

Did you know that the proportion of women working in the construction industry has fallen over the past 20 years from 13.8% in 1998 to just 12% in 2018?¹ Construction continues to be the most male-dominated industry in Australia. Most industries are striving to dismantle gender norms and are moving towards equality, so why exactly is the construction industry gender gap lagging?

According to Dr Carnemolla, a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Technology Sydney, there are several barriers to entering the construction sector which range from social, economic, exclusionary industry practices. The reasons women leave the sector are equally diverse and range from a lack of flexibility and progression, poor parental leave practices and a tolerance of sexism.²

How to break down these barriers in your workplace:



Bridge skill gaps

With the construction industry needing to employ over 300,000 apprentices and independent contractors over the next decade, instead of hiring workers from overseas, we should look at the large untapped pool of potential female apprentices and recruits.



Increased awareness

Encourage and collaborate with schools to help educate children from an earlier age about the opportunities available for females in the construction sector. School leavers can then be better informed about considering it as an option for their tertiary studies.



Review of recruitment practices

According to a study on Demolishing Gender Structures completed by Dr Galea and colleagues of UNSW, men are more likely to secure employment through more 'informal' channels of recruitment such as industry connections and sporting teams, whilst women need to go through online applications, limiting their opportunities.



Open communication

Creating a safe and open communication network where women feel comfortable and supported when raising concerns at work.



Greater diversity

A more diverse workforce will help boost innovation and productivity. Studies consistently show that a diverse workforce brings in fresh ideas and better work outcomes.

¹ Gender Segregation in Australia's Workforce, Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-segregation-in-australias-workforce>

² Breaking barriers for women in construction, Infrastructure magazine, <https://infrastructuremagazine.com.au/2019/06/07/breaking-barriers-for-women-in-construction/>