

Awareness of social enterprises rising in the UK, shows new poll

- UK home to 70,000 social enterprises, businesses that reinvest their profits for good
- Britain experiencing a social enterprise start-up boom
- London, West Midlands and the South home to greater number of social enterprise start-ups
- Poll released on Social Saturday, a day to motivate people to buy from social enterprises
- ‘Social enterprise is growing because people care about the ripple effect of their spending’

Awareness of social enterprises is rising among the British public, according to a new poll released by Social Enterprise UK [1]. The majority of the general public (51%) are now aware of these alternative businesses which are set up to tackle social and environmental issues, compared with 37% two years ago in 2014 [2]. In 2008, only 1 in 5 (20%) British adults were aware of social enterprises [3].

The YouGov poll has been released on [Social Saturday](#) which takes place today and aims to inspire people to buy from British social enterprises – well-known names include The Big Issue, Jamie Oliver’s Fifteen restaurant chain, Divine Chocolate and Belu Water.

Free of shareholders, social enterprises choose to plough their profits back into the business to deliver on their social or environmental mission, which might be getting homeless people off the streets and into work, or reducing the amount of waste that goes into landfill.

Britain is home to 70,000 social enterprises and to an increasing number of [Social Enterprise Places](#). These towns, cities and villages, including Alston Moor in Cumbria, Bristol and Sunderland, are nurturing social enterprises to start-up and grow to tackle local issues and to help communities flourish.

UK experiencing a social enterprise start-up boom

Research shows that British entrepreneurs are choosing to set up social enterprises rather than traditional businesses. Half (49%) of all social enterprises are five years old or less, and a third (35%) are three years old or less – more than three times the proportion of SME start-ups [4]. According to Social Enterprise UK, there are more start-ups in London, the West Midlands and the South.

Percentage of social enterprises that are three years old or less, by region:

- London 44%
- West Midlands 43%
- South East 38%
- South West 37%
- Yorkshire & Humber 36%
- Wales 35%
- North West 30%
- Scotland 29%
- North East 28%
- East Midlands 27%
- Northern Ireland 24%
- East 22%

Peter Holbrook CBE, Chief Executive of Social Enterprise UK, the national campaigning body for the sector, said:

“It’s very good news that awareness of social enterprise is growing in the UK. We can attribute this rise to an increasing number of social enterprises selling to British consumers. One of the reasons that the UK’s social enterprise movement is thriving is because people care about the ripple effect of their spending. But the Government’s support of the sector, public facing campaigns like Social

Saturday, and the growing number of entrepreneurs setting up social enterprises are also helping to raise the sector's profile in the mainstream.

"We're seeing more and more social enterprises in communities across the UK, and they're operating in pretty much every industry, from coffee shops and cinemas to dentists, supermarkets and leisure centres. And there are close to 20 certified Social Enterprise Places in Britain now – these towns, cities and villages are committed to boosting social enterprise as a way to tackle local problems."

On Saturday 15th October, social enterprises around the country are opening their doors and hosting events. Local MPs are also visiting social enterprises in their constituencies.

Visit www.socialsaturday.org.uk to find out what's happening near you and to buy from social enterprises online.

UK social enterprise facts

- Britain's social enterprise sector contributes 24 billion to the economy and employs one million people [4].
- Social enterprises are much more likely to be led by women than mainstream businesses: 40% per cent of social enterprises have a female chief executive, compared with 7% of FTSE 100 companies [4].
- The majority of social enterprises (59%) actively employ people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, including ex-offenders, people with disabilities and the long-term unemployed [4].
- Three quarters (74%) of social enterprises pay the Living Wage as accredited by the Living Wage Foundation [5].

Social enterprises sell a range of products, including...

- [From Babies with Love](#) – baby clothes – every purchase supports orphaned and abandoned babies to grow up in loving family homes
- [Frank Water](#) - reusable water bottles, using profits to provide life changing access to safe water and sanitation for marginalised people living in India's tribal regions and urban slums
- [Alive and Kicking](#) – make footballs in Africa, sustaining 155 ethical jobs and using 100% of profits to deliver health education programmes
- [Buy Rice Back](#) – upcycled rice bags - use the profits to provide homes and education to children in the South of India who would have otherwise been forced into begging
- [Sniffy Wiffy](#) – hand/body creams to help in the fight against breast & testicular cancer
- [The Soap Co](#) – luxury soap and hand creams – employs people who are blind or disabled (80% of its staff) - the org behind it, CLARITY, is the oldest social enterprise in the UK, founded 1854
- [Stand 4 socks](#) – ethically made socks – profits support global causes including providing vaccines to children in developing countries
- [Harry Specters](#) – handmade chocolates, providing jobs and training to young people with autism
- [Tea People](#) – sells tea - profits help to educate underprivileged children in tea growing regions around the world
- [Papi's Pickles](#) – sells pickles - provides women from Sri-Lankan and South-Indian communities training, jobs, support and skills for life

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1. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size 2,006 adults. Fieldwork undertaken 29th - 30th September 2016. Survey was carried out online. Figures weighted and representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Full results available on request.

2. Survey carried out online by YouGov Plc. Total sample size 2,070 adults. Fieldwork undertaken 19th - 20th August 2014. Figures weighted and representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Full results available on request.

3. Cabinet Office, 2008. Research carried out by the COI, Office of the Third Sector. Full results available on request (not available online).

4. [State of Social Enterprise Report](#), 2015, Social Enterprise UK.

5. Online survey carried out by [Social Enterprise UK](#) from 7th December 2015 – 25th January 2016. Completed by 230 social enterprises operating in the UK.

NOTES TO EDITORS

For interview requests and social enterprise case studies, contact the SEUK press office on 020 3589 4959/4949 or 07967 586489 (24/7 press office mobile) or email shehan.perera@socialenterprise.org.uk / fran.gorman@socialenterprise.org.uk

[Social Saturday](#) is led by the national trade body, Social Enterprise UK, and is supported by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The day is part of the UK's successful Buy Social campaign. Watch the [Buy Social animation](#), narrated by founder of The Big Issue, John Bird.

Social Enterprise UK is the national body for social enterprise. Social enterprises are businesses that are changing the world. When they profit, society profits. Together with our members we are the voice for social enterprise in the UK: www.socialenterprise.org.uk