

Women to fill one in four construction jobs by 2020

- Women are expected to make up a quarter (26%) of the UK's construction workforce by 2020
- Women increasingly fill senior construction roles, and 45% have more than ten years' experience
- Pay packets rise 6% per year between 2005 and 2015 for women in the construction industry
- However – misperceptions and a lack of workplace flexibility remain serious barriers to progress
- “Cultural revolution” required by end of the decade if UK construction to reach “true potential”

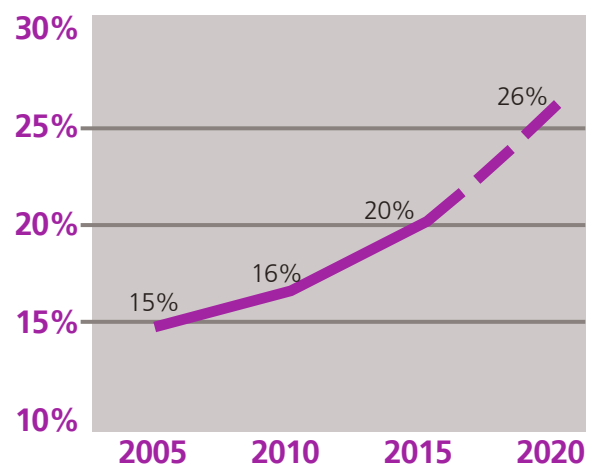
Women will make up a quarter of all workers in the UK construction industry by the end of this decade – a proportion that could grow even further given the right cultural change – according to new research from specialist recruiter Randstad CPE.

As of 2015, the proportion of construction jobs held by women currently stands at 20%, or one in five, according to the latest research from recruitment specialists Randstad CPE.

This is in line with official data from the Office for National Statistics, which puts the proportion at 19.7% as of September 2014.

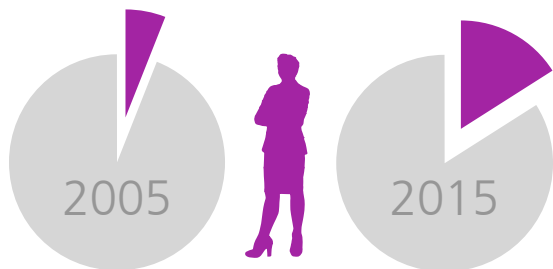
However, women in the construction industry expect this to improve dramatically in the next five years, as women fill 26% – or more than a quarter – of all construction jobs by the year 2020.

Progress has already accelerated over the last decade. Between 2005 and 2010 the proportion of construction jobs filled by women rose by just one percentage point, from 15% to 16%. But in the last five years this has increased at four times that rate, to reach 20% in 2015, even before further acceleration expected by 2020.



Women filling more senior construction roles

In 2005, 6% of women in the construction industry held senior management positions or directorships. This has now jumped to 16%. This is reflected in the top earnings brackets. One in fourteen, or 7% of female construction employees now earn over £75,000 per year, and 2% earn over £100,000. Both proportions were negligible in 2005.



By contrast, the prevalence of traditionally 'female' roles for women in construction has fallen. In 2005 9% of women in construction worked as a secretary or in a purely supportive role. This has now fallen by a factor of three, to just 3% of women in construction.

Highly valued roles outside of senior management have seen more mixed trends. In 2005, 19% of all women in the wider construction industry were architects at various levels of training. However, as the number of women working in other areas of construction has grown more quickly than those in the architectural profession, this has halved, to represent just 10% of women in the construction industry.

Similarly, quantity surveyors now represent 12% of all women in construction, down from 13% in 2005. This is despite the role being in high demand on the back of a reinvigorated construction industry. Quantity surveyors can now command a contracting salary of up to £70,000, according to the latest Randstad CPE Salary Survey.



Owen Goodhead
MD, Randstad Construction,
Property & Engineering

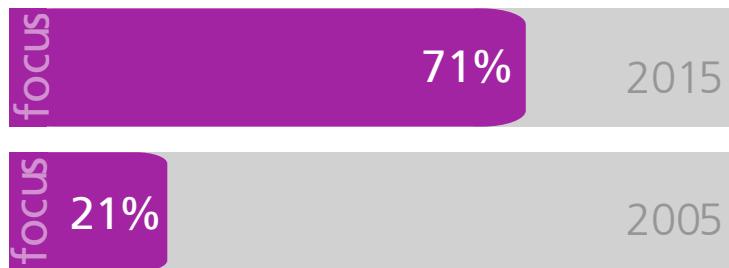
"Construction is about laying the foundations of a prosperous future. So the industry can't afford to be stuck in the past."

"With an enormous housing shortage, vital infrastructure projects, plus a new burst of life for commercial property, opportunities are everywhere. Only last month Experian raised its economic forecast for the UK construction sector, now expected to grow 6% in 2015, or twice as fast as the rest of the economy."

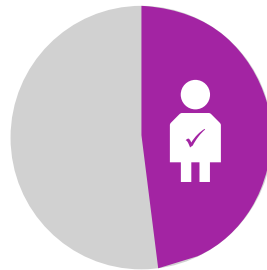
"In a rapidly expanding industry, every ounce of ability needs to be harnessed. Companies that are addressing the issues facing women in the workplace will have access to a greater pool of talent, and will be able to make the most of the opportunity on offer in a fresh climate of growth."

Employers more supportive – but industry still needs “cultural revolution”

Women now report their employers are tackling the shortage of diversity in construction more actively. In 2005 an overwhelming 79% said that their employer had no special focus on recruiting more women – but as of 2015 this has improved to now stand at just 29%, or less than one third of employers who lack an active stance towards recruiting more women.



In 2015 almost half (49%) of women in construction currently report that their employer is ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ supportive of women in the industry.



Despite this, over the same period the proportion of women reporting discrimination or prejudice in the construction workplace – at some point in their career – has actually increased. In 2005 two thirds (66%) of women had ever experienced some form of discrimination. Now, in 2015, this has grown to three quarters (74%) reporting discrimination or prejudice at some point in their working life.

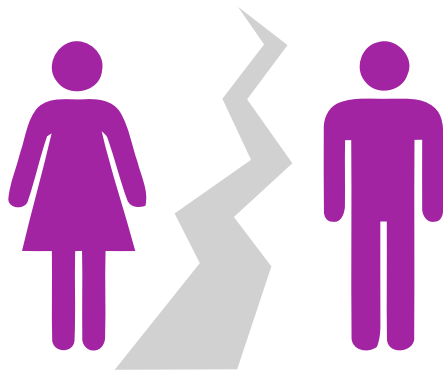
Owen Goodhead continues:

“By contrast, any complacency on this front will have a clear cost. Businesses that exclude women, even accidentally, will feel the effect on the bottom line.”

“For anyone considering different careers, their long-term progression and earnings prospects matter. Anyone with ambition and ability should be able to rise to the top of the construction industry, and now women are making that a reality. Particularly with the majority of the official Construction Industry Training Board now female, there is a real feeling that the government, the industry and the economy are all pulling together.”

“We need an even greater effort from all sides, to offer even more women the opportunities they deserve.”

Of those who have experienced discrimination, the greatest proportion (64%) said this took the form of inappropriate comments or behaviour from male colleagues. A small but significant 7% reported the same from female colleagues.



The next most prevalent form of discrimination is a tendency to exclude female co-workers from male conversations, gatherings or social events – reported by 46% of those who had experienced discrimination.

Forms of discrimination with a more immediate impact on career prospects are less prevalent than more cultural issues. However, 28% of those reporting discrimination said this resulted in being offered a less important role, while one in four (25%) said they had been passed over for a promotion or a particular project.



Despite some continued prejudice, an overwhelming three quarters (76%) of women would actively recommend a career in construction to their daughter, niece or female friend.

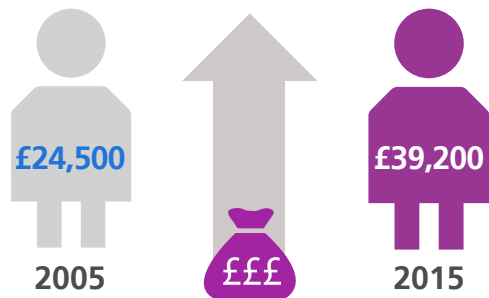
Owen Goodhead continues:

“Clearly, things aren’t all plain sailing. As women have made an impact on all specialisms and levels of seniority, this has forced a little confrontation with out-of-date attitudes. These attitudes are relics of the past – and cannot be allowed to mould the future.

“Construction needs a cultural revolution – or the pace of cultural change simply won’t keep up with the pace of opportunity. This industry should be powering the whole UK out of a decade of economic quicksand. But that won’t happen if a minority of employers are still stuck in a cultural quagmire.

Women in construction's pay rises 6% per year in last decade

In 2005 the average annual salary for a woman in the construction industry was £24,500, but this has grown to reach £39,200 in 2015. This means women in construction are now paid 60% more than a decade ago, or an average 6% pay rise each year for the last decade.



Women in construction have also grown considerably more experienced since 2005. As of 2015, the average woman in construction has worked in her industry for 11 years. This compares to an average of six years' experience a decade ago. Moreover, the proportion of women with more than ten years' experience in construction has doubled, from 22% in 2005, to 45% in 2015.

Variety of work & tangible achievement – but a lack of awareness

The most popular aspect of construction roles is the variety of work, with a third of women (32%) citing this as their favourite aspect. One in five (22%) prefer the sense of tangible achievement and a further 12% say their overall job satisfaction is the reason they do what they do.

Owen Goodhead concludes:

"In terms of technology and working practices, construction has come a long way in the last few decades. There is a growing sense of purpose and professionalism on construction sites across the country – from electricians and carpenters on residential schemes, to the planners and engineers setting the groundwork for the largest infrastructure projects.

"Now, the natural next steps for everyone are tackling any unproductive 'macho image', and allowing more flexible working wherever possible.

"If the pain of the financial crisis has a silver lining, it might be that a more modern construction industry is emerging from the ashes of an especially deep recession."

A lack of awareness is the greatest reason preventing women from joining the construction industry, according to 43%, followed by a lack of role-models (42% agreed with this issue), and a 'macho' image as reported by 41%. This puts these three issues ahead of sexist hiring practices, cited by 40% of women in construction.

In a sign of a more modern and safety-conscious industry, only 7% feel that a perceived lack of safety is a barrier to women considering a career in construction.

For those women who choose to leave the industry, the most likely reason is a lack of flexible or part-time working options. Of women who have left a job in construction, or know someone who has, 16% said this was down to a lack of flexibility.

A smaller, though significant 11% leave due to discrimination. The joint-third most likely reasons for a woman to leave a career in construction are long working hours and stress, both accounting for 9% of cases. Least likely are poor maternity rights (5% of women leaving construction) and poor promotional prospects – at just 1%.

Better flexibility, according to 44%, would persuade women who have left jobs in construction to re-join the industry. This is ahead of enforcing equal pay, at 35%, while improving mentoring and sponsorship programmes would tempt women back to construction jobs according to 23%. Better childcare facilities would also entice women back according to a further 23%.



A majority of 56% are in favour of a quota for women in the construction industry. However, an overwhelming 94% said that their own personal success was due to their own ability, rather than 6% who believed they had been promoted to fill an existing quota or internal target.

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