

CRAFT — WORLD CRAFT DEPOSITORY

An Atlas of Craft Risk

A structured census of risk across every documented technique in the CRAFT archive — by region, craft family, and country.

2,792

techniques
documented

52.1%

endangered or critically
endangered

205

countries and
territories

5

regions

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Why this report exists

This is the first Atlas of Craft Risk we have been able to publish — because it is the first time we have had enough data to make one honestly.

Two thousand, seven hundred and ninety-two techniques is not a complete record of the world's craft knowledge. No archive this young could claim that. It is, however, large enough now to stop being a collection of individual stories and start being something you can measure: which regions concentrate the most risk, which categories of craft are structurally safer than others, and which countries have documented almost nothing but crisis.

None of the numbers in this report are estimates. Every figure was computed directly from the archive's own structured records — the same records anyone can read individually at craftheritage.world. We built it this way on purpose. A living archive that cannot produce its own statistics isn't actually structured. It's just a large pile of stories.

We expect this Atlas to be wrong in places, and to be corrected as more records are field-verified. That is the intended behavior of a living document, not a flaw in this one.

What this Atlas measures

CRAFT — World Craft Depository exists to record the knowledge inside a craftsperson's hands before it disappears with them.

Not the finished object. The part before it — the wrist angle a weaver never mentions because her hands already know it, the acoustic test a flint-knapper uses instead of a measuring instrument, the exact chewing technique that turns tree resin into lacquer.

This Atlas is the first output of that archive treated as data rather than as individual entries. It answers a different set of questions than any single technique page can: not just *is this craft endangered*, but where risk concentrates geographically, which categories of making are structurally more fragile than others, and what that fragility is made of when you look closely at a handful of real, named techniques.

It draws on the archive as it stands today: 2,792 documented techniques, spanning 205 countries and territories, across five regions.

How risk is assessed

CRAFT's risk model draws on the same lineage as the UK's Heritage Crafts Red List of Endangered Crafts, which itself adapted the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species — treating craft knowledge the way conservation science treats a threatened population.

Each technique is assessed against two kinds of criteria:

Objective — the number of active practitioners and trainees, the direction of that number over time, and whether a formal or informal transmission mechanism — apprenticeship, school, family lineage — currently exists.

Subjective — everything known about the technique's commercial viability, cultural demand, and material supply chain, weighed into a judgment of how likely the knowledge is to transmit successfully to a next generation.

Every record also carries a Verification Status (from Desk-Researched to Field-Verified) and a Source Quality rating, so a reader can see not just what a technique's risk level is, but how confidently it was assessed.

CATEGORIES OF RISK

Critically Endangered — near-term risk of complete loss	●
Endangered — a declining practitioner base	●
Vulnerable — currently stable but exposed to a specific threat	●
Stable — consistent transmission, no acute threat identified	●
Thriving — growing or secure practitioner base	●

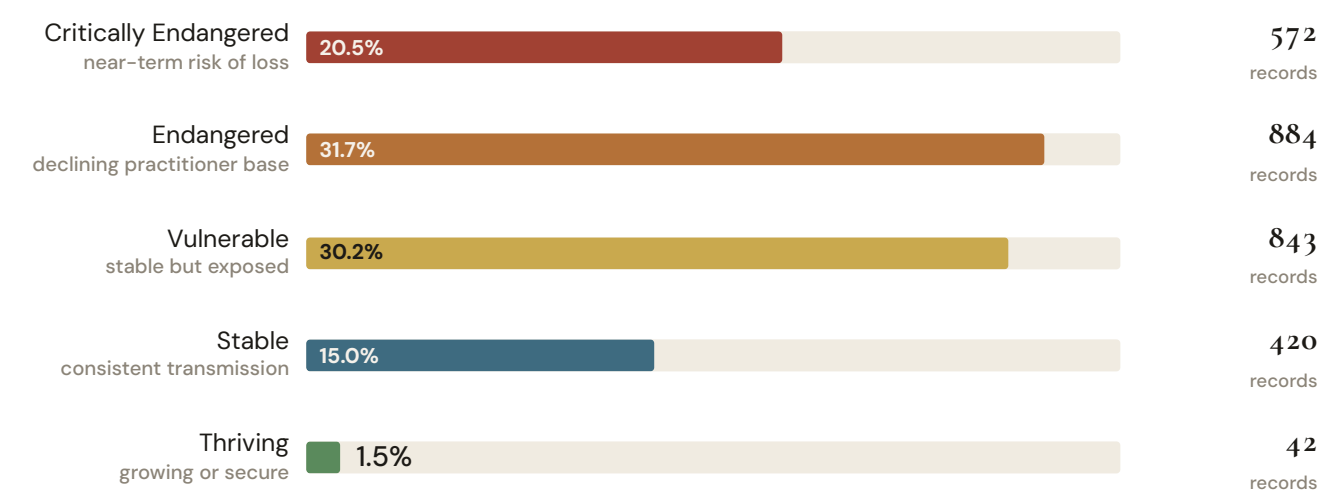
Two further states sit outside that living scale entirely: **Extinct — Revival Exists** (no longer practiced in its original context, but a documented revival keeps the knowledge recoverable), and **Extinct** (no practitioner and no documented revival — the technique survives only as a historical record).

This is a first edition. Risk Level is a snapshot, not a permanent verdict — figures in this report will change as records are added, corrected, or re-verified.

The living spectrum

Every technique still practiced today sits somewhere on this scale, from actively vanishing to secure.

2,792 Techniques documented across five regions	52.1% Rated Endangered or Critically Endangered	205 Countries and territories represented	I Technique confirmed extinct, no living practitioner
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When a technique stops being a risk and becomes a record

Two states fall outside ongoing risk assessment entirely: knowledge that is gone but recoverable, and knowledge that — as far as this archive has been able to determine — is not.

● EXTINCT — REVIVAL EXISTS

30

1.1% of the archive. No longer practiced in its original context, but a documented revival — a workshop, a training program, a research reconstruction — keeps the knowledge from being permanently lost. This tier spans every region: Sangkhalok ceramics in Thailand, Tlingit Ravenstail weaving in the United States, Aleppo stone mosaic in Syria, Qatari and Kuwaiti free-diving pearl harvesting in the Gulf.

● EXTINCT

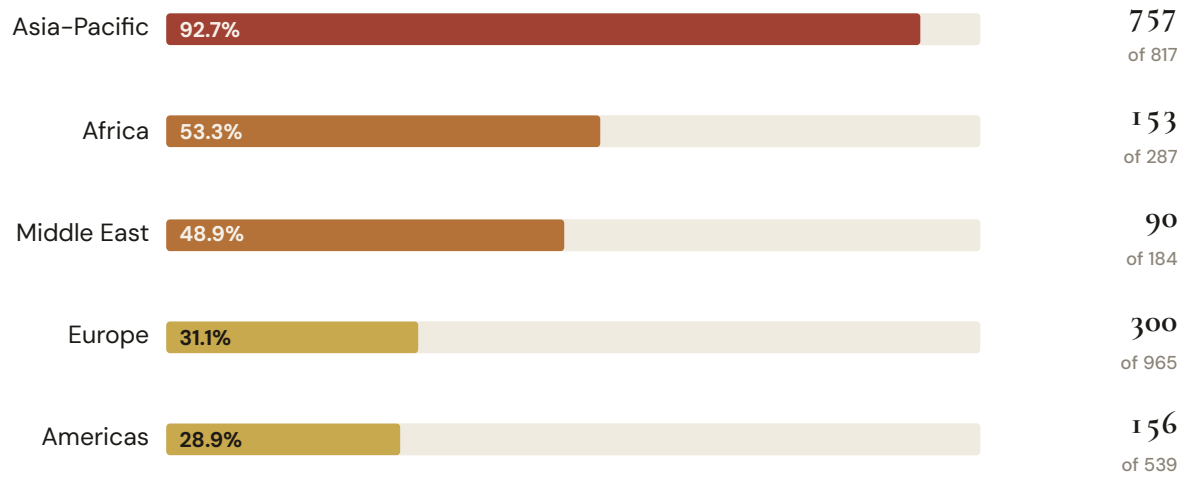
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Nuremberg Kunstkammer Naturalia Mounting — 16th-century goldsmith mounting of nautilus shells and other natural specimens. Researched specifically for a surviving practitioner lineage; none was found. The archive's only record kept as a historical account rather than a living one.

A revival changes what a risk assessment can do for a technique. Thirty records in this archive prove that "gone" and "lost" are not the same word — a documented reconstruction effort, even a small one, is the difference between a closed file and an open one.

Where the risk concentrates

Share of each region's documented techniques rated Endangered or Critically Endangered, combined. The gap between the highest and lowest region is more than three-to-one.



Asia-Pacific's concentration is not simply a function of population or craft density — Europe has more total records in this archive and a much lower rate. The gap tracks more closely with industrialization timelines and the availability of formal apprenticeship infrastructure than with the raw number of historical techniques a region once held.

Which crafts are most at risk

Share of each craft-family category rated Critically Endangered. Built things — buildings, boats — concentrate the most risk; things people make and consume daily concentrate the least.

HIGHEST RISK		LOWEST RISK	
Architectural Craft	45.0%	Food, Drink & Botanical	3.0%
Boatbuilding & Maritime	37.8%	Miscellaneous & Heritage-Adjacent	11.4%
Metalwork & Jewelry	32.3%	Stone & Gemstone Carving	15.1%
Weaving & Textiles	31.7%	Ceramics & Pottery	17.5%
Woodwork & Carving	31.0%	Glasswork	18.6%

The pattern is consistent with how these crafts are actually used. Food and drink techniques are practiced constantly, by necessity, inside ordinary households — transmission happens by default. Architectural and maritime craft require a large, specific, increasingly rare commission — a building, a ship — before the skill gets used at all, so the gap between commissions is where the knowledge quietly stops passing on.

The sharpest edges

Countries with at least 8 documented techniques, ranked by the share rated Critically Endangered — not by raw count, which mostly tracks how much of a country's craft base the archive has reached so far.

COUNTRY	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	DOCUMENTED	RATE
1 Afghanistan	14	14	100.0%
2 Tibet / China	10	13	76.9%
3 Singapore	9	12	75.0%
4 Sri Lanka	10	14	71.4%
5 Syria	10	14	71.4%
6 Taiwan	17	26	65.4%
7 Cambodia	15	25	60.0%
8 Lebanon	9	15	60.0%
9 Malaysia	27	47	57.4%
10 Philippines	7	14	50.0%

For reference: by raw count alone, India (37), China (28), Malaysia (27), and Indonesia (23) hold the most Critically Endangered records — a figure that says more about documentation coverage than comparative risk, which is why this report leads with the normalized rate instead.

What the numbers are made of

Eight records from across the full archive — not a handful of recent additions — that turn the statistics above into specific, verifiable stories.

INDIA · ASIA-PACIFIC **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

Patan Patola

Produced exclusively in Patan, Gujarat, by the Salvi family — now three practising brothers, the last of a lineage that has held this technique for generations. Patola is a double-ikat: both the silk warp and the silk weft are resist-dyed in advance, thread by thread, in patterns precise enough that the design only appears once both pre-dyed sets align exactly on the loom — an alignment problem solved entirely by hand and memory, with no correction possible once weaving begins.

UNITED KINGDOM · EUROPE **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

English Flint Knapping — Brandon

Brandon, Norfolk holds the last surviving commercial flint-knapping industry in England — producing gun flints still used in West Africa and for historical re-enactment, and architectural flints for East Anglia's distinctive flint flushwork buildings. A Brandon knapper judges flint quality the way a bell-founder judges bronze: by an acoustic ring test, striking the stone and listening for the tone that tells them whether it will split clean.

COLOMBIA · AMERICAS **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

Barniz de Pasto Mopa Mopa Lacquerwork

One of only two Indigenous lacquer traditions documented in the Americas. Resin is harvested from young leaf buds of the mopa mopa tree in Putumayo, then boiled, chewed by hand and teeth, dyed, and stretched into paper-thin colored sheets — layered, sometimes with silver leaf, onto carved wooden objects in Nariño. The preparation is inseparable from the human body: chewing is not a metaphor here, it is the actual technique.

FIJI · ASIA-PACIFIC

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

Drua Construction

A 1936–38 scholarly survey of Oceania called the drua "the largest and finest sea-going vessel ever designed and built by natives of Oceania before contact with Europeans." Built entirely from planks sewn together with coconut-fiber cordage rather than a dugout hull, a full-size drua could reach 30–36 metres and carry more than 200 people. The construction knowledge behind vessels of that scale is now critically endangered.

LEBANON · MIDDLE EAST

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

Sarafand Khalifeh Family Glassblowing

Directly documented as the last remaining traditional glassblowing operation in Lebanon — a decline from several active glassblowing families just ten years ago to one. The Khalifeh family's own practice traces continuously back toward the Phoenicians, who exported fine glassware to the Pharaohs and, by most accounts, gave the technique of glassblowing to the rest of the ancient world in the first place.

ISRAEL · MIDDLE EAST

THRIVING

Israeli Klaf Parchment & Sofer Stam Scribal Craft

Not every record in this archive is a countdown. The preparation of klaf — kosher-animal parchment prepared to exacting specification — and its use by a sofer to hand-write Torah scrolls, tefillin, and mezuzot survives today precisely because its transmission requirements are written into religious law itself, not left to market demand. Formal codification, it turns out, is also a preservation technology.

LESOTHO · AFRICA **THRIVING**

Basotho Joala Sorghum Beer Brewing

Joala is brewed by Basotho women in rural households, in clay pots often reused unwashed from batch to batch — deliberately carrying a starter culture forward, the same logic as a sourdough mother, refined over generations of ordinary domestic practice rather than professional training. It is the clearest illustration in the archive of a wider pattern: food and drink techniques are, on average, the least endangered craft family by a wide margin, because they are practiced daily rather than occasionally.

GERMANY · EUROPE **EXTINCT**

Nuremberg Kunstkammer Naturalia Mounting

Between roughly 1550 and the early 1700s, Nuremberg's goldsmiths — trained in Wenzel Jamnitzer's workshop and its successors — turned imported nautilus shells, ostrich eggs, and coconuts into elaborate mounted showpieces for princely collections. This archive researched the technique specifically to find a living successor. None was found. Of the 2,792 techniques documented here, it is the only one recorded with no living practice and no revival underway — not because it is the only craft in history to have died out, but because it is the only one this archive has, so far, confirmed as gone. That distinction is the point: the other 2,791 are still open questions, not settled ones.

What this data actually says

Five conclusions drawn directly from the numbers in this report — nothing here is a new claim.

01 Half the archive is already in trouble.

1,456 of 2,792 documented techniques (52.1%) are rated Endangered or Critically Endangered. This is not a fringe concern within the dataset — it is the majority condition.

02 Geography concentrates risk sharply.

Asia-Pacific's combined Endangered/Critically Endangered rate (92.7%) is more than three times the Americas' (28.9%) — a gap that tracks industrialization timelines and apprenticeship infrastructure more closely than raw craft density.

03 What a craft makes matters as much as where it's made.

Architectural and maritime crafts run 38–45% Critically Endangered; food, drink, and botanical crafts run 3%. Daily, necessary use protects knowledge by default; rare, large-scale commissions don't.

04 A handful of countries carry the sharpest edges.

Afghanistan, Tibet/China, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Syria all rate above 70% Critically Endangered among their documented techniques — though at this documentation scale, a few records can swing a country's rate considerably. Read this as a signal to investigate further, not a final verdict.

05 Extinction, in this archive, is still the exception.

Only one of 2,792 documented techniques has no living practice and no revival underway; thirty more died out and were successfully revived. The dominant story here is loss still in progress — and therefore still avoidable — not loss already finished.

A number on a page doesn't preserve anything by itself

What comes next does — and it takes a different kind of work depending on who's reading this.

FOR RESEARCHERS & INSTITUTIONS

Help move records from desk-researched to field-verified

Every record carries a Verification Status. Much of this archive is still desk-researched — the next step for any of it is contact with the people and places it describes.

FOR THE PRACTITIONERS NAMED IN THIS ARCHIVE

Correct us, and stay in the record

This is a living archive, not a monument. If a technique here is yours, out of date, or wrong in a detail only you would know, that correction is the most valuable contribution this project can receive.

FOR DESIGNERS, MANUFACTURERS & FUNDERS

Connect unviable to viable

Where a technique's risk is driven by commercial unviability rather than by disinterest, the fix is not preservation funding alone — it's a design and manufacturing question hiding in plain sight.

CRAFT is currently in its founding phase, built by a small team, seeking institutional partners, co-founders, and funders who see the same opportunity we do. If you want to go past this report — browse the full archive, follow individual techniques as they're updated, or get in touch — everything here links back to a single source of truth, not a static document.

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Sources & credits

DATA

All figures computed directly from the CRAFT archive's structured records as of September 2026: 2,792 techniques across asia-pacific, europe, africa, americas, and middle-east region datasets.

RISK METHODOLOGY

Adapted from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species conservation-status framework, via the UK Heritage Crafts Association's Red List of Endangered Crafts.

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CONTACT

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EDITION

First edition, September 2026. Figures in this report reflect a snapshot in time and will be revised in future editions as records are added, corrected, or field-verified.