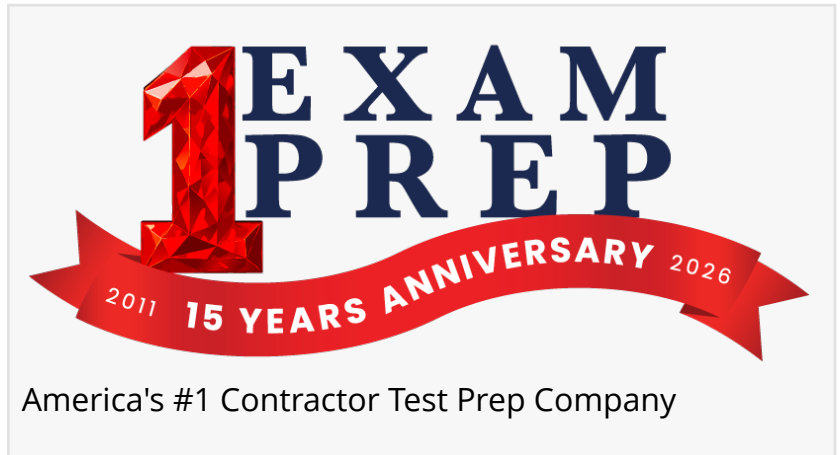


83% of Contractors Surveyed Are Getting Licensed for the First Time, Signaling a Surge of Entrepreneurs Into the Trades

1 Exam Prep career-coaching survey of 2,016 students across 31 states finds most are pursuing licensure to launch or grow their own contracting business

SUNRISE, FL, UNITED STATES, August 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- 1 Exam Prep, America's #1 Contractor School, today released findings from an ongoing survey of students who purchased a licensing program and

also completed a one-on-one career coaching session with the company's career guidance counselors. Since January 1, 2026, 1 Exam Prep has surveyed 2,016 such individuals nationwide who are pursuing a new [contractor license](#) or adding an additional license to their existing credentials — offering one of the clearest pictures yet of who is entering the skilled trades and why, among this segment of its student base.



The data shows the vast majority of respondents, 83.1% (1,676 people), are seeking a contractor license for the first time. Another 15.4% (311 people) are already self-employed, licensed contractors who are adding a new license to expand into additional trades or business lines.

Among the 1,676 pursuing a first license, 1,063 (63.4%) are already performing work on their own, self-employed, without a license yet or below the threshold that requires one. Another 340 (20.3%) are working for another contractor while pursuing their own license, and 273 (16.3%) are getting licensed specifically at their employer's request.

The survey also breaks down all 2,016 respondents by employment status: 68.2% (1,374 people) are self-employed, either launching a new contracting business or adding a license to grow an existing one, while 30.4% (613 people) currently work for another contractor. Of that employed group, 340 say they are pursuing their own license while still working for a contractor, and 273 say they are getting licensed specifically at their employer's request.

"These numbers reflect what we hear from students every day: people aren't just looking for a

job in construction, they're looking to build something they own," Amanda Williams, Director of Relationship Management at 1 Exam Prep, said. "More than two out of every three students we coach are already self-employed or on their way there, and even many of the students currently working for someone else are using their license as a stepping stone to running their own business."

The survey also found that 64% of respondents enrolled in 1 Exam Prep's combined Business + Trade licensing track, rather than a trade-only credential — a further sign that most students are preparing to run their own contracting business, not simply work under someone else's license.

From Exam Preparation to Business Launch

The findings reflect a broader shift in what contractors need as they enter the industry. For many aspiring contractors, passing a licensing exam is only the beginning. Once licensed, they may also need to establish a legal business entity, obtain an EIN, set up business banking, secure required bonds and insurance, and complete state-specific licensing and compliance requirements.

1 Exam Prep has expanded its career coaching and onboarding program to help students navigate those steps alongside their exam preparation. Through one-on-one guidance, students can receive assistance understanding their licensing requirements and identifying the business, insurance and compliance steps needed to move from aspiring contractor to operating business owner.

"Our goal is to help contractors see the entire path, not just the test in front of them. Someone can be extremely talented at their trade and still have no idea how to turn that skill into a business. We're helping bridge that gap," Amanda Williams, Director of Relationship Management at 1 Exam Prep, said.

Respondents span more than 31 states and territories. 1 Exam Prep offers licensing exam preparation for more than 2,500 license types in all 50 states.

Nearly half of respondents, 45.0% (908 people), are pursuing a [general contractor](#) or building license, including residential contractor credentials — the broadest path into running a contracting business. Trade-specific licenses make up the balance: 12.2% HVAC/mechanical, 11.4% electrical, 6.8% plumbing, 4.7% roofing, 3.7% underground utility or water and sewer, and 2.8% pool and spa, with the remaining 13.4% spread across other specialty trades such as low-voltage, glass and glazing, irrigation and solar.

Methodology

Findings are based on 2,016 students who completed a live career coaching session with a 1 Exam Prep career guidance counselor between January 1, 2026 and August 25, 2026. This is not

a survey of all 1 Exam Prep clients: it is limited to students who purchased a licensing program and also opted in to the company's career coaching and counseling program, and who are obtaining a new contractor license or an additional contractor license. The survey is ongoing, and 1 Exam Prep will continue to publish updated findings as the survey population grows.

The full survey results, including a detailed breakdown by license type and employment status, are available at 1examprep.com/blogs/contractor-exam-prep-press, where a downloadable PDF copy of the report can also be found.

About 1 Exam Prep

1 Exam Prep is America's #1 Contractor School, providing licensing exam preparation, career coaching and business-launch support to contractors across all 50 states and more than 2,500 license types. Based in Sunrise, Florida, the company helps tradespeople and aspiring business owners navigate the path from exam prep to a fully licensed, insured contracting business. Learn more at 1examprep.com.

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