# Future Trends Survey:

February 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 February 2017 Survey returns.

### Future workload (February 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 | 56 |
| Increase | 30 |
| TOTAL | 100 |
| Balance | +16 |

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

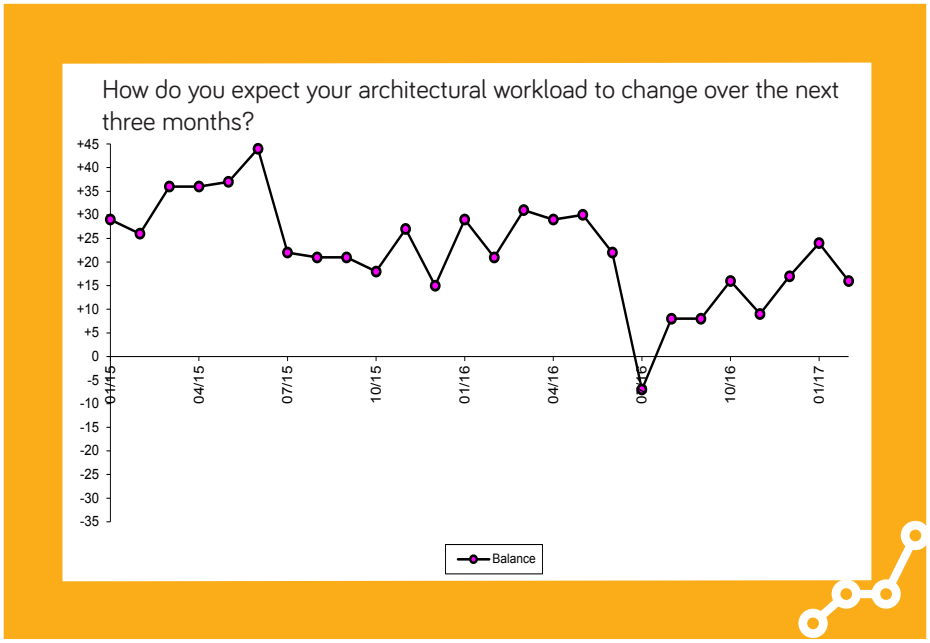
The RIBA Future Trends Workload Index dipped this month, falling to +16 in February 2017, down from +24 in January 2017.

In terms of geographical analysis, practices in London (balance figure +10) and the South of England (balance figure +3) were the most cautious about future workload prospects. Practices located in the North of England (balance figure +39) continued to be the most confident about growth in workloads over the next quarter. Wales and the West (balance figure +22) also reported a very positive outlook.

Analysing the February data in terms of practice size, large practices (51+ staff) returned a balance figure of +14, significantly lower than the +38 recorded in January. Medium-sized practices (11 - 50 staff), with a balance figure of +17, and small practices (1 – 10 staff), with a balance figure of +16, also saw a dip in confidence levels, but all size categories of practice continue to be positive overall about future workloads.

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.

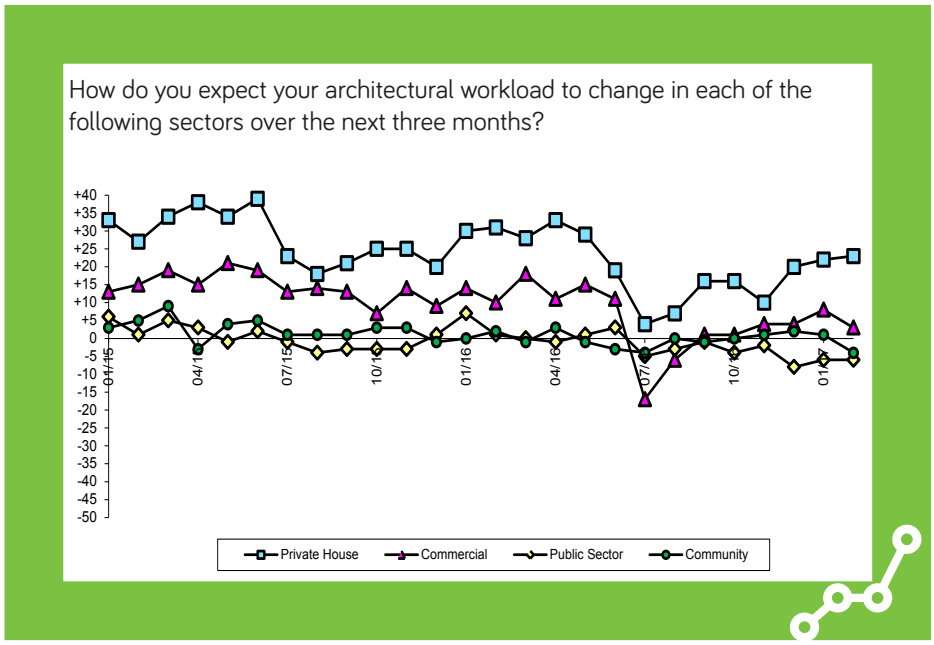


**In terms of different work sectors,** the private housing sector workload forecast nudged up to +23 in February 2016, from +22 in January.

By contrast, the commercial sector workload forecast was down a little, standing at +3 in February 2017 compared with +8 in January.

The public sector workload forecast was unchanged at -6 this month, remaining stuck in negative territory. The community sector forecast also fell, down from +1 in January to -4 in February.

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



## Future staffing levels (February 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 | 7 |
| Stay the same | 77 |
| Increase | 16 |
| 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 increased marginally this month, rising to +9 in February 2017 from +8 in January.

Practices continue to be confident overall about their ability to sustain and even grow staffing levels over the next quarter, indicating that the employment market for salaried architects remains healthy. Only 7% of practices expect to employ fewer staff in three months' time.

This month it was again medium-sized practices (11 - 50 staff), with a balance figure of +31, that were the most positive about future staffing levels,. Large practices (51+ staff) also remain fairly bullish about staffing levels, returning a balance figure of +14. Small practices (1 - 10 staff) remain the least confident, but the balance figure for small practices edged up from +4 in January 2017 to +6 in February.

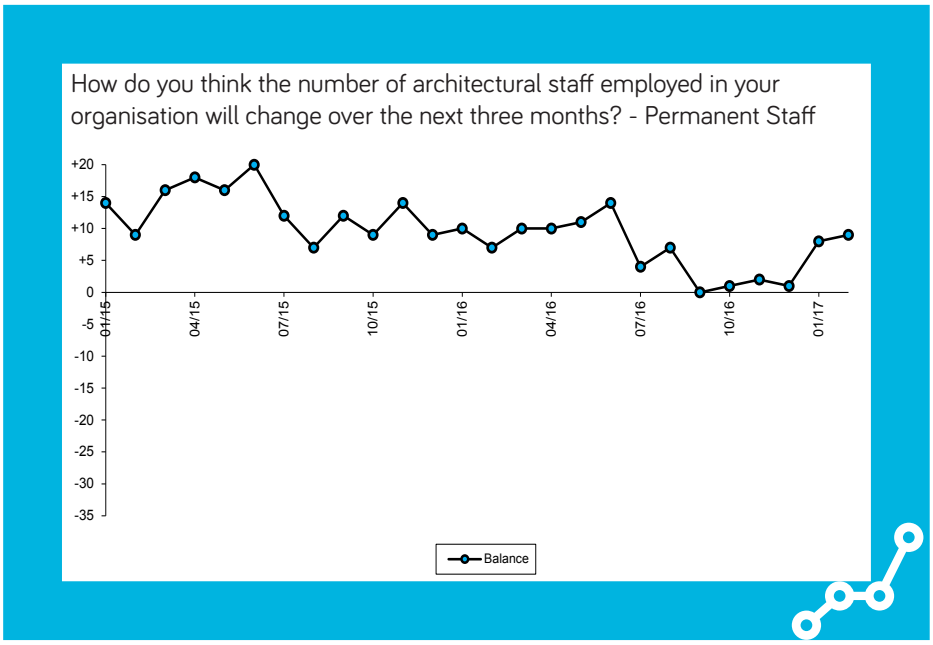
This month we asked our participating practices about any direct impact they have experienced from the Brexit decision upon their staffing levels. 5% of practices reported that they had made some staff redundant as a direct consequence of the EU referendum outcome, with large practices more likely to have done so.

Commentary received from our participating practices continues to be predominantly positive.

A common theme though is that, despite several years of continued growth in demand for architectural services, competition for work remains intense for many, and a number of practices continue to report that fee levels remain suppressed,.

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 218 practices took part in the Survey in February 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.*