Architecture Billings Index (ABI)  May 2020

The Architecture Billings Index (ABI) is a diffusion index derived from the monthly Work-on-the-Boards survey, conducted by the AIA Economics & Market Research Group. The ABI serves as a leading economic indicator that leads nonresidential construction activity by approximately 9-12 months. The survey panel asks participants whether their billings increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the month that just ended. According to the proportion of respondents choosing each option, an index value for each month is generated, which represents an index score.

A score of 50 represents no change in firm billings from the previous month; a score above 50 indicates an increase in firm billings from the previous month; and a score below 50 indicates a decline in firm billings from the previous month.

*All graphs represent data from May 2019–May 2020.

**POSITIVE IMPACTS**
- Difficulty supervising/managing/monitoring staff progress 17%
- Difficulty with effective client meetings 4%
- Erosion of firm culture 7%
- Lower staff morale 4%
- Staff distractions from working at home 6%
- Disruptive amount of emails, phone calls, virtual meetings, etc. 7%
- Decreased staff productivity 22%
- Less creativity/spontaneity among staff 11%
- More difficult collaboration/sharing among staff 15%
- Increased level of staff digital proficiency 18%
- Increased collaboration and sharing 9%

**NEGATIVE IMPACTS**
- Need for less office space in future with telecommuting options 9%
- Easier to connect with other staff due to reduced travel, etc. 4%
- Ease in scheduling/conducting client meetings 15%
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- Increased/new areas of staff productivity 4%
- More empathy toward staff personal situations 29%
- Increased firm investment in technology 6%

**National**

- Commercial/Industrial: 24.8
- Institutional: 35.7
- Residential: 34.8

**Regional**

- West: 36.0
- Midwest: 29.7
- South: 30.6
- Northeast: 25.1

**Sector**

- Decline in billings remains slightly less steep at firms with an institutional specialization.

**Graphs**

- Represent data from May 2019–May 2020 across the three sectors. 50 represents the diffusion center.
- A score of 50 equals no change from the previous month.
- Above 50 shows increase; Below 50 shows decrease.
- 3-month moving average.

**Practice**

- While many firms have seen decreased staff productivity during the shift to a virtual workforce, they have also seen an increase in empathy and digital proficiency.