

How can we measure the number of green jobs?

April 2024 update

Key information

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Summary

This short update examines the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) latest experimental estimates of green jobs, released in March 2024.

Currently, there is no agreed upon definition of “Green” jobs from which official statistics can be produced. For this publication, the ONS used a definition of green jobs which refers to “employment in an activity that contributes to protecting or restoring the environment, including those that mitigate or adapt to climate change”. The ONS uses three approaches to estimate green jobs, namely:

- An industry-based approach, which includes all jobs in a “green” industry or sector, with such industries classified according to activities undertaken in them.
- An occupation-based approach, which includes all jobs that are green based on the tasks undertaken by workers or objectives of their work, regardless of the industry those jobs are in. To note: The estimation methodology has been updated in this latest release.
- A firm-based approach, which includes all jobs in a green firm that could be classified based on firms’ environmental commitments, such as an emissions target and/or their trajectory of emissions.

The industry approach finds that the number of full-time equivalent (FTEs) green jobs in the UK increased from 515,300 in 2015 to 639,400 in 2022, an increase of over 124,000 jobs. Two activities accounted for nearly 40% of green FTE jobs in 2022. These were waste management (21.7% of green jobs) and energy efficient products (18.2%).

The occupation approach uses data that were collected from just over 2,500 respondents via the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) during the period 4th to 14th January and 17th to 28th January 2024. Different from previous releases of this data however, the ONS undertook an additional validation stage to test whether

respondents' views on their jobs matched the ONS definition on the occupation approach. This additional validation step represents a significant methodological change to the estimation approach and as such the ONS do not recommend a direct comparison with the previously published results. Prior to this validation, 19% of respondents believed their job to be green but this fell to 12% after validation.

The firm-based approach to estimating green jobs measures all jobs in firms that are classified as green. The ONS uses data on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by industry and considers those industries that emit less than 1% of the UK's total GHG emissions (and the firms in these industries) as "green".

Across the UK, a small number of industries contribute significantly to total GHG emissions. Three industries, electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning; manufacturing; and transportation and storage, accounted for over 62% of total GHG emissions in 2022. These industries employed almost 3.9 million people, or 14% of total UK employees.

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