

# Women in the UK construction industry in 2016



# Introduction

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**Owen Goodhead**  
MD of Randstad Construction,  
Property and Engineering

*Construction is booming and has enjoyed a significant rise in the number of women entering the industry.*

*As we move further away from the last economic downturn, the signs for growth are good. New infrastructure projects like Hinkley Point C or Thames Tideway Tunnel, a chronic housing shortage and expansion in the commercial property sector means there is opportunity everywhere.*

*Experian's latest forecasts reveal construction output is set to increase by 3.6% in 2016 and 4.3% in 2017, higher than the average growth of the UK economy which is predicted to be 2.3% in 2016 and 2.1% in 2017.*

*This rise is very encouraging but it also raises the risk of a potential skills gap. To keep up with demand, the industry needs another million workers by 2020. Women are expected to make up a quarter of the workforce by 2020 and will likely be instrumental in plugging this growing gap.*

*Many construction companies have realised the value of skilled female workers and are actively recruiting and supporting women. A number of national campaigns are also helping to get women into the industry and there has been a significant and positive change in attitude in the last decade.*

*But to continue this change and create equality, businesses must address the issues women face in the workplace such as flexibility and any lingering discrimination. Companies that don't utilise the many skills and diversity women bring, whether by accident or design, will find themselves suffering poorer recruitment and higher staff turnover.*

*Great strides have been made in construction with women's pay rising by 6% a year for the last decade but there is still a perception men and women are paid differently. Greater pay transparency and published pay scales would help to improve this perception but the industry also needs to do more to sell itself and prove the stereotype that*

*construction is a "man's world" is no longer true.*

*Construction is helping power the UK economy out of recession. But it can only do that if all companies are on board, supporting women in their roles, offering flexibility, equal pay and exciting promotional prospects. Childcare legislation, which comes into force next year, increasing free childcare from 15 to 30 hours a week will also help encourage more women to return to the industry.*

*Construction has become significantly more professional in recent years in terms of technology and working practices. This drive towards professionalism can only be applauded but it needs to go hand in hand with equal treatment of female workers too.*

*By employing women at all levels and using their extensive abilities, any skills gap will hopefully be avoided and construction will continue to be the backbone of the UK economy for many years to come.*

# Key takeaways



Women are expected to make up a quarter (26%) of the UK's construction workforce by 2020



Companies must harness the power and skills of women to avoid a skills crisis within the construction industry



However, perceptions surrounding equal pay still persist among women, with 41% believing they earn less than men



Significant progress made in encouraging women into construction over the last decade with the majority of women saying their employer actively encourages female recruitment



Pay packets rise 6% per year between 2005 and 2015 for women in the construction industry

## Women to make up a quarter of the UK construction workforce by 2020

The rate at which women are embarking on careers in construction is at an all-time high with four times as many entering the industry now as they did five years ago.

They are expected to make up a quarter of all workers in UK construction by 2020 and will play an important part in counteracting the emerging skills gap.

More than a million extra workers are needed by 2020 to keep up with UK growth and build the necessary 300,000 new homes a year. Women are expected to account for a significant portion of that, many of them in senior roles. 82% in construction agree there is already a serious skills shortage and 72% say there is a mismatch between the availability of work and the capacity to keep up so there is plenty of opportunity for improving the gender imbalance.

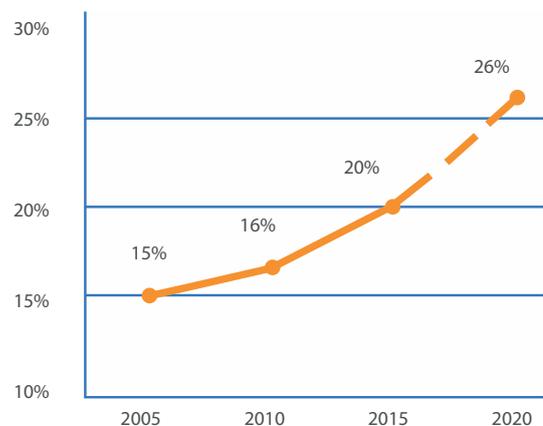
Women could soon make up 50% of this new workforce and, with the majority of construction

firms now actively working to hire women, this could equate to an 80% female recruitment rate. In 2005, an overwhelming 79% of women reported their companies were doing nothing special to attract female workers. In 2015, this figure had dropped to 29% indicating a significant, positive change in workplace culture.

The industry has taken on board the gender disparity and, whilst the perception of a pay gap still exists with 41% of women believing men are paid more than them, attitudes have changed for the better. More than three-quarters of men believe they are paid equally and 42% of workers believe there will come a time when men and women are paid the same.

Women are still reporting discrimination purely because of their gender, showing there is ongoing work to be done in eradicating sexism. However, the number of women leaving the industry because of such discrimination is just 11% and an

overwhelming 94% believe they have got where they are through their own hard work, ability and expertise rather than any gender bias or female-only quotas.



Proportion of female employees entering the construction industry in the UK

Source: Randstad 2015 Women in Construction Report

# Women filling more senior construction roles

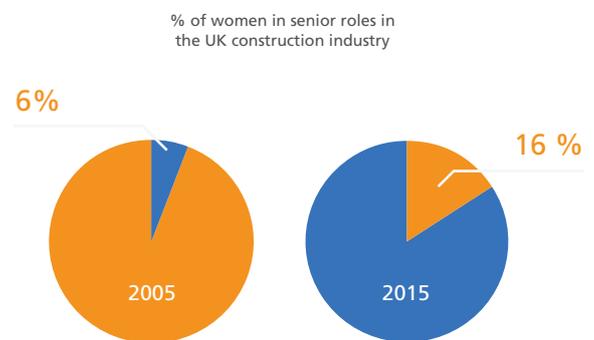
The number of women in senior roles has leapt from 6% in 2005 to 16% and one in fourteen of those in senior management positions or directorships now earns more than £75,000. Another 2% earn over £100,000 a year.

Just 3% of women now occupy traditionally "female" roles such as secretarial or support, compared to 9% in 2005 with more women entering the profession in roles such as surveyors or construction managers.

However, despite the construction industry offering competitive pay, prospects and career advancement, awareness of these benefits is not as high as it could be. According to the 2016 Randstad Awards, a

large-scale survey of more than 7,500 UK adults into employer and industry attractiveness, construction doesn't rate highly as a tempting profession to enter. No major construction firms ranked in the top 20 most attractive companies for either gender. For the numbers of women to increase, this corporate image therefore needs to change.

A third of workers believe more could be done to encourage women into those senior posts and an average of 34% feel a "glass ceiling" still stops many women from rising to the top. Overall, 77% of construction workers feel not enough is being done to address the skills gap and less than one in ten is actually undergoing



Source: Randstad 2015 Women in Construction Report



any formal on-the-job training. However, a third of workers felt women had as good a chance as men of getting a pay rise or promotion.

Outside of senior management, the position is more mixed. Female architects, who once accounted for 19% of all women in construction in 2005, now number just 10%. This is partly explained by the growth of female professionals in other sectors.

A similar position is seen with female quantity surveyors, down from 13% to 12%, despite high demand for the job.

Various campaigns are slowly helping to change awareness. Construction Youth launched its 'Not Just for Boys' campaign in September 2015, targeting young

people and focusing specifically on the misconception that construction careers are only for men.

The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), whose board members are now predominantly female, is also working closely with the industry and educational establishments to change its problematic image and improve recruitment.

And UCATT, the UK's only trade union specialising in construction, has been running a 'Women Get Women' recruitment campaign aimed at dramatically increasing its female construction worker members by its 2016 National Delegates Conference.

# Employers working hard to close the gap

Companies are taking on board the importance of getting women into construction and actively tackling the lack of diversity. There is greater general acceptance of women in the industry and a gradual and ongoing breakdown of what were once considered traditionally male and female roles.

Almost half of women in construction (49%) also currently describe their employer as “very” or “extremely” supportive of women in the industry.

However, a third of workers believe men in construction get more respect than women when promoted and the number of women reporting discrimination in the workplace has actually

increased since 2005. The proportion of those experiencing some form of prejudice has grown from two thirds (66%) to almost three quarters (74%).

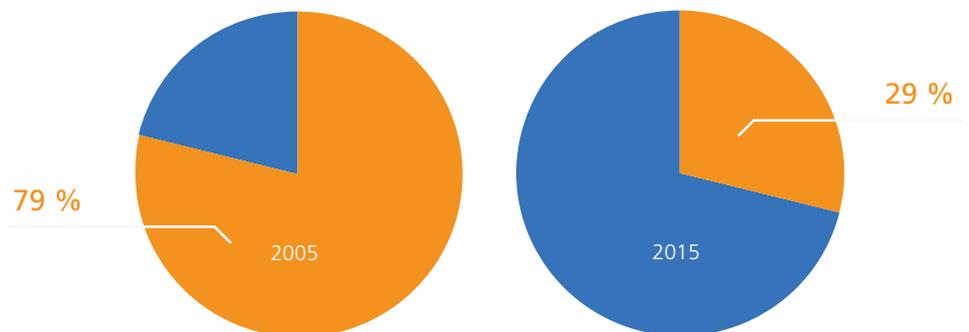
Being the subject of inappropriate comments or behaviour from male colleagues was the top form of discrimination though, significantly, 7% reported suffering the same from female colleagues. This is backed up by UCATT’s Women in Construction Survey in which 51% said they were treated worse at work, merely because of their gender.

There is still a tendency to exclude women from male conversations or social events, with 46% experiencing being sidelined.

A further 28% said they had been offered a less important role and a quarter reported being passed over for promotion.

While many employers are sensitive to such discrimination and attitudes and are working hard to eliminate them, the figures show further work needs to be done to encourage equality. Despite the incidence of discrimination, 76% of women said they would still recommend a job in construction to a female friend, daughter or niece.

% of women who are dissatisfied with the promotion of careers in construction

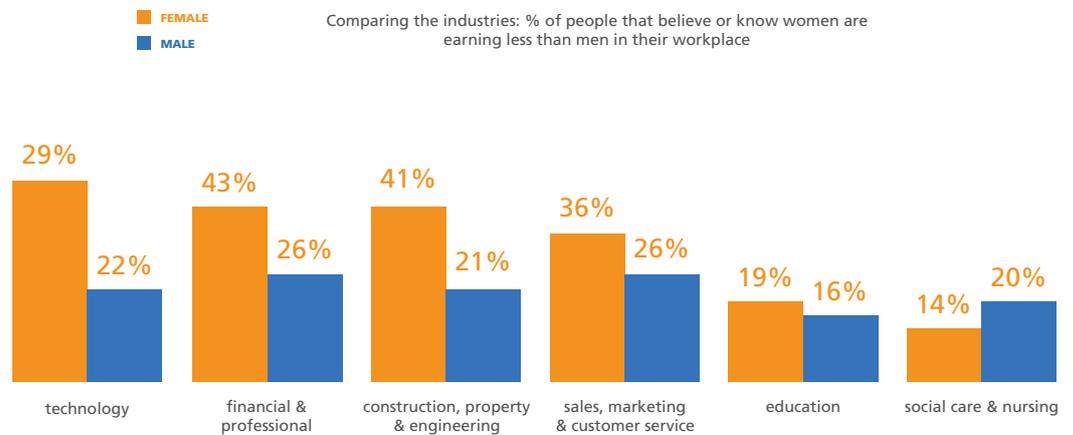


Source: Randstad 2015 Women in Construction Report

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

The average annual salary for women in construction has increased from £24,500 in 2005 to £39,200 in 2015, meaning women are paid 60% more than they were ten years ago. The shortage of skilled workers is helping to drive up wages. However, whilst 79% of men believe they earn the same as women, 41% of women disagree, indicating more needs to be done to increase pay transparency and dispel any perceptions around men being paid more.

New legislation to compel companies with more than 250 employees to publish bonuses and the difference between the average pay of male and female workers should also help to redress the balance.



Source: The Level Paying Field: UK Working Women and Pay Rises, Randstad UK

# Variety of work & tangible achievement – but a lack of awareness and flexibility

Construction is the bedrock of society, promoting sustainable growth and infrastructure for future generations. One in five women (22%) described this sense of achievement as their favourite aspect of the job. Another top factor though was the variety of work (32%).

However, as the 2016 Randstad Award shows, the construction industry suffers from lack of broad awareness and isn't perceived as particularly attractive. This lack of awareness was cited as the top reason women don't go into construction (43%), along with lack of suitable role models (42%) and an industry still described as "macho" (41%). But the survey also revealed that the cost-per-hire

at companies with a good brand or reputation was 46% lower than those without, highlighting the financial benefits for construction companies that do improve their image.

16% of women also said lack of flexibility or part-time working was one of the reasons they had left the industry or knew someone who had. From September 2017, parents can enjoy up to 30 free hours childcare a week for three and four-year-olds, which should give women with younger children more flexibility and increase the opportunity to return to work.

However, 44% said better flexibility in the industry itself would persuade women to return

to a career in construction as would enforcing equal pay (35%) and improving mentoring and sponsorship programmes (23%). This therefore seems to indicate that there are still a lot of issues the construction industry needs to address if it wants to become more inclusive. Just 5% left because of poor maternity rights and 1% because of poor promotional prospects.

What would attract women to a career in construction in the UK?



Source: Randstad Award 2016, Randstad UK

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