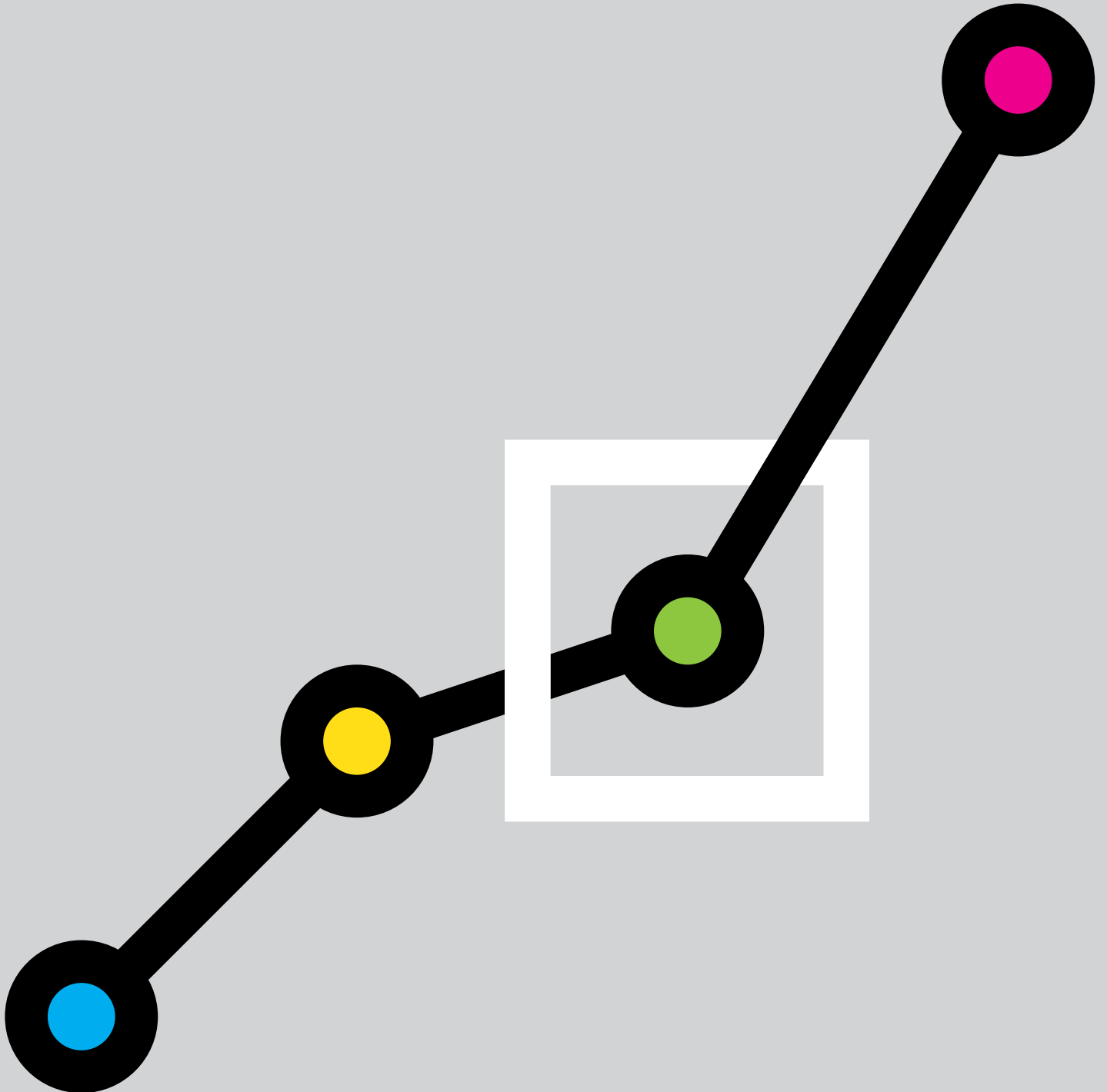


Future Trends Survey:

September 2024



The RIBA's monthly Future Trends Survey

was launched in January 2009 to monitor business and employment trends affecting the architects' profession. Participants give monthly predictions for overall workload and staffing levels over the next three months, and are also asked about their workload predictions in key sectors: private housing, commercial, community and public sector. In addition, practices are asked about their current workload and staffing levels. The Survey is carried out by the RIBA in partnership with the Fees Bureau. Results of the Survey, including a full graphical analysis, are published each month on www.architecture.com

RIBA Future Trends September 2024: Overview

How do you expect the architectural workload in the organisation you work in or own to change over the next three months?

Overall Expect	%
Decrease	22
Stay the same	52
Increase	26
TOTAL	100
Balance	+3*

(The definition for the balance figure is the difference between those expecting more work and those expecting less.)

** 'Increase' minus 'Decrease' does not equal the 'Balance' figure due to rounding.*

The profession is optimistic about near-term workloads as September sees another slight improvement in outlook. Staffing intentions remain positive.

In September, the RIBA Future Trends Workload Index stood at +3, a one-point increase compared with August. A positive balance indicates an overall expectation among architects that workloads will increase.

Twenty-six per cent of architects' practices anticipate an increase in workloads over the next three months, while 22% expect a decline. Fifty-two per cent expect workloads to remain stable.

The outlook across all four monitored work sectors has improved. The housing sector has returned its highest Workload Index figure since the summer of 2022.

Overall the outlook among the regions is improving and the capital has returned to a positive outlook.

The outlook of small and larger practices continues to diverge. Small practices are increasingly pessimistic about future work, while medium and large practices are increasingly optimistic.

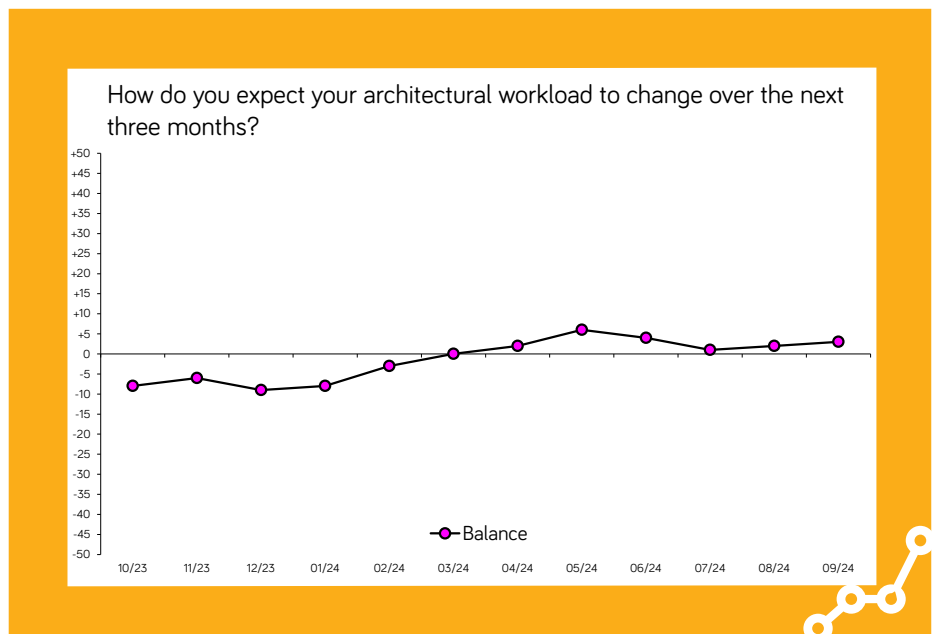
Current workloads remain lower than they were a year ago. The average practice workload has decreased by 9% compared to twelve months ago.

In August, 28% of architects reported personal underemployment, the same as last month. At +6, the RIBA Permanent Staffing Index is positive and has strengthened.

The following graph plots the RIBA Future Workload index over time:

Notes

The balance figure is plotted here. The definition for the balance figure is the difference between those expecting more work and those expecting less.



**RIBA Future Trends September 2024:
Workload Index: Analysis by Practice Size,
Region, and Sector.**

In August, the outlook for **small practices** (1 - 10 staff) deteriorated somewhat and remains negative, with a Workload Index figure of -5, compared with -2 in August. Twenty per cent of small practices anticipate an increase in workloads, 25% expect a decrease, and 55% anticipate stability.

In contrast, the outlook for **large (51+ staff) and medium-sized practices** (11 -50 staff) is very optimistic, with a Workload Index of +60. Sixty-four per cent expect workload growth, 4% anticipate contraction, and 32% expect steady workloads.

The **regional outlook** remains mixed this month but is improving overall.

The outlook among practices based in the capital continues to improve and has returned to positive territory this month, with a +8 Workload Index compared with -4 in August.

The outlook for Wales and the West has also improved this month, with a Workload Index of 0, up from -9 in August.

The outlook in the South of England (+3) and the North of England (+13) remains positive.

The Midlands & East Anglia fell into negative territory this month (-10) with a marked deterioration in outlook.

The **sectoral outlook** is improving.

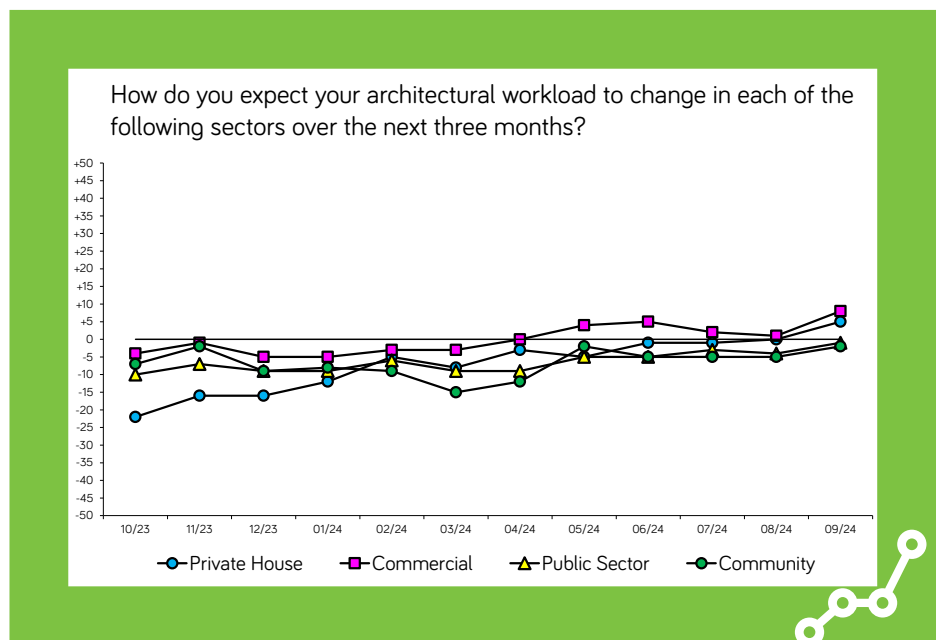
Private Housing work is crucial to most architects' practices. The outlook for **private housing** has become positive. With a Workload Index of +5, September sees the highest balance figure since summer 2022 and the first positive balance since spring 2023.

The outlook for the **commercial sector** has improved further, with a Workload Index figure of +8, the highest balance figure since spring 2022.

The outlook for the **public sector** remains subdued but has risen to -1, up from -4 last month.

While still negative, the outlook for the **community sector** has again improved, with a -2 figure this month, compared with -5 in August.

The following graph tracks the sector predictions in the RIBA Future Trends Survey over time:



**RIBA Future Trends September 2024:
Staffing Index.**

How do you think the number of permanent architectural staff employed in your organisation will change over the next three months?

Permanent Staff	%
Decrease	5
Stay the same	84
Increase	11
TOTAL	100
Balance	+6

(The definition for the balance figure is the difference between those expecting to employ more permanent staff in the next three months and those expecting to employ fewer.)

The RIBA Future Trends Permanent Staffing Index rose to a +6 balance figure in September, indicating that practices, on balance, intend to recruit permanent staff over the next three months.

Eleven per cent of practices anticipate an increase in permanent staff in the coming three months, 5% expect a reduction, and 84% expect no change.

Overall, all practice sizes are optimistic about future permanent staffing levels. Small practices have returned a +1 Staffing Index figure. Medium and large practices increasingly expect to increase their cohort of permanent architectural staff, with a strong +43 RIBA Staffing Index.

All but one region anticipates increased staffing levels in the coming three months.

The staffing outlook for the capital has improved markedly, with a +12 balance this month, compared with +2 in August.

Permanent staffing levels are also expected to grow in the North of England (+7), Wales & the West (+5), and the South of England (+13).

The only region with a negative permanent staffing outlook this month is Midlands & East Anglia, with a Staffing Index of -3.

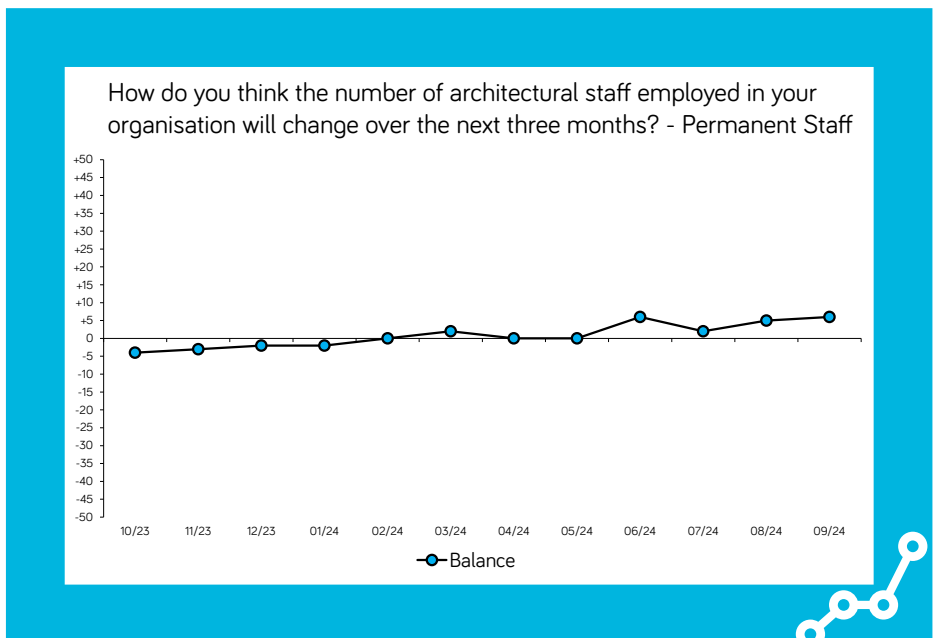
The RIBA Temporary Staffing Index recovered this month, returning a +3 balance.

Levels of personal underemployment have risen slightly as 28% of respondents report 'a lack of work leading to personal under-employment' over the last month.

The following graph plots the RIBA Future Trends Staffing Index over time:

Notes

The balance figure is plotted here. The definition for the balance figure is the difference between those expecting to employ more permanent staff in the next three months and those expecting to employ fewer.



September 2024 RIBA Future Trends: Commentary.

Business conditions are improving.

Practices anticipate increasing staffing levels, and the RIBA Future Trends Workload Index, now at +3, indicates growing optimism.

The news from the monitored work sectors is encouraging.

Private housing, providing the largest share of commissions for smaller practices, has returned to positive territory, suggesting an improving market here.

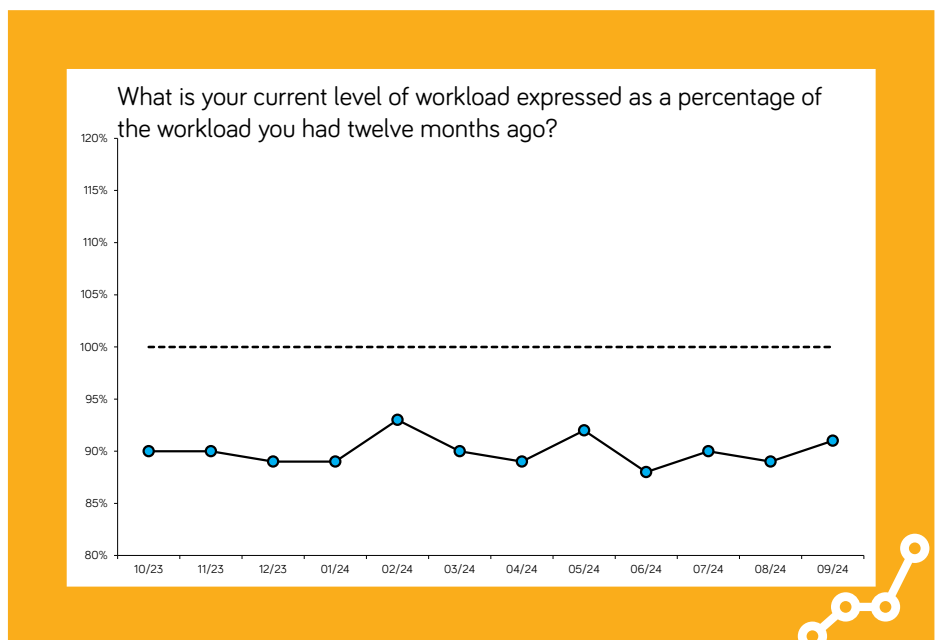
The outlook for the commercial sector, which includes offices, entertainment and retail, is also positive and improving.

Commentary received from practices this month includes some notably positive assessments of the market.

Practices highlight growth returning, workloads increasing, a rise in enquiries, an unprecedented number of new tenders, and a renewed practice focus on recruitment and raising fee levels.

Nevertheless, the picture is not universally positive. Other practices report a challenging market with planning delays, a lack of upcoming projects, cash-flow pressures, and client hesitancy in committing to new projects.

While the market shows encouraging signs of recovery, significant barriers to sustained growth remain.



The RIBA Future Trends Survey is based on a representative sample of the range of different practice sizes and geographical locations which enables analysis of the trends in sectors, size groups and by nation and region.

A total of 205 practices took part in the Survey in September 2024. The development of a larger database of respondents will increase the statistical accuracy of the survey, and if your practice would like to participate in future months, please contact the RIBA Practice

Department on 020 7307 3749 or email practice@riba.org. The survey takes approximately five minutes to complete each month, and all returns are independently processed in strict confidence by our partners The Fees Bureau.