Design in American Businesses

The following information comes from the 2022 Annual Business Survey (ABS), which combines survey data with administrative records from U.S. businesses. The 2022 ABS included a module on design, with the question-items having been developed by National Science Foundation (NSF) staff in consultation with the National Endowment for the Arts.

Co-sponsored by NSF's National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) and the U.S. Census Bureau, the ABS collects data on innovation, intellectual property, technology, and business owner characteristics from microbusinesses and well as companies with 10 or more employees.

This infographic is based on a NSF InfoBrief and accompanying data tables on this topic.

1 What types of workers conduct design-related activities at U.S. firms?

Design tasks are not only done by professional designers, but by **engineers, craft workers, and managers** across various departments such as marketing or web development.

39%
of company leadership engaged in design activities—more than any other worker type

Workers who were not design professionals engaged with these activities the least often (21%)—though, in firms with five or fewer employees, non-design professionals were more likely to do so.

2 How often do U.S. firms integrate design with their products and services?

16%
of firms used design as a structured creative process

Active use of design is most common in:
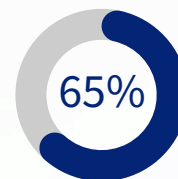
Manufacturing industries

Professional, scientific, and technical services

Education services

Among companies that actively use design, over **40% reported allocating resources specifically for design**, and 11% reported having a design budget.

Among design-active firms, design is used:

65%
Stylistically prior to a product launch

40%
Functionally throughout product development

24%
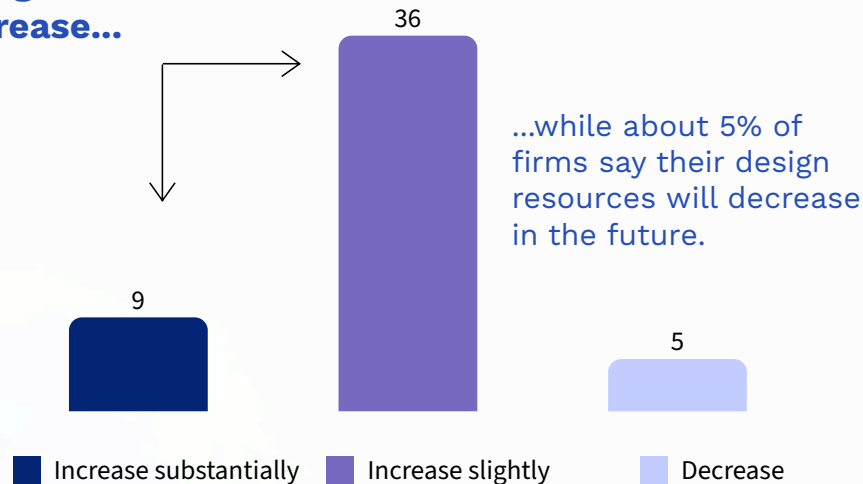**Strategically** as a defining element of the business model

3 What does the future hold for design resource allocation?

Across all sizes of U.S. businesses active in design, the **average number of design workers has increased** slightly.

However, as company size increased, the number of employees or contractors engaged in design activities did not expand much, meaning that for most firms **a small design team may offer sufficient capabilities.**

Among design-active companies, **45% say design resources will increase...**

...while about 5% of firms say their design resources will decrease in the future.

9	36	5

- ■ Increase substantially
- ■ Increase slightly
- ■ Decrease

Even among firms that are not active users of design, **9% project an increase in design resources.**

Additional Resources

The **Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account** (produced by the Bureau of Economic Analysis in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts) tracks specialized design industries, including:

Industrial design

Graphic design

Interior design

In 2023, specialized design services contributed:

$37.7B
In value added to the U.S. economy

148,000
wage and salary jobs

The **National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center** also tracks design occupations, regardless of industry, through annual Arts Indicators. Using data from the American Community Survey, NASERC estimates there were:

997,000
designers across all industries in 2022

Publications

- **Valuing the Art of Industrial Design**
- **Rural Arts, Design, and Innovation in America**