



Future Trends: The Architects' Market

RIBA CPD Providers' Network

Adrian Malleson | 8 October 2026



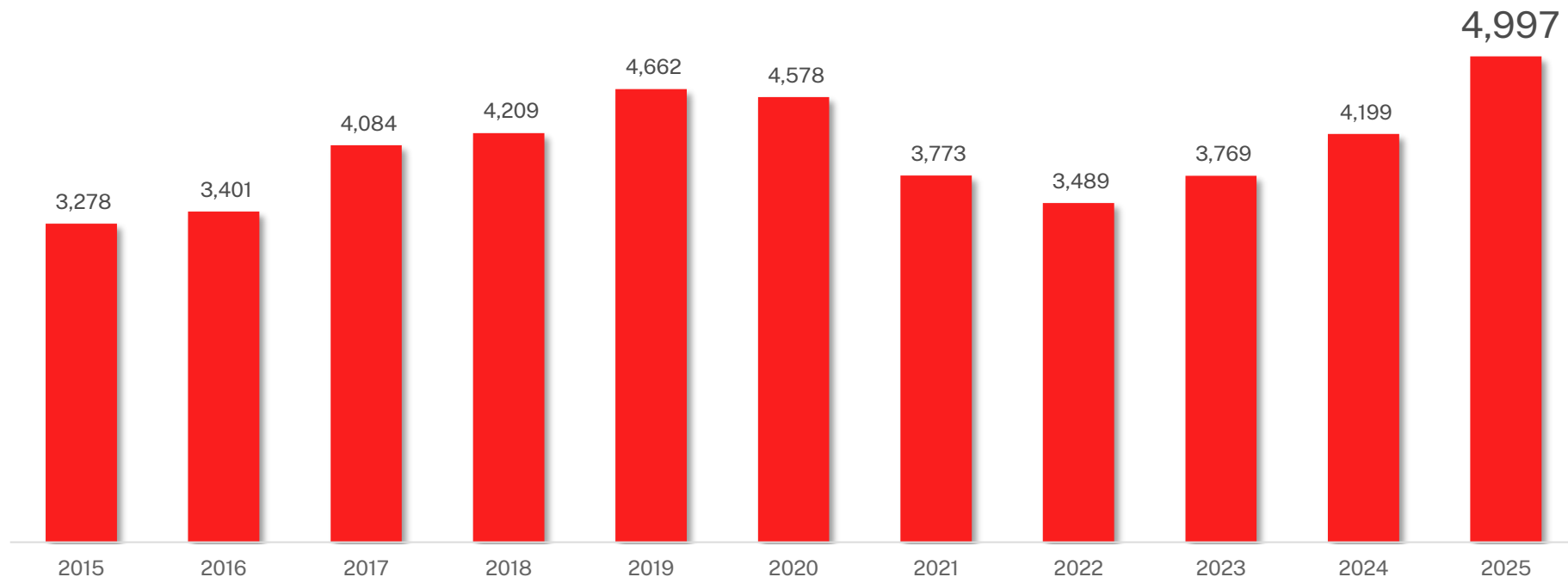
RIBA

The Architect's Market



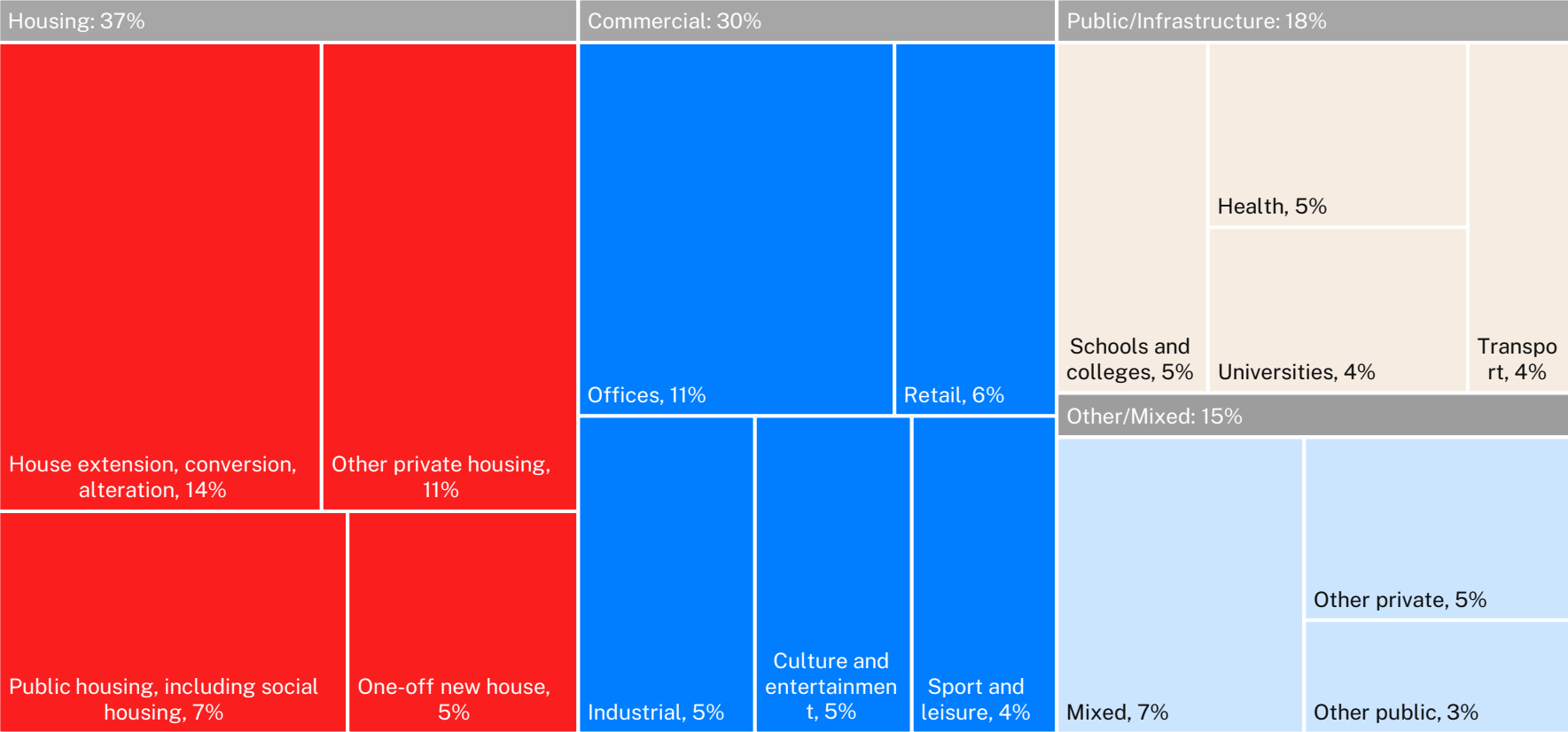
Architects' Market

UK Chartered Practice Revenue
Inflation Adjusted £m



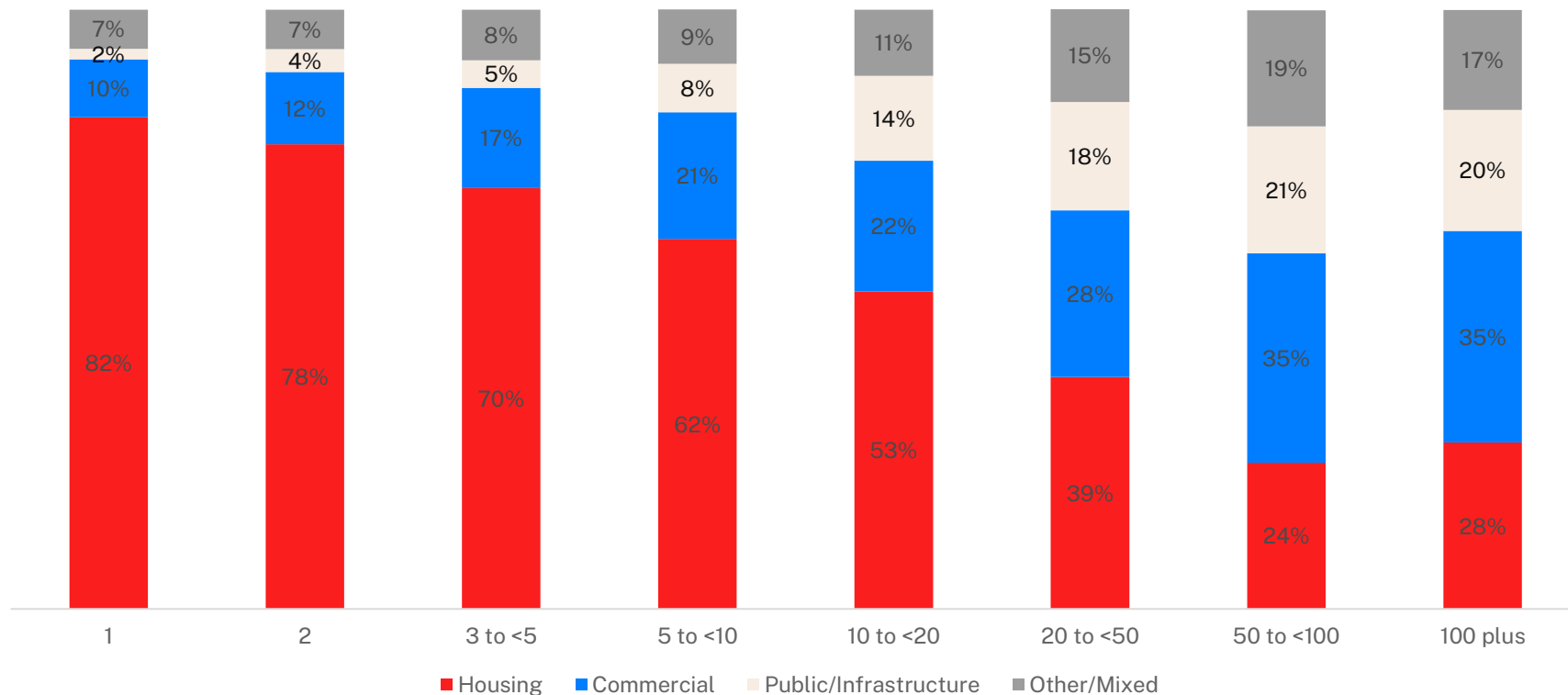
Architects' Market

Revenue by Sector



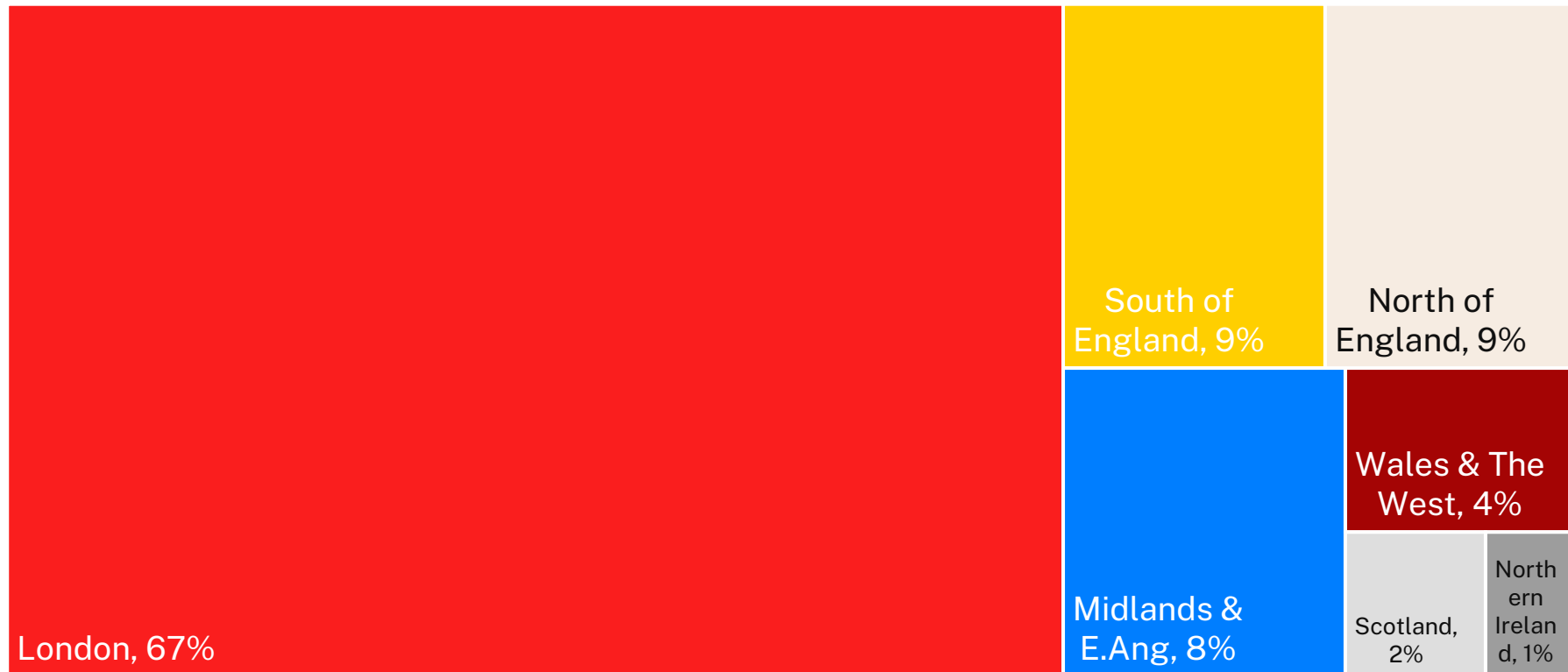
Architects' Market

Work Type by Practice Size



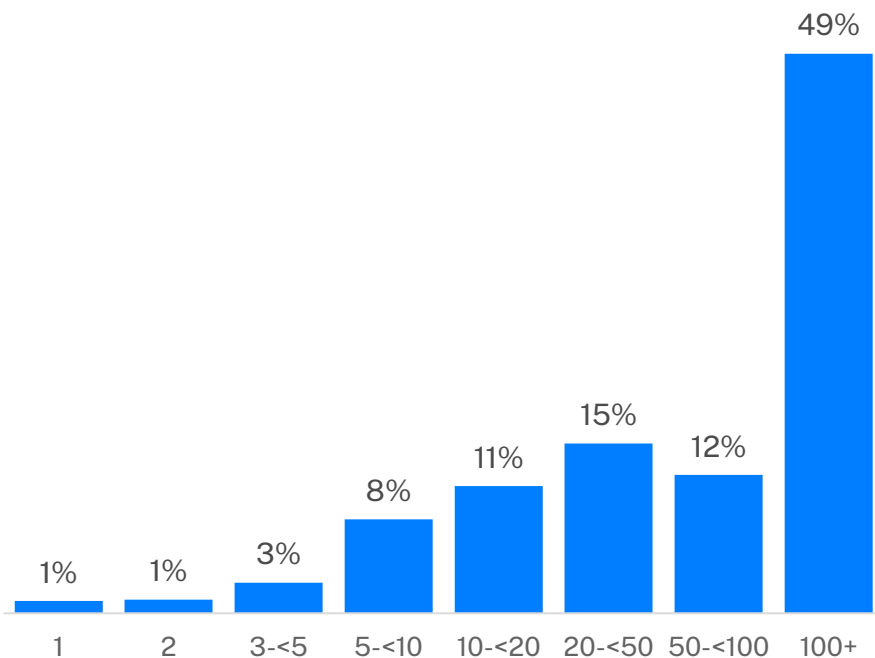
Architects' Market

Revenue by Region

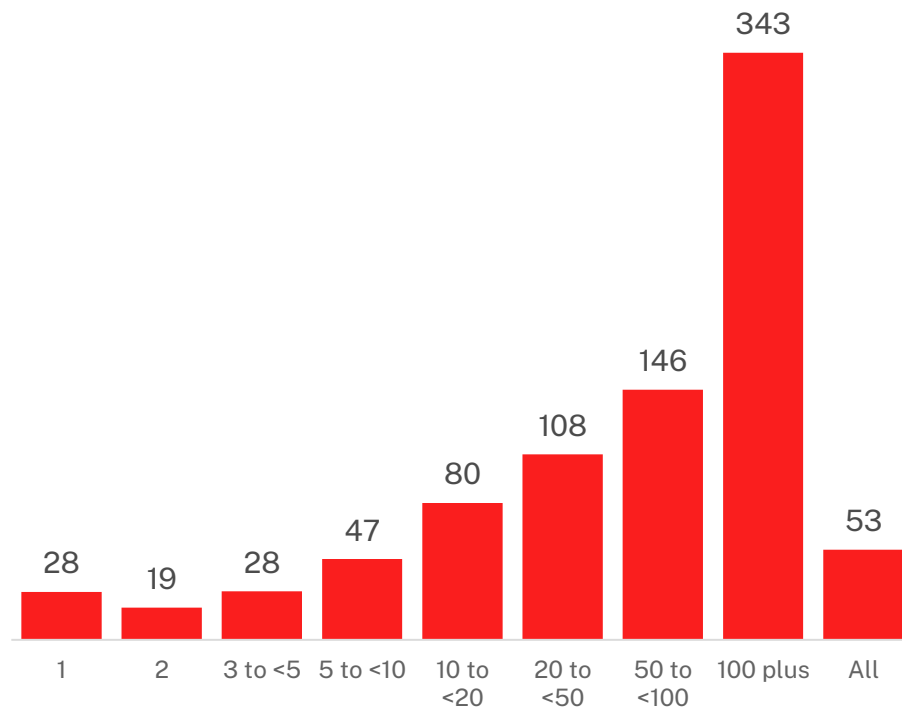


Architects' Market

% Total Revenue

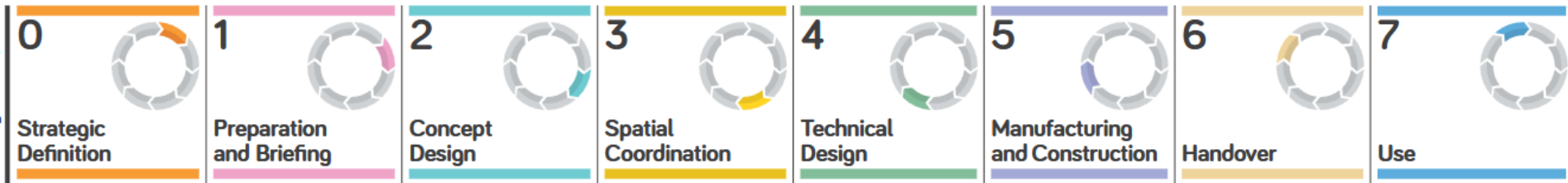
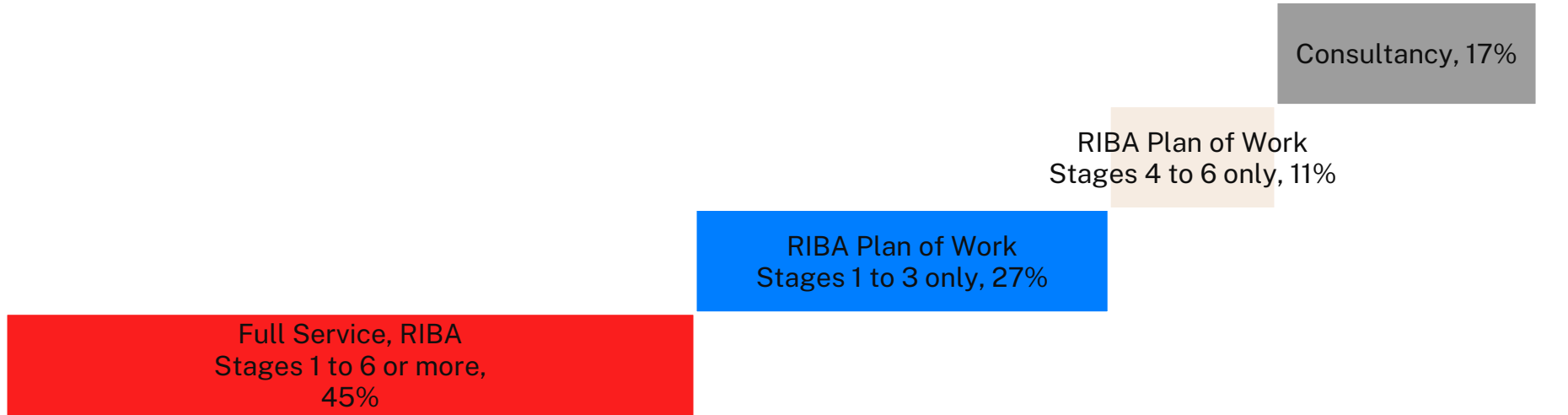


Average Number of Projects



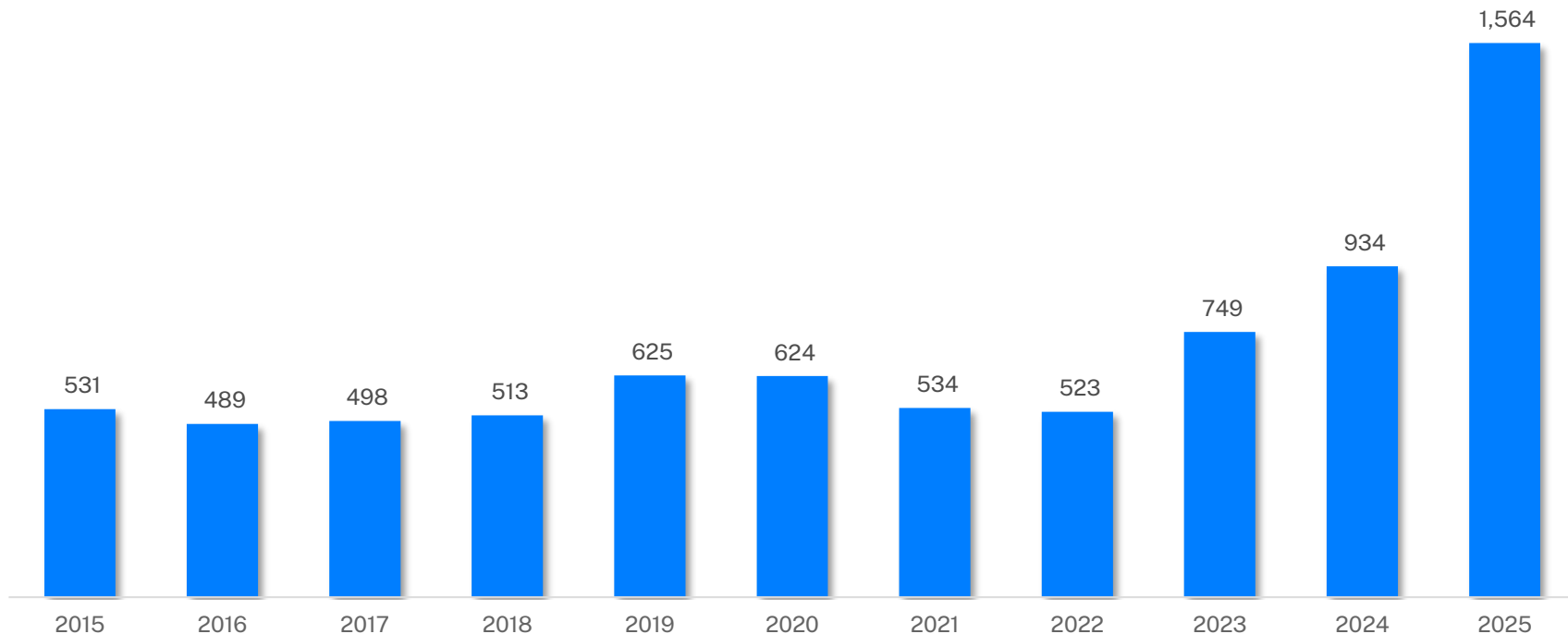
Architects' Market

Work by Stage



Architects' Market - International

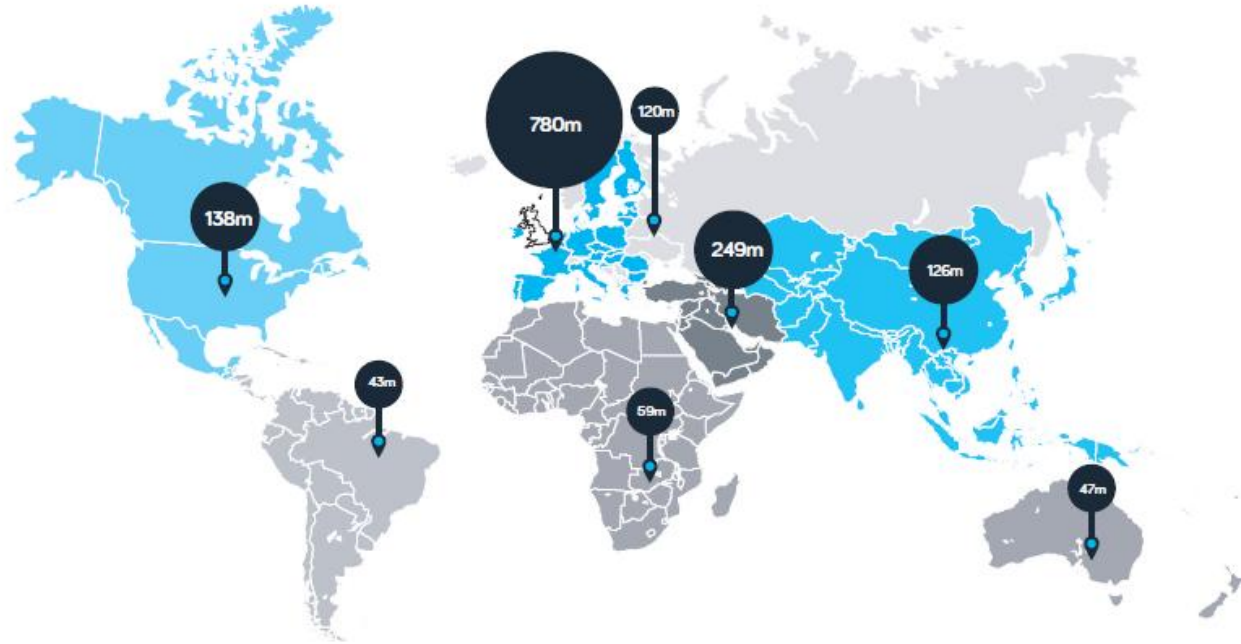
UK Chartered Practice Revenue
International £m



Architects' Market - International

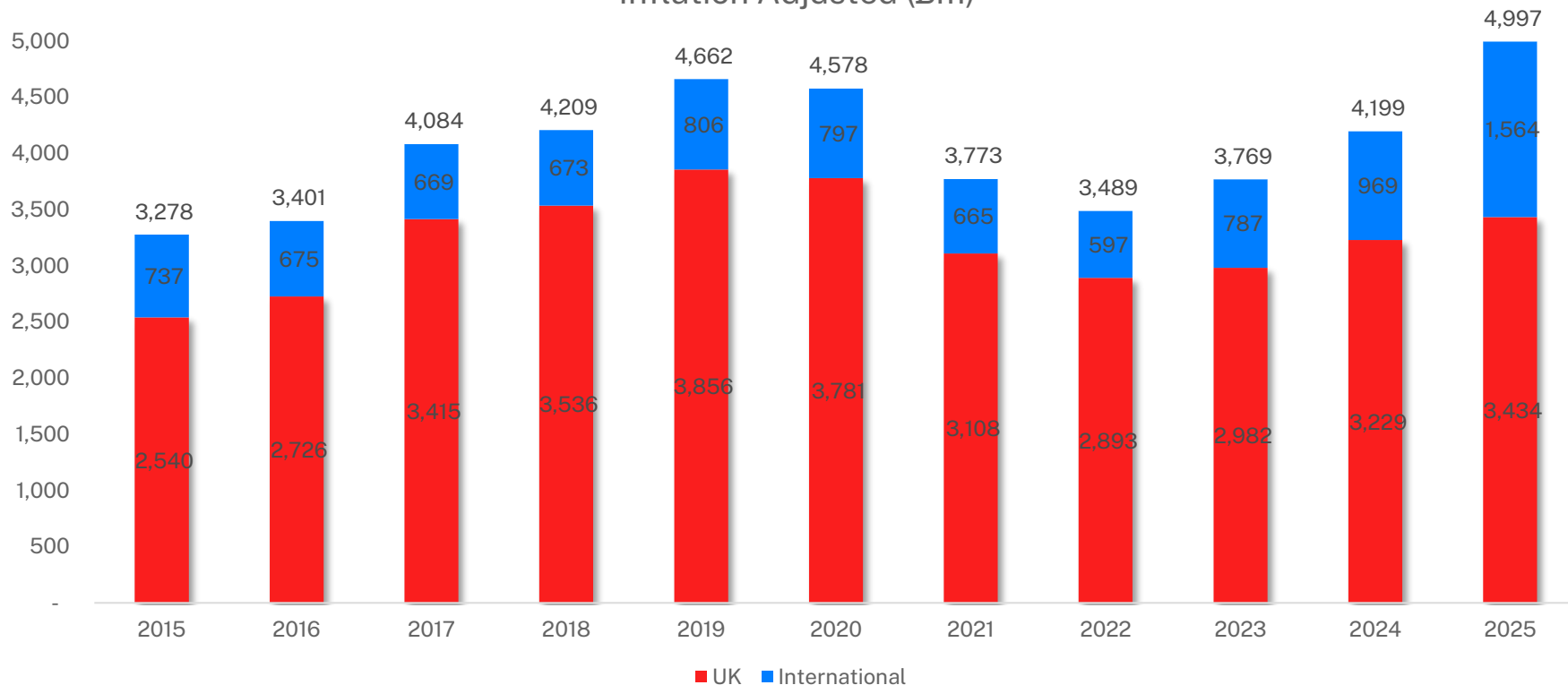
International revenue surges, led by strong growth in EU markets

83% of international work is from practices with 100+ staff, totalling **£1,564m.**



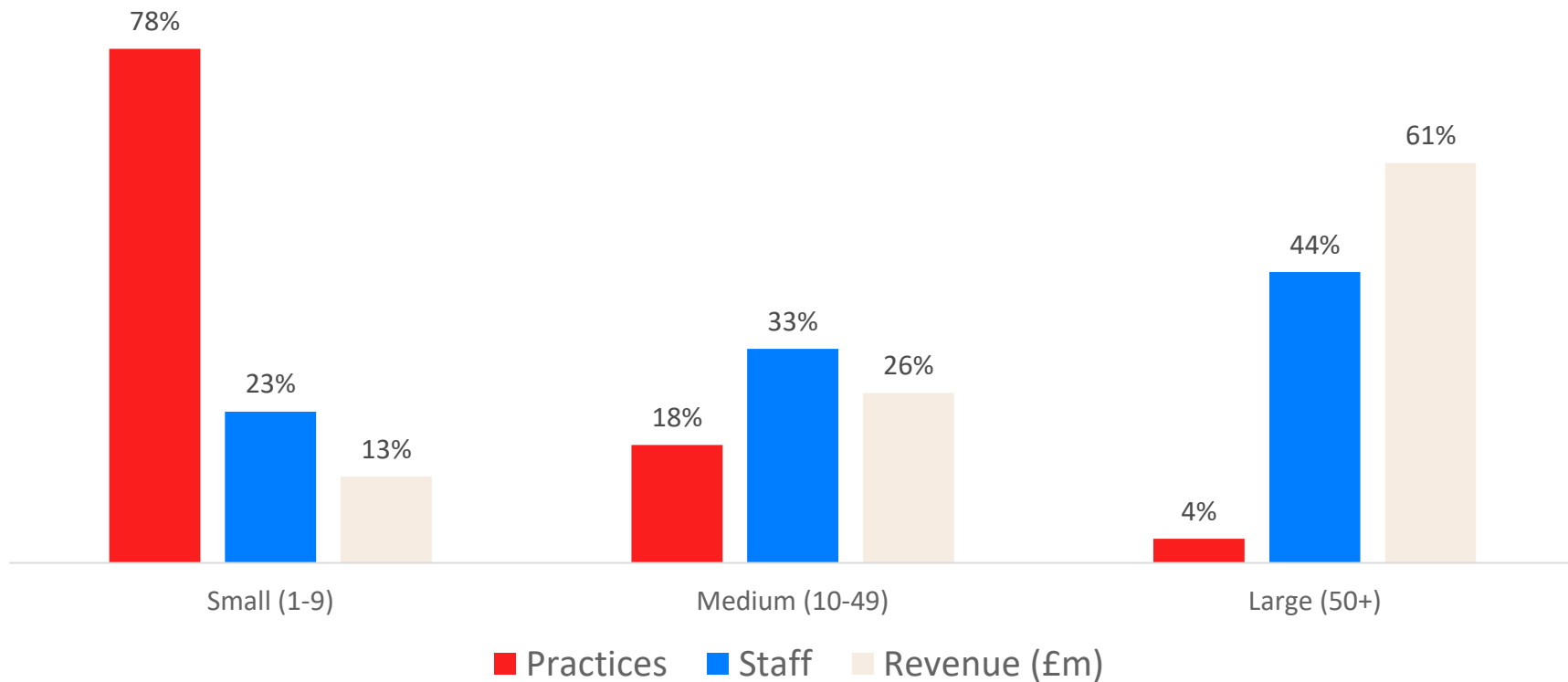
Architects' Market - International

Practice Revenue, UK and International
Inflation Adjusted (£m)



Architects' Market

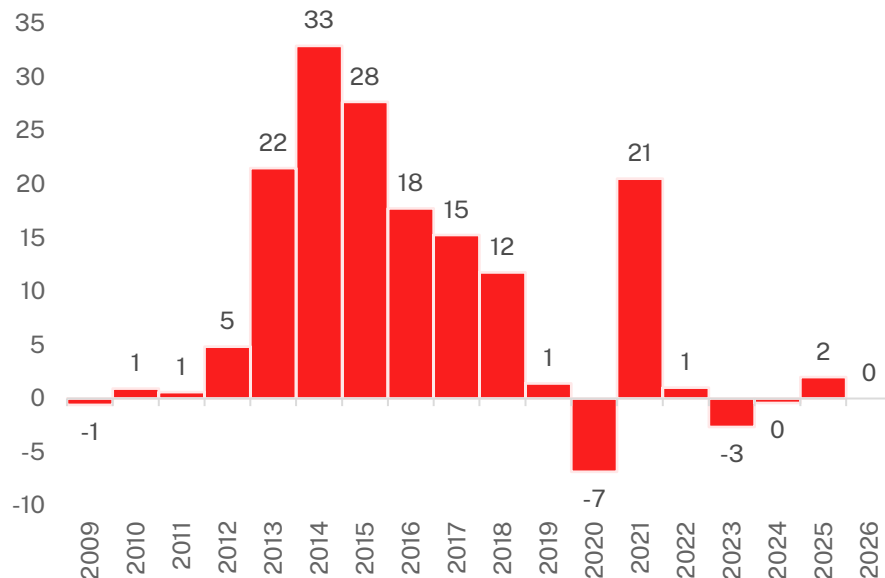
RIBA Chartered Practices, Staff, Revenue



Architects' Market - Trends



RIBA Future Trends Workload Index -
Annual Average



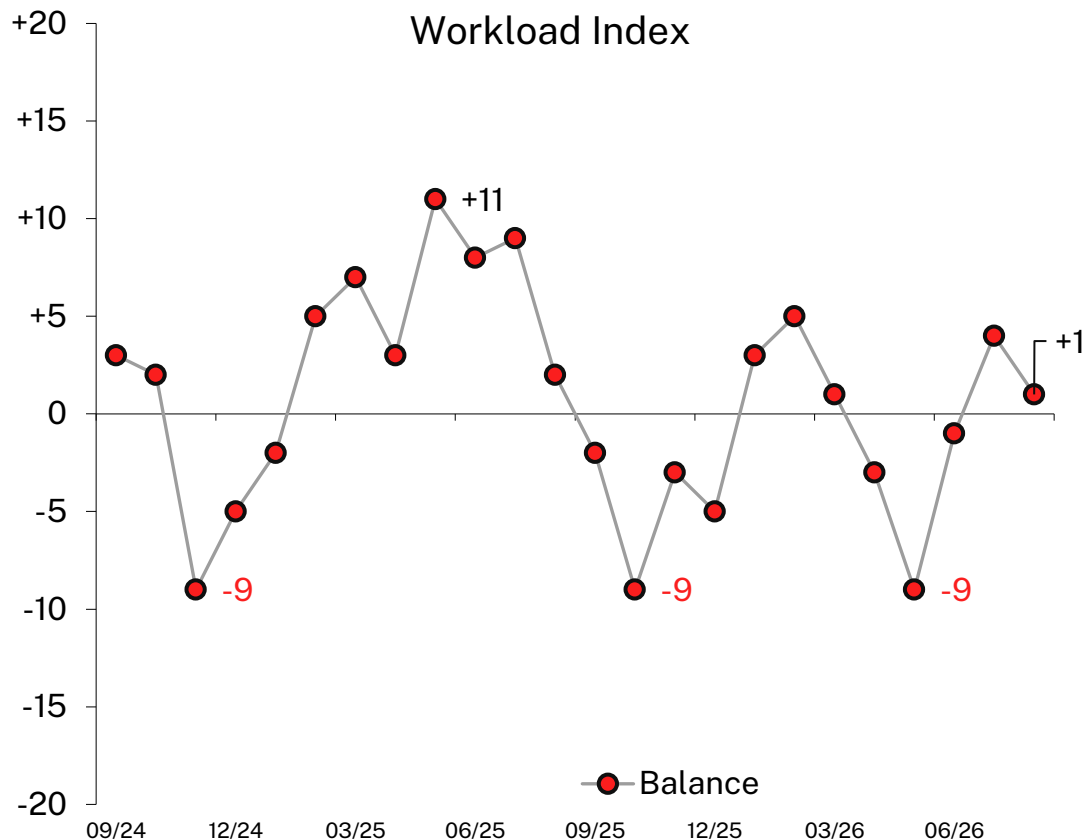
The definition for the balance figure is the difference between the percentage of those expecting more work and the percentage of those expecting less.

Future
trends survey

August 2026



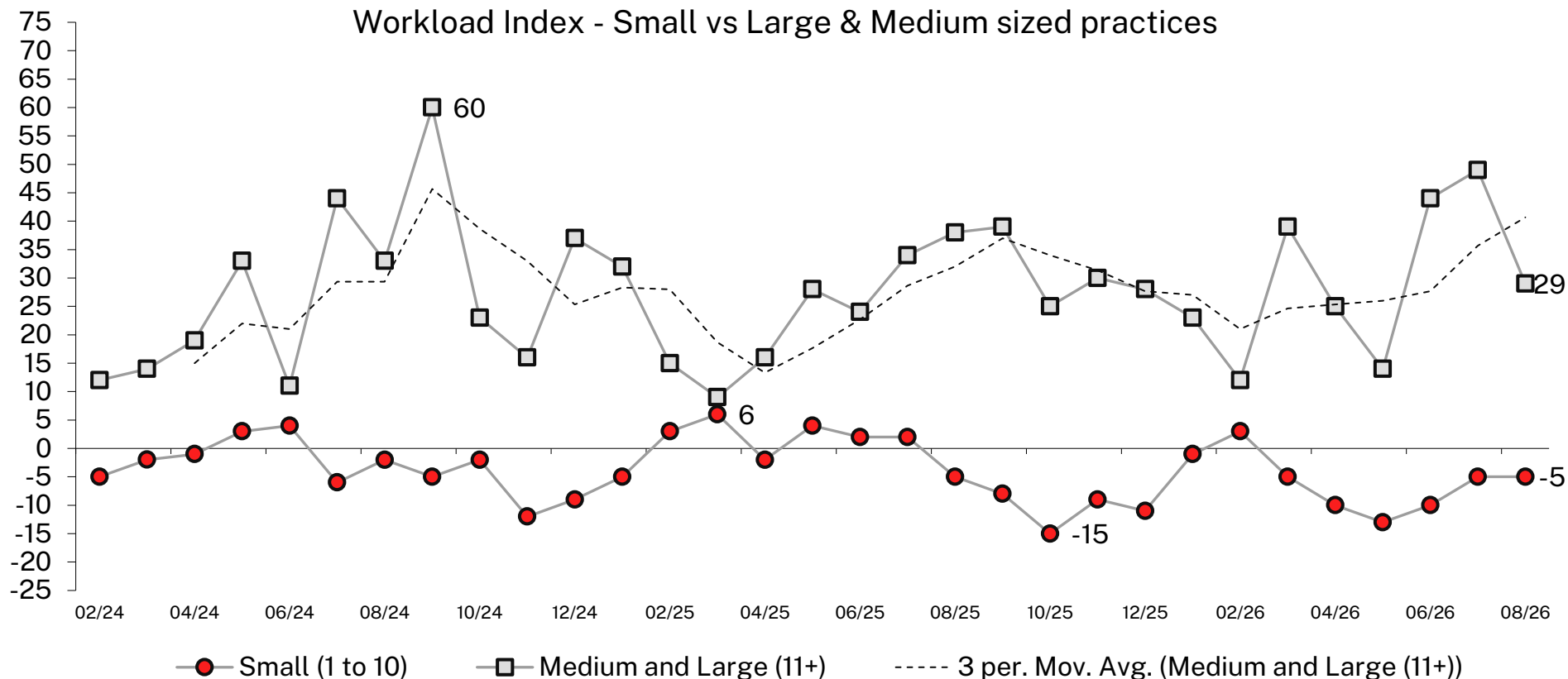
Architects' Market - Trends



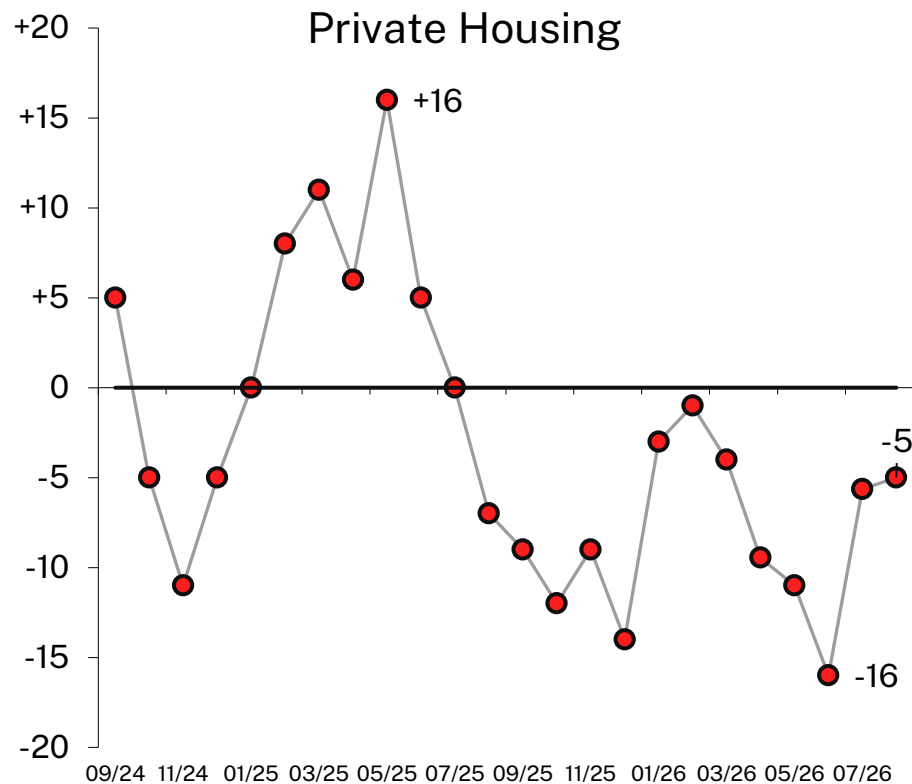
The RIBA Workload Index has hovered fairly close to a zero balance over the last few months, with no sustained recovery in confidence.

Large & Medium sized Practices are a lot more confident than smaller practices

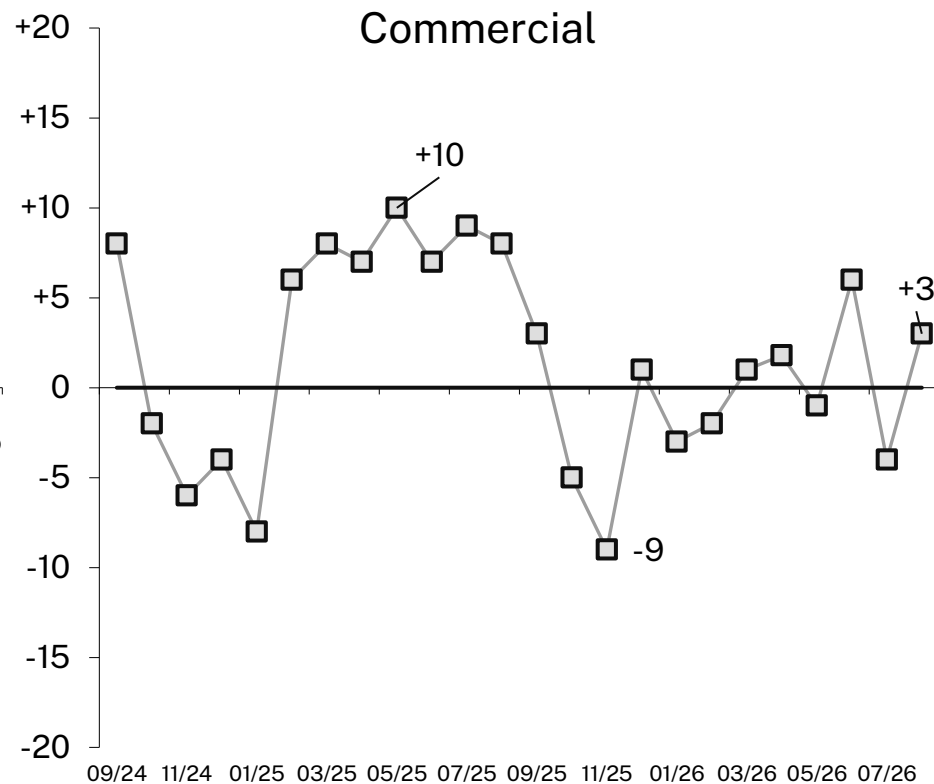
Architects' Market - Trends



Architects' Market - Trends



● Private House



■ Commercial

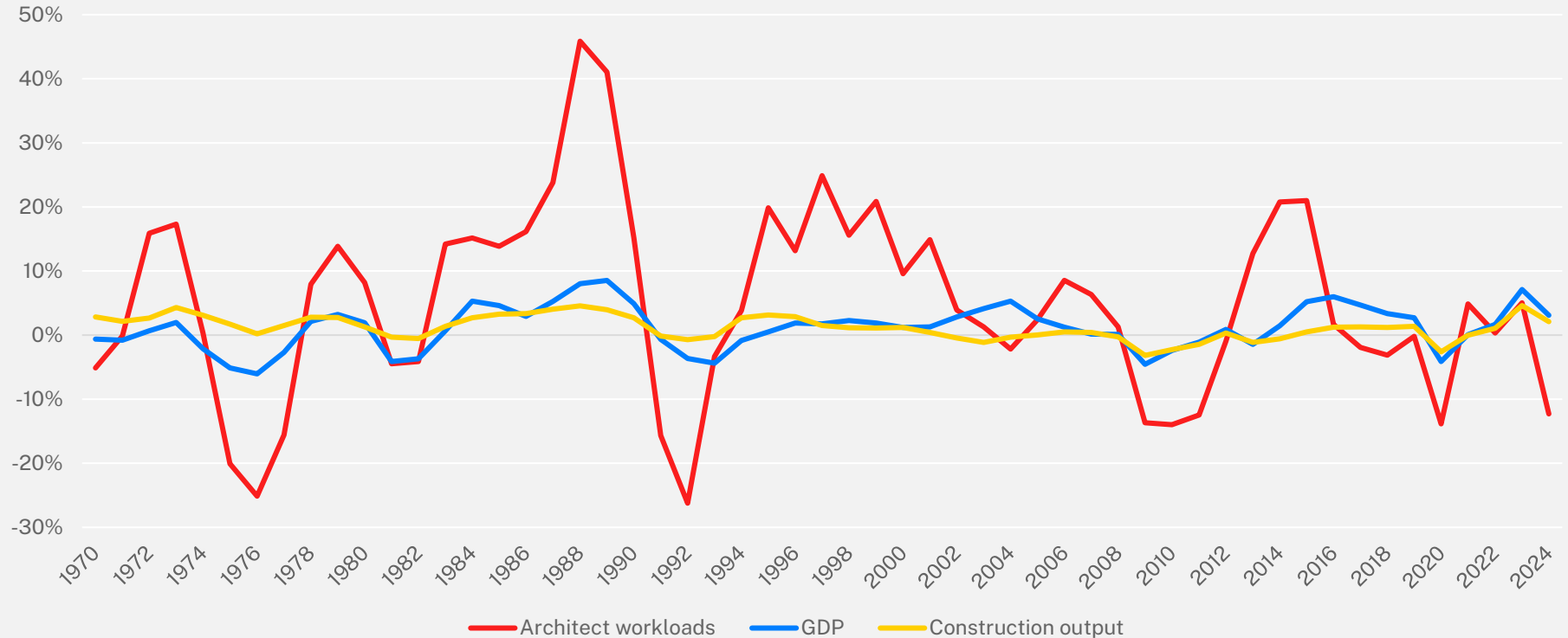
A woman with long brown hair, wearing a black tank top and light blue athletic pants, is walking down a modern, grey metal staircase. The staircase has a clean, industrial design with handrails. The background is a wall made of dark, horizontal wooden slats. The overall scene is well-lit, suggesting an indoor or well-lit outdoor environment.

RIBA

The Construction Sector

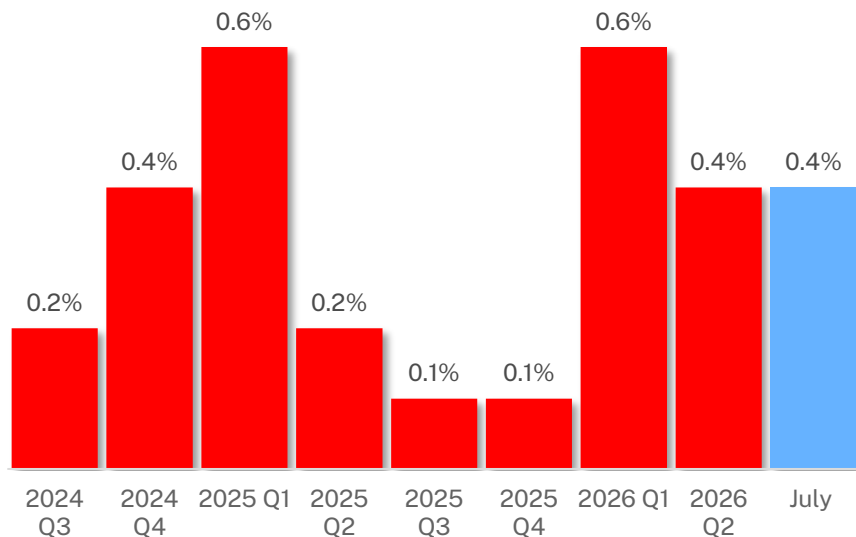
Architects' Market - it's cyclical

How architects' workloads compare with the economic and construction cycles
(3 year rolling average of percentage change)



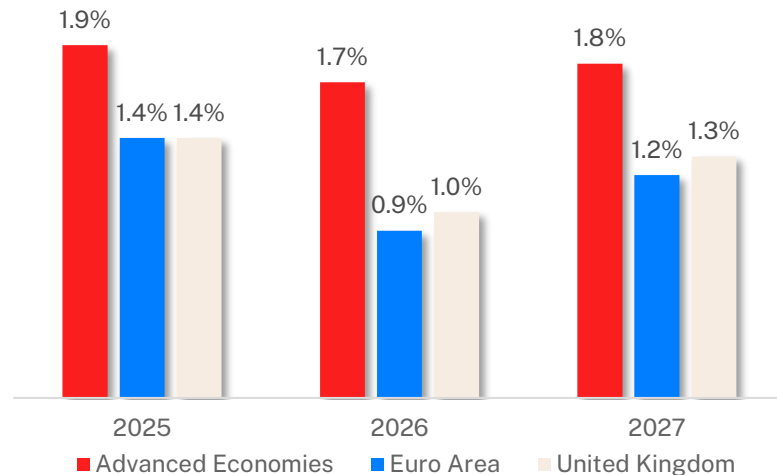
UK Economy

GDP Growth - Quarter on Quarter



- So far, the UK economy has performed better than expected, in 2026 exceeding the IMF's 1% forecast already.
- IMF suggest UK will be among the better performing European countries, but significantly behind the US.

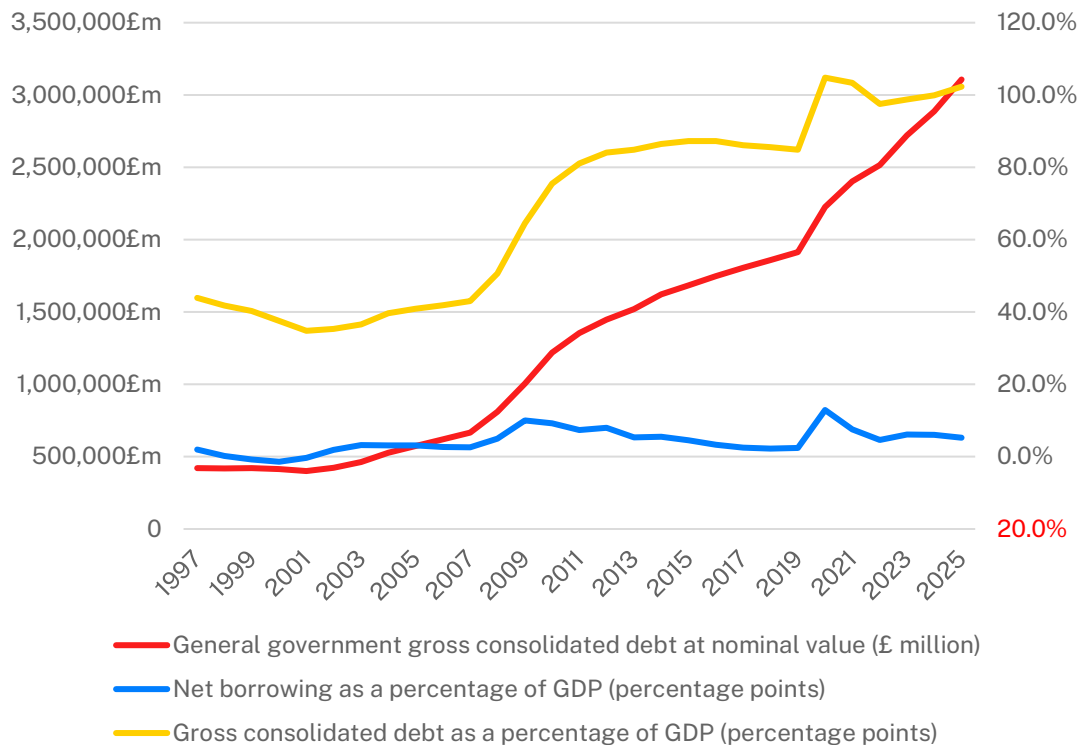
IMF Year on Year Growth Projections



OECD forecast is 1.1% for 2026.

UK Economy

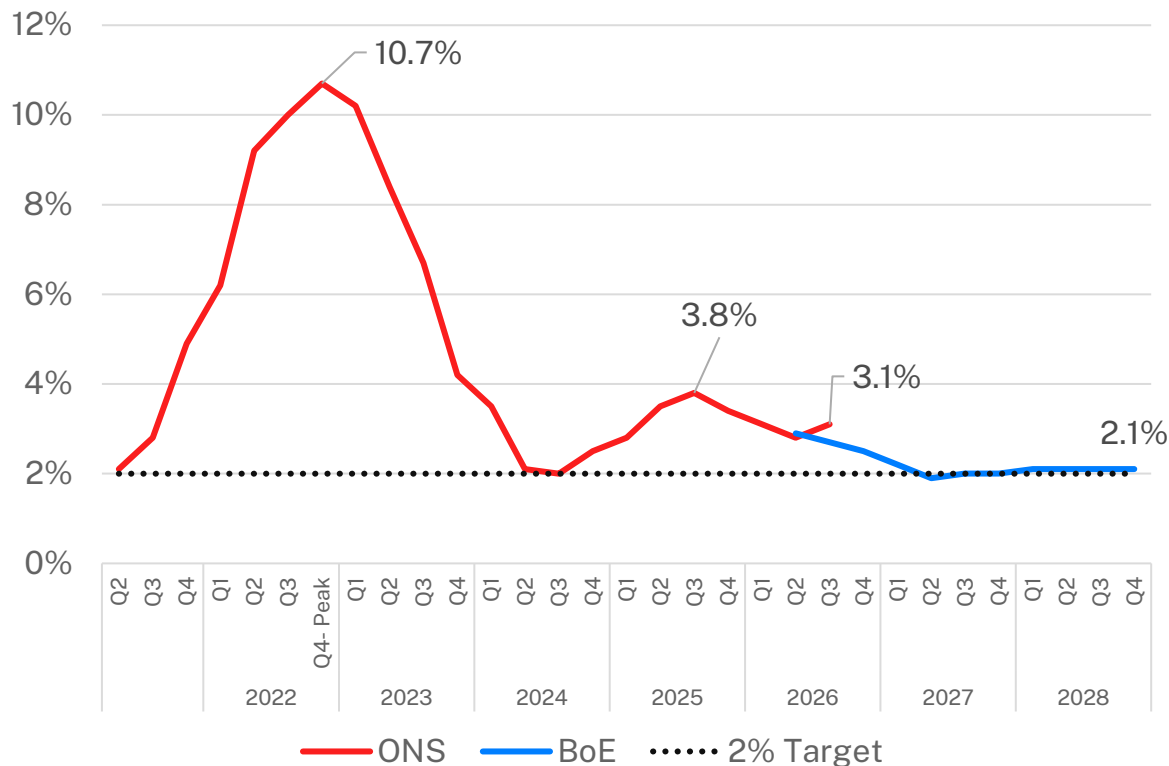
UK Debt and Deficit



- The UK Economy faces significant challenges
- It is indebted, making it highly sensitive to changes in the bond market.
- Higher interest rates on gilts = more government spending on debt (= reduced spending and/or higher tax and/or more debt).
- Or a different economic model....

UK Economy

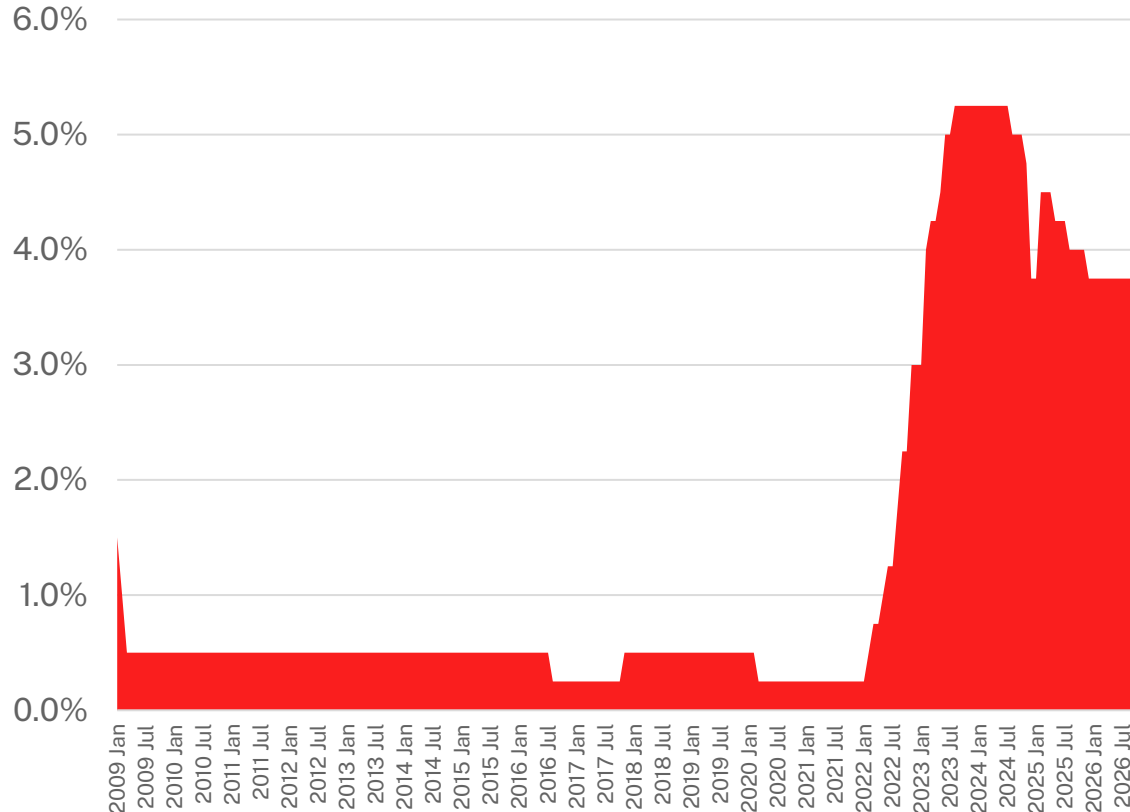
CPI Inflation - actual and forecast



- Inflationary pressures are increasing, due largely to the wars in Ukraine and Iran.
- Energy prices are high and volatile.
- Latest CPI figures have inflation rising at 3.1% pa, 1.1% above target.
- CPIH figures, which include housing costs, are at 3.3%.
- In their latest estimate, the Bank of England expected inflation to slowly return to target over the next year or so.
- But events have worked against this.

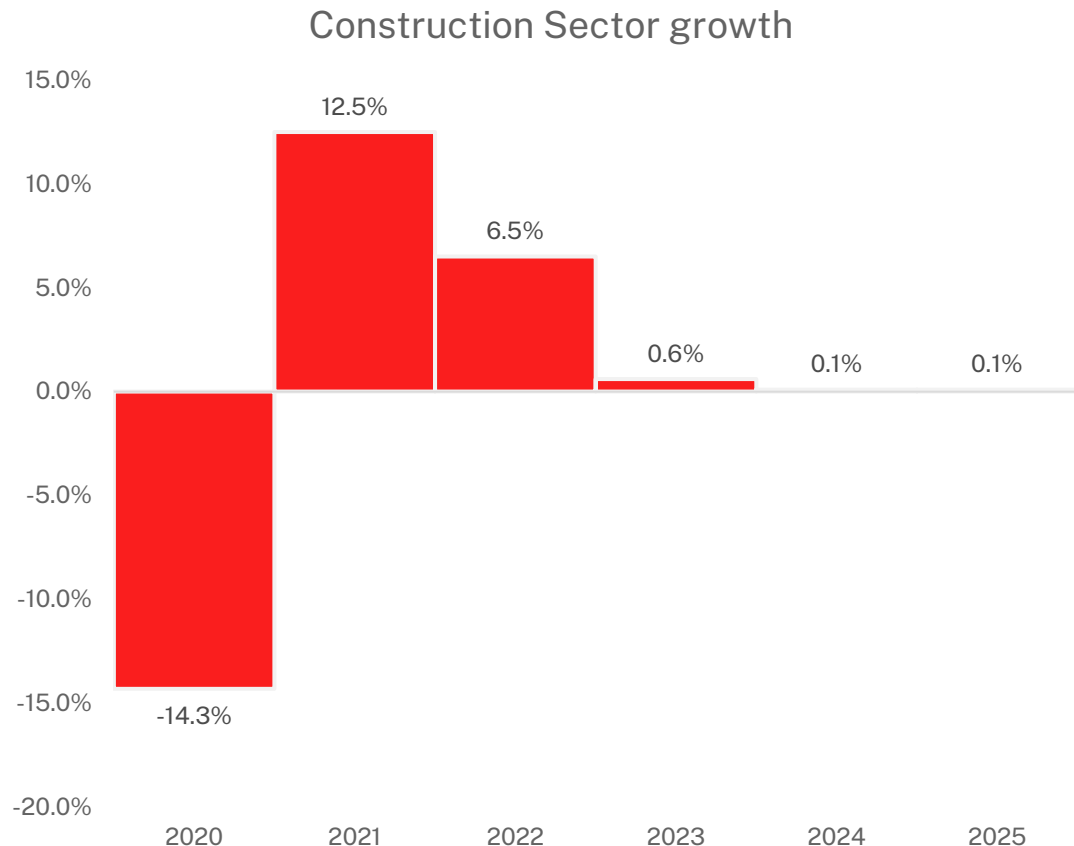
UK Economy

Bank of England Base Rate



- The Bank of England typically responds to higher-than-target inflation by increasing the cost of money, the “Base Rate” for loan interest.
- It’s at 3.75% now.
- Higher interest makes capital investment more expensive.
- So, elevated interest rates suppress the demand for construction work (both for commercial investment and domestic work)
- Base Rate has been elevated since the Ukraine Invasion.
- It was expected to go down, but the ongoing Middle East conflict mean it could well go up again.
- Bad news for potential clients and construction.

Construction

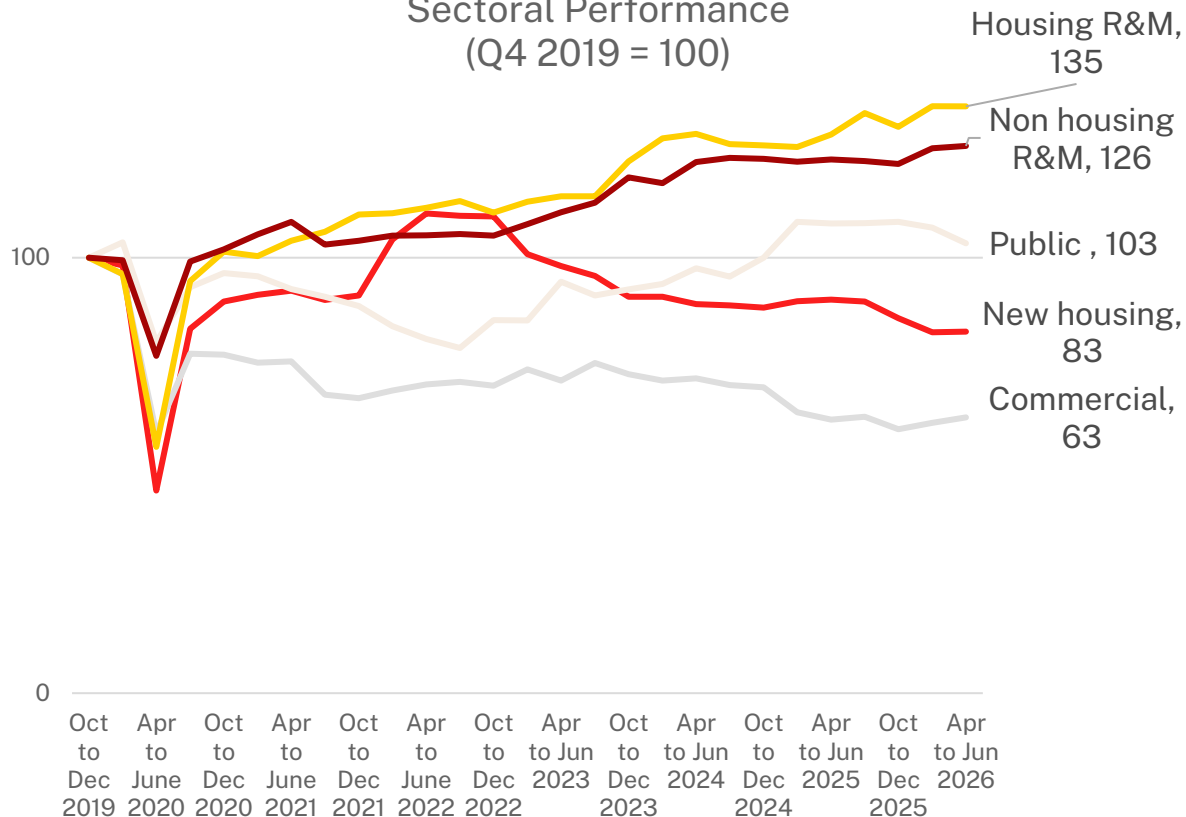


- Construction Sector Growth has been anaemic since the post-covid bounce.
- After a good start, 2026 has also seen weak month on month growth:

Jan 2026	0.7%
Feb 2026	0.3%
Mar 2026	1.4%
Apr 2026	-0.1%
May 2026	-0.8%
Jun 2026	-0.1%
Jul 2026	0.1%

Construction

Sectoral Performance
(Q4 2019 = 100)



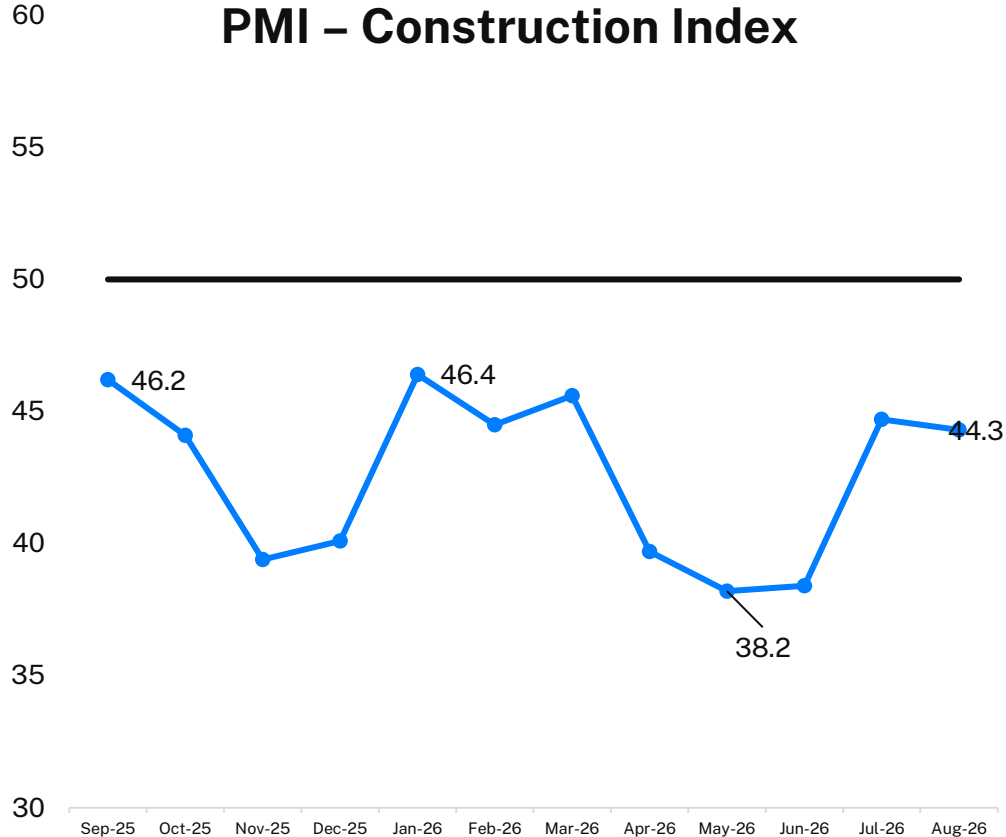
Some sectors have done much better than others.

Looking at important sectors for architects:

- New Housing and Commercial have seen significant declines when compared with pre-covid levels.
- Housing Repair and Maintenance (R&M) is well above pre-covid levels.
- Public sector output is holding steady.

Construction

PMI – Construction Index



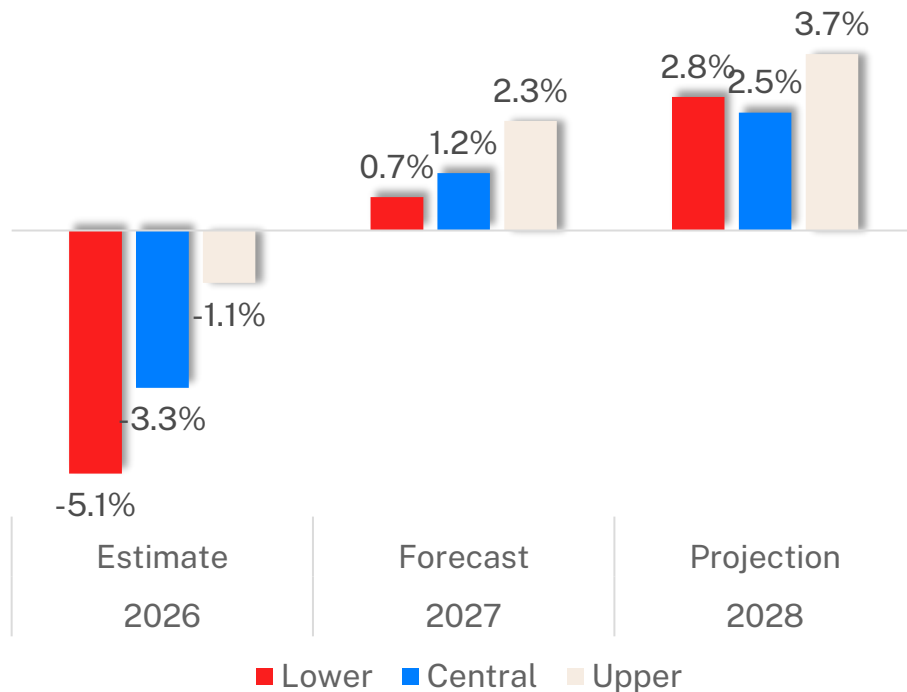
The Purchase Managers Index (PMI) surveys construction firms to assess activity.

- **The Index has been below the neutral 50.0 value for the twenty successive months.**
- The PMI Index registered 44.3 in August, down from 44.7 in July.
- There has been a sharp decline in residential work.

"Sluggish demand conditions and low client confidence, combined with anxiety about the impact of the Middle East conflict, were again factors contributing to lower workloads across the construction sector. "

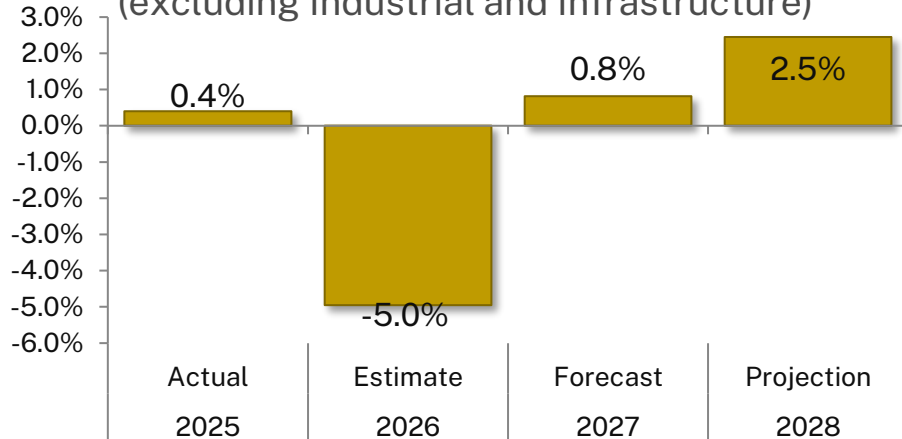
Construction

All Construction Output - Scenarios



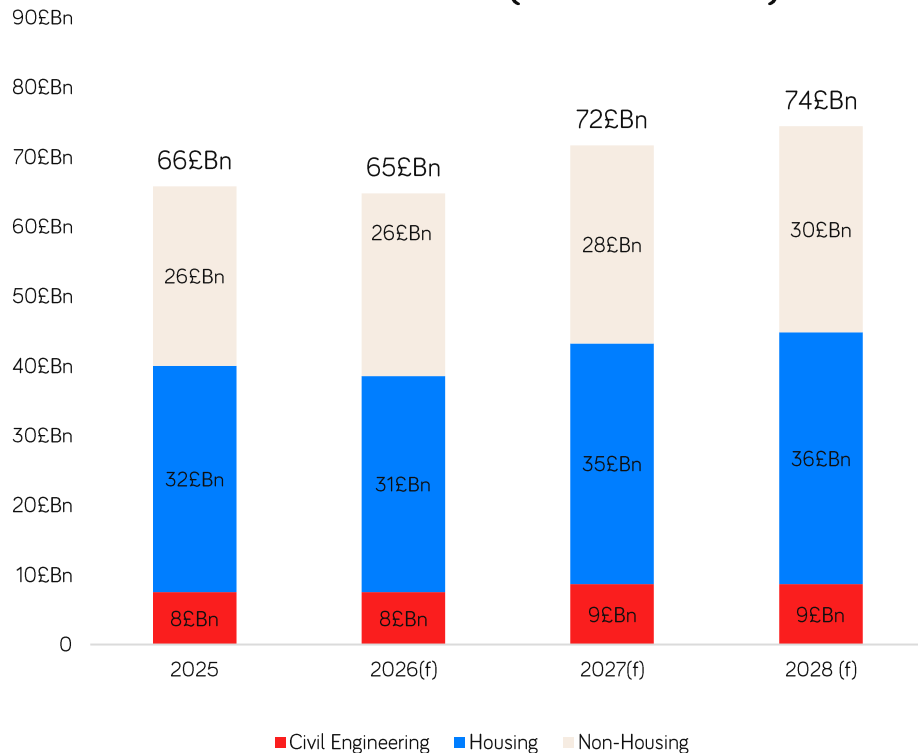
- The CPA anticipate that there will have been a contraction of around 3% in UK construction output this year.
- For the core architects' markets, it's greater, at -5.
- Growth is anticipated to return next year, but much is uncertain – they provide a range of scenarios.

Architects' Core Markets (excluding Industrial and Infrastructure)



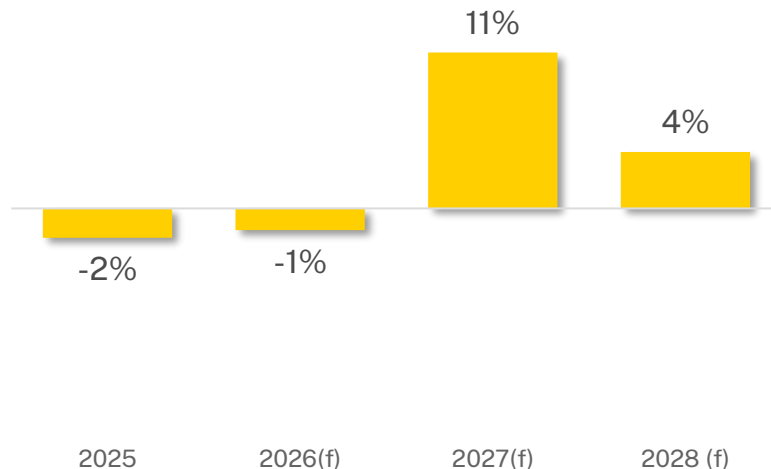
Construction

Value of Underlying Project Starts (under £100m)



- Glenigan anticipate a smaller contraction for projects starts with a value of less than £100m
- They forecast a much stronger return to growth.

Value of Underlying Project-Starts



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Artificial Intelligence

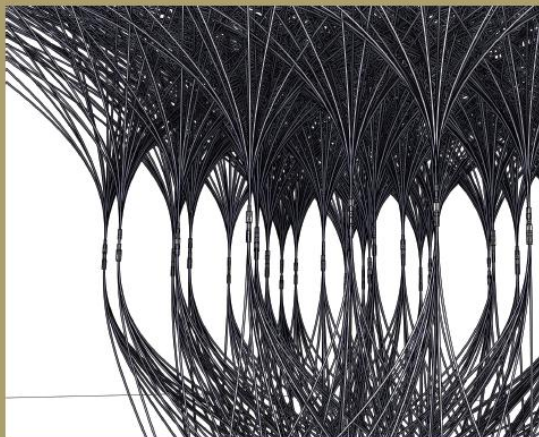


RIBA AI Report 2024



RIBA
Architects

RIBA AI Report 2025



RIBA
Architects



RIBA

AI Report

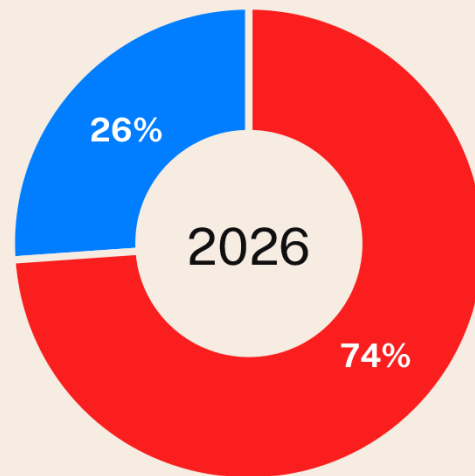
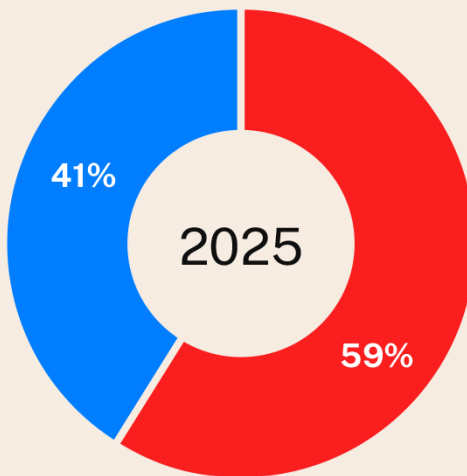
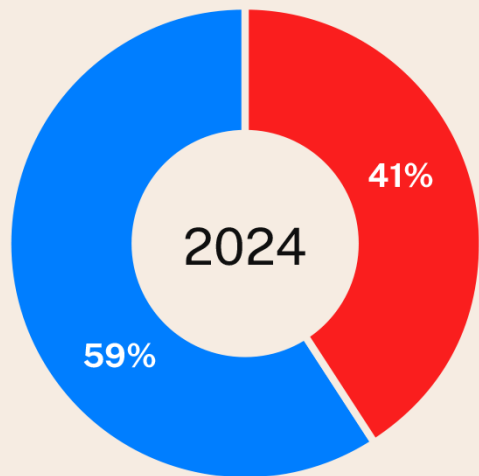
2026



Technological innovation

For the projects you are currently working on,
how often does your practice use AI in any way?

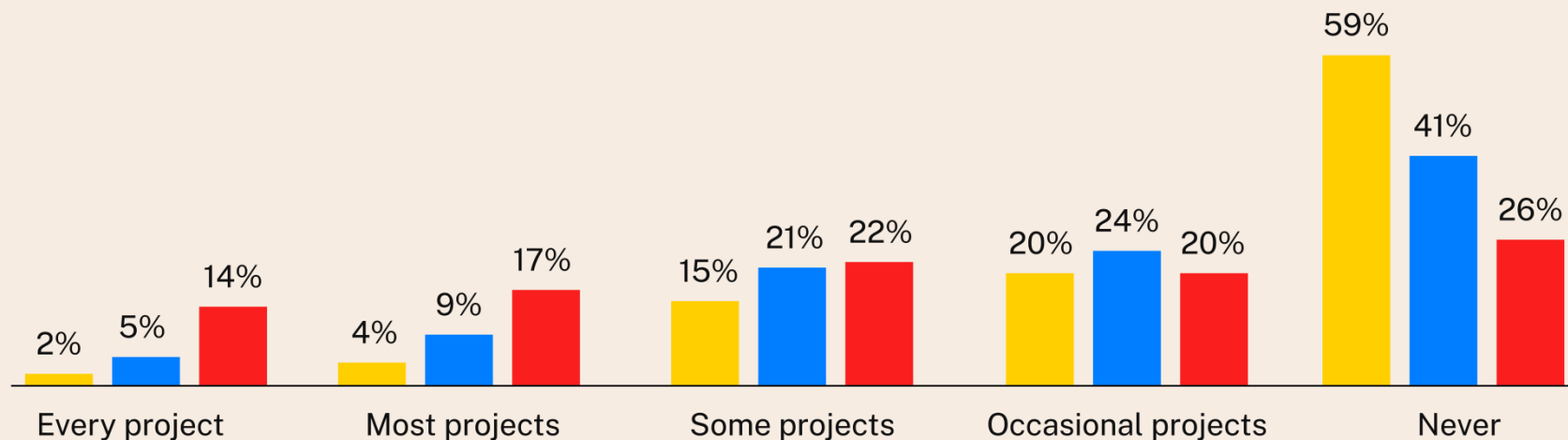
■ Never ■ At least sometimes



Technological innovation

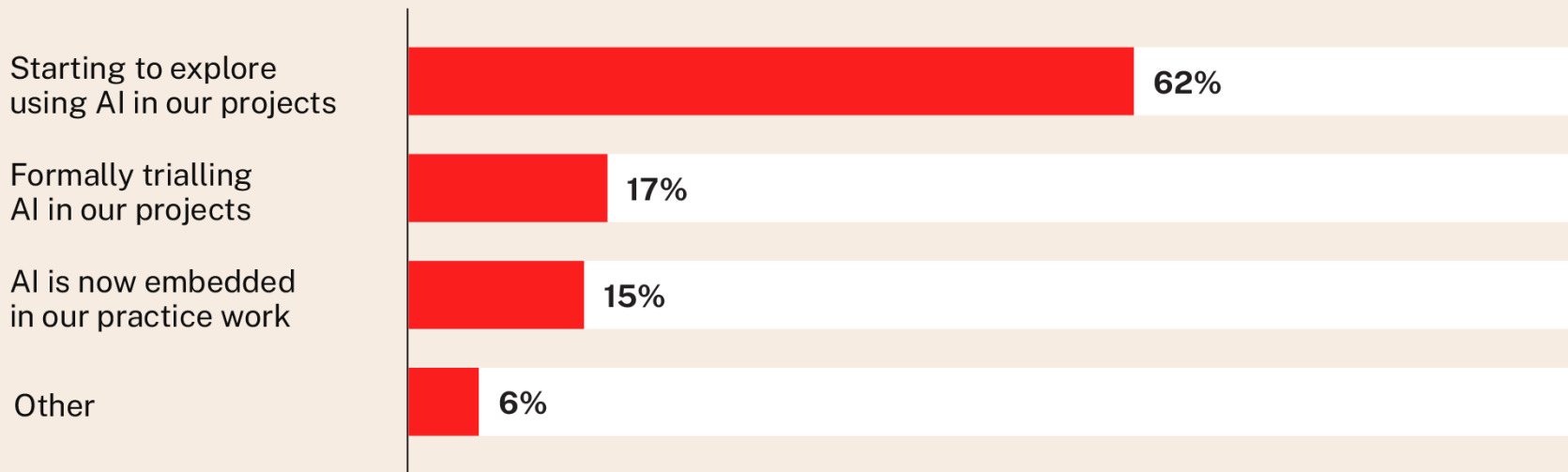
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how often does your practice use AI in any way?

2024 2025 2026



Technological innovation

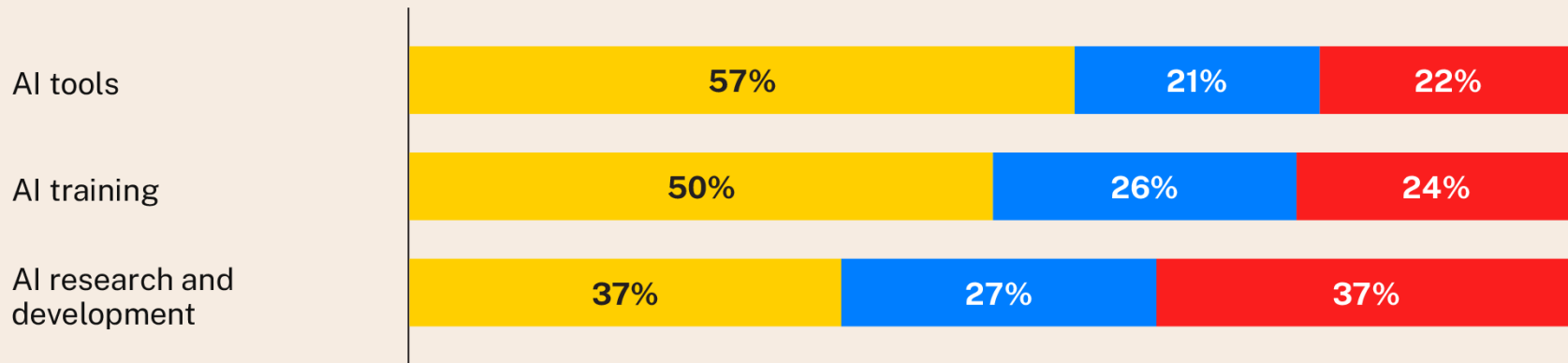
Which of the following best describes your organisation's use of AI?



Technological innovation

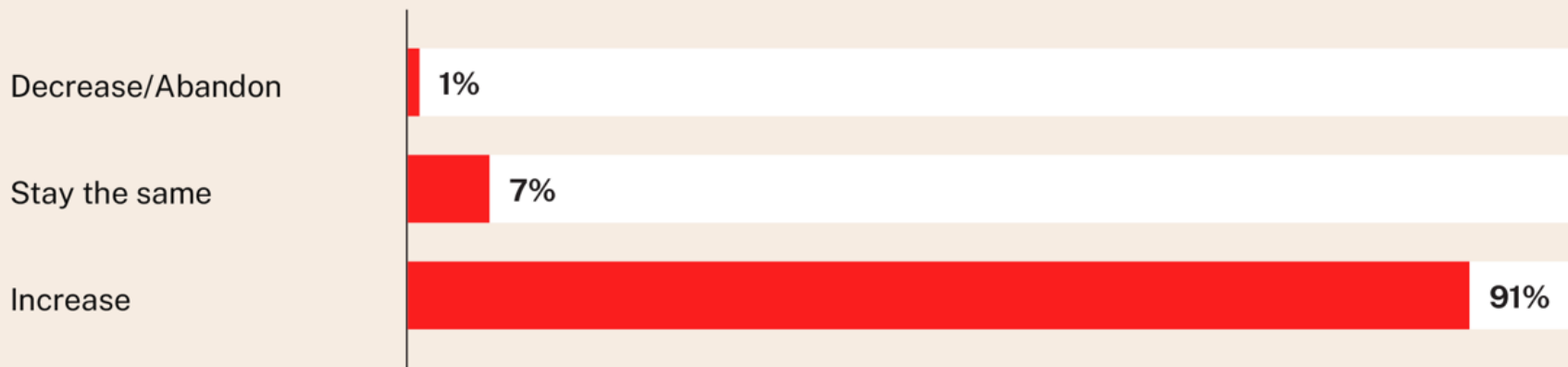
**Agreement with statements:
My organisation will invest in...**

■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree



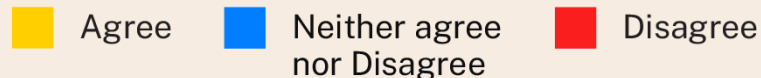
Technological innovation

Across your practice, how do you expect your use of AI to change in the next 2 years?

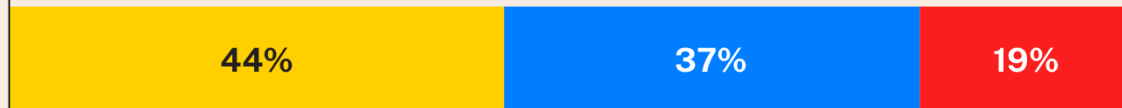


Profitability –technological innovation

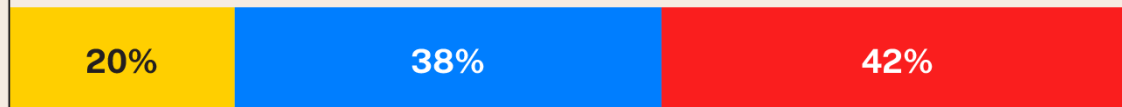
Agreement with statements:



Adopting AI has allowed us to devote more time to creative, high-value, work



AI has allowed our practice to do new kinds of work

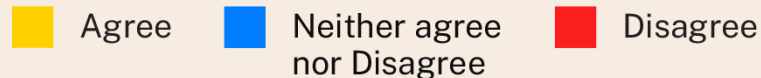


AI has allowed our practice to increase project fees



Profitability –technological innovation

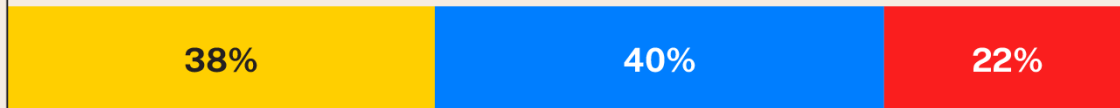
Agreement with statements:



The energy consumed by AI means it will set us back in reaching our global sustainability goals.



AI will help us meet our built-environment sustainability goals.



Profitability –technological innovation

Agreement with statements:

 Agree  Neither agree nor Disagree  Disagree

AI will enable those without sufficient professional qualification to design buildings



AI Uses

In which areas is your organisation using AI?

Early Design Stage
Visualisation

56%

Standards and
Regulatory
Compliance Checking

40%

Practice
Management

32%

Project Briefing

26%

Project Management

26%

Specification and
Technical Design

24%

Construction Product
& Material Selection
Analysis

18%

Inter-disciplinary
collaboration

12%

Building Information
Model creation and
maintenance

10%

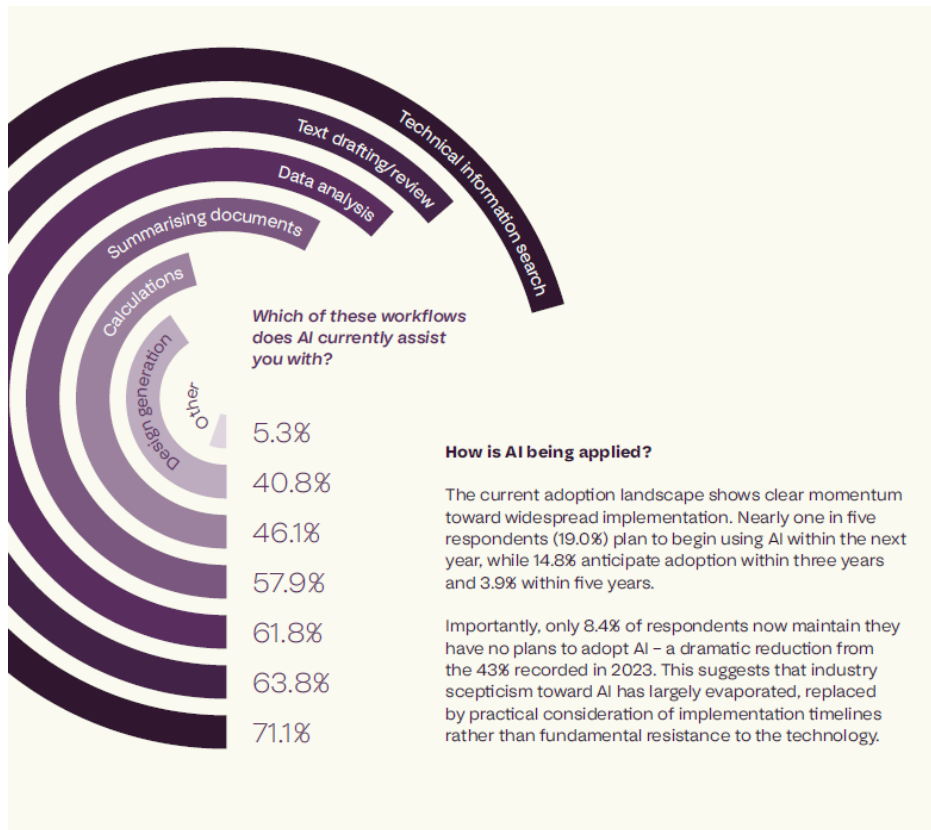
Building Performance
Simulation

7%

Environmental
Impact Modelling

6%

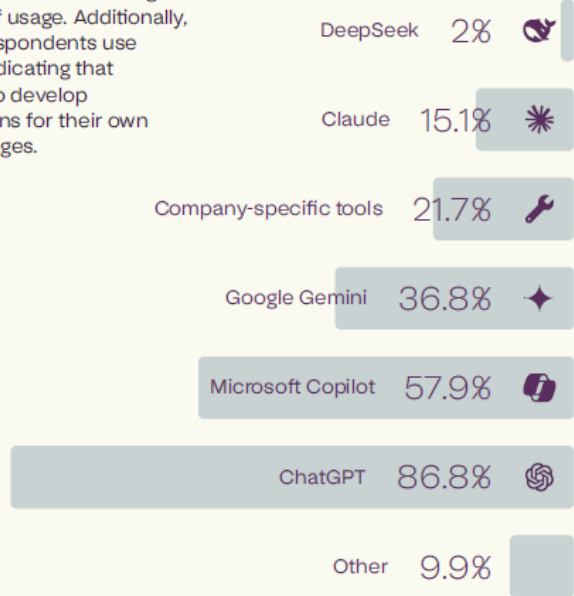
AI Uses



Who's being prompted?

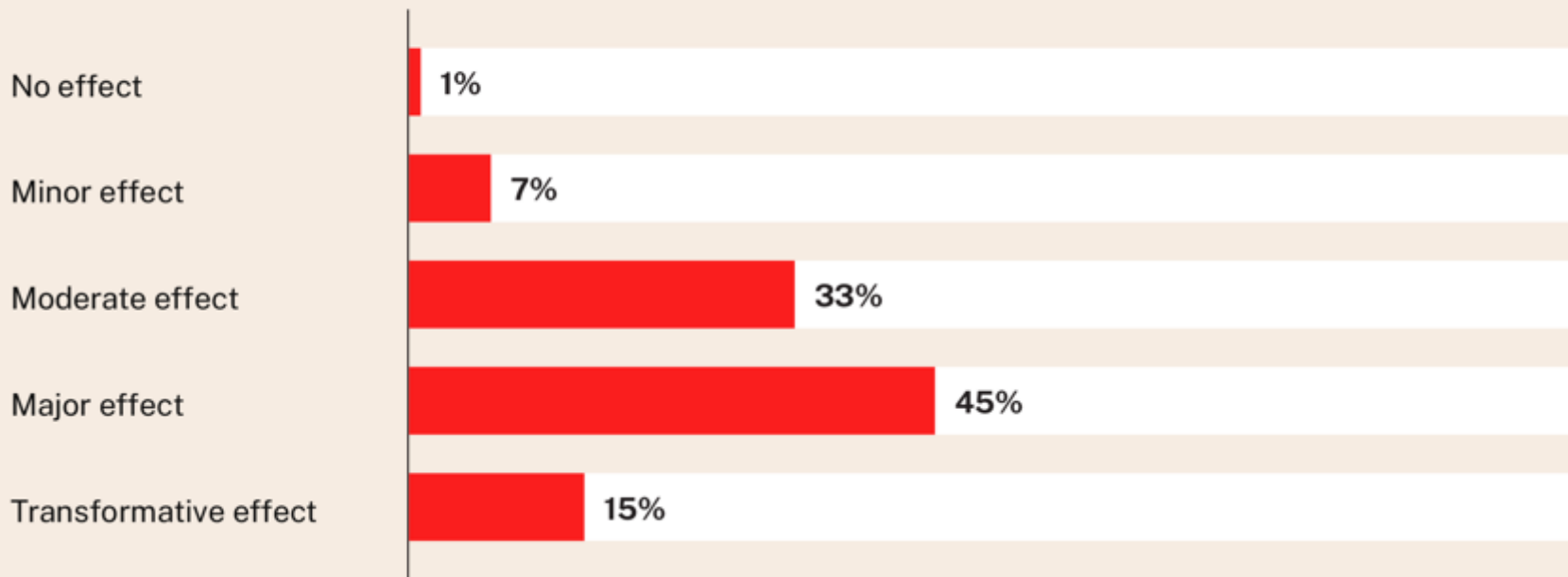
Perhaps unsurprisingly, given its wider category dominance, ChatGPT dominates the AI tool landscape among construction professionals, with 86.8% of current AI users employing the platform. Microsoft Copilot follows at 57.9%, while Google Gemini accounts for 36.8% of usage. Additionally, more than a fifth (21.7%) of respondents use company-specific AI tools, indicating that organisations are beginning to develop proprietary, tailored AI solutions for their own construction-specific challenges.

Which AI tools are you currently using?



Technological innovation

How significant an effect do you think AI will have on architectural practice in the next five years?





Thank you