



Statewide construction workforce continues to grow, diversify according to NY Building Congress

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Manhattan, NY The New York Building Congress released a report that found that New York's construction workforce continues to grow and diversify despite ongoing challenges across the industry.

Overall, New York State experienced a 11% increase in its construction workforce, growing to 545,000 workers from 493,000 workers the previous year, according to the NY Building Congress' "Construction Outlook Update – Workforce Snapshot 2023." Despite being one of the hardest hit industries by COVID-19 stop work orders, construction is the state's seventh-highest employing industry. The workforce is estimated to reach 575,000 workers by the end of the year, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Regionally, New York City saw a similar growth, with a 17% increase in construction jobs in the five boroughs alone.

"The construction industry's labor force is the bedrock of progress in New York state. With skill, dedication and unwavering commitment, these hardworking individuals literally shape the skyline, build our communities and propel our economy forward," said Carlo Scissura, president & CEO of the New York Building Congress. "From towering skyscrapers to vital transportation and infrastructure projects, their expertise ensures the realization of our boldest visions. As we forge ahead, let's recognize and celebrate the immense importance of the construction industry workforce as they build the structures and the prosperity of our great state for future generations."

The industry across the state remains diverse, with an uptick over the last year. Recent data shows that the state's workforce identified as 43% non-white, while 66% of New York City workforce members identified as non-white – both figures a 3% increase from the previous year.

In New York City, the workforce is getting younger, which has been an integral industry focus in recent years faced with an aging workforce. The percent of professionals under 25 increased from 4.9% to 5.7%, a testament to the professional development and workforce training programs available to young people.

Examining data from the latest U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, which represents the construction workforce in 2021, reveals the industry's strengths and identifies areas where the City, State and federal government need to increase rights and expand offerings for the construction workforce.

Key recommendations and insights from the report include:

- Facilitate work authorization for migrant construction workers: The report found that only 21% of the statewide workforce, and 35% of New York City's workforce does not have full citizenship status. To support migrant workers and the workers that left their citizenship status unreported, expedited paths to work authorization should be explored. Streaming work permits for asylum seekers and decreasing fees for federal certification and required training courses would help recent immigrants overcome barriers to work. Adequate support and resources must be available for the 37% of

statewide and 58% of citywide workers that indicated that English is not their primary language.

- Ensure New York is a functional and livable place for the construction workforce: 41% of the construction workforce in New York City travels to work via public transportation and more than half (53%) commute 45 minutes or more to work. Statewide, 35% of workers commute 45 minutes or more to work. New York City and State must invest in the infrastructure, including increased transit connectivity and housing that is affordable and accessible to job sites, to support the construction workforce.
- Support and enhance professional development for young employees: 46% of construction workers in New York are between the ages of 25 and 45 years old. Just 6.6% of the workforce is under 25, signaling a need to invest in professional development programs across the state. A shining example of success has been seen in the Building and Construction Trades Union's apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, known as the Apprenticeship Readiness Collective (ARC), which shows high retention rates and placement levels. High school and college programming to recruit young people to careers in the building industry should be expanded nationwide. In addition, the Building Congress encourages state lawmakers to maximize the amount of funding available under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) for workforce development.
- Create a centralized platform to support minority and women-owned businesses: Statewide, only 9.4% of all construction industry workers are women. Investing in minority and women-owned businesses (MWBES) is an investment in the success and longevity of women in the workforce. To foster a positive and significant improvement in construction workforce diversity, there should be one centralized platform for MWBEs to bid on state, city, and public authority projects. The state legislature took the first step by passing nation-leading legislation to help MWBEs do business in New York – now it's time to streamline and ensure this process is as smooth as possible.
- Maintain reliable pathways to the middle class: The construction industry takes pride in being a gateway to the middle class. 52% of the State's construction labor force reported a household income of \$100,000 or above, with 39% having annual household incomes above \$125,000. This figure is even higher for households with female construction workers, where 42% reported annual household incomes over \$125,000. The Building Congress calls on the City, State and federal government to maintain a steady stream of projects through the IIJA and Inflation Reduction Act by coordinating program applications, expediting approvals, and getting funding to job sites as soon as possible.

"With the state continuing to invest in a number of critical infrastructure projects that are set to create thousands of family sustaining careers for working class New Yorkers, it is encouraging to see that our construction labor force is growing and diversifying in tandem with our economic recovery," said Gary LaBarbera, president of the New York State Building Trades. "As we look to get these important initiatives completed efficiently and masterfully, we must maintain a commitment to expanding our construction workforce development and providing more accessible pathways to the middle class for tradesmen and tradeswomen of all backgrounds. A more diverse and growing union

construction industry strengthens our overall economy, and we look forward to continuing to offer these opportunities to hard working New Yorkers through our pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.”

The New York Building Congress, a broad-based membership association celebrating its 102nd year, is committed to promoting the growth and success of the construction industry in New York City and its environs.

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