Future Trends Survey:

August 2017

RIBA Architecture.com

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 August 2017 Survey returns.

Future workload (August 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	18
Stay the same	53
Increase	29
TOTAL	100
Balance	+11

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

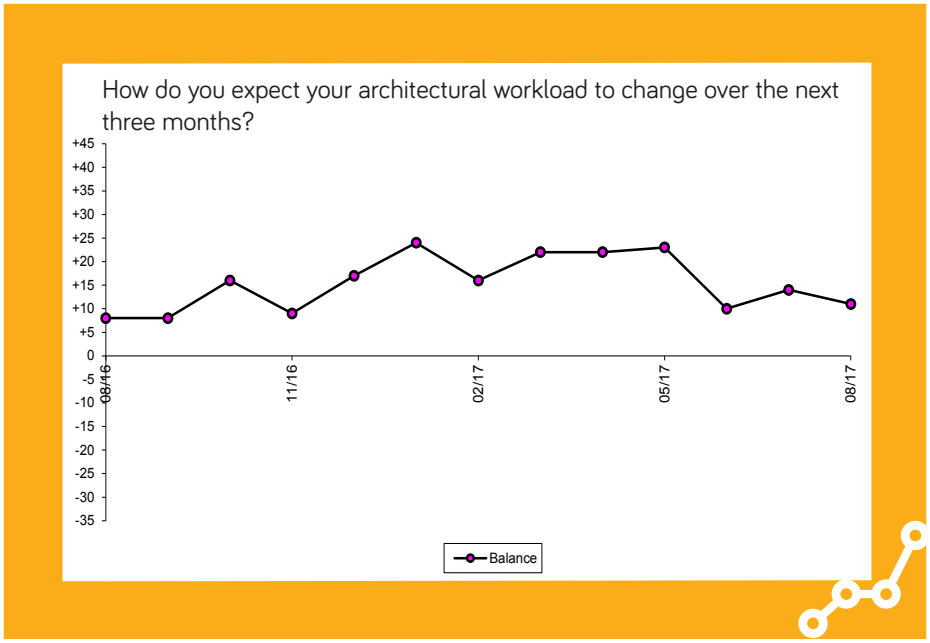
The RIBA Future Trends Workload Index fell back a bit this month, standing at +11 in August 2017 compared with +14 in July.

In terms of geographical analysis, practices in the North of England (balance figure +39) and the Midlands and East Anglia (balance figure +19) continued to be the most optimistic about medium term workload prospects this month. Practices in London remained by far the most cautious about future workloads, with a balance figure of -6, falling further from the figure of -2 recorded last month.

Analysing the August 2017 data in terms of practice size, large practices (51+ staff) returned a balance figure of +50 in June. Small practices (1 - 10 staff), with a balance figure of +10 and medium-sized practices (11 - 50 staff), with a balance figure of +17 continued to be less positive than large practices.

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, it was a very mixed picture this month. The private housing sector workload forecast was the stand out performer with a balance figure +19. This remains by far the most positive of our sector forecasts, and housing at all scales of development remains the primary engine that is sustaining modest growth in overall workloads.

By contrast the commercial sector workload forecast fell back quite significantly, with a balance figure of +2 in August 2017, down from +8 in July.

Both the community sector workload forecast (balance figure -7) and the public sector workload forecast (balance figure -4) fell back this month, and now stand in negative territory, indicating that our practices anticipate a fall in public and third sector work in the next quarter.

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

Future staffing levels (August 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	9
Stay the same	77
Increase	14
TOTAL	100
Balance	+5

(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.)

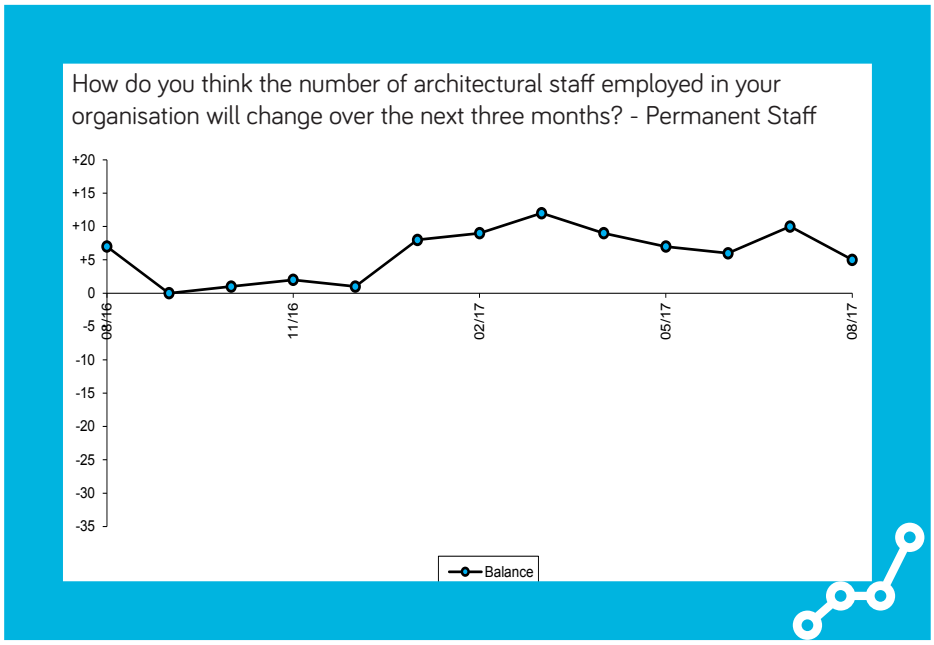
Mirroring our Workload Index, the RIBA Future Trends Staffing Index also saw a move to the downside this month, falling to +5 in August 2017 from +10 in July. However, the overwhelming majority of practices still expect their permanent staffing levels to either remain the same or increase over the coming quarter.

Large practices (51+ staff), with a balance figure of +25 and medium-sized practices (11 - 50 staff), with a balance figure of +21, were more confident about future staffing levels than small practices (1 - 10 staff) with a balance figure of just +2.

Commentary received from our participating practices picks up the same consistent themes we have seen in recent months, namely a steady outlook in the medium term, but a sense of a more unpredictable longer term outlook. Housing remains the area of most growth. Many of our corresponding practices report that fee competition remains fairly intense.

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 206 practices took part in the Survey in August 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.