

Action Brief May 2022: The Demand for Green Skills: Growing, Growing, Gone

As we learn from the business community, we want to share that information with our community of educators and business professionals. One trend our recent business focus panels highlighted is the growth of **green jobs** and the rising demand for **green skills** to fill those jobs. The following Action Brief is a synthesis of panel participants' insights and findings from additional research.

It's no surprise that climate change and environmental concern is top of mind for scientists, governments, and businesses alike. Building a sustainable, viable future depends on our actions and decisions today. Increasingly, that looks like living, and working, in a green way.

Green is a term that refers to sustainability, conservation, and environmental friendliness. From small scale recycling efforts to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adopting company-wide renewable energy programs, green initiatives are impacted by individual action and corporate enterprise.

Green is good not only for the environment—it's often an integral part of a company's **corporate social responsibility (CSR)**, or a business's duty to contribute to the wellbeing of society. According to Pacific Oaks College's article "[Breaking Down the 4 Types of Corporate Social Responsibility](#)," CSR is often divided into four pillars:

- *Economic responsibility*, or making financial decisions that aim to do good (and not just make money)
- *Ethical responsibility*, which means engaging in fair business practices with customers, employees, and stakeholders
- *Philanthropic responsibility*, or giving back to the community in which a company exists
- *Environmental responsibility*, which involves embracing environmentally friendly processes and leadership holding the company accountable for its environmental impact

Customers today don't simply purchase a product—they're interested in the company's culture, philanthropic efforts, carbon footprint, and more. A company's sourcing practices, facilities efficiency, and environmental impact matters to many consumers.

In fact, Carolyn Fortuna of [CleanTechnica](#) argues that "sustainability is no longer a nice-to-have but, rather, a strategic necessity and business imperative. Pressure is mounting for all organizations to be more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable."

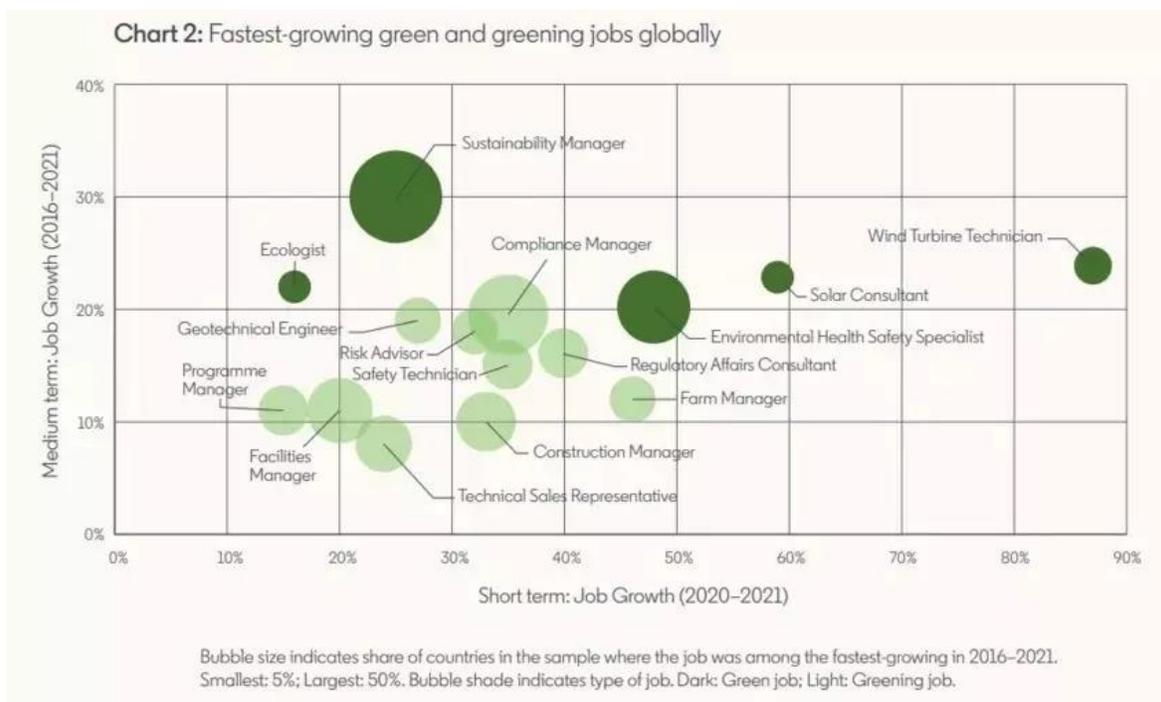
It's not just businesses, either. Green skills, which are the knowledge and abilities needed to support sustainable outcomes, are in high demand. According to LinkedIn's [Global Green Skills Report 2022](#), hiring for these skills grew globally by almost 40% from 2015 to 2021.

Green skills include the following:

- Agricultural sustainability research
- Energy engineering
- Health and safety environmental policy skills
- Product lifecycle management
- Sustainable investing

However, Karin Kimbrough, Chief Economist at LinkedIn, notes that green skills extend beyond conventional green jobs. She explains that LinkedIn, in its [review of studies and skills](#), included “not only skills that people in traditional ‘green’ jobs have, but also skills that people in ‘non-green’ jobs use to do their jobs in a greener way (think sustainable fashion or sustainable investment).”

Many green skills are specialized and fall under typical green occupations, like ecologists and solar panel installers. However, LinkedIn’s reporting reveals some of the fastest-growing green jobs are found in a variety of industries, such as construction managers and technical sales representatives. Green skills are both found and required in a wide range of professions.



While demand for green skills grew at 8% annually over the past five years, LinkedIn’s [reporting](#) reveals that green talent has grown at about 6% annually. Kimbrough notes that “this is a significant missed opportunity for the planet and for workers.” Companies and industries want green talent, but there aren’t enough people to go around. This is the green talent gap.

According to the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO), “skills gaps and shortages are already recognized as a major bottleneck in a number of sectors, such as renewable energy, energy and resource efficiency, renovation of buildings, construction, environmental services, and manufacturing.” These shortages are exacerbated by delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ILO continues: “The availability of workers and enterprises with the right skills for green jobs plays not only a critical role in initiating the transition to a green economy, but also in enabling a just transition that ensures social inclusion and decent work.” It’s vital that “employers investing in new technologies need to be able to find workers with the right skills.”

To address the green talent gap and future-fit their workforce, businesses are focusing on **upskilling** and **reskilling**. In “[Upskilling, Reskilling and Preparing for the Future](#),” Nicole Schreiber-Shearer explains that upskilling focuses on “helping employees become more knowledgeable and develop new competencies that relate to their current position, while reskilling is about equipping workers to switch lanes and move into new roles within your organization.” Upskilling deepens an employee’s job-related skills, while reskilling prepares employees for a different job or industry.

Technology is key to bridge the gap between green supply and demand. In Axios’s article “[The Green Talent Gap Is Widening](#),” Kimbrough notes how green jobs “tend to go hand in hand with technology... Those two are the twin transformers of the jobs market. Things are getting greener and more digital.” To stay relevant, workers should adapt and build their digital skillsets. Employers should focus on providing up-to-date training to foster highly skilled workers. The transition to a green economy is already underway—will today’s employers, employees, and culture *grow* to meet the demand?

Resources for Further Learning:

- [An Action Plan for Climate Change: LinkedIn’s Global Green Skills Report](#)
- [GEO-6 for Youth Interactive Report E-Publication](#)
- [These Are the Skills Young People Will Need for the Green Jobs of the Future](#)
- [Filling the Green Skills Gap](#)
- [Upskill for Green Jobs of the Future](#)
- [Future of Skills](#)

Discussion Questions:

- Unpack the term *corporate social responsibility*. Should businesses be obligated to contribute to society’s well-being? What do we gain from this duty? What, if anything, do we stand to lose?
- Given the increased demand from consumers for “green” businesses, is there a likelihood that corporations will overstate (or “greenwash”) their commitment to sustainable business practices? Why or why not?
- Discuss the impact of upskilling and reskilling on the growing green talent gap. Will either of these practices significantly help bridge the talent gap? Will one do so more than the other? Should there be additional ways that we aim to “future-fit” our workforce?

Sources:

- [Building a Sustainable Future Requires “Green” Skills](#)
- [The Green Talent Gap Is Widening](#)
- [Global Green Skills Report 2022](#)
- [Upskilling, Reskilling and Preparing for the Future](#)
- [LinkedIn Global Green Skills Report Shows Gap Between Demand and Supply of Green Talent](#)
- [The Demand for Green Skills Is Growing Globally](#)
- [Breaking Down the 4 Types of Corporate Social Responsibility](#)