



Supporting makers to export: survey findings

Crafts Council

January 2018

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Introduction

The Crafts Council is keen to strengthen makers' export capability and to gain insight into current craft exports before trade relations and laws change following Brexit. We undertook this survey of makers' needs to generate baseline data in support of our programming to support makers' professional development.

The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) published a first set of craft goods exports figures in August 2017¹. We welcomed this move and are now working closely with officials to expand those datasets beyond the current focus on jewellery².

In the meantime, the Crafts Council decided to undertake its own research in order to understand better how UK makers working in a range of disciplines are exporting internationally and to comprehend barriers for those currently not exporting.

Through the survey we sought to understand the type and scale of goods and services that UK based makers and designers are offering overseas. The survey was compiled to capture the broadest possible understanding of overseas activities, from product sales and representation at trade events or by galleries, to delivering workshops or training.

Evidence was gathered through the '*Supporting Makers Needs: Sales Survey*' during July and August 2017. We invited alumni from our Hothouse and Injection programmes, as well as makers from the Crafts Council Directory to complete the survey. This enabled us to survey makers across the UK at all stages of their career. However, it must be noted that the survey was not based on a scientifically selected sample. The findings cannot, therefore, be used to draw conclusions about the wider population of makers. Instead we have made observations in the report about possible trends revealed by the 44 responses we received.

We are very grateful to the makers who responded to the survey – thank you for your time.

See more about our talent development programmes [here](#).

¹ See DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates: Exports and Imports of Goods Table 5.4 Creative Industries sub sectors exports (£m) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2017-employment-and-trade>

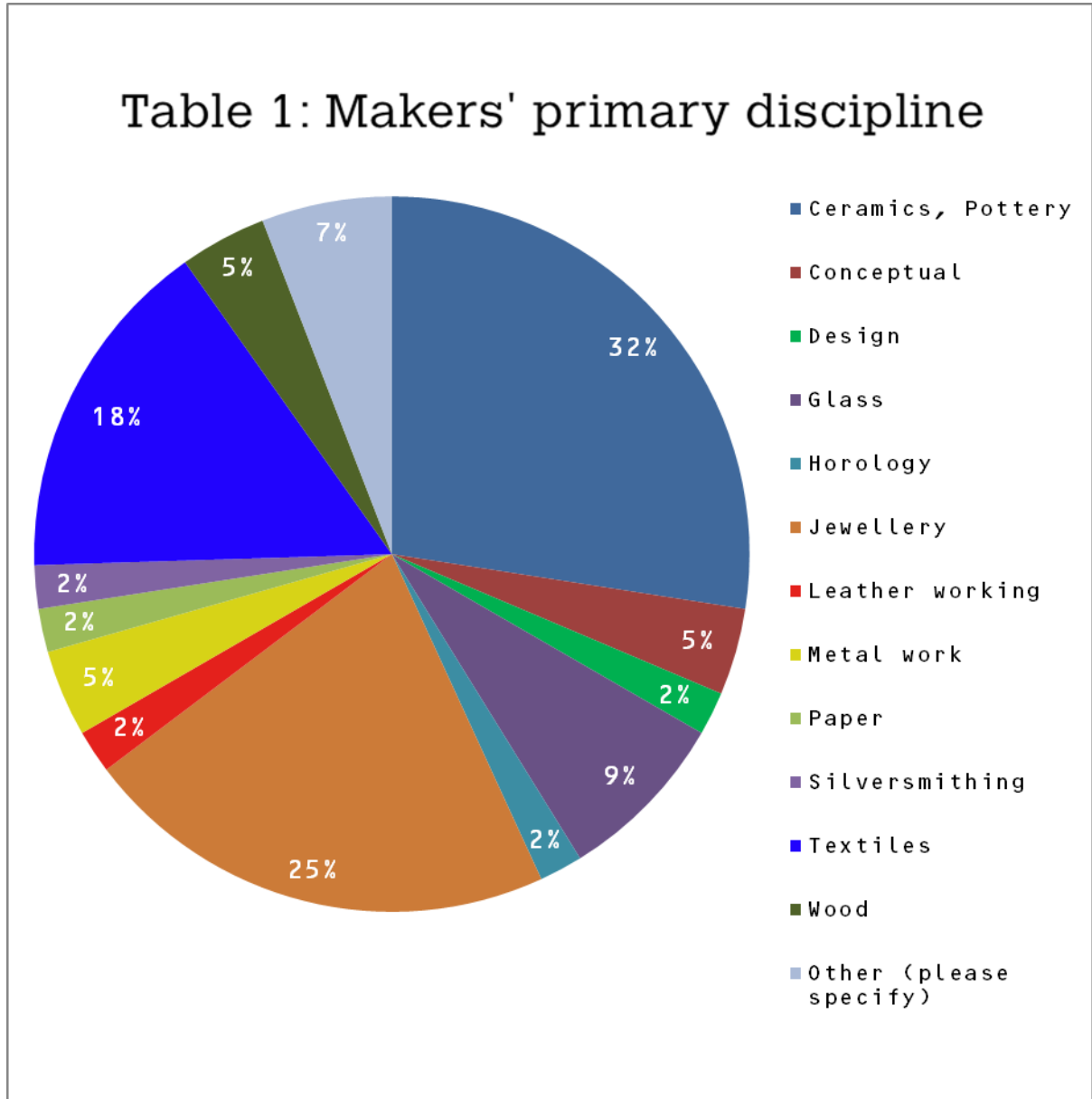
² Currently DCMS measures craft goods exports with reference to the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code for jewellery (31.12 – Manufacture of Jewellery). The Crafts Council report Measuring the Craft Economy makes the case for an expanded set of SIC codes by which to measure craft. http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/content/files/Measuring_the_craft_economy-v4.pdf

The following points summarise the main messages from the survey findings:

- A quarter of respondents' sales are from international work.
- The most common export activity is participation in an exhibition or trade event abroad led by non-UK-based organisations (63%). The latter are also the most frequent route for sales abroad (54%).
- Makers are exporting to all continents, most frequently to North America (77%) and Europe (66%). The United States, Germany and the Netherlands are the most frequently cited priority export markets.
- A large proportion (88%) of makers do not have a written export strategy.
- Only 25% of startup makers are exporting compared to 46% of established makers. It is reasonable to assume that the longer a maker has been in business, the more likely they are to export internationally.
- Identification of barriers to exporting suggest some clear priorities for assistance: the need for networks and contacts, understanding of logistics, shipping and customs/policy restrictions as well as addressing a lack of knowledge and/or experience.

1. Description of respondents

- Makers from the following disciplines responded to the survey (Table 1):

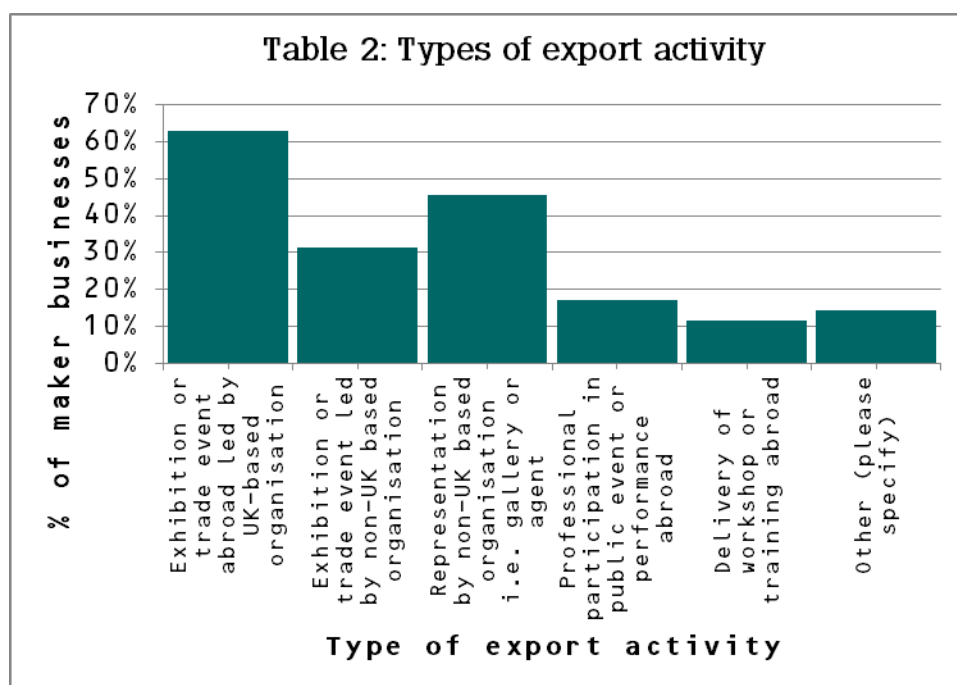


- The majority of makers/respondents are working in ceramics (32%), jewellery (25%) and textiles (18%). [None of the respondents work in Automata, Basketry, Books, Book binding, Furniture, Lettering, Millinery, Mosaic, Printing, Shoemaking, Stone working, Technology, Traditional, Toys and Instruments.]
- 50% of respondents are based in London; the remaining 50% are spread across UK regions and nations. No responses were received from Yorkshire or the North East of England, Northern Ireland or Wales.

- Makers at various stages of their career are represented³. Over one third of respondents (36%) identify themselves as established makers, followed closely by early career makers (34%). Fewer makers surveyed are mid-career (21%) or startup (9%).
- The vast majority of makers (89%) are sole traders. Five maker businesses (11%) employ between 1-9 employees.
- Over half (55%) of the makers surveyed have a yearly turnover of less than £10,000, the remaining 45% a range of yearly turnover between £10,000 and £199,000.

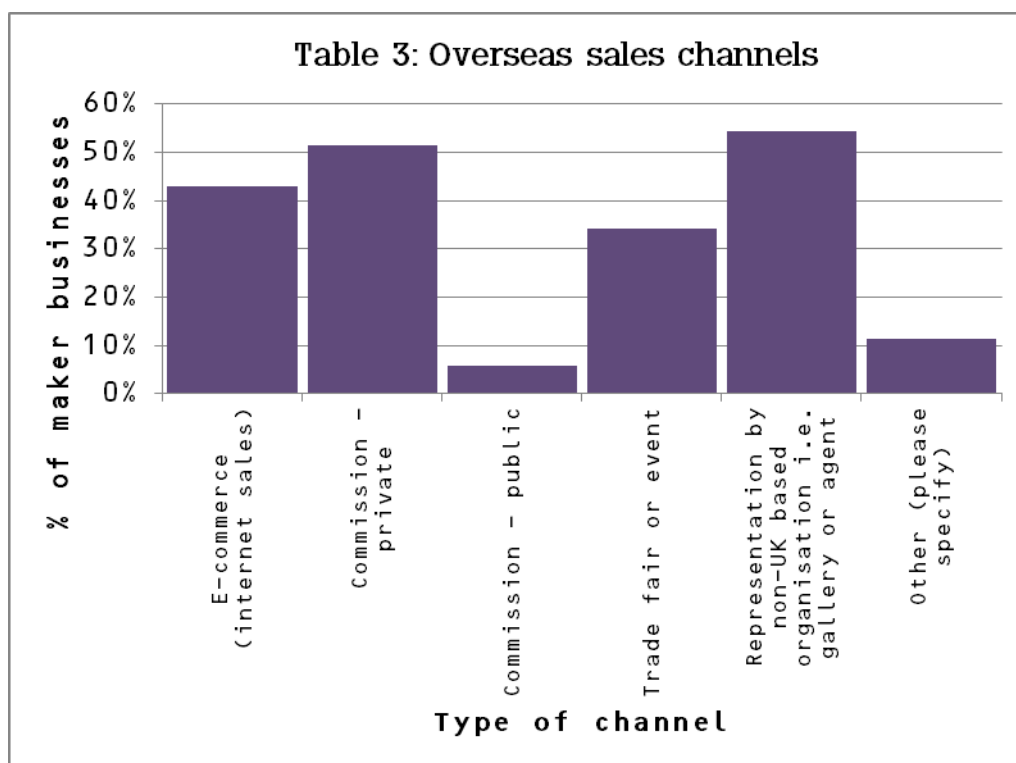
2. Description of makers' export activity

- A quarter of sales are from international work.
- The majority of makers who export internationally made their first sale or provided their first service abroad over five years ago (51%).
- We asked makers who export to indicate the activities they are involved in to support this activity, giving them the option to cite multiple approaches. More than 75% have participated in either an exhibition or a trade event, or are represented by a non-UK based organisation. The single most common activity is participation in an exhibition or trade event abroad led by a UK-based organisation (63%). 11% of respondents have delivered a workshop or training abroad in their exporting activity (Table 2).



³ Maker career stages defined as: Start Up (established less than 12 months), Early Career (established 12 months to four years), Mid Career (established 5 years plus), and Established (e.g. established 10 years plus).

- Makers surveyed sell their craft through a number of different channels. The most common channels used are representation by a non-UK organization (54%), echoing the activity in Table 2, private commissions (51%) and e-commerce (43%).



- A personal website is the most commonly used e-commerce platform (93%). 20% of respondents use the Crafts Council directory, 20% use Etsy, and 40% use other platforms.
- Makers are exporting to all continents, most frequently to North America (77%) and Europe (66%). The United States, Germany and the Netherlands are the most frequently cited priority export markets. Other target markets include Switzerland, Sweden, and Spain in Europe and, globally, Australia, China (Hong Kong), Japan and the United Arab Emirates.

3. Barriers and opportunities

- Nearly half of all makers (48%) see networks and contacts as the biggest barrier to exporting, closely followed by logistics and shipping, customs/policy restrictions and lack of knowledge/experience (45%). These points suggest some clear priorities for assistance.
- There appeared to be no clear consensus, among the largest represented disciplines of ceramics/pottery, textiles, and jewellery in the survey, as to what the biggest barrier to exporting was. Although both jewelers (64%) and textile makers (63%) cited customs/policy restrictions most frequently, textile

makers equally cited marketing as a barrier (also at 63%). In contrast it was logistics and shipping that ceramicists identified most frequently, alongside networks and contacts (both at 62%), as barriers to exporting.

- A large proportion (88%) of makers do not have a written export strategy. Respondents who do have an export strategy are more likely to be established makers (in business for 10 years +). None of the businesses surveyed employing between 1-9 people has produced an export strategy. This may suggest that employing staff does not necessarily mean businesses have any more capacity to produce a strategy.
- Over half of makers surveyed are not seeking export advice from any organisation (57%). Of those who do, 31% go to the Department for International Trade (DIT), 19% consult Crafts Council, with another 17% turning to other organisations.
- Only 25% of startup makers are exporting - compared to 46% of established makers. It is reasonable to assume that the longer a maker has been in business, the more likely they are to export internationally.