

## Numbers Matter: Women Working in Construction

In 2024, the number of women working in construction trades was the highest ever, with 366,360 working in construction and extraction occupations. Since 2015, the number of tradeswomen has increased by almost 160,000, or 77.3 percent. Construction careers, including apprenticeships, are attracting an increasing number of women. Yet, even with this growth, tradeswomen were only 4.3 percent of all construction trade workers. In three of the five largest trades, women's share of jobs is even smaller, at just 3.5 percent of laborers, 3.2 percent of plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters, and 2.9 percent of electricians (Table 1).

**Women's access to earn-as-you-learn apprenticeships grew strongly in the last decade.** Since the launch of the American Apprenticeship Initiative in 2015 and the 2016 US Department of Labor's Apprenticeship Equal Employment Opportunity Final Rule,<sup>1</sup> the number of women in construction apprenticeships grew by 185.9 percent, from 3,789 to 10,834, yet women are still just 5.4 percent of construction apprentices in the 37 states with data for 2015 and 2024 in the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database System (RAPIDS) (Table 1).

**Table 1. Women Working in Construction, 2015 to 2024**

	2015 Women		2024 Women		2015-2024 Change
	Numbers	(%)	Numbers	(%)	(%)
<b>Construction and extraction occupations, including:</b>	<b>206,604</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>366,360</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>77.3%</b>
Construction laborers	47,821	2.9%	80,255	3.5%	67.8%
Painters and paperhangers*	32,604	5.7%	58,212	10.8%	n/a
Carpenters	23,058	1.8%	53,718	4.2%	133.0%
Electricians	17,779	2.3%	28,768	2.9%	61.8%
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters *	4,011	0.7%	20,352	3.2%	n/a
Construction and building inspectors	8,910	9.9%	11,960	11.5%	34.2%
First-line supervisors	23,496	3.3%	47,520	6.0%	102.2%
<b>Apprentices (37 states, RAPIDS active)**</b>	<b>3,789</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>10,834</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>185.9%</b>
<b>Construction managers</b>	<b>49,379</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>131,355</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>166.0%</b>
<b>Construction jobs on payroll (including office/admin) (June 2015 and June 2025)</b>	<b>815,000</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>1,201,000</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>47.4%</b>
<b>Construction industry, all workers (including office/admin)</b>	<b>923,955</b>	<b>9.3%</b>	<b>1,347,024</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>

**Sources:** IWPR calculations based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey Annual Averages, Table 11 and Table 14, accessed July 25, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/tables.htm>; Current Employment Statistics Series CES2000000010 and CES2000000001; and Apprenticeship USA "Data and Statistics: Apprentices by State," accessed July 25, 2025, <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/data-and-statistics/apprentices-by-state-dashboard>.

**Notes:** \*Data for 2015 and 2024 are not comparable because of changes in the definition of the occupation. \*\*Data are for fiscal year; 2024 data 1st quarter of FY 2025 (Oct. to Dec. 2024). The following states are excluded because of missing/incomplete data: CA, CT, DC, DE, ID, KS, MA, ME, NY, OR, RI, VT, WA, WI.

**Differences between states in the shares of women construction apprentices show that higher inclusion is possible.** RAPIDS does not include California (1,821 women apprentices, 3.1 percent) or some of the most proactive states, such as Oregon (823 women apprentices, 9.6 percent) and Washington (1,044 women apprentices, 7.8 percent).<sup>2</sup> The states with the highest share of women construction apprentices in RAPIDS are Arizona (10.0 percent) and Alaska (8.0 percent); women comprise fewer than 3 percent of apprentices in four states: Arkansas, Maryland, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

**Women made more progress as construction managers than as construction trade workers.** Women comprise 10.5 percent of construction managers, more than double their share of workers in the trades (4.3 percent) and much higher than first-line supervisors (6.0 percent). When all workers in the construction industry are counted, including office, administrative, and professional workers such as project managers and estimators, women's share of jobs rises to 11.2 percent. Only counting those directly on employers' payrolls (excluding the self-employed, including administrative workers), women held 14.4 percent of jobs; however, this measure may count individuals working for more than one firm twice.

**Data collection and transparency are crucial, as women remain underrepresented in apprenticeships.** Construction companies report high skill shortages.<sup>3</sup> The industry benefits greatly from the skilled work of tradeswomen and investments in apprenticeships, but women are still woefully underrepresented. Data can create accountability and help policymakers and contractors ensure that progress is sustained and that women have an equal chance at accessing quality apprenticeships and high-paying careers in construction.

**Policymakers and industry leaders must continue to address discrimination to accelerate growth and support women in the industry.** Women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds are underrepresented in construction. Too many women, particularly women of color, face discrimination in hiring, employment, and promotions, and experience sexual or racial harassment and gender bias on the job.<sup>4</sup> Such adverse conditions mean that women are less likely to complete their apprenticeships and are more likely to leave the industry than men.<sup>5</sup> To learn more about IWPR's federal policy solutions, read our "[Increasing Pathways to Good Jobs](#)" brief.

***This IWPR Quick Figure was prepared by Ariane Hegewisch and was made possible with the support of our key funders. It updates an earlier version prepared in collaboration with the [National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues](#), a coalition of tradeswomen organizations, advocates, allies, and individual tradeswomen.***

1. See <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-29/subtitle-A/part-30>.

2. Calculations by National Taskforce for Tradeswomen's Issues using data provided by the departments of labor in the referenced states.

3. The Construction Association (ACG), "2024 Workforce Survey Results," 2024, [https://www.agc.org/sites/default/files/users/user21902/2024\\_Workforce\\_Survey\\_National\\_FINALIZED.pdf](https://www.agc.org/sites/default/files/users/user21902/2024_Workforce_Survey_National_FINALIZED.pdf).

4. Chandra Childers, Ariane Hegewisch, and Lark Jackson, "Here to Stay: Black, Latina, and AfroLatina Women in Construction Trades Apprenticeships and Employment," briefing paper (Chicago: National Center for Women's Equity in Apprenticeship and Employment at Chicago Women in the Trades, 2021), <https://iwpr.org/heretostay-black-latina-and-afro-latina-women-in-construction-trades-apprenticeships-and-employment/>; Ariane Hegewisch and Eve Mefferd, *A Future Worth Building: What Tradeswomen Say about the Change They Need in the Construction Industry*, IWPR report #C508 (Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2021), <https://iwpr.org/a-future-worth-building-report/>.

5. Hegewisch and Mefferd, *A Future Worth Building*.