



The Creative Economy: a growing female force

- More women setting up businesses in pursuit of flexibility and work that 'works'
- 50% increase in the number of self-employed women in last decade
- Women driving economic growth of small creative business sector

A new report by notonthehighstreet.com and Oxford Economics has shown that the changing world of work is seeing more women than ever before turn away from traditional '9 to 5' roles in favour of more flexible and independent ways of working. Over the last ten years, there has been a 50% increase in the number of self-employed women, with figures now standing at 1.5 million. During this time, thousands of women have built successful businesses whilst setting their own work/life agenda, and they are seeing life satisfaction soar as a result.

Over a quarter (27%) of the 134,000 small creative businesses in the UK today are run by women. At notonthehighstreet.com, 89% of the platform's 5,000 Partners (sellers) are female-owned.

The report found nearly half of notonthehighstreet.com Partners cited flexible working hours or having more time to spend with friends, family and children as one of the main motivations for setting up their own business. For one in ten, starting their own business was their ticket back into the world of work after a period of unpaid leave to care for young children. With record numbers of two-parent working households, up by 435,000 in the last ten years to 3.6m, people want flexibility.

The growth in the number of women setting up businesses is helping to boost female employment in the UK, which is up 1.4m to almost 15m in the last ten years.

The report also found that running your own business drives greater life satisfaction: 95% feel a greater sense of achievement; 90% enjoy life more and feel happier; 88% feel they contribute to a worthwhile industry; and 87% feel more fulfilled when they wake up each day as a result of their new work.

These new ways of working are being driven by a number of macroeconomic changes:

- an increasingly connected and online world where physical location is no longer a barrier to the reach and success of a business
- advances in technology enabling more of life's functions to be carried out digitally, at any time and in any location (e.g. shopping on the move and outside '9 to 5' hours)
- post-financial crisis environment forcing people to re-evaluate their careers and working lives
- the refusal by many to fit their increasingly diverse lives around traditional work structures which, because of the above changes, are no longer deemed fit for purpose



Simon Belsham, CEO of notonthehighstreet.com, said: *"In the last ten years, thousands of small creative businesses, many owned and run by women, have emerged all over the UK, creating jobs, driving wealth creation and contributing £3.6 billion to the economy. These 134,000 businesses are highlighting the huge change underway in the UK workforce; a transformation that is seeing more women in work and more people turning to self-employment and flexible working as they shun the traditional 9 to 5 model."*

"Our hyper-connected world and advances in technology are allowing more women to find greater autonomy over working lives and fulfilment through work. This is a real gift of our time, and our nation of creative entrepreneurs is leading the way, demonstrating what it is possible to achieve both economically and socially, for these businesses and society as a whole."

Kathryn Tyler, co-founder at online digital skills training company and creators of the #workthatworks movement, Digital Mums commented: *"The current '9 to 5 coat-on-chair' culture is not only failing women, it's failing a new generation of workers who have grown up in an entrepreneurial environment where today's technology negates the need for such a rigid and restrictive way of working. It's also failing society as a whole; a lack of flexible work is costing the UK economy up to £62.5 billion in wasted mum talent alone."*

"With more opportunities for people to set up small businesses thanks to marketplaces such as notonthehighstreet.com the changes we're starting to see in the working world where women in particular are retraining or setting up their own business to find work that works around their families, are going to continue to rise. If employers want to tap into this talent, they need to wake up to a new way of working or be left behind."

Other report findings:

Empowering women

Small creative businesses are more likely to be owned by women; in fact, 27% of small creative businesses are female-owned, compared with 21% of all small UK businesses. For notonthehighstreet.com the levels of female ownership are significantly higher at 89%.

Empowering parents

55% of creative entrepreneurs working with notonthehighstreet.com have children living at home, compared with 41% of working households nationally. When considering the rise in the number of two-parent working families - up 14% in the decade to 2016 - and the need to work flexibly around childcare, it is not surprising that this industry is attractive to, and supportive of, working parents, particularly as we know that two thirds of notonthehighstreet.com Partners work from home, meaning no time or cost is spent commuting. Nine out of ten Partners with children at home ranked freedom and flexibility in the top benefits of starting their own business.



Female participation in the labour force

Female participation in the workforce has increased from 70% to 73% in last ten years

- 13.9m women participating of 19.8m women aged 16-64 in 2006
- 15.1m women participating of 20.6m women aged 16-64 in 2016

Employment on the rise

Total UK employment has risen 9% from 29.1m ten years ago to 31.7m today.
UK employment for women has risen by 1.4m to 15m over the last decade.

Self-employment on the rise

4.8m people were registered self-employed in 2016, compared with 3.7m ten years ago – an increase of 27%. The increase in self-employment amongst women is even greater, growing by 50% over the same period, from 1m to 1.5m. Male self-employment has risen from 2.7m to 3.2m in the last ten years.

Flexible working

Part-time work has increased whilst full-time work is in decline, with part-time work increasing from 24.9% to 26.4% of all employment, and full-time work decreasing from 75.1% to 73.6%. The majority of notonthehighstreet.com Partners work full-time but flexibly, fitting working hours around personal life and other commitments.

Case studies

Personalised jewellery brand, **Merci Maman**, was founded in 2007 by Béatrice de Montille, a London-based mother of four. Béatrice wanted to build a career with opportunities for creativity, flexibility and family life, through creating bespoke, meaningful gifts for customers. Béatrice's husband Arnaud shared this dream and gave up his career in banking to help build the business from their kitchen table. Merci Maman now employs 25 people from London and Paris, creating unique jewellery for customers including the Duchess of Cambridge. Merci Maman recently received the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in the International Trade category, which is testament to the extraordinary progress the business has made since it was founded a decade ago.

Tillyanna is an ethical business based in the Monmouthshire Hills that makes personalised or locally influenced cushions, homeware, bags and clothing from high quality ethically sourced materials, printed using classic typography design. Helen Parker founded the business in 2012 when her youngest son was due to start school and she was worried about finding the money needed for Christmas that year. She had to make a decision on whether to return to work after parental leave or try to earn enough income on her own. She chose the latter and, following a number of evenings of research, made her first cushion. Within six months Tillyanna was part of the notonthehighstreet.com community and is now one of the best-selling businesses on the site.



Tillyanna was also the winner of the Ethical Business award at the notonthehighstreet.com Make Awards 2015.

After struggling to get back into work after having children, Dani Bolser realised that the options available didn't allow her to be 'mum first.' In reality, a traditional full-time job meant that she would have to work all hours, arriving early or working late, which presented problems for picking up her children from school. With part-time work not proving financially viable, Dani eventually founded **Deluxe Blooms**. *"My husband encouraged me to take the plunge and put my skills to use and be my own boss. I've always been creative and had a passion for flowers. By selecting the finest faux flowers around and using my artistic flair, I've created some wonderful floral designs for people to enjoy all year round and I really enjoy it! I get to be creative, earn money and still do the school run!"*

Betsy used to work for a financial services company, but when she had her son, now 10 years old, she decided she couldn't meet the demands of a corporate job with a big commute while also being mum. She wanted the flexibility and freedom that running your own business provides so she set up **Betsy Benn**, which makes personalised prints. 95% of her sales come through notonthehighstreet.com and she has a team of 4 full time and 4 part time. *"Notonthehighstreet.com was like an adrenalin injection into my business; within a year we had the top-selling product across the whole site! I definitely work much harder now than I ever used to so going self-employed certainly wasn't the easy option. The difference though, for both me and my whole team, is that we have so much more flexibility to work around life's other demands. Whether that's plugging back into the emails once the children are in bed for the night or mentally working out a marketing strategy whilst on the sidelines of one of their footie games, you can find the time to make it all work."*

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Notes to Editors

For a full copy of the report, infographic, and national and regional versions of the press release, please go to: www.notonthehighstreet.com/workthatworks

About notonthehighstreet.com

Notonthehighstreet.com is the leading curated modern marketplace connecting the best small creative businesses, with the world. The brand has gained the trust and loyalty of its customers through offering an alternative to the High Street: a curated product selection with unique designs, high-quality craftsmanship and inspiring stories behind the people that make them.

Customers choose to support small creative businesses and therefore contribute to building the great creative talent and community of artisans across the United Kingdom. Shopping with Notonthehighstreet.com is an opportunity for customers to be a conscious consumer, bringing human values back into retail and enabling the things they buy to say something about who they are.



Founded in 2006 by Holly Tucker MBE and Sophie Cornish MBE, the brand has experienced exceptional growth with gross sales (TTV) in 2016 reaching £158 million and delivering a compound growth rate of 135% since launch. Under the leadership of newly appointed CEO Simon Belsham, there is renewed energy and focus on building a brand that will captivate customers for decades to come by supporting Partners' growth and innovation.

With a team of over 200 at its headquarters in Silicon Upon Thames, South West London, Notonthehighstreet.com is Chaired by retail veteran Darren Shapland and backed by media and technology company, Hubert Burda Media and venture capitalists including Index Ventures, Industry Ventures and Eight Roads Ventures.

About Oxford Economics

Oxford Economics was founded in 1981 as a commercial venture with Oxford University's business college to provide economic forecasting and modelling to UK companies and financial institutions expanding abroad. Since then, they have become one of the world's foremost independent global advisory firms, providing reports, forecasts and analytical tools on 200 countries, 100 industrial sectors and over 3,000 cities.

Available for interview:

- Simon Belsham, CEO, notonthehighstreet.com
- Andy Logan, Associate Director, Oxford Economics
- Ian Saxon, Senior Economist, Oxford Economics
- Ella D'Amato, Chief Commercial and Partner Officer, notonthehighstreet.com
- All the case studies above are available for interview. Other case studies also available on request

Photos of case studies listed [available here](#).