

Women make up a record high of homebuilding workforce nationwide, and Sacramento region is no exception

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In the U.S., women make up about half of the workforce. Despite the longstanding myth that construction jobs are limited to one gender, a growing number of women across the country are carving out fulfilling careers in the construction industry. Both in professional roles and in the trades, more women are seizing opportunities in residential construction.

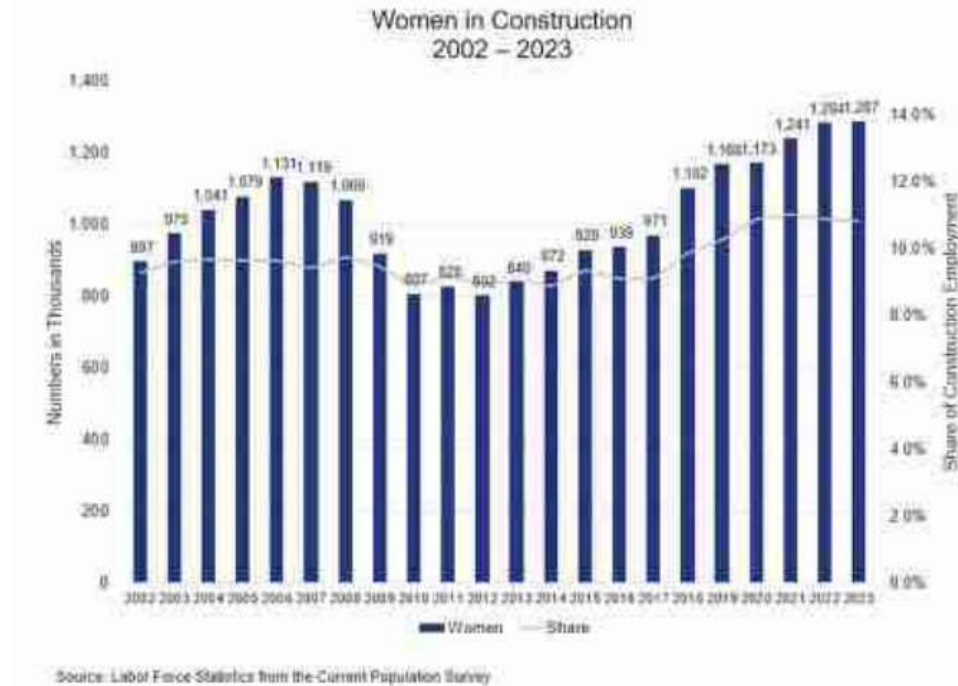
In 2023, the number of women employed in the construction industry inched up to around 1.3 million — a record high. Women now represent 10.8% of the construction workforce, an increase from 9.3% in 2002. As the industry continues to face a shortage of skilled

labor, adding new workers is an important goal.

The homebuilding industry just marked Professional Women in Building Week, so this is a great time to reflect on the growth of women in our profession. It's also a great time for more women to join the industry because not only are residential construction industry jobs in high demand and high paying, but there are also many job training opportunities and growing networks of supportive professionals.

In Sacramento, women are particularly well-represented in leadership roles for our homebuilding companies. Deana Ellis, vice president of land resources for Cresleigh Homes, says women have great opportunities in the industry in our region.

"I've been at Cresleigh



for 20 years and I keep waiting to run into something where gender is an issue, but I haven't. I don't see a man vs. woman thing in the industry — that's

fairly well evaporated. If you show up, be creative and work hard, you're at the table," she said.

Ellis added that given the growing shortage of

labor at all levels as people reach retirement age, now is a particularly good time for men and women alike to consider careers in construction.

"Whether you're a plumber, an engineer, or the foreman of job site, all those avenues are open. We need everyone to fill that pipeline. And I feel so strongly that women can be as successful in this industry as men," she said.

That success is also reflected in BIA leadership. Bonnie Chiu, vice president of forward planning for D.R. Horton, serves as the 2024 Chair of the Board alongside Board Secretary Tina Cruce, the chief financial officer at Tim Lewis Communities. In addition, the executive directors of our two affiliated nonprofits are women — Jennifer Poff at the North State Building Industry Foundation and Amber Celmer at Home-Aid Sacramento. Across

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BIA and our affiliates, one-third of our board leadership is comprised of women. But while this progress is slower in the trades, the number of women in those fields is growing as well. Jennifer Poff reports that women comprise about 10% of the participants in the Foun-

dation's workforce development programs — but that in some courses, the total is upwards of 50%. One reason is likely the fact that wages in homebuilding are steadily rising. According to an analysis of a Bureau of Labor Statistics report by NAHB, residential building workers'

wage growth accelerated in June, marking the fastest year-over-year growth rate since December 2018. The average hourly earnings for residential building workers were \$32.28 per hour in June 2024, increasing 9% from \$29.62 per hour a year ago.

There are many construction-related workforce development programs in the region. One of the best is the Build-Strong Academy, which

provides tuition-free pre-apprenticeship carpentry training program with a focus on professional development, mentoring and ongoing support for students. Operated by the Home Builders Institute — an affiliate of the National Association of Home Builders — in partnership with our own Foundation, about 80% of program participants have found jobs in the industry.

Ellis says educating

young people about what a career in construction can mean before they develop stereotypes is crucial.

"The trades are a career. You can own your own business or be an employee. And you can get started without having to take on a significant amount of debt. I'd encourage parents to encourage their daughters to consider careers in this profession," she said.

"There's a wide opening for young people if devel-

opment is something they want to pursue. Every day is different — it's exciting field." And Ellis is a champion for women in construction with first-hand experience as her daughter is studying business and real estate in college.

"She can have a dynamic career. And one of the best things about being a parent is seeing a person who's 20 years old who wants to follow in your footsteps," she said.