



Small creative businesses are booming in the capital, adding £800m to the economy each year

- Nearly 30,000 small creative businesses in London, employing 42,000 people – equivalent to one in every 110 employed
- Nearly a third of these businesses are run by women, boosting female employment in the capital
- London has highest growth rate of all UK regions when it comes to female labour force participation, up 4.5% to 2.1m in last decade

A new report by notonthehighstreet.com and Oxford Economics has shown that the changing world of work 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.

In London, female labour force participation has increased 4.5% over the last decade, bringing total female employment in the region to 2.1 million and making it the region of highest growth in the UK.

This movement towards creative entrepreneurship has contributed to 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.

Today 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.

A 'creative attitude' to work has also emerged. In the last ten years, more and more people are finding their own way to make work 'work' for them. They are seeking choice and freedom and thousands are building successful businesses and setting their own work/life agendas as a result. With a record number of two-parent working households, which now stands at 3.6m, people want flexibility.

The findings of the report reveal 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 emerged all over the UK, creating jobs, driving wealth creation and contributing significantly to the economy. London is the leading light with nearly 30,000 small creative businesses contributing an impressive £800 million to the economy."*

These businesses are highlighting the huge change underway in the UK workforce more broadly; a transformation that is seeing more women in work, with London again leading the way with the greatest increase in female labour force participation, up 4.5% in the last decade. More people are 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 people 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."

London case study:

Hurley Burley was started by two friends, Sue Buckland and Pippa Currey, after their two youngest children started school. They set about making jewellery for their mum-friends and were soon persuaded by a growing following of friends and family to expand. The business has grown enormously and is now taking over £3m in revenue annually, employing over 20 staff. Sue and Pippa say it has been hugely beneficial to have a business that is based at home, works around their children and requires skills neither of them had explored before: *"Our families are a constant source of inspiration and our children and husbands were the reason we created our Junior and Men's range. They had so much to offer that we couldn't miss the opportunity to use their input, and they love seeing their ideas come to fruition!"*

Further London 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. 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, with 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 – London

Merci Maman is a personalised jewellery brand 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.

SoS15: In 2009, Sandra O'Shea was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was unable to work and lost everything. She had enjoyed a successful career as a graphic designer but was a single parent and had no financial support. Following several years of surgery, Sandra started SoS15 from scratch, using her previous design experience and rediscovering glitter to create personalised clutch bags. The brand is fast becoming the go-to brand for bloggers, stylists and the fashion pack who love the pop inspired, glamorous and personalised handmade creations that Sandra creates in her South London studio – singer Imelda May took an SoS15 personalised clutch bag to this year's BRIT awards, which ensured both got plenty of red carpet attention!

-Ends-

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
- Any of the case studies mentioned above. Other case studies also available.

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