Notes/methodology

Research Methodology

The Design Industry Research is a comprehensive study of the UK design industry. It seeks to explore the size and shape of the industry, the nature of its clients and competitors, how the industry wins business and the state of design education, training and skills. The survey is based on 2,236 telephone interviews conducted with designers from design consultancies and in-house design teams, as well as freelance designers. The initial contacts for the survey were drawn from two commercial business databases and the Design Council provided further addresses from its contacts in Northern Ireland (215) and North East England (110). The telephone survey was undertaken by a dedicated team of telephone interviewers from QA Research during September to November 2009.

To make the results of the survey representative of the UK, the data has been weighed to reflect the distribution of design activity across the English regions and countries of the UK. This means that the published data is statistically representative of the result that would have been achieved from a census of all design businesses in the UK (excluding in-house teams with fewer than 100 employees). Weighting the data is a particularly challenging task due to the very large numbers of designers that are self-employed and freelance designers. Such people will tend to be under-represented in commercial and official business databases. To take account of this problem we have weighted the results for this group against data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Other data has been weighted to reflect the original sampling frame figures.

For in-house design teams we have used the results of the survey to estimate the proportion of businesses with 100 or more employees that have design teams. To give an estimate of the number of businesses with in-house design teams in the UK, the proportion of businesses which say they have an in-house design team was applied to the total number of UK businesses with 100 or more employees.

While we believe the LFS data provides the most reliable estimate of the number of designers, it also has an important limitation. The data does not include designers with supervisory responsibilities, such as design managers in in-house design teams or creative directors in design consultancies; these appear in managerial and directorial occupations where design cannot be separately identified. In the Design Industry Research we asked each respondent how many designers were employed in the business at various levels of seniority. To estimate the number of design managers and directors in the UK, we took the total number of design directors and managers identified by respondents and weighted this by the total number of designers from the LFS data divided by the total number of designers from our survey. NB: these calculations have only been undertaken with the UK figures for designers. The regional figures on numbers of designers exclude designers working in a managerial capacity.

Sample sizes

The figures reported throughout this work have been restricted to those based on results from at least 85 respondents. This threshold represents a compromise between ensuring adequate levels of accuracy and maximising the amount of information that is made available. A sample of 85 is assured to provide precision of ±10.63% at the 95% confidence level. Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers throughout.

A total of 2,236 design businesses were interviewed, they split across the various groups as follows:

Design consultancies	831
Freelance designers	425
In-house design teams	980
Total number of design businesses	2,236

Breakdown of design businesses' sample sizes per region

East	241
East Midlands	169
London	294
North East	165
Northern Ireland	122
North West	177
Scotland	172
South East	242
South West	127
Wales	149
West Midlands	192
Yorkshire and the Humber	186

Success rate for calls:
11% design consultancies and freelances, 8% for in-house teams with non-design businesses. The refusal rate for consultancies and freelances was 50%, higher than experience in 2005.

Discipline definitions

Survey respondents were asked to identify the design disciplines within which their businesses operate. The following categories and examples were read out to respondents:

Communications:
Graphics, brand, print, information design, corporate identity

Product and industrial:
Consumer/household products, furniture, industrial design (including automotive design, engineering design, medical products)

Interior and exhibition:
Retail design, office planning/workplace design, lighting, display systems, exhibition design

Fashion and textiles:
Fashion and textiles

Digital and multimedia:
Website, animation, film and television idents, digital design, interaction design

Service design:
Although no examples of service design were offered, a definition of this discipline was provided by the Design Council: 'Service design is an approach concerned with the design of services. Service design can be both tangible and intangible, and can involve communication, environment and behaviours.' This was read out to survey participants who required an explanation of the term.

Other
Those opting for the 'other' category were asked to specify what this covered.

The following questions were used at the outset of each interview to screen out businesses that were not thought to be design businesses.

1. Interior designers – Are most of your clients individuals or businesses? The former were not included in the survey.

2. Furniture manufacturers and designers – Is your business best described as a design business, a furniture manufacturing business with its own design team or solely a manufacturing business? Respondents were, respectively, taken through the design questionnaire, the in-house design team questionnaire or omitted from the survey.

3. Engineers, design and development – Is this primarily a design company, concerned with enhancing the consumer and market appeal of products, or an engineering company that technically specifies and develops industrial components? The latter group were not included in the survey.

Labour Force Survey Acknowledgement

We have once again made use of results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In 2005 a request was made to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for bespoke tables. In 2010 we have obtained microdata through the UK Data Archive and conducted the same analyses ourselves. Our source is the annualised dataset for 2008. The LFS has been used for two reasons. First, it would provide a reliable measure of the size of the design occupation against which results from this survey could be weighted. Second, it could provide findings complementary to those from the survey.

The LFS results are based on the Annual Population Survey, January – December 2008 produced by the Office for National Statistics, Social and Vital Statistics Division, sponsored by the Office for National Statistics, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and Skills, National Assembly for Wales, Scottish Government, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Central Survey Unit, and supplied by the UK Data Archive. The data are Crown copyright.

Results from the equivalent source for 2003 were produced in 2005 by the Office for National Statistics in the form of bespoke tables commissioned by the Design Council.

Glossary

Design businesses:
Design consultancies and freelance designers, and in-house design teams in non-design businesses with 100 or more employees.

Financial performance:
Relates to fee income for design consultancies and freelance designers, and budgets for in-house design teams. Financial years differ but we have assumed that the data collected broadly applies to the year 2008 – 09.

Large business:
Employing 250 people or more

Medium business:
Employing 50 people or more but fewer than 250

Small business:
Employing fewer than 50 people