

# SOLOMON ISLANDS

## EMPLOYMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY FACT SHEETS 2019

The *Employment and Environmental Sustainability Fact Sheets* series provides key features of employment and environmental sustainability performance. Jobs that are green and decent are central to sustainable development and resource productivity. They respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion. Such jobs create decent employment opportunities, enhance resource efficiency and build low-carbon, sustainable societies. The fact sheets include the most recently available data for selected indicators on employment and environmental sustainability: (i) employment in environmental sectors; (ii) skill levels; (iii) vulnerability of jobs; (iv) jobs in renewable energy; (v) scoring on the Environmental Performance Index; and (vi) air quality.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

The Solomon Islands<sup>1</sup> is an archipelago in the south-western Pacific Ocean, to the north-east of Australia (Fig. 1). Its population is mostly rural and growing, with a fertility rate of 3.7 children and life expectancy of 71.3 years. Around 58 per cent of the population is of legal working age (15–64 years) (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Map of Solomon Islands

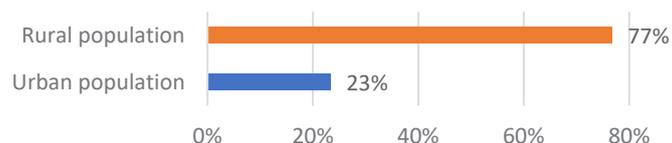


Figure 2. Solomon Islands population statistics

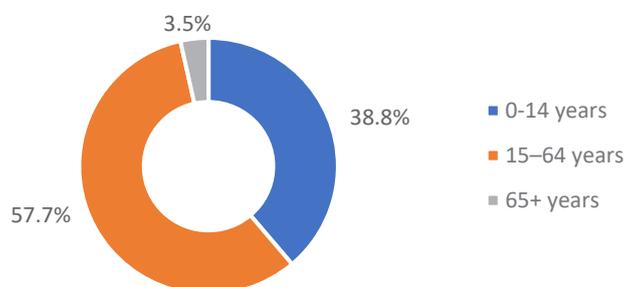
Population:<sup>2</sup> 0.6 million



Population growth rate	Fertility rate	Life expectancy at birth
1.5%	3.7 children	71.3 years



Population age categories



Note: data is for 2017, except fertility rate and life expectancy (2018 data).

Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 28/06/2018; <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> and UN ESCAP statistics. [http://data.unescap.org/escap\\_stat/](http://data.unescap.org/escap_stat/) (accessed on 30 December 2018).

<sup>1</sup> Solomon Islands became a member of the International Labour Organization in 1984.

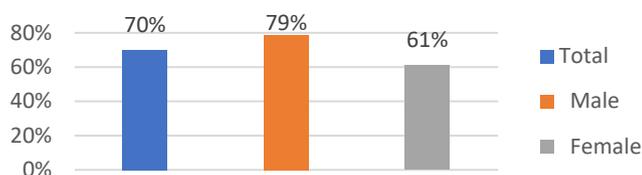
<sup>2</sup> Population data based on 2017 data.

### LABOUR FORCE

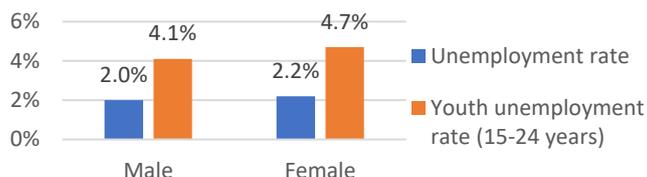
In 2018, the labour force participation rate was 71.4 per cent and the employment-to-population ratio was 70 per cent. Both these rates are more than 17 percentage points higher for men than for women. The total unemployment rate was 2.1 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate was 4.4 per cent, with near gender parity in both rates. Employment is heavily reliant on agriculture, and on medium-skilled occupations (Fig. 3).

**Figure 3. Basic employment statistics for the Solomon Islands, 2018**

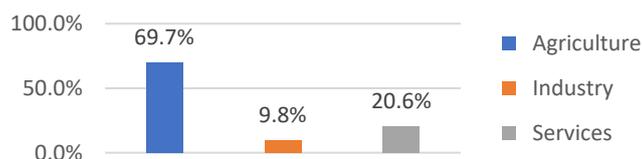
#### Employment-to-population, 2018 (15+ years)



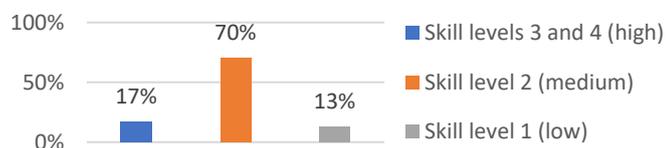
#### Unemployment, 2018



#### Employment by sector, 2018 (15+ years)



#### Employment by occupation, 2018

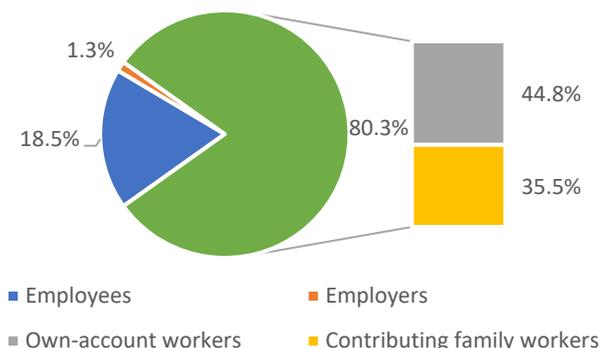


Note: ILO estimates. Labour force participation rate and unemployment: aged 15 years and older. Youth unemployment: aged 15-24 years. Employment by occupation: skill level 1 (low) for elementary occupations; skill level 2 (medium) for clerical, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural and trade workers, plant machinists and assemblers; and skill levels 3 and 4 (high) for managers, professionals and technicians.

Source: ILO estimates and compilation using ILOSTAT, [www.ilo.org/ilostat](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat) (accessed on 30 December 2018).

Vulnerable employment in the Solomon Islands as of 2018 accounted for 80.3 per cent of the labour force, with the majority of those workers having own-account status (Fig. 4). Own-account and contributing family workers are more likely to experience low job and income security than employees and employers, as well as lower coverage by social protection systems and employment regulation.

**Figure 4. Vulnerable employment, 2018**

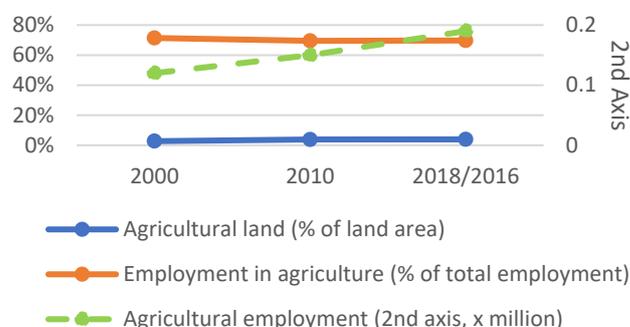


Note: ILO estimates. Vulnerable employment includes own-account workers and contributing family workers from ILO status of employment data.

Source: ILO estimates and compilation using ILOSTAT, [www.ilo.org/ilostat](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat) (accessed on 30 December 2018).

Rural population growth was 1.4 per cent in 2017. The share of agricultural land in total land area increased by 1 percentage point between 2000 and 2016, and agricultural employment also increased from 0.12 million to 0.19 million people. The share of agricultural employment within total employment fell by approximately 1 percentage point due to slightly faster job creation in other sectors (Fig. 5).

**Figure 5. Agricultural land and agricultural employment, 2000-2018**



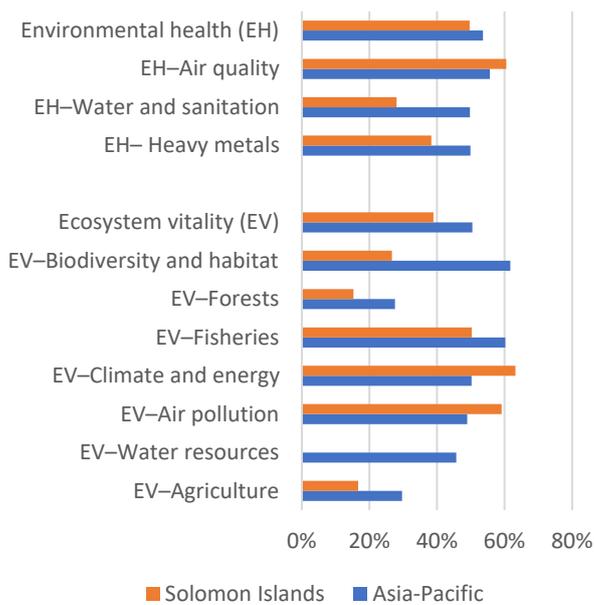
Note: Data for agricultural land is from 2016 and other data is from 2018.

Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 28/06/2018; <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> (accessed on 30 December 2018).

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The Solomon Islands ranks at number 151 of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI),<sup>3</sup> with a score of 43.22 (with 0 being furthest from the high-performance benchmark target of 100). The Solomon Islands outperforms the average score for Asia and the Pacific (Fig. 6) in some of the EPI categories, including air quality, climate and energy, and air pollution. However, there is room for improvement, especially in environmental health (heavy metals, water and sanitation) and ecosystem vitality (forests, biodiversity and habitat, fisheries, water resources and agriculture). Action to address climate change and improve environmental health, ecosystem vitality and resilience to weather disasters all have the potential to provide job creation, green economy growth and innovation in the Solomon Islands.

**Figure 6. Environmental performance index for the Solomon Islands, 2018**



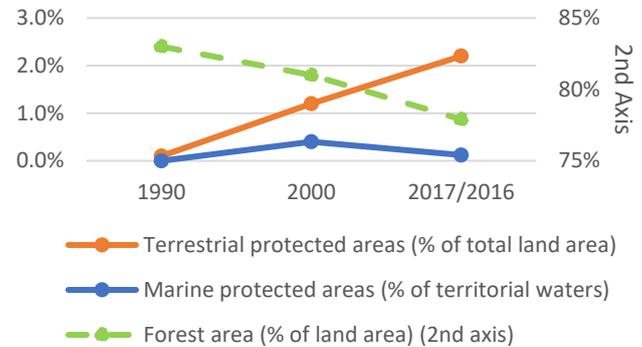
Note: Score 0 (worst) - 100 (best). Asia-Pacific: data is for ILO member states in the region, excluding Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau and Tuvalu.

Source: ILO compilation using "2018 EPI Scores - Current". EPI Yale.

Forest area decreased between 1990 and 2016, to approximately 78 per cent of total land area. From 1990 to 2017, the share of terrestrial protected area increased slightly, reaching 2.2 per cent of total land area, while the proportion of marine protected area increased marginally but then decreased by 0.28 per

cent (Fig. 7). There will be greater prospects for employment opportunities if there is a commitment to transition to a low carbon and resource-efficient economy, such as jobs in resource management and environmental services.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 7. Forest area, terrestrial and marine protection area, 1990-2017**

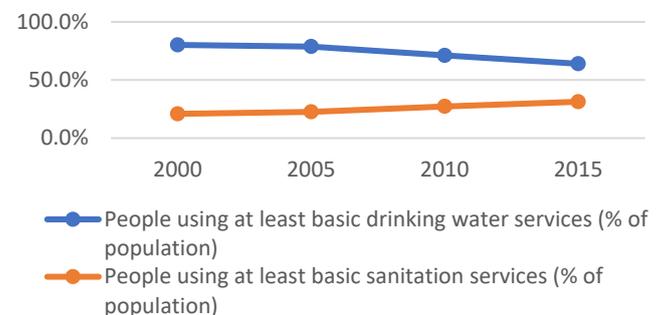


Note: Data for forest area is from 2016 and other data is from 2017.

Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 28/06/2018; <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> (accessed on 19 February 2019).

Since 2000, there has been a gradual decrease in access to basic drinking water, to an average of 64 per cent in 2015, and a gradual increase in access to basic sanitation, to an average of 31.3 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 8). Both are well below the ideal threshold of 100 per cent. Only 0.1 per cent of the labour force was employed in water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities in 2013 (Fig. 13). Improvement in water supply and sanitation access could provide decent job opportunities in the future.

**Figure 8. Basic drinking water and sanitation access, 2000-2015**



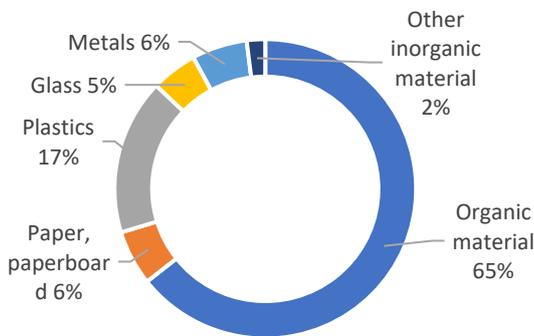
Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 21/05/2018; <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> (accessed on 30 December 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy / Center for International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University. "2018 EPI Scores - Current". EPI Yale. Retrieved 14-06-2018. Available: <https://epi.envirocenter.yale.edu>

<sup>4</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: The jobs potential of a shift towards a low-carbon economy, OECD Green Growth Papers, No. 2012/01 (Paris, 2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k9h3630320v-en>.

Growth of the urban population in the Solomon Islands has meant an increase in solid waste. Waste collection varies between the inner cities and the country's outer urban areas. According to the World Bank, municipal solid waste generation in the Solomon Islands in 2004 was 4.3 kilograms per capita per day and is expected to decrease to 4 kilograms per capita per day by 2025.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the waste in 1994 was organic (65 per cent), followed by plastics (17 per cent) (Fig. 9). The much-needed implementation of a municipal waste management system for collection, safe and sustainable disposal, recycling and composting practices could create more green jobs that help the environment and general health.

**Figure 9. Waste composition, 1994**



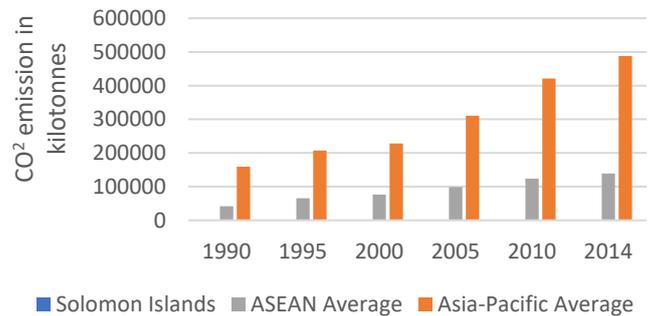
Source: ILO compilation using UNSD-Environment statistics (released on 30 April 2018; <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/qindicators.cshhtml>) (accessed on 30 December 2018).

## AIR QUALITY

The carbon dioxide (CO<sup>2</sup>) emission levels for the Solomon Islands increased very slightly by an average of 1 per cent from 1990 to 2014 (Fig. 10).<sup>6</sup> The increase was due primarily to burning of fossil fuels in the energy sector, with gasoline being the major fuel type.<sup>7</sup> The level of emissions is so much lower than the Asia-Pacific and ASEAN averages that it appears negligible.

The PM<sub>2.5</sub> (atmospheric particulate matter with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres) emission levels for the Solomon Islands were highest in 2016 (Fig. 11). Overall PM<sub>2.5</sub> emission levels did not exceed the World Health Organization's Air Quality Guideline threshold level, thus indicating low emissions. The Solomon Islands also shows a lower level of emissions than both the ASEAN and Asia-Pacific averages.

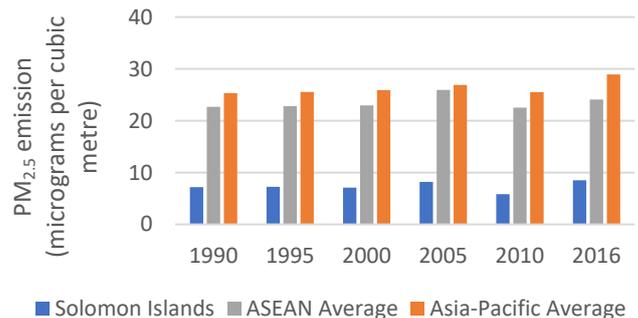
**Figure 10. CO<sup>2</sup> emissions for the Solomon Islands, 1990-2014**



Note: Data for ASEAN and Asia-Pacific are the average of all the ILO member states of the regions. Asia-Pacific: data excludes Cook Islands, Timor-Leste (1990, 1995, 2000).

Source: ILO compilation using World Bank indicators; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.KT?locations=IR> (accessed on 30 December 2018).

**Figure 11. PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions for the Solomon Islands, 1990-2016**



Note: Data for ASEAN and Asia-Pacific are the average of all the ILO member states of the regions. Asia-Pacific: data excludes Cook Islands, Palau and Tuvalu.

Source: ILO compilation using World Bank indicators; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.PM25.MC.M3?view=chart> (accessed on 30 December 2018).

Applying the Just Transition Guidelines, an area of possible intervention includes efforts to reduce harmful emissions, which could potentially generate green jobs in high emitting sectors such as transportation and fuel-intensive industries. Reducing emissions is a significant challenge, which can be achieved not only by mitigation methods, but also by adapting to, and coping with, the changes required by the transition to a low-carbon economy.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank: What a waste: A global review of solid waste management (Washington, DC, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> The value is calculated on the basis of CAGR (compound annual growth rate).

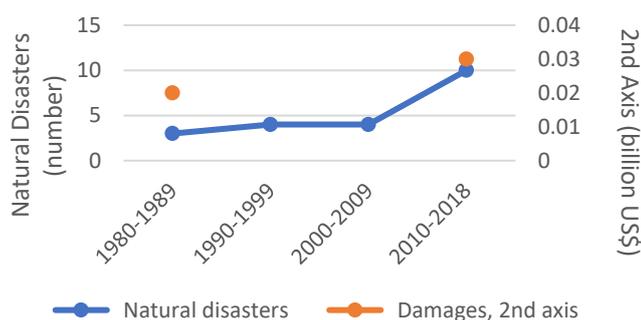
<sup>7</sup> Solomon Islands Initial National Communications under the UNFCCC <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1315solomonUNFCCC%20Nat%20Comm.pdf>

## CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

According to the *World Risk Report*,<sup>8</sup> the Solomon Islands has a very high World Risk Index score. It ranks number 6 of 171 countries because of its high exposure to natural hazards and limited institutional capacity to cope and adapt. Part of the country's vulnerability relates to the 2.9 per cent of the total population who, in 2010, lived in the 1.6 per cent of the total land area below 5 metres above sea level.<sup>9</sup>

According to the *Emergency Events Database*,<sup>10</sup> there was a substantial increase in natural disasters<sup>11</sup> between 1980 and 2018 (Fig. 12). The natural disasters in that time were mostly storms, tropical cyclones, floods and droughts. Developing preventative measures to limit infrastructure and property damage and increase institutional capacity to respond to climate events, particularly for small businesses, can be a source of decent job creation while building resilience.

**Figure 12. Natural disaster occurrence and damage costs in the Solomon Islands**



Note: Natural events include climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

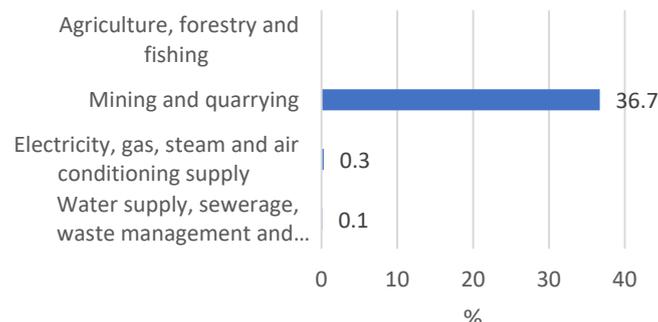
Note: Damage costs data is available for year range 1980 to 1989 and 2010 to 2018 only.

Source: EM-DAT: The emergency events database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) - CRED, D. Guha-Sapir - www.emdat.be, Brussels, Belgium. Data accessed on: 30 December 2018.

## GREEN JOBS POTENTIAL

In 2013, 36.7 per cent of total employment was in the mining and quarrying sector (Fig. 13).

**Figure 13. Employment in sectors with strong green jobs potential in 2013**



Note: These sectors have the most potential for green job opportunities. Employment by selected 1-digit sector level (ISIC - Rev. 4, 2008)

Source: ILO estimates and compilation using ILOSTAT, www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed on 30 December 2018).

In 2016, approximately 8 per cent of the population relied primarily on clean fuel and technology, in the sense that these do not create pollution within the home.<sup>12</sup> The share of renewable energy in total energy consumption has not kept pace with overall consumption. In 2000, it was 66.9 per cent but fell below 63.5 per cent in 2010 and, after some fluctuation, reached 63.31 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 14). However, renewable energy electricity generation has increased over the last six years, with solar power being the main renewable energy source in 2016 (Fig. 15). The country's employment rate in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning was only 0.3 per cent in 2013 (Fig. 13). With the push for increasing reliance on renewable energy, there is the potential for decent job opportunities in the future.

**Figure 14. Renewable energy share in total energy consumption, 2000-15**



Source: ILO compilation using United Nations statistics division. SDG Indicators: Global Database. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (accessed on 30 December 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and United Nations University – EHS (2017) *World Risk Report 2017*, available at: <http://weltrisikobericht.de/english/>

<sup>9</sup> World development indicators. <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> (accessed on 7 August 2018).

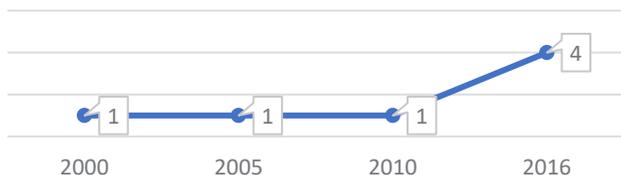
<sup>10</sup> EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) - CRED, D. Guha-Sapir - www.emdat.be, Brussels, Belgium. Data accessed on: 20 July 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

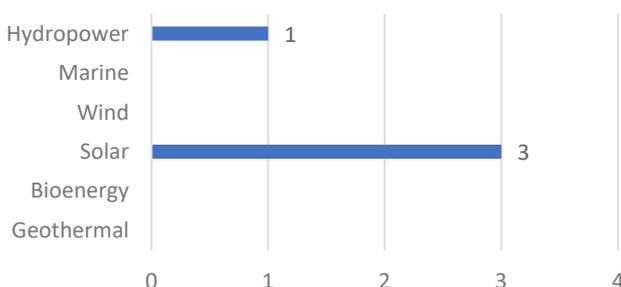
<sup>12</sup> The proportion of the population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology is calculated as the number of people using clean fuels and technologies for cooking, heating and lighting divided by the total population reporting any cooking, heating or lighting, expressed as a percentage. "Clean" is defined by the emission rate targets and specific fuel recommendations (against unprocessed coal and kerosene) included in the normative World Health Organization guidelines for indoor air quality; see the data for household fuel combustion, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-07-01-02.pdf>.

**Figure 15. Renewable energy electricity generation, 2012-2016**

**Total renewable energy electricity generation (gigawatt hours - GWh)**



**Renewable energy electricity generation (GWh) in 2016, by technology**



Source: ILO compilation using source: IRENA (2018); Renewable electricity capacity and generation statistics, June 2018. Available at: <http://resourceirena.irena.org>

Better data collection relating to the green economy and the environmental sector would be very valuable for policy-makers in Asia-Pacific countries. In particular, better data on green and decent jobs is needed to assess the impact of climate change and climate-related policies on social inclusion. Without better data it will be difficult to determine what policy changes are needed to ensure a just transition to environmental sustainability and to monitor progress going forward.



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