

2025

Tco

A woman with long, wavy grey hair, wearing a light blue blazer, is speaking and gesturing with her hands in a meeting. She is holding a small object in her hands. In the background, there is a whiteboard with a horizontal line and an arrow pointing right, and several red sticky notes. In the foreground, there is a wooden box containing various office supplies like pens and scissors. The scene is set in a professional environment.

**Can the right
competence save
the climate?**



Extended Summary

Sweden stands at a critical juncture in its green transition. To meet the UN's target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees, global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced drastically by 2030. For Sweden, this means cutting emissions by at least 44 percent between 2024 and 2030 – seven times faster than the historical pace of reduction.

The coming years will therefore be decisive for how successfully Sweden manages to align climate policy, labour market policy and skills development. The report – *Can the right competence save the climate?* – is based on a nationally representative Novus survey of more than 3,200 employed people in Sweden. The results clearly show that the workforce is ready for the green transition, but that the necessary conditions are not yet in place.

Broad support and a sense of urgency

Support for the green transition is exceptionally strong. More than three quarters of Sweden's working population – equivalent to around four million people – are positive towards transforming society to reduce emissions and climate impact. Seven in ten are aware that the transition must happen quickly, and a majority want Sweden to take a leading role internationally.

At the same time, three in five respondents believe that the government is not doing enough to accelerate climate action. This gap between strong public support and perceived political inaction highlights a key message of the report: there is a broad mandate for faster and more ambitious reforms.



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The labour market will transform

The green transition will profoundly reshape Sweden's labour market. Nine out of ten employees believe that climate change and the green transition will transform the labour market within the next five to ten years. Many foresee new occupations and sectors emerging, new technologies being adopted, and an increased need for training and re-skilling.

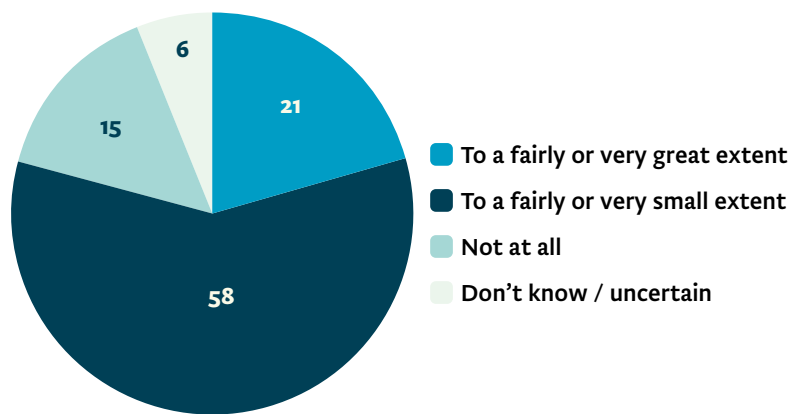
However, far fewer expect significant changes in their own profession in the near future. Only one in five believe that their current job will change substantially over the coming decade. This disconnect – between awareness of structural change and perceived personal impact – suggests that the transition is still not tangible in everyday working life.

Competence is the key

Two out of three employees – representing around 3.4 million people – believe that green competence will be important for employability in the future labour market. “Green competence” is understood broadly, encompassing both technical skills such as energy efficiency, electrification and circular production, and more general abilities such as project management, leadership, and sustainability awareness.

Yet the report reveals a worrying gap between recognition and action. Only 18 percent of respondents say their employer has a plan to strengthen green competences, and merely 11 percent have been offered training related to climate change or the green transition during the past year. Meanwhile, nearly 80 percent believe they will need new or updated competences within the next five years to meet the demands of a changing labour market.

DIAGRAM 1. To what extent will you need skills development related to climate change or the green transition?



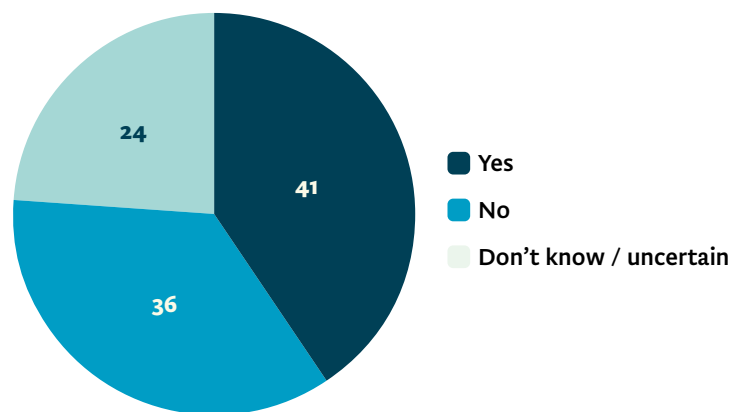
Source: TCO/Novus, april 2025.

This situation risks becoming a bottleneck for Sweden’s climate goals. Without the right competence in the right place at the right time, even the most ambitious climate measures will fail to deliver.

A strong willingness to learn

Despite limited support from employers, the report highlights a striking readiness among individuals to take responsibility. Four in ten employees say they are willing to retrain or upskill on their own initiative, even outside of working hours, to strengthen their ability to contribute to the green transition. This commitment represents an enormous potential for change – but only if society provides accessible education pathways and the economic security needed to make lifelong learning a realistic choice.

DIAGRAM 2. Would you consider pursuing further education alongside your work to strengthen your competence in meeting climate change or the green transition?



Source: TCO/Novus, april 2025.

Towards a national strategy for green competence

The findings underline the need for coordinated, long-term action. Sweden's success in previous industrial transformations has rested on cooperation between government, employers and trade unions. The same model must now be mobilised for the climate transition.

TCO proposes four priorities to strengthen Sweden's green competence supply:

1. A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR GREEN COMPETENCE.

The government, together with the social partners, should map which competences are needed, where and when, and ensure that the systems for lifelong learning can deliver them in time.

2. AN ADAPTIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

Universities, vocational education and adult learning programmes must become more flexible, responsive and relevant to the needs of the green economy.

3. EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR WORKERS IN TRANSITION.

Instruments such as the Transition Study Support and a strong unemployment insurance system are vital for enabling individuals to reskill and upskill without losing income security.

4. WORKPLACE-BASED COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT.

Employers need to make systematic plans for developing their employees' competences in line with the green transition, not rely solely on new recruitment.

Hope and realism

The overall conclusion is both hopeful and urgent. The Swedish workforce is willing, aware and largely optimistic about the green transition. But unless professional development becomes a political and organisational priority, this optimism risks turning into frustration.

Sweden has unique strengths – a highly educated workforce, strong institutions and a tradition of social partnership – that can make the country a leader in the green transition. By combining political leadership, investment in skills, and trust-based cooperation, Sweden can demonstrate that it is possible to reduce emissions, strengthen competitiveness and create a sustainable labour market for the future.

The transition will not succeed without people. But with the right competence, it can.



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