



# 2015 BC CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SURVEY

“ Apprentices are the future of our industry. They start on the tools, but they become our company presidents. The career potential is phenomenal, if only more of our young people could see it. ”

RESPONDENT #259

PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2015

PRESENTED BY:

**CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS**  
BC & ALBERTA'S CONSTRUCTION MAGAZINE



British  
Columbia  
Construction  
Association

## Data connects us to each other and to the future. Smaller businesses have a bigger voice when they aggregate data to show activities, opportunities and challenges.



Manley McLachlan, President  
British Columbia Construction Association (BCCA)

Current and factual information is a major resource, a currency in today's world, and a competitive asset. New technologies allow data capture in ways never before possible; how our industry captures, interprets and acts upon that data will be critical for success.

Governments and the private sector are working more closely with industry associations, including the BCCA, enhancing data collection to drive decision-making so government and industry programs and investments can respond directly to real needs, quickly and effectively. Indeed, the Government of BC's Skills for Jobs Blueprint makes data a top priority.

To support this, the construction industry needs to actively contribute information to ensure the renewed emphasis on labour market reporting is fully reflective of our business needs. Data shows that skilled trades will be in demand in BC regardless of LNG projects: this is a key message and one that construction employers must continue to hit home.

We're a busy province and the construction sector is at its center; remember, nothing happens until something gets built.

- ▶ Estimated capital costs of major infrastructure projects in BC hit a record high of \$312 billion in 2014.
- ▶ Our sector is a leading contributor to BC's provincial GDP (currently at 7.9% and expected to increase 31% by 2018).

Despite these strong numbers, productivity levels in Canada are at an all-time low. Cited by the Conference Board of Canada as "the single most important determinant of a country's per-capita income over the longer term". We must make use of available information to ensure we're getting the best out of what we're putting in.

Procurement tools like BidCentral have gone fully online and have been reported to save as much as 60% on staff time and resources during the tendering process. Our discussions with BC's capital Ministries in the Deputy Ministers' Industry Infrastructure Forum inform public sector procurement policy to ensure BC businesses are enabled – and empowered – to make the best of the opportunities on offer in this province.

BC's construction associations continue to connect, represent, and support our members, offering more and more tools to make the best of your time and money; to give you a voice so you can focus on your business.

Become part of our network in any way that you can: join your Regional Construction Association to become an integrated member of BCCA, try BidCentral – now the largest online bidding marketplace in BC – to procure or bid on private and public sector projects, take advantage of the Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP) to source your skilled workers, or find us at events around the province.

As the world moves forward with a new emphasis on the numbers, make sure those numbers include you.

## SURVEY PARTNERS



The British Columbia Construction Association (BCCA) represents roughly 2,000 organizations active in the province's industrial, commercial and institutional construction sectors. Working to foster an economic and political climate which will promote growth, competition and success for our industry, the BCCA is your provincial advocate and provider of strong support programs to support BC construction businesses of all sizes. [www.bccasn.com](http://www.bccasn.com)



[www.bidcentral.ca](http://www.bidcentral.ca)



[www.bccabenefits.ca](http://www.bccabenefits.ca)



[www.projectshopclass.com](http://www.projectshopclass.com)

An initiative of the Construction Foundation of BC



[www.fswbc.ca](http://www.fswbc.ca)

BCCA INITIATIVES TO HELP YOU  
SOURCE SKILLED WORKERS

Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP)  
[www.stepbc.ca](http://www.stepbc.ca)

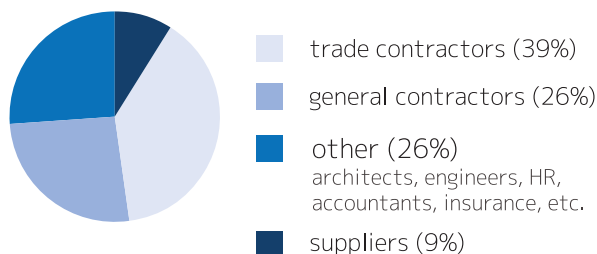
The Hire Guide  
[www.hireguide.ca](http://www.hireguide.ca)



Construction Business Magazine shares the BCCA's leadership responsibility, providing an important vehicle for the exchange of knowledge and ideas in western Canada's construction sector: information critical to the public and private sectors as BC gears up in this new economy.

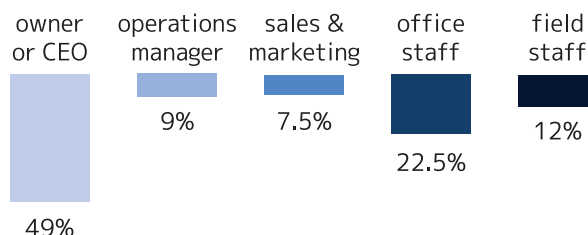
# ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

## ROLE IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

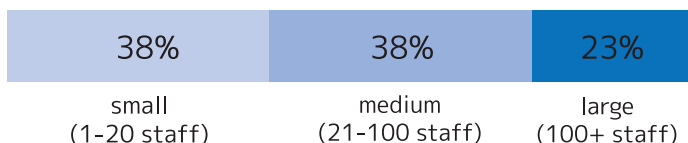


**269** COMPLETE RESPONSES

## RESPONDENT'S ROLE IN ORGANIZATION

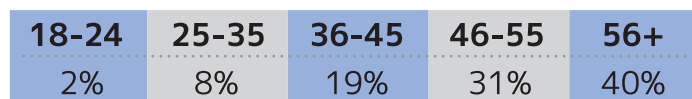


## BUSINESS SIZE



On average, **22%** of total staff are seasonal workers.

## AGE

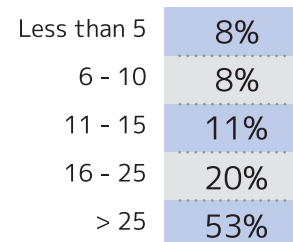


Dean Baumeister, Manager & Co-Owner  
Dalco Instruments, Fort St. John

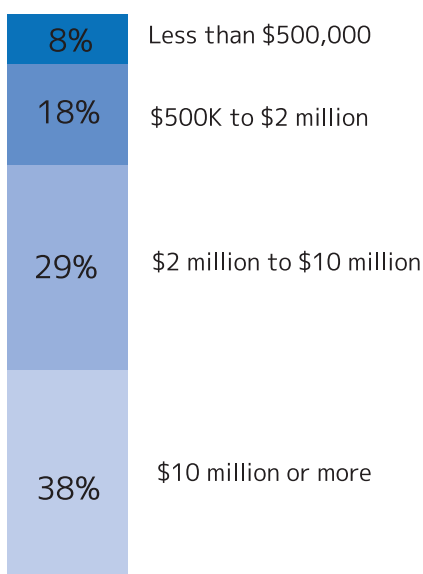
## TOP TRADES EMPLOYED (IN ORDER)

- carpentry
- electrical
- concrete finishing
- heavy equipment operation
- plumbing
- crane operation
- welding
- painting
- HVAC
- sheet metal
- ironworkers/metal fabrication
- glazing
- gasfitting
- flooring
- framing

## YEARS IN INDUSTRY



## DECLARED BUSINESS VALUE



## GENDER

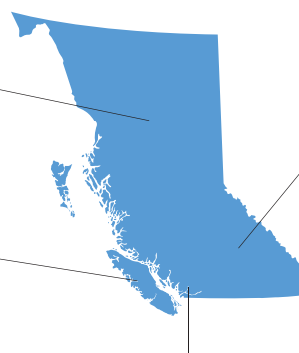


Male: 82%  
Female: 18%

## LOCATION OF BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

**42%** serve Northern BC.

**49%** are active on Vancouver Island.



**45%** are engaged in the Southern Interior.

**60%** of respondent businesses operate in the Vancouver region.

**70%** of respondents work in an 'open shop' business.



## THE YOUTH MOVEMENT

### DO YOU THINK YOUNG PEOPLE IN BC ARE AWARE OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TRADES?

Just **24.5%** say yes, with an increase in awareness in BC's North.

"A stigma persists through the general population that tradespeople are lower class and lower paid, which, in my experience, is not true at all."

"The kids are under the impression that the trades don't need or want the 'smart' kids. We're constantly battling that misconception."

"Schools do not tell students about earnings or advantages of the trades."

"There is too much focus on degree programs for wages when many trades can make as much or more than degree-holding workers."



**35%** of respondents participate in programs to engage youth.

### WHY DO YOU THINK SO FEW YOUNG PEOPLE CHOOSE A TRADES CAREER?

JUST  
**1**  
IN  
**85**

BC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES GO DIRECTLY INTO TRAINING FOR CONSTRUCTION TRADES.

"It's unclear to young people that the trades offer way more than 'swinging a hammer' for their whole career."

"False illusions of big pay and easy jobs sitting behind a computer."

"People need to be motivated, and there has to be motivation there: higher pay, perks, etc."

"I doubt they're even thinking about how they are going to make a living."

"They are concerned that girls won't be impressed unless they are executive types."

"Today's society would rather give a young person a smartphone than a tool box."

"We are not sexy."

"The BC education system needs to show prospective individuals the real value of earning Red Seal status in a trade."



Trades Student, Fort St. John

## ON APPRENTICES

Throughout BC, the percentage of employers who train apprentices is predicted to remain the same for 2015, at about **66%**.



Aaron Smith, Sheet Metal Apprentice  
Skilled Trades Employment Program

Respondents plan to hire at least **600** apprentices in 2015.

“To train apprentices, there is a big burden put on the employer, with little financial assistance to offset costs.”

business size (employees)	% who employ apprentices	average # of apprentices
1-20	57%	3
21-100	77%	7
100+	77%	30

### TOP APPRENTICES IN DEMAND

Carpentry  
Concrete  
Mechanical  
Sheet Metal  
Ironworking  
Roofing  
Plastering/Drywalling  
Pipefitting/Steamfitting

Electrical  
Welding  
Glazing  
Framing  
Plumbing  
Millwrighting

**1** in **42** BC apprentices employed by our survey respondents are Aboriginal.

**1** in **49** are female.

“If you take pride in who you are and what you do, you will have a great career in the building trades.”



### WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOU HIRE APPRENTICES?

“Apprentices become human resource assets in time.”

“So we can train them to fit our company model.”

“Good for business, industry, succession planning, leadership development, and company profits. It’s the right thing to do.”

“We feel a responsibility to help keep our industry strong and slow down the importation of workers from other countries.”

“Apprentices trained by the company tend to be more loyal than hires off the street.”

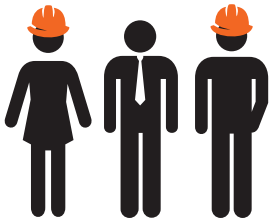
“To train ‘em to our method of building safely, and take the place of retiring journeymen.”

“We need to ensure trade sustainability with qualified workers.”

“To backfill our staff with young talent.”

“They’re the future of our crew.”

## ON HUMAN RESOURCES



### TOP TRADES IN DEMAND

#### Lower Mainland

Labourers  
Carpenters  
Concrete Finishers  
Electricians  
Crane Operators  
Heavy Equipment Operators  
Glaziers

#### Vancouver Island

Labourers  
Carpenters  
Electricians  
Heavy Equipment Operators  
Crane Operators  
Glaziers  
Ironworkers/Metal Fabricators

#### Northern BC

Labourers  
Carpenters  
Crane Operators  
Electricians  
Heavy Equipment Operators  
Concrete Finishers  
Ironworkers/Metal Fabricators  
Welders

#### Southern Interior

Labourers  
Electricians  
Carpenters  
Ironworkers  
Welders  
Concrete Finishers  
Plumbers  
Crane Operators

On average, each of our respondents employs **9** journeypersons.

“Our biggest difficulty is labour. **Productive** labour.”

**1** in **43** journeypersons are female.

**1** in **41** journeypersons are Aboriginal.

“Lack of **skilled** trades has been influencing volume.”



Recruitment of international skilled workers is down by **36%** from 2014, but reports say **21%** more employers report success.

**94%** of construction businesses plan to hire in 2015, including executives, managers, administrators, journeypersons, labourers and apprentices. 89% of surveyed companies hired new personnel in 2014.



**7** of every **10** respondents report moderate to significant difficulty sourcing skilled workers, with the Lower Mainland expressing the most severe troubles.

## ON LNG OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

“LNG is a 50/50 opportunity.”

“If they go forward it will make all of BC busier.”

“All I can hope for is a sliver of the pie.”

“It will have a large impact on labour demand when projects become reality.”

“These are very large projects which may preclude local GCs from bidding. International firms will get these projects.”

“I think it will eventually become a market but I don’t see it as our saving grace.”

“If the LNG projects go ahead, we are ready to bid them.”

## ON BIDDING AND COMPETITION

Use of online bidding resources for construction projects is up **18%** throughout the province

**76%** say they have used online bidding in the past year.



### INTEREST IN BIDDING OUTSIDE HOME REGION

**40%**  
high

**20%**  
medium

**25%**  
low

Only **1** of **7** of respondents bid exclusively in their home region.

Businesses based in the **Southern Interior** and **Northern BC** remain the most likely to bid jobs outside their region, and enjoy the highest rate of success on out-of-region bids – 10% higher than those in the Island and Lower Mainland areas.

### LOCATION OF PROJECTS

	LOCAL	REGION	PROV	NAT'L	INT'L
2014	60%	19%	14%	5.5%	1.5%
2015	49%	29%	12%	8%	2%

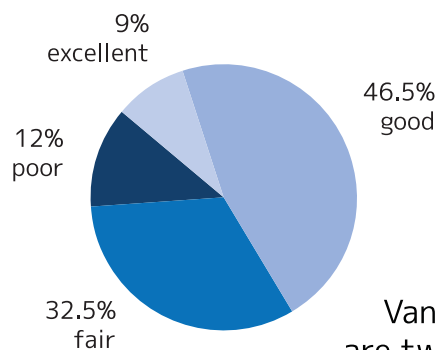
### TRENDS IN COMPETITION: 2013 to 2015

**6/10** report increased regional competition

**1/2** report increased national competition

**1/3** report increased international competition

### SUCCESS LEVEL WHEN BIDDING OUTSIDE REGION



Businesses in BC's North have the highest overall success levels, with 98.6% rating fair to excellent.

Vancouver-based businesses are twice as likely as any other area to report a "poor" success level on project bids outside their region.

**77%** of projects are close to home.

## ON THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING THEIR BUSINESS

"Finding the guys with the talent and determination to try something new."

"We're lucky to go in with 2% profit. The tiniest error and we're losing money."

"Trying to continue making money while not cutting corners."

"Local markets will not likely support the wage structure from the mega-projects."

"We need prompt payment legislation with penalties. Payments often come through months late, with the trades carrying the job."

"Replacing aging staff over the next 10 years."

"Safety, accountability, and over-regulation."

## TO YOUTH, FROM INDUSTRY

"Construction is an area of an increasingly technical nature. Good tradesmen actually require notable technical comprehension."

"Building is a science, and you need to be able to perform in mathematics, physics, customer service, languages – it's a very well-rounded career."

"Get in early and work hard. Find a good company and stick with 'em through the apprenticeship; it looks good on your résumé. Join industry groups to get to know the community."

"Visit different trades companies to help decide on your career choice. Talk to the long-term employees for insight."

"Do your work with pride. Listen and learn so one day you can teach others what was taught to you."

"Consider your apprenticeship as the bare minimum education. Never stop learning."

"Don't go to university just because it seems like the thing to do."

"Expect to work hard. Be on time always. Show up every day. Show an interest and show initiative. These basics will quickly move you off the broom, onto the tools, and into management."

"The trades aren't for dummies. We are looking for those who like to work with their brains and their hands, who like variety, who would like opportunities to work almost anywhere, and who would like to work inside the office, and outside."

"Find what trade you like and you will do well. Don't be afraid of hard work. Be eager to learn everything: the more versatile you are, the more employable."

"It's a good opportunity to earn money while you learn. There are excellent opportunities for advancement into project management, estimating, etc."

"Do it! It's well worth it. You can take it with you anywhere in the world. Make yourself valuable and you'll get paid top dollar and never be out of work."

"Always ask questions."

Learn more at [www.bccasn.com/survey2015](http://www.bccasn.com/survey2015)

## THE SKY'S THE LIMIT. WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

The 2015 BC Construction Industry Survey is a partnership between:

**CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS**  
BC & ALBERTA'S CONSTRUCTION MAGAZINE

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