

Mind the gap:
Why Gen Z talent is crucial in
addressing the looming green
skills shortfall.

Introduction

The needs of a green transition

As concerns surrounding the usage of fossil fuels and climate change mount, governments are setting increasingly stringent emissions-reducing targets which ultimately require a significant upheaval of current operations and working practices. Tooling this workforce appropriately to meet demand for change is presenting itself as a tremendous problem, analogous to a green ‘industrial revolution’, as green technologies advance and the world works to achieve a low-carbon future. These changes in processes and new business models will demand new or different skill sets.

The three main ways that the shift to a green economy affects necessary skills are as follows:

- Demand for some tasks rises due to structural changes, while demand for others declines.
- New skill profiles, credentials, and training frameworks are required because new economic activity generates new jobs.
- Many current occupations and industries will see a change in the kind of tasks performed, making changes to the existing training and qualification frameworks for these jobs necessary.

It is crucial to understand that the availability of green jobs and skills shouldn't be seen as specialised or restricted to specific industries. Every career has the potential to become ‘green’ and there is a wide range of skills that will aid the shift to a net zero economy as the world works to combat climate change.

‘Mind the gap’ – the green skills challenge

As green technologies progress and the world strives towards a low carbon future, these changes in processes and new business models will require new or differing skill sets, and tooling the workforce suitably is presenting itself as a monumental challenge, akin to a green ‘industrial revolution’. Both developed and developing countries must now shift their economies towards more ecologically friendly forms of production and consumption through use of these green skills.

“Simply put, green skills are the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society.”ⁱ – United Nations Industrial Development Organisation

According to research, one in five jobs in the UK (or roughly 6.3 million workers) will require skills that may see an increase or decrease in demand throughout the transition.ⁱⁱ Further, LinkedIn’s Global Green Skills Report 2022 demonstrates a worldwide trend towards green jobs, with an 8% increase in job postings requiring green skills. Regrettably, this growth is not matched by an increase in available talent, which has seen only a 6% rise.ⁱⁱⁱ

Young Green Talent in the Workplace survey

Methodology

The ZCA young green talent in the workplace survey gathered the views of thirty-nine 18–30-year-olds who were applying their eco aptitude either in education or in the workplace. We first gathered information on the experiences and skills of the respondents followed by collecting their expectations of their employers. Many of our questions were qualitative and open ended in nature in order to understand more deeply the opinions and values of young people when it comes to climate.

Young green talent is ready to step up

The top 7 green skills possessed by young green professionals are (in order of prevalence):

- Sustainable development
- Sustainability research
- Environmental policy
- Renewable energy generation
- Pollution prevention
- Ecosystem management
- Environmental remediation

LinkedIn’s 2022 global green skills report records the share of job postings that require each of the aforementioned skills. These are represented in figure 1 alongside the prevalence of the same skill within young green talent.^{iv}

Figure 1: Prevalence of selected green skills in young people and the percentage of green job postings that require selected green talents

Green skill	LinkedIn postings requiring green skill	Prevalence of green skill within young green talent
Sustainable development	27.6%	72%
Sustainability research	Not in top 10	56%
Environmental policy	11.1%	54%
Renewable energy generation	8%	31%
Pollution prevention	Not in top 10	26%
Ecosystem management	10.5%	21%
Environmental remediation	10.9%	15%

Source: ZCA

The impact of the climate crisis on the well-being of young people is well documented. A Lancet survey of 10,000 16–25-year-olds from 10 different nations found the following. All respondents expressed concern about the effects of climate change, with 59% expressing extreme or very high concern and 84% expressing at least moderate concern. More than 50% of people reported feeling unhappy, worried, angry, frustrated, helpless, and guilty. Many respondents reported having a lot of negative thoughts about climate change (e.g., 75% said they thought the future was frightening and 83% said they thought people had failed to take care of the planet), and more than 45% of respondents said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning. The government's responses to climate change were not well received by

respondents, and they expressed more feelings of betrayal than certainty.^v

“Anger can be hugely motivating. When it is based in a real sense of injustice, it shows that your conscience is alive.”^{vi}

This kind of motivation and its power to make organisational change should not be underestimated, when accountability is so vital to meaningful climate action, having young green talent within your organisation that will provide that accountability will be hugely valuable.

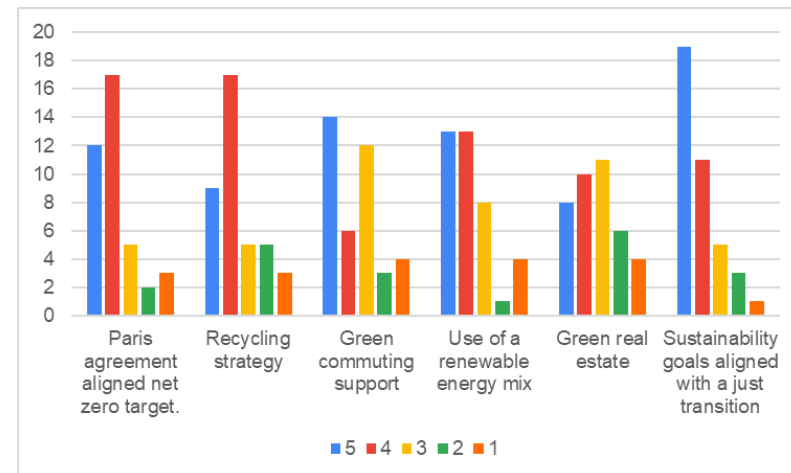
You’ll have to compete to recruit and retain young green talent

Employees from Generation Z and millennials are at the forefront of sustainability and climate change initiatives. They have become more outspoken about their workplace values as a result of their concern for environmental issues, and they now demand that the businesses they work for and do business with reflect their commitment to sustainability. In fact, a recent study indicated that, of the over 23,000 respondents, a significant portion of Gen Zers (55%) and millennials (54%) have gone as far as to investigate a company’s environmental impact and policies before accepting a job from them.^{vii}

The respondents to ZCA’s survey ranked six key climate credentials that they expect from their employers. These were a Paris Agreement aligned net zero target, a recycling strategy, green commuting support, use of a renewable energy mix, green real estate, and sustainability goals aligned with a just transition. This insight can guide you towards strategies that

will present your organisation as a positive force in the fight against climate change and boost chances to recruit and retain young green talent. Figure 2 shows the respondents’ opinions on these credentials, they were ranked from 5 meaning essential, to 1 meaning not required.

Figure 2: The value placed on various climate credentials by respondents to the young green talent survey (5 being essential and 1 being not required)



Source: ZCA

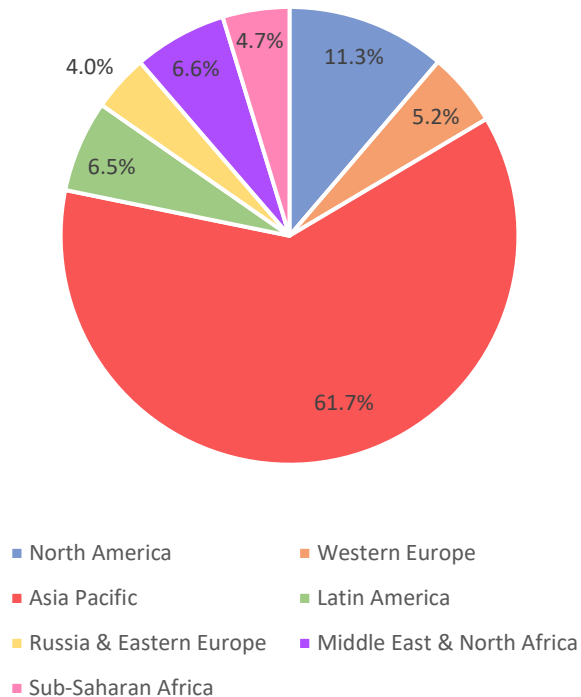
How your green credentials will work for the planet and for you

Bettering your organisational climate credentials is the first domino that must fall as you ready your business for the green transition. By fostering a climate-aware workplace, you create a culture of conscious decision-making that ensures our planet and its environment are never not considered. This culture will not only enhance your own employees’ satisfaction and by extension the likelihood of retaining them but also give a competitive edge to recruitment especially in the Gen Z and millennial groups.

Forecast summary

We forecast that green skills vacancies will soar to 147 million by 2028, with the bulk of demand coming from Asia Pacific. Yet, green skills adoption will not meet demand, growing at just 50% in the next 5 years, compared with 300% growth in green jobs.

Figure 3: Total green skills vacancies in 2028: 147 million, split by 7 key regions (%)



- There is significant variation between regions. We expect North America to lead throughout the period in terms of green skills proliferation, followed by Western Europe.
- We forecast a notable rise in green skills prevalence within the energy & mining sector over the coming 5 years. This is due to investment in renewable energy sources, as well as the reskilling of workers who currently find themselves in more traditional fossil fuel roles. Substantial growth in this sector will be seen in the Asia Pacific region, where China currently maintains a strong base of green skilled workers.
- The green skills gap will be smallest in Western Europe throughout the period; however, this masks some industries where the gap will be of concern – namely energy & mining, education, real estate, and transport & logistics.
- Industries displaying a particularly high skills gap on a global scale are as follows: transport & logistics, education, information and communication, travel, entertainment & recreation, and construction. As a result, governments and industry organisations should act now to help resolve this.

For in-depth analysis, including our full suite of market forecasts, survey data, industry-specific trends and recommendations, as well as insight into legislation & policy, ZCA's full research can be purchased here: [The emerging green skills gap & Gen Z attitudes \(zerocarbonacademy.com\)](https://zerocarbonacademy.com)

Source: Zero Carbon Academy

References

- ⁱ [What are green skills? | UNIDO.](#)
- ⁱⁱ [Green Jobs Taskforce \(publishing.service.gov.uk\).](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ [economicgraph.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/economicgraph/en-us/global-green-skills-report/global-green-skills-report-pdf/li-green-economy-report-2022-annex.pdf.](#)
- ^{iv} [LinkedIn – Global Green Skills Report 2022.](#)
- ^v [The Lancet – Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey.](#)
- ^{vi} [Yale Environment 360 – For Gen Z, Climate Change Is a Heavy Emotional Burden.](#)
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