



**University of Salford**  
A Greater Manchester University

# Women and Constuction



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# Women and Construction

The construction industry is of strategic importance to England's North West and has an important place in the Regional Economic Strategy. A healthy construction industry is vital for the physical regeneration of the region. But, potential skills shortages are facing the construction industry. As the CITB 2003 Skills Forecast Report suggests: "UK construction has delivered a sharp increase (8%) in output over the last year, growing faster than any other major sector. Approximately 83,000 new recruits will be required each year between 2003 and 2007". The industry cannot rely on the traditional male workforce to meet these targets. The recruitment of women is imperative to achieving these objectives and prolonging the industry's growth.

Further, the number of women entering into University education has continued to increase over recent years, and women now account for over 50% of students. However, women still only constitute 8% of construction students. Further, despite the introduction of Equal Opportunities policies by universities most academic staff continue to be male. Women hold only 35% of full time academic posts, and only 10% of professorships. The figures are even more revealing in the case of construction, where less than 0.5% of professors are women.

Despite the above concerns there has been very little change in the number of women working in industry. Numerous initiatives promoting construction careers to women have been developed but none has had the desired effect.

## Construction and Women project

In July 2005, an 18 month project – Construction and Women - was established to identify the underlying causes for the lack of professional women in construction, including industry and academia. Policies, strategies and best practice guidelines will be produced and disseminated to encourage women to pursue careers in construction, and improve retention in the industry.

This project is jointly funded by the European Social Fund and the University of Salford.



## Aim and objectives

The Construction and Women project is concerned with the lack of women working in a professional capacity within the construction sector, with particular emphasis on those working in the North West of the UK. The issue regarding the lack of women in construction has been a concern for many years, attracting government and industry wide attention. This issue has been made more prominent recently due to the skills shortages facing the industry. Despite it being a concern, there has been very little change in the number of women working in the industry. Numerous initiatives promoting construction careers to women have been developed but they do not appear to have had the desired effect. In this context, this project will look into:

- The background to the problem; women's under representation in construction, including both industry and academia;
- The recent initiatives and their limited success in attracting more women into construction and the current status of women in construction to find out whether such schemes have had the desired effect, or after trying for numerous years to improve the position of women in the industry, have they finally run their course;

- To explore women academics' perceptions and experiences within the field to discover what factors had influenced their own professional career and what seemed to them to be the conditions relevant to the access of women to the academic profession within construction;
- The effect of culture on the employment of women in the Construction sector: both industry and academia - to explore effects of the reality of being a small minority working in a male dominated environment on women's perceptions of themselves as full members of the profession;
- What lessons can construction learn from other professions where women has a fair representation within the North West Region of the UK, to improve its own situation; and
- To provide recommendations (including training needs) and good practice guidelines to aid the recruitment and retention of women in construction.

It is hoped that the project will be able to uncover:

- The ways to remove the barriers in women involvement in construction
- Policies and practices designed to remedy the effects of past discrimination against the members of the under represented gender: women academics relating to construction and women employed in the construction industry

## Work packages

Activities within the project are planned as 4 work packages:

### Work Package 1 - Identify and Understand the current status on "Construction and Women" in the NW

- Understand the background to the problem and associated barriers - women's under representation in construction: both industry and academia
- Study the recent initiatives and their limited success to attract more women into construction (industry perspective)
- Explore women academics' perceptions and experiences within the field to discover what factors had influenced their own professional career and what seemed to them to be the conditions relevant to the access of women to the academic profession within construction (academic perspective)
- Understand the effect of culture on the employment of women in the Construction sector: both industry and academia

### Work Package 2 - What lessons can be learnt from other sectors

- Examine other professions such as Medicine, Accountancy, and Media Studies to discover how it has become an accessible career for women in the North West.

### Work Package 3 - Investigate a solution

- Provide recommendations to aid the recruitment and retention of women in construction.

### Work Package 4 - Dissemination

- Inform the construction community, academic community, policy makers and other stakeholders of the research findings.

## Further information

If you require further information on the research or if you want to discuss the possibility of participating, please do not hesitate to contact:

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