

## Highly skilled, international talent helps fuel UK creative industries growth, finds new report

**Embargoed 9am (UK time) Tuesday 10 June 2025**

As the dust settles on the UK government's Immigration White Paper, the creative industries reflect on what tighter restrictions might mean. New research published today outlines how important it is that the migration system works to meet the sector's needs as one of the Government's priority growth sectors. From architecture to video games and digital design, the sector is internationally connected, innovation-driven, and highly reliant on an exceptionally skilled workforce (with over 75% of workers having a degree), while also facing big skills shortages.

Today's research from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) is the first to fill the evidence gap in relation to migration, creative occupations and creative industries, by providing detailed statistics on sector trends, rates of growth, country of origin and distribution across the UK.

The report findings:

- Since 2021 there has been a 70% increase in temporary visas for creative occupations vs a 13.5% increase for non-creative occupations. (Since post-Brexit visa reforms).
- During the same period, across all types of (longer stay) Worker visas, those granted for creative occupations increased by only 8% and for non-creative occupations by 233% (106% if Health and Care visas are excluded).

- 'IT, Software and Computer Services' sub-sector grew by 58.3% GVA between 2010-2023, this correlates with the growth in visas being granted to skilled workers from Asia (in particular India) in occupations related to this subsector.
- 65% of all visas granted to creative workers were in 'IT, software and computer services.'
- The next most common creative occupations sponsored by visas are 'Actors, entertainers and presenters' (7.5% of all visas granted to creative workers), 'Musicians' (5.5%), 'Marketing associate professionals' (4.6%), 'Arts officers, producers and directors' (3.9%), 'Marketing and sales directors' (3.1%), 'Graphic designers' (2.2%) and 'Artists' (1.6%).
- More than half of non-UK creative workers being granted a new visa were from Asia (62.6%), followed by the rest of Europe (16.8%), Americas (9.1%) and Africa (9.1%). More than half of the granted new creative visas came from India (53%), with the next country, the US, accounting for just 5%.
- In 2024, 16.2% of the creative industries workforce was accounted for by non-UK workers, up from 11.6% in 2014. This compares with 14.4% of non-UK workers employed in non-creative industries, up from 9.3% in 2014.
- There is a greater reliance on overseas workers for several creative industries: 'IT, software and computer services', 'advertising and marketing', 'museum, galleries and libraries', 'crafts', 'design and designer fashion' and 'publishing' all show that non-UK workers are proportionally more likely to work in these creative industries compared to UK workers (after taking into account the relative size of the overall non-UK and UK workforce)

**Hasan Bakhshi, Director, Creative PEC says:**

“Reliant on high-skilled talent, but facing skills gaps and shortages, the creative industries employ disproportionately high numbers of migrant workers. As the UK Government looks to implement the commitments in its recent immigration white paper, it's vital that it ensures the migration system is calibrated to the needs of

the creative industries – one of the priority growth sectors in the UK's industrial strategy.”

**Dr Sara Maioli, Lead Report Author, Newcastle University says:**

“The UK's creative industries continue to be a global success story, drawing talent from across the world and contributing £124bn in GVA in 2023. The evidence points to sustained growth in the creative industries being supported by skilled immigration. Any modern migration system must achieve sustainable net rates while allowing strategic sectors to attract the global talent needed to foster innovation and growth. This balancing act is made even more difficult by pressures that have a cross-sectoral dimension.”

The report emphasises distinctive features of the creative industries that must be considered in relation to migration policy:

- The greater reliance on freelance and project-based work.
- It thrives on diverse and international talent to foster innovation.
- It includes a higher share of micro-businesses than other sectors.
- It experiences acute skills shortages given its exposure to technological shocks.

In response to the research findings the Creative PEC recommends:

- Targeting hard-to-fill vacancies through balanced migration and domestic skills policy.
- Maintaining the UK's attractiveness to global talent.
- Ensuring temporary and short-term visa routes remain competitive and accessible for creative occupations.
- Exploring ways to ease the burden of cost on visa applicants.
- Pursuing bilateral agreements that ensure the inclusion of creative workers and their needs.
- Improving data collection and evidence on any barriers that UK creative workers face when working abroad, especially for the EU.

The report 'Migration in UK Creative Occupations and Industries' is by Dr Sara Maioli, Dr Daniel Simandjuntak, Dr Jonathan Jones and Professor Giorgio Fazio of Newcastle University. The report is published by the Creative PEC which is funded by the UKRI's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The report was launched during an online event with speakers including Dr Madeleine Sumption MBE, Director of The Migration Observatory, University of Oxford, as well as Deputy Chair of the Migration Advisory Council, and Marta Foresti, founder and CEO of LAGO a research and creative collective on migration, culture and the arts who was recently announced Chair of the Global Creative Economy Council.

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Download the report: 'Migration in UK Creative Occupations and Industries'  
[https://pec.ac.uk/state\\_of\\_the\\_nation/migration-in-uk-creative-occupations-and-industries/](https://pec.ac.uk/state_of_the_nation/migration-in-uk-creative-occupations-and-industries/)

(live from 12 noon on Tuesday 10 June 2025, UK time)

The report: 'Migration in UK Creative Occupations and Industries' is published by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, which is led by Newcastle University with the Royal Society of Arts and funded by the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

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

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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' 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.

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## **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. 'Migration in UK Creative Occupations and Industries' was designed by Mike Green at Green Doe Graphic Design