

In Her Own Words: Improving Project Outcomes

Executive Summary

Workforce shortages in the construction industry are growing as individuals retire faster than the industry can recruit and hire new entrants. Statistics show that for every four people leaving the construction industry, only one enters. Simultaneously, investments in infrastructure to rebuild roads and bridges, expand public transport, and upgrade the power grid only heightens the issue.

With predictions as high as 1.9 million craft professionals needed by 2025, it is time for our industry to actively and effectively make the changes necessary to recruit and retain the largest demographic percentage of our population – women.

Purpose and Methodology

Our goal in this study was to highlight the unique benefits women bring to the construction craft workforce, the barriers they encounter getting in and staying in the industry, and their advice on what contractors can do to recruit and retain more women in the craft workforce. NCCER held 29 focus groups in Canada and the United States with 176 tradeswomen and their site supervisors. In separate discussions, tradeswomen and site leaders were invited to share their perspective on 12 different question prompts, resulting in lively conversations.

Findings

Example Qualities Tradeswomen Bring to the Job Site

- Team Focused
- Detail Oriented and Work Efficiently
- Prioritize Safety and Value Neatness
- Multitasking Abilities
- Good Care of Tools and Equipment
- Highly Committed to their Work

Women are role model workers. They want to work safely. Generally, I find that women adhere better to compliance and HSE process and procedures. – Focus Group Participant, Jobsite Leader

Recommendations for Recruiting and Retaining Practices to Overcome Barriers for Women

- Address Discrimination & Harassment
- Ensure Consistent Hiring Practices
- Offer Training Opportunities
- Accommodate Mothers
- Promote Women in Jobsite Leadership
- Improve Jobsite Experience

Options for flexible hours or childcare would accommodate mothers in the industry. Many women are their family's primary provider and caregiver. – Focus Group Participant, Tradeswoman

If we want construction careers to be a viable option for all, we must change the culture and perception of our industry, starting with our own projects. We must recognize that we are not effectively appealing to the largest percentage of the population, and this is negatively impacting our project outcomes.

To read the complete white paper, visit nccer.org/research.