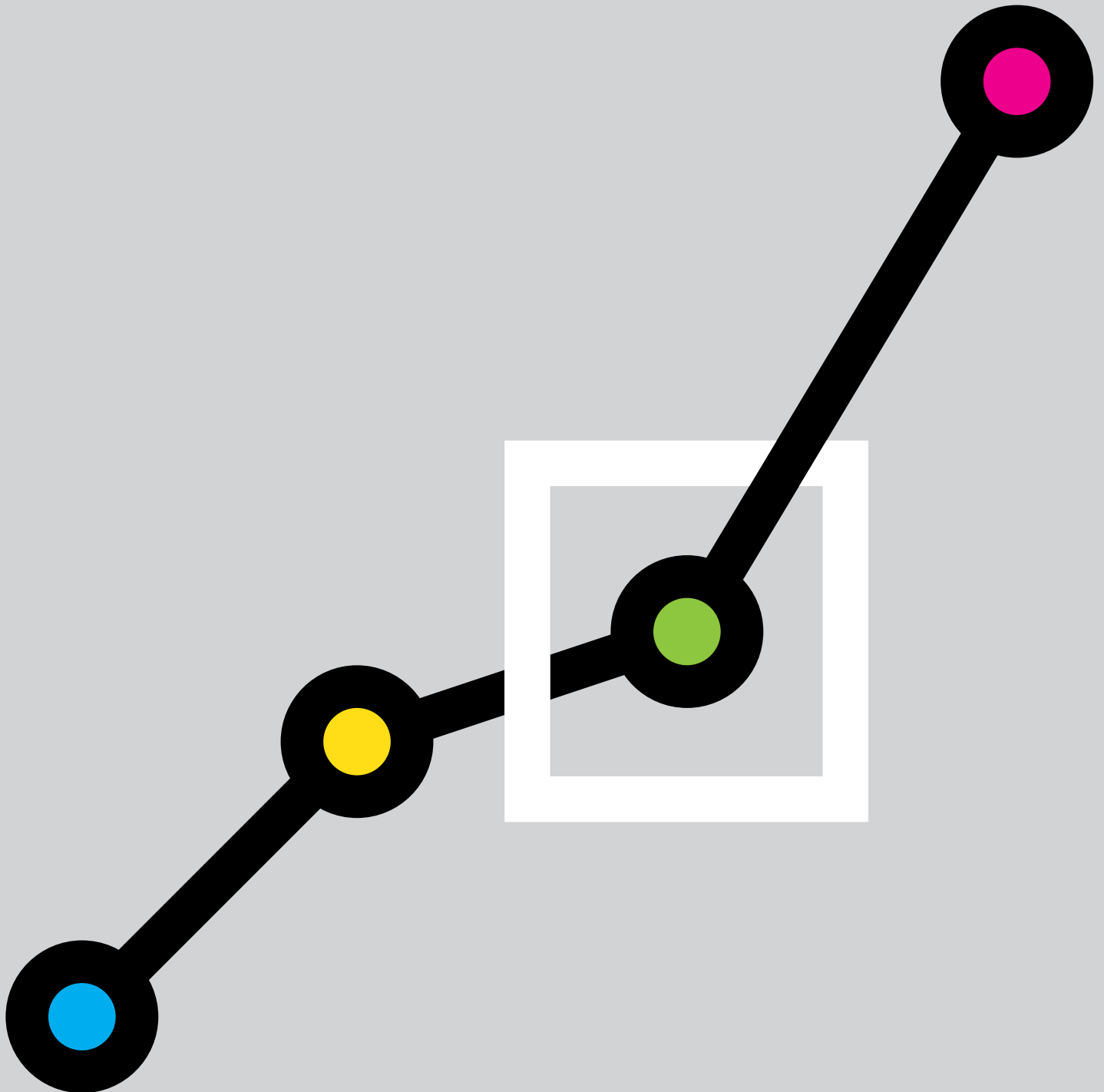


# Future Trends Survey:

August 2019



## 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](http://www.architecture.com)

The following is a summary analysis of the results from the August 2019 Survey returns.

### RIBA Future Trends Workload Index (August 2019)

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	23
Stay the same	53
Increase	24
TOTAL	100
<b>Balance</b>	<b>+0*</b>

(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.*

#### 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.

The RIBA Future Trends Workload Index balance figure dropped five points in August 2019, falling from a balance figure of +5 in July, to +0 in August.

The fall in confidence looks to be driven by the close possibility of a no-deal Brexit. One year ago, in August 2018, the balance figure was +11.

The regional variance in attitude towards future workload continues.

London practices continue to be downbeat, recording a balance figure of -8 in August. This balance figure is, however, a seven-point improvement on the -15 figure we saw in July.

The South of England has followed London into negative territory this month, returning a balance figure of -15 in August.

The outlook of practices in Wales & the West has also weakened this month; they too returned a -15 balance figure in August.

As we move north, however, the picture improves.

The Midlands & East Anglia balance figure has reverted to positive territory this month, rising to +19.

The North of England continues to be the most positive region. Though softening a little this month, to a balance figure of +29 (down from +39), the North of England consistently remains the most optimistic region for future workload.

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



Analysing the August 2019 RIBA Future Trends Workload Index in terms of practice size, we can see the following:

**Small practices** (1 - 10 staff) recorded a six-point fall in their balance figure. The balance figure in August was -4, down from +2 in July. In the next three months, more small practices expect their workload to decrease than to increase.

**Medium-sized practices** (11 - 50 staff) continue to be positive, returning a balance figure of +20, only marginally down (by two points) on last month's figure of +22.

**Large practices** (51+ staff) again returned a strongly positive balance figure this month.

In terms of **different work sectors**, we have seen an overall drop in confidence in all sectors in August. Three of the four sectors we monitor returned a negative balance figure.

The **private housing** sector remained positive, with a balance figure of +1 in August, marginally down on the +3 balance figure of July.

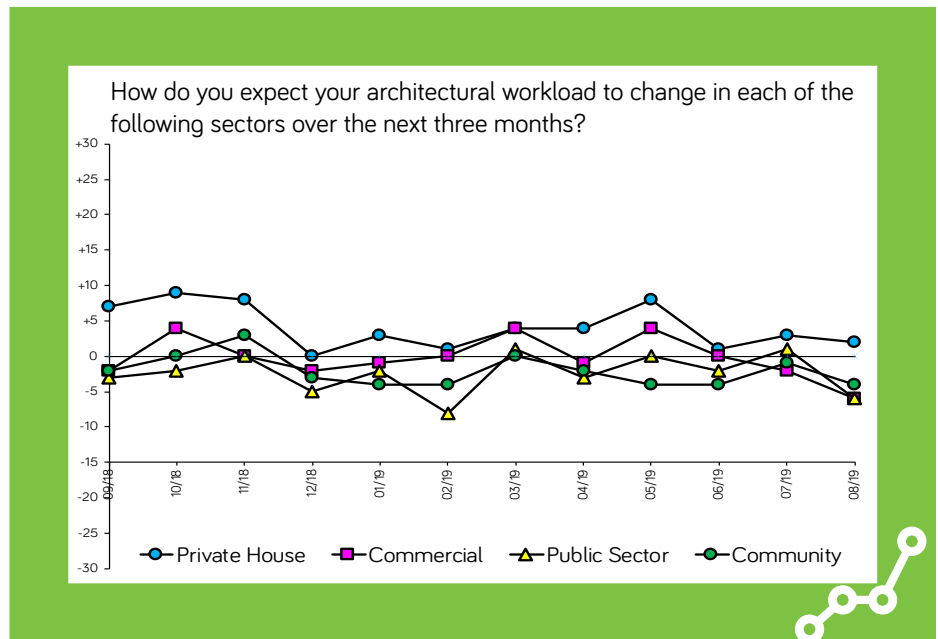
For private housing, the weakest regions were London and the South East, returning balance figures of -8 and -11 respectively. The most positive regions were the North of England (+14) and the Midlands & East Anglia (+22).

The **commercial sector** declined further in August, from a balance figure of -2 in July to -6 in August. Only the North of England returned a positive commercial sector balance figure in August, all other regions being negative.

The workload predictions for the **community sector** continue to be negative. They haven't been positive since November 2018. In August the community sector returned a balance figure of -4, down from -1 in July.

The **public sector** has moved squarely back into negative territory, returning a balance figure of -6 in August, down from +1 in July. Small practices are notably less positive about future public sector work than are medium and large practices.

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



**RIBA Future Trends Staffing Index**  
(August 2019)

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

Permanent Staff	%
Decrease	9
Stay the same	82
Increase	9
TOTAL	100
<b>Balance</b>	<b>+0</b>

(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 recovered somewhat this month, rising from -3 in July, up to 0 in August.

Small practices (1 - 10 staff), with a balance figure of -2, remained the group with the lowest staffing index figure.

The South of England, as well as the Midlands & East Anglia, returned negative staffing index figures.

The North of England, as well as Wales & the West, returned positive staffing index figures. London reverted to a positive balance, rising to +2 in August, from -5 in July.

Medium sized practices (11 - 50 staff) remain upbeat about future staffing levels, as do large practices (51+ staff), with both returning a positive staffing index figure.

As well as monitoring the demand for full-time staff through the Future Trends Staffing Index, we also monitor the anticipated demand, in the next three months, for temporary staff. The August workload balance for temporary staff is negative, at -7 points.

With 17% of respondents citing a lack of work leading them to be personally underemployed, there is spare professional capacity among some practices.

Commentary from our participating practices continues to suggest a nervous architectural profession, ill at ease with the direction Brexit may take. Few who commented are positive in their outlook.

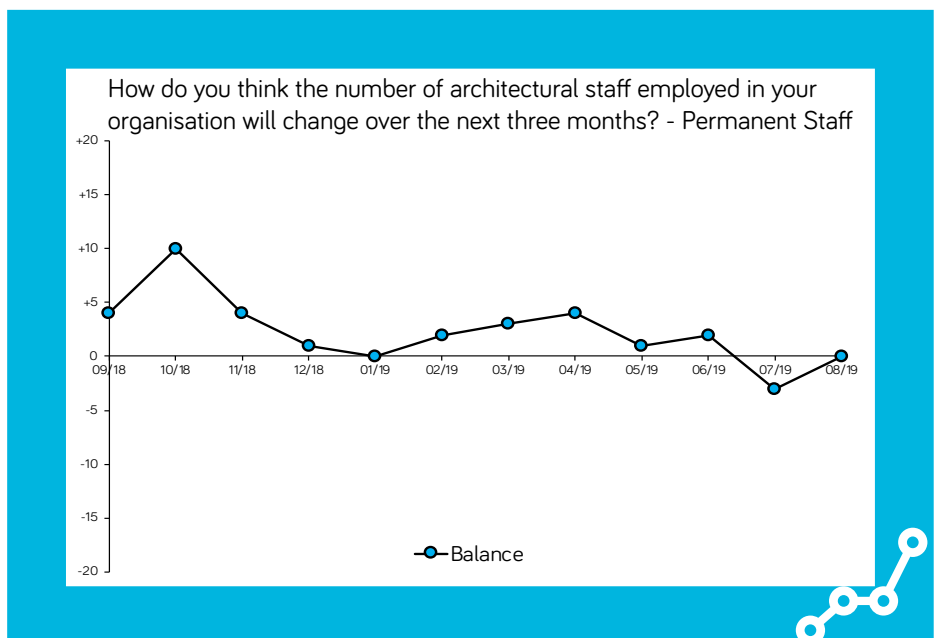
Our respondents draw attention to a range of issues, all attributed to Brexit. These include: a falling off of overseas work from other EU countries, a falling pound pushing up costs, lowered margins and fee income, and projects failing to move beyond feasibility studies.

Some practices, whilst acknowledging these are challenging times, draw attention to ways in which they have made themselves more resilient: concentrating on high-quality work, investing in marketing, and an emphasis on high levels of client service.

Our report next month will be the first in which the proposed date for Brexit, the 31st of October, will fall within our three month future trend analysis.

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 209 practices took part in the Survey in August 2019. 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](mailto: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.