Careers in Sustainability

Current Job Trends and Future Growth
About the Study

In Winter 2013, ECO Canada interviewed 658 Canadian organizations. Excluding sustainability consulting firms,

- **37%** had employees working in environmental, social or economic sustainability

- **22%** used a corporate sustainability policy to govern their core business functions

- **57%** of organizations with sustainability professionals incorporated their sustainability teams into more than one business unit or department
Overview

This research uncovered new insights on Canadian careers in sustainability, including:

- **Where the jobs are** – top employers and demand by province
- **What it takes to get hired** – required skills, education and experience
- **Who works in the sector** – characteristics of the sustainability workforce
- **How viable these careers will be** – typical salaries and future job growth
Canada’s Sustainability Workforce

Definition of Sustainability Professionals:

“Practitioners who spend at least 50% of their time performing activities related to environmental, economic or social sustainability.”

50,659 Sustainability Professionals work in Canada

At least 18% of Canadian organizations have at least one or more Sustainability Professionals on staff
Why Do Companies Need Sustainability Professionals?

Employers depend on their sustainability staff to support key business functions – especially **Managing Risk** and **Increasing Returns on Capital**.

- 57% of Companies with sustainability professionals are managing risk.
- 51% are increasing returns on capital.
- 39% are driving business growth.

(*Companies could report more than one business function*)
Top Sustainability Employers

Governments are one of the top employers of Sustainability Professionals, representing 27% of the sustainability workforce.

Distribution of Sustainability Workforce by Employer Type

- Governments (27%)
- Other Businesses (25%)
- Research Institutions/Not-for-Profit Organizations (24%)
- Large Enterprises (10%)
- Sustainability Consulting Firms (5%)
Where are the Jobs?

British Columbia and Alberta have the highest proportion of sustainability jobs compared to their share of the Canadian labour force.
Profiling the Sustainability Workforce

70% of Sustainability Professionals work as **Sustainability Specialists**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Sustainability Officer</td>
<td>2,512</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Officer</td>
<td>6,456</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Specialist</td>
<td>2,340</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Researcher</td>
<td>2,512</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Trainer</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Educator</td>
<td>2,442</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Consultant</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# and % of Sustainability Professionals working in each occupation
The majority of Sustainability Consultants are young: 60% are under the age 35.
Level of Experience

Most Sustainability Professionals are at the **Mid to Senior point of their careers**, with 8+ years of professional experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Entry-Level (&lt; 1 year of experience)</th>
<th>Early Career (1 – 4 years of experience)</th>
<th>Mid-Career (5-7 years of experience)</th>
<th>Senior-Level (8+ years of experience)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total # of Sustainability Professionals</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>9,319</td>
<td>12,388</td>
<td>28,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total % of Sustainability Workforce</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
68% of all Sustainability Professionals hold a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

Top Fields of Study for Sustainability Careers:
- Business or Public Administration
- Physical or Life Sciences
- Engineering
- Social Sciences
- Natural Resources/Conservation

32% of senior Sustainability Professionals have a degree in Business or Public Administration.

Sustainability Consultants are more likely to hold degrees in Physical/Life Sciences, Engineering or Natural Resources/Conservation.
Key Skills in Sustainability

In their work, Sustainability Professionals rely on these top competencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting, enforcing and complying with environmental regulations and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing and monitoring sustainable development strategies and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnering with stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing corporate environmental sustainability policies and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building sustainable development indicators, plans and strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Much Do Sustainability Professionals Make in Canada?

Starting salaries range widely for Sustainability Professionals due to:

- Type of Employer
- Occupation
- Level of Experience
The Forecast for Job Growth

Canadian jobs in sustainability will grow significantly in the next 3 to 5 years.

84% of sustainability consulting firms expect to hire = 400 new jobs

46% of other sustainability employers will also increase their staff = 3,800 additional jobs
1.) **Sustainability jobs are in high demand**, with over 50,000 Canadian professionals performing work in this area.

2.) There are **viable and diverse career paths in sustainability**.

3.) Companies count on Sustainability Professionals to support core business functions, especially to **reduce risk and increase capital**

4.) **High levels of experience and education** are necessary for most careers in sustainability

5.) Sustainability Professionals draw upon **key skills related to environmental, economic and social sustainability** to support change management, strategic development and corporate social responsibility
Thinking About a Career in Sustainability?

Here’s how to:

**Get started**
- Find out which careers are in top demand (and how to get them) in 7 New Sustainability Career Profiles.
- Learn more at: [www.eco.ca/training/career-profiles](http://www.eco.ca/training/career-profiles)

**Get recognized**
- EP Sustainability is a new certification specialization to help you market your skills to sustainability employers and clients.
A special thanks to RDA Global Inc. for conducting this study. We also thank the numerous interviewees who graciously provided their time and insights.

Learn more about ECO Canada’s ongoing labour market research at:

www.eco.ca/research