



# HORNBY HOBBIES

PRESENTS THE

# RETURN OF THE HOBBY



SCALEXTRIC



CORGI

HORNBY



Humbrol



Pocher  
1:8 Model Kits



## Hello

In today's fast-paced world, hobbies are more than just fun pastimes - they're an essential part of our lives!

Whether it's model building, gardening, painting, playing an instrument, or geeking out over board games, hobbies provide us with many benefits, from escaping from daily pressures to developing new skills and providing social connections to others. The result: hobbyists are more positive about life, reflecting the positivity and mental wellbeing that comes with having a hobby. **The time and money spent on hobbies is contributing to what has been dubbed the 'joy economy'.**

We have always been a nation of hobbyists. From Churchill and his passion for painting, Queen Victoria and her love of tiny wooden dolls, Tom Daly's obsession with knitting, or Francis Bourgeois combining modelling and model building – hobbies come in all forms. At Hornby Hobbies, we are proud to play a part in supporting the world of hobbyists. **We believe that hobbies can be a force for good, providing much-needed benefits in a world full of many individual pressures.**

This is why we wanted to explore the wider world of hobbies in the UK in more depth: to champion the humble hobbyist and shine a spotlight on the powerful force of hobbies.

Our whitepaper draws on insight we

commissioned through **Disrupt Insight** into the current role of hobbies in the UK. As part of the research, we carried out:

- A nationally representative survey of n=2,000 UK adults between 25th April and 2nd May 2024.
- Six 1-hour qualitative depth interviews amongst a selection of craft-based / model-making hobbyists.

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# WE ARE A NATION OF HOBBYISTS

**93%**

**of people in the UK have an active hobby**

In a fast-paced, technology-driven world, hobbies remain a crucial aspect of our daily lives. Whilst the types of hobbies have changed over time, one thing has remained consistent: Brits like to hobby.

Most of us have a hobby of some form. Us Brits are most likely to recognise outdoor and physical activities as our top hobbies, but this is often balanced with more intellectual or creative hobbies. Hobbies are pretty universal in the UK, regardless of your age, gender or affluence.

But why have one hobby when you can have many? With most Brits having **five hobbies on average**, we are proving effective at splitting our time across the activities we enjoy doing.



## Top UK hobbies



**41%**  
Outdoors & nature

- Top activities:
- Hiking & walking
  - Gardening



**34%**  
Sports & physical activity

- Top activities:
- Gym
  - Running
  - Swimming
  - Yoga
  - Team sports



**31%**  
Intellectual pursuits

- Top activities:
- Reading
  - Brain games
  - Board games
  - Writing



**28%**  
Culinary arts & cooking

- Top activities:
- Cooking
  - Baking
  - Eating out
  - And let's not forget...wine appreciation



**25%**  
DIY & home improvements

- Top activities:
- Decorating
  - Home renovation
  - DIY decor

**24%**  
Video games & tech

- Top activities:
- Console or PC
  - Mobile games
  - Betting



**22%**  
Hands-on, creative activities

- Top activities:
- Knitting
  - Crafting
  - Model making



**18%**  
Music & performing arts

- Top activities:
- Gigs & concerts
  - Playing an instrument
  - Singing

# HOBBIES MAKE US HAPPY

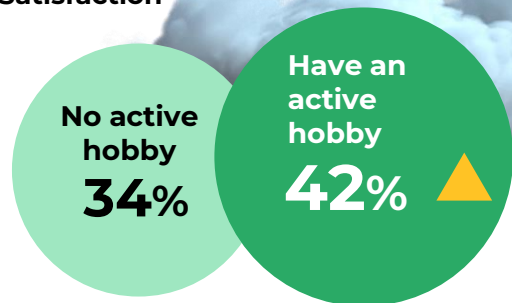
Hobbies are a direct investment in our well-being. Those with an active hobby are **more satisfied with life** (nearly a quarter to be precise!), highlighting the importance of hobbies to make Brits happy.

There are a number of benefits that Brits recognise having an active hobby can bring; the most common associations are around **improved mental health and wellbeing**.

**Whilst happiness is one of the key benefits and outcomes, there are many wider positives from good hobbies.**

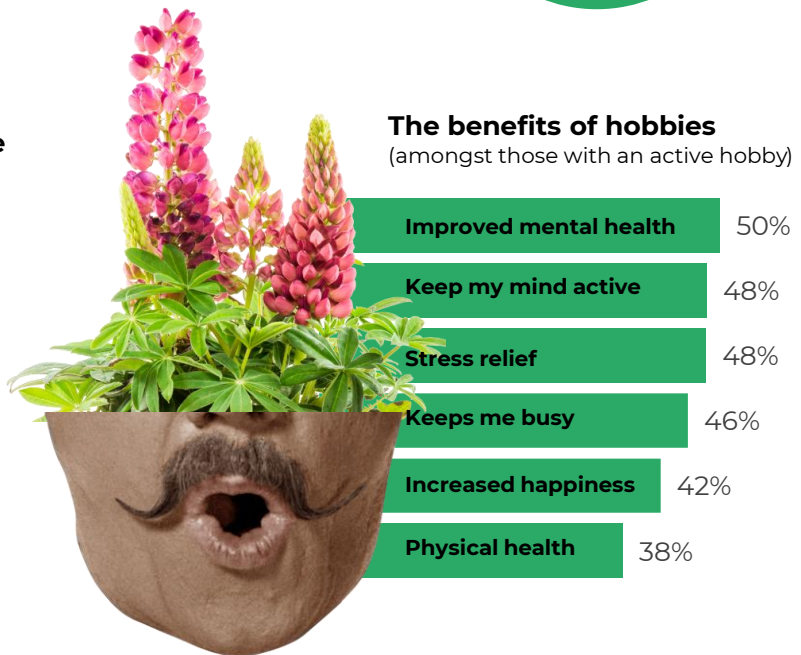
They help deliver a sense of achievement and accomplishment for around a quarter of Brits (26%). And provide a break from digital screentime (21%) or other day-to-day chores.

**Current Satisfaction with life**  
(%8-10 out of 10)



## The benefits of hobbies

(amongst those with an active hobby)



**“It’s about escapism as it’s a really nice way to forget about other things for a while and just concentrate on something. It can be satisfying because you can complete a project and then, at the end, have something amazing to show for it.”**

JULIE, AGED 50,  
MINIATURES

**“It teaches you that, yeah there’ll be challenges but you can overcome it. So, when you actually come to your job that’s got time pressure, you’re already in the know of how to deal with it.”**

BEN, AGED 23,  
MODEL BUILDER

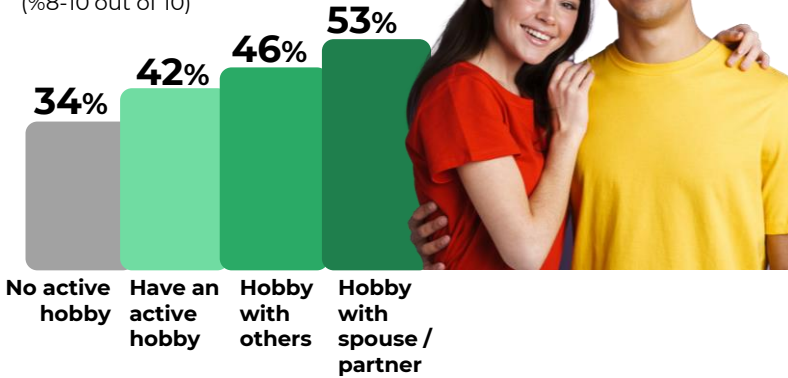
**“When I get to sit down and just get on with it, it’s my headspace. It helps me think. If I’ve got something I’m really stressed about, I can sit down and carry on with my model and generally work out the situation – it gives me room to think and process. Model making to me is like my meditation. It’s just ‘peace.’”**

DAN, AGED 48,  
MODEL TRAIN

# THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS...

**It's all about who you hobby with**

**Satisfaction with life**  
(%8-10 out of 10)



Those who choose to partake in hobbies with others are more satisfied with their lives. But it is those who **hobby with their spouse or partner who report the highest satisfaction with life.** The secret to a happy life (and even marriage) may just be our hobbies!

## MEET IRENE

**Aged 28. got into model building and dolls' houses from a young age with her dad and has since carried on her hobby with her partner**



"We had an attic, and my dad had no idea what to put into it, so we got a Scalextric set. Then we went to Hamleys, and they had a train set so we thought what if we had the train set on the outside. So, bless him, my dad bought me a vintage train set and then I discovered you could buy the little mesh trees and stuff. So, we ended up making the houses look like my street with the little town houses. He would play with the cars and I would play with the trainset."

"My partner has been really good with my hobby, it's been a joint couple's experience. He does the soldering, and I'll do the gluing. It's actually been really nice."

## MEET JULIE

**Julie has built miniatures and dolls' houses since she was a young girl. Now aged 50 with 2 young girls, she shares her passion for miniatures with her family across generations.**

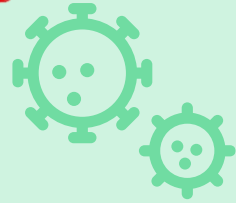


"It started as something I used to do with my dad. We spent a lot of time in his workshop growing up. We spend a lot of time together that way. It's something we've been doing for a long time and still do. It's just a really nice way to spend a day together."

My older daughter is into miniatures and polymer clay, so we do that together. It's something we like to do on a rainy afternoon on the kitchen table and make whatever they are in the mood for that day. My younger daughter also likes to get in on the action with her Play-Doh so it's something that we all do together."

My older daughter is also now starting to work with my dad in the workshop, so she loves that as it's just a great way to bond and they get along really well. It's a multigenerational thing."

# FROM COVID... TO **CREATIVITY**



Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic may now feel like a distant memory, it was a pivotal point for many to re-evaluate the role of their hobbies and acted as a trigger to take up a new hobby during a difficult time.

For all the stress and anxiety at the time, the pandemic inadvertently provided an opportunity for Brits to discover new hobbies and talents. And Brits are still feeling the lasting impact, as many are more open minded, interested in new hobbies and the social acceptability of certain hobbies have fundamentally changed.

**Since the COVID-19 pandemic...**

**61%**

**Actively use hobbies to boost their mental health**

**52%**

**Are more interested in mindful hobbies**

**49%**

**Are more open to trying new hobbies**

**43%**

**Say hobbies seem more popular / socially acceptable amongst their peers**

**43%**

**Say the pandemic gave them the opportunity to try out a hobby they'd previously been interested in**

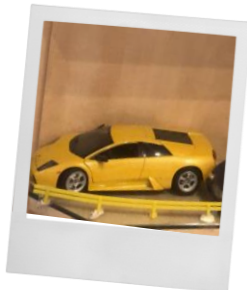


**NARMEEN, AGED 33, MINIATURE MODEL BUILDER**

**“When Covid happened, everyone got a new hobby or was making bread and doing this and that, but I found out about some miniature kits on eBay, and it seemed interesting. So, I bought one kit and started making these really tiny pieces and it was really fun and satisfying. Then I ordered 6 or 7 kits.”**

**“People might think it’s quite nerdy and old fashioned, but that perception has become less now...it’s cool to just do something that you want to do. Loads of other hobbies have become cool with younger people, like knitting and pottery.”**

**SANTOSH, AGED 32, MODEL CAR AND PLANE BUILDER**





# HOBBIES ON YOUR TERMS

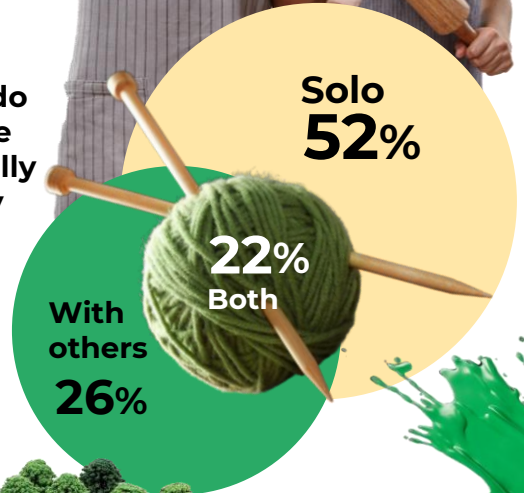
# SOCIAL?

# OR SOLO?

The social element of hobbies is a key part of the enjoyment for many. **48% of Brits partake in hobbies with others**, spread between people's partners (23%), friends (20%) or other family members (19%).

In reality, most hobbies are a solo activity, often enjoyed in the comfort of one's own home. These solo hobbies can fit seamlessly into different lifestyles and environments and based around the times and the moments when you need a break from everyday life.

Who do people typically hobby with?



## What hobbyists say about getting the balance of solo time for yourself...



**"Sometimes you need some down time when it's been a busy week, or you've been socialising loads and need a bit of me time."**

SANTOSH, AGED 32, MODEL CARS & PLANES

**"Invariably, my kids want me to sit down with them to model build because they don't feel they can do it on their own. But that's the bit I want to get them through because I'm not always going to be here and I want to pass on the skills for them to do it by themselves and the meditation side."**

DAN, AGED 48, MODEL TRAIN



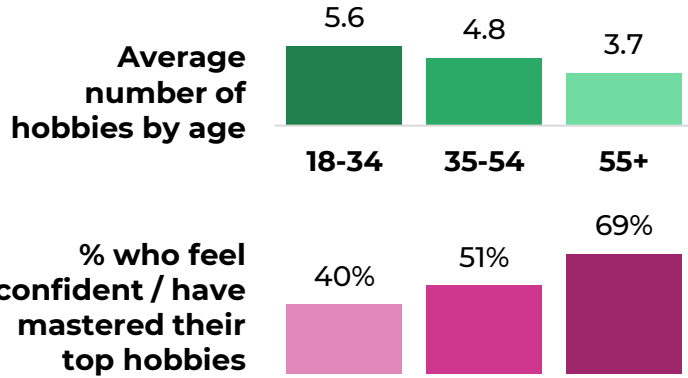
**"I'm in my own head and my own space – it's me by myself which is a positive thing. If I'm doing something, I want to get it done. And that can happen when everyone goes to bed and I'm by myself."**

NARMEEN, AGED 33, MINIATURE MODEL BUILDER



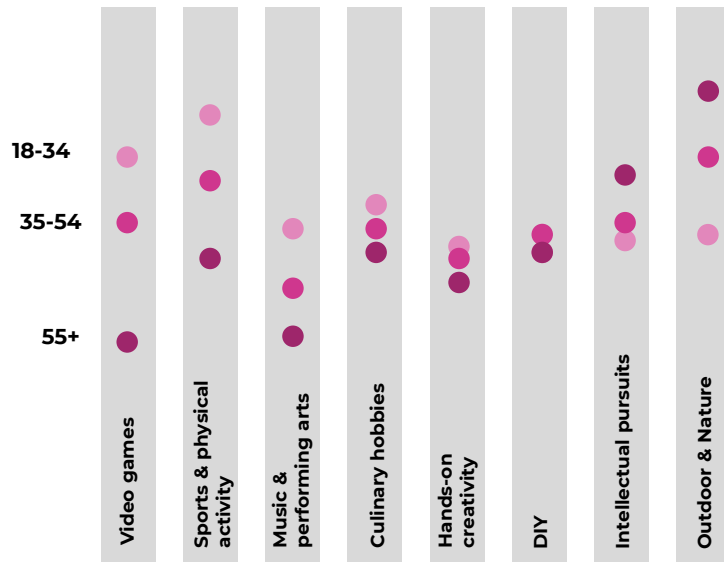
# HOBBIES FOR ALL

Hobbies are for everyone. Older audiences often have well-established hobbies that bring them comfort and joy, while younger audiences are actively exploring and "hobby shopping", trying out various activities to discover their passions. This dynamic interplay between generations keeps the culture of hobbies vibrant and evolving.



Older generations are more selective in their choices as sport and physical activities drop off and time in the garden or the great outdoors, or more intellectual pursuits, take precedence.

## Differences by age group



As well as the number and types of hobbies, age is also a defining factor in how people feel about hobbies.

**Under 35s are most open to finding new hobbies**

(61% vs 44% amongst all Brits)

**Under 35s are making more time for hobbies since COVID-19**

(54% vs 45% for all Brits)



**Under 35s see the social potential of hobbies**

(66% agree hobbies help connect with others vs 58% for all Brits)





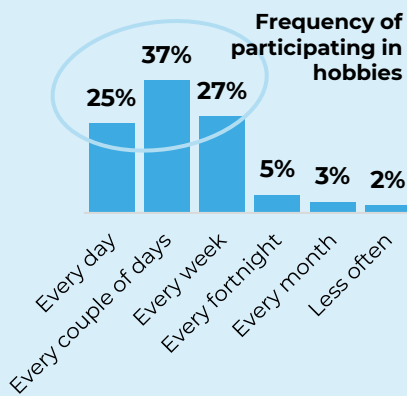
# HOBBY TIME IS PRECIOUS



Most people engage in their hobbies weekly or even daily. Despite busy schedules, individuals prioritise their hobbies, recognising their importance in maintaining a balanced and fulfilled life.

## 89%

**Participate in their hobbies weekly**



Those who have **an active hobby are committed to the cause. On average, Brits are spending £36 per month on their hobbies**, though there are 1 in 5 (21%) who take that commitment up a level, spending over £50 per month (over £600 per year).

Despite Brits' commitment to their hobbies, it's not always easy to balance the time and money needed. But they often find a way!

**“Soon, I’m going full time in my job then I’m going to have to take time in the night when the son is in bed – that’ll be my hobby time then...**

**...If I’m doing something, I want to get it done. And that can happen when everyone goes to bed and I’m by myself.”**

NARMEEN, AGED 33, MINIATURE MODEL BUILDER

## 90%

**Of active hobbyists spend money on their hobbies every month**



**“It can be time consuming – but it gives you something to focus your mind on after you’ve done a day at work. You can just switch off for an hour or so to give time for your mind to tick over.”**

BEN, AGED 23, MODEL BUILDER

**“Money is a bit of a barrier as prices have gone up and things just aren’t as accessible as they were before.”**

SANTOSH, AGED 32, MODEL CARS & PLANES

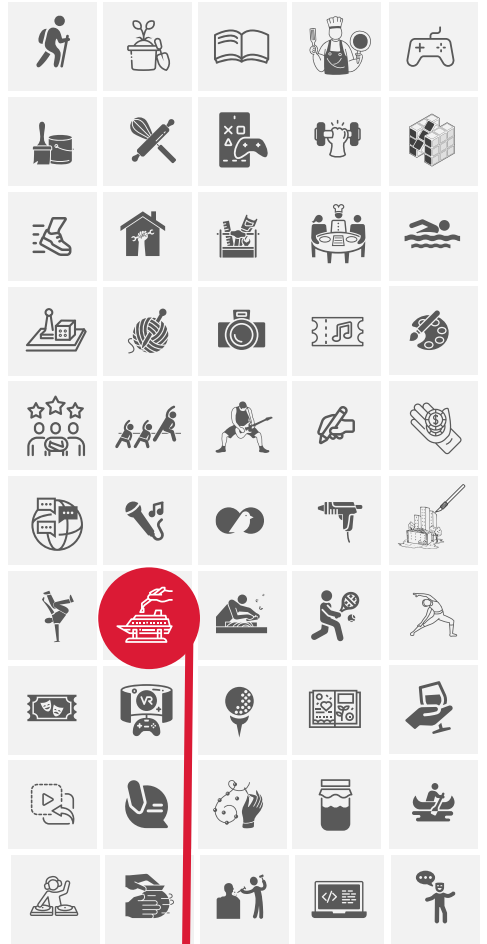
# THE EXCITEMENT AT **HORNBY HOBBIES**

At Hornby Hobbies, we are passionate about the happiness that hobbies bring, particularly scale modelling. This is a hobby with so much joy and potential for all types of audiences.

This hobby, which is **on par with yoga, racquet sports and dancing in terms of popularity**, is experiencing a resurgence of interest, especially among younger audiences.

The younger audiences actively participating in model making are looking for a creative outlet, but also a way to connect with family and friends. As a hobby with broad appeal to all ages and demographics there are some audiences that over-index, in particular, British Asians are a key group passionate about model making.

Scale modelling is not just a pastime; in fact, it is a key nostalgic link to many people's childhood. But crucially, it is a significant contributor to mental health and creativity, offering an escape from the daily grind and a means to express oneself artistically. With **3 in 10 Brits interested in taking up model making in the next 12 months**, we know the future is bright for a hobby with so many benefits.



## Model making hobbyists

**+2%**  
Growth in active hobbyists since COVID-19

**43%**  
Are aged under 35

**37%**  
Have kids in the household

**28%**  
Are female

## Perceptions amongst model-making hobbyists (% Agree)

**91%**

Model making is a creative hobby

**83%**

Reminds me of my childhood

**80%**

Is beneficial to mental wellbeing

**64%**

A hobby on the up



# MEET THE MODERN DAY MODEL MAKERS

With model makers spanning all ages, genders and ethnicities in the UK, it is fair to say this hobby can be for everyone. At Hornby Hobbies, we are proud to be part of the growing community of enthusiasts, helping to unlock the model-making potential of our nation and beyond.

## **NARMEEN** MINIATURE DOLLS' HOUSE BUILDER



Took up building miniature dolls' houses during lockdown and hasn't looked back since. Building provides a key link back to childhood memories but also brings joy at the end of the day. Building models for herself and to give to her family or friends.

**"Everything comes flatpack, so to get to the whole 3D model is really satisfying when you see the finished product. If I start something, I want to finish it to see the final result."**

## **BEN** SPECIALISES IN MODEL WARSHIPS



With an interest in history and Navy models, Ben specialises in model warships and aircraft. He takes his creations to shows around the country, bringing in modern technology and interactive displays to encourage new generations to discover the art and joy of model making.

**"It's a relief from work. It just gives you that release of energy. Yes, you can be tired, but I don't want to just go to work, come back, sleep, repeat. Whereas with this, I've got something I can carry on with."**

## **IRENE** MINIATURE ENTHUSIAST



For Irene, her miniature model making combines her interest in miniature models, design and photography. The hobby provides a creative outlet and link to the past.

**"I like video games but there's not a game that lets you have as much creativity as physically doing it yourself."**

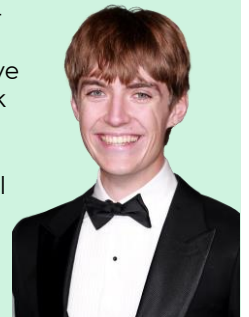
**"My hobby makes me feel talented – that I can make something look good that is really small. And when you get it right, it feels like an intuitive talent."**

## **THE FAMOUS MODELLERS**

There are many famous names already associated with model building. From **Pete Waterman**, who left the music business behind to help set different types of world records for his model building, to **Rod Stewart, Jools Holland, Tom Hanks** and there are even rumours that **Elton John** has a miniature railway running through his garden. Personalities like **Francis Bourgeois** are helping to drive the modern face of modelling to millions of followers.

## **FRANCIS BOURGEOIS**

Francis Bourgeois, is a 24-year-old that puts the model into model making. He takes his love of trains to his over 3.2m TikTok and 2.3m Instagram followers. When he's not showcasing his love of model railways on social media, he is a model collaborating with Gucci and The North Face.



# THE WORLD NEEDS MORE HOBBYISTS



## HORNBY HOBBIES

At Hornby Hobbies, we want to continue to support and grow our amazing community of model builders – from trains, planes, automobiles and more – we know the value of model building to build happiness.

If you'd like to learn more about our brands and ways to get involved in model building, visit [Hornby-hobbies.com](http://Hornby-hobbies.com)

**FOR MORE INFO ON THIS  
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