

Women in Construction: Building the Future

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The increasing presence of women in the construction industry is driving change and positively impacting the businesses for which they work. Their influence on the industry will extend far beyond the current day as they are paving the way for future generations of young women to seriously consider a career in construction.

It's well known that construction is a male-dominated industry. In 2020, women made up only about [10.9% of construction workers](#), whereas they are approximately [47% of the total workforce](#). However, there is evidence of a changing tide.

Since 2010, the [number of women](#) in construction has increased more than 50%. And according to the [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#) analysis of data from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), construction was one of only two major industries where there are now more women on the payroll than before the COVID-19 pandemic. In August 2021, there were nearly 1.2 million women on employer payrolls in the construction industry, 30,000 more than in February 2020.

In addition to the growing presence of women, the industry itself is brimming with opportunities as it expected to add approximately [400,000 new jobs](#) from 2020-2030. Salaries vary by opportunity depending upon training and experience, though, the annual [median salary in 2022](#) for a Construction Manager is \$116,000.

With this in mind, we seized the opportunity to speak with



the women in Engel Burman's Construction division to hear their real-life perspectives of what it's like for women in construction. We were interested in hearing their thoughts on the industry in general, not their necessarily their opinions of any specific company or employer. The group included, from left to right in photo above, Kim Pitterson, Assistant Project Manager; Martha Xuereb, Director of Preconstruction; Eileen Calaci, Assistant Project Manager; Shaleen Porter-Awong, Payroll Administrator; Diane Ambrosio, Assistant Project Manager; Kelly Gardner, Assistant Project Manager; and Margaruite Bynum, Contract Administrator, not pictured.

WOMEN IN A MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRY

For the most part, women are becoming more accepted and gaining more respect. In fact, many men have been very welcoming of women into the field as they appreciate the different perspective that women can bring. More women are also being seen in various roles including the trades, vendor partners, and managers.

THE CHALLENGES WOMEN FACE

Of course, there are still some stereotypes that exist. It may be assumed that women lack experience, or their authority may be questioned. There may be assumptions about their role, for instance, assuming they are administrative support rather than a member of the construction team. While these are familiar issues for women in many different industries, the fact that only 1 in 10 construction jobs are filled by women make them a bit more pronounced.

Also similar to many other industries, there is a gender pay gap in construction that needs to be addressed, though, according to data from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the pay gap in construction is the lowest among all U.S. industries.

An unexcepted challenge was acquiring safety equipment tailored for women such as work boots. While they are available, they are not necessarily available for purchase off the shelf as men's equipment would be. Often it is necessary to order online and there may be limited options. And these limited options may not always be ideal, such as the women's work boots with pink laces. To paraphrase one woman, 'Try to earn respect on a job site showing up with pink laces.'

WHY WOMEN DO IT

The women really enjoy the variety of skills and tasks that their jobs entail. And with the impact of new technologies on construction, there is always something new to learn and another challenge to meet.

Their passion is driven by the very tangible, literal fruits of their efforts in building something that benefits the future of their communities. They take great pride in seeing the finished product and knowing they were a part of it.


This seems to be true of most women in construction. In fact, [78 percent](#) say that they love their job.

WHAT WOMEN BRING

The women believe they bring a different perspective to the industry and an additional set of skills. In their experience, women tend to pay more attention to detail, have stronger organizational skills, and are well versed in collaboration and team building, all of which help them succeed.

Gender diversity on its own is beneficial to companies in general. According to a [McKinsey & Company](#) report, gender-diverse companies are 25 percent more likely to achieve above-average profitability than companies with less diversity. The report also highlights that when women filled 30 percent or more executive-level positions in a company, the companies were 48 percent more likely to outperform their least-diverse competitors.

ATTRACTING MORE WOMEN

According to this group, it is critical to educate and inform young girls/women of the career opportunities available to them in construction early on, in middle school and high school. Young women need to see other women in the industry in order to recognize that this is a possible career path for them as well. It's reminiscent of the saying, "If you can see it, you can be it.," or as in the current TV ad campaign led by the Association of National Advertisers, [SeeHer](#). If you can see her, you can be her.™ 



About the Author

As the Director of Corporate Marketing, Donna Bahena is responsible for the Engel Burman brand. In this role, she works to maintain the consistency and integrity in all Engel Burman communications and the alignment of all divisions – EB Development, EB Construction, EB Management, EB Living. She has over 20 years of experience in stewarding brands and developing and implementing strategic marketing plans across a wide array of industries and in a wide array of roles. She has led large internal marketing teams as well as multi-disciplinary teams within some of the world’s largest advertising agencies.

[Engel Burman](#) is a fully integrated real estate company consisting of Development, [Construction](#), and Property Management. Engel Burman has developed over 10 million square feet of commercial and residential property with a market value over \$3 billion. The company’s portfolio includes more than 5,000 multifamily and senior living condos and apartments, 25+ assisted living communities, and numerous offices, retail, and industrial properties.

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