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NEW YORK

NYC Construction Employment Hits 40-Year High, Wages Continue To Rise

Average annual wages earned by city construction workers increased by an estimated 5.4% in 2016, which represents the highest annual percentage increase since 2007.



Carlo A. Scissura, president, CEO of the New York Building Congress

BY [JOHN JORDAN](#)

NEW YORK CITY—The building boom that has taken hold here has swelled the ranks of the construction trades in New York City to levels last seen more than 40 years ago.

According to a report released today by the New York Building Congress, construction industry employment rose for the fifth consecutive year, having reached an average of 146,200 construction jobs in 2016, [up sharply from the 139,200 jobs in 2015](#). Construction industry employment in New York City reached 129,100 in 2014 and 122,100 in 2013.

The Building Congress' prognostication of this year's construction sector's workforce levels was nearly on the mark. The Building Congress predicted a 6.4% increase in construction employment in New York City in 2016 and a workforce of approximately 147,100.

Average annual wages earned by city construction workers increased by an estimated 5.4% in 2016, which represents the highest annual percentage increase since 2007, when wages increased 6.4%, and the first time since 2008 that wages increased by more than 3% in any single year. In 2015, wages increased 3%.

The Building Congress analysis is based on a review of New York State's current employment statistics and quarterly census of employment and wages compiled by the New York State Department of Labor.

“Thanks to a virtually unprecedented building boom in both the residential and office sectors, the New York City construction workforce has grown by an impressive 30% over the past five years,” says New York Building Congress president and CEO Carlo A. Scissura. “Just as importantly, about three-quarters of these well-paying jobs are going to residents of the five boroughs, further strengthening the city's economy and tax base.”

The specialty trades sector, which includes plumbers and electricians, accounted for 93,900 jobs in 2016, up from 89,900 jobs in 2015. Workers involved in the construction of buildings accounted for 43,300 jobs in 2016, up from 41,000 the prior year. The heavy construction and civil engineering sector, which is primarily engaged in major infrastructure projects, produced 8,900 jobs last year, up from 8,400 in 2015.

Although the heavy construction and civil engineering workforce remained the highest paid in the industry in 2016, average wages for that sector declined from \$119,200 in 2015 to \$116,800 in 2016. This workforce earned an average of \$111,200 in 2014 and \$107,900 in 2013. The decline in annual wages in 2016 may have been associated with declines in overtime rather than a contraction in average hourly wages, the Building Congress explains.

The New York City workforce involved in the construction of buildings experienced a dramatic, 9.2% increase in wages from \$73,300 in 2015 to \$80,100 last year. These workers averaged \$71,200 in wages in 2014 and \$70,200 in 2013.

Workers employed by specialty trade contractors also brought home bigger paychecks last year with wages that averaged \$76,900 in 2016, up from \$73,500 in 2015, \$71,700 in 2014 and \$70,300 in 2013.

“Like the rest of the job market, construction industry wages finally seem to be catching up to job growth after lagging behind for most of the economic recovery,” Scissura notes. “While this is great news for individual workers and their families, it remains to be seen what, if any, effect rising wages will have on the overall demand for construction services in New York City.”