



Gender Equality & Diversity

Emerging Sector Insight

CEWales insight, in response to concerns about the ageing workforce, lack of diversity in the Construction Industry and the implications this will have on our future workforce.

1. Current Position

UK Wide

Current UK Census data on employment highlighted that Males (61.4%) were more likely to be employed than females (53.2%). In the construction sector, white British and white Irish Workers comprised the highest percentages out of all ethnic groups. [Diversity in the labour market, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) & [Employment by sector - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](#)

According to the Construction Inclusion Coalition, only 15% of the construction industry in UK are women (2% on site), 6% are people from ethnic minority background and 6% people live with a disability. [About Us - Construction Inclusion Coalition \(biltonbetter.uk\)](#)

Wales

According to the Annual Population Survey for the year ending March 2024, of the 102,700 people employed in the construction sector in Wales, the majority (89,100 or 86.8%) are male, with females making up just 13.2% (13,600) of total employment. (Provided by Welsh Government directly).

According to Chwarae Teg's (Gender Equality Charity now closed) latest State of the Nation Report 2022 only 12.5% of the Construction workforce are women. This is a slight increase of 0.9% on the previous year, the report also shows that the construction sector employs the least number of women amongst the 20 Standard Industry Classification groupings. They also found that only 3% of apprenticeship starts in Construction in Wales (2021) were female.

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/sites/default/files/images/the-construction-industry-in-wales-november-22.pdf> & [State of the Nation 2023: "Women to Wait Decades for Equality" \(businessnewswales.com\) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Data - Architects Registration Board \(arb.org.uk\)](#)

In professional services such as Architecture, diversity statistics show 80.4% white with 1.4% black registered architects. [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Data - Architects Registration Board \(arb.org.uk\)](#)

In February to April 2024, Wales had the lowest employment rate (68.9%) and the highest economic inactivity rate. [Labour market in the regions of the UK - Office for National Statistics](#). Despite this, an



emerging picture from the CEWales State of business survey showcased that focus regarding Equality Diversity and Inclusion was the same as before and/or more.

2.Areas for Improvement

Challenges

- Known challenge area in Wales and broadly UK - identified in the [Cardiff Capital Employment and Skills Plan 2022 - 2025](#) – Perceptions influence the sector however this appears to have improved over recent years but not by much. Those who enter, find the profession to be rooted in ‘boys club’ mentality with few mentors/female leaders present.
- Mental, Behavioural, Financial and social barriers exist that prevent women from entering and then climbing up the career ladders.
- Inclusion, diversity, BAME are still yet to be fully realised across career progression and leadership positions.
- Fear of discrimination combined with greater pay in other sectors prevents the industry from growing quickly.
- There are shoots of positivity around early career awareness through STEM, ICE Connects Initiative and Women in Construction events however more needs to be done at a leadership level.

Opportunities

- Visibility & Inclusive career growth - need to raise the profile of construction careers through activities such as Go Construct, Skillbuild, STEM Ambassadors as captured in the [CITB Regional Wales Report](#) and showcase sector value beyond early careers.
- Professional membership charity ICE has recognised that there is an imbalance in the gender split across the sector, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and created an [action plan](#) with five membership bodies from across the built environment sector to agree to jointly improve equity, diversity and inclusion. The collaboration potential of expanding this to apprenticeship and skills bodies is significant. Linking it to the Welsh context via their regional Welsh arms is an opportunity for industry bodies to collaborate on diversity and gender. ICE has also doubled the number of women Fellows over the last few years striving to improve the diversity across all grades and republished the updated [Anti-Racism Toolkit](#).



Relevant Publications

[Why Diversity and Inclusion are Important to the Construction Industry \(itsconstruction.co.uk\)](#)
[citb_strategiequalityplan_english_final.pdf](#)

[Calls for gender balance in construction industry - BBC News](#)

[Business, industry and trade - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<https://www.skillsforwales.wales/2024/01/03/shh-no-we-need-to-talk-about-it#:~:text=The%20construction%20industry%20overall%20has,%2C%20Asian%2C%20Minority%20Ethnics%20backgrounds.>

[ICE Membership Diversity Data 2023/24 | Institution of Civil Engineers \(ICE\)](#)

[Gender Pay Gap Report 2023 | Institution of Civil Engineers \(ICE\)](#)

[Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Data - Architects Registration Board \(arb.org.uk\)](#)

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/sites/default/files/images/the-construction-industry-in-wales-november-22.pdf>

[State of the Nation 2023: “Women to Wait Decades for Equality” \(businessnewswales.com\)Equality,](#)

[Diversity & Inclusion Data - Architects Registration Board \(arb.org.uk\)](#)

[About Us - Construction Inclusion Coalition \(builtonbetter.uk\)](#)

[Diversity in the labour market, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Employment by sector - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Construction statistics, Great Britain - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Labour market in the regions of the UK - Office for National Statistics](#)