

FROM ENTRY TO LEADERSHIP

Women's Careers in the Skilled Trades

Learnings from Skills for Change's national *Women in Skilled Trades: Inclusive Pathways to Apprenticeship for Immigrant and Racialized Women* initiative.

Employers' Practices in the Skilled Trades

CONTEXT



In 2019, the Government of Canada launched the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy (CAS), a funding program aimed at increasing the visibility of career pathways in the skilled trades while tackling barriers for entry into the sector for equity-deserving groups. A women-focused initiative under the CAS was launched in 2022 for projects that would improve the recruitment, retention, and success of women apprentices in the skilled trades. One of the explicit objectives of this initiative is “creating a welcoming space where women can feel comfortable and safe in the training and work sites.”¹

Skills for Change responded, and through our *Women in Skilled Trades: Inclusive Pathways to Apprenticeship for Immigrant and Racialized Women* (WiST) program, we are working with women, employers, unions, and trainers across the country to build a stronger, more equitable construction and manufacturing skilled trades sector. Our convenings in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia foster critical dialogue, develop new networks, and advance understanding of the issues women face in skilled trades careers. The WiST Leadership Academy provides mentorship, career guidance, and leadership training to help women advance their career aspirations. And, we have conducted a national survey² of women and employers to gather insights into women’s perceptions about careers in the skilled trades, experiences of women already in a skilled trades career, and employer practices that support women’s careers and advancement. And through all these activities, this project looks ahead to the future of skilled trades and emerging pathways in environmentally sustainable practice.

This report is the sixth in a series of ten based on our national survey, augmented with data from other sources to build out a fuller picture of the skilled trades sector in Canada. In this sixth issue, we explore some case studies of inclusive employers in the trades, and how they are building more inclusive workplaces by focusing on thoughtful onboarding, mentorship, and career development practices. With each report, we will reveal more about their perspectives and experiences, weave in practices from employers who are working to create pathways for women, and stitch together research from a variety of sources to better understand ways forward. What emerges is a compelling story: women are not only actively participating in the skilled trades, but more are eager to join. Yet there remains much work to be done to ensure women can not only enter the trades and thrive in their careers but be safe doing so.

All of our reports, as well as our full suite of programs and services for women, including mental health supports for those experiencing discrimination or violence at home or in the workplace, are available on our website.

[READ THE OTHER REPORTS](#)



THE SKILLED TRADES EMPLOYER PRACTICES



In our national survey, we had a larger proportion of newcomer and racialized women respondents interested in skilled trades careers than are in the construction and manufacturing sectors in Canada (31% and 27% respectively). And 77% of these respondents said they are somewhat or very aware of the career pathways in the skilled trades, with some also telling us that they view the trades as a path to financial stability and hands-on, fulfilling work.

I never pictured myself stuck behind a desk. My hands always wanted to do something. I saw family struggle despite hard work, and I wanted stability and good pay without crushing student debt. My aunt, an electrician, showed me the satisfaction of building. Plus, the demand for skilled workers is huge! Seeing other women in trades made it feel possible. It's tough as a pre-apprentice, but I'm learning, getting hands-on, and building a future I'm proud of. Honestly, it came down to stability and making good money without piling on student debt. My aunt, the electrician, showed me it's possible for women of colour like me to thrive in these careers. Plus, there's such a huge demand for skilled workers, I knew it was a smart move for my future.

They also told us what they need in order to connect with employers and pursue skilled trades career pathways: mentorship opportunities (72%) and career fairs (59%). As well, 75% are very interested in women-specific leadership training.

However, once they join the workplace, they face some systemic issues. While the sector successfully recruits them, with employers from our survey saying they use strategies like employee referral programs (73%) and diversity training for hiring managers (69%), these promising recruitment efforts are overshadowed by tough workplace cultures and insufficient retention practices. When 61% of employers report that they do not provide networking opportunities for their employees, citing operational and time challenges, it means that the women miss out on the crucial opportunity to get to know about others who are going through similar journeys and build supportive networks. This is not just an administrative oversight, but a systemic failure to build the supportive infrastructure needed to retain talent.

The data from our survey reveals a lack of support for women in the skilled trades: 65% of employer respondents do not provide opportunities to learn about career advancement, and 87% do not offer women-specific leadership or mentorship programs. This gap between the high interest in leadership programs, and an absence of them in the workplace, suggests that career progression can be uneven and unpredictable. However, mentorship programs, leadership training, networking opportunities, and education on career advancement are key for long-term job retention and career sustainability. Unfortunately, such activities are also time consuming, cost both human and financial resources, and requires particular skills and knowledge to be able to create and operate. 56% of employers from our survey operate with fewer than 20 full-time employees, which raises questions about capacity and scope of responsibilities for individual positions and managers.

This is where Canada's nonprofit workforce development agencies, like Skills for Change, become an important part of career pathways. We are able to provide the expertise and supports, including training for employers, on equity issues and shifting workplace cultures. In our next report we discuss the WiST Leadership Academy as an example of how leadership training specifically designed for tradeswomen are scalable and focused on women's success.

CASE STUDIES OF INCLUSIVE EMPLOYERS



BC Infrastructure Benefits (BCIB): making inclusion “the operating system” of public infrastructure hiring

BC Infrastructure Benefits (BCIB) stands out as a rare Canadian example of an organization where equity, accessibility, and culture change are not layered on top of how trades employment works, but are built into the core mechanics of how workers are hired, trained, supported, and deployed on major public projects. BCIB's model is anchored in B.C.'s Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), with an explicit Priority Hiring approach that places qualified Indigenous workers, women, locals, and other underrepresented groups first in line for opportunities across the construction schedule and across trades.³

What makes BCIB's approach worth examining closely is that it demonstrates both scale and measurability, two qualities that are notably absent from many inclusion claims in the construction sector. In 2024/25 alone, BCIB reports employing more than 2,900 individual skilled trades workers, positioning itself as one of the province's largest construction employers.⁴ That workforce is also overwhelmingly local: 96% of employees lived in British Columbia in 2024/25, and 86% lived within 100 km of the project they were working on.^{5,6} This is an important point. Keeping workers close to home reduces the "camp culture" dynamic, supports family stability, and makes it more realistic for workers, particularly those who are most often pushed out by long-distance rotational work, to stay. BCIB's cumulative public reporting adds further texture to this picture: more than 6,500 people have worked for BCIB to date, and 20% have been rehired on at least one CBA project, an unusually direct indicator of continuity in a project-based industry.⁷

BCIB also treats culture change as a retention and safety intervention rather than a compliance exercise. Its Respectful Onsite Initiative (ROI) delivers mandatory training built around Indigenous cultural competency through a "History Matters" component and justice and equity content, with 97% participation among project skilled trades workers reported in 2024/25.^{8,9} The reach of this program has extended beyond CBA sites, as other organizations have sought access to the training model, suggesting its resonance beyond BCIB's own workforce.

BCIB's approach also integrates equity into apprenticeship outcomes rather than concentrating inclusion efforts at the point of entry alone.¹⁰ In 2024/25, BCIB exceeded its apprentice-hours target, reporting 31% apprentice hours relative to journeyperson hours, with 32% of apprentices advancing one or more levels during their time with the organization.¹¹ BCIB also publicly states that women on CBA projects are paid at the same rate as equally qualified men. In a sector where job assignment practices and wage transparency can quietly reproduce inequity even under formal pay scales, this kind of stated commitment carries real weight as a credibility signal.

Taken together, BCIB's story is one of inclusion built as a system: priority access, local continuity, structured culture change, and measurable apprenticeship progression, operating at an employer scale that connects EDI commitments to tangible outcomes.

Aecon Canada: EDI at industrial scale, tied to pathways, conversion points, and procurement power

Aecon Canada's approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion is notable in part for its willingness to publish hard numbers, acknowledge where gaps remain, and tie inclusion to concrete conversion points into trades work, including placements, apprenticeships, and project-linked training, rather than resting on broad statements about organizational values.¹² In its public EDI reporting, Aecon benchmarks its Canadian workforce against Employment Equity Act groups and population comparators. The organization reports 35.2% women

and gender minorities, 24.7% people of colour, 2.5% Indigenous Peoples, and 3.5% people with disabilities, set against Canadian population reference points of 50.9% women and gender minorities, 26.5% people of colour, 5.0% Indigenous Peoples, and 22.3% people with disabilities.^{13,14} The value here is not that the numbers signal a solved problem, but that reporting transparently enough to enable accountability and trend tracking over time is itself a meaningful practice that few construction employers have adopted.

Aecon has also focused attention on structured entry pathways in parts of the industry that are often among the hardest to access, particularly industrial and nuclear work, where informal networks and high credential thresholds can effectively close the door on newcomers and underrepresented groups. In 2024, Aecon participated as a host employer in an Ontario General Contractors Association New Entrants Bridging Program, with three newcomer placements converting into full-time roles on project management and site supervision career paths.¹⁵ That conversion metric matters in practice: it tracks movement from placement to stable employment in sectors that have historically been less accessible to newcomers.

For skilled trades pathways specifically, Aecon reports 140 placements through a Boilermaker Helpers Program in partnership with Boilermaker Local 128 and Ontario Power Generation, as well as 14 Indigenous participants introduced to the Millwright Union as first-year apprentices through a low-barrier introductory program combining practical training and mentorship.¹⁶ The organization also reports onboarding two new Indigenous carpenter apprentices through an Indigenous-led joint venture on project work, illustrating how equity pathways can be embedded directly into project delivery rather than operating as detached human resources initiatives.¹⁷

Aecon has also taken procurement seriously as a tool for distributing opportunity more broadly. In 2024, the organization reports \$15.3 million in spend with women-owned suppliers, \$73.8 million with Indigenous-owned suppliers, \$63.7 million with minority-owned suppliers, and \$5.2 million with disabled-owned suppliers.¹⁸ In a subcontract-heavy industry, this matters because opportunity flows not only through payroll hires but through who receives contracts, who becomes a preferred vendor, and who gains the repeat work that builds organizational capacity over time.

Aecon's case is perhaps most useful when understood as an example of inclusion infrastructure operating at industrial scale: transparent metrics, programmatic trade entry, and procurement practices that have the potential to redistribute opportunity across the supply chain.

PCL Construction: women-focused inclusion built around retention, sponsorship, and a "stay-and-advance" architecture

PCL's approach to inclusion for women is most clearly understood against the sector's baseline reality. BuildForce Canada reports that women represent close to 14% of all those employed in construction across Canada, described as the highest share recorded since the Labour Force Survey began in 1976.¹⁹ That number reflects genuine progress, and it also reflects how much distance remains. PCL's approach is oriented not only toward bringing women into the sector, but toward creating the conditions that allow them to stay and advance, addressing a structural pattern in which recruitment without retention simply recycles women through short tenures in environments that are unsupportive or outright hostile.

What makes PCL's case particularly useful is the way it pairs culture indicators with advancement systems. PCL cites an overall employee engagement score of 85%, with 90% of respondents saying they would recommend PCL as a great place to work and 88% reporting a sense of purpose in their work.²⁰ These are not women-specific figures, but in a sector as heavily dominated by men as construction, high engagement across the workforce points to conditions that correlate with lower attrition when combined with targeted supports for underrepresented groups. PCL also reports hiring 977 students companywide in 2024, a pipeline figure that matters because early career entry points are often where gender segregation begins, in terms of who receives site exposure, who is mentored into supervisory pathways, and who gets the kind of trade-adjacent assignments that lead to long-run careers.²¹

PCL's most substantive contribution to the conversation about supporting women in the trades lies in how it distinguishes between mentorship and sponsorship as distinct tools.²² Through its College of Construction, PCL describes a sponsorship framework that was updated specifically to support diverse talent in accessing leadership roles, with explicit attention to ensuring that women and individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups receive skill development opportunities and access to senior leaders who can provide advocacy on their behalf.^{23,24} This distinction is worth thinking about. In the construction sector, the barrier is often not only at the point of hiring. It is at the point of deciding who receives assignments, who gets introduced to the right people, and who is positioned for superintendent, project manager, estimator lead, or operations roles where both influence and compensation are concentrated. Mentorship builds skills and connection; sponsorship moves careers.

As such, PCL's practices point toward what might be described as a “stay-and-advance model”: an effort to build the internal conditions, including engagement, training infrastructure, and active sponsorship, that make it more feasible for women to build durable careers in construction rather than being treated as short-term indicators of diversity progress.²⁵

MENTORSHIP, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT



For any company, onboarding sets the tone for inclusion, clarity of expectations, and early support. In Ontario’s “Supporting an Accessible and Inclusive Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship System” review, the government emphasises the need to “break the stigma, reduce barriers” and improve engagement of under-represented groups in trades.^{26,27} But what does this look like in practice?

Outreach, Education, and Awareness

Broadening the pipeline of women entering the skilled trades requires more than adjusting hiring practices at the point of application. Reaching young women and girls before they leave high school, or earlier still, is an important part of building genuine interest and familiarity with what a trades career can offer. One initiative working directly in this space is Jill of All Trades (JOAT), a skilled trades outreach program founded at Conestoga College in 2014, designed to give young women in Grades 9 through 12 hands-on exposure to trades careers.²⁸ Working alongside a network of community partners, JOAT delivers hands-on workshops in a safe, engaging environment led by female mentors, faculty, and students. By introducing participants to non-traditional career pathways and helping them make informed choices, JOAT aims to boost post-secondary enrolment in trades and contribute to addressing skilled trades shortages.

For employers thinking about how to translate this into onboarding practice, a pre-start phase offers a natural opportunity to ensure that new apprentices and entrants have clear information about the trade pathway, from apprentice through to journey person and Certificate of Qualification or Red Seal certification, alongside a grounded introduction to site culture, health and safety expectations, and the supports available to equity-deserving groups,

including women, newcomers, and persons with disabilities. Research points to why this early groundwork matters: a study by Hansen and Hondzel, evaluating the Apprentice Retention Program and its implications for Ontario, identified documentation, paperwork, and communication issues as contributing factors in apprentice non-completion. This suggests that addressing these proactively, before they become points of friction, is one of the more straightforward ways the sector can reduce preventable early attrition.²⁹

Hiring and Onboarding

Scaffolded onboarding programs are important for ensuring that any worker has the information they need, the opportunity to ask questions, and understands key milestones in the early days of their employment. Some best practices include:

- Pairing a new employee with a peer in a similar position (if possible) who can guide them on workplace culture, offer advice on navigating interpersonal dynamics, and field any questions that they might not yet be comfortable bringing to their manager.
- Clear and attainable learning objectives related to not only the technical aspects of the job but possibly even things like the organization or company history, major partners or clients, and different initiatives within the business pertinent to their role.
- Regular check-ins for the employee with their supervisor, making space for questions, updates on progress, and openness for any emergent access or accommodation needs.
- Setting objectives and meetings over a 30-, 60-, and 90-day timeline with the clear intention for these to be supportive opportunities for helping the employ get acclimated to their new environment and not top-down surveillance of their performance.
- Accessible, plain-language training materials, employee handbooks, and company policies, with attention paid to different abilities in how information is communicated and in what format.

For newcomer and racialized women in the skilled trades in particular, an employee-centred approach to onboarding has the potential to build confidence, trust, and belonging from the earliest days of employment, reducing the early attrition that represents one of the sector's most preventable losses.

Mentorship: Building Connection, Belonging and Skill Progression

Mentorship is widely acknowledged as a key factor in retention and successful progression in any career, especially for underrepresented groups.

In practice, mentorship programmes in the trades have some unique considerations:

- Journeypersons experienced in the trade are important mentors, but it's also important they have strong communication skills, are aware of various biases and power dynamics in the workplace, and can provide a confidential space for new employees.
- Pairing women apprentices with mentors who understand their lived experience increases belonging, as it helps create a personal bond and mutual understanding.³⁰
- Clear goals, meeting cadence (e.g., bi-weekly for first six months), scope of discussion (technical skills, workplace culture, career planning, inclusion supports), and mechanisms for reviewing progress.
- Peer groups and networking components, not just one-to-one relations, are other models that have benefits for women as they create community and reduce isolation.

Structured mentoring reduces attrition. Apprentices who lack support, mentoring, and clarity of workplace expectations are at greater risk of leaving.^{31,32} According to [ApprenticeSearch.com](https://www.apprenticesearch.com), 83% of apprentices from under-represented groups in their study said they would not have succeeded without their mentor, and 92% said mentors taught things they would not have otherwise learned.³³ Strong mentorship practices lead to strong outcomes: increased retention rates, career progression, and a sense of belonging, and are all possible with the right supports and guidance for newcomer and racialized women in the skilled trades.

Career Development: Transparent Pathways and Inclusive Progression

Onboarding and mentorship set the stage for successful jobs, but to advance in a skilled trades career, pathways must be transparent, inclusive and accessible. In 2023, The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum published a Best Practices for Recruitment and Retention guide that emphasizes ways employers can provide realistic career path information, continuous training, and internal mobility opportunities to support the retention of diverse trades recruits.³⁴ Workforce development organizations like Skills for Change bring resources and practical expertise to small- and medium-sized enterprises navigating capacity-building and the slower work of shifting workplace culture. That cultural dimension is crucial too. Worksites where learning, respect, recognition, and inclusion are part of the daily fabric, rather than benefits listed in a policy document, are the ones where retention tends to be stronger and where the conditions for women to build durable, fulfilling careers are most likely to take hold.³⁵

THE STORY CONTUNUES



Drawing on what women in our national survey told us would help them pursue a career in the skilled trades, and looking closely at how employers like BCIB, Aecon Canada, and PCL are working to build more inclusive workplaces, a picture begins to take shape around what thoughtful onboarding, mentorship, and career development can look like in practice. Across these different sources of evidence, one thread runs consistently: mentorship and leadership training are not peripheral supports but central to whether trades workers, and particularly women and other underrepresented groups, stay in the sector and are able to build meaningful, lasting careers.

Building on these key factors, the next report in this series explores mentorship and leadership development for newcomer and racialized women in the sector through the WiST Leadership Academy.

REFERENCES

1. Government of Canada, “Apply for funding for the Women in the Skilled Trades Initiative under the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy.” December 1, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/women-skilled-trades-initiative.html>.
2. Survey data for these reports was accessed on January 12, 2026.
3. BC Infrastructure Benefits and Government of British Columbia, BC *Infrastructure Benefits 2024/25 Annual Service Plan Report* (2025), https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2024_2025/pdf/agency/bcib.pdf.
4. BC Infrastructure Benefits and Government of British Columbia, BC *Infrastructure Benefits 2024/25 Annual Service Plan Report* (2025), https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2024_2025/pdf/agency/bcib.pdf.
5. BC Infrastructure Benefits and Government of British Columbia, BC *Infrastructure Benefits 2024/25 Annual Service Plan Report* (2025), https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2024_2025/pdf/agency/bcib.pdf.
6. BC Infrastructure Benefits, “BCIB By the Numbers,” *British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits*, December 27, 2025, <https://bcib.ca/reporting-resources/bcib-by-the-numbers/>.
7. BC Infrastructure Benefits, “BCIB By the Numbers,” *British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits*, December 27, 2025, <https://bcib.ca/reporting-resources/bcib-by-the-numbers/>.
8. BC Infrastructure Benefits, “Respectful Onsite Initiative,” *British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits*, 2023, <https://bcib.ca/respectful-onsite-initiative/>.
9. BC Infrastructure Benefits and Government of British Columbia, BC *Infrastructure Benefits 2024/25 Annual Service Plan Report* (2025), https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2024_2025/pdf/agency/bcib.pdf.
10. BC Infrastructure Benefits, *BCIB Accessibility Plan 2023-26* (BC Infrastructure Benefits, 2023), https://bcib.ca/wp-content/uploads/Accessibility-Plan_20250312_final.pdf.
11. BC Infrastructure Benefits and Government of British Columbia, BC *Infrastructure Benefits 2024/25 Annual Service Plan Report* (2025), https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2024_2025/pdf/agency/bcib.pdf.
12. Aecon, *2024 Sustainability Report Aecon* (2024), <https://www.aecon.com/docs/default-source/sustainability-report/aecon-2024-sustainability-report.pdf>.
13. Aecon, *2024 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report @AECON* (Aecon, 2024), https://www.aecon.com/docs/default-source/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-report/public-equity-diversity-inclusion-2024-report-%282%29.pdf?sfvrsn=c1642bf_5.

REFERENCES

14. BuildForce Canada, “Reviewing Canada’s Construction Sector in 2024 – Part 5: Building a Strong Workforce,” *BuildForce Canada*, September 4, 2025, <https://www.buildforce.ca/en/blog/reviewing-canadas-construction-sector-in-2024-part-5-building-a-strong-workforce/>.
15. Aecon, *2024 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report @AECON* (Aecon, 2024), https://www.aecon.com/docs/default-source/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-report/public-equity-diversity-inclusion-2024-report-%282%29.pdf?sfvrsn=c1642bf_5.
16. Aecon, *2024 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report @AECON* (Aecon, 2024), https://www.aecon.com/docs/default-source/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-report/public-equity-diversity-inclusion-2024-report-%282%29.pdf?sfvrsn=c1642bf_5.
17. Aecon, *2024 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report @AECON* (Aecon, 2024), https://www.aecon.com/docs/default-source/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-report/public-equity-diversity-inclusion-2024-report-%282%29.pdf?sfvrsn=c1642bf_5.
18. Aecon, *2024 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report @AECON* (Aecon, 2024), https://www.aecon.com/docs/default-source/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-report/public-equity-diversity-inclusion-2024-report-%282%29.pdf?sfvrsn=c1642bf_5.
19. BuildForce Canada, “Reviewing Canada’s Construction Sector in 2024 – Part 5: Building a Strong Workforce,” *BuildForce Canada*, September 4, 2025, <https://www.buildforce.ca/en/blog/reviewing-canadas-construction-sector-in-2024-part-5-building-a-strong-workforce/>.
20. PCL Construction, *2024 Sustainability Report PCL Construction* (2024), https://www.pcl.com/content/dam/resources/SustainabilityReport_2024.pdf.
21. PCL Construction, *2024 Sustainability Report PCL Construction* (2024), https://www.pcl.com/content/dam/resources/SustainabilityReport_2024.pdf.
22. PCL Construction, “The Promise of Sustainable, Resilient Construction,” accessed March 3, 2026, <https://www.pcl.com/us/en/insights/the-promise-of-sustainable-resilient-construction.html>.
23. PCL Construction, “Celebrating the Growth and Contributions of Women in Construction,” 2025, <https://www.pcl.com/us/en/insights/celebrating-the-growth-and-contributions-of-women-in-construction.html>.
24. PCL Construction, *2024 Sustainability Report PCL Construction* (2024), https://www.pcl.com/content/dam/resources/SustainabilityReport_2024.pdf.
25. PCL Construction, *2024 Sustainability Report PCL Construction* (2024), https://www.pcl.com/content/dam/resources/SustainabilityReport_2024.pdf.
26. Government of Ontario. “Recommendations | Supporting an Accessible and Inclusive Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship System in Ontario.” October 12, 2021. <http://www.ontario.ca/document/supporting-accessible-and-inclusive-skilled-trades-and-apprenticeship-system-ontario/recommendations>.
27. Government of Ontario. “Supporting an Accessible and Inclusive Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship System in Ontario.” October 12, 2021. <http://www.ontario.ca/document/supporting-accessible-and-inclusive-skilled-trades-and-apprenticeship-system-ontario>.

REFERENCES

28. Jill of All Trades, “About Skilled Trades | Young Women | Jill of All Trades,” July 4, 2022, <https://jillofalltrades.college/about-us/jill-of-all-trades/>.
29. Ron Hansen and Catharine Dishke Hondzel. *The Apprentice Retention Program: Evaluation and Implications for Ontario*. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2015. https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Apprentice_Retention_Prog-ENG.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
30. Literacy Link South Central. “Building Your Support Network.” 2025. <http://www.llsc.on.ca/hub-building-support-network>.
31. Ron Hansen and Catharine Dishke Hondzel. *The Apprentice Retention Program: Evaluation and Implications for Ontario*. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2015. https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Apprentice_Retention_Prog-ENG.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
32. Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. *Best Practices for Recruitment and Retention Guide Recruiting and Retaining a Dynamic and Diverse Workforce*. Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2013. https://cupe.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Best-Practices-Guide-Recruitment-and-Rentention.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
33. Kelly Hoey. “Mentorship Matters for a Successful Career in the Skilled Trades.” *Innovating Canada*, December 6, 2022. <https://www.innovatingcanada.ca/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-inclusion-archive/mentorship-matters-for-a-successful-career-in-the-skilled-trades/>.
34. Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. *Best Practices for Recruitment and Retention Guide Recruiting and Retaining a Dynamic and Diverse Workforce*. Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2023. https://cupe.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Best-Practices-Guide-Recruitment-and-Rentention.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- 35 Ibid.



Skills for Change

Building Welcoming and Equitable Communities

© 2026 Skills for Change.

Title: From Entry to Leadership: Women's Careers in the Skilled Trades

Publication Date: February 2026

This publication is available under a Creative Commons License.

For more information, contact:

research@skillsforchange.org

www.skillsforchange.org/research

791 St. Clair Avenue West

Toronto, ON

M6C 1B7

This publication was developed with the support of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist in research and information gathering. However, all writing, editing, design, and final content decisions were made by human contributors.

The survey was designed in consultation with a national advisory committee, with representatives in British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Manitoba. The survey was circulated digitally through the WIST network via newsletters and social media, as well as at in-person events, and was open from April 2025 to November 2025. The survey sample is not representative.