

# Recruiting and Retaining Women in Good Jobs in Construction

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California Women in Construction Advisory Commission

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# About IWPR

As a leading national think tank, we build evidence to shape policies that grow women's power and influence, close inequality gaps, and improve the economic well-being of families.



# Apprenticeships: Expanding Access to Good Jobs for Women

- *Why now*
- *Who are women apprentices in the trades*
- *What are the challenges for growing gender diversity in trade apprenticeships*
- *How to meet those challenges*

# Women and Building Trades Apprenticeships

## *Why now: Extraordinary moment*

### ○ **Great momentum**

- Great momentum with highest numbers ever
  - COVID recovery: Between February 2020 and September 2023, jobs on payroll in the construction industry increased by 147,00 for women, and 253,000 for men nationally
  - 354,000 tradeswomen nationally (47% growth between 2017 and 2022)
  - 2017 to 2023, number of Latina construction apprentices almost tripled (but still only 338 in CA)

### ○ **High need**

- Aging: High retirement rates of skilled workers
- COVID-19 highlighted women's concentration in the lowest paid jobs, and many of these jobs have not (may not) come back
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act & Inflation Reduction Act & CHIPS & Science Act

# Women and Building Trades Apprenticeships

## *The Challenge*

- New monies come with high expectations, including for apprenticeships
- The construction workforce does not reflect the population:
  - Women are just 4.2% of tradesworkers nationally (but 14% of veterans)
  - Women are just 4.5% of construction apprentices (in CA and nationally)
    - 20 states are doing better than CA in attracting and retaining women construction apprentices
- Many women (and also men) who enter the industry do not stay

# The 2021 IWPR Tradeswomen's Retention and Advancement Survey

*Lifting Up Tradeswomen's and Trade Apprentices Voices and Experiences on What Needs to Change in the Industry to Build on the Current Momentum*

- **What did we asked**

- What attracts you to the trades? How did you learn about trade opportunities?
- What is it like to work in the trades? As a woman of color? As an apprentice? As a mother?
- Is anything pushing you out of the trades?
- What helps you succeed in the trades?

- **Who answered the survey**

- 2,635 tradeswomen and nonbinary tradespeople (CA: 412)
- 63% are union members (CA: 61% A)
- 46% journey, 23% apprentices, 23% experienced other (CA: 41% journey; 18% apprentices; 30% Experienced Tradeswomen; 11% other)
- Responses from 50 states and DC

- **When and how**

- Winter 2021 on-line
- Distributed through tradeswomen's groups, social media, women-focused pre-apprenticeship programs, NABTU Women's Committee

# The 2021 IWPR Tradeswomen's Retention and Advancement Survey

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  - What helps you succeed in the trades?
- **Focus groups with Black, Latina, and Afro Latina Early Career Tradeswomen**
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# Who are Tradeswomen Apprentices?

- **Mothers and Parents**

- 66% of all tradeswomen in CA have kids
- 54% of women apprentices nationally have kids
- 18% of women apprentices nationally have kids under 6

- **Diverse**

- 5% Asian American and Pacific Islanders (CA all: 5.7%)
- 17.9% Black non-Hispanic (CA all: 11.4%)
- 16.4% Latina (CA all: 26.1%)
- 2.7% Native American non-Hispanic (CA all: 4.7%)
- 55% White non-Hispanic (CA all: 49.9%)
- 3.5% More than one race or other (CA all: 2.2%)

- **Earning Good Wages (2019)**

- 30% earned at least \$50,000 per year
- 46% earned between \$25,000 and \$50,000





# Why do Women join the Trades: Good Job with Benefits

*“I experienced homelessness at the beginning of my apprenticeship. But also through my apprenticeship I now have my own home.”* Black woman apprentice

*“I am a single mother and needed to make good money to survive”*  
White woman apprentice

*“I’m in the process of buying a house. All of my sisters are stay-at-home moms. I’m going to show my nieces that you could do something other and buy your own house.”*  
Latina early career journeywoman

*“A paid apprenticeship without the burden of more college debt was hugely important to me! I wanted a career change but didn’t want tens of thousands of dollars of debt.”* White woman apprentice

# How can we grow the number of women apprentices

## *What are the challenges*

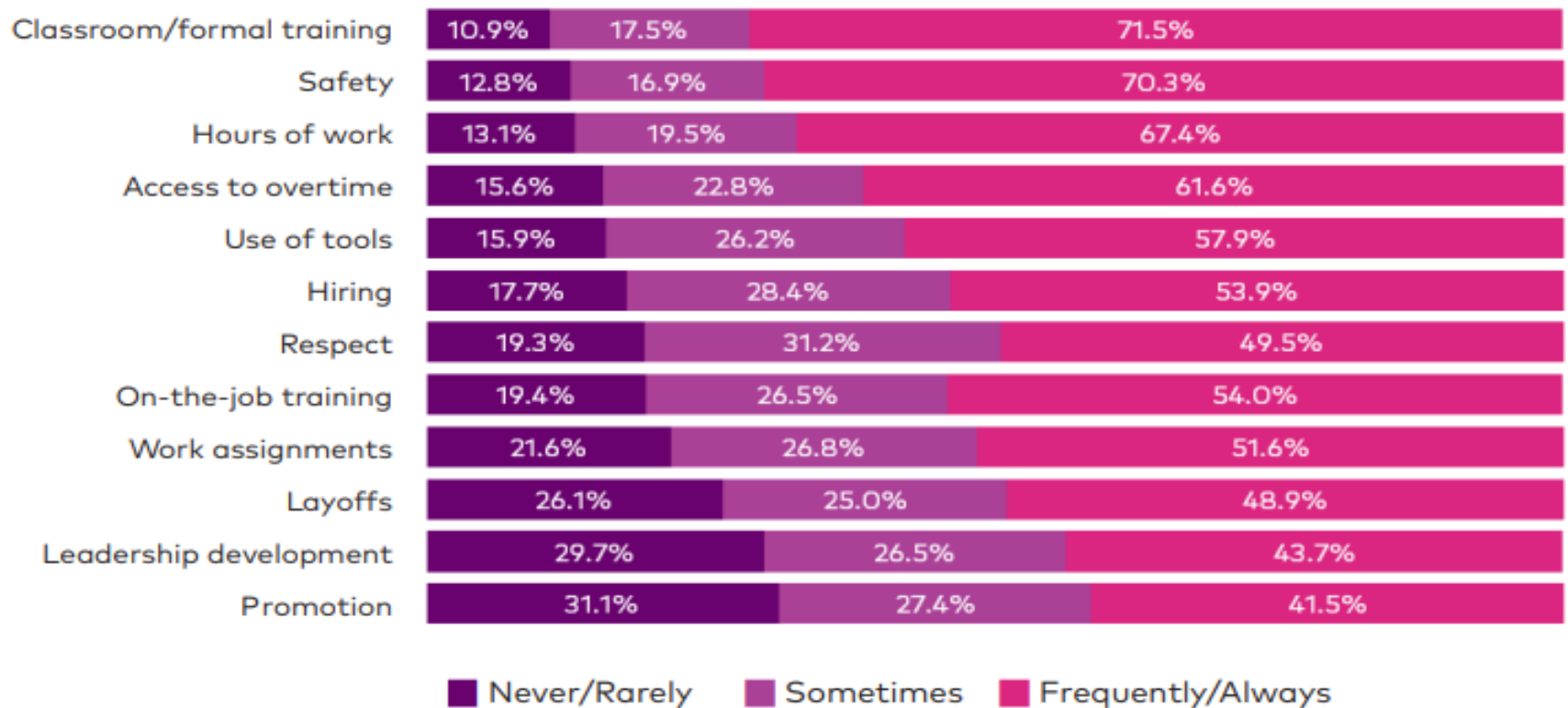
- **Finding out about the trades is haphazard**
  - Only **2.9% of CA tradeswomen** respondents (6% nationally) learned about opportunities in the trades from their high school counsellor
  - **59% in CA** (44% nationally) came in through friends and family
- **Being held to higher standards than men is exhausting:**
  - 37% of apprentices nationally say there are frequently or always held to a higher standard than men
- **Discrimination and harassment are too common**
  - 19% say they are never or rarely treated equally with men when it comes to *respect* or *on-the-job training*
  - 22% say they are never or rarely treated equally when it comes to *work assignments*

➔ **Retention: 44% have seriously thought about leaving the trades**

# Discrimination at the Heart of the Apprenticeship Model

*“I feel like men with half my experience and poor quality of work get put before me all the time. I have to work twice as hard to get half the credit. I’m a 4th year apprentice and find first-year guys get put before me often. Feel like I get stuck cleaning and doing meaningless tasks a lot.”*

## As an Apprentice, How Often are You Treated Equally to Men?



Source: 2021 IWPR Tradeswomen’s Retention and Advancement Survey.

# More than 4 in 10 apprentices have seriously thought about leaving the trades

*Most common “very important” reasons for thinking about leaving for apprentices*

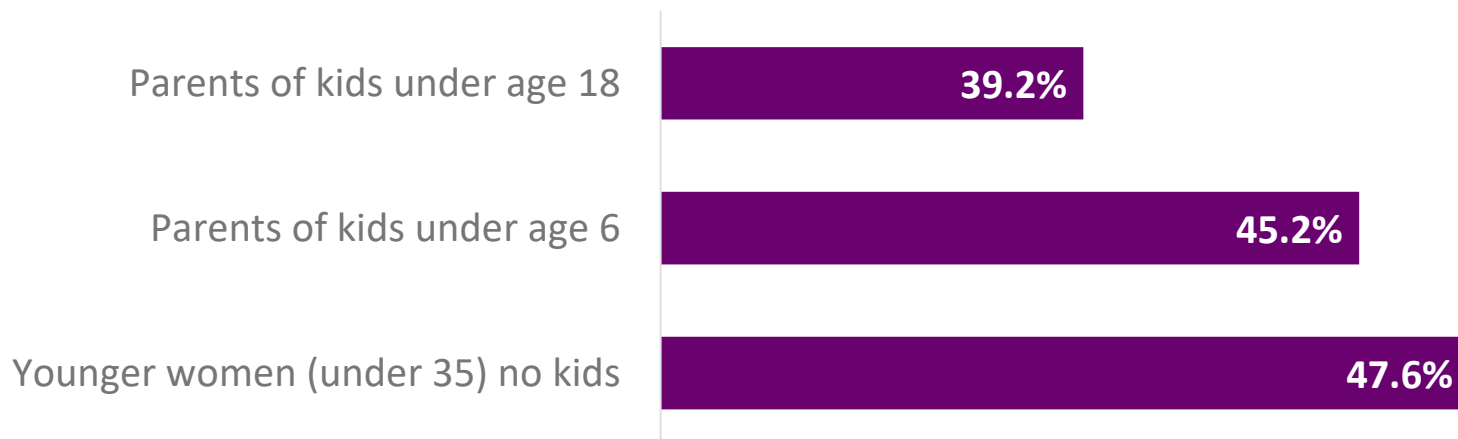
- 51% Lack of Respect/Harassment
- 40% Lack of opportunity to build full skills set/low quality of training
- 37% Difficulties Finding Stable Work/not Enough Hours
- 36% Problems I raised were Not Taken Seriously
- 34% Yelling Culture
- 33.5% Lack of Promotion and Advancement Opportunities
- 33% Difficulties finding Childcare
- 31.5% Lack of Pregnancy accommodation

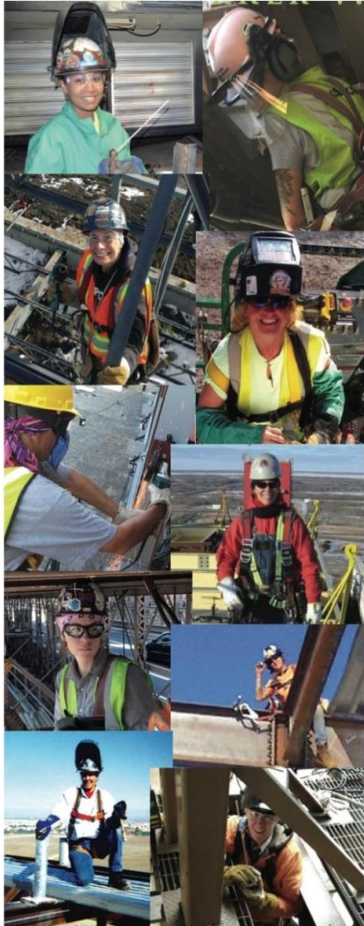
**→ With exception of childcare (perhaps): fixable!**

# Retention of tradeswomen with kids is potentially a big issue: but also of tradeswomen who may be thinking about becoming parents.

*“... kids are a big thing – you are not going to be pregnant”  
Tradeswoman, 5<sup>th</sup> year electrician apprentice*

Have you ever seriously considered leaving the trades? Yes





If you have any questions, please contact  
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IRONWORKERS.ORG

## MATERNITY PROVISION POLICY

### Benefit Description

June 2017

IMPACT is pleased to provide you with a summary of the MATERNITY PROVISION POLICY benefits. We urge you to read this brochure carefully so that you are aware of your benefits and the conditions under which they are available to you. Please keep this brochure with your Health and Welfare information and other important papers.



- **During Pregnancy: Up to 6 months of paid leave at two thirds of her usual earnings (up to \$800 per week)**
- **with a medical certificate to confirm that she is unable to continue work during her pregnancy;**
- **Maternity Leave: Up to 6 weeks (8 weeks in case of a Cesarean birth) of paid maternity leave**
- **Once every 24 months.**
- **Designed to complement any state and local benefits and can be used to top up such benefits if these are below the capped rate.**

# Unions have begun to adjust health benefits to cover pregnancy



## **North Central Carpenters (2018):**

Paid pregnancy & maternity leave similar to Ironworkers

## **Illinois Sheetmetal Workers Local 256 (2018)**

Paid Maternity leave (not during pregnancy) of Six Weeks for normal pregnancy/birth, eight weeks complications.

## **Oregon IBEW: Local 48, Salem Local 280, Medford Local 659, and Coos Bay Local 93 (July 2020):**

Up to 13 weeks prior to the expected due date and 13 more available after; up to \$800 per week.

## **North Atlantic States Carpenters Health Benefit Fund (Feb 2023):**

Pre-birth up to 20 weeks, post birth up to 12 weeks, per pregnancy; up to \$1,500 per week (top up on MA paid family leave pay).

## *Quick question*

*California was the first state in the nation to have a paid family leave scheme: How many tradesmen or women do you know who have taken parental leave?*



# Pregnancy and Maternity Accommodation

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Building New York While Building Families: Workers at the TWA Hotel Construction Site Benefit from Access to Nursing Station

July 18, 2018



- Finding space to nurse a child  
Mamava Pods  
(<https://www.mamava.com/>)
- Finding light or alternative work

**Thank you!**

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## Resources

*A Future Worth Building: What Tradeswomen Say about the Change They Need in the Construction Industry*” by Ariane Hegewisch and Eve Mefferd, 2021. Institute for Women’s Policy Research <https://iwpr.org/iwpr-publications/a-future-worth-building-report/>

*Here to Stay: Black, Latina, and Afro-Latina Women in Construction Trades Apprenticeships and Employment* by Chandra Childers, Ariane Hegewisch and Lark Jackson, 2021. Institute for Women’s Policy Research and Chicago Women in the Trades <https://iwpr.org/iwpr-publications/heretostay-black-latina-and-afro-latina-women-in-construction-trades-apprenticeships-and-employment/>

National Center for Women’s Equity in Apprenticeship and Employment at Chicago Women in the Trades “Best Practices” library <https://womensequitycenter.org/best-practices/>

Massachusetts Policy Group on Tradeswomen’s Issues: “Finishing the Job Best: Practices for a Diverse Workforce in the Construction Industry,” <https://policygroupontradeswomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Finishing-the-Job-Best-Practices-v.8-Sept-2018.pdf>

*Pregnancy and Maternity in the Trades: Good Practices for Apprentices.* by Ariane Hegewisch 2019. National Center for Women’s Equity in Apprenticeship and Employment at Chicago Women in the Trades. <http://womensequitycenter.org/best-practices/>

*Child Care Supports For The Construction Trades: Building and Sustaining Diversity in Oregon.* By Ariane Hegewisch, 2020. Institute for Women’s Policy Research <https://iwpr.org/iwpr-publications/briefing-paper/child-care-supports-for-the-construction-trades-building-and-sustaining-diversity-in-oregon/>