

xR StOries



**YORK
& NORTH
YORKSHIRE**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

York and North Yorkshire Creative Economy Census 2025 Technical Report

December 2025

XR Stories

Jay Harrison, Rosario Neyra,
Emma Brown, Damian Murphy

**York and North Yorkshire
Combined Authority**

Sue Brandom

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|---|-----------|---|-----------|
| Executive summary | 1 | 4. Barriers to business/organisation growth | 41 |
| List of figures | 3 | 4.1. General barriers | 41 |
| List of tables | 4 | 4.2. Skills-related barriers | 44 |
| | | 4.3. Workplace-related barriers | 48 |
| 1. Introduction | 5 | 5. Business/organisation support usage, needs and improvements | 50 |
| 1.1. The wider context: Why a Creative Economy Census? Why now? | 5 | 5.1. Financial support accessed | 50 |
| 1.2. Census design and rationale | 5 | 5.2. Challenges seeking and using funding | 52 |
| 1.3. Data collection | 7 | 5.3. Business support accessed | 54 |
| 1.4. Data inclusion criteria | 8 | 5.4. Business support needs | 55 |
| 1.5. Data cleaning | 8 | 6. Innovation and sustainability | 57 |
| 1.6. Scope and limitations of the data | 9 | 6.1. Innovation | 57 |
| 1.7. Format of technical report | 9 | 6.2. Sustainability | 58 |
| 2. Respondent demographics and geographic profile | 10 | 7. Working with freelancers | 61 |
| 2.1. Age and gender of respondents | 10 | 7.1. Numbers of freelancers contracted | 61 |
| 2.2. Location of respondents' home addresses | 12 | 7.2. Services provided by creative freelancers | 63 |
| 2.3. Geographic classification of respondents' home addresses | 14 | 8. Support for the creative economy | 65 |
| 2.4. Number of creative economy roles per respondent | 16 | 8.1. Services of value | 65 |
| 3. Respondents' primary and secondary creative economy roles | 17 | 9. Creative spaces, networks and festivals | 67 |
| 3.1. Creative economy employment type | 17 | 9.1. Creative spaces | 67 |
| 3.2. Employment status | 18 | 9.2. Creative networks | 72 |
| 3.3. Location of respondents' businesses/organisations | 20 | 9.3. Creative festivals | 73 |
| 3.4. Business/organisation creative economy industry/subsector | 21 | 10. Celebrating creativity in York and North Yorkshire | 77 |
| 3.5. Business/organisation creative economy occupation | 25 | 10.1. Creative economy fulfilment | 77 |
| 3.6. Respondents' job titles/positions in the creative economy | 28 | 10.2. Creativity in York and North Yorkshire | 78 |
| 3.7. Relationship between industry and occupation | 29 | 10.3. Creative economy success stories | 79 |
| 3.8. Working hours | 30 | 10.4. Volunteering and the creative economy | 79 |
| 3.9. Age and geographical history of business/organisation | 30 | 11. Conclusion | 80 |
| 3.10. Business/organisation employment | 32 | References | 81 |
| 3.11. Volunteers | 35 | | |
| 3.12. Workspace | 37 | | |
| 3.13. Income of business/organisation | 38 | | |
| 3.14. The creative economy and the heritage sector | 39 | | |

Executive summary

The York and North Yorkshire Creative Economy Census 2025 provides the first comprehensive baseline of creative economy activity across the newly devolved Combined Authority area¹, comprising of the City of York Council and North Yorkshire Council. Developed by XR Stories and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, the census captures the breadth, nature, barriers and needs of the region's creative economy workforce. This evidence base arrives at a pivotal moment, with the Combined Authority's 2025 Local Growth Plan having identified the Creative Industries as a 'competitive advantage' sector for regional growth, and offers essential insight into how to drive sustainable, place based creative growth. York and North Yorkshire is the UK's largest and most diverse Combined Authority geography, spanning urban, rural and coastal communities. While the region has well established creative strengths, from York's UNESCO City of Media Arts designation to vibrant festivals, cultural programmes and emerging innovation in immersive and mixed reality, a holistic understanding of its wider creative economy has been missing.

The census was designed to address this gap by surveying not only those working in the Creative Industries, but also anyone in creative occupations across all sectors. This broader lens enables a more comprehensive representation of the creative workforce and its contribution across the wider economy. Data was collected between June and August 2025 via an online survey. From an initial 404 responses, 205 met strict inclusion criteria around geographic relevance, completeness of data and valid participation. While the sample size places limits on statistical generalisation, the findings offer strong insights into workforce characteristics, business activity, infrastructural strengths and sector needs.

Creative economy workers from across the entire region took part, with the largest concentrations living in York (41%), Scarborough (11%) and Harrogate (9%). Respondents reflected the region's geographical diversity: 46% described their community as urban, 40% rural and 13% coastal. The sample is predominantly female (60%) with 60% of respondents aged 25–54. Most respondents (65%) work in a single creative economy role, while 35% hold multiple roles, a pattern consistent with portfolio careers typical of the sector. The majority of respondents' roles (87%) sit within the Creative Industries, while the remaining 13% work in creative occupations located in other sectors. The most common subsectors² include: Music, performing and visual arts (40%), Film, TV, video, radio and photography (12%) and Advertising and marketing (11%). Freelancers are an essential component of the region's creative economy with 36% of roles being freelance and 17% sole-proprietor. 64% of respondents reported working with creative freelancers, who supply a wide range of creative skills and services. Roles also commonly intersect with the region's heritage economy, with 41% reporting an overlap between their creative economy work and the heritage sector. Respondents' organisations collectively employed thousands of people across the region. Respondents' businesses are predominately micro or small enterprises, with a mix of established organisations and recently founded ventures. Many businesses were created within the region, while others have relocated in recent years, reflecting opportunities for inward creative investment. Most respondents (84%) earn at least half of their income from creative economy work.

Across geographies, respondents identified consistent challenges. Financial barriers; including difficulties securing funding, unclear eligibility criteria, and complex application processes. Skills and training gaps; evidenced by limited access to affordable training and challenges in recruiting staff with the necessary skill sets. Workspace issues; amounting to shortages of suitable, affordable creative workspace, felt particularly by studio/exhibition-based practitioners. These barriers collectively limit growth, development and long-term sustainability. Engagement with financial and business support varied, but respondents noted gaps in practical guidance, tailored advice and awareness of the opportunities available. Despite these challenges, many organisations reported recent innovation activity, including development of new products or services, digital tools and a desire to engage in collaborative research and development (R&D). Sustainability is an important issue for most respondents, with most taking steps to reduce environmental impact. However, cost and implementation remain major barriers to taking action.

¹ The York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority was founded on the 1st of February 2024.

² The 9 Creative Industries subsectors, as defined by the DCMS are: Advertising and marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Design; Film, TV, video, radio and photography; IT, software and computer services; Publishing; Museums, galleries and libraries; Music, performing and visual arts.

Respondents highlighted the importance of creative spaces, networks and festivals in providing community, wellbeing, collaboration opportunities and access to audiences. The census identified a rich but uneven distribution of spaces, networks and festivals across the region, evidencing the essential role they play in sustaining the creative economy. Qualitative responses reveal a passionate workforce driven by creative expression, community impact and the opportunity to produce meaningful work rooted in place. Respondents emphasised the distinctive creative identity of York and North Yorkshire - its festivals, cultural heritage, landscapes and communities - and the importance of celebrating this identity. While volunteering, collaboration and community-led initiatives play a key role in sustaining a thriving creative culture, many also highlighted achievements such as UK-wide tours, international sales, major award wins and successful new events as examples of recent successes.

Building on the wider national and regional policy context, the census findings further illustrate how local experiences align with these broader ambitions for the creative economy. Many of the patterns observed, particularly the need for accessible small-scale funding, sector-specific support and improved guidance on national funding processes, reflect national priorities around finance, skills and business development. At the regional level, the results echo pan-northern aims to improve equity of access to skills, infrastructure, networks and markets. The challenges identified across the census, including uneven workspace provision, limited transport connectivity and the realities of freelance and microbusiness models, highlight the importance of approaches that reflect the geographically dispersed nature of creative economy activity across York and North Yorkshire. Considered together, the findings demonstrate how local conditions correspond with broader national and northern ambitions for a more sustainable, inclusive, and better supported creative economy.

List of figures

| | | | | | |
|----|--|----|----|---|----|
| 1 | Diagram illustrating the relationship between the Creative Industries and creative economy. | 6 | 21 | Non-creative occupation groups of respondents working in the Creative Industries, shown by primary and secondary roles. | 27 |
| 2 | Distribution of census respondents by age group, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 10 | 22 | Job titles provided by respondents when asked to describe the position they hold within their creative economy businesses/organisations, visualised as a word cloud. | 28 |
| 3 | Gender distribution of census respondents, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 11 | 23 | Flow of respondents from creative-industry sub-sectors (and other industries) into their reported occupation groups, combining both primary and secondary roles. | 29 |
| 4 | Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' home locations by outward postcode area. | 13 | 24 | Weekly hours worked in respondents' primary and secondary roles. | 30 |
| 5 | Geographical classification of the community in which respondents live. | 14 | 25 | Length of time respondents' businesses/organisations have been trading/operating, shown by primary and secondary roles. | 30 |
| 6 | Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' home addresses (by outward postcode area) for those who described the community in which they live as 'Urban' (see Figure 5). (n = 95). | 14 | 26 | Distribution of respondents' businesses or organisations that were founded in York and North Yorkshire, shown by primary and secondary role responses. | 31 |
| 7 | Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' home addresses (by outward postcode area) for those who described the community in which they live as 'Rural' (see Figure 5). (n = 83). | 15 | 27 | Length of time since respondents' businesses or organisations relocated to York/North Yorkshire, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 31 |
| 8 | Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' home addresses (by outward postcode area) for those who described the community in which they live as 'Coastal' (see Figure 5). (n = 27). | 15 | 28 | Number of people employed in respondents' businesses/organisations within the creative economy, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 32 |
| 9 | Number of creative economy roles held by respondents, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 16 | 29 | Business size category of respondents' businesses/organisations within the creative economy, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 32 |
| 10 | Distribution of respondents' creative economy employment types, distinguishing between primary and secondary roles. | 17 | 30 | Number of people employed in respondents' businesses/organisations within the Creative Industries, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 34 |
| 11 | Distribution of respondents' creative economy employment types, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 18 | 31 | Business size category of respondents' businesses/organisations within the Creative Industries, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 34 |
| 12 | Distribution of respondents' creative economy employment status, distinguishing between primary and secondary roles. | 18 | 32 | Whether people volunteer for respondents' organisations, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 35 |
| 13 | Distribution of respondents' creative economy employment status, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 19 | 33 | Number of people volunteering for respondents' organisations, shown for primary and secondary role responses. | 36 |
| 14 | Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' work locations by outward postcode area, based on the combined total of primary and secondary roles. | 21 | 34 | Whether respondents' organisations are volunteer-led, shown for primary and secondary role responses. | 37 |
| 15 | Creative Industries subsectors where respondents work in creative and non-creative occupations, shown by primary and secondary roles. | 22 | 35 | Whether respondents' organisations rent or own space, shown for primary and secondary role responses. | 37 |
| 16 | Creative Industries subsectors where respondents work in creative and non-creative occupations, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 23 | 36 | Annual turnover of respondents' businesses/organisations, shown for primary and secondary role responses. | 38 |
| 17 | Breakdown of respondents' work in creative and non-creative occupations across Creative Industries subsector sub-group categories, based on the combined total of primary and secondary roles. | 24 | 37 | Annual income after expenses of respondents' businesses/organisations, shown for primary and secondary role responses. | 38 |
| 18 | Industries outside the creative economy where respondents work in creative occupations, shown by primary and secondary roles. | 25 | 38 | Whether respondents consider their creative economy work to overlap with the heritage sector in the York and North Yorkshire region, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 39 |
| 19 | Creative occupation groups of respondents work in the Creative Industries and other industries, shown by primary and secondary roles. | 25 | 39 | Whether respondents consider their creative economy work to overlap with the heritage sector in the York and North Yorkshire region, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 39 |
| 20 | Breakdown of respondents' creative occupations in the Creative Industries and other industries by sub-occupation categories, based on the combined total of primary and secondary roles. | 26 | 40 | Respondents' income composition, showing the extent to which earnings are derived wholly from creative-economy work or supplemented by external sources, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 40 |
| | | | 41 | Barriers reported as being particularly relevant to respondents' businesses/organisations in the creative economy, broken down by primary and secondary roles. | 42 |

| | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|---|
| 42 | Barriers identified as particularly relevant to respondents' businesses or organisations in the creative economy, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 43 | accessed by respondents' businesses/organisations over the past year, shown by primary and secondary roles. | |
| 43 | Whether respondents had undertaken formal skills-based training in their creative economy role, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 44 | 55 | Innovation- and development-related activities carried out by respondents' businesses/ organisations in the last 12 months, displayed for primary and secondary roles. 57 |
| 44 | Types of skills-based training undertaken by respondents in their creative-economy roles, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 45 | 56 | Actions taken by respondents' businesses or organisations to become more sustainable, shown by primary and secondary roles. 58 |
| 45 | Difficulties encountered by respondents' businesses/ organisations in providing skills-based training, shown for primary and secondary roles. | 46 | 57 | Barriers that respondents' businesses/organisations have faced in taking action to become more sustainable, shown by primary and secondary roles. 59 |
| 46 | Difficulties encountered by respondents' businesses/ organisations in providing skills-based training, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 46 | 58 | Barriers that respondents' businesses/organisations have faced in taking action to become more sustainable, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). 59 |
| 47 | Difficulties faced by respondents' businesses/ organisations in recruiting suitably skilled employees, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 47 | 59 | Whether respondents' businesses/organisations work with 61 creative freelancers, shown by primary and secondary roles. 61 |
| 48 | Difficulties faced by respondents' businesses/ organisations in recruiting suitably skilled employees, shown by primary and secondary roles. | 47 | 60 | Number of creative freelancers contracted by respondents' businesses/organisations between April 2024 and March 2025, shown by primary and secondary roles. 62 |
| 49 | Whether respondents' businesses/organisations have faced challenges securing workspace in York and North Yorkshire, broken down by primary and secondary roles. | 48 | 61 | Types of skills and services creative freelancers provided to respondents' businesses/organisations, shown by primary and secondary roles. 63 |
| 50 | Difficulties encountered in finding suitable workspace in York and North Yorkshire, reported by respondents' businesses/organisations and shown by primary and secondary roles. | 49 | 62 | Services that respondents identified as being of value to their business or organisation, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). 65 |
| 51 | National and local sources of financial support and advice accessed by respondents' businesses/organisations over the past year, shown by primary and secondary roles. | 51 | 63 | Types of creative spaces respondents reported working at within York and North Yorkshire, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). 67 |
| 52 | Main challenges faced by respondents' businesses/ organisations when seeking or using funding, shown by primary and secondary roles. | 52 | 64 | Creative spaces across York and North Yorkshire reported by respondents. Each marker indicates a space listed in Table 6, with colours denoting different space types. 70 |
| 53 | Main challenges faced by respondents' businesses/ organisations when seeking or using funding, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). | 53 | 65 | Types of creative festivals respondents reported working at within York and North Yorkshire, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). 73 |
| 54 | National and local sources of business support and advice | 54 | 66 | Aspects of working in the creative economy that bring respondents the most fulfilment, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5). 77 |

List of tables

| | | | | | |
|---|---|----|---|---|----|
| 1 | Distribution of census responses by the first half of respondents' home address postcodes, showing counts and percentages across postcode areas. (n = 205) | 12 | 5 | Creative Industries subsector breakdown of people who volunteered at respondents' organisations. | 36 |
| 2 | Distribution of census responses by the first half of respondents' primary and secondary business/organisation postcodes, showing counts and percentages across postcode areas. (n = 274) | 20 | 6 | Creative spaces identified by respondents in York and North Yorkshire, organised by name, location, type and census response count. | 68 |
| 3 | Distribution of employees across full-time, part-time, and temporary/seasonal roles at the businesses/ organisations of respondents in creative economy roles. | 33 | 7 | Creative networks in York and North Yorkshire that respondents reported having worked at or being aware of, by name, location, type and census count. | 72 |
| 4 | Distribution of employees across full-time, part-time, and temporary/seasonal roles at the businesses/organisations of respondents in Creative Industries roles. | 35 | 8 | Creative festivals in York and North Yorkshire that respondents reported having worked at or being aware of, by festival name, location, type and census count. | 74 |

1. Introduction

1.1 The wider context: Why a Creative Economy Census? Why now?

York and North Yorkshire is the largest Combined Authority region in the UK - covering over 3,500 square miles and with a population of 845,000 [1]. Established in 2024, it is recognised as the first Combined Authority area which combines cities with wider urban, rural and coastal communities.

The Creative Sector in York and North Yorkshire is well-established and diverse, with activity ranging from York's designation as the UK's only UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts to a wide variety of festivals, cultural programmes, and community initiatives across the region. It also has emerging strengths in areas such as immersive and mixed reality. Creative work produced locally spans film, television, digital media, animation, games, theatre, architecture, and year-round cultural events. Organisations and practitioners contribute to projects across the region as well as nationally and internationally.

In July 2025 the York and North Yorkshire Local Growth Plan was adopted, with Creative Industries identified as one of the 'competitive advantage' sectors for regional growth [2]. For a region rich in built and natural heritage, the importance of the creative sector to the wider economy cannot also be overlooked.

In September 2024, mayors and leaders from across the north of England met in York and committed to establishing One Creative North, a pan-northern partnership designed to grow and support the Creative Industries across the North [3]. This initiative aims to improve creatives' access to skills training, finance, networks and infrastructure, helping them to build sustainable careers while strengthening the North's creative economy.

Nationally, the Creative Industries contribute £125 billion to the UK's economy annually [4] and have been recognised as one of eight sectors driving growth in the UK government's modern industrial strategy [5]. However, with 46% of all Creative Industries jobs located in London and the South East [6], there is a need to drive further growth locally, to attract and retain local talent and to enable young people in the region to access opportunities to pursue a creative career close to home. And with new opportunities for wider regional collaboration across the North it is vital to address how we will build on and flourish from our regional foundational strengths of innovation and talent to achieve the aim of being recognised as a vital contributor to the UK's Creative Industries.

This census, developed by XR Stories at the University of York and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, is key to understanding the breadth and nature of the creative economy and the needs of the people working within it. This is the first time this data has been gathered for the newly devolved electoral geography of York and North Yorkshire. It is a crucial part of ensuring the creative workforce is fairly represented and the economic impact is accurately captured. The data in this report, alongside other data and research that is being gathered, should serve as an essential resource enabling

1.2 Census design and rationale

The York and North Yorkshire Creative Economy Census project and survey instrument was coproduced by XR Stories at the University of York and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority. A range of resources were used to inform the development of the census design and survey questions, including, most notably, Cornwall's Creative Census [7], which has been run by Cornwall Council annually since 2022.

A clear distinction between the methodology utilised in the Cornwall Creative Census and that of the York and North Yorkshire Creative Economy Census, is this census was designed to survey those working in the wider creative economy, as opposed to just the Creative Industries. The creative economy is an established concept that encompasses all roles within the Creative Industries, in addition to those working in creative occupations in other industries or sectors outside of the Creative Industries [8]. Consequently, those employed in the creative economy can be broadly classified as belonging to one or more of the following three categories; creative occupation within the Creative Industries, non-creative occupation within the Creative Industries, creative occupation in other non-Creative Industries. This is illustrated by the diagram shown in Figure 1. Surveying the wider creative economy can provide a more comprehensive representation of the creative workforce in a geography and the contribution that creative roles make to the broader economy.

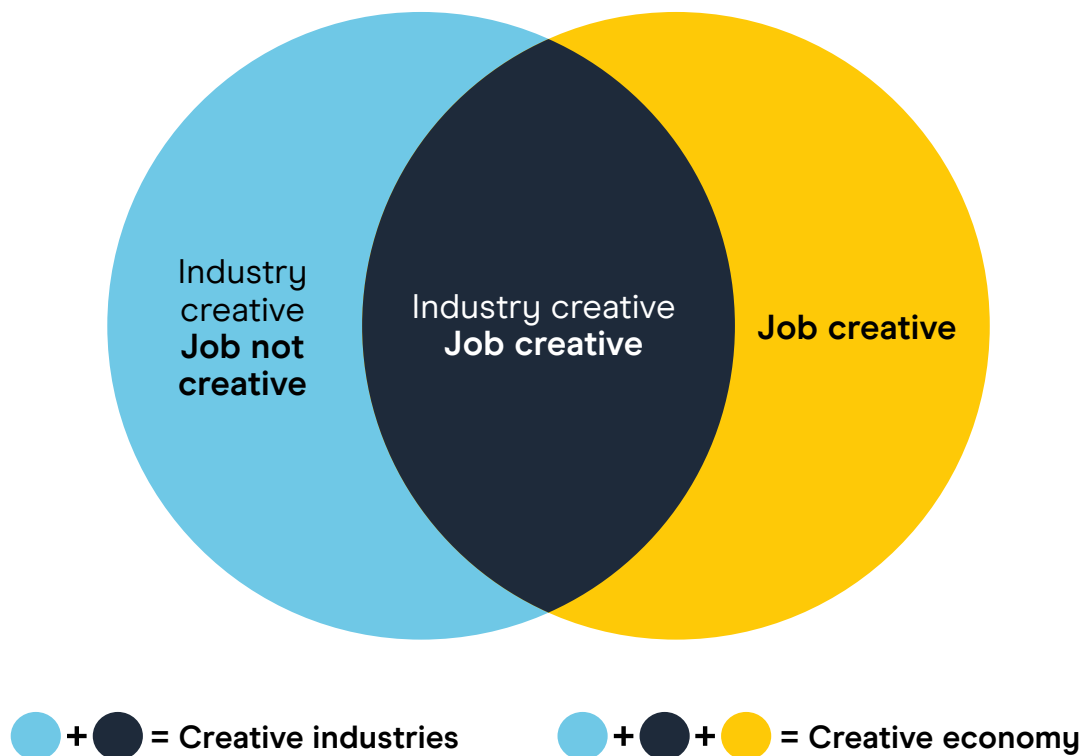
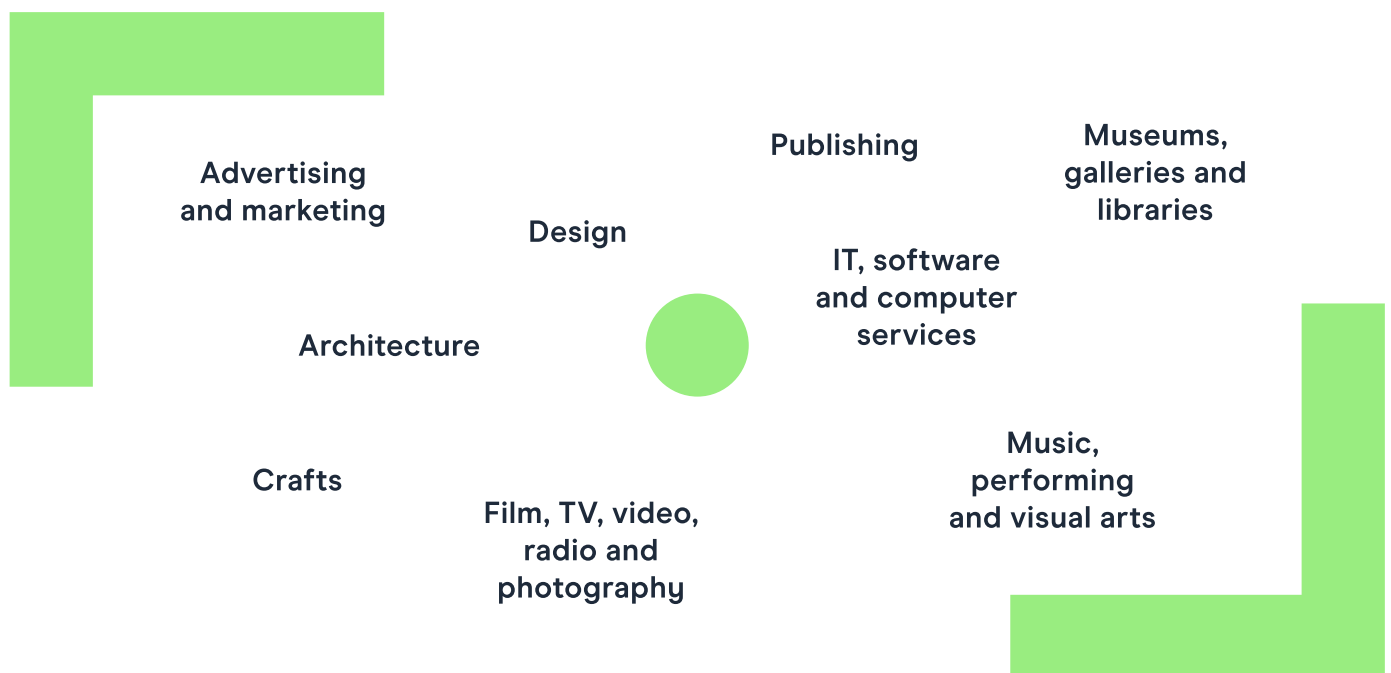


Figure 1: Diagram illustrating the relationship between the Creative Industries and creative economy, taken from 'Appendix 1: Defining the creative economy, the Creative Industries, and the cultural sector' [8].

The Creative Industries are defined by the current UK Government as industries which “have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” and comprise of the following 9 subsectors [9]:



The census survey instrument comprised of the following sections:

- **Participant information**
- **Section 1: Profile of your primary/secondary business/organisation and role**
- **Section 2: Barriers to business/organisation growth**
- **Section 3: Business support usage, needs and improvements**
- **Section 4: Innovation and sustainability**
- **Section 5: Working with freelancers**
- **Section 6: Support for the creative economy**
- **Section 7: Creative spaces, networks and festivals**
- **Section 8: Celebrating creativity in York and North Yorkshire**
- **Section 9: Thank you**

Respondents were required to provide responses for all questions in the participant information section and the primary role questions in section one, whereas responses were optional for the secondary role questions in section one and all questions in the subsequent sections two to eight. When respondents reached the end of section one they were given the option to conclude their participation at that point or to continue on and complete the remaining sections. If respondents choose to conclude their participation at the end of section one they would be taken to section nine, which included the following exit questions:

Are you happy for any written responses you have provided to be included in the report(s) for this census?

Would you be happy to be contacted by researchers from the University of York about participating in future research on the creative economy in York and North Yorkshire?

Please provide your email address to enable researchers from the University of York to contact you regarding potential future research involvement.

Can you please tell us how you found out about this Creative Economy Census?

The questions in section one were considered to be more closely aligned with a traditional workforce census, while the later sections were more aimed towards capturing data on wider issues relevant to the creative economy, such as barriers to growth, support needs, infrastructure and the influence of place. For these reason, sample sizes for the data presented in this report often vary from question to question. Details of sample sizes are included in captions and question headings throughout the report.

1.3 Data collection

The data presented in this report was collected over a period of 6 weeks from 30 June to 10 August 2025. Respondents provided their answers via an online survey tool (University of York administered Qualtrics). During data collection the census was promoted to potential participants via an organic and targeted promotional media campaign, delivered in partnership with a local creative agency. Ethical approval for the data collection was granted by the University of York's Physical Sciences Ethics Committee (approval number Harrison20250328). Participation of respondents was on an entirely voluntary basis. The online survey received a total of 404 at least partially attempted responses. Following data cleaning the number of valid responses carried forward to data analysis was 205. The median census completion time amongst the 205 respondents was 21 minutes 22 seconds.

1.4 Data inclusion criteria

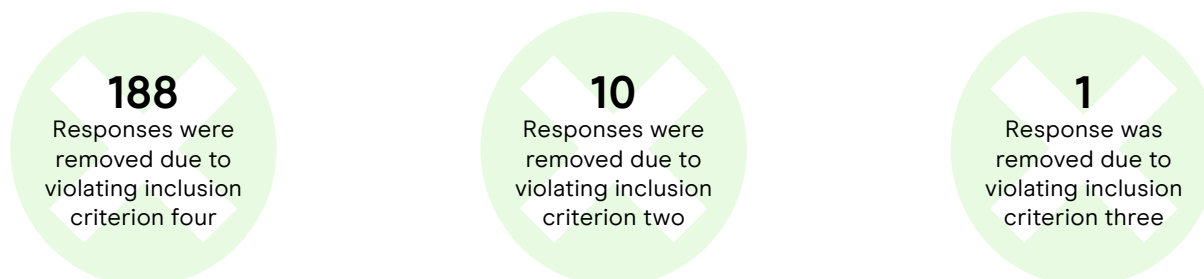
Responses were only considered valid if they satisfied each of the following inclusion

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>1. Basic participation criteria: Respondents must be aged 18 or over and working in at least one paid role in the York and North Yorkshire creative economy.</p> | <p>2. Valid York and North Yorkshire Postcode: At least one of a respondent's given home, primary work or secondary work postcodes must be based within the electoral boundary of the York and North Yorkshire Combine Authority.</p> | <p>3. No duplicate responses: Responses must not be from a respondent that has previously submitted a response to the census.</p> | <p>4. Insufficient data: Responses must include a complete set of data for all of the mandatory response questions in the participant information section and section one.</p> |
|--|--|--|---|

As illustrated by the home, primary work and secondary work postcode location results presented in Tables 1 & 2, there were several instances of a respondent's home or work address not being based within York and North Yorkshire. In the case of home addresses, this was due to respondents' living outside of York and North Yorkshire while working at a business or organisation based within York and North Yorkshire. The opposite was true of respondent's primary or secondary work addresses that were based outside of York and North Yorkshire. There was one instance of a respondent who reported a primary work postcode of YO1 and a home postcode YO6, which is no longer in effect, but previously covered a geography within York and North Yorkshire. These responses were considered valid and kept as the accompanying home/primary/secondary work data meant that the inclusion criteria were met.

1.5 Data cleaning

The following numbers of responses were removed from the initial dataset of 404 responses, as they were found to violate at least one of the specified inclusion criteria:



This resulted in valid responses from a total of 205 respondents. Of these, 193 were considered complete responses (where respondents continued beyond section one and engaged with questions in sections two to eight) and 12 were considered partial responses (where respondents opted to conclude their participation after completing the mandatory questions in the participation information section and section one).

1.6 Scope and limitations of the data

The relatively small sample size of the census dataset means that there are limitations on the generalisability of the results presented in this report, in particular many of the quantitative results in section three of this report that describe the breadth and nature of the creative economy. Therefore, it is important to note that this census and its findings should only be considered as representing a sample of the entire creative economy within York and North Yorkshire. As such, the results should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically definitive.

Despite these limitations, the dataset offers valuable insights into understanding broad patterns within the creative economy. Even with a smaller sample, the responses provide clear directional insights into practitioners' experiences, priorities, and barriers, highlighting recurring themes that are consistent across different creative disciplines. The qualitative data gathered through open-ended responses provides particularly rich and nuanced insights. These narratives offer insight into the lived experiences of workers, revealing the practical challenges, support needs, and working conditions that shape creative practice across the region.

1.7 Format of technical report

This technical report is intended to serve as the public data repository for the results of the census. Results from single choice [SC] and multiple choice [MC] questions from the census are presented as graphs and diagrams as appropriate. Qualitative textual data results from free text [FT] questions are presented as qualitative data summaries. The results are presented in the same order and sections in which the questions were presented to respondents. Each section begins with a selection of key findings and insights taken from the data within that section, followed by the census questions and the relevant plots, diagrams or qualitative data summaries. Where appropriate, the results are cross-tabulated by respondents' primary and secondary creative-economy roles and by their community geography self-descriptor. Results from all of the questions included in the census are presented in the report, with the exception of the following two questions:

Q. Please briefly describe the main products and / or services of your business/organisation. [FT]

Q. Please briefly describe the main duties/responsibilities of your role. [FT]

2. Respondent demographics and geographic profile

| Key findings | |
|--------------|---|
| 1. | 60% of census respondents were aged between 25 and 54. |
| 2. | The majority of respondents (60%) described their gender identity as female. A larger proportion of female respondents lived in rural and coastal communities, while a greater proportion of male respondents lived in urban areas. |
| 3. | The top five most common locations where respondents reported living were York (41%), Scarborough (11%), Harrogate (9%), Thirsk (4%) and Whitby (4%). |
| 4. | The majority of respondents (46%) reported living in Urban communities, 40% Rural and 13% Coastal. |
| 5. | 65% of respondents held only one role in the York and North Yorkshire creative economy, while 35% held more than one role. |

2.1 Age and gender of respondents

Q. What age are you? [SC]

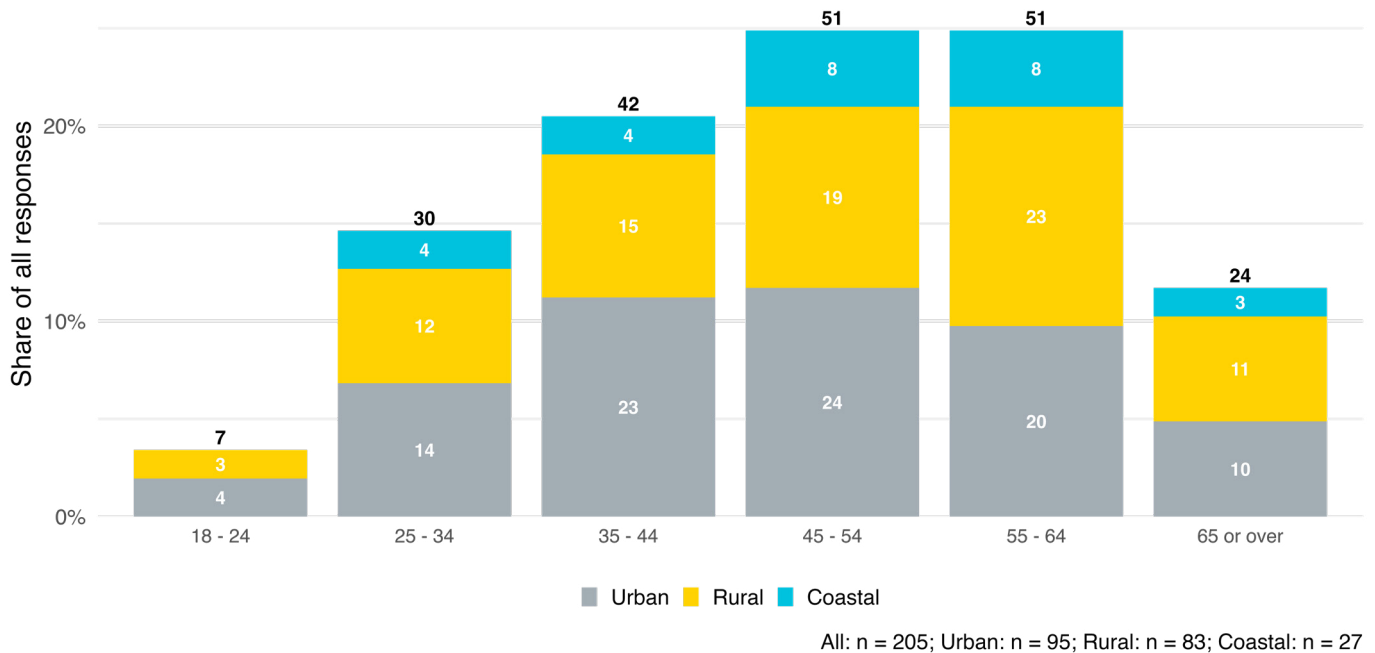


Figure 2: Distribution of census respondents by age group, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. What best describes your gender identity?

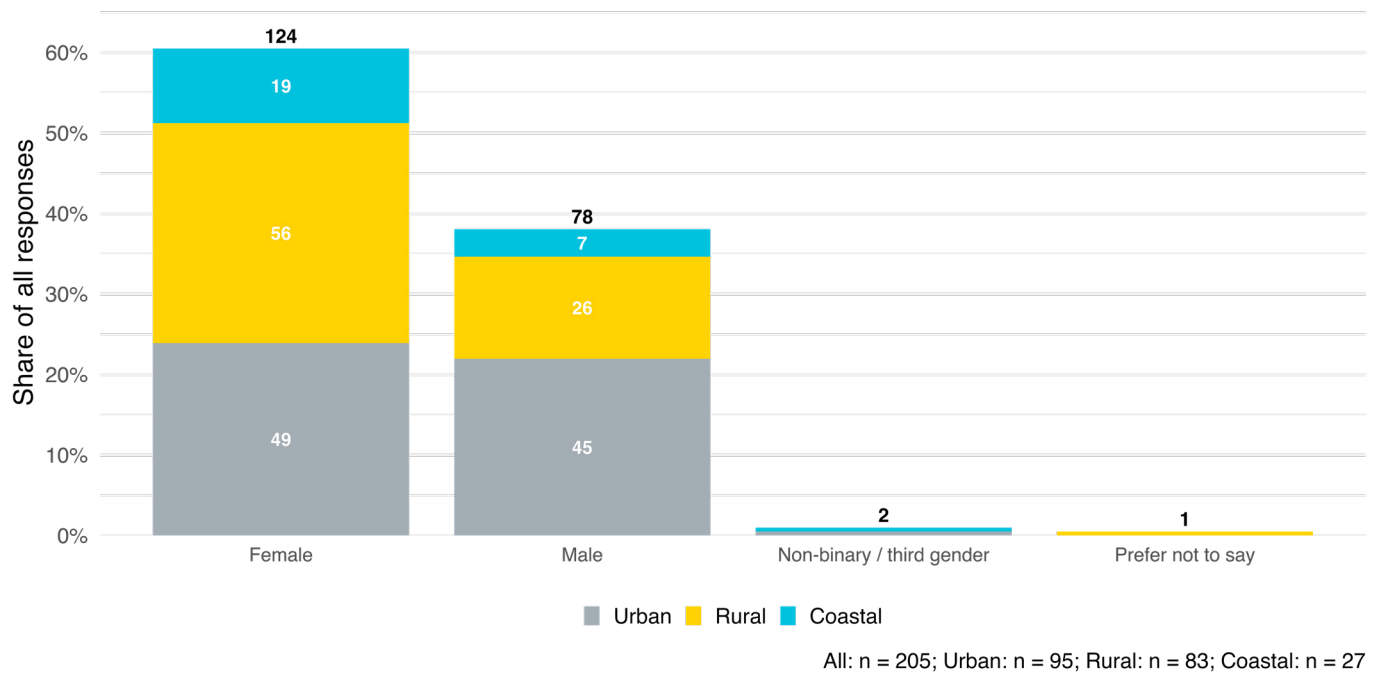


Figure 3: Gender distribution of census respondents, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

2.2 Location of respondents' home addresses

Q. What is the first half of your home address postcode? [FT]

Methodology: The following inclusion criteria was used to determine whether a response should be considered valid, based on the location of respondents' home and work addresses. A response was considered valid if at least one of a respondent's home, primary work or secondary work addresses was based within York or North Yorkshire. The vast majority of respondents home, primary and secondary creative economy work addresses were all within York and North Yorkshire, however there were some examples of respondents for whom either their home or primary/secondary work addresses were based outside of York/North Yorkshire.

| Postcode | Area | Number of Census Responses | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| | | Count | Percentage |
| YO31, YO24, YO1, YO23, YO32, YO26, YO10, YO19, YO30 | York | 84 | 41.0 |
| YO12, YO11, YO13 | Scarborough | 22 | 10.7 |
| HG1, HG3, HG2 | Harrogate | 19 | 9.3 |
| YO7 | Thirsk | 9 | 4.4 |
| YO21 | Whitby | 8 | 3.9 |
| YO62 | Helmsley/Kirkbymoorside/Nawton | 7 | 3.4 |
| YO8, DN14 | Selby | 7 | 2.9 |
| TS9 | Stokesley/Great Ayton | 6 | 2.9 |
| YO17 | Malton/Norton | 6 | 3.4 |
| BD20, BD23 | Skipton | 4 | 2.0 |
| DL7 | Northallerton | 2 | 1.0 |
| HG4 | Ripon | 2 | 1.0 |
| LS24 | Tadcaster | 2 | 1.0 |
| YO61 | Easingwold | 2 | 1.0 |
| LS25 | Sherburn-in-Elmet | 2 | 1.0 |
| YO22 | Robin Hood's Bay | 2 | 1.0 |
| YO41 | Stamford Bridge/Wilberfoss/Elvington | 2 | 1.0 |
| YO18 | Pickering/Thornton-le-Dale | 2 | 1.0 |
| DL8 | Bedale/Leyburn/Hawes | 2 | 1.0 |
| BD24 | Settle | 1 | 0.5 |
| DL10 | Richmond | 1 | 0.5 |
| HG5 | Knaresborough | 1 | 0.5 |
| YO14 | Filey | 1 | 0.5 |
| DL9 | Catterick Garrison | 1 | 0.5 |
| YO60 | Sheriff Hutton | 1 | 0.5 |
| TS15 | Hutton Rudby | 1 | 0.5 |
| LS17, LS26 | N/A (Leeds) | 1 | 0.5 |
| DL1 | N/A (Darlington) | 2 | 1.0 |
| YO42 | N/A (East Riding of Yorkshire) | 1 | 0.5 |
| TS16 | N/A (Stockton-on-Tees) | 1 | 0.5 |
| WF1 | N/A (Wakefield) | 1 | 0.5 |
| LS22 | N/A (Wetherby) | 1 | 0.5 |
| YO6 | N/A (York) | 1 | 0.5 |

Table 1: Distribution of census responses by the first half of respondents' home address postcodes, showing counts and percentages across postcode areas. (n = 205)

Methodology:

The choropleth map shown in Figure 4 was produced using postcode boundary data from the Ordnance Survey Code-Point® with Polygons data set (Version: May 2025) [10] and local authority boundary data from the Office for National Statistics [11]. The postcode boundary data was used to create the outward code boundaries, enabling a density mapping representation of respondents' home address outward code data, also shown in Table 1. In Figure 4 darker shades indicate areas with a higher concentration of responses and lighter areas represent lower response counts.

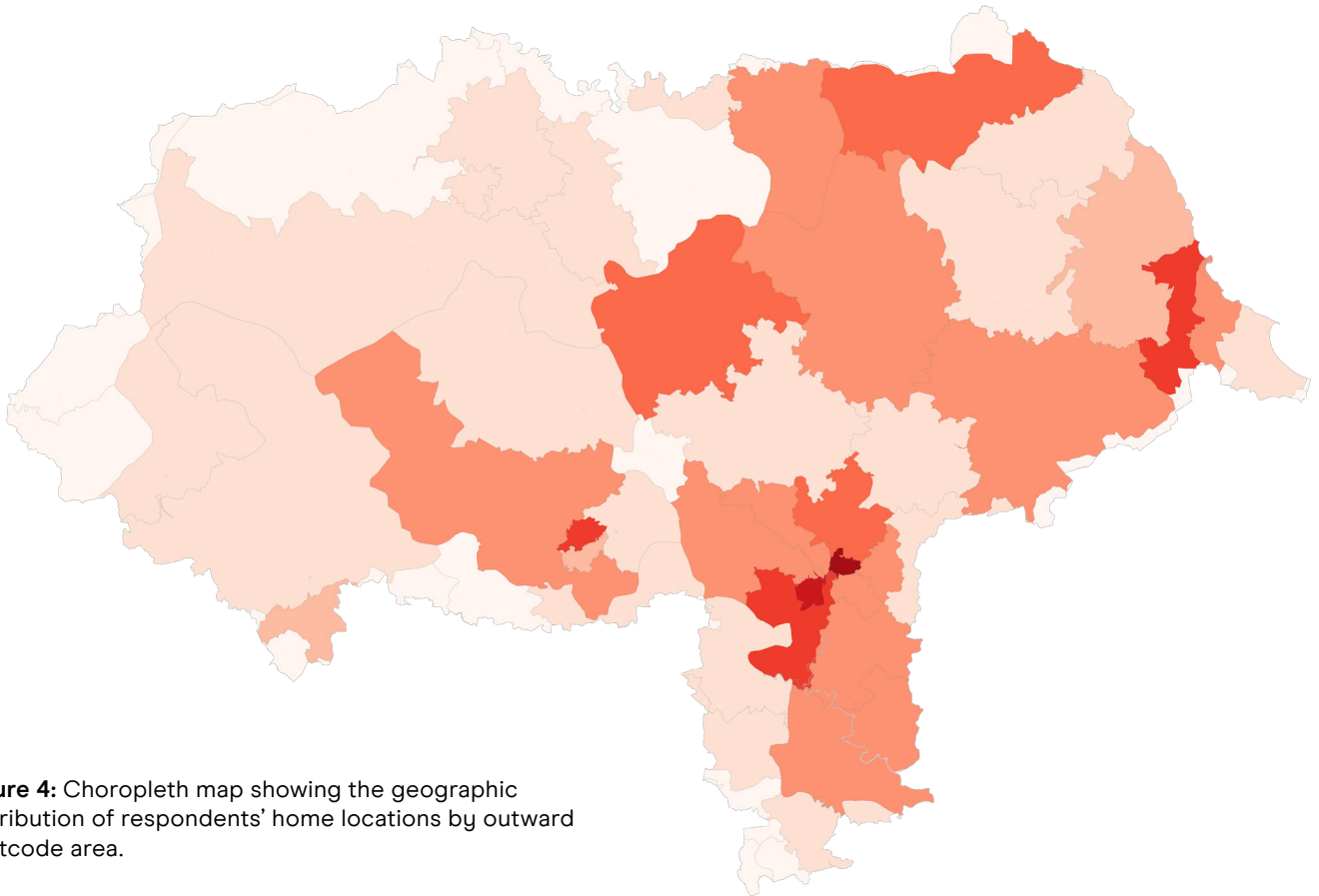


Figure 4: Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' home locations by outward postcode area.

2.3 Geographic classification of respondents' home addresses

Q. Which of the following terms best describes the community in which you live? [MC]

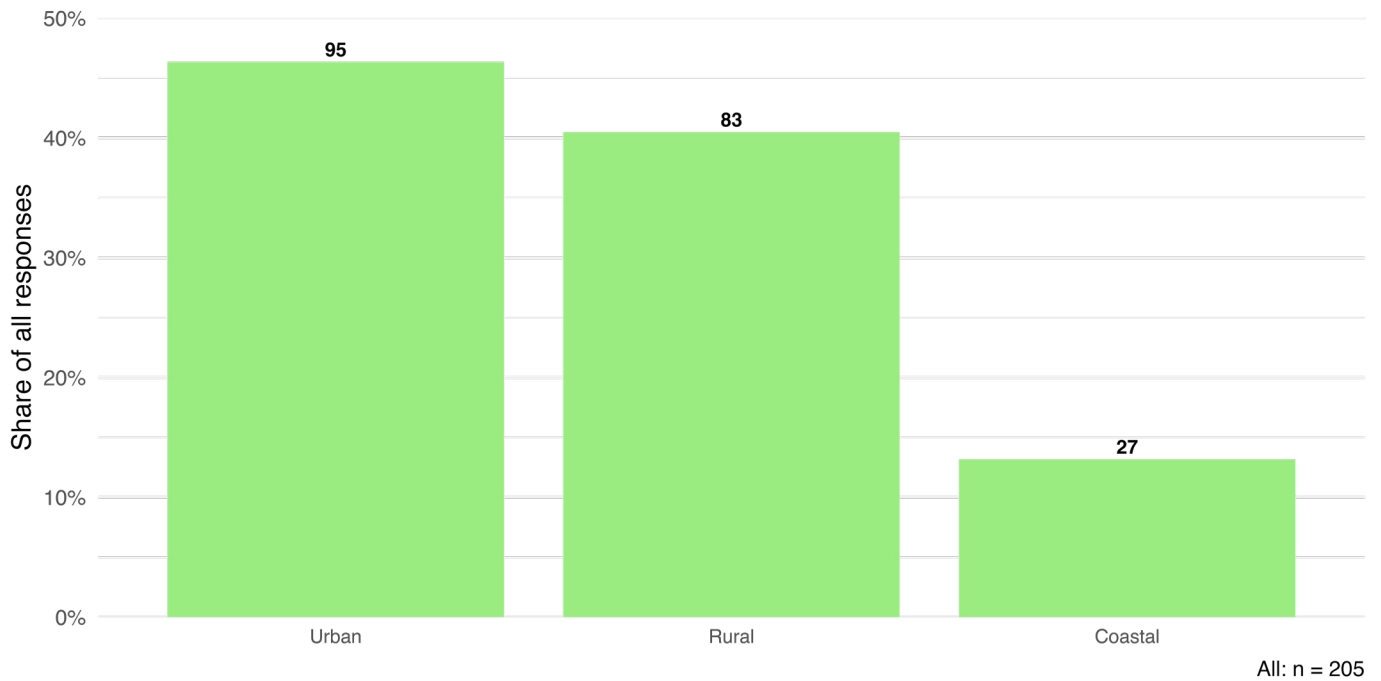


Figure 5: Geographical classification of the community in which respondents

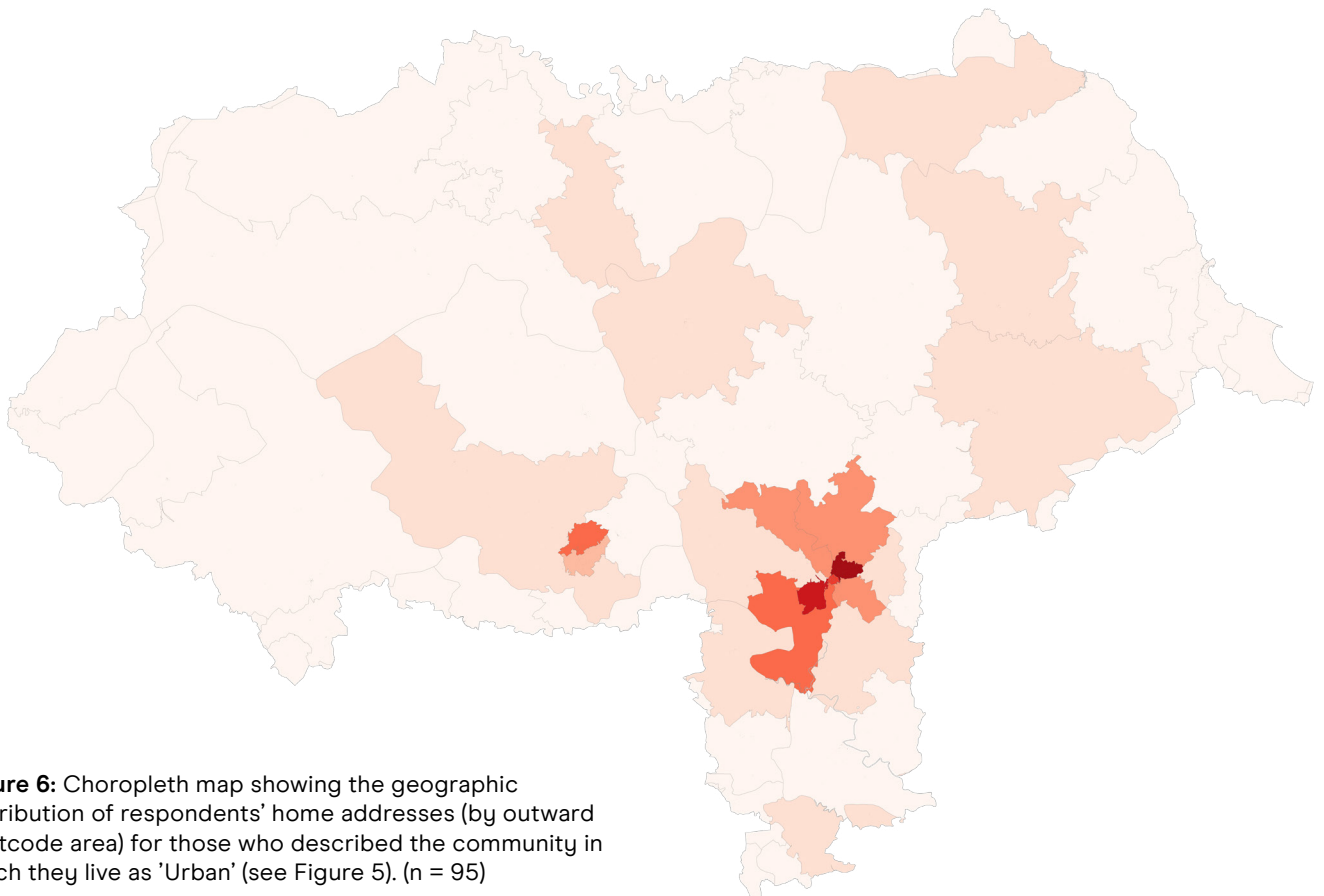


Figure 6: Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' home addresses (by outward postcode area) for those who described the community in which they live as 'Urban' (see Figure 5). (n = 95)

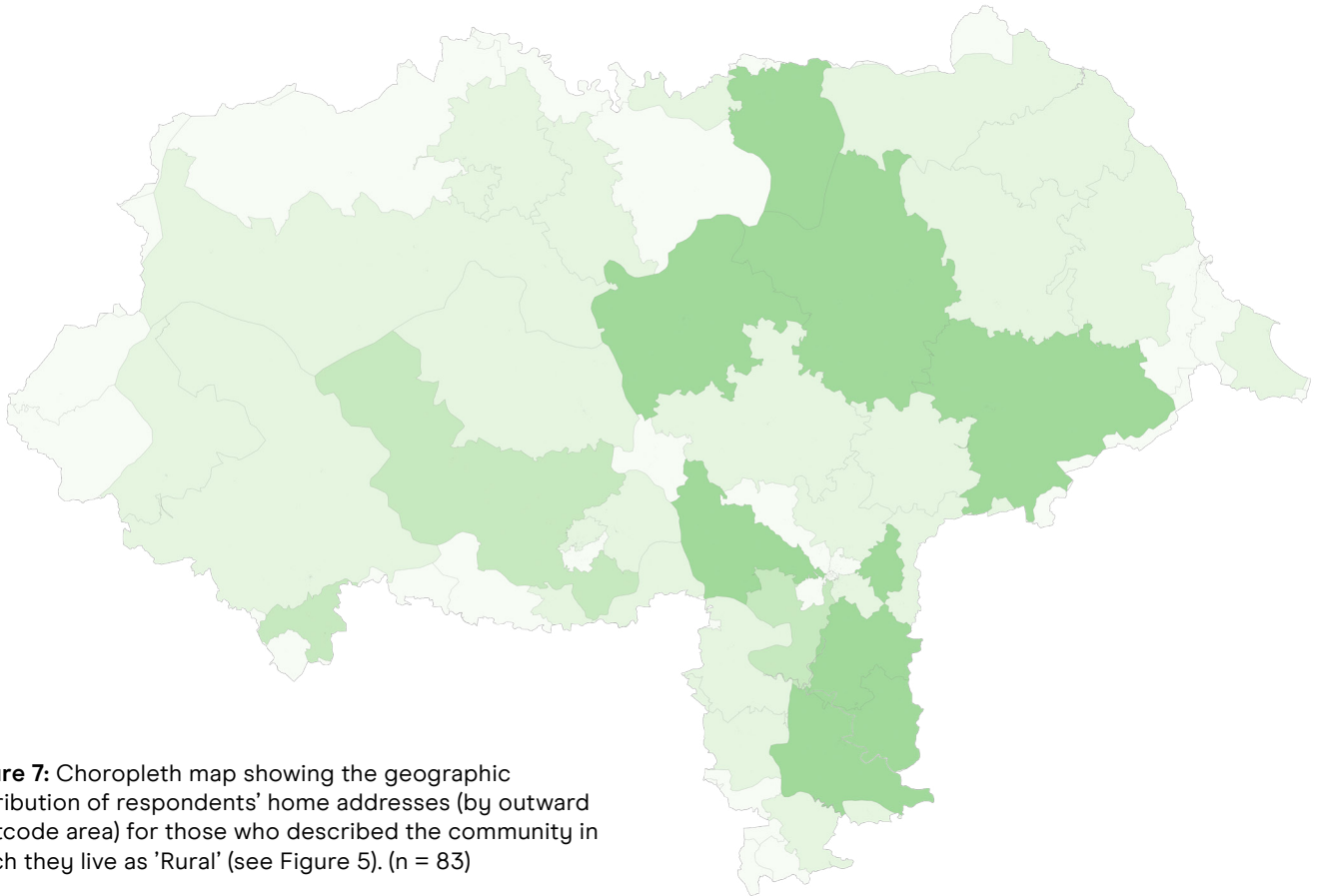


Figure 7: Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' home addresses (by outward postcode area) for those who described the community in which they live as 'Rural' (see Figure 5). (n = 83)

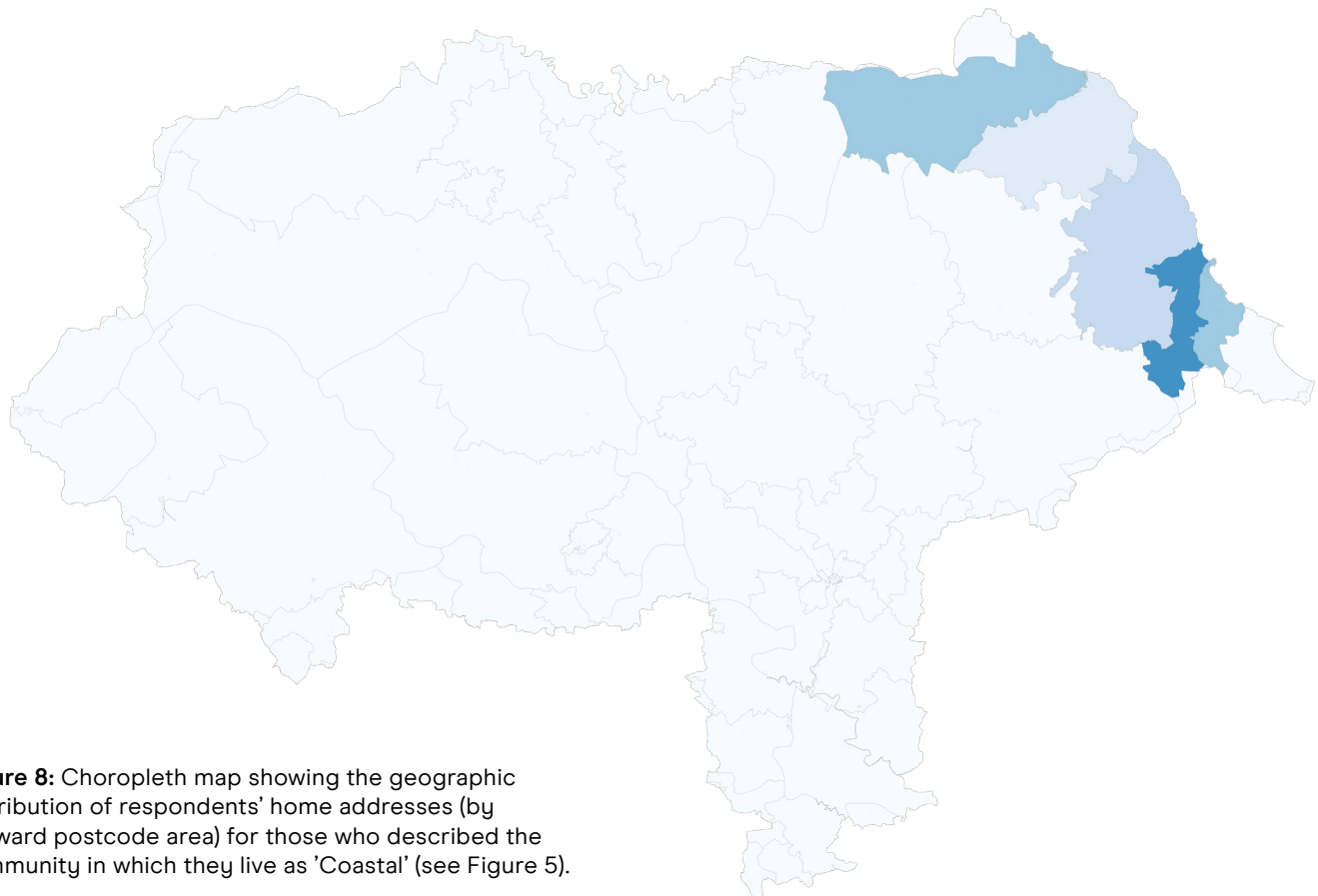


Figure 8: Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' home addresses (by outward postcode area) for those who described the community in which they live as 'Coastal' (see Figure 5).

2.4 Number of creative economy roles per respondent

Q.Q.

Methodology:

The results presented in Figure 9 are combined from two separate questions in the survey, the first asking respondents if they made more than one role in the York/North Yorkshire creative economy and the second question (conditional on the first) asked how many different roles they held.

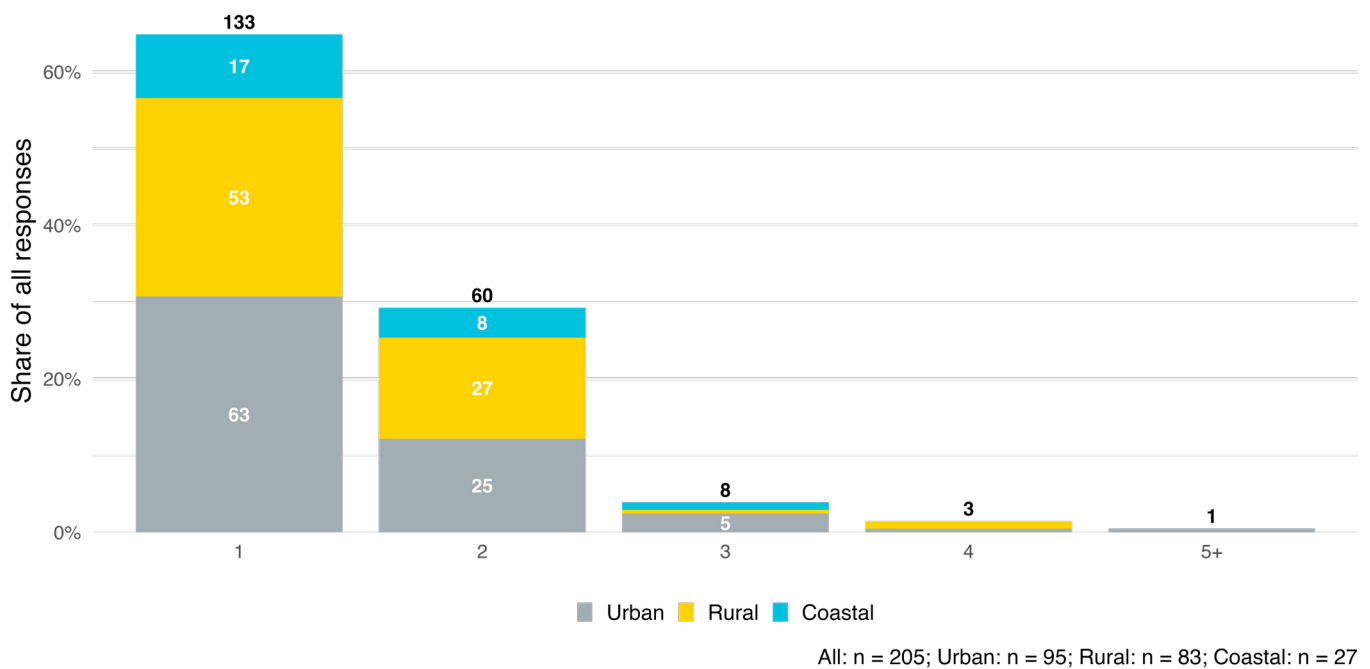


Figure 9: Number of creative economy roles held by respondents, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

3. Respondents' primary and secondary creative economy roles

| Key findings | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. | The top five most common locations for respondents' businesses or organisations were York (44%), Scarborough (12%), Harrogate (8%), Whitby (5%), and Selby (4%). |
| 2. | 87% of respondents' roles were based within the Creative Industries, while 13% were in creative occupations in other industries external to the Creative Industries. |
| 3. | The top five Creative Industries subsectors amongst respondents roles were Music, performing and visual arts (40%), Film, TV, video, radio and photography (12%), Advertising and marketing (11%), Crafts (10%) and Design (9%). |
| 4. | 60% of roles were as freelancers, sole proprietors or one-person businesses. |
| 5. | 41% of respondents' creative economy roles overlapped with the heritage sector. |
| 6. | 84% of respondents earned half or more of their income from creative economy work. |

3.1 Creative economy employment type

Methodology:

In this section of the census display logic was used (based on the answer to the prior 'number of roles in the creative economy' question) to control whether respondents were shown a single set of questions (which only referred to a single creative economy role), or two sets of questions (which referred to respondents' primary and secondary roles). In the case of the later, respondents were asked to respond to the primary role questions first (which were mandatory), before then moving on to the secondary role questions (which were optional).

Q. Which of the following options best describes your creative economy role?

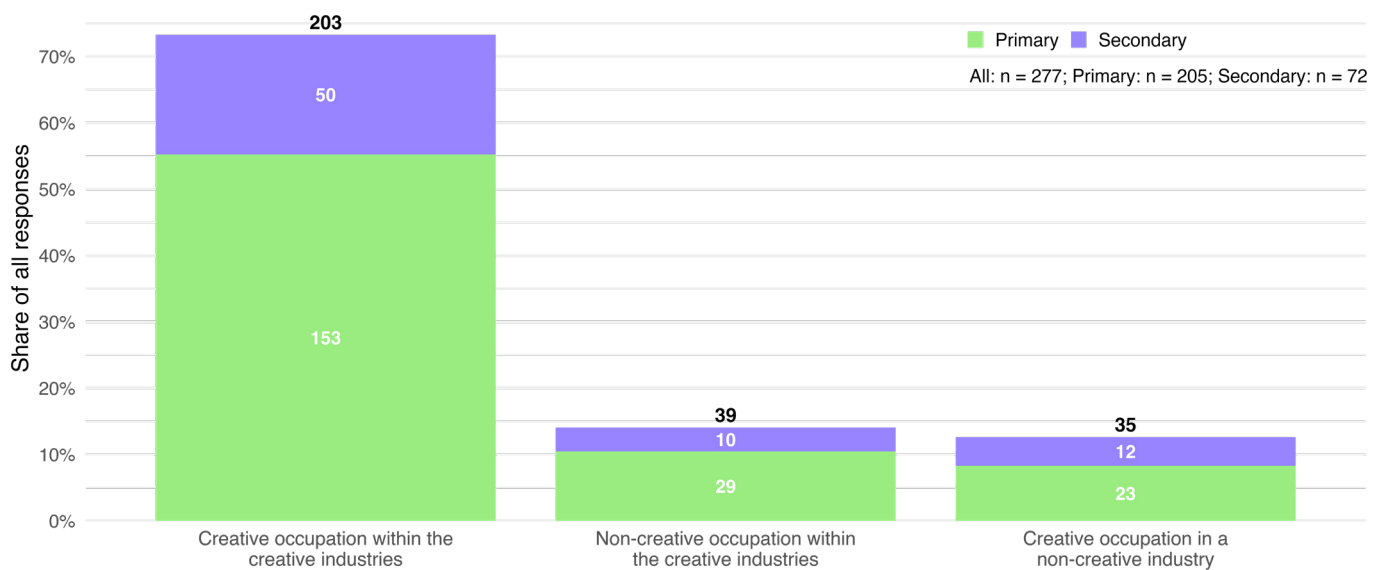


Figure 10: Distribution of respondents' creative economy employment types, distinguishing between primary and secondary roles.

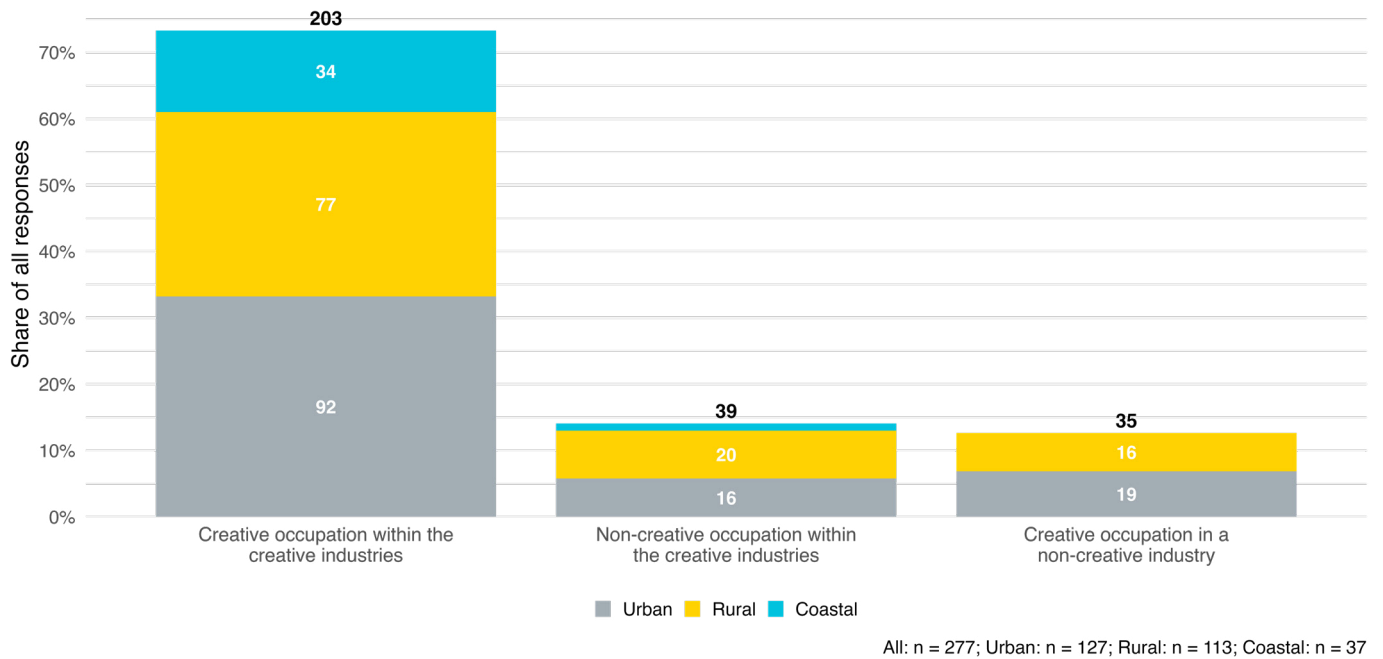


Figure 11: Distribution of respondents' creative economy employment types, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

3.2 Employment status

Q. Which of the following options best describes your creative economy role?

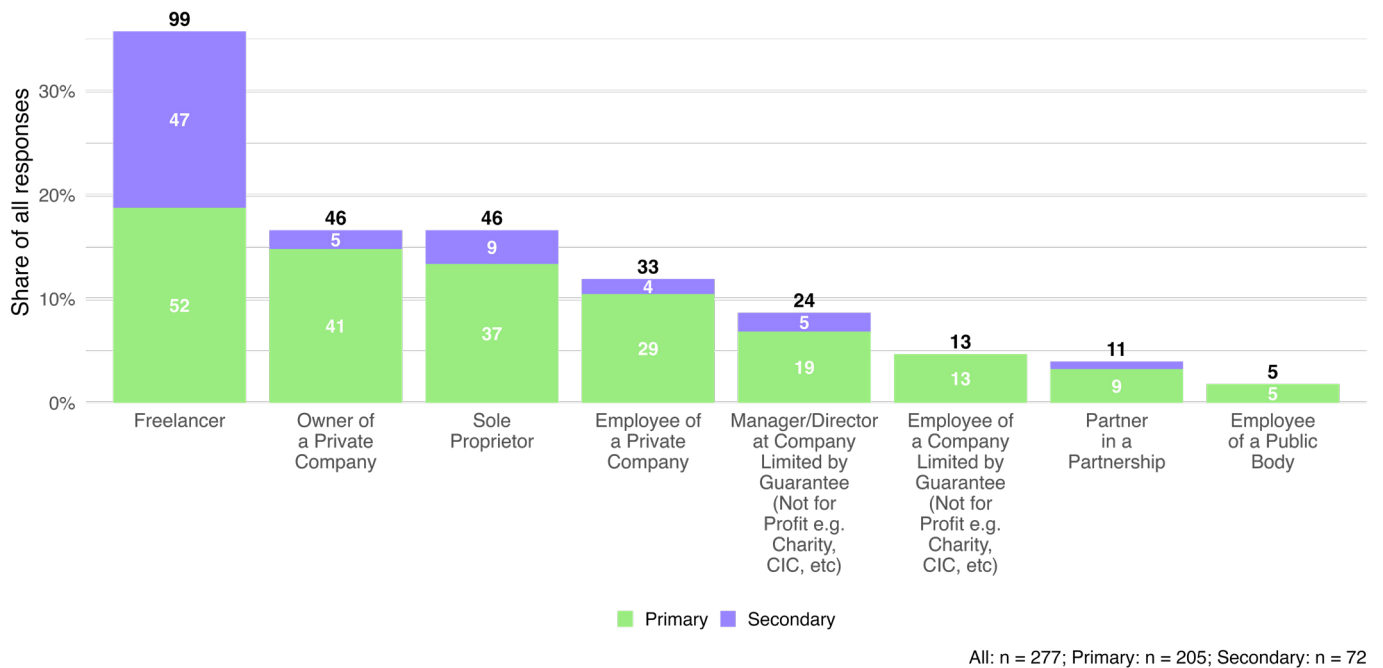
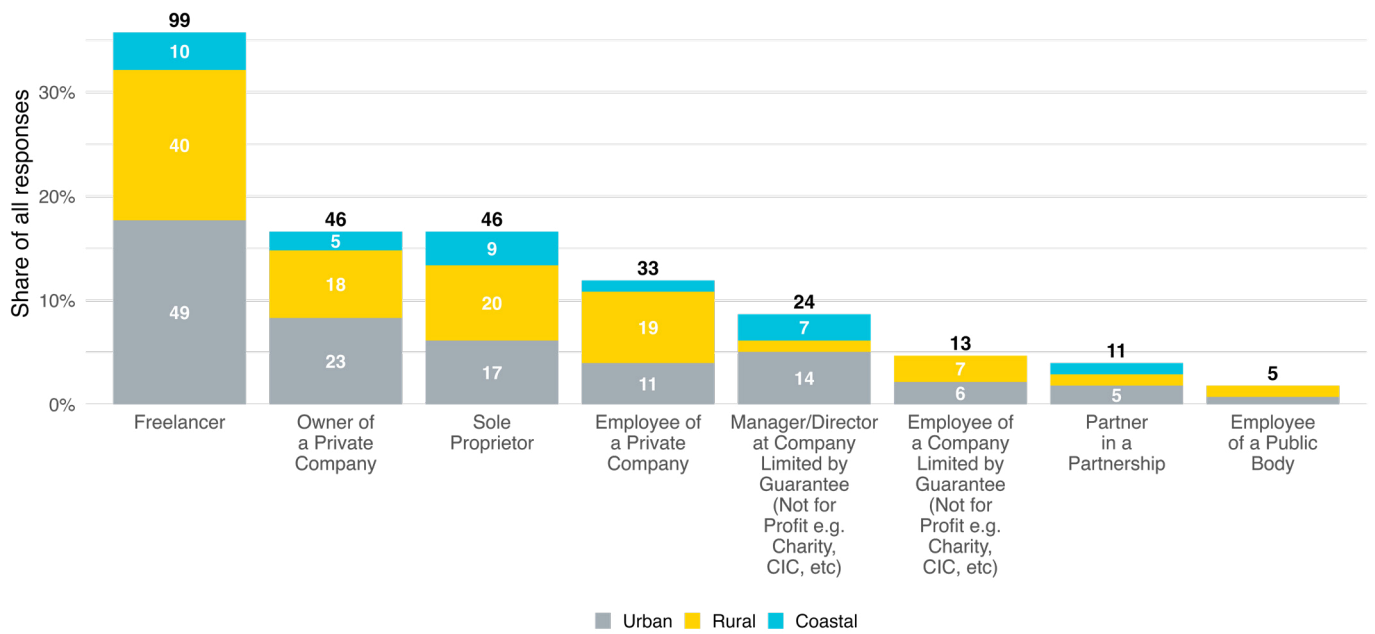


Figure 12: Distribution of respondents' creative economy employment status, distinguishing between primary and secondary roles.



All: n = 277; Urban: n = 127; Rural: n = 113; Coastal: n = 37

Figure 13: Distribution of respondents' creative economy employment status, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

3.3 Location of respondents' businesses/organisations

Q. What is the first half of your business/organisations' postcode? [FT]

| Postcode | Area | Number of Census Responses | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| | | Count | Percentage |
| YO1, YO31, YO23, YO26, YO24, YO10, YO19, YO32, YO30 | York | 120 | 43.8 |
| YO12, YO11, YO13 | Scarborough | 34 | 12.4 |
| HG1, HG2 | Harrogate | 21 | 7.7 |
| YO21 | Whitby | 13 | 4.7 |
| YO8, DN15 | Selby | 12 | 4.4 |
| YO7 | Thirsk | 10 | 3.6 |
| YO62 | Helmsley/Kirkbymoorside/Nawton | 9 | 3.3 |
| TS9 | Stokeley/Great Ayton | 7 | 2.6 |
| HG4 | Ripon | 5 | 1.8 |
| BD23, BD20 | Skipton | 5 | 1.8 |
| YO17 | Malton | 4 | 1.5 |
| DL8 | Bedale/Leyburn/Hawes | 4 | 1.5 |
| DL10 | Richmond | 3 | 1.1 |
| YO41 | Stamford Bridge/Wilberfoss/Elvington | 3 | 1.1 |
| BS24 | Settle | 2 | 0.7 |
| DL7 | Northallerton | 2 | 0.7 |
| LS24 | Tadcaster | 2 | 0.7 |
| LS25 | Sherburn-in-Elmet | 2 | 0.7 |
| YO61 | Easingwold | 2 | 0.7 |
| HG5 | Knaresborough | 1 | 0.4 |
| DL9 | Catterick Garrison | 1 | 0.4 |
| YO14 | Filey | 1 | 0.4 |
| YO22 | Robin Hood's Bay | 1 | 0.4 |
| YO60 | Sheriff Hutton | 1 | 0.4 |
| TS15 | Hutton Rudby | 1 | 0.4 |
| YO18 | Pickering/Thornton-le-Dale | 1 | 0.4 |
| LS9, LS10, LS18 | N/A (Leeds) | 3 | 1.1 |
| LS22 | N/A (Wetherby) | 1 | 0.4 |
| S11 | N/A (Sheffield) | 1 | 0.4 |
| HU15 | N/A (East Riding of Yorkshire) | 1 | 0.4 |
| RG12 | N/A (Bracknell Forest) | 1 | 0.4 |

Table 2: Distribution of census responses by the first half of respondents' primary and secondary business/organisation postcodes, showing counts and percentages across postcode areas. (n = 274)

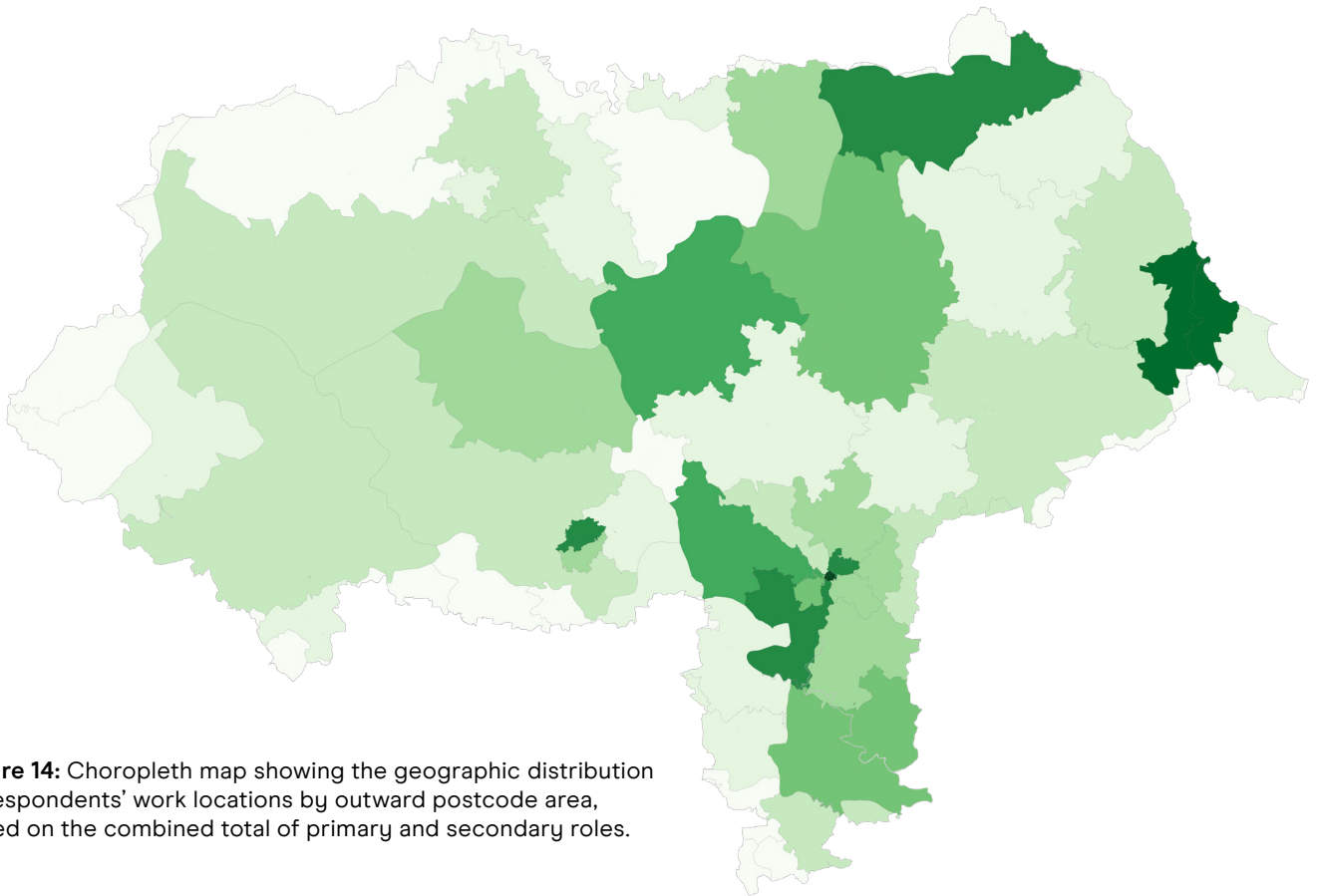


Figure 14: Choropleth map showing the geographic distribution of respondents' work locations by outward postcode area, based on the combined total of primary and secondary roles.

3.4 Business/organisation creative economy industry/subsector

Methodology:

The question options that were shown to participants in this section were determined by responses to the creative economy employment type question for primary and secondary roles. If respondents selected the 'Creative occupation within the Creative Industries' option they were provided with lists of question options for Creative Industries subsectors, Creative Industries subsector sub-groups [12–14], creative occupation groups and creative occupation sub-groups [13, 14]. If respondents selected the 'Non-creative occupation within the Creative Industries' option they were provided with lists of question options for Creative Industries subsectors, Creative Industries sub-groups [12–14] and major occupation groups [15]. If respondents selected the 'Creative occupation in a non-creative industry' option they were provided with lists of question options for industry/industries (based on [16]), creative occupation groups and creative occupation sub-groups [13, 14].

Creative Industries analysis

Q. Which of the following options best describes the main products and / or services of your business/organisation? [SC]

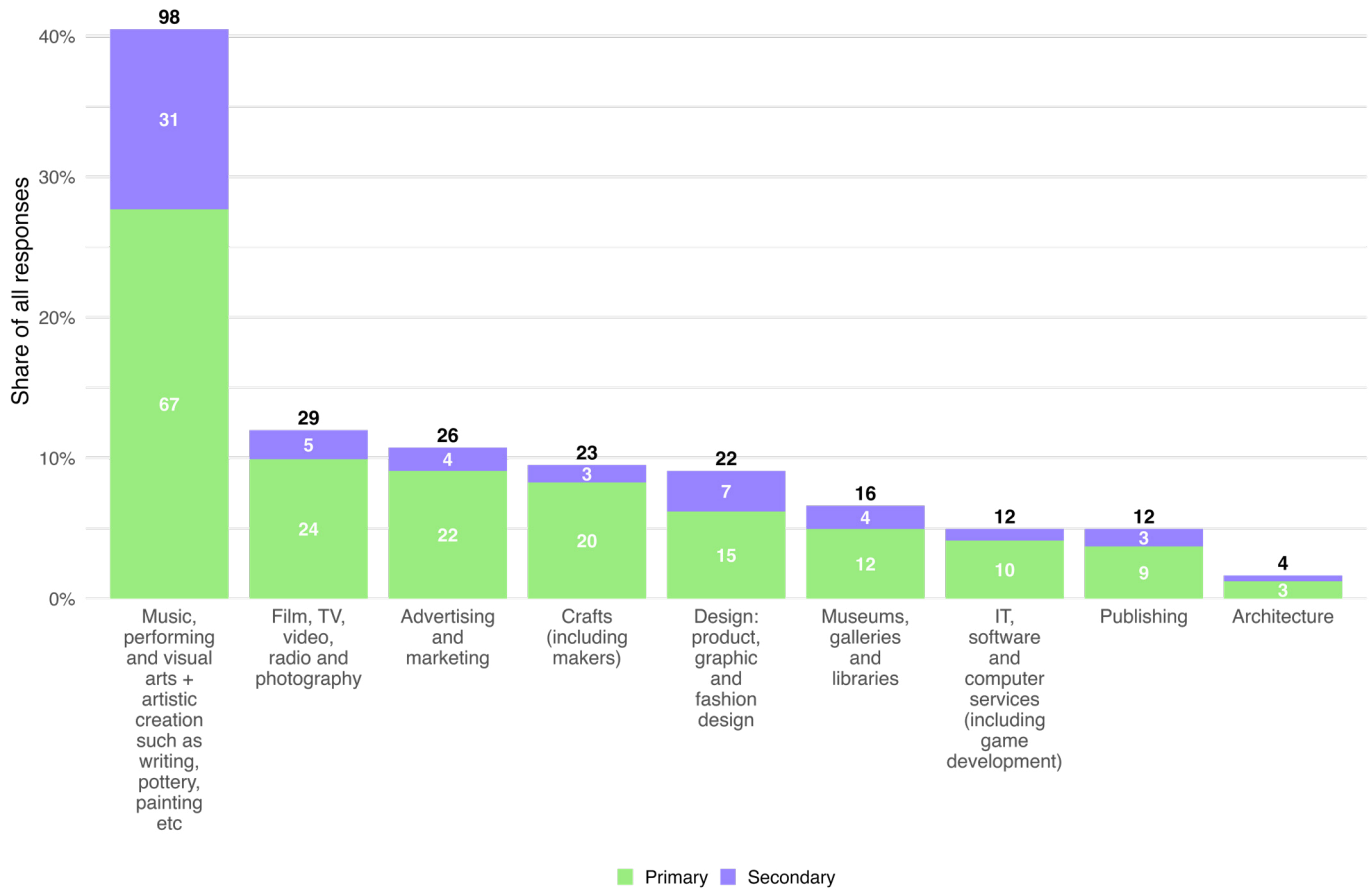
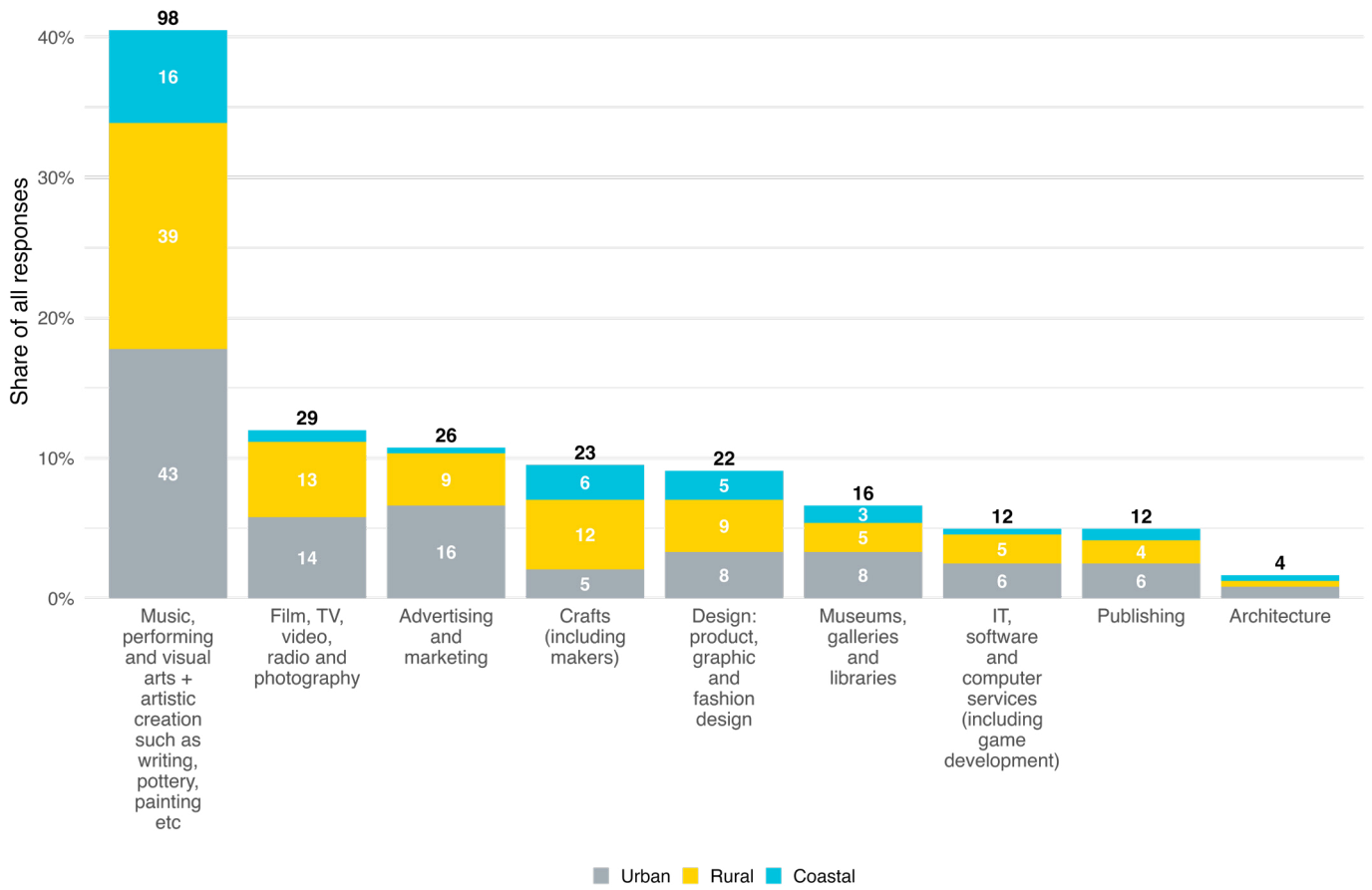


Figure 15: Creative Industries subsectors where respondents work in creative and non-creative occupations, shown by primary and secondary roles.



All: n = 242; Urban: n = 108; Rural: n = 97; Coastal: n = 37

Figure 16: Creative Industries subsectors where respondents work in creative and non-creative occupations, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. What sub-group of "x" best describes the main function of your business/organisation?



Figure 17: Breakdown of respondents' work in creative and non-creative occupations across Creative Industries subsector sub-group categories, based on the combined total of primary and secondary roles.

Other industries analysis

Q. Which of the following options best describes the main products and / or services of your business/organisation?

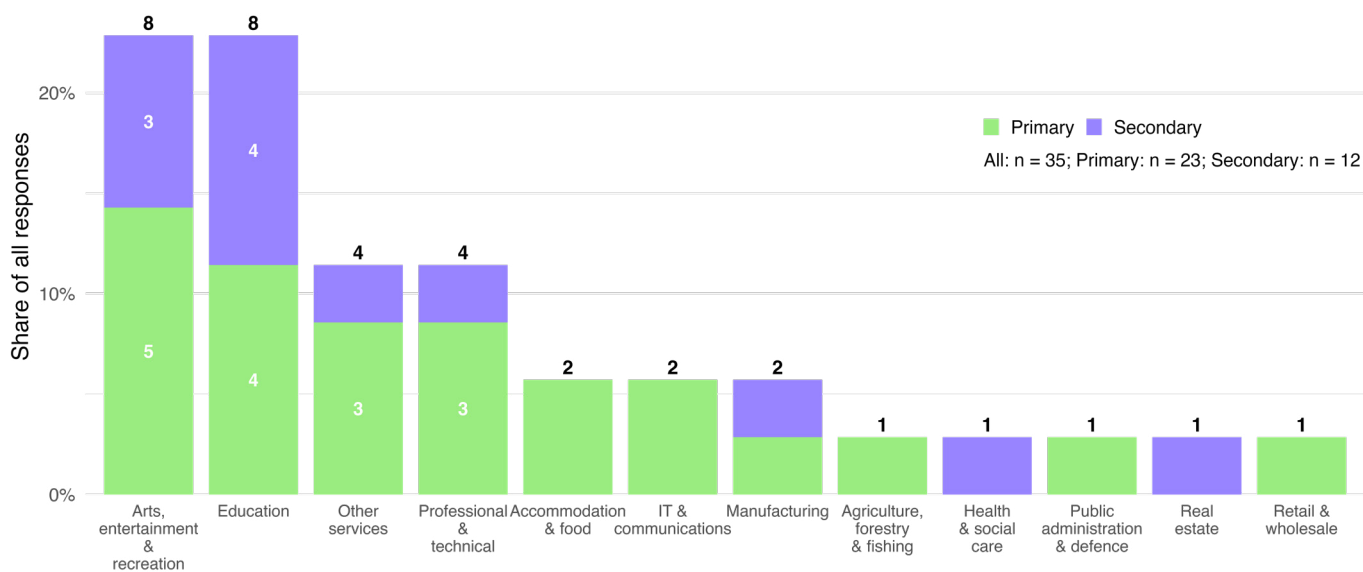


Figure 18: Industries outside the creative economy where respondents work in creative occupations, shown by primary and secondary roles.

3.5 Business/organisation creative economy occupation

Creative occupations analysis

Q. Which of the following options best describes your creative occupation at your business/organisation? [SC]

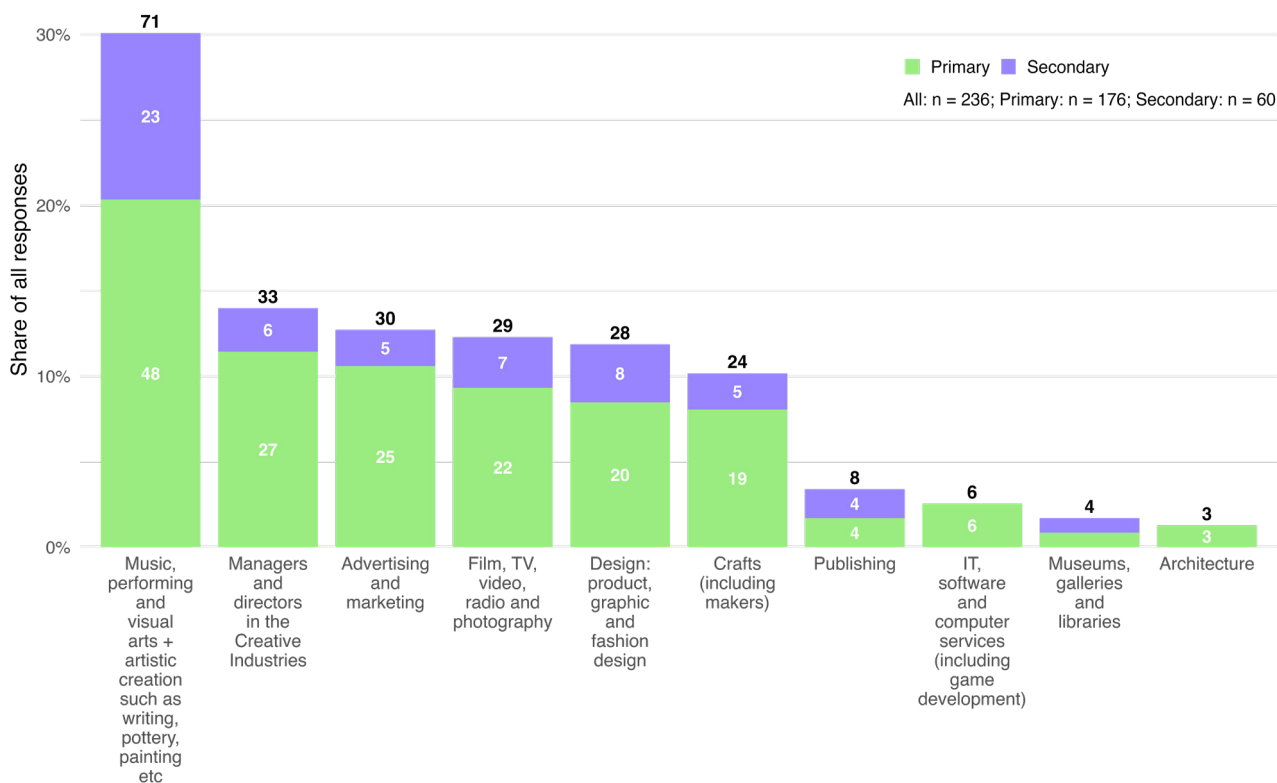


Figure 19: Creative occupation groups of respondents work in the Creative Industries and other industries, shown by primary and secondary roles.

Q. What sub-group of "x" best describes your creative occupation at your business/organisation

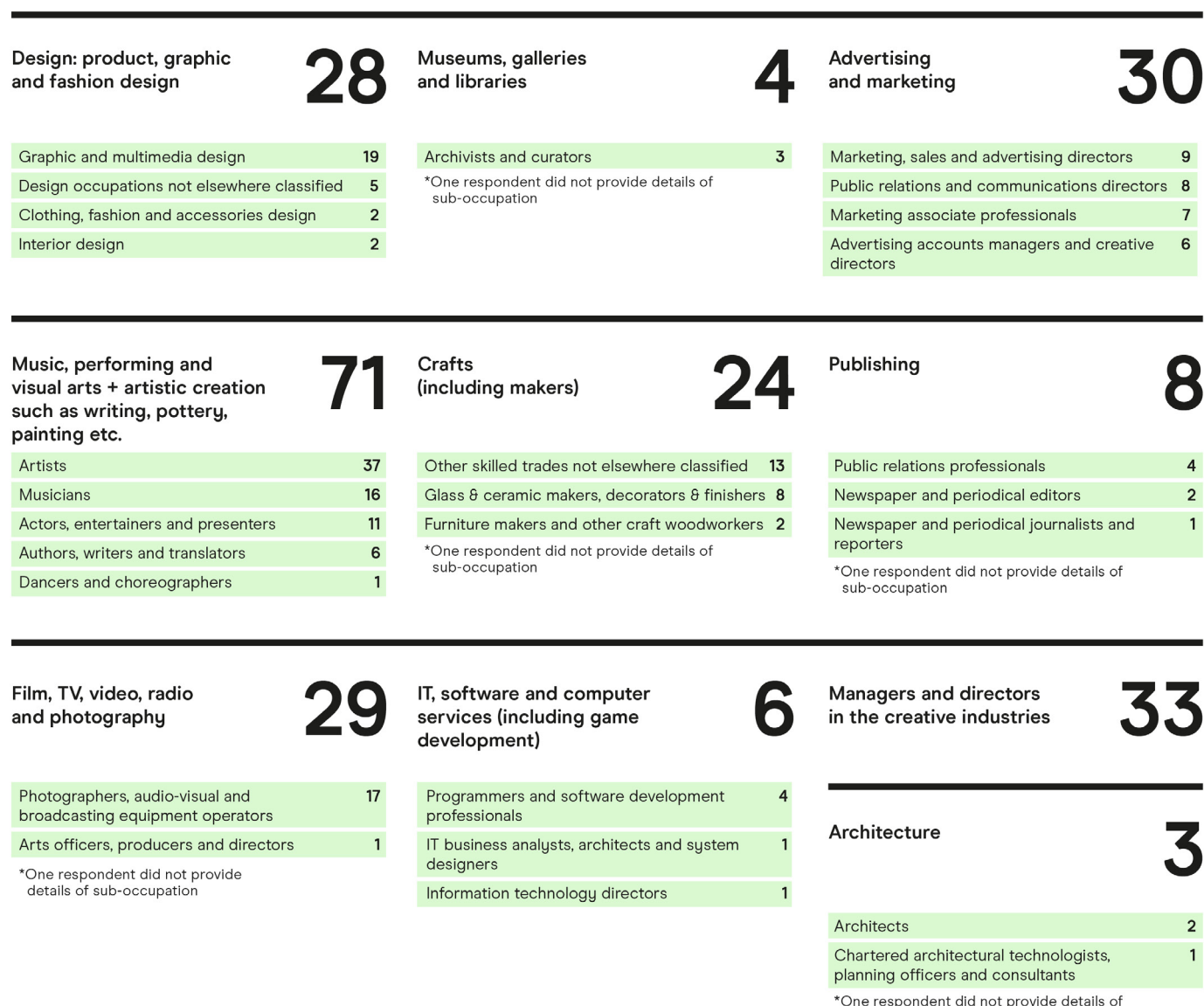


Figure 20: Breakdown of respondents' creative occupations in the Creative Industries and other industries by sub-occupation categories, based on the combined total of primary and secondary roles.

Non-creative occupations analysis

Q. Which of the following options best describes your creative occupation at your business/organisation? [SC]

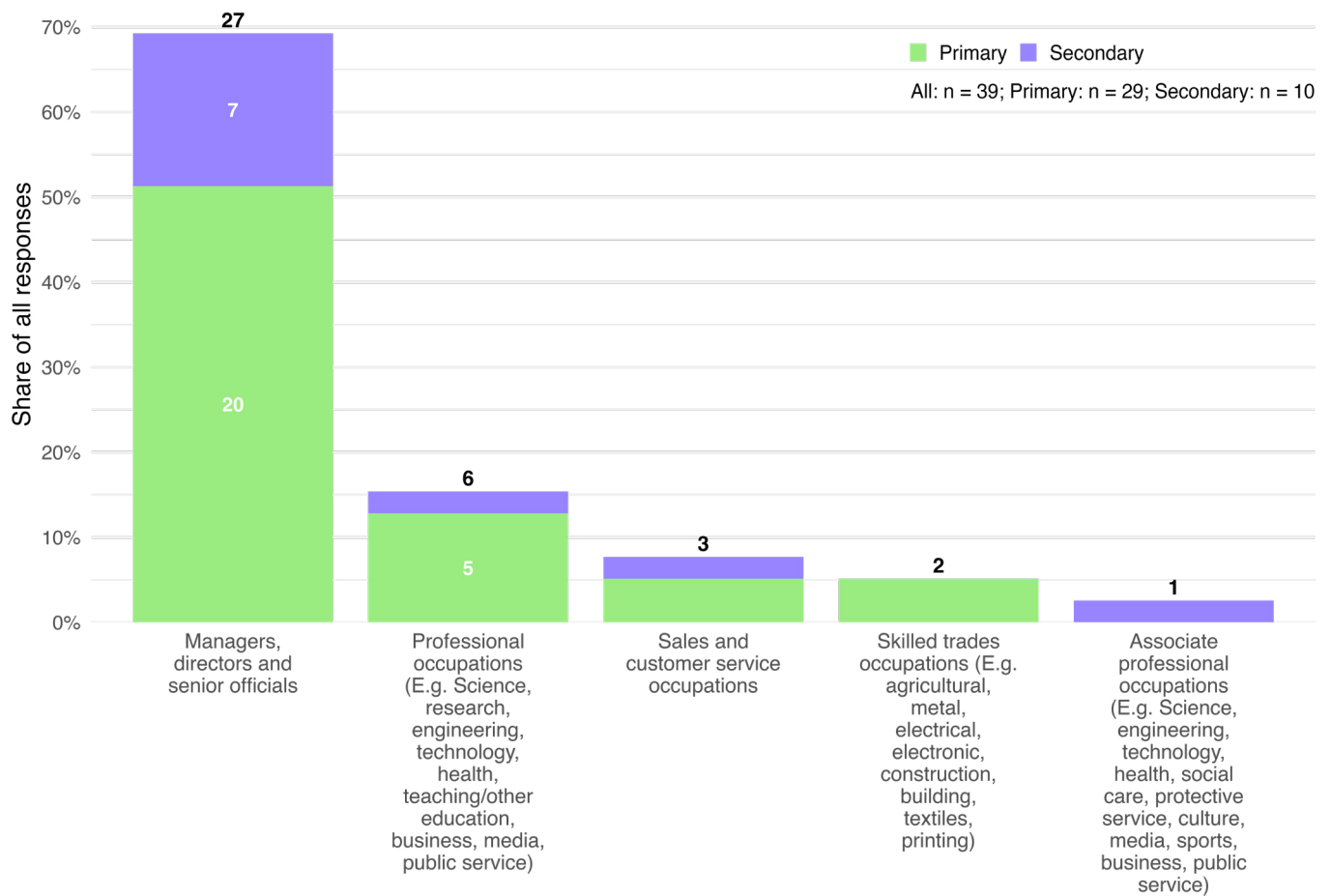


Figure 21: Non-creative occupation groups of respondents working in the Creative Industries, shown by primary and secondary roles.

3.6 Respondents' job titles/positions in the creative economy

Q. What is the position/job title of your role?

Methodology:

The responses to the above question (shown in Figure 22) are from respondents who opted in to their qualitative responses being published in reports of the census results. The data was cleaned, anonymised and the terms 'Owner', 'Founder', 'Freelance' and 'Sole Proprietor' removed from responses.



Figure 22: Job titles provided by respondents when asked to describe the position they hold within their creative economy businesses/organisations, visualised as a word cloud.

3.7 Relationship between industry and occupation

Q. Which of the following options best describes the main products and / or services of your business/organisation?

Q. Which of the following options best describes your occupation at your business/organisation?

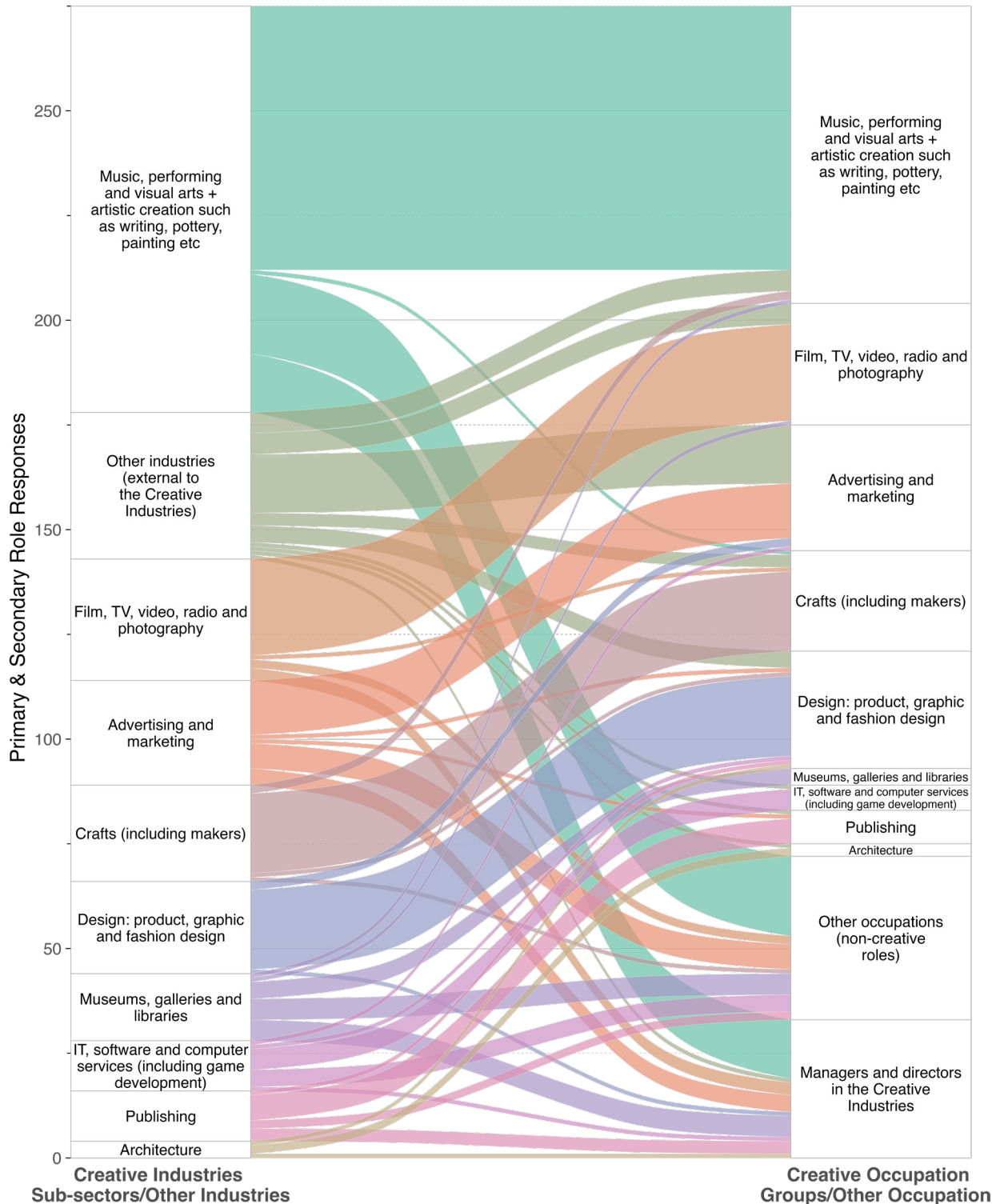


Figure 23: Flow of respondents from creative-industry sub-sectors (and other industries) into their reported occupation groups, combining both primary and secondary roles.

3.8 Working hours

Q. How many hours a week do you typically spend working in your role?

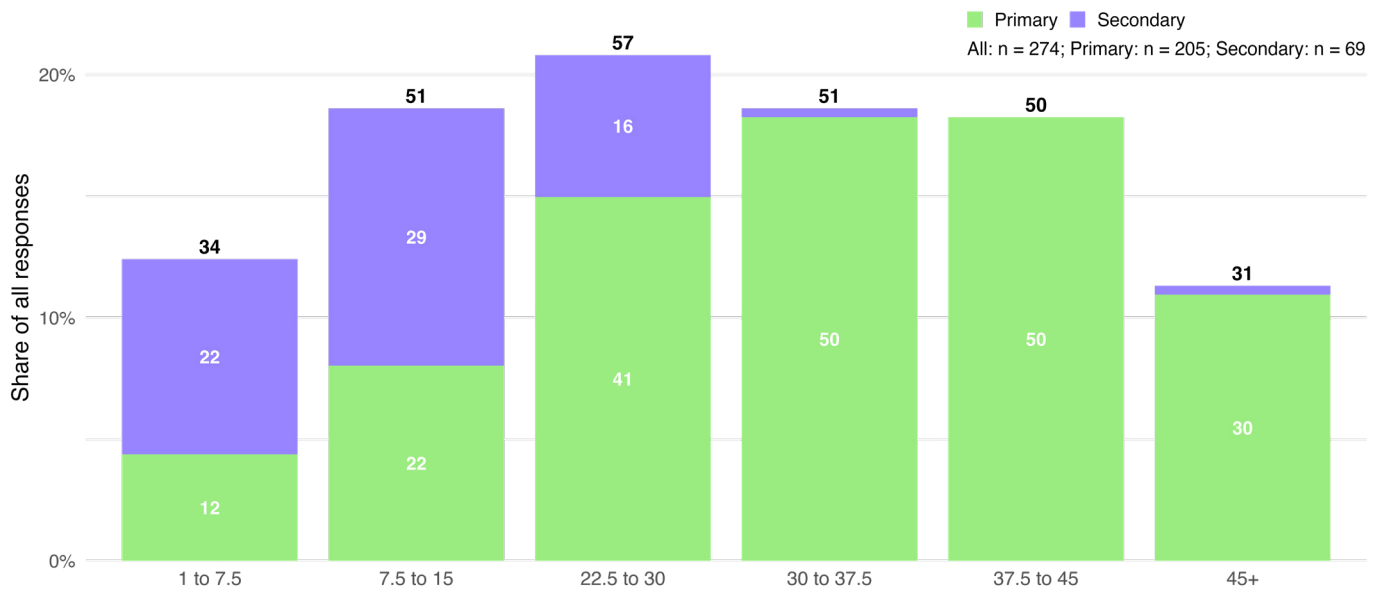


Figure 24: Weekly hours worked in respondents' primary and secondary

3.9 Age and geographical history of business/organisation

Q. How long has your business/organisation been trading/operating?

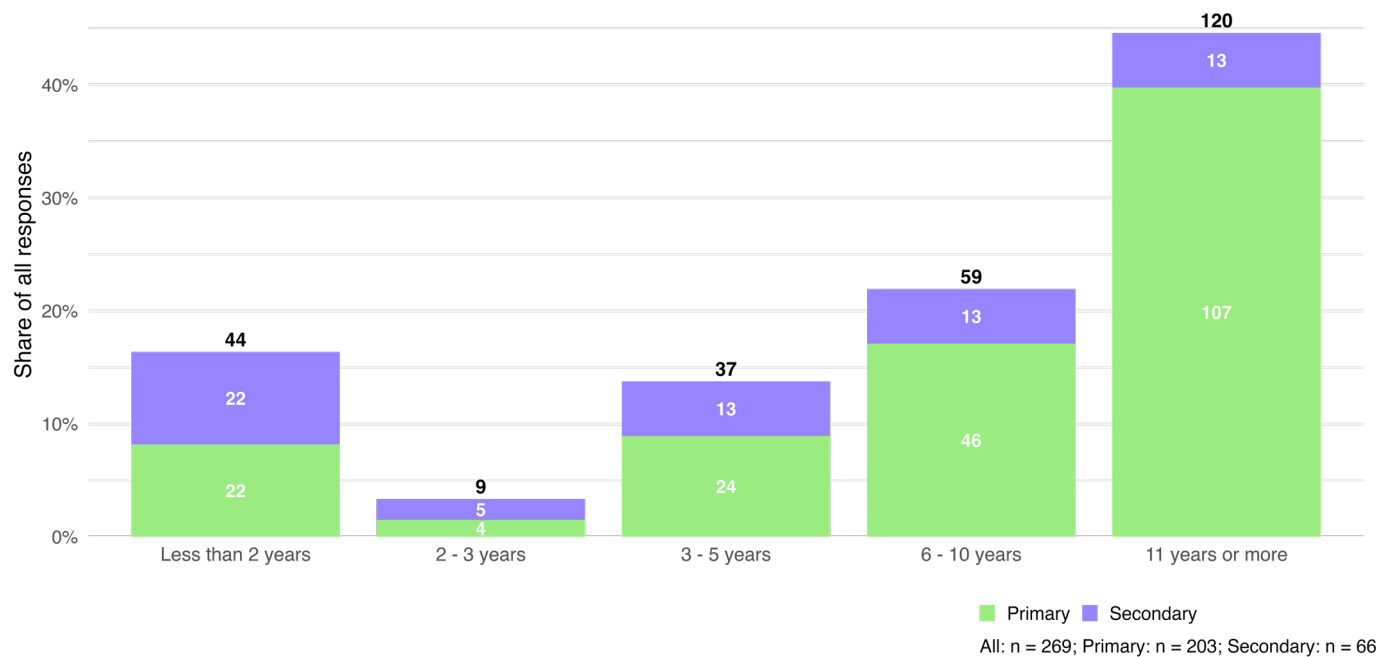


Figure 25: Length of time respondents' businesses/organisations have been trading/operating, shown by primary and secondary roles.

Q. Was your business/organisation founded in the York and North Yorkshire region?

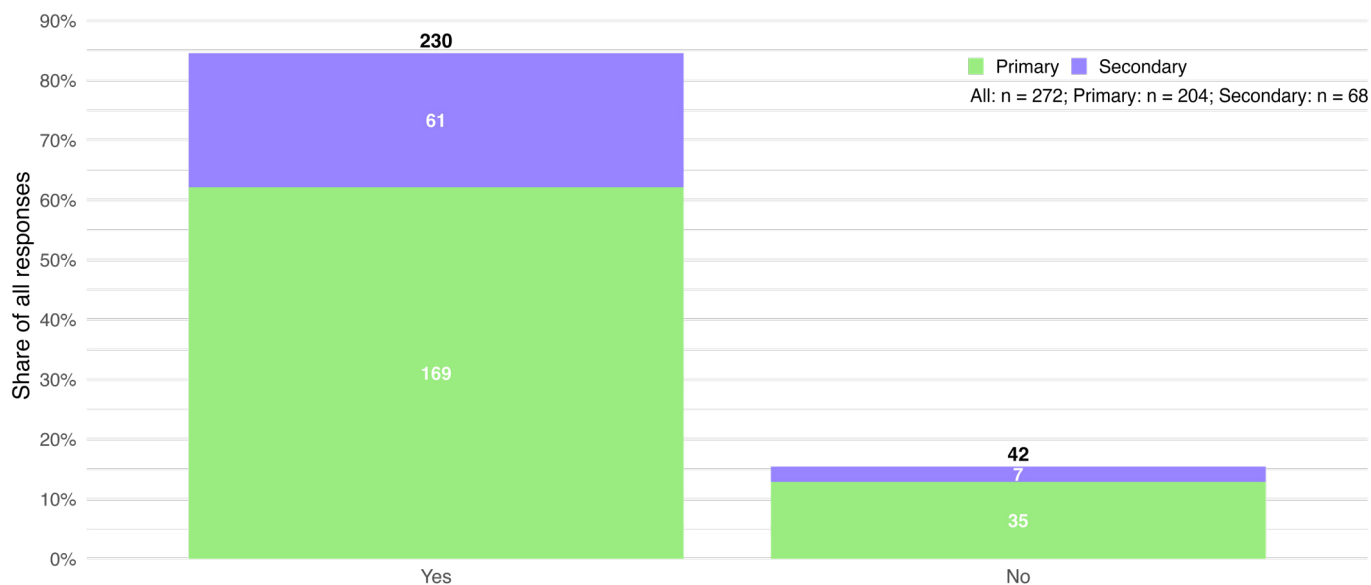


Figure 26: Distribution of whether respondents' businesses or organisations were founded in York and North Yorkshire, shown by primary and secondary role responses.

Q. If no, when did your business/organisation relocate to York/North Yorkshire?

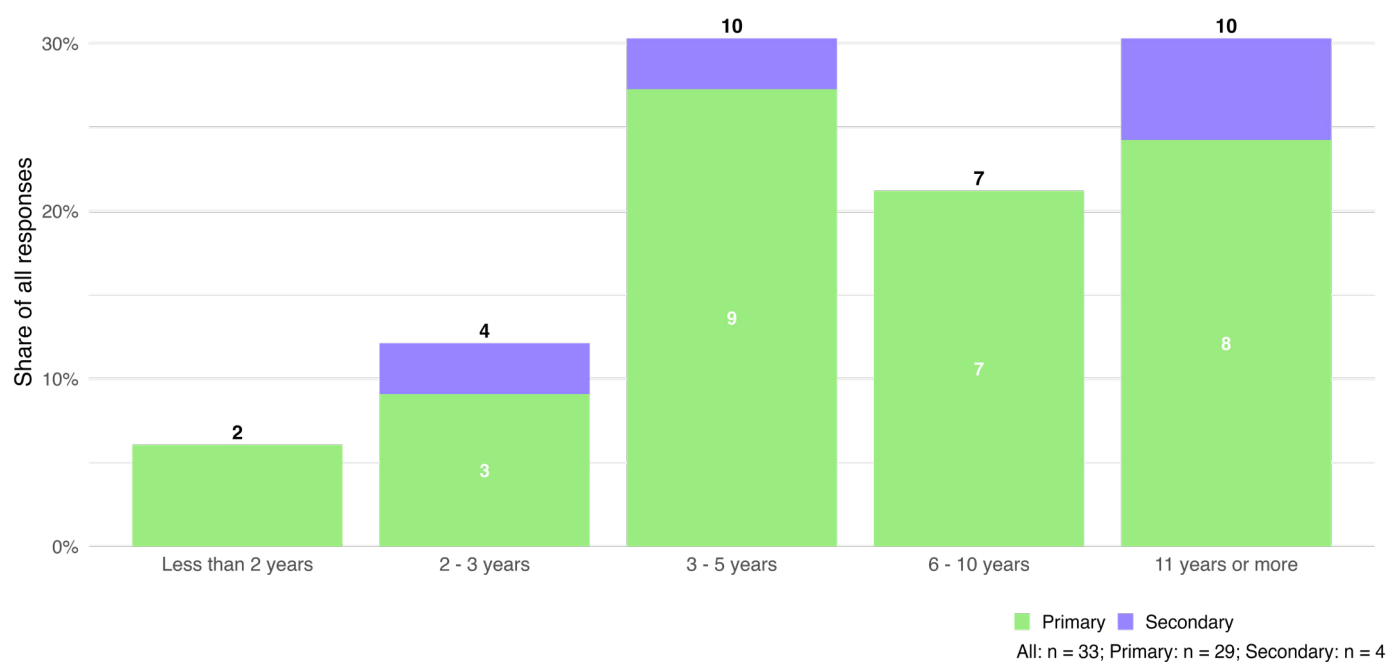


Figure 27: Length of time since respondents' businesses or organisations relocated to York/North Yorkshire, shown for primary and secondary roles.

3.10 Business/organisation employment

Creative economy analysis

Q. How many people are employed by your business/organisation? [FT]

Methodology:

As this question asked respondents to provide their response using a free text box, additional data cleaning and analyses were used to produce the statistics presented in this section.

Responses to the above question (n = 261) revealed a total of 12,897 people employed across the businesses/organisations of respondents who worked in a creative economy role. Figures 28 and 29 shows this data broken down across the numbers of people employed at individual organisations and the business size categories, respectively.

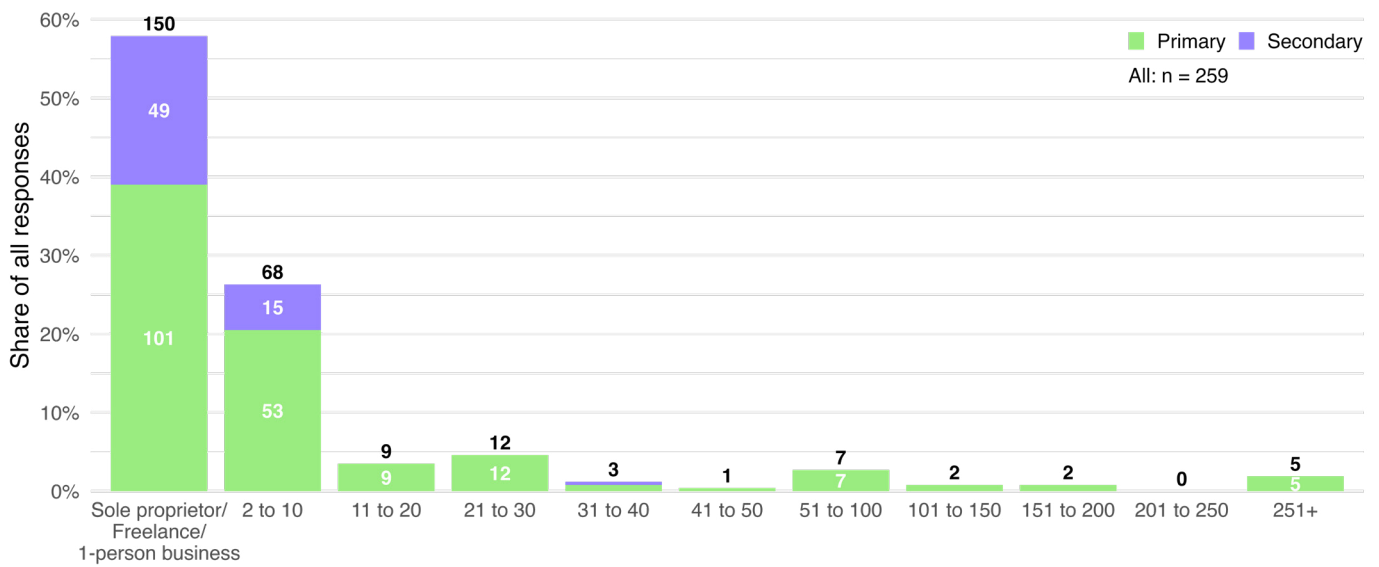


Figure 28: Number of people employed in respondents' businesses/organisations within the creative economy, shown for primary and secondary roles.

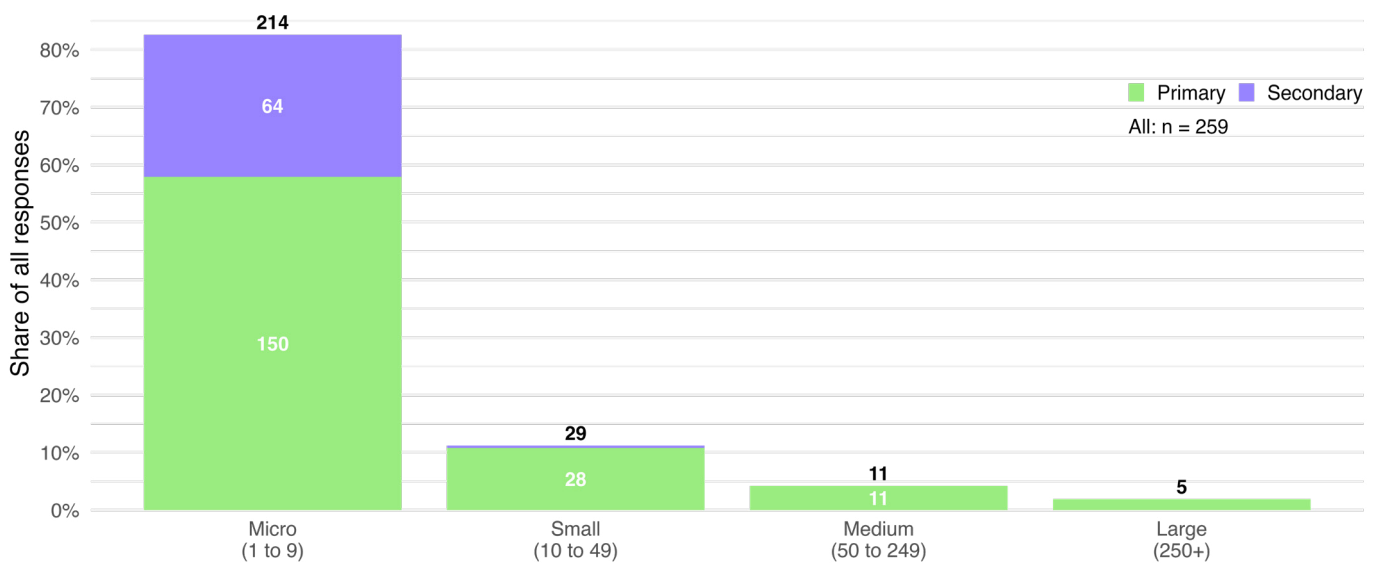


Figure 29: Business size category of respondents' businesses/organisations within the creative economy, shown for primary and secondary roles.

Of the 12,897, 3,399 (26%) people were employed at the organisations of respondents who reported being in a creative occupation within the Creative Industries, 920 (7%) people at the organisations of respondents who had a non-creative occupation within the Creative Industries and 8,578 (67%) people at the organisations of those who reported having a creative occupation in a non-creative industry.

Q. Of which, how many people are employed full-time (working more than 30 hours per week)? [FT]

Q. How many people are employed part-time (working less than 30 hours per week)? [FT]

Q. How many are temporary contract staff / seasonal workers? [FT]

Methodology:

As these question asked respondents to provide their response using a free text box, additional data cleaning and analyses were used to produce the statistics presented in this section.

Table 3 shows the numbers of people who were employed in full-time, part-time, and temporary/seasonal roles at the organisations of respondents who reported having a creative economy role. Combined, the data from these three categories (n = 200) indicate that 10,243 people were employed across the businesses and organisations of respondents working in creative economy roles. Notably, this is lower than the figure of 12,897 (n = 261) reported in the initial question on total employment within respondents’ businesses or organisations. This occurred because responses to these questions were optional. As a result, the questions about full-time, part-time, and temporary/seasonal workers received fewer total responses than the initial overall employment question.

| Employment Classification | Number of Employees | |
|---|---------------------|------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Full-time (more than 30 hours per week) | 6,186 | 60.4 |
| Part-time (less than 30 hours per week) | 2,146 | 21.0 |
| Temporary contract staff / seasonal workers | 1,911 | 18.7 |
| Total | 10,243 | 100 |

Table 3: Distribution of employees across full-time, part-time, and temporary/seasonal roles at the businesses/organisations of respondents in creative economy roles.

Creative Industries analysis

Q. How many people are employed by your business/organisation? [FT]

Methodology:

As this question asked respondents to provide their response using a free text box, additional data cleaning and analyses were used to produce the statistics presented in this section.

Creative Industries workers responses to the above question (n = 232) indicated a total of 4,319 people worked at the businesses/organisations of respondents who reported working within the Creative Industries. Figures 30 and 31 shows this data broken down across the numbers of people employed at individual organisations and the business size categories, respectively.

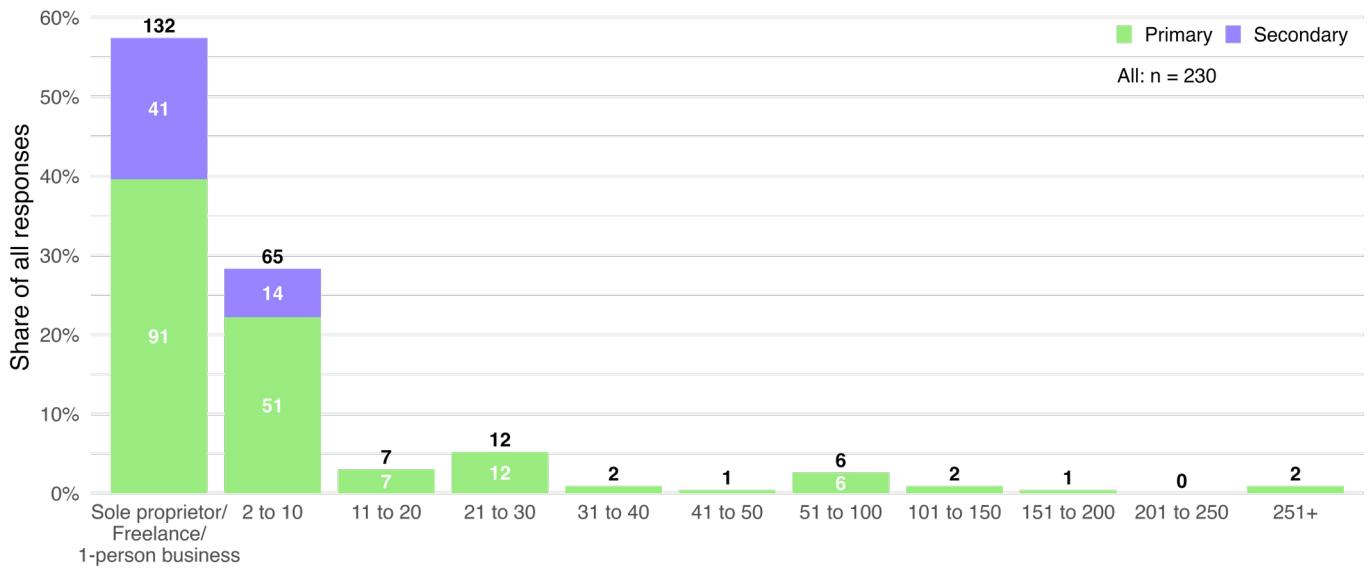


Figure 30: Number of people employed in respondents' businesses/organisations within the Creative Industries, shown for primary and secondary roles.

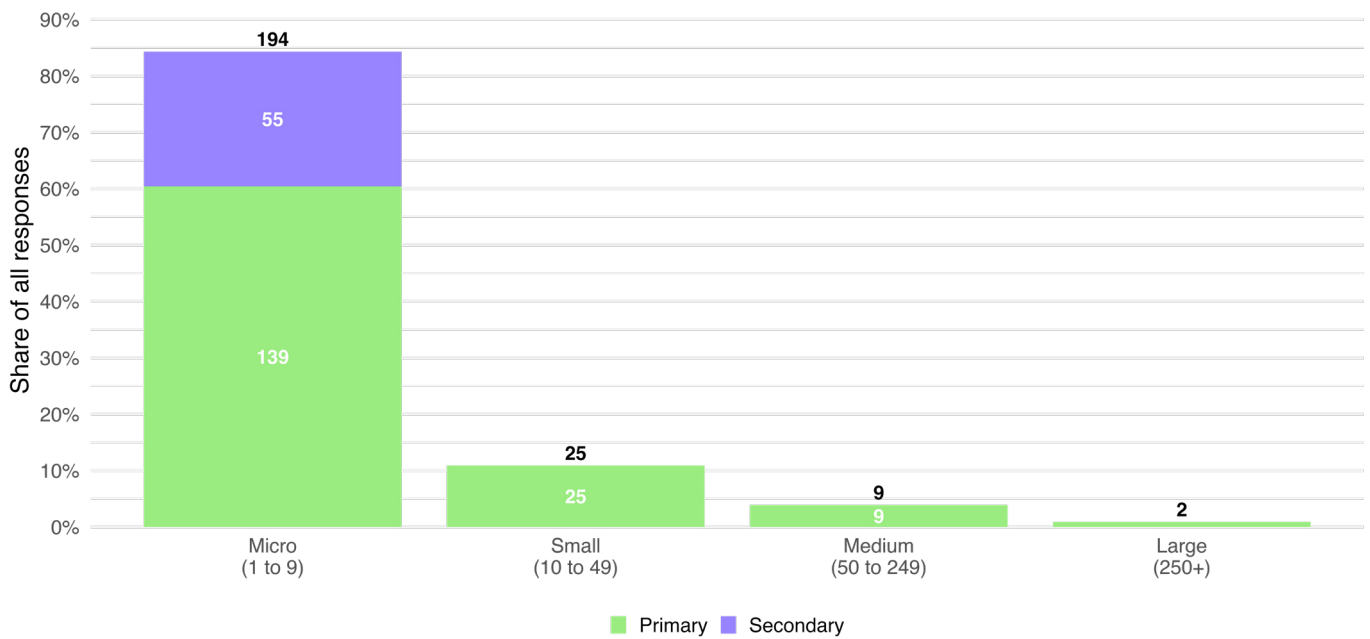


Figure 31: Business size category of respondents' businesses/organisations within the Creative Industries, shown for primary and secondary roles.

Q. Of which, how many people are employed full-time (working more than 30 hours per week)? [FT] Q. How many people are employed part-time (working less than 30 hours per week)? [FT]

Q. How many are temporary contract staff / seasonal workers? [FT]

Methodology:

As these questions asked respondents to provide their response using a free text box, additional data cleaning and analyses were used to produce the statistics presented in this section.

Table 4 shows the numbers of people who were employed in full-time, part-time, and temporary/seasonal roles at the organisations of respondents who reported having a Creative Industries role. Combined, the data from these three categories (n = 187) indicate that 2,171 people were employed across the businesses and organisations of respondents working in Creative Industries roles. Notably, this is lower than the figure of 4,319 (n = 232) reported in the initial question on total employment within respondents’ businesses or organisations. This occurred because responses to these questions were optional. As a result, the questions about full-time, part-time, and temporary/seasonal workers received fewer total responses than the initial overall employment question.

| Employment Classification | Number of Employees | |
|---|---------------------|------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Full-time (more than 30 hours per week) | 879 | 40.5 |
| Part-time (less than 30 hours per week) | 591 | 27.2 |
| Temporary contract staff / seasonal workers | 701 | 32.3 |
| Total | 2,171 | 100 |

Table 4: Distribution of employees across full-time, part-time, and temporary/seasonal roles at the businesses/organisations of respondents in Creative Industries roles.

3.11 Volunteers

Q. Do people volunteer for your organisation? [SC]

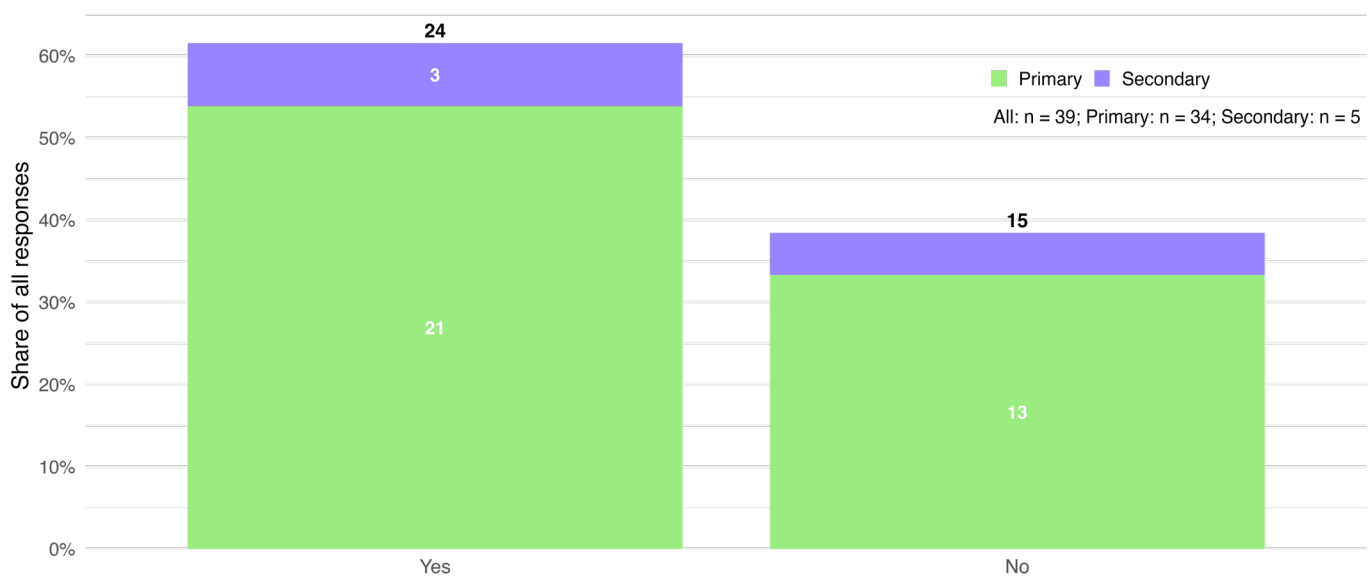


Figure 32: Whether people volunteer for respondents’ organisations, shown for primary and secondary

Q. How many people volunteered with your organisation in 2024?

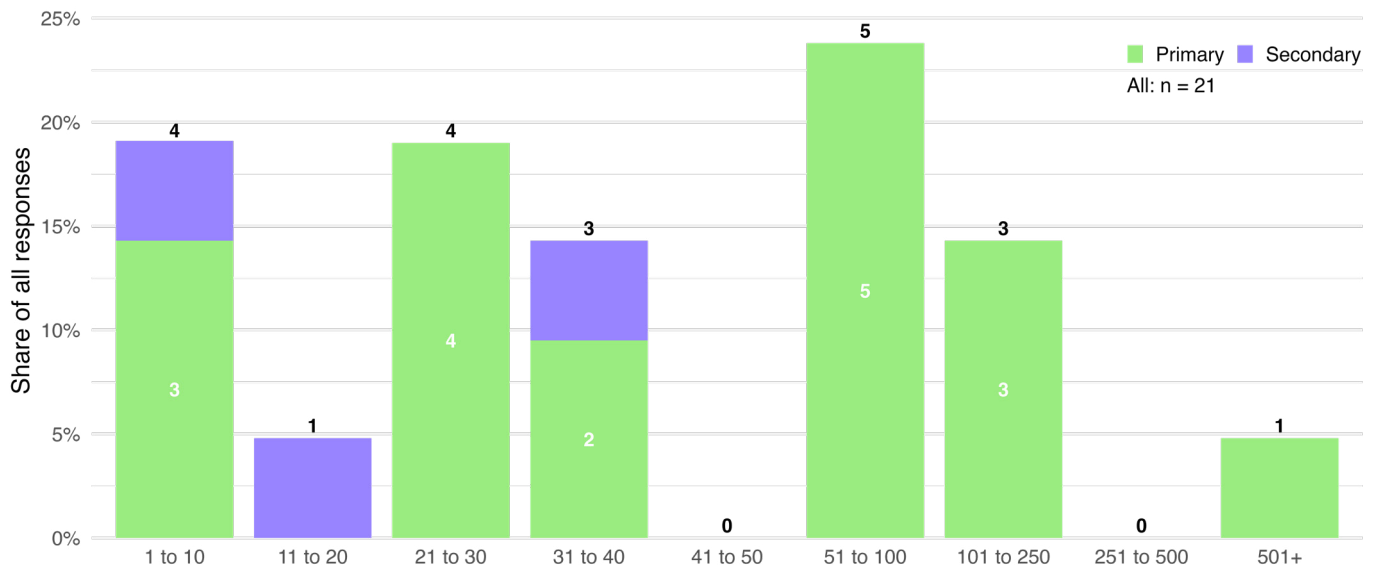


Figure 33: Number of people volunteering for respondents' organisations, shown for primary and secondary role responses.

A total of 1,707 people volunteered for respondents' organisations. All of these organisations are within the Creative Industries. Table 5 shows the Creative Industries subsector breakdown of this data.

| Creative Industries Subsector | Number of Volunteers | |
|--|----------------------|------------|
| | Count | Percentage |
| Museums, galleries and libraries | 900 | 52.7 |
| Music, performing and visual arts + artistic creation such as writing, pottery, painting etc | 727 | 42.6 |
| Crafts (including makers) | 70 | 4.1 |
| Film, TV, video, radio and photography | 10 | 0.6 |
| Advertising and marketing | 0 | 0.0 |
| Architecture | 0 | 0.0 |
| Design: product, graphic and fashion design | 0 | 0.0 |
| IT, software and computer services (including game development) | 0 | 0.0 |
| Publishing | 0 | 0.0 |

Table 5: Creative Industries subsector breakdown of people who volunteered at respondents' organisations.

Q. Is your organisation volunteer-led? [SC]

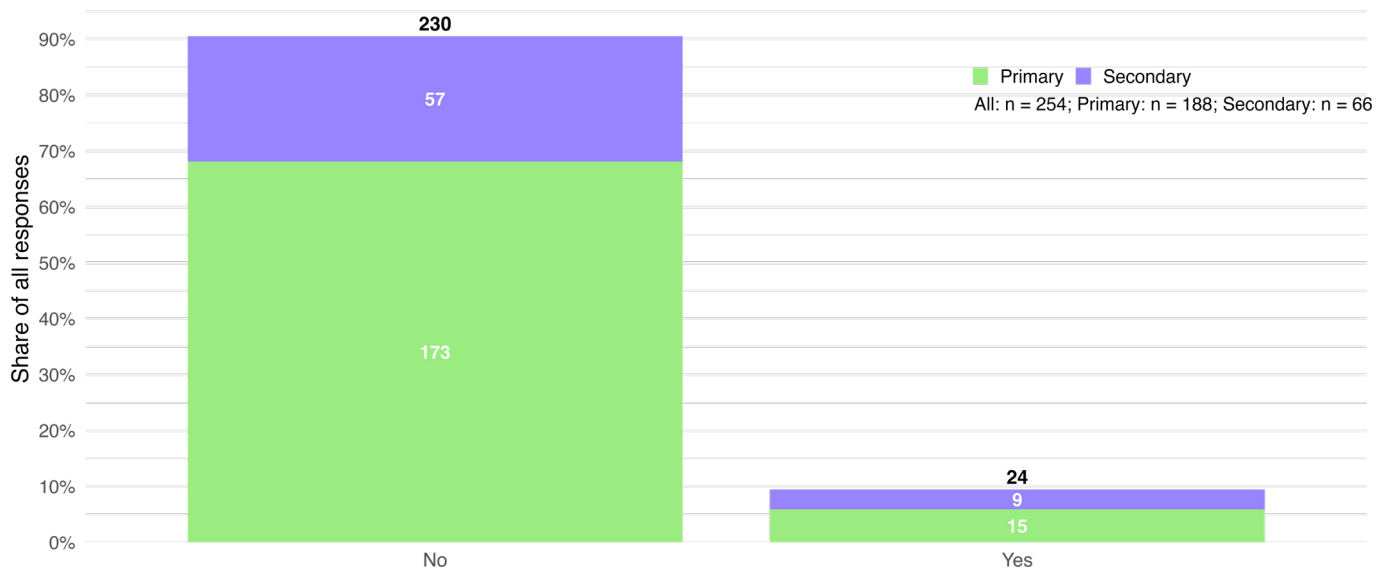


Figure 34: Whether respondents' organisations are volunteer-led, shown for primary and secondary role responses.

3.12 Workspace

Q. Does your business/organisation own or rent space within York or North Yorkshire to operate? [SC]

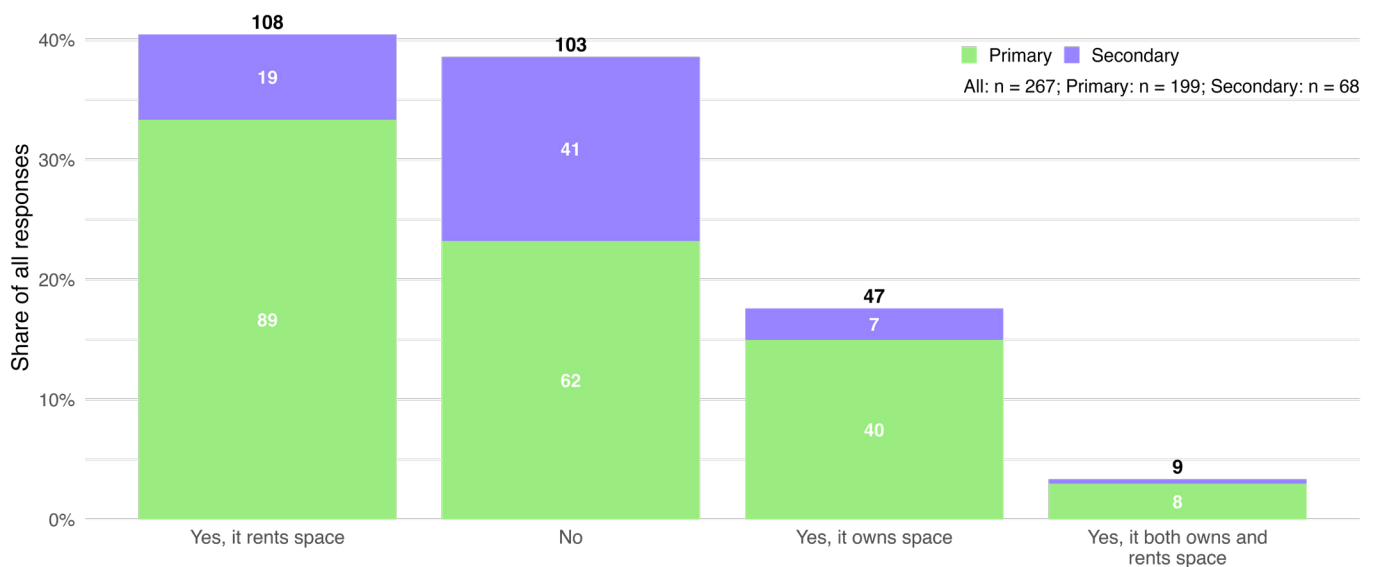


Figure 35: Whether respondents' organisations rent or own space, shown for primary and secondary role responses.

3.13 Income of business/organisation

Q. Please can you tell us the approximate annual turnover (gross income) of your business/organisation?

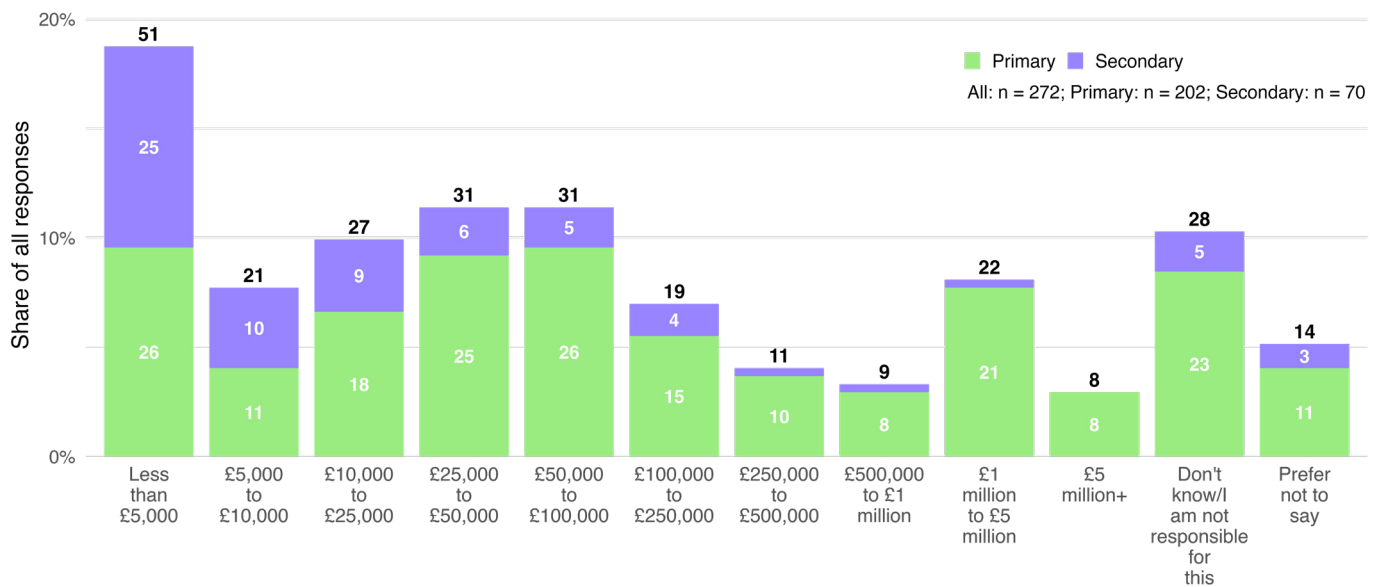


Figure 36: Annual turnover of respondents' businesses/ organisations, shown for primary and secondary role responses.

Q. Please can you tell us the approximate annual income after expenses of your business/organisation? [SC]

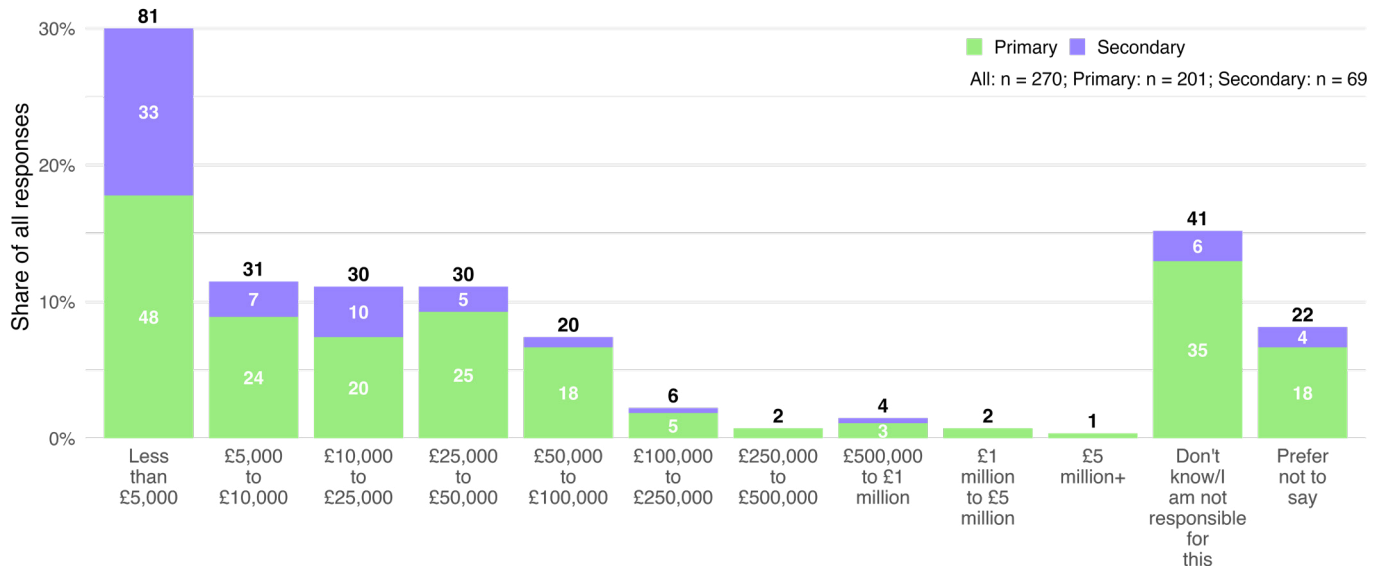


Figure 37: Annual income after expenses of respondents' businesses/ organisations, shown for primary and secondary role responses.

3.14 The creative economy and the heritage sector

Q. Do you consider any of your work in your creative economy role to overlap with the heritage sector in the York and North Yorkshire region? [SC]

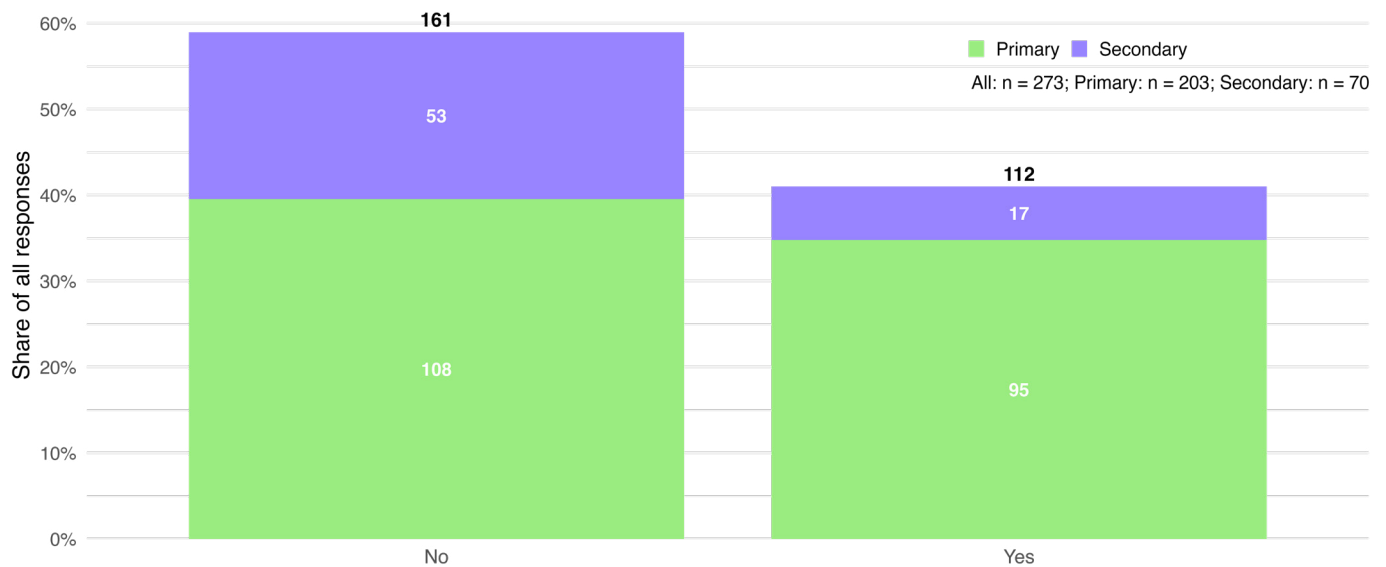


Figure 38: Whether respondents consider their creative economy work to overlap with the heritage sector in the York and North Yorkshire region, shown for primary and secondary roles.

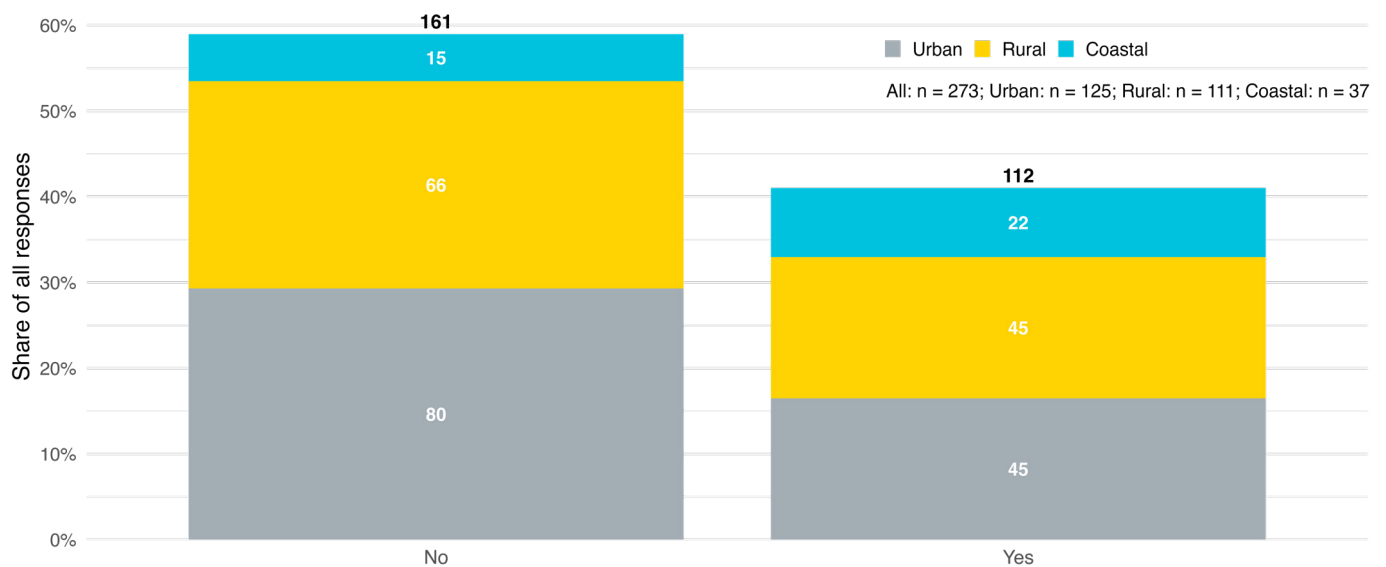


Figure 39: Whether respondents consider their creative economy work to overlap with the heritage sector in the York and North Yorkshire region, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. Please provide details of how your secondary creative economy role overlaps with the heritage sector. [FT] (n =107)

Qualitative data summary:

Many respondents (n = 34) reported working for, or with, museums, theatres, and other cultural heritage organisations (e.g., National Trust, English Heritage, York Museums Trust, British Museum, Science Museum, and many more), as well as delivering heritage work for York and North Yorkshire councils. Work cited includes creating marketing and online content (n = 5), costume work (n = 2) and creating immersive experiences (n = 4). As one respondent put it, “We are often engaged by organisations in the heritage sector to bring digital expertise and creative activation activities to heritage contexts.” Another explained, “We create audio-visual and interactive experiences for museums, attractions and heritage.”

Others described using listed buildings and heritage sites as workplaces settings (n = 18), including as spaces to perform (“performing early music in historic buildings”) and places to run their businesses from (“we own and operate a Grade II listed building”). Some of these respondents also noted they are directly involved in renovation and ongoing upkeep as part of keeping these places alive. As one put it, “our home is a Grade-1 listed church, which we renovated and are responsible for its upkeep. The music that we promote is best presented in the many glorious heritage assets in the City of York.”

A large group also described how they drew on local heritage as material for creative work, from audio trails and immersive VR to the reuse of historic buildings as studios (n = 21). A rural respondent wrote: “The recording studio itself is a repurposed traditional farm building in the North York Moors National Park. Original materials were preserved and reused for the build where possible and in alignment with its new operating purpose. It supports intangible cultural heritage by recording and promoting traditional music, predominantly applicable to folk of all genres, where songs and music have been passed down for generations.” Coastal respondents often cited maritime heritage as a creative influence, for example, “using the heritage sector as an inspiration and setting” and paintings that “are often inspired by and reflect the local landscape and landmarks”.

Across all regions, heritage crafts also appeared as a theme (n = 16), including glass blowing, letterpress, and stained glass, with some respondents working with endangered crafts. As well as being involved in heritage craftwork, some respondents also ran workshops. In rural areas, overlaps frequently combined heritage crafts and community projects with work in and around national parks, including teaching endangered crafts and running festivals and events that foreground local history and landscapes. As one respondent put it, “The studio promotes the park as a place where creativity, sustainability, and heritage coexist.” Several respondents cited working with heritage assets (n = 9), including working on heritage buildings. Some respondents (n = 8) also said they supported “heritage events and open days” and “heritage festivals”. Notably, six of these respondents were in rural or coastal areas. Five respondents mentioned overlap with the tourism industry, for example, one respondent who wrote: “currently working with Good Org / Outside Influence and YSJ [York St John] Uni regarding community led tourism strategy and engaging visitors to discover hidden areas of York”. Finally, two respondents

3.15 Additional income outside of the creative economy

Q. Do you, as an individual, earn any additional income from work that’s not within the creative economy? [SC]

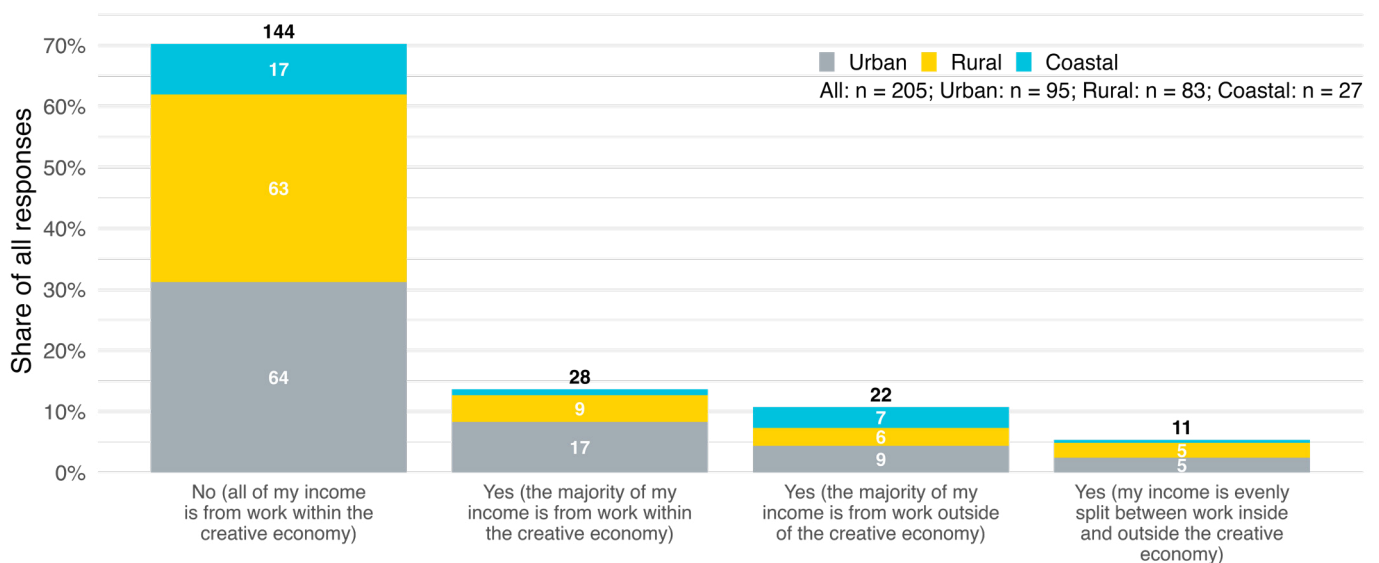


Figure 40: Respondents’ income composition, showing the extent to which earnings are derived wholly from creative-economy work or supplemented by external sources, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

4 Barriers to business/organisation growth

Key findings

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1. | 54% of responses reported 'Access to finance, including eligibility for grant' as being a barrier for their organisation. This was the general barrier that was reported by the largest number of respondents. |
| 2. | 45% have experienced difficulties finding workspace within York/North Yorkshire. |
| 3. | 58% of respondents' said that workspace was too expensive in urban areas. |
| 4. | 35% reported not having undertaken any formal skills-related training in their role. |
| 5. | 59% reported that their business/organisation had experienced difficulties in providing skills-based training for its employees. |
| 6. | 37% said that their business/organisation had experienced difficulties in funding training, with 75% of coastal respondents reporting the same. |
| 7. | 60% reported that their business/organisation had encountered difficulties in recruiting suitably skilled employees. |

4.1 General barriers

Q. We understand that businesses and organisations face barriers, which of the following, if any, are particularly relevant to your business/organisation? [MC]

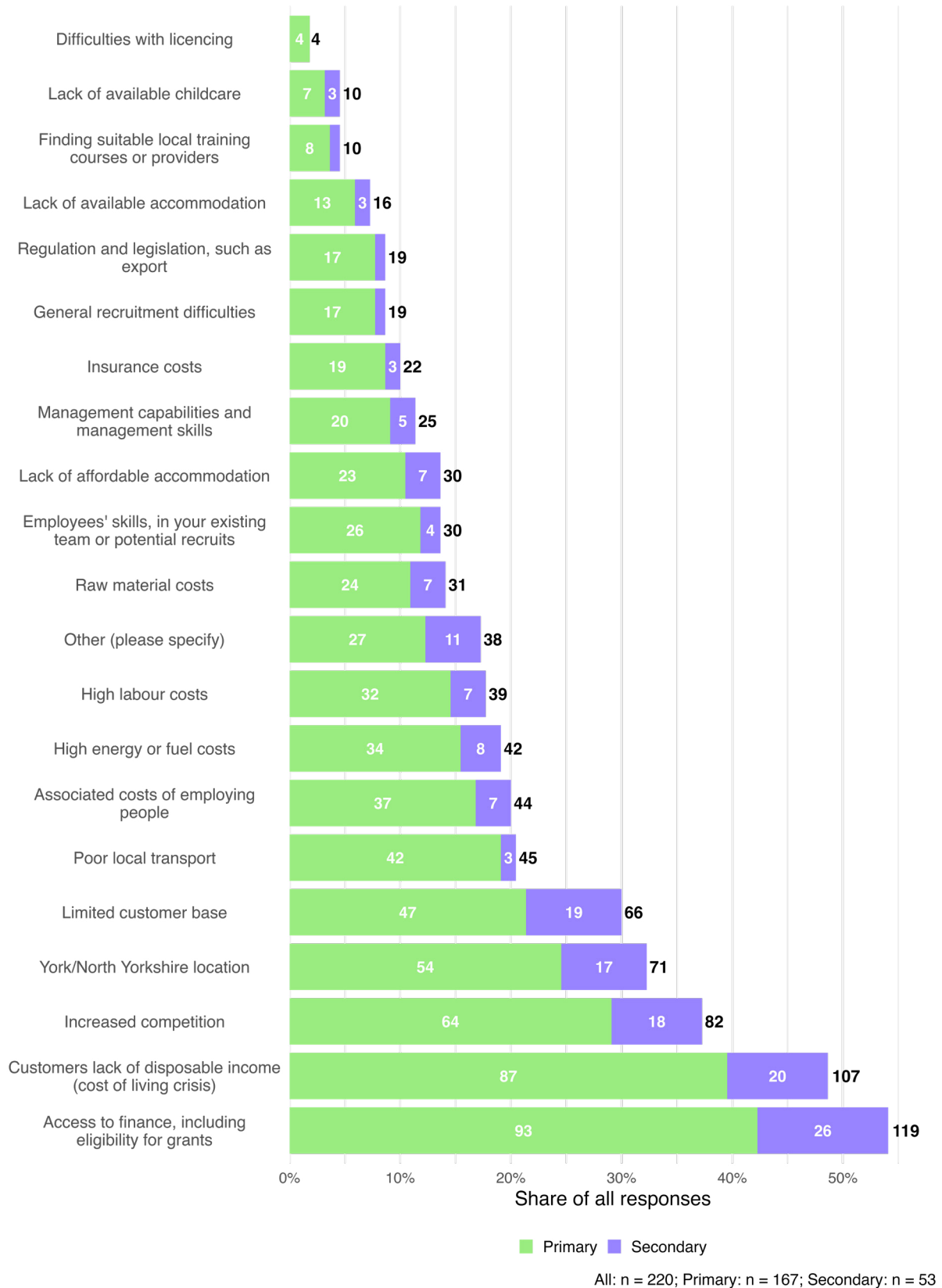


Figure 41: Barriers reported as being particularly relevant to respondents' businesses/ organisations in the creative economy, broken down by primary and secondary roles.

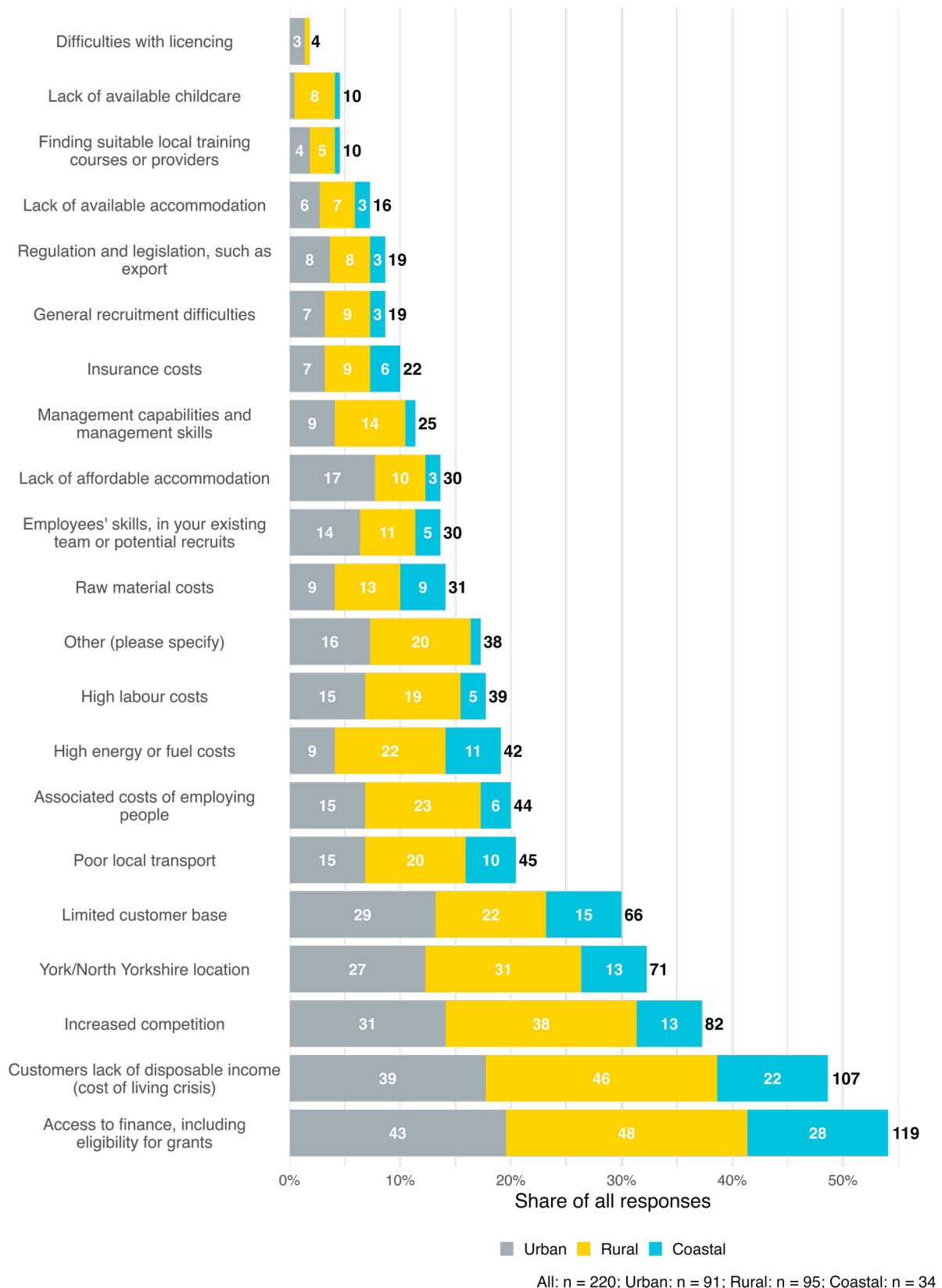


Figure 42: Barriers identified as particularly relevant to respondents' businesses or organisations in the creative economy, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. We understand that businesses and organisations face barriers, which of the following, if any, are particularly relevant to your business/organisation? [MC - Other responses] (n = 38)

Qualitative data summary:

Access to funding (n = 8):

Respondents frequently cited lack of funding as a key barrier, affecting both charitable and cultural/heritage organisations. Reduced funding from the Arts Council was a recurring concern.

Spaces (n = 8):

Across all geographies, there was strong emphasis on the need for affordable studio, rehearsal, and exhibition spaces. Several respondents also pointed to high business rates as a barrier.

Training and skills (n = 4):

A few respondents, across all geographies, reported difficulties in finding or retaining employees. One rural respondent wrote, “talented young creatives often leave the region due to perceived lack of opportunities.”

Competition (n = 3):

Some felt there is limited willingness to pay fair fees for freelance work: “fees for entertainment products have become too low to be sustainable.” Another respondent claimed that the “Council don’t enforce rules allowing illegitimate businesses to create cheap competition” [sic].

4.2 Skills-related barriers

Q. Have you undertaken in any formal skills-based training in your creative economy role?

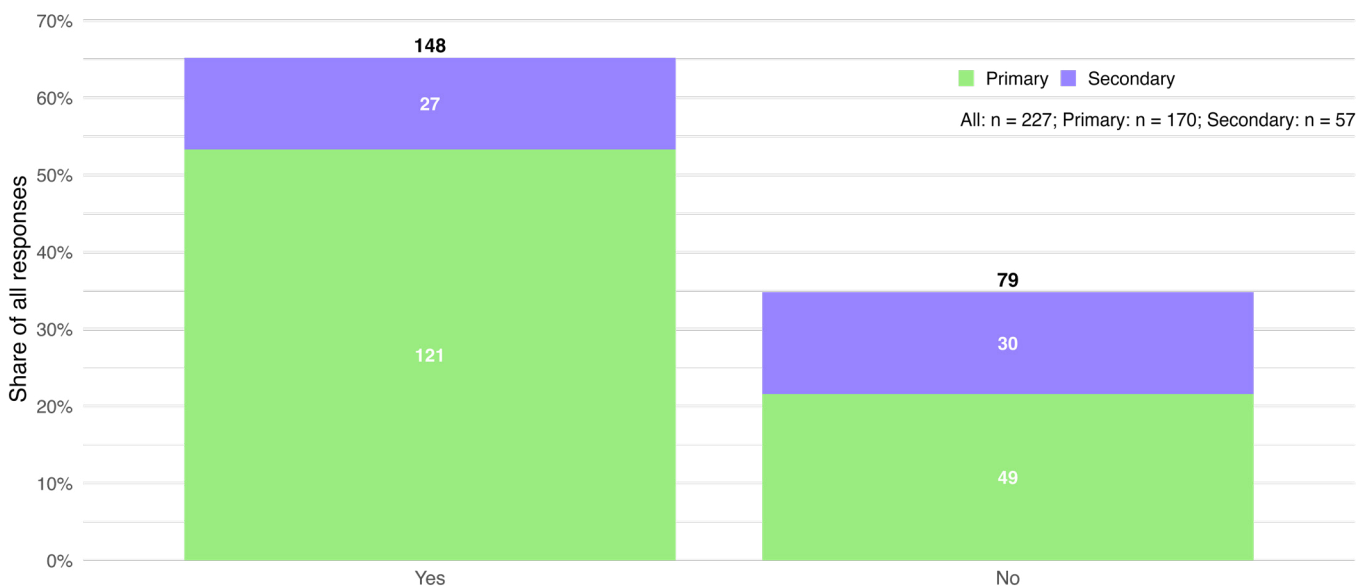


Figure 43: Whether respondents had undertaken formal skills-based training in their creative-economy role, shown for primary and secondary roles.

Q. Which of the following types of skills-based training have you undertaken in your creative economy role?

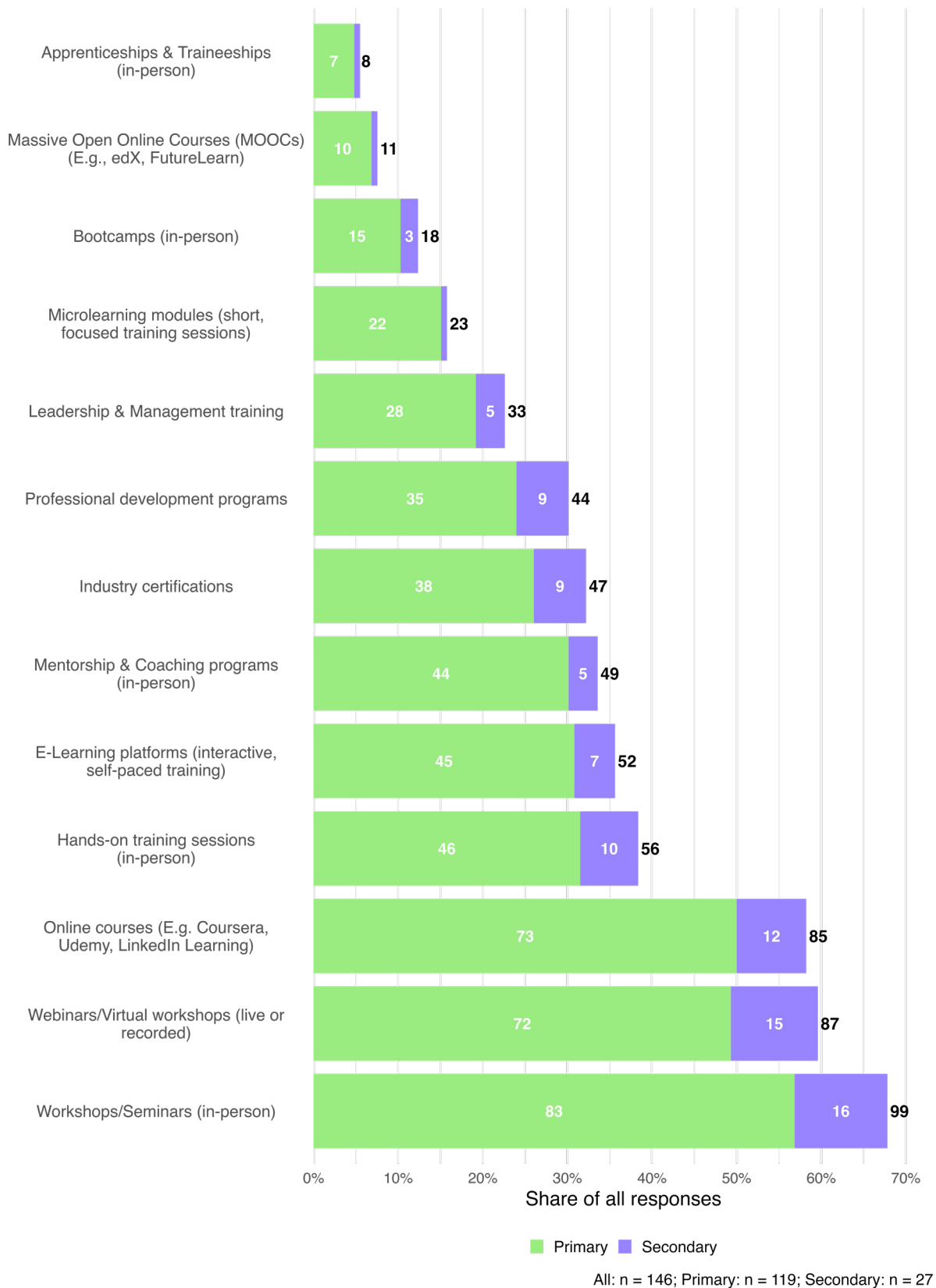


Figure 44: Types of skills-based training undertaken by respondents in their creative-economy roles, shown for primary and secondary roles.

Q. Has your business/organisation experienced difficulties in providing skills-based training for its employees? [MC]

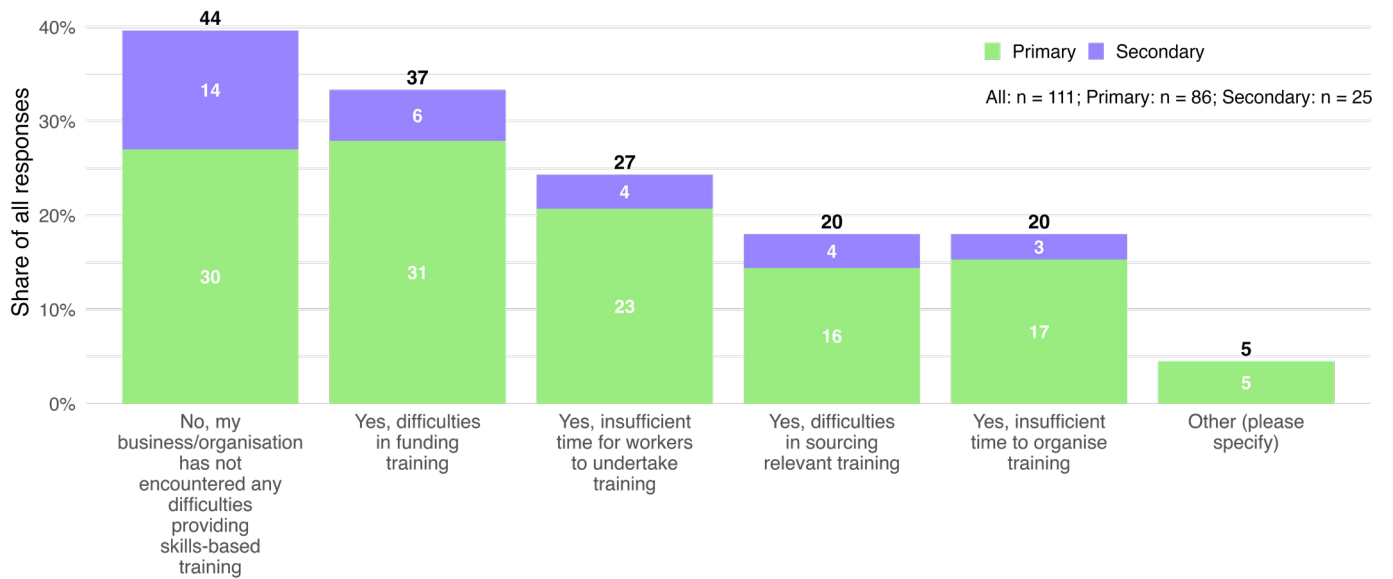


Figure 45: Difficulties encountered by respondents' businesses/organisations in providing skills-based training, shown for primary and secondary roles.

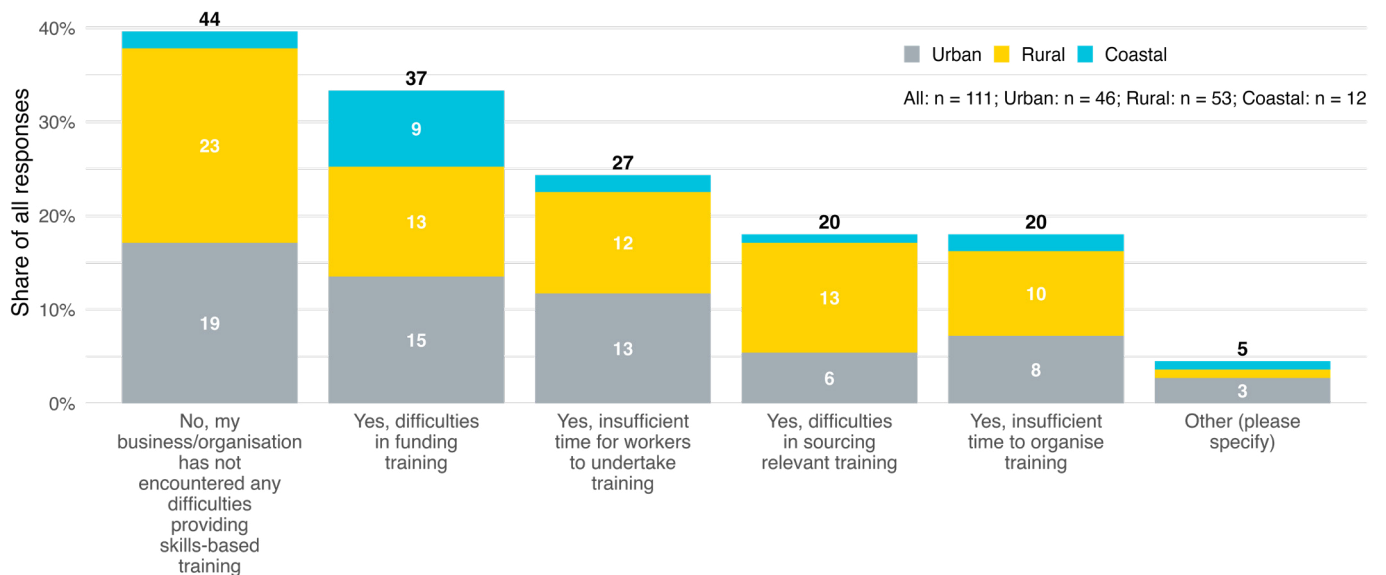


Figure 46:

Q. Has your business/organisation experienced difficulties in providing skills-based training for its employees? [MC - Other responses] (n = 5)

Qualitative data summary:

One respondent said they did not experience difficulties because they provided their own training to freelancers. The other respondents claimed they did experience difficulty providing training, because of (1) a lack of quality training opportunities, (2) a lack in time for volunteers, and (3) a lack of interest in training.

Q. Has your business/organisation encountered any difficulties recruiting suitably skilled employees? [MC]

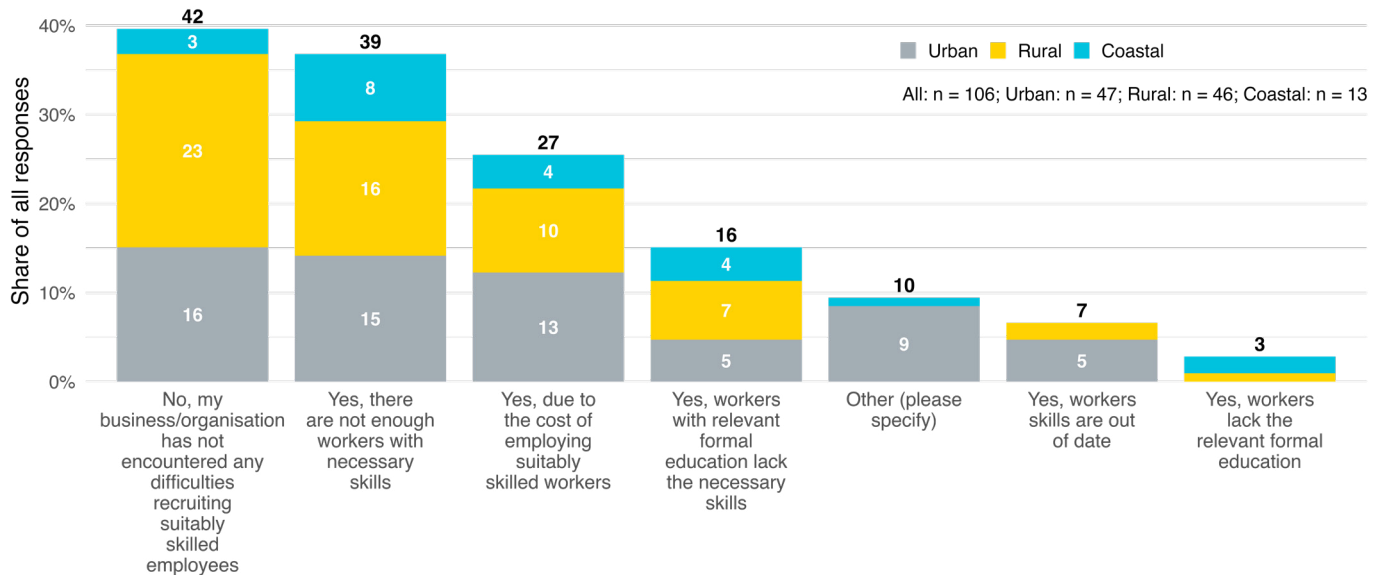


Figure 47: Difficulties faced by respondents' businesses/organisations in recruiting suitably skilled employees, broken down by the geographical classification

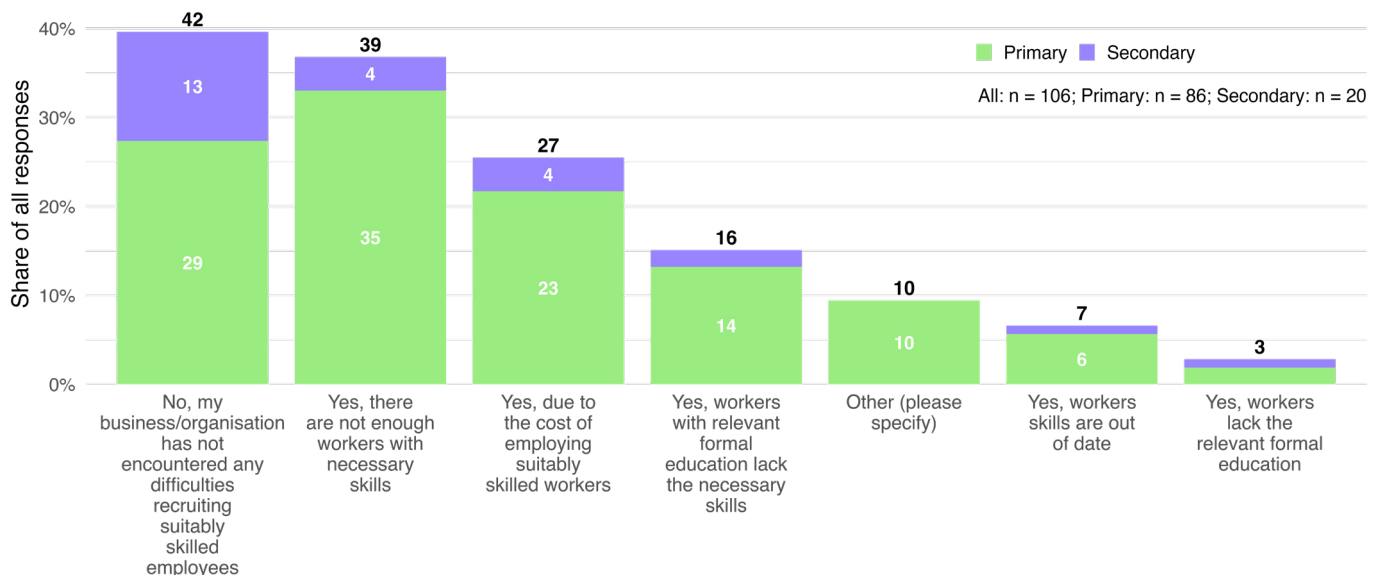


Figure 48: Difficulties faced by respondents' businesses/organisations in recruiting suitably skilled employees, shown by primary and secondary roles.

Q. Has your business/organisation encountered any difficulties recruiting suitably skilled employees? [MC - Other responses] (n = 10)

Qualitative data summary:

All respondents in the “other” category cited having encountered difficulties in recruiting suitably skilled employees. Most cited place-based constraints on hiring (n = 6), including issues around location and image (“Skilled workers are often employed in Leeds and are reluctant to travel to York and see York as a less creative destination to work”) and the small local talent pool. The cost of living in York was also cited as a difficulty (n = 3). One respondent cited offshoring to cheaper places like Portugal and South Africa as a way to circumvent affordability difficulties. Finally, two respondents cited issues with retention and work-readiness skills.

4.3 Workplace-related barriers

Q. Has your business/organisation experienced difficulties finding workspace within York or North Yorkshire?

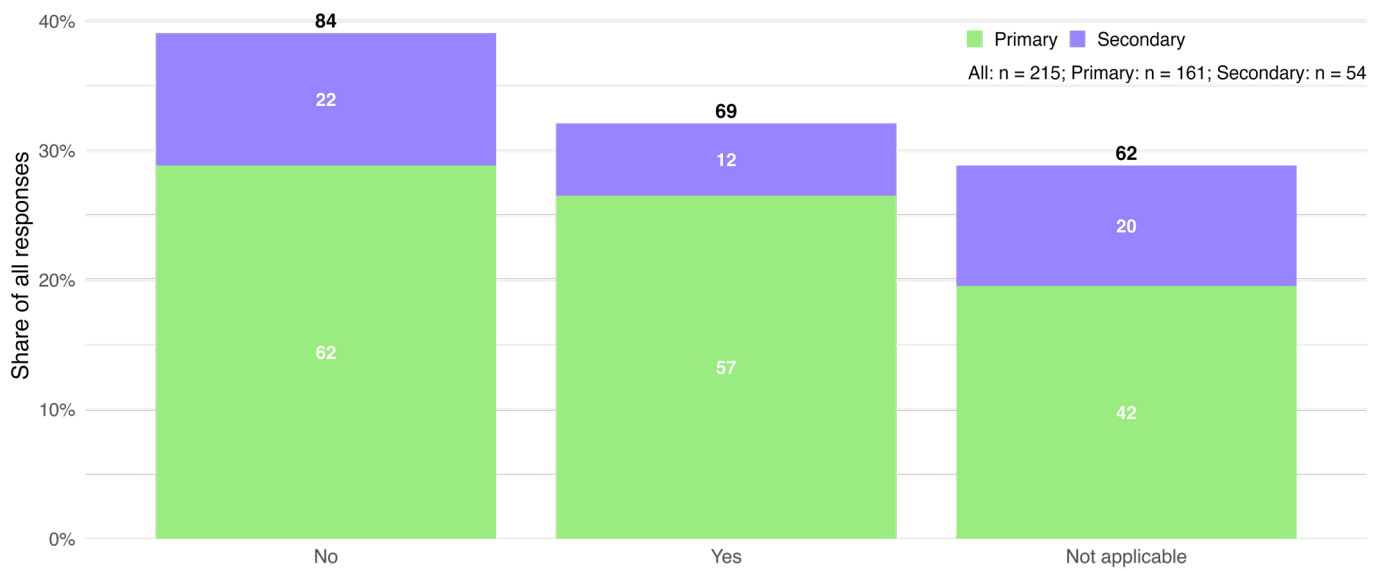


Figure 49: Whether respondents’ businesses/organisations have faced challenges securing workspace in York and North Yorkshire, broken down by primary and secondary roles.

Q. What difficulties has your business/organisation experienced when trying to find workspace within York or North Yorkshire? [MC]

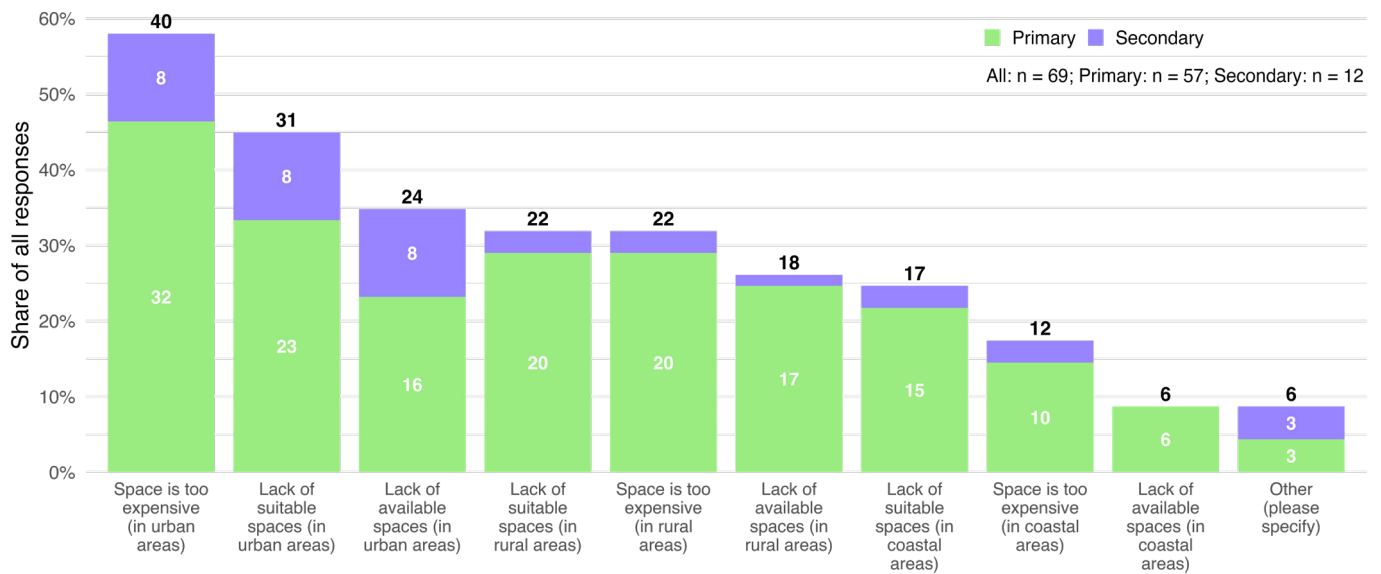


Figure 50: Difficulties encountered in finding suitable workspace in York and North Yorkshire, reported by respondents' businesses/organisations and shown by primary and secondary

Q. What difficulties has your business/organisation experienced when trying to find workspace within York or North Yorkshire? [MC - Other responses] (n = 6)

Qualitative data summary:

Difficulties cited related to limited accessible, suitable and affordable spaces (n = 4), barriers to planning (n = 1) and lack of support in finding a space (n = 1).

5 Business/organisation support usage, needs and improvements

| Key findings | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. | The top five most common sources of financial support and advice accessed by respondents were the Arts Council (32%), Private/corporate donations (17%), York and North Yorkshire Growth Hub (11%), National Lottery Heritage Fund (11%) and the North Yorkshire Council Shared Prosperity Fund (11%). |
| 2. | 15% said that they had received no financial support. |
| 3. | The top four challenges encountered by respondents when seeking or using funding were identifying funding opportunities (48%), applying to funding calls (18%), finding match funding (14%) and finding suitable funding (7%). |
| 4. | The top five most common sources of business support and advice accessed by respondents were the York and North Yorkshire Growth Hub (28%), the Arts Council (16%), Universities (11%), City of York Council Business Advisor Service (7%) and the North Yorkshire Council Business Advisor Service (11%). |
| 5. | The most common business support that respondents said would be useful was improved access to funding (45%). 31% cited skills and support, 22% highlighted access to spaces and 12% asked for improved networks or creative clusters. |

5.1 Financial support accessed

Q. Over the last year, what national or local sources of financial support and advice has your business/organisation accessed? [MC]

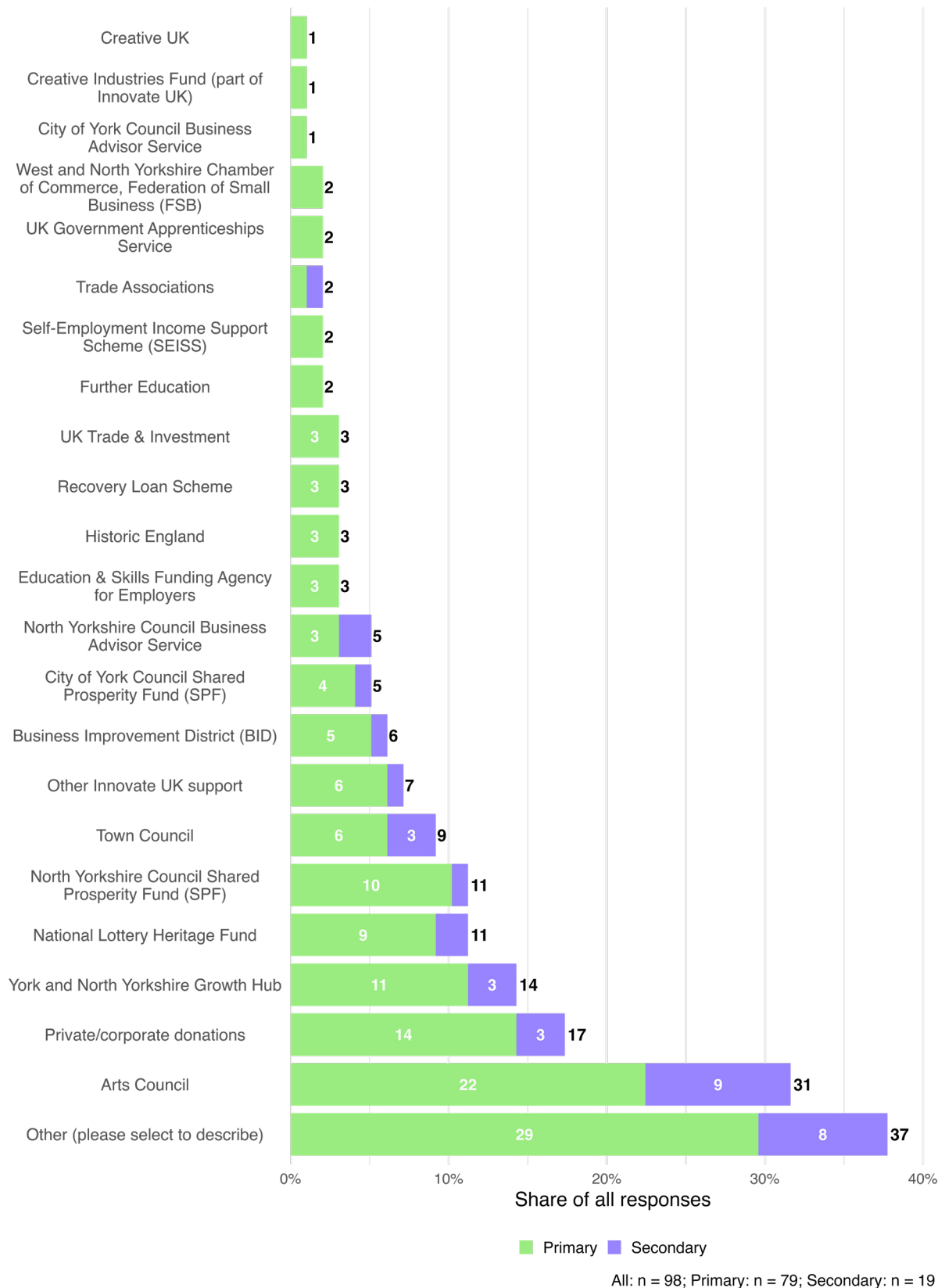


Figure 51: National and local sources of financial support and advice accessed by respondents' businesses/organisations over the past year, shown by primary and secondary roles.

Q. Over the last year, what national or local sources of financial support and advice has your business/organisation accessed? [MC - Other responses] (n = 37)

Qualitative data summary:

Many respondents (n = 15) who selected the 'other (please specify)' option reported having received no financial support. Some respondents (n = 5) reported having received funding from charitable trusts or foundations. Other respondents (n = 4) reported having received funding from support initiatives associated with festivals in the region. A small proportion (n = 4) stated they had received financial support from other local (n = 3) and national (n = 1) government support initiatives not listed in the options. Two respondents reported that their work was self funded. Other individual responses included organisations/initiatives such as the North Yorks Moors National Park, the National Lottery Community Fund, the Yorkshire Coast Community Rail Partnership, a local performing arts organisation, a community wealth fund, a private equity philanthropy programme and a University internship programme.

5.2 Challenges seeking and using funding

Q. What was the main challenge that your business/organisation encountered when seeking and using funding? [SC]

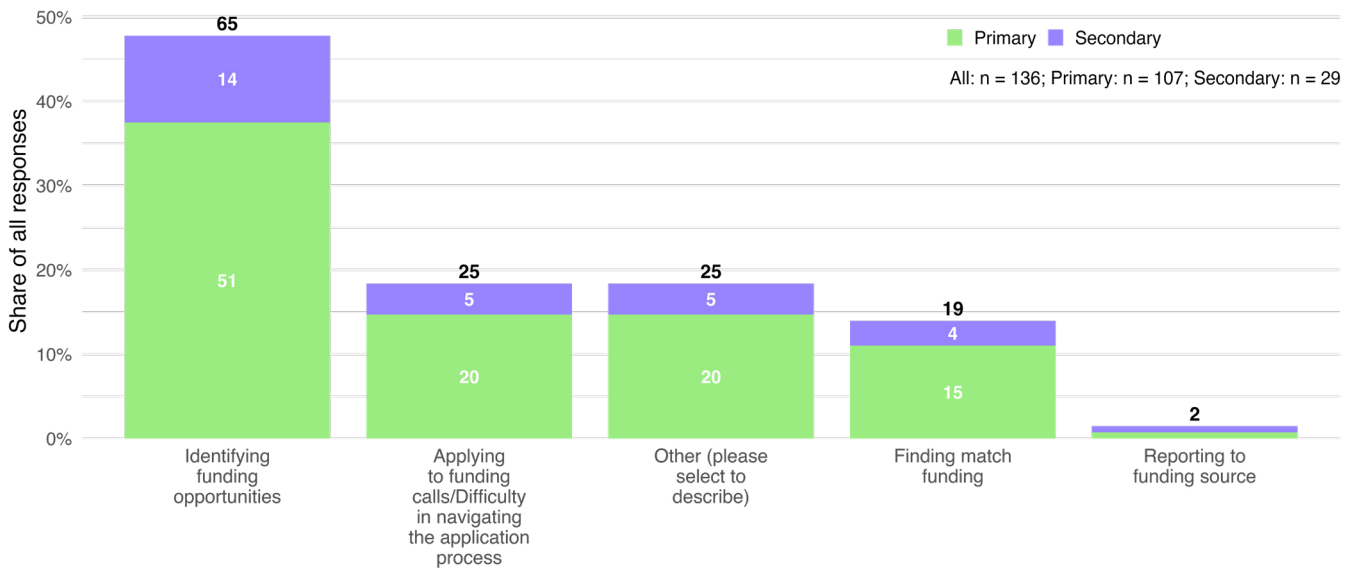


Figure 52: Main challenges faced by respondents' businesses/organisations when seeking or using funding, shown by primary and secondary roles.

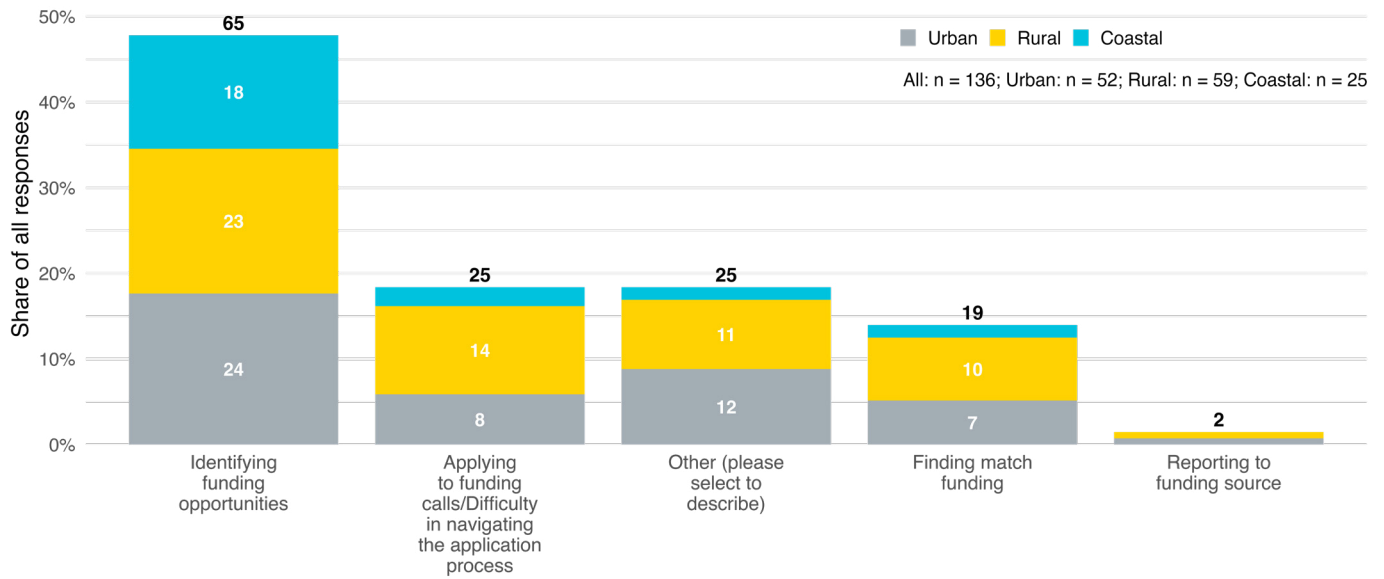


Figure 53: Main challenges faced by respondents' businesses/organisations when seeking or using funding, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

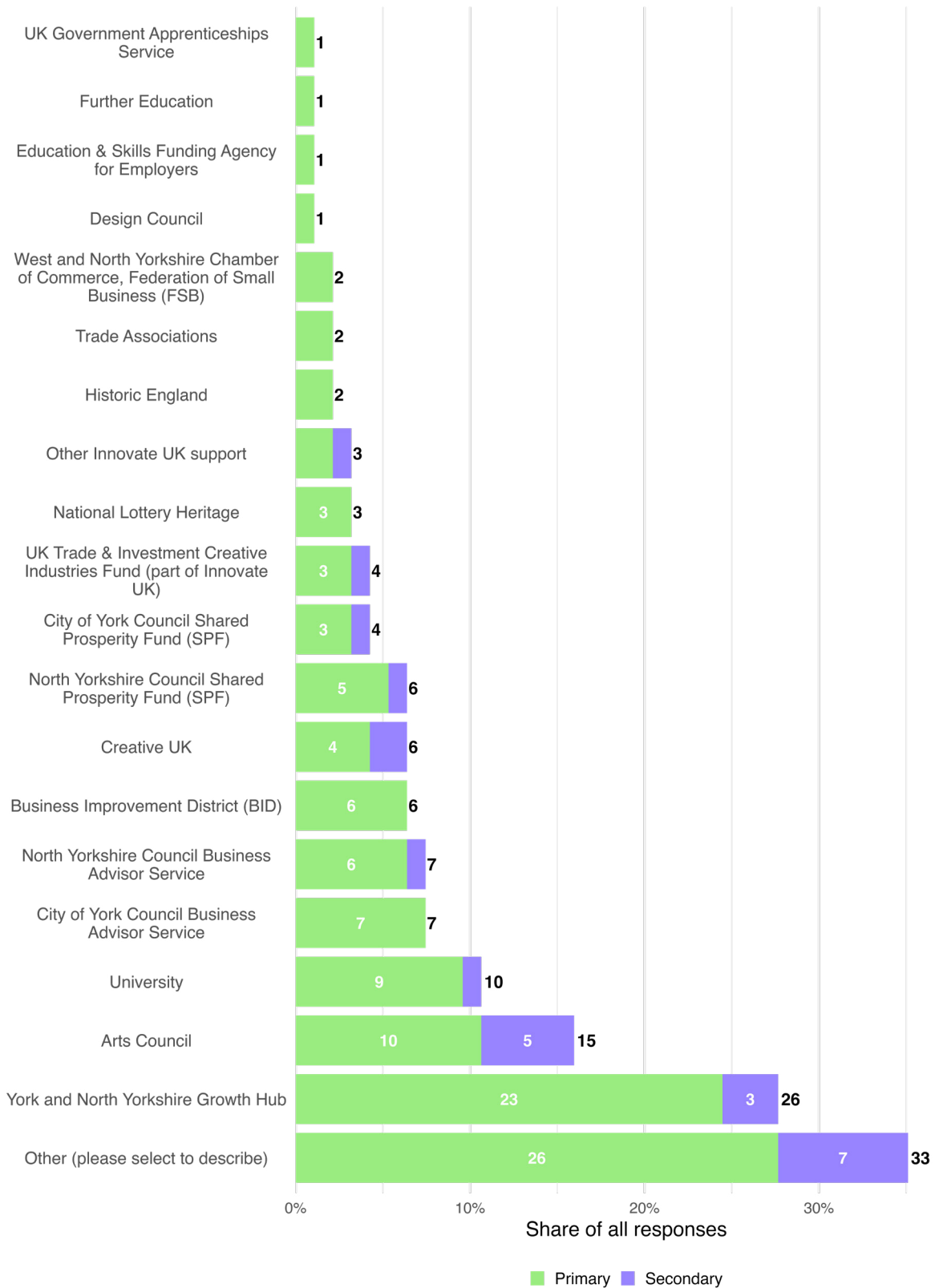
Q. What was the main challenge that your business/organisation encountered when seeking and using funding? [SC - Other responses] (n = 23)

Qualitative data summary:

Several respondents (n = 9) reported difficulties in finding funding that suited the specific needs of their business or organisation, citing difficulties in finding: “funding that is relevant to my industry and practice”; “a lack of regular income to pay for exhibitions”; “funding for under 30’s, start ups or in the wrong area. Nothing for developed businesses needing to scale up premises”; “Funding is too short term” and “Most of the funding applications don’t fit our community creative hub.”. While another respondent expressed the sentiment that their “location in Harrogate often demonstrates less need on scoring”, another reported a lack of funding opportunities that support ongoing activities, as opposed to new ventures, and one respondent cited “Exporting” as being a particularly challenging to fund. Other respondents (n = 4) reported that they experienced difficulties in finding the necessary time required to find and apply for relevant funding opportunities. One respondent commented that this had led to them “working on being more “investment ready” to be [sic] able to apply for funding more successfully”. One respondent reported lacking “decent and comprehensive feedback when a funding bid is unsuccessful”. Two respondents reported that they had encountered all of the above included options for the question. Two respondents stated that they had experienced no challenges in seeking or using funding. Three respondents responded N/A. One respondent said that they did not know.

5.3 Business support accessed

Q. Over the last year, what national or local sources of business support and advice has your business/organisation accessed? [MC]



All: n = 94; Primary: n = 77; Secondary: n = 17

Figure 54: National and local sources of business support and advice accessed by respondents' businesses/organisations over the past year, shown by primary and secondary roles.

Q. Qualitative data summary:

5.4 Business support needs

Q. Is there any business support or initiative you feel would really help your business/organisation in York/North Yorkshire? Please describe. [FT] (n = 89)

Qualitative data summary:

Access to funding (n = 40): The most common support that respondents thought would be useful was access to funding. Requests for funding took many forms: provision of more and/or better funding (n = 7), requests for match funding (n = 5), provision of small grants (n = 3) and non-specific funding (n = 2).

There were calls for funding to support all stages and types of businesses. Two respondents called for funding targeted at micro businesses and sole traders, with one sole trader saying: “growth as a sole trader is different. This is impossible to find funding for in this are [sic].” At the same time, two respondents also called for support for more established businesses, for example, “growth support, many of us are trying to grow and move to the next level of business but most support is directed at start ups not those who have been in business a number of years and trying to reach the next level.” Four respondents requested funding for charities and “ensuring opportunities do not focus solely on ROI [Return on Investment] as many charities will never be able to deliver on this.”

Some respondents called for funding and grants to cover different areas, including funding for business development (n = 6), such as “website redesign” and marketing; funding to support business rates and renting workspaces (n = 3); and grants for training (n = 2). Two respondents asked for non-specific funding, “allowing businesses to apply for funding to support growth, in whatever form that takes for the organisation, and allowing the business to describe what they need funding for to support that growth, rather than it being stipulated by the fund” and two further respondents called for a “re-run of the City of York voucher scheme”. Urban respondents in particular highlighted the need for small culture funds and voucher schemes that could offset high city-centre rents. By contrast, rural and coastal respondents more often stressed match funding and accessible grants for charities and community organisations, including “accessible funding to creative charities especially in support of match funding when applying for larger bids.”

Skills and support (n = 28): Several respondents across all regions (n = 9) mentioned getting help with business skills (marketing, finance, HR) that are specific to the Creative Industries: “Business advice and support tailored specifically to the Creative Industries”, and specific to each sub-sector: “Current schemes often generalise “creative industry” needs—recording studios and production businesses require niche knowledge (IP, licensing, spatial acoustics, tech investment).” As such, some also called for sector-specific training (e.g., 3D design, CAD, theatre production). Several respondents requested funding for training or for employment support (n = 5), for example, “financial assistance for the employment and training of staff”.

Rural and coastal respondents mentioned mentoring (n = 4), again specifying that mentoring should be specific to the sector: “1:1 mentoring would be a massive help but having paid for this privately in the past it is expensive and you need the right understanding of creative business issues by the mentors. Often their idea of a small business is way out of touch with what a creative business is and the fact you are operating in a very niche, small marketplace where it’s hard to find customers.” Another respondent praised a scheme in Nottingham: “Whilst living in Nottingham I accessed Creative Business Mentorship through Big House which was amazing and really helpful and supportive. I would certainly access it again if I could as they really understood how to advise artists rather than small business owners.”

Furthermore, two respondents called for early and mid-career training, and two further respondents requested a hub or “a Business advice for Creatives “go to” support Initiative, that would provide advice and answers to questions”. Several respondents (n = 6) mentioned getting assistance for grant-writing such as “in depth workshops about how to write successful Arts Council bids and navigating that funding landscape” and help in scaling up, for example by “attracting investment capital and scaling beyond 5m”.

Access to spaces (n = 20): Across all geographies, respondents strongly emphasised a need for affordable studio, rehearsal, and exhibition spaces. Eight respondents called for more spaces: “more exhibiting spaces”, “affordable multi-use wet/dry studio space”, “prototyping [sic.] facility - Resident driven Makerspace” and “affordable retail space”. Urban creatives in particular called for lower business rates or funding to assist renting a workspace. Rural and coastal respondents similarly requested subsidised retail space, pop-up shops which would allow them to test a physical shop space and co-working hubs to counter isolation. Many noted that the high cost of premises hinders growth, and they suggested public-sector intervention or match-funded grants to make spaces accessible.

Networks and creative clusters (n = 11): Respondents wanted more networking opportunities and more support accessing markets, but the form this would take varied by area. Urban respondents tended to stress brokerage and B2B links: for example, one respondent wanted “an organisation to mediate on behalf of small businesses that work with children, with other organisations”, while another mentioned the need for “support for B2B marketing and networking events to get visibility for new businesses”. One respondent praised an existing initiative, writing: “The Artery are providing an excellent service – a regular version of that. An attempt to connect creative business with other businesses that could use their creative skills for problems they may be facing.”

Rural respondents focused more on coordinated approaches to heritage and tourism, calling for “a cohesive approach to the importance of the heritage sector in regard to York and its wider environs”. Coastal respondents highlighted region-wide creative sector initiatives and sector-specific networks, including “a registry of professional photographers in the region, which meet professional standards and quality of outcomes”, as well as incubator-style support to “get support and networking”.

6 Innovation and sustainability

| Key findings | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. | 57% of respondents' businesses/organisations have created a new product in the past 12 months. |
| 2. | 12% of businesses/organisations have not seen the need to change products or processes at this current time. |
| 3. | The majority of respondents' business/organisations (83%) had taken action to become more sustainable. |
| 4. | 45% of businesses/organisations reported facing financial barriers in taking action to become more sustainable. This was particularly the case for coastal respondents, with 63% saying financial constraints had hampered their efforts in support of sustainability. |
| 5. | 35% of respondents across all geographies said a lack of time or resources was a barrier to sustainability action, while 25% reported having encountered no barriers. |

6.1 Innovation

Q. Please tick the following statements that apply to your business/organisation.

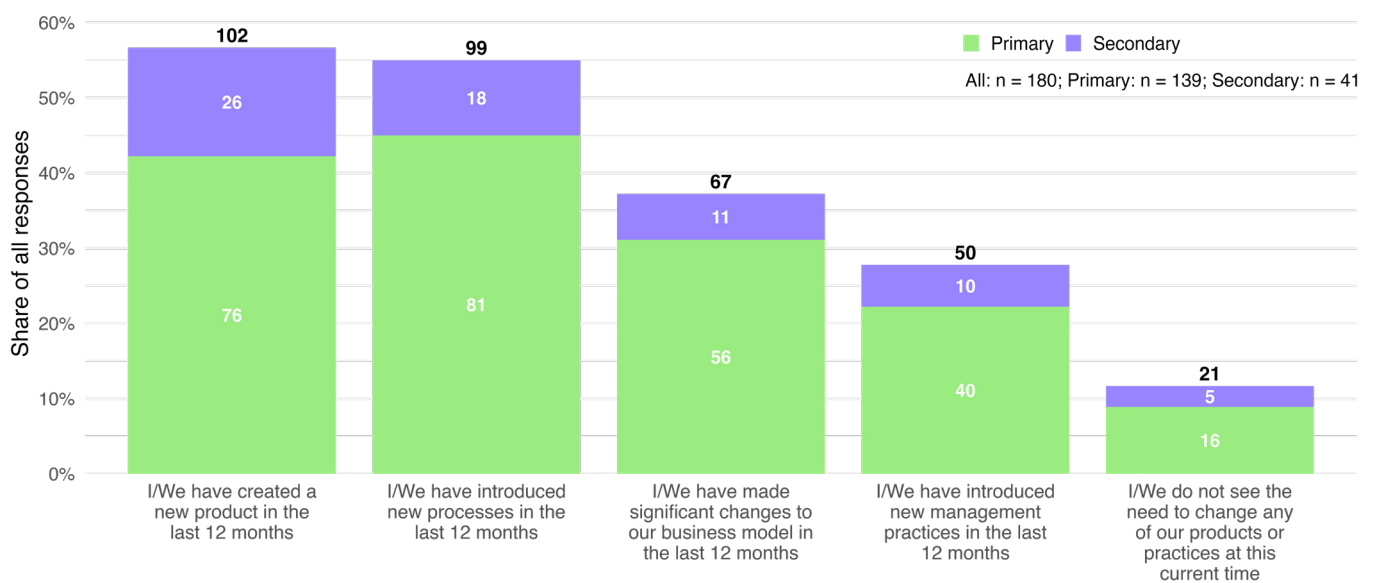


Figure 55:

6.2 Sustainability

Actions for sustainability

Q. Which of the following actions (if any) has your business/organisation taken to become more sustainable?

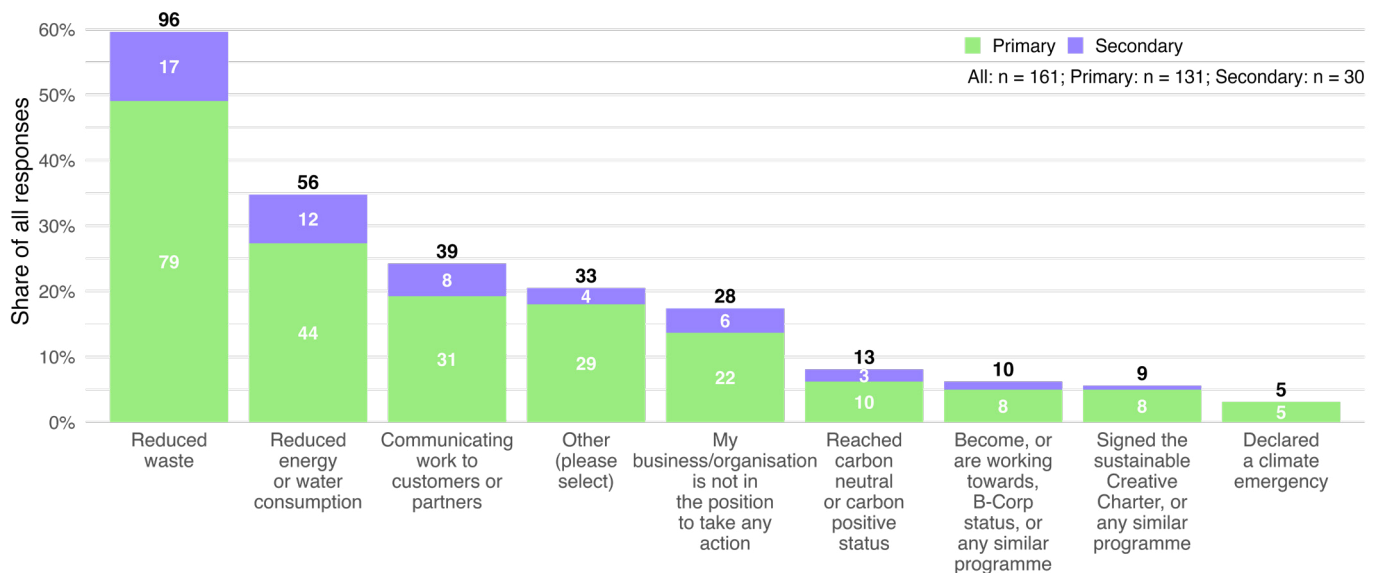


Figure 56: Actions taken by respondents' businesses or organisations to become more sustainable, shown by primary and secondary roles.

Q. Which of the following actions (if any) has your business/organisation taken to become more sustainable?
[MC - Other responses] (n = 30)

Qualitative data summary:

Many respondents (n = 17) reported having taken various practical measures (not listed in the question options) to improve the sustainability of their business/organisation. This included; designed products that offer alternatives to in-person tourism, changing energy suppliers, installing new energy meters, using recycled rainwater, using environmentally conscious construction materials, walking and using public transport, eco-friendly gardening techniques, carbon footprint calculation, digital carbon footprint reduction measures, solar panels, designing products to be biodegradable, donating to charitable organisations, working to improve the local environment, sourcing things locally and using recycled materials where possible. Several respondents (n = 6) reported that their business/organisation actively engages in the promotion of activities to improve sustainability and raise awareness around ecological issues more widely.

Some respondents (n = 5) reported that their business/organisation had provided sustainability related training for their employees and or board members. Two respondents reported that their organisation had developed dedicated sustainability related action plans. One respondent stated that all films produced by their business receive BAFTA Albert certification. One respondent reported that their business had signed up to the Good Business Charter. One respondent expressed the sentiment that it was too costly to be able to take any actions to improve the sustainability of their work as a freelancer. Lastly, one respondent expressed the belief that "You can't ask businesses to take on a fictitious problem. Climate change is a distraction and a barrier to businesses. It is not proven that carbon is an issue".

Barriers to sustainability

Q. What barriers has your business/organisation faced in taking action to become more sustainable? [MC]

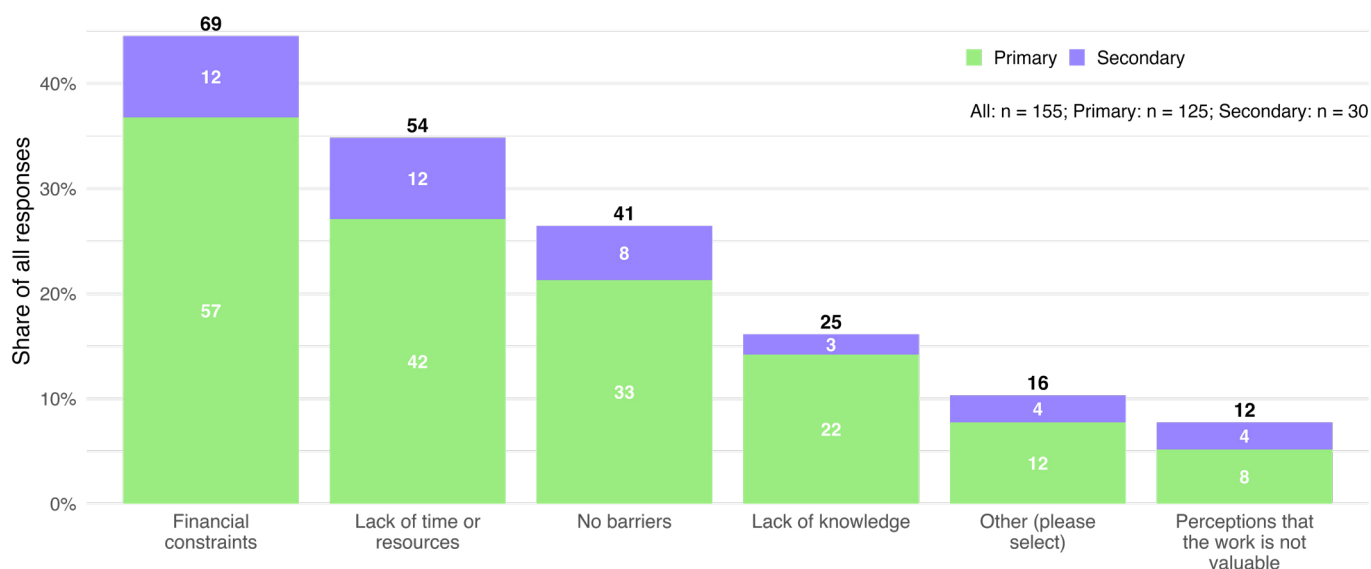


Figure 57: Barriers that respondents' businesses/organisations have faced in taking action to become more sustainable, shown by primary and secondary roles.

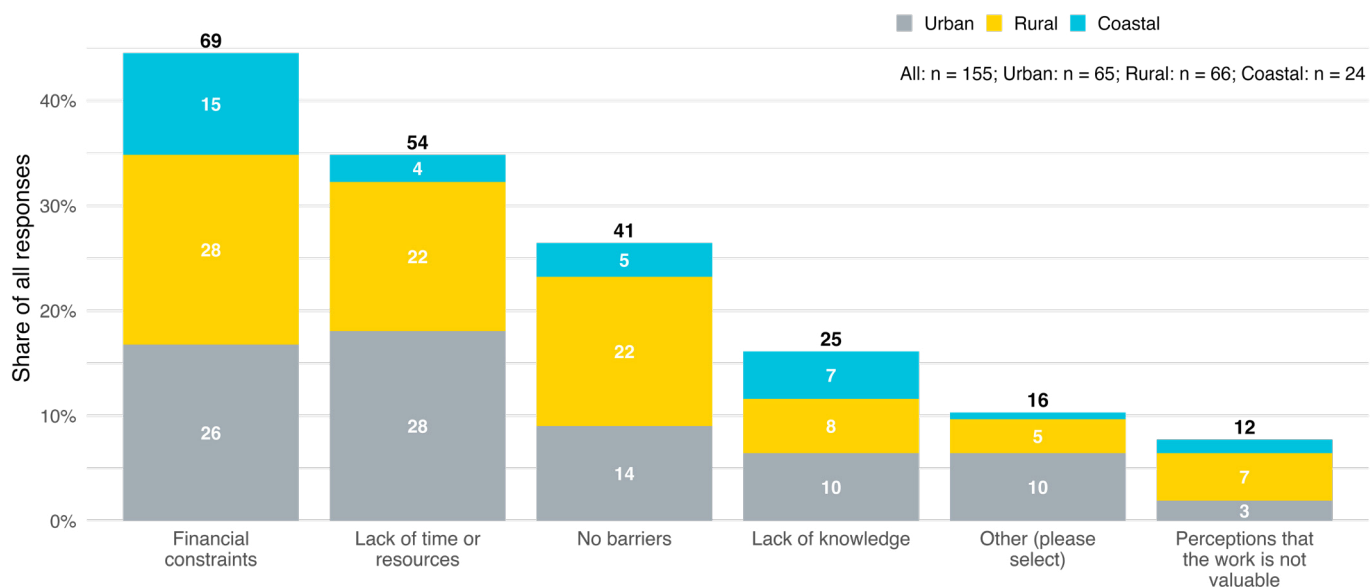


Figure 58: Barriers that respondents' businesses/organisations have faced in taking action to become more sustainable, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. What barriers has your business/organisation faced in taking action to become more sustainable? [MC - Other responses] (n = 16)

Qualitative data summary:

Four respondents referred to barriers related to their workspace. Within this, two respondents pointed to difficulties being based in or managing heritage/listed buildings and being able to bring about improvements to the energy efficiency of their buildings. Another respondent cited the need to improve the insulation in their workshop, and more widely, another respondent cited the “Infrastructure across North Yorkshire” as being a barrier to improving the sustainability of their business.

Two respondents reported having experienced difficulties with funding actions to improve the sustainability of their business operations - this included difficulties in accessing affordable sustainable manufacturing and difficulties funding a carbon audit. While another respondent who worked as a photographer stated “My largest footprint is travelling out of North Yorkshire to a location I can afford.”. Other individual responses included the lack of exhibiting spaces/opportunities. “Reliance on other’s services”, difficulties in affecting the “Carbon Neutral practices for a tech based company.”, “Lack of suitable products that I can swap to.”, and the feeling that “this area is geared to more established and high growth businesses.”

Two respondents posited potential solutions to the barriers that they faced in making their business/organisation more sustainable; One respondent called for “Greater support for collaborations between rural creative businesses and tech innovation hubs or universities”. While another believed that training for their clients could improve the sustainability of their operations - “There’s lots of ways a photoshoot can be sustainable and lots of it is using local talent or resources, not buying props or materials once, and ensuring equipment is not wasting energy.” Finally, one respondent expressed negative sentiments towards the general concept of sustainability and consequently the importance of it to their business.

7 Working with freelancers

Key findings

- 1.** 64% of respondents' businesses/organisations reported that they worked with creative freelancers.
- 2.** 15% of businesses/organisations reported working with more than 25 creative freelancers.
- 3.** The top five most common types of skills/services that creative freelancers provided to respondents' businesses/organisations were photography (49%), advertising or marketing (47%), graphic or animation design (47%), film-making or videography (41%) and web design (32%).

7.1 Numbers of freelancers contracted

Q. Does your business/organisation work with creative freelancers (E.g. as a supplier of services)?

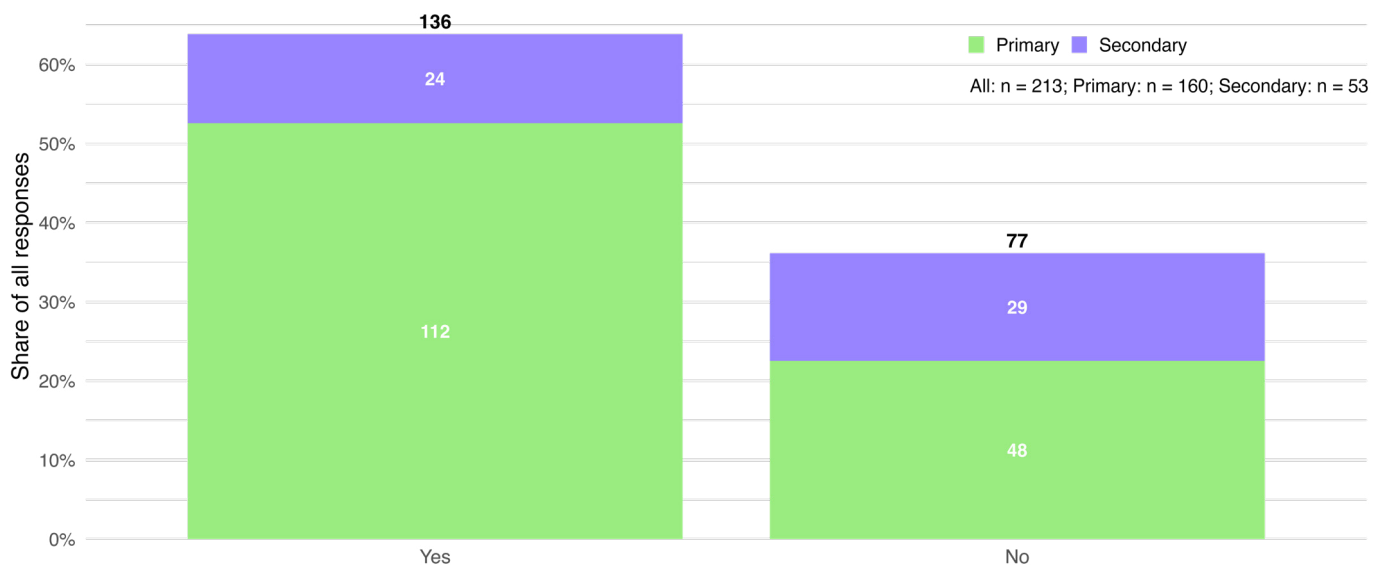


Figure 59: Whether respondents' businesses/organisations work with creative freelancers, shown by primary and secondary roles.

Q.

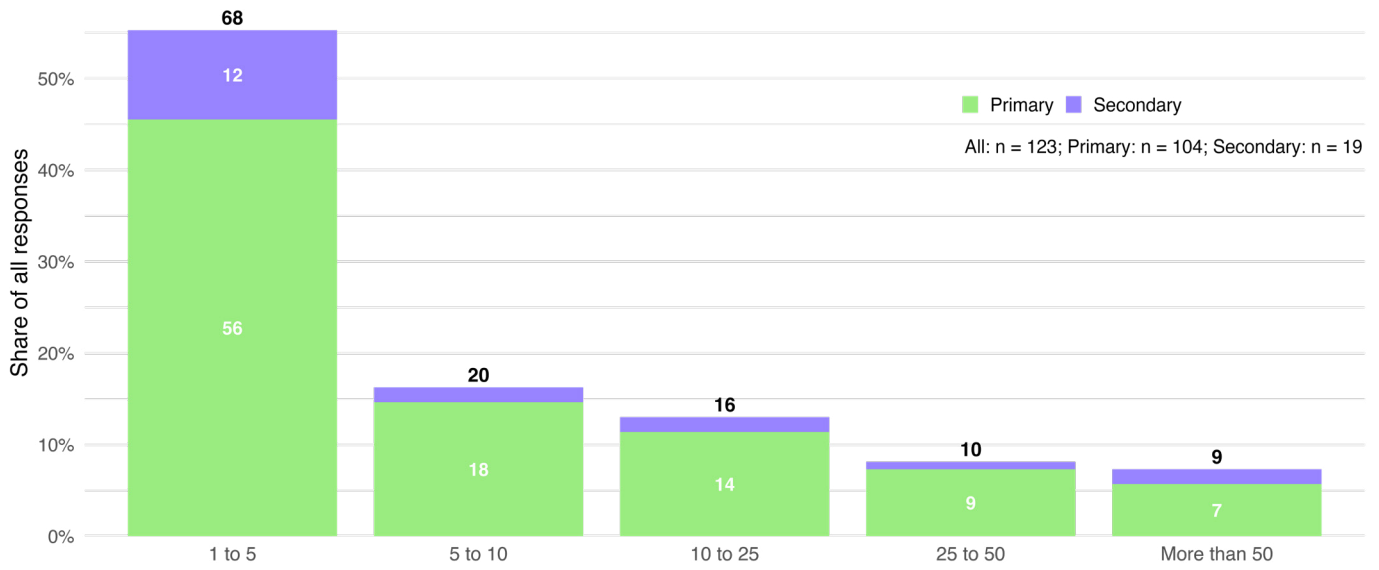


Figure 60: Number of creative freelancers contracted by respondents' businesses/organisations between April 2024 and March 2025, shown by primary and secondary roles.

7.2 Services provided by creative freelancers

Q. Which of the following skills / services have creative freelancers provided for your business/organisation?

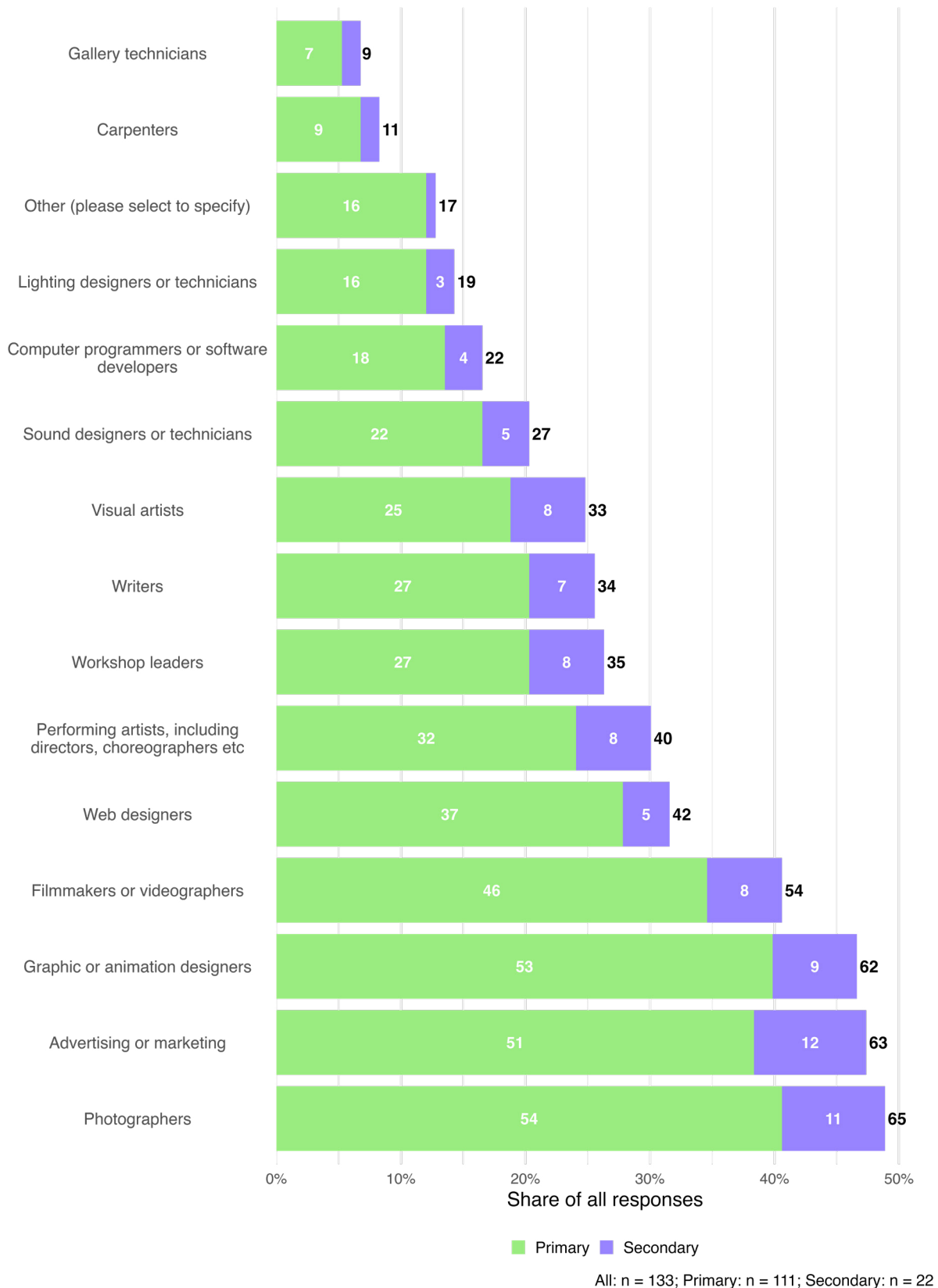


Figure 61: Types of skills and services creative freelancers provided to respondents' businesses/organisations, shown by primary and secondary roles.

Q. Which of the following skills / services have creative freelancers provided for your business/organisation? [MC - Other responses] (n = 16)

Qualitative data summary:

Responses from those who selected this other (please specify) option included; Set designers, Costume makers x (2), business operations expert, musicians, subject specialists, Public Relations (PR) and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), digital project manager, performers, other crafters, coaching, print companies, heritage craft workers, and retouching. One respondent also stated that they had been commissioned by freelancers, rather than the other way around.

8 Support for the creative economy

Key findings

- 1.** The top five most common services that respondents said would be of value to their business/organisation were informal networking opportunities (64%), marketing and promotion initiatives (64%), collaborative research/development (41%), training/skills programmes (40%) and formal networking opportunities (39%).
- 2.** 75% of rural respondents called for informal networking opportunities, compared with 59% of coastal respondents and 25% of urban respondents.
- 3.** 82% of coastal respondents requested marketing and promotion initiatives, compared with 65% of rural respondents and 25% of urban respondents.
- 4.** Many respondents also highlighted the need for more affordable studio and exhibiting space.

8.1 Services of value

Q. Which of the following services would be of value to you and/or your business/organisation?

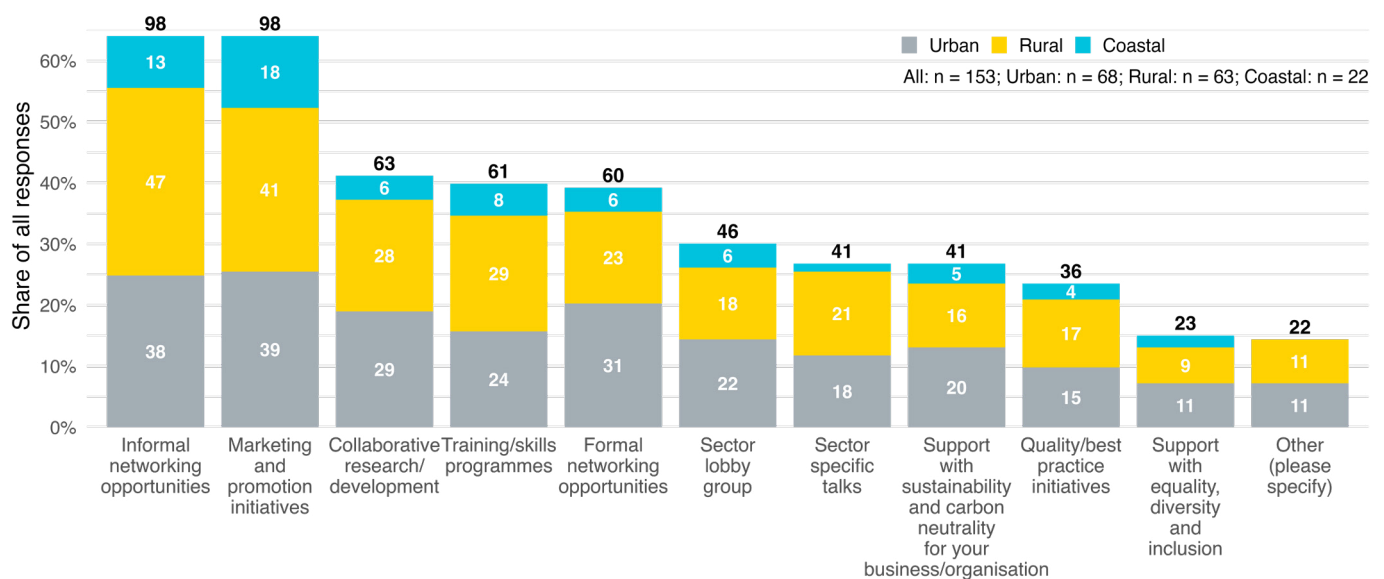


Figure 62: Services that respondents identified as being of value to their business or organisation, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. Which of the following services would be of value to you and/or your business/organisation? [MC - Other responses] (n = 22)

Qualitative data summary:

There was a large range of responses to this question. Respondents requested local circular-economy initiatives, grants for professional photography, and improved access to exhibiting and studio spaces. Others wanted clear pathways for funding independent theatre companies, more affordable arts festivals like the Scarborough Fair, and better market access (e.g., distribution networks and “connecting creative freelancers to bigger businesses networking”). Many emphasised tailored, business sector-specific support, such as HR marketing, finance and legal matters, and a regional hub to disseminate knowledge, highlight creative talent, and provide business advice. Rural respondents suggested better access to transport and networking opportunities that aren’t just (City of) York specific.

Q. Please use the text box to provide any further details you may wish to share on the services you would like to see. [FT] (n = 43)

Qualitative data summary:

Here, respondents elaborated further and echoed similar thoughts as before. Visibility and recognition were common themes (n = 6): urban creatives asked the combined authority to “relook at the effectiveness of cultural strategies and why they seem to have impetus at the beginning then fade away or get forgotten”. Many called for creator visibility, including “places new pieces of entertainment can be seen, where things can be sold” and “celebrating creatives in our local communities”. A rural respondent commented how there were “not enough opportunities or engagement for the wider North Yorkshire area”.

Many respondents also mentioned the need for specialist business support that was tailored to the Creative Industries (n = 8). Some suggested a hub for support, others an incubator programme. Many stressed that support tends to be too general and not specific to the needs of freelancers, artists and micro-businesses. In line with this, many asked for better/more networking opportunities and more opportunities for freelancers in the region (n = 7).

Infrastructure was also a theme (n = 6). Echoing previous comments, lack of available working spaces (especially for visual artists) and high business rates were cited as barriers to the businesses. Many called for the provision of affordable studio spaces. One respondent also cited the closing of the National Glass Centre³ as a problem for their business, and said that they “would like help to set up a glass studio in the region which would be sustaining a heritage craft, providing affordable work facilities for glass artists, accessible to the community for learning and leisure experiences”.

³ The National Glass Centre referenced by the respondent is based in Sunderland, outside of the York and North Yorkshire region, and is set to permanently close its doors in July 2026.

9 Creative spaces, networks and festivals

| Key findings | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. | The top five most common types of spaces that respondents worked at in their creative economy roles were performance spaces (44%), studio/exhibition spaces (43%), workshop spaces (42%), coworking spaces (37%) and meeting spaces (36%). |
| 2. | Respondents reported working at or being aware of a wide array of both traditional and non-traditional creative spaces in York and North Yorkshire, including places of worship, libraries, parks and supported living organisations. |
| 3. | Creative spaces were seen as vital for creative work, community, wellbeing, and reaching audiences. They support collaboration, visibility, and local economies, but many respondents highlighted a shortage of suitable, affordable spaces. High costs and limited availability especially in city centres and rural areas were particular concerns. |
| 4. | Respondents also identified a wide range of creative networks within the region. Most viewed these networks as essential for collaboration, learning, wellbeing, and securing work, with some noting added benefits such as improved skills, income and mental health. However, some respondents also pointed to challenges, describing networks as sometimes exclusive, difficult to access, or of limited use. |
| 5. | The top five most common types of festivals that respondents worked at in their creative economy roles were cultural festivals (42%), visual arts festivals (39%), music festivals (26%), craft festivals (23%) and heritage festivals (19%). |
| 6. | Many respondents viewed festivals as vital for income, audience reach, collaboration and community-building. A small number, however, felt they were inaccessible or ineffective, particularly in York, where some said festivals only tended to attract other creatives, rather than customers. |

9.1 Creative spaces

Types of creative spaces

Q. Have you worked at any of the following types of creative spaces (in any capacity) in York/North Yorkshire?

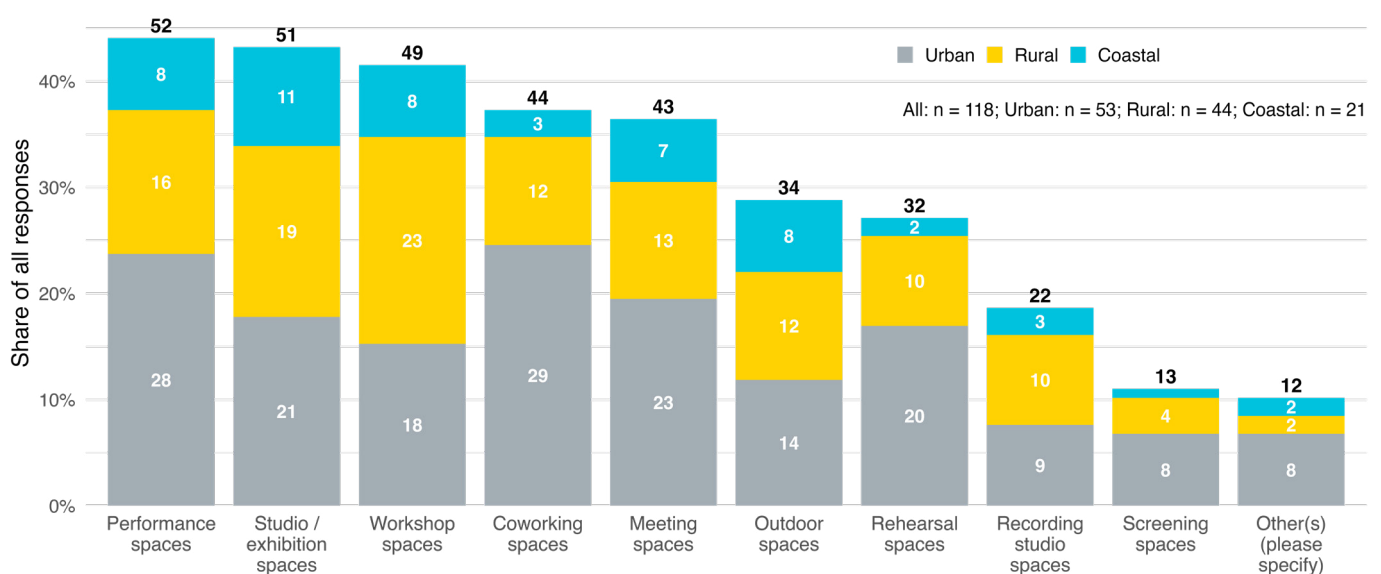


Figure 63: Types of creative spaces respondents reported working at within York and North Yorkshire, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. Have you worked at any of the following types of creative spaces (in any capacity) in York/North Yorkshire? [MC - Other responses] (n = 12)

Qualitative data summary:

Respondents reported a wide variety of working and exhibiting locations, ranging from traditional arts spaces to more informal or community-based environments. Some participants (n = 3) mentioned art galleries (including York Gallery) and historic or cultural venues such as castles, museums, and York Minster. Others highlighted non-traditional spaces, including churches, cafes, charity-run shared studios, and community arts initiatives like the Micklegate Arts Trail. A number (n = 3) of responses reported not having worked at any creative spaces, with one respondent reporting that they worked from home.

Creative spaces in York and North Yorkshire

Q. Please provide specific details of the creative spaces you have worked at. (e.g. council run/community run/private owned/etc.) [FT]

Q. Please provide details of any other specific creative spaces, networks and festivals that you are aware of in the York and North Yorkshire region. [FT]

| Space Name | Location | Space Type | Count |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Everyman Cinema | York | Cinema | 1 |
| City Screen Picturehouse | York | Cinema | 1 |
| Old Parcels Office | Scarborough | Community Arts Centre | 4 |
| The Shakespeare Gallery | Scarborough | Community Arts Centre | 2 |
| Woodend Gallery and Studios | Scarborough | Community Arts Centre | 2 |
| Mandy Apple | Scarborough | Community Arts Centre | 1 |
| Creative Harrogate | Harrogate | Community Arts Centre | 2 |
| Scott Creative Arts Foundation | Thirsk | Community Arts Centre | 1 |
| Skipton Town Hall | Skipton | Community Arts Centre | 1 |
| Craven Arts House | Skipton | Community Arts Centre | 1 |
| Rural Arts | Thirsk | Community Arts Centre | 1 |
| Bilton Working Mens Club | Harrogate | Community Space | 1 |
| Clementhorpe Community Centre | York | Community Space | 1 |
| Bishop Monkton Village Hall | Bishop Monkton | Community Space | 1 |
| Hutton Rudby Village Hall | Hutton Rudby | Community Space | 1 |
| Door 84 | York | Community Space | 1 |
| Space York | York | Coworking Space | 4 |
| Patch York | York | Coworking Space | 8 |
| Spark | York | Coworking Space | 6 |
| Yorkshire in Business | Scarborough | Coworking Space | 1 |
| North Yorks Arts School | Scarborough | Educational Institution | 1 |
| Campus @ Northallerton (Treadmills) | Northallerton | Educational Institution | 1 |
| University of York Theatre Spaces | York | Educational Institution | 1 |
| University of York Film Studios | York | Educational Institution | 1 |
| Beeforth's Hive | Scarborough | Events Venue | 1 |
| Scarborough Spa | Scarborough | Events Venue | 1 |
| The Guildhall | York | Events Venue | 1 |
| The Dalesbridge Campsite and Cabins | Austwick | Events Venue | 1 |
| Elsworth at the Mill | Skipton | Events Venue | 1 |
| York Art Gallery | York | Gallery | 1 |
| The Glass Box Gallery | Scarborough | Gallery | 1 |

| | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Studio 49 | Scarborough | Gallery | 1 |
| Gallery 33 | Scarborough | Gallery | 1 |
| Mercer Gallery | Harrogate | Gallery | 1 |
| Danby Lodge National Park Centre Gallery | Danby | Gallery | 1 |
| Scarborough Art Gallery | Scarborough | Gallery | 1 |
| The Globe Community Library | Stokesley | Library | 1 |
| Scarborough Library | Scarborough | Library | 1 |
| York Explore Library | York | Library | 1 |
| Acomb Explore Library | York | Library | 1 |
| Clifton Explore York | York | Library | 1 |
| Tang Hall Explore | York | Library | 1 |
| Harrogate Library | Harrogate | Library | 1 |
| Evolution | Northallerton | Meeting & Events Space | 1 |
| Springboard | Stokesley | Meetings & Workshop Space | 1 |
| Ryedale Folk Museum | Hutton-le-Hole | Museum | 1 |
| The Yorkshire Museum | York | Museum | 1 |
| Blake House | York | Office Space | 1 |
| Rowntree Park | York | Park | 1 |
| The Joinery | Settle | Performance Venue | 1 |
| National Centre for Early Music | York | Performance Venue | 1 |
| The Milton Rooms | Malton | Performance Venue | 1 |
| Southlands Methodist Church | York | Place of Worship | 1 |
| Ripon Cathedral | Ripon | Place of Worship | 1 |
| Holy Trinity Church Ripon | Ripon | Place of Worship | 1 |
| Allhallowgate Methodist Church Ripon | Ripon | Place of Worship | 1 |
| York Cemetery Chapel | York | Place of Worship | 1 |
| York Minster | York | Place of Worship | 1 |
| Young Thugs Studios | York | Recording Studio | 1 |
| Ayriel Studios | Castleton | Recording Studio | 1 |
| York St John University | York | Studio | 1 |
| York Dance Space | York | Studio | 2 |
| Fabrication | York | Studio | 4 |
| Art Happens Here | Malton | Studio | 1 |
| Camphill Village Trust | Botton | Supported Living Organisation | 1 |
| Grand Opera House | York | Theatre | 1 |
| Joseph Rowntree Theatre | York | Theatre | 1 |
| Theatre@41 Monkgate | York | Theatre | 8 |
| Riding Lights Friargate Theatre | York | Theatre | 4 |
| York Theatre Royal | York | Theatre | 4 |
| Harrogate Theatre | Harrogate | Theatre | 1 |
| Royal Hall Theatre | Harrogate | Theatre | 1 |
| Ripon Arts Hub | Ripon | Theatre | 1 |
| Stephen Joseph Theatre | Scarborough | Theatre | 1 |
| Whitby Pavilion | Whitby | Theatre & Events Venue | 1 |

Table 6: Creative spaces identified by respondents in York and North Yorkshire, organised by name, location, type and census response count.

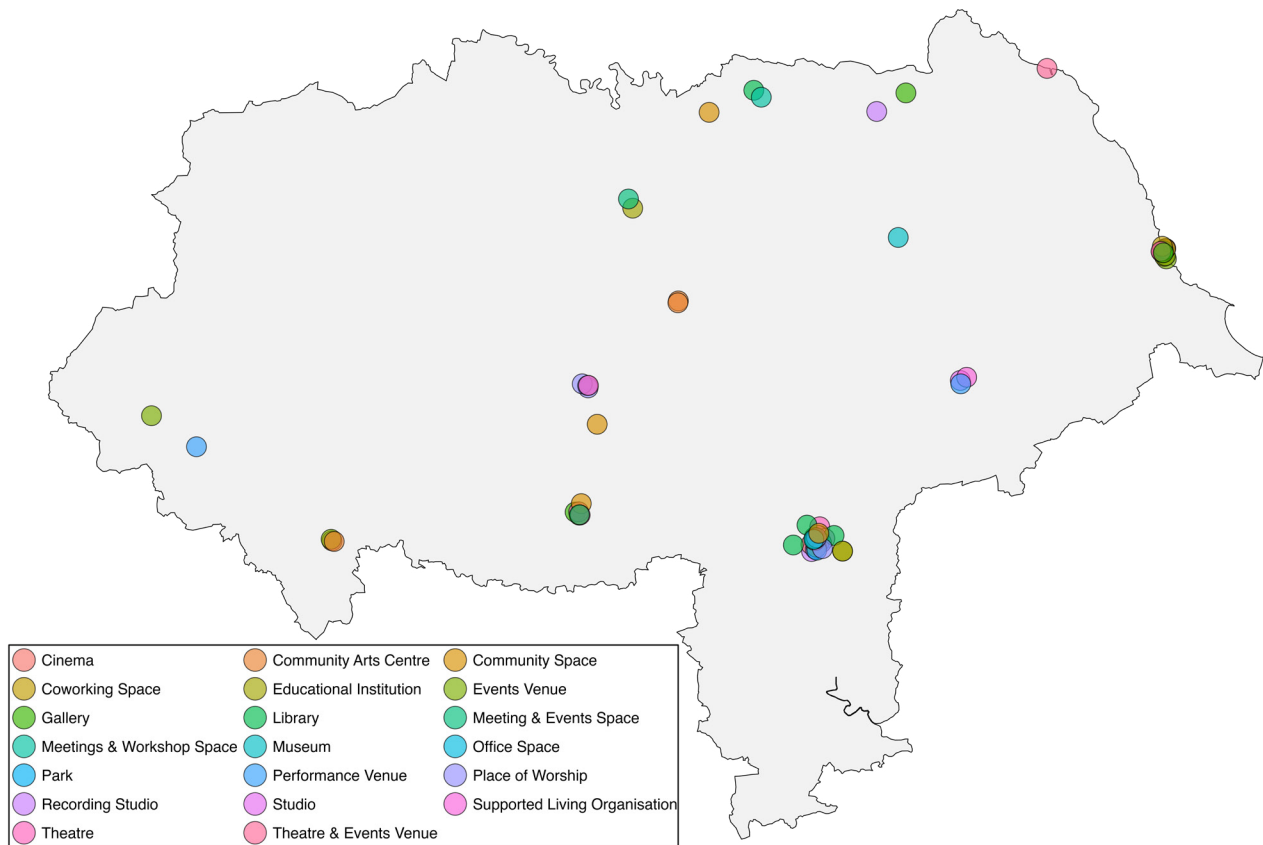


Figure 64: Creative spaces across York and North Yorkshire reported by respondents. Each marker indicates a space listed in Table 6, with colours denoting different space types.

Importance of creative spaces

Q. Please describe the importance of creative spaces to you and your work in the York and North Yorkshire creative economy. [FT] (n = 100)

Qualitative data summary:

There were 54 mentions of the importance of creative spaces across all geographies, describing them as very or hugely important (n = 17), vital (n = 16) and essential (n = 5). One respondent described creative spaces as “the lifeblood” and another respondent also wrote: “without spaces that engage audiences, why make anything?”

Spaces were deemed important for their ability to create community and networking opportunities (n = 24). Respondents wrote that creative spaces are “extremely important for informal networking” and that they could be “A space to have a sounding board with other creatives”. One respondent wrote that creative spaces provided “a more vibrant and diverse environment to work in, meeting interesting people that become friends, collaborators and partners. A more open and innovative way of working where more things happen more quickly. A sense of community and belonging that you are actually part of something”. Another respondent wrote that “Without SPACE, I would not have the creative community around me that I need to thrive.” Highlighting a success story, one urban responder wrote: “Having affordable working space for creatives is crucial. Patch⁴ is a great success not only bringing an old building back to life but because of the opportunity to meet, network, deliver workshops and support others in the sector.” For rural respondents in particular, spaces were also deemed important for their ability to support wellbeing and mental health (n = 9). Two rural respondents specifically wrote how it was important for combatting isolation. An urban respondent also wrote: “No workspace= no headspace = blocked artistically. Can’t create if fighting within confines of a single bedroom space.”

Several respondents (n = 12) mentioned the importance of spaces to display work, reach audiences and to “provide a selling space”. The importance of visibility was underscored by a respondent who wrote: “art works need to be seen in order to build customer base [sic]”. Furthermore, several respondents (n = 10) wrote that they could not do their work without a space, from theatre (“without affording rehearsal and performing spaces in the region, new performance work could not exist”) to visual artists and crafters (“I couldn’t work in stained glass in my rented flat!”) and film (“filming needs space to happen”).

⁴ Patch is a coworking and office space based in York which first opened for business in

Coastal respondents often linked this visibility directly to audiences and customers, for example: “being able to get out and take product to spaces where new customers are is vital” and “my work with various theatre, dance and music festival organisations at Whitby Pavilion has allowed me to develop my reputation as a photographer, as well as my client base. The impact has been enormous on the success of my business.”

Some respondents (n = 5) mentioned the usefulness of spaces for business operations (e.g., for meetings). Others (n = 5) mentioned that creative spaces were good for other industries, such as service, hospitality and tourism industries: “Much of hospitality and tourism relies heavily on an arts crowd to drum up interest. You only need to look at some of the most expensive retail spots in the country to know that these were once busy arts districts. Design and art go hand in hand with commerce. Neglecting the arts means to destroy the foundations of what is fuelling your economy.” A small group (n = 4) mentioned other benefits that creative spaces could have, such as providing “local spaces that children can access” and allowing creatives to “connect with communities & support them creatively”. These spillover effects were especially prominent in coastal responses, where creative spaces were seen as central to festivals and the visitor economy, with one respondent noting that “they are central to our feestival [sic]”.

Within this question, there were more calls for affordable studio space. Several respondents commented on the lack of suitable space (n = 13), with some respondents mentioning how lack of space was pushing them away from York, and one of them highlighted that in York, “spaces are either too big or too small”, and a rural respondent called for more investment in infrastructure. Several respondents (n = 11) also mentioned the high cost of spaces, for example: “generally expensive for good quality. Low cost space is generally poorly maintained”. Urban respondents tended to emphasise the pressure on existing city-centre premises and high rents, whereas rural respondents focused more on the basic availability of fit-for-purpose spaces within reasonable travelling distance. Only four respondents wrote that spaces are not important or that the availability of jobs mattered more.

9.2 Creative networks

Creative networks in York and North Yorkshire

Q. Are you a member of any of the following creative networks in York/North Yorkshire? [MC]

Q. Please provide details of any other specific creative spaces, networks and festivals that you are aware of in the York and North Yorkshire region. [FT]

| Network Name | Location | Network Type | Count |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| York Art Workers Association | York | Artists | 1 |
| York Open Studios | York | Artists | 1 |
| Gillygate Collective | York | Artists | 1 |
| Art Happens Here Studio Collective | Malton | Artists | 1 |
| Scaffold Artist Collective (SCAF) | North Yorkshire | Artists | 1 |
| Selby Art Collective | Selby | Artists | 1 |
| Easingwold District Art Society (EDAS) | Easingwold | Artists | 1 |
| Scarborough Arts Forum | Scarborough | Artists | 1 |
| North York Moors Arts & Culture Partnership | North York Moors | Artists, Cultural | 1 |
| Ladies Who Latte York | York | Business | 1 |
| Courageous Females | York | Business | 1 |
| Reignite | York | Business, Cultural | 1 |
| Fabrication York | York | Craft | 2 |
| Made in Yorkshire | Yorkshire | Craft | 1 |
| Brigantia (Yorkshire Moors, Wolds & Coast Art & Craft Workers) | North Yorkshire | Craft, Artists | 1 |
| North Yorkshire Cultural Consortium | North Yorkshire | Cultural | 6 |
| Explore York's NPO Programme | York | Cultural | 1 |
| York Culture and Creative Advisory Board | York | Cultural | 3 |
| Forge | North Yorkshire | Cultural | 1 |
| Ryedale Creatives | Ryedale (Former district) | General | 3 |
| York Creatives | York | General | 37 |
| Scarborough Creatives | Scarborough | General | 18 |
| Tadcaster Creatives | Tadcaster | General | 1 |
| Creative Coast (Scarborough) | Scarborough | General | 1 |
| Creative Harrogate | Harrogate | General | 2 |
| Creative Craven Network | Craven (Former district) | General | 2 |
| Guild of Media Arts | York | Media | 10 |
| York Filmmakers | York | Media | 7 |
| York Photographers | York | Media | 1 |
| York and North Yorkshire Dance Network | North Yorkshire | Performing | 1 |
| York Howlers | York | Poetry | 1 |
| ARCADE (Scarborough/Tadcaster) | Scarborough & Tadcaster | Producing, Performing | 6 |
| York Spoken Word | York | Writers | 1 |

Table 7: Creative networks in York and North Yorkshire that respondents reported having worked at or being aware of, by name, location, type and census count.

Importance of creative networks

Q. Please describe the importance of creative networks to you and your work in the York and North Yorkshire creative economy. [FT] (n = 84)

Qualitative data summary:

Most respondents valued networks for collaboration, learning and work opportunities, calling them vital, essential and/or critical (n = 36). Respondents also mentioned that networks were important for pipelines and getting work (n = 15), with one writing: “Networks are where I get most of my work” and another one writing that they were “the sole pipeline for finding work or people to work with within the film industry.” Networks were described as important for learning 9 times and as important for wellbeing and peer support 18 times. Some respondents mentioned how creative networks were community led, and one respondent gave the following example: “I set up The Artery to provide a network for creatives wishing to improve their business skills. Participants report 18 to 30% increase in revenue. Some participants were at the point of giving up and now have thriving businesses. Several report benefits of improved mental health, reduced isolation, collaborations, and the benefits of being part of a supportive network of like-minded people”.

However, the perceived value of creative networks varied between urban, rural and coastal respondents. 17% of urban respondents (n = 6) claimed that creative networks weren’t useful or relevant. Some respondents felt networks are exclusive or “talking shops” that need to become more action-focused. 34% of rural respondents (n = 12) claimed that they were not aware of any near them and that they had limited use. One respondent claimed that they “lack time to attend”. 50% of coastal respondents (n = 6) also claimed the networks were not very useful. Reasons given included lack of formal networks, niche markets and that they “require quite a bit of effort and time to access tangible support”.

9.3 Creative festivals

Types of creative festivals

Q. Have you worked at any of the following types of creative festivals (in any capacity) in York/North Yorkshire?

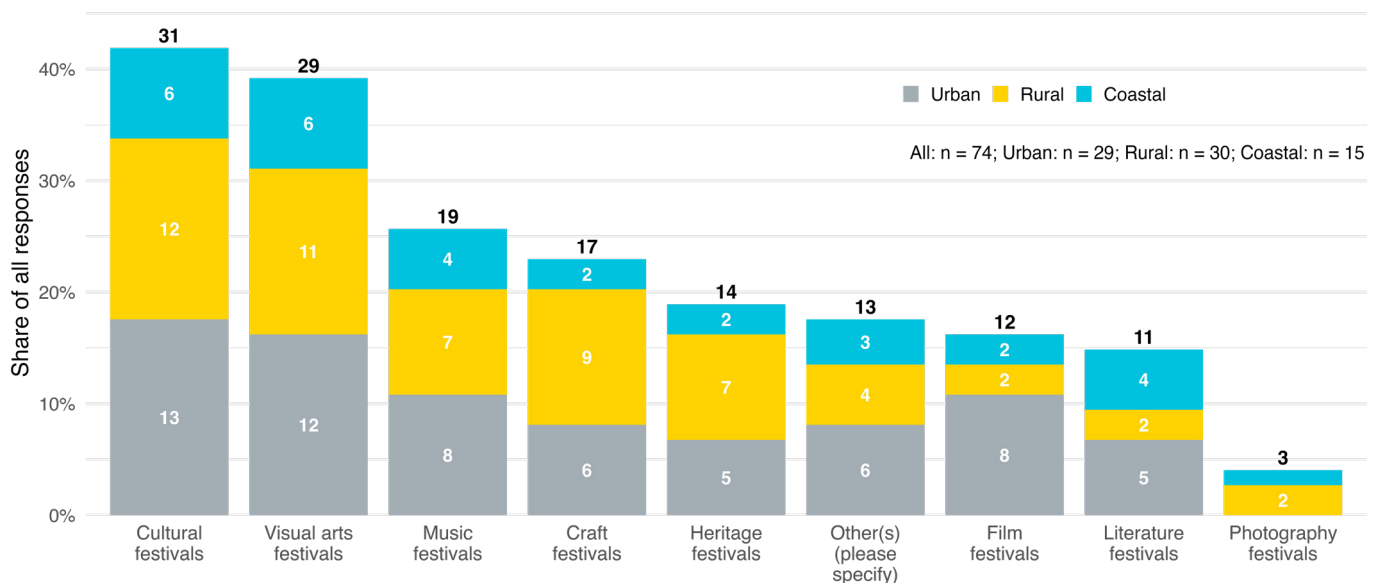


Figure 65: Types of creative festivals respondents reported working at within York and North Yorkshire, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. Have you worked at any of the following types of creative festivals (in any capacity) in York/North Yorkshire? [MC - Other responses] (n = 13)

Qualitative data summary:

Respondents reported involvement in a broad range of festivals and public events, though participation varied widely. A number (n = 3) of individuals indicated experience with arts and performance-related festivals, including comedy festivals, theatre festivals, and the Scarborough Fringe, showing engagement with established creative and cultural programmes. Others mentioned work at conventions, wellness festivals, children's events, salons, and various outdoor community activities, reflecting diverse and flexible creative practice.

Some participants highlighted involvement in not traditionally creative sector or mixed-purpose events, such as agricultural shows, markets, and heritage events, as well as participation in charity fundraising exhibitions, demonstrating crossover between creative output and community or public engagement. Some respondents (n = 3) stated not having worked at any creative festivals.

Creative festivals in York and North Yorkshire

Q. Please provide specific details of the creative festivals you have worked at. (e.g. council run/community run/private owned/etc.) [FT]

Q. Please provide details of any other specific creative spaces, networks and festivals that you are aware of in the York and North Yorkshire region. [FT]

| Festival Name | Location | Festival Type | Count |
|---|------------------|---------------|-------|
| Coastival | Scarborough | Arts | 1 |
| Beacon for the Arts Festival | North York Moors | Arts | 1 |
| Eskdale Festival of the Arts | Whitby | Arts | 1 |
| Autumn Daze | Scarborough | Community | 1 |
| Spring Daze | Scarborough | Community | 1 |
| Homestead Park Festival | York | Community | 1 |
| York Design Week | York | Cultural | 1 |
| York Festival of Ideas | York | Cultural | 3 |
| NowThen! Selby | Selby | Cultural | 2 |
| Scarborough Streets Festival | Scarborough | Cultural | 1 |
| Big Ideas by the Sea Festival | Scarborough | Cultural | 2 |
| Sci-Fi Scarborough Convention | Scarborough | Cultural | 2 |
| Whitby Goth Weekend | Whitby | Cultural | 1 |
| Whitby Steampunk Weekend | Whitby | Cultural | 1 |
| Scarborough Film Festival | Scarborough | Film | 1 |
| Aesthetica | York | Film | 5 |
| Short + Sweet Theatre & Film Yorkshire Festival | Harrogate | Film | 1 |
| Dead Northern Festival Horror Film Festival | York | Film | 1 |
| Scarborough Food & Drink Festival | Scarborough | Food | 1 |
| Bridlington Seafood Festival | Bridlington | Food | 1 |
| Eboracum Roman Festival | York | Heritage | 1 |
| Whitby Fish & Ships Festival | Whitby | Heritage | 1 |
| Jorvik Viking Festival | York | Heritage | 1 |
| Robin Hood's Bay Victorian Weekend | Robin Hood's Bay | Heritage | 1 |
| Bridlington Old Town Vintage Festival | Bridlington | Heritage | 1 |
| York Unlocked | York | Heritage | 1 |
| Yorkshire Festival of Story | Settle (Online) | Literary | 2 |

| | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| York Zine Fest | York | Literary | 1 |
| National Literacy Trust Summer of Literacy | North Yorkshire | Literary | 1 |
| Books by the Beach | Scarborough | Literary | 1 |
| Whitby Regatta | Whitby | Maritime | 1 |
| Musicport World Music Festival | Whitby | Music | 2 |
| York Early Music Festival | York | Music | 3 |
| Scarborough Jazz Festival | Scarborough | Music | 1 |
| North York Moors Chamber Music Festival | North York Moors | Music | 2 |
| York Blues Festival | York | Music | 1 |
| Ryedale Festival | Ryedale (Former district) | Music | 2 |
| Deer Shed Festival | Topcliffe | Music | 2 |
| Scarborough Folk Festival | Scarborough | Music | 1 |
| Staxtonbury Family Music Festival | Staxton | Music | 1 |
| Moonbeams Folk Festival | Hunmanby | Music | 1 |
| Scarborough Seafest | Scarborough | Music, Food, Heritage | 1 |
| Scarborough Fringe Festival | Scarborough | Performing Arts | 2 |
| Everybody Dance Festival | York | Performing Arts | 1 |
| Scarborough Fair | Scarborough | Series | 4 |
| Harrogate International Festivals | Harrogate | Series | 2 |
| York International Women's Week | York | Social Purpose | 1 |
| Make Space for Girls Festival | York | Social Purpose | 1 |
| Scarborough Surf Festival | Scarborough | Surf Festival | 1 |
| Airecon (Analog Gaming Festival) | Harrogate | Video Game | 1 |
| Easingwold District Art Society Annual Art Exhibition | Easingwold | Visual Arts | 1 |
| Scarborough Art Festival | Scarborough | Visual Arts | 6 |
| North Yorkshire Open Studios | North Yorkshire | Visual Arts | 5 |
| York Open Studios | York | Visual Arts | 6 |
| Micklegate Arts Trail (York Festival of Ideas) | York | Visual Arts | 1 |
| Malton & Norton Art Trail | Malton | Visual Arts | 1 |
| York River Art Market | York | Visual Arts | 3 |
| Whitby Art Fair | Whitby | Visual Arts | 1 |
| Staithe Art Festival | Staithe | Visual Arts | 1 |
| Scarborough Lights Festival | Scarborough | Winter | 2 |
| Scarborough Sparkle | Scarborough | Winter | 2 |

Table 8: Creative festivals in York and North Yorkshire that respondents reported having worked at or being aware of, by festival name, location, type and census count.

Importance of creative festivals

Please describe the importance of creative festivals to you and your work in the York and North Yorkshire creative economy. [FT] (n = 59)

Many respondents (n = 18) wrote that festivals were “very important”, “vital” or “essential”. Reasons given include that festivals help them reach audiences and are a source of income (n = 14), with several respondents saying that this is how they get customers into their shops and another stating that “approximately 30 - 40% of income is derived from creative events”. Other reasons for the importance of creative festivals include as a way to network with other creatives and an opportunity for collaboration (n = 15) and that they help build communities and to “bring people together” (n = 6). One respondent highlighted that “festivals deliver a huge amount for their communities”, while another highlighted that it was important to “commission local creatives”.

Some respondents did claim that creative festivals were not important (n = 4) or that they were inaccessible for them (n = 2). One respondent pointed to YOS [York Open Studios] as being too selective. Another respondent stated that creative festivals in York are not fit for purpose: “Many creative festivals in York attract mostly other creatives, but not customers, and so no money can be made. They’re fun, but it’s bad for business to invest time in them over and over again.”

10 Celebrating creativity in York and North Yorkshire

Key findings

- 1.** Many creatives draw directly on York and North Yorkshire’s natural landscapes, coast, heritage and built environment for subject matter and inspiration.
- 2.** Respondents value local networks and a sense of community and connection, yet some said that these communities can be ‘insular’ or lacking sufficient opportunities, pushing some to work more outside of the region.
- 3.** Respondents reported a shortage of funding (especially compared with London and other parts of the UK), limited suitable workspaces and unsuitable transport links as constraints on their practice and professional development.
- 4.** Respondents reported volunteering in governance roles, mentoring, festival work and making pro-bono creative contributions to support the creative economy. However, some respondents warned that this risks creating an unsustainable cycle of unpaid work.
- 5.** Success stories reported by respondents include UK-wide performances, international exports, and awards such as BAFTAs, Emerging Artist Awards, and major theatre accolades.

10.1 Creative economy fulfilment

What aspects of working in the creative economy bring you the most fulfilment? [MC]

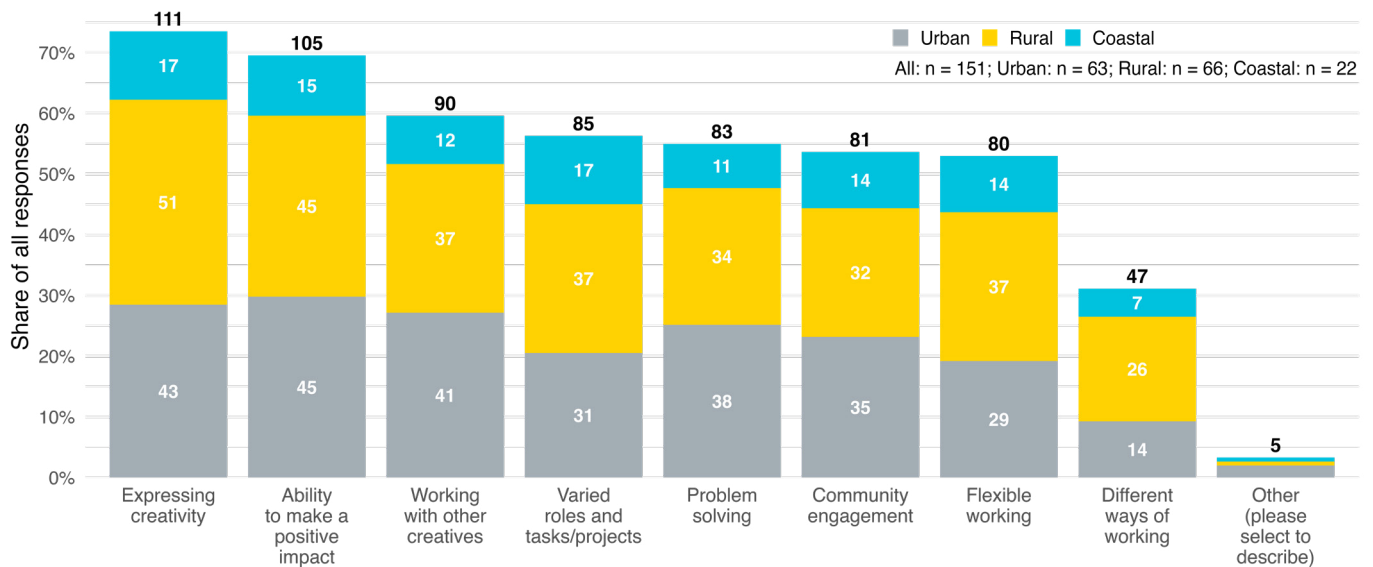


Figure 66: Aspects of working in the creative economy that bring respondents the most fulfilment, broken down by the geographical classification of the community in which they live (see Figure 5).

Q. What aspects of working in the creative economy bring you the most fulfilment? [MC - Other responses] (n = 5)

Qualitative data summary:

Of the five respondents, three mentioned earning money or making a living. One wrote it was “creating a new career”, and another that they were a trained painter and it’s what they did: “the ‘economy’ bit is not the fulfilling bit”. One of the respondents also mentioned being able to work for themselves and to provide for their family.

How has being based in York/North Yorkshire influenced your work? [FT] (n = 107)

Qualitative data summary:

Overall, there were 85 mentions of positive influences from respondents being based in York and North Yorkshire, while there were 36 mentions of negative influences and impacts. Several respondents did mention both positive and negative aspects.

Most respondents felt positively about the influence of the region on their work. Eight respondents mentioned specifically that York and North Yorkshire is an inspirational place, expressing sentiments such as “the area itself is deeply inspiring” and “moving to the coast inspires endless new works”. Many respondents (n = 21) mentioned that they use the region either as the subject of their work or as inspiration for it. Urban respondents were more likely to mention heritage as inspiration for their work, for example, that they “rooted it in heritage and the opportunities to tell the stories of the past creatively through the design of places”. In contrast, rural and coastal respondents were more likely to mention the natural landscape, such as one rural respondent who wrote: “I draw on the nature and geology of the area”. Another coastal respondent wrote that they “use the coast, our urban environments and natural world as our inspiration”. Some rural and coastal respondents also wrote that they use the natural landscape in their work, for example by photographing it (e.g., “benefits of being in a beautiful location - great for photoshoots.”) or painting it (e.g., “it is often the subject of my paintings”).

Several respondents also mentioned the positives of community and connection within the region (n = 15). A few respondents mentioned access to universities and their research as a positive: “world-class researchers and tech start-ups. Things are done here in research and tech that make headlines”. Others wrote that networks were motivating, for example, one respondent who wrote: “many other makers and craftspeople facing the same challenges and opportunities has been a real encouragement”. However, some (n = 9) also mentioned that it can be difficult as communities could be “insular” and that there is a “less connected creative industry”. Some mentioned that they do not work much in the York and North Yorkshire region, and one respondent wrote that “lack of local support has pushed us to work more nationally and internationally”. Indeed, 13 respondents mentioned a lack of opportunities in the region, with one respondent writing: “I struggle more” and that their work “has stagnated somewhat since being back in North Yorkshire”.

An additional challenge cited included the lack of funding (n = 6), especially when compared to London: “philanthropic giving is considerably lower here than in London”. Several respondents also felt that the region lagged behind other parts of the UK in terms of grants, for example when securing Arts Council funding. Another respondent pointed to having to work to “a much more commercial model due to the lack of local govt/ACE funding into the area”.

Several respondents (n = 9) wrote that work-life balance was a positive of living in the region, which improved wellbeing and led to lower stress. One urban respondent wrote that the region “allows for a laid back, rural-urban quality of life which is beneficial to creativity”, while a coastal respondent wrote that living by the sea “has also improved my work/life balance”. Additionally, four urban respondents mentioned the proximity to other places such as London, Leeds and Scotland as a positive, for example, “being only two hours from London is also a positive”. However, other respondents were less positive about transport links (n = 3) writing that “travel by train is expensive and unreliable, roads are very heavily congested” and that “access to high quality creativity can be a challenge for people who do not drive”.

While one rural respondent wrote that the ability to build a studio in the region was positive, most respondents who mentioned spaces lamented the lack of suitable space (n = 5), especially in urban areas. One respondent wrote: “Lack of spaces means it’s embarrassing if I get a York-based enquiry and have to ask them to travel to the other side of West-Yorkshire.” Another urban respondent also commented on the inadequacy of their studio space: “I have had to take the only studio I could find, which is too small and limits the scale of what I can do.” That said, three respondents did mention that spaces and infrastructure in York and North Yorkshire were a positive aspect. For example, one respondent praised the “world class knowledge and facilities in video production and post-production” and another mentioned “an excellent theatre venue at Whitby Pavilion which provides an exceptional performance space for the many local dance and theatre schools, involving hundreds of young people”.

Finally, nine respondents mentioned that working in York and North Yorkshire had no influence at all. While most in this group responded with “none” or “it hasn’t”, some expanded their answers. For example: “mostly to not work in York and North Yorkshire” or “I live here. So I work here”. This underscores that for some, the region is deeply embedded in their subject matter and daily practice, while for others the key constraint or opportunity lies in access to wider networks and markets beyond York and North Yorkshire.

10.3 Creative economy success stories

Please share some of your recent good news/success stories. [FT] (n = 86)

Qualitative data summary:

Respondents gave many varied answers to this question, that shows how York and North Yorkshire produces far-reaching and award-winning creative content. Creatives report getting national reach, performing “all over the UK” or holding partnerships with national organisations such as “BBC Radio 3, meaning that our work and the mention of ‘York’ is heard across the country and beyond.” Internationally, respondents have mentioned exporting their work to the USA, Singapore, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands. Creatives in the region have won the UK Theatre Best Show for Children and Young People, Emerging Artist Award and BAFTAs, and been nominated for YO1 Radio’s Sport Awards, UK Small Business Awards and SBID [Society of British & International Interior Design] International Interior Design Awards. Some respondents also mentioned success in acquiring funding to grow their businesses or deliver projects. Additionally, many mentioned successes in starting up and running events and performances and reaching new audiences.

10.4 Volunteering and the creative economy

Q. Please tell us about any unpaid voluntary roles you have, that serve to support the creative economy in York/North Yorkshire. [FT] (n = 65)

The most commonly reported unpaid role is that of board and trustee roles (n = 24). Several respondents also wrote about mentorship and education support, including providing internship and work experience opportunities for young people (n = 9). Others wrote that they supported festivals and events (n = 7), including running York Design Week and volunteering at Ryedale Festival. Some also produced pro-bono work for charities, schools and other organisations (n = 9).

A smaller but important counter-theme is concern about unpaid labour (n = 3), including categorical opposition to normalising volunteer work in place of proper funding. Together, the pattern is an ecosystem heavily reliant on unpaid governance, skills transfer and event labour, with some respondents explicitly questioning its sustainability: “Most of my work is unpaid as no one has any access to funding. Most organisations I work with as a freelancer would love to pay us, but are unable to. At the same time, many freelancers, particularly early career freelancers, don’t feel we have the ability to be discerning and refuse unpaid work because of the importance of getting our names out. It creates a vicious cycle– there is no funding, no one gets funding, they do the work any way, funding is seen as unnecessary because the work is getting made already.”

11 Conclusion

The findings of the York and North Yorkshire Creative Economy Census 2025 reveal a sector that is rich in talent, ambition and contribution, yet constrained by structural conditions that shape how creative work is produced, sustained and shared across the region. Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative data show that while the region benefits from a highly skilled and motivated creative workforce, the systems surrounding that workforce, particularly funding, infrastructure, support, mobility and skills-training, can limit opportunities for growth. Across the survey, respondents described challenges that cut across subsectors, geographies and working practices. These recurring patterns point to a series of overlapping themes that can be used to better understand the environment in which the region's creative economy currently operates.

Space is essential but often not fit for purpose. Shortages of affordable, suitable and specialist workspaces constrain the ability to make, rehearse and showcase work. Funding mechanisms frequently fail to align with how creatives work. Respondents expressed strong demand for small, low-administration grants, seed and micro funding, local commissioning opportunities and support navigating competitive national funding systems such as the Arts Council. Coastal respondents were especially vocal in reporting elevated challenges in accessing funding and attracting investment.

Tailored business support is valued far more than generic provision. Creatives call for sector-specific mentoring and guidance relating to issues such as intellectual property, licensing, export, marketing, finance and HR that better reflects the realities of freelance and micro-business models. Recruitment and retention are limited by place, pay and work-readiness gaps. Limited local talent pools, training, costs and skills mismatches inhibit growth for many organisations. Visibility and access to markets are uneven across the region, with those in rural areas particularly affected. Creators reported a need for more effective routes to present, distribute and sell work—through venues, showcases, directories and distribution partners—with concerns that existing opportunities feel overly York-centric.

Networks play a vital role in both securing work and supporting wellbeing, yet access is not evenly distributed. Geographical distance, availability and the relevance of opportunities mean that many creatives outside York face greater barriers to participation, this was particularly the case for rural respondents. Transport across the region is a constraint in its own right. While York benefits from strong national connections, lacking local links and high travel costs restrict collaboration, access to audiences and participation in sector events.

Finally, the creative economy relies heavily on unpaid labour, including governance roles, stewardship, mentoring and pro-bono creative contributions. While such work underpins many projects and organisations, respondents raised concerns about the sustainability and fairness of this reliance, particularly for freelancers and early-career practitioners. Together, these themes paint a picture of a geographically dispersed creative economy with substantial potential but uneven conditions, one that could achieve even greater impact with more coherent, better resourced and more regionally balanced support systems and targeted funding.

However, the results of the York and North Yorkshire Creative Economy Census should not be seen in isolation. The findings sit within a wider national and regional policy landscape that places growing emphasis on the Creative Industries as drivers of economic, cultural and social value. Nationally, the Creative Industries Sector Plan [17] highlights priorities around growth finance, skills development, innovation and improved business support. The patterns observed in this census, particularly the need for accessible small-scale funding, support navigating national funding systems, and sector-specific business advice, mirror these national priorities, while also illustrating how such support does not always reach dispersed, freelance or small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) focused creative economies such as those in York and North Yorkshire.

Regionally, the findings resonate strongly with One Creative North [3], the pan-northern partnership established to improve equity of access to skills, finance, networks and infrastructure across the North. Themes emerging from the census, including uneven access to workspace, networks, markets and transport; barriers faced by rural and coastal creatives; and the reliance on micro-business and freelance models, provide empirical evidence for the challenges that One Creative North seeks to address. They highlight the importance of regionally balanced approaches that recognise the geographically dispersed nature of the sector and the varied working conditions of those working within it.

Taken together, the census reinforces both national and northern ambitions for a more inclusive, better connected and better supported creative economy, while grounding these ambitions in the lived realities of practitioners across York and North Yorkshire. The evidence suggests that, with the right support, the creative economy has the foundations to harness the geographically dispersed nature of creative activity and the diversity of Creative Industries subsector activity as key regional assets within the wider economy. These opportunities sit alongside the region's natural, heritage and cultural strengths, which continue to shape its creative identity and provide a rich context for creative practice across York and North Yorkshire.

- [1] Office for National Statistics, “Local indicators for York and North Yorkshire (E47000012),” 2025, [Online]
Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E47000012-york-and-north-yorkshire/indicators> Accessed: 28 November 2025.
- [2] York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, “Local Growth Plan,” 2025, [Online]
Available at: <https://yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk/our-strategy/localgrowthplan/> Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [3] J. Kelly, “One creative north: Chair’s scoping report,” The Great North, Tech. Rep., 2025, [Online]
Available at: <https://thegreatnorth.org.uk/downloads/95/one-creative-north-report-may-2025.pdf> Accessed: 2 December 2025.
- [4] Department for Culture, Media and Sport and The Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP, “Funding for UK’s growth-driving Creative Industries confirmed in the Budget,” Government press release, 2024, [Online]
Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-for-uks-growth-driving-creative-industries-confirmed-in-the-budget>
Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [5] Department for Business and Trade, “The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy,” 2025, [Online]
Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy> Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [6] Department for Culture, Media and Sport, “Economic Estimates: Employment in DCMS Sectors, July 2023 to June 2024,” 2024, [Online]
Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/economic-estimates-employment-in-dcms-sectors-july-2023-to-june-2024> Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [7] Cornwall Council, “Cornwall’s creative census,” Website, 2025, [Online]
Available at: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/parks-leisure-and-culture/culture-and-creative-economy/cornwalls-creative-census/>
Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [8] Centre for London, “Appendix 1: Defining the creative economy, the creative industries, and the cultural sector,” In: Culture Club: Social mobility in the Creative and Cultural Industries, 2019, [Online] Available at: <https://centreforlondon.org/reader/culture-club/appendix-1-defining-the-creative-economy-the-creative-industries-and-the-cultural-sector/> Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [9] A. Uwazuruike, G. Hutton, J. Woodhouse, M. Lalic, and H. Samuel, “Creative Industries – Commons Library Debate Pack,” House of Commons Library, UK Parliament, Research Briefing (CDP 2025/0017), 2025, [Online]
Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2025-0017/CDP-2025-0017.pdf> Accessed: 21 November 2025.
- [10] Ordnance Survey, “Code-point® with polygons: Sample data download,” Dataset (sample) via OS Data Hub, 2025, [Online]
Available at: <https://osdatahub.os.uk/data/downloads/sample/CodePointWithPolygons> Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [11] Office for National Statistics, “Local Authority Districts (May 2024) Boundaries UK BGC,” Dataset, UK Data Service, 2024, [Online]
Available at: <https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/datasets/ons::local-authority-districts-may-2024-boundaries-uk-bgc-2/about>
Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [12] —, “230724 creative jobs final tables,” Dataset, UK Data Service, 2024, [Online]
Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/adhocs/1357onslocalnumberofjobsinthecreativeindustryandoccupations2018to2022forexistingandforthcomingcombinedauthorityareas/230724creativejobsfinaltables.xlsx> Accessed: 24 November 2025.
- [13] —, “Jobs in the Creative Industries and Occupations in London and All Other Regions of the UK, 2010 to 2021,” 2021, [Online]
Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/adhocs/15627jobsinthecreativeindustriesandoccupationsinlondonandallotherregionsoftheuk2010to2021/creativejobs20102021.xlsx> Accessed: 25 November 2025.
- [14] Crafts Council, “Measuring the craft economy: Defining and measuring craft — report 3,” 2014, [Online]
Available at: [https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/documents/881/Measuring the craft economy 2014.pdf](https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/documents/881/Measuring%20the%20craft%20economy%202014.pdf) Accessed: 25 November 2025.
- [15] Higher Education Statistics Agency, “Soc 2020 – standard occupational classification,” Web page; HESA collection coding manual tools, 2024, [Online]
Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/coding-manual-tools/sicsocdata/soc-2020> Accessed: 25 November 2025.
- [16] Companies House, “Nature of Business: Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Codes,” Web page, 2025, [Online]
Available at: <https://resources.companieshouse.gov.uk/sic/> Accessed: 25 November 2025.
- [17] Department for Business and Trade and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, “Creative Industries Sector Plan,” 2025, [Online]
Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68920e22dc6688ed50878479/industrial_strategy_creative_industries_sector_plan_accessible.pdf Accessed: 2 December 2025.

xR StOries

xR NetwOrk+



XR Stories

The Guildhall
St Martins Courtyard
Coney St
York YO1 9QL



xrstories.co.uk
enquiries@xrstories.co.uk



UNIVERSITY
of York