

WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION



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Women in Construction week, running from the 2nd to the 8th March 2025, is an initiative dedicated to changing the stereotypes that women face when it comes to careers within the construction industry. Even now, women are still underrepresented across the construction industry, despite the great work from the NAWIC (National Association of Women in Construction) since 1953. In honour of this dedicated week, we've interviewed a selection of our own female employees to explore what life is really like for a woman working in construction and to understand what we can do as an industry to influence more women to make similar commitments in the future.

Times are changing, with the number of women working in construction on the increase. A survey conducted by GoConstruct found that 37% of new entrants into the industry that came from higher education are women and over 320,000 women work in construction in the UK.



THE BENEFITS OF A DIVERSE WORKPLACE

Misconceptions about traditionally masculine or feminine jobs are slowly diminishing with a growing number of women joining previously male dominated industries.

Charlotte Gordon, Geberit Customer Support Manager with more than 14 years' industry experience believes that attitudes within the construction sector have changed for the better. She says: "There's more diversity out there. With more people doing roles that were once more male dominated. You see women on construction sites and female plumbers on the road setting up their own business which is really great to see."

A diverse workplace is an asset to any industry. A report conducted by McKinsey & Co. found that the most gender-diverse companies are 25% more likely to achieve above-average profitability than companies with less diversity. Sally Hulme is a Geberit Technical Sales Manager with 18 years in the industry. She comments: "I think diversity is really important in every environment, not just with gender but also culture, age, religion, sexuality and ethnicity."

ENACTING CHANGE

With so many rewards and benefits, and with plenty of room for career progression and skill development in the construction industry, the sector is certainly worth considering. However, these opportunities are often not communicated to young women. Addressing the low number of women in construction starts at school age. It's important that girls feel that a career in the construction sector is not only feasible but also desirable as a long-term career.

The power of a role model for young girls should not be underestimated, as not only does this normalise the prospect of a woman in a historically male dominated industry, but also inspires and pushes back against gender stereotypes. As Neelam Bala, Specification and Estimating Manager and member of The Women's Engineering Society with 13 years in the industry says: "Do not change your direction in a male dominated industry based on another's narrow mind."

Amplifying voices from successful women within the industry is more essential than ever, to allow young girls to be able to visualise themselves in similar positions and to know that these positions are attainable. Geberit Technical Sales Manager Jan Parker, who has been in the industry for 40 years, is yet another role model, passionately stating: "Yes, join the construction industry! I have girls and I have encouraged both of them to try an engineering degree. It's a great life and the experiences are fantastic."

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS AND SMASHING GENDER STEREOTYPES

However, there's still work to be done to drive equality across the UK's built environment. As time moves on it will become ever more crucial to encourage young girls and women to choose a career in construction, providing opportunities for everyone to thrive within the industry. It's important for organisations to bust the myths surrounding construction work and continue to spread the word around how anyone can build a prosperous and rewarding career within the industry. Joanne Ansell, Regional Sales Director with 35 years in the industry says: "Others recognise the knowledge I have gained over many years in the construction industry. I believe this has helped me enormously in my role to gain respect."

As a company, we value diversity and a culture that allows every employee to bring their full potential to their role, and we are proud to be helping to increase equality across the built environment.



Q&A CONTRIBUTORS

WITH OVER 100 YEARS OF COMBINED EXPERIENCE



Lynne Clapham-Carter

Specification Sales Manager

35 years experience



Hannah Butterworth

Key Account Manager (SH)

9 years experience



Crina Nitura

Business Development Manager

11 years experience



Sonia De Gioia

Sales Director (Showrooms)

21 years experience



Neelam Bala

Technical Pre Sales Manager

13 years experience

Q. WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE WHEN DECIDING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN CONSTRUCTION, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

Lynne Clapham-Carter:

"I started working as a specification manager in the construction industry in 1996, having worked in architects' practices before that. Attitudes to women in the industry at that time were very different from today and for many years I was the only female specification manager employed within the companies I worked for. Contractors and plumbers were often visibly surprised when a female arrived to measure up their WC facilities and recommend products to them, or when I was able to suggest workable solutions for site-specific issues they were facing. I'm pleased to say that today I'm not the only woman on the team that I work with and that attitudes have improved enormously over the years."



Hannah Butterworth:

"I started off as a graduate and didn't feel I faced too many barriers starting off my career in construction. I think companies have to be seen as inclusive when offering graduate programs and apprenticeships. However, as I tried to progress my career, I experienced stoppers. One manager told me, "Its daunting for a man going on to sites never mind a woman". I was constantly chasing progression behind my male counterparts, even though my performance was always at the top of its game. I then realised it wasn't me, it was the culture of the company that was stopping me."



Crina Nitura:

"Facing assumptions that construction is a "man's job," leading to doubts about competence and misconceptions about technical abilities required for the role. Overcome by building confidence through on-the-job achievements to prove skills and expertise. Mindset: you're the expert in the room!"



Sonia De Gioia:

"I started my career in construction selling building products in 2001. I was one of the first women in an Area Sales Manager role to be working for my company at the time in what was a very traditional and male dominated industry. I felt I really needed to prove myself and go over and above in order to be taken seriously and gain credibility and trust. I would often turn up on site in my hard hat and safety boots and be the only woman there. Entering into this industry is like no other...it is down to earth, fast paced, constantly changing, competitive and fierce at times. I gained the respect of my male colleagues and customers by working really hard, always doing what I said I was going to do, and training myself to a level where I felt confident that I had the product knowledge and technical expertise to answer any question that came my way."



Neelam Bala:

"Entering the construction industry, came with challenges, especially in a male-dominated field where I was constantly challenged and had to prove my expertise, I however focussed on both technical expertise and experience (e.g., AutoCAD, Autodesk Revit, and BIM) and leadership capabilities has helped me establish credibility. My commitment to continuous learning new skills, such as mastering advanced tools has allowed me to overcome these barriers."



Q. WHAT SKILLS HAVE BEEN MOST CRUCIAL TO YOUR SUCCESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, AND HOW DID YOU DEVELOP THEM?

Lynne Clapham-Carter:

"I've always been passionately interested in broadening my knowledge about the construction industry as a whole, including all of the diverse market sectors and branches of expertise that it encompasses, rather than only deepening my knowledge regarding my relatively small sphere of involvement.

This has led to me developing a broad scope of technical know-how over the years, which in turn affords me a high degree of trust and respect from my customer base. That has proved to be very beneficial to my career over the years and the fact that I also have first-hand experience and understanding of my customers' roles, responsibilities, and requirements, is a valuable additional skill."



Neelam Bala:

"My proficiency in software tools has been indispensable, especially in roles involving technical specifications, prefabrication designs, and compliance with British Standards. I developed these through hands-on experience, international collaboration, and continuous learning. The dynamic nature of construction requires innovative solutions, and my ability to troubleshoot and align technical designs with customer requirements has been pivotal. These skills have been refined over years of managing complex projects, traveling internationally to introduce technical innovations, and mentoring others within my teams."



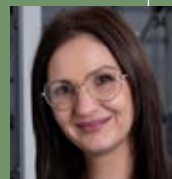
Hannah Butterworth:

"Resilience has been key, keeping going and breaking down the barriers has got me where I am today."



Crina Nitura:

"The construction industry can be demanding, and resilience is crucial to overcoming challenges. Developed by setting achievable goals to build self-confidence over time and celebrate milestones and successes. Confidence is building when you become an expert on the field but focusing on clear communication, building strong relationships and conflict resolution can boost your confidence too."



Sonia De Gioia:

"Being able to think on your feet is crucial. Every day you are faced with having to make time critical decisions and seek solutions if a product doesn't turn up on time or is out of stock or your customer needs it on site urgently and has someone has forgotten to order it. Construction does not stop and you have to be able to work at the same pace alongside it and stop what you're doing at the drop of a hat to deal with an emergency. Although the bathroom industry does not operate at such a frenzied pace, these skills have been crucial for me to have been able to carry over. As a result of years of working like this, I have been able to learn to be really creative, think outside of the box and come up with unique ways of solving a problem for a client."



Q. HOW DO YOU THINK THE CULTURE OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED IN SUPPORTING GENDER DIVERSITY OVER RECENT YEARS?

Lynne Clapham-Carter:

"Towards the start of my career, there were actually some "no women allowed" areas in a few of the buildings I visited for my role – quite a shocking concept in the UK of today! Much of the shift within the construction industry has been a direct result of the general change in cultural attitudes over the years and also the growth in generational awareness around inclusivity and diversity. The emphasis on and importance of equality has also been strengthened through the Equality Act of 2010 in the UK.

In my view, the more diversity there is in a team, the more viewpoints there are and the more interesting the discussions become, which in turn helps us to provide the best solutions for our customers."



Neelam Bala:

"I believe since placing a precedence in the UK i.e. the Equality Act 2010, this very much supported gender diversity and women in construction, although challenges remain at all levels, more so, at and below mid-management with lesser women in leadership and board positions. Such actions for gender diversity are being promoted by education organisations and associations (Women in Construction and National Association of Women in Construction, including networking and events held specifically for construction). Noticeably, the gender gap remains large and women with further experience and expertise than their male managers, remain unnoticed. Such a position creates fear in managers and ultimately, lack of progression and development."



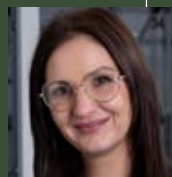
Hannah Butterworth:

"Yes, very much so. You now see more females on sites, and in what was once male dominated professions, which is great!! When I came to Geberit, I loved the fact I wasn't the only female in the team, and they are very gender diverse."



Crina Nitura:

"The construction industry has made notable progress in promoting gender diversity and many companies are implementing diversity policies, flexible work arrangements, and harassment-free workplace initiatives. There are more welcoming and supportive environments for women, reducing barriers to entry and advancement. I have many role models in my life and most of them are female.."



Sonia De Gioia:

"I think there are a lot of good companies out there who have been trailblazers in encouraging more women to join the construction industry and to also share the highlights of working in it to a wider audience. One of the businesses I used to work for, CITB created one of the first campaigns and programmes on women in construction about 15 years ago. Seeing images of women across social media and marketing who are working within the industry really helps to change people's opinions that it isn't just for men. Companies like Saint Gobain who I also worked for, created programmes to encourage women to apply for roles and also set themselves targets to have more women in higher positions within their businesses to encourage inclusion and diversity. One of the reasons I came to work for Geberit was because I was interviewed by two fantastic women and this showed me straight away that I was walking into a really diverse workspace where I would feel valued and welcomed."



Q. IF YOU COULD GIVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN CONSIDERING A CAREER IN CONSTRUCTION, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Lynne Clapham-Carter:

"Work hard, trust in your knowledge and have confidence in your abilities. Be yourself and believe in who you are - you are as valuable as everyone else."



Neelam Bala:

"My advice to young women considering a career in construction is to believe in your abilities, keep educating oneself and seize every opportunity to grow. The construction industry is dynamic and rewarding, offering the chance to make a tangible impact on the build environment. Be proactive in developing technical skills, seeking mentorship, and networking through organisations and associations. Most importantly, don't let stereotypes deter you. Your skills, dedication and results will speak louder than any doubts others may have."



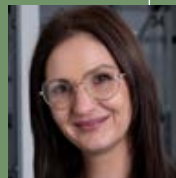
Hannah Butterworth:

"Go for it! Always know your worth and if someone ever tells you that you can't do something, it might be time to consider working somewhere else! Never underestimate or limit yourself!"



Crina Nitura:

"Believe in your abilities and strengths, embrace continuous learning, and don't let stereotypes define your path."



Sonia De Gioia:

"Go for it! It's hugely satisfying and rewarding for all the reasons I have mentioned. You get to build some truly wonderful relationships with people and meet some fantastic characters along the way that make every day special and unique."





14% OF CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS OVERALL ARE FEMALE.

AT GEBERIT WE ARE PROUD TO BE MOVING TOWARDS EQUALITY ACROSS THE WHOLE BUSINESS.

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN:

Women in field sales

23%

Women in management positions

36%

Women in senior management positions

40%

Women in exec team

50%

