

The Design Ladder

The Design Ladder was developed by the Danish Design Centre in 2001 as a communicative model for illustrating the variation in companies' use of design.

The Design Ladder is based on the hypothesis that there is a positive link between higher earnings, placing a greater emphasis on design methods in the early stages of development and giving design a more strategic position in the company's overall business strategy.

The Design Ladder consists of four steps:



Use of design in Danish companies in 2016

The figure shows Danish companies' use of design - from the non-systematic use to the advanced use of design as a central and controlling element in the business and its strategy.

58 pct. of Danish companies indicate that they use design.

When you look at the companies that use design as an element in their processes and strategy, that group consists of **43 pct.** in Denmark.

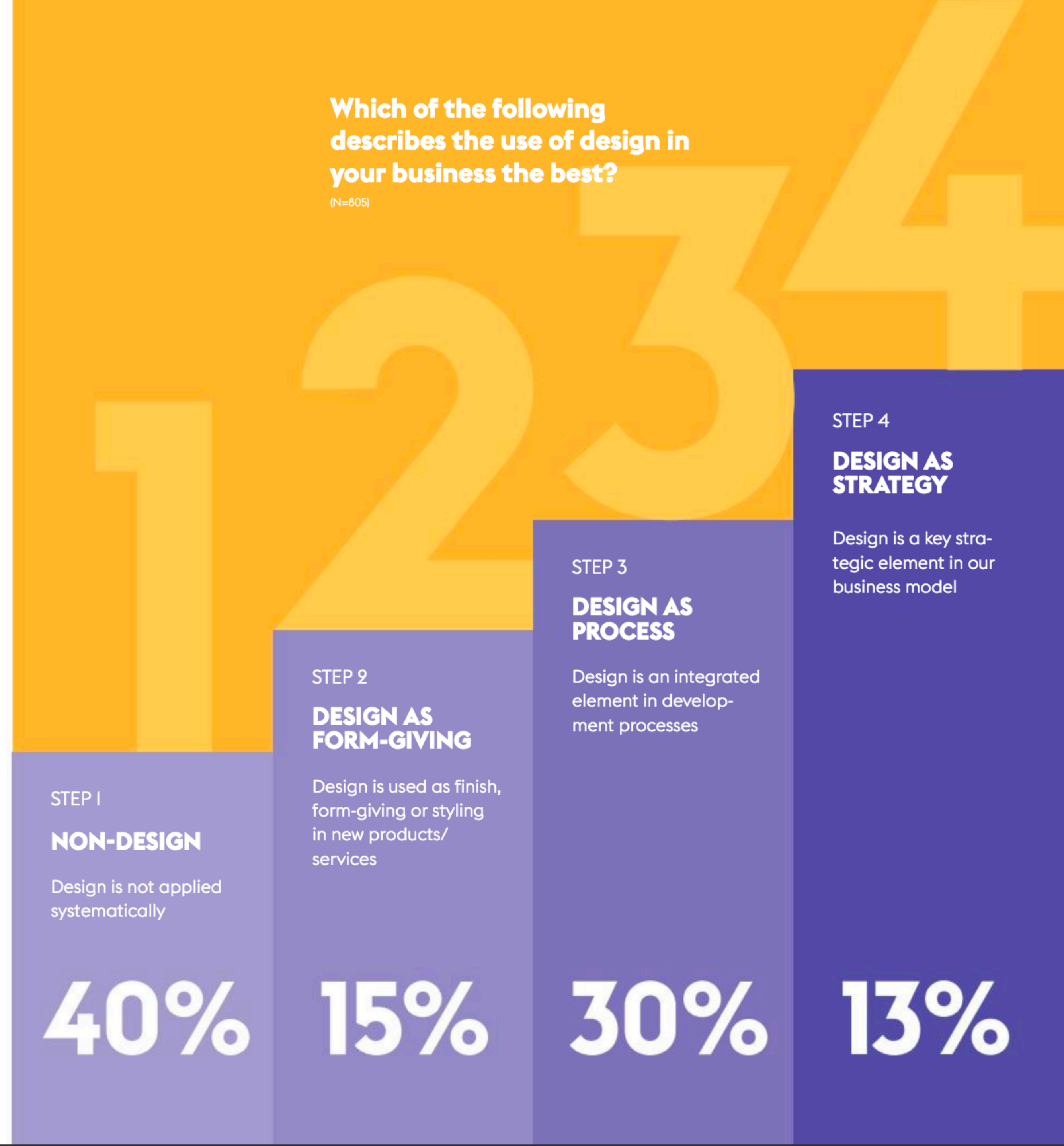
13 pct. are using design strategically, as design methods and design thinking contributes to the company's business development and strategy.

30 pct. are using design as a tool in the company's work processes, as an integrated element, for example when developing and optimizing workflows, production processes and other types of flows.

40 pct. do not use design systematically.

Which of the following describes the use of design in your business the best?

(N=805)



ABOUT THE DESIGN LADDER

The Design Ladder is a tool for rating a company's use of design.

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The Design Ladder is based on the hypothesis that there is a positive link between, on the one hand, placing a greater emphasis on design methods in the early stages of development and giving design a more strategic position in the company's overall business strategy and, on the other hand, higher earnings.

In 2001, Danish companies' respective positions on the Design Ladder were evaluated for the first time.

The survey was repeated in 2003 and 2007. A comparison of the figures for 2003 and 2007 shows a general move up the ladder.

DESIGN IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Companies that work systematically with design have higher earnings and bigger exports than companies that do not use design. That is the main conclusion in the survey 'The economic effects of design', which was carried out in 2003.¹

The economic effects are more pronounced in companies where design is firmly rooted in both internal and external design investments.

With regard to the companies' position on the Design Staircase, a higher placement on the Design Staircase is associated with a positive effect on gross earnings and a clear positive effect on exports.

¹ UK: <https://erhvervsstyrelsen.dk/economic-effects-design-2004>
DK: <https://erhvervsstyrelsen.dk/designs-oekonomiske-effekter-2003>

THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF DESIGN

The survey 'The economic effects of design' was carried out in 2003 by the Danish Design Centre, Advice Analyse, I&A Research and the University of Copenhagen.

The survey was conducted on behalf of the Danish National Agency for Enterprise and Housing (now the Danish Business Authority). The goal was to determine the value a company gains by using design. The survey included an assessment of the participating companies' ranking according to the Design Staircase (called the 'design ladder' in the report).

The survey was the first of its kind in the world, so at the time, it represented ground-breaking new knowledge, with the advantages and limitations that implies.

The survey employed the following definition of design:

"WHEN WE SPEAK OF DESIGN WE MEAN DESIGN STRATEGIES, DEVELOPMENT AND STYLING – EVERYTHING THAT TAKES PLACE PRIOR TO PRODUCTION OR IMPLEMENTATION OF PRODUCTS (PRINTED MATTER, SALES FAIR STALLS, WEB SITES, INTERIORS, ETC.)."