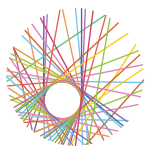


Hong Kong C-Suite Talent Survey Report

Co-published by The British
Chamber of Commerce in
Hong Kong and Morgan McKinley



The British
Chamber of Commerce
in Hong Kong
香港英商會



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Foreword

Dear friends,

Talent has been the subject of much debate in Hong Kong over the last few years as we “re-boot” our city after some years of stagnation. Hong Kong has long been recognised as a global hub for business and talent. Yet in this era of economic transformation, intensified competition and global instability, the idea of the “future of work” itself is difficult to define. While there are numerous surveys of what talents desire, the perspectives of those at the helm of organisations is equally important if Hong Kong is to succeed in this war.

The Chamber has conducted an exclusive C-suite survey across Hong Kong. We believe it offers a unique and invaluable lens into what Hong Kong’s business leadership perceive as the challenges and opportunities surrounding talent attraction, retention, and development. Their insights reflect both the current landscape as well as hint at strategies that will help define Hong Kong’s future as a thriving business ecosystem.

The Chamber is a powerful business network of 1,000+ members, that collectively employ over 200,000 people. With leadership drawn from top-tier executives across law, finance, consulting, real estate, education, and extends beyond just British businesses. Our membership is a pivotal voice of the business community in Hong Kong. This survey’s sole focus on the C-suite provides a strategic viewpoint that can often be absent in broader discussions. From navigating talent shortages to fostering an inclusive and sustainable workforce, the findings highlight the immediate pain points and some long-term solutions that need to be offered if we are to secure Hong Kong’s position as a premier destination for global talent.

We hope this report serves as a catalyst for actionable dialogue among businesses, policymakers, and stakeholders. If we can align the needs of corporations with the needs of the workforce, and the broader community, we can enhance Hong Kong’s appeal as a place to live, work, play and learn.

In preparing this report for the Chamber it is important to give thanks to the contribution of the “architects” as without them, it would have lacked credibility as we present it to you.

- To **Morgan McKinley** for their invaluable partnership in shaping this report into a clear, insightful document reflecting their expertise in market dynamics, talent trends and ensuring we refined the data into actionable insights.
- To **CLP** for its thought leadership as well as **Standard Chartered** for their roles in shaping the questionnaire. It needed to resonate with the C-suite in order to capture the most pressing issues.
- To Paul McComb, Betty Wan, Rob Sheffield and Christy Ng for their efforts put in shaping and analysing this report, also to the entire Policy team of the Chamber, whose work and collaboration made this initiative possible.

We trust you find the report useful as we hope the significant collective effort provides solutions for Hong Kong’s talent future and presents the city as a great place to work!



**Jeremy
Sheldon**

Chairman
The British Chamber of Commerce
in Hong Kong



The British
Chamber of Commerce
in Hong Kong
香港英商會



Foreword

On behalf of the entire team at Org Group and Morgan McKinley, it is with immense pride that we have been able to support the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, CLP, Standard Chartered and their partners with the production of this document.

Our expertise lies in understanding market dynamics and talent trends, as we navigate the complexities of Hong Kong's evolving business landscape, understanding the nuances of talent attraction and retention has never been more crucial. The Hong Kong talent market in 2025 is characterised by a complex interplay of cautious optimism, significant talent scarcity in specialised domains, and a fundamental reorientation of both employer strategies and candidate priorities. While the economy projects steady growth, particularly in high-value sectors, a pronounced mismatch exists between the skills available and those in demand.

Recruitment practices are undergoing a notable evolution, with organisations increasingly embracing flexible workforce models, integrating advanced technologies like AI, and adopting more strategic human resources functions. Concurrently, candidates are prioritising job security and a holistic employee value proposition that extends beyond traditional compensation, encompassing work-life balance and opportunities for continuous development.

These transformative shifts are primarily driven by persistent global economic uncertainties, the accelerating pace of digital transformation, and targeted government initiatives aimed at fostering new growth areas. Looking ahead to 2026, a gradual stabilisation of salary increases is anticipated, yet the underlying structural challenges and the dynamic talent landscape will necessitate ongoing adaptability and strategic foresight from all stakeholders to ensure sustained growth and competitiveness.

This document represents more than just a collection of data; it is a critical reflection on Hong Kong's position at a pivotal moment.

For years, we have engaged in a global "war for talent," and in today's dynamic landscape, this competition has never been more intense. While much has been written about what the workforce desires, this report offers a unique and invaluable perspective directly from the leaders at the helm of Hong Kong's organisations.

By focusing exclusively on the C-suite, we gain a strategic and unfiltered view of the challenges and opportunities that will define the city's future as a premier talent hub.

The findings within this report confirm what we see on the ground every day, Hong Kong's enduring strengths as well as the pressing need to address areas like the leadership pipeline, critical skills gaps, and the attraction of global talent.

We believe this report serves as a vital tool for businesses and policymakers alike. It provides a shared understanding of the talent landscape, fostering a necessary dialogue and a unified commitment to action.

As we look to the future, let us use this report as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue and actionable strategies. Together, we can reinforce Hong Kong's position as a premier destination for global talent and ensure our city's continued success as a vibrant hub for innovation and opportunity.

We trust that the insights within will empower you to make informed decisions that not only address immediate pain points but also contribute to a sustainable and prosperous future for Hong Kong's business ecosystem.



**Robert
Sheffield**
Managing Director
Greater China
Morgan McKinley

An aerial photograph of Hong Kong's skyline, featuring the Bank of China Tower prominently in the center. The city is densely packed with skyscrapers, and the surrounding water is filled with boats. The image is used as a background for the report's statistics.

89% of employers describe the
talent market as highly competitive

Only **2%** of companies **disclose salary ranges** internally to their employees



63% cite a **lack of skilled candidates**
as their **top hiring challenge**

56% of employers now prioritise
skills-based hiring over traditional
qualifications like degrees



Introduction

Recognising the critical importance of talent sustainability for Hong Kong's continued competitiveness, the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong spearheaded a comprehensive survey targeting C-suite leaders across Hong Kong. Conducted between late May and 22 August 2025, this initiative engaged senior executives from both member and non-member companies with operations in Hong Kong.

The survey highlights Hong Kong's talent landscape from the point of view of C-suites in Hong Kong, identifying some key challenges and opportunities inside corporate world. We are deeply grateful for the tremendous support of our co-publisher Morgan McKinley, and immensely value the instrumental insights and guidance provided by CLP and Standard Chartered Bank during the crucial survey design phase.

This report synthesises the invaluable feedback gathered, aiming to illuminate how C-suite leaders perceive the strengths and weaknesses of Hong Kong and its talent pool, identify areas lagging behind, and pinpoint what requires urgent boosting. Beyond diagnosis, the core objective is to translate these critical insights into actionable recommendations. We intend for the findings to provide a clear roadmap for both the Government and the business community, fostering collaborative efforts to secure sustainable talent growth and ensure Hong Kong's enduring prosperity.

Executive Summary

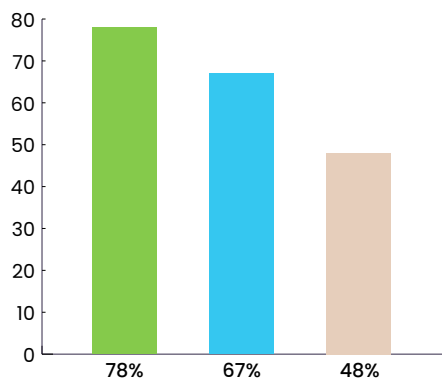
While the city retains strengths like a resilient workforce and bilingual capabilities, concerns around leadership pipelines, skills gaps, and employee retention persist. Talent shortages are acute, particularly for mid-level specialists. For example, AI proficiency and possessing global exposure are critical future skills that currently face a shortage in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's appeal to global talent is underpinned by strong fundamentals such as tax regime, infrastructure, and education. Addressing cost of living and enhancing international branding will further strengthen its position as Asia's leading hub.

Key Findings

1. Priority Talent Concerns

Respondents identified three primary talent challenges:

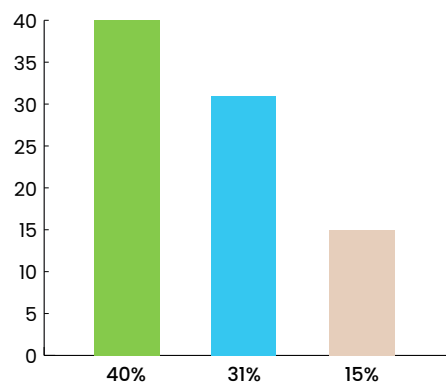


- Leadership pipeline & succession planning** emerged as the top concern, indicating a critical gap in preparing future leaders
- Skills gaps in critical roles** highlighted specific competency shortages impacting organizational performance
- Employee retention & satisfaction** underscored the ongoing challenge of keeping valuable talent engaged

Other notable concerns included upskilling/reskilling needs (41%), compensation competitiveness (30%), and demand for flexible work arrangements (15%).

2. Talent Recruitment Difficulties

A significant 81% of respondents reported experiencing talent shortages in their organisations, with only 19% indicating no such challenges. When examining which levels are hardest to recruit:



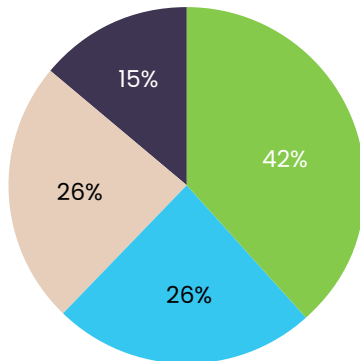
- Mid-level/ Specialists** represented the most difficult category to fill
- Management** followed as the second most challenging
- Senior/ Leadership** and **Entry-level** were equally challenging but less so than mid-level positions

These findings suggest a particular bottleneck in acquiring experienced professionals with specialised skills, rather than entry-level or senior executive talent.



3. Critical Skills for Hong Kong's Future

Respondents identified several essential skills Hong Kong needs to develop over the next five years:



- AI proficiency and tech skills: the most frequently mentioned capability
- International exposure
- Critical thinking and communication skills
- China/ digital economy and trade expertise: e.g. WeChat/ Alipay, consumer behaviour, regulatory nuances and policy directions

Other valuable skills included:

- Soft skills (leadership, adaptability, collaboration)
- Technical skills (data analytics, cybersecurity)
- Industry-specific expertise (ESG, finance & tech, legal, business development)
- Language proficiency (English/Mandarin)

4. Hong Kong Talent Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths of Local Talent (from most to least relevant):

1. Work ethic/ resilience – The most valued attribute of local professionals
2. Bilingual abilities – Proficiency in both English and Chinese

3. Market/ cultural knowledge – Understanding of regional business environments
4. Savvy – Business acumen

Attraction of Overseas Talent (from most to least relevant):

1. Competitive cost of living vs. salary packages – Primary concern
2. Cultural/ language barriers in workplace – Challenges in integration
3. Perception of Hong Kong's stability – Continued opportunity to reinforce international confidence through policy clarity and consistent communication
4. Healthy competition from other hubs – underscores Hong Kong's need to continue innovating and differentiating as Asia's superconnector
5. Limited industry diversity – Over-reliance on finance/ real estate sectors

Respondents highlighted the importance of strengthening Hong Kong's international image, noting opportunities to showcase its resilience and successful recovery from past challenges.

5. Hong Kong's Appeal to Global Talent

Hong Kong's current attractiveness to global talent on a 1-5 scale (1=Low, 5=High):

- **Average rating: 3.22** – Indicating moderate appeal

• **Positive factors:**

1. Low tax regime
2. World-class infrastructure
3. Gateway to China/ GBA
4. Quality international schools/ healthcare

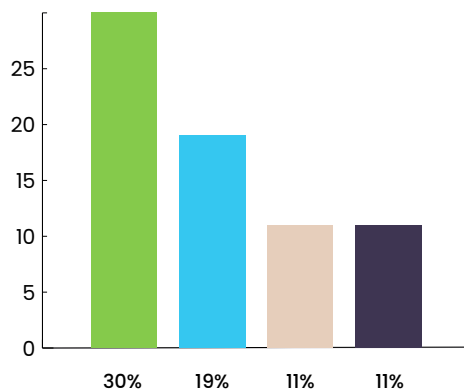
• **Negative factors:**

1. High cost of living (especially housing)
2. Concerns about openness/ stability
3. Competition from other financial hubs

6. Organisational Strategies to Address Talent Gaps

Talent Mix within Organisations

The mix of local vs. international talent varied by organisations, with common responses including:



To note, the answer may vary from level to level, for example we have two similar responses pointing out that there is a difference between senior management and more operating levels. One said "Staff level 90:10 / senior level 70:30". Another response specifically mentioned that they target local talents in local markets generally but there is exception for senior level consultants where they need people with more international experience.

Sector-Specific Labour Importation

Only 15% of respondents reported using sector-specific labour importation schemes in the past year. Amongst those who did:

- Average effectiveness rating was 4 out of 5

- Comments suggested these schemes were helpful but limited in scope

Recruitment Approaches:

1. Upskilling locals (partnering with universities/ training programs)
2. Aggressive global recruitment
3. Overseas role creation
4. Hybrid/ flexible work arrangements

To remain competitive, organisations have to:

1. Regularly benchmark compensation against market trends
2. Review bonus structures
3. Introduce long-term incentive (LTI) programs
4. Adjust based on sector-specific market scans

Retention Strategies:

1. Career development paths - Providing growth opportunities
2. Flexible work policies - Accommodating work-life balance
3. Health/ well-being programs - Supporting employee wellness
4. DEI initiatives - Fostering inclusive workplaces

Well-being initiatives, include:

1. Corporate wellness programmes
2. Meeting-free periods (e.g. over Christmas)
3. Flexible work environments / hours
4. Regular health check-ups/ insurance benefits

7. Economic and Future Outlook

Economic Outlook:

Views on Hong Kong's long-term economic vision were mixed but generally optimistic:

- Positive outlook centred on continued investment in tech hub development and economic diversification beyond finance.
- Concerns focused on over-reliance on financial sector and need to adapt to the ever-changing macro environment. Common themes in responses included:

1. "Diversification into innovation and technology";
2. "Ensure Hong Kong remains the global gateway to China"; and
3. "Need economic diversification"/ "Need to move beyond financial sector dominance".

Future Outlook: Hong Kong as a Talent Hub

When asked if Hong Kong will remain a top 3 Asia's talent hub in 10 years:

- Majority responded "Yes" due to low taxation, international environment, safety, stability, local work ethic and high-quality provision of education and healthcare.
- Hong Kong's world-class financial/ legal infrastructure, global connectivity and it being the gateway to the Mainland were also mentioned to support why Hong Kong would retain its top position in Asia.

- Some respondents emphasised the importance of proactively positioning Hong Kong against strong competition from other global cities, and of further elevating its international branding to reflect its strengths.

Transformation Priorities for Hong Kong

1. Digital transformation (39%)
2. Leadership development (38%)
3. Political risk management (11%)
4. Sustainability (10%)

8. Recommended Government Actions

To boost competitiveness, respondents suggested that the Hong Kong Government should prioritise:

1. **Addressing cost of living** – Particularly housing affordability
2. **Enhancing talent schemes** – More financial incentives for critical roles
3. **Attracting multinational organisations into Hong Kong**
4. **Improving international perception**
5. **Supporting education and housing for incoming talent**



Conclusion:

Keys to Securing Hong Kong's Future

Hong Kong is at a pivotal point in talent competitiveness. The survey highlights both its significant advantages and the key priorities where focused action can unlock the city's next phase of growth.

3 Common Threats for Talent Attraction & Retention

Three key priorities for enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness: Managing cost of living; Strengthening international branding; Building a sustainable, future-ready talent pipeline.

Despite the sky rocketing application numbers to the Top Talent Pass Scheme, the survey reveals the adoption remains limited. To reverse this trajectory, coordinated and immediate action is essential to tackle the common struggles faced by companies in Hong Kong:

1. ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND TALENT TRANSFORMATION

Diversification of the economy through regular reviews of economy model referencing new market trends, and reskilling-upskilling the existing labour market, need to continue with pace and momentum under dedicated Government and private sector collaboration. Beyond enhancing tech/ AI literacy, prioritise the knowledge of how to do business in or with China and internationally – cementing Hong Kong's role as the "superconnector" of the world.

2. RESKILLING

The emphasis on investing in developing AI capabilities, China digital economy expertise, and global mindsets points to specific areas for educational and training focus in the long run. Businesses should provide relevant training to existing workforce, at the same time the Government and universities or schools should closely monitor industry and market trends to ensure an up-to-date syllabus for future generations to seamlessly enter workforce. Meanwhile, the struggle to recruit mid-level specialists suggests a need for targeted talent development programs to ensure this critical cohort is well recruited and retained in Hong Kong.

3. ELEVATING HONG KONG'S VALUE PROPOSITION

Organisations are responding with creative recruitment and retention strategies, for example through improving career prospects, introducing well-being programmes and flexible work environments and hours, however Government's actions on providing more affordable housing and financial incentives will be of crucial importance to attracting more overseas talent and retaining local talent.





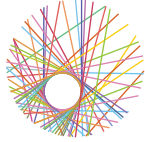
The Path Forward

Hong Kong's future as Asia's premier talent hub demands **unified commitment**. We urge regular dialogues between the Government, businesses, academia, and Chambers to forge sustainable talent strategies. We welcome the Chief Secretary's Committee on Education, Technology and Talents, the Chamber and its members to stand ready to deploy our expertise to secure Hong Kong's reputation as Asia's World City and its next decade of success.

Thanks to



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