

## Executive Summary

Green employment has become a global trend. To further promote the sustainable development of society and tackle the climate crisis, various governments have committed to developing green markets and to leading the increase in the number of green jobs and relevant practitioners.

According to LinkedIn the share of green talent increased from 9.6% in 2015, to 13.3% in 2021; a growth rate of 38.5%<sup>1</sup>. Green employment has also been promoted widely. During the pandemic the United Kingdom pledged to create 2 million green employment opportunities by 2030<sup>2</sup>; Canada's Sustainable Jobs Plan and the European Green Deal are creating jobs that are focused on fighting climate change<sup>3</sup>. In recent years there has been a green employment trend in Mainland China, with it being estimated that by 2025 the number of people in green industry will reach one million<sup>4</sup>.

Green employment in Hong Kong is catching up with this development. While support measures have been provided, this is still in its infancy. In recent years the Government has launched the "Pilot Green and Sustainable Finance Capacity Building Support Scheme" and the "Green Tech Fund". The Environment Bureau launched three rounds of green employment schemes during the pandemic, that included providing subsidies to local companies and organisations to employ graduates in environment-related fields<sup>5</sup>.

Although there is no standard international definition, green jobs in Hong

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<sup>1</sup> LinkedIn Economic Graph. (2022). Global Green Skills Report 2022. Retrieved October 31, 2023, from <https://economicgraph.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/economicgraph/en-us/global-green-skills-report/global-green-skills-report-pdf/li-green-economy-report-2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> CarbonCare InnoLab. (2021, March 4). Green Recovery Webinar #3: Green Industry, here I come! Retrieved October 7, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFUWmuuPefA>

<sup>3</sup> LinkedIn Economic Graph. (2023, October 4). Global Green Skills Report 2023. Retrieved December 11, 2023, from <https://economicgraph.linkedin.com/research/global-green-skills-report>

<sup>4</sup> People's Daily Online. (2023, July 10). China's 'Green Employment' Becoming a Trend. Retrieved September 21, 2023, from [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2023-07/10/content\\_26004930.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2023-07/10/content_26004930.htm)

<sup>5</sup> The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. (2022, May 22). ENB to offer nearly 1000 environmental-related jobs under third round of Green Employment Scheme. Retrieved September 18, 2023, from <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202205/20/P2022051900574.htm>

Kong's Census and Statistics Department are covered under the term "environmental industries" with 43,530 employees, which accounts for 1.2% of the total employed workforce in Hong Kong<sup>6</sup>. However, Hong Kong still needs to fully understand that the scope of green employment is expanding. As such, the current definitions and classifications have yet to include emerging green and sustainable development-related industries, or greening and potential greening jobs. Given the rising global demand for green employment, Hong Kong should now be nurturing and retaining talent to align with the development of the green economy.

Against this background, our study aims to explore the issue and how to promote the development of green employment in Hong Kong as a career option for young people. Through on-site surveys, interviews with experts and academics, and the working experiences shared by young people in the green industry, this study seeks to provide options for the development of green employment in Hong Kong and, with it, new employment opportunities for young people.

This study collected data between September and December 2023, by reviewing literature, conducting onsite surveys with 526 Hong Kong youths aged 18-34, 15 local youths known to be working in the green industry, and interviewing five subject-matter experts and academics.

## Main Findings

- 1. Green employment has become a global trend. Various countries are committed to addressing the challenge of climate change, consequently stimulating the demand for green employment. However, the current green employment measures in Hong Kong appear piecemeal and short-term in nature; the city also lacks a long-term plan for green employment, which is not conducive to its development.**

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<sup>6</sup> Census and Statistics Department. (2023, November 30). Table 655-83001: Value added and employment in respect of the Selected Industries. Retrieved January 9, 2024, from [https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web\\_table.html?id=655-83001](https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=655-83001)

- 2. Green employment in Hong Kong is in its early stages, that lacks a definition and categorisation of green jobs. Given the increasing demand in this area, there is a need to provide a clearer definition of green jobs.**
- 3. Many of the young people interviewed had low levels of awareness, interest and confidence in green jobs as the concept has not been widely understood. Given this insufficient knowledge, young people are accustomed to choosing relatively traditional occupations. There is, therefore, a need to address the confidence in green employment among young people.**
- 4. There are two major constraints to the development of green jobs: the lack of a social climate and inadequate policies and accompanying support.**
  - 4.1 Lack of a social climate is attributed to the concepts related to green development have yet to be promoted. The public's low level of awareness of green job discourages their willingness to work in green industries.**
  - 4.2 Inadequate policies and accompanying support are not conducive to the development of green employment. Both traditional and emerging green industries in Hong Kong have different constraints that need to be addressed. The Green Employment Scheme is worth continuing to better support green employment.**
- 5. Adopt two key measures to explore the building of a green talent pool. This could be achieved through educating the workforce and promoting certification for green professionals**

## Recommendations

**Regarding the above research findings and key discussion points and in order to support the early and continuous development of green employment in Hong Kong, we believe that the following suggestions are worth considering:**

- 1. The HKSAR Government should define and classify green jobs to create a social climate that is green employment-friendly. This not only promotes sustainable planning for green jobs, but also facilitates a better understanding of green jobs among the general public.**

**Currently, Hong Kong's classification of green jobs is unclear and preliminary; the data from the Census and Statistics Department only covers categories related to “environmental industries”. To promote the continuous development of green employment, Hong Kong needs to rapidly establish clear definitions and classifications of green jobs. This will enable a better understanding of industry development and facilitate long-term planning. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ O\*NET system has already identified three main types of green jobs: “green new and emerging occupations”, “green enhanced skills occupations” and “green increased demand occupations”, using a green leaf (  ) as the symbol for green jobs. As Hong Kong moves towards a green economy, establishing clear classifications not only benefits policy planning but also creates a social climate that is green employment-friendly, where citizens can develop a more solid understanding of green jobs and the related industries.**

- 2. Introduce a long-term blueprint for green employment. This may encompass green job development and related talent cultivation measures, equipping the workforce with green skills to align with sustainable development goals.**

**Green employment in Hong Kong is still in its early stages. Although various support measures have been introduced, it is necessary to establish a long-term development direction to further promote green employment. The Government should launch a long-term planning blueprint for green employment to present the vision of continuous green job development. This will help the public recognise green jobs as a viable career choice and enhance the employment confidence of young people. The blueprint should also emphasise the cultivation of talent; actively nurturing green capabilities to equip the next generation with comprehensive green skills to address global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development. This includes understanding concepts such as carbon emissions and the circular economy. Such measures can potentially guide individuals in their career development or transitioning to the green industry. This should also actively consider long-term integration of the relevant concepts and content into formal education and vocational training curricula. In particular, elements of green skills can be incorporated into the revised curriculum of Citizenship and Social Development, allowing students to explore the idea of green jobs from an early age.**

- 3. Promote green talent certification in Hong Kong. A certification pilot scheme can be initially launched for green practitioners in outstanding emerging industries. It can then be gradually extended to other industries to enhance the recognition of green jobs and to professionalise talent.**

**Currently, Hong Kong does not have a systematic framework for green talent certification. Industry offers certification courses independently that result in varying standards and inconsistencies in the quality of talent. Many governments across the world select industries with**

**significant impact on sustainable development to introduce green talent certification in collaboration with industry or academic institutions. The Singapore Economic Development Board funds the National University of Singapore to conduct the Certified Energy Manager programme. The Taiwan Ecotourism Association and the Korea Tourism Organization, have introduced formal certification for ecological tour guides. Hong Kong can also select green practitioners in outstanding emerging industries for certification. This would help to prepare for the long-term establishment of green talent certification. Hong Kong can start with a pilot-scheme based on the 2023 Policy Address that proposed the promotion of green eco-tourism and blue resources tourism to boost the demand for eco-tours. After accumulating experience and success, certification can be extended to industries beyond ecological tour guides. This could increase the recognition of green jobs while enhancing the development opportunities for young people to help professionalise talent.**

- 4. Re-launch and expand the Green Employment Scheme to cover job positions in Mainland China's green-related industries. This will provide more comprehensive green work experience.**

**When it was launched during the pandemic, the Green Employment Scheme received positive feedback. Our study also found that some of the interviewed young people benefited from it and have been inspired to develop their careers in the industry. However, the Green Employment Scheme no longer operates.**

**Although the Environmental Protection Department is exploring different internship and training opportunities, these are generally limited to local organisations or companies, while green employment opportunities have, in recent years, been expanded in Mainland China. These**

**opportunities can provide more green career development options for Hong Kong's young people. As such, we recommend re-launching of the Green Employment Scheme, which can expand its scale based on the existing programme and green jobs available in Mainland China. This would enable graduates to gain comprehensive green work experience, broaden their industry perspectives, and expand their professional networks.**