



East of England is a hotspot for women entrepreneurs, beating London and South East

- 13,000 small creative businesses in the East of England employ 19,000 people and contribute over £350m to UK economy
- 31% of small creative businesses in East of England are female-owned, the second highest rate of all English regions and above the UK average of 27%

A new report by notonthehighstreet.com and Oxford Economics has shown how the East of England is a leading force for creative business owners, with almost 13,000 small businesses employing 19,000 people and contributing £350 million to the economy. Nearly a third (31%) of these businesses are run by women, helping to boost female labour force participation in the East of England by 3.2% over the last decade – one of the highest growth rates of all regions – and contributing to overall regional female employment of over 1.4m.

In total, there are 134,000 small creative businesses in the UK, employing 192,000 people and contributing £3.6 billion gross value added to the UK economy. One in 40 UK businesses is a small creative business.

The growing creative sector is emblematic of the changing world of work, which is seeing more people than ever before turn away from traditional '9 to 5' roles in favour of more flexible and independent ways of working. This is demonstrated by the 27% increase nationwide in self-employment over the last ten years, bringing current numbers to 4.8m. The 50% increase in self-employed women is particularly notable, now standing at 1.5m. With a record number of two-parent working households, which now stands at 3.6m, people want flexibility.

The report also found that two thirds of creative entrepreneurs are benefitting from greater flexibility and freedom, with nearly half citing this as the main motivation for starting their own business. 95% of those surveyed feel a greater sense of achievement and 90% enjoy life more and feel happier as a result of starting their own business.

A ticket back into the world of work for mums

The shift to a different way of working is particularly empowering women entrepreneurs and parents with children living at home. In fact, for one in ten of the notonthehighstreet.com Partners surveyed, starting their own business was their ticket back into the world of work after a period of unpaid leave to care for young children. And this movement is happening nationwide with small creative businesses driving prosperity and economic growth in every single region of the UK.

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 increasing number of two-parent, or carer, working families looking for ways to juggle work and life, and the reluctance of many workplaces to adapt to this change
- 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 have sprung up across the UK, particularly in the East of England, which boasts one of the highest rates of women-owned creative businesses.*

These entrepreneurs are creating jobs, driving wealth creation and contributing significantly to the overall UK economy. They are also 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."

East of England case study:

Lisa Angel was launched by Lisa and her husband David in the sunny town of Norwich, and the business is now one of notonthehighstreet.com's longest standing Partners. The pair joined notonthehighstreet.com in 2008 and are the first Partner business to have reached the £3 million turnover mark. Designed by her own in-house team, Lisa's business has gone from selling beaded bracelets to jewellery, scarves, bags and hats, and now employs a team of over 64 permanent and part time staff in the Norfolk area. Counted among their customers is former Prime Minister David Cameron, who personalised one of their best-selling bar necklaces for his daughter when he visited their HQ last year.

Further East of England case studies below.

Other report findings:

Positive impact of running own creative business

When notonthehighstreet.com Partners were asked to compare how they feel now relative to how they felt before starting their business:

- 95% now feel a greater sense of achievement
- 90% enjoy life more and feel happier
- 88% feel the industry they contribute to is worthwhile
- 87% feel more fulfilled when they wake up in the morning
- 80% enjoy the responsibilities that come with running a business



- 52% of the Partners surveyed were employed by another business before setting up on their own, and nearly three quarters of those have undergone an entire career change in order to start their own creative business

Empowering women

Small creative businesses are more likely to be owned by women. 27% in the UK are female-owned compared with the UK average of 21% for female small business ownership – the East of England exceeds this with 31% female ownership. Some 89% of notonthehighstreet.com Partner businesses are female owned. Small creative businesses are retaining women in the workforce and encouraging other women back into it; 10% of the notonthehighstreet.com Partners surveyed were looking after children at home and were not in paid work before they founded their business.

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.

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

In the ten years to 2016 part-time work has increased from 24.9% to 26.4% of all employment, and full-time work has decreased 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 – East of England

Ginger Rose in Kings Lynn is another small business that has grown rapidly since it was founded in 2006 by Harriet Clayton. Having sold her first jewellery business in order to travel the world and start



a family, Harriet set up Ginger Rose after realising the potential of the leather goods sold in her parents' local gifting shop for the male gifting market. Her husband has since joined the business full-time, which they run around school pick-ups from their studio. Given its rapid growth, the couple has also hired three other mums into the business. Harriet said: *"Our set-up allows us all the freedom of working around the school run, school holidays, child sickness etc. We all work together to make it work for our families because, ultimately, that is who we are doing this for. We can all attend the sports days, assemblies, Christmas plays, but have the sense of achievement and ambition in the work place too. Our work/life balance is as good as it gets and the business has allowed us to raise our 2 boys in the way we wanted to."* Harriet added: *"It has not come without hard work through - you only get out what you put in – but we are creating a secure future for us as a family.*

Essex-based **Clouds and Currents** was established in 2012 by Bridget Charlesworth following an injury that meant she couldn't return to her full-time teaching job. Bridget began to create handmade wedding hangers and after successfully applying to notonthehighstreet.com, saw the product take-off instantly. Bridget said: *"The business grew so rapidly that in 2013, my husband also left his teaching job to work for the business. Today, we've grown our product range, selling 600 different items spanning numerous gifting occasions, and the business has become a full-time job for a team of 7 (and our dog, Peanut!)."* Bridget added: *"With our first baby on the way, running our own business has already given us the flexibility to fit work around our ever-changing lifestyle, taken the pressure off returning to work and allowed me the opportunity of working from home during my pregnancy and once baby arrives."*

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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](http://www.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](http://www.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
- Any of the case studies mentioned above. Other case studies also available.

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