

Apprenticeships and Occupational Training in Construction

Many workers enter the construction industry through craft-specific apprenticeship programs, which offer on-the-job training, along with formal classroom and hands-on instruction from experienced craft workers.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) establishes quality standards for apprenticeship programs registered with the federal or state government. The ETA requires all apprenticeship programs to include at least one year, or 2,000 hours, of on-the-job training, and recommends 144 hours of formal instruction.¹ Apprenticeship programs are sponsored either jointly by a labor-management committee or independently by non-union contractors. The length of apprenticeship varies depending on the occupation.

Joint labor-management programs are major providers of the training to produce skilled labor. Such programs are established at the national, state, and local levels (chart 31a). In 2011, joint programs accounted for the largest share of apprentice programs in Hawaii (80%) and California (65%). Most joint programs are very large. Overall, around 70% of apprentices in construction were enrolled in joint labor-management programs.²

Apprenticeship registrations tend to coincide with construction cycles. The overall number of new apprentices in construction increased during the construction boom, peaking at 74,164 in 2007 (55,372 union and 18,792 non-union), and then dropped to 35,551 by 2010 (chart 31b), reflecting the downturn in construction activity. This fluctuation in the number of new apprentices is clearly illustrated by the change in Hispanic construction workers (chart 31c). In 2007, about 21.5% (15,913) of new apprentice registrations in construction were for workers of Hispanic ethnicity, which was a dramatic increase from 13.4% in 2006. The number of Hispanics enrolling in apprenticeship programs dropped to 6,596 in 2010, but still accounted for nearly 19% of the overall new apprentice registrations that year. Despite

the variation in both union and non-union programs, union programs consistently had higher apprenticeship enrollments over time, regardless of Hispanic ethnicity.

Apprenticeship programs are organized in more than 500 occupations in the construction industry. Construction trades that have certification requirements, such as electricians, tend to have more workers enrolling in apprenticeship programs (chart 31d). Generally, employer-only programs are concentrated in a few occupations, whereas joint apprenticeship training programs cover a greater variety of occupations. For example, structural steel work and operating engineer registrations were almost exclusively in joint labor-management programs.

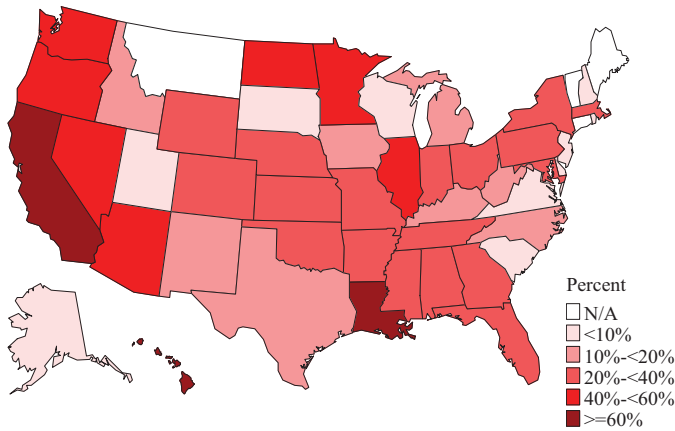
In addition to apprenticeship programs, construction workers may receive ongoing training to improve or expand skills and keep up with advancements in the industry. According to self-reported data from a national household survey, less than one-third of construction workers reported receiving some job-related training over the previous 10 years.³ Hispanic workers lag behind their non-Hispanic counterparts in occupational training. About 4.8% of Hispanic construction workers reported receiving job-related training in the previous year, compared with 14.3% of their non-Hispanics counterparts (chart 31e). Moreover, construction workers employed in larger establishments are more likely to receive training than those in smaller establishments. Less than 9% of workers employed in establishments with fewer than 25 employees reported that they received training in the previous year, whereas 17% of workers in establishments with 100 or more employees received training (chart 31f). Among construction workers receiving training, most (87.6%) reported that they used their training in their current job. Only 21.4% reported training for a different job within their current organization, and 11.3% trained for a job outside of their organization.³

1. U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services/Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, <http://www.doleta.gov/oa/apprentices.cfm> (October 2012).

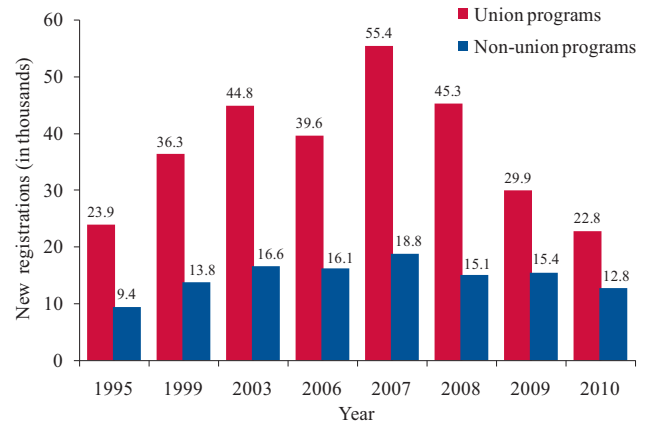
2. U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. *Top 25 Occupations by Active Apprentices - Fiscal Year 2011*. Contact: Alexander Jordan.

3. U.S. Census Bureau. 2001, 2004, and 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation. Calculations by C. Jeffrey Waddoups, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

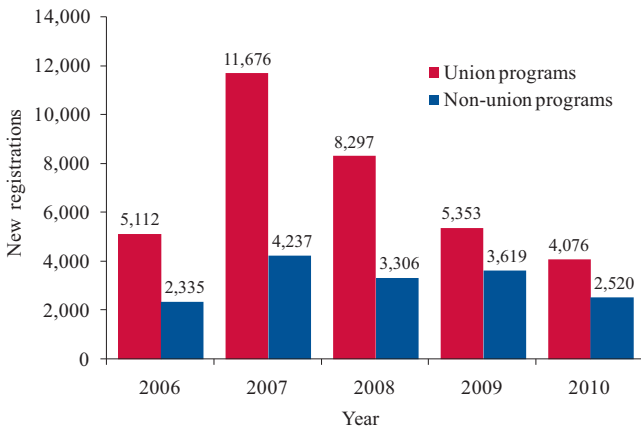
31a. Joint labor-management apprenticeship programs by state, 2011 (Share of all active programs)



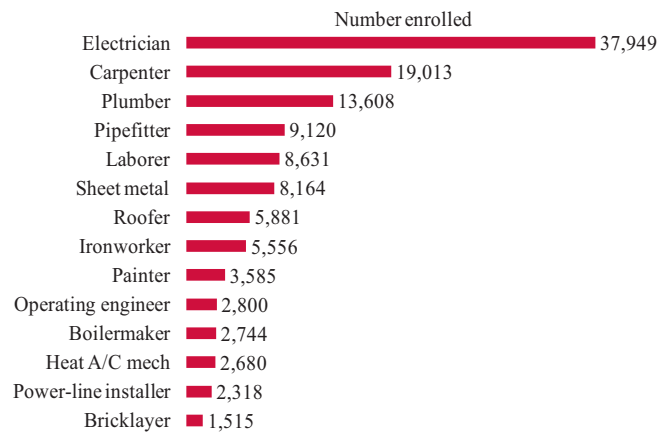
31b. New registrations in construction apprenticeship programs, union vs. non-union programs, select years, 1995-2010



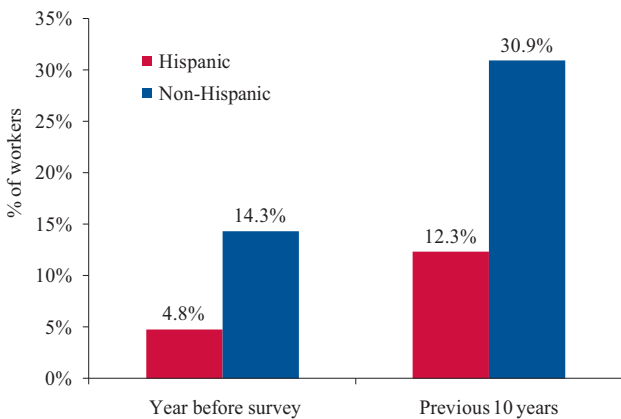
31c. Number of Hispanic construction workers among new apprenticeship registrations, union vs. non-union programs, 2006-2010



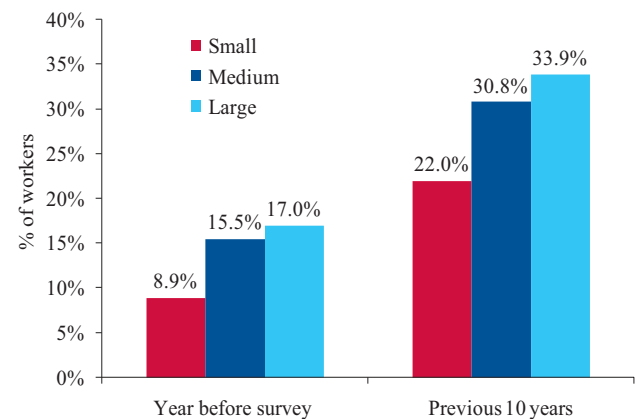
31d. Number of active apprentices in selected construction occupations, 2011



31e. Occupational training in construction, by Hispanic ethnicity



31f. Occupational training in construction, by establishment size



Note: Chart 31a - Data for Connecticut, Maine, Montana, and Vermont are not available.
 Chart 31f - Small = Less than 25 employees; Medium = 25-99 employees; Large = 100+ employees.

Source: Charts 31a-31d - U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Contact: Alexander Jordan.
 Charts 31e and 31f - U.S. Census Bureau. 2001, 2004, and 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation. Calculations by C. Jeffrey Waddoups, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.