Future Trends Survey:

November 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 November 2017 Survey returns.

Future workload (November 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	24
Stay the same	53
Increase	23
TOTAL	100
Balance	-1

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

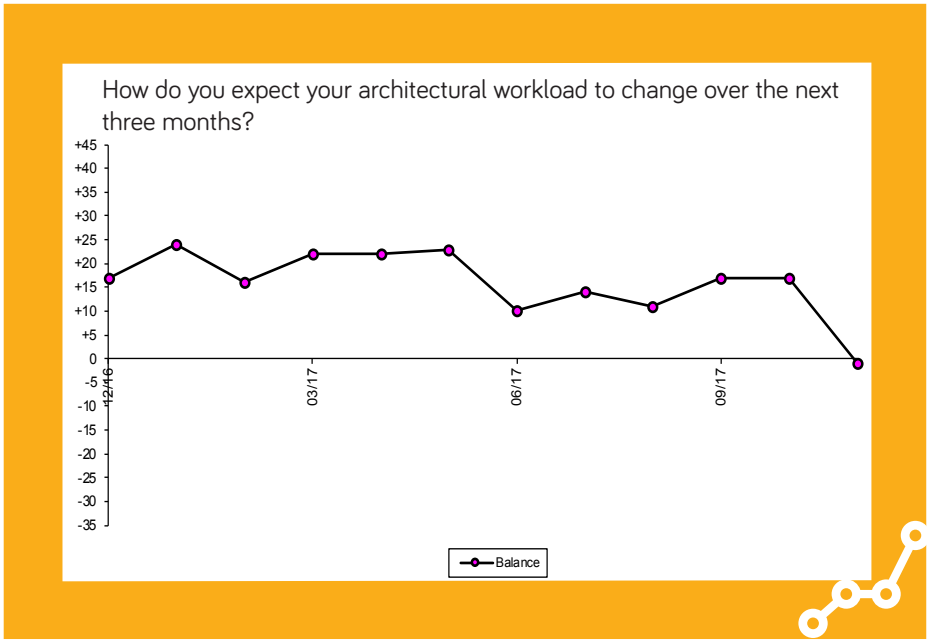
The RIBA Future Trends Workload Index underwent a fairly dramatic fall this month, dropping from +17 in October 2017 down to a distinctly chilly -1 in November.

In terms of geographical analysis the picture remains mixed. Practices in the North of England (balance figure +7) and the Midlands and East Anglia (balance figure +18) remain the most optimistic about medium term workload prospects., but returned significantly lower balance figures in November than in October. Practices in London continue to be more pessimistic about future workloads, with the balance figure for London falling further into negative territory at -15, the lowest figure for London practices in 2017.

Analysing the November 2017 data in terms of practice size, large practices (51+ staff) returned a balance figure of zero in November. Medium-sized practices (11 - 50 staff) returned a balance figure of -5. Small practices (1 - 10 staff), with a balance figure of -1, were also more cautious this month.

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, all our sector forecasts were on a downward trajectory this month. The private housing sector workload forecast remains the most positive of our sector forecasts but was signifcantly down in November 2017, standing at just +4.

The commercial sector workload forecast had a balance figure of-3 in November 2017, down from +5 in October.

The community sector workload forecast (balance figure -7) and the public sector workload forecast (balance figure -10) both fell further into negative territory in November.

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

Future staffing levels (November 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	11
Stay the same	82
Increase	7
TOTAL	100
Balance	-4

(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.)

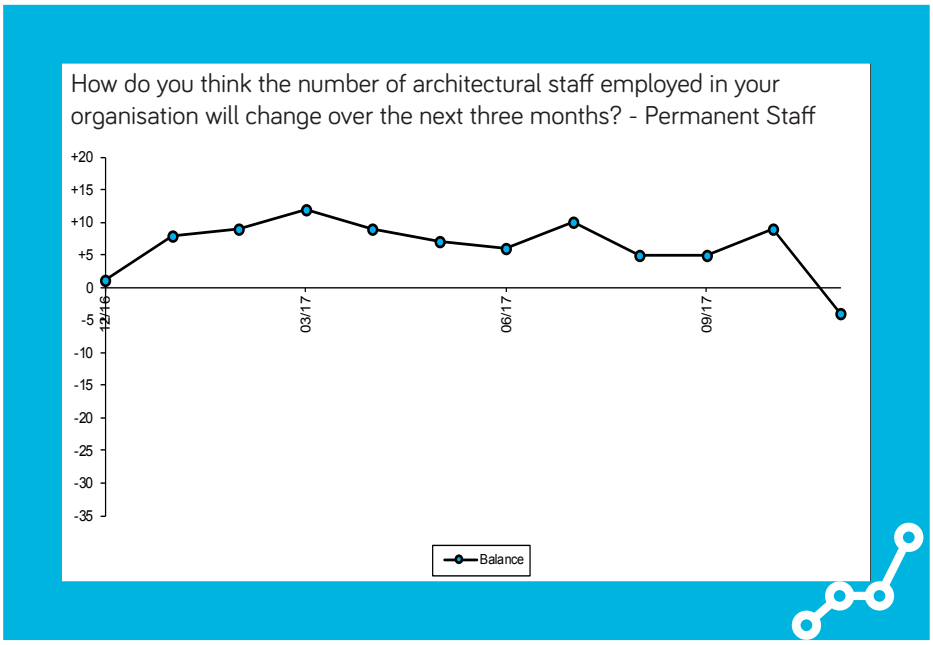
The RIBA Future Trends Staffing Index was also down this month, standing at -4 in November 2017 compared with +9 in October, entering negative territory for the first time this year.

Small practices (1 - 10 staff), with a balance figure of -5, and medium-sized practices (11 - 50 staff), with a balance figure of -9, were less confident about future staffing levels than large practices (51+ staff), who returned a balance figure of zero.

Commentary received from our participating practices continues to be somewhat mixed. Some practices report steady workloads but others are seeing a reduction in new enquiries. A number of larger practices have cited uncertainty over the outcome of the Brexit negotiations leading to caution on the part of clients. If anything the pressure on fee levels appears to be tightening. Overall sentiment this month does seem to be a little to the downside in general.

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 205 practices took part in the Survey in November 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.