

Back the creative industries to grow the economy, says new research showing creative firms are more likely to be innovators and exporters.

Embargoed Wednesday 10 December, 10 am.

The share of creative industries firms who export increased by 10 percentage points over six years from 15% to 25%, whereas for other industries exporting stayed static at around 9%, according to a new report from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC). Exporting firms are also shown to be more profitable and therefore policy interventions that grow the share of UK creative industries exporters could be an important way for the government to achieve its growth ambitions.

Furthermore, the study finds that across *all* regions and nations of the UK, creative industries firms are more likely to be exporters compared to those across the wider economy, suggesting prioritising the creative industries also supports regional regeneration. The study - based on Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs), those with fewer than 250 employees - suggests the UK could be a global hub for creative industries trade, if policy levers at local and national level are optimised to grow and expand the pool of creative exporters.

The new research conducted by a team at Newcastle University Business School for the AHRC-funded Creative PEC found a higher share of UK creative MSMEs are exporters compared with the rest of the economy, and that this gap is widening. Between 2018 and 2024 the share of creative MSMEs who export rose from 15% to 25%, whereas for comparable firms across the economy, this remained static at around 9%.

In some sub-sectors, such as Advertising and Marketing, the share of exporters went from 21% in 2018-2020 to 38% in 2022-2024, and in Publishing from 31% to 40%. The study also finds MSMEs exporters, across all sectors, significantly outperform non-exporters in terms of profit, hence encouraging exporting is critical to supporting regional and national growth ambitions.

The report makes a series of recommendations to further support creative MSMEs, including:

- UKRI to consider how their remit connects to trade support opportunities rather than approaching R&D and innovation separately.
- Maximise the opportunity devolution presents for place-specific strategies and for devolved policy makers to coordinate activity between local creative MSMEs and UK-wide export support initiatives, such as those offered by UK Export Finance.
- Embed a combination of policies that target creative industries firms generally alongside policies that target individual creative specialisms, as the report finds not all challenges faced by creative MSMEs are sector specific, but some are.
- Boost mentorship programmes that build management capacity and exporting knowledge among creative MSMEs, as the report finds creative exporters tend to be younger and smaller than exporters in the rest of the economy and so require additional support with managerial and administrative planning.
- Improve the evidence base to understand barriers to finance, and especially whether new financial instruments might be developed to support creative exporters.
- Raise awareness of key export support programmes to further expand creative industries exports, as the report finds low awareness of key initiatives such as Global Export Facility among exporters.
- Stabilise international trade uncertainty through agreements and continue to set out clear public strategies such as the Sector Plan for the Creative Industries, as the report finds creative MSMEs are more likely to say that the current economic climate is a barrier more than other businesses in the economy.

Dr Daniel Simandjuntak, Research Associate, Newcastle University Business School says:

“Amidst global competition and trade uncertainty, the creative industries show considerable resilience in exporting, especially in services. It is encouraging to see in the creative industries firms are entering international markets despite being younger and smaller.”

Nik Gunn, Policy Adviser, Creative PEC says:

“What’s really encouraging about this report is that creative MSMEs are shown to be more likely to be exporters than non-creative MSMEs across all nations and regions of the UK. This presents a huge opportunity in the context of devolution and Local Government Reorganisation for place-based targeted support, to help existing exporters grow and expand the pool of those companies doing so.”

Chris Bryant, Minister of State for Trade Policy says:

“Our creative industries are world-leading and this report - showing the success of exporting creative firms - shows the government is right to cement the UK's position as a global creative superpower.

“Our modern Industrial Strategy aims to significantly increase investment into our creative industries and I’m delighted this report shows our approach to encourage innovation, increase productivity and support businesses across the UK is the right one.”

Publishing is shown to be one of the key creative industries sub-sectors in which the UK has a competitive advantage that it could exploit still further.

Ameesha Green, Founder and CEO of The Book Shelf, who is speaking at the launch of the new research says:

“To date, we’ve exported to 25 different countries and generate around 50% of our

income from exports. We strive to be innovative within our fairly traditional publishing industry. We've exported since the early days of business as it felt like the natural thing to do. But legislation and regulation can make this more challenging, especially around understanding international sanctions.”

The new research will be launched today during an online event in which an expert panel, including - Dan Thomas, Global Media Editor for the FT, Stephen Woodford, CEO Advertising Association and Interim Chair of the Creative Industries Trade and Investment Board and Ameesha Green, Founder and CEO of The Book Shelf and Professor Giorgio Fazio, Director of Research, Creative PEC – will dissect the findings, with the event hosted by Dr Fiona Whitehurst, Associate Dean Engagement and Place at Newcastle University.

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Download the report: ‘Will the Creative Exporters Please Stand Up? Recent Export Trends and Features of Exporting Creative Micro, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises’ by Dr Daniel Simandjuntak, Professor Giorgio Fazio, Dr Jonathan Jones, and Dr Sara Maioli, Newcastle University Business School.

https://pec.ac.uk/state_of_the_nation/creative-exporters-please-stand-up/

(live from Wednesday 10 December 2025)

The research team and spokespeople for the Creative PEC are available for comment and interview.

Press contacts

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Notes to editors

1. State of the Nations reports

The report is part of the Creative PEC's State of the Nations research series, which uses the latest data to inform policymakers on how best to support the creative sector across four thematic areas. Regular reports on each area will be published annually over the five years of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funding period.

2. About the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC)

Creative PEC works to support growth of the UK's Creative Industries through the production of independent and authoritative evidence and policy advice. Led by Newcastle University with the Royal Society of Arts and funded by the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Centre comprises a core consortium of; Newcastle University, Work Advance, Sussex University and the University of Sheffield. The PEC works with a diverse range of industry partners.

For more details visit www.pec.ac.uk, follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Bluesky](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#).

3. About The UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council

The UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation, funds internationally outstanding independent researchers across the whole range of the arts and humanities: history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages and literature, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and much more. The quality and range of research supported by AHRC works for the good of UK society and culture and contributes both to UK economic success and to the culture and welfare of societies across the globe.

4. Will the Creative Exporters Please Stand Up? Recent Export Trends and Features of Exporting Creative Micro, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises' Mike Green at Green Doe Graphic Design