



# The Status of Women in the Construction Trades (USA) - 2018 to 2023

*July 2025*

Compiled by the International Institute of Women in Construction, in Partnership with FMI Corporation and the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER)



# INTRODUCTION

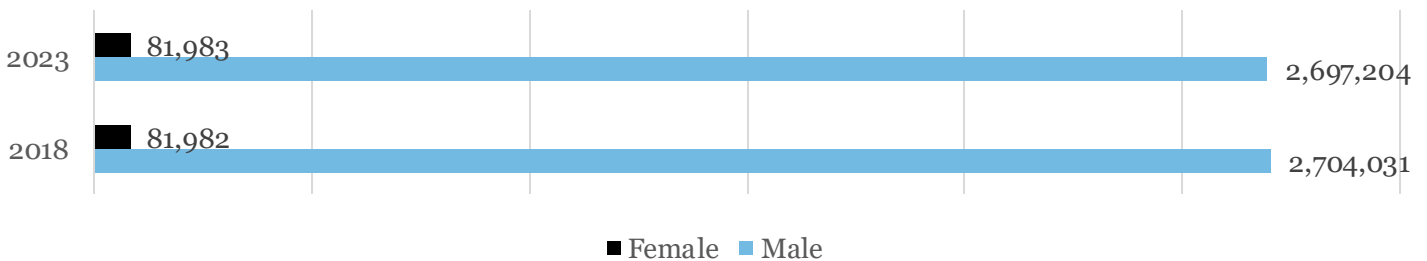


Efforts to attract, develop, and retain women in the construction industry worldwide must begin with a clear understanding of the current state. The International Institute of Women in Construction (IIWIC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating the participation and retention of women in the construction industry worldwide. Our research goal is to work collaboratively with partners throughout the world to be the global source for data on women in construction.

This report, created in collaboration with the FMI Corporation and the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), aims to provide recent data on the status of women in the construction trades in the US. NCCER's May 2025 white paper, "Women in the Skilled Trades: More Than Just Boots on the Ground", analyzes data from a survey conducted by NCCER and Ambition Theory involving 775 tradeswomen (<https://hs.nccer.org/women-in-the-skilled-trades-more-than-just-boots-on-the-ground>). The Women in Construction survey, along with follow-up interviews with female craft professionals, aimed to better understand the experiences of women in the construction industry, their motivations for entering the trades, the barriers they encounter, and the factors that influence their retention or departure from the field.

Recent discussions have increasingly emphasized the pressing need to improve the representation of women within the trades, a sector traditionally dominated by men. This report reveals that despite a US construction labor deficit of 500,000 to 1 million workers, we have made little progress in attracting women to the trades. From 2018 to 2022, the number of women in the trades in the US has grown from 3.03% to 3.04%.

MALE VERSUS FEMALE US CONSTRUCTION TRADEPEOPLE

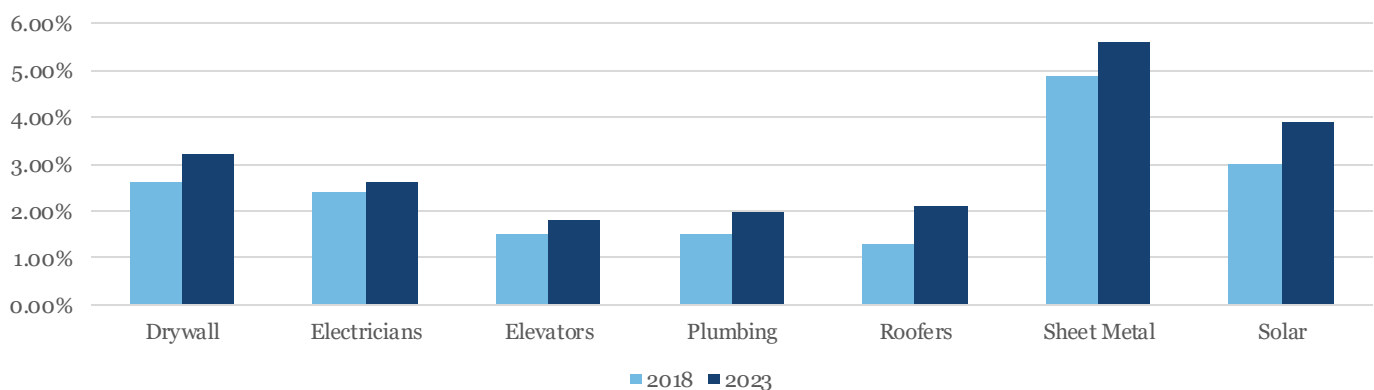


We commend initiatives that are increasing awareness and creating supportive pathways for women entering these field by organizations such as the Sisters in the Building Trades and Women in Restoration and Roofing. By forging partnerships with companies and labor unions across the industry, these collaborations focus on comprehensive initiatives aimed at recruiting, educating, and retaining women in skilled trades by offering specialized training in hands-on skills, leadership, and safety, alongside vital mentorship and networking opportunities. With continued commitment and collaboration, we anticipate further advancements, ultimately fostering a more diverse and inclusive workforce that benefits the entire industry.

# US Trades with Growth in Female Representation (2018 to 2023)



## Trades Experiencing an Increase in Female Representation from 2018 to 2023 (US Bureau of Labor and Statistics)



Trades reporting an increase in female representation from 2018 to 2023 include drywall, electricians, elevators, plumbing, roofers, sheet metal, and solar. Numerous organizations are dedicated to promoting the advancement of women in these fields. Local nonprofits for tradeswomen, along with national groups such as Women in National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), provide specialized training, certifications, mentorship, and extensive networking opportunities. These collective efforts aim to enhance technical skills, foster leadership, and support professional growth, helping women transition from hands-on roles to executive positions within their respective industries. The National Association of Elevator Contractors has launched the Women in Motion initiative, which aims to enhance the visibility and representation of women in the elevator industry. This program highlights women's potential in installation, service, and technology through publications, mentorship opportunities, and dedicated programming for both field and executive positions.

**Key Findings from NCCER Report *Women in the Skilled Trades: More Than Just Boots on the Ground***

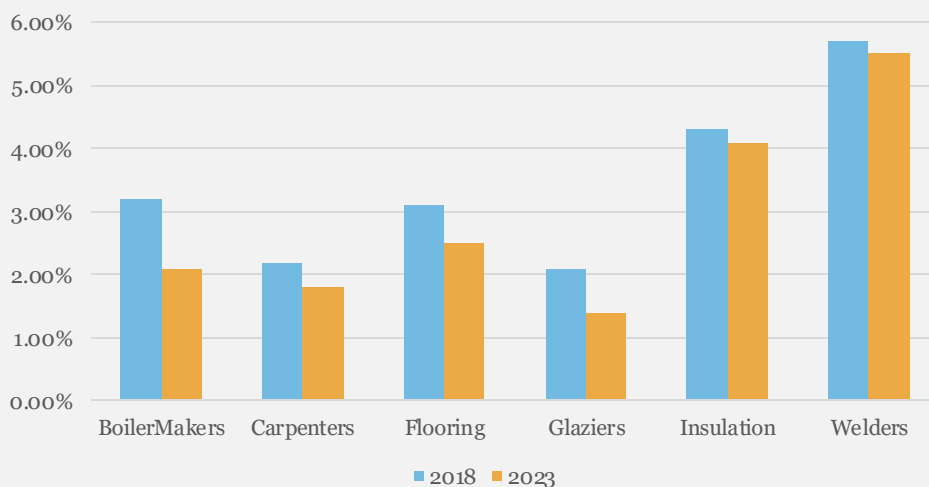
**They want to grow:** 90% of respondents expressed a desire to advance into leadership, management, or training roles.

**Support systems are sparse:** Formal mentorship and sponsorship programs, along with appropriate PPE, are rare and not provided unless specifically requested. Only 1 in 15 respondents reported access to formal career advancement resources for women..

# US Trades Experiencing a Decline in Female Representation (2018 to 2023)

From 2018 to 2023 the representation of women declined in these trades: boilermakers, carpenters, flooring, glaziers, insulation, and welding. However, dedicated initiatives from organizations such as the National Glass Association, Women in the Boiler Industry, Women in the Floor Covering Industry, the IBEW Sisterhood and the Insulation Contractors Association of America are actively promoting women's involvement in these industries. These efforts showcase the achievements of female professionals and provide educational sessions on technical skills, safety, and new technologies. They also offer networking opportunities through conferences and online forums to support career development, mentorship, and business growth.

## Trades Experiencing a Decline in Female Representation from 2018 to 2023 (US Bureau of Labor and Statistics)



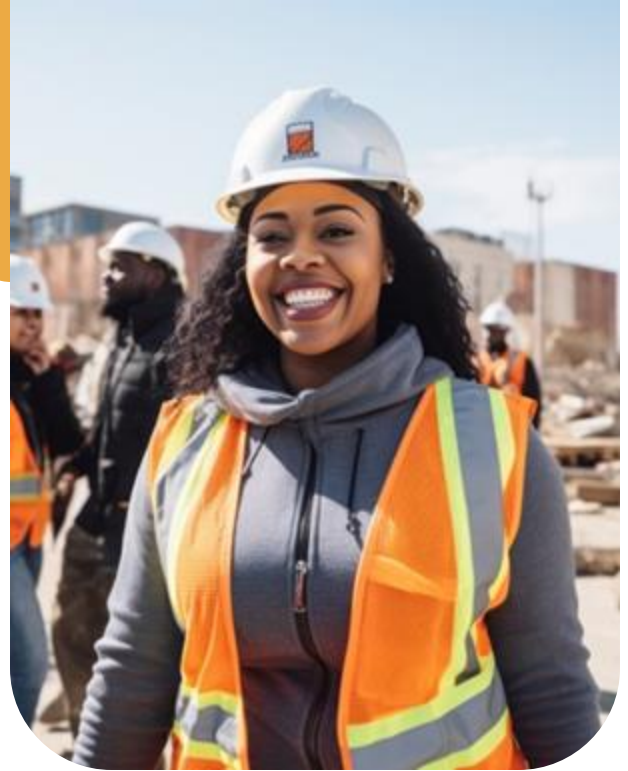
### Key Findings from NCCER Report *Women in the Skilled Trades: More Than Just Boots on the Ground*

**Late entry into the trades:** Most women enter construction after dissatisfaction with other careers, and few are exposed to the trades early.

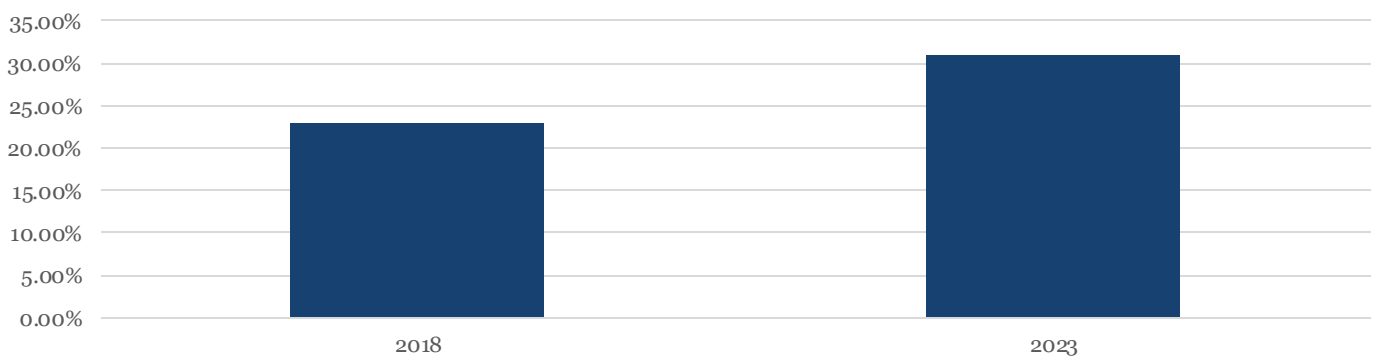
**Bias still exists:** 80% of craftswomen surveyed reported having their expertise questioned or being mistaken for a junior employee, and informal networks (like “good-ole-boy” culture) still influence hiring and promotions.



## US Hazardous Material Trade - The Outlier with Significant Female Representation



### US Female Representation in Hazardous Materials Trade (2018 to 2023)



Over the past eight years, the only trade that has seen significant growth in female representation is Hazardous Materials. Local nonprofits focused on supporting tradeswomen often collaborate with labor unions to provide specialized training and apprenticeships in handling, abatement, and remediation of hazardous materials, specifically aimed at women. These programs equip women with essential safety protocols, including the correct use of protective equipment, and offer professional development opportunities, facilitating their entry into and advancement in high-risk environmental and hazmat roles.

### Key Findings from NCCER Women in the Skilled Trades: More Than Just Boots on the Ground

**Retention is at risk:** Although most craftswomen in our survey said they enjoy their work, 40% were considering leaving their current employer within the next year, primarily due to limited advancement opportunities.



## What Next?

The intent of this report was to create baseline data on the number of women participating in the construction trades in the US, and to share key findings from the NCCER's monumental study of women in the trades. We plan to publish a future report on the barriers women face in entering the trades, the challenges in the industry faces in retaining these women, and the solutions that will shift the numbers. We offer these as a starting point:

### **Key Recommendations from NCCER report *Women in the Skilled Trades: More Than Just Boots on the Ground***

Invest in early outreach and awareness campaigns that showcase construction and the trades as a viable career for young women.

Build advancement pathways that are visible, achievable, and supported, and ensure they are not based on informal networks or guesswork.

Create and implement formal mentorship programs tailored to support female craft professionals.

Ensure facilities and PPE are available, inclusive, functional, and designed with women in mind.

# CONCLUSION



This report highlights the current state of women's participation in the construction industry in the US. Our mission is ambitious: to double, and ultimately triple, the number of women engaged in various roles, including trades, management, leadership, and board positions within the construction sector. IIWIC is not designed to overshadow the valuable efforts of the numerous individuals and organizations already working diligently to improve the representation and success of women in construction and related sectors, such as engineering, energy, and mining. Rather, our goal is to cultivate enhanced collaboration and secure additional funding to support proven strategies that drive change. We hope that by raising awareness, we can unite stakeholders from across the industry to identify and support effective solutions. Our goal is not only to increase the number of women entering the field but also to ensure their success and long-term retention in the industry.

**Our gratitude to FMI and NCCER in collaboration with Ambition Theory for their collaboration on this report.**



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<https://fmicorp.com/>



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<https://www.nccer.org/women-in-construction/>



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<https://ambitiontheory.com/>

