a foundation course at an art college and the vast majority were trained in the United Kingdom (96%).

Mid-career development and funding was seen to be important by 84%. This reflects the recognition of a cyclical need to reskill and revitalise business models as conditions change or new technology or new markets develop.

Makers know about the support on offer from the Crafts Council, Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales. Almost half of respondents (47%) had made use of Crafts Council services. Of Welsh respondents, 56% had used the Arts Council of Wales services and 43% had used those of the Crafts Council. Some 29% and 28% of the total sample had used the services, respectively, of Arts Council England and local authorities services in the last calendar year.

Among makers, membership of craft associations is strongest at national level for specialist crafts, with 923 reporting membership of between

one and five organisations. Local or regional associations attract between 300 and 600 members, mostly to a single organisation.

Five significant purposes of involvement with these organisations were identified (by about 20% of the 2,083 respondents in each case): continuing professional development; networking opportunities; social contact; selling opportunities; and facilitating exhibiting.

Over 56% of those sampled undertook continuing professional development in 2002, with the majority attending or participating in more than one day of professional development. Forty percent of respondents reported undertaking training related to their craft (40%); business and education activities also each accounted for around another 25% of the sample.

Attitudes towards the crafts industry

As mostly self-employed individuals within a competitive sector, the respondents showed a welcome acceptance and support for the generic business promotion of their industry. The following attitudes are indicative of the positive support that the researchers found throughout all levels of practice:

- Grants to individuals in the start-up process are important to some extent for 85% of the respondents.
- Greater support and recognition of crafts was seen to be important by 90%. Some 79% supported curriculum development at all levels of education within crafts.
- Over 58% of respondents felt that a critical debate around crafts was important. The promotion of crafts through specialist publications, craft trails and maps was seen to be important by 85%.
- In more tangible terms, 84% agreed with the importance of selling and promoting British work and makers at an international level. Over 70% saw the importance of commissions for public buildings and sites.
- Over 65% saw the importance of having a greater number of Crafts Council 'selling' events, and 75% saw the importance of investing in business and marketing training. Over

MATTHEW TOMALIN Metal (cast iron), Wales

I'm a metalworker, now working mostly in cast iron. I run a small, non-industrial, one-man foundry, casting only my own work: bowls, wall-pieces and sculpture.

I have made several starts and re-starts, over 35 years or more. In Mexico on a gap year in 1967 — after an academic degree — I heard about a

small jewellery workshop, which sometimes let visitors stay a few days and learn a bit. Three months later I left it, with a degree of skill and the absolute certainty that I'd found what I wanted to do. Back at home I bought some tools, taught myself as much as I could, and then went to Sir John Cass College in London for more training. I set up my first proper jewellery workshop in 1971.

In the mid-nineties, after several changes of scale and material, I started experimenting with scrap cast iron. This led me onto a one-week course on casting iron, held in Wales and taught by an American sculptor. At that time, virtually no artists in the UK knew that you could even begin to cast your own iron, but some of us were hooked. We continued occasionally to use the furnace built for the course — though with pretty rough results — but a Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship in 1997 took me to America, to learn in depth, from renowned American artist-ironcasters. As far as funding goes, I've also received support from the Arts Council of Wales, in the form of a travel grant.

Between 1998 and 2000 I set up my foundry and by 2001 I was starting to get together a body of work I was reasonably happy with. My greatest achievement so far has been to get a backyard iron foundry to run well, consistently and safely, and to produce work I believe in and other people enjoy.

Economic success with iron has been patchy, and unfortunately has lagged behind critical suc-



cess. When I have sold, I don't believe there's been any secret ingredient: I work with conviction, people like what they see, and they enjoy the surprising refinement you can get from this coarse industrial stuff.

I'm far from overcoming the business hurdles I've faced. I may never do so. My biggest initial problem, technically, was a high failure

rate, but I've largely solved that now. My biggest business problem may be one of perception. One-off casting is extremely labour intensive, and therefore my prices are high. This conflicts with the popular (and correct) image of ironcasting as a repetitive, so relatively cheap, process — since only another caster will know that my way of working has to be one-off. It can be a mixed blessing to be the only one in your field.

I've always worked from home; and — living in the country — when I set up the foundry there was no reason to change that. The decision to live in Wales had little to do with work, though it is a fine country in which to be an artist or a maker. You miss proximity to wealthy English markets, but you don't miss the stress. You miss the networking - or do you? Perhaps your reputation must derive more from the work you do.

Being a maker is not a matter of choice so far as I'm concerned — it's simply who I am and what I do. I'm lucky that what I do will always stretch me and always hold out the promise of better next time.

I'm thinking of moving more towards the area where craft meets fine art. It may be that cast iron works best, not in the middle ground, but either for cheaper, volume work (often very good, but just not my process), or at the much more expensive end. This is a tall order, and risky, but I want to test it out; I'm currently starting to make work which tends that way.

75% favoured support for specialist craft associations.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ENGLAND AND WALES

Regional differences between Welsh and English makers were examined but no significant areas were apparent apart from in business form:

Though both English and Welsh respondents were most likely to be sole traders, a higher percentage of Welsh makers were working in part-

nerships (18% of Welsh respondents compared with 8% of English respondents). Around two-thirds of English makers work full-time, while the figure increases to almost three-quarters for Welsh respondents.

Research Objectives and Methodology

This survey was carried out throughout 2003 and follows on from the surveys published by the Crafts Council 1981 and 1994. Unlike the 1994 sur-

TANJA UFER

Jewellery maker, South Yorkshire

I started my business in 2000 with the help of grants from the Prince's Trust and the Crafts Council. The Crafts Council's Setting Up Grant (now Crafts Council Development Award) made it possible to equip my dream workshop with all the tools and materials I needed and to work without the worry of having taken out a considerable loan. It also gave me a lot of confidence to be chosen from a large number of applicants.

My work has been described as mini-sculpture jewellery. Each individual design incorporates gemstones such as raw diamonds, tourmalines and pearls set in silver with fine gold and enamel.

After being trained in Germany as a Goldsmith and having completed my MA in Metalwork and Jewellery I felt I had developed a language to communicate with my work. I enjoy having the freedom to produce a wide range of different designs. I constantly work on new pieces to keep my mind fresh and my ideas challenging. Recently I started lecturing at the Sheffield Hallam University on the Metalwork and Jewellery degree course, which gives me the chance to have an inspiring interaction with other designers.



My greatest achievement in business so far is being able to make a good living out of my work, which also enables me to travel to places like the New York International Gift Fair and the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Crafts Show. Participation in Chelsea Crafts Fair and other fairs is my main source of income.

I put down my economic survival as a jewellery maker to the fact that I show my work at fairs and exhibitions constantly. To be able

to survive is a matter of taking part in at least two fairs a year and making sure your work is shown in the most prestigious galleries.

I have started to export my work to the European and overseas galleries that I made contact with at international fairs like Inhorgenta in Munich and the New York Gift Fair.

Most recently the Yale Museum of British Art in Connecticut USA has bought a range of my work for their collection. I made this contact at the last New York Gift Fair where I was showing with the Crafts Council. As a result of contacts made at Chelsea last year, Leeds City Art Gallery and the Jam Eton applied arts gallery are also exhibiting my work at the moment.

I am planning to put aside at least a month to develop a series of spoons that are individually smithed and formed. I would like to apply for a travel grant from the Crafts Council to research the Japanese market. I also have an ambition to organise a themed touring exhibition featuring my own work and other makers.

I enjoy the challenge of having my own business, being creative, never knowing what's going to happen next and meeting other makers. I love the fact that I have found a passion in life that is also my job.

TIM DENTON AND JOHANNA VAN DAALEN

Product designers, Manchester

We studied Contemporary Furniture Design at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. After graduating we were accepted onto the Crafts Council's Next Move scheme and set up in business in April 2002.

Next Move provided an insight into the world that we were getting into without the initial heavy financial strain. We were able to work without having to rely solely on the income of our business, which has enabled us to develop a good body of work and also a way of approaching our designs.

Electricwig, our creative practice, is an ideas-based studio that creates functional objects that derive from everyday rituals. We attempt to engage people both physically and emotionally through our products.

We find the most challenging part of running our business is identifying opportunities to be creative in a different context, although it is rewarding at the same time. The versatility of our practice has been key to our economic success so far.

Our greatest achievement has been selling our work both nationally and internationally and establishing strong relationships with overseas clients. Our work is sold by shops, galleries and distributors worldwide, including Selfridges in London and Mission Gallery in Wales, The Collection in Paris, New York's The Apartment and Galleria Luisa Delle Piane in Milan.

We are ambitious to extend our portfolio of collaborations with producers and manufacturers. The internet is vital to our practice, not necessarily through direct sales but by creating invisible relationships with companies that could be potential clients.

Working with the Japanese company Trico has been our most successful venture. Despite the obvious problems

with communication we have been able to work with Trico on the production of a number of our designs including Puppet Socks, Perfectly Folded Shirt, Embroidered Tables and the Albert Stool. A mission to Japan with the Crafts Council this year should help us to build further on this relationship. We will be holding an exhibition, meeting potential clients and using the trip as an inspirational experience. We are also looking forward to taking part in London's 100% Design in September.



vey, it does not include makers in Scotland.

Research Objectives:

1. To establish as precisely as possible the numerical and occupational structure of practising makers in England and Wales in relation to the scope of the Crafts Council's activities, and to present this in relation to existing studies.
2. To assess the socio-economic conditions of makers, including information about personal circumstances, continuing professional development and training opportunities, work situation, personal fulfilment, difficulties and attitudes.
3. To obtain information on makers' attitudes to, and the adequacy of, support organisations, including the Crafts Council and sectoral infrastructure.
4. To assess the economic value of the sector, both through the primary research undertaken for this project, and through desk analysis of existing material in the context of wider cultural industries.

Methodology

Initially a database of makers operating in England and Wales was established and this was then used for a postal survey of the sector. Between July and October 2003, 6,913 makers were surveyed, and a total of 2,418 questionnaires were received. Of these, 206 of these were returned as gone away or not appropriate, leaving 2,212 usable responses which represents a usable response rate of 32.9% based on a database of 6,707.

A further 129 of the respondents were omitted from the analysis as they had declared themselves as hobbyists – or it could not be confirmed that they were not hobbyists – leaving 2,083 in the final group (31% of 6,707).

This survey was carried out by Professor Andrew McAuley and Dr. Ian Fillis of the University of Stirling.

A full version of the methodology used by this survey is in the main report and can be downloaded from www.craftscouncil.org.uk

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 Crafts Council, 44a Pentonville Rd, Islington, London N1 9BY

Case studies prepared and researched by Emily Palmer
 Design by Keith Grosvenor
 A full copy of the full report can be downloaded from www.craftscouncil.org.uk

CRAFT TYPE WITHIN ENGLAND AND WALES 2003

- Automata
- Basketry
- Bookbinding
- Ceramics: Architectural
- Ceramics: Domestic
- Ceramics: Sculptural
- Fashion Accessories
- Furniture
- Glass: Architectural
- Glass: Studio
- Jewellery: Non precious
- Jewellery: Precious
- Leather
- Lettering: Calligraphy
- Lettering: Letter Cutting
- Lettering: Fine press printing
- Metal: Architectural/Blacksmithing
- Metal: Enamelling
- Metal: Silver & Fine Metalwork
- Metal: Sculptural
- Millinery
- Mosaic
- Musical Instruments
- Paper Mâché
- Paper: Wallpaper
- Paperworks
- Recycled Materials
- Shoemaking
- Stone Carving
- Textiles: Felted
- Textiles: General
- Textiles: Knitted/Crochet
- Textiles: Lace
- Textiles: Stitched
- Textiles: Surface patterned
- Textiles: Tapestry
- Textiles: Woven
- Toys: General
- Toys: Games
- Toys: Puppets/Dolls
- Toys: Soft
- Wood: Carved
- Wood: Marquetry
- Wood: Turned
- Wood: Working



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Crafts Council
44a Pentonville Road
London N1 9BY
t: +44 (0)20 7278 7700
f: +44 (0)20 7837 6891
info@craftscouncil.org.uk
www.craftscouncil.org.uk
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