

# Building Better:

*A Women In Construction Study*





This publication is a collaboration between Ambition Theory and the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER).

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# Building Better: A Women In Construction Study

**BUILDING BETTER IS A** collaboration between Ambition Theory and the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) born out of a mutual desire to increase opportunities for women in the construction industry.

Our partnership was established to provide data-driven practical insights and tools to companies in the construction industry who are genuinely committed to making the industry more inclusive. We are on a mission to empower companies to take action and drive real change.

Employee resource groups and mentorship programs provide women with support, guidance and safe spaces to share their experiences, but they often still leave the burden of change on women's shoulders.

We believe that *everyone* needs to play a role in creating a more equitable workplace.

**Building Better** is a call to action for all stakeholders to join forces and make a positive impact on the industry.

## This is just the beginning.

At the heart of our collaborative effort is a commitment to creating a construction industry that's welcoming to everyone. Our 2023 report marks the first step in this journey, with a focus on what women truly want from their jobs, including work-life balance and opportunities for career advancement.

We're encouraged by the initial findings of our research, which show that simple, straightforward steps can be taken by individuals and companies alike to create meaningful change. These steps don't require huge investments of time or money, yet they have the potential to be incredibly impactful.

As we continue to work together, we remain steadfast in our goal of creating a construction industry where everyone can thrive.



WE GOT  
FEEDBACK FROM  
**770**  
WOMEN IN  
CONSTRUCTION

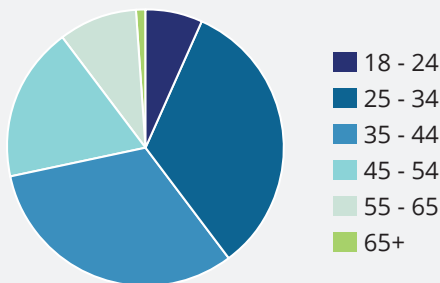
# A Holistic Picture of Women In Construction

**770 WOMEN COMPLETED OUR** inaugural *Building Better* survey, with women from across sectors, roles, ages and years of experience represented.

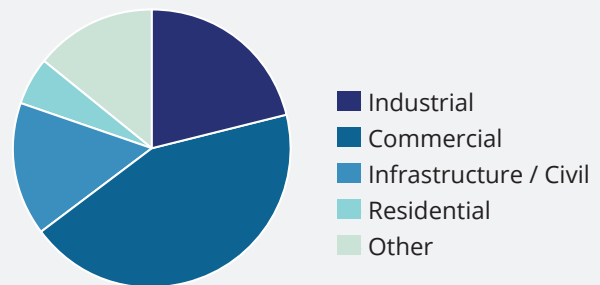
While research on women in construction has often focused either on those in on-site or in-office roles, our report takes a more holistic approach, offering a

comprehensive view of women’s experiences across the industry. By exploring the similarities and differences in these experiences, we can gain valuable insights into how organizations can improve their workplace cultures and create more inclusive environments for all employees.

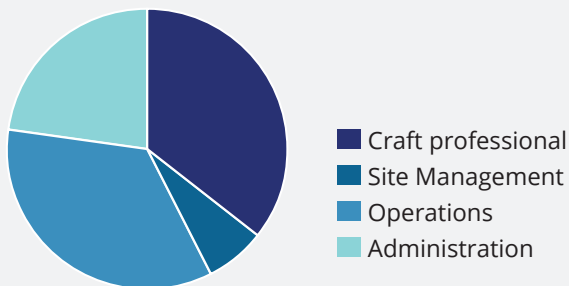
**How old are you?**



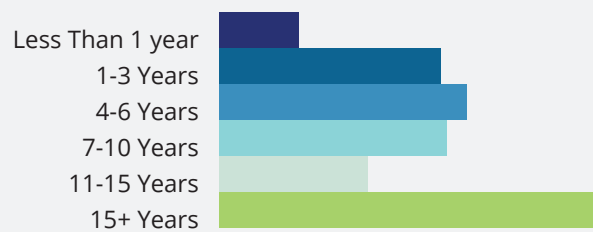
**In which construction sector do you predominantly work?**



**What is your role within the industry?**



**How many years have you been in the construction industry?**







# 2023: State of the Industry

**THE SHARE OF WOMEN** making up the construction workforce has steadily increased since 2016, but the numbers aren't anything to start celebrating just yet. It remains to be seen how long women new to the industry will stay.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>1</sup>, women make up 11% of employees in the overall U.S. construction industry. This percentage includes women who work in engineering, legal, insurance, and administrative work. However, when focusing on the number of women who work specifically in the construction trades, this number drops to less than 4%.

In Canada, the numbers are similar—women make up just under 13%<sup>2</sup> of the construction industry workforce. That number is only 4.7%<sup>3</sup> when looking at women in the trades.

Recruitment and hiring efforts have helped bring more women into the industry, but those efforts don't guarantee that women will stay. If the work environment doesn't give women what they're seeking, they will leave.

**To address this issue, we wanted to answer these important questions about women in construction:**

**Are they getting what they want?  
Will they stay in the industry?  
What will it take to keep them?**

This report, which focuses on our 2023 findings, sheds light on the answers to these questions, offering insights and actionable steps for companies to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment.





# Here’s what we found.

## It’s not all about the money.

While salary might get women in the door, what they really want as they progress is a **clear path to career advancement**.

Among the women we surveyed, those with less than one year of work experience, ranked ‘Salary’ as the most important consideration when looking for employment opportunities. A ‘Clear Path For Career Advancement’ was less important to those same women in the first year of their career, with them ranking it towards the bottom in terms of importance.

On the flip side, for women with *more* than 1 year of work experience ‘Clear Path For Career Advancement’ was **unequivocally ranked as the most important thing** when they are seeking employment.

This can be interpreted in numerous ways, but one thing this shows us is that while salary can be a great motivating factor to get people *into* our industry, after their first year it’s important for the “good paying job” to transform into a **career pathway**. Women in the construction industry want to see that there is a

clear path toward advancing their careers and growing professionally.

## Women want to be leaders.

This lines up with what women had to say about becoming leaders during their careers.

88% are already in or would like to be in a leadership role during their careers.

The idea that women don’t want to be leaders or don’t have the same ambition or drive to advance as men is a myth.

But, women are still not advancing at the same rate as the men they work with.

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*88% of women are in or would like to be in a leadership role during their careers.*







## So what's happening?

### “If you can see it, you can be it.”

Unfortunately, women in construction can't see it. A lack of representation in our industry means it is difficult for a woman to envision what is possible in terms of career advancement.

Research shows that while men are promoted based on potential, women are promoted based on experience. And women are expected to have much more experience than men before they're given opportunities to advance.

In a recent study, *Use of LinkedIn Data and Machine Learning to Analyze Gender Differences in Construction Career Paths*<sup>4</sup>, researchers used Machine Learning to analyze the LinkedIn profiles of over 2,800 executives to assess career differences between genders.

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*72% of women have never or rarely had a woman manager or supervisor.*

The research found that women face greater obstacles than their male counterparts in career advancement in the industry. Their path requires extra rungs on the corporate ladder, more frequent job changes, and a greater accumulation of education and connections.

Women in the study demonstrate higher career mobility between companies, hold more career titles, earn greater numbers of advanced degrees, and gather larger professional networks than men.

Yet women only fill 14.8% of leadership positions.

*“Women in construction are often told to get more field experience and that we should know how to do every task and operate every piece of equipment before we can become a manager, even though men aren't expected to prove they can do this before they're promoted to leadership.”*

-Ambition Theory training participant



## Women have been told that mentorship is the answer.

For years, women have been told, “If you want to be successful, you need to have a mentor; if you want to support the next generation, you need to mentor them.”

Mentorship programs were supposed to be the answer to closing the gender gap in the workplace. Women got mentors for themselves and started mentoring others. Hours were invested in sharing stories and giving advice. Companies created formal mentorship programs, with contracts and processes to help people find the perfect match, track progress and hold each other accountable<sup>5</sup>.

### Women *do* have mentors.

Despite the fact that so many women have never had a woman manager or supervisor, most women do have a mentor.

The types of behaviors and activities listed below are associated with mentorship. Our research shows that most women have somebody at work who exhibits at least one mentorship characteristic or behavior.

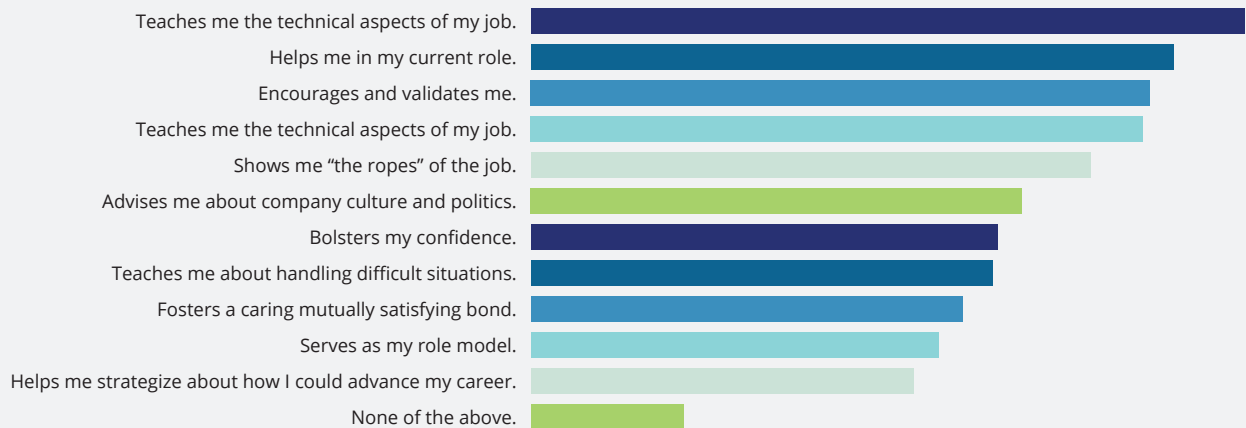
Mentorship is a valuable tool: It helps people to feel supported, learn new things, connect and feel more engaged at work.

76% of women say they understand what it takes to advance in their careers.

“Just a little more redirection in the routes that I can take to further my career and the opportunities out there that are “up for grabs”.”

-Survey respondent when asked what kind of support she needs to advance her career.

### At work, I have someone that:



Building Better 2023 Results





## But mentorship isn't the answer.

While mentorship is an important and vital component of a successful culture, it has not been successful in accelerating women into leadership positions. Women often receive valuable advice and guidance through mentorship programs, but this support alone isn't enough to overcome systemic barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential.

What women *really* need to advance is someone in their corner advocating for their next move, pushing them into riskier situations and supporting them to learn and figure it out as they go.

### Many women recognize this.

Our survey results confirm that women are aware of this need for advocacy and sponsorship. When we asked what type of support they need to help them advance their careers, women said they wanted to "be invited to the same meetings that their male counterparts attend". They expressed a desire for "more opportunities to do bigger work" and wanted to be trusted to handle more complex projects.

Our research reveals that women are seeking more than advice and support. They are looking for

individuals to open doors to new opportunities for them and give them the exposure they need to advance.

Many women in our study recognized that mentorship wasn't enough to help them get ahead in their careers.

The type of support women described when asked what they needed to advance their careers is what is actually considered *sponsorship*, not mentorship.



“I want to be invited to the same meetings that my male counterparts attend.”

“I want more opportunities to do bigger work. I feel like as a female a lot of times I get pushed to the side to do smaller tasks like I can't handle working with bigger materials and projects.”





# Why Sponsorship (not mentorship) is the Answer

**MENTORSHIP IS ABOUT GIVING ADVICE**, sharing stories, and encouraging people in their current roles.

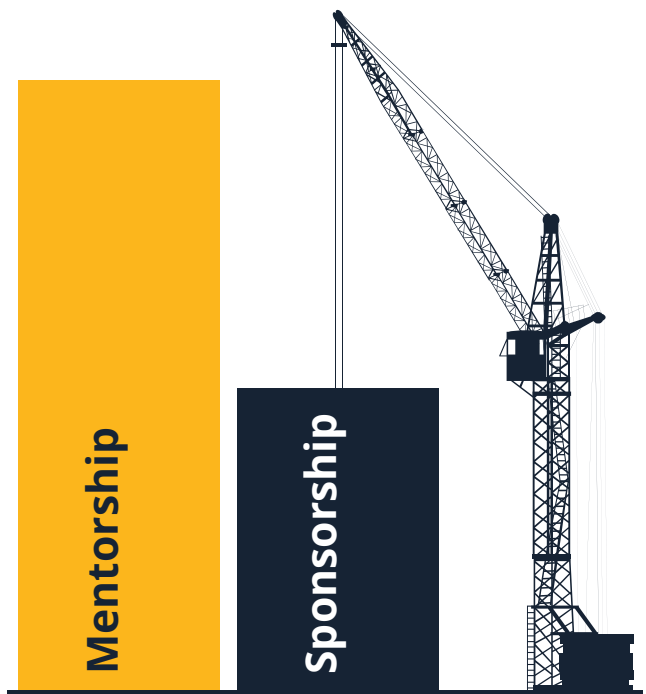
Sponsorship is about providing opportunities and exposure to help somebody advance in their career. It's about allowing somebody to learn as they go and being there to support them as they stretch outside of their comfort zones to expand their abilities. It's about exposing somebody to the people and experiences that allow their strengths and abilities to be seen and rewarded.

Women with sponsors have somebody at work who:

- Has put their reputation on the line for them.
- Assigns them high-profile job tasks.
- Makes introductions to influential stakeholders.
- Provides them with high-visibility opportunities.
- Includes them in meetings that provide contact with people who could help them advance their careers.
- Advocates publicly on their behalf for career-advancing opportunities and/or promotions.

The problem is, women receive sponsorship **only half as often** as they receive mentorship.

Sponsorship happens half as often as mentorship.



Building Better 2023 Results





**When we talk about how mentorship works for men, what we’re actually talking about is sponsorship.**

*Men are given opportunities and exposure. Women are given support in their current roles and advice on how to prepare for the future.*

## **A lack of exposure and opportunities is holding women back.**

**WHERE WOMEN ARE OFTEN** given advice and encouraged to prepare for future opportunities, men are often given opportunities to expand their experience and skills through on-the-job learning. For example, a senior individual may ask a more junior man to attend an upcoming meeting or networking opportunity. They may give them the chance to present a few slides at a presentation, standing by to jump in if needed, but allowing the junior man to grow outside of his comfort zone. They are trusted to learn as they go and receive valuable exposure in the process.

This learning and exposure can pave the way for career

advancement and increased visibility within a company. It can accelerate professional growth and development. In a sponsorship dynamic, it’s up to the senior *and* junior person to take action and create opportunities together.

“Trust that I can and will do the job.”

–Survey respondent on the kind of support she needs to advance her career.

“Being introduced to the right people and given the confidence to take advantage of that relationship.”





# From Mentorship to Sponsorship: How A Mindset Shift Created a More Inclusive Workplace

**HAL, A CONSTRUCTION COMPANY EXECUTIVE,** attended a keynote presentation given by Ambition Theory where he was enlightened and educated about the barriers women face in the industry. This event marked the beginning of his journey to becoming an effective ally, and he started looking for ways to create opportunities for the women at his company.

Hal knew from what he learned that one of the first steps he could take to start driving change within his organization was shifting his mindset from one of mentorship to one of sponsorship. Hal realized that instead of just providing advice, he could create opportunities for women to grow their skills and connect with influential people in the company and the industry.

One of the first actions he took was to take Kendra, a young project coordinator, to a networking event. Hal was impressed by Kendra's skills in networking and talent for business development, and he soon realized the value these skills could bring to both his team and the company.

The next time there was a networking event, Hal sent Kendra without him. He had 100% confidence that the company was being well-represented in his absence and knew that Kendra would look out for his and the company's best interests.

This new sponsorship relationship had many benefits for both Kendra and the company. Kendra gained exposure to influential people in the company and the industry, and she grew in confidence and competence. Hal had a reliable team member he could trust to attend events when he couldn't be there.

Hal's sponsorship of Kendra also had a ripple effect on the organization. Her confidence and competence were noticed and respected, and she began to receive less pushback on job sites. Hal's trust in Kendra was projected onto others, which helped her gain respect and influence.



The positive impact of Hal's sponsorship also changed his approach to hiring. He realized that hiring based on technical skills alone was not enough, and he began to focus on hiring for complementary strengths and skills. He says his new approach is already paying off.

“I couldn't believe how quickly I noticed positive changes after shifting my mindset from one of mentorship to one of sponsorship—for my protégé, for myself, for my team and for our company.”

Overall, Hal's experience with Kendra shows the power and positive impacts sponsorship has for the sponsor, the protégé, and the organization. Hal and Kendra's sponsorship relationship has proven to be a powerful catalyst for creating opportunities for women at the company. It started a shift in the company culture and helped create a more inclusive and diverse workplace.





**For me, a flexible work schedule means:**

*“No surprise required overtime.”*

*“The ability to function as a leader and a parent.”*

*“Not being penalized for life emergencies/situations and not being looked at negatively for declining overtime hours.”*

# Flexibility: More Than ‘Work-From-Home’

**THE TOPIC OF FLEXIBLE** work options is often associated with remote work or working from home. However, the construction industry is lagging behind when it comes to offering flexibility, particularly on job sites. In fact, the idea of offering flexible work options often isn’t even given any consideration.

But when we asked women what flexibility means to them, there were no wildly unrealistic responses. **Women’s expectations were considerate of their employers, their teams, the job sites they work on, and the schedules that projects must maintain, all while pleading for employers to simply consider their lives in the same way.**

It turns out that for many women in construction, flexibility doesn’t necessarily mean having the ability to work from home or make their own hours.

**Women Want Work-Life Balance.**

**Flexibility at work means:**

*“Working within the boundaries of business needs, but having opportunities to arrange my schedule to balance life.”*





**When job searching,  
I am most likely to take a job  
because of...**

**Women want work-life balance so they can care for themselves and their families.**

**ON THEIR QUEST TO** prove they're worthy of a promotion, that they're equally capable as the men they work with, many women burn out.

This extra burden that women carry at work is only compounded by the fact that many women also tend to carry more of the load at home. This is likely why, when asked what is most important to them when considering taking a job, women across sectors and roles **overwhelmingly ranked work-life balance as most important.**

*"We risk losing women in the industry because they get burnt out proving themselves, focusing on improving their weaknesses or spending too much time on things that don't interest or motivate them. When can women stop pushing themselves to round out their experiences and move on to maximizing their strengths?"*

- Ambition Theory training participant



- Most important
- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Less Important
- Least Important





When asked what flexibility at work meant to them, women spoke about the ability to function as both a leader *and* a parent. They want to be able to spend time with family and friends and have time to do the things they love.

They want to feel comfortable asking for time off when they need it and do not want to worry about facing disciplinary action if they have to leave work for personal reasons.

Almost half of the women we surveyed (46%) do *not* have flexible work options where they work. When we look at those in Site Management roles and Craft Professionals, the proportion of those with flexible work options is even lower.

With 57% of women in Craft Professional roles reporting that they receive no pay for time off, and 25% of them reporting that they have faced disciplinary action for missing work due to family or personal situations, it is no wonder that they laugh at the thought of flexibility in their current roles.

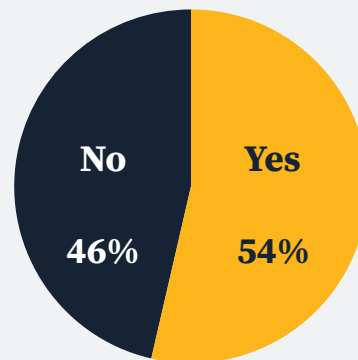
*45% of women are uncomfortable, hesitant or only comfortable sometimes asking for a work schedule adjustment for family matters.*

*“I always have the flexibility to leave for appointments and my coworkers are always told to make their families’ priorities first. I never feel guilty asking for sick leave or time off. This to me is flexibility.”*

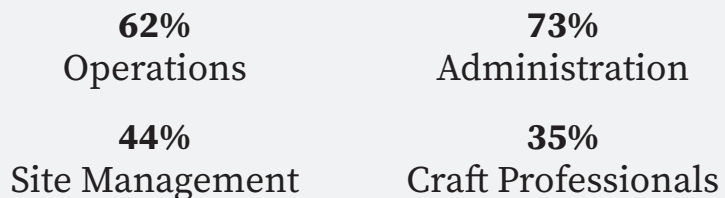
-Building Better Survey Respondent

*“Ha! Hahahaha. Hilarious you would ask this in the realm of construction. I would have to leave my field to get a flexible schedule.”*

**My company currently offers flexible work options for people in my role.**



**Respondants who had work flexibility by role.**



*Building Better 2023 Results*



# Making Flexibility Work – A Powerful Example



**LIZ IS A PROJECT EXECUTIVE** at a large general contractor who had been working at the same company for 18 years. She would often work long hours and would be on site early or until late. The pace she was working at wasn't sustainable. She was missing out on time with her children and time for herself to enjoy friends and family. Eventually, Liz was burnt out. She told her company she would no longer be able to work her job unless she had more flexibility.

While her company offered flexible work options for other people—those working in administration or business development—the same flexibility wasn't offered to those in operations. But the company valued Liz's experience and did not want to lose her. So, they began considering what flexible work options could look like for Liz and others working on their job sites.

It turns out that by questioning the status quo and simply asking, "What is possible?" the company was able to find a solution. They worked closely with Liz to understand what her needs were and were able to offer Liz the flexibility she needed to continue working her job. Liz still sometimes works long shifts to hit important

milestones on a project. She still shows up on-site early when necessary. But, most days, Liz works reduced hours and is able to pick up her kids from school.

She is empowered to make the decisions on when it's time to put in the extra hours to support her team and when she can trust them to get the job done without her physical presence. Liz set clear boundaries with her team and senior leadership—she will take phone calls after hours, but won't check email for example. She only turns on her computer after hours if it's

absolutely necessary.

"I have found work-life balance—I'm happy at work again. I have time to spend with my family and do the things I love outside of work." says Liz.

The company is using Liz's experience to create a flexible work policy that can eventually be expanded across the company. It's not perfect, but they are learning as they go and modifying when needed. **In exploring potential ways to make their workplace one where Liz can thrive, the company actually improved the**

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*"I have found work-life balance. I am happy at work again."*

- Liz

**workplace for everyone.**





## Building Better – An Industry Ready for Change

**OUR RESEARCH HAS UNCOVERED** valuable data that speaks volumes about the state of the construction industry. While there has been progress, it's clear that there's a long way to go to make it a welcoming place for women.

Despite our less-than-picture-perfect findings, we are encouraged by the potential for change we see.

The women currently paving the way in the industry are key to this change. They're advocating for progress and setting an example for future generations. The grassroots efforts of these women and the allies that support them have helped bring more and more women into the industry and helped to create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

It's becoming increasingly clear that the gender disparity in our industry is not a problem for women to solve alone. It's an issue that everyone must acknowledge and take action to address. Many companies are in alignment—we're starting to see more companies and leaders step up and take responsibility. They recognize the industry is missing out on innovative ideas because of a lack of women's representation and are looking for ways to improve. Companies like Liz's are already questioning the status quo and implementing new approaches with positive results. Leaders are engaging Ambition Theory for workshops and talks to drive change across their organizations. More and more companies are

approaching NCCER for resources, workshops, training, and support.

The industry is clearly ready for change and we're excited to be a part of that change.

**Through our research, we have identified three key areas of opportunity for organizations ready to lead the industry to a new era of inclusivity:**

- **Shifting Mindsets from Mentorship to Sponsorship**
- **Prioritizing Flexibility and Work-Life Balance**
- **Investing in Training for Women**

**We've outlined how companies can start taking action immediately to make an impact within their organizations and across the industry as a whole.**

**Let's start today.**





# Taking Action

## Shifting Mindsets – From Mentorship to Sponsorship

**FOR SPONSORSHIP TO TRULY** work, there can't be a sign-up sheet. People don't naturally tap somebody on the shoulder and say, "I would like to sponsor you; will you be my protégé?" There are no contracts, and there isn't a precise method to follow. The best way to make this happen is to create a culture where sponsorship can happen organically<sup>6</sup>.

How can you do this at your company?

### Start by shifting mindsets at the top.

Mentorship is all about offering advice and helping women prepare for opportunities. Sponsorship is about offering exposure and opportunities. Encourage your leaders to start identifying women with leadership potential and instead of taking them for coffee to chat about their careers, ask them to identify opportunities to give those women exposure and expand their skillsets.

This can be done informally—by sharing this report for example. Or more formally, by investing in a training workshop to help your leadership team understand the key differences between mentorship and sponsorship and give them strategies for shifting from one to the other.

### Expose the elephants and involve everyone.

If we don't acknowledge the truth—that mentorship doesn't work for women the way it does for men—we'll continue to invest in mentorship programs that don't actually help to get more women into leadership roles. Exposing this "elephant in the room" is a key first step to driving change.



And this needs to happen for everyone in your organization. One of the biggest issues of most women's leadership initiatives is that they all place the burden of responsibility on the women themselves. The gender inequities in our industry cannot be solved by women alone. The companies leading the way in gender diversity and inclusion in the construction industry are those who have encouraged and empowered everyone in their organizations to take responsibility for driving change.

Many men aren't even aware of the reality of what women experience throughout their careers in the construction industry. Others may be more aware of the challenges women face, but feel powerless to help. Find ways to educate your people at the organizational level—book keynotes and invest in initiatives that educate and support everyone.





*49% of women leaders say flexibility is one of the top three things they consider when deciding whether to join or stay with a company.*

- McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org *Women in the Workplace Report 2022*

## Prioritizing Work-Life Balance and Flexibility

**WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION WANT** work-life balance overall. They want time for themselves and their families and don't want to feel pressured to work overtime. They want to be able to advance their careers without sacrificing their personal and family lives.

Offering flexible work options can be one of the most effective ways to ensure that balance. Offering flexible work options could be the factor that ultimately determines if a woman will take a job offer or stay in a current role.

Even if the way to provide more flexibility in the construction industry may not be as straightforward as in other industries, making an effort is absolutely necessary if we want to recruit and retain more women.

Here's how you can begin exploring flexible work options and improve work-life balance for the women (and everyone!) in your company.

### **Get curious and document your current state.**

Before you can begin to make changes, you need to have an accurate picture of what's currently happening in your organization. Explore how comfortable your people are asking for time off when needed. Ask employees what

flexibility means to them. Consider any differences that exist between office and field staff. How could flexible work options address any issues you uncover?

### **Don't let flexible work options stop at the job site gate.**

There will inevitably be differences between flexibility options for office & field employees, but it's time to take a long hard look at how you can offer some form of flexibility to field staff.

This may include considering one (or more) of the following:

- Adjusting the hours of the workday after surveying your field employees. Maybe a 6 am to 3 pm or a 7 am to 4 pm schedule works better. As you approach the end of the fiscal year, consider how you can start offering paid time off for field staff as well as office staff. If this is unrealistic, consider what benefits are realistic for your organization to implement to give employees a better work-life balance.





- Explore how your organization addresses overtime. Does your organization require overtime? If not, does management reprimand or punish those who turn down overtime?
  - Overtime can be a great way to see which employees are going above and beyond but can be detrimental to employee morale to require or 'volun-tell' people to take part in it. This can affect the retention of more site employees.
- Consider exploring childcare options as a benefit you offer within your company. You can read more about some of the national childcare providers that are ready to help employers like yourself in NCCER's In Her Own Words<sup>7</sup> white paper.

**What's your why? Connect it to business objectives.**

How could offering flexible work options and taking other steps towards supporting work-life balance help you achieve your business's objectives? Identifying these

connections can help build the business case for offering flexibility.

**Sharing the vision and getting buy-in.**

Change starts at the top. It's important to share your vision for change and your expectations of everyone with your entire organization. Pay particular attention to managers and supervisors, as they are the ones who will be implementing changes, answering questions and fielding concerns. You need their buy-in and also to equip them appropriately for any changes.

**Choose one thing.**

Workplace culture change doesn't happen overnight. Instead of getting overwhelmed by all that could be done, choose one thing to kick off your efforts. What is one thing your organization could start implementing first that would help improve work-life balance? Is there one project you could try something new with?







# Invest in training for women

**CHANGING WORKPLACE CULTURE TAKES** time. Until real change has occurred, women will continue to face challenges that prevent them from advancing at the same rate as the men they work with. Acknowledging that existing training may not produce the same results for women as it does for men and offering training designed to address the barriers and challenges women in the industry face is essential for change.

## Training Shows Your Commitment to Career Advancement

Many women attempting to enter the construction industry may feel intimidated or under-educated compared to their male counterparts. The national estimates of enrollment for women in secondary and post-secondary construction-based programs range between only 10% (NCWGE) and 20% (Clayton 2022)<sup>18</sup>.

Seeing that she can learn within your company could be just the motivation a woman needs to apply for an

open role.

Our *Building Better* research shows that for women with more than one year of work experience having a ‘Clear Path For Career Advancement’ was unequivocally ranked as the most important thing when they are seeking employment.

Investing in training designed to help women build the skills they need to get ahead is *the most powerful way* to show women you’re committed their development and career advancement.

Having training programs in place is essential for any company that wants to not only recruit more women, but also retain and advance more women to leadership positions.





## Training is a Key to Recruiting and Retaining Tradeswomen

Whether you're a small or large contractor, there are training solutions you can start to implement to increase the involvement of tradeswomen within your organization.

- If you have a training department and are looking to implement training for your field staff, but aren't sure where to get started, NCCER has curriculum developed<sup>9</sup> in nearly every trade you can imagine. All of our curriculum was developed for industry by industry and is made to be moldable to your company's needs.
- If you are a smaller company or don't have the internal bandwidth to implement field training yourself, NCCER has accredited partners across the country who can help in the form of short-term trainings, certificate programs, apprenticeship programs, and more.
- Regardless of the path you choose training programs that work for women (and field staff in general) require flexibility and guidance. Make sure you consider travel time if your employee has to take class before or after their shift. Rather than penalize someone who might be showing up a few minutes late or wanting to leave a few minutes early, remember that they are investing in not only themselves but the performance outcomes of your jobsite and the overall success of your company. See if you can adjust their schedule on certain days to accommodate their training needs.
- While field personnel and office staff should both be offered training opportunities, training those in the field successfully requires hands-on practice. NCCER research has found that providing hands-on training elements are highly rated by students for learning and loyalty to a company. Whether you're training internally or sending them to an external training program, try to keep in mind what they are learning and, if at all possible, allow them to practice the skills their learning on the job. If you have an employee who wants to go from a laborer to a carpenter, it only makes sense to pair them with a journeyman carpenter on the jobsite so that they strengthen their skillsets with guidance. The same goes for a carpenter who wants to become a foreman.
- On-the-job training and "sponsorship" is what will really allow your employees to feel supported and successfully transition into their next role.





## Ambition Theory Leadership Accelerator Program

**THE AMBITION THEORY LEADERSHIP ACCELERATOR PROGRAM** is an 8-week intensive course designed to help women in the construction industry overcome the unique obstacles they face on their path to leadership. Traditional leadership training fails to address these obstacles, which include:

- **A lack of sponsorship:** Women often receive mentorship while men receive sponsorship. Mentorship focuses on providing advice and preparing somebody for advancement, while sponsorship is all about providing exposure and opportunities. Without opportunities to take on new types of work or exposure to the people responsible for determining promotions, women aren't able to use mentorship experiences to advance their careers the same way men can.
- **The double-bind:** In a 2021 survey conducted by Ambition Theory, 78% of women were told they need to be more assertive and confident to advance their careers and move into leadership roles. However, 70% of the same women surveyed said they were also told to be less bossy. When women embody the traits typically associated with leaders in the construction industry, they are considered bossy, aggressive, or worse—this is the double bind.
- **A failure to reward women's transformational leadership style:** The construction industry has traditionally been male-dominated, and the dominant leadership style of men - transactional leadership - is rewarded. The impact of the transformational leadership style that most women naturally adopt isn't appreciated, measured, or considered when evaluating women for promotions.

[Ambition Theory's Leadership Accelerator Program](#) tackles these issues head-on by providing women with the skills they need to navigate these obstacles and increase their influence. The course includes a 360-degree assessment, 8 hours of group coaching, an on-demand curriculum, and the opportunity to learn alongside other women construction professionals. It is ideal for women who are on the verge of rising to a leadership position or who have recently been promoted to a leadership role.

Offering women training that specifically addresses the unique challenges they face in the construction industry is essential for companies that want to see more representation of women in leadership roles. By equipping women with the tools they need to navigate these obstacles, you can help them achieve their career goals and improve gender diversity in leadership positions.







## Be a Part of the Building Better Community

**THIS REPORT IS JUST** the beginning of the work Ambition Theory and NCCER plan to do to help build a better future for women—and everyone—in the construction industry.

But we can't do it alone.

If you and your company are committed to making the construction industry a more diverse and inclusive place to work, join our Building Better Community and be a part of the change.

We want to expand our community as much as possible to ensure our future research and action plans are informed by the most robust and broad representation of the construction industry as possible. You will be the first to know about future research and resources available. We thank you in advance for your future participation and support in spreading the word about the next phases of our *Building Better* research.

Questions? Contact us:

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JOIN THE COMMUNITY



## About NCCER



The **National Center for Construction Education and Research** (NCCER) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) education foundation created in 1996. It was developed with the support of more than 125 construction CEOs and various associations and academic leaders who united to revolutionize training for the construction industry. Sharing the common goal of developing a safe and productive workforce, these companies created a standardized training and credentialing program for the industry. This progressive program has evolved into curricula for more than 40 craft areas and a complete series of journey level assessments offered in over 4,000 NCCER-accredited training and assessment locations across the United States.

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## About Ambition Theory



At Ambition Theory, we're dedicated to driving systemic change in the construction industry. We offer leadership training and coaching that equips individuals with the transformational leadership skills essential for advancement. We firmly believe that it is the responsibility of industry leaders and companies to create a more inclusive and diverse environment, and we work collaboratively with organizations to make this a reality. By sharing our expertise and proven approach, we're able to shift the burden of change from individual women to the industry as a whole. Ambition Theory is unwavering in our commitment to leveraging research and data to drive tangible outcomes and create a more equitable industry for all. Listen to our twice-monthly [Women in Construction](#) podcast to discover your part in closing the gender gap at work and learn more about our Leadership Accelerator and corporate programs at [AmbitionTheory.com](http://AmbitionTheory.com).

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