



# CONSTRUCTION OUTLOOK UPDATE: WORKFORCE SNAPSHOT

This year's Workforce Snapshot report has been expanded to cover the construction industry workforce across all of New York State. As the Building Congress continues to grow, it is essential that our coverage of the industry's workforce expands as well. Part of our snapshot also compares the workforce of New York City to that of the entire state, highlighting key differences and similarities.



# OVERVIEW

The construction labor force grew sharply in New York State and New York City during 2021 after the shutdowns of COVID in 2020. In 2021<sup>1</sup>, over 545,000 workers were employed in the industry statewide, just under 246,000 (or about 45%) of whom worked in New York City. This reflects a 10.5% increase from roughly 493,000 workers statewide in 2020, with a 17% growth in New York City, up from 210,000.

The construction labor industry in this report includes workers engaged in building and infrastructure projects, design, site preparation and excavation, government workers, and consultants involved in various construction activities self-reported in the American Community Survey.

The industry, however, is still down roughly 7% from its pre-pandemic workforce level of 585,000 statewide in 2019. There is still work to be done, and workforce development remains a key factor which

will determine the success of building projects and infrastructure improvements across the state.

In 2021, the private sector reported some 388,000 construction industry jobs in New York State, indicating that roughly 157,000 construction workers were self-employed or worked in public/non-profit sectors. The construction industry employs the seventh most workers in terms of industries statewide, after Education & Health Services, Trade, Transportation, and Utilities, Professional & Business Services, Government, Leisure & Hospitality, and Financial Activities.

This report showcases a highly diverse workforce, as the industry continues to be a path to the middle class for workers of all walks of life, speaking a variety of different languages, and hailing from all around the globe. The construction workforce prides itself on this growing diversity, continuing a long history of employment opportunity for New York's immigrant community.

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers used in this report are from the [U.S. Census Bureau's one-year American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#) released in February 2023 and representing New York's construction workforce in 2021.



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR AND PRESIDENT & CEO

The construction industry's labor force is the bedrock of progress in New York. With skill, dedication, and unwavering commitment, these hardworking individuals literally shape the skyline, build our communities, and propel our economy forward. From towering skyscrapers to vital transportation and infrastructure projects, their expertise ensures the realization of our boldest visions. As we forge ahead, let's recognize and celebrate the immense importance of the construction industry workforce as they build the structures and the prosperity of our great state for future generations.

**Ralph J. Esposito**  
New York Building Congress Chair  
President, Northeast & Mid-Atlantic Region  
Suffolk

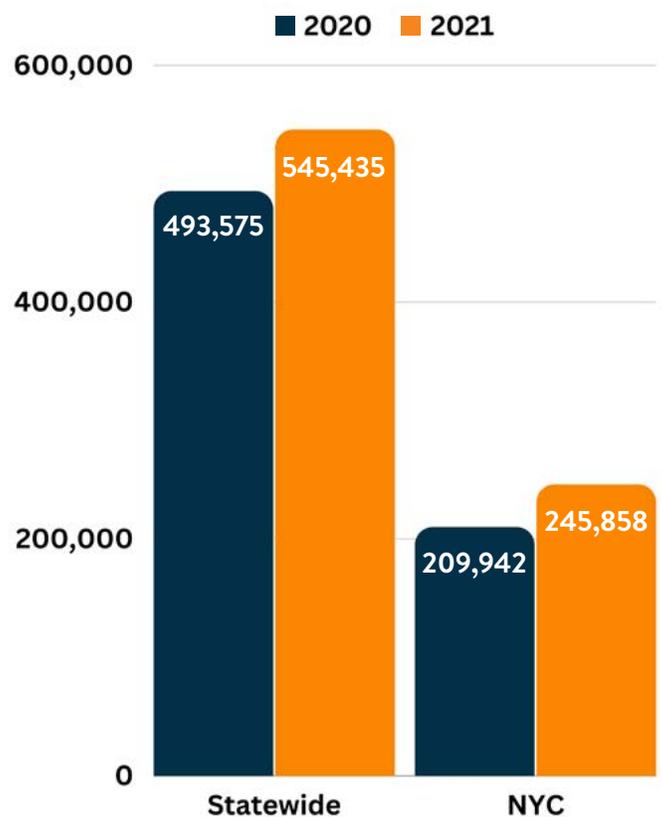
**Carlo A. Scissura, Esq.**  
President & CEO  
New York Building Congress

## LOOKING AHEAD

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) issues more up-to-date labor data than that shown in the ACS. However, it is limited to private payroll data, and only reflects about 65% of the industry's labor force. To paint a fuller picture of the workforce, ACS data is much more robust.

Though limited, BLS data on workers employed in the "Construction of Buildings, Specialty Trade Contractors and Building Equipment Contractors" largely tracks in the same direction as ACS data, allowing us to make a reasonable projection that through May 2023 the construction workforce is estimated to comprise about 575,000 workers, and this is before we consider factors such as federal infrastructure spending towards workforce development, and the influx of migrants into the construction industry as legal employment becomes possible for these individuals. It is conceivable that by the end of this year, our industry will finally be back to pre-pandemic levels of employment, a major milestone in our recovery.

## NEW YORK CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY LABOR FORCE



# DEMOGRAPHICS

## RACE-ETHNICITY

Demonstrating the growing diversity of the construction industry workforce, 43% of statewide workers identify as nonwhite, up from 40% in 2020.

- ▶ Comparatively, the workforce in NYC is 66% nonwhite, up from 63% in 2020.

## GENDER

Statewide, 9.4% of all construction industry workers are women, slightly down from 10% in 2020.

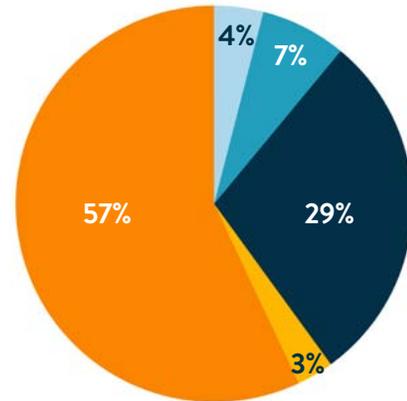
- ▶ The decline within NYC was steeper, going from 8.7% in 2020 to 7.9% in 2021.
- ▶ 66% of women in the industry across the state have some college education or higher, compared to 37% of men in the industry.
- ▶ Within NYC, 64% of women have some college education or higher, the same percentage as men.

## LANGUAGE

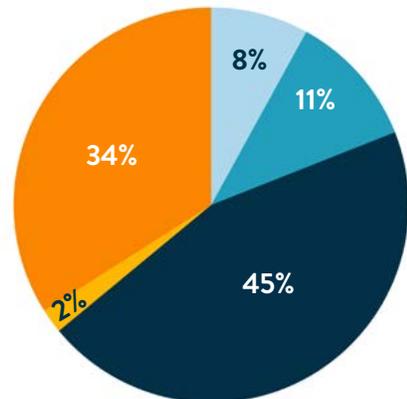
37% of statewide workers indicated English was not their primary language; 25% of the workforce speaks Spanish as their primary language.

- ▶ Within NYC, 58% indicated that English was not their primary language, with 40% speaking Spanish. This is up nearly 2% from 2020.

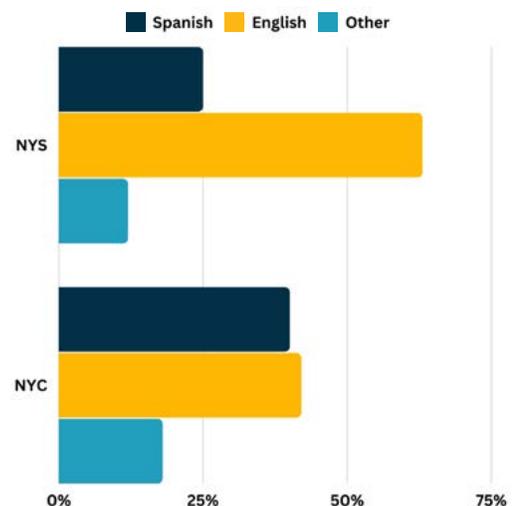
RACE-ETHNICITY OF NYS CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, 2021



RACE-ETHNICITY OF NYC CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, 2021



PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN



# CITIZENSHIP STATUS

Only 15% of the statewide construction labor force noted having full citizenship status, while the majority (64%) were unreported. 21% reported to be non-citizens in 2021, compared to only 18% in 2020.

- ▶ In NYC, 23% of the workforce reported having U.S. citizenship, while 35% were non-citizens.

# NON-CITIZEN STATUS IN THE WORKFORCE

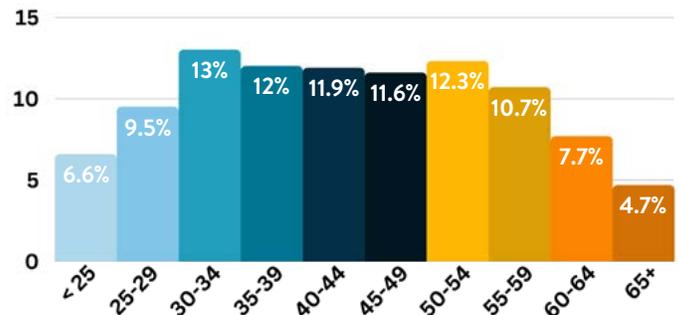


# AGE

46% of construction workers in New York are between the ages of 25 and 45 years old. 35% of NY construction workers are 50 or older, while 6.6% are under 25 years old, virtually unchanged from the prior year.

- ▶ Within NYC it skews older, as 49% are between the ages of 25 and 45 years old. 33% are 50 or older, while 5.7% are under 25 years old, up from 4.9% in 2020.

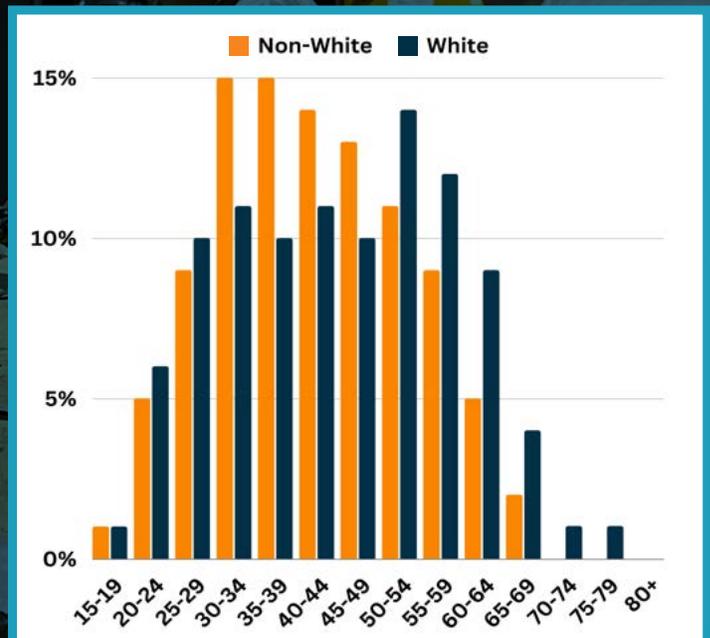
# CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE BY AGE



# KEY INSIGHTS

Issues associated with an aging construction workforce have been a source of industrywide concern, however, the strong showing of racial/ethnic minorities in the State's construction industry is a positive development and mitigates issues with an aging workforce. 57% of the Non-White workforce is between ages 30-49, while only 42% of the White workforce falls into those ages. 41% of the White workforce is over 50, while only 28% of the Non-White workforce is over 50. It is encouraging to see a growing share of workers under 25 years old within the city, as it points to the success of new cohorts making their impact on the industry.

# CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE BY AGE



# EMPLOYMENT/INCOME

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Many construction worker households are likely to have multiple income earners, as work can be intermittent or seasonal, and a stable source of continuing income is usually necessary.

- ▶ In 2021, 52% of the State’s construction labor force reported a household income of \$100,000 or above, with 39% having annual incomes above \$125,000. Within NYC, we noted 50% and 37%, respectively.
- ▶ For households with female construction workers, the average household income was even higher, as 42% had annual incomes above \$125,000. Within NYC, 44% of such households had incomes above \$125,000.

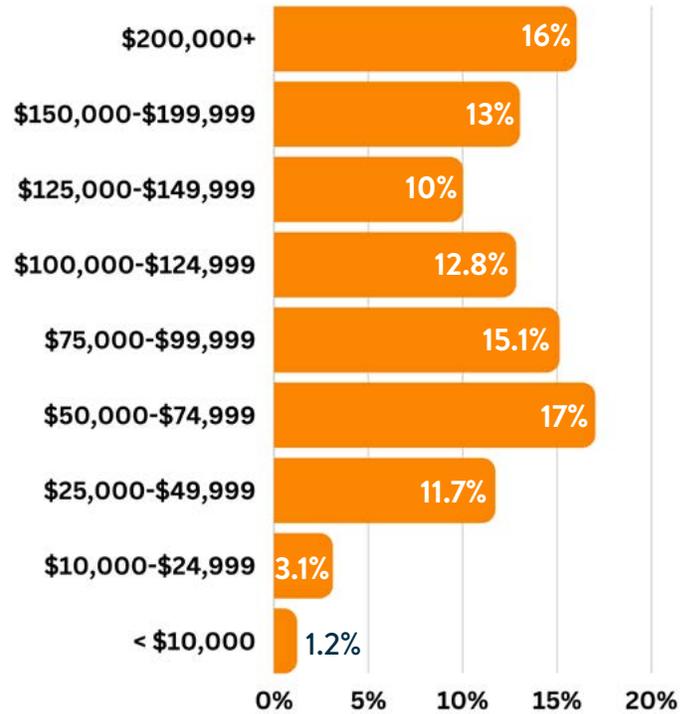
Such statistics demonstrate the power that the building trades have to provide a clear pathway to the middle class for working families.

## EARNINGS

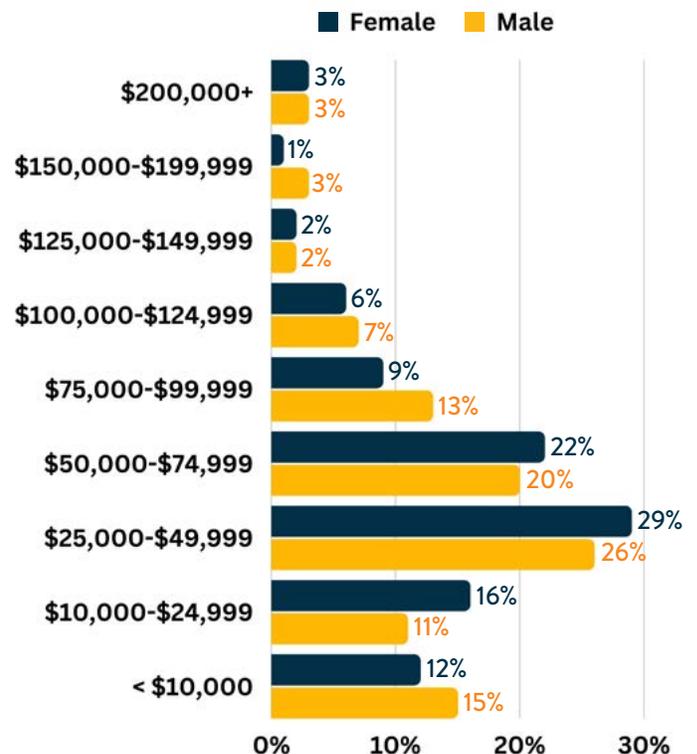
53% of all NY construction workers reported earnings of less than \$50,000 per year, with 33% between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 15% at more than \$100,000.

- ▶ Within NYC 51% of workers reported earnings of less than \$50,000 per year, with 30% earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 19% at more than \$100,000.
- ▶ Statewide, the percentage of women in the workforce earning over \$125,000 was 6%, compared to 8% of men. However, within NYC, the percentage of women earning over \$125,000 was 9% compared to 8% of men.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME



## WORKFORCE EARNINGS BY GENDER



# HEALTH INSURANCE

In 2021, 61% of the workforce had health insurance, down from 63% in 2020. The industry-wide percentage is largely dependent on blue-collar workers, of which 57% had health insurance.

- ▶ Within NYC 56% of employees are insured, with 51% of blue-collar workers insured, down from 59% and 55% in 2020, respectively.

# OCCUPATION

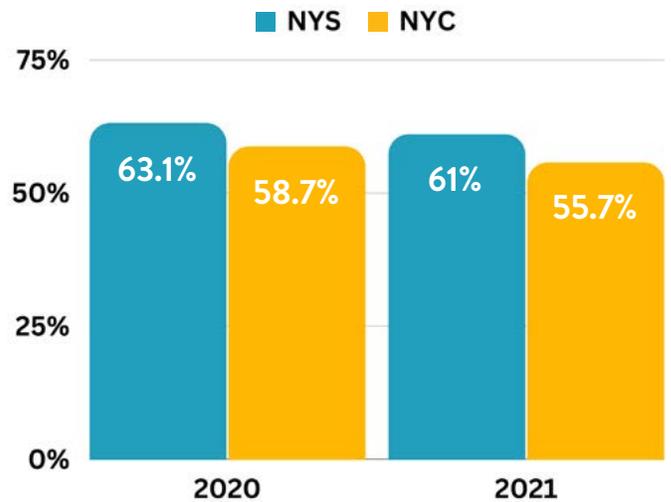
Statewide, 72% of all workers engaged in the construction industry are blue collar workers, including construction, installation, material moving and production workers. 22% of workers in the industry are white collar workers including managers, architects and engineers, while 6% are in service occupations i.e. office and administrative support and sales.

- ▶ Within NYC 75% of all workers in the industry are blue collar workers, with only 20% white collar workers and 5% service occupations.

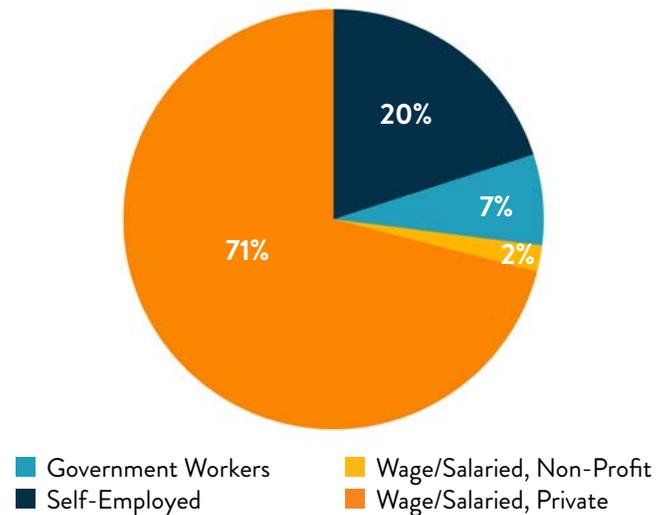
# SECTOR

71% of NY construction industry workers are employed in the private sector. Another 9% work for government and non-profit institutions, while all others are self-employed or unpaid family workers, at 19.6%. Within NYC 76% of construction industry workers are employed in the private sector. Another 5% work for government and non-profit institutions, while all others are self-employed or unpaid family workers, at 16%.

## PERCENTAGE OF WORKFORCE INSURED



## OCCUPATION CHARACTERISTICS



## KEY INSIGHTS

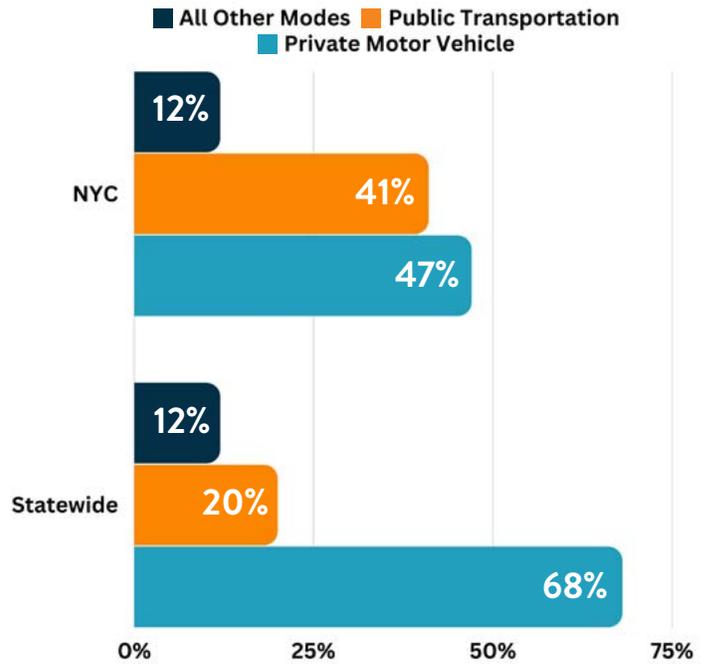
The gain of over 51,800 statewide job opportunities between 2020 and 2021 was largely comprised of private sector expansion, with nearly 36,000 new wage and salary opportunities. However, self-employment also expanded, with new start-ups and existing firms offering nearly 5,500 openings, while government and non-profits added 9,500.

# TRAVEL

## MODE OF TRANSPORTATION

The construction industry labor force in NYC travels to work via public transportation much more regularly than the labor force statewide, with 41% of commuters traveling via public transportation, compared to only 20% statewide. Statewide remote workers in 2021 reflected 8.5% of the workforce, while only 6% of the city's labor force worked remotely. Travel via private automobile is 68% statewide, while only 47% within NYC.

### MODE OF TRANSPORTATION STATEWIDE VS NYC

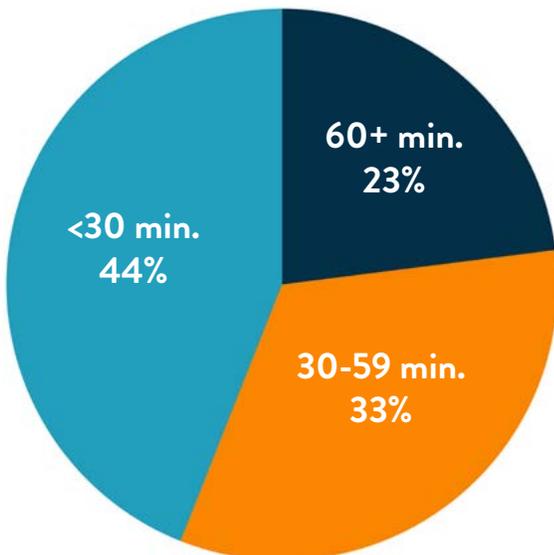


## TRAVEL TIME

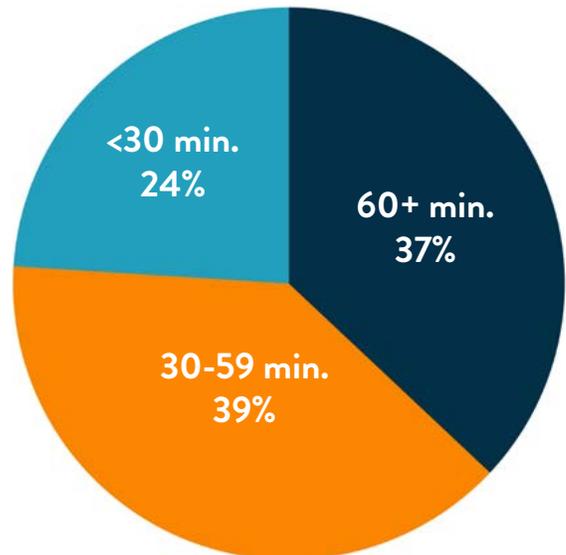
Surprisingly, travel times statewide are considerably shorter than those within NYC alone, with 35% of workers statewide having commute times of over 45 minutes, compared to 53% of city commuters. 22% of the statewide workforce had a commute under 15 minutes, compared to only 11% of city commuters.



### TRAVEL TIMES STATEWIDE



### TRAVEL TIMES NYC



“With the state continuing to invest in a number of critical infrastructure projects that are set to create thousands of family sustaining careers for working class New Yorkers, it is encouraging to see that our construction labor force is growing and diversifying in tandem with our economic recovery. As we look to get these important initiatives completed efficiently and masterfully, we must maintain a commitment to expanding our construction workforce development and providing more accessible pathways to the middle class for tradesmen and tradeswomen of all backgrounds. A more diverse and growing union construction industry strengthens our overall economy, and we look forward to continuing to offer these opportunities to hard working New Yorkers through our pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.”

**Gary LaBarbera**

*Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, President  
New York State Building and Construction Trades Council, President*

# RECOMMENDATIONS & GOALS

## 1 INCREASE INVESTMENT IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARCHITECTURE, AND MATH (STEAM) CHILDHOOD AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION.

Statewide, Computer/Math, Architecture and Engineering jobs have increased since 2019 by almost 37% within the construction industry, and yet they are still in very high demand, as projects become more technical and complex than ever before.

## 2 PROMOTE GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNGER INDIVIDUALS IN THE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE

The New York Building Congress’s Young Professionals Committee has been active in engaging and attracting younger workers to the construction industry. As noted above, the workforce within NYC under 25 years old has gone up to 5.7% from 4.9% in 2020. We will aim to build off of this success and continue to retain and grow the building industry’s next generation of leaders.

## 3 INCENTIVIZE THE EXPANSION OF CHILDCARE HOURS SO THAT FAMILIES WHO WORK THIS INDUSTRY HAVE ADEQUATE CHILDCARE WHEN THEY ARE REQUIRED TO BE ON JOB-SITES DURING NON-TRADITIONAL HOURS

As many construction industry workers are from multiple-income households, it is essential to provide childcare options that suit their needs, particularly for workers who are required to be at construction sites early in the morning, and late at night, when public schools are not open.

## 4 INCREASE M/WBE PARTICIPATION STATEWIDE

By developing a one-stop-shop for M/WBE firms to bid on all state, city, and public authority projects in one place, we can proactively increase the number of M/WBE firms involved in such public works projects, increasing the workforce diversity in a positive and meaningful way.

## 5 INCREASED SUPPORT FOR WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS STATEWIDE

Many Building Congress members award scholarships and provide workforce training programs today to create a more robust construction industry workforce. A shining example of success has been seen in the Building and Construction Trades Union’s apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship programs, known as the Apprenticeship Readiness Collective (ARC), which shows high retention rates and placement levels. Those programs include (but are not limited to):

- ① *The Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills, Inc.*
- ② *Nontraditional Employment for Women*
- ③ *New York Helmets to Hardhats*
- ④ *Pathways to Apprenticeship*

**ARC OUTCOMES 2018–2022**

	CSKILLS	NEW	NYH2H	P2A	TOTAL
APPRENTICE PLACEMENTS	514	537	516	219	1,786
ACTIVE APPRENTICES	406	402	256	147	1,211
JOURNEY LEVEL	39	32	184	28	283
RETENTION RATE	87%	81%	85%	80%	84%

*The Building Congress encourages further investment by state and local governments in free or affordable career and technical education programs as well as summer youth employment programs.*



## INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT UPDATE

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) alone is expected to create over 850,000 jobs nationwide, we will continue to monitor the pace of IIJA funding to ensure that New York gets its fair share of funding, especially funding dedicated to workforce development.

The IIJA gives states the authority to allocate funds from four programs under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) towards workforce development initiatives, which encompass registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. We encourage state law makers to maximize the amount of IIJA funding that can be spent on workforce development through these new mechanisms.

The New York Building Congress will continue its advocacy efforts in Washington D.C. to ensure that this critical funding gets to New York and our members as quickly as possible.

## FEDERAL POLICIES TO SUPPORT GROWING OUR WORKFORCE STATEWIDE

- 1 Decrease fees for federal certification and required training courses, particularly OSHA Training Courses, often cited as a barrier to entry for recent immigrants.
- 2 Streamline work permits for asylum seekers.
- 3 Increase Workforce Innovation and Opportunity funding for programs that effect the Construction and Building trades such as the funding the Youth Activities program, the Adult Employment and Training Activities program, and the Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities program.
- 4 Develop a national program to provide job training for formerly incarcerated individuals.



The New York Building Congress, a broad-based membership association celebrating its 102nd year, is committed to promoting the growth and success of the construction industry in New York City and its environs.

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Formed in 1998, the New York Building Foundation is in its 25th year of promoting the long-term growth and well-being of the New York City building industry and the wider community through an active program of research, education, and philanthropy.

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