

The Aging Construction Industry: Keeping Skilled Employees Longer

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Workers in the construction industry tend to be older than those in other industries, according to the [National Association of Home Builders](#). The *median* age of construction workers is 42 years old, a year older than the median in the national labor force. Further, the median age of workers in the industry is 44-45 years old in several U.S. states, including Illinois, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Wyoming.

The industry has found itself in a bind as the amount of work continues to grow while the construction industry's workforce ages. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that between 2016 and 2026, the construction industry will see a projected growth of approximately 11 percent, or 747,600 jobs. Construction firms, however, are reporting difficulties in finding skilled labor to meet this growth.

A survey from the Associated General Contractors of America and Sage Construction and Real Estate found that, while 79 percent of construction firms plan to expand their headcount in 2019, 78 percent of them have had difficulties in finding skilled labor. The construction industry may continue to struggle on this front, as trends suggest that millennials (*i.e.*, those born between 1981 and 1996) are projected to make up 75 percent of the U.S. workforce by 2030, but millennials simply are not joining the industry.

This data suggests that it is not only imperative that employers understand the changing demographics and diversity of the workforce population (which will help in recruiting, training, and retaining new talent), but strategize on how to keep current workers in the industry longer. Employers who fail to address the latter run the risk of losing some of their most senior, skilled, and experienced employees sooner than necessary.

Employers may want to consider developing methods to mitigate risks to employees, to keep them healthy and active. Studies suggest that injuries to older workers, including simple sprains or strains, tend to be more costly for employers, as older workers often require greater recovery time. To reduce the likelihood of these injuries, *and injuries to any worker, regardless of age*, employers may find success in implementing rotating schedules, fitness programs, stretching routines, or safety programs to train workers on best practices. Employers also may want to consider developing disability prevention programs, and more robust disability management programs, to help assess and reduce potential hazards that may cause injury. Finally, ensure proper procedures are being followed to reintegrate employees into the workforce quickly and safely.

Please contact a Jackson Lewis attorney with any questions.

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