

BEYOND THE HEADLINES

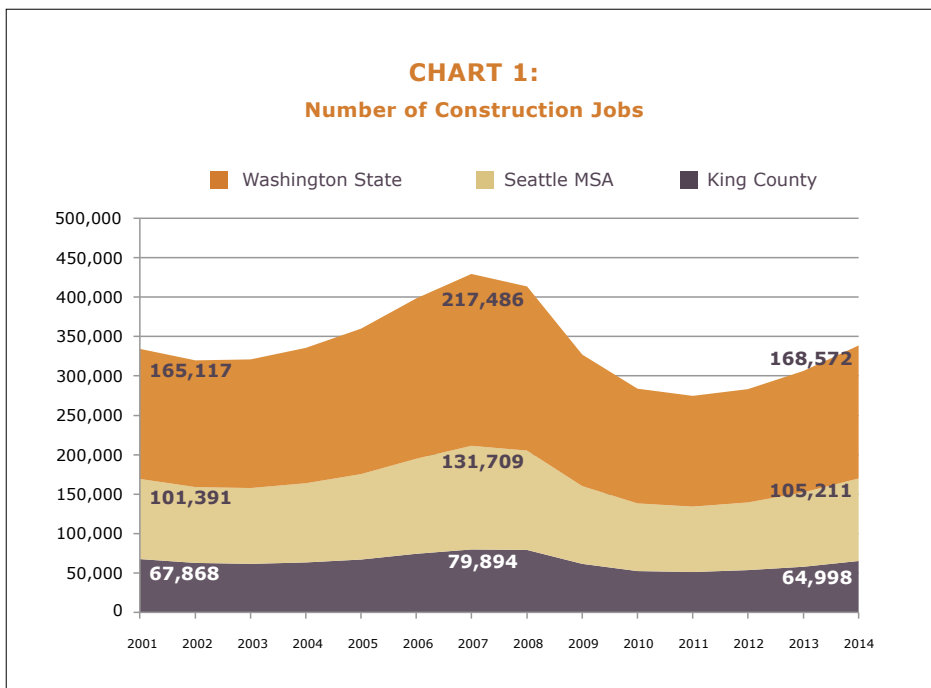
At a Glance: Jobs, Workers & the Economy

MAY 2015

FOCUS: SEATTLE

Have Construction Jobs Returned to the Seattle Region?

Construction cranes dominate much of Seattle's skyline and landscape. New housing units and office buildings are rising around the city. In Downtown alone, Seattle saw nearly a hundred active construction projects in December 2014.¹ The construction industry is also abuzz with road projects and infrastructure projects such as the Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement tunnel and the expansion of Sound Transit's light rail. Despite all of this activity, construction jobs have yet to rebound since their pre-recession highs in the Seattle area and Washington State.



SOURCE: Economic Modeling Specialists International, 2015.1 Class of Worker

Chart 1 shows the number of construction jobs in the Seattle Metropolitan Statistical Area (Seattle MSA), King County, and Washington State. Construction jobs in all three areas peaked in 2007 and fell sharply throughout the recession. Today, the number of construction jobs in Seattle and Washington are only slightly above what they were in 2001, and in King County, the number of construction jobs are below what they were in 2001 as of the end of 2014.

The current economic boom of Seattle has the construction industry poised for significant growth, and with it the

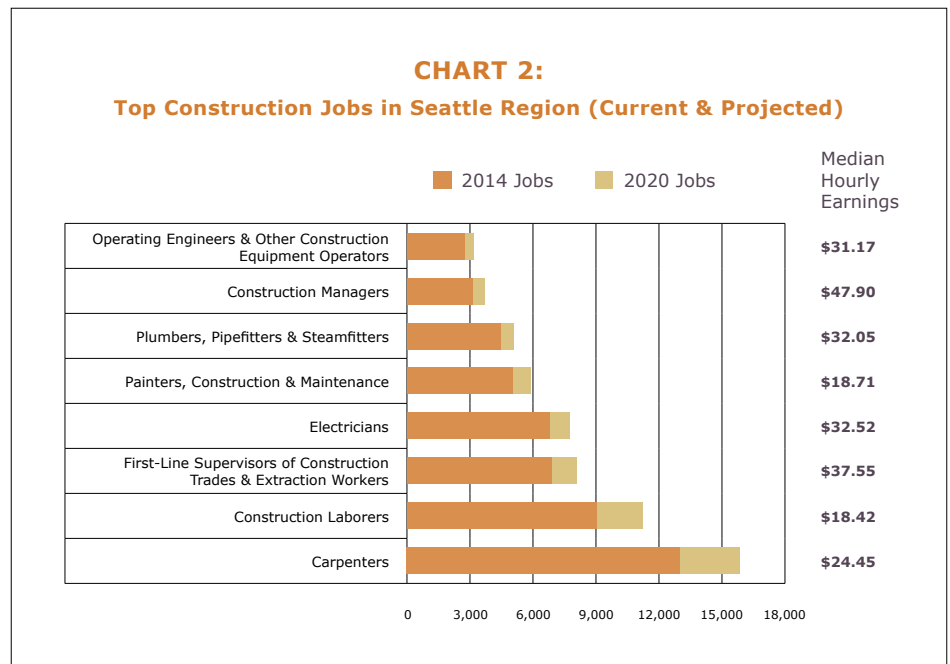
projected return of thousands more construction jobs. Projections are for the industry to grow by 18 percent and add over 18,000 new jobs by 2020 in the Seattle MSA alone. **Chart 2** shows the top occupations in the construction sector in the Seattle metropolitan region for 2014 and 2020. Carpenters and laborers are the largest two occupations in the sector. The number of new jobs projected to be created, however, fails to tell the whole story. Increased demand, turnover, and retirements will generate hundreds of openings per year in some of these occupations. Between 2014 and 2020, 677 and 672 annual openings are projected for carpenter and construction laborer positions respectively. Despite the growth

in construction, recent analysis from Community Attributes indicates a surplus of between 5,700 and 8,300 construction workers through 2019 for King, Snohomish and Pierce counties. Even with a surplus of workers, construction contractors will continue to draw on apprenticeship programs and other educational programs to recruit newly skilled workers.²

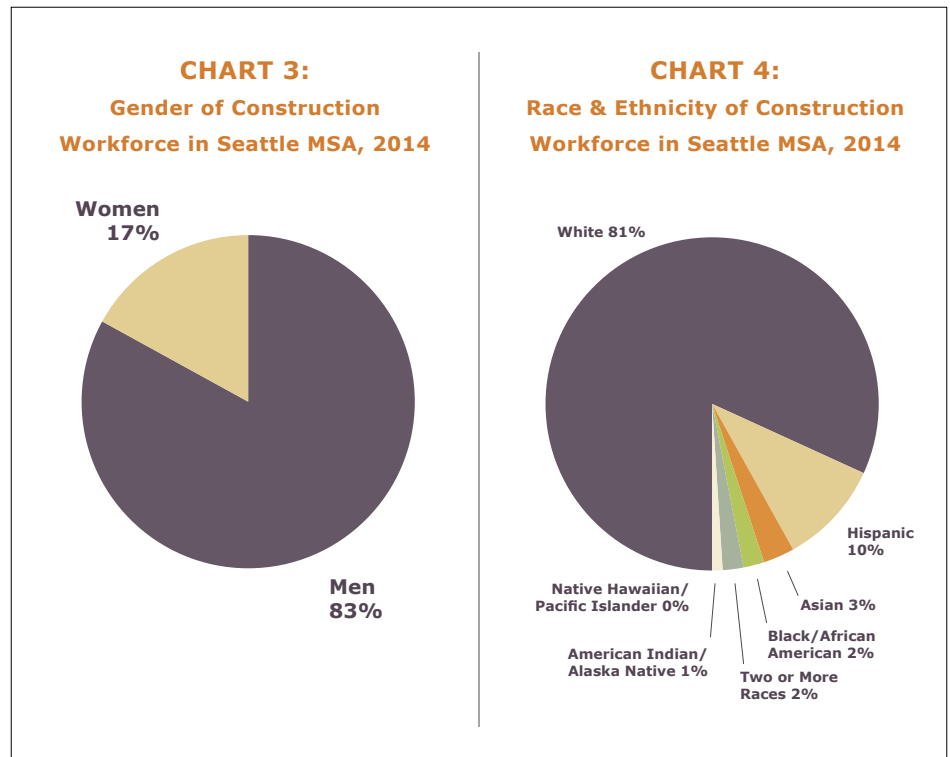
The construction sector continues to be an industry that predominantly employs white males. As seen in **Chart 3**, less than one in five workers in the construction sector are women in the Seattle region. For comparison, 47 percent of the entire workforce in the region is female. **Chart 4** reveals that four in five workers in the construction sector in the Seattle MSA are white compared to slightly more than 74 percent of the workforce as a whole. Numerous studies have shown that minorities and women are not only underrepresented in the construction sector, but that those who do manage to enter the industry through an apprenticeship disproportionately fail to complete their training compared to their white and male counterparts.³

The construction sector's workforce also continues to age. **Chart 5** shows the breakdown of the construction workforce in the Seattle MSA region by age. Fifteen percent of the construction workforce and 19 percent of the entire workforce in the region was over the age of 55 in 2014.

While the construction industry stands on the precipice of a rebound in the Seattle region, the data and discussion above reveal some stark challenges with gender and racial diversity. The City of Seattle's new priority hiring program

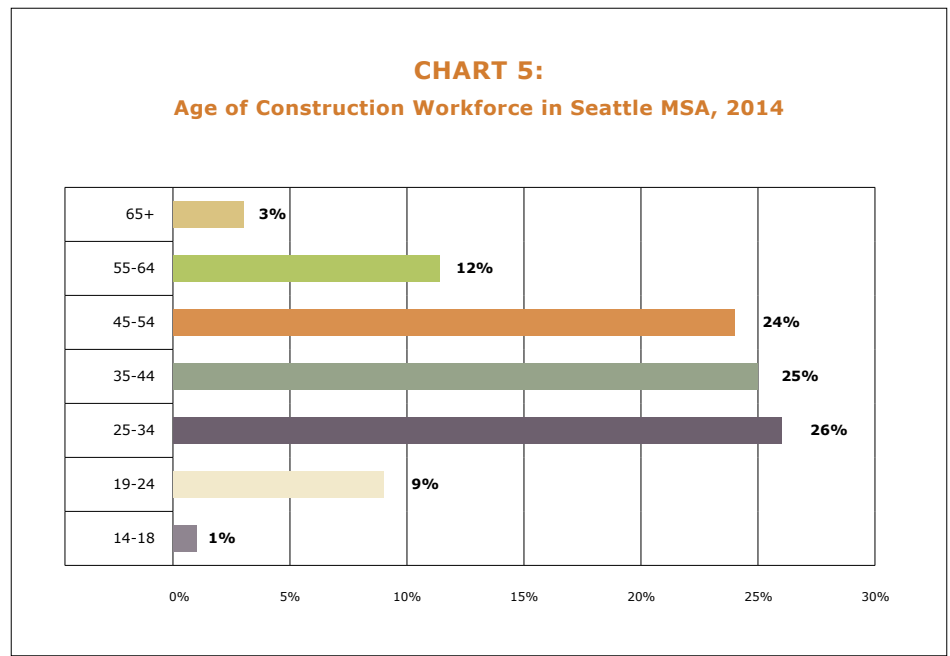


SOURCE: Economic Modeling Specialists International, 2015.1 Class of Worker



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that aims to help residents in low-income communities and pre-apprenticeship graduates connect to employment on large public construction projects holds promise for helping more women and minorities find careers and apprenticeship opportunities in the construction sector. Going forward, we hope the City of Seattle and other key stakeholders will maintain this commitment to growing diversity within the sector and ensure that those individuals who do enter an apprenticeship are provided with the resources and supports they need to complete their training.



SOURCE: Economic Modeling Specialists International, 2015.1 Class of Worker

1. Downtown Seattle, "Development and Construction Projects," February 2015, accessed May 14, 2015 <http://www.downtownseattle.com/resources/development-and-construction-projects/>
2. Community Attributes, "City of Seattle Construction Industry Labor Market Assessment," March 2014, accessed May 14, 2015 http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/FAS/PurchasingAndContracting/Labor/CAI_Study2014.pdf
3. See Matt Helmer and David Altstadt, "Apprenticeship: Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades," 2013, The Aspen Institute, accessed May 18, 2015 <http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/apprenticeship/>. And, Community Attributes, "City of Seattle Construction Industry Labor Market Assessment," Report submitted to City of Seattle Purchasing and Contracting Services, March 2014, accessed May 18, 2015 http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/FAS/PurchasingAndContracting/Labor/CAI_Study2014.pdf

BEYOND THE HEADLINES: Policy & Labor Market Updates for Those Working to Help Low-Income and Low-Skill Individuals Advance through Education, Training & Living-Wage Jobs

About Seattle Jobs Initiative

Seattle Jobs Initiative creates opportunities for students, workers and business to succeed by helping education and job training programs meet the demands of a new economy. We find and apply solutions for people to gain the skills they need for good jobs that create prosperity for all in today's marketplace.

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