

Future Trends Survey:

April 2017



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 on a quarterly basis 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

The following is a summary analysis of the results from the April 2017 Survey returns.

Future workload (April 2017)

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	14
Stay the same	50
Increase	36
TOTAL	100
Balance	+22

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

The RIBA Future Trends Workload Index was unchanged this month at +22.

In terms of geographical analysis, practices in the North (balance figure +48) were the most optimistic about medium term workload prospects this month. Practices in London (balance figure +17) remained more cautious about future workloads, but our practices in the South of England saw a significant uplift in optimism (balance figure +29) compared with the figures we have seen for this region in recent preceding months.

Analysing the April data in terms of practice size, large practices (51+ staff) returned a balance figure of +50, in April 2017; a big jump up from +20 in March. Small practices (1 - 10 staff), with a balance figure of +23 were also more upbeat this month. By contrast medium-sized practices (11 - 50 staff) were becoming more cautious, with a balance figure of +16 in April 2017, compared with +36 in March.

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

Notes

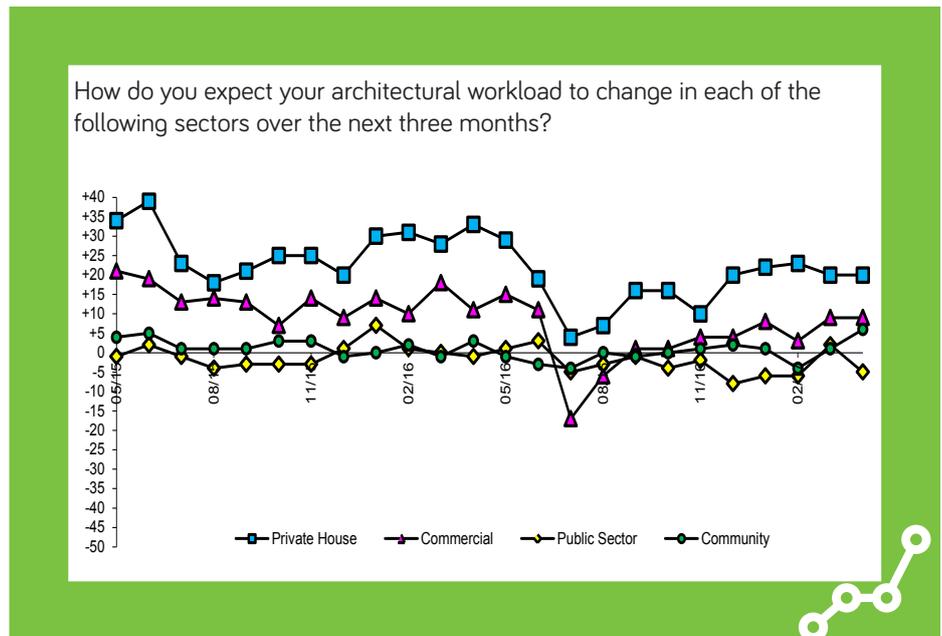
The balance figure is plotted here. The definition for the balance figure is the difference between those expecting more work and those expecting less.



In terms of different work sectors, both the private housing sector workload forecast (balance figure +20) and the commercial sector workload forecast (balance figure +9) were unchanged this month. These remain the most strongly performing of our sector forecasts.

The public sector workload forecast lost its recent upward momentum, falling back into negative territory, with a balance figure of -5. The community sector forecast, however, continued to rise, standing at +6 in April 2017 - its highest figure since March 2015.

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



Future staffing levels (April 2017)

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

Permanent Staff	%
Decrease	6
Stay the same	79
Increase	15
TOTAL	100
Balance	+9

(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 Staffing Index dipped a little this month, falling to +9 in April 2017 from +12 in March.

This month it was large practices (51+ staff) with a balance figure of +20 that felt most positive about their ability to increase staffing levels. Medium-sized practices (11 - 50 staff), with a balance figure of +15, were also positive about future staffing levels. Small practices (1 - 10 staff) were a little less confident, with a balance figure of +8 in April 2017.

Commentary received this month from our participating practices continues to suggest a broadly stable market for architectural services.

A number of correspondents have commented that the market for private house extensions remains particularly buoyant, but that much of this work is financed via re-mortgaging and is therefore highly sensitive to any correction in house prices.

At the larger project scale, it seems that infrastructure is likely to continue to be prioritised in terms of public sector capital investment, and sectors such as transport and energy infrastructure are seen as increasingly important by a number of larger practices.

There continues to be growing interest in the PRS housing sector as financial institutions begin to become more actively engaged, building upon experience in student housing provision.

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



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 210 practices took part in the Survey in April 2017. 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.